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**HAPPINESS, WELL-BEING, HEALTH AND LEISURE:
AN EXPERIENCE IN GUIJAN GHAT, TINSUKIA,
ASSAM, INDIA**

This is an empirical study focusing on happiness, well being, health and leisure of the people residing in different villages in and around Guijan Ghat, which is located near Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, in the district of Tinsukia, Assam, India.

I

Hubbard (2007: 7) defined happiness as “a condition or state of well-being, contentment, pleasure : Joyful, cheerful, untroubled existence; the reaction to having nice things happens to one”. He further writes that true joy and happiness are valuable and that it is difficult to survive in a chaotic, dishonest and immoral society. Peterson, Park and Seligman (2005) assessed three orientations to happiness – through pleasure, engagement and meaning – and found that each of these three orientations are associated with life satisfaction. They also found that people who obtained low scores on all three orientations to happiness reported low satisfaction with their lives. Park, Peterson and Ruch (2009) write that ‘orientations to engagement and meaning were more strongly associated with life satisfaction than an orientation to pleasure’. On the other hand, Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005 a) pointed out that ‘ positive emotions led to better adjustment in the broad domains of work, relationships and health, and also to greater positive perceptions of self and others, sociability, likability, co-operation, altruism, coping, conflict, resolution, creativity and problem solving. However, greater happiness does not always lead to greater success in all domains’.

Further Lyubomirsky (2007) and Lyubomirsky *et al.* (2005 b) have argued that three clauses of factors determine our level of happiness which are namely (1) Set- point, (2) Circumstances, and (3) intentional activities.

Carr (2011 : 17) writes ‘the idea of a happiness Set – point evolved from observations that happiness levels are partly determined by personality

traits, and individual differences in these traits are partially determined by genetic factors’.

In case of circumstances as a factor determining our level of happiness there is a range of circumstances, many of which are environmental which influence happiness and well – being. Carr (2011 :19) mentioned that these include geographical location, culture, religion and spirituality, life events, wealth, marital status, social support, education, work, recreation, age, gender and health. Altogether these circumstantial variables account for about 10% of the variance in overall happiness.

Lyubomirsky (2007) mentioned that 40% of individual differences in happiness are the result of activities that people intentionally carry out, so people have considerable latitude to enhance their well-being. Anand (2016) points out that ‘happy mental states actually reflect judgments by a person about their overall well-being’. Thus, in brief ‘happiness is a mental or emotional state of well –being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy (word net 3.0 accessed 2011-feb 24 via Wolfram Alpha). After happiness we should also understand the meaning of well – being, Health and leisure.

Well-being can be defined in words of Guttman and others (1982) as “ a special case of attitude”. This definition indicate two aims; (a) developing and testing a systematic theory for the structure of inter-relationships among varieties of well –being and (b) integration of well-being theory with the ongoing cumulative theory development in the fields of attitude of related research. There are different types of well – being like cognitive, affective and social well – being.

Carr (2011: 39) writes that the “Psychological well – being refers to the achievement of one’s full psychological potential. The construct is central to the humanistic psychology tradition”. He further mentions that psychological well – being scales evaluate six dimensions namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Similarly, Carr (2011; 39) states that “social well – being refers to positive states associated with optimal functioning with one’s social network and community”. He mentions that social well – being scales evaluate five dimensions : Social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance. He further informs that these scales correlate with measures of anomie, perceived social constraints, community involvement, neighborhood quality, generativity and educational level.

Another issue of interest in this paper is health. Now scholars are giving attention to the relation between health and lifestyle. Exercise, slimming and controlled eating and so on are practiced to follow a healthy lifestyle.

Hunt and Lightly (2004: 97) write that “health care today seems to have reached an important crossroad. At the time when orthodox medical services in Western societies have expanded and medical science has advanced in many areas, the number of healing methods, practitioners and people interested in what is frequently referred to as ‘alternative medicine’ has continued to grow. Indeed, the expansion of such ‘alternatives’ has been so great that a whole commercial industry has emerged around them. Increasingly, the populations of advanced industrial societies appear to be becoming health ‘consumers’, who want more and more information and new choices in health care. Moreover it seems that many people are increasingly open to the idea of balancing the use of orthodox medicine with choices in complementary medicine, in short, taking resources from what both have to offer.”

