

**Introduction to Algebraic Topology (Part-I)**  
**Professor Anant R. Shastri**  
**Department of Mathematics**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Bombay**  
**Lecture 4**  
**Path Homotopy**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:15)

The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a dark blue header and a white main area. The header contains a table of contents with two columns. The first column lists: Introduction, Fundamental Group, Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces, Relative Homotopy, Simplicial Complexes, Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group, and Group Actions and Coverings. The second column lists: Pre-requisites, References, Conventions, The Basic Problem, and Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy. To the right of the table of contents is a small video window showing Professor Anant R. Shastri. Below the header, the text 'Module 4:' is displayed in a blue box. The main body of the slide contains the following text: 'In the first three modules, I have given a bird's eye-view of what this course is about and a little bit about Algebraic Topology in general. I have told you about 'big' problems that cannot be solved and about millennium prize problems like Poincaré conjecture which we cannot discuss in this course in any depth. Today let me begin with telling you about some big things that we can achieve in this course.' At the bottom of the slide, there is a footer with the NPTEL logo, the text 'Anant R. Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics', and 'NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I'.

Hello. So, let us begin the fourth module today. In the first three modules, I have given a bird's eye-view of what this course is about and a little bit about algebraic topology in general. I have told you about certain big problems that cannot be solved and about certain millennium prize problems like Poincare conjecture which we cannot discuss in this course in any depth. So, today let me begin with telling you about some other big things that we can achieve in this course, on the positive side.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:08)

Anant R Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology

Introduction	Pre-requisites
Fundamental Group	References
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces	Conventions
Relative Homotopy	The Basic Problem
Simplicial Complexes	Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group	
Group Actions and Coverings	

**Brouwer's Celebrated Theorems**

Consider the following classical result due to Brouwer.

**Theorem 1.2**  
**Jordan-Brouwer Separation Theorem** : Let  $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$  be homeomorphic to  $S^{n-1}$ ,  $n \geq 2$ . Then  $\mathbb{R}^n \setminus X$  has precisely two connected components, and  $X$  is their common boundary.

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So, this is called Brouwer's Celebrated Theorems. There are two of them here. One is the Jordan-Brouwer Separation Theorem. Jordan comes here for  $n = 2$ . For higher things it is Brouwer. That is why it is Jordan-Brouwer Separation theorem.

Take a copy of  $S^{n-1}$  in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  for  $n \geq 2$ . Then, the complement of this  $S^{n-1}$ , let us denote the copy of  $S^{n-1}$  by  $X$ , the complement of  $X$  has precisely two connected components, and  $X$  happens to be the common boundary, common boundary. So, in the case of  $n = 2$ , a copy of  $S^1$ ; one calls it a Jordan Curve, or a Jordan Loop.

So, a Jordan Loop separates the plane into exactly 2 components. One is inside, another is outside. So, the inside region is called, inside is what?--- the bounded region. That is the meaning of inside region. There is only one bounded region and only one unbounded region and the loop happens to be the common boundary of both of them. This has been completely generalized by Brouwer for all  $n$ . This theorem, we will be able to prove in this course. Maybe it will take some time but it will be proved, that is the whole idea.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:10)

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Pre-requisites  
References  
Conventions  
The Basic Problem  
Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy

**Theorem 1.3**

**(Brouwer's Invariance of domain)** Let  $U, V$  be some subspaces of the Euclidean space  $\mathbb{R}^n$ ,  $n \geq 1$ . Suppose  $U$  is homeomorphic to  $V$ . Then  $U$  is open in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  iff  $V$  is open in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .

An easy consequence of this is:

**Corollary 1.1**

For  $n \neq m \geq 1$ ,  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is not homeomorphic to  $\mathbb{R}^m$ .

The next thing is Brouwer's Invariance of domain. Invariance of domain means ----you know what is the meaning of domain in calculus or complex analysis. It is an open and connected subset. Open and connected subsets of  $\mathbb{R}^n$  are called domains. So, if something is a domain in some  $\mathbb{R}^n$  that  $n$  is invariant. That is the whole thing. That is the whole idea of Brouwer's Invariance of domain.

Suppose, you have  $U$  and  $V$ , some subspaces of  $\mathbb{R}^n$  and they are homeomorphic. If one of them is a domain that is one of them is open, then the other one is also open. That is like saying that invariance of domain. If something is a domain, then homeomorphic copies of that inside the same  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , they are all domains.

