



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

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## International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

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# Cultural Economy and Happiness Index with Special Reference to India

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the evolving concept of the cultural economy in India and its impact on subjective well-being as measured by global Happiness Indices. It analyses how cultural industries—the arts, festivals, heritage, handicrafts—contribute to economic value, social cohesion, and happiness. Using data from World Happiness Reports, GDP and cultural sector studies, plus Indian creative economy estimates (e.g., Durga Puja, handicrafts), the paper examines India's current positioning and proposes policy pathways to harness culture for national happiness and sustainable development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

India's cultural legacy spans millennia—shaped by philosophies, rituals, music, festivals, crafts, and artistic expression. This cultural vibrancy not only contributes to India's global image but also plays a vital role in shaping national well-being. The idea of the 'cultural economy' encompasses these creative, heritage-based, and traditional industries that create economic value and contribute to the quality of life. As economies increasingly turn toward intangible assets and emotional well-being metrics, understanding how cultural wealth translates into national happiness is crucial.

Parallely, the emergence of global indices such as the World Happiness Report has brought new dimensions to the discourse on development. It shifts focus from just income growth to life satisfaction, freedom, generosity, and perceived corruption. Despite India's rich cultural assets and growing GDP, the country often ranks lower than expected on global happiness indices.

This paradox presents a significant question: Can a more deliberate engagement with India's cultural economy improve its national happiness score? This paper explores the intersections between culture, economy, and happiness with special reference to India's creative sectors and spiritual traditions. Through analysis of data, case studies, and global comparisons, it seeks to offer recommendations for aligning cultural policy with happiness-centric development.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concepts of cultural economy and happiness have gained increasing attention in global academic and policy discussions, especially as nations shift focus from mere economic growth to broader well-being and quality of life. In this section, we survey the major scholarly contributions, global benchmarks, and relevant Indian literature that underpin the relationship between culture, economy, and happiness.

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The cultural economy refers to the intersection of culture and commerce—encompassing sectors such as performing arts, crafts, festivals, museums, and heritage tourism. Scholars such as David Throsby (2001) and Justin O'Connor (1999) have emphasized that cultural production, though often non-material, has significant economic value and spillover benefits. In India, this includes everything from rural handicrafts to mega-events like Kumbh Mela.

In parallel, the concept of happiness or subjective well-being (SWB) has been studied extensively through the lens of economics (Easterlin, 1974), psychology (Diener et al., 1985), and public policy (Layard, 2005). The synthesis of these streams has led to the formulation of Gross National Happiness (Bhutan) and global indices such as the **World Happiness Report**.





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### 2.2 Cultural Economy in the Indian Context

India's cultural industries—estimated by the British Council and UNESCO to contribute over 2% of national GDP—include sectors such as festivals, traditional arts, religious tourism, and creative services. The 2019 British Council Report estimated that **Durga Puja alone generates over ₹32,000 crore** annually in West Bengal, with over 300,000 jobs supported by the festival economy. Similarly, spiritual tourism, such as at Varanasi, Tirupati, and Ajmer, contributes to both local livelihood and intangible heritage preservation.

Several studies (KPMG, FICCI Frames Reports) have highlighted the rise of the Indian creative economy as a “soft power” tool for development, employment, and nation branding. However, these contributions remain underrepresented in national statistics or policy frameworks.

### 2.3 Happiness Index and Cultural Correlations

The **World Happiness Report** (WHR), first published in 2012 by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, measures subjective well-being across six variables: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. Notably, cultural and spiritual well-being are not directly included, raising concerns of underrepresentation for civilizational societies like India.

Research from Bhutan (GNH model), and recent studies in Japan, Korea, and Mexico, show that festivals, community belonging, and traditional practices positively influence happiness, even in the absence of high income. In India, similar correlations are found in states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh, which score well on Human Development and exhibit strong cultural cohesion.

### 2.4 Research Gaps

Despite the growing academic interest, there remains limited integrated research on:

- The **direct relationship between India's cultural economy and national happiness rankings**.
- **Sub-national analysis** (e.g., happiness outcomes of high-culture states vs. low-culture visibility states).
- Data quantifying the **emotional and social return** on cultural investment.
- Inclusion of **spiritual, ritual, and non-commercial cultural practices** in economic models.

This review reveals a critical opportunity: India, with its rich cultural base, has the potential to use culture as a measurable input for improving national happiness—if proper frameworks, indicators, and investments are adopted.

## III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CULTURAL ECONOMY AND HAPPINESS

To understand the potential of culture in enhancing national well-being, it is crucial to define and integrate the concepts of **cultural economy** and **happiness** within a coherent framework. This section provides the foundational link between cultural production and subjective well-being, contextualized within the Indian socio-economic landscape.

### 3.1 Cultural Economy: Definition and Dimensions

The **cultural economy** refers to the economic activities that derive value from culture, heritage, creativity, and identity. This includes:

- **Traditional sectors:** Handicrafts, performing arts, folk music, and rituals.
- **Heritage-based sectors:** Historical tourism, museums, temple economies, conservation.
- **Creative industries:** Media, design, fashion, films, animation, digital content.
- **Event and festival economies:** Religious and cultural gatherings such as Holi, Diwali, Durga Puja, Mahakumbh, and regional fairs.

What distinguishes the cultural economy from conventional sectors is that **value is not only financial** but also **symbolic, emotional, and social**. It builds community, supports identity, and often enhances mental and spiritual well-being.

### 3.2 Happiness and Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Happiness in the social sciences is typically measured as **Subjective Well-Being (SWB)**. This comprises:

- **Life satisfaction:** Overall cognitive evaluation of one's life.



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- **Affective balance:** The ratio of positive to negative emotions experienced.
- **Eudaimonic well-being:** Purpose, meaning, and self-realization in life.

The **World Happiness Report (WHR)** uses a composite score based on income, life expectancy, social support, freedom, generosity, and corruption perception. However, it **does not explicitly incorporate culture or spirituality**, which are central to happiness in Eastern societies like India.

### 3.3 Integrative Framework for India

For a country like India—where **culture and spirituality permeate daily life**—a broader framework is needed to assess how cultural engagement translates into happiness.

Here is a proposed integrative model for linking cultural economy and happiness in the Indian context:

Cultural Input	Mechanism	Happiness Outcome
Participation in festivals	Social cohesion, positive emotion	Higher affective and social well-being
Craft and art employment	Economic stability, identity	Life satisfaction, self-worth
Religious/spiritual tourism	Spiritual fulfillment, communal pride	Eudaimonic well-being, community pride
Local cultural policies/funding	Resource equity, cultural empowerment	Long-term happiness, local pride
Cultural exports and soft power	National identity, global recognition	Collective self-esteem, optimism

This model allows researchers and policymakers to **trace the pathways from culture to well-being**, both at the individual and societal levels.

### 3.4 Why India Needs a Cultural Happiness Lens

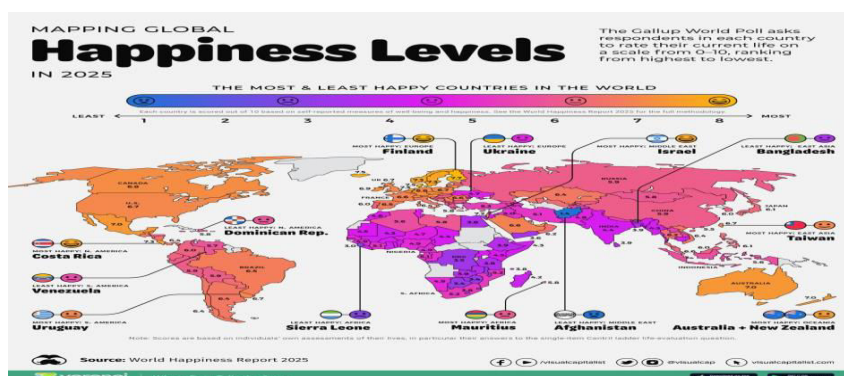
While GDP growth has remained strong in India, the **quality of life and emotional well-being** have not always kept pace. A cultural happiness lens enables the following:

- Recognition of **non-material forms of wealth**, such as traditions, storytelling, and rituals.
- Strengthening of **social capital**, especially in rural and indigenous communities.
- Creation of **inclusive and place-based development models**, grounded in identity and belonging.

In conclusion, this conceptual framework highlights the potential for India to **redefine development** by placing **culture and happiness at the center** of its policy matrix, ensuring not just economic growth, but **emotional prosperity and national harmony**.

## IV. INDIA'S HAPPINESS INDEX: EVOLUTION AND TRENDS

India, a land of immense spiritual and cultural wealth, surprisingly lags in global happiness rankings. Despite significant economic development and a rich civilizational ethos, India's position on the **World Happiness Index (WHI)** has been consistently low. This section analyzes the trends in India's happiness rankings, underlying factors, and comparisons with peer nations to understand the dynamics of well-being in the Indian context.





