

# Indian Culture and its Social Security System. A Draft Paper

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Suppose that we want to build an 'ideal' social security system. Such an act needs to answer several questions: who should sustain such a system, the State or the Society-at-large? Once built, what guarantees its stability and sustainability? And so on. However, before such questions are answered, we need to answer even more basic questions about the goal of such a security system: *what should it do? What are its goals and what is its finality?* The answer to these last two questions, I submit, depends on our understanding of the kind of creatures that human beings are and what, we think, they seek. In this draft paper, I will focus on this issue and show how the social security system we want to build depends *fundamentally on how we understand human beings*. In that process, I will also take a very controversial stance: *Indian culture has built the most ideal social security system one could ever hope for, a system that is beginning to disintegrate for reasons that have nothing to do with its intrinsic shortcomings*. In order to begin the task of outlining the contours of my subject, however, we need to first undertake a detour and examine some basic concepts and ideas. These have to do with what we think human beings are, what we take desires and needs to be and so on. Discussion of these themes constitute the primary focus of this paper. Once this is done, we can appreciate much better what social security systems are and what their roles are.

A few caveats about this paper, first. One: this is envisioned as a position paper, which attempts to draw out a central thread of connection between

*Only the society-at-large (the so-called 'civil society' and its basic units like family, friends, etc.) can hope to set up a viable social security system, if such a thing is possible at all.*

conception of human beings and the kind of social security system that gets built. As such, it is not a full and coherent article meant for publication which implies that certain intellectual embellishments (footnotes, bibliography, etc.) are absent. Second: I do not tackle, much less meet, the objections that can be anticipated to emerge in the course of reading this paper. Three: despite my best efforts, the paper has grown long even though much that requires saying has been left unsaid. Four: it presupposes an Indian audience and some familiarity with the Indian culture and her traditions. Therefore, it might lack intelligibility to a western audience or western trained intellectuals in India. Making it accessible to all the possible readers would have bloated the text even more. Five: its central object is to sketch the possible directions for a conference on the social security system in Indian culture and no more. Therefore, where possible, I have taken very provocative positions, which can be defended. Finally, I have not elaborated on certain formulations ('the only possible answer', 'the conclusion that can be drawn', etc.) that, normally speaking, cry out for more clarifications. All these deficiencies notwithstanding, I hope to have accomplished what I undertook to do.

## I

One of the most striking things about the global economic meltdown in the twenty-first century is the following: it is a crisis generated primarily by managers and CEO's from the banking and financial sectors. Whatever might be the economic 'logic' (as of now, we merely have partial insights into it) that went into creating the problems that surround the crises involving mortgages, sub-primes and derivatives, it remains obvious that one of the psychological premises that functioned as a 'rationality assumption' of the free-markets is no longer tenable. That premise was the following: no CEO would ride his firm to its death; to do so, would be to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Today, we are able to see that this is not a 'rationality' assumption but a claim about human psychology: after all, if the CEO can arrange his contract in such a way that he receives a huge bonus for every profitable quarterly report, then neither the enduring health nor the continued existence of the firm is of any concern to him. Indeed, he is indifferent to whether the goose that lays the golden eggs survives or not, as long as he can lay claim to a few of those eggs. He is driven by his focus on his share of the golden eggs, and such a motive is being called 'excessive greed' today. Many politicians, correspondingly, are calling for a cap on executive compensations; even those who resist any such move do agree that 'greed' played a very important role in precipitating the

crisis. The difference between these two camps is merely about how to restrain this 'greed'. They agree, however, that this played a significant role in the behaviour of the CEOs.

This is the moment for us to reflect about this extraordinary agreement between the two competing parties. Both the free market ideologues and those who are calling for massive state interventions in the economy share the same set of anthropological assumptions. By nature, human beings are greedy and the current discussion is merely about how to harness it. Of course, the CEO's were greedy and acted greedily: this is indeed how the phenomenon appears. But appearance of a phenomenon is not always the truth: the sun appears to move around the earth, but this is not the truth about the relationship between the sun and the earth. Therefore, the question facing us is this: in acting greedily, do the CEO's express a typical, biological human inheritance? The answer to this question depends on how we explain or understand human beings.

It is my suggestion that the particular anthropology, which undergirds our economic and management theories is very much Christian in origin. Our

deeply held intuitions that guide thinking about economics and management are not the results of scientific reflections about the nature of human beings. Instead, they have emerged due to the kind of (implicit) marriage that has taken place between the religion that Christianity is and theories about economics and management.

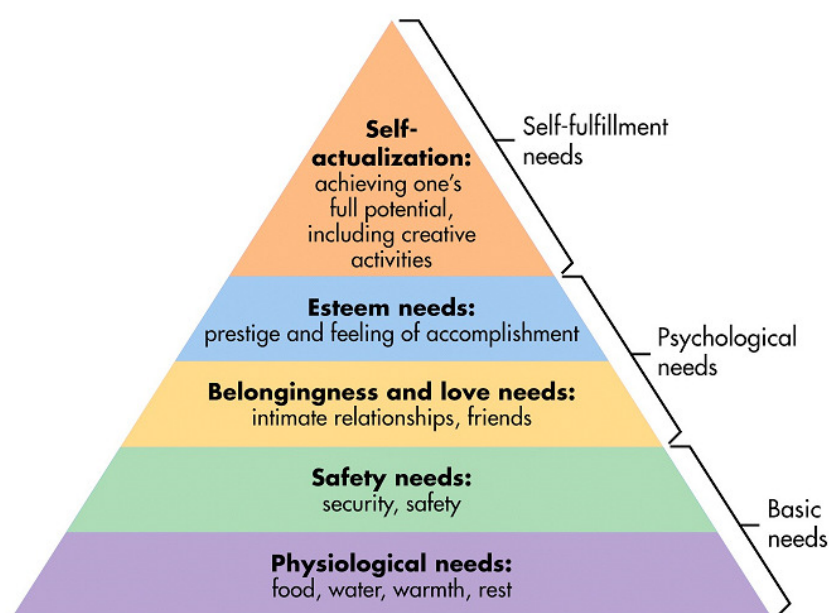
In this paper, I want to explore two ways in which economic and management theories can be married. For the sake of convenience, call the one way 'a western, Christian approach' and the other, 'an Indian, heathen' one. The first one is rather familiar; the second, I hope, is not so. I will try to conceptualize the difference between these two ways in terms of how *they explain facts* about human beings that we observe and experience. These facts are: *our limitless desires, our 'greed', our needs and our wants*. In order to complete the task in the space I have, I will drastically simplify my theses. I cannot do what intellectuals love doing: add nuances, subtleties, and qualifications. I will merely paint a rough contrasting picture in order to agree and disagree. I hope you will forgive me for this.

## II

One theory we can use to understand the facts about our limitless desires, our 'greed', our needs and our wants is a variant of what is called humanistic psychology. Abraham Maslow formulated it first in 1943, and it has been refined in many different ways since then. (I do not talk about the challenges this proposal has faced.) The basic thesis goes something like this: human beings have different kinds of needs – from the purely biological to the spiritual needs. The original suggestion was that these different kinds of needs form some kind of a hierarchy: a pyramid, so to speak (see *Figure 1*). Our needs for food, water, clothing, shelter form the base of the pyramid.

