Editorial

GNH – In quest for a nation's happiness

Gross National Happiness is engaging because happiness is a universal human aspiration. All of us may not agree that the ultimate aim of life is happiness but we would agree that it is better to enjoy our lives than to suffer. Certainly all of us would desire happiness over suffering.

While to a large extent we do know what it means to be happy or unhappy, the reasons for being happy and unhappy can be very complex. Happiness is one of the greatest philosophical deliberations at least since the time of Socrates. While many authors have made contributions in our understanding of happiness, governments have always thought happiness is human experiences too subjective to be integrated into the government's development policies. Therefore, Bhutan's Gross National Happiness is a bold concept, which does just that.

Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) is about a nation's happiness and the nation's quest for the best way to deliver happiness to its people. GNH is a development concept that has now drawn attention of the world as an alternate development model. The greatness of the GNH concept lies not in its pursuit of human happiness. Happiness has in fact been an established worthwhile quest since the times of Socrates in the olden days. The nobleness of the GNH concept is its audacity to make the pursuit of happiness a deliberate government role.

Let each seek its ideal life

Bhutan thus is the first country to challenge itself to integrate the pursuit of human happiness in its public policies. In the process, GNH challenges the present economic development models as being either inadequate or perhaps obstructing the very quest for happiness. Therefore, progress measured in terms of GDP is at best not a holistic progression.

Although apparently today, Bhutan tries to conceptualize the GNH into a practical development model, the GNH had been a guiding development philosophy ever since. GNH with its roots in the Buddhist values, Bhutan's socio economic and political development were influenced by such Buddhist values as the middle path, compassion, tolerance, etc. Perhaps GNH now needs to learn to speak the language that development scholars and experts can understand.

IN THIS ISSUE

1

Course In Focus - DRC

INDUCTION COURSE IN TAX ADMINISTRATION (ICTA)

Objectives: The ICTA aims to assist public organizations by:

- building the strengths of human resources in the areas of tax, customs and excise
- developing the skills required in executing tax, customs and excise administration and inspection
- meeting the requirement of the skilled human resources in the areas of accounting and tax, customs and excise, management for the Department of Revenue and Customs

Duration: 24 months (From July, every year)

Designed for: Class XII (passed) candidates of commerce background who have been selected to pursue career in the areas of tax, customs and excise administration and accounting, selected through the selection process of the ICTA by DRC, RCSC & RIM.

Learning Areas: (a) Intensive training in the areas of tax, customs and excise administration and accounts auditing is offered for a period of six months

- Commercial Accounting (theory & Practice)
- IT Applications
- Government Financial Management System
- Cost Accounting
- Revenue Accounting and Auditing
- Tax administration
- Companies Act
- Effective Communication
- Office Management
- Govt. Accounting (Principle and Practice)
- Auditing (General & Government)

2

Happiness

By F. Heylighen,

People are happy when they are "in control", that is, when they feel competent to satisfy their needs and reach their goals

The utilitarian have posited the basic value or goal that society should strive for as "the greatest happiness for the greatest number". However, how to create such happiness remains one of the eternal philosophical questions. Different philosophers have proposed the most diverse answers to that question. The only thing most of these answers seem to have in common is that they are so vague or ambiguous that you cannot test them out in practice. Insofar that some of these utopian views of the ideal society or way of life have been realized, for example in communism, they have generally turned out to be disastrously wrong.

Our evolutionary-cybernetic philosophy, on the other hand, proposes an answer, which seems both theoretically well founded and in good agreement with psychological and sociological observations of the factors that correlate with happiness. We will first sketch the theoretical argument, and then review the empirical evidence.

The evolutionary-cybernetic theory of happiness

In an evolutionary worldview, the basic value is fitness. Fitness is the capacity to survive and reproduce in a given environment. Cybernetics adds that for living systems, fitness is in the first place achieved through control, that is, the capacity to counteract deviations from the goal state in which the system can optimally survive. Such deviations are for example lack of nutrients, too high or too low temperature, or damage to the organism. When the organisms deviates too much from the goal state it cannot survive. Therefore, it must remain in the vicinity of that state. The different variables defining the optimal state can therefore be seen as intrinsic *needs*. The better the control an organism has over its situation, the more perturbations it can survive, and thus the higher its fitness. Control does not only take into account the present situation, but its likely evolution, by anticipating further

deviations. Anticipation requires knowledge of cause and effect relations, and therefore control is the basis for cognition (see the law of Requisite Knowledge).

We can define momentary happiness as pleasant feeling or the subjective experience of well-being. Long term happiness then corresponds to the preponderance of pleasant feelings over a prolonged period. This corresponds to the degree to which people feel satisfied with their life as a whole. Though not exactly the same, this sense of happiness is nearly synonymous with life-satisfaction, quality-of-life, or even "self-actualization" (Heylighen, 1992).