As an easy consequence of this, if you change the dimension, then they are not all domains --- can also be seen; it can also be observed, namely, for  $n$  not equal to  $m$ ,  $\mathbb{R}^n$  will never be homeomorphic to  $\mathbb{R}^m$ . So, this corollary is an easy corollary to theorem 1.3. I will let you think about it. Finally, we will solve this one. This is not, this corollary is not difficult from theorem 1.3.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:55)

Anant R Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Pre-requisites  
References  
Conventions  
The Basic Problem  
Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy

The standard method of proof of Theorems 1.2 and 1.3 is to obtain them as a 'not-too-difficult' consequence of the singular homology theory. This will be taken up in the sequel to this course.

Standard method of proof of these two theorems is to obtain them as “not-too-difficult” consequences of singular homology theory. The singular homology theory will be taken up in a sequel to this course.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:15)

Anant R Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Pre-requisites  
References  
Conventions  
The Basic Problem  
Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy

On the other hand, in this course, we shall obtain a proof of theorem 1.3 (BID), as a consequence of simplicial approximation and Sperner lemma. There are purely point-set-topological proofs of the invariance of domain which are much too long and difficult. Notice that mere homotopy equivalence is not able to detect the fact that  $\mathbb{R}^n$  and  $\mathbb{R}^m$  are not homeomorphic for  $n \neq m$ , since both are contractible. It should be noted that any known proof of the purely set-topological invariance of domain is not too easy (see [Engleking, 1968] or [Hurewicz-Wallman, 1948] for a proof).

On the other hand in this course, what shall we do? We shall obtain a proof of the Brouwer’s invariance of domain as a consequence of simplicial approximation and some combinatorial result called Sperner lemma. There are of course, purely point-set-topological proofs of this invariance of domain which are much too long and difficult. So called dimension theory books have been written on that.

Notice that mere homotopy equivalence is not able to detect the fact that  $\mathbb{R}^n$  and  $\mathbb{R}^m$  are not homeomorphic for  $n$  not equal to  $m$ , because both of them are contractible and therefore, they are homotopy equivalent to each other. So, how does homotopy help here? That is a strange thing no. It does. It should be noted that any known proof of purely point-set-topological invariance of domain is not too easy at all. All proofs are somewhat quite involved and lengthy. But you can look into Engleking's book and Hurewicz-Wallman's books and so on.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:49)

The general purpose of this course is to take a few steps which lead the student to the doorsteps of such great results in topology. Algebraic tools have been invented and sharpened by masters while attempting to solve topological problems. This requires the reader to master formidable amount of technical tools even before understanding what the master is trying to do. We have tried to minimise this with shortcuts without missing out on important points which have certain permanent value.

The general purpose of this course is to take a few steps which leads the students to the doorsteps of such great results in topology. We may not be able to see much of them, but once you have a couple of courses like this, you will be able to access all these results. Algebraic topology tools have been invented and sharpened by masters while attempting to solve topological problems.

This requires the reader to master a formidable amount of technical tools even before understanding what the master is trying to do; master is trying to work out. We have tried to minimize this with shortcuts without missing out on important points which can have a certain permanent value. So, this is what we are trying to do in this course.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:03)

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Introduction	Pre-requisites
Fundamental Group	References
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces	Conventions
Relative Homotopy	The Basic Problem
Simplicial Complexes	Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group	
Group Actions and Coverings	

In what follows, we shall keep acquiring new tools and sharpening old tools so as to solve problems mentioned in Q. I and Q. II above and many other related ones.

So, in what follows we shall keep acquiring new tools and sharpening the old tools, so as to solve problems mentioned in question number 1 and question number 2 above and many other related problems. So, this is the summary of whatever we want to do. So, we will now start doing them one by one.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:37)

Anant R Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology

Introduction	Pre-requisites
Fundamental Group	References
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces	Conventions
Relative Homotopy	The Basic Problem
Simplicial Complexes	Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group	
Group Actions and Coverings	

**Exercise 1.1**

- 1 Show that a contractible space is path connected.
- 2 List half a dozen topological properties not preserved under homotopy. Justify your list.
- 3 Show that composite of two homotopy equivalences is a homotopy equivalence.
- 4 Show that homotopy equivalence amongst spaces is an equivalence relation.

So, since we have already some technical definitions and so on, here is a set of exercises which you should try to solve them on your own and submit and the tutors will check them and you know later on we can even discuss it in one of the open sessions, live sessions. But before that you have to submit and you have to participate.

