

**BOOK REVIEW****Happiness by Bent Greve, Routledge: New York, 2011, English, 144pp****Pinki Yadav***M.Ed. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Delhi*

The book Happiness by Greve is an attempt to theorise Happiness. It highlights the importance that happiness has gained in contemporary times. It also discusses the relevance and importance of experiencing Happiness in the various aspects of life. Greve also suggests that one must work towards increasing happiness, in general, and through public policy, in particular. The book begins by outlining its scope, that is, the present work is a broad analysis rather than a nuanced discussion of the issues and debates around happiness. Thus, Greve has attempted to discuss the concept in a holistic manner by understanding Happiness as an interdisciplinary concept instead of rooting it in any one discipline. However, it turns out to be a fragmented discussion of happiness via the lens of psychology, sociology, economics and philosophy, and the reason for the same has not been articulated in the book.

The book begins with raising questions that are crucial to any attempt to understand happiness, in general, and within the framework of these disciplines, in particular. These questions, if discussed and understood thoroughly, will provide a better understanding of happiness. The introduction of the book highlights the importance that happiness has always had, and at the same time, the recent emphasis it has gained in discussions and deliberations across various issues and aspects of society which probably started with Aristotle (350 BC)(Sachs, 2002), Barrow (1978), Hudson (1996) to Happiness Curriculum (SCERT, 2018).

Through this chapter, the author tries to establish the relevance of the work and presents an outline of the work ahead.

The second chapter of the book intends to explain the meaning and pre-requisites of happiness, from the perspective of some disciplines that the author chose such as sociology, psychology and economics. The author has presented a brief summary of the major writings in the discourse of happiness in these disciplines. Based on this summary, a comprehensive understanding of the concept has been attempted and questions regarding the nature and measurement of happiness have been raised. These questions form the basis of the next chapter of the book. A distinction that seems important to Greve is between the notion of Happiness and Well-being, as they are often used synonymously. However, if it is not to make the discussion simpler, then, no other reason seems to emerge for not doing so. Such a distinction has been the basis of previous works such as Hudson (1996) and hence, it brings out a nuanced understanding of the practical issues related to both the conception as well as the measurement of happiness.

The third chapter discusses the possibility of measuring happiness. This chapter refers to the empirical research that has been conducted to measure happiness or to study its relationship with other aspects of life in multiple forms. The context of these researches is located in Europe and USA. The author tries to build connections between aspects of human life with happiness,

such as health and happiness, income and happiness, relationships and happiness, and religion and happiness. The author hints at the criticisms of these researches but sums up the chapter by reiterating what these researches have concluded. An absence of a detailed and critical discussion of the issue could be attributed to Greve's choice of using happiness and well-being synonymously.

Once establishing that happiness can be measured to a certain extent, the next chapter discusses the role of public policy in happiness in order to increase people's happiness. Here again, the author uses the earlier discussed parameters, such as income, health, relationships, and religion as indicators of happiness or related to happiness, to argue that public policies should aim at the happiness of maximum number. However, this discussion could have been more nuanced if a discussion on the various aspects of happiness was included, as Barrow (2012) does. Barrow defines happiness as a state of mind and engages with questions such as whether happiness is a degree word, whether it can be judged or not, what is its value. The author also forewarns of some possible challenges that might come up in front of the welfare state while attempting to integrate happiness in public policies.

Moving on, the penultimate chapter, it argues for considering happiness as one of the aims of public policy. Here, Greve refers to happiness as an indicator of societal development and critiques the popular indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The concluding

chapter presents a summary of the key arguments put forth in the former chapters to indicate the contestations, debates, issues, and challenges in happiness research.

The book has managed to present that, an understanding of happiness from one discipline would be different from an understanding in another discipline, i.e. to say a sociological, psychological, philosophical, to an economical one. The language of the book is lucid. The author has been successful in providing questions that will potentially enrich the discourse of happiness.

The book, because of a fragmented discussion of happiness in various disciplines, needs a more coherent articulation of happiness. Such a discussion may not be able to keep the reader engaged or be of much value to a scholar of this area of study. It is also important to highlight that, the studies referred to in the book are not precisely about happiness, but about other similar terms, such as, well being, satisfaction, utility, etc. which Greve does not differentiate in sufficient detail. This book, as reflected in the introduction, proposed to discuss happiness in not just a multidisciplinary fashion but also from a socio-political perspective, which is still wanting.

The book might come in handy, to get a preliminary idea of the kind of work done related to happiness. It provides a summary of the work done on happiness in sociology, psychology, philosophy and economics, which works well for readers who have commenced their research in the field.

## References

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