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# Happiness in India

Robert Biswas-Diener, Louis Tay, and Ed Diener

Over the past four decades, there has been a growing academic interest in happiness.<sup>1</sup> Researchers have paid increasing attention to the causes and consequences of wellbeing (see Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith 1999, for an overview of the findings from the first three decades of research). In the early stages of this scientific undertaking, they were primarily concerned with establishing the validity of happiness measures and with exploring demographic correlates of happiness. Later studies focused on the outcomes of happiness as well as on the creation of happiness interventions. One of the most important recent set of findings emerging from the research on happiness concerns the benefits of experiencing happiness. Although, traditionally, happiness was thought to simply *feel* good, modern research is increasingly revealing that happiness is associated with a wide range of desirable outcomes in health (Diener & Chan 2011; Pressman & Cohen 2005), in relationships (Myers & Diener 1995), and at work (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener 2005).

The idea that happiness is beneficial not only to the individual but also to families, work groups, and societies has caught the attention of government officials and policy makers. There is a new field of “happiness economics” (Frey 2008) as well as recommendations for national accounts of wellbeing (Diener & Seligman 2006) and happiness-related policies (Diener, Lucas, Schimmack, & Helliwell 2009). Policies that produce wellbeing without disproportionate costs to the environment are given particular attention (Marks, Simms, Thompson, & Abdallah 2006) as well as policies that preserve cultural values (Burns 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter we tend to use “happiness” and “wellbeing” as interchangeable concepts especially when describing the abstract concept of happiness. When we discuss research on specific aspects of wellbeing, such as life satisfaction or positive emotions, we clearly identify the exact concept under scrutiny.

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India represents a particularly interesting case study of national and individual happiness. In many ways India is a unique country with a society, history and cultural traditions unlike anywhere else in the world. India is currently the second most populous nation on the planet, after China, with more than one billion inhabitants. Because of its geographic location and natural resources, India has a history of being invaded and colonized by other cultures including the Mongols (13th century A.C.E.), Mughals (16th century A.C.E.) and the British (18th century A.C.E.), as well as being a major trading destination. India is a diverse society, with the largest concentration of Hindus in the world, as well as sizable Muslim and Christian populations. There are 14 official languages, largely unique to specific states and regions, in addition to the widely used Hindi and English.

India also has a noteworthy economy. Although the annual per capita income is the equivalent of slightly more than 1,000 US dollars, India has the 11th largest economy in the world as ranked by Gross Domestic Product (GDP; International Monetary Fund 2010) and a 9% annual GDP growth rate during 2007–2008 (World Bank 2010). This rapid economic development has led to large gains in the treatment—and in some cases the eradication—of tuberculosis, leprosy and other health problems, and to the development of a distinct Indian “middle class”. India can be described as a country at an economic, technological, societal, and cultural crossroad. The nation is on the brink of rapid change and increasing in overall wealth, but it is also a relatively poor country with the majority of its citizens living in rural non-industrialized areas and participating in a traditional lifestyle.

India is, in many ways, an ideal test case for one of the most interesting questions related to happiness: Is happiness an “outside-in” or an “inside-out” phenomenon? That is, how much of an individual’s happiness is a matter of personal attitude versus how much it might be influenced by the external and material conditions of that person’s life. To the extent that outside-in factors, such as income, contribute to happiness (see Diener & Biswas-Diener 2002 for a detailed discussion of this issue) the Indian government would do well to maximize the happiness of its citizens by promoting economic, labor and healthcare policies that are the most likely to create collective wellbeing. On the other hand, to the extent to which happiness may be a matter of personal attention and interpretation of daily events, it would make sense to establish happiness interventions by providing educational programs that instruct citizens in how to train their aspirations, set goals, and savor positive moments.

