

Read the following article and then

- (1) translate the last paragraph into Chinese (20%)
- (2) write a 300-word summary (in English). Use your own words; do not copy sentences from the original text. (80%)

It's almost impossible for most people in well-off countries to begin to understand how it feels to live in the extreme poverty of Calcutta, surviving in India's third largest city in a shack or on the street with little access to clean water, food or health care. The filth. The crowds. The disease. From the perspective of the comfortably housed and amply fed, these conditions sound hopeless, and the suffering they must breed seems unimaginable.

But not as unimaginable as this: according to a researcher who employs a method of ranking human happiness on a scale of 1 to 7, poor Calcuttans score about a 4, meaning they're slightly more happy than not. And that's certainly happier than one might expect. The assumption behind this finding, of course, is that happiness, like Olympic figure skating, can really be scored numerically at all and that the judges who score it don't need to come from the same countries or speak the same languages as the people they're judging.

Robert Biswas-Diener has worked extensively with his father, the noted University of Illinois psychologist Ed Diener, to evaluate what they term the Subjective Well-Being (SWB) of people around the globe, from Masai warriors in East Africa to Inughuit hunters in Northern Greenland, inviting them to answer questions about their moods and outlook. The results have led them to one sweeping conclusion: human beings, no matter where they live, and almost without regard to how they live, are, in the elder Diener's words, "preset to be happy."

He thinks of this predilection as a "gift" bestowed on people by evolution that helps us adapt and flourish even in fairly trying circumstances. But there are other theories. Maybe, he says, we're "socialized" to be happy, "in order to facilitate smooth social functioning." Whatever the reasons for this gift, however, its benefits don't seem to be evenly distributed around the globe.

Latin Americans, for example, are among the happiest people in the world, according to study after study. A survey of college students in the mid-1990s compared so-called national differences in positivity and ranked Puerto Rico, Colombia and Spain as the three most cheerful locales. This may surprise those who equate happiness with flat-screen TVs and icecube-dispensing refrigerator doors. But not Ed Diener. For him, the high spirits of the relatively poor Puerto Ricans and Colombians stem from a "positivity tendency" that "may be rooted in cultural norms regarding the value of believing in aspects of life in general to be good." Translation: Latin Americans are happier because they look on the sunny side of life.

That tendency does not seem to be popular in East Asia. Among the bottom five in the study are Japan, China and South Korea, the outliers of unhappiness. "We have found that East Asians tend to weight the worst areas of their lives when computing their life satisfaction," Diener reports.

That may be a reflection of a difference in cultural expectation, says Shinobu Kitayama, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, who does research on the connection between culture and

well-being. "White Americans see happiness as a goal. Self-esteem is very important to them. But Asians, from the beginning of life, are trained to focus on the negative aspects of themselves." That extends to Asians' view of happiness itself, which Kitayama sees as surprisingly dialectic. He recently asked American and Japanese college students to describe the positive and negative aspects of happiness. The American students could only see happiness as a pure good, while the Japanese students repeatedly pointed out the potential drawbacks to happiness---the way personal success, for instance, could invite envy. That might be part of the fun for your average American freshmen, but Asians often see little value in personal happiness that upsets family or group harmony. "Asian happiness is much more social than personal," says Kitayama. When asked to estimate their happiness in surveys, Asians might naturally underrate themselves for that reason, and it's not clear whether they actually feel unhappy or whether they're just moderating their responses. Ultimately personal happiness may simply not be what many Asians are searching for.

But that may be changing. Over the past 50 years, Asia has undergone a wrenching crash course in economic and political modernization. A wealth of new possibilities are now available to Asians across the region, yet many of those choices---what to buy, where to work, whom to marry---come into direct conflict with the old interdependent values still held by society or by their families. "There is enormous stress in these transitional cultures," say Aaron Ahuvia, a professor of marketing at Michigan. The result can be a kind of cognitive dissonance that leaves Asians individually freer but perhaps less happy, at least in the short run.

If the developing-world Colombians are happy mostly because they really like to be and the developed-world Japanese are not so happy because, for them, personal happiness isn't part of the plan, it would seem to follow that SWB has little to do with material well-being and a lot to do with attitude---at least when it comes to filling out surveys. The planet's happiest souls, as determined by the World Happiness Database, compiled by researchers at Rotterdam's Erasmus University, are the Danes, the Swiss and the Maltese, all of whom score 8 on a 10-point scale of happiness. Most of Asia, including the Japanese, hover around 6 on this measure, while troubled Pakistan is near the bottom at 4.3.

Biswas-Diener agrees that attitude counts, but also notes that highly developed nations, as a group, score consistently high, suggesting that it doesn't hurt a country to pave its highways and disinfect its water supply. Democracy, as a measurement for most of the world, is a sure guide to happiness. And there are no superpowers when it comes to happiness. The U.S. is pretty chippy, but in the study of international college students it ranked a contented eighth, tied with Slovenia. It would appear that merely living as if you are No. 1, and running around the world shouting you are No. 1, doesn't mean that you feel like No. 1 inside.

Even Biswas-Diener cautions that national-happiness rankings are crude instruments. That's especially true when comparing West with East, cultures where the pursuit of happiness is a national obsession with cultures where, as the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu put it, "happiness is the absence of the striving for happiness." Still, if you belong to one of the higher-ranking countries, you'll enjoy gazing at the big scoreboard and speculating about the source of your collective joy. Whereas, if your motherland fares badly, you might want to consider spending more time in Denmark. (From *Time*, February 28, 2005)