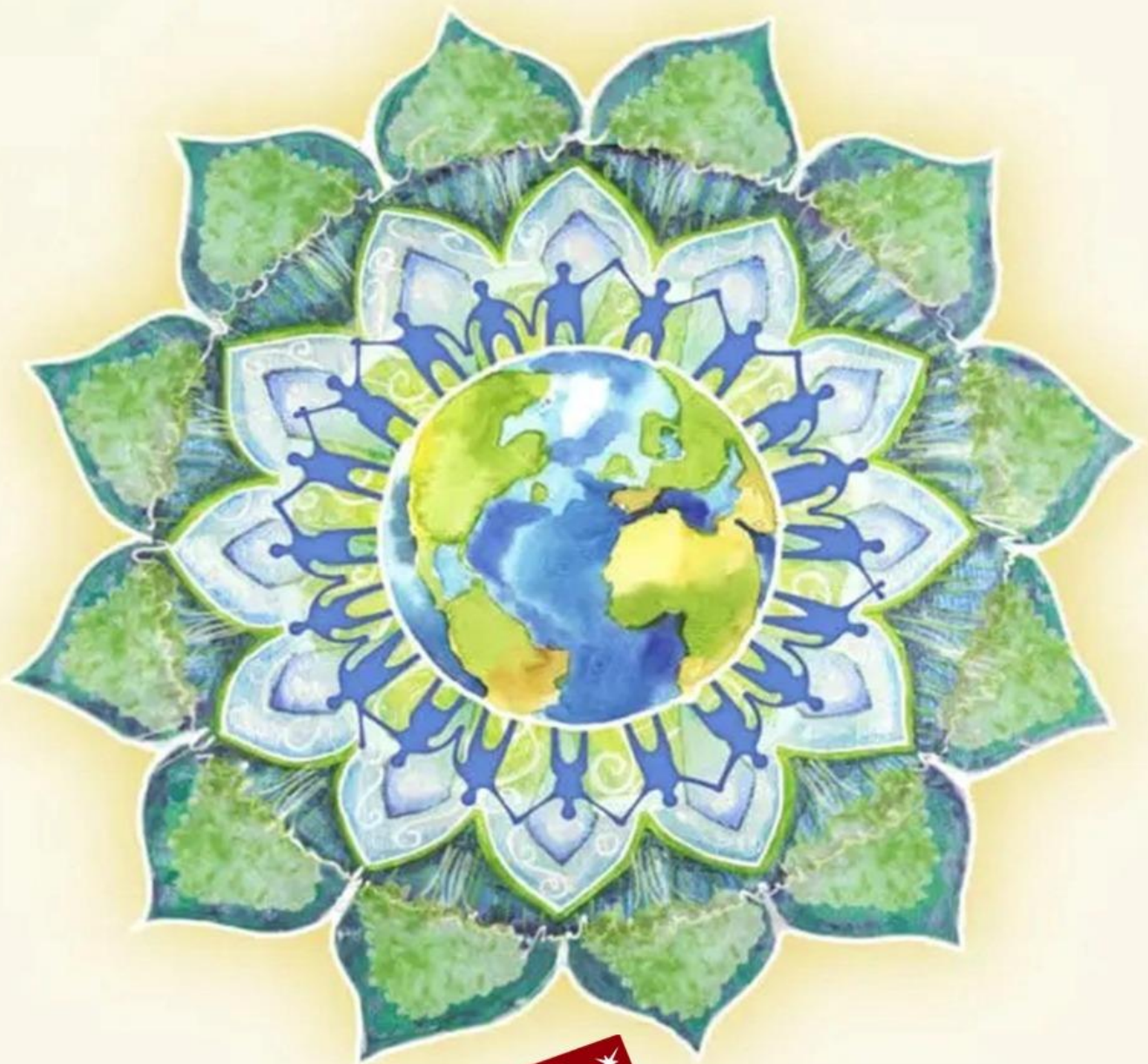


A Case for a State Policy on Happiness

Proposal for Government of Uttar Pradesh



LUCKNOW MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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A Case for a State Policy on Happiness

(Proposal for Government of Uttar Pradesh)

Abstract

This paper advocates for the formulation of a state policy on happiness for the Government of Uttar Pradesh, drawing on diverse sources and perspectives. It begins by exploring the rich insights from ancient Indian texts that emphasize well-being and harmony. Economic theories are then examined to understand how happiness correlates with economic policies and growth. Expert views, including those from psychologist, behaviour scientists, and public policy thinkers, offer further context for the idea of happiness as a state responsibility. The paper also highlights India's position in global happiness rankings, alongside studies like the World Happiness Report and the India Happiness Report 2020. It reviews current happiness initiatives in both India and globally, providing a foundation for developing state-level strategies. The rationale for a focused state policy is presented, emphasizing the potential benefits for societal well-being. Finally, the paper concludes with actionable recommendations for Uttar Pradesh to integrate happiness into public policy, ensuring a comprehensive approach to improving life satisfaction across the state.

1. Introduction

The ultimate objective of public policy is the well-being of citizens. While economic growth, infrastructure development, and technological advancement are crucial indicators of progress, they do not alone ensure the happiness or holistic well-being of individuals. A growing body of global research underscores the importance of subjective well-being or "happiness" as a legitimate and measurable policy goal. This proposal recommends the formulation of a State Policy on Happiness, grounded in the idea that governance should not only improve material conditions but also enhance the emotional and psychological quality of life of its people.

