

**GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS :
LEARNING LESSONS FROM
A TINY KINGDOM (BHUTAN)**

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ABSTRACT

Gross National Happiness is a concept and philosophy which is viewed as development parameter for tiny Kingdom of Bhutan. This Buddhist nation, sandwiched between two most populous countries of the world, India and China, has taken initiative to propagate the priority of Happiness over several visible economic indicators. Almost all the planning documents are the testimonies of the fact that GNH is in the top agenda of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The academicians, planners, researchers and practioners are being sensitised to this noble initiative of His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

Spiritualism and Culture are two very important issues for GNH. The Concept of GNH is all about National Contentment which ultimately deals with the Quality of Life of the people and their emotional feedback to the study of Needs (both material as well as spiritual), Wants, Aspirations, Satisfaction, and Happiness.

The researcher has tried to explore this interdisciplinary area of research.

INTRODUCTION

Bhutan^a is a unique sovereign Buddhist nation which followed a conscious policy of isolation. This policy has allowed the nation to maintain the balance of culture and development. The development philosophy of Bhutan has been driven by the happiness values as compared to the economic indicators. The Third king of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk had stated in 1952 that the goal of development should be to make the people prosperous and happy. This basic thought has directed the priorities of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) to emphasize more on the social and cultural development apart from the economic development unlike most of the other nations. Bhutan has also been constantly concentrating on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth which is evident from its Five Year Plans but it is driven by the fact that priorities are established keeping in mind its impact on the Quality of Life vis-à-vis Gross National Happiness (GNH). Bhutan can lead the breed of the GNH economists which can tell the world that even within lot of constraints and having been under pressure it can sustain its

developmental process. GNH is a phenomenon which has transpired the citizens of this kingdom to put forth their efforts to maintain peace, tranquillity and sovereignty.

HOW IMPORTANT IS HAPPINESS FOR DEVELOPMENT?

Happiness is highly a relative as well as subjective term. It depends on the surrounding environment, whether the subjects are happy or not. Ignorance at times does not provide an opportunity to become unhappy. Haves and Have-nots are determined by the forces of economies like market, environment, consumption, and competition and alike. The level of happiness can be judged only when the haves of others do not affect the attitude of the people not having those items or things.

This is generally an impossible proposition. In the economy of welfare, one could expect the state to sit in the driver's seat and direct the policies towards improving satisfaction level of people. The pace of development is not to be compromised for short term gains against long term losses. Therefore the state takes initiative to sustain the pace of development. The philosophy of development has to be studied in consonance with the philosophy of happiness. 'Welfare' is taken as a comprehensive term of which happiness and well-being are the constituents. Wright (1976) has termed happiness and well-being as 'aspects', 'components' or 'parts' of Welfare. He suggests that there is a broad sense of 'happiness' and of 'well-being' to mean more or less same as 'Welfare' and happiness is the consummation or crown or flower of welfare. The primary concern of public-good^b should occupy the first priority while framing development strategies, be it in the area of foreign policy or trade policy, governance or adapting new technology, production or environment.

Jigme Thinley (1999), then head of the council of ministers in Bhutan, has contributed significantly on the concept of happiness and related it with the policies of Bhutan in a very convincing way. He states that '...the primary goal of development is happiness, but the subject of this very goal eludes our analysis because it has been regarded as subjective. The current approach may be too obtuse and unnecessarily scientific. We do not need scientific proof to assess happiness meaningfully. We can, and in my opinion we

must, raise policy and ethical questions about happiness. It is a universal proposition and value. It is a goal all humanity shares in common.’ (p 13)

Happiness is attained when the needs are satisfied. Worcester (2004) identifies seven fundamental needs of human beings as – food, water, shelter, health, clothes, education, happiness and love. (p 125) She considers happiness and love as a human need but one attains happiness when other needs are fulfilled. This notion tries to relate the sense of happiness with that of satisfaction but this relationship does not seem to be as close as the one between unhappiness and dissatisfaction (Wright, 1976). Satisfaction depends on one’s aspirations so once the aspirations are not met it results in dissatisfaction and ultimately into unhappiness. However if the aspirations are met one feels satisfied which may not really result in attaining happiness rather interestingly it tries to put the aspirations at higher level. And this process of step-by-step meeting aspirations does develop a momentary sense of satisfaction but increases wants and aspirations. If the aspirations are set modestly and the wants well crafted a degree of happiness could be attained which does not make the individual dissatisfied as the chances of frustration gets reduced. Wright (1976) calls it ‘the ascetic ideal of life’.

The climbing economic indicators are very deceptive in nature. Public good is compromised at the cost of goodness for selected few who dominate decision. The cries of the masses get unheard and are rarely given ears. The weapons of mass destruction might help a state boasting of more power but that does not reflect the notion of public good as a whole.

