

## **Sustainable Happiness**

**Professor Atasi Mohanty**

**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Lecture - 26**

### **Positive Character Strengths**

Hello viewers, welcome back to this NPTEL course on sustainable happiness. Today we will start a new topic that is positive psychology and sustainable happiness and discuss about the how positive psychology has influenced sustainable happiness. So, here positive character strengths, the topic is that positive character strengths for sustainable happiness. Positive psychology as all of us we know we have already discussed. that positive psychology initiated by started by Seligman, Daniel Goleman, Mel Mayer and Salovey, many researchers they have started this positive psychology and their concepts like positive emotions, positive thoughts, positive mindset, positive character strengths, these concepts were very much impressive and it has influenced many disciplines so it has also influenced uh sustainability also conscious of sustainability and as we have already discussed that Catherine O'brien how she has try to incorporate the components of positive psychology like positive character sense, positive emotions, attitude, mindset, behavior, etcetera. How these things she has integrated in the theory of sustainable sustainability and how to achieve sustainable happiness through positive psychology and what should be the education that is education for sustainable happiness and how positive psychology has influenced in developing the pedagogy of education for sustainable happiness.

So, that is where the positive psychology has contributed significantly in the development of the course content and practices of sustainable happiness. So, today we will discuss about these positive character strengths, positive emotions, mindset all the attributes of positive psychology and positive mindset. So, positive mindset and character strengths, positive psychology that is a branch of psychology applied psychology. So, it primarily advocates that how the humanity or the how the society how the people they should develop positive mindset, positive emotion, positive thinking all these things how we can regulate our behavior, how we can direct all our thoughts, emotions, actions towards the positivity that is being open-minded, being empathetic, being compassionate.

So, they have introduced many such character strengths, these which are desirable in

case of a very successful human being and for achieving the well-being, overall well-being, holistic well-being of the people, of the people, of the society. So, let us discuss about this what this positive mindset and positive character sense. So, positive psychology always advocates for inculcating, developing all kinds of positive thoughts, attitudes, behavior, emotions, actions and towards the development, towards the progress, towards the prosperity and towards the sustainability. So, similarly so that is where positive mindset and character sense. All of us we have already discussed that.

how human behavior is being influenced by, is being controlled and regulated by three domains, major domains, like first is our cognitive domain that includes our thought process, our mindset, our understanding, our intelligence, our thinking, our all kinds of our perceptions. So, that is the cognitive perspective. Similarly, how do we feel about certain things that is the emotions or affective domain is also there similarly. So, in positive psychology that is positive emotions like empathy, compassion, gratitude All these kinds of things have been emphasized that how to inculcate, how to develop these kind of character strengths among the people, among the employees, among the students, among the stakeholders, etcetera. And then thereafter the positive actions that is the positive behavior.

As a result of these of all these positive thoughts and positive emotion, then again we have to we have to manifest these things components in our daily life in your workplace, in your daily practices. So, that is the positive actions. So, combining all these three things positive thoughts, emotion, positive thoughts, emotions and actions. Now, we have to develop that is some certain positive characteristics and certain positive attributes. how positive attributes are very much desirable in case of human being in case of the society.

So, to embrace even sustainability also, because you know we have already discussed that sustainability is a paradigm shift is a shift in our mindset, it is in our thought process. So, positive mindset, positive character sense, positive emotions, positive actions all these things can focus on focus on embracing sustainability as a way of life ok. So, what this positive mindset means? Our attitude is our perception, our attitude that is the positive mindset that is being open-minded, being positive, being hopeful, being very considerate about perceiving or being about understanding others perspective. Similarly, how to build a positive character stance like, you know, being resilient, being open minded, being empathetic, being compassionate, all these are the positive attributes, personality traits are called the positive character stance. So, everybody that in case of society that a good character is something everyone looks for it.

Be it in the workplace, be it in the institutes, be it in the academic place, be it in the even in the any non-governmental sectors also everywhere wherever the workplace is

concerned So, good characteristics of the employees, of the stakeholders, of the you can say of the people those who are directly involved in this, it is very much desirable. Everybody wants that we must have, we must interact with the people who are good in terms of their attitude, behavior and personality traits. So, good behavior which is very much desirable for every place, for workplace, for every you know for collaboration, for even within the organization, for even for you can say for the all kinds of teamwork etcetera. So, whether the whether the stakeholder is a student or a friend or an employee or employer whatever may be the thing. So, there is these good characters or which are positive, which are good characters that That signifies the positive character sense, good character that determines the positive behavior, positive attitude etcetera that is called the character sense that how to.