So, let me go through these exercises. First one is, (these are all simple exercises,) to show that a contractible space is always path connected. Second one is, I have told you that there are lots of topological properties which are not homotopy invariants, which are not preserved under homotopy. So, give a list of this, say a dozen topological properties--- No, half a dozen.

Show that composite of two homotopy equivalence, is homotopy equivalence. Show that homotopy equivalence amongst spaces is an equivalence relation. I have already told you how these things are but now you have to write down full details of these exercises. These Exercises are only for practise. There is nothing very hidden in them.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:10)

The screenshot shows a video lecture interface. At the top, there is a table of contents with two columns. The first column lists: Introduction, Fundamental Group, Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces, Relative Homotopy, Simplicial Complexes, Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group, and Group Actions and Coverings. The second column lists: Pre-requisites, References, Conventions, The Basic Problem, and Module 2 The Concept Of Homotopy. To the right of the table of contents is a small video feed of a man with glasses and a white beard, identified as Anant R. Shastri. Below the table of contents is a blue header for 'Exercise 1.2'. The main content area contains three numbered exercises. Exercise 1 asks to show that if  $f \circ g$  and  $g \circ f$  are homotopy equivalences, then  $f$  and  $g$  are homotopy equivalences. Exercise 2 asks to show that a map homotopic to a homotopy equivalence is a homotopy equivalence. Exercise 3 asks to show that if  $f$  and  $g \circ f$  are homotopy equivalences, then  $g$  is a homotopy equivalence. At the bottom of the slide, there is a footer with the NPTEL logo and the text 'Anant R. Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I'.

Now come to a few more exercises. First you have  $f: X \rightarrow Y$  and  $g: Y \rightarrow X$ , such that  $f \circ g$  and  $g \circ f$  are homotopy equivalences. I am not saying that  $f$  and  $g$  are homotopy inverses of each other. The composite, I am not saying that the composite  $f \circ g$  is homotopic to the identity of  $Y$  nor  $g \circ f$  is homotopic to the identity of  $X$ . But they are themselves homotopy equivalences. Then show that  $f$  and  $g$  are homotopy equivalences.

So, I caution you. I do not mean that  $g$  is homotopic inverse of  $f$ , it may not be, it may be. It does not matter. So, that is not the question here. Here you have to think a little bit. Keep thinking. When I want to use one of these results in the exercise, given the exercises, by that time I will give you the solutions. But till then, you keep thinking about it. So, whenever you get a solution, you can submit it. The tutors and I will check them.

So similarly, the next problem here:  $f: X \rightarrow Y$ ;  $g: Y \rightarrow Z$  be such that  $f$  and  $g \circ f$  are both homotopy equivalences. Show that  $g$  is a homotopy equivalence. It is like cancelling one of them. If  $f$  is invertible,  $g \circ f$  is invertible, then  $g$  is invertible. So, this is algebra of homotopy equivalences.



(Refer Slide Time: 12:17)

The screenshot shows a video lecture slide. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a dark blue background. On the left, it lists: 'Relative Homotopy', 'Simplicial Complexes', 'Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group', and 'Group Actions and Coverings'. On the right, it lists: 'Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle' and 'Module 8: Some Applications'. Below this bar, the text 'Section 2' is displayed in white on a blue background. To the right of the text is a small video feed of the lecturer, Anant Shastri. The main body of the slide is white and contains the following text: 'This section contains the definition of the fundamental group and its functorial properties. We shall also introduce two best known 'methods' of computing the fundamental group and use them to compute the fundamental group of the spheres  $S^n$ ,  $n \geq 1$ . Extensive study of these methods will then be taken up later in the course.' At the bottom, there is a footer bar with a dark blue background. On the left, it says 'Anant R Shastri/Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics'. On the right, it says 'NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I'. Below the footer bar, there is a small NPTEL logo on the left and a navigation bar with icons on the right. The navigation bar also lists: 'Introduction', 'Fundamental Group', 'Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces', 'Path Homotopy', and 'Module 6: The Fundamental Group'.

Let us begin with the brass-tags. We want to do whatever we want to do. We have to start doing them. So, this section will contain a definition of the fundamental group and its fundamental functorial properties. We shall also introduce two best ‘methods’ of computing fundamental groups and use them to compute the fundamental group of spheres; the neat objects. Once you have  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , they are simplest one; they are contractible, they do not have much homotopy properties.