Once these physiological needs are satisfied, other next-in-line needs emerge: these are safety needs like the need for security, whether it is security of employment or security of revenues and resources. After these are satisfied, there emerge the social needs: they involve emotionally based relationships in general, such as friendship, sexual intimacy, and/or having a family. The subsequent set of needs is psychological: humans have a need to be respected, to self-respect and to respect others. All these needs are seen as "deficiency needs": once met and satisfied, these needs get neutralized; they cease to motivate us any further. Then there is the need at the apex of the pyramid that continually motivates us and cannot be neutralized: the need for self-actualization. As Maslow put it: "Self Actualization is the intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is." Or "a musician must make music, the artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization". In this approach, to be happy is to have all our needs met. There are some reasons why I use Maslow and

**Figure 1**



his theory here. Quite apart from being well-known in economic and management circles, his theory also reminds us that if we want to talk about human needs, we need to ground such discussions in some or another psychological theory about human motivation. In fact, that is what Indian notions also do. They too work with some definite ideas about human psychology and anthropology in their attempts to grapple with the problems of human existence. However, the difference is that the Indian traditions do not speak in terms of 'needs' but do so in terms of desires. So, if a contrast between these two approaches is to be made, one requires a uniform vocabulary. Therefore, let me *translate the language of needs into the language of desires*.

Here is one such possible translation. Let us say that needs take the form of desires. These desires are geared towards objects. We can say that human beings have multiple desires and that these desires function as motivations for the human being. In order to satisfy their desires, human beings act. It is important to realise that the desires are not only indefinitely many but also doubly qualified. The first qualification is this: desire is oriented towards an object, because a desire is always a desire for something. The second qualification is regarding the specificity of the object. For instance, you do not merely have a desire for sex; you also have a desire to have sex with some particular human being. You do not merely desire food, but you desire beefsteak as food. You

do not merely desire clothes but you desire Armani clothes, and so on.

Desires emerge in us and such desires are doubly qualified. What about new desires, or further qualifications to the existing ones? New objects can either create new desires for those objects or qualify the existing desires. That is to say, in any given period, human desires are formed socially and culturally. This is how we experience fellow human beings and ourselves today: as creatures with indefinitely many desires for indefinitely many things. New desires emerge as new products come into being and are successfully marketed. In this case, happiness would mean the satisfaction of all our desires. In this account, it makes no difference whether one argues that happiness arises from a 'prudent' satisfaction of desires (i.e., 'one ought to know which desires to satisfy and which things not to desire') or from a 'hedonistic' fulfilment. The claim is merely that happiness has to do with the satisfaction of human desires.

### III

Let us now agree that most human beings, in all times and cultures, seek to be happy. The question I raise here is simple: if it is indeed the case that human beings seek to be happy, why are they not? If they really seek happiness, why do they not find it easily? There is also a simple answer to these

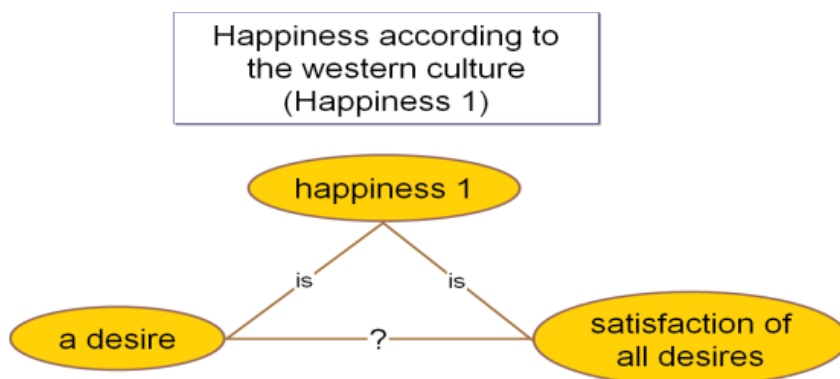
questions: many things prevent them from being happy. Which are these things?

The 'western' story about desires gives us the following answer by transforming happiness into a desire: human beings desire to be happy. Now, we began with the idea that human beings are happy if their desires are satisfied. However, as we proceed further, happiness itself becomes a desired object. Once human beings are seen to desire happiness the way they desire any other object, then questions can be asked about happiness: what kind of an object is happiness? Is it possible to specify its properties? Is it a psychological feeling, an attitude to life, a quantity of goods, the quality of life...? When such questions are asked, our task becomes even more complex: satisfying our desires now includes satisfying the desire to be happy. Happiness becomes both an object of desire and it is also something that arises from satisfying other desires.

Before we get lost in this chain of argument, notice the two things that have happened in the process of transforming happiness into a desire. First, we can ask whether this desire to be happy is the proper end of human kind: we can even ask normative questions, 'Is it good to be happy?'. Second, we can speak of different 'kinds' of happiness: happiness as a desire as against the happiness we seek by satisfying all our other desires (see *Figure 2*). It is now totally unclear what relation, if any, exists between these two kinds of happiness. Hence, we can say, as we also often say, even if someone has satisfied all his desires, he has not yet found 'happiness' (or 'he is not truly happy').

Correspondingly, there are two aspects to finding happiness. The first is to seek happiness directly and the second is to seek it indirectly. However, because happiness is such an elusive object, and we do not anymore know what it is, a search for it can only frustrate us. That is to say, if we seek

**Figure 2**



happiness directly we will end up becoming unhappy. What happens if we seek it indirectly? Because our desires are indefinitely many and they could never be satisfied fully or completely, we will never find happiness. Both aspects give us the same message: human beings desire happiness, but they can never satisfy this desire.

Now, throw in the story of that religion which has dominated the western culture: we can never find 'true' happiness on earth by chasing either happiness or by trying to satisfy the desires for material things. So, if we want 'true' happiness, we need to do two things: seek God and constrain our desires. But if you want to follow humanistic psychology and do not want to speak of God, you say the following: human beings cannot be 'truly happy' until they also satisfy their spiritual desires and live in a sober and ascetic fashion by curtailing their desires for material objects.

This story has deep roots in our common sense understanding of human beings. This is also the basis of many theories in philosophical anthropology. This story guides our thinking about human beings, society and economics. I want to suggest that this story is not a scientific story about human beings but merely a culture-specific product. This is how people in western culture are brought up to understand and experience themselves. This is merely one perspective on human beings that one culture has thrown up. There exist other cultures in the world and they tell different stories about human beings and their desires. I want to tell you one strand from that story, as it is told in Indian culture.

#### IV

Let me invite you to think along with me. Let us continue to agree that all human beings seek happiness, whatever 'happiness' means. Let us not assume that happiness is a desire or its opposite. Let us not even assume that

happiness arises from satisfying our desires for objects or whatever else. In that case, it might appear as though the sentence 'all human beings seek to be happy' becomes completely senseless. Not quite, because the Indian traditions try to clarify this elusive notion by making some meta-claims about the nature of 'happiness'. Correspondingly, let us now imagine a culture making the following meta-claim: *each human being can be happy*. If all human beings can be happy, then there are some consequences attached to this claim (see *Figure 3*).

