

Competition is the law of the jungle, but
Cooperation is the law of the civilization

At the turn of the third decade of
the 21st century, the world is engulfed
in two major geopolitical Conflicts — the
Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas
Conflict. Both the wars were spawned by
a serious lack of Cooperation and enhanced
Competition for land, resources and identities.
The result — endless loss of lives, destruction
and anarchy.

Now compare this situation with the
peaceful lands of the Scandinavian Countries.

They are marked with immense cooperation, harmony and symbiotic relationships between the people and ~~the~~ between people and the state. The result — immense reserves of social capital, security and happiness — true markers of a civilisation.

The above comparative analysis well presents the vagaries of Competition and harmonies of cooperation. In this essay, we will analyse how and why competition at times unleashes the destructive forces of characteristic of a jungle. At the same time, how the creative forces of cooperation shapes a civilisation. Finally

We will also see certain situation where competition becomes necessary. And how the ^{dynamic} interplay between competition and cooperation defines us.

COMPETITION: A MARKER OF CONFLICT

Competition or conflict happens when the 'will' of an individual or society comes in opposition to the will of the other. This can emerge in numerous settings. One example can be seen in numerous inter-state border and river disputes plaguing modern India. Karnataka is competing with Tamil Nadu over Kaveri waters or India is competing with Pakistan for Indus waters.

Such Competitions creates a situation of zero-sum game where a lack of cooperation results in no party benefitting from the potential benefits in the long run.

Such fights for resources is myopic at best and primordial at worst. This mentality was also evident during the time of COVID-19 crisis. The intense competition over scarce medicines, vaccines and essential supply, and not to speak of the blackmarketeering thereof was reminiscent of humans' days in the jungle.

The sheer anarchy or lawlessness that was spawned by the conflict led to loss of so many precious

lives which could have been potentially saved otherwise. Such becomes the dark force of competition that it results in the loss of human values such as empathy and selflessness. Competition makes us selfish and predatory. It kicks in our primal instinct of survival no matter the cost. It takes us back to the jungle!

Competition leaves the weakest among us to fend for themselves. This is in sharp contrast to a civilisation where the weakest too have a fair chance to move up the ladder and realise their full potential. Imagine an infant in a remote location of Sub-Saharan

Africa. Had it not been for the Cooperative forces of globalisation that took vaccine to her, would she be able to survive as long as a child in say, New Delhi? Thus Cooperation has a lot to offer and Competition has a lot to snatch away.

COOPERATION - A VACCINE FOR SURVIVAL

Thomas Hobbes in his famous work Leviathan, describes the state of nature as one of Competition, fear and Conflict for survival. It was a war of all against all. Humans were losing. The survival instinct of humans made them realise that it was more prudent to Cooperate than to fight. It led to

the ~~est~~ genesis of a 'state' under which humans start Cooperation in multifarious ways— trade, language, art, politics, Society— all was born taking us to a civilised form. Although there have been intermittent Competition even in this arrangement but by and large we all have Cooperated ever since.

Even our success as the masters of the planet Earth has been due to our biological instinct to Cooperate. Yuval Noah Harari in his book Sapiens argues that this is exactly what makes us different from baboons. They can Cooperate in small numbers but not in the number of 7.7 Billion!

Similarly in his work 'Biology of Belief', Bruce Lipton argues that multicellular life was born out of process of Cooperation. It is fascinating to visualise human body itself as a work factory for numerous cells each having a designated work and no cell is left to fend for itself!

This biological instinct of Cooperation unleashes its creative force in the physical world as well. At an individual level, we tend to become more altruistic, something which is missing in the jungle. Philanthropists such as Kailash Satyarthi or Sonu Sood did much for the emancipation of the poor masses around them.

At yet another level, the institution of family and marriage is born out of Cooperation and love. This is perhaps the most defining feature of human civilisation. According to Confucius, fulfilling familial responsibilities is one of the highest virtues of a human being.

At the level of society, humans Cooperate at multiple levels. The invention of 'money' as a medium of exchange epitomises the Collaborative spirit of humans. The trust we repose in the banking system and our fellow humans is quite phenomenal. This has

resulted in the development of modern society with all its paraphernalia deployed in the service of the human civilisation.

Moreover, Our cooperation in the imagination of a shared identity has resulted in the formation of Nation States. The 'State' is responsible for the protection of human lives through law and order; Welfare of its citizens and propagation of civilisational ideals.

At the international level too, instances of Cooperation abound. The vaccine development during Covid-19 in record amount of

time was a testament to human's ability to bring about meaningful changes to the lives of all.

The establishment of supranational organisations such as the United Nations symbolises the true achievement of human civilisation.

At the same time, we must also keep in mind that competition in right spirit can be a creative force too. The conflict of ideas lead to the emergence of truth, as evident in the Socratic method of dialogue or the Indian tradition of argumentation. Or If Competition is

for the purpose to better ourselves, for example Competition among Indian states to score better in Swacchata.

The key to a progressive civilisation is taking competition in a healthy spirit wherever necessary, and Cooperation wherever possible. It is only through utilising their collective power can humans usher in an age of tomorrow, and age where inequalities, poverty, and hunger vanish. An ~~age~~ age when all be happy and healthy, depicted in the Sanskrit adage

'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina,
Sarve Bhantu Niramaya.'

U.P.S.C.

