



Good Governance For Peoples' Happiness – Leading to Overall Development

*Lessons from Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Bhutan and other happy countries,
with insights from the research on happiness and government*

Inspired by the teachings of:



Swami Vivekananda



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Based on Ph.D. research findings of Dr. Prasad Oswal – University of St. Gallen,
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Shree Krishna the
Compassionate One
lifting mount
Govardhan to protect
people and animals
from the torrential
rain

Artist: Unknown, ca 1640

Happiness arises from things good for us – health, education, wealth, good environment, social support, good governance, love, mental health, etc

HAPPINESS IS A MORE INCLUSIVE AND PEOPLE-DRIVEN PUBLIC POLICY GOAL THAN JUST GDP MAXIMIZATION



Happiness leads to things good for us – success in health, wealth, relationships, careers, creativity, peaceful living, etc

← Positive feedback loop

Happiness arises from things that are good for us and leads to things that are good for us. This study proposes a people-focused governance model that listens to peoples' reasonable voice in fostering their inner and outer happiness, and doing so not only brings what matters most to people – their happiness, but also leads to overall development

WHAT BRINGS
HAPPINESS?

KAMA
Pleasure, love
Psychological Values

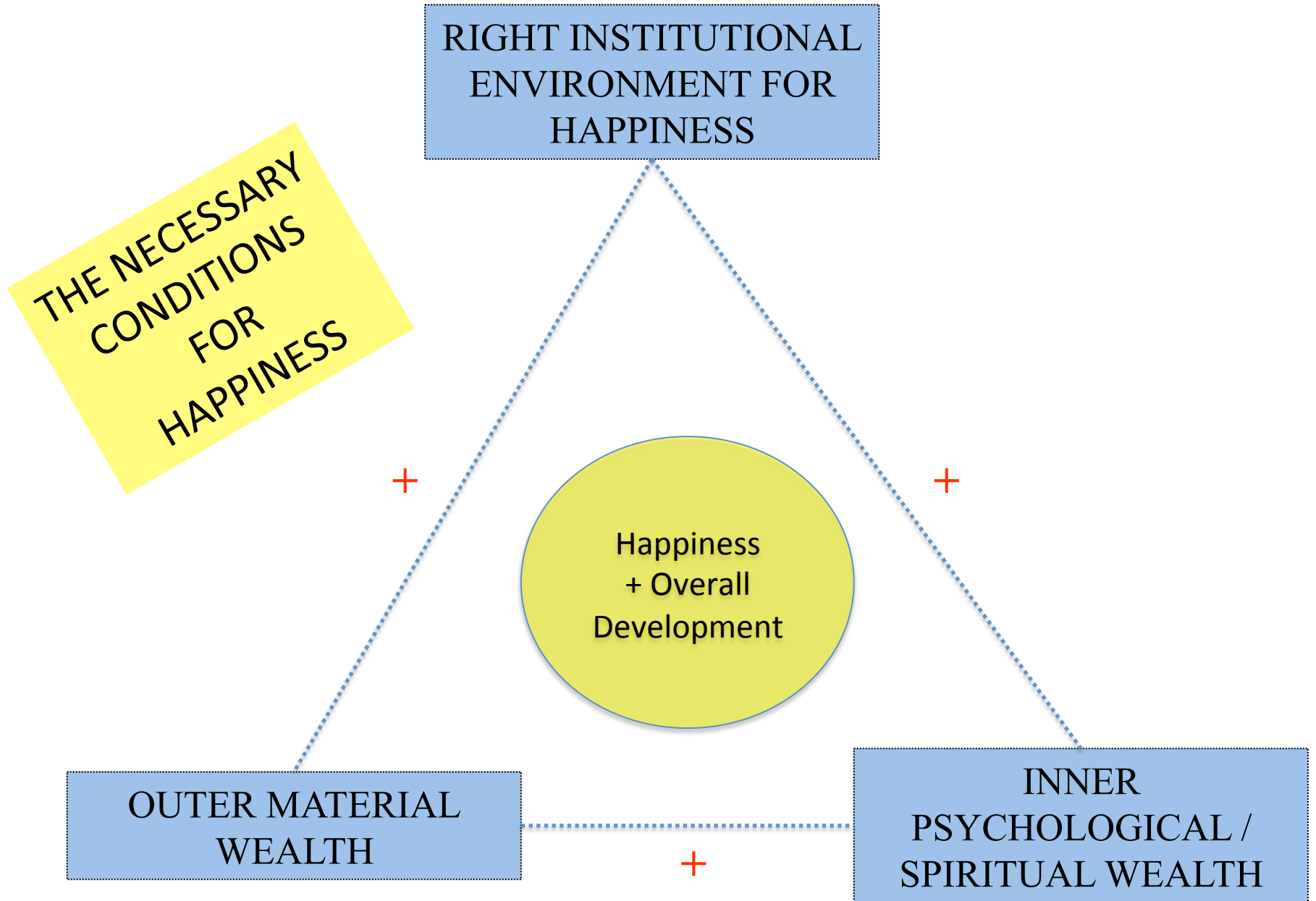
ARTHA
Prosperity
Economic Values



MOKSHA
Enlightenment
Spiritual Values

DHARMA
Righteousness
Moral Values

Ancient Indian philosophy taught that both inner and outer happiness are important for human flourishing. Modern happiness research has confirmed this insight





Switzerland



UAE



Denmark



Netherlands



Singapore



Canada

HOW THE HAPPIEST COUNTRIES FOSTER HAPPINESS



The **happiest countries** foster both outer material and inner spiritual/psychological happiness of their people

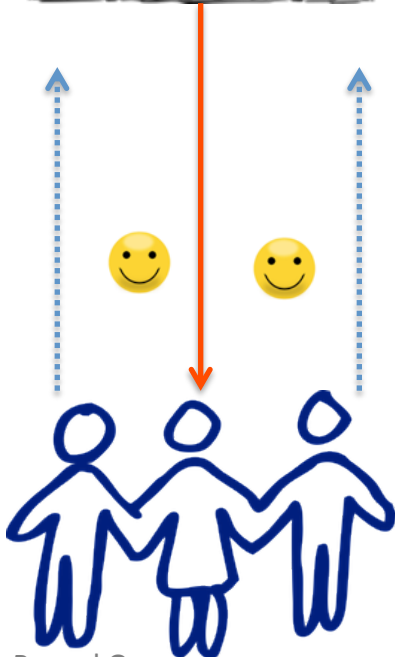
But they also have an institutional environment that fosters happiness. Their **political system** is 1) high income social democratic liberal (or in rare cases also benign autocratic) with healthy national pride 2) humane, compassionate and innovative 3) and having transformational leadership that works for peoples' happiness

Their **people-focused governance philosophy** 1) recognizes peoples' sovereignty 2) trusts human nature and 3) realizes the importance of listening to peoples' "reasonable" voice in fostering their happiness

They exhibit **three key governance values**: 1) freedom, 2) empowerment, and 3) an effective but humane law and order environment

They have **three governance actions for happiness**: 1) making government efficient and effective, people-centered and empathic 2) implementing happiness policies; and 3) working closely with people in fostering happiness

Finally, they create a **culture of happiness**



HAPPINESS IS THE ULTIMATE HUMAN VALUE ACROSS CULTURES, AND CAN UNITE PEOPLE WITH A COMMON PURPOSE



Government and happiness related quotes

- Whatever the form or Constitution of Government may be, it ought to have no other object than the general happiness. ~ **Thomas Paine**
- Listen to your happiness, follow your happiness. It always gives you the right indication. If a man listens to one's happiness he can never go wrong. Happiness is simply an indication that you are coming closer to truth, that you are coming closer to the harmony of existence. ~ **Osho**
- Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product. ~ **His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan**
- From happiness all beings have been born. Through happiness born they live. Towards happiness they progress. And into it they merge. ~ **Taittiriya Upanishad 3.6**
- Any economic system must provide for the minimum basic necessities of human life to everyone. Food, clothing and shelter constitute, broadly speaking these basic necessities. Similarly, the society must enable the individual to carry out his obligations to the society by properly educating him. Lastly, in the event of an individual falling a prey to any disease. society must arrange for his treatment and maintenance. If a government provides these minimum requirements, then only it is a rule of Dharma. Otherwise, it is a rule of Adharma. ~ **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on Integral Humanism**
- In all that you do, let love be the sole motive ~ **Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi, 68th Shankaracharya of Kanchi**
- Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes. ~ **Mahatma Gandhi**