## The Wellbeing of India

Veenhoven and Ouwendael (1995) suggest that the “livability” of a nation—the extent to which the state provides services and infrastructure that make for a society in which people can flourish—is an important element of collective wellbeing at the national level. Thus, the wellbeing of the citizenry will be determined, in part, by national wealth and the ability of the government and private sector to leverage material resources into infrastructure, jobs, and other societal institutions

that promote happiness. This is an “outside-in” approach to happiness and it is interesting to gauge the collective wellbeing of Indians in this way. Although India has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it has long struggled with challenges such as poverty, agricultural droughts and other weather-related problems, religious sectarian violence, and armed conflict with neighboring states. Despite the rapid economic growth in India, Easterlin and Sawangfa (2010) report that, according to the World Values Survey (a large international survey of social, economic and psychological indicators administered in waves across many years), Indian happiness has stayed relatively level over the past decade and a half. India typically ranks in the middle of nations in international surveys of happiness. In an analysis of the World Values Surveys, for instance, Inglehart and Klingemann (2000) reported that India placed 43 of 69 nations, with 77% of those sampled reporting happiness and 67% of those sampled reporting life satisfaction. In an in-depth survey of nations, Prescott-Allen (2001) reported that India ranked 172 out of 180 countries. This relatively low score, according to Prescott-Allen, can be explained, in part, by low levels of education, health, and high levels of ecological destruction and other societal ills that take a psychological toll on the citizenry. According to Veenhoven (2010), reporting on several surveys across time, the citizens of India who have been sampled on a wide range of happiness measures including those of affect, affect balance and life satisfaction typically score just above average.

Unfortunately, much of the data on the happiness of Indians was collected before its rapid economic growth. To get a better sense of the current overall wellbeing of Indians, we can turn to recent survey data from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll was undertaken by The Gallup Organization with the mission to collect ongoing data on “key indicators that range from basic survival requirements to feelings about general health, job satisfaction, financial security, personal enjoyment and hopes for the future” (Gallup 2007, p. 5). This poll now includes representative samples from more than 150 countries. The data were collected by telephone interviews in industrialized countries and by face-to-face interviews in less industrialized places. In India, the sample consisted of 10,296 individuals, comprised of 52.9% males and 47.1% females, with a mean age of 35.8 (SD 15.1). Locality information was available for 8,170 individuals within the sample: 53.8% respondents were from rural areas, 28.4% from small towns, 13% from large cities, and 4.7% from suburban areas near large cities.

In the first wave of the Gallup World Poll data collection, Indians answered questions relating to a variety of aspects of life ranging from having running water at home to being satisfied with personal health (Gallup 2007). In this initial sampling Indians ranked just below the overall world average on the Food and Shelter Index (India: 64; World Average: 75) and the Work Index (India: 24; World Average: 30). These relatively low scores do not represent the whole story of life quality however. Indians also ranked exactly at the world average for the Health Index (India: 76; World Average: 76) and above average on the Law and Order Index (India: 75; World Average: 70). Taken together, these Index scores suggest that Indians suffer from inadequate food, shelter, and access to non-subsistence agricultural jobs

but also enjoy surprisingly high levels of quality of life in other areas. Reports of crime victimization are low compared to world averages, and the number of Indians reporting that they feel safe walking alone at night is high (73%). This is especially high given the overall population, the size of major urban centers and the diversity of Indian society.

Among the wellbeing items specific to happiness used in this survey were measures of overall life quality (a proxy for life satisfaction), positive emotions and negative emotions. Relative to respondents in some other nations, Indian respondents reported fewer positive emotions and more negative emotions, with a relatively low Feelings Balance score (Table 1).

On a 0–10 scale of overall life evaluation the respondents scored just above average with a mean score of 5.2 (SD 1.77), although average scores varied by urban-rural living (Table 2).

The recent data in the Gallup World Poll shows that happiness in India is a mixed story. It ranks among the middle and lower middle nations on international indices of happiness, but respondents reported absolute levels of happiness in the positive range. Thus, it is not that India is unhappy—indeed, its citizens appear to experience mild satisfaction and appreciably more positive than negative emotions—but rather, that Indians are generally happier than their GDP per capita might suggest. This

**Table 1** The happiness of India and 3 other countries

	Subjective well-being	India	USA	China	Brazil
Life evaluation	5.20	7.35	5.06	7.14	
Positive emotions	0.70	0.83	0.82	0.82	
Negative emotions	0.25	0.22	0.14	0.24	
Feelings balance	0.46	0.62	0.68	0.59	

*Note:* Life evaluation is represented on a range of 0–10. Emotion scores reflect a range of 0–1. Feelings Balance scores are computed by subtracting Negative Emotion from Positive Emotions scores