The next objects are the spheres in them, unit spheres in the Euclidean spaces. Extensive study of these matters will be taken up later on. This is just now a trailer again to give you a flavour of what kind of things are coming up. So, that is what this section is about. But it will already be introduced to you, slightly deeper into the subject.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:22)

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Path Homotopy  
Module 6: The Fundamental Group  
Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
Module 8: Some Applications

Anant Shastri

Recall that a path in a space can be thought of as the track of a moving point. The fact that we may 'move' from one point to another point in a continuous way within a space is described by saying that the space is path connected. We know that the set of path components of a space is an important topological invariant. This can be viewed as  $[[*, X]]$ , the set of homotopy classes of maps from a point space  $*$  to  $X$ .

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Recall that a path in a space can be thought of as the track of a moving point. The fact that we may move from one point to another point. It means what? Moving means what? In a continuous way within a space. That is described by saying that the space is path connected. You can go from one point to another point, if it is path connected. Path connectivity is a very, very old concept and which is very fundamental in all topological aspects.

We know that the set of path components of a space is an important topological invariant. We have introduced it as homotopy classes of maps from single point into  $X$ --- the set of homotopy classes of maps from a single point into  $X$ .

(Refer Slide Time: 14:30)

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Path Homotopy  
Module 6: The Fundamental Group  
Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
Module 8: Some Applications

Anant Shastri

Given a path connected space  $X$ , we are now interested in looking at various 'different ways' in which two given points may be joined in  $X$ . For example, suppose  $X$  is the disc  $\mathbb{D}^2$ . Then given any two points in  $X$ , the natural way to join them is to take the line segment between them. If we are not so economical, there will be a lot of nearby paths but they would all be the 'same' in the sense that they are all homotopic.

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Now, given a path connected space, that is, suppose  $X$  is path connected. We are now interested in looking at various different ways in which two given points may be joined. For example, suppose  $X$  is a two-dimensional disk, -say the unit disk. Then given any two points, the natural way to join them is to take the line segment.

If we are not so economical there will be a lot of nearby paths, but they will all be in some sense the same even if you go a little bit away from the straight line. And straight lines are not always possible. You know paths are not always made up of straight lines, except perhaps in deserts. But we keep the direction the same. So, it is more or less the same in some sense. So, that is the meaning of being the same. Slightly they are away but you know like diversions in a given route when there is some road construction going on. They are homotopic paths.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:57)

On the other hand, suppose the space is  $S^1$ . Then given any two points in  $S^1$ , the natural way is to trace the circular arc from one point to the other. Obviously there are two choices here. We can say that the shorter one is a better choice. But then if the two points are antipodal there will be two distinct choices to make and common sense tells us that mathematically also we should distinguish them. Since a path in  $X$  is described by a continuous function  $\mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$ , and since  $\mathbb{I}$  is contractible, it follows that any two paths are homotopic. So, homotopy as considered in the previous section is not exactly the tool that is going to help us here.

But, let us look at the picture  $S^1$ . In  $S^1$ , let us say, take any two points. Then I want to say that there is no straight line now, but there are two different arcs from one point to another point. So, these arcs, you know, you cannot change from one arc to another arc continuously. So, how to make this idea rigorous? That is the task we now have.

A path in  $X$  is described by a continuous function from a closed interval, which you have standardized as  $\mathbb{I}$ , the closed interval  $[0,1]$ . The closed interval  $[0,1]$  itself is contractible. Therefore, we know that any path, namely, a function from  $\mathbb{I}$  to  $X$  must be null homotopic. We have seen that once you have a contractible space, any continuous function from a contractible space into any other space is null homotopic.

So, the homotopy that we have introduced is not very effective in distinguishing the two arcs that are there in which we want to distinguish. So, we need to sharpen the tool here. Then we want to study the paths as such. That is the meaning of sharpening a tool. We have the homotopy concept, but we want to modify it as per our requirement.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:03)

The slide content is as follows:

Introduction	Path Homotopy
<b>Fundamental Group</b>	Module 6: The Fundamental Group
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces	Module 7: $\pi_1$ of a circle
Relative Homotopy	Module 8: Some Applications
Simplicial Complexes	
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group	
Group Actions and Coverings	

So, we fix two points  $x_0, x_1 \in X$  and look at the space  $\Omega(X, x_0, x_1)$  of all possible paths in  $X$  from  $x_0$  to  $x_1$ , with the compact-open-topology. We may then look at the path components of this space. These turn out to be nothing but the classes of paths which are homotopy equivalent to each other by a homotopy which *keeps the end-points fixed*. This is the modification in the concept of homotopy that is going to play the crucial role and leads us to the study of fundamental group.

