



ROLE OF SPIRITUAL FACTORS IN WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX

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ABSTRACT

Happiness is the most preferred, valuable and pleasing feeling of all human beings. Quantifiable world happiness index (WHI) was introduced in 2012 with a aim to motivate the different countries to learn and get benefited from the experiences of the other countries having higher Happiness index while framing welfare policies. WHI depends only on physical key explanatory variables of happiness like gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, social support, healthy life expectations, freedom of life choice, generosity and corruption etc and ignores entirely the role of conscient or spiritual functional variables(SFVs). The present study therefore is an attempt to identify and highlight such SFVs which may contribute to the happiness index of different countries and to provide ample justification for thier incorporation while preparing World Happiness Report.

KEYWORDS : happiness, world happiness index, spiritual functional variables.

Happiness is a feeling and its measurement in units is a Himalayan task. It is the most preferred, valuable and pleasing value of all human beings. Realizing its extreme importance the United Nations had introduced a quantifiable Happiness Index in 2012 and presented the first World Happiness Report (WHR) covering 156 countries⁽¹⁾. Intension of the WHR is to motivate different countries to learn and get benefited from the experiences of the other countries having higher Happiness index while framing welfare policies. It is a well known fact that the WHR of United Nation depends only on physical key explanatory variables of happiness like gross domestic produc per capita, social support, healthy life expectations, freedom of life choice, generosity and corruption etc.⁽²⁾ but ignores entirely the role of conscient or spiritual functional variables(SFVs). It is being felt that SFVs may be equally significant in the determination of happiness of human beings across countries. The present study therefore is an attempt to identify and highlight such SFVs which may contribute to the happiness index of different countries and to provide ample justification for thier incorporation while preparing World Happiness Report.

The word 'human being' as per the Latin language is made up of 'humus' which means mud and 'being' which means consciousness. To be pin pointed we actually measure the happiness level or index of souls residing in their bodies and bodies are distinctly material and insensitive without them. So the consideration of the consciousness or the being becomes unavoidable. A wealthy person may be having a sound mind and healthy body yet he/she may be unhappy within. Increase in the physical explanatory variables of World Happiness Index alone may fail to or hardly raise happiness levels. The saying of Guru Nanak Dev - 'Nayak Dukhiya Sab Sansar'⁽³⁾ indicates towards all sufferings caused by deficiencies of physical/spiritual functional variables of happiness.

The present situation reminds us of two great English Poets, viz. W. Wordsworth and John Milton. Wordsworth said that beauty of the nature (a physical functional variable in the present context) increases the happiness of human beings.⁽⁴⁾ John Milton contradicted Wordsworth asserting that nature increases the happiness of people only when they are already happy within.⁽⁵⁾ Therefore, the inner happiness of the beings has to be taken into account while preparing the WHR. So, it is necessary to identify the Spiritual Functional Variables which may ensure not only the threshold level of spiritual happiness

but may also boost the overall happiness level when used in combination with the physical functional variables. Threshold level of spiritual happiness may be defined as an acquisition of minimum spiritual standing where an agonised person may give solace to himself/ herself. In view of the aforesaid significant role of spiritual factors in happiness of the people, its spiritual functional variables at world level may be surveyed and examined as under:

SPIRITUAL FUNCTIONAL VARIABLES OF HAPPINESS

We need to search such spiritual functional variables which may alter the happiness level of the people and at the same time they should be easily measurable. There may be seven generally accepted innate values of all the human consciousness or souls viz; spiritual knowledge, purity, peace, love, contentment, bliss and might which may be sole determinants of spiritual happiness. A soul which is full of these seven values may be said to be perfectly happy. But decline in these values in the present era, perhaps to the lowest level, has given rise to widespread violence, riots, rapes, murders, adulteration, favouratism, injustice, intolerance, terrorism, ill health, insecurity etc, though varying from country to country. In order to raise their spiritual happiness level, we are required to measure and develop these values.