India's constitutional structure is based on the welfare model, with the goal of the Government being the upliftment of the citizenry. It is also true that ideologies aside, the Government has taken up a plethora of measures for the progress of the country, be it infrastructural, socio-economic, legal etc. Hence, India is no novice to the happiness agenda. However, the welfare policies of the Government have somewhere fallen short of realising their actual potential. Whether it is our National Food Security Act or the different Housing schemes floated by the Central Government and the State Governments or MNREGA. the authorities have time and again implemented a wide range of welfare policies with the objective of increasing people's happiness. And yet we rank 126 as per the perceived Happiness index.

1. Contextualizing Happiness: Insights from Ancient Texts

In ancient Indian thought, governance intertwines material prosperity (artha) and supreme happiness (ānanda), emphasizing the ruler's duty to ensure both external wealth and internal well-being among subjects. The *Arthashastra* asserts

that a ruler's happiness stems from the welfare of his people, not personal pleasure, highlighting that artha should facilitate dharma (righteousness) and kāma (desire), leading to long-term societal well-being. The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches that true happiness arises from inner peace and self-realization, advocating practices like yoga and meditation to achieve param ānanda (supreme happiness) beyond sensory pleasures. It introduces the concept of five koshas (sheaths), with the fifth and most significant being the bliss sheath (ānandamaya kosha), representing stable and sustainable happiness. The *Puranas* depict rulers such as Rama and Yudhishtira governing with compassion and spiritual wisdom, upholding dharma, promoting economic welfare, and nurturing the emotional and spiritual needs of citizens. This perspective underscores that governance transcends mere power; it embodies the duty to cultivate joy and justice. Material progress without happiness is empty, just as joy without sustenance is unsustainable. Thus, ancient texts collectively affirm that the aim of rule is to create a society characterized by peace, prosperity, and Param Ananda.

2. Economic Perspectives on Happiness

Since the establishment of the administrative economy, happiness has been the subject of study of economists. In the theory of moral sentiments, Adam Smith suggests that happiness is influenced by various factors, such as social relations, personal virtues, and external conditions. He argues that these factors generally affect all people similarly, regardless of their social or economic status. For Smith, happiness is rooted in sympathy and the approval of others¹.

In his work *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill argues that happiness is the ultimate goal of human life, and that actions are right insofar as they promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number².

Richard Layard, in his book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, argues that economic and social policies should focus more on promoting happiness rather than just wealth³.

John Maynard Keynes, in his *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren* (1930), suggested that as economies grow and productivity increases, people could eventually focus less on material wealth and more on achieving happiness and

¹Smith, A. (1759). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

²Mill, J. S. (1863). *Utilitarianism*.

³Layard, R. (2005). *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*.

leisure. He predicted that future generations might prioritize well-being over GDP growth⁴.

In recent years, scholars across disciplines have emphasized the importance of prioritizing happiness and mental and physical health within public policy frameworks, challenging the traditional reliance on GDP as the primary measure of national progress.

3. Opinions of Other Thinkers on Happiness

Among psychologists, Martin Seligman stands out as a leading advocate for shifting the focus from economic indicators to human flourishing. In his seminal work *Flourish* (2011), Seligman argues that genuine well-being is rooted in positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—none of which are captured by GDP. He calls for policy that directly fosters mental health and psychological resilience, insisting that flourishing should be the ultimate goal of societies⁵.

Similarly, Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman has significantly contributed to our understanding of well-being. In *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, he distinguishes between “experienced” happiness (our moment-to-moment feelings) and “remembered” happiness (our retrospective evaluation of life). Kahneman emphasizes that public policies should aim to reduce suffering and increase daily positive experiences rather than rely on aggregated income data to infer well-being⁶.

Behavioural scientists have echoed and expanded on these insights. Cass Sunstein, co-author of *Nudge*, argues that public policy should account for the predictable irrationalities of human behaviour. Through behavioural “nudges”—small policy adjustments that steer people toward healthier and happier choices without limiting freedom—governments can improve citizens’ well-being in practical, cost-effective ways. He emphasizes that incorporating behavioural science into governance can help align policies with what genuinely enhances happiness

Dan Ariely, in *Predictably Irrational*, further demonstrates that human decision-making often defies economic logic, particularly in health and emotional matters. He advocates for policy interventions that consider these irrational tendencies, arguing that failing to do so leads to systemic issues in health, financial decision-making, and social well-being. Ariely’s work underscores that if policy aims to improve people’s

⁴Keynes, J. M. (1930). *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren*.

⁵Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Free Press.

⁶Kahneman, D. (2010). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

lives, it must be grounded in an accurate understanding of how people actually behave—not how they're assumed to behave in classical economics⁷.

Public policy experts have also made forceful arguments for reorienting governance around well-being. Jeffrey Sachs, coordinator of the *World Happiness Report* (2012), has been a vocal critic of GDP as a proxy for national success. He argues that true development should be judged by metrics that reflect life satisfaction, mental health, social support, and ecological sustainability. Sachs calls for governments to institutionalize happiness measures and use them to guide national and international policy⁸.

