

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Module No # 04
Lecture No # 14
Pro-Sociality and Happiness – Generosity, Give and Take

Good morning friends today we are going to focus on pro-sociality and in that context with the concepts of generosity and in some sense social exchange that is give and take. We have already covered some of these aspects in our earlier discussion today's focus is going to be on one of the fundamental debates that troubles us which is.

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In spite of the fact that we might be better off if we, are selfish why is it? That we nonetheless focus on that which apparently seems to be selfless or at least which seems to be affecting our self or the benefits of ourselves to a significant extent. This aspect of focusing on others being amicable to others is what is known as pro-sociality will cover that first we will look into the concept of the relationship between generosity and happiness.

And if it is a paradox how to resolve it will talk about giving and reciprocity that is giving and taking at various levels. Quickly touch upon the Indian concept of generosity and we will close the session. In terms of relevance the theoretical relevance is it will make us realize the significance of pro-social behavior. And in terms of applied significance it might, convince us of indulging or getting involved in different ways of different aspects of pro-sociality and who knows we might benefit from it.

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Question for the Class

- Does giving enhance happiness?
- Why?

Pro-sociality

- That which benefits other people or the society as a whole
- Sharing, donating, volunteering, cooperating, obeying or conforming to social norms.

As we start applying it to our lives. Now one of the very common questions that comes up in our classes is that does giving enhance happiness. We often find that a significant number of the students in the class respond by saying yes. And then of course there, are quite a few if not the majority who say that well maybe not why? So from there we begin the debate so as we start this session I am also asking you the same question that ask yourself does giving enhance happiness.

Here I would like to make a subtle difference between happiness and well-being as we go ahead we will look at the way that generosity or Pro-social behavior enhances well-being. And we have differentiated between happiness and well-being earlier something which is beneficial to us whether it is at a material level or at a emotional level is our well-being. Happiness is purely a mental emotional state so when we give we might benefit from that we will look into that.

But when we give we feel happy now that is also something which is equally pursuing so you see that there are not one, puzzle but 2 puzzles what is pro-sociality? That which benefits others or the society as a whole sharing, donating, volunteering, cooperating, obeying or conforming to social norms all of which involved giving priority to others as opposed to the self. In a purely individualistic focus we would not be doing any of these things.

So when we do that and we do that willingly that is pro-sociality and when we do that happily then we get into the loop of pro-sociality. So the fundamental question today is the entire area of why and the practices that we follow.

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- Now, for any Stone Age person with ambition, the general rule for success is: the more, the better...(shelter, children, food)...No surprise, then, that our modern mind continually looks for more: more money, more status, more love, more...

The Happiness Trap. Russ Harris. 2008.

- Briefly, the primary purpose of the nervous system is to direct an animal either towards opportunities or away from danger in order to help survive and procreate. Three brain modules are engaged in this task: one for avoidance and two for attraction (seeking and consuming).

The Biology of Happiness. Bjorn Grinde. 2012.

Now here I give 2 codes and if you are looking at these 2 codes you find that there are 2 fundamental selfish motivations for human beings. The first one is something which we have discussed when we talked about the, philosophical traditions which; is the more the better. So in a bid for survival our brains are trained in such a way that if we want something we want more of it and very often we want more of it than we require.

So that we have a situation where maybe we have enough in this world for people's needs but we do not have really enough and will never have enough for people's wants. Because wants are unlimited and that is what economics tells us and way before that, that is what Gautama Buddha also told us. So this desire for more is something which conflicts with others because when there is a limited amount of resources, resources have to be shared.

And this goes counter to our essential desire to have more so every time you have to moderate our behavior. If we have to start sharing food, then maybe I want 2 ice creams but there is only an ice cream for each one of us. So there itself what we call within a quotes sacrifice is something which comes in. The other thing is that we have a pleasure pain principle so link it to the first concept.

If wanting more is something which gives us pleasure and having more is something which gives us pleasure and being deprived is something which, gives us pain then we have a tendency of moving away from pain. And yet as you can see for yourselves we are told that very often giving away makes us feel happy. So irrespective of whether it makes us feel happy or unhappy we indulge in certain kinds of behavior we will look into the science of it and the practice of it.