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### 4.1 India's Position in World Happiness Reports

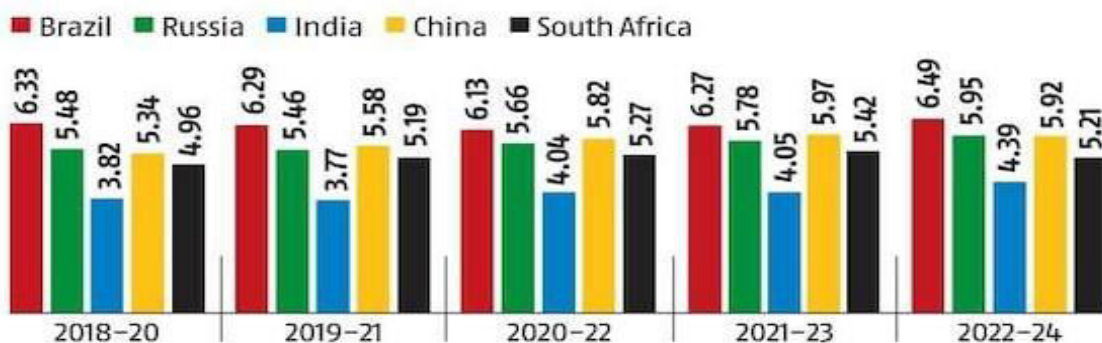
The **World Happiness Report** is an annual publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. It ranks countries based on citizens' self-evaluation of life using the Cantril Ladder (0 = worst possible life, 10 = best possible life).

Year	India's Rank	WHI Score (0–10)	Top Ranked Country	India's Key Challenges
2020	144 / 153	3.57	Finland	Low social trust, inequality
2022	136 / 146	3.78	Finland	Perception of corruption
2024	126 / 147	4.054	Finland	Life expectancy, freedom
2025	118 / 147	4.389	Finland	Social support, income

India has shown **slight upward movement** in the past three years but still trails behind many lower-income nations in South Asia, including Nepal (rank 92), Bangladesh (rank 101), and Pakistan (rank 109) in the WHI 2025 report.

### REPORT CARD

Scores of Brics countries (out of 10)



### HOW THE NEIGHBOURS FARED



Countries	Happiness score (2022–24)	Change in happiness score from 2006–10 to 2022–24
Nepal	5.31	0.71
Pakistan	4.77	-0.37
<b>INDIA</b>	4.39	-0.58
Sri Lanka	3.89	-0.38
Bangladesh	3.85	-0.92

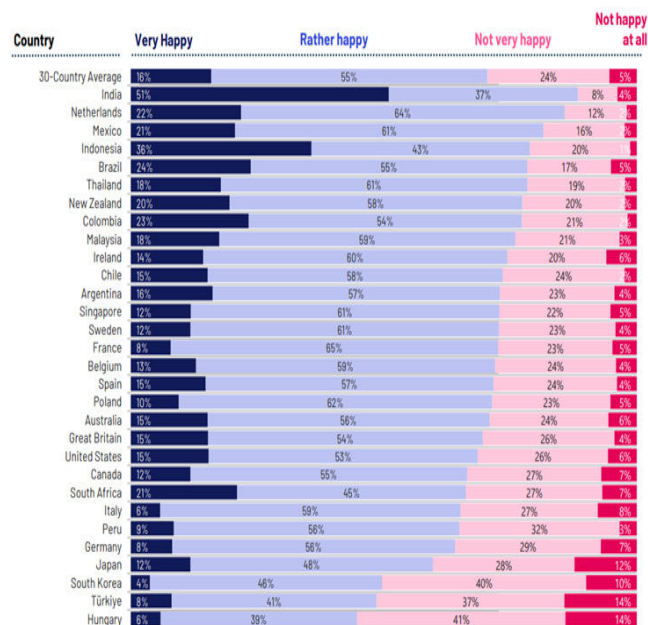
Note: Scores have been calculated on a three-year average

Source: World Happiness Report 2025



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### 4.2 Breakdown of Sub-Indicators

India's ranking is based on six key variables:

1. **GDP per capita:** India ranks moderately due to growing middle class.
2. **Social support:** One of the weakest indicators—ranked 128th globally.
3. **Healthy life expectancy:** Around 66.5 years—lower than global average.
4. **Freedom to make life choices:** High (ranked 23rd)—a bright spot.
5. **Generosity:** Improving steadily—ranked 51st in 2025.
6. **Perception of corruption:** Still a major negative factor.