Renowned economist and philosopher Amartya Sen offers a more foundational critique in *Development as Freedom* (1999). Sen contends that development should be understood in terms of expanding people's capabilities—their actual freedoms to live the lives they value. For Sen, this necessarily includes access to healthcare, education, and the opportunity for emotional and psychological well-being. He argues that policies should be judged by how well they promote human freedom and dignity, not by how much they increase income alone⁹.

Together, these thinkers make a compelling case: if governments are serious about promoting societal progress, they must go beyond GDP and incorporate happiness, health, and human well-being into their core policy frameworks. Doing so not only reflects the reality of what people value but also enables more just, humane, and sustainable societies.

4. The World Happiness Report: India's Global Position

The World Happiness Report was first published in 2012 as a foundational text for the United Nations' High-Level Meeting on "Well-being and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm." It evaluates global happiness by assessing factors such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. The rankings are based on individuals' self-assessed life evaluations using the Cantril Ladder, where respondents rate their current lives on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life).

Nordic countries Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, and the Netherlands have consistently dominated the top positions in the report. Finland, in particular, has been ranked the happiest country in the world for eight consecutive years as of 2025. In the 2025 edition, India is positioned at 118th out of 147 countries, reflecting a

⁷Ariely, D. (2010). *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. Harper.

⁸Sachs, J. D. (2012). *World Happiness Report 2012*. Earth Institute, Columbia University

⁹Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press

modest improvement from its 126th rank in the previous year but still trailing behind neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and China.

5. Global Happiness Ranking by State Bank of India

The research desk of the State Bank of India in its weekly report in April 2023 decided to censure the World Happiness Rankings. As asserted by the SBI Report “Ecowrap”, the biggest lacuna in the happiness survey is the one fits all approach. Happiness foremost is an extremely subjective emotion, and while it can now be reduced to a scientific concept and measured via structured determinants, it still cannot be devoid of its subjectivity. The biggest example of the same is the juxtaposed difference in the way the Bhutanese, considered to be the pioneers of happy-nomics, measure happiness for their goals and the way the Happiness Index in the World Happiness Report does it. State Bank of India's (SBI) Ecowrap report critically evaluated the World Happiness Index (WHI) and proposed an alternative assessment of India's happiness ranking.

The WHI was deemed flawed for not accounting for persistent issues in higher-ranked nations, such as gun violence and civil unrest. SBI suggested a model incorporating financial happiness (savings and credit access), work access and productivity, mental happiness, work-life balance, and clean energy access. Applying its proposed criteria, SBI estimated India's rank should be 48th. SBI's assessment places India significantly higher than the WHI, suggesting a more favourable position when considering additional factors. The WHI's limited parameters may not fully capture India's cultural and social dynamics, potentially leading to an underestimation of its happiness ranking. SBI emphasized that happiness is subjective and varies across cultures, making universal measurement challenging. SBI advocated for a model that integrates financial and productivity metrics with emerging aspects like work-life balance to better assess happiness. SBI's Ecowrap report calls for a reassessment of happiness indices to more accurately reflect the diverse factors influencing well-being in different countries. In the Ecowrap survey, India was placed at 48th position out of 61 countries surveyed while the top three were Australia, USA, and New Zealand¹⁰.

6. India Happiness Report 2020: Key Findings and Implications

India Happiness Report 2020¹¹ is the inaugural study assessing the happiness levels across India's 36 states and union territories. This pioneering report is authored by Professor Rajesh K. Pillania, a noted expert in strategy and happiness studies and is

¹⁰IN PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS: HOW MODELS AND RANKINGS CONSTANTLY DO A HIT JOB AT CAPTURING THE STATE OF BEING RESEARCH SBI ECOWRAP(April (2023)

¹¹ <https://www.happinessstrategyfoundation.org/research>

recognized for his extensive research in the field. The report offers a comprehensive analysis of factors influencing happiness in the Indian context. The study was conducted under the auspices of the Happiness Strategy Foundation, a non-profit think tank dedicated to researching and disseminating findings on happiness and well-being in India.

Research encompassed a survey of 16,950 individuals across all 36 states and union territories, conducted between March and July 2020. The assessment was based on six key components:

- i. Work and related issues: Factors such as earning and growth opportunities.
- ii. Relationships: Quality of family and friend connections.
- iii. Health: Physical and mental well-being.
- iv. Philanthropy: Engagement in social concerns and charitable activities.
- v. Religious or spiritual orientation: Personal beliefs and practices.
- vi. Impact of COVID-19: Effect of the pandemic on individual happiness.

These components were analyzed to understand their influence on the overall happiness scores of each region.

Top 5 Happiest Large States were Punjab, Gujarat, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. and Sikkim and top 5 Happiest Small States/UTs were Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

1st All India Happiness Report-2020 | Happiest smaller states Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh¹²

According to India's Happiness report 2020, Uttar Pradesh is a happier state than Tamil Nadu and West Bengal is a happier state than Goa. India's happiness report was prepared between March 2020 and July 2020. Its relevance gains further traction now because the lessons learned from the happier states can be applied to improve India's current happiness world ranking. India's least happy state is Chhattisgarh, followed by Uttarakhand and Odisha¹³

¹²https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/travel-news/india-happiness-report-2020-mizoram-most-happy-state-uttarakhand-and-odisha-at-the-bottom/articleshow/78252001.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹³Payal Seth and Palakh Jain (2022) To improve India's happiness ranking, learn from the states

7. Exploring Happiness Studies in Indian Cities

Some studies and surveys have been conducted to assess the happiness levels of cities in India. Notable findings include:

1. India Cities Happiness Report 2020:

This comprehensive study evaluated 34 major Indian cities, ranking them based on residents' happiness levels. Ludhiana, Ahmedabad, and Chandigarh emerged as the top three happiest cities. Among Tier-I cities, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and New Delhi led the rankings, while Ludhiana, Chandigarh, and Surat topped among Tier-II cities. The report also noted that unmarried individuals reported higher happiness levels than their married counterparts in major cities¹⁴.