So, these are all otherwise called as the positive character sense which are of the that means, acquiring, developing the good qualities that qualities among the that is that the people poses and they develop the inculcates their values, ethics and positive traits. That is called the you know people strength, character strength or you can say these are the assets, these are their assets and strengths. So, for you know for appearing in any kind of interview, any kind of interaction, for working in any workplace etcetera. So, how to acquire these positive qualities in terms of positive thoughts, positive traits, positive emotions etcetera. So, this that therefore, positive psychology always looks for character strengths of the character.

potential, how potential, how reliable, how honest, how confident, how, you know, how intelligent, how, how much, you know, how much skilled, how much talented the person is, so that shows his character strengths. So, and it helps in building those attributes which are very much relevant for day-to-day living, in the workplace practices, even in the educational institutions, educational administration, educational engagements also. So, the work of the positive psychologists like the Seligman's they show that the happiest people how these positive character strengths influences the happiness of the individuals happiness of the society of the people that is they say from their research they have founded happiest people there are those who have discovered their unique strengths such as kindness, curiosity, resilience, being hopeful and then being and virtues such as certain virtues like the you know humanity, wisdom, compassion, empathy etc. and how they discover their own unique positive strengths like these things and virtues also, values also, wisdom also and how they use these strengths for the benefit of others, for the for a particular purpose, for the benefit of others, for the social well-being, for the community well-being or for the workplace that means, organizational development of workplace. So, which are so, which are beyond which are greater than their own personal goals.

So, they want to they they use these things their positive strengths certain purpose in

their life, but purpose does not necessarily is that individual goals or the personal goals, but these purposes are much larger and more meaningful in terms of their applications, in terms of their scope, like if they are there they try to achieve some larger goals in for the society, for the community, for the organization. So, Seligman has actually discovered that how people have identified their own strengths virtues and how they discover it and how they try to utilize it for achieving certain purpose, certain larger goal, which is beyond their individual goal. So, to achieve this, that is where to achieve this happiness and well-being, these personal strengths, strengths are the abilities that must be developed among all the individuals, not just to achieve the purpose and meaning or gaining some meaningful experience, but also achieving some balance, life satisfaction and meaningful, leading a meaningful life. So, Seligman actually distinguishes three aspects of this concept of happiness, that is one is the pleasure, commitment and meaning. what does the three components pleasure, commitment and meaning means to people.

So, people who believe they have a happier and fuller life or those who orient their life towards these three aspects. Either we are focusing our life or our happiness towards some pleasure, getting pleasure, getting pleasure which is the very much subjective, which is very individualistic. Either we are working, we are doing something to achieve the happiness in our personal life through pleasure seeking behavior and that can be there. So, well-being but or else you can say we are committed to some organizational goals, some workplace goals or academic aspirations and goals and so and we are working or we are striving towards achieving these things. those kind of commitment it reflects in our personal happiness in terms of in in terms of developing you can say self-efficacy self-satisfaction confidence etc or is that or is it is beyond that that means that means you are all of us we are engaged people are engaged In some other activities, social activities, some you can say you can say some social activity, well-being activities, community activities, there is some kind of you know helping out other people so that is from some kind of you know social work social because that shows that because by doing so they get the purpose they get some purpose in life that is that means that helps them in making their life more meaningful while you know while helping out the others or you know working for the disadvantaged people or you know working for the for the community for this for getting them the justice equality and all kinds of things.

So, in this process when the individuals are engaged they get they get experience of meaningful life. So, either so these three out of these three aspects happiness can be related to anyone. So, people who believe that they have a happier and fuller life those who orient their life towards these three aspects either pleasure they are doing all these things for getting pleasure, pleasure seeking or commitment they are committed to some goal some organizational goals and purposes for which for which they feel satisfied, happy and sense of competency, sense of you know self-efficacy develops or and beyond

that it can be it can have a larger meaning in life that means achieving some meaningful goals. So, well-being now here coming so happiness and well-being even though these are very much related to well-being is holistic well-being is you know overarching well-being has a larger scope. So, well-being is considered in the positive psychology equivalent to happiness or the subjective well-being.

Well-being in positive psychology is primarily related to subjective happiness, subjective well-being which is defined by the two components, one is emotional component, another cognitive component. So, when we talk about the well-being or of a particular individual or subjective well-being of individual, so whether he is emotionally happy or not or his emotional well-being, well-being are are ensured or the his cognitive well-being is also there. So, whether he has achieved emotional both the emotional and cognitive well-being. So, these are the two primary components of the subjective well-being as per the positive psychology. So, the objective of positive education now from positive psychology also positive education, positive action, positive behavior, positive training or positive leadership all these components the concepts have emerged out of this positive psychology.

So, objective of the positive education also that how to promote the well-being by helping out the students individuals and apply and how can they identify and apply the different strengths in different ventures in different endeavours in them in different goal achievement behaviors. So, positive education so, that is a education system should also focus on the positive aspects development of the positive attributes among the students so that they can identify, they can discover, they can identify their own inner strength, individual strength and utilize it for different purposes and goals. So, the combination of this emotional education with the positive education contributes towards the happiness of individual. When your positive education and your emotional education both get blended and you are happy that you are that means, you are intellectually you have become competent, you are emotionally happy satisfied. so both your personal and social goals and well-being are also she are also ensured so in that way you develop a holistic personality well integrated personality personality with proper with proper balance of both the cognitive component effective component with That means, it consists of the emotional intelligence as well as it also consists of the intellectual capabilities with and the passion and the passion and the motivation or intention for intention to work with values.

So, all these personality, personal attributes, social components, social well-being components, and positive character strengths, emotional intelligence, value oriented actions, values, positive values, ethics, standards, etcetera. All these components positive all these components when they are embedded in the education system in the positive

education and they they are that means, it focuses primarily on developing this kind of positive attributes and personality traits among the students, among the individuals, So, that the individual can deliver, the individual can interact, the individual can contribute significantly, positively towards the workplace, towards the society, towards the institutions. So, positive education, positive emotions, all these are the combination and the confluence of all these positive attributes, character strengths in the field of in the field of education, in the field of organizational behavior by developing an integrated and holistic integrated personality and aiming towards the holistic development, holistic well-being of the individual. So, these are the virtues and strengths of the characters as according to Seligman and his associates Peterson they have identified because a number of things are there from their research from their research findings empirical research and findings etcetera they have identified and they have narrated the components that is the concepts that comes under each and every virtue. Like we know under wisdom and knowledge as you can see open being open minded, being curious, being creative, all these attributes, all the character strengths are included under the domain of you can say wisdom and knowledge that is the primarily cognitive domain.

Similarly, courage, courage primarily again it is it is it is more of you know as a key domain that is persistence, industriousness, enthusiasm, your vitality, passion, vigour as all these things comes under the courage. That means, in the individual individuals must develop the characteristics of the courage in the sense that he must have a willpower, passion, motivation and consistency in consistency in maintaining that effort, perseverance. all that means all these things that is for engaging in certain tasks. That is why we say that the that is called we in education case we that courage means that the primarily it is also that means the preparedness, the readiness. So, by you know the individual, the subject, the employee, the student they must be trained, they must be groomed in such a way that now they are ready to deliver, they are ready to venture into a domain.

So, that is that is called the courage, courage that is the it builds in. self-confidence that means their mental readiness their knowledge their background their skills and so that means their vitality all these things that is the courage another is the humanity humanity similarly it includes the kind of kindness generosity compassion love and it is also related to social intelligence, personal intelligence, etc. So, these are the virtues and these are the related characteristics. Similarly, justice, justice it focuses more on impartiality, equality, inclusiveness, teamwork and then temperance, temperance is primarily related to forgiveness, honesty, humility, self-control, modesty, discretion, all these prudence. uh this thing then transcendence is that which is beyond it is much larger that when we talk about transparency that is beyond this mundane, mundane practices mundane activities that is beyond that is uh moving towards the self-actualization moving

towards spirituality moving towards you know um developing the higher characteristics like you know uh humility then gratitude then um then you can having the developing the foresight then spirituality then So, this is the transcendence, this is the highest level of the transcendence that is these are the towards the higher level of cognitive virtues, cognitive values etcetera.

So, now, the similarly related competencies, the competencies for sustainability and its components also are equally important. Yes, we are discussing about the positive character strengths, positive virtues and its related strengths, how to be developed among the students, among the learners, among the employees, etcetera. But as a result of that, what sort of competencies, the skills, because actions, that is action What sort of competencies they are supposed to develop and so far as sustainability is related as a result of this development of this positive attributes, strengths, character strengths, emotion etcetera and positive education etcetera. What are the skills and competencies that the individuals or stakeholders they are supposed to develop so that they can deliver in the society. So, so far is the sustainability as a domain as a as a as an as an array of skills and skills and competencies is considered.

So, again sustainability competence also it requires, it expects the development of certain skills, certain competencies. So, these are also called as the sustainability competencies. Sustainability competencies can say critical analysis. That means, the individual's cognitive thought processes, cognitive domain should be nurtured in such a way that that his critical thinking, his ethical commitment, intellectual commitment, all these things should be developed. That means, higher level of cognitive skills, cognitive higher order thinking skills should be developed and critical analysis, creative thinking these are of highest level of cognitive thought process.

Similarly, another these are called as a sustainability competence. Systemic reflection is that the whether the individual is competent to perceive as a whole how the system functions. That means, he must be very much familiar with the holistic thinking. That is not just focusing on any micro part, any particular segment or particular attribute rather as a holistic. How the system, suppose we are working in a particular state or we are observing how the government runs or we are observing how the community functions in a particular way.

climatic condition etcetera. So, this is about developing the holistic thinking the relational thinking how each component each segment of the each stakeholder of that community they are interrelated. So, and how what is not just in terms of logistic or the logistic things, but also in terms of the belongingness in terms of their feeling emotions and affinity. So, all these things are that is called primarily is called as the relational

thinking systems thinking and holistic thinking. So, that is called the systemic reflection whether the individual is competent enough to reflect on all these aspects of the system, how the system operates and system takes into account that is the combination is the conglomeration of many units. So, that is how to understand that how the system functions operates that is the systemic reflection.

The individual needs to reflect on the functionalities of all the aspects of that system. Then collaborative decision making it primarily is collaborative decision making is that primarily it focuses on teamwork and participatory skills in you know, it also focuses on argument skills every individual, every participant, team members should actively think about and place their arguments in the discussion board, in the discussion panel. So, and again they have the democratic commitment. and commitment is there and then how they should how they must understand they must reflect on other perspective how without any bias being non-biased being objective so this being again they must have some democratic commitment etc that is a collaborative discussion decision making that is being a stakeholder in the teamwork being a member of the team group so how collaboratively every member of that team they should take the decision and the decision should be taken consensually that is also sustainability competency Second is the sense of responsibility for present and future generations. So, it is very much required for sustainability because sustainability competencies not only focuses on ethical commitment or the social commitment, but also it focuses more on Anticipating something, what is going to happen in assumptions, making assumptions, making that means having the foresight that is may happen, how to assume something and more from in different thinking in thinking that is not in a linear way, non-linear mean both synchronously way thinking that across the things both horizontally and vertically thinking across the domains across the across the plate.

So, that is the thinking both synchronously and non-synchronously well the non-linearity. Then it must again how the stakeholders they must take the universal responsibility for not just resorbing, consorbing or behaving sustainability in the present, but also for the restoring the future. and being compassionate, being caring care not you know not only caring for your resources like human resources and material resources, but being caring for your planet earth also for the nature also. So, sense of responsibility, so every individual must develop the sense of responsibility for not just for the present times, present war, present condition and situation, but for future generation, how our future should be restored, our future generation should be should be having the resources available for them to carry on their work. So, we should be very much protective and caring for future generation.

The next is so these are the next similarly other things are also there these are the



primarily that means primary competencies, competence of sustainability. So, and beyond that also there are also you know other things of other sustainability competencies have also been added. Now, we will just go to the next step like the science and the science of positive psychology reveal that several character strengths this is not limited to these many only there are also many most character strengths. So, how these several, how these character strengths are connected to the higher level of happiness. So, more and more character strengths, more virtues, values that we inculcate, we develop, how our happiness moves towards, moves in an upward way that is, that is moving towards self-actualization, moving towards spiritualism, moving towards being the global citizen, moving towards universal happiness, all these things.

