

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS AS AN RIGHT ALTERNATIVE OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT: High up the Himalayas, maintaining distance from the rest of the world there is a nation called Bhutan, the living place of last Shangri –La. The nation is unique in various reasons. To preserve their unique culture and environment they apply the GNH as an alternative model of GDP as the approach to development. Present study is an effort to examine the importance and relevance of GNH as a right alternative of GDP in the age of globalization.

KEY WORDS: BHUTAN, ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT, GNH

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS:

Just after the end of Second World War entire nations chose the path of economic growth as the right model of development. No doubt the productivity of both economic goods and services are dramatically increased in every aspect. But sometime these trends of development compel us to review the means and end of development by question – Development for Whom and Why.

Today majority people are over consumed as a mad-craze for development which is not equitable, balance and sustainable. The craziness of overdevelopment actually not only harm on human and humanity but also create crisis on ecology and mother Earth. The time has come to our economist and national leaders to begin to rethink about the alternatives model of development which is based on the illusion of limitless growth on a finite planet.

GDP growth accompanied by financial instability and rising inequality. The gaps between rich and poor are increasing. Those who earns double to their basic needs, those are also not happy because income important for life satisfaction up to a point but above the safety net ,

has rapidly diminishing returns on happiness. We can describe it with “Hedonic Treadmill” mentioned by Brikman and Campbell in their book named “*Hedonic Relativism and Planning the Good Society*” published in 1971. As we make more money, our expectation and desire rise up and up never touch to the level of expectation. Because, level of happiness we felt real set of contentment. What interesting on a population level is that inequality plays a great bow in our wellbeing and happiness within a country. The study of Wilkinson and Pickett shows that inequality harms both the rich poor of our society. In the age of globalization, the people living with hunger and poverty increases continuously. Interestingly there need only US\$172 billion per year to end the extreme poverty and hunger which is barely 0.32% of the current Gross Domestic Production of world. More than quality of productions but eradication of inequality is needed to fight against poverty.

So, what else, counts for happiness. Community trust, good governance, meaningful and secure works and work life balance are the some of the aspects, people matter to the more than their salary and increment. In this context we began to challenge the GDP based model of development.

Interrogation of GDP is not new incident, former President of USA Robert Kennedy warned the world in his public speech deliberated in early sixties of just ending century by arguing how poorly we measure the success of a nation by compromising economic growth by destroying the environment and humanity. The former security General of UN Ban Ki Moon also interrogated the old model of development by saying that the old model was broken and we need to create a new one which would be vision foe quality of human development, a healthy planet, an enduring economic dynamics.

The thunder dragon of Himalaya, Bhutan’s concept of GNH can also be an alternative of GDP. Present article is an evaluative effort in this direction.

METHODOLOGY:

The entire research paper has been formulated within the historical cum analytical method of study. In using this methodology care has been taken to avoid both the extremes, that is one-sided emphasis on objective conditions and subjective interpretation divorced from abstract historical reality. The work has been based on historical document and data has been analyzed in the context of the present day's reality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of Gross National Happiness of the Himalayan state Bhutan as the alternative model of GDP. Present study is also an effort to highlight the evil effect of capitalist model of development which is not based on the principles of equitable and sustainable growth.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF GNH:

Before evaluating on GNH, a little conceptual knowledge on GNH is very necessary.

In 1972, Jigme Singwe Wangchuk became the fourth dragon king of royal Bhutan at the age of seventeen. After becoming king of Bhutan in such a young age, he questioning himself what should be the philosophy behind his regime. The young Bhutan king noticed that majority of the nations and people try to economical way as the means to achieve development and who achieve this goal use their life comfortable, but on the down side(South), he noticed that most of the people are living with poverty and socially isolation life. He also noticed that the environment was totally destroyed in the name of development. Then he realized the needs of a proper alternative of GDP. That's why the word GNH is coined by him arguing that Gross National Happiness is more important than GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT for Bhutan. He retired at the age of fifty two in 2006 when his popularity was on the peaked. Changing the course of history two years later , Bhutan become the first democracy in the world that established in accordance of the will of king , not by the will of people. The fifth dragon king Jigme Kheser Namgyet

Wangchuk clarified the meaning of GNH in a speech by defining GNH as the ***Development with Values*** and makes the world happier place to live. It makes bridge between fundamentals values of kindness, equality and humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth. Gross National Happiness is an approach to maintain balance economic growth with social development, environmental sustainability and cultural preservation and all of this within the framework of good governance.