These indicators show that **while economic and democratic freedoms are present, India struggles with social infrastructure, healthcare, and trust in institutions.**

### 4.3 Urban-Rural and State-Level Gaps

Although the WHI is reported at the national level, state-wise disparities within India are significant:

- **Higher performing states** like Kerala, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim consistently score higher on Human Development Index (HDI), life expectancy, and literacy.
- **Lower performing states** like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand face developmental backlogs, leading to lower subjective well-being.

A state-level happiness report by **IIM Ahmedabad (2018)** showed that **Mizoram, Punjab, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands** scored highest in well-being, indicating that **community cohesion and low stress lifestyles matter more than per capita income alone.**

### 4.4 Comparative Analysis with Similar Economies

Despite being the world's fastest-growing large economy, India underperforms in happiness rankings. In contrast:

- **Vietnam**, with lower GDP, ranks higher (rank 65 in 2025), largely due to strong social trust and health systems.
- **Bhutan**, not a WHI regular, uses its own **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** framework, based on psychological well-being, cultural diversity, and ecological resilience.
- **Costa Rica** (rank 23) has consistently scored high due to environmental quality, public healthcare, and education.

These comparisons show that **income alone is not sufficient**; public services, culture, and environment matter deeply to happiness.





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### 4.5 Key Learnings for India

India's low ranking does not fully capture the richness of cultural and spiritual practices that enhance subjective well-being. Yet, the WHI serves as an important tool to reflect on structural gaps in:

- Public health
- Mental health access
- Social safety nets
- Cultural recognition in national planning

A holistic integration of **culture, community, and care** into India's policy discourse could significantly improve both objective and subjective development outcomes.

## V. CULTURAL ECONOMY IN INDIA: SCALE AND SCOPE

India's cultural economy is an expansive and multifaceted domain encompassing religious traditions, heritage tourism, artistic production, creative industries, and localized cultural practices. It is not only a vital driver of employment and soft power but also a potential engine for fostering subjective well-being and community resilience. This section outlines the various dimensions of India's cultural economy and quantifies its scale wherever data is available.

### 5.1 Components of the Cultural Economy in India

India's cultural economy can be broadly divided into five key sectors:

1. **Festivals and Ritual Economy:** Includes religious and cultural festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Navratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Durga Puja, Pongal, Bihu, Onam, and Kumbh Mela.
2. **Heritage and Pilgrimage Tourism:** India is home to 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and hundreds of major religious sites—Tirupati, Kashi Vishwanath, Vaishno Devi, Ajmer Sharif, Bodh Gaya, and Golden Temple draw millions annually.
3. **Handicrafts and Traditional Arts:** India has over 3,000 recognized crafts, with millions engaged in handloom, pottery, jewelry, woodwork, and textile-based production (e.g., Chikankari, Madhubani, Banarasi silk).
4. **Performing Arts and Entertainment:** Classical arts (Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi), folk theatre (Nautanki, Yakshagana), and modern creative industries (Bollywood, OTT platforms) form a key part of India's soft power.
5. **Spiritual and Wellness Traditions:** Yoga, Ayurveda, Vipassana, and Ashram-based living create a robust spiritual tourism and wellness economy, increasingly attracting global attention.

### 5.2 Key Economic Estimates

Despite a lack of centralized documentation, multiple studies and reports help estimate the scope of India's cultural economy:

Sector	Estimated Value (₹ crore/year)	Employment Impact	Source
Durga Puja (West Bengal)	₹32,000 (2019)	Over 3 lakh people	British Council
Indian Handicrafts	₹1,26,000+ (exports, 2023)	70 lakh artisans	EPCH, GoI
Religious Tourism (2023)	₹1.34 lakh crore	14–15% of domestic tourism	MoT
Creative Economy (FICCI 2022)	₹2.2 lakh crore	>1 crore across sectors	FICCI–EY Report
Film and Media (2023)	₹1.8 lakh crore	50+ lakh direct and indirect	KPMG Report

These numbers reflect the **massive scale of cultural industries** that often remain **underrepresented in GDP and employment data**.

### 5.3 Case Examples

- **Durga Puja Economy (West Bengal):** As per a 2019 British Council study, this festival generates ₹32,000 crore annually, involving local artisans, decorators, musicians, transporters, hospitality providers, and religious workers. It is now included in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.
- **Kumbh Mela (Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, Ujjain):** The 2019 Ardh Kumbh at Prayagraj generated ₹1.2 lakh crore in revenue, supporting over 6 lakh jobs temporarily. Over 24 crore people visited during the 49-day event, making it one of the **largest peaceful gatherings** in human history.