1. There is no special or specific condition attached to being happy. One could be a man, a woman or a child; one could be rich or poor; one could be intelligent or stupid; one could be young or old... None of these qualifications matter: anyone and everyone can be happy. The only possible condition is that one is a human being and even here, it is left vague as to what it means to be a human being.
2. The second implication is the answer to the question, 'when can someone become happy?' The answer is obvious: *anytime, anywhere and in any manner*.
3. The third consequence is this: if every human being can be happy, that means there cannot be a conflict

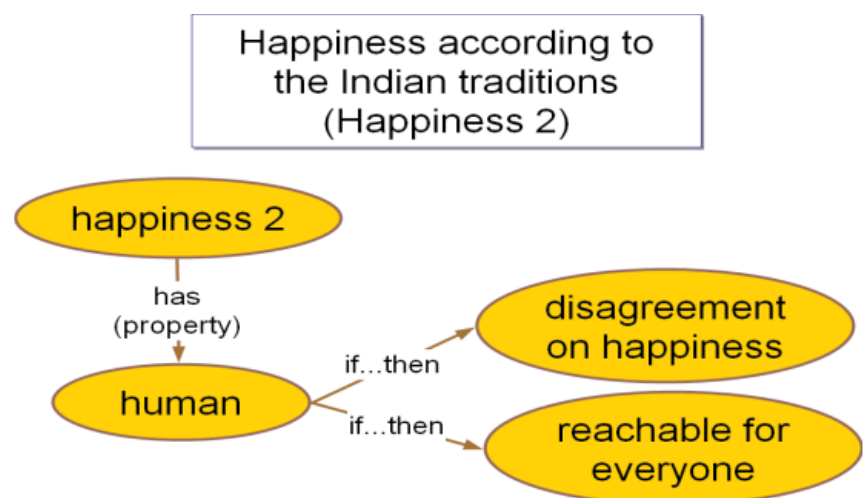
between the happiness of one person and the happiness of the other.

4. The fourth consequence is even more interesting: because each one of us is occupied in different ways in the world, each one of us has a different psychology than the other, no occupation or no individual psychology can prevent us from being happy. That is to say, 'being happy' is something that is either so general that it is applicable to all human beings or something so plastic that it can adapt itself into every situation and every person.

5. Because of all these considerations, the next consequence is also necessary: every path and every way we travel in the course of our journey through life can lead us to this goal. That is, it is not possible to speak of only one way of being happy. There are indefinitely many ways of being happy.

6. What does it mean to say that there are indefinitely many ways to be happy? Now comes a startling consequence: you can take happiness as a goal and find it in your life; or you can chase after material goods and still find happiness. (I am limiting myself here to just these two possibilities in order to draw the contrast.) That is, you can chase after happiness either directly or indirectly. From this, it follows: not only people can be happy but

**Figure 3:**



also there is no such thing as 'true' as against 'false' happiness. There is only one thing we all seek and that is to be happy.

If all these consequences are derivable from the meta-claim about happiness, the question arises: why are people unhappy then? Surely, if it is that simple and so obvious, why is the majority of humankind unhappy? The Indian traditions provide a double answer to this question, both of which are deceptively simple.

Here is the first answer: One reason why people are unhappy is because they do not 'really' seek happiness. To be happy, all you need is seek it; "seek, and ye shall find". Seek what though? If we do not know what happiness is, how can we seek it? That is to say, if we are ignorant of what we seek, how can we recognize it (assuming we find it) or seek it?

"Indeed so", say the Indian traditions. We cannot seek something until we know what we seek. However, instead of telling us what we 'ought' to be seeking, the Indian traditions do something remarkable: they draw attention to our ignorance and ask us to reflect upon its nature. That is, they say, *we cannot find happiness because of our ignorance*. What stands in the way of us seeking and finding happiness is our own ignorance.

Let us reflect a bit on what is remarkable about this. If, indeed, all of us can

be happy and can be that in different ways, and there is no 'true' happiness as against multiple illusions about it, then no theory can tell us what all of us 'ought' to be seeking. If a believer, an atheist and an agnostic (for example) can all be happy, then either happiness has nothing to do with belief in God or happiness means different things to different people. The Indian traditions do not prescribe a specific 'normative end' to all human beings; they merely notice factually that we all seek happiness as an end. In this process, they focus on the impediments to achieving what we think that end is. The Indian traditions tell us that we are prevented from achieving that end, which we call happiness, because of our ignorance. That is, what prevents each one of us from being happy (even though we believe that each one of us 'defines' happiness differently) is our ignorance about what happiness is. Therefore, they say, think about ignorance and understand how it prevents you from being happy. So let us also do it. *What is ignorance?*

## V

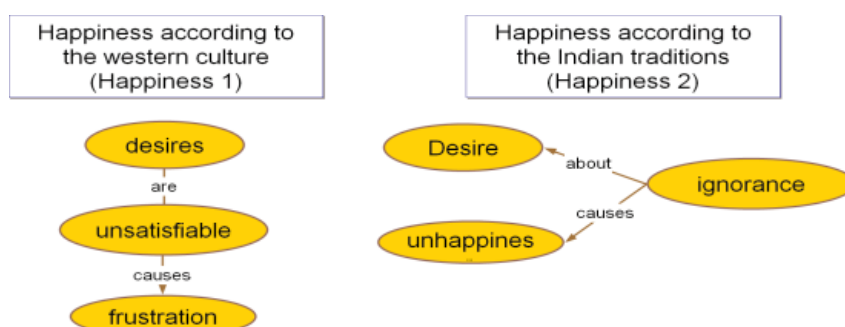
To begin with, ignorance is an absence: the absence of information (or knowledge) about what happiness is. This answer is intuitively familiar to us. I will very soon come back to it. For now, let us look at another notion of ignorance that the Indian traditions talk about. They construe ignorance as a force of some sort that actively prevents knowledge. To get some grip on this idea, let us notice that for something to 'do' something else in the

world, it has to be present. That is, something must exist in the world if it has to have an impact on other objects in the world. So, as a mere absence (whether it is information or knowledge that is absent), ignorance cannot actively prevent knowledge. In fact, in the sense of 'absence', ignorance is a precondition for knowledge. Nor does ignorance mean believing in 'wrong or false' ideas in this case. How, then, to make sense of the idea of ignorance as an active force?

Let us look at statements of the following sort: "Knowledge removes ignorance"; "knowledge cures ignorance"; "ignorance prevents one from seeing the truth"; "forgiving people for their ignorance" ("Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing") and so on. How can knowledge 'remove' or 'cure' or 'be prevented by' something if that something is not present? The Indian traditions have thought about this notion of ignorance as an active force that prevents knowledge. This ignorance is not "about" any particular object; it is merely ignorance as a force. I cannot develop this idea further here. But keep in mind that the notion is not all that alien even in western culture. This then is one reason why people are unhappy: we do not find happiness because ignorance prevents us from discovering what happiness is. One reason why people are unhappy is due to the presence of ignorance as an active force.

In addition to this, we are also ignorant "about". That is, we cannot be happy until we realize (or gain knowledge) about the nature of our desires, wants, limitless greed and such like and about the kind of beings we are. Let us begin by noting what the Indian traditions say about desires (see *Figure 4*).

**Figure 4:**



Human beings do not have multiple desires for specific objects, say these Indian traditions. What we have is Desire: in the singular, unqualified, and objectless. Consequently, to say, as we do, that we have 'many desires', or that





‘we have a desire for something’ would be false and misleading. However, Desire has the property of attaching itself to any and every object. When I desire Armani clothes or a beef steak, I do not have desires for these particular objects. What I do have is just one ‘Desire’ that attaches itself now to Armani clothes and then to beef steak. Our desire for multiple objects does not show that we have many desires but shows, instead, that it is merely one and the same Desire attaching itself to different objects. The limitlessness of our desires does not have anything to do with the limitless number and variety of objects in the world but with the fact that Desire has no intrinsic goal or object. That is why Desire cannot be satisfied: nothing can satisfy it. To make this notion of Desire perspicuous, let me use an economic metaphor. The Desire that the Indian traditions talk about is like Money. Money is singular, there are no plural monies. Money can become savings, financial capital, Industrial capital, mercantile capital, money-lending capital, or merely something we exchange for some commodity or another. Money can take the form of various currencies, shares,

gold or any other commodity. Money can buy anything because it is indifferent to what it is exchanged against. According to the Indian traditions, Desire is like Money: it is limitless; it has no intrinsic object as its goal; it can be accumulated in any form or quantity.