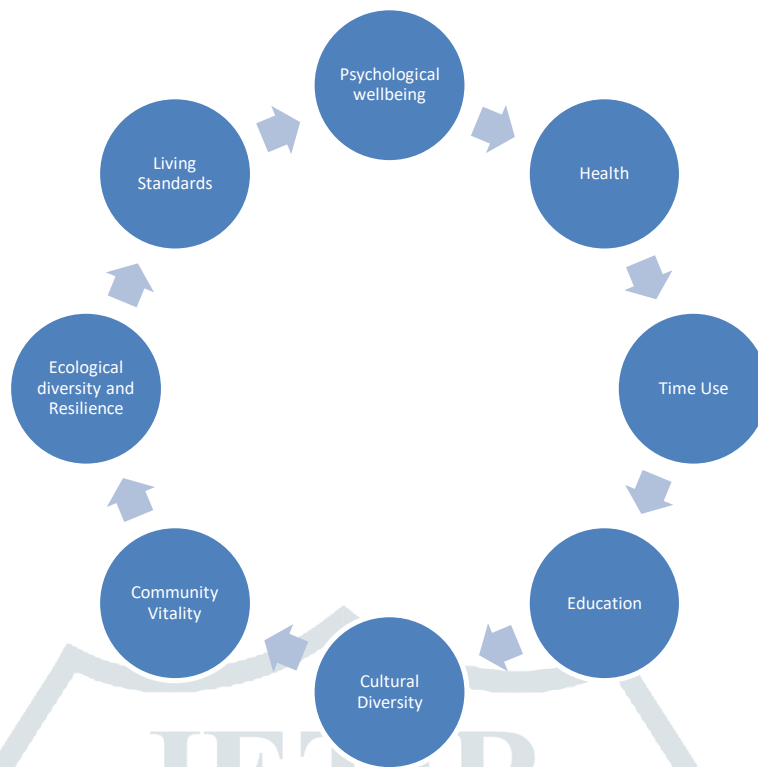
DOMAINS OF GNH PARADIGM

GNH is consisting of nine core domains that are regarded as the basic components of Happiness.

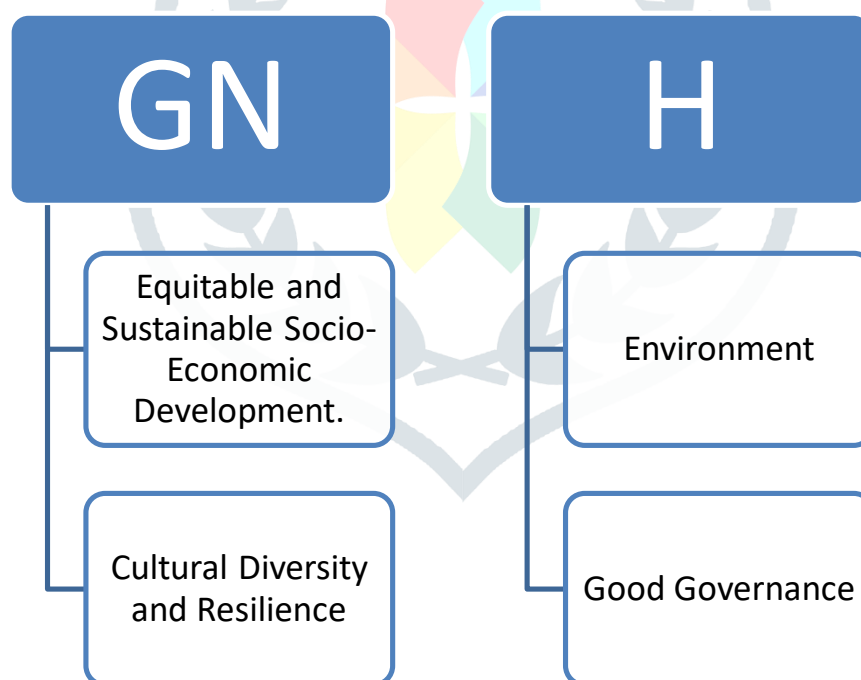
Those were:

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1. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING
 2. HEALTH
 3. TIME USE
 4. EDUCATION
 5. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE
 6. GOOD GOVERNANCE
 7. COMMUNITY VITALITY
 8. ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE
 9. LIVING STANDARD

These nine domains create a balance between subjective conditions of Happiness with the objective condition of Happiness, consumption with conservation, individual with community and most importantly present generation with the generation that will come in future.



These nine domains have four basic pillars:



LIVING STANDARDS:

It will be wrong to assume that GNH does not regard economic growth as an important indicator of development. It considers economic growth is a means to achieve the goal but not an end itself.

Interestingly over past decade the GDP growth rate of Bhutan exceeded most emerging Asian economy. The nation also successfully lowered its unemployment rate which is below 4% since 2005.

