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Is India Moving Towards Dystopia?

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Happiness and Economy:

The growth parameters of any economy constitute GDP per capita, Purchasing Power Parity, Disposable income, etc, which are largely quantitative measures. But, whether these parameters necessarily translate into overall wellbeing or people's happiness is a legit point to mull over. For example, GDP does not take into account the hidden costs of economic development, such as inflation and unemployment, and an overemphasis of GDP diminishes the value of important well-being factors such as natural capital, knowledge, health, and social capital (Frank, 1997; Ovaska & Takashima, 2006).Therefore, the happiness index considers a multidimensional approach with the following parameters, which includes both observable objective (e.g., health and socioeconomic status), and subjective(e.g., domain satisfaction and quality of life)well-being measures.

GDP per capita	Life expectancy	Generosity	Social support	Freedom	Corruption
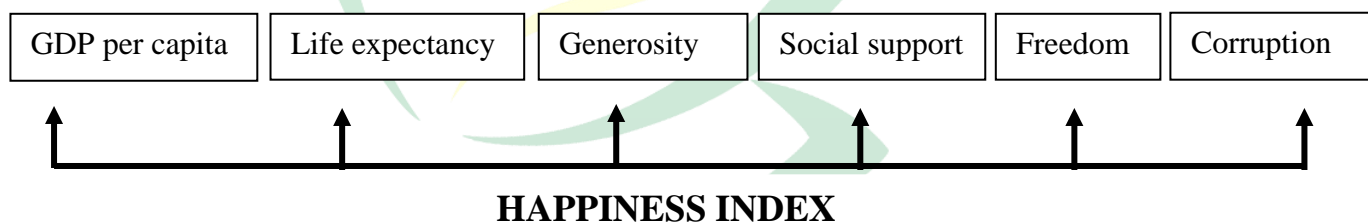
HAPPINESS INDEX

The happiness index is a tool for the use of researchers, community organizer and policy makers seeking to understand and enhance individual happiness, community wellbeing, social justice, economic equality and environmental sustainability

Dystopia: The saddest country

Dystopia is a hypothetical country with values equal to the world's lowest national averages for each of thesix factors namely GDP, Life expectancy, Generosity, Social Support, Freedom and Corruption. Or put into other words, Dystopia is an imaginary country that has

the world's least-happy people. Since life would be very unpleasant in a country with the world's lowest incomes, lowest life expectancy, lowest generosity, most corruption, least freedom, and least social support, it is referred to as "Dystopia," in contrast to Utopia. Dystopia serves as benchmark against which all countries can be favourably compared in terms of each of the six key variables.

Nitty-Gritties of Calculation:

As people may be the best judges of their own happiness, subjective well-being is measured by asking individuals to assess their happiness by answering a single question or a multiple-item survey (Frey & Luechinger, 2007; Diener & Pavot, 1993). The basics involved in calculating happiness index are as below:

S. No.	Particulars	Details
1	Data	For latest last 03 years
2	Sample size	1000 (Annual Survey), 3000 in total irrespective of no. of surveys
3	Indicators	Six (as above)
4	Approach	Life evaluation rating through Centril Ladder approach (Ladder Range: 0 to 10, 0 being the worst and 10 the best)
5	Confidence Interval	95 percent (Indicates that there is 95% likelihood of the population mean of falling in the calculated range)
6	Survey done by:	Gallup World Poll (Gallup, Inc. is an American analytics and advisory company based in Washington, D.C.)
7	First Happiness index released in	2012 (Have been released for 10 times till date)

India's stand in Happiness Index:

India may be one of the fastest growing economies of the world, but it ranked 136th (10th from the bottom) in the happiness report from the list of 146 nations. India has fared the worst in the happiness index, in comparison to its neighbouring countries. The table gives a comparative picture of the same.

A brief dive into the India's performance in each indicator of happiness index is as below:

1. **GDP**: India along with other countries, did witness serious Covid-19 implications in terms of GDP contractions since 2019. Due to lockdowns and other restrictions, many persons lost their jobs and income, which resulted in lower levels happiness among Indians. GDP per capita income in 2021was estimated only $2,191.

Country	Rank
China	82
Nepal	85
Bangladesh	99
Pakistan	103
Myanmar	123
Sri Lanka	126
India	136

2. **Life Expectancy:** India's average life expectancy is 69.16 years, whereas in top ranked countries it is ranges from 80 to 85 years, which indicates better healthcare access and quality facilities to its citizens, and India clearly lags in it.

3. **Generosity:** While generosity is not the most important aspect of happiness, it does have a trickledown effect in both psychological and material wellbeing of the society. India did well in this parameter of happiness index and stood among the top-20 generous countries, according to the CAF World Giving Index 2021 by bagging 14th spot. As per the report, 61% more Indians helped a stranger during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic year. Last year, 36% of Indians donated money, 34% volunteered for social causes in the country. Still, the population size might be deterrent in enhancing country's happiness.

4. **Social support:** Social support refers the general climate of interpersonal trust, and the extent and quality of personal contacts, how much people trust the quality of public institutions that set the stage on which personal and community-level interactions take place and respective inequalities. India ranking of social support was also 141 as compared to other countries, this in turn might have impacted happiness of Indians.

5. **Freedom:** A sense of freedom is the strongest predictor for happiness across nations (Verme, 2009). Bay, 1970 suggested three kind of freedoms: social freedom, potential freedom and psychological freedom. *Social freedom* is about opportunity to choose and denotes absence of restriction by other people. *Psychological freedom* is about the capacity to choose and denotes absence of inner restrictions. *Potential freedom* is about information on possible choice options and awareness of external opportunities.

Looking at some related data reveals that in world press freedom India was at 142 position out of total 180 countries. In human freedom index India fell by 17 places to 11[1th] rank on economic and personal freedom. So, India's overall rank was also low in terms of freedom which might have also reduced India's ranking in happiness index.

6. **Corruption:** Transparency International ranked India at 85 among 180 countries in its Corruption Perception Index report 2021. It shows the concerns over the country's democratic status, as fundamental freedoms and institutional checks resulting into more unhappiness.

Conclusions

No doubt India is at a high pace on path of modernization but with the high income inequality compromising 1% of the upper or rich population owns 58% of wealth while richest 10% own 80% of wealth, this trend is constantly increasing, rich section is getting richer and the gap is widening. India has largest population dividend, which can become country's strength if dealt diligently otherwise, vice-versa. Happy population means healthy and efficient human resource, which has huge potential of building a nation. India certainly needs focus on improving its performance in all the six indicators to make the country happier place for its people.

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