

LECTURE 3

UNIVERSAL HUMAN ASPIRATIONS: HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY

“Continuous Happiness and Prosperity are the Basic Human Aspirations”

HAPPINESS

Life is full of paradoxes, all that exists in this world, there is always the opposite side of it, still they are all times interrelating and this is the natural way of life. When there is day there will be night, when there is positive there will be negative, where there are strengths there will also be weaknesses, where there are successes, there will be failures, where there are opportunities, there will be adversities, where there are rewards and honours, there will be punishments and insult. Similarly, within you, you can be happy or unhappy, enjoying and depressive; satisfied or dissatisfied, it is only possible when we take ourselves where we will find happiness.

Happiness is not something that happens, it is not the result of the good fortune or random chance, it is not something that money can buy or power command; it does not depend on outside events but rather on how we interpret them. It is a state / situation in which there is harmony/synergy. To be in a state of liking is happiness. When we are in state of happiness – we experience no struggle, no contradiction or conflict within and we enjoy such a state of being. On the other hand when we experience feeling such as failure, disrespect, lack of confidence, being doubtful in ourselves or about others, we feel unhappy as they are states of conflict. These are the states when there is lack of harmony, either within us or between us and others, so in short we can say that

To be in state of harmony is happiness and to be in state of disharmony or contradiction is unhappiness.

We get an impression of happiness through our sensory interactions such as eating tasty food, wearing or stitching beautiful dress, seeing crops grown by self in the field etc. However, these impressions of happiness are short lived and their continuity can never be ensured and all the efforts to seek happiness through sensory interaction only leads to more and more misery.

Psychologists have repeatedly found that individuals who put a high premium on higher incomes generally are less happy and more vulnerable to other mental problems or diseases than individuals who do not crave higher incomes. According to Swami Vivekananda (2000) life is not enjoyment alone, true joy is when we venture inwards. The individual is an agent

of his/her own happiness, independent of environmental conditions, the well spring of happiness is within the individual and it is more spiritual enrichment rather than material satisfaction. Aristotle and the Buddha advised humanity to follow a middle path between asceticism on the one side and craving material goods on the other. From the researchers' and philosophers' viewpoint, it is concluded that happiness can be measured.

The two broad measurements of happiness:

- a) The ups and downs of daily emotions
- b) An individual's overall evaluation of life.

The former is called “**affective happiness**,” and the latter “**evaluative happiness**.”

- **Affective happiness** measures the day-to-day joys of friendship, time with family and basic needs of individual.
- **Evaluative happiness** measures different dimensions of life, those that lead to overall satisfaction or frustration with one's place in society. Higher income, better physical and mental health, and a high degree of trust in one's community (“social capital”) all contribute to high life satisfaction, whereas poverty, ill health, and deep divisions in the community all contribute to low life satisfaction.

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS (GNH)

The Gross National Happiness Index is the first of its kind in the world, a serious, thoughtful, and sustained attempt to measure happiness. Gross National Happiness (GNH) measures the quality of a country in a more holistic way [than GNP] 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 GNH Index provides an overview of performances across nine domains of GNH (psychological well-being, a balanced use of time, community vitality, cultural diversity, harmony with environment, living standard, health, education and good governance).

This concept was introduced by the King of Bhutan in 1972 as an alternative to the Gross domestic product. Although the GNH framework reflects its Buddhist origins, it is based upon the empirical research of happiness, positive psychology and wellbeing.

The philosophy of happiness of Bhutan rests on four pillars: a healthy environment, a good economy, a democratic government and the anchoring in a positive religion / culture. The Bhutan case study tells the story of GNH in Bhutan, a story of exploration and progress since the King declared in 1972 the goal of happiness over the goal of wealth. The World Happiness Report, 2018 ranks the happiest countries around the globe, with Finland as the

happiest nation followed Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Switzerland. Out of 156 countries in the World Happiness Report, India's rank is 133. India was far behind the majority of its neighbouring countries, like Pakistan at 75th rank, China at 86th , Bhutan at 97th ,Nepal at 101, Bangladesh at 115 and Srilanka at 116

The Happy Planet Index, measures health and happiness not in isolation but against a crucial new gold standard for success: sustainability .The formula goes something like this: take the well-being and longevity of a population, measure how equally both are distributed, then set the result against each country's ecological footprint.



