

Module-4

Human Adjustment Process: Maintenance Needs

Till now we have discussed the major dimensions that determine the level of subjective adjustment of any given individual in a given culture. We have been trying our best to become as generic as possible. Now we are going to begin with the premise that all human beings are normal and well adjusted. Then are the basic needs equally distributed among all human beings? If so, does it maintain their level of adjustment to whatever level they are? What we find is that we try to maintain a level of equilibrium with respect to certain driving forces within ourselves. They are called maintenance needs. Remember that these are the driving forces that are inherent in you. These needs are—

Curiosity
Understanding
Order
Predictability
Adequacy
Competence
Security
Love and belongingness
Approval
Value and meaning
Hope

Need Hierarchy and Maintenance Needs

Those of you who have been to introductory psychology course must be remembering the need hierarchy theory. We shall discuss Maslow's need hierarchy theory and see how it corresponds with the maintenance needs. Maslow's theory proposed that human needs can be divided in the form of a pyramidal structure that includes the physiological needs, security needs, affiliation needs, self esteem, and the need for self-actualization.

There is an interesting interpretation why the need hierarchy theory is presented in a pyramidal form. There are two interesting explanations for this. One, somewhere it conveys the segment of the given population which is involved in satisfying a given need. So, when we say that at the first level we have physiological (basic/biogenic/biological) needs we refer to hunger, thirst, sex and sleep. Then comes the need for security. You don't only think of today's meal; rather you think of supper, tomorrow's meal, meal of your dependents and so forth. "What happens after this?" So, you think more and more of security in terms of satisfaction of the basic needs. Similarly, one proceeds with other needs. The interpretation for pyramidal shape is that at a given point in time the size of the population involved in the satisfaction of the physiological needs will always be much higher compared to the number of people involved in the satisfaction of their security needs. So, the area occupied by the later is comparatively smaller. This is true for other needs as well. Hence, the pyramid gradually shrinks. This basically means that most of us remain satisfying only our biological needs in our lives or we move little ahead; a very small percentage of the population moves to the top level where you tend to actualize yourself.

After need for security you have affiliation needs wherein you want to belong to people and you want others to belong to you. Now this belongingness is guides different types of behaviour. You tend to fall in love with somebody, want to marry, procreate, develop love for kids, and so forth. This is the usual trend at intimate front in life. On the

other front, need for affiliation also makes you obtain certain memberships. People join alumni associations, skydivers club, boating club, and so forth. You want to maintain all kinds of affiliations. Why? Primarily because you take pride in saying that I belong to these many associations; these are the people that are associated to me or I am associated to them; these are the groups or these are the individuals with whom I relate. All this adds to your ego structure. If you are supposed to define yourself, one way of doing it could be to define yourself in terms of your inherent traits. Another way could be to talk about those who belong to you and vice-versa. Take the example of marriage negotiations in our culture. This is true only for arranged marriages. The elderly members of the two families will always talk in terms of their family tree thereby telling the other party who is what in the family. The more stable and recognized status you have in the given hierarchy, more chances you have of the relationship getting approved by the negotiating parties. Take the example of job applications. When you apply for certain positions you are asked about the societies you have memberships of and you say that I belong to say, American psychological association, National academy of psychology, etc. There is somewhere a sense of happiness and attachment that you derive besides your status getting elevated.

A student of this course once shared an experience when he was caught on his bike without driving license. During examination at the police post he disclosed that he was a third year B.Tech student of an IIT. The concerned police officer just warned him and did not penalize him for his action. Here, the concerned student derived a secondary benefit out of his affiliation. Many of you wear t-shirt printed with texts like 'hall X'. This is also reflection of pride that you derive out of it. In certain sense it hardly makes a difference, whether you are in hall 1, 2, 3, 4 or 10. These are simply the name of hostels.

You remember the case of Mr Pandher, the main accused in the Nithari episode. This was a case where a person and his servant were arrested for killing small children and eating

their body parts. While the whole media was projecting the evil picture of Mr Pandher, his son came forward vehemently claiming that his father was innocent. This shows that irrespective of the circumstances, one takes pride in getting affiliated to someone. The love and trust in the father remains intact irrespective of the life circumstances. Similarly, in the case of hostels you do not consider hall 3 to be made of bricks and mortar; you consider, “it is the hall to which I belong”. So, the psychological feeling that you derive out of the affiliation is much higher as compared to when you simply look at it as a structure.

After the need of affiliation, you move to the next level, self esteem. You gradually consider that your self esteem goes high and therefore the total derivation of the sense of positivity increases manifold in you. You realize that up to a little higher degree, the shocking events of your life do not break you down because your self-esteem by default has gone up very high because you have been able to cross certain stages of satisfaction of the basic needs. Major events can of course affect you but when faced with events of moderate or little higher level you would be able to retain your integrity, your mental balance. You would be able to reflect socially adjusted behaviour irrespective of the fact that you are in a troubled situation right now. Self esteem helps you in this way.

If you are able to satisfy your self-esteem needs, you move to a state where you profess certain life philosophies and millions and millions of people follow you. That is the level of self actualization. You have actualized your view point, your prophecy of life and your prophecy is being looked forward by many people. This is one interpretation why Maslow’s need hierarchy theory is put in a pyramidal shape.