2. Happy City Index 2024: In this global assessment, Bengaluru and Chennai were the only Indian cities to feature among the world's happiest cities. Bengaluru secured the 210th position, and Chennai was ranked 232nd. The index evaluated cities based on factors like citizens' well-being, governance, environment, economy, and mobility¹⁵,

3. Time Out Survey 2025: Mumbai was recognized as India's most romantic and happy city, ranking 49th globally. The survey highlighted Mumbai's vibrant street food scene and its blend of historical and contemporary attractions as contributing factors to its high happiness quotient¹⁶.

4. Ipsos IndiaBus Happiness Survey (December 2023)¹⁷: Conducted across 16 cities, this survey revealed that 76% of urban Indians reported being happy. The highest happiness levels were observed in Tier-I cities (88%) and the western zone (85%). Family and health were identified as the primary contributors to happiness.

GOVERNANCE NOW <https://www.governancenow.com/views/columns/to-improve-indias-happiness-ranking-learn-from-the-states>

¹⁴<https://www.happinessstrategyfoundation.org/research>

¹⁵<https://curlytales.com/only-two-indian-cities-feature-on-the-worlds-happiest-cities-list-2024-they-are/>

¹⁶https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/travel/news/mumbai-ranked-as-indias-most-romantic-and-happy-city-in-global-2025-survey/articleshow/117396357.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁷https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2024-03/Happiness%20Report_Final.pdf

5. LG Electronics Survey 2015¹⁸: This survey identified the Top 5 happiest cities – Chandigarh, Lucknow, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru - all share the same broad themes as the sources of their happiness. The people of these cities are broadly happy with the amount of time they get to spend with family and the quality of relationship they share with friends and family. They are also happy with the kind of control they have over their lives and doing what they want and taking decisions for themselves.

8. Rationale for Crafting a State Policy on Happiness

India is currently experiencing a rising mental health burden, with nearly 1 in 7 citizens estimated to suffer from a diagnosable mental illness. Depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic stress are on the rise, particularly among youth, urban professionals, the elderly, and marginalized communities. The COVID-19 pandemic, increasing societal pressures, and economic uncertainties have exacerbated these challenges. While the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 provides a progressive, rights-based legal framework, implementation has been uneven and underfunded. A State Happiness Policy, when integrated with mental health strategy, can promote early prevention through positive mental health practices, normalize conversations around emotional well-being and self-care, offer systemic interventions across schools, colleges, workplaces, and public institutions, and supplement the healthcare system by shifting focus from illness to wellness.

There are multiple welfare policies of State and Central Governments already in place. Pragmatically now what is required is not to introduce the happiness agenda into the Indian polity, for the Indian constitution is very much a consequence of this agenda, but to create a framework so as to measure the efficacy of policy vis-a-vis happiness. It has become pertinent to bring public policy and happiness together, to achieve beyond the set traditional contours of any welfare action. It is time that we build upon a policy of happiness; for it will definitely go a long way in serving as a fulcrum for all consequent policy initiatives. India needs to bridge the gap between the ideal and the reality, for the New India, is an economically thriving and more importantly, not an unhappy nation¹⁹.

Regardless of the ongoing debate around global/Indian happiness indices, rankings and initiatives, it is imperative to formulate and implement a coherent state happiness policy.

¹⁸<https://www.lg.com/in/about-lg/press-and-media/lg-lifes-good-happiness-study-ranks/>

¹⁹Aparajita Kumar, Kaustubh Shakkkarwar (2019) *India's Pursuit of Happiness* National Economic Forum https://nationaleconomicforum.org/nef_articles/indias-pursuit-of-happiness/

In alignment with Article 38 of the Constitution, which calls upon the State to secure a social order for the promotion of people's welfare, a Happiness Policy will:

- Humanize governance by placing citizen satisfaction and emotional wellness at its core.
- Guide policy decisions across departments toward a holistic definition of development.
- Strengthen individual and collective mental resilience.
- Foster more empathetic, healthy, and socially connected communities.

9. Global Initiatives for Promoting Happiness: A Global Perspective

Several countries have taken pioneering steps in integrating happiness and well-being into public policy frameworks:

1. Bhutan – Gross National Happiness (GNH):

Bhutan pioneered the concept of Gross National Happiness, a holistic approach to development that prioritizes well-being over economic growth. The GNH framework encompasses nine domains, including psychological well-being, health, education, and environmental conservation, to assess and promote the overall quality of life. Bhutan's ancient legal code of 1629 stated that, "if the government cannot create happiness for its people, then there is no purpose for government to exist"²⁰

2. United Arab Emirates – National Program for Happiness and Well-being:

The UAE established a Minister of State for Happiness and Well-being to integrate happiness into government policies. The programme focuses on aligning governmental plans to promote well-being, fostering a culture of happiness, and developing tools to measure and enhance societal satisfaction. UAE Cabinet stressed its commitment to make community happy through a happiness and positivity Charter²¹.