In this calculation, the most successful countries are those where people live long and happy lives at little cost to the environment.

According to Happy Planet Index (2016) Report, Costa Rica was termed the happiest country, followed by Mexico and Colombia. Wealthy Western nations, however, fared poor in the ranking. The UK ranked at 34, Germany 49, Japan 58, China 72, Australia 105 and the US 108. Bangladesh at 8th tops the list among South Asian countries with Sri Lanka at 28, Pakistan 36, Nepal 42, India 50, Bhutan 56 and Myanmar 81.

PROSPERITY

In our religious books and scriptures these two words happiness and prosperity are always mentioned side by side as *Sukh aur Samridhi*. Usually prosperity is related to material things. Prosperity can be defined as the feeling of having or making available more than required physical facilities. Prosperity can be ascertained by the following two things:-

1. Correct assessment of one's need for physical facilities
2. The competence of making available more than required physical facilities.

One thing is very clear that we can be prosperous only if there is limit to the need for physical facilities. The struggle for unlimited needs and desires is never ending and drags an

individual towards frustration and mad race in material world. However, the correct assessment of one's needs, leads to contentment, everlasting happiness and peace of mind.

PROSPERITY INDEX

The Prosperity Index is the only assessment of material wealth and wellbeing that ranks countries globally according to their performance across eight relevant sub-indices. The rankings, produced by a London-based think tank, the Legatum Institute, gauge the prosperity of a nation by combining economic indicators, including gross domestic product, with dozens of other measures of wellbeing, from access to education and health to the living environment for ethnic minorities. The index is based on the logic that “prosperity is more than just the accumulation of material wealth,” according to its recent report in 2017. In this year's rankings, Norway topped the list, followed by New Zealand, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden.

India ranked 100 out of 149 countries on a Prosperity Index and improved by four places from last year (104th in 2016). Canada has 8th rank, Australia at 9th, USA at 18th, Srilanlaka at 53rd, Nepal at 89th and China at 90th.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WEALTH AND PROSPERITY

- **Wealth** is a physical thing. It means having money or having a lot of physical facilities/materialistic possessions or both.
- **Prosperity** is a feeling of having more than required physical facilities and not just having the physical facilities. It refers to the inner satisfaction or contentment one feels with whatever he/she possesses. Some people feel contented with whatever limited possessions they have whereas the others are always dissatisfied with even much more than others.

In another words we can conclude that our basic desire is to be prosperous and wealth is only a means to fulfill that desire. We can maintain prosperity only if our production systems are in harmony with the nature. Like we should use natural resources in a renewable manner and utilize appropriate technologies so that the human needs are satisfied and nature is also enriched.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY

- By maximizing accumulation and consumption of physical facilities we can achieve happiness and prosperity

- Through pleasant sensory interactions we can achieve happiness.
- Physical facilities are not considered as just a mean to fulfill bodily needs rather they are considered as means to maximize happiness.

As a result of these misconceptions our efforts are concentrated on achieving unlimited wants through limited resources. These efforts result in problems at different levels like:-

- ❖ **At the individual level-** rising problems of depression, psychological disorders, suicides, stress, insecurity, psychosomatic diseases, loneliness etc.
- ❖ **At family level-** breaking of joint families, mistrust, conflict between older and younger generations, insecurity in relationships, divorce, dowry tortures, family feuds, wasteful expenditure in family functions like in marriages etc.
- ❖ **At societal level-** growing incidences of terrorism and naxalism, rising communalism, spreading casteism, racial and ethnic struggle, wars between nations, attempts of genocides, fear of nuclear and genetic warfare etc
- ❖ **At the nature level-** global warming, water, air, soil, noise pollution, resource depletion of minerals and mineral oils, sizeable deforestations and loss of fertility of soil.