Introduction

- **Satisfaction with governments has been falling** in many developed countries (OECD, 2013). And the situation is worse in many developing countries plagued with weak economic, social and environmental development arising out of governance and societal weaknesses. People increasingly feel that governments do not represent their wishes (Gilens and Page, 2014) leading to unhappiness in society and with government. **Some countries however appear better than others in fulfilling peoples' wishes and making them happy**
- **Happiness is today increasingly becoming important in politics** and “there is now a rising worldwide demand that policy be more closely aligned with what really matters to people as they themselves characterise their wellbeing..” (WHR 2015, p. 15)
- **Happiness (or subjective well-being)** is defined in terms of peoples' own evaluation of their life satisfaction and moods and emotions. **Research shows that happiness ranks at the top of peoples' aspired values, and that not just money but also** physical and social security, loving relationships, healthy environment, freedom, trust, caring government, life attitude, societal values, etc contribute to peoples' happiness, and governments can play an important role in fostering this happiness
- **This research examines governments in the happiest countries in the world such as Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, etc** – together with the literatures on political philosophy, positive psychology and organizational excellence – and uses case study analysis to examine the desirability of making happiness of the people a cornerstone of public policy, and how doing so leads not only to happiness, but also to overall flourishing and development
- The take-home message of this research is that governments are well-advised to listen to peoples' reasonable voice in fostering their inner and outer happiness, and doing so will not just bring what matters most to people – their happiness, but also lead to overall development

Key findings

- **Happiness** or subjective well-being arises from things that are good for us. It also leads to positive effects in our life and **deserves to be an important public policy goal**
- **Switzerland and Denmark** are the happiest countries in the world according to the World Happiness Report (2015) while **India** unfortunately ranks much lower down at rank 117
- Our research shows that the happiest countries foster both outer/material and inner/spiritual/psychological happiness of their people. Both are necessary for happiness
- In addition, they have the right institutional environment necessary for happiness as follows:
- **The political system of the** happiest countries is 1) high income social democratic liberal (or in rare cases also benign autocratic) with healthy national pride 2) humane, compassionate and innovative 3) and having people-centered, transformational leadership that works for peoples' happiness
- **Their people-focused governance philosophy** 1) recognizes peoples' sovereignty 2) trusts human nature and 3) realizes the importance of listening to peoples' "reasonable" voice in fostering their happiness
- This political system and governance philosophy **lead to three key governance values: 1) freedom 2) empowerment, and 3) an effective but humane law and order environment**
- These governance values drive **three governance actions for happiness: 1) making government efficient and effective, people-centered and empathic 2) implementing happiness policies; and 3) working closely with people in fostering happiness**
- Furthermore, peoples' thinking and values might also need to change for happiness to foster and the happiest countries ensure this by creating a **culture of happiness**
- **Such a people-focused happiness perspective to governance not only delivers what matters most to people – their happiness, but also leads to increased economic, social and environmental development in a virtuous cycle. A change in thinking can bring this about**

PART I: WHY HAPPINESS? AND HOW GOVERNMENTS CAN FOSTER INNER AND OUTER HAPPINESS

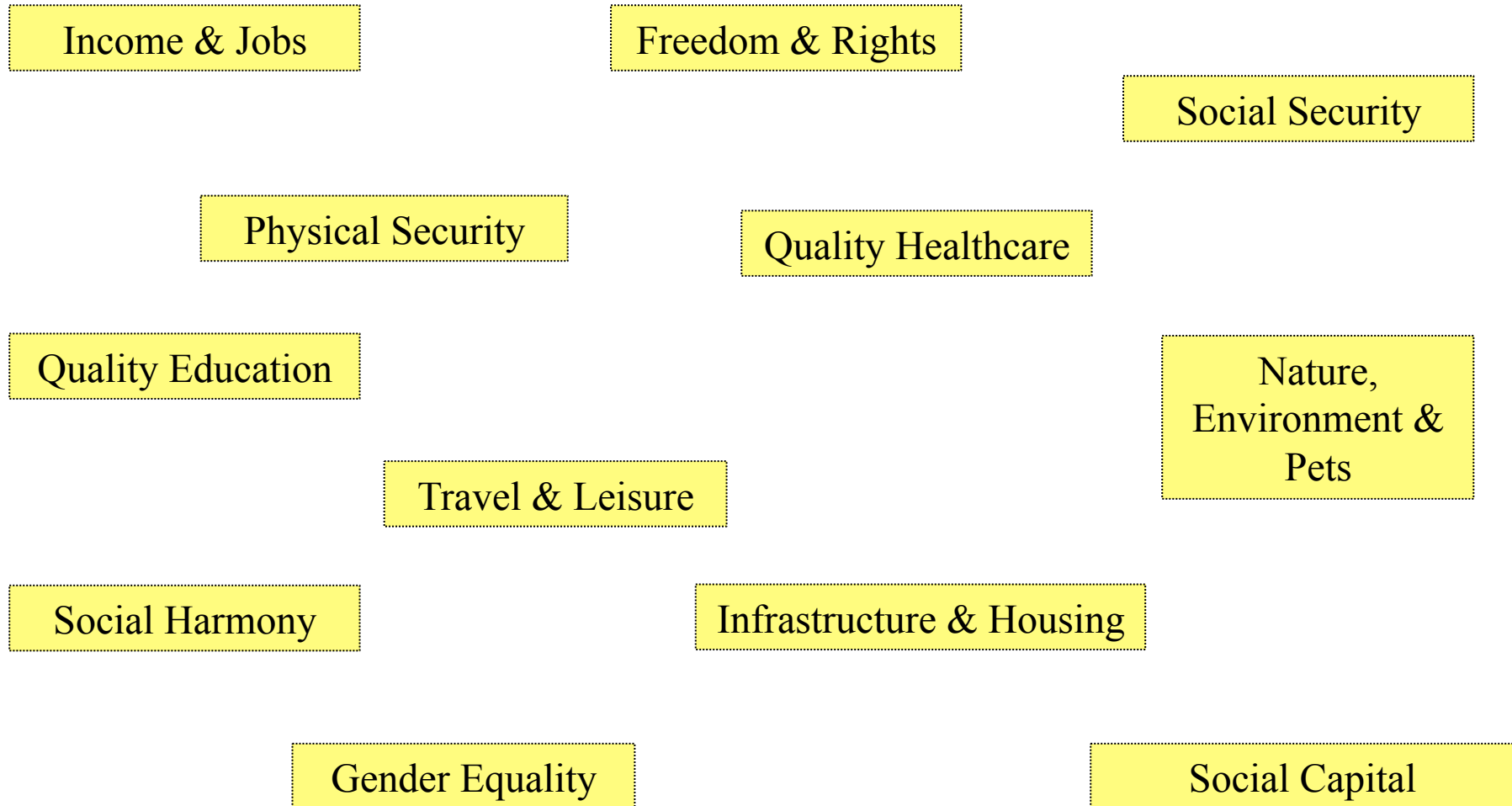
On happiness

- Subjective well-being encompasses three different aspects: cognitive evaluations of one's life, positive emotions (joy, pride), and negative ones (pain, anger, worry) ~ OECD
- Happiness or subjective well-being is **defined** in terms of peoples' own evaluation of their life satisfaction and moods and emotions (see Lyubomirsky et al, 2005). It ranks at the top of peoples' aspirations (Diener, 2000). Both external material things and inner life spiritual/psychological skills necessary for happiness to flourish. Studies show that **governments can help foster both outer and inner factors leading to happiness** in people (Kim and Kim, 2012; WHR 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016).
- **External factors** such as income, environment, etc are important for happiness upto a basic minimum level. **Beyond these one's inner life skills and spiritual attitude become more important**, and help explain upto 80% of peoples' happiness and can be learnt (Argyle, 2001; Bok, 2010; Diener et al, 1999; Seligman, 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2012)
- **Inner life skills including maturity and self-reflection are important to ensure that happiness is "responsible" i.e. based on "reasonable" or "informed" preferences about what is good for us (ruling out "irresponsible" activities such as doing drugs or harming others – see Dolan and White, 2007 for more)**
- Happiness brings **positive outcomes** for our health, relationships, and for our success, and is an antidote to stress. **It also arises from things that are good for us** e.g. freedom, wealth, health, supporting relationships, healthy environment, physical and social security, etc (see WHR 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016). Happiness is **one of the best evolutionary indicators of what is good for us** (Kováč, 2012). **All major religions and cultural traditions support happiness**, especially in its eudemonic form stressing human flourishing (following Aristotle, 2000), and happiness can bring people together with a common vision
- Happiness thus deserves to be a pre-eminent personal, societal and public policy goal