प्रश्न संख्या
(Question No)

इस पृष्ठ में कुल
५ प्रश्न हैं
(Total 5 questions are given in this page)

TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Victor Frankl, in his Seminal work 'Man's Search for Meaning' Vividly recounts his days of sheer atrocities and horror in Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Nazi Germany. Faced with an almost Certainty of death, his fellow interns lost all hope for a future. There was no future. To them, death was a better option. But not for Frankl. In a situation where life could not get any worse, Frankl found a sense of profound meaning in his life. When faced with the question of whether to be or not to be, when others found solace in the latter, Frankl found valiance in the former.

In this essay, we will explore the ~~for~~ question of existence itself. We will start by examining why the question 'To be or not to be' emerges in the first place. While trying to answer it we will try to unravel the meaning of human existence and also ^{find} a way for a good life.

LIFE IS FULL OF SUFFERING - BUDDHA

With the sheer magnificence and vividness of life, it also comes with a fair share of suffering ~~with~~ attached ^{to} it. The cause of suffering can be multifarious. Right from the onset of our lives, we work incessantly for a 'good future'. A future of comfort and recognition. A future

where we age with our loved ones. But eventually death and decay takes over. Our loved ones are gone forever. We realise that all the things we did, all the sufferings we endured was all ~~not~~ for nothing. The existential dread that follows lead us to ~~believe~~ question the futility of human existence. We lose our purpose. This is exactly what happened to the inmates at Concentration Camps. They developed a general apathy towards life.

Also, when we look up to the sky and into the vastness of the Cosmos, we see the insignificance of the human civilisation in the grand scheme of ~~these~~ things "What if there

is no purpose and meaning of human life after all?", "what if we are just a tiny blue ball floating around in the sea of an indifferent universe?" "what if there is no god or creator looking after us?"

Even if there is a benevolent god, what if everything is pre-determined by him? And if it is so, does it mean we don't have any free will? And if we don't, why am I made to suffer by the benevolent god? why is there evil all around us and why, more often than not, it reigns supreme over the good?

When faced with such questions about life, which seems so chaotic and death, which seems so peaceful, a person commits psychological suicide, as depicted in Albert Camus' influential work 'The Stranger'. They develop a sense of apathy towards life and death, and start leading a life of meaninglessness. Time and time again, we often come across such people who lead an animal existence. They die at 35 ~~and~~, we just bury them at 75.

On the other hand, faced with the same existential questions, few of us find true meaning and purpose. We not only survive, we thrive!

WE ARE WHAT WE CHOOSE TO BE

No one can deny the epistemic truth about death. Those who have risen will eventually fall. But that does not mean we wait for our final companion to arrive. We still have a choice to make about our life. In the Hrishikesh Mukherji's blockbuster movie 'Anand', the protagonist (Rajesh Khanna) suffered from intestinal cancer and had 6 months to live. But his condition didn't stop him to lead a life of joy, friendship and humour.

Similarly, when renowned Scientist Stephen Hawking lost ~~at~~ his motor abilities, he opened his mind up to the Cosmos. The brilliance of

the space scientist is a sheer testament to the power of human fortitude in the face of an eventual doom.

Both Anand and Hawking when faced with the same question of whether to be or not to be, decided to infuse their lives with a profound sense of meaning.

Moreover, even if we are insignificant blue balls in an indifferent universe, we are still quite significant for ourselves. No one knows about the complete mysteries of the universe and what all lies out there. The finite minds of humans probably could never fathom the

infinitude of the universe. We are earthly beings and must find meaning in the people around us. Imagine the 28 years that Nelson Mandela spent in the prison. A man having lost all the fruitful years of his youth could have easily succumbed to a kind of psychological suicide and become indifferent towards anything outside his prison. But he found deep meaning in the freedom of his people. For him, life was worth fighting for and nothing was predetermined by fate.

And even if universe was predetermined and we all are like dogs bound by the cart of

a moving target, we still have a certain degree of freedom offered by the slackness of the rope of our bondage.

When we think about life in this fashion, we will always try to be most useful in the limited autonomy we are granted with. Bhagrat Geeta exhorts us to do our deed without thinking about the end result. Such thinking has practical utility in the field of administration. Emotionally intelligent officers operating in the limited autonomy granted by the determinism of rules and laws, try to maximise the common good and welfare. Examples abound.

Taking the debate further,
We saw how we yearn for the existence
of a benevolent god and when we see
evil and suffering all around us, we
go ~~for~~ towards a religious suicide, we
become non-believers. We begin to doubt life.
Marcus Aurelius in his book The Meditations
had slightly different take. ~~We~~ He believed
in the 'logos' or the logic and reason
that pervades the universe. We shouldn't
judge a situation because 'logos' has a
larger plan. Things are always as they
should be. We can't change our predicament
but we can always change our responses
to it. The great Roman stoic philosopher
King lost all his 13 children and wife,
still he lived a life of virtue and benevolence.

~~This~~ Thus, we saw that the predicament of human existence is such that it poses in front of us numerous questions about life and death. The secret, however, is to find true purpose and meanings of our lives. We do not know anything beyond death, how final is it and what lies beyond. But we do know quite a bit about life. We must have a never-give-up attitude towards life. We must find happiness in the short life that we share with our loved ones. In the words of J.K. Rowling,

Happiness can be found in the darkest of times if one remembers to turn on the light'. Life is what it is,

We can't change the very facets of it, but we must always live actively, taking challenges head on and strive towards a better future.

In the words of Shiv Khera —

"When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're treading seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
When you want to smile but you have to sigh,

~~Rest if you must, but don't~~
When fear is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit".