

## Ethical Idealism of Buddhism and Its Influence on Gross National Happiness in Manufacturing Industries of Bhutan

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**Abstract:** Bhutan is a country where culture is mainly imbibed with Buddhism. The study has an effort to examine the positive impacts of Gross National Happiness (GNH) philosophy and culture percolated down to nation/society / industrial community/ Individual citizen of the country as a whole especially employer and employee relationships (IR) and organization culture in manufacturing industries in Bhutan. The concept of Gross National Happiness has been originated from the constituent features of Bhutanese society before 1959. The GNH philosophy was proclaimed by the king of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk in the late 1980s, and has influenced to build up a developmental policy framework of the Government of Bhutan. The later policy maker of Bhutan has integrated the concept with all agents in the Bhutanese economy: consumers, savers, investors, banks, stock and option markets, private companies, the government, central banks and international organizations. Thus, evolved a socio-economic system based on a Buddhist and feudal set of values. The findings of the study reveal that employer and employee's relationship (IR) under GNH culture creates constructive and pleasant atmosphere in work place surroundings which have a great impact of HRM/ IR practices in Bhutan. This may be coupled with high job satisfaction and harmonious organization culture and trust relationship among employers and employees which only indicate that Buddhist concept of "Happiness" as envisioned by GNH has been successful in achieving the objectives and purpose of policy doctrine and policy implementation and declarations of GNH as a development framework in Bhutan.

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### I. Introduction

#### Ethical Idealism of Buddhism and its influence in Bhutanese Culture

Bhutanese people have imbibed the culture based on religious faith, belief and values on Buddhism. The concept of Buddhist happiness is a thoughtful of "Rectification of the mind" which is integrated and percolates down the life of Bhutanese widely. Buddha's teachings of thorough engagement with one's self, the world and reality that one is able to achieve a transcendent happiness. Composure and goodness, a deep sense of well-being and happiness, can be attained through proper knowledge and practice in everyday life. Happiness is felt as an inner experience attained especially through meditation. It is an ethical practice for the individual meditating which generate motivation of empathy and benevolence to ward others.. This is a secular aspect of Buddhist ethics and psychology. Happiness in a Buddhist sense is somewhat independent of pleasures. Pleasures are circumstantial but happiness is an inner strength and "an inner resource to deal better with those circumstances". Even unhappiness is not suffering; unhappiness is "the way in which we experience suffering" (Richard 2012).

Buddhist concept of GNH is holistic having processes of two type of Happiness.

**First**, the form of Moral and Spiritual Happiness. It progresses from the initial *Saddha*=gaining an understanding of the Dhamma, to a development of moral excellence through the practice of *Pancha Sila*=Five Precepts, a sub-set of moral practices that include, abstaining from the evils of – killing, stealing, unchastely, lying and intoxicants. These five in mutually reinforcing interaction can be expected to produce synergistic effects.

**Secondly**, the economic advancement process leads to happiness on this earth when conducted under the guidance of moral and ethical values. Material Happiness generated in this manner is a *sine quo non*-for the achievement of Spiritual Happiness under the first process.

#### Concept of Gross National Happiness

Bhutanese concept of "Gross National Happiness" is deeply ingrained in Buddhist philosophy and culture and has been adopted by the Government of Bhutan as its development framework. The term was introduced by the king of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk in the late 1980s and has rapidly evolved into the accepted label for the Bhutanese development concept. During the mid-1970s, Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, first introduced gross national happiness (GNH), and said that gross domestic product (GDP)

is less important than GNH because GDP alone could not deliver happiness and well-being. “GDP is a gravely dated pursuit” (Oswald, 2010) GDP information influences all agents in the economy: consumers, savers, investors, banks, stock and option markets, private companies, the government, central banks and international organizations. The statistical data and information on GDP may be misleading for economic agents to take wrong decisions from the perspective of social welfare (Bergh Van den 2010).

The term ‘Gross National Happiness’ (GNH) underlies the meaning of a people- centred holistic development approach which can effectively decline the growth of material poverty and spiritual decline, having undermining effects on human dignity and the value of human life. Accordingly, in any development work, care should be taken to ensure freedom from any uncertainty and risk of survival and the basic human needs. There are four Pillars (elements) of GNH i) creating an enabling environment for the achievement of GNH ii) equitable and sustainable socio-economic development, iii) conservation of ecological environment, iv) promotion of basic values and culture and the strengthening of good governance. The approach is not an intellectual construct detached from practical experience, but rather the translation of a cultural and social consciousness into development priorities. Thus, the concept of Gross National Happiness has organically evolved from the constituent features of Bhutanese society before 1959, a socio-economic system based on a Buddhist and feudal set of values.

### **GNH and Bhutan’s Vision of Development**

The Vision statement for national development as formulated and included in the official documents of Bhutan aims at “Apart from the obvious objectives of development: to increase GDP on a national level and incomes at the household level, development in Bhutan includes the achievement of less quantifiable objectives. These include ensuring the emotional well-being of the population, the preservation of Bhutan’s cultural heritage and its rich and varied natural resources.” (Royal Government of Bhutan, Seventh Five Year Plan, Main Plan Document 1991).

The Constitution of Bhutan, under its Article 9 emphasizes that “The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of GNH.” GDP does not find a specific mention in the constitution like GNH, although words such as economic self-reliance open and progressive economy and fair market competition are mentioned. Harmonizing and balancing between GNH and GDP requires increasing skills in governance. Authors have argued that because of modernisation and fast changing growth of consumerism in Bhutan, economic reliance on other countries has increased by manifolds. Authors have also anticipated the fallout of modernisation per se Urbanisation which will surely affect the country’s traditional social structure and the age-old institutions and community practices of civic behaviour and collective action. (LhamDorji et al, (2013).

In advocating GNH philosophy” We consider that integrating social and economic ideas have greater potential for better development outcomes that blending these two branches of knowledge would make development processes more holistic by lending to the proper balance between material, social and psychological well –being.” (LhamDorji et al.(2013).

### **Vision of Individual, Society and Governing System with GNH**

GNH envisions that people will be living in a safe and supportive community wherein trustworthiness of the people is high, and fear of victimization by other human beings is ideally non-existent. Responsibility for nurturing ecology lies on Community just as an individual is a part of a community. A person’s psychological attributes of kindness, generosity, forgiveness, contentment, and compassion, can be thwarted by negative emotions like anger, jealousy, and selfishness. The domains of good governance, living standards, health, and education in GNH articulate the familiar developmental perspectives. The domains of environmental diversity, community vitality, cultural diversity, and time use. A person envisioned in GNH society should have no time poverty, and should experience the joy of slowness (Kundera 1996). Every day, a person should enjoy the right to have ample time to socialize, to have active leisure, and to have wholesome sleep.

To realize this vision of society and individual attainments, the vision of the government is one that was stated long ago in 1729 legal code of Bhutan (Je Tenzin Chogyal, reign 1755–1759): “The purpose of the government is to provide happiness to its people. If it cannot provide happiness, there is no reason for the government to exist.” GNH as a state objective aims to provide enabling conditions for happiness, as it cannot directly provide happiness.

### **Phenomena of the study**

As the present king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has also said that GNH measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other.

**First**, it was argued that the adoption of planned development was not the result of an ideological shift and the concept of cultural preservation was merely the continuance of the traditional system.

**Second**, it was demonstrated that the survival of the concept GNH till date might be due to the deep sense of identity, which equipped the Bhutanese to define development priorities according to their cultural perceptions.

**Finally**, it was suggested that additional elements of Gross National Happiness, i.e. the general objective of well-being and the goal of environmental conservation, was drawn from Buddhist normative values, while the principles of self-reliance and paternalism were the constituent structural features of the traditional society. This is a genuinely non-western development approach, which considers non-economic goals more important than economic ones.

This study explores GNH as a framework for socio-economic development in Bhutan and how GNH principles that affect the way Bhutanese society and state interact. The study intends to find out more on how manufacturing industries in Bhutan is actually, in practice, following GNH as guiding principles and doing - by assessing policy intentions versus policy outcomes and declarations. It is also intended to know as to how GNH has influenced and impacted to bring about positive harmonious Industrial Relations (Employer and employees relationship) practices and productive organization culture leading to the industrial growth and productivity. The study concludes that Bhutan's experiment with GNH remains dynamic and evolving, and suggests that GNH policy process may also be of interest to those in the international community who have been moved by the original idea of GNH.

### **Significance of Research**

Bhutan is the only country with Economic frames work of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Bhutan's political identity is closely intertwined with its religious history.

Rose, Leo. E. (1977). The state's primary function was to support the religious establishment, which in turn promoted humanistic morality and ethics among the common population. (Ura, Karma. Development and Decentralization in Medieval and Modern Bhutan, p. 2) Although a sizeable number of Bhutanese are Hindus today, Gross National Happiness (GNH) gradually developed in the Bhutanese heartland, where Hinduism had hardly any influence. In fact, self-confidence and assertiveness are prime characteristics of the interaction between Bhutanese policy-makers and their foreign counterparts. Bhutanese are confident and firm in their approaches towards development, while foreign experts are strictly considered advisors with no influence on decision-making. This strong sense of national identity may be attributed as the primary reason for the survival of "Gross National Happiness" to date. Despite the conventional development concepts delivered and advocated by foreign professionals, experts and pundits, development in Bhutan is still distinctly Bhutanese. Hence Buddhism as the single most important determinant for the Bhutanese value base furnished the core concept for "Gross National Happiness", the perception of human wellbeing as the fundamental objective of economic activity.

Bhutan is a small country where globalization and multinational company environment of high stress, organizational diversity challenges, cut-throat competition, work place conflict and uncertainty of work place environment is still not prevalent. The reasons can be cited as: slow pace of industrial development, and many factors like "a weak entrepreneurial orientation, higher transport costs small domestic market, an underdeveloped infrastructure and lack of resource inventory" (National Encyclopaedia of Bhutan).

Despite various constraints, the advantages of domestic business environment are still there in Bhutan which makes work environment and work culture still different from other countries (Developed and developing countries) with globalization and internationalization. Researchers have made an effort to know industrial relation (IR) practices in domestic environment in Bhutan. How GNH has impacted and created a positive influence on IR practices and organization culture?

There are very few studies about GNH and its impact on industrial relations (IR). However, there is enormous requirement of research in this area which has motivated the researcher to investigate in Bhutan.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Bhutanese concept of GNH will have positive impact on Industrial Relation practices in manufacturing industries in Bhutan.
2. GNH has positive influences on Organizational Culture.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To study the impact of Buddhist concept of GNH in Bhutan.
2. To study how GNH culture influences industrial relations (IR) practices
3. To study how GNH culture influences organization culture in Bhutan

## II. METHODOLOGY

Primary data collection on questionnaire methodology for the purpose of testing, explaining, comparing and finding the strength of relationship between the theoretical construct of Industrial Relations(IR)practices and Organization Culture(OC). As expressed by Snow and Thomas (1994) in their categorization of field level research, the study is grounded in theory and hypothesizes relationships between the variables.

### Sample and Setting

The target population consisted of employees representing a wide variety of manufacturing industries in Bhutan and positions typical of Pasaka (Industry Hub) and Phuentsholling city. The sampling frame selected employees who are currently employed or employed in last six months. Respondents were asked a primary filter question about their current employment and those who responded by saying that they are currently employed or employed within last six months were the one allowed to participate in the study. While this frame represents a non-probability sampling methodology based on convenience, it provides a cross-section of the professional services workforce consisting of an array of industries, positions and firm sizes, which add to the generalization of the findings.

The collected data was cleaned for consistency and tested for normality using one-way ANOVA (SPSS) before further analysis. Using SPSS V.22, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test for the intended relationships between indicators and constructs. The SPSS Amos structural equation modelling program was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis to test the data for full model fit (Byrne, 2013).

Total of nine (9) different manufacturing establishments were randomly selected keeping in view the type and size and shape of industries operating in the areas so as to understand and appraise the manufacturing industries in Bhutan. There are a few small units scattered and located in a remote hilly terrain in different parts of Bhutan which have been left out from our study keeping in view of having its less impact of overall economy of Bhutan.

To achieve the objectives of study, detailed analysis of the existing literatures on the Industrial Relations and HRM have been consulted. For this purpose, the different resources like libraries, website and other secondary resources like journals. Newspapers have been studied. The use of primary data has been made to achieve the objectives of study which includes the framing of questionnaire on the different points of study Industrial Relation /HR practices.

### Tools of the Study

The questionnaire was developed for collection of data contains (50) questions on a five-point Likert scale are provided to respondents at three (3) levels of employee such as Management, Supervisory and workmen levels. The questionnaire has been divided into three specific components such as organization Culture, Employee satisfactions and Industrial Relations Practices so as to elicit the opinions and views of the respondents.

## III. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that employer and employee's relationship (IR) under GNH culture creates constructive and pleasant atmosphere in work place surroundings which have a great impact of HRM/ IR practices in Bhutan. This may be coupled with high job satisfaction and harmonious organization culture and trust relationship among employers and employees which only indicate that Buddhist concept of "Happiness" as envisioned by GNH has been successful in achieving the objectives and purpose of policy doctrine and policy implementation and declarations of GNH as a development framework in Bhutan. (Chakraborty & Vajpayee, 2017)

### 1. Buddhist Happiness

Happiness in Pali is called *Sukha*, which is used both as a noun meaning "happiness," "ease," "bliss," or "pleasure," and as an adjective meaning "blissful" or "pleasant." To understand precisely the nature of happiness, a brief discussion of the Buddhist analysis of feeling is necessary. Feeling (*vedana*) is a mental factor present in all types of consciousness, a universal concomitant of experience. It has the characteristic of being felt, the function of experiencing, and as manifestation the gratification of the mental factors. It is said to be born of contact (*phassa*), which is the coming together (*sangati*) of a sense object, a sense faculty, and the appropriate type of consciousness. When these threejoins together, consciousness makes contact with the object. It experiences the affective quality of the object, and from this experience a feeling arises keyed to the object's affective quality.