An evolutionary theory of happiness must clarify the connection between the objective property of fitness and the subjective experience of feeling well. Biologically, feelings function to orient an organism away from dangerous situations (signalled by unpleasant affects such as fear, hunger or pain), and towards positive situations (signalled by positive affects, such as enjoyment, love, satisfaction). Thus, feelings play the role of vicarious selectors: they select appropriate actions, such as drinking when thirsty, and reject inappropriate actions, such as touching a flame, thus substituting for natural selection. Therefore, positive feelings will normally indicate that the organism is approaching the optimal state.

Happiness can therefore be seen as an indication that a person is biologically fit (near to the optimal state) and cognitively in control (capable of counteracting eventual deviations from that optimal state), in other words that he or she can satisfy all basic needs, in spite of possible perturbations from the environment. Such control over one's situation has three components (Heylighen, 1992):

Material competence:

You must have the necessary resources or opportunities to satisfy your needs. You cannot quench your thirst without water, or satisfy your need for social contact when you are marooned on an uninhabited island.

Cognitive competence:

It is not sufficient that the needed resources are there, you must also be able to find them, recognize them and apply them effectively. Except in trivial cases, need satisfaction demands problem-solving skills, i.e. knowledge, intelligence and creativity.

Subjective competence:

It is not sufficient that the resources are there, and that you are capable to find them, you must also believe in your own problem-solving capacity. Otherwise you would not be motivated to do the necessary effort.

The problem of promoting happiness then simply reduces to promoting material competence (by providing resources and opportunities), cognitive competence (by education in the broadest sense, and by cognitive aids such as computers), and subjective competence (by making people feel that they are competent or "in control") (cf. Heylighen, 1992).

Empirical confirmation of the theory

The cybernetic theory of happiness says that the presence of these three components is a necessary and sufficient condition for well-being. Let us now look at the empirical data to see in how far this hypothesis is confirmed. The sociologist Ruut Veenhoven has created an extensive World Database of Happiness, collecting the results of hundreds of studies in which people were asked how happy or how satisfied they are with their life. Veenhoven (1991, 1995) then studied the main factors that correlate with the resulting happiness scores. His first conclusion is that happiness is not relative or dependent on a purely subjective outlook, as some theories posit. Indeed, happiness can be rather accurately predicted on the basis of the objective "liveability" of the society in which the individual lives, and on the basis of his or her personal profile. Let us discuss the factors that have strong positive correlations with happiness. We will begin with the characteristic of societies where people tend to be happy:

Wealth (Measured by average purchasing power).

This is obviously an important measure of the material competence to satisfy basic needs. It is interesting to note that the correlation between purchasing power and happiness becomes less important for more wealthy societies, implying that once the basic material needs of nutrition and shelter are satisfied, further prosperity adds little to happiness.

Access to knowledge (measured by literacy, school enrolment and media attendance).

Personal freedom

People are more satisfied in societies which minimally restrict their freedom of action, in other words, where they are in control rather than being controlled. This is again a form of material competence.

Equality

This factor is somewhat less pronounced. Social inequality implies less control for those who are in the weaker position, and more risks of losing their privileges for those in the stronger position.

On the individual level, the differences in happiness between people living in the same society depend on their situation and on their personal characteristics:

Health

Life-satisfaction tends to be larger among those that are in good physical and mental health. Inversely, happy people are much less likely to fall ill and die than unhappy people (Blakeslee & Grossarth-Maticek). This directly reflects the strong correlation between happiness and biological fitness.

Psychological characteristics

Happy people are characterized by the belief that they are able to control their situation, whereas unhappy people tend to believe that they are a toy of fate. This reflects what we have called subjective competence. Happy people are also more psychologically resilient, assertive, empathetic and open to experience. These are all features which, according to our theory of self-actualization (Heylighen, 1992), accompany the perceived competence to satisfy needs.

Social position

Happiness is more common among those that have intimate ties (e.g. marriage) and that participate in

4

Highlights of campus Events

RIM Faculty engaged in Position Classification Initiative

In what is dubbed by many observers as a major civil service reform initiative in the recent years, the position classification system is now in its final stage of development. Conceived as early as 1995- position classification initiative has actually undergone several phases of development punctuated with occasional dormancy.

However, the Royal Civil Service Commission who champions this reform initiative has consistently been justifying the necessity to reap the merit of position classification in the Bhutanese Civil service.

Planned to launch early next year, many expect the position classification system to cause major changes in the civil service. Observers emphasize that the reform would affect all aspects of the public service. It is designed to provide new framework for personnel decisions ranging from recruitment to retirement.

In its bid to ensure a smooth change - over, the Royal civil service commission has been in consultations with various stakeholders. It claims to have incorporated significant input from all kinds and levels of stakeholders.