Borah (2007: 39) states that “health is the primary requisite of individual and social development. Improvement in health states of the population has been one of the major thrust areas in social development programmes of the country. Health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental and social well – being and not merely absence of disease and infirmity...”

Kraus (1971 : 266) has defined Leisure, recreation and play in the following manner:

‘Leisure’ is that portion of an individual’s time which is not devoted to work or work – connected responsibilities or to other forms of maintenance activity and which therefore may be regarded as discretionary or unobligated time.

‘Recreation’ consists of activities or experiences carried on within leisure, usually chosen voluntarily by the participant, either because of the satisfaction or pleasure, he gains from them or because he perceives certain personal or social values to be derived from them. Like leisure, recreation does not have work connotations. When it is carried on as part of organized community or voluntary agency programs, it is designed to meet constructive and socially acceptable goals of the individual participant, the group, and the society at large.

‘Play’ customarily is also regarded as an activity carried on within leisure for purposes of pleasure and self – expression. It tends to be active and has to be carried on in a spirit of competition, exploration, or make – believe. Customarily, play is regarded as a child’s activity, although an adult may also engage in play and under some circumstances may find play in his work.

Modi (2012: 387) has put four theoretical perspectives in regard to the development of Leisure which are (i) Metaphysical, (ii) Cultural, (iii) Socio – psychological and (iv) Sociological.

The Metaphysical perspective is focused on contemplative and esoteric nature of leisure. Plato, Aristotle and Pieper advocated this particular view.

Durkheim emphasizes two religious dimensions which relates to the cultural concept of leisure. On the other hand Evans – Pritchard, Brightbill and Meyer, Bohannan, Mead, Hughes, Riesman and Linder draw attention to the existence of radical discrepancies in the conception of time among different cultures.

Modi (2012 : 388) writes “....., from a sociological point of view, leisure is a structural aspect of any society and its nature is determined largely by the structure and nature of that society, as I believe, social structure influences the nature and form of leisure and its activities. In a given society, at a particular time, it allows, dictates, or is conducive to a particular mode of leisure. Not only does it determine the forms and nature of leisure, but also the extent and limit of participations who participates in what, with whom, when, where, and to what extent, is determined by the structure of a society according to its nature and organization.”

So far we have dealt with the major keywords outlined in this paper. The main objectives of this work are –

- (1) To highlight the notion of happiness, well – being, health and leisure.
- (2) To depict the social structure of different villages namely Guijan village, Erasuti village along with three forest villages – Laika Pamua, Laika Pasidia and Laika Rigobi.
- (3) To comprehend the notion of happiness, well – being, health and leisure in the mentioned villages.

II

Guijan Ghat (Port) of Tinsukia is one of the famous places in Assam. It is the entry point for Dibru-Saikhowa National Park which is situated on the other side of the river Brahmaputra. Guijan Ghat is about 10 km away from Tinsukia Town.

In this study, we will only take five villages to study. Guijan Village is the only village we are considering on the South Bank of the river Brahmaputra and the rest other villages-Erasuti, Laika Pomua, Laika Pasidia and Laika Rigobi are located on the North Bank of the river Brahmaputra. Erasuti Village is just located at the other side (northern side) of the river Brahmaputra which is just 2.5 km away from Guijan Ghat (Port). It is called as Erasuti meaning a place created when the river changed its course. On the other hand Laika Pomua, Laika Pasidia and Laika Rigobi are located at 15 kms distance from Guijan Ghat. These three villages are known as Forest Villages because they are within the campus of Dibru-Saikhowa National Park. In fact one can say that all these four villages are located somewhere in the middle portion of the Brahmaputra river where there are other tributaries of the river flowing across. So these villages are situated in between the Brahmaputra river and the villagers have to cross the river in either Side to reach southern bank as well as northern bank.

The study is based mainly on the data collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The primary data is gathered through survey, interview method and observation. The secondary data are based on books, journals, official documents, magazines, newspapers and other published materials.

The respondents of this study were the villagers of the five mentioned villages, village headman, tourists, businessman of this area, Forest personnel and the senior citizens of the locality near the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park.

