

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Lecture - 13
Exploring the Self and the Other

Good morning, friends, I believe that by this point of time a number of questions related to, what is happiness? How it is defined cultural contexts misconceptions and some of the fundamental aspects related to the antecedents consequence and myths and all those things have been answered for you. Now one of the next logical step is to focus on the self and today's talk is going to be centred around the self.

And then will move the direction of the other and that is why we are talking about exploring the self and then the possibility of exploring the other and with the other.

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So, in the first slide I will try to share what I am going to do in the next few classes along with this session. Then I will focus on the conflicted self, certain fundamental things related to identity, our relatedness to the other and then going beyond the self. The reason we are talking about all these things in the context of happiness is because there are so many things which come into the picture when we are talking about happiness.

And one of the most fundamental things obviously is whose happiness are we talking about, is it our own happiness or about the happiness of the others and even if at some point of time we talk about the happiness of others. Why is it so very important that we want to talk about the happiness of others. So, when we start asking this first question, this question leads to the other questions.

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The slide features the title "Why we focus on what we focus?" at the top center. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) logo and the NPTEL logo. Below the title, there are four lines of text: "Self – conflicted self – resolution of self (pre-condition of any kind of leadership)", "Self and the other – understanding give and take and relationship", "Towards self-discovery – character strengths", and "Related leadership lessons". At the bottom center, there is a flow diagram consisting of four blue rectangular boxes labeled "Self", "Other", "Traits", and "Lessons" in white text, connected by a large, light blue arrow pointing to the right. To the right of the flow diagram is a circular video inset showing a man in a white shirt speaking.

So, what I am going to focus here is right at the beginning on the self. Because I am going to propose here that the self is fundamentally conflicted. And it is a precondition to what kind of person I become how I lead other people how I lead myself. Then we will touch upon the concept not necessarily very deeply in today's class but in the classes to follow on the relationship with the others.

Then we will move in the direction of self-discovery, discovery of certain character traits which have significant relationship with our own happiness and the happiness and well-being of others. And then of course towards the later part of the sessions in some of the later classes we will be talking about some fundamental traits related to leadership which again is linked to happiness in a significant way.

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The conflicted self

- The story of the Chariot – Questions of King Milinda
- The lamp and the flame

- Who do we speak to when we speak to ourselves?
- Split personalities – *Fight Club*
- Heretronyms – Ferdinand Pessoa

- Resolutions
 - Composite self
 - Self beyond self



So, you see here that I am talking about a group of ideas and then in this class and the classes to follow in the sessions to follow we will be looking deeper into some of these ideas that I touched up in the earlier slide. So, if you are looking at a child, I mean go by any tradition go by modern science then we are talking about the process of discovery and identity formation. The child is born into the world without a language and then by some miraculous process which cognitive scientists are still trying to understand.

The child moves into language and starts learning it there is a language all around it. And it realizes that without a language it cannot communicate and it starts moving into it and call it an intuitive process if you may we start language we start learning. And as we start learning one of the first things that we learn or the child learns is that it is separate or it is distinctively different from others.

In the initial intuitive processes, it screams it cries it smiles it laughs and a certain set of things are readily made available to it. But as it grows older without the process of language things become difficult. So, basically as the child grows up invariably a series of questions come up. One of the fundamental ones being the concept of the self., the capital I that we use in the English language and for that matter in any language we refer to ourselves.

That becomes the fundamental thing and we realize that we are looking at the world through a perspective which is unique my perspective and each person who attached the word my or I is a unique person. And the entire totality of experience of that person begins and ends with that person. But once you start looking at this question what is this I this again becomes a troublesome question and if not for all of us for many of us this troublesome question leads to some fundamental explorations as such as.

If you are looking at any spiritual tradition in the world they begin with questions and they are trying to give answers. While the answers can be very different, I will not go into it those aspects in today's session the questions, some of the fundamental questions remain the same, who am I? Who is this, me? I am always referring to myself as a, me and then there is the first split that takes place.