## **2. GNH and Societal Culture**

The strong Society cultural effects which are to be found in organizational design and competitive advantage of firms tend to be strongly influenced by domestic home base. The result shows societal cultural variables reflecting in high level of commitment to work, low level of labour turnover and absenteeism, positive beliefs about work, positive work values, attitudes and norms.(Vajpayee and chakraborty,2017) Again the study shows that both employees and employers are bounded by common belief, faith , values and norms as enshrined in GNH culture as envisioned as Individual, Society/community(industrial community) and government as actors, institutions and nation as a whole.

## **3. GNH and Social Capital**

The concept of Social Capital can be understood as interpersonal relationship built on mutual trust (blotted) and the norms of reciprocity (*phentshunnyamphen*) that facilitate collective (*mnyam rub*) action to achieve common goals (*spyimthundmigs don*). Authors have argued that at this stage, it is difficult to determine the extent of decline in social capital in Bhutan, but there are already signs of the Country's social capital stock either changing or declining. The rise in the reported crimes, increased feeling of insecurity and isolation, and growing sense of individualism and competition (among the Bhutanese citizens) are some of the spin-off effects of modernisation and urbanisation." (LhamDorji et al, 2013. Bhutan's Case: Social Capital, Household Welfare and Happiness. National Statistics Bureau, Thimpu, Monograph No.5 p.1)

## **4. GNH and Policy guidelines for operationalization**

According to Narayan (1997), social capital brings prosperity and reduces poverty, Putnam (2000), Leung et al (2010), Helliwell and Pitman(2004:1437) have shown that social capital has important correlation of subjective wellbeing. Jetten et al (2012:1) observed that the conservatives are happier than the liberalists are mainly because the conservatives have better to group membership (social capital). Ura et al (2012:40) shows that in Bhutan the Community Vitality contributes more to the GNH Index than any other domains. The GNH index derives more weights from the community Vitality indicators of the rural than that of the urban areas.

## **5. GNH and Individual-Action plan on Labour Relations Ethic**

According to the pro-Happiness Code of Buddhist Ethics of Human Resources/ Labour Management, the duties of employers towards their employees have been spelt out in Buddhism. They are entrenched in Buddhist Ethics and set apart by the positive virtues of empathy and universal kindness which are as follows:

### **6. Duties of employers towards their employees**

- Be sensitive to physical and emotional needs of employees.
- Pay reasonable and adequate remuneration;
- Assign work in accordance with the physical capabilities of the workers (implying - according to sex, age, health status);
- Fix non-oppressive hours of work; grant leave for them; provide the necessary medical care; and
- Give due recognition to the services rendered (in modern terms - rewards, incentives and bonuses).

In general, it has to be seen that the workers get job satisfaction. (Diga III). Harmonious employer-employee relations of the above type conduce to Material Happiness of both employers and employees through their productivity increasing effects, and to their spiritual happiness through the mutually reinforcing moral development of the two parties in the environment of compassion and kindness that gets created." (BuddadashaHewavitharana, 2010).

Hence, this code of ethics is veritable generator and multiplier of happiness of both types to expand GNH. The cultivation of these virtues implies the avoidance of exploiting workers to a mass wealth which as seen above will lead to their impoverishment, misdistribution of wealth and socio-political unrest.

## **7. National/state action to facilitate/promote Buddhist ethic of labour relations:**

Adhere the principles as a guideline as follows:

- To link wage rates to COL index in view of the inflationary pressures which depress the Material Happiness that can be derived from one's money wages;
- To introduce welfare schemes for housing, primary healthcare, Medicare and recreational facilities for the workers.
- To design incentives and inducement schemes; and
- To adopt institutional procedures for quick and peaceful resolution of industrial disputes to prevent increase in acrimony, hatred, distrust and friction between employers and employees.

#### IV. Conclusion

The findings of numerous studies show that all firms are aware of the GNH duties and responsibilities. Employers have been successfully given orientation and technicalities for adaptation of GNH culture in manufacturing industries of Bhutan. Employees in general, are cooperative, non-aggressive, mild, and loyal to their managements and business organisations being manifested in their approaches. They do not find importance and urgent necessity of any trade unions/ workers' associations activities in Industrial Relations. Industrial Relations based on objectives of fairness and equity in which both parties (Management and Employees) are prepared to recognise the need for organisation and employee growth and they are interrelated, and though their interests are different, yet there are areas of common interest for mutual survival.

Keeping in view of above, the relationship between employers and employees in manufacturing industries of Bhutan attracts attention in terms of smooth running of business activities in any industrial establishments which may be important indicator or outcome of policy implementations of GNH culture at all levels. GNH culture has been able to penetrate in the minds and hearts of Bhutanese population which always reflects the positive attitudinal behaviours of organizational change or changed organizational culture.

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