**Table 2** Happiness within India

	India overall		Rural (N = 3065)		Urban (N = 5105)		Rural-Urban difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Life evaluation	5.20	1.77	4.98	1.71	5.24	1.80	0.00
Positive emotions	0.70	0.40	0.68	0.41	0.73	0.37	0.00
Negative emotions	0.25	0.32	0.27	0.33	0.25	0.32	0.00
Feelings balance	0.46	0.60	0.41	0.62	0.48	0.57	0.00

*Note:* Life evaluation is represented on a range of 0–10. Emotion scores reflect a range of 0–1. Feelings Balance scores are computed by subtracting Negative Emotion from Positive Emotions scores. Rural includes “rural area” or “on a farm”; urban includes “small towns”, “suburb of a large city” and “large cities”

is consistent with past findings that most people are mildly happy (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso, & Diener 2005) and that mild pleasantness may be an evolutionarily adaptive set point that helps people function (Fredrickson 2001). The data presented here (Tables 1 and 2) suggest that people in more industrialized countries are relatively happier than Indians, and that people in urban areas—presumably those with greater access to jobs, education, goods and services—are happier even within India.

## A Finer Look

The conclusions presented above are, by their nature, limited. Aggregated happiness data paint a broad picture of average happiness levels but tell us little about individuals or sub-groups. National polls are important for understanding the large-scale effects of development, the job market and other macroeconomic and societal conditions, but data from smaller samples can be helpful to elucidate the actual day-to-day experiences of people. There are currently two sources of information about the happiness of individuals in India: (1) samples from people living in a similar way in other places, such as people from Bangladesh (who are culturally similar to citizens of the Indian state of West Bengal), and (2) small samples of sections of Indian society. To date, relatively few studies have focused specifically on the happiness of Indian samples or samples from neighboring societies. Here we present several such studies to expand on the nation level data presented above.

There are several studies of the wellbeing of people living in Bangladesh, Tibet and Thailand. Camfield, Choudhury, and Devine (2009), for instance, examined happiness in the context of poverty using samples from Bangladesh. They found that material needs were a factor in overall happiness but that other factors, such as social relationships, were also important correlates of happiness. A qualitative analysis by Camfield and colleagues yielded interesting insights into the social world of Bangladeshis: Young women reported that their marriage was their most important relationship, whereas older women reported experiencing happiness when their children treated them with affection. The researchers conclude that it is possible to parse the aspects of the marital relationship into intimacy, familial (the relationship between the two families), and societal (cultural expectations of the marriage). This finding—that social relationships are important to happiness—is consistent with other research on this topic (e.g. Diener & Seligman 2002). Camfield and colleagues' study is important in that it provides an examination of wellbeing beyond the satisfaction of material needs and includes an emphasis on social fulfillment.

Webb (2009) conducted an exploratory study of wellbeing on the Tibetan Plateau. He found that the Tibetans in his study scored an average 67.3 out of a possible 100 on life satisfaction. This implies that despite cultural change and economic hardships, the Tibetans in this sample were satisfied with some, if not many, aspects of their lives. Webb also found that women reported significantly higher satisfaction than did men, and that—surprisingly—non-educated people were more satisfied than those who were formally educated, perhaps because of higher material

aspirations or being separated from family due to the geographic mobility required by professional work. Although the samples represented in these studies bear striking resemblances to societal and cultural conditions in India it is still prudent to exercise caution in generalizing the results to contemporary India. [Ed. note: See the chapter "Happiness on the Tibetan Plateau" by Dave Webb, in this book.]

