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“Why India is not a happy nation? Ranks 140 in UN Report. Novelist, poet Thomas Hardy suggests a way out”

“Happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain,” penned 19th-century novelist Thomas Hardy in the Mayor of Casterbridge. Thomas Hardy was an English novelist and poet. A Victorian realist who is known for his works including “Return of the Native”.

What Thomas Hardy wrote in the 19th century about the state of happiness suggesting that happiness can only be achieved if we return to mother nature, is true even today. His novel Return of the Native is a clarion call to attain achieve happiness is returning to roots or to nature. On 20 March 2019, Finland has named the happiest nation on earth for the second consecutive year in the UN’s World Happiness Report 2019. The margin of victory was even greater this year with Finland beating second-placed Denmark by .169 compared to .38 the previous year ahead of Norway.

Shockingly even Pakistan stands on a much higher pedestal in the happiness index as it stands at number 67. Bangladesh stands at 125. At the bottom is Afghanistan at number 154 and South Sudan at the bottom at number 156.

Published by the United Nations, the report ranks 156 countries by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be. Based on the report, the Finns’ happiness can be credited to their high GDP, long lifespan, connection with nature, lack of corruption and the people’s control over their own life, among other things.

Released on the International Day of Happiness on March 20, the report warned that world happiness has declined in recent years, driven by a sustained fall in India, which this year ranked in 140th place. As well as performing well on all the indicators, the most content countries all tended to have very stable societies, with happiness levels changing comparatively little since 2005. Despite the political turmoil brought by Brexit, Britain rose four places in the rankings to 15th.

"This year's report provides sobering evidence of how addictions are causing considerable unhappiness and depression in the US," said professor Jeffrey Sachs, one of the report's authors.

The unhappiest country was South Sudan, where the UN recently said 60 percent of people face food insecurity following a bloody civil war, which has claimed the lives of an estimated 400,000 people. Other conflict-ridden countries, such as Yemen, Afghanistan and the Central African Republic also featured at the bottom of the table.

Significantly, the United States appears at number 11 in the happiness index. In fact, the US has never made it to top 10 slots. “The U.S. is in the midst of a complex and worsening public health crisis, involving epidemics of obesity, opioid addiction, and major depressive disorder that are all remarkable by global standards,” the report said. It added that the “sociopolitical system” in the United States produces more income inequality _ a major contributing factor to unhappiness _ than other countries with comparatively high incomes.

The United States also has seen declining trust, generosity and social support, and those are some of the factors that explain why some countries are happier than others. The solution lies in returning to nature as Thomas Hardy suggested.

World Happiness Report 2019 Top 10 (and placement in 2018):

1. Finland (1st)
2. Denmark (3rd)
3. Norway (2nd)
4. Iceland (4th)
5. The Netherlands (6th)
6. Switzerland (5th)
7. Sweden (9th)
8. New Zealand (8th)
9. Canada (7th)
10. Austria (12th)

*UN World Happiness Report 2019 <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2019/>