Chasing after satisfaction of desires, as we experience our strivings, is intrinsically and inherently frustrating. Such an endeavour is also a direct cause of unhappiness because Desire is unsatisfiable: nothing can satisfy it. However, true to their nature, the Indian traditions do not suggest that no one, ever, finds happiness in accumulating money: it is also a possible route. One could accumulate Desire and chase after satisfying it and claim that s/he is happy in doing so. While possible, to most of us however, such a route might not be the best choice.

In the western thinking, the nature of the world is used as a pragmatic argument to suggest that we have to put restraints on our desires. Our desires are infinite but the resources of the world

are finite. However, this argument convinces only those who want to be convinced; it cannot convince the sceptic, who might be an optimist (‘science and technology will solve the problem’) or an ignoramus. Further, this argument makes the ‘Other’ – whether the other is Nature or other human beings – into the enemy: the ‘Other’ is the source for the unsatisfiability of human desires. Consequently the ‘Other’ is always the threat that the ‘self’ confronts in its attempts to fulfil its desires.

In the Indian traditions, by contrast, neither the ‘self’ nor the ‘other’ has anything to do with the limitless nature of our desires or our inability to satisfy them. It is in the nature of Desire that it is unsatisfiable. Consequently, going-about with Desire is crucial to being happy. That is to say, one can learn to be happy and this learning involves acquiring the ability to deal with Desire. Asceticism is of no help as a societal solution, even if some individuals could be happy by living ascetically. The road to happiness involves people learning this truth about Desire at an individual level, among other things.

That is to say, Self-knowledge is crucial to the process of being happy. *What then is self-knowledge?*

## VI

I live in a culture (western culture) whose members not only pride themselves in their self-knowledge but also believe such knowledge is an index of the maturity, independence and stability of a person. What they mean by self-knowledge is actually self-representation, which is more often than not at odds with the kind of creatures they are. It is a mixture of odds and ends: ideas, pictures, values, fantasies, ideals, etc. which they slug all through their lives. The less this picture is subjected to shocks by the events that occur in their lives, the more comfortable they feel. Looked at it this way, a person is said to have a stable and mature “identity” (this is another word they use in psychology for this assortment) if this representation is not shaken by what happens in that individual’s existence. Creation of an identity or the emergence of an identity refers to that process or event where the person in question begins to relate to this picture consciously and explicitly.

Is this also self-knowledge? This amalgam does contain elements of insights by the person about him/herself. But these are not thought-through; they are not the deliberate results of exploration and reflection into oneself. Mostly, they are the insights the organism has acquired about itself during the course of its journey through life. Grafted onto this are other odds and ends: the strategies one used as a child, the remembered feelings one has had at different phases in life, a way of holding oneself while alone, different ways (both successful and failed) of going about with people, the vague images of heroes one admired but has since forgotten... In the full sense of the word, it is an assortment of junk that is somehow held together. This junk is accumulated in the course of one’s life (see *Figure 5*).

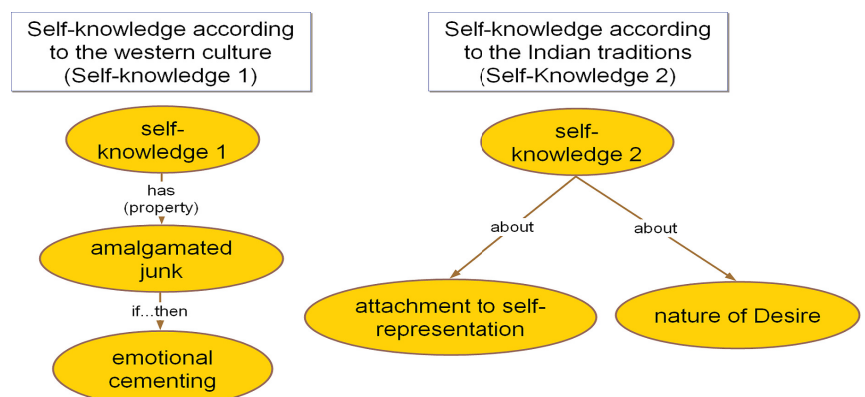
What holds this junk together even as an amalgam? *Emotions*. They cement these odds and ends together and ignorance does the rest: one presupposes that this junk is a coherent picture of some sort or another. One does not know whether this amalgamated junk that we call self-knowledge or self-representation is a coherent picture; most of us might even suspect that it is not, which is perhaps why we are so afraid of attacks against it. That is also why we get so attached to it. However, the emotions invested in this amalgamated junk and ignorance makes us think that this is what we are. This is one of the reasons why we are so sensitive to remarks by others about us. They nastily remind us that the emperor is naked. The others exhibit this truth, albeit in perverse ways (by insulting us, by poking fun at our self-image, etc.), about this junk: namely, that it is junk. The fact that we get emotional (whether positively or negatively) about this amalgamated junk is the surest indication that emotions hold this junk together. If the emotions did not hold these odds and ends together, two things would have happened: there would be no picture to talk about or hang on to, and the remarks of the others would induce no emotions in us. The emotions that hold this junk together also blunt the remarks that others make about it. They redirect such remarks (as weapons) against the amalgamated junk that the others hang on to: the other is prejudiced, ignorant, jealous, stupid... Thus, the ideal and mature person that the western psychology talks about has two properties: such a person must know which remarks from others

should be recognized as true (even though painful) and which to redirect. You do not learn these two abilities in order to become a mature person; these abilities are the consequences of your maturity.

If the above is true, what stands in the way of achieving self-knowledge or knowledge about the kind of organisms we are? The amalgamated junk that we call ‘psychological identity’. Having such an identity is not indispensable to being a person; instead, it stands in the way of becoming one. What prevents self-knowledge is the picture we have of ourselves as individuals. Or, better put, the emotions we invest in holding our self-representation together prevents us from understanding ourselves for the kind of creatures we really are.

Absence of information or lack of knowledge both about ourselves and the nature of Desire prevent us from seeking happiness. In other words, we wrongly believe that our self-representations constitute self-knowledge and this (implicit) belief allows us to invest emotions in holding the amalgamated junk together as though it is a coherent picture. This attitude (or the emotional investment) actively prevents us from being happy. Ignorance, conceived as a positive force, also refers to this attachment to the amalgamated junk. Equally, absence of information or lack of knowledge about Desire makes us believe that we have multiple desires. We blame ourselves for our inability to satisfy these desires or seek its ‘cause’

**Figure 5:**



in the greed inherent to the human nature. The Indian traditions shift the focus to the nature of Desire and suggest that our inability to satisfy it has nothing to do with 'human nature' but with the very nature of Desire. As long as we do not have this knowledge, 'desires' enslave us and actively prevent us from seeking happiness. This too is a positive force. In short, absence of information or lack of knowledge also transforms it into a positive force.