Money and happiness have been the primary concern for people to a certain level but there have been instances where the feeling of looking for solace has reduced the importance of physical money. Thinley (1996) is of the opinion that beyond a level, an increase in material consumption is not accompanied by a concomitant rise in happiness. He has supplemented the views of psychologists and economists by saying that; happiness depends on relative income and on absolute income. This reflection can be found even in the official documents of Bhutan as in the report of round table meeting (RGOB 2000) mentions that ‘...there is ample evidence throughout the world that an

increase of GNP does not lead directly or indirectly, to an increase in happiness, either personally or as a society.’

What we have is less and what we aspire for is more at every level. We keep aspiring for more and after achieving our aspirations perpetually our aspirations are set higher. So we have reasons to be happy about as well as to be unhappy about. It depends on what we are concentrating whether on our achievements or on higher aspirations. The choice is ours. If we put a state in the position of such individual, it would make us realise as a state of more displeasures and discontentment than a sense of satisfaction and happiness. Happiness is highly a relative term. Let’s not forget that. Poor economies have transformed themselves as under-developing economies but now can we forget that the developed economies have not been complacent and have constantly kept their eyes open for the runners behind them. In this race of which (what) comes first and remains there at a large level public good of happiness is ignored not only compromised.

The welfare economists have streamlined the priority areas for the third world nations to make the development sustainable. Among these priority areas, health and hygiene, education, social security, poverty alleviation, gender related issues, people participation etc have occupied basic focus. In one or the other ways all these issues are happiness driven. Ironically these areas are substituted by infrastructure development, industrialisation, improving service utilities etc among the nations which fall in the so called ‘developed’ bracket or the First world nations. Does one derive a conclusion that the first world has shifted the focus from basic areas of public good or happiness towards improving disclosure practices and concentrating on economic indicators? Is happiness a non-issue among the developed nations, since they are monetarily sound? Should it be only the underprivileged or sometime suppressed for whom the tablet of being happy is provided? There are several such questions which object to the so called standards set up to determine the status of a nation as economically, socially and politically developed. Happiness depends on gaining freedom, to a certain degree (Thinley, 1999, p 18) because when one is free the feel of happiness is derived. But this freedom has to be taken very cautiously that is the reason ‘a certain degree’ is thought about. It has to be within the purview of the law of the land so that if one goes beyond that *certain degree* established

by law, proper measures are taken against such people to set them right. This way the freedom would provide happiness to the individuals. The freedom is also related to the availability of choices. So it is freedom to choose from. It is possible in a world of competition where the economy of the state encourages and supports it. State is responsible to encourage competition by providing choices to its citizens. However one needs to remember that you can provide only what you have. Hence if freedom is not available to state, state cannot offer it. In the process of enjoying the fruits of freedom, the state has to create a friendly environment where choice is offered within the broader purview of the freedom for state.

The policies and plans of the state are generally oriented towards the development and improvement, directly or indirectly of its residents. ‘...we live in a world of many interactive institutions – the market, the government, the democratic process, the media, the NGOs, the research institutions, public and private, and so on. Each of them can play a major, but complementary role in enhancing the well-being and freedom of the individuals in the society and in the world at large...’ (Sen, 2000). All the efforts of the organizations, business or social, can easily be linked to the improvement in the quality of the population. Well-being of the people and population has been a major agenda for the development strategies across the nations.

Thinley (1998) feels that happiness is usually considered a utopian issue and suggests that the individual’s quest for happiness and inner and outer freedom is the most precious endeavour, society’s ideal of governance and polity should promote this endeavour. Further he laments into the future and provide an insight into the challenges which happiness faces in general with the advent of information technology.

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

Happiness is a feeling of an individual and happiness of the individuals putting together for a nation results into Gross National Happiness (GNH) of a country. The economic indicators of development can very well depict the status of development and growth of a nation but still the living standard of the people gets side lined. Therefore, the concept of

GNH has been evolved to give more weightage to this indicator of development as compared to the economic indicators. Development can be achieved and maintained through the philosophy of happiness which makes the process of development more focused and sustainable. GNH is more close to human development than economic development. 'GNH rejects the notion that there is direct and close relationship between wealth and happiness'. (Bandyopadhyah 2004 p. 259)

Lyonpo Jigme Y Thinley, the then Chairman of the Council of Ministers, while giving his keynote address to the Millennium Meeting for Asia and the Pacific at Seoul, Korea, in 1998, put many relevant questions which needs to be addressed while studying and understanding the concept of GNH. The questions included the affect of informational technology, rapid automation of society and the economy, and shrinkage of biological and cultural diversities on people's happiness, role of value education, secularisation and nuclearization of family affecting loneliness and self enclosure, global capitalism and competitive international trade resulting into unhappiness and uncertainties, impact of cloning on happiness and the forms of global and regional governance best suited for promoting happiness among people.

These questions might look stereotyped but the felt concern is what makes these questions important, relevant and worth deliberating on. There is a price which we pay for development; hence there are certain questions like secularisation and nuclearisation of family, competition etc which are firmly attached with the development process. However at every level of developmental planning one needs to think and relate the policies to the happiness of people. One could evolve better ways of breaking laws, committing crimes, being corrupt etc through education that does not mean that education should not be provided.