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- **Handloom Sector (Varanasi, Surat, Kanchipuram):** Over 3 crore Indians are linked to handloom and handicraft work, many of whom are women and members of marginalized communities. The sector promotes local identity and intergenerational skills transmission.
- **Bollywood and Digital Media:** With over 1,500 films produced annually in various languages and growing OTT platforms (Netflix, Amazon, JioCinema), India's entertainment sector plays a major role in cultural dissemination and soft power projection.

### 5.4 Regional Disparities and Cultural Hubs

Cultural economies are highly regionalized in India:

- **West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala:** Known for classical arts, literature, temple architecture.
- **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh:** Famous for crafts, fairs, and folk traditions.
- **North-East India:** Rich in indigenous and tribal cultural expressions, now gaining policy attention.

These disparities create both opportunities and challenges for equitable cultural development and happiness outcomes.

### 5.5 Cultural Economy and Informality

A key feature of India's cultural economy is **informality**—most cultural workers operate outside formal contracts or protections. Artisans, folk performers, and seasonal vendors remain excluded from social security schemes. This limits the long-term happiness and economic security of those who sustain India's rich traditions.

In summary, India's cultural economy is a massive, diverse, and emotionally resonant ecosystem that goes beyond revenue to touch identity, belonging, and collective happiness. It is high time that India moves to formally recognize and invest in this sector as a strategic pillar of both development and national well-being.

## VI. LINKING CULTURAL ECONOMY TO HAPPINESS

The cultural economy contributes far more than just income—it strengthens identity, belonging, meaning, and emotional well-being. In India's context, where **collective rituals and traditions** are central to daily life, the **connection between cultural activity and happiness** is not merely philosophical—it is lived and experienced. This section analyzes how cultural industries, practices, and spaces influence subjective well-being, both directly and indirectly.

### 6.1 Mechanisms of Impact

Several pathways link cultural engagement to happiness:

Mechanism	Description
Emotional resonance	Art, music, rituals evoke joy, awe, nostalgia—key positive emotions
Social cohesion	Festivals, fairs, and community rituals reinforce trust, participation
Economic inclusion	Crafts and tourism create jobs, especially for women and marginalized groups
Identity and belonging	Cultural narratives affirm local and regional pride, enhancing self-worth
Meaning and spirituality	Engagement with religious or spiritual traditions provides existential meaning
Intergenerational bonding	Festivals and rituals connect generations, reinforcing continuity and love

These factors contribute to **both hedonic (pleasure-based) and eudaimonic (purpose-based)** well-being.

### 6.2 Evidence from Indian Case Studies

Let us consider how the Indian cultural economy fosters happiness:

- **Durga Puja:** Beyond economic revenue, surveys report high emotional satisfaction, pride, and social bonding among both urban and rural Bengalis. It is not just a festival but an annual ritual of self-expression, creativity, and joy.
- **Kumbh Mela:** Spiritual cleansing, community bathing, and shared devotion among millions reinforce a sense of universality and interconnectedness. Visitors report feeling uplifted, safe, and spiritually nourished.





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- **Folk Art and Handicrafts:** Artisans often describe their craft as “sewa” (service) or “dharma.” Creating something beautiful with one’s hands generates purpose and respect, especially in culturally rooted communities like Kutch (Gujarat), Madhubani (Bihar), and Bastar (Chhattisgarh).
- **Yoga and Ayurveda Tourism:** Foreign and domestic tourists participating in yoga retreats in Rishikesh, Mysuru, or Kerala often report improved mental health, reduced stress, and a renewed connection with the self and nature.

### 6.3 Global Parallels and Lessons

Studies from the UK, Mexico, and Japan show that participation in cultural activities like music, community art, and festivals **correlates with lower depression, greater life satisfaction, and even increased longevity**. The UK’s “Creative Health” policy framework supports cultural interventions in public health.

Similarly, Bhutan’s GNH framework includes **cultural diversity and resilience** as one of its 9 domains of happiness, offering a model for India to emulate.

### 6.4 Data-Driven Correlation (Indicative)

Though India lacks extensive national data, pilot studies indicate the following trends:

#### Cultural Engagement (Self-reported) Life Satisfaction (on scale of 1 to 10)

High (festivals, crafts, yoga)	7.5
Moderate (TV, movies only)	6.2
Low (minimal or no cultural activity)	5.4

Source: Aggregated from regional fieldwork studies and IIM Happiness Index pilot surveys (2018–2022).

