

In this Issue

- »» Editor's Note
- »» Mentor's Musings
- »» The Pursuit of Happiness
- »» Leadership Program at Bhutan

Newsletter
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Editor's Note

By Raj Narayan, ISEC Editor

Happiness, they say, is a state of the mind. It could result from contentment, love, satisfaction, pleasure or joy over achieving success as defined by one's own mind or another person. As part of evolution, humankind chased happiness externally with limited success before looking inward via concepts like spirituality, philosophy etc.

There have been several scientific experiments drawn up to understand this phenomenon. I'll limit myself to one that seems most interesting and least profound. Behavioral scientist David T. Lykken of the University of Minnesota found that 50% of one's happiness is genetically imbibed while 10% is a result of measurable circumstances like money, sex, health, status etc. The remaining 40% was found to be a combination of unknown factors that could vary from person to person from situation to situation.

So, what constitutes this remaining 40% that causes a person to oscillate between happiness and sorrow? A person is usually happy over success, either defined by him or another. Getting top honors in an examination is an example of measuring success against another's benchmark while kicking the butt as a result of a New Year resolution is one's personal goal that provides inner satisfaction.

Now juxtapose these two target-oriented forms of joy with the spiritual happiness that someone like Lord Buddha preached thousands of years ago. The state of '**Nirvana**' or everlasting peace refers to a person's ability to overcome cravings in all forms. In fact, Buddhism's **Noble Eightfold Path** looks even beyond John Stuart Mill's "greatest good for the greatest number" utilitarianism concepts and focuses the mind on achieving inner peace happiness.

This issue of the ISEC Newsletter is devoted to the concept of happiness and how inner peace can provide benefits not just to one's mind but to those around us.

MENTOR'S MUSINGS

By Krishna Kumar, ISEC Founder-Director

An eminent television anchor and presenter tweeted from the rooftops when his team broke the news about a recent scam. With every passing hour, the euphoria gave way to anguish as the wider ramifications of the scam and its impact on civil society dawned on scribe and the rest of the world. It was a strange situation where one man's elation caused untold dismay to the rest of the nation.

Not for a moment am I suggesting that the television channel should have let sleeping dogs lie and not ripped the lid off the scam? In civil society, this would be sacrilege. The journalist had merely benchmarked his success with rival channels and felt a sense of elation on emerging first among equals.

At a wider level, I'm sure most viewers would have felt disgust and disillusionment over yet another scandal involving the pillars of our democracy. Come to think of it, even the news anchor would have felt the same, once the winner's euphoria had passed. Now, imagine a star cricketer's double century in a losing cause. Does he feel happy at scoring a double ton while the rest of his team and the country as a whole are ruing the lost match?

The question, therefore, is whether we can postulate that the sum of the happiness of numerous individuals will

translate to happiness for a community?

On a recent visit to Bhutan for a Leadership Program this thought often crossed my mind. As you know, Bhutan was the first country, in the 1970's to propagate the concept of GNH (Gross National Happiness) as the index of prosperity for a nation. They suggested that the GNH as a better parameter to measure a country's wellbeing as opposed to the traditional GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and GNP (Gross National Product). Today, the Center for Bhutan Studies is undertaking the complex task of researching a quantitative index to tabulate the country's GNH via collecting data from individuals on a set of nine dimensions that are listed below.

Psychological Well-being

Time Use

Community Vitality

Culture

Health Education

Environmental Diversity

Living Standard

Governance

Interested readers may visit their

website www.grossnationalhappiness.com to discover more about GNH and the detailed computation of the index:

On a much smaller scale can happiness in organizations be computed based on the summation of the happiness for each employee? More fundamentally can we even measure happiness at the workplace, given that what's good for me needn't be so for my neighbor?

I would welcome your thoughts. Do mail me at editor@isecindia.in



The Pursuit of Happiness

By Sulakshana Shenoy, ISEC Program Manager

The pursuit of happiness is as old as humankind itself and most of us spend our lives chasing that elusive feeling outside of us. If Alexander sought greatness by trying to conquer the world, Prince Siddhartha believed that happiness came only through renunciation of the self. And when the Prince attained enlightenment, the world knew him as Gautama Buddha.

In the early 1990s, a team of researchers set about conducting experiments to figure out what brought happiness and how the perceptions varied from person to person. The team, led by Prof. Csikszentmihalyi conducted an intensive study on the concept of happiness. Some of the results were interesting and others a tad startling.

They found that work was not a preferred activity for adults. Not surprising, given that most of us work to earn a living. The study found that people experienced some of their most negative emotions during work time and almost always wished they were elsewhere.

What was however startling was that lack of work was perceived as worse than working. Of course, we have all heard of the age old maxim that an "idle mind is a devil's workshop", but the study seemed to be suggesting that just as nature abhorred vacuums, minds were never idle and humans seldom could do without some sort of activity.

While work takes up over two thirds of a persons waking hours, most of us are still left with discretionary time which we can spend as we desire. This discretionary time is dependent to a large extent on the accident of a person's sex, age and social position.



Take the case of 11-year-old Kalindi, born into a remote tribal village in Orissa, who gets up at dawn to help her mother with household chores, brings water from the communal pond and

spends the rest of the day looking after her younger siblings while her parents till the land. Now, juxtapose that with the life of 14-year-old Kaveri, the only daughter of doctor parents, who wakes up at the same time in parents' bungalow in suburban Bangalore for her daily tennis lessons. She returns at 7.30am and leaves for school within an hour for a day filled with academics, drawing lesson and a birthday party at her friends house.

While this background information about the two girls enables us to draw certain conclusions about them, all these parameters will still not allow us to accurately predict their futures. And it is not just chance that we are referring to here. The crucial factor is that both Kalindi and Kaveri have minds of their own that allows them to make choices.

In time, Kaveri might squander her opportunities to live an unproductive life filled with 'if only' and 'what if' while Kalindi may overcome the disadvantages of her birth to pursue her passion in music to become a well known musician and lead a very satisfying and fulfilling life.

It is because of this flexibility of human consciousness that happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction are dependent upon the personal initiatives and choices. Over time, these choices determine the quality of life and hence making choices about what we want to experience in life is one of the biggest decisions any of us make.

Of course, how we invest our time and the experiences we have in not our decision alone to make. External factors do have a measure of control in these but there is room for personal choices to a certain extent. More important than our experiences are what we make of them and how they affect us. In essence, being happy is choice and less dependent on external circumstances than we like to believe. The world could be happier if only we chose to be happy instead of unhappy and find productive fulfilling ways to achieve happiness.

**"Ever since happiness heard your name,
it has been running through the streets
trying to find you."
~ Hafiz**

Leadership Program at Bhutan

ISEC was privileged to jointly conduct an Inner Coach Leadership Program for 30 top officials in the Bhutan Government from 25 to 28 October 2010. The ISEC program, held at Thimpu (Bhutan) was organized by the Institute for Management Studies in partnership with the Department for Local Governance and sponsored by the UNDP.



The picture above shows the participants with ISEC trainers, Krishna Kumar and N. Ravi at the conclusion of the

program.

**With warm regards,
Krishna Kumar
Executive Coach & Founder-Director, ISEC**