Fostering happiness

- If we want a whole man – and to me a whole man is the only holy man – then Zorba has to be absorbed into Buddha. They have to be accepted totally as one. And I don't see where the trouble is. In fact, Zorba plus Buddha will be a tremendous enrichment. ~ Osho
- **Modern psychology** proposes that “the good life can be encouraged by identifying individual strengths and fostering them (Seligman 2002)...Institutions enable (or not) positive traits, which in turn enable (or not) positive subjective experiences (Park/Peterson 2003)” (Peterson and Park, 2006)
- Fisher (2010) summarizes the literature on **positive psychology** as below (pp. 24-25, emphasis added): “Lyubomirsky and her colleagues (2001; Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005) have suggested that happiness is 50% genetically determined (top down), 10% environmentally caused, and 40% potentially modifiable by intentional happiness-enhancing activities and practices (bottom up). The latter include practicing gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and spirituality, choosing and pursuing authentic goals, nurturing social relationships, seeking opportunities to experience flow, and engaging in meditation and physical exercise
- **Seligman (2002) suggests that authentic happiness is facilitated by developing and practicing character virtues such as kindness, gratitude, optimism, curiosity, playfulness, humor, open-mindedness and hope.** Eudaimonic happiness is thought to be increased by, “(1) pursuing intrinsic goals and values for their own sake, including personal growth, relationships, community, and health, rather than extrinsic goals and values, such as wealth, fame, image, and power; (2) behaving in autonomous, volitional, or consensual ways, rather than heteronomous or controlled ways; (3) being mindful and acting with a sense of awareness; and (4) behaving in ways that satisfy basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008, p. 139, emphasis added).”
- Governments can on the one hand foster the outer/material factors leading to happiness through public policy, and on the other create awareness and education of the inner/spiritual/psychological factors leading to happiness, and provide infrastructure for mental well-being. These aspects are highlighted next..

Governments can foster following outer/material happiness factors



*for more see Argyle (2001), Bok (2010), Diener et al (1999), Helliwell and Putnam (2004), Seligman (2004)

Governments can foster following inner/spiritual/psychological happiness factors

Personality Traits:

- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Gratitude
- ❖ Optimism
- ❖ Curiosity
- ❖ Playfulness
- ❖ Humor
- ❖ Open-mindedness
- ❖ Hope

Prayer

Meditation

Love & Healthy Relationships

Healthy Activities

Mental Healthcare

Community Service and Helping

Societal Cultural Traits:

- ❖ Less In-group collectivism
- ❖ Institutional collectivism
- ❖ Less Power distance
- ❖ Gender egalitarianism
- ❖ Less Uncertainty avoidance
- ❖ Less Assertiveness
- ❖ Future orientation
- ❖ Humane orientation
- ❖ Performance orientation

*for more see Argyle (2001), Bok (2010), Diener et al (1999), Goyal et al (2014), Greeson (2009), Seligman (2004), Veenhoven (2012), Ye et al (2015)

PART 2: INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR HAPPINESS IN THE HAPPIEST COUNTRIES

The political philosophy of happiness

- The idea that people are sovereign and governments should care for peoples' happiness goes back to ancient Indian, Greek and Roman thought, and to the teachings of Confucius and Lao Tze, and flowered with the Enlightenment in Europe and the development of liberalism and democracy
- Freedman (2015) writes that **in liberal thinking**, for democracy to be considered a worthy system of government, it needs to be: "fair, tolerant, inclusive, restrained, and self-critical, not simply the pursuit of majority rule. Liberal democracy involves not just elections but free elections. It involves not just representative government, but accountable and constrained government. It involves not just the right to vote, but the equal and unsupervised right to vote. And it involves attention to the well-being of all members of a society, a principle that requires some government activity but may be open to different interpretations." (p. 6)
- Today, happiness is becoming increasingly important in politics and "there is now a rising worldwide demand that policy be more closely aligned with what really matters to people as they themselves characterise their wellbeing.." (WHR 2015, p. 15)
- The happiest countries not only foster inner and outer happiness but also have an institutional environment fostering happiness characterized as follows:
- Their **political set-up** is 1) social democratic liberal (or in rare cases benign autocratic) with healthy national pride 2) transformational leadership that 3) fosters peoples' happiness in a compassionate and innovative manner. They are driven by a **governance philosophy** that 1) recognizes peoples' sovereignty 2) trusts human nature and 3) realizes the importance of listening to peoples' "reasonable" voice in fostering their happiness. This philosophy leads to **three key governance values**: freedom, empowerment and empowerment. These values further drive **three governance actions** for peoples' happiness: making government efficient and effective, people-centered and empathic; implementing happiness policies; and working closely with people in fostering happiness. Finally, peoples' thinking and values also contribute to happiness and the happiest countries help create a **culture of happiness**. All these are elaborated next..

1) Political system in the happiest countries

The happiest countries are typically high-income social democratic liberal countries with a healthy national pride

- **Switzerland, Iceland and Denmark are the happiest countries in the world** according to the World Happiness Report (2015), while India ranks unfortunately low down at 117 out of 158 countries. Others in the top-10 include Norway, Canada, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, New Zealand and Australia. The UAE is the only non-democracy in the top-20 but has liberal government
- Most of these top-ranked countries explicitly or implicitly incorporate happiness considerations into their public policy. They have liberal political systems, with high incomes, extensive freedoms, free markets and also outstanding human rights records, successful social welfare programs, and governments that provide high quality social and other infrastructure. These countries have thus managed to find the Middle Way between left and right wing ideologies, based on what works best for the people
- **They score highest in the USNews Citizenship rankings** which considers how countries rank on human rights, the environment, gender equality, progressiveness, religious freedom, respecting property rights, trustworthiness and well-distributed political power (<http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/citizenship-full-list>)
- **This social support, freedom, security and quality infrastructure are amongst the best predictors of happiness according to the World Happiness Report**
- The happiest countries also have **open societal cultures** that question established values when these are inimical to happiness
- These countries are also characterized by a **healthy, non-aggressive sense of national pride**, which creates community-level bonding and brings people together for each other in a constructive manner, without being aggressive towards others or putting others down. People in Switzerland, Norway etc have a healthy sense of pride in their country's past and present accomplishments

The happiest countries are humane, compassionate and innovative

- Excessive power of state is also harmful of Dharma. It was said that a king should be neither too harsh nor too soft with his people. Heavy reliance on harsh measures produces a feeling of revolt in people. When state usurps the rightful position of Dharma, then there is this evil of preponderance of power of the state. Dharma suffers thereby. This is the reason of the decline of Dharma in ruthless states. When the state-acquires all powers, both political and economic, the result is a decline of Dharma. In this way if the state has unlimited powers, the whole society looks towards the state, for everything. Officers of the government neglect their duties and acquire vested interests. ~ Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on Integral Humanism
- The happiest countries have a humane orientation, described by House et al (2002) as the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring and kind to others and people are tolerant of others' mistakes. Citizens are considered to be part of an extended family that have to be cared for. Their governments are inspired by a feeling of compassion for peoples' happiness, and try to innovate government to this end
- The happiest countries rate high on human rights. They also rank highest on compassion and innovation. These two qualities are ranked as the top-two predictors of future economic growth by world-leaders at the World Economic Forum (US News Best Country Rankings, 2016), and are also significantly associated with happiness
- Neff (p. 87-88) defines compassion as involving “being touched by the suffering of others, opening one’s awareness to others’ pain and not avoiding or disconnecting from it, so that feelings of kindness toward others and the desire to alleviate their suffering emerge (Wispe, 1991).” In their literature review, Kanov et al (2004) state that compassion has occupied an important place in the history of modern society, that has shown itself in the creation and sustenance of human community
- Kanter (1983, p. 21) meanwhile defines innovation as the “generation, acceptance, and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or services.” Kanter found that the entrepreneurial spirit producing innovation is associated with a particular way of approaching problems, which she calls “integrative”