So to sum up this slide desires are unlimited and there is a tendency, to move away from pain and in the direction of pleasure that is the selfish motivation. And within that framework obviously when resources are limited we will always perpetually feel deprived. And yet in a sociocultural context in our day-to-day lives we perpetually knowingly or unknowingly make compromises by giving others an opportunity whether we have that opportunity or not and interestingly that, gives us a sense of happiness.

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Let's take a moment and think

- In certain conditions we are willing to sacrifice the self for others
- This may not make us happy, but we often prioritize the other over the self
- Why?

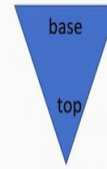
You see that there are very rare conditions when we are willing to sacrifice the self for others. We have examples of parents giving up their lives for their children but then you can also again link it to the survival of the species argument where the species are kind of hardwired to give up their lives. If required for their children for their progeny to continue so you can say that you can always argue that well that is because we are hard wired that way.

But the other challenge is that why do we very often not prioritize the self and as I told you a little earlier we are looking into it.

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Possible reasons

- Diplomacy (self-centred)
- Values (intrinsic)
- Peer pressure (extrinsic)
- Warm glow (intrinsic – nurturing self)
- Deep love or attachment (the other is more important than me)
- Empathy
- Detachment and compassion (the other is more important than me)



So there are various possible reasons that we will look into diplomacy strategic. And this is where the social exchange component comes in significantly we will talk, about it in much greater detail as we go ahead values. Right from our birth as we have grown into the society we talked about how relevant culture is in the context of happiness. Culture is also very significant in the context of moralities into which we are born and values that we learn.

So we are told that giving is good being selfish is bad and all huge set of values are there I will talk about, values in a trans-cultural context just a few slides from now. Peer pressure you would like to look good to everybody else and in the context of trying to look good to everybody else there is a social pressure on you so you project yourself as something which you are not maybe that is the context in which you give.

Warm glow this is essentially a ego thing but it is a nice ego thing I am giving and, because I am giving I mean acquisition to give and I am giving and others are expressing maybe gratitude or whatever. Or maybe in my absence they will express gratitude I feel a warm glow inside a positive feeling. Deep lover attachment sacrificing for the loved ones there is something which is known as empathy we will talk a little more about it later.

Which is when you experience with the other, person his or her emotions and then of course a kind of a transcendent component which we will talk about in much greater detail in the next presentation in the next set of talks which relates to the element of transcendence.

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The I centric world-view

- Pleasure and pain – hedonism
- Fight or flight – survival
- Optimize, conserve (hence selfish)
- Where the self is at stake the other must be sacrificed
- I am at the centre of the world – narcissism
- I will primarily TAKE...

So the position that we begin with is the I centric view where in the context of pleasure and pain we tend to move away from pain in the direction of pleasure. Wherever there, is a crisis we either fight it or we run away but essentially we are survival oriented. Survival first of all of the self-optimization converses conservation we want to optimize resources conserve resources hence be selfish do not put in too much of effort. If the other person is suffering let him suffer let me let me save myself.

Wherever there is a choice between me and the others let us, say that we are in a classroom and there is a fire the first tendency would be to run away rather than to think about the well-being of the others. True some of us will do that but why do we do that where whenever there is something as at stake we prioritize ourselves. If somebody says that in a classroom one of you has to die and we have stories like that in the Mahabharata the I mean I will not go, into the parable here.

But you know of the story where the Pandavas were in disguise and they met a Brahmin family where a giant used to have regular lunch of one of the human beings and the Brahmin had a choice of sacrificing one of their kids and the debate related to that who is supposed to die. So at each point you see that let us take a take away the ethics part of it. There is an intrinsic desire, to save yourself and this then to save the near and dear ones.

And there is the general tendency to take I mean we definitely suppress that but the first and fundamental desire is to take rather than to give. This is the I centric world not necessarily the world that we generally project but the kind of world which we fundamentally have within ourselves we might fight it.

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So when we have that kind of, a world why give this is what we are going to deal with into this session.

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Make a Choice

Which List would you prefer as your guiding principles?

List 1	List 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wealth (money, material possessions)• Power (dominance, control over others)• Pleasure (enjoying life)• Winning (doing better than others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpfulness (working for the wellbeing of others)• Responsibility (being dependable)• Social justice (caring for the disadvantaged)• Compassion (responding to the needs of others)

Now you see that if I ask you to make a choice what will be your guiding principle will it be wealth power pleasure and winning or will it be helpfulness, responsibility, social justice and compassion. We have taken this surveys we get mixed responses each time you take the survey in different value systems you will get mixed, response. Because you see that there is a pro-social value which has been embedded at a social level at your home, at your village, in your town, in your joint family which prefers the second test.

And then of course in a city once you start being independent and on your own the first list starts playing every very significant role. And throughout our lives very often we are debating

between moving, between the first one and the second one. There are certain moral guidelines and there are certain intrinsic primal desires and the 2 lists kind of represent those possibilities.

Again when we have had surveys in our classes we have found that surprisingly even at IIT KGP in one of my classes. There was a kind of a 40:60 response where list 2 was prioritized by 60% of the students who, are highly competitive and who come here.

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Schwartz's findings

- Benevolence, self-direction, and universalism values are consistently most important
- power, tradition, and stimulation values are least important
- security, conformity, achievement, and hedonism are in between

You see that if we take this a little further there is a study and the reference by of the study by Schwartz is indicated at the end. A study a pan cultural and I would say international study was done on values. And these are the key findings let me go a little more into it, it was done with school teachers and college students. And for the various studies 13, countries were taken in the beginning and in some of the cases up to 50 different cultures were studied.

You see that it was all about value hierarchies which values are put at the top which values are put at the bottom and which are kind of somewhere in between look at the values which are at the top benevolence self-direction universalism values are consistently most important. Imagine that across, nations across countries in some sense it is generalizable across the world the focus is on being good. slight self-direction obviously as a guiding principle for the journey of life.

But a more universal orientation is something which is found distinctively and which is the least power the desire for power tradition which keeps on by getting obsolete and stimulation which is a sensual value these, three are at the bottom. Security conformity achievement hedonism they are somewhere in between. Now if you say that this is generalizable across the world now

this is a little puzzling you might say that okay India is a country which is a collectivist country with a collectivistic culture.

Generically we have joint family system still in the villages and all that which means that well it works for, India but what about the US? What about the European countries? Where there is a lot of freedom and a lot of financial I would say liberality. Why is it that across countries they found more than 80% correlation or agreement in terms of these values? What could be the reason for that?

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Why?

The basic social function of values is to motivate and control the behavior of group members.

- Most important is to promote and preserve cooperative and supportive relations among members of primary groups. Without such relations, life in the group would be filled with conflict and group survival would be at risk.
- Positive relations are insufficient to ensure the survival and prosperity of societies, groups, and their individual members. Individuals must also be motivated to invest the time and the physical and intellectual effort needed to perform productive work, to solve problems that arise during task performance, and to generate new ideas and technical solutions.
- Some gratification of the self-oriented needs and desires of group members is also critical. Rejecting all expression of self-oriented desires would produce individual frustration..

Value Hierarchies Across Cultures, Schwartz & Bardi, 2001

So why now before I go into this you can again go for going to looking into the possible reasons some of, which are discussed by the writers over here. And the paper is available we will be also sharing the link to it in our website. The fundamental thing is group behavior a collectivistic and the group survival very often is compatible to individual survival. So probably those are the contexts within which this operates you can go through the arguments here I will not go into the details of it.

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The Why question and levels of operation

- Evolutionary Level (Genetic coding, natural selection)
- Cultural Level (rules, traditions, group level)
- Proximate/ Psychological level (contexts, individual level)

Now the labels at which we operate at the evolutionary levels where as I have talked to genetic coding is something which is there the cultural level where there are rules traditions and group level organizations and the psychological levels context individual level. My choices the specific context when I am taking decisions the various decisions that we take are taken under these various levels so it all, makes sense at these levels.

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Why Collectivism?

- Kin selection
- Direct reciprocity (give and take)
- Indirect reciprocity (reputation, morality, social norms / networks)
- Network reciprocity
- Group selection (ethnicity)

Martin A. Nowak. Five Rules for the Evolution of Cooperation.
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But then there are some very interesting things as to why collectivism and I will give you 2 strong arguments the others you can find from the papers here I have indicated. The first one imagine a situation where you see that a community is surviving and staying together and the community survives and flourishes when there are social exchanges people keep on, giving and taking from one another.