Strengths might be considered the happiness strengths like for example, there are there are many, but researchers have identified some of the things like. This is that you know how much that means how much perseverance that you can only want to put the physical exercise, the pressure, the strength that the energy you want to you know you can invest how to improve your endurance that is one thing. Hope is being the that means being hopeful, hope is definitely hope is the you can say Inevitably in our life and it should be like hope is always that if you are very much hopeful and hope is there in your thought process then definitely you will try to update you will try to develop yourself as the best possible self because hope that means failure yes failure gives us a lesson. So, how to overcome the hurdles, how to improvise our skills and knowledge and behavior. So, hope is there, it is a kind of intangible kind of component which keeps on going, keeps on running, moving, keeps on going.

So, there is a hope so best possible that is because it keeps on thinking keeps on it helps us in moving on with imagination with again greater effort, greater encouragement, greater you know it also opens up many options for us to achieve to work towards our goal etcetera. So, hope is the another attribute of long term happiness. Second, gratitude. Gratitude is that think of a person who has achieved something.

was helped you a lot in particular situation. So, that that thinking that feeling of gratitude like that person has helped me. So, that offering that gratitude, gratefulness to a person that is also important very important. So, it is also considered as the positive character sense. So, gratitude that is thanks being thankful being grateful for any For every component in our life, be it even we should be thankful to sun, thankful to planet earth, thankful to our environment, thankful to our people, thankful to our government, thankful to our society. So, everywhere being thankful to everybody that develops a sense of gratitude.

And another is also the reflecting, being reflective is that reflective again being reflective

is a practice is a self is a self-development practice. It is a kind of being reflective and always we keep on keep on introspecting our self and and reflecting on our thoughts action and its impact on others. So, being reflective always it is It develops a habit, it develops a habit of mind that is to monitor, to objectively evaluate our actions and accordingly we can improvise your, improve if and accordingly we can improve our actions, our feelings, our interactions. in the society. And curiosity is definitely, curiosity you can say is the is the mother of creativity you can say.

That means, unless and until we become curious, curious we cannot think of beyond this mundane things. That is curiosity it generates our thought process, it stimulates our thought process and then ultimately we move towards the creative thinking process. And yes love, love means you love is again another indispensable thing like love. That means, it enhances our engagement, it enhances our you know interactions, love to like when we start loving our start loving our own work, love to do so, love to work, love to read, love to help. So, that also keeps it is an engage in love of loving and kindness kind of thing.

So, love to do when we love to do certain things means it brings that kind of service orientation. So, these are many character strengths are there, so which causes the happiness and so these reasons are the reasons of being happy with these character strengths is because it energizes us, it you know it makes us more enthusiastic, it also gives a direction towards our behavioral activation, behavioral that is, but because it lifting us from one level energy level to another level, a level of energy to mobilizing us towards mind, towards actions and synchronizing our body, our body and mind and thought process and mobilizing us towards action. Similarly, being hopeful also it also it also creates good thinking, positive thinking, futuristic thinking, more imagination, imagination having more reasons, having more, you know, kind thoughts regarding, kind thoughts about others, helping out others, having, you know, contributing, contributing towards the society. So, all these kind of things. So, gratitude, as we know, gratitude is also, it's not just an acknowledgement, it's not just an thought process is also thinking and feeling.

So, these all these when we develop this kind of character strengths automatically, it regulates it regulates constantly our behavior, it monitors regulates and helps us in deflecting our behavior and thoughts and regulates our actions thoughts and emotions. So, that is a correct these character strengths are very very important. And similarly curiosity law whatever and all being altruistic that means how can we that means how can we encompass the actions aimed at ensuring the well-being of others. Not just we are not just doing for the benefit for the well-being of only our self or our personal or our close circle people, but towards others being altruistic, being compassionate. That means not just we are living sustainably, but we also try to help out others.

so that others they can also lead a very good life, happy life. Similarly, generosity. Generosity about being concerned about others' rights, their comfort, their discomfort and treating them fairly. These are the generosity.

And virtues like, you know, positive. coexistence, how can all of us we can live together, stay together, work together and and prosper together. And so, these things kind of virtues also that like the altruistic being altruistic, being generous and being virtuous, these things also these also it helps in and the not just in positive coexistence of everybody, but it also stimulates positive emotions, positive thoughts and positive well-being. primarily psychological well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being which can bring the holistic development. So, how can we be happy? How can we make others happy? So, in Japanese it is actually there is a theory called Ikigai. Ikigai that means, how can we lead a sustainable happy life? How can we also make others happy? So, in this context now I am just stopping it here.

Next class we will discuss about the how to build a positive organization, creative organization that will be the next class, next session of this course. Thank you very much now.