In our search for happiness, Indian traditions claim to teach us to be happy; they claim they are teaching systems. If one can learn to be happy, it can only be because *happiness can be learnt*. Here, happiness is not seen as a desire or a need of human beings, but as something that can be learnt. It is some kind of knowledge. Among other things, the Indian traditions help us go-about or deal with Desire by developing an ability in us to do that. This ability is developed in the course of teaching us about ourselves. *Being spiritual, in this way of looking at things, involves having knowledge both about ourselves and about the hindrances that prevent this self-knowledge.*

If happiness is some kind of knowledge and a happy person is a knowledgeable person, what kind of knowledge is it? The Indian traditions call it as *experiential knowledge*. We can get an intuitive handle on this notion of knowledge by asking ourselves the following question: who knows whether some person is happy or not? Quite obviously, the person in question. S/he knows whether or not s/he is happy if and only if s/he experiences happiness. In this sense, happiness is experiential in nature and it is experiential knowledge because it can be taught and learnt. To be happy, you need to get rid of ignorance as well: ignorance both as absence of information and ignorance as a positive force that prevents you from being happy. This ignorance is both about the nature of Desire and the nature of oneself as a human being. When looked at this way, this knowledge appears related to the intuitive

notion of 'wisdom', which we have. Indeed so. The Indian traditions link the notion of wisdom (*sophia*) to happiness (*eudaimonia*). Both are practical and experiential in nature. The end of human beings is to be happy, not because it is the 'proper' end but because that is what we all seek.

## VII

The Indian traditions are mere signposts and guide in our search for happiness. There is no one way to seek and find happiness any more than there is a single 'true' happiness as against multiple illusions about happiness. The only person qualified to judge whether or not one is happy is the person in question, and her/his judgment will be a result of her/his experience.

In saying this, Indian traditions talk about human pain and suffering as well. To understand their claims in this regard, consider some examples like the following: an Olympic swimmer has an accident because of which a promising career gets broken in the middle; a Casanova, who made a career of chasing after women, discovers his waning attraction; a beautiful woman, who prided herself on her beauty, begins to grow old; a rich man loses his money because of a stock-market crash; a young mother discovers that her infant baby has incurable cancer; a young couple breaks-up; a loved one dies; and so on and so forth. In each of these cases, the resultant pain and suffering is obvious. How does one respond to these situations? The obvious answer is that one tries to comfort them and provide them with some kind of solace. Yes, of course, but how does one do any of these?

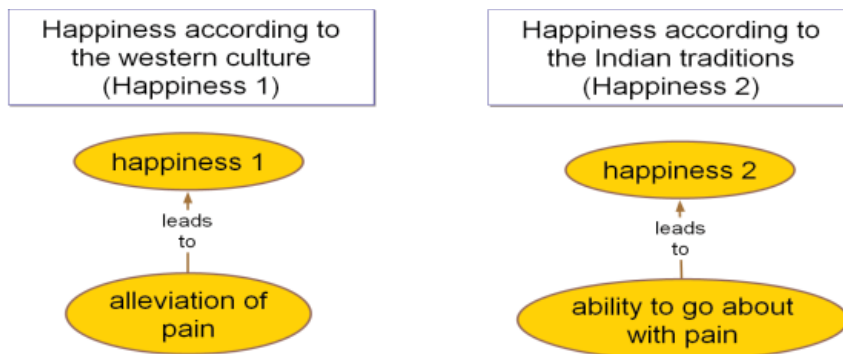
Let us first note the contrast set for pain and suffering: it is pleasure and enjoyment. The Indian traditions suggest that we locate the origin of pain and suffering and let us do so, even if it looks a bit tedious at first glance. The sorrow of the swimmer has its roots in

his physical excellence which he enjoyed when he was not impaired; the Casanova enjoyed his physical prowess and his capacity to attract women; the beautiful woman enjoyed and took pride in her youth and beauty; the rich man took great pleasure and derived enjoyment from his wealth; the young mother's joy was her baby; the young couple enjoyed their love for each other; the loved one gave pleasure and joy to those who loved her/him; and so on. In short, each of these was attached to something or another, and took a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment from that attachment.

Why do they suffer now? Because the object they were attached to, which was the source of their joy and comfort goes missing. In other words, their pain and suffering of today is precisely because of their attachment, which was their source of joy yesterday. So, a great deal of human pain and suffering that we see in the world has to do with our joy and pleasure. That is to say, one and the same object which provided us joy and pleasure, while present, is the source of pain and suffering, when absent. It is, furthermore, in the nature of these objects and our attachments (to them) that they are impermanent and transient. Nothing human is permanent; what is present today will be absent tomorrow. In this sense, our attachment to these objects is the cause of both pleasure and enjoyment, and pain and suffering. If you want to reduce the one, then you need to reduce the other at the same time. Pain and pleasure, joy and suffering are two faces of the same coin. You cannot separate them and they do not occur independently of each other. *This is the human condition.*

Consequently, you cannot reduce pain and suffering if you do not do something about pleasure and enjoyment at the same time. If this is the human constitution, how can we respond to pain and suffering? Maximally, we can cultivate the ability to go-about with pain. That is exactly what the Indian traditions advocate and the Indian culture





**Figure 6**

All organisms, not merely human ones, try to avoid pain and suffering and seek joy and pleasure. From here on, one can pursue two paths: the one wants to reduce pain and suffering, and maximize joy and pleasure; the other advocates their ‘transcendence’. The one believes that these two are relatively independent of each other. The other denies such independence and claims that they are two faces of the same coin.

does: help us deal with pain and suffering by accepting its presence as the inevitable obverse side of the human ability to take pleasure and enjoy.

(Of course, we also have the pain and suffering that has its roots in poverty and the resultant material deprivation and diseases. To deal with these, we do not need anything special. As reasonable people, we can all agree that it is totally absurd that, in the twenty-first century world, there are people who die of starvation and diseases brought about by poverty.)

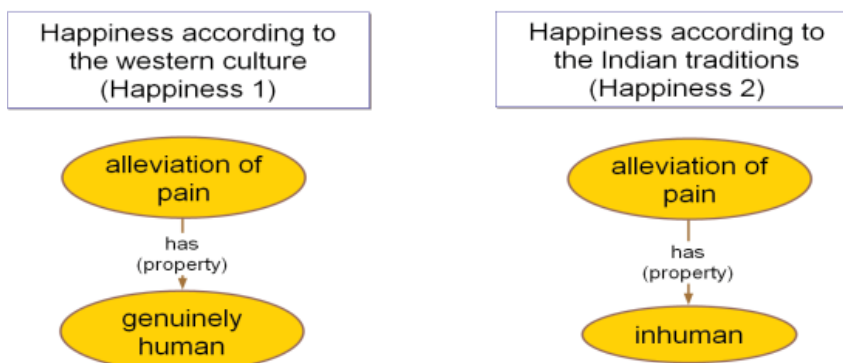
Happiness, in this account of the nature of human beings, transcends the ‘duality’ of joy and pleasure, and pain and suffering. It is ‘beyond’ these two aspects because, unlike these, it is not a transient state of affairs. In fact, one could even put it in this way: happiness requires the ability to go-about with transience and impermanence. When human beings strive to be happy, surely, they are not striving to experience a momentary and transient state

of affairs; they want something that is ‘permanent’ (with respect to the life-span of an organism, of course). In this respect too, the happiness that all human beings strive for is beyond the duality of pain and suffering on the one hand and joy and pleasure on the other. From this it follows that happiness, as the Indian traditions look at the issue, stands (relatively) independent of the issue of alleviating human suffering. One cannot alleviate human pain and suffering without sacrificing the ability to enjoy and take pleasure. The only thing one can do is to learn to go-about with both (see *Figure 6*).