So, we will talk about that through a couple of stories. The very fact that these are fundamental questions which trouble human beings and if these questions are not answered they create unease in our minds. Tells us that probably one of the first things that needs to be done if we are to take a step in the direction of understanding our happiness and the happiness of others or for that matter the very concept of happiness is discovery of the self or at least a small step in that direction.

Because many people throughout the history of this world have asked this question and try to answer this question in their own ways. We know of Gautam Buddha asking this question we know of Nachiketa in Katha Upanishad asking this question, fundamental question because this question at some point of time leads to the question of life and death. But here we will concentrate on the question of the self.

There is a fairly well known earlier text of the three Nikayas which were probably the manuscript was written probably between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. known as the Milinda Panha or the questions of King Milinda. And there we have beautiful stories we have the story of this King Milinda who is probably of Greek origin and is asking questions to a Buddhist monk known as Nagasaena.

So, the way that the story goes is something like this that the king is a scholarly king and he has defeated many scholars of the various traditions of Samkhya, Yoga and Vaisheshika and other traditions and he is searching for somebody who can argue with him, he is an intellectual. And although there is a long story behind it, we know that there is a monk, Arhat or a realized one known as Nagasena who lives nearby.

And the king wants him to come and have a discourse with him and then Nagasena says that well if the king is really keen, he can come and talk to me. So, the king armed with his 500 guards arrives and his job is generally to ask questions. And so, he starts with this question that who is I have heard so much about this Nagasena who is this Nagasena. And he starts quizzing this person I will not go into the quizzing but let me share with you.

The question is that who is Nagasana and then Nagasana tactfully asks this King the question that ok my Lord you have come in a chariot, what is this chariot? Are the horses the chariot, is the flag the chariot? The flag post the chariot, the seat on which you sat the chariot, the wheels you have the chariot what exactly do you mean when you are talking about the chariot. And then Nagasena answers his own question that the aggregate of all these things and the causal-link among these things is something which is ascribed or named as chariot.

Well, I stop here for a moment and share with you that the moment we go deeper into the discourse. We are talking about whether there is a final identity or not and all that so, the Buddhists have a different way of looking at it the Upanishads have a different way of looking at it. We are not going to go into that but we are taking a pause here. In the same way he talks about the flame and the concept of identity saying that, okay five minutes back there was a flame in the lamp.

And five minutes have gone by and now we have a flame in the lamp, are they the same flame or are they different flames. So, what I am trying to tell you again and again is that wherever you look one of the fundamental questions that troubles us is the concept of identity. And I would like to establish or share with you that identity can be very problematic. So, for instance we often say that we are talking to ourselves.

Who is this ourselves that we are talking to? Have you thought about it? Who is this myself? I am talking to me I am saying that no I did not do the right thing, who is this person who did not do the right thing and who is saying that you did not do the right thing. Sometimes if you close your eyes and try to meditate say that I would like to stay still I would not like to think who is saying that he would not like to think.

So, you see that when we are talking about thinking and if you close your eyes and try to do that you will find that you are still thinking and then somebody from within is telling you that now you are thinking and then somebody deeper down is saying that somebody is telling that somebody else is thinking. So, there is a whole loop. Now the question is that who is this at a very basic level whether we like it or not, we are divided, the self is divided.

In for all practical purposes, we manage over a period of time as we move into language of considering this aggregate that they are talking about as a self the eye because this eye is conflicted for so many reasons. If you remember in the earlier sessions when we talked about happiness we talked about short-term happiness and we talked about long-term happiness. Smoking a cigarette makes you happy now but over a period of time probably it is going to be harmful for you.

