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Metaphorical landscapes of HAPPINESS: A cognitive semantic analysis in Hindi and Bangla

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Abstract

While extensive research exists on cognitive metaphors of happiness in Western, Middle Eastern, and East Asian languages, South Asian languages remain largely underexplored. This gap limits our understanding of how diverse cultural and philosophical traditions shape emotional conceptualization in non-Western contexts. Addressing this research problem, the study explores how Hindi and Bangla speakers conceptualize happiness through metaphorical patterns rooted in their linguistic and cultural frameworks. This study investigates similarities and differences in the conceptualization of happiness in Hindi and Bangla, identifying the socio-cultural, religious, and philosophical factors shaping emotional meaning. The dataset consists of 100 idiomatic and proverbial expressions (50 from each language) collected from digital and print sources and analysed using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2020). The findings reveal shared embodied metaphors—such as light, elevation, fluidity and growth—alongside language-specific patterns: Hindi foregrounds sweetness, journey, illumination and moral–philosophical schemas, while Bangla emphasizes water-based and vulnerability-oriented metaphors. The study contributes to cross-cultural metaphor analysis and highlights the role of cultural and philosophical traditions in shaping emotion metaphors. The findings provide insights into the interplay of language, culture, and cognition.

Keywords: *happiness metaphors, cultural conceptualization, embodied cognition, Bangla, Hindi*

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Метафорические ландшафты счастья: КОГНИТИВНО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ на языках хинди и бенгали

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Аннотация

Несмотря на то, что уже существует много исследований когнитивных метафор счастье в западных, ближневосточных и восточноазиатских языках, южноазиатские языки остаются малоизученными. Этот пробел ограничивает наше понимание того, как разнообразные культурные и философские традиции формируют эмоциональную концептуализацию в незападных контекстах. Для решения этой исследовательской проблемы данное исследование изучает, как носители языков хинди и бенгали концептуализируют счастье посредством метафорических моделей, укорененных в их лингвистических и культурных рамках. Цель исследования — выявить сходства и различия в концептуализации счастья на хинди и бенгали и выявить социокультурные, религиозные и философские факторы, формирующие эмоциональное значение. Объектом исследования стали 100 идиоматических выражений и пословиц (по 50 из каждого языка), собранных из цифровых и печатных источников и проанализированных с использованием теории концептуальной метафоры (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) и расширенной теории концептуальной метафоры (Kövecses 2020). Результаты исследования выявляют общие телесные метафоры — такие как СВЕТ, ВОЗВЫШЕНИЕ, ТЕМПЕРАТУРА и РОСТ — наряду со специфическими языковыми особенностями. В хинди на первый план выходят сладость, путешествие, просветление и морально-философские схемы, в то время как в бенгальском языке акцент делается на метафорах, связанных с водой и уязвимостью. Исследование вносит вклад в межкультурный анализ метафор и подчеркивает роль культурных и философских традиций в формировании эмоциональных метафор. Полученные результаты расширяют наши представления о взаимодействии языка, культуры и сознания.

Ключевые слова: метафоры счастья, культурная концептуализация, воплощенное сознание, бенгальский язык, хинди

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1. Introduction

Emotion plays a crucial role in human cognition, communication, and behaviour. Being a traditional object of psychology, nowadays emotions have been actively studied by linguists, demonstrating an “emotional turn in linguistics” (Lüdtke 2015: ix, Mackenzie & Alba-Juez 2019, Zappettinni 2021, among many others). Language profoundly influences and mirrors the cultural comprehension of emotions. A culture’s understanding of emotions is built and shown through

language. The way emotions are conceptualized and expressed varies across languages and cultures (e.g. Alba-Juez & Larina 2018, Wierzbicka 1999).

While biologically based, emotional expression is culturally and cognitively structured. The Conceptual Act Theory (CAT) emphasizes language's role in shaping emotional interpretation (Lindquist et al. 2015), necessitating cross-cultural studies (Lindquist 2021). Idioms and proverbs, repositories of cultural wisdom (Mieder & Bryan 1997), reveal how communities conceptualize emotions, offering crucial insights for psychology, linguistics, and affective computing. Linguistically, metaphors, especially in idioms and proverbs, map abstract emotions onto concrete domains, aiding conceptualization and expression (Kövecses & Szabco 1996). This metaphorical mapping reveals universal and culturally specific emotional understandings, providing insights into linguistic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions of emotion (Kövecses 2000, 2005, 2015).

Most of the explorations based on Happiness emotion metaphor research were found to be based on Western, Middle Eastern, and East Asian languages (Zoltán 2008, Tissari 2008, Goddard & Ye 2016, Gomez 2020, Pollard 2021, Stefanowitsch 2004, Hamdi 2016, Ahmed 2016, Safarnejad et al. 2013, 2014, Seidi et al. 2021, Rajeg 2016, 2019, Yu 1995, Chen 2010, Liu & Li 2016, Csillag 2016). However, there is a dearth of substantial scholarly works on emotion metaphor research in South Asian languages, particularly Indian languages such as Hindi and Bangla from the cognitive linguistics perspective, apart from Patowari (2015), Sharma (2017, 2018) Goswami & Yadav (2024), Ballav (2025) and Paul et. al. (2024).

Therefore, this study aims to uncover the similarities and differences in conceptualization of happiness in Hindi and Bangla, and identify socio-cultural, religious, and philosophical factors that influence the construction of emotional meaning. This study investigates the conceptual metaphors underlying idiomatic, proverbial and colloquial expressions of happiness in Hindi and Bangla and explores the socio-cultural factors influencing metaphor formation in both languages.

Key research questions include:

- 1) What are the conceptual metaphors shaping happiness expressions in Hindi and Bangla?
- 2) How do these conceptualizations compare across the two languages?
- 3) What socio-cultural factors contribute to the creation of happiness metaphors?

The paper proceeds with a literature review (Section 2), data and methodology (Section 3), analysis and findings on Hindi and Bangla metaphors (Section 4), discussion of universal and culture-specific patterns (Section 5), and concludes with key insights and implications (Section 6).

2. Literature review on the conceptualization of Happiness across cultures and languages

The study of happiness metaphors is deeply rooted in cognitive linguistics, where metaphorical language structures abstract concepts. Kövecses (2008) explores four cognitive components shaping our understanding of happiness: conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, related concepts, and cognitive/cultural models. He identifies three cognitive models of happiness: happiness as an immediate response, happiness as a value, and happiness as being glad. Kövecses (2008) highlights the roles of evaluative metaphors (for appraising happiness) and phenomenological metaphors (for experiential aspects) and advocates combining top-down and bottom-up approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of happiness, considering its diverse causes and responses.

Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), Păstae (2019) explores how metaphors structure the concept of joy within cognitive and cultural frameworks. The study highlights metaphors such as joy as fluid, heat, and natural force, showing how Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs) help organise abstract emotional experience and support meaning construction.

The embodiment hypothesis, as discussed by Sharma (2017), posits that language encodes both physical and socio-cultural experiences. The study identifies metaphorical concepts like HAPPINESS IS VEGETATION, where happiness is associated with natural imagery such as blossoms, flowering, greenery, and harvests. This reflects an extroverted cultural outlook, contrasting with the Chinese metaphor HAPPINESS IS FLOWERS IN THE HEART, which suggests a more introverted perspective. These linguistic structures illustrate how metaphors are grounded in cultural and physical experiences. Hindi idioms and phrases are not just fixed expressions but are dynamic linguistic constructs that encode the socio-cultural realities of Hindi-speaking communities. This aligns with the embodiment hypothesis, which asserts that language reflects the historical and cultural experiences of its speakers. Additionally, the diversity of Hindi phraseology is highlighted through its rich lexical variations for happiness, such as “k^hu^hi” and “fuk^h,” which vary across regional and cultural contexts.