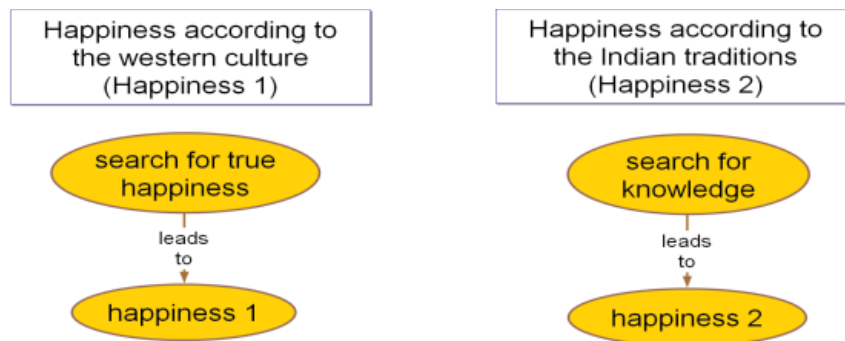
However, it is important to note that acquiring this ability does not reduce either the pain or the suffering. There is no reason why the Olympic swimmer had to lose his abilities in an accident any more than there is a reason why the young mother lost her baby to cancer. Therefore, no alleviation of pain or suffering is possible. The only thing that one can teach them is the ability to bear this pain.

If you take one path, which is also the path that Christianity stipulates, you can formulate the question: should not our primary concern be one of alleviating human pain and suffering? If you take the other path, the path that the Indian traditions stipulate, you formulate the following answer: except searching for and finding happiness on earth, which all of us seek, there is no other remedy for pain and suffering. In the absence of such a positive end, merely trying to reduce pain and suffering is to impair the human capacities for joy and pleasure. That is, such an attempt would end up making us less human. What appears as a genuinely human concern, when you look at it from the western point of view, that is, our attempt to reduce pain and suffering of fellow-human beings, becomes its opposite when perceived from within the framework of the Indian traditions: *it becomes inhuman*. A genuinely human concern for our fellow-human beings requires that we create conditions where each and every one of us can seek and find happiness on earth (see *Figure 7*).

**Figure 7**



Happiness as the ‘end’ or *telos* of humankind cannot be conceived normatively. Any normative conceptualization either ignores the factual diversity in what ‘happiness’ means to people (different people conceive ‘happiness’ differently) or claims that only some specific conception of happiness (‘the union with God’, say) is the true end and meaning of human life. The Indian traditions claim that this disagreement and the diversity of opinions about happiness are typical of *condition*



**Figure 8**

*humaine*. It is neither necessary nor possible to seek consensus about this end: we merely notice divergences and differences, and take this diversity as our starting point. However, in their attempts to strive for what they consider happiness is, human beings are impeded by certain things. Our task, therefore, is to think about and help remove these impediments. Consequently, we need to discuss the common impediments to our search for happiness. There will always be discussions and disagreements about what happiness is; but we can successfully identify things that prevent us from being happy.

Consequently, how to relate happiness to the economic system? Or to economic and management theories? There are, it appears to me, two broad ways of doing this. One way is to retain the image of man as a creature with infinitely many needs and desires and try and graft happiness on to this picture. Then, I do not see any way forward other than a restriction of these needs and desires and the practice of asceticism. Then, you are coupling the western image of human beings with the religion that created the western culture, namely Christianity. The second way is to change our image and thinking about human beings: in that case, we need not fight Desire or even restrict it but merely learn to go-about with it. These two ways make use of two different theories about human beings that explain the limitless nature of our desires.

One theory blames it on human nature. It tells us that this human nature will neither make us happy nor 'deliver us from evil'. In seeking happiness, *we are our worst enemies*: human nature (spontaneously) prevents us from becoming happy. We need Gurus, priests or experts, to tell us what 'true happiness' is, and that we can become happy if we learn to be ascetic and control our desires (see *Figure 8*).

The other theory tells us that each of us can be happy, if only we learn about the nature of impediments that hinder our search. Truth or knowledge liberates, and this can be learnt and taught. The Buddha or Shankara, for instance, claim to teach us knowledge about human beings the way scientists teach us about Nature. This knowledge will also help develop the ability to go-about with Desire.

## VIII

At last, thanks to this rather long detour, we are in a position to ask and answer questions about social security systems in western culture and India.

Let us begin with the West. What should be the goal of a social security system? The answer is obvious: because each person should decide and define for himself what happiness is and that a distinction is made between 'true' and 'illusory' happiness by experts, a social security system cannot have the goal of enabling people to

find happiness. Therefore, all that a social security system can do (in fact, this is the only thing it can do) is to take care of the 'basic needs' of an individual (see section II). These needs, in so far as they deal with biological and safety needs, are defined purely and only in terms of material goods. This system leaves it to an individual to decide what goals s/he pursues or even whether s/he pursues any goals at all. It is supremely indifferent to human happiness but is interested only in enabling the biological survival of an individual by providing for basic amenities like food, clothing, shelter, medicine, etc. In short, it looks at a human being only as an organism and treats the person as a 'rational animal'; no more, no less.

Given this approach, only the State can assume such a function. Not only because the State has the taxed resources of the community at its disposal but also because it is the only organization in society that is capable of treating human beings as dossiers, files, numbers and so on. That is to say, only the State (and all other state organizations like the police, prison, bureaucracy, etc.) is capable of treating *human beings as no more than biological organisms*. *No civil organization*, whether it is a club or an association, *is able to treat people as items or objects*. Therefore, it falls to the State to set up a social security system that treats human beings as mere receptacles of material goods.

How is this social security system financed? Quite obviously, it can only be supported by the resources available to the State and that depends very crucially on the *economic conjuncture*. When and where there is a continuous and sustained economic growth, then there is the possibility of sustaining the social security system. That is to say, in periods of wealth creation, sustaining the social security net is not an impossible task. However, we need to note that this safety net is also rather superfluous during periods of economic prosperity, except for a tiny minority. In other words, the safety net functions well as long as a minority depends on

it: whether it is for unemployment or for pensions.

What happens when the majority needs to be supported by such a safety net, as is the case in Europe and the US today? That is, when the active population becomes the minority, the economic crisis deepens and the majority (of the baby boomers) begins to make claims for a decent pension... what happens then? *The social security system begins to breakdown.* That is, precisely *when the need for a social security system is the greatest, then the safety net cannot be sustained.* Put differently: this kind of social security system cannot really help human beings because it breaks down precisely when it is needed the most. Or, we can formulate this situation as follows: the western social security system is affordable if and only if it is not really required.

Of course, one can try different economic strategies to shore such a system up: Keynesian intervention or plan the safety net during periods of prosperity in such a way that it can function well during periods of crises. A very brief consideration about the impossibility of both needs to be noted here. Not only did Keynesian intervention generate an uncontrolled and uncontrollable inflation in the western economies but it is also the case that such an intervention, today, would be quasi-suicidal because the locus of economic activities is shifting away from western economies. The production of wealth has become less and less a western phenomenon in contrast with how it was immediately after the Second World War.

The second strategy is also ruled out because of the experience in the West. Neither nationalization of industries nor prudent and long-term state investments is an option because of their long history of failure. The difficulty lies, among other things, in the fact that neither the nature nor the character of economic crises is predictable.

What conclusions can we draw from this situation? Clearly, a social security system that focusses on providing material goods to satisfy the 'basic' needs of a human organism is not a viable option in the long-term. Such a system is going to breakdown sooner or later, precisely when the need for it is the greatest. When that happens, the very goal of such a safety net is compromised.