There is a balance if you do too much of that maybe you will be self depriving and it will lead to negative emotions if you do too little of that the community disintegrates. So certain values get transmitted from one generation to the next generation. And that happens only if the value is something which helps people survive and be happy which helps people survive, and helps people flourish.

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Reciprocity: the Prisoner's Dilemma

- Two members of a criminal gang are arrested and imprisoned. Each prisoner is in solitary confinement with no means of communicating with the other.
 - If A and B each betray the other, each of them serves 2 years in prison
 - If A betrays B but B remains silent, A will be set free and B will serve 3 years in prison (and vice versa)
 - If A and B both remain silent, both of them will only serve 1 year in prison (on the lesser charge)
- Because betraying a partner offers a greater reward than cooperating with them, all purely rational self-interested prisoners would betray the other, and so the only possible outcome for two purely rational prisoners is for them to betray each other. The interesting part of this result is that pursuing individual reward logically leads both of the prisoners to betray, when they would get a better reward if they both kept silent. In reality, humans display a systemic bias towards cooperative behavior in this and similar games, much more so than predicted by simple models of "rational" self-interested action.

Prisoner's Dilemma: Wikipedia

So community values it has been found help people survive and flourish and this is something which I will take up through a couple of examples. The prisoner's dilemma you can go through it in detail is a situation where you have 3 possibilities. 2 people, 2 thieves are caught the choice is that both the thieves can tell against one another and they get fairly heavily, punished.

One can tell and the other one is silent the one who tells gets punished the one who is silent gets rewarded or both of them can keep silent in which case they are moderately punished. If you are looking at this you find that each individual in isolation if operating selfishly is most rewarded. But the catch what is isolation studies were done economic games were played but they were what, are known as iterative games you keep on doing that again and again.

So in the iterative games it was found that the people who were selfish in the exchange of money in the first part of the game started winning so heavily. But then by the second round of the game other people realized that these were extremely selfish people. So those people started stopped cooperating with these people so by the end, of the game the selfish people had suffered and the people who were generous had built up a trust network around them and had succeeded.

And here you find that the practice of generosity the practice of giving somehow indirectly through the process of social networking rewards in a different way and generally in the long run. So there have been studies there are many other studies which talk about, it I will talk about one more about the other.

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Mirror neurons: empathy and altruism

- A **mirror neuron**, or **cubelli neuron**, is a neuron that fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another.
- Imitation
- Understanding others' actions
- Understanding others emotions
- Empathy

So basically there is a rational reason for pro-social behaviour and that is something which is embedded in our stories value stories we have stories about Harish Chandra we have stories about various other generous people. And in each case we find that after an initial punishment the generous person is happy why is it that these stories have succeeded, and why is it that they are transmitted across tradition.

That is because the traditions have found that each time they work and the very interesting and fascinating thing about stories or parables that is stories with morals is that they survive if they perform a social function again and again across generations. And that is something which happens in this particular context. But the other, thing is also that psychologists and cognitive scientists tell us that.

Probably we have some kind of a brain level empathic response which means that we have certain neurons which behave in a different way and which get activated when other people experience emotions or different kinds of situations. You see that the very understanding of the self is through the other because I always say that, Okay I am like somebody else. If somebody is feeling sad he must be feeling sad like me.

So this concept of generalizability of my personal experience is not extremely unique but something which others also experience is only possible when I am able to empathize experience with the other person. And it seems that the brain has that capability and if that is the context then we find that empathy is, a very very important and it may not be with everybody but it is an important function of the mind and that probably is another reason that we are generous and we are pro socially in our behaviour.

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Dana – the Indian context – An evolutionary approach

- The question of reciprocity?
- If A gives to B who should be grateful?
- Then why is A grateful to B?

Now see that as I told you towards the end of this discussion I would be touching off on the Indian concept of generosity. There is a certain paradox I will touch upon because this is an example every tradition every spiritual tradition across the world has generosity as a significant parameter. In fact this is something which we will talk about in the next session that we will be focusing on in the context of characters and virtues.

But the issue or the point over here is that generosity behavior is all pervasive we have studied very spiritual traditions. And if you Google you will find the same, thing generosity across traditions generosity across cultures especially more communal the culture more collectivist the culture the greater the emphasis on generosity. But in the Indian context something strange happened the concept of Dana which can be roughly translated to charity narrowly but giving in the larger context is something where people are definitely generous.