2.1. Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspectives

While metaphorical expressions of emotions stem from universal human experiences, they are also shaped by cultural contexts. Yu (1995) compares happiness metaphors in Chinese and English, identifying shared patterns like HAPPINESS IS UP/LIGHT/CONTAINER. However, Chinese metaphors more frequently reference body parts, especially internal organs, influenced by cultural frameworks such as yin-yang theory and traditional medicine. Despite linguistic differences, the

study highlights the universal bodily grounding of emotion metaphors, with cultural contexts shaping their specific expressions.

Chen (2010) analyses idiomatic expressions in English and Chinese, highlighting both shared and culture-specific happiness metaphors. While HAPPY IS UP is common in both languages (e.g., “walk on air”), English emphasizes outward joy, whereas Chinese associates being “off the ground” with boastfulness, reflecting cultural values of modesty. The study underscores how metaphors shape emotional expression, balancing universal bodily experiences with cultural specificity, and emphasizes their role in cross-cultural communication.

Safarnejad et al. (2013, 2014) examine the translation of Persian happiness metaphors into English, highlighting challenges arising from cultural and cognitive differences. Using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and CMT (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), they identify universal metaphors like HAPPY IS UP alongside culturally specific ones. Translation difficulties stem from cultural nuances, lack of direct equivalence, and cognitive domain differences. The studies stress the need for balancing literal and conceptual equivalence and underscore the importance of metaphorical competence in translation for effective cross-cultural communication.

Ahmed (2016) delves into metaphoric parallels between Arabic and English, identifying shared metaphors, such as sadness as a burden (“down in the dumps” in English, “Sadness has broken her back” in Arabic) and happiness as uplifting (“on cloud nine” in English, “She flew because she was happy” in Arabic). The study highlights cultural nuances but concludes that metaphorical expressions of emotions reflect universal human experiences, offering insights into how language shapes emotional understanding across cultures.

2.2. Metaphors in literature, media, and historical contexts

Metaphors serve as powerful linguistic tools that enhance the richness of language and convey complex ideas and emotions. They are prevalent across literature, media, and historical contexts, shaping our understanding of various themes.

Tissari (2008) used the ARCHER (A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers, 1650–1990) corpus to analyze “hap(p)” and “joy” words, revealing that “hap(p)” terms are more common, while “joy” conveys stronger emotions. The study showed happiness’s connection to love and social relationships, highlighted metaphorical expressions like “happiness is a journey,” and explored contrasting concepts like grief. This research illuminates the cognitive and cultural aspects of historical happiness expressions.

Rajeg (2016, 2019) used corpus-based quantitative analysis to explore Indonesian happiness near-synonyms (*kesenangan*, *kegembiraan*, *kebahagiaan*), identifying distinct metaphorical profiles and 62 differentiating metaphors,

including HAPPINESS IS A LOCATION. This research highlights lexeme-specific metaphorical nuances in Indonesian emotion expression.

Pollard (2021) examined 20th-century American poets' use of happiness metaphors, showing both conventional (e.g., "happiness is light") and novel expressions, emphasizing cultural influence and advocating metaphor theory in literary analysis. Gomez (2020) critiqued *Cosmopolitan* magazine's happiness discourse, revealing neoliberal ideologies where happiness is framed as personal responsibility and tied to consumerism, demonstrating how media metaphors can reinforce social norms.

2.3. Comparative studies across languages

Stefanowitsch (2004) highlights differences in metaphorical patterns for "happiness" in English and "Glück" in German, showing variations in emotional intensity and cultural beliefs, with metaphors like EMOTION-AS-LIQUID and EXPERIENCER-AS-CONTAINER shaping these experiences.

Al-Sharif (2007) examines happiness and anger metaphors in English and Arabic, revealing that while both languages share basic-level metaphors, significant cultural-specific variations are influenced by factors such as climate and lifestyle. The study finds that anger metaphors are more prevalent than happiness metaphors in both languages. Using the CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and analysing a corpus of 345 expressions, the research underscores the role of cultural context in shaping emotional expressions. Goddard and Ye (2016) emphasise the need for a non-Anglocentric approach to studying emotions, advocating for cultural contextualisation and the use of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) (Wierzbicka 1996) to explore emotional expressions across languages. They argue that emotions are shaped by cultural contexts, cautioning against assuming universal meanings for English terms, and promoting cultural sensitivity to avoid misinterpretations.

Csillag (2016) investigates happiness metaphors in English and Russian, noting that the Russian terms for happiness (*schast'e* and *radost'*) differ significantly from the English term. The metaphor HAPPINESS IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY is notably more prominent in Russian culture, illustrating how cultural factors influence linguistic expression. Csillag emphasises the interplay of physiological, psychological, and linguistic elements in understanding emotions, highlighting their complexity as both concepts and expressions within different cultural contexts.

Shah and Sharar (2018) analyze happiness metaphors in English and Khowar, finding shared metaphors like HAPPY IS UP but noting cultural variations—Khowar speakers express happiness indirectly through objects, while English speakers are more direct. Using CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and qualitative content analysis, they highlight cultural influences on emotional expression. Similarly, Liu and Li

(2016) compare *joy* and *anger* metaphors in English and Chinese, identifying shared CONTAINER metaphors for joy but cultural differences—English emphasizes the body, while Chinese focuses on the heart. For anger, both use FIRE metaphors, but English also employs FLUID, while Chinese includes GAS, reflecting cultural nuances. Hamdi (2016) examines happiness metaphors in English, Spanish, and Tunisian Arabic, revealing cultural differences—English links happiness to *heaven*, Spanish to *virus, medicine, and path*, while Tunisian Arabic links extreme happiness with *insanity or death*. These studies emphasize the cognitive and cultural role of metaphors in shaping emotional expression.

Seidi et al. (2021) compare happiness metaphors in English and Laki, identifying shared metaphors like HAPPINESS IS UP, LIGHT, FLUID IN A CONTAINER, and ANIMALISTIC BEHAVIOR. A unique Laki metaphor, HAPPINESS IS BEING IN POSSESSION OF SOMETHING, reflects cultural specificity. Using CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and Kövecses' (2008) emotion models, the study highlights both universal and culturally shaped metaphors. Moreno-Ortiz et al. (2022) use NLP to analyze self-reported happy moments, revealing diverse sources of happiness, including consumerism, and demonstrating that happiness is not solely defined by positive words. Their study underscores the complexity of happiness in language and its commercial influences.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that while conceptual metaphors for happiness share universal elements rooted in embodied human experiences, their specific manifestations vary significantly across cultures. These variations highlight the influence of societal values, linguistic structures, and historical contexts on emotional expression. Understanding these metaphoric frameworks enriches cognitive linguistic research and fosters cross-cultural empathy and communication.

3. Data and methodology

This study employed a multi-faceted approach to collect and analyse 100 figurative expressions (50 Hindi and 50 Bangla) related to happiness, drawing on both digital and print sources. The dataset was compiled through purposive thematic sampling of idiomatic and proverbial constructions. A systematic keyword-based search was conducted using core lexical items for each language to ensure semantic focus and balanced representation.

Hindi (H) / Bangla (B): *kʰuʃi* (H,B) (happiness/joy), *həsi* (H) / *haʃi* (B) (*laughter, smile*), *anand* (H) / *anond* (B) (joy), *sukʰ* (H) / *fukʰ* (B) (happiness, well-being)

Hindi data were collected primarily from literary and cultural websites¹ as well as general knowledge and educational blogs², while Bangla data were drawn from literary and cultural blogs³ and established print sources, notably *Bangla Pravada* (A Collection of 9,100 Bengali Proverbs) by Shri Sushilkumar De and *98 Drishtanta Bakya Samgraha* edited by Chakraborty, Barun Kumar.

Following data collection, the corpus underwent systematic refinement: literal usages were excluded, extraneous contextual material removed, and only idiomatic and culturally embedded figurative constructions retained. The resulting dataset therefore reflects culturally salient metaphorical encodings of happiness rather than general lexical references.