At its final preparation for implementation, several support mechanism are being developed. These mechanisms such as recruitment, human resources development, promotion, performance appraisal and pay structures would determine to a large extent the effectiveness of the position classification system.

The RCSC has drawn experts to develop these mechanisms. A total of seven faculty from the RIM are currently engaged as members of the seven committees, rendering their expertise towards development of the support mechanisms.

Faculty	Name of the committee	Aims & objectives of the committee
MP Sharma, Sr. lecturer	Pay revision Committee	To investigate remuneration issues not addressed by the job evaluation process within the Position Classification System and efficiency of the civil service and recommend means of mitigating such effects.
Sonam Phuntsho, Director	Job Description and Evaluation Committee	To establish generic job descriptions covering all Civil Service positions and determine their salary grades in accordance with the methodologies established by the Position Classification System.
Indraman Chetri, Sr, lecturer	Job Description and Evaluation Committee	To establish generic job descriptions covering all Civil Service positions and determine their salary grades in accordance with the methodologies established by the Position Classification System.
Norbu Wangchuk, Sr. lecturer	Performance Culture Committee	That performance becomes key Civil Service value being planned, monitored, evaluated, recognized and rewarded as the way the Civil Service is managed.
Gajel Lhendup, Jt. Director	Recruitment and Selection Committee	To establish a best practice approach to recruitment and selection that will be used consistently and effectively throughout the civil service. It will be based on the principles of openness, transparency, fairness and objectivity and support the implementation and operation of the PCS System.
Dhanapati Mishra, Sr. lecturer	Human Resource Development Committee	To establish a best practice approach to Human Resource Development that supports the Position Classification System.
Pema Wangdhee, lecturer	Media, Publicity & Information Committee	To Facilitate smooth and effective Implementation of the PCS and to inform and educate the civil servants regarding PCS in accordance with Media Publicity Information plan.

5

"Gross National Happiness"
On Bhutan's Development Philosophy and a Defense of some of its Dilemmas

By Phub Dorji

Phub Dorji (PGCDM)

The path to development in Bhutan's history has been a relatively short one. Since it emerged from its state of self-imposed isolation in 1970, it has made great strides in the enhancement of the quality of life of its people.

Today, Bhutan enjoys favorable macroeconomic conditions with a GDP growth rate of 7 – 9% p.a., largely fueled by the hydropower, transportation and construction sectors; per-capita income has increased to US$ 755 (the highest in South Asia); and, reserves stand at US$ 366.71 million, which is sufficient to cover 22 months of imports. [1]

These exponential developments in the last 30 years have been defined within a coherent and balanced development path, which emphasizes that progress be based on the promotion of cultural preservation, good governance, socio-economic development and environmental conservation. This is a path outlined in His Majesty the King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck's coronation speech as he ascended the Dragon Throne in 1974. He proclaimed that "the ultimate purpose of the government is to promote the happiness of the people. Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product."

What is Gross National Happiness then? Simply defined, GNH is Bhutan's Buddhist development philosophy. It inculcates the Bhutanese values of tradition, culture and sustainable development, and the "middle path" toward modernization, in placing more importance on peoples' overall happiness over such economic indicators as GDP or GNP.

But, these definitions are what GNH means to the literate and the scholars. The question really is – what does GNH mean to the common Bhutanese? It is important to recognize this corner of deliberations, for the ultimate target and purpose of GNH is the "people." Saying thus, we arrive at the first dilemma in propagating the development policy of GNH – do ordinary Bhutanese comprehend such far-reaching development philosophies?

Although there are no assessed statistics on whether the ordinary Bhutanese understand, or are happier under the guidance of this policy, my recommendation (for now) is to focus on the expressions that indicate a sense of satisfaction and well-being of the people. Tshering Dorji (69), a yak-herder from Sangbay Gewog in Haa points out: "When was the last time we had to leave our children, our harvest and cattle and offer *gungda wula* (labor) to landlords? When was the last time we had to pay forbidding harvests in taxes? And, when was the last year we lived on "food credit," not knowing whether the next year would be good to us? It is only in these times that we neither worry about mandatory work, food, and even injustices." [2]

This statement illustrates "a" success of the policies guided by GNH. However, the caveat remains that over 80% of Bhutan's population still remain rural. The comprehension of such philosophical approaches may be beyond them. But, this does not mean that we cannot infer from the satisfaction shown by the people that this policy is on the right track. The Royal Government of Bhutan's ardent drive to achieve 100% literacy is one of the solutions to overcoming difficulties in comprehending such development policies.