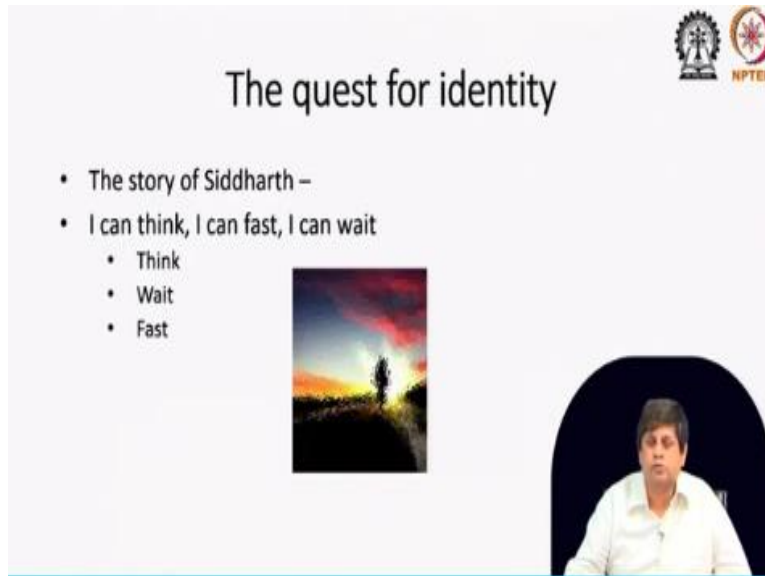
So, you see that here is a conflict you would want to go to the movie theatre and you would also want to attend a birthday party at the same time. And you cannot do it at every juncture we have to have priorities we have to; we are divided, we are conflicted and this fundamental conflict and the realization that we are often conflicted. And the resolution of the conflict this is a key thing that we need to take into account.

So, you have examples of split personalities there was a movie known as fight club there was a poet who wrote in more than fifteen, twenty different personae so the same poet never wrote in the name of himself, he wrote in different names and they were all distinctive characters known as heteronyms a very fascinating way. But these examples make us aware of the fact that we have so many conflicts and in that sense, we are composites.

Very often we say that I wish I had 10 bodies so I could do so much of work. We have so many different kinds of wishes. So, there are two fundamental concepts that need to be resolved, the first is the resolution of the conflict of the self itself. And the second one is the resolution of my conflict itself to whatever extent it is resolved with the various other people around me and the various other things around me. So, resolution beyond myself.

So, this is the first thing that we are looking at and any time we touch upon the concept of happiness, this is something we will have to touch upon.

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The quest for identity

- The story of Siddharth –
- I can think, I can fast, I can wait
 - Think
 - Wait
 - Fast

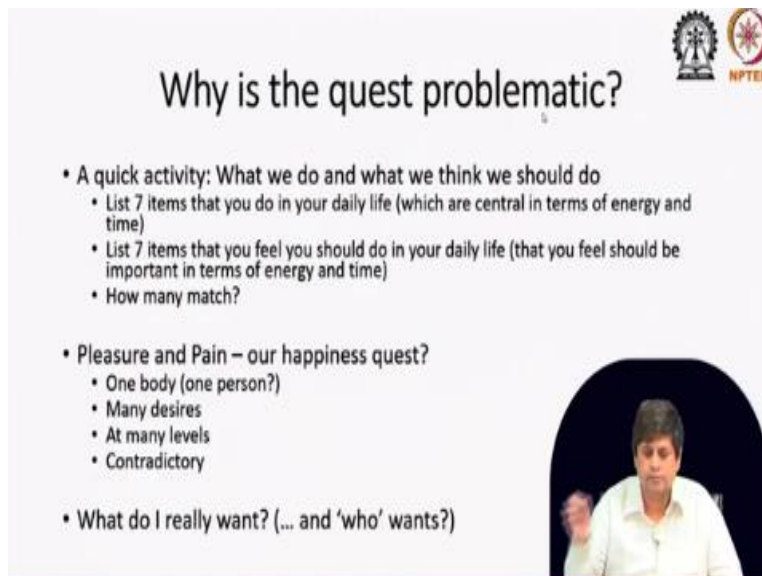
The slide features a central image of a person walking on a path towards a sunset. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset of a man in a white shirt speaking. The NPTEL logo is visible in the top right corner.

So, the quest for identity there are many stories of the quest for identity. We have the story of Nachiketa we have the story of Gautam Buddha. There is a similar story which was written by a German writer Hermann Hesse who created a character name known as Siddharth who lived around the time of Buddha. There was one thing that kind of touched me and I felt that that is significant to be discussed here with you.

