



## Gross National Happiness - Theory

The term Gross National Happiness was coined in 1974 by Bhutan's former king Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Since then Bhutan has seen profound positive changes in the socio-economic paradigm. Learning lessons from the mistakes of other countries and practicing sustainable development, Bhutan has now one of the fastest growing economies in South-East Asia.

The Centre for Bhutan Studies has developed a sophisticated survey instrument to measure the population's general level of well-being. It is based on the Canadian health epidemiologist Michael Penncock's work. He and the Bhutanese Karma Ura have together developed a policy screening tool, which can be used to examine the potential impacts of projects or programs on Gross National Happiness.

GNH serves as a unifying vision for Bhutan's five-year planning process, including the economic and development plans for the country.

GNH is the guiding philosophy behind every development initiative, encapsulated in every activity and program implemented by the various agencies of the government and the corporate and private sector. GNH is considered more important than just increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Proposed policies in Bhutan must pass a GNH review, based on a GNH impact statement.

The four pillars of GNH are:

- 1) Sustainable & Equitable Socio-Economic Development
- 2) Preservation and promotion of cultural values
- 3) Preservation & Promotion of Culture
- 4) Good governance



Through collaboration with an international group of scholars and empirical researches, the Centre for Bhutan Studies further defined these four pillars with greater specificity into eight general contributors to happiness:

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Adress: Birger Svenssons väg 29 B, 432 40 Varberg  
Telefon: 073-775 60 02  
E-post: [mi@margaretaivarsson.se](mailto:mi@margaretaivarsson.se)  
Hemsida: [www.margaretaivarsson.se](http://www.margaretaivarsson.se)





- 1) Psychological wellbeing
- 2) Health
- 3) Time use
- 4) Education
- 5) Cultural diversity and resilience
- 6) Good governance
- 7) Community vitality
- 8) Ecological diversity and resilience
- 9) Living standards



The GNH framework is based upon the research literature of positive psychology, wellbeing and happiness.

[On the 2nd of April 2012 Bhutan hosted a conference at the United Nations in New York](#). One that could lead to a change in the world: the need for a new economic paradigm - a shift from a purely GDP-based model to one with a new interpretation of "success". "Gross National Happiness has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me it signifies simply - development guided by human values" said by the King of Bhutan.

## References

A glimpse of Bhutanese culture by Ngeema Sangay Tshenpo. Third edition, 2012.

The business of Gross National Happiness, article by Isabel Sebastian in the magazine Tashi Delek sept - oct 2012

[Gross National Happiness](#)

[A short guide to Gross National Happiness](#)

[Gross National Happiness Centre](#)

[Gross National Happiness Commission](#)

[Gross National Happiness in Business](#)

[High-Level meeting on wellbeing and happiness](#): defining a new economic paradigm, hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan, 2nd April 2012, United Nations Headquarters, New York

By [Margareta Ivarsson](#), November 2012 updated: 20171215

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Adress:	Birger Svenssons väg 29 B, 432 40 Varberg
Telefon:	073-775 60 02
E-post:	<a href="mailto:mi@margaretaivarsson.se">mi@margaretaivarsson.se</a>
Hemsida:	<a href="http://www.margaretaivarsson.se">www.margaretaivarsson.se</a>