There are also several studies of the happiness of smaller Indian samples. Brinkerhoff and colleagues (1997), for example, conducted a study of Indian villagers to examine the relation between the fulfillment of basic needs and happiness. Through a series of interviews with hundreds of respondents from two Himalayan villages they concluded that more than half of the people in the study were satisfied with their lives (55% in one village and 62% in the other). In addition, relatively few of the people reported being actively dissatisfied (4% in the first village and 9% in the second). This suggests that, despite the hardships of village life, there is much that functions for people at the social and psychological levels. Interestingly, the researchers conclude that it is difficult to establish criteria for basic minimum needs as these needs change from location to location. The idea that social needs must be fulfilled simultaneously with material needs is receiving empirical support (Tay & Diener 2011) and is becoming an increasingly important idea in development work (Linley, Bhaduri, Sen Sharma, & Govindji 2010). In a series of studies examining the happiness of Indians in an urban setting, Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001; 2006) conducted two studies with pavement dwellers, slum dwellers, and sex workers living in Kolkata. In the first study they found that slum dwellers were mildly satisfied with their lives and with the specific domains of their lives, such as their morality, their food, and their families, despite the dire economic conditions in which they live. When looking at possible causes of happiness the researchers found that objective housing indicators such as crowding and quality of housing construction, as well as income levels were important indicators of life satisfaction, but so was family satisfaction. In their second study, Biswas-Diener et al. (2005) compared samples of homeless people living in Kolkata to those living in Oregon and California. They found that the Indians were mildly satisfied with their lives and were significantly more satisfied than their counterparts in the American samples. This suggests that there may be some locally protective factor that helps buffer the Indians from the dire effects of poverty. Subsequent analyses revealed that the Indians were also significantly more satisfied with their social lives and with themselves than the Americans. It may be that some societal factor such as attitudes toward poverty or the value of close family relationships helps the Indians enjoy surprising levels of happiness.

Our own analysis of the recent Gallup World Poll data suggests that the social fabric of Indian life is, indeed, a source of happiness. Indians reported similar levels of trust in local police, feeling safe walking at night, and safety from assaults and property thefts as did respondents from Brazil, China and the United States. Perhaps more interesting is our analysis of social capital variables examining Indian urban and rural samples separately (see Table 3). Rural dwellers reported comparable levels of all social capital variables as their urban counterparts. This suggests a reassuring note to those who believe that economic growth favors those living in

**Table 3** Social capital within India

	Overall	Urban	Rural
Count on to help	0.64	0.61	0.65
Donated money	0.17	0.18	0.16
Volunteered time	0.12	0.13	0.12
Helped a stranger	0.31	0.32	0.30
Voiced opinion to official	0.11	0.14	0.09
Trust local police	0.72	0.74	0.75
Feel safe walking home	0.72	0.71	0.73
Money/Property stolen	0.06	0.05	0.06
Assaulted in past year	0.04	0.04	0.04
Important purpose	0.91	0.96	0.91

*Note:* Rural includes “rural area” or “on a farm”; urban includes “small towns”, “suburb of a large city” and “large cities”

cities and who, presumably, have better access to jobs, health services and other factors that might raise their quality of life. It appears that people living in rural areas have not been “left behind” in terms of feeling safe or supported by others.

The studies discussed above suggest that macroeconomic factors and national policies may be helpful for promoting a livable society, but they do not necessarily address all psychological needs at the local level. Brinkerhoff and colleagues (1997) suggest that family and community needs must be weighed in concert with individual needs, and that this might best be accomplished locally, rather than through national programs. Tay and Diener (2011) offer evidence that social needs are important for positive emotion while material needs—along with household conveniences (Diener, Ng, Harter, & Arora 2010)—are important for life satisfaction. It is on this last point, perhaps, that programs and policies with greater psychological benefit, such as women’s empowerment programs, might be utilized.

## Cultural Issues

Thus far, we have principally discussed happiness as an “outside-in” process in which income, satisfaction of needs and other material conveniences affect an individual’s happiness. There are also possible “inside-out” factors through which people interpret and make sense of their daily events, and these might influence happiness. Because we are discussing India—a nation state—rather than individuals, it makes sense to address the inside-out factor that is most relevant to groups: culture. There has been a surge in research on culture and happiness in the last decade and a half, and we now understand much more about the ways in which culture subtly (and not so subtly) influences emotion.

Although there are many definitions of culture we use this term to mean a set of socially transmitted attitudes, feelings and behaviors that can be used to distinguish one group from another. Culture is, by definition, a learned phenomenon. Tsai (2008) argues that affective states can be *actual* (what people actually feel in

response to a specific event) or *idealized* (the state people strive to feel) and that cultural factors more heavily influence idealized affect. One common way of distinguishing cultures is through the dimension of individualism and collectivism. Individualists, such as people raised in the United States, tend to view themselves as unique and look for opportunities to pursue their own goals and distinguish themselves from the group. Collectivists, such as people raised in Taiwan, on the other hand, tend to look for opportunities to fit in and tend to subjugate personal goals when they come into conflict with those of the wider group. In a series of studies sampling people from individualist cultures and collectivist cultures Tsai concluded that collectivists strive for an idealized affective state that can best be described as "low-arousal positive" (calm, relaxed, peaceful), in contrast to the "high-arousal positive" (enthusiastic, excited, elated) states sought after by their individualistic counterparts. Tsai argues that idealized affect has behavioral consequences. She reviews a series of studies suggesting that members of individualistic cultures are more likely to want to exert themselves in leisure pursuits, view fun and thrills as important, and to engage in individual recreational activities such as jogging and hiking. Similarly, there is evidence that cultural factors influence preferences for slow versus up-tempo music.

