

Human Happiness rests on sociological and psychological factors than economic growth

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ABSTRACT - Pursuit of happiness is perceived as highest goal of human being. Although happiness is subjective and its dimension and expression varies from person to person. It's mostly confused with momentary pleasure and gratification of senses. But it has a greater significance in human life. Life in safe environment, free from mental anxiety and assurance of abundance life sustaining resources can be source of joy for many. Rich people view it differently as they put more value to luxurious life with abundance of wealth, enormous estate, ownership of successful business venture and imperial aristocracy. Most of the time, economists are busy in calculating and analysing economic growth which portrays prosperity of the nation. But only economic growth doesn't ensure happiness of masses. If there's absence of trickle-down-effect and yawning income inequality, economic growth fails to ensure joyous life for majority of populace. That's why more emphasis is given on sustainable development and inclusive growth, so that poor people should not be left out in economic growth story. HDI also acts a pertinent index as it puts emphasis on human entitlement and achievement such as educational attainment, life span and standard of living. Happiness Index has gained importance significantly and considered to be more relevant than GDP growth rate. Ease of life index is equally important in Indian context for grasping human welfare in developing nation with high density of population and less of social security for inhabitants.

KEY WORDS: *Happiness, Security, Income level, Environment, Safety net, Welfare measure, Psychological aspect, Economic growth*

I. INTRODUCTION

Happiness is very elusive and ephemeral concept. It varies from person to person and highly subjective in nature, As it is related to human feelings and experience, it is difficult to measure, quantify, predict and compare. Idea of happiness for illiterate and educated will differ. Similarly, it varies with respect to age, gender, class, ethnicity and social standard. People from different backgrounds and walks of life define and specify happiness in various forms. But there could be some commonality factor such as fulfilment of basic needs and enough time for relaxation, refreshment and recreation. Happiness can't be expected in tension, stress and drudgery. Modern day slavery and work-bound existence is real anathema of happiness. World is progressing at faster pace. Technology is game changer for supersonic transformation. New technologies are changing the old paradigm and making things obsolete in lesser time. Although beneficial impacts are undeniable but it's putting strain on psychological balance of mankind. On the one hand digital divide is making deprived ones disgruntled and at the same time technological aggression and information overload making privileged one dystopian and distraught.

Deep seated class division and polarization of civil society are disturbing reality. They are persisting understatedly but discrimination and disproportionate treatment are facing ire of disadvantaged group to show that world should be more accepting and accommodative and happiness or prosperity should not be sole proprietorship of privileged class.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The chief objectives of the research paper are scripted below-

- i. To illustrate the significance of happiness in nation's progress and prosperity paradigm.
- ii. To highlight the imperative of psychological factor, social security and living status over economic growth in progressive nation.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Descriptive and analytical methods are followed to conduct the research operation on aforementioned topic. The concept of happiness is abstract and metaphysical at times. It is heavily debated and deliberated in academics, economic setting and social parlance. The navigation and

exploration of happiness centric welfare measure is most relevant, hard-pressed and time tested now. Secondary data, facts and information were collected and used. Study based approach had been followed to understand the nuances of happiness and factors necessary to make in consistent and continuous. Columns in business magazines, newspaper articles, web publications from authentic sources had been used to ascertain the validity of the behavioural economy-based concept. Comprehensive narrative had been given on concept, expanse of the subject matter, profound implication of happiness concern in an economy and its prospect in practical world. All the literatures are deeply analysed, assessed and interpreted to make sensible narrative and meaningful inference. Further research is feasible to elucidate the potentiality, status and prospect of happiness economy. Due to paucity of time survey method had been avoided but epistemological enquiry had been exercised to make the research extensive and outcome realistic.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the research article titled 'GDP Is Not a Measure of Human Well-Being' by Amit Kapoor and Bibek Debroy published in Harvard Business Review on October 04, 2019, authors mentioned about economic growth that boosted up standard of living across the economies. But they pointed out the fallacy of GDP per capita metric which fails to gauge societal wellbeing. It was stated that Ease of living Index would be a better indicator to figure out quality of life, economic potentiality of masses and sustainability factor. As per their analysis, externalities should be factored in GDP measure when environmental degradation, climate change and income inequality affecting disadvantaged group rather than richer group. It had been highlighted that GDP didn't provide income distribution across society and overlooked discontented masses and burgeoning polarisation. Request had been made to encapsulate digital medium and virtual platform which satisfies human needs in modern economy but misses out in GDP estimation.

