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## **Scrap GDP in favour of Gross National Happiness**

JUG SURAIYA

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GNH — Gross National Happiness — is a better indicator of national development than GDP, which doesn't really take into account the overall well-being of the people. As for all those who bicker over the word happiness and describe it to be a purely subjective state of being, this really amounts to selfishness.

There is such a thing as common or public good, and it is indeed the task of governments to achieve that for its citizens. America's Founding Fathers took this richer meaning of the word happiness, and included the pursuit of happiness as a right. Take Bhutan's example.

The reigning monarch in 1972 decided that instead of judging his tiny nation's growth by GDP alone, it would use GNH instead. The parameters for achieving GNH were environmental preservation, cultural promotion, free time with family, access to healthcare and good governance.

The king went about implementing policies and programmes like free healthcare and education, which would help accomplish all of the above. If life expectancy can be taken to be one valid indicator of the success of GNH, then Bhutan has been a roaring success. From 1984 to 1998, life expectancy has increased by 19 years.

There are other tangible indicators where the country has done well. Gross enrolment rate in primary schools has reached 72%, and the literacy rate has grown from 17% to 47.5%. Says Stefan Priesner of the UNDP, who has written a paper on GNH for Johns Hopkins, "It is widely recognised that Bhutan has fared well in terms of development".

He goes on to say that higher GNH has "limited the social, cultural, ecological and human costs" of development. Bhutan has shown that people-centric development is a workable economic model.

As Bertrand Russell put it, "Man needs, for his happiness, not only the enjoyment of this or that, but hope and enterprise and change". GNH is a multi-dimensional measure that should take the place of GDP.