Because we are embarking on the journey of understanding little about happiness, this boy would say three things, that I can think I can wait I can fast as even as a child as he starts his journey. He can say these things if you look a little deeper what exactly do these three things mean I can think self-reflection probably is something which is very very important. Wait patience is the other thing which is very very important.

Fast, the ability to be comfortable with discomfort, the ability to be resilient against all odds. These are probably the three key components that we require in our own lives when we journey into the search for happiness. I am sure that Professor Mandal has shared with you that very often in the context of happiness the goal is less important the journey is more important. Sometimes the quest itself creates a majority of problems.

There are various viewpoints there are various thoughts but irrespective of all that the search for identity in a small way or a large way is a very very important thing that we need to keep in mind. **(Refer Slide Time: 16:54)**



The slide features the title "Why is the quest problematic?" at the top center. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo. The main content consists of three bullet points:

- A quick activity: What we do and what we think we should do
 - List 7 items that you do in your daily life (which are central in terms of energy and time)
 - List 7 items that you feel you should do in your daily life (that you feel should be important in terms of energy and time)
 - How many match?
- Pleasure and Pain – our happiness quest
 - One body (one person?)
 - Many desires
 - At many levels
 - Contradictory
- What do I really want? (... and 'who' wants?)

In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing Professor Mandal speaking.

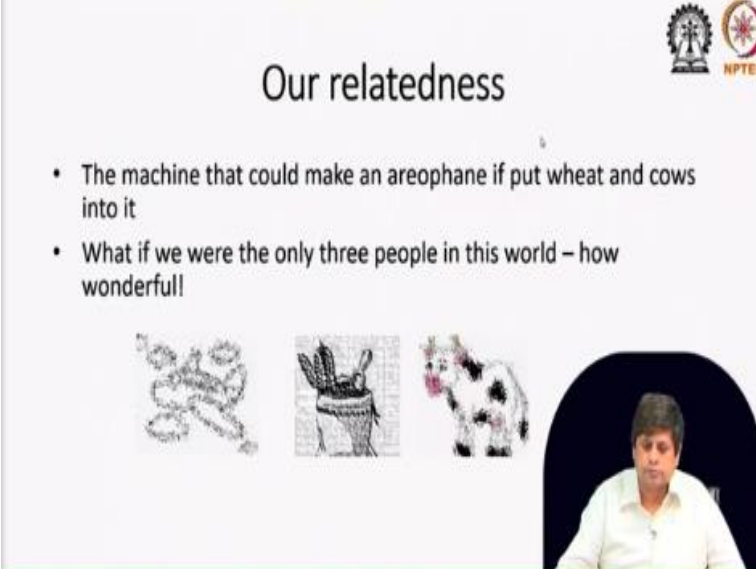
And this is the reason I would like you to do this activity and then post it the responses that you have we will share a link of what was the solution. At least seven items that you do in your daily life which are central in terms of energy and time; you do not have to talk about brushing your teeth or taking a bath. But you find that a significant amount of your meaningful time is consumed by seven or eight important things that you do.

Now make a list of seven or eight important things that you would like actually we like would be happy doing. You see that I have done this activity with many of my students even with myself when the gap between the two is less then you are less conflicted. And when the gap between the

two is high then you are very highly conflicted. So, you do this activity give us the item list we will be sharing the links with you.

And let us find out how we all perform because you see that as I have shared earlier also that pleasure and pain, these are the two fundamental biological drivers that we are looking at and we have one body and we have many desires at many levels and often many of them in contradiction with one another. And so, this concept of what do I want and then who wants what because there are so many voices within my mind asking so many things and sometimes the very very different things, alright.

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The slide is titled "Our relatedness" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains two bullet points: "The machine that could make an areophone if put wheat and cows into it" and "What if we were the only three people in this world – how wonderful". Below the text are three small illustrations: a complex mechanical device, a basket of wheat, and a cow. A small inset video of a man in a white shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Now this brings us to the next step but before that we take a pause and we realize because if you remember I have shared an overview Professor Mandal has also talked about it. We would be talking about mindfulness there are tools there are techniques which help us resolve the issues that we face in our lives. And before we take any step further it is a good idea to at least know that we are conflicted if we are conflicted and how we are conflicted.