The second dilemma is GNH's search of "happiness" for all. The "common good" versus "individual rights" is the issue here. As a society, often times the drive towards a common good contravenes the rights of the individuals and sometimes, the needs of an individual infringes on society's common good. Therefore, how do we reconcile common good with individual rights? How do we progress as a people, while at the same time, involve every individual? Is democracy the answer? ""Yes" and "no."" (Maanen, Gert Van. *A Meeting of Two Cultures*. p. 14) Yes, for we need to involve every person in decision-making processes that affect their lives. And no, since the right balance of decisions do not always arise from people's involvement. [3]

A part of Bhutan's solution to this predicament in the last five years has been the decentralization of decision-making processes; devolution of powers

(even the king's); and the drafting of the country's first ever Constitution. These changes have transpired in the view that society and government at large need "to construct instruments to balance" (*A Meeting of Two Cultures*. p. 15) the protection of human rights as well as the unimpeded progress for the common good. How far these changes will go in terms of achieving the goals of GNH remains to be seen.

A final dilemma in applying Gross National Happiness arises in marketing the concept to global (Western) audiences. In the international arena, GNH is consistently viewed as unquantifiable and even, utopian. However, in our context, it is the Bhutanese view that matters; and, the Bhutanese view this concept as holistic in nature. It is economics wrapped in spiritualism and "culturalism."

It is often asked, "Why do you pursue such a holistic, even utopian approach to development?" An article published in a notable edition of The Economist, titled "Chasing the Dream," best sums up the answer and my recommendation to this inquiry:

Over the past half century, as developed economies have got much richer, people do not seem to have become happier. Survey suggests that, on average, people in America, Europe and Japan are no more pleased with their lot than in the 1950s … the pursuit of material comfort does not always lead to happiness.[4]

Thus, our answer, "Why not?"

These are Bhutan's answers to the dilemmas of GNH. To date, Gross National Happiness remains a multidimensional pillar of development, aimed at harmonizing the spiritual and material balance of the Bhutanese people.

(Footnotes)

[1] Hon'ble Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinlay. "Annual Report: Royal Government of Bhutan." Lhengye Zhungtshog (Cabinet of Ministers) June 2004. Published by the Cabinet Secretariat, Tashichhoedzong, Thimphu.

[2] Interview with Tshering Dorji (yak-herder). Sangbay Gewog, Haa. 2005

[3] The thoughts on the dilemma of "choice between the rights of the individual as opposed to the common good" presented in this paper is an excerpt from the chapter "Dilemmas" to Gross National Happiness (p.14) presented in the publication, "Gross National Happiness, Gross National Product – a Meeting between Two Cultures (Bhutan-Netherlands)." This publication was a result of a seminar for "a dialogue on Gross National Happiness" initiated by the Sustainable Development Secretariat in Bhutan and Ecooperation in the Netherlands in Woudschoten, the Netherlands.

[4] "Chasing the Dream: Why don't rising incomes make everybody happier?" *The Economist* . August 7th 2003.

(Continued from page 04)

various organizations. This reflects the degree to which people manage to satisfy their social needs, and get better control of their own situation by relying on the support of others. Occupationally, happiness tends to be more common among professionals and managers, that is, people who are in control of the work they do, rather than subservient to their bosses.

Life-events

Happiness is clearly correlated with the presence of favorable events (such as promotion, marriage, etc.) and the absence of troubles or bad luck (such as accidents, being laid off, conflicts, etc.). These events on their own signal the success or failure to reach one's goals, and therefore the control one has.

In conclusion, although these observations cannot *prove* that perceived competence to satisfy needs is necessary and sufficient for happiness, they do confirm the basic tenets of the evolutionary-

cybernetic theory of happiness. Moreover, they clarify how happiness can be promoted in practice, namely by the promotion of wealth, education, freedom, equality, health, personal control, self-actualization and intimate relations.

7

HAPPINESS QUOTES

BUDDHA

Happiness comes when your work and words are of benefit to yourself and others.

HH THE DALAI LAMA

Consider the following. We humans are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others' actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment of our lives when we do not benefit from others' activities. For this reason it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others.

HELEN KELLER

Happiness cannot come from without. It must come from within. It is not what we see and touch or that which others do for us which makes us happy; it is that which we think and feel and do, first for the other fellow and then for ourselves.

MARK TWAIN

The perfection of wisdom, and the end of true philosophy is to proportion our wants to our possessions, our ambitions to our capacities, we will then be a happy and a virtuous people.

THEODOR FONTANE

Happiness, it seems to me, consists of two things: first, in being where you belong, and second — and best — in comfortably going through everyday life, that is, having had a good night's sleep and not being hurt by new shoes.

ALGERNON BLACK

Why not let people differ about their answers to the great mysteries of the Universe? Let each seek one's own way to the highest, to one's own sense of supreme loyalty in life, one's ideal of life. Let each philosophy, each world-view bring forth its truth and beauty to a larger perspective, that people may grow in vision, stature and dedication.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

The happiness that is genuinely satisfying is accompanied by the fullest exercise of our faculties and the fullest realization of the world in which we live.