

## **Taking Environment with Development: ‘Gross National Happiness’ as a model**

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Pursuing development at the cost of environment has been a practice invariably followed by all states across the world. Per capita ‘Gross National Product’ has been seen as the yardstick of such development. Bhutan stands as an exception to this trend. The tiny Himalayan country offers a different model of development which is envisaged as sustainable and environmentally conducive. It attaches great importance to individual happiness than material possession and prosperity. Accordingly, ‘Gross National Happiness’ is regarded as its parameter to judge its development. Environment has been given utmost importance in this scheme of development. In order to translate the philosophy into real life of Bhutanese, the GNH Commission has developed the conceptual tools called four pillars and nine domains. Conservation of the Environment is the first pillar and ecological diversity is one of the important domains. Bhutan thus recognizes the central role environment factors play in human development. Article 5 of the Constitution of Bhutan urges every Bhutanese citizen to contribute to the protection of its natural environment, conservation of its rich biodiversity and prevention of all forms of ecological degradation. Of course, in respecting the environment, religion has been a factor in Bhutan. The Commission puts to test all proposals for developmental legislation or any developmental projects in tune of these pillars and domains. In order to become a policy each proposal must pass that GNH test so that it could ensure maximum good than do harm to society. It is like Jeremy Bentham’s ‘Felicific Calculus’ to judge the goodness of a decision that would produce more pleasure than pain. GNH thus aims at the holistic development of Bhutan which is inclusive and sustainable. Against this background, this paper wishes to look into the new development philosophy for its greater understanding and its applicability to other states too.

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