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park is a tourist destination. Tourists visit these areas for cruising, boating, food and lodging, bird watching along with feral horses, wild buffaloes, wild elephants, tiger, deer, river dolphins, orchids, sunrise and sunset and so on. Local tourists come here for various occasional parties, meetings and conference. There are several houseboats, resorts, eco-camps and small boats in the locality.

We have interviewed the head of the household (in case not available, then any other member is taken) in the villagers category. A total of 150 respondents were interviewed with purposive sampling method. We also tried to give representations of different strata of the villagers while using purposive sampling method. Thus the category wise distribution of the respondents were as follows :

III

There are relationships between happiness, Well-being, Health and Leisure. We will focus on this aspect through the empirical study of the five villages chosen for this purpose.

Guijan Village is the largest village among all the villages chosen for the study in term of population. They have 8000 population with 1200 households. Strategically one can say that the village is better located as it is just 10 kms away from Tinsukia town and situated just in the Southern Bank of the Brahmaputra river.

A conglomeration of different communities like Assamese, Bengalis, Tea Garden Community, Mishings, Nepalis, people from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab are residing in this village. The village is connected with pproper road, electricity, market, Forest office, police outpost, High school, L.P. school, Primary Health Centre, Play ground etc. They use tube well for drinking water. Majority, that is, 85 per cent of the population is Hindus and only 50 households are Muslim. Bengali Community is the majority which consists of 55 per cent. Next is the Assamese, Tea Garden Community and Hindi speaking people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Then there are Mishings and the Nepali Community.

The respondents of the study informed that they are engaged in business activities like selling cloths, grocery items, vegetables, Milk, fishing

activities, poultry farming, piggery, cows, goat, buffalos. Some of them are also engaged with selling of furniture items and painting jobs. Only ten per cent (2 numbers) of the villagers of Guijan Village reported that they are government servant working in Tinsukia Town. Their income level is from Rs 5000 to Rs 50,000 per month.

In the Guijan village there are temples, Namghar, Mosque etc as religious institution. In and around the Guijan Port there are several Resorts like Padmini Resort, Benu Cottage, Banashri Cottage, Ohm Boat, Nakshatra Boat, Royal Palace Boat where food and lodging services are there. Some of the villagers are also engaged in such activities facilitating the different tourists coming to this place of Southern Bank of the river Brahmaputra. There are services of Boat Safaris both in day and night.

In this Guijan village most of the land holding are patta land and people have land possession from half katha to several bighas. 75 per cent (15 numbers) of the villagers of the respondent category informed that they pass their time in fishing, dairy and vegetable production, boating, swimming, collecting timber for business, firewood collection from river and playing games like football, cricket, carom, gambling and also guiding tourists. Similarly, in Erasuti village, Cent per cent (20 numbers) of the respondents of villagers category reported that they earn their livelihood by means of agriculture, fishing, poultry farming and milk productions. Not a single service holder is reported in Erasuti village. There are 108 households with around 1000 population. It was found in the study that majority, that is, 81 household belongs to Bengali Community and the rest consists of people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and from Assamese Communists of course. 60 per cent (12 numbers) of the respondents of villagers category of Erasuti village opined that they cultivate rice, tomato, ladyfinger, brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage, potato, banana etc.

It is worthwhile to mention here that all their land holding is not patta land as government have no record of their land possession. In the Milk production business they are keeping more than 1000 buffalos and about 500 cows in the village.

It is a fact that in the Erasuti village there is no electricity and no motorable roads are available. There is only one L.P. School in the village. People cook food by using firewood and use water from tube well.

Their life as reported by the respondent is very simple as they get up early in the morning between 4 to 4.30 am and sleep at 6 to 7.30 pm. At 4.30 to 5.00 in the evening it's dark. They drink sulai (an alcoholic beverage) made up of molasses. There is very less pollution, noise and crime. Again we have observed that except in the school building they do not have concrete toilets as such, only they have temporary provisions for toilets which is contrary to Guijan Village where atleast 40 to 50 per cent of the villagers have concrete

toilets and also they use modern amenities like Television, Gas etc which is not true in case of Erasuti village.

75 per cent (15 members) of the respondents of villagers category in Erasuti Village opined that they do not have much health problem except simple problems like Dysentery, Gastric, fever etc. They live in peaceful atmosphere and have the practice of walking, swimming, cultivating and overall know how to adjust with the nature. The only problem they face is the danger of flood and danger from the wild animals of the Dibru-Saikhowa forest.