Values:

It may be a universal fact that people possessing these aforesaid seven innate values not only remain happy themselves but they may extend happiness to others also. But how to calculate and compare the extent and depth of these values possessed by people across the countries? This may easily be done by surveying how far these values have been embodied in the courses of studies at school, college and university levels nationally and internationally. Then we may assess and compare the contribution of this functional variable to the happiness level or index of the people accordingly across countries on the basis of some devised formula by the committee appointed for this task.

Performance of Duty:

People equipped with spiritual values may perform their duties towards their families, jobs and society better, because such persons consider the non performance of duty as a sin. Hence, due to good performance of duties on their part they may be more contented, satisfied and happy as compared to

the non- spiritual persons. So, higher the ratio of the people with better performance of duties, comparatively higher would be its contribution to the happiness index. Further, their happiness level may also be higher across countries because better performance of duties also leads to rise in productivity, a physical functional variable of happiness.

Spiritual Health:

Recent researches in medical science reflect that majority of the diseases are psychosomatic and they have shown an increasing trend. Prof. R. Sagar (2020)⁽⁶⁾ reported, " The proportional contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden has doubled since 1990". This shows decline in spiritual and mental health. Heart ailments, tension, depression, blood pressure, mental diseases etc. are caused by over and negative thinking. Choksi M. Patil B. Khama (2016)⁽⁷⁾ have stated, "Mental health is being recognised as one of the priority areas in health policies around the world"⁽⁸⁾ and has also been included in the Sustainable Goals"^(9,10). Hence, spiritual health of the people of a country may be deemed better if the number of patients suffering from psychosomatic diseases are lesser.

Philosophy of Karma:

The proverbs: As you sow so shall you reap, Do Good Have Good etc. have been accepted widely or universally by the people. Since this spiritual philosophy is of the opinion that action and reaction of the people are always equal and opposite sooner or later, the scientists may also tend to believe it as an eternal natural phenomenon. However if more people of a country know, believe and act according to this philosophy they may do more good deeds and therefore, they may be found more happy as compared to the people of other countries. It may be searched through surveying different groups of the people across countries whether they believe or deny this philosophy and accordingly this may be adjusted in the happiness index.

Donations:

Spiritual people consider donation and help to the needy as a noble deed. They derive happiness by doing such acts. The people of countries which are more generous in donation they may be said to be more spiritual and happy. For instance, people of Myanmar are Buddhist and they are stated to be the most generous in the world in the act of donations for the well being of their people. (L.N.Dahiya)⁽¹¹⁾ This may be because they are more spiritual and therefore they appear to be more happier. Hence, donations may be considered as one of the RSFV which may be easily measurable by visiting the institutions being run by charity and donations etc.

Meditation/contemplation on the self:

Meditation practice is a means to acquire the spiritual and other values or qualities by linking the self with the deity of ones choice or with the God. It also amounts or leads to contemplation on the self where in the people may remove their own bad values/ disqualities gradually. People of all religions may practice it without being biased because these values are found common in all religions. People doing so may ensure happiness for themselves as well as for others. Even the scientists have been found of the opinion that the regular practice of meditation increases the grey matter of brain which is responsible for happiness, love, positivity etc.⁽¹²⁾ Sample surveys may be conducted by electronic means across countries and it may also be adjusted while preparing the happiness index.

Policy Implications:

1. More emphasis on spiritual values and ignoring of materialistic values may prove counterproductive. Therefore, a balanced growth of spiritual and material values may prove worthwhile.

2. For the promotion of RSFV the governments of different countries are required to include them in their welfare programs. They may encourage and aid the institutions to spread the spiritual values further.
3. To promote the RSFV, all extravagant expenditure by the government on ministers, bureaucrats, political agendas, unnecessary subsidies etc. have to be curtailed and such funds may be diverted to the spread of spiritual values.

CONCLUSION:

Some level of happiness at conscious level is essential to ensure the realisation of happiness generated by the increase in physical functional variables. The study finds that spiritual values expressed here for practical purposes in the form of Representative Spiritual Functional Variables(RSFV) like values, performance of duty, spiritual health, philosophy of karma, donation, meditation etc. affecting the happiness of the people around the globe. If the World Happiness Index report includes the contribution of the RSFV towards happiness of the people then only it may be called a sound, complete and realistic report.

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