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So, we fix two points  $x_0$  and  $x_1$  belonging to any space  $X$ . You can assume that  $X$  is path connected. There is no other way and look at the space of all paths from  $x_0$  to  $x_1$  inside  $X$ . So, I have denoted it by  $\Omega(X, x_0, x_1)$  all paths. So, this is the collection of all paths. They are starting at  $x_0$  and ending at  $x_1$ .

All of them are in  $X$ . So, such a space can be given a neat topology what we call compact-open topology. What is the meaning of compact-open topology? I will tell you later on. There is some topology. We may then look at paths in this space and path component of this space. This turns out to be nothing but classes of homotopy in this space namely I have to change from, I have to change the given path to another path but all the time we are in this space means the end points  $x_0$  and  $x_1$  remain the same. So, homotopy keeps the end points the same.

So, this is the extra condition on homotopy that we are going to introduce, a modified homotopy that we are going to introduce. So, once we see what we are trying to do, then we can do that. We have to understand what we want to do first of all. So, this leads to the concept of fundamental group of the space  $X$ .

(Refer Slide Time: 19:59)

Group Actions and Coverings

## Path Homotopy

Following the simple common sense rule of tracing one curve until its end-point and then tracing another curve which begins at the end-point of the first curve, we get a binary operation on the set of all loops at a given point in a space. The constant loop is expected to play the role of a two-sided identity and tracing a given loop in the opposite direction should play the role of taking the inverse. A moment's reflection tells us that this is not exactly the case.

Anant R. Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part I

Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group

Path Homotopy  
Module 6: The Fundamental Group  
Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
Module 8: Some Applications

Well, let us introduce this concept of path homotopy. Following the simple common-sense rule of tracing one curve until its end-point and then tracing another curve which begins at that point, we get a binary operation on the set of all loops at a given point in space. To take a point and then look at a loop at that point. Means end point and the starting point are the same:  $x_1$  is equal to  $x_0$ .

Take that special case. Then take a loop, take another loop. You can compose them by this method. It is called concatenation of the loops, which is just an extension of homotopy that we have already done. The constant loop, you know, you see any constant loop; it is a funny thing. Geometrically, you would like a loop as a continuous function from an interval into the space  $X$  with the endpoints the same.

But if the endpoint, not only endpoint, all the points are the same? that is also a loop by our definition. Why do we allow this one? This is a very nice thing to be allowed, this one, the constant loop. I would like to say that it will act as a two-sided identity for this operation. Because, after you trace a curve and come back and then you do not do anything. You stay there all the time; it is just like you have traced that curve-- that is all. So, that is the meaning of this constant loop being the identity element for this operation. If the right side is identity, the left side is also identity.

But there are problems, we are just now making a demand; making, anticipating something. How to do is one thing-- trying to do is another. We want to sharpen our definition of

homotopy, how to make these things work and finally it should work. So, another thing is, if you trace a path in the opposite direction, it should be treated as the inverse of the path. You have gone along this path but finally you have come back the same way. So, it is as if you have done nothing. So, this kind of thing one has to do.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:00)

However, our expectations are met when we pass onto the homotopy classes of loops—we obtain a very powerful notion, viz., the fundamental group of a space, which is going to play a very important role in the study of topological behaviour of a space. Let us lay down a sound foundation for this important notion.

However, our expectations are met only when we pass on to the homotopy classes of loops. Otherwise as functions they are never the same. So, this is what we want to emphasize. We obtain a powerful notion namely fundamental group only when we go to homotopy classes of loops. So, this is going to play a very important role in the topological behaviour of a space.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:40)

**Definition 2.1**  
By a path in  $X$ , we mean a continuous function  $\mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$ . If  $\omega : \mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$  is a path, then  $\omega(0)$  is called the initial point of  $\omega$  and  $\omega(1)$  is called the terminal point of  $\omega$ . These two points are also called end-points of  $\omega$ . When they coincide, the path  $\omega$  is called a loop in  $X$  based at  $\omega(0) = \omega(1)$ .