3. United Kingdom – Measuring National Well-being Programme:

The UK's Office for National Statistics initiated this program to measure well-being across various domains such as health, relationships, education, and personal finance. The collected data informs policy decisions aimed at

²⁰Aparajita Kumar, Kaustubh Shakkkarwar (2019)*India's Pursuit of Happiness* National Economic Forum https://nationaleconomicforum.org/nef_articles/indias-pursuit-of-happiness/

²¹ <https://uaecabinet.ae/en/news/mohammed-bin-rashid-happiness-positivity-are-lifestyle-government-commitment-and-a-spirit-uniting-uae-community>

improving the quality of life for citizens. The UK Measures of National Well-being comprise 60 measures of well-being across 10 domains: personal well-being; our relationships; health; what we do (paid and unpaid work, and leisure activities); where we live (the quality of the local area and community); personal finance; education and skills; economy; governance; and environment. This Framework combines objective measures, such as unemployment and inflation, with subjective indicators, such as life satisfaction, perceived happiness and hope for the future²².

4. New Zealand – Wellbeing Budget:

In 2019, New Zealand introduced a Wellbeing Budget that allocates government spending based on priorities like mental health, child well-being, and supporting indigenous communities. This approach shifts focus from solely economic indicators to a broader assessment of societal health and happiness²³.

Thailand – National Happiness Index:

Thailand developed its own happiness index to assess the population's well-being, guiding policies that aim to balance economic growth with cultural and social contentment. The index evaluates factors such as mental health, community vitality, and environmental quality. A Thai Happiness Index developed in 2019 used data from more than 6,000 people across 13 provinces gathered in 2017 and 2018. It measured happiness based on how sufficient people felt different aspects of their lives were. It found many people are completely happy without achieving sufficiency across all aspects of their lives, which included how they felt about their quality of life, the government and their standard of living. The Thai Government has been attempting to collate data on the wellbeing of its people for more than 20 years.

But so far, its applications in formulating policies, management and public administration have not been unified and there are few practical results. Happiness is often tied to culture²⁴.

²²OECD Case Study 2023 UK Measures of National Well-being

²³Digital Insight (2024) New Zealand's Well-being Budget: A Focus on Human Flourishing

²⁴CodeBlue (2023) Measuring Happiness In Thailand Has Ties Back To The Late King

5. United States – Gross National Happiness Index Initiatives:

Various states and cities in the U.S., including Vermont and Seattle, have adopted Gross National Happiness frameworks to measure and promote well-being at the local level. These initiatives focus on aspects like community engagement, environmental sustainability, and work-life balance. A relatively simple tool has been designed to do just that. The Seattle-based Happiness Alliance recently updated a carefully vetted, scientific survey to help individuals, businesses, and local governments measure people’s “life conditions and satisfaction” in 10 “domains” of happiness: Material Wellbeing, Physical Health, Time Balance, Psychological Wellbeing, Education and Learning, Cultural Vitality, Environmental Quality, Governance, Community Vitality, and Workplace Experience²⁵.

6. Canada – Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW):

The CIW tracks changes in well-being across domains such as community vitality, democratic engagement, and leisure. It serves as a tool for policymakers to understand and enhance the quality of life for Canadians beyond traditional economic measures²⁶.

These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the importance of well-being and happiness as essential components of national development, influencing policies that extend beyond traditional economic metrics.

Internationally, Harvard University has created a Department of Happiness Studies that engages in advanced research on psychological well-being, positive psychology, and life fulfillment. Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar runs one of the most popular courses in Harvard’s history, focusing on the science of happiness, meaning, and well-being. The popularity of such courses abroad reflects a growing recognition of happiness as both a science and a social goal.

Besides Harvard, many world-renowned universities now offer courses and even full programs on happiness, well-being, and positive psychology. Yale University (USA) teaches course: *The Science of Well-Being*. It explores psychological science and daily habits that lead to a more satisfying life. Likewise, University of California, Berkeley (USA), course: *The Science of Happiness*, Stanford University (USA), University of Pennsylvania (USA), London School of Economics (UK), University of Oxford (UK) Department: Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Melbourne (Australia), and University of Bristol (UK) also run courses in Happiness,

²⁵Happy Alliance <https://www.happycounts.org/>

²⁶The CIW National Index Report: How Are Canadians *Really Doing?*

10. Happiness Initiatives in India: Current Efforts and Outcomes

India has witnessed a multifaceted approach toward enhancing citizen well-being through various happiness initiatives undertaken by the central and state governments, public sector undertakings (PSUs), political parties, non-profit organizations, universities, and research institutes. These initiatives aim to integrate happiness and well-being into public policy, education, and community programs.

Government Initiatives:

1. **Madhya Pradesh** became the first state in India to set up a "Happiness Department" in 2017. The focus of this initiative is to increase the happiness index among the state's residents, including students and promote the well-being of its citizens through programs encompassing yoga, meditation, spirituality, arts, and religious pilgrimages for seniors²⁷.