The analysis adopted an inductive, bottom-up orientation, proceeding from linguistic form to conceptual structure without imposing predefined metaphor categories. Non-literal units were identified through contextual–basic meaning comparison using an adapted MIP, supplemented by collocational analysis to detect recurrent imagery (e.g., water, light, elevation, sweetness). Expressions were iteratively clustered according to shared semantic features until coherent conceptual domains emerged. These included fluidity, illumination, verticality, vegetation and seasonality, sweetness, movement, intoxication, temporality, possession/value, and embodied physiological manifestations. Broader conceptual mappings (e.g., HAPPINESS IS FLUID, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT) were inferred only after domain stabilization.

A structured cross-linguistic comparison then identified shared embodied schemas and language-specific mappings, interpreted in relation to ecological, religious, philosophical, and cultural practices. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) and Extended CMT (Kövecses 2020) were applied at the interpretive stage to situate findings within cognitive linguistic scholarship while preserving the study’s bottom-up design. The following section presents the emergent metaphorical patterns shaping the conceptualization of happiness in Hindi and Bangla.

4. Analysis and findings – conceptual metaphors in Hindi and Bangla

This section presents the metaphorical patterns associated with the Hindi and Bangla lexemes examined in the study. Rather than analysing an abstract universal concept of ‘happiness’, the discussion focuses on the metaphorical structures associated with the lexical items *k^huḥi*, *anondō/anand*, *fuk^h/suk^h*, and *haḥi/hāsi*.

¹ URL: <https://hindilearning.in/hindi-muhavare/>; <https://www.ncertbooks.guru/hindi-muhavare/>; <https://www.aplustopper.com/muhavare-in-hindi/>; <https://www.rekhtadictionary.com/?lang=hi>; <https://www.hindivarta.com/>; <https://www.hindisahityadarpan.in/>

² URL: <https://leverageedu.com/blog/>

³ URL: <https://bengali.pratilipi.com/blog/bangler-prabaad-probochon2tf04u8h15gpa41>

This usage shows ‘happiness’ presented as a fluid that escapes containment, marking intensity, collectivity, and public celebration — all central elements in the emotional-fluid schema.

iii. HAPPINESS IS INTOXICATION

In both Bangla and Hindi, intense ‘joy’ is metaphorically likened to intoxication, producing euphoria, light-headedness, and detachment from reality. The metaphor is also metonymic, since intense happiness produces bodily and psychological effects resembling intoxication. This cause–effect link anchors the metaphor in embodied experience, making the emotion more tangible.

A media usage example in Bangla further demonstrates this metaphor in collective emotional context:

								(Bangla)
obofese	fej	holo	juḍḍ ^h o,	k ^h ujite	maṭowara	hoet ^h e	gazar	
finally,	end	be-PST.3	war	happiness-INS	intoxicated	be-PFV.3	Gaza-GEN	
ḷifura ⁵								
children.PL								

(3) “Finally with the end of the war, the children of Gaza are overjoyed.”

This usage demonstrates how ‘happiness’ can be framed as affective intoxication that overtakes groups and spreads socially — mapping emotional states onto collective bodily experience.

k ^h uḷi	ki	k ^h umari	me:	hona	(Hindi)
happiness	GEN	intoxicated-state	LOC	be-INF	

(4) “To be intoxicated with joy” / “To be in a blissful daze”

This metaphor appears in both Bangla and Hindi, where intense joy is likened to the effects of intoxication—euphoria, light-headedness, and detachment from reality.

iv. HAPPINESS IS CONTAINER (being in happiness)

‘Happiness’ is conceptualized as a bounded space in which individuals can “stay” or “be,” reflecting the EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS metaphor. Here ‘happiness’ is an immersive yet temporary state that can be entered or experienced. In Hindu traditions, this metaphor frames ‘happiness’ as a mental or existential space attained through contentment, moral living, and spiritual practice.

k ^h uḷi/suk ^h	me:	hona			(Hindi)
happiness	LOC	be-INF			

(5) “To be in happiness”

v. HAPPINESS IS DESIRED OBJECT

k ^h uḷi	ki	ṭəlaʃ	me:	rehna	(Hindi)
happiness	GEN	search	LOC	stay-INF	

⁵ 1.2K views · 30 reactions | অবশেষে শেষ হল যুদ্ধ, খুশিতে মাতোয়ারা. . . (n.d.). <https://www.facebook>

(6) “To be in pursuit of happiness”

‘Happiness’ is metaphorically framed as a valuable and sought-after entity. The Hindi example presents ‘happiness’ as an object of pursuit. This metaphor aligns with a broader cognitive understanding of GOALS AS OBJECTS, where desirable emotional states like happiness are treated as tangible things that can be gained, lost, or longed for.

vi. HAPPINESS IS MUSIC

Hindi metaphorically link ‘happiness’ to music, symbolizing harmony, rhythm, and celebration. Embedded in cultural traditions like classical music, bhajans, Bollywood music, etc. this metaphor reflects joy as an instinctive, communal, and uplifting experience. A well-known cultural example appears in a classic Hindi film song:

ḍʒ ^h u:m	ḍʒ ^h u:m	ke	natʃo	a:dʒ	ga:o	(Hindi)
sway	sway	INST	dance-IMP.2PL	today	sing-IMP.2PL	
k ^h uʃi:	ke	gi:t	ho ⁶			
happiness	GEN	song	EMPH			

(7) “Sway, sway and dance today, sing the songs of happiness!”

This cinematic usage reinforces the metaphor HAPPINESS IS MUSIC/SONG, presenting ‘happiness’ as a performative and embodied emotion that takes *audible* and *social* form.

vii. HAPPINESS IS TEMPERATURE

k ^h uʃi	ki:	gərma:fʌt	(poetic use in Hindi)
happiness	POSS	warmth	

(8) “Warmth of happiness”

The association between warmth and positive feelings is deeply rooted in the language and culture. This conceptual metaphor aligns with universal human experiences where warmth is equated with comfort and positivity. The metaphor *Happiness is Warmth* is universal (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) but takes specific cultural forms in Hindi. In Western languages, warmth is also used metaphorically (e.g., “a warm personality”), for instance, Díaz-Vera’s (2024) study examines the culturally specific use of the HAPPINESS IS TEMPERATURE metaphor for positive emotions in Old English texts, challenging universal embodiment theories.

viii. HAPPINESS IS UNRESTRAINED DANCING

Consistent with embodied cognition, this metaphor expresses ‘happiness’ through bodily movements such as dancing or swaying. These actions reflect the sensorimotor experience of intense joy and metonymically represent emotion through physical expression. The metaphor also emphasizes the communal nature

⁶ Jhoom Jhoom Ke Nacho (HD) – Andaz Songs — Nargis — Dilip Kumar — Cuccoo — Raj Kapoor. (n.d.). [Video]. YouTube. URL: <https://share.google/nMLcBDhA1RzmoqFFS>

of ‘joy’ in celebratory and devotional contexts. For example, a popular bhajan performance reports:

sa.ra: paṇḍa:l kʰuʃi: se d̪ʒʰu:m uʃʰa:⁷ (Hindi)
 whole pandal happiness INST sway rise-PFV.3SG
 (9) “The entire pandal swayed with happiness.”

Here, collective swaying stands as a visible embodiment of shared emotional uplift, reinforcing HAPPINESS IS ELEVATION and DANCE as intertwined metaphorical structures.

ix. HAPPINESS IS BLOSSOMING FLOWER

A recent Hindi news headline demonstrates this metaphor in natural discourse:

məmmi:-pa:pa: ka: kʰuʃi: se kʰil gaja: t̪ʃəhra:⁸ (Hindi)
 mother-father GEN happiness INST bloom go-PST.M.SG face
 (10) “The parents’ faces lit up with joy.”

