

Gross National Happiness in India

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Abstract

There is a new debate regarding whether people of India require more Gross Domestic Product or need Gross National Happiness. This has become imperative to bring in discussion because the people of rich states of India like Punjab are suffering of many terminal diseases. Such incurable ailments accreting with the pace of economic development. Economic development always materializes at the opportunity cost of the decrepitude of pristine environment. It has been observed that people have plenty of money, however, they are not able to use that money to eat tasty food and not even able to take sleep in night because of the numerous health problems like diabetes, hyper-tension, and cancer like diseases. It is very obvious that such problems among people merely attributed to the degradation of environment. Its degradation emanating from the instantaneous economic development to provide all prerequisites to increase the economic welfare of the population growing at a burgeoning pace in India. Institutional policies need to be reevaluated to provide happiness to nationals of any country rather than gross domestic product. certainly, every government get mandate to increase their wellbeing the terminal ailments of the people necessitates revamped the policy measures to impede such afflictions.

Introduction

Presently, as the entire world is experiencing unprecedented challenges, it has become more important for everyone, than ever before, to strive for happiness. Keeping in view the happiness as a common aims and ambitions in the lives of people Worldwide, the General Assembly of United Nation has declared 20th March as an International Day of Happiness. The objective behind observing the day of happiness is to raise the awareness on the importance of happiness in the life of human beings and its cumulative impact on their wellbeing. United Nation has prepared and recommend seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with the aim of reducing poverty, inequality, and protecting environment. These are the major components that directly affects the happiness and welfare of human beings. It necessitates to take the initiative to recognise the superiority of the National Happiness over the National product. The objective of the economic development model and the strategy of economic planning should be prepared to increase Gross National Happiness over Gross National Product. The happiness should be the holistic goal of development. Gross National Happiness can be distinguished from Gross Domestic Product, if the collective happiness becomes the goal of the governance, if we emphasize harmony with the nature and the cultural and traditional values of the state. Gross National Happiness is a multi-dimensional development approach which facilitates the attainment of harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional, and cultural needs of the society. Happiness must remain the central point of strategic decisions and economic planning for the development of the state. The rat race for Material possessions has usurped the happiness of human being. It has fettered him with worry, anxiety.

despair and frustration. An eminent philosopher of America, Ralph Waldo Emerson says that if you are angry for a minute, you lose sixty seconds of happiness. Mahatma Gandhi feels that Happiness comes in one's life when what he thinks, what he says and what you do are in harmony.

First world happiness report has launched in 2012 which has rated all countries in Northern Europe (Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Netherlands) as the happiest countries. India stands at 94 out of 170 nations and Pakistan stands nine ranks ahead to it. (WHR-2012). The least happy countries are all poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Togo, Benin, Central African Republic, and Sierra Leone). The Report holds that wealth alone didn't make people happy. The major factors which have been incorporated in reports are political freedom, strong social networks and absence of corruption. At individual level, some major aspects of life, like good mental and physical health, job security and stable family, are given importance in the report. The report mirrors a new worldwide demand for more attention to happiness and absence of misery as criteria for Government policy. It reviews the state of happiness in the world today and shows how the new science of happiness explains personal and national variations in happiness. The well-behaviour of the people makes them happier. The mental health is another critical factor which affects the happiness of the people in the country. The stable family life and enduring marriages are also important factors for the happiness of parents and children. GNH is distinguishable from GDP by valuing collective happiness as the goal of governance, by emphasizing harmony with nature and traditional values as expressed in the nine domains of happiness and 4 pillars of GNH. The four pillars of GNH are sustainable and equitable socio-economic development; environmental conservation; preservation and promotion of culture; and good governance. The nine domains of GNH are psychological well-being, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards.

Institutional Adoption of Gross National Happiness Philosophy in India

As the hostile climatic changes and the impact of greenhouse gases have adversely begun to disturb the peaceful life of the people across the nation and the world, it accentuates the need to reappraise the prevailing economic-ideology in pursuance of which the draft of economic planning is prepared. It necessitates to make happiness an indicator of nationals' wellbeing in lieu of Wealth and Gross domestic product. If the economic models are prepared by incorporating well-being, positive psychology and economics of happiness as variable, Gross National Happiness can definitely be established. Many countries around the world, including the United States, have begun to develop economic model to increase Gross National Happiness. Thus, India, generally, and Himachal particularly, are needed to announce an economic plan to make happiness a key indicator of growth. The union government and state must direct economists and economic planners to incorporate wellbeing into national assessment. In order to have a better managed progress toward improved human welfare, there is a need to prepare a genuine report on more comprehensive indicators of environmental, social and economic conditions. Canada has become a leader since 1997 in identifying measures of sustainability, well-being, and quality of life which are called as "Genuine Progress Indicators". These have gone beyond the unidimensional measures of Gross Domestic Product. Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI) is a very useful measure of economic welfare as it incorporates changes in environmental conditions, resource stocks, social capital, income distribution, cultural and religious activities. It appears an effective tool for informing discussion and finding answer for the stimulating questions about the nature of the economic development process. The methodology of