But the interesting, thing is that generosity is generally matched with the concept of gratitude if I am generous then you are grateful to me well it is a fairly complex thing. For instance if I am generous to a stranger the stranger is grateful to me but if I am generous to my daughter she did not necessarily feel regretful she might say that it is my birth right. So the more proximal the

relationship the lesser the, generosity the more distal the relationship the; greater the generosity so it is a very interesting relationship.

But in the Indian context somehow there was a power equation I will not go into that where the Hindu concept of generosity was one where the person who gave started feeling grateful to the person who received. But then there were a set of guidelines that the person who received should be, worthy of receiving the person who is giving is giving without any expectation then there are set of value systems which operated.

There was also a power underlying power system which operated because the people in power were also creating rules which are beneficial to them. So the people who received the generous offerings created a strategy which was successful for them and this was challenged, later on by Buddhism.

And when it was challenged by Buddhism you see that people leaned very heavily in the direction of Buddhism because they felt suffocated by the so-called generosity guidelines which had become extremely rigid and power centric in the middle period. Let us say any time between till the 7th century A.D. but will not go into that then later on with Sankaracharya there was a, revival and people get came back but those are long stories we will not go into that.

But it is interesting that this is a very unique tradition of generosity which kind of reverses the situation.

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Giving in Buddhism					
Directed towards	Donors	Recipients	Motivations		Forms of giving
Humanity centric	Anybody driven by altruism and love for humanity	Persons truly in need Of help and Charity	Altruism and faith	1. Sheer Altruism 2. Complete faith in religious philosophies	1. Sattvika 2. Madhyam 3. Dhruv 4. Dharm 5. dana
Community centric	1. Kings 2. Royal nobles 3. Businessman 4. Lower sections of society	1. Members of own community 2. Brahmins	Peer Pressure and reward and punishment	1. Prestige in society 2. Act of diplomacy 3. Force of social tradition	1. Kriyapeksh 2. Dhruv 3. Madhyam 4. Utsarga 5. Purta

Indian Traditional Generosity Model: Rashmi Ranjan Behera and P. Patnaik, 2016, MS Work.

Now you see that I am giving you examples from studies that we did in the context of generosity. I will just quickly touch upon it and we realize that generosity even in the historical context. Whether we looked at the ancient Hindu traditions or the Buddhist traditions or the Jaina traditions even the Sikh traditions even the Islamic traditions where essentially at 3 fundamental levels. People gave individual centric giving individual centric is where you give to get a benefit.

I give to the let us say there is a Yagya there is a sacrificial fire there is a puja I give I give to god I give to, x y z. So that I will get material benefit from it or I will get some kind of prestige related thing then humanity centric giving somebody person actually needs help and the focus motivation is altruism. And you are giving at some point of because you think truly believe that giving is part of you.

This is probably like linked to your mirror neurons you are extremely empathetic attitude towards, life. And there is a somewhere middle point which is the community level giving everybody else is giving there is a pressure on you to give. So you see that this is known as the bandwagon effect it is a kind of a cognitive bias that we have where what happens is that? You generally give when everybody else is doing it let me do it so you do not think about it.

Your father has been giving your brother, is giving your friend is giving so you do not want to think about it this is a heuristic response the brain does not want to do too much of analytical thinking it wants to optimize. So in that particular context everybody is giving I will also give why debate about? Whether to give not to give there is too much of stress you have the capability of giving a certain amount of money you give it.

Everybody is giving 50 rupees you can give maybe 40 rupees 50 rupees or sixty rupees that is within the framework you do not give 500 rupees or you do not give 10 rupees that would again catch attention conformity confirmative bias you want to go with the tradition.