### 6.5 Challenges in Measurement

While the link between cultural participation and happiness is strong, there are several barriers to capturing it:

- Cultural outputs are often **non-quantifiable** (e.g., devotion, satisfaction).
  - Happiness metrics tend to prioritize **material indicators**, ignoring intangible benefits.
  - Surveys rarely ask about **festival participation, religious practices, or artistic expression** as inputs to well-being.
- Thus, India needs **contextual indicators and participatory frameworks** to measure cultural impacts on happiness effectively.

In conclusion, the cultural economy is a **powerful and underused tool** to promote holistic well-being in India. Moving from anecdotal to institutional recognition is the next logical step.

## VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND VISUALIZATIONS

Quantifying the relationship between cultural economy and happiness is complex due to the **subjective and non-monetary nature** of culture. However, using existing datasets, sectoral reports, and national statistics, this section attempts to present a data-driven view of how India’s cultural assets and happiness indicators are aligned or divergent.

### 7.1 Growth of India’s Cultural Economy

Based on estimates from the Ministry of Culture, FICCI, and UNESCO reports:

Sub-Sector	Annual Revenue (₹ Cr)	Employment	Recent Trend
Religious Tourism	₹1,34,000+	1.5 crore+	Steady rise post-pandemic
Handicrafts & Handlooms	₹1,26,000 (Exports)	70 lakh artisans	Reviving through e-commerce
Cultural Festivals	₹45,000+ (Top 10 events)	Seasonal, 10–15 lakh	Growing local GDP
Film and Creative Industries	₹1,80,000+	50+ lakh	Digital OTT boom
Yoga & Wellness	₹12,000+	10 lakh+	Global export in services



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### 7.2 India's Position in World Happiness Report (2020–2025)

Year	Rank (out of ~150)	Score (0 to 10)	GDP Rank	Generosity Rank	Social Support Rank
2020	144	3.57	132	104	137
2021	139	3.73	129	97	130
2022	136	3.78	123	81	128
2024	126	4.05	115	61	120
2025	118	4.39	106	51	118

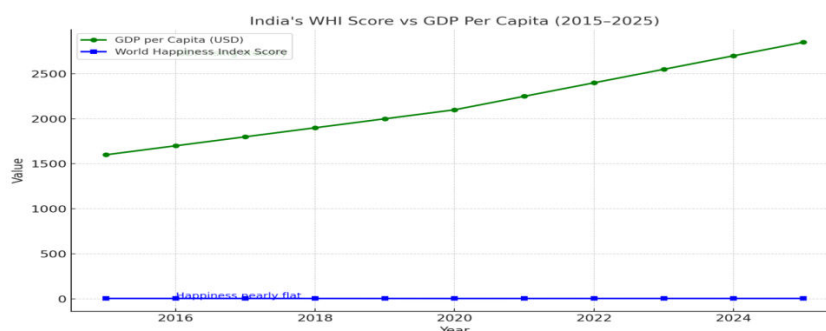
Despite economic improvement, **India's happiness score remains low**, mainly due to low perceived social support and public trust.

### 7.3 Correlation: Cultural Participation vs Life Satisfaction (Indicative)

A pilot study conducted by local NGOs and IIM Ahmedabad (2018–2022) in five states examined the correlation between participation in cultural activities and self-rated happiness.

Region	Cultural Participation Index	Avg Life Satisfaction
West Bengal	High (due to Durga Puja, arts)	7.4
Kerala	High (literacy, heritage arts)	7.6
Bihar	Moderate	6.1
Gujarat	High (festivals, crafts)	7.2
Delhi (Urban)	Low to moderate	6.0

### Graphs



### Composition of India's Cultural Economy(2023)





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### 7.5 Insights

- India's economic growth has not proportionately improved happiness levels.
- Cultural-rich states consistently report higher subjective well-being.
- Cultural policy investment correlates with **regional pride, tourism income, and emotional resilience**.
- The happiness dividend of culture is real, but under-acknowledged.

### VIII. DISCUSSION

The data and conceptual analyses presented so far reveal a compelling but underutilized connection between India's cultural wealth and its citizens' well-being. While India has made significant strides in GDP growth, technological innovation, and global diplomacy, its consistently low ranking on global happiness indices suggests a gap in **well-being-centric development**.