Fundamentally there are two types of requirements for the case of GNH which are derived from the sense of happiness of individuals' viz., Physical requirement and Mental requirement. There are certain activities which provide us physical happiness like, money, enough to eat, house, proper clothing, government provisions, electricity, road, water, sanitation, employment etc. On the other hand there are certain activities which

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provide us only mental happiness like the feeling of security, participation, feel good factor, spirituality, cultural values etc.

We tend to become complacent when we feel happy and contented. Sustainability is the issue to be kept in mind here. Sustainability here means sustaining the sense of happiness both at the individual level as well as at state level. Apart from sustaining happiness the efforts have to be put to minimise suffering. GNH is about minimising suffering and maximising happiness. The premise of GNH includes cultural preservation and creative experimentation apart from technological and material development.

GNH is a concept which is based on the premise of happiness derived spiritually and at minimal cost of development. It is imperative to look at development as a process of eliminating poverty and making people happier. Development has to fulfil the aspirations of the people in the manner that their hunger is well addressed in the policy issues and statements. Hunger is of two types physical and mental. Physical hunger is about clothing, shelter, food, physical exercise etc whereas mental hunger is spiritual hunger, ignorance and the feeling of attachment and detachment. Mental hunger distinguishes human being with animals as animals also have physical hunger but no mental hunger. Through attachment the human mind throws spiritual hunger. Hopes are merely spiritual hunger.

It is very important that at times it is also seen that once people are satisfied and happy, they become complacent. This results in a problem of sustainability. The individuals have to be told about the relationship which very prominently gets established between the happiness of individuals and the prosperity of the nation. Once the people become complacent, it affects their efficiency level and ultimately destabilises the economic growth in a longer perspective which is one of the most important pillar of GNH.

Population quality and GNH are two sides of the same coin. Better quality of population ensures higher GNH. GNH finds its base in the parameters of Population quality. 'A great deal of consistency exists between the Bhutanese concept of GNH and human development... The pursuit of GNH calls for a multi-dimensional approach to

development that seeks to maintain harmony and balance between economic forces, environmental preservation, cultural and spiritual values and good governance.’(BNHDR 2000). The RGOB has been targeting to provide better facilities and services to the people to ensure their development through its Five Year Plans and other planning instruments.

There is much agreement that GNH is a good idea, for many it offers the glimmerings of refuge against the steadfast tide of scientific reductionism. For others it provides relief from the stale indicators of development that enjoy so much currency. (Hargens 2002) Gross National Happiness is, undoubtedly, a unique paradigm of a chastening possibility in which the main motivating force behind human effort is not economic gain, but the cultivation of a humane society, the ultimate goal being the happiness of all people. (Powdyel). Veenhoven (2004) defines GNH as ‘the degree to which citizens in a country enjoy the life they live, GNH is then an aggregate concept, like the concept of GNP that sums goods and services.’

The concept of GNH has evolved from the basic constituent features of Bhutanese society in the beginning of the twentieth century when the social fabric was being woven. Buddhism, which surrounds feudal set of values form the basic constituent features of Bhutanese society. The official documents and publications in Bhutan show that their development objectives lie in the happiness and satisfaction of their people rather than the growing GDP. The discussion during 7th Round Table Conference held in 2000 at Thimphu concluded one very interesting thought according to which the underlying idea of happiness within GNH concept is the ‘capacity to make choices for oneself’. Mathou (2000) puts modernisation and preservation of national heritage as two merged rhetorics ‘under the catchphrase of GNH’.

This path of development seems to be making sense. Bhutan has been successful in selling the idea of GNH world over. The discussions and debates are on to follow this concept while making developmental policies at local as well as national level. Researchers are busy finding out the ways to quantify GNH so that it is comparable. It is

suspected whether the countries having higher GDP would count higher on the scale of GNH also.