GOOD GOVERNANCE:

Good governance is one of a pillar for happiness. Bhutan translated from monarchy to Democracy just eleven years ago. But due to good government the administration is totally corruption free and providing welfare services to the Bhutanese people on basis of just and equitable distribution. Education and Health care facilities are totally free in Bhutan. The GDP of the entire nation is just two billion US dollar. So, the government of Bhutan utilize their limited income through best policies guided by GNH.

ENVIRONMENT:

Bhutan is situated in rich Himalayan biological complex region. Most of ancient Himalayan endangered biological elements were found at the foothill of Bhutan. Nature lover Bhutanese preserves their pristine and green environment and ecology which is gifted their forefathers. Seventy two percent area of Bhutan is under forest cover, and more than half of the nation is protected as national park, wildlife sanctuaries and natural reserves. Bhutan is the only nation in the world where its constitution mandate sixty percent of forest covers to all time to come.

“The Government shall ensure that, in order to conserve the country’s national resources and to prevent degradation of the ecosystem, a maximum of sixty percent of Bhutan’s total land shall be maintained under forest cover for all time.”

Article 5 Section 3 (Constitution of Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008)

Interestingly the king of Bhutan announced a package of environment policies in early seventies which are far ahead of rest of the world.

Bhutan is the only carbon neutral country in the world and they committed to remain carbon negative forever. Bhutan is actually not carbon neutral but carbon negative. The forests of Bhutan sequester of 6.6 million tonnes of carbon die oxide each year and it is three times than they generate (2.4million tones). Therefore Bhutan is net carbon sink at about 3.9 million tonnes every year.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE:

Bhutanese are proud of their traditional Buddhist culture which is well preserved by their forefathers. They always give priority in developing their cultural resilience which could be understood cultural capability to develop their cultural identity knowledge and practices from the purpose to overcome the difficulties from influence of norms of outsiders.

EDUCATION:

For Bhutanese education is meaningless without adding it with enlightenment. They believe that enlightenment is blossoming of happiness by consciously creating a harmonious psychological, social and economic environment. Bhutanese are well follower of Buddhist philosophy of life. Their traditional educational institutions and monastic apparatus were suited to the continuity of such kinds of life philosophy. They blends their educational culture in the Buddhist world-view with scientific study.

TIME USE:

Time use is one of strongest predictors of well- being. A lots of studies that done in recent years prove that the use of social media harms users well being by increasing depression and loneliness in their life. A study done in USA revels that lack of leisure time, increasing job demands, parental guilt about time spent with children and it is reason of their child free time increasingly devoted to T.V. The study is also associated it with higher obesity, lower sleep, fewer social ties, higher materialism, in increasing up wards social comparisons.

The Buddhist nation is very much careful of permitting the entrance of social media in their society and nation. Television and internet were launched in the very first year of twenty first century(1999). Mobile phone is introduced in Bhutan only in the year of 2003.

HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING:

Depression is now become the main contributor to burden of disease in high and mid-income countries. According to a study done by J.Sachs in 2012 media and advertising is playing the major role in creating “the distracted society”.

Bhutan limits on its public advertising. One can hardly noticed a few advertising banner in the capital city of Thimpu. Bhutanese very carefully preserve their rich Buddhist culture and heritage from ill impact from outsider.

In accordance with this nine domains, the government has designed 36 Sub-indexes, 72 indicators and 151 variables that are used to analyse the happiness of people. Interestingly one element of Happiness domain is closely related with other. All elements of these nine domains together creates a context with environment that's people can be happy.

GNH Survey is done every three years in Bhutan. The first survey of Gross National Happiness was conducted in the year of 2010 with a sample size of 2510 amongst the age group of above fifteen. The second nationwide survey was conducted in 2015. This time the sample size is increased to 2871. The survey was done by interviewing 8000 people representing all twenty districts of Bhutan with proper representative sampling. Each person was interviewed over two hours, covering 148 questions. After three rounds of survey which was followed up interview and field gathering is conducted in order to refine the survey. The survey was covered twenty districts of the kingdom of Bhutan. In survey, the nine domains have measured by thirty three indicators. The overall results is established a “Happiness Threshold” sufficiency at least Six out of nine domains. It appears in the survey that the people of Bhutan subscribe the condition leading to Gross National Happiness across the domains. According to the results of second survey ninety one percent Bhutanese satisfied with the half of the

domains. Overall the priority is given on the measures people's happiness and wellbeing. There is also given diversity of room for individual variation in what is the important for happiness. All these functions are done by the GNH commission. The commission assesses proposed policies, plans, projects through GNH screening tools.