So, let us make a formal definition of path homotopy. Before that let me make a formal definition of a path also now, so that we have no confusion later. A path is just a continuous function from a closed interval from the closed interval  $0,1$  to  $X$ . All the time, we have fixed the domain to be the interval  $0,1$  closed interval  $0$  to  $1$ .

If  $\omega$  is a path,  $\omega(0)$  is called initial point.  $\omega(1)$  will be called the terminal point. Both of them together can be called end-points. When the end-points coincide, such a path is called a loop and what is the base point? The base point, namely,  $\omega(0)$  which is same thing as  $\omega(1)$ . So, these are some basic terms. I have defined what is the path, initial point, terminal point, end point and a loop.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:55)

**Definition 2.2**  
 Let  $\omega, \tau : \mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$  be any two paths with the same end-points, i.e.,  $\omega(0) = \tau(0) = x_0, \omega(1) = \tau(1) = x_1$ . By a **path-homotopy** from  $\omega$  to  $\tau$  in  $X$ , we mean a map  $H : \mathbb{I} \times \mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$  such that

$$H(0, s) = x_0, H(1, s) = x_1; \forall 0 \leq s \leq 1;$$

$$\omega(t) := H(t, 0), \tau(t) := H(t, 1), \forall 0 \leq t \leq 1.$$

If there exists such a path homotopy, we say that the two paths  $\omega, \tau$  are **path-homotopic in  $X$**  and write this

$$\omega \sim \tau. \quad (2)$$

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Introduction  
 Fundamental Group  
 Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
 Relative Homotopy  
 Simplicial Complexes  
 Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
 Group Actions and Coverings

Path Homotopy  
 Module 6: The Fundamental Group  
 Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
 Module 8: Some Applications

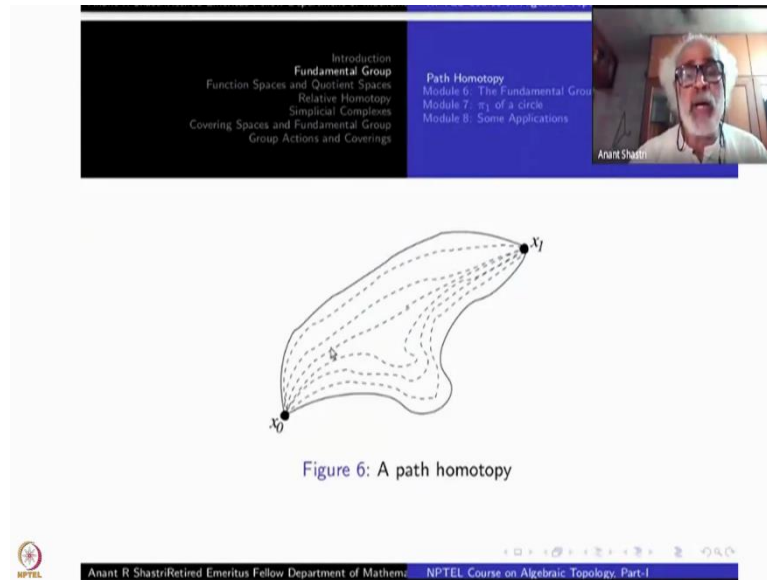
So, let us now make a path homotopy, definition of path homotopy. Take two paths, with the same end-points.  $\omega(0)$  is equal to  $\tau(0)$  equal to  $x_0$ . Let us call,  $\omega(1)$  equal  $\tau(1)$  equal to  $x_1$ . Then a path homotopy from  $\omega$  to  $\tau$  is first of all a homotopy- homotopy of these maps; remember if your map is from  $X \rightarrow Y$ , then homotopy was taken  $X \times \mathbb{I} \rightarrow Y$ .

Now, the maps are from  $I \rightarrow X$ , so homotopy will be from  $\mathbb{I} \times \mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$ . So,  $H$  is a continuous function from  $\mathbb{I} \times \mathbb{I} \rightarrow X$  such that when you take  $H(0,s)$  for all points  $s$ -- the starting thing, is  $x_0$ .  $H(1,s)$  for all points  $s$  is  $x_1$ . So, these two points do not move at all. The second coordinate showing that it is moving. They do not move at all. For every point  $0 < s < 1$ .