GNH PRACTICES IN BHUTAN

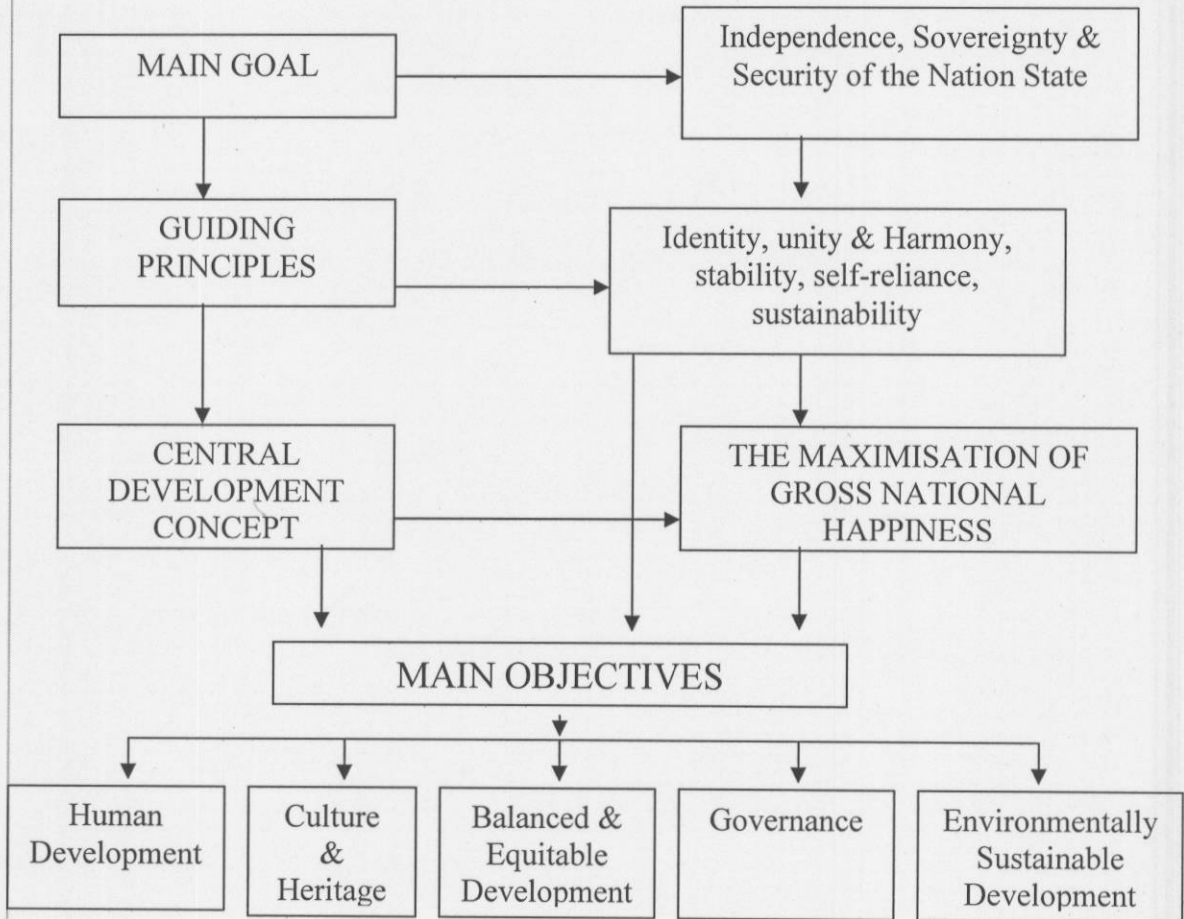
Orville (2002) writes that the King Jigme Singye Wangchuk once told Barbara Crossette, South Asia correspondent of *New York Times* that "Being a small country, we do not have economic power. We do not have military muscle. We cannot play a dominant international role, because of our small size and population and because we are a landlocked country. The only factor we can fall back on ... which can strengthen Bhutan's sovereignty and our different identity is the unique culture we have. ... happiness takes precedence over economic prosperity in our national development process".

This is a realisation as well as self analysis which keeps Bhutan as one of most close friend of a big nation i.e., India. It is a concern of mutual interest. The kingdom has concentrated on maintaining its unique culture in all these years which is evident from the fact that as a nation there is a dress code and *driglam namjha* (code of conduct) which is strictly followed. The residents proudly follow it in their public life.

Figure 1 shows that Bhutan considers GNH as its central development concept. Interestingly it is seen that the kingdom has two dimensions of goals viz. the guiding principles and Independence, Sovereignty & Security of the Nation State. These two goals are the driving forces for the maximisation of GNH but it has to ensure that there is no compromise made so far as its 'identity, unity and harmony, stability, self reliance and sustainability' is concerned which are shown as guiding principles. These guiding principles and central development concept viz. GNH establish five main objectives as – Human Development, Culture and heritage, Balanced and equitable development, Governance and Environmentally sustainable development. These objectives make the process of development unique in this tiny kingdom.

Normative architecture
For the Kingdom's future Change and Development

Figure 1



Source: Bhutan 2020, p 15

The sense of one community is reflected in practice in rural and urban areas alike in Bhutan. Bringing up the children of relatives or of the people of the same village, bearing their expenses etc is a very common practice here. 'Our ability to survive depends on our sense of ourselves as members of a national community. This implies both the development of the institutions of national cohesion and participation and the consciousness of Bhutan as a nation.' (RGOB 2000 p 18) Bhutan has been participating in the international discourses and deliberations and in the last decade it is observed more with a difference. It is making good investment in building up the institutions of national