Cultural norms also influence cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. In one study Suh, Diener, Oishi and Triandis (1998) found that among more than 62,000 respondents from 61 nations, norms were a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in collectivist cultures relative to individualistic ones. That is, individualists appear to weigh personal achievements and experiences when arriving at satisfaction judgments, whereas collectivists are more likely to use both personal experiences and contextual cues about how they should feel. Suh (2007) suggests that collectivists are more sensitive than individualists to context (see Nisbett 2003, for further discussion), including social and cultural norms. It is even possible, according to Suh, that this cultural context-sensitivity is associated with psychological downsides: constantly scanning the environment for useful contextual information leads to an external view of the self; that is, a tendency to view the self from the perspective of outsiders and to habitually monitor self-presentation accordingly. At its extreme, according to Suh, external "outside-in views" of the self are associated with excessive need for approval and belonging that, in turn, lead people to become more materialistic and less happy. Evidence for this can be found in samples of Koreans (Diener, Suh, Kim-Prieto, Biswas-Diener, & Tay 2010) and Singaporeans (Napa-Scollon & King 2010).

While the studies mentioned above deal with collectivists broadly, there is also research pertaining specifically to Indian samples. A study by Menon and Shweder (1994), for example, examines local cultural emotions such as *lajya* (acute shame). [Ed. note: Please see the chapter "Hinduism, Happiness and Wellbeing: A Case Study of Adulthood in an Oriya Hindu Temple Town" by Usha Menon, in this book.] In a cross-cultural study by Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener (2004) that included an Indian sample, the researchers examined whether indigenous emotions unique to the local culture formed separate clusters distinct from the western and English emotion clusters found in the study. In both Indian and Japanese samples,

the indigenous emotions clustered into predictable “pleasant” and “unpleasant” clusters. Interestingly, in the Indian sample, the English word “pride,” which is typically a positive emotion for Westerners, clustered with the negative emotion words, including the indigenous word *aviman* (prideful loving anger). In other languages, pride is often identified with being haughty.

It appears, at a cursory glance, that Indians and other collectivists are more prone to inside-out interpretations of daily events that would suppress rather than boost happiness. They are more likely to strive for low arousal positive emotions, more likely to be at the mercy of contextual cues for how they should feel, and more likely to sacrifice personal goals if they come into conflict with group goals. This is not, however, the only interpretation of the findings on research and wellbeing. When understood from their own point of view it is easy to see that Indian “inside-out” phenomena can promote happiness. Perhaps the most important aspect of “inside-out” happiness in the Indian context is related to fatalistic thinking. Indian culture is well known for the concept of *karma*, which can be thought of as an individual’s fate as dictated by actions from a former life. Westerners, by contrast, often have a “disjoint agency” view of the world in which a person’s control over her environment and freedom to choose are viewed as causes for celebration (Markus, Uchida, Omoregie, Townsend, & Kitayama 2006). To the extent that Indians feel life is a series of fated circumstances rather than under immediate and direct personal control this could have consequences for happiness. In a study by Chaturvedi, Chiu, and Viswanathan (2009) the researchers examined the thinking styles of low-income Tamil Indian women living in urban areas. The researchers found a high rate of endorsement of “negotiable fate” beliefs, especially among women who were non-literate. Negotiable fate is not the same as fatalism; it refers to the belief that an individual may not have direct control over her environment but can negotiate with fate for a bounded form of indirect agency. The fact that this form of thinking is particularly high among the least educated may indicate that negotiable fate beliefs serve as a psychological buffer against the dire effects of poverty by blending the acceptance and personal control dimensions that are found in fatalism and agency beliefs.