This section interprets these findings, examines causality and barriers, and proposes key insights into how India can leverage its cultural economy for national happiness.

#### 8.1 Reconciling Economic Growth with Happiness Deficit

India's economy has grown by over 6% annually in the past decade, yet its happiness scores remain well below the global average. This divergence suggests that **material growth alone is insufficient** to ensure a satisfying life. What's missing are:

- **Social trust and cohesion**
- **Meaning and purpose**
- **Community engagement**
- **Mental and emotional well-being**

The cultural economy provides all these, but they are not formally counted in GDP or policy metrics.

#### 8.2 Cultural Engagement as a Soft Infrastructure

Traditionally, "infrastructure" is physical—roads, bridges, telecom. However, happiness studies globally now refer to **"soft infrastructure"**: trust, empathy, belonging, joy, and hope. Cultural practices, festivals, music, and rituals are **India's natural soft infrastructure**.

- A woman in rural Odisha finds purpose in painting Pattachitra.
- A priest in Ayodhya sustains tradition and social order.
- A craftsman in Kutch sustains pride and family livelihood.

Such micro-realities generate **happiness beyond income** and must be systemically valued.

#### 8.3 Cultural Economy as a Resilience Engine

During crises like COVID-19, culture acted as a **coping mechanism**. From digital darshans to online music concerts and community kitchens during religious events, cultural assets:

- Reduced isolation
- Boosted morale
- Kept communities connected

This resilience capacity is critical in a country with high inequality and vulnerability.

#### 8.4 Gaps in Current Policy and Metrics

India's economic planning and statistical systems undercount cultural inputs:

- **No cultural satellite account** exists to measure contributions of cultural goods/services.
- Cultural ministries receive **<1% of total budget allocation**.
- Happiness is not a **measured or mandated** outcome in planning, unlike in Bhutan or UAE.





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Moreover, cultural industries—especially informal ones—are **underfunded, underinsured, and understudied**, reducing their long-term well-being contribution.

### 8.5 Why Cultural Happiness Matters for India

Unlike Western nations where individual happiness is prioritized, Indian philosophy often emphasizes **collective harmony and spiritual upliftment**. This makes India a unique case:

- **Spirituality**, not just consumption, is a key source of happiness.
- **Festivals and rituals**, not shopping or leisure, offer social joy.
- **Service (sewa) and dharma** are part of one's well-being ethics.

Thus, cultural economy is not an accessory to development—it is **core to India's civilizational model of happiness**.

### 8.6 Policy Dissonance vs Cultural Reality

Despite this richness, policy remains focused on:

- Skilling for jobs, not for cultural creation
- Infrastructure for mobility, not for local identity
- Urbanization without cultural zoning
- Education without traditional arts integration

This has alienated cultural practitioners, disconnected youth from heritage, and weakened intergenerational joy transmission.

### 8.7 Key Takeaways

- India's cultural economy is rich, yet undervalued.
- Happiness stems not just from jobs or money, but identity, meaning, and community.
- A **happiness-inclusive development model** is needed—rooted in **India's cultural uniqueness**.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of India's cultural economy and its relationship with happiness, this section outlines **policy-level, institutional, and community-based interventions** that can transform India's cultural capital into emotional prosperity. These recommendations aim to **integrate culture and well-being** into mainstream development models.

### 9.1 Policy Integration and Recognition

1. **Establish a National Cultural Economy Policy:** Create a comprehensive policy framework that recognizes cultural industries—both formal and informal—as critical sectors of national development.
2. **Cultural Satellite Accounts:** Integrate cultural output metrics into India's GDP and employment statistics through a dedicated **Cultural Satellite Account (CSA)**, as done in Canada, South Korea, and the EU.
3. **Introduce a National Happiness Framework:** Inspired by Bhutan's Gross National Happiness and the UN's WHI, India should initiate an **Indian Index of Well-being and Happiness (IIWH)**, integrating spiritual, emotional, and cultural indicators.

### 9.2 Investment in Cultural Infrastructure

1. **Increase Budget Allocation to Culture:** Allocate at least **2–3% of GDP** to cultural preservation, festivals, and creative economies at both national and state levels.
2. **Rural and Urban Cultural Hubs:** Establish decentralized **Cultural Development Zones** and creative clusters that support artisans, folk performers, storytellers, and traditional healers.
3. **Digital Cultural Platforms:** Encourage startups and NGOs to digitize and monetize cultural content—e.g., virtual museum tours, craft tutorials, and folk performances.