Here, *kʰil gaja: t̪ʃəhra:* encodes ‘happiness’ as somatic blossoming, reinforcing the metaphor HAPPINESS IS FLOWERING, where inner joy becomes externally radiant and aesthetically visible. In both Hindi and Bangla traditions, ‘happiness’ is culturally grounded in floral imagery as blossoming vitality and sacred renewal; in Bangla Śyāma Sangeet dedicated to Goddess Kali, the line “*maa er paaye joba hoye uthlo fute mon*” (/ma:er pa:e dʒɔba hœ uʃʰlo pʰuʃe mon/) depicts the heart blooming like a hibiscus—Kali’s sacred flower—at the Mother’s feet, reflecting the Śākta tradition (Śaktism), a devotional stream of Hinduism that worships the Divine Mother (Śakti) as ultimate reality, while in Hindi, expressions such as *t̪ʃəhra kʰil uʃʰna* (“the face blossomed”) similarly encode ‘joy’ as visible floral flourishing embedded in festival aesthetics, nature symbolism, and devotional culture.

x. HAPPINESS IS LIGHT (rofnai, radiance)

uske t̪ʃəhre pər ek t̪ʃəmək kʰuʃi: ki t̪ʃi (Hindi)
 3SG.GEN face LOC one shine happiness-GEN exist.PST.3SG
 (11) “There was a glow on his/her face.” In Hindi, ‘happiness’ is linked to a glowing face, reflecting its transformative effect.

This aligns with EMOTIONS CAUSE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES, where ‘happiness’ manifests as a glow.

o HAPPINESS IS SPARK

(Specific level metaphor of the generic level metaphor – HAPPINESS IS LIGHT)

⁷ सारा पंडाल खुशी से झूम उठा श्याम बाबा का ये भजन सुनकर | Raj Pareek Bhajan | Khatu Shyam Bhajan. (n.d.). YouTube. URL: <https://share.google/bAIG1MoaMcjMiFrTv>

⁸ अन्नप्रशान में बच्चे ने खाने-खिलौने को छोड़कर चुना भागवत गीता... Jansatta Trending News (2024). Retrieved from https://www.jansatta.com/trending-news/baby-chooses-bhagavad-gita-at-annaprashan-everyone-shocked-viral-video/4194521/?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=WhatsappShare

This metaphor is actively used in Hindi pedagogy and everyday communication. For instance, a language-learning prompt explains:

‘ākʰō me: tʃəmæk a:nɑ:’ ka: ərʈʰ hɛ kisi: ba:tʃ ki: kʰuʃi: hɔ:nɑ:.⁹

(12) “A sparkle in the eyes’ means to feel happiness about something.”

The instructional context reinforces that this visual effect is widely recognized as a signifier of ‘happiness’ in cultural cognition and linguistic usage.

xi. HAPPINESS IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR

suk ^h	ka	gulam	hona	(Hindi)
happiness	GEN	slave/servant	to be-INF	

(13) “To be a slave to happiness.”

‘Happiness’, in Hindi, is conceptualized as a powerful social superior, portraying individuals as submissive or dependent on it. The phrase “slave to happiness” suggests that joy can dominate actions and decisions, reinforcing its authority in shaping behaviour.

It resonates with Indian philosophical traditions, especially Bhakti¹⁰ and Vedanta¹¹, where material ‘happiness’ (sukha)¹² is seen as an illusion (maya)¹³ that can enslave the mind through attachment (moha)¹⁴. True liberation (moksha)¹⁵ is believed to come from detachment (vairagya)¹⁶ and spiritual fulfilment over fleeting pleasures.

xii. HAPPINESS IS JOURNEY

							(poetic use in Hindi)
kʰuʃi	koi	mənzil	nəhi	bəlki	ek	səfər	he
happiness	any	destination	NEG	rather	one	journey is.COP	

(14) “Happiness is not a destination but a journey.”

‘Happiness’ is conceptualized as a continuous journey rather than a fixed destination, reflecting Indian spiritual and poetic traditions that emphasize

⁹ Brainly.in (14 December 2022). ‘[खों में चमक [ना] का अर्थ है किसी बात की खुशी होना। ऐसी कोई चार बातें लिखो जिनके कारण तुम्हारी [खों में चमक [जाती है। Retrieved from <https://brainly.in/question/54592092>

¹⁰ Bhakti: A devotional tradition in Hinduism emphasizing emotional connection, love, and surrender to the divine as the path to spiritual fulfilment.

¹¹ Vedanta: A philosophical school focusing on the realization of ultimate truth (Brahman) and the illusory nature of worldly experience.

¹² Sukha: Material or worldly happiness; pleasure experienced through sensory and external sources.

¹³ Maya: The illusionary nature of the material world that can mislead individuals into attachment and away from spiritual truth.

¹⁴ Moha: Attachment or delusion that binds the mind to transient desires and worldly pleasures.

¹⁵ Moksha: Liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth, achieved through spiritual realization and freedom from attachment.

¹⁶ Vairagya: Detachment from material desires and emotional extremes, considered necessary for spiritual progress.

experiential growth, impermanence, balance, and mindful engagement over final attainment. Vedantic thought, the Bhagavad Gita¹⁷, Sufi¹⁸, and Bhakti poetry all reinforce the idea that joy unfolds through experiences, inner discovery, and detachment from fixed outcomes.

A recent Hindi article reinforces this metaphor explicitly:

k^huʃi: ja:ʈra: he, mənzil nəʃi¹⁹ (Hindi)
 happiness journey be.PRS.3SG destination NEG
 (15) “Happiness is a journey, not a destination.”

The accompanying sub-headline elaborates that what makes a person happy depends on their nature, mindset, desires, and circumstances, highlighting variability and experiential growth.

This reinforces the metaphoric mapping of ‘happiness’ as ongoing progress rather than a final acquired state.

xiii. HAPPINESS IS FLIGHT

k^huʃi ke mare asma:n me: uʈna (Hindi)
 happiness GEN due to sky-LOC fly-INF
 (16) “To fly in the sky out of happiness”

‘Happiness’ is metaphorically depicted as flight, symbolizing freedom, lightness, and exhilaration. Located in Hindi, this imagery reflects the psychological effect of ‘joy’, creating a sense of weightlessness and boundless energy, as if soaring above earthly concerns.

xiv. HAPPINESS IS A LAMP

k^huʃi ke di:p d̪ʒəlana (Hindi)
 happiness GEN lamp light-INF
 (17) “To light the lamp of happiness.”

This Hindi metaphor symbolizes brightness, warmth, and positivity, reinforcing the idea that ‘joy’ can be spread like light. In Indian traditions, lighting lamps (*diyas*) during festivals like Diwali represents hope and the victory of light over darkness. Rooted in Hinduism, this metaphor aligns with the *Ramayana*²⁰,

¹⁷ Bhagavad Gita: A foundational Hindu scripture within the Mahabharata, presenting philosophical teachings on duty, devotion, and emotional equanimity.

¹⁸ Sufi: Islamic mysticism focused on divine love and inner spiritual experience beyond worldly happiness.

¹⁹ जनसत्त. (2022, September 9). खुशी यात्रा है, मंजिल नहीं. *Jansatta*. URL: <https://www.jansatta.com/duniya-mere-aage/happiness-is-the-journey-not-the-destination/2368532/>

²⁰ Ramayana: A major Sanskrit epic narrating the life of Lord Ram and his victory over evil, central to Hindu devotional and cultural traditions.

pain, like heat and cold, are fleeting. Similarly, *Ritu Chakra*³⁰ (seasonal cycles) symbolizes emotional impermanence.

The phrase *kʰufi ke d̪ɔ:r* (“a phase of happiness”) echoes Hindu teachings on *vairagya* (detachment), advocating equanimity in both joy and sorrow.