Clearly there are two causes for this breakdown. One: the State sets up a social security system when its resources are parasitic on something it cannot control using its powers to legislate. That is, the outcome of economies cannot be controlled either by laws (this is the lesson we have learnt during the last sixty years in different parts of the world) or by management techniques and strategies (this is the lesson of the 2008 crisis, which is not yet over). If that is the case, only the society-at-large (the so-called 'civil society' and its basic units like family, friends, etc.) can hope to set up a viable social security system, if such a thing is possible at all.

Second: the social security system is defined entirely in monetary terms and, as such, is susceptible to all the vicissitudes of the market. Consequently, if a viable and stable social security system has to be built up, it has to be defined in those terms that are not so susceptible. Which are those terms? The answer is obvious. If the social security system has to be the creation of society-at-large, we need to note too that no organization in civil society is capable of treating human beings as mere biological organisms. This means that when civil society creates such a safety net it cannot be indifferent to what human beings seek: happiness. Thus, *a social security system created by the society-at-large can only be oriented towards helping human beings find happiness.* However, this must be done bearing the following caveat in mind: happiness is completely an individual affair.

Can such a system be ever built? My answer is simple: Yes. It has been built by Indian culture and it is the most ideal form that a safety net can ever take. In the next section, I will show how this is the case. For now, let us note two conclusions from what has been said so far. (A) The western social security system is directly based on a specific conception of human beings which looks at human beings as *creatures with needs*. (B) Such a system is unstable, unviable and breaks down, when it is needed the most.

The challenge for us Indians is to show that (a) a different social security system can be built using a conception of human being as a creature with Desire; (b) such a safety net is stable, viable and does not breakdown when the needs are the most acute. To this task, I now turn.

## IX

Imagine for a moment that Indian culture has built up a social security system. What could the goal of such a system be? *Its only goal* would be to enable human beings to be happy. Because, as I said, there are no qualifications (or requirements) to reach this end-state, any and all ways must be conducive to reach this end-state. At any and every stage and moment, people should be able to achieve happiness. Such a system (or such a structure of society) is the most ideal social security system that can ever be built. No human being could possibly fall outside the safety net and there must be routes from every point in life to this end-state that all human beings seek. The system should guarantee each one of us that we can be happy and provide us with just the route we want (and can follow) to become happy.

### An Aristotelian Question

Consider now the following question: 'how should I live?' Depending upon



who is asking this question, whether a teenager or a middle-aged man, it is susceptible to at least two interpretations and, as a consequence, allows of at least two possible answers. To the teenager, it would be an answer to say, 'live as an ethical being'. The same answer would probably infuriate the middle-aged person: his question lies 'beyond' the ethical. Probably, he is saying something like this: "To the extent possible, I have tried to lead an ethical life. I have undergone many experiences in life. I am now struggling to 'make sense' of these experiences. I am increasingly at a loss to cope with all my projects, ambitions, dreams, desires, success and frustrations. How should I live from now so that I may reconcile these forces, passions, attitudes etc. with each other?"

For Aristotle, the answer to this question constitutes the 'ethical domain'. A search of *eudaimonia* (loosely translated as 'happiness') is undertaken only after undergoing some experiences in life. That is why, to Aristotle, a moral agent is an 'experienced' person:

"(A) young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect does not depend upon time, but on his living and pursuing each successive object as passion directs. For such persons, as to the incontinent, knowledge brings no profit; but to those who desire and act in accordance with a rational principle knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit." (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, p. 1730; *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volume 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.)

There are three of points worth noting in the above citation. The opposition is not between 'reason' and 'passion': one can pursue any passion (fame, wealth, power, etc.) in a 'rational' way. After all, modern-day industries use market research, advertising campaigns,

and theories of management to pursue their goal of making profit in a 'rational' way. So can an individual. Rather, it is a contrast between directing all one's abilities in order to acquire an object and 'thoughtfully acting' or 'thinkingly-doing-something', where action is brought under the scope of thoughtful considerations.

The second point is that even those 'who are old in years, but young in spirit' (a compliment these days, which has the status of a norm about how one ought to grow old!) are not considered 'fit' to receive instructions in ethics. Their 'defect' is that they too pursue objects as 'passion' dictates. That is to say, they too cannot pose (or understand) the question of Aristotle, viz., how one should live.

The third point is that ethical discussions begin with 'actions in life'; they are reflections about these actions; the goal lies in the acquisition of an ability to act (thoughtfully).

Our middle-aged man is, thus, raising the question of Aristotle. "I have pursued many things in life. I have acquired wealth and status, and aimed with varying degrees of success to become powerful and famous. I have been successful in some of my endeavours, while failing in yet others. I thought these things would make me happy, but I discover that, apart from moments when I felt 'good', these projects have only made me unhappy. What should I do? How should I live?"

This is a question about happiness: what it is and how to achieve it. We raise this question only when we really desire to be happy and have discovered that we have been unhappy hitherto. Even though it is possible to face this question without having a great deal of experience in life, for most of us, it becomes an issue only after having varied kinds of experiences in life. Note too that this question does not depend on who you are, what your psychology and position in society is; it merely requires that you feel unhappy and you seek happiness. Here is where the social security system should help you because you are seeking help. Does it?

Where, you might ask, is the Indian social security system so that you might seek its help? The answer is obvious to you and everyone else: find out for yourself where you go when you seek help to become happy. You seek help in the Indian traditions, dead or alive, and in the exponents of these traditions, whether dead or alive. *Together, these traditions and people constitute the Indian social security system.*

### **The Indian Social Security System**

Consider now your starting point. 'You' feel that 'you' are unhappy and that it was 'you' who sought happiness hitherto. 'You' have projects, ambitions, goals, frustrations and dreams. What 'you' have achieved or failed to do so is because 'you' acted or failed to do; 'you' are the agent acting in the

world. 'You', the agent, needs solace, comfort and happiness. How do Indian traditions, the Indian social security system, respond to 'your' plea?

One possibility of understanding this plea is to say that you were never an agent (nor could you be one) because there are no agents. This is the answer, for example, of the Buddhist traditions. I say 'traditions', because there are several ways of understanding the absence of agency. One could say there is no agency at all and that the experience of agency is totally illusory. (This is the 'doctrine' of *anatta*.) Or one could say that acts give birth to an illusory 'experience' of agency. To understand the illusory nature of this experience requires an insight into the relation between the organism and the actions. These different accents roughly indicate in the direction of the different traditions in Buddhism.

The second possibility lies in taking the insight in another direction: Who is the 'you' who realises that 'you' were never an agent and all agencies are illusions? 'Whose' illusion was it, and why did 'you' succumb to this illusion? When these questions arise, a new 'interiority' opens up that is different from and other than the internal mental life. That is to say, you discover that there is a difference between your persona and 'yourself'. Here too different possibilities open up. Either the person discovers that the 'he' cannot be a particular, because particularity is a property of the organism and the persona. In that case, he is heading towards the *Advaita* traditions. Or he could experience the particularity of the 'he' in a different way than the particularity of the persona: in that case, he could head either towards the Jain traditions or towards the *Dvaita* traditions.

The third possibility is this: the illusion lies in the fact that you think that you are the agent, while you are never that. Actually, someone else is the Agent and this agent is acting through you all the time. You now see your role

as a conduit, and no more than that. Thus, we approach the various *Bhakti* traditions.