It is important to know about ourselves, resolving issue is the next step but knowing what are the kinds of issues that I have developing an awareness about them is probably one of the fundamental things that we begin with because then half the problem is resolved. Because one of the major half

of the problem is not knowing what exactly is wrong with myself, acknowledging that there are certain issues that I am facing.

Acknowledging that there are conflict acknowledging our imperfection our incompleteness, that in itself solves a lot of problems. And then we can always take the next step forward. So, that is the reason we talked about it in this session. So, talking about our the concept of relatedness which is the next step I will give you two examples and I will talk about the second example first because that is something which actually happened with me when my daughter was a small kid.

And the small kid actually asked profound questions. So, it was a beautiful evening and I my wife and my daughter were together and suddenly she exclaimed what if we were the only three people in the world how wonderful. Her perspective is very limited for her the world is her parents she does not see beyond that but for me it was a horrifying idea when I tried to explain obviously at that point of time I failed.

But a lot of things came up in my mind like the ice cream that you eat the toy that you are playing with none of these things would be available if other people were not there. If the house we live in the television that you watch all these things are made possible because of the tremendous amount of interconnectedness we have. And that takes me to a beautiful example which was given in a book which I have referred to in the reference section known as naked economics is that the author puts forward a problem says that imagine that we are a machine where you put in weeds, cows and all kinds of things a huge number of that and out from the other side comes an airplane. Does such a machine exist? Obviously, the answer is yes, the machine is trade or whatever you call it. One country gives all these things and the other country sends the airplane.

And then once you realize that you realize our great degree of interconnectedness. So, the very fact that we are having a great life if you are having a great life or if you are having a bad life if you are having a bad life is not determined only by ourselves. A lot of people a lot of things the entire world is involved in whatever is happening to me. As one of our dear friends who probably would have shared some thoughts with you in this session.

Dr Sandhu Chatri tells that the rice we eat is something for which we should be grateful to the farmer who put in his toil to actually yield the crop. There is such a huge amount of activity going on around there is a huge such a long supply chain through which products come to us. And none of this would be possible unless we were strongly linked or related to one another. So, the first step in the direction of trying to say that the other person in our lives is important is to understand that without the other person.

Our existence or the kind of identity or the kind of world in which I live none of these things would have been possible if the other person or the other people had not been there. And had not created the; knowledge base or all those things that we see around us. And at some point, of time these other people have thought more about me or you than about themselves for whatever reasons. They can be very selfish reasons for that and in some cases, there can be selfless reasons for that.

But whatever it is at the end of the day the other person has thought about you the other person has thought about me and that is why we are able to sit here and talk to one another. So, this interconnectedness this tremendous amount of interconnectedness is something that we need to acknowledge because as we go ahead, we would be talking about the other people.

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The slide is titled "The self and the other" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains the following bullet points:

- Identity – can we be who we are without others, but are we who we are because of others?
- Cooperation vs competition – the eternal struggle
 - Evolutionary
 - Empathy (is it a part of evolution?)

At the bottom of the slide, there is a diagram of two fish facing each other with a vertical red line between them, and a small video inset of a woman speaking.

So, that is the context in which we are talking about because can we really be who we are without the others. Because we are who, we are because of the others. In the context of happiness very

often we are told that 50 percent of whether I am going to be happy or not is already decided at the time of my birth it is embedded in my genetic coding. So, who is responsible for this obviously not me.

And then we are told that 25 percent of the remaining left possibility of my being happy or unhappy is determined by how where I was born the kind of people with whom I interacted the kind of life I am leading my lifestyle all those things. So, the environment so only 25 percent of my potential for happiness lies with me which is a great deal still but if 75 percent of it is not something which depends on me but on the others.

Then we know and we need to acknowledge the significance and the importance of the other and that is where one fundamental issue comes up. The relationship between cooperation and competition as we; go ahead with the classes to follow, we will be taking it up in much greater detail. And we will talk about some very fascinating things related to the evolutionary aspect of cooperation versus competition.

