

# Gross National Happiness: An Alternative Approach to Progress

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## Abstract

As a society we tend to care regarding what we tend to live, we tend to use what we tend to live, and what we tend to live drives policies and society in an exceedingly specific direction. We tend to thus ought to live progress properly. If societies blindly settle for GDP as their live of progress, they may be making an attempt to maximize the incorrect indicator for society. During this paper Bhutan is considered as a living example of a society that has opened a national dialogue regarding what progress suggests that, and that they have created the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index to replicate their understanding of progress. Moreover, the political and economic design of Bhutan is structured around increasing GNH instead of GDP. Establishments in Bhutan use the GNH index and a series of instruments of policy to construct policies that promote GNH. This paper will help in drawing variety of lessons from the Bhutanese experiment, particularly that every individual society ought to attempt to answer the subsequent 3 questions:

- What will progress mean?
- How can we develop indicators that measure progress?
- How can we use indicators to form policies and institutions?

All societies request to form welfare for people. The question isn't whether or not societies want welfare or not. The basic queries are: what will welfare mean? However can we live it? And the way can we use indicators to arrange society and its institutions so on maximize wellbeing? Answering these advanced queries may be a difficult endeavor, particularly given the variety of values and world views round the globe. However, at the middle of the essential queries of development and progress lie the symptoms we have a tendency to use as a society to live welfare and develop policies. As Hazel Henderson said, "Statistical indicators are the basic DNA codes of states. They replicate a society's values and goals and become the key drivers of economic and echnological decisions."

**Keywords:** Gross National Happiness, GNH, progress, social impact and GDP

## Introduction

Gross National Happiness, or GNH, may be a holistic and property approach to development, that balances material and non-material values with the conviction that humans need to go looking for happiness. The objective of GNH is to achieve a balanced development all told the aspects of life that are essential; for our happiness.

We are within the age of the Anthropocene once the fate of the world and every one life is inside the ability of humanity. Limitless consumerism, widening socio-economic difference and instability is inflicting speedy natural resource depletion and degradation. Global climate change, species extinction, multiple crises, growing insecurity, instability and conflicts don't seem to be solely decreasing our well-being however are threatening our terribly survival.

Today, it's impossible for contemporary society to operate without the business of commerce, finance, business or trade. These very factors are fixing human destiny by the day in extraordinary ways that, each positive and negative. GNH directly addresses such world, national and individual challenges by inform to the non-material roots of well- being and providing ways that to balance and satisfy the dual wants of the individual within the bounds of what nature will offer on a sustainable basis.

### Sustainable & Equitable Socio-Economic Development

**Environmental  
Conservation**



**Good  
Governance**

**Preservation & Promotion  
Of Culture**

### Good Governance

Good Governance could be a thought of a pillar for happiness as a result of it determines the conditions during which Bhutanese thrive. Whereas policies and programs that are developed in Bhutan are usually in line with the values of GNH, there's additionally variety of tools and processes used to make sure the values are so embedded in policy.

## Sustainable Socio-economic Development

A thriving GNH economy should value social and economic contributions of households and families, free time and leisure given the roles of those factors in Happiness.

## Preservation and Promotion of Culture

Happiness is believed to be contributed to by the protective the Bhutanese culture. Developing cultural resilience, which might be understood because the culture's capability to take care of and develop cultural identity, information and practices, and ready to overcome challenges and difficulties from alternative norms and ideals.

## Environmental Conservation

Environmental Conservation is taken into account a key contribution to GNH as a result of additionally to providing important services like water and energy, the atmosphere is believed to contribute to aesthetic and alternative information which will be directly healing to people that get pleasure from vivid colors and light, unstained breeze and silence in nature's sound.