cohesion. The *Tshogdu* or National Assembly was established in 1953. It is the highest legislative body in the kingdom. The *Thrimkhang Gongma* or High Court was established in 1968 comprising of the Chief Justice and seven *Dungthrims* and *Thrimkhangs* in all 20 *Dzongkhags*. The judicial system has been separated from the executive and legislative branches of Bhutan. The *Lhengye Zhungtshog* or the Cabinet was established in 1968. The king devolved full executive powers to the council of ministers elected by the National Assembly in 1998. The *Lhengye Zhungtshog* is the highest executive body in the country which consists of the council of ministers and the members of the *Lodey Tshogdey*. The *Lodey Tshogdey* was established in 1965 which consists of six elected representatives of the public, two elected representative of the clergy and one nominated by the government who functions as Chairman of the council. It advises the King on matters of national importance, acts as a bridge between the government and the people and ensures that the laws and decision of the national Assembly are implemented. The members of the *Lhengye Zhungtshog* are collectively responsible to the king and the national assembly. *Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs* (DYT) was established 1981 and the *Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs* (GYT) was established in 1991. DYT and GYT are basically local level institutions which were established under the personal initiative of the King with 'the objective of strengthening traditional local institutions and enhancing their role in development policies and activities'. (9th Plan document, p 3) In the dual system prevailing in the kingdom, the *Dratshang* or the Monastic Body plays an important role in the spiritual and cultural life of people apart from participating in the decision making institutions like the *Tshogdu* and the *Lodey Tshogdey*.

The dynamism which is evident from the establishment of these important institution in the kingdom, has allowed it to deal with its environment more firmly. The law and order condition is excellent, crime and corruption very minimal, no capital punishment, beggars hardly seen, life is relatively less hectic and the physical environment well protected. These are some of the generally observed indicators which have been maintained through these important institutions.

Priority Areas in the Planning documents of the Kingdom

Figure 2

7 th FYP (1992-1997) p 23	8 th FYP (1997-2002) p 25	Bhutan HDR 2000, p 21 *	9 th FYP (2002- 2007) p 4-6
Self reliance	Self reliance	Human Development	Economic growth & development
Sustainability	Sustainability	Culture & heritage	Preservation & promotion of cultural heritage
Efficiency & Development of the private sector	Preservation & Promotion of Cultural & Traditional values	Balanced & Equitable development	Preservation & sustainable use of the environment
People's Participation & Decentralization	National security	Governance & Environmental conservation	Good governance
Human Resource Development	Balanced Development		
Regionally Balanced Development	Improving the Quality of Life		
	Institutional Strengthening & HRD		
	Decentralization & Community Participation		
	Privatisation & Private Sector Development		

** Four priority areas mentioned under HDR 2000 have been identified as four essential constituents of happiness.*

It is visible from Figure 2 that the RGOB has narrowed down its priority areas on the basis of GNH. BHDR 2000 identifies four important pillars of happiness for the nation and these pillars are same as the priority areas of the government. This also indicates that the kingdom has not vitiated from the basic concerns. If at all we try to relate the priority

areas of 9th FYP with that of 7th and 8th FYP, we see first area of concern as economic growth and development which ultimately results into self sufficiency and sustainable economic development which was the primary concern in 7th FYP and 8th FYP. 8th FYP had elaborated these priorities but the 9th FYP further bracketed them into four basic focus areas which are in a similar way reflected in Figure 1 as the main objectives of GNH.

Priesner (1999) has given few influencing and determining factors. The backdrop on which the concept of GNH is based has been termed as 'Superstructure' which includes Indigenous national building and absence of foreign domination as precondition for political, social and cultural identity, Buddhism and feudalism as cornerstones of traditional Bhutanese socio-economic identity giving psychological and substantive input respectively. These inputs results in the thinking of GNH which is termed as 'Output Concepts' and reflected through four basic policy guidelines as self reliance, human development, cultural preservation and environmental preservation. This theoretical model puts forward the major determinants of GNH which are the basis for development projects and policies in the country and they reflect the vision of the RGOB.

The Buddhist culture has harmony, stability and integration as its important components which are addressed in the policies of development (GNH driven) in Bhutan. Bhutan has concentrated on the policy of decentralisation and participation in last two decades and both of these elements have been chosen as essential elements of GNH. Since 1981, the King has initiated a vigorous programme of administrative and political decentralization. 9th FYP emphasises on *Geog* based planning which ensures the participation of people from the lowest level of administration. 'The decentralization policy has enhanced the democratic powers, social responsibilities, transparent processes and structures of villages and communities to make decisions at grass roots level.' (Thinley, 1999 p 21). The nation has made great efforts to achieve these objectives through its policy initiatives in all the sectors of development. 'In our country, consensus is a characteristic and even a necessity of daily life. We need to understand our own culture and society more thoroughly and to formulate principles and institutions that will survive our national political life.' (RGOB, 2000) Bhutan has shown that it is open for change happening

around the world even when it comes to look at its culture as its foreign minister expresses this to Orville (2002) 'Some people tend to look at culture as static, but actually culture is always evolving. It is a tool, and when a tool becomes obsolete, you have to change it.'