Some of the key actions taken include:

- **Happiness Curriculum in Schools:** The Madhya Pradesh government introduced a happiness curriculum in schools that emphasizes emotional well-being, stress management, and mindfulness practices. The curriculum is designed to equip students with coping strategies and enhance their mental health and happiness.
- **Happiness Index:** The government also measures the happiness of citizens through surveys and integrates that data into public policy to enhance citizens' overall well-being.
- **Training Teachers:** Teachers are trained to help students build emotional intelligence and resilience, both in and outside the classroom.

Anand Sansthan is a government department established by the Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet in Madhya Pradesh, making it the first state in India to have a department solely dedicated to promoting happiness and well-being. The department operates through a society called Rajya Anand Sansthan, which was formed under the Firm and Society Registration Act. Anand Sansthan was constituted by the State Government of MP in August 2016. Directly under the Chief Minister.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anand_Sansthan#:~:text=Anand%20Sansthan%20is%20a%20government%20department%20established%20by,department%20solely%20dedicated%20to%20promoting%20happiness%20and%20well-being.

²⁷Madhya Pradesh first Indian state to start 'Gross Happiness Index'

https://egov.eletsonline.com/2016/11/madhya-pradesh-first-indian-state-to-start-gross-happiness-index/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

The Anand Sansthan, which had been merged with the 'spiritual department' by the Congress government under Kamal Nath from December 2018 to March 2020, was reinstated as a singular entity in January 2022.^[1]

The Anand department has several roles, including identifying the scale of measuring pleasure and efficiency, coordinating with other departments to promote well-being, formulating policies, implementing action plans, and mainstreaming the entire process. The department also takes feedback from citizens and publishes reports after surveying the effect of Anand Vibhag. It serves as a knowledge resource centre as well.

The department takes inspiration from other countries, such as Bhutan, which measures gross national happiness through psychological well-being, health, education, use of time, cultural diversity and harmony, good governance, community activism, natural diversity and harmony, and standard of living. The Anand department focuses on the concept of Anand, which means happiness, and aims to remove mental ailments such as jealousy, passion, malice, anger, greed, ego, and others. The department promotes yoga, meditation, pranayama, devotion, study, music, sports, and other activities to remove these mental diseases and achieve long-lasting bliss.

The Anand department has an 11-member committee that includes spiritual leaders such as Jaggi Vasudev, Baba Ramdev, Awadheshanand, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The committee provides suggestions to the department.

The Anand department has 30 employees in various positions, including the President, CEO (Secretary level), Director of Research (Deputy Secretary level), Director of Coordination (Deputy Secretary level), Accounts Officer, Research Assistant, Junior Assistant (six posts), and Peon (five positions).

The Anand Utsav, a week-long Happiness Festival, was organized by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in Madhya Pradesh from January 14 to 21, 2017. This initiative aimed to promote joy and communal harmony among residents. The festival featured traditional sports and cultural activities across approximately 10,000-gram panchayats, encouraging community participation and collective celebration. Schools also hosted Anand Sabhas, organizing special programs to instil the message of living life with happiness. The objective was to

create a positive environment, allowing people to forget their worries and enjoy together²⁸.

The festival featured various activities designed to encourage residents to step out of their homes, interact with one another, and participate in communal celebrations. Shobhit Tripathi, a senior village council functionary, highlighted the motivation behind the festival, noting that increased consumption of television and mobile phones had led to more introverted and self-centred behaviours in villages. He emphasized that the festival aimed to counteract this trend by fostering a sense of community and shared happiness.

This initiative reflects the BJP's commitment to holistic development, recognizing that societal progress encompasses not only economic growth but also the emotional and social well-being of its people.

2. Delhi's Happiness Curriculum: The Delhi Government, under Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, launched a similar initiative, known as the Happiness Curriculum, in 2018. The curriculum is aimed at making students more emotionally resilient and fostering mental well-being. Here are the key elements:

- **Happiness Curriculum (2018):** The Delhi government introduced this unique curriculum in schools, focusing on fostering emotional and mental well-being. The curriculum includes meditation, mindfulness exercises, and personal reflection.
- **Focus on Emotional Well-being:** The curriculum is integrated with subjects like value education and personal growth, aiming to help students develop positive emotional health and coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety.
- **Happiness Classes:** These are special classes aimed at making students feel more at ease with themselves, reduce stress, and deal with emotional challenges.
- **Yoga and Meditation:** A strong emphasis on yoga and meditation as tools to promote mental and physical well-being among students.
- **Teacher Training:** Teachers in Delhi schools receive training on how to implement happiness practices effectively, fostering an atmosphere conducive to well-being²⁹.

²⁸Anand Utsav in State from January 14 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/anand-utsav-in-state-from-jan-14/articleshow/88602106.cms>

However, in 2025, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Delhi government announced plans to discontinue this curriculum, proposing new programs such as 'Rashtraniti' and 'Science of Living' as replacements³⁰.

3. The Uttarakhand government has implemented the Anandam Pathyacharya curriculum to enhance student well-being and holistic development in its public schools. Launched on November 14, 2019, this initiative draws inspiration from Delhi's Happiness Curriculum and aims to create a stimulating learning environment through experiential methodologies³¹. Key Features of Anandam Pathyacharya:

- Scope: Implemented across 17,752 government schools, targeting students from grades 1 to 8.
- Curriculum Components: The program comprises daily happiness classes incorporating mindfulness, storytelling with open-ended discussions, reflective conversations, and activities designed to help students experience and express happiness.
- Objectives: Focuses on fostering emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills among students, contributing to their overall well-being and academic performance.