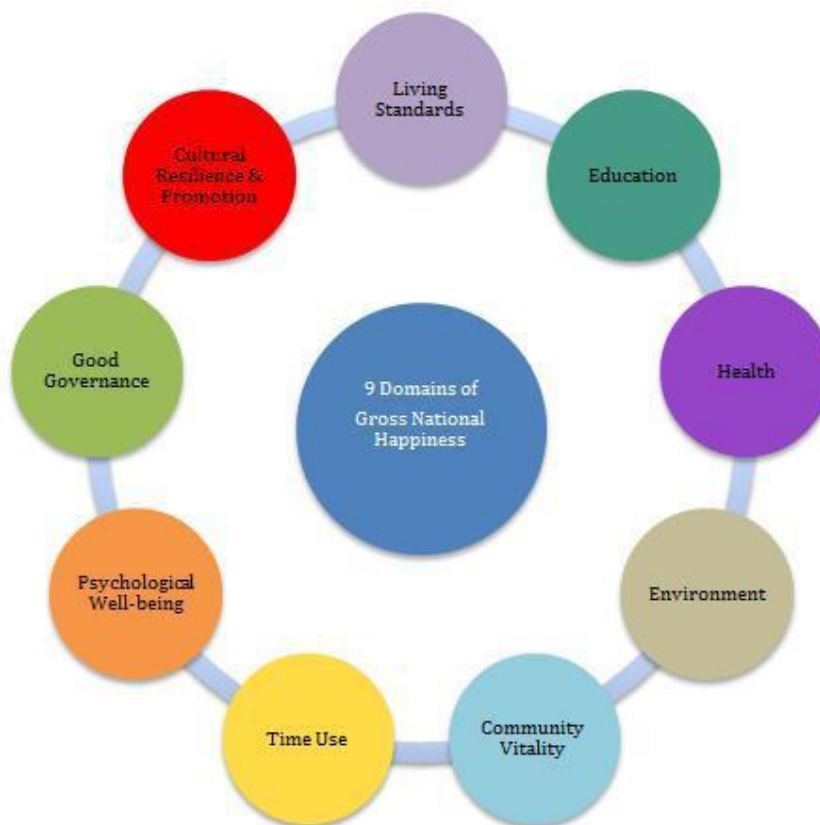
### Bhutan's four-pillar definition of Gross National Happiness

Buddha's eightfold path	Values/levels of consciousness	Maslow hierarchy of needs	GNH components
8. Right meditation	Transcendence/freedom	Service	Monastic well-being; Religious freedom and flourishing
7. Right mindfulness	Identity	Contribution	Culture Development; Leadership education
6. Right view	Creation	Responsibility	Social welfare; Sustainable development
5. Right effort	Idleness	Internal cohesion	Nature and resource preservation; Culture preservation
4. Right concentration	Participation	Transformation	Political participation
3. Right speaking	Affection/understanding	Self esteem	Education; Culture; Media

2. Right action	Protection	Relationships (community, family)	Governance; Judicial system; norms
1. Right livelihood	Subsistence	Survival	GDP; Economic opportunities; markets

Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227111671\\_Gross\\_National\\_Happiness](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227111671_Gross_National_Happiness)

**The 9 Domains of GNH**



The four pillars are more elaborate into 9 domains that articulate the various components of GNH thoroughly and form the basis of GNH measuring, indices and screening tools.

1. Living standards
2. Education
3. Health
4. Environment
5. Community Vitality
6. Time-use
7. Psychological well-being
8. Good Governance
9. Cultural resilience and promotion

These nine domains, clearly demonstrate that from the angle of GNH, several inter-related factors are necessary in making the conditions for happiness. For example, GNH counts the importance of material security as one of those – and assessing whether or not individuals get pleasure from decent and equitable living standards, is enclosed within the GNH survey. Similarly, the happiness of individuals isn't seen as break free the well-being of different life forms, and ecological diversity and resilience are included within the measure of GNH. The balance between material and non-material development, and also the multi-dimensional and mutually beneficial nature of GNH are key options that distinguish GNH from GDP as a measure of a country's progress.

In accordance with these nine domains, Bhutan has developed thirty eight sub-indexes, seventy two indicators and 151 variables that are used to outline and analyze the happiness of the Bhutanese individuals.

### **GNH Screening Tool**

The GNH Screening Tool is a system that ensures all development policies and projects of Bhutan are reviewed under the lens of GNH. The GNH Screening Tool evaluates, monitors, sets goals and raises national consciousness concerning what conditions are contributive to the happiness and well-being of the individuals, and country as a whole. The GNH screening tools may be applied in 2 phases, at project level and policy level. Generally, it consists of 3 types:

- For all ministries and sectors (e.g. good governance)
- For several ministries (e.g. education, health)
- For individual sectors (e.g. youth, employment)

The Gross National Happiness Commission is that the highest government body mandated to formulate and monitor policies. It's "an institution that promotes an enabling surroundings for all Bhutanese to be happy and steer national development towards promotion of happiness for all Bhutanese guided by the philosophy of GNH." Policies in Bhutan originating from the sectors begin with the preparation of an idea Note which is submitted to the Commission for endorsement. The results of the GNH Screening exercise conducted by the Commission shall be shared with the involved sector and submitted to the cabinet for final approval.