4.2. *anondo / anand (joy)*

Expressions containing *anondo* or *anand* highlight several metaphorical patterns related to emotional intensity, immersion, and collective experience.

i. HAPPINESS IS FLOOD

A recent Bangla news post describing the emotional scene in Gaza used the phrase:

muk̪t̪ir anond̪e gazar j̪ifud̪er bad̪h³¹ (Bangla)
 freedom-GEN happiness-LOC Gaza-GEN children-PL.GEN dam
 b^haja ullas
 break-PFV.PTCP exultation

(20) “The children of Gaza burst into a flood of ‘joy’ at their freedom.”

This real-world usage from a Bangla media post illustrates the metaphor HAPPINESS IS FLOOD, where ‘joy’ is described as a dam-breaking force (*bad̪ b^haja ullas*), expressing an uncontrollable surge of collective ‘happiness’. The phrase aligns with traditional idiomatic expressions such as *anond̪er bad̪h b^haja* (“the floodgates of happiness broke open”), emphasizing the embodied and unrestrained nature of intense ‘joy’ in Bangla cultural cognition. In Bengal, rivers such as the Ganges, Padma, Hooghly, Mahananda, and Teesta symbolize both destruction and fertility, as floods devastate yet enrich the soil.

ii. HAPPINESS IS LIGHT (rofnai, radiance)

bohu s̪ɔ̪sk̪t̪ir melband^hon, bibid^h anond̪er rofnai³² (Bangla)
 many culture-GEN union various happiness-GEN light/illumination

(21) “In the union of many cultures, the myriad lights of happiness.”

The phrase appeared in a feature article from *The Daily Star* (Bangla, Nov 28 2022) which describes Qatar’s vibrant display of cultural diversity during the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The phrase *bibid^ho anond̪er rofnai* (“the myriad lights of happiness”) evokes collective ‘joy’ through imagery of illumination, extending the metaphor HAPPINESS

³⁰ *Ritu Chakra* (Seasonal Cycles): The cyclical progression of seasons in the Indian calendar, often used metaphorically to represent recurring shifts in human emotions and life phases.

³¹ 51K views 10K reactions | মুক্তির আনন্দে গাফ জার বুকে ছুটে চলছে. (n.d.). URL: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2270308693393164>

³² জাহামজেদজ. (2022, November 28). বহু সংস্কৃতির মেলবন্ধন, বিবিধ আনন্দের রোশনাই. *The Daily Star Bangla*. URL: <https://share.google/dyjsYfTXyhGJTckCW>

IS LIGHT. In Bangla, *rofnai* (light, splendour) evokes Durga Puja³³, linking ‘joy’ with celebration and warmth. With the broader cultural contrast of DAY AS HAPPINESS and NIGHT AS SADNESS, reinforcing light as a symbol of positivity, energy, and celebration across both languages – Hindi and Bangla.

○ HAPPINESS IS SPARK

(Specific level metaphor of the generic level metaphor – HAPPINESS IS LIGHT)

tʃok ^h e	anond̪e	d̪ʒ ^h ilik	(Bangla)
eyes-LOC	happiness-GEN	spark	
(22)	“A sparkle of joy in the eyes”		

Using imagery of a sudden flash of light, this metaphor represents the visible and immediate expression of ‘joy’. The eyes become a key site where emotions manifest physically, with a sparkle conveying excitement and liveliness. It aligns with the generic metaphor EMOTIONS CAUSE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES, where ‘happiness’ produces facial brightness and animated expressions. Like a spark, it also highlights the fleeting yet intense nature of ‘joy’.

iii. HAPPINESS IS ELEVATION/UP

ʃe	anond̪e	akaf	tʃ ^h ulo	(Bangla)
3SG.NOM	happiness-LOC	sky	touch-PST.INDF.3SG	
(23)	“He/she soared with happiness”			

Aligning with the broader conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP, this expression conceptualizes ‘joy’ as upward movement, symbolizing emotional upliftment. It reflects embodied experiences of feeling lighter when happy and cultural imagery of the sky as boundless ‘joy’. In Hindi, “saṭwe asma:n p̄r hona” (“to be in seventh heaven”) also draws on religious traditions that associate higher realms with divine bliss.

A Hindi media example reinforces similar conceptualization in everyday discourse:

arha:n	k ^h a:n	saṭwe	asma:n	p̄r	he ³⁴	(Hindi)
Arhaan	Khan	seventh	sky	LOC	be.PRS.3SG	
(24)	“Arhaan Khan is over the moon with happiness.”					

Although the expression does not contain the specific lexical items analysed in this study, it is included because it represents a highly salient cultural expression of intense ‘joy’.

○ HAPPINESS IS BEING LIFTED OFF THE GROUND

³³ Durga Puja (Durgotsava): A major Hindu festival (September-October) primarily celebrated in West Bengal and East India. It honours the goddess Durgā and commemorates her victory over the buffalo demon Mahishāsura, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil (Dharma over Adharma).

³⁴ Tomar, N. (2025, October 7). Arhaan Khan को मिली छोटी बहन, सातवें □समान पर है मलाइका के बेटे की खुशी. *News24 Hindi*. URL: <https://share.google/lNyHZh1oyWe8vuVR6>

(Specific level metaphor of the generic level metaphor – HAPPINESS IS ELEVATION/UP)

anonḍe tar pa maṭṭe porc^he na (Bangla)
 happiness-LOC 3SG.GEN feet ground-LOC fall-PRS.CONT.3SG NEG
 (25) “He/she is walking on air”

Derived from the HAPPINESS IS ELEVATION/UP, the metaphor conceptualizes extreme ‘joy’ as physical lightness and detachment from the earth. It reflects embodied experience where upward movement signals positive emotion, while heaviness and groundedness indicate sadness or burden.

iv. HAPPINESS IS UNRESTRAINED EXPRESSION

je anonḍe nece ut^hlo (Bangla)
 3SG.NOM happiness-LOC dance-CVB rise-PST.INDF.3SG
 (26) “She rose up dancing with happiness”

Aligned with embodied cognition, this metaphor expresses ‘happiness’ through bodily movements such as dancing or swaying. These actions reflect the sensorimotor experience of intense ‘joy’ and metonymically represent emotion through physical expression, while also highlighting its communal dimension in celebratory dance and rhythmic movement.

v. HAPPINESS IS A FLUID

anonḍo-mḡno haoa (Bangla)
 happiness-immersed be-INF
 (27) “To be absorbed or immersed in happiness”

anand^ḡ-mḡgan hona (Hindi)
 happiness-immersed be-INF
 (28) “To be absorbed or immersed in happiness”

In both Bangla and Hindi, ‘happiness’ is conceptualized as an immersive experience, like being submerged in liquid. The imagery of being drenched or enveloped highlights deep emotional engagement where surroundings fade. This reflects a broader cognitive mapping in which emotions function as tangible substances that can fill or overwhelm the experiencer.

vi. HAPPINESS IS SPRING SEASON

(Specific level metaphor of the generic level metaphor – HAPPINESS IS SEASON)

faguner nobin anonḍe³⁵ (Bangla) (Tagore’s song)
 spring-GEN new happiness-LOC
 (29) “In the new happiness of the onset of spring”

This is the opening line from a Rabindra Sangeet of the same name. This song by Rabindranath Tagore belongs to the *Prakriti (Nature) Parjaay (No. 245)* and the

³⁵ Anjan Ganguly, Debasis Biswas, and geetabitan.com contributors. (n.d.). *Song phaguner nabin anande | Lyric and History*. URL: <https://www.geetabitan.com/lyrics/P/phaguner-nabin-aanande-lyric.html>

Basanta (Spring) *Upa-Parjaay* (No. 58). Celebrating spring as a season of renewal and ‘joy’, the song linguistically and musically embodies the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS SPRING, where emotional blossoming parallels nature’s rebirth.

tum mere d̄zivən ki bəsənt ho (poetic use in Hindi)
 2SG.NOM my life GEN spring be-PRS.2SG.INF
 (30) “You are the spring of my life”

This specific-level mapping under HAPPINESS IS A SEASON, links ‘happiness’ with spring in both Bangla and Hindi, symbolizing renewal and vitality. Although the expression does not contain the lexical items examined in this study, it is included because it reflects a culturally salient metaphor of joyful transformation that helps illustrate broader conceptual patterns.