In short, depending on what appeals to one's psychology, one faces a variety of traditions that makes the questions intelligible (in different ways) to the person asking the question. Not only are these traditions different from each other, but there is also diversity within each of these traditions as well. Each sketches a path and a route that appeal to different people with different inclinations, attitudes and psychologies.

Let us now appreciate the variety within each of these traditions as well. Again, I will merely provide a thumbnail sketch here.

One way encourages an unremitting reflection and analysis of the experience of being an agent. Who acts? What is acting? In what does the attachment consist of, except the feeling of 'I' and 'mine'? What are these two terms? Is the 'I' the same as this body, or this organism, or this persona? Does the sense of 'I' undergo change and development as the organism or the persona undergoes change and development? If not, what is the relation between the 'I' and the other two? This is the path of knowledge (*Gyana*) that changes the nature of experience by correcting it.

Another way of reaching the same insight is to go deeper into experience. Any attachment requires constancy: of the object or the event one is attached to, and of the 'agent' who is attached. The deeper one delves into locating this constancy in experience, the more one discovers discontinuities and inconstancies. One discovers that neither the 'structures' of experience nor their 'constancy' are given in experience. Rather, they are provided by the descriptions of the said experience. This would be the meditative path to such an explanation. By relocating the subordinate units of the daily experience,



the meditative path (*Dhyana*) restructures it.

The third way of achieving the same insight is to notice that ‘attachment’ is also a particular human emotion. To be unattached requires an altering of this emotion. One can do that using other kinds of human emotions as ‘meta-emotions’ directed towards emotional attachment. Attachment to objects, events, and persons are seen as situations a person is caught up in. Ironical and humorous descriptions of such situations enable the person to achieve a sense of distance from those situations; compassion and sorrow, directed towards the situation of suffering caused by attachment will help loosen the hold of the emotion of attachment. Music, rhythm, cadence, dance and poetry (in combination) work on generating such sets of ‘meta-emotions’. This is the devotional path (*Bhakti*) to such an insight. This path restructures experience by altering the force of emotions invested in such experiences.

A fourth way of achieving the same insight is to try and sever the relation between action and its outcome. Attachment can also be seen as the experience of relating action to its outcome and claim that one is the fruit of the other. One decouples actions from human intentions, and such a decoupling can be achieved by building reflexivity

regarding action and ‘its’ intention. One acts ‘observantly’, observing both the nature of action and ‘its’ alleged intention, only to discover that ‘intentionality’ is no ‘property’ of the ‘agent’ at all. This is the action path (*Karma*) to the insight. This path transforms the daily experience by severing the relation between human action and human ‘intentionality’.

Consider how a fifth way would approach this insight. Whatever one experiences, there is but one means through which one experiences: through the organism that one’s body is. Consequently, one can also begin to understand what experience is by experimenting with the experience itself. One way of doing that is to begin manipulating experience, begin assembling and reassembling it. One’s body is not only the means through which experience is possible but it is also the instrument to experiment on experience itself. That is, the focus shifts to the body, its sense organs, and such like in order to understand what the ‘insight’ is. This is the Yogic path to further the insight. Thus one could go on. But my purpose is served.

And that purpose is simply this: *to indicate the variety and diversity that the Indian traditions embody*. This is absolutely necessary because of the individual differences: between

psychologies, social positions, attitudes and aptitudes, inclinations and capacities... No one route will work for everyone and an indefinite plurality of routes is the only way to keep the system maximally accessible to all. Note too that none of these traditions defines what happiness is but merely helps you overcome the hindrances you face in your quest for happiness. This is how this safety net helps you, whether you are poor or rich, intelligent or dumb, young or old, man or woman. These traditions have built up a great variety of practices too: from visiting temples, singing bhajans to the arduous task of thinking about abstract issues. Choose whatever suits you the best in search for happiness.

Like all social security systems, this one also requires to be constantly replenished. It too has to draw upon the ‘total wealth’ of society to keep reproducing itself. As society and its environment changes, this wealth has to be constantly reproduced and replenished in order to keep this social security system going. For this to happen, people should continue to produce wealth. However, what constitutes ‘wealth’ for such a social security system? The answer is obvious: the only possible wealth that can keep such a social security system going is the increase in the diversity of routes to the end-state. That is, because both the variety of individual psychologies continues to increase and the changes in their environments occur constantly, the only possible contribution that can sustain such a security system is something that keeps pace with this increasing variety and change. In other words, as diversity increases, so too do the routes to the end state of being happy. The continuous production and reproduction of this wealth is the only thing that can keep such a security system solvent. How shall we call such wealth? Because it is not material wealth, let us call it ‘spiritual wealth’. ‘Spirituality’, as a first approximate definition then, is what allows people to be happy. Such a social security system is a spiritual system and the diverse routes are all spiritual routes.



In fact, if you were to look at the Indian culture and examine its so-called religions, it is striking that, without exception, all of them have one central and overriding concern: how can human beings be happy? Each of these traditions, where each tradition is itself an accumulation of great diversity, provides us with routes to that end-state that all human beings seek: happiness. Because of this concern, these traditions can neither be other-worldly nor utopian: they cannot be other-worldly because they are concerned about the happiness of human beings here on earth; they cannot be utopian because the routes they sketch must 'work', if they are routes to happiness at all. However, this multiplicity of routes to happiness makes some assumptions about the kind of beings human beings are. That is to say, they also presuppose some general ideas that explain human beings and their factually observed limitless desires. These explanations are just the opposite of what people in the West tend to believe.

We can now appreciate better what kind of wealth is required to keep such a social security system functioning. *The wealth consists of indefinitely many routes to achieving self-knowledge.* Such a system is something within which individuals learn, i.e., *such a social security system must be a teaching system.* That means, happiness is not a desire or a need of human beings, but something that can be learnt, if one wants it. Among other things, happiness helps us go-about with Desire by developing an ability in us to do that. This ability is developed in the course of teaching us something about ourselves.

Much more needs to be said than what I have, but the paper has already become inordinately long. So, let me end my task by focusing on the one dimension that the western social security system focusses on: on satisfying the requirements needed to live. The challenge that my exposé faces is this: *who 'needs' happiness when there is no food to eat?* The answer

to this question is two-fold. One: this question makes sense if and only if you accept the idea that human beings have some basic needs, a picture that western culture has made a part of our common sense. Second: because the society-at-large builds this safety net, people have to be taken care of within the units that belong to the civil society, namely, family, friends, charitable organizations, temples and such like. It is not the responsibility of the State but that of the society.

It is this society and this culture that is beginning to fall apart today. With this, one of the most wonderful safety nets ever built in the history of humanity is also disintegrating. It appears to me that the most urgent task facing us today is to rejuvenate Indian culture, even if all of us become mere pragmatists: for the sake of keeping this social security system alive, we need a revitalization of Indian culture.

## Conclusion

There are, of course, many objections that require to be met. I shall leave that for other times and places. However, there is one other point I want to make. By saying what I have said, I am not taking the position that India does not need science and technology or that we should not aim at improving the health of people or even that we should be indifferent to the poverty and suffering in India. The only themes I emphasize are that: (a) we need to be very clear about the goals of a social security system and that above issues do not belong to the domain of such a safety net; (b) the creation and sustenance of such a system cannot be undertaken by the State. Further, with respect to the western social security system, I imply that it looks at human beings as animals (in the sense that one treats them the way one treats the household pets, giving both exactly the same kind of 'care'), except that the State treats its citizens with far more suspicion ('not wanting to work', 'wanting to be on the dole all the time', etc.) than how people treat their pets.