The happiest countries have transformational leadership that work for peoples' happiness

- A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves ~ Lao Tze
- The happiest countries like Switzerland, Denmark, etc have elected **leaders over time that have worked for the best interests of their people, following the voice of the people.** The UAE meanwhile has had the good fortune of having transformational leaders who have built an advanced economy from scratch from the desert. The UAE has made happiness and well-being central tenets of the design and delivery of the National Agenda “... to be the happiest of all nations” (WHR 2015, p. 4) and even announced a Ministry of Happiness recently
- What sets these leadership apart in these countries is that leadership structures are **not hierarchical or feudalistic.** For instance, in Switzerland one can often see the President of the country traveling by ordinary train with regular passengers. They are also some of the least corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International (<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table>)
- Transformational leaders are important when it comes to bringing about major societal change. They can help overcome inertia and resistance from vested interests to bring about a change in governance values and redesign government for happiness
- **Burns (1978) describes transformational leadership as where leaders and followers mutually help each other rise to higher levels of morality and motivation.** Transformational leaders lead by example and appeal to higher ideals and values, helping raise people to their better selves and encouraging people to collaborate with each other. Transformational leaders transform followers into disciples, and develop followers into leaders, increasing their awareness and consciousness of what is really important and motivate them to go beyond their own self-interests to work for the good of the larger organizations or institutions where they belong

2) People-focused governance philosophy of the happiest countries

The happiest countries believe in peoples' sovereignty

- The care of human life and happiness...is the only legitimate object of good government. ~ Thomas Jefferson
- Welzel (2013) contends that in its literal meaning, “government by the people” – the ideal that ultimately inspires democracy – is about empowering ordinary people to govern their own lives
- Peoples' or popular sovereignty means that people are the real rulers in society and that governments are created and sustained by the consent of its people and exist for peoples' welfare. This idea goes back to ancient Indian, Greek and Roman thought, and flowered with the Enlightenment in Europe and the development of liberalism and democracy
- Countries like Switzerland, Denmark, etc have high levels of direct democracy, where people have a direct say in decisions that affect their lives
- However in most other countries, the idea of peoples' sovereignty remains far from realization. In this light, Meaney and Mounk (2014, p. 24) lament that “(d)emocracy, as we know it in the modern world, is based on a peculiar compromise...Every few years, the citizens of modern democracies make their way to the polls to cast their votes for a limited set of candidates. Once they have acquitted themselves of this duty, their elected representatives take over. In the daily functioning of democracy, the public is marginal.”
- In recent years there have been important initiatives to restore peoples' sovereignty. One strong emphasis is on collaborative democracy, on which Bingham et al (2005, p. 555) write: “Citizens can and must play an important role in public policy and decision making. Citizens have the right to decide what is important to them and how they can best achieve their objectives...Public administration practitioners and scholars must reengage the public in governance, recognize the special duty we have to citizens, and move our research and teaching agendas in a direction that supports these new governance processes to address the fundamental imperatives of democracy.” Direct democracy is also increasingly being introduced in the happiest countries in the world. Frey (2003) suggest that direct democracy reinstates the balance of power in the hands of the people and is a useful complement to parliaments and representative democracy

The happiest countries trust human nature

- Ancient Indian traditions as exemplified in the Upanishads recognize the inherent goodness and blissful nature of humanity, and that life's fulfillment lies in realizing the divine, and divine happiness within us (Basham, 1963)
- Research today shows that the presence of governmental trust in people is a crucial pre-requisite of well-being and development, and that trust begets trust (see Fehr, 2009). Studies in the field of behavioral psychology shows that humans are naturally cooperative, but that cooperation is the intuitive response only for those who regularly engage in interactions where this behavior is rewarded (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientists-probe-human-nature-and-discover-we-are-good-after-all/>). This means that the right institutional environment can foster peoples' goodness (see Ryan and Deci, 2001 on self determination theory)
- In a classic piece on the principles to consider while designing the legal system (studying the example of Switzerland) Frey (1997) writes: "A constitution designed for knaves, or even for purely self-interested citizens, tends to crowd out civic virtues. As a result, the citizens exploit all legal opportunities to the fullest and the constitution is less observed. The effort to constrain citizens constitutionally may thus lead to a perverse result. Although a constitution, and more generally public laws and regulations, must check against knaves and prevent the exploitation of the citizenry by free riders and by professional politicians, it should also support civic virtues. The general spirit of the law, including specific rules, should acknowledge the citizens' basic goodwill. The establishment of a trusting constitution does not automatically produce high civic virtues. This is only the case if the constitution is considered to be fair and productive, and hence is widely accepted. An important prerequisite for a trusting constitution is that it gives citizens extensive participation rights (p. 1044)...Civic virtue is bolstered if the public laws convey the notion that citizens are trusted. Such trust is reflected in extensive democratic participation possibilities (condition 1). Citizens are given the freedom to express themselves, to be heard by the politicians and public officials, and to carry out discussions with them. The basic notion enshrined in the constitution that citizens are on average, and in general, reasonable human beings thus generates a crowding-in effect of civic virtue. This implies, however, that interventions constraining citizens are mild because according to condition 2, the crowding-out effect is strong in this case...Another sign of distrust towards the citizens is also enshrined in a constitution where the government is given great power to intervene in the economy and society, and where little room is left to the individuals to act on their own. Controls by bureaucracy and police are then extensive, and no citizen is taken to be trustworthy. The burden of the proof to have acted correctly lies with the individual citizen while the public authority is considered to be correct a priori. Such a distrustful constitution undermines the citizens' civic virtue. They respond by taking full advantage of all opportunities and by breaking the constitution and its laws whenever they expect to do so at low cost, and the political system is characterised by high transaction costs and low productivity. A vicious cycle of progressively lower civic virtue and increasing distrust by the rulers may lead to general cynicism. Such a development has occurred in many communist countries and still exists in totalitarian systems. Citizens may be unwilling to cooperate with the state in many other ways, e.g. by refusing to support projects in the national interest. Distrustful public laws also favour tax evasion, i.e. citizens make an effort to minimise their tax burden by illegitimate or illegal action...constitution must thus reflect trust towards citizens and politicians in order to safeguard their civic virtue, and at the same time put limits on politicians in order to prevent them from exploiting the ordinary citizens. In so far as the ordinary citizens are given rights to reverse decisions taken (via referenda), and initiate laws opposed by the professional politicians (via initiatives), both goals can be achieved at the same time." (p. 1048-49, emphasis added)

The happiest countries listen to peoples' "reasonable" voice in fostering their happiness

- The happiness perspective to governance recognizes peoples' sovereignty and that government's main role is ensuring peoples' happiness based on their voice (and not as some officials prescribe it), and this is an essential component of governments in Switzerland, the UK, USA, etc
- This voice of the people is derived from feedback mechanisms, experimental settings, surveys, direct democracy mechanisms, etc (WHR, 2012, 2013, 2015) and takes the following practical forms:
- ✓ At a very basic level, the happiness approach may involve **governments asking themselves while designing public policies** whether these will lead to peoples' happiness
- ✓ **Another approach is to focus on happiness factors that have been identified empirically**, e.g. freedom, security, good education and healthcare systems, etc
- ✓ A third approach may be that followed by **Bhutan**, which uses data from its Gross National Happiness (GNH) survey to identify areas of weakness (and strengths) identified by the people in the 9 happiness domains such as education, health, good governance, etc, and then focusing attention and resources on those areas needing attention
- ✓ **The World Happiness Report 2015** (p. 77) meanwhile suggests a fourth policy approach that involves ranking all possible policies in terms of the extra happiness that they generate per dollar of expenditure. Starting with the most effective and then working down, policy makers can then undertake as many policies as it is possible to do until the total money available is exhausted
- ✓ Finally, **governments can encourage people to foster their own inner happiness** by adopting a positive life attitude and activities. Governments can also make mental healthcare more accessible to people to help them in this direction (see Bok, 2011; Thin, 2012)
- **Public discussion and introspection** on happiness are crucial for people to discover ways in which societal happiness can be achieved (see the works of Juergen Habermas)
- Very importantly, this approach also realizes that the voice of the people can sometimes turn unreasonable, so in such cases, governments, parliaments and courts still retain the power to overrule them via a system of checks and balances (see Frey, 2003)