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Giving in Buddhism					
Directed towards	Donors	Recipients	Motivations		Forms of giving
Individual centric	1. Kings 2. Royal Nobles 3. Businessmen 4. Common householders 5. along with their wives	1. Brahmins 2. Ascetics	Reward and Punishment	1. Atonement for sin 2. Quest for spiritual reward or punya 3. Temporal gain/wish fulfillment 4. Fear of punishment by a spiritual force 5. Belief in the afterlife and rebirth 6. Moksha 7. Superstitions and blind beliefs	1. Dhenu dana 2. Maha dana 3. Gunapeksh 4. Kriyapeksh 5. Vimal 6. Naimittik 7. Kamya 8. Jyesth 9. Kanishth 10. Rajasik 11. Ista

Indian Traditional Generosity Model: Rashmi Ranjan Behera and P. Patnaik, 2016

Now individualistic as I had shared a little earlier is where you give for various kinds of individual selfish benefits we have, learned a little earlier. So I will skip this for the time being. **(Refer Slide Time: 28:30)**

Give-Take-Match

(context dependant, but clear tendency)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They like to give more than they take • Generous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They like to get more than they give • Self-centric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They like to match • Fairness driven
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- The pressure to become a taker – When we anticipate self-interested behavior from others we tend to become takers.
- In a competitive environment more than 90% people may judge themselves to be takers.

Many takers can be deceptive – and look like givers. How to identify them?

That we have learned a little earlier that there is a tendency of people to be essentially self-centric but even when people are self-centric if they are convinced that giving helps they will give friends I told you about other studies. There are people who give there are people who take and there are people who match essentially, selfish people there are other people who wait. Your neighbor has given you one *Sabzi* next day you return one special sweets a social exchange give and take balanced.

There are other people who do not think about receiving they just keep on giving because they feel happy giving the other people who feel that. Okay let me get I do not have to give anybody

people are giving me I am fine with that. These orientations are there and you can give take a survey in fact we will share it with you to find out where you stand. But if the mindsets change they benefit you pro-sociality benefits you.

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Let us assume that giving pays...

- In the long run... the President
 - The medical students...
 - Productivity...
 - Happiness...
 - Sense of justice...
-
- And that in an organization givers behave differently from takers

So let us say and it generally benefits you in the long run so I will give you one example of that and this is a study which is I will go to the references. This is a study which has been done in the happy, people are happier through kindness no not this one. We have it here personality scale validities increase throughout medical school. I will tell that story and with that we will kind of wrap up this session.

The story goes like this or the test goes like this that in a special certain European country the medical students were profiled on the basis of their big five personalities. And the prediction was, that people who are not very pro-social would probably benefit because if they are selfish they will concentrate and they will gain. In the first year that matched the findings matched with this assumption this hypothesis.

But by the time these students had gone to the fifth year it was found that things had gone slightly differently there were two traits openness and extroversion which were, pro-social terms and tended to end up with people giving sharing more than receiving. And it was found that these people with these traits had started going to the top. And when they went deeper into the study they realized that this was happening because as in life in a medical college it is tough.

And working at an individual level succeeding is difficult you need to cooperate in order to succeed. So people who; are cooperative and show generosity openness were the people who

got rewarded; at the end of the day. So if I can sum up what I have shared so far I would say that there are 2 or 3 fundamental things which happen at this end one is that pro-social behavior has been found to be very very relevant in the context of our lives especially generosity gratitude.

And in this particular case we, are focusing on generosity but in gratitude also when you are grateful to others it feels kind of that your sense of guilt or obligation somebody has lifted so you feel happy about it. Whatever the that there is a scientific reason for why we give I have tried to share it with you there is peer pressure there are social rituals all those things I have shared with you.

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But let us sum up with, one final point which is that at the end of the day whatever the reason for generosity, for gratitude, for pro-sociality it benefits us. So getting networked building up relationships sharing exchanging trying to empathize with people at the end of the day rewards us. So if you are not too much of a giver instinctively then also please remember that it is going to help you.

And some of you might, surprisingly discover that you are essentially people who enjoy giving then please go ahead and give either way it is going to benefit us. And historically and culturally this is something which has been endorsed and reiterated again and again in different kinds of civilizational states right thing right from hunting gathering to agricultural civilization to industrial to post-industrial civilizers.

So anything which has worked across time and works today because; fundamental human relationship probably dictate that thank you friends we stop here.

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CONCLUSION

- Pro-social behaviour looks like a paradox
- Why pro-sociality – the case of generosity
- Social exchange – give and take
- Empathy and mirror neurons

And we will be taking up so at the as we conclude pro-social behavior why pro-social behavior social exchange and empathy and mirror neurons. We have discussed all these points and with that we close this session thank you.