Government also prioritise GNH survey while implementing their policies. The implementation mainstreaming of Gross National Happiness into political institution has been gradual progress for several decades in Bhutan. But very recently it accelerates by introducing of Gross National Happiness index.

The Bhutan centre for study developed the policy of Gross National Happiness. CBS (Centre for Bhutan Study) is also taken the responsibility to help by taking measures the progress of the Bhutanese society. The royal government set up the GNH centre associating with local and international institutions. The visions of the centre are...

1. Applying latest research in compassion, mind human values.
2. Leadership programmes in three sectors for Business, government, civil society.
3. Effective initiatives in School, Ministries of Education in Bhutan, Vietnam and Thailand.

All developmental activities of Bhutan likes road construction, cleaning forest, constructing building and complex are guided by the principle of Gross National Happiness.

Like in the first survey of GNH where happiness was low in rural area compared to urban area, the government took basic plans to improve the socio-economic conditions of rural Bhutan. At the same time community vitality is going down in urban Bhutan due to changing lifestyle of urban people, Bhutanese government place a proper plane to improve the community vitality in rural people.

POSITIVE GLOBAL REACTION ON GNH:

The concept of Gross National Happiness evolved through the contribution of international and some of the Bhutanese scholars.

In 2005, M. John, a well known US economist proposed the 2nd Generation of American GNH concept which is also known as Gross National Wellbeing (GNW). The first GNW survey of USA slash GNH index and the proposal survey blue print lay wellbeing framework, development and happiness econometric model.

In 2006, the international institution of Management publishes a policy widely calling for the implementation of Gross National Happiness in USA.

Well-known Canadian scholar Michel and Panic play the major role for developing Bhutanese Gross National Happiness survey which was conducted beyond the national border of Bhutan, such as home region of Victoria, D.C. as well as in Brazil.

In 2010, the Oxford University Human development launched international dimension of poverty index which has been published in UN development and Human development programme since 2010.

Adam Kramer, a psychologist from Bolivian University of South America has developed behavioural model of Gross National Happiness that based on the use of both positive and negative verge of social network, resulting in quantitative GNH net work.

In 2011, UN General Assembly passed a Resolution number 65309 title, "Happiness Towards to Holistic Approach to Development". The resolution recognizes the pursuit of Happiness as a fundamental human goal as the number of states to pursue collaboration for additional measure, captured the importance of pursuit of Happiness, Wellbeing of the development in view of guiding public policies.

The former king of Thailand, Juliadi, a close friend of Wangchuk conceive the similar philosophy of sufficient economy. IN 2016, this South East Asian Nation launched of its own Gross National Happiness Centre.

In 2006, Commercial city of Arab, Dubai establish Ministry of Happiness as a reference of Gross National Happiness of its initiative.

Recently in USA, GPI (Gross progress indicator) is getting popularised. Economist Lorenzo Flarmoniti uses the term WE7 as a right alternative to G7 countries by measuring development by economic well-being. Globally wisdom conference is conducted where transformation is expecting by sharing real life experience of scholars come from different places and different fields in real time.

The effort is going on to set up Global wellbeing laboratory bringing a group of twenty five change makers to Bhutan. Change within the system is urgently required and for change we have to realize the power of mind to challenge the status quo.

CONCLUSION:

Balance and equality are two of the principles of the universe to maintain sustainability of development. Materialistic growth of human being is meaningless without its proper balance with mind and spirit. The well directed functioning of our human mind is very essential to guide our thinking. Both AEinstein and Buddha reminded us long ago by saying.....

<p>“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking”....Albert AEinstein(!945)</p>	<p>“We, are what we think, all that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thought we make the World”.....Buddha(500 B,C.)</p>
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So, what kinds of World, we are making with our thought, with our mind and heart today.

Its gives birth a tendency within us to focus on what is visible, the other. Because the inner dimensions of social transformation can never be separated.

Primary goal of development is making people happiness. But the vision of development is non-quantifiable goals. The end of happiness depends on relative income, not on absolute income. GNH is a multi-dimensional approach to development which established balance and harmony between

spiritual and material needs of people. From this point of view GNH is not only a universal proposition but also a universal value.

Global capitalism is not only vulnerable for the existence of human civilization, but also a challenge for maintaining ecological balance for sustainable development and future existence of our mother earth. According to the latest UN report on global biodiversity reflect how economic system that based on capitalism are driving a million species towards extinction. The environmentalist asked for transformative change in the nature of human economy values. High up in the Himalaya the civilized people of Shanghari -La taught us how we achieve our end of our human civilization through a right mean. Hence, it is high time to examine the holistic development approach of GNH as the right alternative of GNH. Otherwise one day we have to pay the price for which we have unlearned from the Bhutanese civilization.

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