In Bengal, *Fagun*³⁶ ushers in *Dol Utsav*³⁷ (Basanta Utsav), inspired by Rabindranath Tagore, marked by music, colours, and poetic expressions of love and freedom. In Hindi-speaking regions, Holi³⁸, the festival of colours, signifies exuberant ‘happiness’, unity, and renewal. Both festivals emphasize uninhibited emotional expression, reinforcing the metaphor of ‘happiness’ as a seasonal bloom—fleeting yet intense, cyclical yet eagerly anticipated.

vii. HAPPINESS IS MUSIC

Composed spontaneously during a train journey, the below mentioned line transforms ‘happiness’ into song, directly embodying the metaphor HAPPINESS IS MUSIC. Here, *anondo gan ut̄huk bad̄zi* portrays ‘joy’ as an audible, rhythmic outpouring of emotion—where inner elation becomes a communal melody. Tagore’s poetic imagination fuses sound, movement, and devotion, turning ‘happiness’ into an expressive performance of the soul.

anondo gan ut̄huk bad̄zi ³⁹ (Tagore’s song – Rabindrasangeet)
 happiness song rise.SBJV play-PFV
 (31) “Let the song of happiness arise, let the music resound.”

³⁶ Fagun (Phalgun): The twelfth month of the Bengali calendar (February–March), Fagun marks the arrival of spring in Bengal. It is associated with warmth, renewal, blossoming nature, and festivals such as Dol Utsav (Basanta Utsav), celebrated with music, colours, and expressions of joy.

³⁷ Dol Utsav: In Bengal, Fagun ushers in Dol Utsav (also known as Basanta Utsav), a spring festival introduced by Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan. The celebration is marked by music, dance, vibrant colours, and poetic expressions of love and freedom—symbolizing renewal and the joyous spirit of spring.

³⁸ Holi: Major Hindu festival (Feb/Mar) celebrating the arrival of spring, love, and the victory of good over evil. Festivities begin with Holikā Dahan (a bonfire ritual marking the legend of Prahlāda) and culminate in Rangwalī Holī, where people play by throwing coloured powder (*gulāl*) and water on each other, often symbolically blurring social distinctions.

³⁹ Rabindranath Tagore — *Songs — pooja — anandagan uthuk tabe baji*. (n.d.). URL: <https://www.tagoreweb.in/Songs/pooja-233/anandagan-uthuk-tabe-baji-4695>

Source: Rabindranath Tagore, *Puja-Parjaay: Ānondo* (Song No. 309), written on 12 January 1915, composed on a train from Bolpur to Kolkata. Published in *Balaka; Swarabitan* Vol. 56. In Bangla culture, ‘happiness’ is metaphorically expressed through music symbolizing harmony, rhythm, celebration, and a deeply communal, uplifting experience of ‘joy’.

viii. HAPPINESS IS TANGIBLE OBJECT

(Bangla)

je tar anonḍoke dhore rakḥṭe parlo na
 3SG.NOM 3SG.GEN happiness-ACC hold-CVB keep-INF be.able-PST.3SG NEG
 (32) “He/she couldn’t hold on to his/her joy.”

In Bangla, ‘happiness’ is seen as a tangible entity that can be held or lost, highlighting its fragility and the effort needed to sustain it. Culturally, Bengali literature, music, and folk traditions depict happiness as fleeting, needing careful preservation. In modern discourse, it aligns with self-help narratives, highlighting ‘happiness’ as something that requires active effort.

ix. HAPPINESS IS DISORIENTATION

anonḍe ḍifahara (Bangla)
 joy-LOC directionless
 (33) “Lost in joy”

‘Happiness’ is depicted as a disruptive force causing disorientation (ḍifahara), highlighting how overwhelming ‘joy’ can momentarily distract from focus, routine, or practical concerns.

x. HAPPINESS IS MAGIC SPELL / ENCHANTMENT

anonḍe bib^hor hooa (Bangla)
 happiness-LOC enchanted/bewitched become-INF
 (34) “Enchanted/ bewitched in happiness”

‘Happiness’ is depicted as a magical spell, creating a trance-like, euphoric state that alters perception and overwhelms the mind. Intense ‘joy’ is portrayed as a captivating force that transforms reality, aligning with South Asian literary traditions where ‘happiness’, love, and beauty are described as magical and dreamlike. This metaphor remains productive in contemporary public discourse. For example, during Durga Puja celebrations, a recent Bangla news report stated:

puṛo baṅladeṣ puḍḅar anonḍe bib^hor⁴⁰ (Bangla)
 whole Bangladesh puja-GEN happiness-LOC entranced/absorbed
 (35) “The whole Bangladesh is immersed in the happiness of puja (here, Durga Puja).”

⁴⁰ রিপোর্টব. ট. (2022, October 3). পুরো বাংলাদেশ পূজার আনন্দে বিভোর: স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী. *Bangla Tribune*. URL: <https://share.google/UzApjMR2ic5hXvgJB>

Here, *bib^hor* encodes a spellbound emotional state, extending the metaphor into collective experience: ‘happiness’ acts like an affective enchantment enveloping an entire community during a cultural festival. The grammatical construction further frames ‘happiness’ as a surrounding environment or condition in which people become absorbed.

xi. HAPPINESS IS LOSS OF SELF-AWARENESS

‘Happiness’ is seen as an overwhelming state (*aṭtoḥara*) that immerses individuals, temporarily erasing self-awareness and external consciousness. Intense ‘happiness’ leads to emotional transcendence, overwhelming rational thought and creating complete present-moment absorption. A recent Bangla news headline illustrates this metaphor:

funei	baṛi	firṭḥilo	anonde	aṭtoḥara	(Bangla)
hear-CVB	home	return-PROG.3	happiness-LOC	self-forgetful	ḍzugal ⁴¹
(36)	“Hearing it, the couple was returning home, self-forgetful in joy.”				

Here, ‘joy’ is construed as a force that possesses the experiencer, resulting in temporary loss of rational control, highlighting the embodied experience of extreme emotional states.

4.3. *fuk^h / suk^h (happiness, well-being)*

The lexeme *fuk^h/suk^h*, which often conveys meanings related to well-being and contentment, appears in expressions that conceptualize emotional states through natural, spatial, and cyclical imagery.

i. HAPPINESS IS OCEAN

fuk ^h	ṣagor	(Bangla)
happiness	ocean	
(37)	“An ocean of happiness”	

The metaphor *an ocean of happiness* found both in Hindi and Bangla depicts ‘happiness’ as vast and overwhelming, aligning with the EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES concept, where the ocean symbolizes its depth and intensity. In both cultures, water bodies symbolize emotional richness and spiritual fulfilment. In Bengal, the Ganges, Padma, Hooghly, and other rivers flowing into the Bay of Bengal represent life, prosperity, and sanctity, while in Hindi-speaking regions, the Ganga and Yamuna are linked to purity, renewal, and devotion.

⁴¹ Desk, T., Sarkar, S., & Desk, T. (2025b, May 23). “ফিরে এসো, আমরা মেনে নিয়েছি. . .” শুনেই বাড়ি ফিরছিল আনন্দে আত্মহারা যুগল! নিমেঘে যা ঘটল, ভালবাসা খান খান! *News18 বাংলা*. URL: <https://bengali.news18.com/photogallery/national/love-story-terrible-news-here-is-what-happened-to-a-couple-while-eloping-to-get-married-shocking-incident-will-shake-you-in-moment-all8-tc-sanj-2177956.html>

A contemporary devotional usage further reinforces this metaphor:

fuk^h sa:gər ke kina:re me:ra: ga:ũ⁴² (Hindi)
 happiness ocean GEN shore my village
 (38) My village is on the shores of the ocean of happiness.