In research article titled 'Does More Money Really Make Us More Happy?' by Elizabeth Dunn and Chris Courtney published in Harvard Business Review on September 14, 2020, authors referred about futility of money chasing or extravagant spending habit of people which doesn't help to gain happiness. It is verified through experiment that happiness doesn't come through accumulating material things. It is rather achieved through relishing special moments or through charitable work where one devotes himself or herself for social welfare. There is no qualm that wealthier people are happier but that would not necessarily mean one would get caught in mad rush of making money and lose precious time needed for rest, relaxation and refreshing experiences. The later would be detrimental for emotional and cognitive well-being.

In the article by Chris Patten titled 'A missing factor in measures of happiness' published in World Economic Forum on November 26, 2014, author endeavoured to find the secret of happiness and complimented modern technology for making life comforting and easy going. He stressed on the fact that more than money, sound health and congenial friends provide happiness. It is mentioned that plump bank balance and enviable job title falter to ameliorate happiness factor whereas mundane meaningful activities bring cheers to life. In his opinion world affairs and streaming news about virus outbreak, rise in militancy and military aggression can make us worried and anxious about our existence. The joy of happiness is perceived in hygiene and health which act as indicator of economic advancement and feeling of gratification.

In the research paper titled 'Consumption and Happiness' by Haining Wang, Zhiming Cheng and Russell Smyth published in the Journal of Development Studies, 2019 attempt had been made to establish relationship between relative consumption and happiness on the basis of panel data for China as a momentous developing country. It had been discovered that their consumption lead to contentment. It is also referred that consumption related to higher social connectivity and conspicuous one ensured higher degree of happiness. But it is also presented that person with lesser consumption in the group develop sordid mental status and deprivation has some negative influence in happiness. Expenses on material goods doesn't create any long-term happiness as it isolates person from saving and debt repayment obligation. Spending money on consumer durable goods and on jewellery or vehicle bring happiness as former makes life easy and later elevates status in the society.

In the article '4 lessons from Bhutan on the pursuit of happiness above GDP' published in World Economic Forum dated 3rd May, 2016 author Antonia Gawel pointed out balanced approach to economic progress of Bhutan with high Gross National Happiness (GHI) which prove to be inspiring model for rest of the world. The Himalayan kingdom continued to give due importance to GHI since 1972. The four significant components for Bhutan's development strategy were equitable society and sustainable development, preservation of environment, maintenance and proliferation of culture and assurance of upright governance. Bhutan remained chief signatory of COP21 Paris summit held in 2015 with 72% forest cover and conservation of assorted ecosystem. This small country believes in natural elegance, presence of greenery, impeccable governance, slow but predictable lifestyle, decency of culture and equal benefit from economic advancement which enriches life more than material avarice and mindless urbanization.

In the article 'These are the happiest countries in the world' by Briony Harris published in World Economic Forum

dated March 16, 2018, author had clearly mentioned about countries high on rank as per World Happiness Report 2018 and reasons behind their achievement. As commonality factors for Nordic nations to be high on happiness relied on safe, stable but progressive society. On top of it, trustworthiness of politician and corrupt free practices made the environment conducive. Although happiness is subjective, author referred about happiness measured through various factors such as kindness, honesty and integrity, freedom of choices, life expectancy, social cushion and per capita GDP. Decline in life expectancy, increase in income inequality and sliding faith in ruling incumbent might put the happiness on downward spiral. It is stated that a happy country create wellness for native and migrants alike.