$H(t,0)$ ; it is the first part, that is  $\omega(t)$ .  $H(t,1)$ : it is the last path; it is  $\tau(t)$ . So, if this happens then we call  $\omega$  is path homotopic to  $\tau$ . Alright? And we use a simple notation  $\omega \sim \tau$ . A general

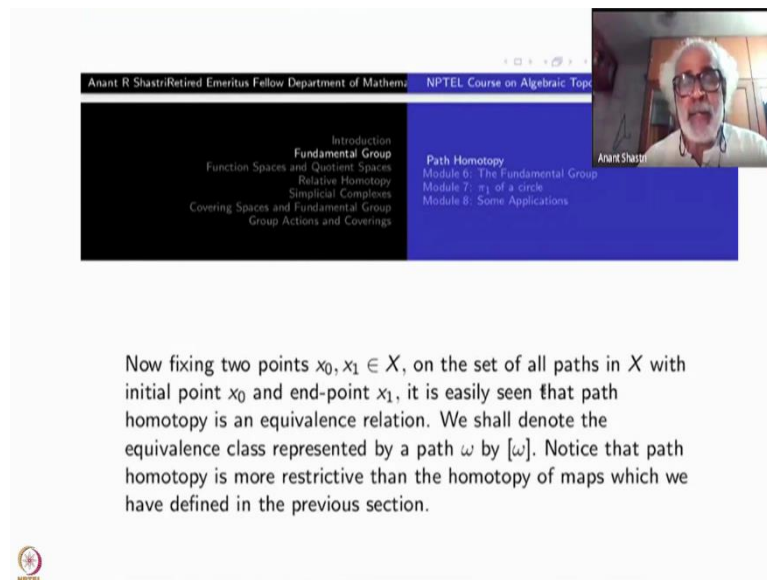
notation for homotopy was there is a twiddle and an arrow. Remember that. Here; this is a different notation. So, this is a different equivalence; this is a different symbol.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:21)



Here is a picture, starting with  $\omega$  here ending in  $\tau$  here. End-points are fixed here. So, this is you know, for  $t$  equal  $t_1, t_2, t_3$ , various stages shown by dotted lines. This is how homotopy is supposed to look like.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:50)



Fixing two-points  $x_0$  and  $x_1$ , on the set of all paths in  $X$  with initial point  $x_0$  and end point  $x_1$ , it is easily seen that path homotopy is an equivalence relation. The proof is exactly the same as the proof equivalence of homotopy of functions. We have now taken end-point being fixed at same thing.



So, every time it will fix the same thing. Transitivity, reflexivity and symmetry, all you can verify the same way. So, path homotopy is an equivalence relation amongst the class of paths which have same end points. That is what is important. Notice that path homotopy is more restrictive than the homotopy of maps which you have defined in the previous section.

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goto theorem 1.1 In particular, several paths may be path homotopic which has nothing to do with the space that we taken them in. This notion is formalized in the following definition.' The NPTEL logo is in the bottom left corner."/>

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Introduction  
Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
Relative Homotopy  
Simplicial Complexes  
Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group  
Group Actions and Coverings

Path Homotopy  
Module 6: The Fundamental Group  
Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
Module 8: Some Applications

It is natural that both the properties of the domain and the codomain will influence the nature of maps. We have witnessed this in the theorem 1.1. [goto theorem 1.1](#)

In particular, several paths may be path homotopic which has nothing to do with the space that we taken them in. This notion is formalized in the following definition.

So, it is natural that both the properties of the domain and the codomain will influence the nature of maps between them. We have witnessed this in theorem 1.1 namely if the domain is contractible, then the function is null homotopic. Similarly, codomain is contractible, any function to that is null homotopic. Right?

So, even for paths and path homotopy, there must be some such thing happening. Irrespective of where I am taking  $x \in X$ ,  $X$  is the space, I am taking the paths inside that. Let us first understand, what are these essential homotopies between paths and of course end-points must be the same. So, let us first take away this path. After that we can talk about what happens inside  $X$ . Right now, irrespective of what happens to  $x$ , where  $x$  is, this path homotopy must have certain properties. Let us understand that.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:48)

The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a dark blue header and footer. The header contains a table of contents with the following items: Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces, Relative Homotopy, Simplicial Complexes, Covering Spaces and Fundamental Group, Group Actions and Coverings, Path Homotopy, Module 6: The Fundamental Group, Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle, and Module 8: Some Applications. The main content area has a blue box titled 'Definition 2.3' containing the text: 'Given a path  $\omega : I \rightarrow X$ , by a re-parameterisation of  $\omega$ , we mean a path  $\omega \circ \alpha$  where  $\alpha : I \rightarrow I$  is any map such that  $\alpha(0) = 0$  and  $\alpha(1) = 1$ .' Below the definition is a small mouse cursor. The footer contains the NPTEL logo, the name 'Anant R. Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics', the course title 'NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I', and the slide title 'Introduction Fundamental Group Path Homotopy'.