The reflection of GNH is seen in the cultural follow up in Bhutan 'a culture of mutuality, not of competition; of inclusion, not exclusion; and of compassion, not acrimony'. The government is aware of the challenges to get this culture divulged as it is finding it difficult to determine the shape of the institutions in the changing scenario. Still the priorities are well defined and the citizens well informed about the government initiatives calling them for their participation. As mentioned earlier, the institutions of importance have been quite dynamic in nature. Individuals heading such institutions are well oriented and briefed about the international developments in all the fields of importance like economics, society, politics, culture, spiritualism etc. The kingdom is committed to 'maintain at least 60% of the land area under forest cover for all time to come'. (9th FYP, p30)

Urbanisation is a concern for the nation which believes in the philosophy of 'one nation - one people'. Bhutan realises that in the times ahead it would have to face a greater challenge since a new Bhutanese culture is expected to emerge in the new urban centres. Political stability and unity has been addressed through transparency in governance. This tiny kingdom does not want development which is not sustainable and this is visible from the academic discourses taking place in most of the ministries, departments, units and institutions. There is hardly an individual in the capacity of a decision maker who neither is nor oriented on the basic premise of sustainable development. International volunteers and NGOs are providing help to the government in the process of increasing GNH through following policies towards sustainable development. The government believes that 'only the ability to acquire what one cannot produce or cannot produce in sufficient quantities to satisfy one's needs can result in self reliance which is one of the goals of GNH.' (RGOB, 2000 p 39)

The Government has constantly shifting its main focus on the emerging issues of economy which have direct linkage with the quality of life vis-à-vis GNH. The issues like urbanisation, environment, unemployment, globalisation, infrastructure development, media, communication, and information technology are into the official documents and one could see it being given importance practically. Bhutan has taken into account the cultural, social, economic and historical costs of not engaging in infrastructural development in its planning and policies. The most important factors for Bhutan's development have been continuous culture, environment and *Vajrayana Buddhism*.^c

Stated in the simplest terms, planning means deciding what should be done in a given situation, after careful consideration of alternatives, and thereafter working out the details of how it could be done as quickly and economically as possible. (Sarup & Brahme 1990). The government in Bhutan has very carefully drafted its plan documents after considering the alternatives and the road map is drawn keeping in mind the path of GNH. The five year plans are reviewed periodically to examine the shortcomings and prospects so that the focus is not lost at any time. The process of review has become more organised and planned during last three five year plans. During 8th plan period apart from the above mentioned issues the position of private sector, economy and status of governance has also come under scrutiny. The private sector plays an important role in GDP growth simultaneously it helps the economy to grow especially in the competitive market environment. It allows the state to concentrate on the issues of greater social importance. Hence it has two fold impacts on the economy of a nation.

Gayleg (2004) establishes six levels of happiness as individual level happiness, family level happiness, community level happiness, regional/*dunkhag/dzonkhag* level happiness, national level happiness and global level happiness. (p 622) The happiness which starts with the individual happiness ultimately results into global happiness if at every level it is maintained and further improved.

As private sector is an important player for GDP growth it has its roots in the concept of GNH as well. The basic premise of GNH is 'independence of thought and conscience'. This premise allows the private sector to play its role but the RGOB needs to have a well

defined policy for the entry of private sector so that there is no risk to GNH. However, it is important to mention here that the private sector was given more importance in the 6th FYP when the strategies were drafted to facilitate its development. The process of corporatization of government agencies and divestment of government equity to the private sector was started during 6th FYP and since then the RGOB has been quite active in privatising many of the profit making government enterprises and the this trend of divestment is still being actively pursued today. The Private sector in Bhutan suffers many problems which are identified as – the fear of commercial culture, capital requirement and its management, human resource development, enabling environment, physical infrastructure etc, which is one of the reasons that it has not grown as expected.

It is important to mention here that this is done keeping in mind the important role these sectors are going to play in the times to come to maintain and improve the happiness level of people in the country. The government is aware that ‘globalisation offers unprecedented opportunities for human advancement’ however it visualises that ‘it also poses new and increasingly complex challenges’. (RGOB, 2000 p 63)

It has been the strategy in this tiny kingdom to deal with poverty by strengthening the food security base, its proper distribution and adequate relief measures whenever felt necessary. It is realised on a general note that large amount of investment is required to make the rural life more attractive so that rural-urban migration can be controlled. It could also increase the returns on farming vis-a- vis improving the quality of life of people in the rural areas. The RGOB has initiated macro level policies with its development partners to address poverty both in rural and urban areas.

It realises its vulnerability to the effects of globalisation and this realisation has provided an opportunity to concentrate on the GNH driven development. This policy is not followed in isolation with economic development rather they go together. In result traditional values and culture are not compromised at the cost of economic development. The kingdom ha given preference to good governance and has followed its policies keeping this preference in mind. RGOB (2000) has stated that efficiency, transparency and accountability are the pillars of good governance. Another important feature of good

governance could be developing trust among people towards the government and its established institutions.

In the process of development in isolation, Bhutan did not allow television viewing and internet before 1999. But studying the mindset of people and looking at the pros and cons of the impact of television and internet and the preparedness of the government to face this challenge, it opened its doors for the entry of television and subsequently internet. This step of RGOB has changed people's life here. The government is still cautious of its bad effects than really its impact for public good.

'Buddhism is historically the most important religion – historically not philosophically – because it was the most tremendous religious movement that the world ever saw, the most gigantic spiritual wave ever to burst upon human society.' (Vivekananda 2000) According to Buddhism there should be partnership of nature and man for development and Bhutan is following that whereas the general perception about environment is that nature is a resource or a force to be exploited. Co-existence of nature and man is considered not as an enemy of nature rather a friend.