IV. THE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HAPPINESS QUOTIENT

COVID 19 has inflicted heavy damage to the economy of the world and world got into worst recession in living history (Zeinab Badawi, 2020). People suffered immeasurable. Death of near and dear ones, social isolation, loss of job and income, scarcity of basic needs, hopelessness, mental stress, future uncertainty crippled human lives badly. Poverty, hunger and malnutrition went high. People across geography struggled for existence. Suffering was agonizing where safety net was infinitesimal and social security remained as alien concept. Happiness was torn apart in recent time for majority of people due to virus outbreak for which nation, government and people remained unprepared. Happiness comes with security of life, certainty of means of livelihood and consistency in supply of basic needs. Happiness in struggle for source of sustenance is far cry but people remain hopeful in economically challenged nation when government indulges in fair practices in administrative work, economic and commercial activities and shows intention to do development-oriented work, improvement in institutional facility and remain proactive in public welfare measure. COVID 19 has put majority of emerging markets and developing economies under severe economic distress. Lack of job opportunities and downsizing of business group would lead to higher unemployment and widened income inequality. Decade long progress of poverty reduction and enhancement of life expectancy would be in doldrums. In IMF study of June 2020 on Tele Workability measure across countries, it had been made clear that low wage earners are more vulnerable to job loss than high-income earners as skill deficiency and lack of enterprise amenability caused the impediment. Govt should concentrate on expansion on digital connectivity, better broadband service, internet connectivity and social inclusion measure through training program and job creation to assuage the hardship of weaker section of

society. Happiness would be distant dream for majority of masses post COVID scenario unless govt of LDC and emerging nations become concerned about training and education, healthcare, food security and job creation for employable workforce and welfare services for aging and dependent populace. Pandemic has laid bare social imbalance and polarised structure. The contrast came vivid in terms of access to park or green surrounding, availability of healthcare service, access to internet, broadband connectivity, job in digital medium, work from home opportunity and social security measure. When govt across economies struggled to deal with monstrous virus and doled out funds for tracing, test and treatment of infected masses, fund fell inadequate for delivering welfare services and govt ended up mounting debt and economic liabilities to provide public services. People from troubled nations such as Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen and Venezuela went through worst misery and humanitarian crisis became harrowing reality.

V. THE REALITY ABOUT INFLUENCING FACTORS IN HUMAN CONTENTMENT

Generalisation is erroneous in happiness determination. Happiness or contentment is subjective concept. It is not static and varies from person to person. Just like DNA structure or finger prints, perception about happiness differs. But by and large, affluent people are happy. Poverty and struggle for existence can't yield happiness. Happiness differs with respect to age, income, education level, occupation, ethnicity, upbringing, social status and life style. Similarly, economic condition, political stability, environmental situation, legal framework, social fabric and technological progress are instrumental in constituting happiness for human beings. Happiness is psychographic element. There is no right instrument available to measure the intensity of it. As per the data from UK based Office for National Statistics (ONS) released in 2015, it was stated that happiness remains subdued until 45 years of age for people and tends to increase till 65 and levels off by 70 years of age. The reason behind it is the time spent on overcoming initial struggle of life and reaching secured level with basic necessities. But what works well for advanced nation might not be justified for developing or poor nations. Job uncertainty, crossroad in career, insecurity complex, burden of family obligations ties down a person and happiness disappear in struggle for existence. Happiness for male comes from social status, material abundance, power and influence over community members, and fulfilment of primordial need. In some society in Africa, male authority is perceived as a tool for complacency and realized through company of consort or concubines, residence, conveyance and domineering leadership trait. In advanced society, male supremacy is realised with educational attainment and professional

achievement. For male as well as female authority and status in the society derive sense of accomplishment and happiness. People caught in modern day slavery and toiling hard to keep poverty at bay miss out happiness completely. Females are mostly home bound and family centric. They derive great satisfaction from physical perfection, family comfort, marital bliss, sense of security with respect to income stream and basic amenities, love and affection from family members and fulfilment of emotional and instinctive desire.

World is teeming with population. Happiness for majority of people are personal choice rather than national goal. Economy doesn't perform consistently and fail to ensure long term security and wellbeing. When economy is on the path of progress and economic policy pays attention to infrastructural devilmint, social welfare measure and availability of basic necessities, trickle-down effect reaches to people. Life is mostly peaceful and salubrious in rich, less populated nation where government allocates fund for wholistic development and enrichment of standard of living. Life in underdeveloped or developing nation with huge population pressure remain tough as govt. finds it difficult to make social benefits distributed equally for all. Modern society has accelerated speed and offered plethora of amenities with technological marvels but heightened competition took away peace and pleasantry. Digital connectivity, round the clock culture, cutthroat competition, restlessness with regular updates about happenings of the world kept people on perpetual tenterhook. But it's again related to personal circumstances, belief, practices, and approaches to life. Unless one is good at time management, diet control, physical fitness, mental relaxation life would be troubled with servitude and turmoil. Financial literacy, life sustaining wealth, disease free health, sense of belongingness, rest and relaxation would make life worthwhile. Chase of fame and fortune, strive for overnight prosperity, earning money or appropriation of wealth by unfair means would cause disturbance, dismay and disrepute no matter how lucrative pursuit may appear in the beginning. People with truthfulness, honesty and integrity secure happiness in long term compared to crooked and covetous. Concrete jungle, crowded neighbourhood, rampant cacophony of city life, air pollution, conflict of interest among society members and demanding job shatters the peace and happiness becomes a distant dream. Rural life with draught condition, debt burden and crop failure increase misery and force peasants to extreme end. If people are serious about happiness, the effort, endurance, exuberance and employability quotient need to be reinforced because in volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity ridden world peace and prosperity are something to be earned with merit rather than served in platter.