## Policy Issues and Conclusion

Should Indian policy makers focus on happiness? When we compare subjective wellbeing in the Scandinavian nations to that in most African nations, the differences are huge (Diener et al. 2010). These large societal differences are not likely due to innate temperament differences between people living in different nations. There are longitudinal data of individuals that show that people’s long-term SWB can change in response to events such as unemployment (Luca 2007; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener 2003). There is now no doubt that the “outside-in” circumstances of people’s lives matter for SWB, and many of these are societal circumstances that can be influenced by business and government policies and practices. To the extent that happiness is an outside-in phenomenon, we argue

that Indian policy makers should carefully consider how transportation, economic, health, education, and social policies will affect the happiness of the citizenry. Policies that promote public cooperation and equality are likely to be particularly helpful in increasing not only objective indicators of wellbeing such as longevity but also subjective indicators of quality of life such as happiness (Tov, Diener, Ng, Kesebir, & Harter 2009). In Table 4 we report correlations between four happiness variables (positive and negative emotions, feelings balance and life satisfaction) and a variety of public trust and cooperation related variables. As can be seen in the table, cooperation and trust are generally positively related to higher levels of happiness and negatively related to negative emotions. Regardless of the specific policies, we advocate adding subjective indicators to existing economic indicators. In addition, prioritizing cultural policy, such as has been done in the case of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness policy, can lead to better environmental policy that might be in the long-term happiness interests of all citizens (Burns 2010). The British government have recently initiated similar programs (BBC November 15th, 2010).

Outside-in influences are not the only factors influencing an individual's happiness. Inside-out factors also influence wellbeing. Indians do not need to wait for a "post-materialistic" society where basic material needs are fully met to attend to their happiness. In fact, the evidence from impoverished groups suggest that non-material aspects of life such as high quality social relations and a positive view of the self are instrumental to a person's happiness (Biswas-Diener & Diener 2001; Biswas-Diener et al. 2005). There are several reasons why inside-out processes might not have received more attention from policy makers. First, liberal critics might fear that enhancing happiness in poor individuals is synonymous with fostering complacency and an acceptance of sub-standard living conditions. Second, because inside-out phenomena are abstract and psychological in nature they are less

**Table 4** Correlations between any of the public trust/helping behavior variables and the 4 happiness outcome measures, for sample as a whole

	Life evaluation	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Balance
Life evaluation	1	0.225**	-0.236**	0.274**
Positive emotions	0.225**	1	-0.400**	0.872**
Negative emotions	-0.236**	-0.400**	1	-0.798**
Feelings balance	0.274**	0.872**	-0.798**	1
Count on to help	0.203**	0.159**	-0.152**	0.186**
Donated money	0.133**	0.091**	-0.004	0.061**
Volunteered time	0.122**	0.081**	0.037**	0.033**
Helped a stranger	0.114**	0.108**	-0.004	0.072**
Voiced opinion to official	0.129**	0.103**	0.027	0.053**
Trust local police	0.083**	0.077**	-0.088**	0.098**
Feel safe walking home	0.058**	0.075**	-0.077**	0.090**

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$

popular among policy makers and interventionists who want to emphasize objective aspects of happiness. The relatively recent trends in "empowerment" programs in economically developing nations such as India are one example of intervention programs that address not only external circumstances but also the types of psychological inside-out influences on happiness, including personal feelings of control over fate and cultural norms.

Indians, both as individuals and as a nation, strive for lives full of meaning, peace, and positive emotion. Results from a variety of studies suggest that Indians experience a preponderance of positive states and might, on average, be described as "mildly happy". It is likely that poor conditions in which many Indians live take a psychological toll, and the research evidence suggests that wealthier individuals, and wealthier Indians specifically, experience significantly more happiness and lower rates of negative emotions. Thus, policies that help improve the material standards of life in India will likely be accompanied by some gain in aggregate happiness. It is imperative for Indian policy makers to keep in mind that material gains not lead to large sacrifices in other important areas such as social relationships, public trust or the quality of the environment.

Material fulfillment is not in itself a sufficient goal where Indian happiness is concerned. Indians also experience happiness that is constructed from within and defined by local standards for emotions and individual perceptions of the world. India presents an interesting case of people with a fate negotiation perspective that may help buffer them from the dire effects of poverty by helping them accept their circumstances even as it propels them to affect change by giving them hope that change—within limits—is possible. Those seeking to intervene in the happiness of Indians—whether at the individual or national level—must understand these indigenous ways of constructing happiness.

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