### **Objectives**

Objectives of this research paper are:

- To study domains of Gross National Happiness.

To know the indicators that measure progress of Gross National Happiness. To draw variety of lessons from the Bhutanese experiment.

## Review of Literature

The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) was first expressed by King of Bhutan in the 1980s in response to western economists visiting his country who said that they regarded Bhutan to be a “poor” country by standards of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While acknowledging that Bhutan may score low on the scale of conventional indicators for a nation’s economic performance, he claimed that his country, secluded in the Himalayas, would score high on an indicator measuring happiness. But GNH is more than a counterpoint to GDP (Tideman, 2011).

The search for alternative indicators of economic progress is critically important at the time that contemporary world faces a growing threat of ecological collapse due to climate change, and ecosystem loss, and rapidly depleting natural resources. We can no longer rely only on measurements such as GDP that only measures material and financial capital while ignoring natural and social capital. This is increasingly understood, also by western economists (Layard 2005; Stern 2006; Krugman 2009; Stiglitz 2009). In fact, Nobel Prize Winner in Economics Joseph Stiglitz (2009) recently called for adjusting GDP to measure other influences on the well-being of a nation aside from the turnover of goods and money, including national happiness and environmental conservation. “GDP has failed to capture the factors that make a difference in people’s lives and contribute to their happiness, meaning security, leisure, income distribution and a clean environment”.

A whole range of economists is busily developing models that account for the more intangible common factors affecting our economies. One of the first was Herman Daly, who asserted in “For the Common Good” that a country’s growth has both costs and benefits – not just the benefits that contribute to GDP (1989). He said that, in some situations, expanded production facilities damage the health, culture and welfare of people. Growth that was in excess of sustainable norms (e.g. of ecological yield) had to be considered to be uneconomic. These efforts paved the way for the creation of the Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI), which has found application in various local jurisdictions, especially in Canada (Anielski 2007).

## Lessons from GNH

Gross National Happiness is a manifestation of the unique values and worldview of the Himalayan people of Bhutan. Trying to blindly adopt this indicator in a new context, especially in Western context, would be unreasonable.



Bhutan has decided to open a national dialogue about progress and has arrived at a consensus about the meaning of wellbeing that is reflected in GNH and its corresponding indicator. Karma Tshiteem, Secretary of the GNH Commission, says “progress should mean more than economic growth. It must be about a society that is really evolved, a holistic development of the individual, including material and other needs. It’s about people finding meaningful work and a purpose in life. This is what GNH seeks to achieve, an enlightened society. We have to acknowledge the great contributions of scientific and industrial progress, but not forgetting the other components of what makes us human. If we can foster external, material wellbeing and internal, spiritual wealth, we will have achieved a GNH society.”

Bhutan has debated about what progress means for them and have arrived at a conclusion, they have operationalized this definition of welfare into an indicator that reflects the fruits of that dialogue, and they have created a political and economic architecture around Gross National Happiness. The lessons to learn from the pioneering.

### Suggestions

Countries need to open a national dialogue about what progress means for them.

Indicators should be developed to reflect the outcomes of this dialogue.

Indicators of genuine welfare should be used by decision makers to structure institutions and guide policies.

Bhutan is a living example of a country that has pioneered in the process described above, and its institutions and policies put Gross National Happiness in practice.

### Conclusion

“GNH is a great concept. Achieving it is a very different thing. Current indicators of progress like GDP do not adequately capture welfare. Although GNH was developed to specifically reflect Bhutanese values and culture, what GNH represents is indeed applicable outside of Bhutan. GNH represents a movement towards developing metrics that measure what people in society care about. There are now many ways to show that both capitalism and communism are systems that, when taken to an extreme, are self-destructive. Governments who see themselves to be owner of the economy tend to over-promise and over-spend.

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(PDF) Gross National Happiness in Bhutan: A Living Example of an Alternative Approach

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