Kuensel writes in its editorial dated January 1, 2000 that 'Bhutan has understood, perhaps better than most other countries, that there is nothing such as unlimited progress. Development comes with a cost, be it the deadly stain on our natural resources, that impact on the human soul through growth of material desires and spiritual superficiality, or the breakdown of society, the family and, therefore the individual. We learned that progress brings us many gifts but also enslaves us.' This is not a sudden realisation but it has its roots in the planning process of the country. However it is important that this kingdom has reasoned the sustainability of such progress.

Apart from the concern felt for satisfaction and happiness Bhutan is aware of certain approaches to development which might lead to an increase in unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Therefore it minimizes such compulsive initiatives which might lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The King has been conveying his opinion through

various modes on the five year plans as 'if at the end of a plan period, our people are not happier than they were before, we should know that our plans have failed.'^d

The development philosophy followed by Bhutan has made this kingdom unique. Powdyel (2000) provides an overview of the relative importance to humaneness given in the kingdom '...the world knows what Bhutan always knew: that the profoundest needs of human beings are not material, but spiritual, that all the wealth of the world does not measure up to the worth of a single human being. Development in the Bhutanese concept puts on a more dignified, humane and sanctified fact.' Powdyel (2000) further clears the priorities established by 'the genius and sagacity of the rulers' where the shift is made from 'commodifying human beings to humanizing commodities'.

Bhutan has developed in isolation and the development philosophy viz. GNH, has allowed this tiny nation to sustain development. There is absence of extreme poverty and negligible unemployment with large availability of renewable natural resource base like forests and hydropower. It has maintained its culture *par excellence* and has ensured that the development approaches are in no way contrary to the local conditions. It does not believe in the policy of isolation now and the initiatives taken by the government prove that the kingdom is trying to learn lessons from other nations and is prepared with a strong base for the challenges ahead. 'We can continue to be cautious, but being cautious does not mean shutting our eyes, ...shutting our eyes and cloistering ourselves as we did at one time during the policy of isolation served us once. But then we took the conscious decision to strengthen our sovereignty through involvement in the world. That means some intrusion, and we are prepared for that' these words were told to Orville while his interaction with Jigme Thinley. Further Orville (2002) mentions on his own that 'Bhutan has passed an important milestone in convergence with the outside world.'

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

Bhutan has followed unique style of development which has helped this tiny nation to grow from strength to strength. It has made a remarkable progress in improving the living standards of its people since its first five year plan for modernization in the early

transparency and accountability. The role of the state needs to be redefined and the priorities re-established on the basis of GNH parameters.

Bhutan is a tiny kingdom. Yet it has been successful in raising its voice (GNH) for the cause of public good through its visionary leaders in the international forums. The size of a nation is immaterial till its policies are driven by the core values of public happiness. And Bhutan is such country. 'Economies grow, GDP swells, but once above abject poverty, it makes no difference to citizens' well-being. What is all this extra money for if it is now proved beyond doubt not to deliver greater happiness, nationally or individually? Happiness has not risen in western nations in the last 50 years, despite massive increases in wealth.^e A report in the New Scientist stated that the 10 happiest nations were all so-called third world ones.^f In the times of industrial espionage and falling values we need to look back and question whether money can buy us happiness. For learning lessons one does not need to look for big and developed countries. Therefore it is not that the nations need to follow the first world. The third world and particularly this tiny kingdom has many things in its offering which can help other nations to maintain peace, tranquillity, sovereignty, better quality of life, happiness, etc which are much more important indicators of development than just rising gross domestic product.

1960's. The policies are monitored on the basis of its impact on GNH. There could be many lessons which other nations could learn from this tiny kingdom. The range of lessons would vary from the very philosophy of Buddhism and its spiritual outlook to development, the principle of middle path to implementing development programmes and policies keeping in mind public-good in general. The role of a state might be required to be redefined. Being a small and monarch country, may be one would assume better law and order situation and minimal level of social disturbances. Apart from this the kingdom has been able to get the limelight of the international community so far as its approach to environment, sustainable development, good governance and decentralisation policy is concerned. '...perhaps this new, fresh, dimension of development (GNH) could be Bhutan's gift to the world'. (Powdyel 2000)

Bhutan would certainly provide a base to follow the philosophy of GNH. It believes in a common Bhutanese saying which is quoted by many people - 'If it is medicine, you should take it from an enemy. But if it is poison, you should refuse it from a friend.' The medicine in the form of GNH philosophy could help nations to sustain their growth and maintain better quality of life amongst the people.

The interested nations which would like to follow the concept of GNH could establish a GNH directorate to look into nations developmental planning. Such directorate could be assigned the job of assessing the planning instruments and processes on its befitting the framework of GNH. It would have a long term effect on its application and the priorities could get rearranged and reconstructed. The practices as regards to decentralisation and governance could also be followed. However the size of the nation and its socio-political fabric might obstruct the way. Therefore it is very important to note that before taking initiatives one has to give importance to the sustainability issue.