3) Important governance values of the happiest countries

The happiest countries value peoples' freedom

- The World Happiness Report finds that **freedom to make life choices is one of the key determinants of happiness**. The happiest countries have extensive freedoms (see <http://www.heritage.org/index/>), and free markets building on liberal philosophy, and are also the best places to do business according to Forbes (<http://www.forbes.com/best-countries-for-business/>).
- According to Inglehart et al (2008), regression analyses suggest that the extent to which a society allows free choice has a major impact on happiness. Since 1981, according to the authors, **economic development, democratization, and increasing social tolerance have increased the extent to which people perceive that they have free choice**, and this in turn has led to higher levels of happiness around the world. The basic idea behind this shift in life strategies is the reduction in level of external authority and maximization of individual autonomy
- In this light, **the human development model proposed by Welzel et al (2003) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) proposes that human development shifts focus from the pursuit of happiness through economic means to a broader pursuit of happiness brought about by maximizing free choice in all realms of life**. This belief that one has free choice and control over one's life is closely linked with happiness (following Johnson and Krueger, 2006), and this link seems to be universal. Happiness is linked with people's sense of freedom across all major cultural zones (following Inglehart and Welzel, 2005, p. 140) and in many societies people value free choice as much as they value economic security (Sen, 2001). Furthermore according to Inglehart et al (2008) the emphasis on freedom increases with rising economic security.
- **The field of psychology and especially self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) also finds positive effects of freedom and self-determination on intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being**. Based on insights from self-determination theory, Moller et al (2006) argue for policy initiatives based on fostering autonomous, as opposed to controlled, motivation for change.
- Amartya Sen's (1999) research meanwhile shows that in cultures where relative freedoms have been fostered, there has been an increase both in the quality of life as well as economic growth.

The happiest countries value empowerment

- All men (people) are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next...that I desire for all men ~ Emperor Ashoka in the Kalinga Rock Edicts
- Argyle (2013) argues that while it is often assumed that one of the main goals of government is to make the population richer, other goals are also recognized such as health and education. If happiness were to become the goal of governments, they would give some priority to leisure facilities, and to training especially for people from the working class. Governments would focus on reducing unemployment and to increasing job satisfaction. Another focus area would be enhancing social relationships by the provision of social skills training, more marriage guidance, and more care for the socially isolated
- Modern day liberalism attempts to find a balance between maximizing freedom for the people and actively empowering and adding value to their lives. This balance is highlighted by the distinction between positive and negative liberty. According to Gaus et al (2015): “(f)or Berlin and those who follow him, then, the heart of liberty is the absence of coercion by others; consequently, the liberal state's commitment to protecting liberty is, essentially, the job of ensuring that citizens do not coerce each other without compelling justification. Positive liberty meanwhile has implications on empowering people with the capacity to act, and involves issues such as the easy availability of education.”
- The happiest countries not only score high on freedoms, but also offer reasonable social security nets to support that have failed to succeed in the free markets, building on their social democratic philosophy. They also have outstanding human rights, civil liberties and political rights records (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/table-scores>) and provide high quality social and other infrastructure with responsible finances. The experience of countries that have been able to simultaneously achieve consistently high levels of economic growth together with rise in key development indicators suggest that these countries benefited simultaneously from astute government intervention of the economy together with a general faith in free markets. Government has stepped in when markets have failed (Todaro and Smith, 2006)

The happiest countries value an effective but humane law and order environment

- Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love. ~ Martin Luther King Jr
- An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- You are that which you wish to harm. ~ Bhagwan Mahavira
- People respond in accordance to how you relate to them. If you approach them on the basis of violence, that's how they will react. But if you say, we want peace, we want stability, we can then do a lot of things that will contribute towards the progress of our society ~ President Nelson Mandela
- The happiest countries incorporate a humane, restorative attitude in their criminal justice systems to deal with individuals that misuse the freedom and empowerment inherent in the system
- The approach of restorative justice has its roots in ancient traditions, with the Vedic Hindus considering "he who atones is forgiven" (following Weitekamp 1989). Lord Woolf, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, meanwhile suggested that the punitive approach of imposing ever stronger jail sentences had failed, and called for a more "holistic" approach to justice, with community-based penalties, restorative justice, drug treatment and rehabilitation (quoted in Sherman, 2003). Restorative justice takes a balanced view of the interests of victims, the community as well as offenders, rather than being driven by emotional feelings of revenge. It is also grounded in research which shows that long incarcerations actually lead to an increase in future propensity to commit crime, while rehabilitative techniques such as counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy lead to reforming offenders (see McGuire, 2003; Sullivan and Tifft, 2007)
- Europe has been leading the way in restorative reform in the criminal justice system world. For instance, the USA, despite having 271 times more police officers, has a 53% higher crime rate than the Netherlands¹, which also recently closed 19 prison facilities². Norway's Bastoy prison meanwhile, where prisoners live in relatively comfortable conditions, and the focus is on their training and rehabilitation, has by far the lowest reoffending rate in Europe.⁴

¹ <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/compare/Netherlands/United-States/Crime> ² <http://www.trueactivist.com/netherlands-closing-19-prisons-due-to-lack-of-criminal>

⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/25/norwegian-prison-inmates-treated-like-people>

4) Governance actions in the happiest countries

The happiest countries reinvent government

- Manage a great nation as you would cook a delicate fish. To govern men in accord with nature, it is best to be restrained. ~ Lao Tze
- Much of the literature on good governance focuses on increasing efficiency and effectiveness of government. Efficiency and effectiveness are in fact two basic conditions for organizational success. Ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in government include using horizontal collaboration, root cause analysis, total quality management and business process reengineering to reduce red tape and increase productivity in government
- However, there are two more areas that are of crucial importance in ensuring good governance for the happiness of the people. These are people-centeredness and empathy in government, without which government would lack the vision and the heart necessary for ensuring peoples' well-being. These two qualities build on the people-focused, compassionate philosophy of the happiest countries, and distinguish the happiest countries from the rest, and offer the maximum potential for government reinvention even in developed countries
- Democracy is about the people, so it is important for government to be people-centered, that is keep the well-being of the people at the center-point of public policy. This can be done by mechanisms such as collaborative governance, introducing direct democracy, incorporating the voice of the people and their feedback into policy-making, etc
- Finally, empathy, or government figuratively putting itself in the shoes of the people and caring and thinking about the people is an important government quality. This can be done by removing “pain-points” in government processes, becoming more “friend or family-like” towards people, re-examining the penal system to focus more on reforming and reintegrating deviants, etc

The happiest countries create happiness policies

- Happiness policies refer to public policies made by governments to foster happiness of the people, that follow the “reasonable” **voice of the people** on what makes them happy. Governments can foster **both inner and outer happiness** in people, and happiness policies in the happiest countries build on the values of freedom, empowerment and humane law and order
- The **Government of Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness** for instance lays importance not just on material well-being, but also on enjoying other things like community, culture, knowledge and wisdom, governance, health, spirituality and psychological welfare, harmony with nature, and a balanced use of time (<http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/>)
- Experience shows that happiness is best nurtured via a **holistic approach** that combines economic, social and environmental objectives (WHR 2016). The **OECD (2015) and European Union** (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Quality_of_life_indicators) focus on the following happiness policy areas, which could act as templates for other governments:

OECD	European Union Eurostat
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Income and wealth❖ Jobs and earnings❖ Housing conditions❖ Health status❖ Work-life balance❖ Education and skills❖ Social connections❖ Civic engagement and governance❖ Environment quality❖ Personal security❖ Subjective well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Material living conditions❖ Productive or main activity❖ Health❖ Education❖ Leisure and social interactions❖ Economic and physical safety❖ Governance and basic rights❖ Natural and living environment❖ Overall experience of life

The happiest countries co-create happiness with people

- Governments cannot foster happiness without peoples' active involvement, and in fact by involving people governments can encourage the inherent motivation of people for doing good and being altruistic
- Happiness research also shows us that **altruism and caring for the well-being of others brings happiness both to the person offering the care and to the person being cared for.** Hence government and people can work together in fostering happiness in a win-win relationship (WHR, 2015)
- In this light Bok (2010, pp. 210-211, emphasis added) explains: “People must also have a better appreciation of the causes of their own happiness and dissatisfaction. **Government cannot assume this responsibility for them.** In a democracy, public officials have only a limited power to increase well-being.”
- The World Happiness Report (2015, pp. 145-146) argues that solutions to current problems facing us cannot just arise from institutions left to themselves, if citizens and corporations remain short-sighted and passive. **Active participation of citizens in their economic activities and of companies in the areas of social and environmental responsibility is highly important in overcoming current challenges.** It is in the primary interest of institutional players to design proper rules to foster the development of civic and corporate virtue
- Similarly, Duncan (2013) elaborates that “Appropriate public policies can increase the average level of subjective well-being, and it is conceivable that individuals, with greater knowledge of the social mechanisms governing their lives, might themselves deliberately choose courses of action that would permanently improve their happiness (Easterlin 2003a).”
- **The happiest countries build on their people-focused governance philosophy to involve people and communities with government to foster happiness.** Countries such as Switzerland, Denmark etc have a vibrant voluntary sector, with people contributing in terms of time and resources to diverse activities such as caring for elders and families with young children, helping the disadvantaged, drug addicts, etc

Additional insights on good governance

- In the last two decades there have been several new approaches to good governance, including the New Public Management initiative. The **United Nations Development Program** (UNDP, 1997) meanwhile outlines the following characteristics of good governance: Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus Orientation, Equity, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Accountability, Strategic Vision
- Osborne and Gaebler (1992, pp. 19-20) in Dingwall and Strangleman (2005) suggest ten **“essential principles” of “reinvented” governments**: “Entrepreneurial governments promote *competition* between service providers. They *empower* citizens by pushing control out of the bureaucracy, into the community. They measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on *outcomes*. They are driven by their goals – their *missions* – not by their rules and regulations. They redefine their clients as *customers* and offer them choices...they *prevent* problems before they emerge, rather than simply offering services afterward. They put their energies into *earning* money, not simply spending it. They *decentralize* authority, embracing participatory management. They prefer *market* mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And the focus not simply on providing public services but on *catalyzing* all sectors – public, private and voluntary – into action to solve the community’s problems.”
- **The UK Government’s citizens charter** introduced under PM John Major has the following basic principles: 1) Information and openness, 2) Choice, 3) Courtesy and helpfulness, 4) Well-publicized complaints procedures, 5) Value for money (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2009b following HMSO, 1991)
- The happiest countries are increasingly using pay for performance incentive systems at the individual and collective levels for government employees (<http://www.oecd.org/governance/pem/35117916.pdf>), which has positive benefits in aligning interests of the people that are being served with that of government. This could potentially be extended to include rewarding for fostering happiness

Additional insights on how to design excellent organizations

- The literature on reinventing governments draws much from the literature on organizational excellence in the private sector. Oswal et al (2014) make an comprehensive review of the literature on organizational variables fostering excellence. Following this study (which was primarily focused on excellence in the private sector), a framework for redesigning government could include:
- Optimizing **government structure** by bringing about a better balance between centralization and decentralization; greater professionalization and use of best-practices; and more use of integrative, cross-functional and cross-departmental teams for better project coordination where government structure is concerned
- Best practices in **government processes** including bringing about operational excellence; world class quality; innovation and learning; customer delight with a optimal marketing approach; an entrepreneurial spirit in government; integration of government tasks with use of IT and other tools; and an ability in government to renew itself and keep up-to-date with the changing requirements of time
- Further, **people policies** in government focusing on better selection; development and training; appraisal and reward systems; and career planning for government employees
- **Transformational and enlightened leadership**
- Finally, governments can build an **organizational culture** that promotes the self-efficacy of its employees; brings about normative integration around ideas such as people-centeredness, empathy and efficiency and effectiveness; and a workplace environment that makes it attractive for the brightest minds to consider working for the government

Additional insights on happiness in government environments

- Only a happy person can be a ground for others' happiness. ~ Osho
- Workplace environments can play a key role in making employees happier, and employee happiness is related to a range of positive consequences including higher creativity, proactivity, reduced turnover, conflict and stress, and higher performance and customer satisfaction (see Fisher, 2010 for an overview)
- Research however shows that time spent at work is typically not associated with happiness (see Kahnemann et al, 2004), and government employees are less happy than their private counterparts (<http://fortune.com/2015/12/08/government-workers-satisfaction/>)
- In the government context, happier employees can however lead to better government services, increase in people's trust in government and a general positive contagion effect, and is thus highly desirable
- On increasing workplace happiness, Ryan and Deci (2010) propose that when three innate psychological needs in people are satisfied – competence, autonomy, and relatedness – it leads to increased self-motivation and well-being at the workplace. The Great Place to Work Institute meanwhile suggests that employees are happiest when they "trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with." (<http://www.greatplacetowork.com>)
- Further, according to Fisher (2010) organizations can increase happiness at the workplace by: Creating a healthy, respectful, and supportive organizational culture; Supplying competent leadership at all levels; Providing fair treatment, security, and recognition; Designing jobs to be interesting, challenging, autonomous, and rich in feedback; Facilitating skill development to improve competence and allow growth; Selecting for person-organization and person-job fit; Enhancing fit through the use of realistic job previews and socialization practices; Reducing minor hassles and increase daily uplifts; Persuading employees to reframe a current less-than-ideal work environment as acceptable; Adopting high performance work practices

Additional insights from behavioral economics

- Behavioral economics draws on psychological sciences and argues that the “rational man” assumption of neoclassical economics has shortcomings, and that most people do not have the ability or time to evaluate all available options before arriving at optimum decisions. People typically act out of biases and heuristics, which while advantageous in making fast decisions, may also be counterproductive to their own interests
- In this light, Thaler and Sunstein in their influential book “Nudge” (2008) advocate “**libertarian paternalism**”, which argues that while in general, people should be free to do what they like, and opt out of undesirable arrangements if they want to, it is legitimate for policy makers to try and influence people's behavior to make their lives longer, healthier, and better
- **Policy makers are using insights from behavioral economics to optimise public policies and help make people aware of behavioral shortcomings in countries such as the UK, USA, etc**
- Examples of insights from behavioral economics that can enriched policy-making include:
 - ✓ **Simplifying government procedures and forms** to make them understandable and easily followable for people. Creating incentives for good behavior and two-way feedback systems
 - ✓ **Intelligently making people aware of lifestyle options that are in the interests of their well-being**, e.g. eating healthy food, exercising, meditating, going green, etc
 - ✓ Build on peoples’ desire for social approval by **rewarding socially positive activities like planting trees, teaching underprivileged children, etc with public recognition and awards**
 - ✓ **Reducing the costs of making mistakes to promote economic growth** – for instance entrepreneurs are needed to make fast decisions based on limited available information (see Busenitz and Barney, 1997). If the legal environment penalizes entrepreneurs harshly for making mistakes in good faith, they will be afraid to take initiative in the first place (see Gray, 1994), and economic development will suffer
 - ✓ **Questioning shortcomings in social thinking and bringing people together for positive action**