Genuine Progress Indicators has been applied for the first time to Baltimore city, Baltimore County (the third most populous country of US), and Maryland, a constituent state of the United States of America, in order to explore how sustainable economic welfare in these regions has changed from 1950-2019. A comparison among per capita Genuine Progress Indicators trends in four cities shows that Baltimore will have the highest average annual growth rate over the study period. The comparison between Gross Domestic Product, the most recognised measure of national performance, and Genuine Progress Indicators is also drawn. After having analysed this comparison thoroughly, it is found that Gross Domestic Product growth does not correlate well with changes in welfare as measure by Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI). It indicates that Baltimore city, Baltimore County (the third most populous country of US), and Maryland, will experience negative economic growth, if the social and environmental costs of further economic growth offset the benefits of such growth. The efficacy of Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI) over Gross domestic product is shown in its capability of differentiating economic and non-economic gains of the numbers of Gross Domestic Product. For instance, Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI) does not blindly consider the economic implications of a divorce. Gross Domestic Product might reflect a divorce as a positive economic event because it creates chances of legal services which involves financial activities in the legal fees of attorney. GPI, however, considers the emotional and financial strain of such a legal process seeing it as non-economic and a liability in the welfare of the populace. GPI looks into natural disasters and how the GDP can rise due to the rebuilding efforts. GPI also considers green economics, ozone depletion concerns, and the implications of resource depletion to the overall economy of the nation. GPI is simply a hybrid GDP that seeks to specify its metrics while refining its numbers further. This is the main difference between the GDP and GPI.

Economic Growth and Wellbeing of the Society

Economic growth is the most significant indicator of the health of the economy. It seems as only a singular factor which influence the income an individual. By far, Growth of all sectors is indispensable for leading a prosperous and happy life. However, high economic growth accretes with the dilapidation of environment which causes numerous terminal diseases in the society. Thus, if it brings fortune to the society, also curse it with maladies that makes human being helpless to use all those material goods which happens to occur because of economic growth. Schumpeter (1942) coined the term ‘creative destruction’ which highlights how the progress brought on by economic growth could lead to a destruction of an old economic structure, in the process of creating a new one. According to Cox and Alm (2008), a society cannot reap the benefits of creative destruction without acknowledging that there will be some individuals who will end up being worse off. High Economic growth, as mentioned above is important in spheres of life. However, it has a trade-off with environmental degradation which is also an unignorable factor to live a happy and healthy life. However, what should be the magnitude of growth? should it be at the cost of environment degradation which is as necessary as the air to breathe for men’s survival? It is very obvious that India is a second highly populated country and the inventory of natural resources which it is possessing does not match with the number of people lives in it. Thus, how the government of India will succeed to realize its goal of ensuring economic stability and wellbeing of the people?

Easterlin Paradox

It has been theorized by an economist of university of south California in his paper titled, “Does economic growth improve the human lot? After having analysed the comprehensive empirical evidences, he

concluded that country's level of economic development (i.e., the increase in the standard of living) and the level of happiness are not connected. In his paper titled Paradox Lost in 2017, he found that the long-term trends in growth rates of happiness and real per capita GDP are significantly and positively related. It is worth noting that it is the long-term trends in the happiness and income that are unrelated. In the short run, two factors are positively correlated. They go up and down together. For instance, consider the sentiment that accompanies stock market crashed. Consumers tend to be sad in the immediate aftermath of a crash but become happier as the market as the market starts to recover. Thus, we can eventually conclude that on micro level, income of an individual increases the subjective wellbeing or happiness significantly. However, on macro level, the national economic growth of a country does not necessarily increase subjective wellbeing. It necessitates to analyse the causality of long run economic growth and well being of the people in the country. Ordinarily, economic growth tends to increase materialism and consumerism in the society which entails with the polluted environment. The Polluted environment vitiate the ambience through breaking out numerous terminal diseases in the country. There is a need of cautious economic development policy in order a strike a balance between the development and happiness of the people. The happiness of the people does not only continent upon the availability of the materialistic commodities

The Limitations of GDP as a Measure of Progress

It does not make any distinction between GDP made from good development and GDP made from bad development; (ii) does not adequately value natural, human, and social capital in its measurement; (iii) does not value free time and leisure; (iv) does not value unpaid work; and (v) does not explicitly provide for equity. GNH attempts to correct those shortcomings, with proxy measures for social welfare. In the same vein, the present king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has also said that “GNH measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other.” The Constitution of Bhutan, under its Article 9 emphasizes that “The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of GNH.” GDP does not find a specific mention in the constitution like GNH, although words such as economic self-reliance, open and progressive economy, and fair market competition are mentioned. Yet, even in Bhutan, the government has increasingly begun to use GDP-related indicators— misleading as Bergh pointed above from the point of view of social welfare, while also dualistically striving toward GNH. Harmonizing and balancing between GNH and GDP requires increasing skills in governance.

Conclusion

The Gross national happiness is a framework for socio-economic aspects of life that affect the living standard of the society and state interact. Gross national happiness was maidenly developed by the royal government of Bhutan. Bhutan's experiment with GNH remains dynamic and evolving. It suggests that the entire policy process must be in the interest of India. It will provide a realistic alternative towards higher wellbeing of people and more sustainable development. Gross national product helps society to have more materialistic progress while it fails to provide happiness as it accretes with many maladies in the country. The Happiness is indeed hard to define, nonetheless these difficulties should not deter its higher pursuit. This calls political leaders and the societies to ultimately deliver inclusive development and truly sustainable solutions to the steep, interconnected challenges of modern times. We cannot

increase gross domestic product in proportion to the growth of population because of the resource's constraint. Thus, ultimately government measures are needed to mitigate the growth of the population so that over-utilization of resources could be precluded.

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