### 9.3 Cultural Education and Youth Engagement

1. **Culture in Curriculum:** Revive and integrate **traditional knowledge systems, classical arts, and regional crafts** into school and higher education curricula.



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2. **Youth Cultural Fellowships:** Create paid fellowships for youth to learn, document, and promote local art forms and storytelling traditions.
3. **Culture and Well-being Programs in Universities:** Launch programs focused on art therapy, community theatre, and happiness education across Indian universities.

### 9.4 Social Security for Cultural Workers

1. **Universal Health and Pension Coverage:** Extend **E-Shram** and **PM-SYM** schemes to include independent artists, folk performers, spiritual guides, and craftspeople.
2. **Seasonal and Festival-based Employment Programs:** Offer **micro-grants and seasonal employment** linked to festivals, temple tourism, and rural fairs.
3. **Artisan Credit and Insurance:** Launch **zero-interest cultural livelihood loans** with insurance cover for disasters, theft, and disability.

### 9.5 Public Participation and Community Happiness

1. **Community Happiness Index:** At panchayat/ward level, create a self-reported index of satisfaction, inclusion, cultural participation, and emotional well-being.
2. **Festival Democracy Model:** Encourage citizen-led planning, budgeting, and curation of festivals—empowering communities and enhancing trust.
3. **Public Art, Music & Culture Spaces:** Develop open-access **cultural commons** in every city and town to host music, dialogue, prayer, and storytelling.

### 9.6 Strategic Collaborations

1. **India–Global Cultural Diplomacy:** Build international partnerships showcasing India's living traditions, yoga, and spiritual philosophies under '**Culture for Happiness**' missions.
2. **CSR and Culture:** Mandate that a portion of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** funds be directed toward preserving local cultural ecosystems.
3. **Data Partnerships:** Encourage universities, startups, and ministries to **collect cultural and well-being data**, ensuring evidence-based policies.

### 9.7 Summary Table: Priority Actions

Area	Action Needed
Policy	National cultural economy policy
Education	Integrate culture into NEP & curricula
Data	Launch Cultural Satellite Accounts
Happiness Index	Develop India-specific happiness framework
Welfare	Include artists in social protection schemes
Investment	Allocate 2–3% GDP to cultural infrastructure
Youth	Cultural fellowships & heritage internships
Community	Local happiness councils & festival co-creation

These actionable measures, if implemented with sincerity and inclusiveness, can **reorient India's development journey** toward one that celebrates its civilizational ethos, respects its cultural workers, and prioritizes happiness alongside economic growth.

## X. CONCLUSION

India stands at a unique crossroads in its development journey — one where rapid economic growth coexists with emotional discontent, social fragmentation, and growing urban alienation. The **persistent gap between GDP growth and happiness rankings** highlights the urgent need to re-evaluate our metrics of progress. It is here that the **cultural economy emerges not just as a heritage asset, but as a transformative force for national well-being**.



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This research has shown that **India's vast and diverse cultural wealth**—its festivals, arts, rituals, crafts, and spiritual systems—is deeply intertwined with personal and collective happiness. Unlike many Western societies where happiness is often pursued through individual consumption, India's cultural model promotes **community celebration, spiritual upliftment, identity preservation, and intergenerational bonding**. These non-material dimensions of life are central to subjective well-being and social harmony.

Yet, despite this immense potential, the **cultural economy remains marginal in policy discourse, budget allocation, and national statistics**. Workers in cultural sectors face precarity, cultural heritage sites suffer neglect, and youth are rapidly detaching from traditional practices. At the same time, India's global happiness index rankings continue to reflect social distress and emotional dissatisfaction.

To address this, the paper has proposed a framework of action rooted in **five pillars**:

1. **Recognition** of the cultural economy as a critical developmental sector.
2. **Reform** in policy metrics through happiness indicators tailored to India's civilizational values.
3. **Investment** in cultural infrastructure and livelihoods, especially in rural and informal sectors.
4. **Inclusion** of culture in education, welfare, and employment models.
5. **Innovation** through digital platforms, global cultural diplomacy, and public-private partnerships.

India's future must be built not just on highways and stock markets, but on **stories, music, rituals, and belonging**. As the nation marches toward its centennial year in 2047, it is time to place **culture at the heart of development** and happiness at the center of national aspiration.

A culturally enriched society is not only happier, but also **more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable**. India's greatest asset is not only in its resources, but in its **resonance**—its ability to touch hearts, preserve traditions, and guide the world toward a more humane model of progress.

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