As well as the empathetic aspect of the relationship between cooperation and competition. A small you can see the example of a large fish eating small fish and the small fish in the other case coming together and trying to take away try to shove away the large fish. We have stories and parables throughout the world and these stories and parables are able to give us insights into the fact and the very fact that they have survived through centuries.

Tells us that apart from the; competition as a competition principle the cooperation principle makes sense. And when the parable is successful you suddenly realize that the parable kind of transcends the borders of language and the borders of nation and moves to other countries and so you find that the same story being repeated in different places. Here is an example, there was an old man who had four sons and they used to fight amongst themselves.

There used to be terrible fights and so the old man told these four young lads that go and get me a stick each and these people went out and each one brought a stick and then the old man said that put it against your knee and try to break it. So, they did it very readily very happily then he said

that now you have done that you go and get one more stick each and they went and they brought another four sticks then he said that put all the four sticks together and now try to break it.

And obviously they were not able to do it anymore. So, you have parables or you have stories with a moral. And these stories with a moral perform a very significant social function and the function they perform is that they tell you certain lessons which have been learned the hard way through experience and this is a wisdom which is passed on in the form of a story. And if these wisdoms are sustainable or withstand the test of time then these wisdoms continue down generations.

I am sure that you have heard this story the majority of you must have heard this story and this is about cooperation.

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The slide features the title "Transcending self: the others, the society" at the top right, accompanied by logos for a university and NPTEL. Below the title are two bullet points: "Forgetting the self from moment to moment – relevant" and "Caring for others beyond the self – the first step". A diagram on the left shows a central circle labeled "Identity" with two boxes above it: "Who am I?" and "What do others mean to me?". To the right of the diagram is a black box with three lines of text: "I am conflicted about decisions", "I am conflicted about what I want", and "I am conflicted about who I am". A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a man speaking.

As we go ahead with these classes we will focus on these aspects of things so, its and the other thing that I talked about a little earlier is empathy we will talk about it again which is a important question is it a part of evolution or not but that also makes us think about others. Put ourselves in the other person's position and reflect and say ohh I am not feeling good or I am feeling sad. So, the concept that we will talk about as we go ahead would be a little later the concept of transcending the self amongst other things.

Forgetting the self from moment to moment and this will also again become relevant when we talk about creativity and flow. Caring for others beyond the self can happen for so many reasons we will talk about that and as you can see, we start with who am I and that leads us to the concept of identity. And an identity; even a scientific definition of any kind which is again an identity of anything that you are defining cannot exist without exclusions.

So, if I am something then there have to be other things around me who are not me in order for me to be me. So, this exclusion principle is very very important there is an inclusion principle and there is an exclusion principle. Identity requires both of them. When these two things are no longer there, there is a dissolution of identity you cannot have an identity. Whatever it is for my identity other people are required other things are required.

And if they are required and some way they relate to my identity and they are relevant. So, the fundamental issues that I face I am conflicted about decisions I am conflicted of what I want I am conflicted about who I am. The first step in the direction is self-discovery and trying to realize the fact that the other matters and we need to concentrate on the other for a moment.

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The slide features a title 'REFERENCES' in blue text at the top left. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo. Below the title is a stack of four books with orange, green, blue, and red covers. To the right of the books is a list of references:

- Herman Hess, *Siddhartha*. Fingerprint (reprint), 2012
- Charles Willan & B G. Malkiel. *Naked Economics – Undressing the Dismal Science*. W W Norton & C, 2010.
- Rhyes Davids, T. W. *Question of King Milinda* (2 Vols.) Sacred Books of the East Series (Reprint). Motilal Banarasidass, 2011.

In the bottom right corner, there is a circular video inset showing a man in a white shirt speaking.

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CONCLUSION



- Knowing the self
- Knowing our relatedness (motivation)
- The first step towards knowing others



So, what we did today was try to realize the significance of knowing the self or knowing what is wrong with the self, the significance of being getting related to other which can act as a motivation for taking the first step towards knowing others. And in the journey of happiness this is probably one very very important step. And so, I have shared it with you the next session we will talk about the other and the way we behave towards others certain aspects related to pro sociality. Thank you, friends, we stop here for today.