5) Societal cultural values in the happiest countries

Societal culture and happiness

- Hofstede et al (1997) describe culture as “software of the mind”. Culture according to the authors consists of patterns of thinking, feeling and acting or “mental programs” acquired during a person’s lifetime but mainly in childhood. Changing these patterns of thinking, acting and feeling, when they are dysfunctional, require unlearning before new patterns can be learnt
- In the happiness context, extensive research shows that cultural values affect how happy people are (Exton et al, 2015; Joshanloo, 2014; Scollon et al, 2004; Suh, 2000). For instance, the Gallup poll showed Latin American countries, despite relatively difficult conditions socially, economically and politically rank highest on how happily they “live” their life through experiences such as smiling and laughing, enjoyment and feeling treated with respect (<http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/182843/happiest-people-world-swiss-latin-americans.aspx>)
- Governments led by transformational leadership can work with people in changing negative cultures by questioning old assumptions and creating the right values, to create a culture of happiness, as seen in the next slide. A change in peoples’ thinking towards a happiness perspective can thus transform governance and society
- In describing this mechanism of cultural change via transformations in organizations, Schein (2004) explains that such change is led by a single strong leader or a team of change agents. Turnarounds involve all organizational members in order to make the problematic elements of the old culture clear to everyone. New assumptions are then developed through a process of cognitive redefinition through the medium of teaching, coaching, changing processes and structures where necessary, constantly giving attention to and rewarding instances of learning of the new ways, and creating new stories, slogans, myths and rituals to drive people into adopting the new behaviors

The happiest countries have a societal culture of happiness

- **Cultural values** such as power distance, humane orientation, gender inequality etc **can hinder/foster happiness** and are extremely important in determining whether other measures to foster happiness are successful or not (Ye et al, 2015 – see table below)
- Ye et al found that **the combined contribution of culture variables accounts for 91.8 % of happiness, compared to** the 9.2% contribution of the six traditional variables including income, education, etc. **The biggest inhibitor of happiness is high power distance (or hierarchical structure of society) and gender inequality**
- Governments can work with people to question assumptions behind current cultural values that are inimical to happiness to transform them
- **The happiest countries have a “culture of happiness” and rank favorably on the below cultural indices fostering happiness..**

Culture Indices (GLOBE Indices)	Practical example of the index	Effect on happiness
1. In-group collectivism (ING)	Thinking of narrow caste, family interests	-
2. Institutional collectivism (INC)	Thinking of national interest	+
3. Power distance (PDI)	Hierarchical, feudalistic structures	-
4. Gender egalitarianism (GEI)	Discrimination against women	+
5. Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)	Excessive risk avoidance, bureaucratic	-
6. Assertiveness (AOI)	Aggressive, dominating behavior	-
7. Future orientation (FOI)	Saving for the future, green thinking	+
8. Humane orientation (HOI)	Helpfulness, forgiveness of mistakes	+
9. Performance orientation (POI)	Success is celebrated in society	+

PART 3: FOSTERING HAPPINESS LEADS TO OVERALL DEVELOPMENT, AND IDEAS FOR INDIA

Good governance model for peoples' happiness

The happiest countries foster peoples' inner and outer happiness. In addition they have the right institutional environment for happiness – this includes a political system that is 1) high income social democratic liberal (or in rare cases also benign autocratic) with healthy national pride 2) humane, compassionate and innovative 3) and having transformational leadership that works for peoples' happiness

Their people-focused governance philosophy 1) recognizes peoples' sovereignty 2) trusts human nature and 3) realizes the importance of listening to peoples' "reasonable" voice in fostering their happiness

THIS REFLECTS IN 3 KEY GOOD GOVERNANCE VALUES: FREEDOM + EMPOWERMENT + EFFECTIVE BUT HUMANE LAW & ORDER ENVIRONMENT

They foster peoples' inner and outer happiness with 3 good governance actions for happiness:

- 1) Reinventing government to make it efficient and effective, empathic and people-centered
- 2) Creating public policies for happiness to foster
- 3) Closely working with people to co-create happiness

They work with people to create a Culture of Happiness with the following values:

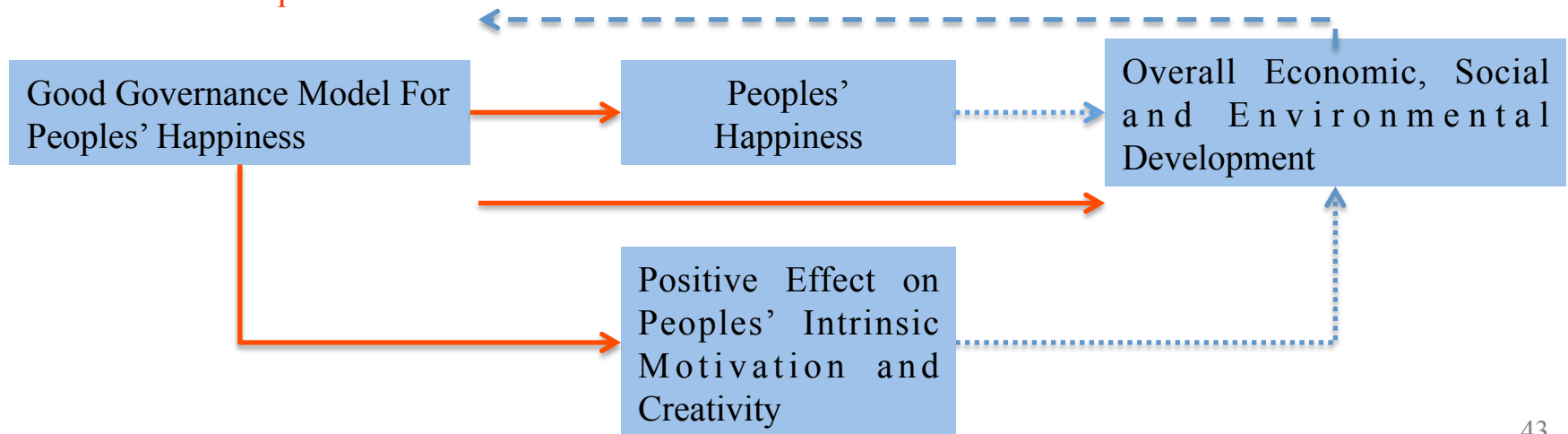
- 1) Less In-group collectivism
- 2) Institutional collectivism
- 3) Less Power distance
- 4) Gender egalitarianism
- 5) Less Uncertainty avoidance
- 6) Less Assertiveness
- 7) Future orientation
- 8) Humane orientation
- 9) Performance orientation

Happiness +
→ Overall
Development

Positive feedback loops

Fostering happiness also leads to overall development

- The happiest countries are typically **social democratic and liberal**. The experience of the last two centuries shows that liberal democracies have emerged as the most economically advanced and wealthy countries in the world
- **The happiest countries listen to the voice of the people, which supports balanced economic, social and environmental development (because these things make people happy)**. Furthermore, research shows that happy people are more likely to enjoy career success, and care for the environment and for the welfare of others, leading to overall development via a **1st feedback loop**. Additionally, the people-centered governance philosophy, freedom enhancing values, government focused on peoples' welfare, and progressive societal cultures also support peoples' intrinsic motivation to do good and help create social capital (see Helliwell and Putnam, 2004; Inglehart et al, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000 for more on this), that lead also to people-driven development via a **2nd feedback loop**, and act as disincentives for corruption, red-tape, free-riding, etc. People on their own thus complement government efforts at good governance and creating societal good without the need for outside control or coercion (OECD, 2013). Finally, this social, economic and environmental development feeds back into the 3 pillars of good governance, leading to an overall spiral of happiness, via a **3rd feedback loop**





Happiness in the happiest country: Switzerland



- Switzerland was ranked the happiest country in the world in the World Happiness Report 2015. Several factors help explain this high ranking as below:
- Switzerland is the 4th richest country in the world according to the World Bank. It offers an exceptional quality of life, with Swiss cities ranking amongst the best cities in the world to live in (<https://www.imercer.com/content/quality-of-living.aspx>)
- Switzerland ranks No. 1 in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15 and also in their Sustainability-Adjusted Rankings (<http://www.weforum.org>). It also is one of the least corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International
- Switzerland's direct democracy means citizens are the ultimate sovereigns, and not only can choose their representatives, but also take an initiative in introducing new legislation or rejecting laws they do not agree with. About Swiss federalism, Fossedal (2002, p. 63) writes: “(it) does not merely mean a division of power in which cantons or even communities enjoy significant sovereignty and responsibility. (It) stretches down to the individual who sits on the school board, or helps run the library – largely volunteer activities in all but the largest Swiss communities...The Swiss vote more, volunteer more – in short they govern more.”
- Switzerland has excellent, accessible public and social infrastructure, and Swiss government is perceived as efficient and effective and people-centered, not over-bureaucratic, and responding flexibly to individual needs with empathy. This is not just a cultural trait of the Swiss, but people vote on issues at the municipal, state and federal level and actually have the power to substantially correct government that is not to their liking
- Swiss people trust government, and also feel responsible for their country's welfare and volunteer a lot, and Swiss culture is courteous, egalitarian, humane-, consensus-, performance- and community-oriented, while simultaneously respectful of individual freedom of choice