The two villages mentioned earlier, namely Guijan and Erasuti Village, are situated nearer to the Southern bank of the river Brahmaputra and have cosmopolitan population. But the other three villages are situated nearer to the North Bank of the river Brahmaputra and they have homogeneous population of only Mishing tribe of Assam. These three villages are called forest villages.

Nearly 5500 people of 550 families, inhabited in this three villages namely-Laika Pomua, Laika Pasidia and Laika Rigobi. If one travel from Guijan Ghat after crossing several tributaries of Brahmaputra river one can reach these villages either by walk or by riding bicycle (Which is possible only in some portion of the road which is entirely of sand). Pomua village is located in the middle and from the Southern Bank on the left side the village Rigobi is located and on the right side the village Pasidra is located. Again after crossing the river Brahmaputra from these villages in the Northern side one can reach Jonai, Silapathar, Pasighat etc. People either go this side which is nearer for their day-to-day need or some even cross the other side of the river Brahmaputra in the Southern side and reach Guijan Ghat.

In Pomua village, there are 350 households with a population of 3000 people and they have atleast 10,000 Cows and 8,000 Buffalos. Similarly in Rigobi there are 50 households of 500 population. They also have 1000 Cows and 1000 Buffalos. On the other hand, in Pasidia village there are 150 household with 2000 population. At least 4000 cows and 4000 buffaloes are there in Pasidia village.

They all live in primitive lifestyle. They see electricity, Hospitals, Banks, Vehicles, markets, roads etc. only in dreams. The seriously ill people have to die without doctor as they have only primary health centre without Doctor. They have only L.P. School in their village. But they also do not have concrete toilets as such. They are the people living in Government forest land.

The respondent of the study reported that most of the villagers do not have any serious disease and they have more longevity of life. We have observed many old people in those villages who were above 80 years of age but were physically fit. It's all because of the pollution free natural environment where they live their life consuming natural organic food.

In their leisure time, they pass their time in gossiping, gambling, swimming, boating, collecting timber for business and firewood for cooking and so on. Women folk are unusually busy with their weaving works, cooking, collecting herbs from the forest and so on.

Overall it has been observed that they are very satisfied with their way of life and are happy. Ali Aye ligang is their main festival where they use rice beer of different type. On the first Wednesday of the month of Fagun they observe their festival. They actually celebrate this festival to pray Mother Earth for production of agricultural product. In their village there are Namghars which are religious institutions of the Mishings.

66.66 per cent (10 numbers) of Tourists as the respondents of the study informed that they were very satisfied with their culture, environment and simple way of life. They opined that all these villagers of the study are really enjoying their life with better lifestyle, health. They found them in very happy and their life as easy going life without much tension, crime and pollution. The tourists also reported that if they stay long with them they will also feel the pleasure and happiness of the nature.

On the other hand all the forest staff and official informed us that Government is not very happy with these people as they are occupying the forest land and they take forest wood, food, herb etc from the forest and sometimes even kill animals. Also sometimes these wild animals kill them. There is a man-animal conflict which is apparent.

Whereas the senior citizens and the businessman interviewed in this study opined that all these villagers are leading a very peaceful life and stay with the nature. Their well-being and happiness is observed in their simple life-style. All of these villagers have to depend on mobile Clinic Boat which comes to their villages occasionally.

IV

To conclude, one can say that all these people residing in and around the Guijan Ghat (Port) and in the Dibru-Saikhowa Forest area are leading a peaceful life with simple life-style and they have little serious diseases. But at the same time doctors are not available in their remote land and they do not have the basic facilities like permanent toilet, high schools, colleges, motorable roads, Electricity and other amenities of modern life.

In spite of all these, they are happy with their simple primitive life style and social well-being. But some of them still dream that government will help in the process of rehabilitation and compensation and allot them land in future so as to start a new life like other people. At the same time the irony is that they do not have a strong practical vote bank which can pressurize the government to fulfill such dream in future.

Table 1
Category wise selections of respondents

Sl. No	Respondents	Number
1.	Headman	5
2.	Villagers	20 x 5 = 100 (20 from each village)
3.	Tourist	15
4.	Businessman	10
5.	Forest Personnel	10
6.	Senior Citizen	10
Total = 150 numbers of respondents.		

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