Here, ‘happiness’ as an ocean extends into a metaphoric landscape, situating life and community in close proximity to abundant ‘joy’. The spatial construction (“shore of happiness”) reinforces the idea that happiness is a life-giving environment that one can inhabit or approach, reflecting a spiritualized emotional geography within Hindi discourse.

ii. HAPPINESS IS A CONTAINER

fuk^h-e t̪haka (Bangla)
 happiness-LOC stay-INF
 (39) “To be in happiness”

suk^h me: hona (Hindi)
 happiness LOC be-INF
 (40) “To be in happiness”

Here, ‘happiness’ is conceptualized as a bounded space where individuals can “stay” or “be,” like a physical container holding an object. This aligns with the broader EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS metaphor, suggesting that ‘happiness’ can be entered, exited, or fully experienced, reinforcing its temporary nature. Culturally rooted in Hindu traditions, the metaphor depicts ‘happiness’ as an immersive state – a mental or existential space one can inhabit through contentment, moral living, and spiritual practice.

iii. HAPPINESS IS FLUID IN A CONTAINER

(Specific level metaphor of the generic level metaphor – HAPPINESS IS FLUID)

fuk^h upt̪e pəra (Bangla)
 happiness overflow-CP fall-INF
 (41) “Happiness spilling over”

In Bangla, HAPPINESS IS FLUID is realized through the metaphor of the body/mind as a container where intense ‘joy’, like liquid, overflows its limits and manifests physically, emphasizing that strong emotions demand outward expression.

iv. HAPPINESS IS A SEASON

fuk^h-er mor̪sum (Bangla)
 happiness-GEN season
 (42) “Season of happiness”

⁴² *Sukh Sagar ke Kinare Mera Gaon (Full Song) — Brahmakumar Dr. Ambrish Shah — Download or Listen Free — JioSAaVN.* (n.d.). JioSaavn. URL: <https://share.google/ZYqSRrPq5IhIPsjVT>

d̪ipaboli-te suk^h-er d̪ʒoɑr⁴⁴ (Bangla)
 Diwali-LOC happiness-GEN tide/flood
 (47) “During Diwali, a tide of happiness rises.”

viii. HAPPINESS IS WAVE

fuk^her d̪^heu (Bangla)
 happiness-GEN wave
 (48) “A wave of happiness”

This Bangla metaphor depicts joy as a powerful, fluid force—rising, spreading, and engulfing like ocean waves. Rooted in Bengali ecology and culture, it highlights ‘happiness’ as dynamic, unpredictable, yet rhythmic, mirroring the ever-changing nature of emotions.

ix. HAPPINESS IS VALUABLE COMMODITY

fuk^her d̪ɑ:m/ muljo (Bangla)
 happiness-GEN price/value
 (49) “The price/value of happiness”

In Bangla, ‘happiness’ is viewed as a valuable commodity—earned, exchanged, or lost—rooted in economic cognition. Bengali culture contrasts ‘happiness’ with material wealth, depicting it as elusive yet invaluable. Traditional views tie joy to morality, while modern discourse connects it to consumerism and social status.

x. HAPPINESS IS VULNERABILITY

fuk^he t̪^hakle b^huṭe kilae (Bangla)
 happiness-LOC stay-COND ghost-ERG punch-PRS.3SG
 (50) “If you’re too happy, the ghost will strike”

The Bangla proverb reflects the vulnerability of ‘happiness’, always at risk of disruption. Rooted in South Asian beliefs in fate (bhagya)⁴⁵, karma⁴⁶, and the evil eye (najar)⁴⁷, it suggests that excessive ‘joy’ may attract misfortune or jealousy. The b^huṭe (ghost) symbolizes an invisible threat, reinforcing the idea that happiness is precarious.

Psychologically, this aligns with defensive pessimism, where people avoid full immersion in ‘joy’ to guard against disappointment. Bengali culture, through proverbs, folklore, and social attitudes, emphasizes emotional balance—warning against complacency in ‘happiness’. Common in everyday speech and literature, this metaphor highlights that ‘joy’ is fragile, shaped by life’s uncertainties.

devotees worship the goddess Kali with lamps and offerings, emphasizing protection, renewal, and positive energy.

⁴⁴ দীপাবলিতে সুখের জোয়ার, ৩০ বছর পর ৩ রাশিতে বাম্পার যোগ। (2024, October 5). URL: <https://share.google/5KbAKe5PRcAApVDfE>

ii. HAPPINESS IS A STATE OF MIND

je k^hub b^halo mejaje a^he (Bangla)
 she very good mood-LOC be-PRS.3SG
 (54) “She is in a very good mood”

‘Happiness’ is seen as an internal, subjective state in Bengali culture, with ‘b^halo mejaj’ (good mood) highlighting its transient and perception-based nature. This metaphor reflects psychological and South Asian philosophical views of ‘happiness’ as a mental state shaped by thoughts, emotions, and inner peace. Although it does not contain the searched lexical items, it is included due to its cultural and conceptual relevance.

Our findings are summarized in two tables below. Table 1 presents the conceptual metaphors of happiness shared by Hindi and Bangla. It lists representative expressions from both languages that illustrate common embodied schemas such as fluidity, light, elevation, containment, seasonality, and music, showing cross-linguistic similarities in the metaphorical conceptualization of happiness.

Table 1. Common Conceptual Mappings of Happiness in Hindi and Bangla

	Conceptual Metaphors	Hindi	Bangla
1	HAPPINESS IS OCEAN	suk ^h ka sagar “An ocean of happiness”	fuk ^h jagor “An ocean of happiness”
2	HAPPINESS IS FLOOD	k ^h ufi me: bah dzana “To be flooded by happiness”	anonger bad ^h b ^h ana “The floodgates of happiness broke open”
3	HAPPINESS IS BLOSSOMING FLOWER	t ^h ehra k ^h il sa gaja “The face blossomed like a flower”	muk ^h e hafi p ^h ota “A smile blossomed on the face”
4	HAPPINESS IS LIGHT	uske t ^h ehre par ek t ^h emak t ^h i “There was a glow on his/her face.”	anonger rojni “The light of happiness”
5	HAPPINESS IS SPARK	ak ^h o me: chamak a dzana “The eyes lit up (sparkled)”	t ^h ok ^h e anonger dz ^h ilik “A sparkle of joy in the eyes”
6	HAPPINESS IS ELEVATION/UP	satwe asma:n par hona “To be in seventh heaven”	je anonge akaf t ^h ulo “He/she soared with happiness”
7	HAPPINESS IS BEING LIFTED OFF THE GROUND	paon zami par na hona “(He/she is) walking on air”	tar pa matite por ^h e na “(He/she is) walking on air”
8	HAPPINESS IS UNRESTRAINED DANCING	k ^h ufi se dz ^h u:m ut ^h na “To sway in happiness”	je anonge nece ut ^h lo “She danced in happiness”
9	HAPPINESS IS CONTAINER	k ^h ufi/suk ^h me: hona “To be happy”	fuk ^h e t ^h aka “To be happy”
10	HAPPINESS IS FLUID	anand-magan hona “To be absorbed or immersed in happiness”	anondo-magno hooa “To be absorbed or immersed in happiness”
11	HAPPINESS IS FLUID IN A CONTAINER	k ^h ufi t ^h elakna “Happiness spilling over”	fuk ^h upt ^h e pora “Happiness spilling over”
12	HAPPINESS IS DESIRED OBJECT	k ^h ufi ki t ^h alaf me: rehna “To be in pursuit of happiness”	akafer t ^h ad hat ^h e paoa “To touch the moon in the sky”
13	HAPPINESS IS INTOXICATION	k ^h ufi ki k ^h umari me: hona “To be intoxicated with joy”	anonge matowara hooa “To be intoxicated with joy”