So, this leads us towards what is called re-parameterisation. Take a path  $\omega : I \rightarrow X$ . A re-parameterisation of  $\omega$  we mean a path  $\omega \circ \alpha$  where  $\alpha$  itself is another map from  $I$  to  $I$  such that 0 goes to 0 and 1 goes to 1 under  $\alpha$ . Any path and then you change it namely  $\omega$ , instead of  $\omega(t)$  you take  $\omega(\alpha(t))$ . That will be called re-parameterisation of the path  $\omega$ .

One of the simplest things is the image of  $\omega$  and image of  $\omega \circ \alpha$  does not change. It is the same thing. So, from a layman's point of view both the paths are the same, but from a mathematician's point of view, they may not be the same. But in fact, they are not the same if  $\alpha$  is not identity map. But the layman's point of view should be respected and what happens is these two paths will always be path homotopic to each other. So, weaker equivalence is there. Any re-parameterisation will not produce any new paths in that sense. They will all be path homotopic to the original  $\omega$ . Let us see how?

(Refer Slide Time: 32:44)

Fundamental Group  
Function Spaces and Quotient Spaces  
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Group Actions and Coverings

Path Homotopy  
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Module 7:  $\pi_1$  of a circle  
Module 8: Some Applications

Anant Shastri

**Remark 2.1**  
Observe that  $A(t, s) = (1 - s)\alpha(t) + st$  gives a homotopy of  $\alpha$  with the identity map, relative to  $\{0, 1\}$ . Therefore, it follows that all re-parameterisations of a given path are path homotopic to each other. **It may be noted here that in differential geometry, wherein we are concerned about the concept of length, etc., a parameterisation  $\alpha$  is required to be smooth and satisfy  $\alpha'(t) > 0$  for all  $t \in \mathbb{I}$ .**

Anant R Shastri Retired Emeritus Fellow Department of Mathematics NPTEL Course on Algebraic Topology, Part-I

NPTEL Introduction

So, this is how. All that I have to do is, look at this homotopy  $A(t, s)$ .  $A(t, s)$  equal to

$(1 - s)\alpha(t) + s t$ . So, I am joining  $t$  and  $\alpha(t)$ . Where are they? They are inside the closed interval  $[0, 1]$ . Therefore, line segment makes sense  $1 - t$  times this plus  $s$  times that one which is again inside the closed interval. Therefore, this gives you a homotopy. When you put  $s = 0$ , it is  $\alpha(t)$ . When you put  $s = 1$ , it is the identity map  $t$  going to  $t$ . So,  $\alpha$  is homotopic to identity map.

Relative to the end-point 0 and 1. No matter what  $s$  is when you put  $t = 0$ , what do we get?  $\alpha(0)$  is also 0;  $t$  is 0. So,  $A(0, s)$  is 0 for all  $s$ . Similarly,  $t = 1$ ,  $\alpha(1)$  is 1 and  $t$  is

1.  $(1 - s)1 + s$  is equal to 1. So, this homotopy is a homotopy of the identity map with  $\alpha$ , keeping the end-points fixed.

Therefore, when you apply  $\omega$  to it, what you get? You will get the homotopy of  $\omega \circ \alpha$  with  $\omega$  composite identity which is  $\omega$ . No matter what  $\omega$  is or no matter what  $\alpha$  is, re-parameterisations of all paths are path homotopic to the original one. This is the concept.

Now, I want to warn you, you might have studied in differential geometry or even in complex analysis and so on, when there is a re-parameterisation, first of all those maps are not just maps, they are smooth maps or piecewise smooth maps. Similarly, the re-parameterisations must be smooth maps with an extra condition namely the derivative at every point must be positive. So, this is the standard condition in differential geometry. Also, in integration theory and so on in complex analysis.

But, in algebraic topology, we do not need those conditions. We are taking all continuous functions and we do not require smoothness, only end-points are the same is enough for us. If these conditions are all satisfied, there is no problem, of course. We do not need to bother about them because our spaces are arbitrary spaces. The derivative may not make sense there. So, I will stop here and we will resume from this point onwards in the next module. Thank you.