VI. SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATION

Happiness is not always easily obtained; it is rather hard earned. There is no clear evidence that lots of money ensured happiness but there is no pleasure in poverty. Happiness is realised in balanced approach and moderation is indulgences. In Mahabharata, Judhistir in exile confronted Dharma and presented happiness in simple term to rescue his brothers. As per his opinion, happiness is perceived when the person is in native place, able to manage staple mid-day meal and completely debt free. In jet set world, statement from epic character might be discounted because ambitious people would travel abroad and settle in location where opportunity beckons, fulfil dreams such as having house, car and luxuries with borrowed fund and prefer to relish multiple cuisine to make life worth living. Financial freedom is far better than debt ridden life. In the uncertain world, risk taking ability brings reward but mistakes based on blind faith or unrestrained avarice invite regret and remorse. Attachment to material objects cause worry and tension. Inclination for experience rather provide feel-good-factor or sense of joy. Disciplined life, learner's mindset with goal-oriented existence keep a person on track and help to attain sense of achievement. Some stability and security is needed to have a blissful life. A shade-over-head, steady means of livelihood and basic amenities for relax and rejuvenation make life worth living. Routine based life, healthy diet, regular exercise, minimalist approach and nightlong sleep improves quality of life no matter how mundane it sounds. Search for passion, devoting time to nurture it, dispassionate view for material possession and involvement in community services can ascertain profound bliss. Inviting changes and assimilate with progressive trend drives away worry and make life sustainable.

VII. CONCLUSION

In the paper endeavour is exerted to define what constituted happiness for mankind. It is tried to figure out correlation between economic progress and its influence on social wellbeing. Happiness is momentary and transient concept which can't be quantified. It is reliant on of experiences people undergo across different phases of life. Human psychology is complex factor and people carry various perception in expression of contentment. Money can't buy happiness but poverty doesn't do any good for wellbeing. Servitude, hardship and drudgery corrodes essence of existence. There is long standing tussle whether economic growth is precursor to happiness or not. If economic growth ensures education, healthcare, shelter, provisions of basic necessities and means of livelihood then it empowers people and provides a sense of joy. On top of it if it offers clean environment, justice, civic amenities, democratic rights and social securities that acts as icing on the cake. Scandinavian countries such as Finland, Denmark, Norway,

Netherlands are high on happiness index as they bask on the glory of higher per capita GDP, social cohesion, greater life expectancy, freedom for life aspirations, generosity among fellow compatriots and corruption free practices. Sense of safety, environmental sanctity, quality of education and availability of public services make people free from stress, worry and nagging tension. On the contrary, countries like South Sudan and the Central African Republic cut a sorry figure on peace and happiness as nations get caught in turbulence of civil war and insurgency. In countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen lives are torn apart due to militancy, scarcity of food and basic services, abysmal law and order situation. Unless peace and stability are restored happiness would remain far from reality. Economic superpower US doesn't do well on happiness factor as soaring income gets underscored due to lack of social trust, gambling habit, social media addiction, extravagant shopping and unhealthy food consumption. The happiness can't be secured through addiction or over indulgence of technology or living isolated monotonous life. It would rather be perceived through strength of unity, sense of harmony, peaceful coexistence, healthy habits, adaptability to changing circumstances and self-motivation to lead a moral dutiful and decent life. Care for green cover, inclination for emission free energy, environment friendly technology along with incisive growth and sustainable development can catalyse happiness index of a nation.

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