Collaborations and Support:

- Labhya Foundation: Collaborated in co-creating the curriculum, ensuring its integration as a state-mandated well-being class in over 18,000 public schools, despite challenging terrains³².

Through these concerted efforts, Uttarakhand aims to cultivate a more joyful and conducive learning environment, prioritizing the holistic development of its students

4. The Government of Tripura has initiated several programs aimed at enhancing the well-being and happiness of its citizens, focusing on education, skill development, and social welfare. The Government launched Saharsh Program in

²⁹The Happiness Curriculum: Inculcating mindfulness and social and emotional learning amongst students every day https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/the-happiness-curriculum-inculcating-mindfulness-and-social-and-emotional-learning-amongst-students-every-day/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³⁰BJP-Led Delhi Govt Discontinues AAP's Education Initiatives, Set To Introduce New Ones <https://www.freepressjournal.in/education/bjp-led-delhi-govt-discontinues-aaps-education-initiatives-set-to-introduce-new-ones>

³¹<https://dreamadream.org/anandam-pathyacharya-towards-happiness-on-the-hills/>

³²<https://www.labhya.org/what-we-do/programs/>

August 2022. The Saharsh initiative aims to promote social and emotional learning among school children. Initially piloted in 40 schools, it was expanded to all government and government-aided schools in January 2023. The program encourages a more inclusive and joyful learning environment, moving away from traditional rote learning methods. Education Minister Ratan Lal Nath emphasized that this approach seeks to empower children to learn with happiness and contribute to empathetic development³³.

In collaboration with the Labhya Foundation, an Indian education non-profit organization, the Saharsh curriculum was co-created and implemented. This partnership facilitated the development of a localized, culturally sensitive social-emotional learning and well-being curriculum tailored to the needs of Tripura's students. The Labhya Foundation also supported the capacity building of educators and relevant stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of the program³⁴.

The Saharsh curriculum includes daily well-being classes for students in grades 1 to 8, focusing on mindfulness, storytelling with open-ended discussions, and reflective conversations designed to help students experience and express happiness. This initiative represents North-East India's first in-school program dedicated to children's well-being, impacting approximately 400,000 children across 4,000 public schools in Tripura.

These initiatives reflect Tripura's holistic approach to fostering happiness and well-being among its citizens through education, skill development, and social empowerment programs.

5. Kerala Government has launched Kudumbashree Happiness Centres. Through Kudumbashree, Government is implementing "Happy Kerala - Happiness Centre" projects to uplift families and individuals, aiming to make Kerala a model state for happiness by addressing various challenges and promoting well-being.

³³ Learn with happiness: Tripura launches 'Saharsh' in all govt, govt-aided schools
The Indian Express Jan 7, 2023 https://indianexpress.com/article/education/tripura-saharsh-scheme-social-emotional-learning-schoolchildren-8367753/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³⁴Teaching Mental Health: Evaluating India's Saharsh Curriculum? https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative-project/teaching-mental-health-evaluating-indias-saharsh-curriculum?utm_source=chatgpt.comhttps://www.labhya.org/what-we-do/model?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Key Features of the "Happy Kerala - Happiness Centre" Project are:

Ensuring the overall well-being and upliftment of every individual and family in society. Kudumbashree, the State Poverty Eradication Mission, is spearheading the initiative³⁵.

The project will be launched in 168 model Community Development Societies (CDS) across Kerala.

Happiness Centres will provide support to make each family a centre of happiness. The initiative aims to address challenges in areas like equality, financial stability, environment, mental health, arts, sports, literature, sanitation, and democratic values.

A survey will be conducted in model CDSs, and micro-plans will be prepared to improve each family's happiness index.

A happiness index suited to the social conditions in Kerala will be prepared based on these micro-plans.

Guidelines and training modules are being developed for trainers involved in the project.

Kudumbashree will collaborate with various departments like health, social justice, women and child development, and other relevant agencies.

"Happiness Forums" will be formed at the district, CDS, and ADS levels, including representatives of Kudumbashree and local bodies.

"Edam" will be formed at the ward level, including 10 to 40 families, to prepare family-based micro-level plans.

Kudumbashree Snehitha Gender Help Desk and Gender Resource Centre will provide psychosocial support and counseling.

Women will be made aware of menstrual hygiene, physical and mental health, and lifestyle disease prevention.

³⁵ Kudumbashree to launch Happiness Centres to make Kerala happy (27 June 2024)
<https://lsgkerala.gov.in/en/kudumbashree/news/kudumbashree-launch-happiness-centres-make-kerala-happy>

The Department of Social Justice has also formulated a comprehensive project "Vayoraksha" for addressing the grievances and issues faced by senior citizens.

The state is also planning to establish over 1000 "happiness parks" for mental and physical well-being, offering facilities like art spaces, sports activities, yoga, meditation, and more.

The Kochi Corporation is also working on a "Happiness Kochi" project to address critical civic issues that impact mental health.

6. Several prestigious universities, IITs, and IIMs, etc have begun offering happiness, well-being, and mindfulness courses in recent years. Following is a list of some notable institutions:

1. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)

- IIT Bombay: Offers courses on mindfulness, stress management, and well-being as part of its student wellness programs.
- IIT Delhi: Runs programs focused on emotional intelligence and stress management for students.
- IIT Kharagpur: Introduces courses on happiness and well-being, including mindfulness practices.
- IIT Madras: Offers workshops on the science of happiness and stress management.
- IIT Kanpur: Organizes courses and workshops on personal development, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence.

2. Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)

- IIM Ahmedabad: Includes courses on leadership that incorporate elements of emotional well-being, mindfulness, and happiness.
- IIM Bangalore: Focuses on well-being as part of its leadership development program, including the science of happiness.
- IIM Calcutta: Provides courses related to emotional intelligence, stress management, and mindfulness.
- IIM Lucknow: Offers training sessions that include aspects of personal well-being, stress management, and mindfulness.

- IIM Indore: Focuses on leadership and well-being programs that emphasize positive psychology.

3. Other Universities and Institutions

- Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore: Conducts workshops on emotional intelligence and mental well-being for its students.
- Indian School of Business (ISB): ISB integrates courses on happiness, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence as part of their leadership and executive education programs.
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai: Includes courses on well-being, mental health, and happiness within its various programs.
- Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi: Offers courses and workshops on positive psychology and happiness.
- University of Delhi (DU): Offers short-term courses and workshops focused on mental health, emotional well-being, and happiness as part of its student wellness initiatives.
- Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), New Delhi: Conducts programs on well-being, mental health, and stress management for students and staff.
- Jindal Global University (JGU): JGU offers courses related to happiness studies and well-being, where students explore various aspects of happiness including psychology, philosophy, and the scientific basis of happiness.
- Amity University: Conducts workshops and programs on happiness, mindfulness, and emotional well-being.
- Symbiosis International University, Pune: Runs mindfulness and well-being programs for students.

These institutions are increasingly incorporating the science of happiness and well-being into their curricula to help students lead balanced lives and improve their emotional intelligence, enhancing both their personal and professional development.

In Lucknow, the Rekhi Centre of Excellence for the Science of Happiness has been established at IIM Lucknow. Jaipuria Institute of Management has introduced a Happiness Course. Mind Spa, Centre of Excellence for Happiness at Amity University is functioning at their Lucknow campus. Happiness Thinking Lab has been established at Lucknow University. The University runs courses on happiness like Personality Growth, Happiness and well-being, Self Enhancement etc. Era University has set up a Department of Happiness.

12. Proposal for Action: Formulating the Policy and Establishment of the Department of Happiness, Government of Uttar Pradesh

A) Constitution of an Expert Committee

To create a well-rounded, comprehensive policy on happiness and well-being, the Government of Uttar Pradesh should constitute a multidisciplinary Expert Committee comprising:

- Experts in the fields of psychology, public health, governance, education, economics, sociology, and happiness studies.
- Representatives from universities and academic institutions with ongoing happiness and well-being programs.
- Civil society members and youth representatives to ensure that the policy is inclusive and reflects the needs of various demographic groups.

The Committee will undertake the following tasks:

- Conduct a study of global and national best practices related to happiness, mental well-being, and quality of life in Governments where these initiatives have been taken.
- Identify and recommend relevant well-being indicators tailored to the socio-cultural and economic context of Uttar Pradesh.
- Draft a State Happiness Policy, outlining actionable interventions and a clear framework for monitoring and assessing its progress.

B) Creation of a Department of Happiness and Well-being

The establishment of a Department of Happiness and Well-being will act as the focal point for promoting happiness across various sectors to ensure effective coordination with other government departments.

The key responsibilities of this Department will include:

- Coordinating across government departments to integrate happiness and mental well-being goals into their respective policies, programs, and initiatives.
- Developing a State Well-being Index that includes the concept of Yogameditation, spirituality, peace, mental health metrics, citizen satisfaction indicators, and other relevant measures of well-being.
- Designing and conducting training programs, outreach activities, and research focused on happiness, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

- Monitoring policy implementation, assessing its effectiveness, and publishing an annual Happiness Report to track progress and suggest adjustments.
- Any other initiatives to promote happiness of citizens.

C) Pilot Programs and Public Engagement

Design Programs should be launched across multiple sectors to gauge the feasibility and impact of the happiness policy. These initiatives will focus on:

- Introducing happiness curricula and stress management programs in schools and colleges to foster emotional intelligence and well-being from an early age.
- Establishing employee well-being frameworks within government offices to improve the mental health and job satisfaction of public service employees.
- Promoting community engagement through activities such as arts, mindfulness practices, and volunteerism, creating spaces for people to connect, express themselves, and find joy.

Additionally, public platforms will be utilized to ensure participatory policymaking by inviting feedback from citizens through:

- Online surveys to gather insights into the public's well-being needs and preferences.
- Storytelling platforms where individuals can share personal experiences related to happiness and well-being.
- Idea submissions to involve citizens in co-creating solutions that reflect the diverse needs of the state's population.

Formulating a State Happiness Policy represents a forward-thinking, visionary, citizen-centred approach to governance that prioritizes mental and emotional well-being. It draws inspiration from scriptures, and global innovations and addresses the pressing mental health challenges in India, all while leveraging the success of university-based happiness programmes. By fostering collaboration, expert deliberation, and cross-sector implementation, the state can position itself as a pioneer in creating a society that is not only prosperous but also joyful, humane, and mentally resilient. This initiative will contribute significantly to enhancing the quality of life for the people of Uttar Pradesh.