End of Table 1

	Conceptual Metaphors	Hindi	Bangla
14	HAPPINESS IS A SEASON	suk ^h ke m̄s̄əm “Season of happiness”	fuk ^h er morjum “Season of happiness”
15	HAPPINESS IS SPRING SEASON	ṭum mere d̄z̄iv̄ən ki b̄as̄ənt ho “You are the spring of my life”	faguner nobin anonḍe “In the new happiness of the onset of spring”
16	HAPPINESS IS MUSIC	suk ^h / k ^h ufi: ke gi:ṭ̄ gana “Sing the song of happiness”	anonḍo gan uṭ ^h uk bad̄zi “Let the song of happiness be played”
17	HAPPINESS IS DAY	suk ^h ke ḍ̄in, ḡəm ki ra:ṭ̄ “Day of happiness and night of sorrow”	fuk ^h er din, duk ^h er raṭ̄l “Day of happiness and night of sorrow”
18	HAPPINESS IS TEMPERATURE	k ^h ṭ̄ji ki: ḡərma:h̄aṭ̄ “Day of happiness and night of sorrow”	ujno onub ^h uṭ̄l “Warm feelings”

Table 2 highlights language-specific differences. Hindi metaphors frequently draw on ritual symbolism (lamps), sensory experiences (sweetness), and philosophical reflections (journeys), often influenced by Vedantic and Bhakti traditions. In contrast, Bangla metaphors are deeply shaped by the region’s riverine ecology (tides, waves) and emphasize emotional immersion and vulnerability. Together, these tables show how a shared metaphorical foundation is uniquely elaborated through different cultural “ecologies of emotion”.

Table 2. Culture-specific Conceptual Mappings of Happiness in Hindi and Bangla

Hindi	Bangla
HAPPINESS IS SWEETNESS	HAPPINESS IS BREEZE
HAPPINESS IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR	HAPPINESS IS TIDE
HAPPINESS IS JOURNEY	HAPPINESS IS WAVE
HAPPINESS IS FLIGHT	HAPPINESS IS VALUABLE COMMODITY
HAPPINESS IS A LAMP	HAPPINESS IS TANGIBLE OBJECT
HAPPINESS IS A PERIOD OF TIME	HAPPINESS IS A PERSON
	HAPPINESS IS VULNERABILITY
	HAPPINESS IS A STATE OF MIND
	HAPPINESS IS DISORIENTATION
	HAPPINESS IS LOSS OF SELF-AWARENESS
	HAPPINESS IS A MAGIC SPELL

5. Discussions on conceptual metaphors structuring happiness in Hindi and Bangla

The shared conceptual metaphorical mappings identified in the analysis reveal cultural and cognitive continuities between Hindi and Bangla, reflecting historical contact, linguistic proximity, and shared South Asian cultural traditions. Rather than treating the English term *happiness* as a universal category, this discussion focuses on metaphorical patterns associated with the Hindi and Bangla lexemes *k^hufi*, *anonḍo/anonḍ*, and *fuk^h/suk^h*. The term ‘happiness’ is therefore used only as a convenient analytical label, while the analysis centers on the semantic and metaphorical behaviour of these language-specific lexical items.

Expressions containing these lexemes frequently draw on embodied schemas such as fluidity, light, elevation, containment, and seasonal cycles. While these schemas correspond to widely observed patterns in conceptual metaphor research, their linguistic realizations are shaped by the semantic properties of the individual lexemes. Consequently, the patterns observed in Hindi and Bangla represent language-specific conceptualizations rather than universal metaphorical models of ‘happiness’.

5.1. Hindi-specific elaborations

In Hindi, metaphorical extensions associated with *k^huḥi* and *suk^h* frequently develop embodied schemas through ritual symbolism, sensory experience, and philosophical reflection.

5.1.1. HAPPINESS IS SWEETNESS

Sweetness metaphors conceptualize emotional states through gustatory experience. Cultural practices such as *miṭ^hai ba:ṭna* (sharing sweets) during celebrations reinforce sweetness as a socially enacted symbol of joy and collective well-being.

5.1.2. HAPPINESS IS LAMP

Associations between *k^huḥi* and light extend the broader illumination schema into ritual symbolism. Lighting *diyas* during Diwali represents renewal, hope, and the triumph of good over evil, linking emotional experience with religious practice.

5.1.3. HAPPINESS IS JOURNEY

The journey metaphor conceptualizes emotional well-being as an unfolding process rather than a fixed state. Expressions involving *k^huḥi* frame emotional experience as developing through life events, reflecting philosophical traditions such as Vedanta, Bhakti, and Sufi thought.

5.1.4. HAPPINESS IS SOCIAL SUPERIOR

Some Hindi expressions portray emotional states as entities that dominate the experiencer, reflecting cultural perspectives that caution against attachment to transient pleasures and emphasize emotional restraint.

5.2. Bangla-specific elaborations

In Bangla, metaphorical extensions associated with *anondo* and *fuk^h* often develop shared embodied schemas through ecological imagery, aesthetic immersion, and emotional ambivalence.

5.2.1. HAPPINESS IS TIDE, WAVE, BREEZE

These metaphors extend the fluid schema through imagery rooted in Bengal's riverine environment. Expressions involving *fuk^h* and *anondo* conceptualize emotional states through the movement of water, tides, and breezes, emphasizing rhythm and cyclical change.

5.2.2. HAPPINESS IS MAGIC SPELL, ENCHANTMENT, *and* LOSS OF SELF-AWARENESS

Some expressions portray emotional experience as immersive or transformative, temporarily suspending rational awareness. This reflects literary and devotional traditions that depict intense emotion through metaphors of aesthetic or spiritual absorption.

5.2.3. HAPPINESS IS VULNERABLE STATE

Certain Bangla proverbs depict positive emotional states as fragile and susceptible to disruption, reflecting cultural beliefs about fate and the instability of emotional fortune.

5.2.4. HAPPINESS IS VALUABLE COMMODITY

In some expressions, emotional well-being associated with *fuk^h* is conceptualized through economic schemas that frame it as something possessing value or worth.

Overall, while Hindi and Bangla share several embodied metaphorical schemas, they elaborate them differently. Hindi expressions involving *k^hu^hi* and *suk^h* often emphasize ritual symbolism, sensory experience, and philosophical reflection, whereas Bangla expressions involving *anondo* and *fuk^h* foreground ecological imagery, aesthetic immersion, emotional fragility, and socio-economic valuation. These patterns demonstrate how shared embodied experiences are linguistically shaped by culturally specific lexical meanings.

6. Conclusion

While both languages share foundational embodied schemas (fluidity, light, elevation), Bangla elaborates ecological dynamism and emotional immersion, whereas Hindi extends ritual symbolism, gustatory embodiment, philosophical temporality, and hierarchical relational models. Bangla's extensions emphasize natural rhythm, aesthetic absorption, emotional fragility and socio-economic valuation. Hindi's extensions emphasize ritual celebration, sensory sweetness, moral-philosophical reflection and social relational structuring. These divergences

illustrate how shared embodied cognition is culturally elaborated through ecology, ritual practice, literary tradition, and philosophical worldview.

By analyzing idiomatic and proverbial data, the study uncovers underlying cognitive models consistent with Kövecses' view that language reflects conceptual reality. Importantly, it expands global metaphor research by introducing Bangla within a South Asian framework, highlighting both universal embodied patterns and culturally distinctive influences shaped by ecology, ritual, and philosophy.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Namrata Paul: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal analysis; Investigation; Data curation; Writing — original draft; Visualization. **Abhijeet Satsangi:** Conceptualization; Data collection; Resources; Linguistic validation; Writing — review & editing. **Sanjukta Ghosh:** Conceptualization; Supervision; Validation; Theoretical framework development; Writing — review & editing.

All authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to its submission.

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