It is to be learnt from the experience from Bhutan that a nation has to follow a practice of self-management, better governance, building trust and to have a leader with a firm and well determined vision. In the times of market economy and of the survival of the fittest, it has to be learnt that instead of corporate governance becoming more important the focus should be shifted back to local governance which can be assured through

END NOTES

a. A Note on Bhutan:

'It is believed that the name Bhutan is derived from the Sanskrit 'Bhotant', meaning 'the end of Tibet', or from 'Bhu-uttan', meaning 'high land'. Historically the Bhutanese have referred to their country as Druk Yul, 'land of the thunder dragon'. Bhutanese refer to themselves as Drukpa people.'

(<http://www.kingdomofbhutan.com/kingdom.html>)

The Royal Kingdom of Bhutan is a tiny mountainous country situated between two most populous nations of the world, India and China. It was in 747 AD when guru Padmasambhav visited Bhutan from India and introduced Buddhism. Bhutan has been practising Buddhism and it is a religious country. In 1907 Monarchy system started in Bhutan by the first monarch Ugyen Wangchuk who was given knighthood by British Raj. Subsequently he attended Delhi Durbar in 1911. It was in 1926 when the eldest son of the first king, Jigme Wangchuk took over the reign from his father. His rule was one of the most important periods since it was during this period that there was social, economic and political instability internationally. Bhutan maintained its independent status through the policy of non-engagement. The third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, became king in 1952. He introduced land reforms, reduced land taxes, established Royal Bhutan Army (RBA), National Assembly, Planning Commission, and Royal Advisory Council, launched Five Year Plans and abolished capital punishment. Bhutan became member of United Nations Organisation in 1971. Jigme Singye Wangchuk, fourth in the wangchuk dynasty was coroneted in 1974. Bhutan became a member of the World Bank in 1981. The period between 1907 and 1998 is seen as a period of consolidation and development of instruments of power. The functioning of the government is streamlined and the priorities properly set. In 1998 the king devolved all the executive powers to the council of ministers elected by the national assembly. This can be seen as a beginning of a new political era in the History of Bhutan. 'Bhutan is also well endowed with other natural resources with a rich forest cover of 72.5 %, and various mineral resources that include limestone, dolomite, gypsum, coal, copper, talc, marble, quartzite, zinc and lead. Bhutan's pristine nature, bio-diversity and unique cultural heritage also make for an attractive and exotic tourist destination.' (Country presentation by RGOB at third UN Conference on the LDCs, Brussels 14-20 May 2001, p4)

It is estimated that Bhutan had 0.65 million population in the year 2000 comprising of around 80% rural population. Around 80% population is estimated to be of mongoloid origin (*drukpas*) and remaining 20% of indo-aryan (*Nepalese*). The country has 20 *Dzonkhags* composed of 201 *Gewogs*.

- b. I am using the term 'public-good' as a broader sense of happiness of people. Happiness of people together is different from the individual happiness. The State

has to look beyond individual happiness to the happiness of people which is termed as 'Public-good'.

- c. It is mentioned in 'Development Toward Gross National Happiness – Seventh Round Table Meeting on 7-9 November 2000 Thimphu, Bhutan that these three factors (continuous culture, environment and Vajrayana Buddhism) have been of the greatest influence over Bhutan's development. It is of strength for Bhutan that it has never been colonized or conquered, so the culture has been maintained continuously in all the times. The prevalent Buddhist culture considers nature and man as friends and there is a special symbolic relationship between the people and nature. Since Bhutan follows Vajrayana Buddhism it gets its reflection in the development policies of the country.
- d. As quoted by TS Powdyel in his paper 'Foundations and scope of GNH: some reflections' published by CBS (conference proceedings) 2004 Pp 597-614 (www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publications/GHN-papers-1st_29-31.pdf)
- e. As quoted by Polly Toynbee in his paper 'Money and happiness' published in the Guardian dated March 7, 2003. (<http://utilitarianism.com/misc/index.html>)
- f. As quoted by Tracey Worcester in her paper 'Operationalising Gross National Happiness' published by CBS (conference proceedings) 2004 p130 (www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publications/GHN-papers-1st_5-8.pdf)

Bhutanese Terms

English Meaning

<i>Tshogdu</i>	National Assembly
<i>Thrimkhang Gongma</i>	High Court
<i>Lhengye Zhungtshog</i>	the Cabinet
<i>Lodey Tshogdey</i>	Royal Advisory Council
<i>Dzonkhag</i>	District
<i>Gewog or Geog</i>	Block (consisting of villages)
<i>Dzongkhag Yargye</i>	District Development
<i>Tshogchung (DYT)</i>	Committee
<i>Gewog Yargye Tshogchung (GYT)</i>	Block Development Committee
<i>Dratshang</i>	Monastic body
<i>driglam namjha</i>	code of etiquette
<i>Dunkhag</i>	Sub-district formed by a few Gewogs

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