Happiness in India – Past, present and future

- The aim of government and society in the golden age of ancient India was to create conditions for people to flourish in four areas of life – Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness), Kama (pleasure), and Moksha (enlightenment). Flourishing in these four areas brought happiness
- This golden age was characterized by both material and spiritual richness together with a liberal atmosphere of freedom, empowerment and a efficient but humane law and order environment. The Chinese traveller and historian Fa Xien visited India in the time of Guptas writes: “The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the grain from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances (of each case).”*
- Things however deteriorated rapidly following numerous foreign invasions and British rule. Factors explaining India’s poor ranking today include deficient economic and social development, divisions amongst people, and a governance system historically based on a colonial and Soviet-era controlling mentality
- Government is part of the problem today, with poor governance negatively affecting most peoples’ lives from the cradle to the grave. This is however changing fast for the better with PM Narendra Modi’s drive for good governance
- The village of Ralegan Siddhi in western India has also shown how people-centered policies can lead to happiness and development, and was named model village by the World Bank
- India can however reemerge as a world leader or “Jagat Guru” in good governance by leveraging its ancient wisdom with modern insights on good governance

• *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms: Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa- Hsien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline, by Fa- Hsien, Translator: James Legge Release Date: March 28, 2006 [EBook #2124

Fostering happiness in India – Ideas I

- **Make government more people-centered with:**
 - Letting the “reasonable” voice of the people on what makes them happy guide public policy and only stepping in if this is leading to undesirable outcomes. Fostering direct democracy mechanisms and collaborative governance
 - Enabling citizen charters, right to quality of public services, grievance redressal, citizen-feedback linked incentive systems
 - Trusting people and their goodness and encouraging their intrinsic motivation to flourish rather than controlling them with threats
- **Make government more effective and efficient with use of tools such as:**
 - Horizontal collaboration, root cause analysis, total quality management and business process reengineering to reduce red tape and increase productivity in government
 - Working for the happiness of government employees, for their well-being, and also because happy employees will further lead to better government services
 - Simplification and review of rules and laws to promote “ease of life” and “ease of doing business”. Introduce meritocracy in government
- **Introduce empathy in government with ideas like:**
 - Removing “pain-points” in government processes and making them delightful for people, rather than fearful or frustrating
 - Becoming more “friend or family-like” towards people i.e. primarily supportive and caring but firm when societal happiness is threatened by wrong-doers
 - Re-examining the possibility of making the law and order environment more humane and effective and focusing more on reforming and reintegrating deviants, as Holland, Switzerland, etc have successfully shown

Fostering happiness in India – Ideas 2



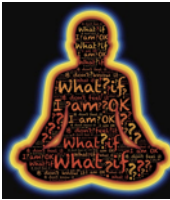
- Explore surveys, feedback and direct democracy mechanisms to know the voice of the people and “happiness-deficit” areas. Leverage India’s IT skills to learn from peoples’ voice about what makes them happy and use modern insights on good governance innovatively for peoples’ happiness
- Transform India to a free market economy with a well-functioning social security net. The top-20 happiest countries in the world (WHR 2015) all have free markets with reasonably good social security systems
- Create empowering conditions for farmers including education, technology, marketing flexibility and infrastructure support. Farmers make up around 50% of India’s population but only earn 15% of India’s GDP
- Trust entrepreneurs and workers as partners in India’s growth. Remove the antagonistic and suspicious mentality in government against business. Remove the plethora of regulation that shackles industry and proceed on the basis of trust and gratitude towards this sector. Without this, India’s industrial progress is impossible
- Increase people-centeredness by bringing accountability and world-class quality to public infrastructure including education, healthcare and physical infrastructure systems with investments and benchmarking
- Bring a culture of caring and humanity in government. Take institutional measures to tackle the possibility of government apathy, police violence, etc. Over regulation and harsh laws can lead to corruption, harassment of people, and reduce societal trust and create social insecurity, if laws are misused by law-enforcement. Implement pay-for-performance components for government employees linked to peoples’ happiness
- Improve overall quality of life in cities and also rural areas



Fostering happiness in India – Ideas 3



- Focus on **safety and well-being of women and gender equality**, via education, technology like CCTV cameras, and societal introspection
- **Change the cultural mentality of treating love as a sin.** Love and loving relationships are one of the biggest contributors of happiness. One can learn a lot from ancient Indian culture on this
- Make India's **natural environment bloom again**, by creating sensitivity amongst people and especially children, and giving local people the opportunity to benefit from its conservation. Offer symbolic awards to people who plant trees
- **Educate people about mental health and inner skills** such as meditation, yoga, healthy activities, right life-attitude, etc. These inner factors account for upto 80% of peoples' happiness and are necessary for "responsible" happiness to foster
- **Involve and incentivize people with recognition for participation in voluntary projects like community education, rural development, etc.** Volunteering brings happiness to both parties, and people power can be channelized for nation building
- **Extend the happiness perspective to international relations creating win-win partnerships with a caring attitude**, and highlighting India's soft power and traditions reflected in the Sanskrit saying "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", or that the whole world is one family
- **Work with the media to remove the feeling of aggression and cynicism in society and also extend the spirit of compassion to the political arena**, which can help bring political parties together for the happiness of the people
- **Rediscover India's ancient cultural and spiritual heritage** that has taught the world about enlightenment, happiness and peoples' interconnectedness, and leverage this with modern knowledge of good governance to create a truly happy society





Concluding remarks



- The happiness perspective to governance presented in this study is based on sound theoretical insights, and empirical foundations of the experience of the happiest countries in the world, and offers the following lesson: **Governments are advised to listen to peoples' reasonable voice in fostering their inner and outer happiness and doing so will not just bring what matters most to people – their happiness, but also lead to overall development**
- **It is grounded in ancient wisdom and modern science** of psychology, good governance, and directly aims at what the Constitutions of most modern democracies attempt to bring about – the happiness and the well-being of the people
- **It fosters economic, social and environmental progress with public participation.** This progress arises not so much from the grand plans of experts and planners, but from the “invisible hand” of the intrinsic motivation in people, because progress in these areas make people happy
- In using insights from behavioral economics and psychology on what institutional conditions foster peoples' intrinsic motivation to do good, the happiness perspective offers an **intelligent solution to problems such as corruption and red tape**, and leads to **increased trust** in people and with government
- In involving people in the creation of happiness, it **brings people together** under this common goal, and with its humane orientation can **heal societal wounds**
- The happiness perspective recognizes that both outer material and inner psychological / spiritual sources of happiness are necessary conditions for happiness to foster. This wisdom is inherent in India's cultural traditions. By rediscovering these traditions and values, Indian society can transform itself to a truly happy and successful society and India can emerge as a true “Jagat Guru” on good governance for peoples' happiness

Suggestions for future research

- Given the integrative scope of this study, we have highlighted individual aspects of the relationship between government and peoples' happiness. **Future researchers can add to the depth of insights on the various areas highlighted in this study**
- Future researchers could also make use of **different methodologies** such as cross-case qualitative analysis and large-scale interviews, as well as quantitative methodologies based on surveys and data analysis to add to these findings
- Given the promise it holds in delivering what matters most to people, i.e. their happiness, governments would be well-advised to use a “happiness lens” to vet important policy decisions and devote resources to increase our knowledge on the theory and practice of good governance for peoples' happiness

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Thank you

I believe a happiness perspective can radically transform government and lead to sustained well-being for people. I would be very happy to hear your views at:

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In gratitude to “Simba” – the happiest being in the world I know