Second interesting explanation that has to do with psychological adjustment is that one gradually moves from one stage of the hierarchy to the other. If you want stability in terms of your level of adjustment you have to gradually move from stage one to stage two and then to three, and so forth. So, you get engaged in satisfaction of physiological needs,

then you move ahead and then again you move ahead to the other needs. Remember that it is not the case that when you move ahead you do not have to satisfy the need which you had claimed to have satisfied. It is not that you will no more have need for food anymore the moment you move to security or you do not want to satisfy your hunger and thirst and you do not want to remain secure because you have moved to affiliation. That is not true. Rather, you consider that you will be able to satisfy your physiological needs, you are secure, you are happy with the affiliation and then gradually you move ahead.

A question comes that what happens if suddenly someone wants to make a quantum jump. You claim that you do not value physiological, security and affiliation needs and aim to satisfy needs at the top of the hierarchy. It has been found that if you show a tendency to make a quantum jump, the chances of you remaining unstable in a given state are very high.

Let us take examples from our cultural heritage. During our discussion on the interpretation of right and wrong we had come across a historical character *Chitralekha*. At that time we discussed how the context and not the content define the rights and the wrongs. *Kumargiri* was another character. He was practicing sage hood since adolescence. A time came when Chitralekha was puzzled out of the worldly affairs and decided to take *sanyaas*. She came to *Kumargiri* to learn saintly practices to attain salvation. As described in the text, *Kumargiri* was infatuated towards *Chitralekha*. Now the lady who was involved in worldly affairs wanted to practice sage hood and get salvation whereas the man who right from the beginning was practicing sage hood was thinking in terms of worldly life. You can read the full description to understand the dichotomy of life.

One more story from our rich cultural heritage. Nahusha, a king of Aila dynasty, had two sons— Yati and Yayati. They were very distinct from each other in nature. Yayati, the younger son, was just like any other prince who later on became king. The eldest son Yati was convinced that the worldly way of life was not the correct way right from his adolescent

days. Therefore he went to the forest and became a *muni*. Irrespective of the fact that Yayati was involved in all types of activities that are usually attached to kings of those days, he still had balanced life style and a balanced state of mind compared to Yati who later in his life wanted to attain supernatural powers so that he could transform women into men. As described in the text, one of his aims in life was this transformation. You can imagine the state of someone's mind when the life goal of somebody could be so bizarre, that too after acquiring certain power out of meditative practices.

These two stories from our culture have something common. One character each from both the stories made quantum jump in their life. The stability in both these cases was compromised with. Therefore, when you are involved in the worldly affairs, you think about studies, placements, some years of job, about either enhancing your experience or having more education, getting married, having kids, and so forth. All of these are instrumental in getting stability in life. This is how our culture promotes a certain way of life. This could be assumed to be a derivative of aggregate social knowledge about acquiring stability in life.

Maintenance Needs

Let us revert back to maintenance needs. You might observe certain similarities between maintenance needs and the behavioural scheme described in Maslow's need hierarchy theory. Maintenance needs tell you the list of those needs which help you get engaged with the worldly affairs, thereby making you take efforts that will help you adjust in the environment irrespective of the changes you are experiencing. The first maintenance need is curiosity. Human beings are very curious by nature. You can recollect examples from your daily life experiences. See the reaction of small children. When you tend to hide something from them they try to search it out. Look at neonatal growth pattern. If you show something to the baby they will be attracted towards it but as you remove it they will not search for it.

But this is true only till first few months. Thereafter, if you hide something the baby will make anticipatory movements assuming that probably the dislocated object is at this point. So, if I show a relatively older baby an object and hide it behind myself, the baby will make anticipatory movements considering that the arm has been put back therefore the object is probably now located at the back of the individual who showed it to him. As we grow up we do not randomly search for all the objects that we are shown in life like a younger baby does, but we decide the areas based on both the factors, our interests and the fact that we are able to achieve something in that area. Based on those factors, we start showing certain degree of curiosity. For example, you might be interested in knowing new facts in certain aspects of education but not in all the spheres. Say, you study one or the other branch of science and technology but you are not interested in something like philosophy of science or history of science and technology. You are not interested in topics like science, society and culture. So, there are areas where you invest your interest and there are areas where you cease to do so. You know that you cannot peep into all spheres therefore you selectively choose where to invest your interest and where not to. This is also guided by the fact that wherever you have invested your interest in you have been able to derive some primary or secondary benefit out of it.

However, there is a need to make a distinction between curiosity and search guided by group dynamics. During my school days only Doordarshan was available and they use to telecast a movie every Sunday. The trend among our classmates was that everybody would watch Sunday evening movie telecasted on Doordarshan, irrespective of how bad or good they find the movie. The following week used to be dominated by discussion related to the telecasted movie. So, if you missed the movie you realize that you are not able to participate in the group discussion. This use to lead to a sense of alienation and everybody want to avoid

it. Therefore, we all use to watch the movies and retain the level of curiosity so that the hot topic of discussion remains live and we derive the acceptance by the group.

Similar pattern was observed in one of our recent studies. You find liking, preference and repulsion as well when it comes to selecting a TV channel when one channel telecasts Doremon, the other telecasts Shinchon and the third shows Tom and Jerry around the same time. Which one will you as a modern kid choose? We did this exercise for small kids in schools in Kanpur city to realize that majority of the kids preferred to watch Doremon. The reason primarily was that according to the kids, rest of the children also watched Doremon. So, in case, you watch some other show, you will feel alienated because out of 25 pupils in their section in school 20 people discussed Doremon and not the other characters. These are some of the compulsive, extraneous forces that make you become curious about a character being telecasted. Similarly, there would be certain things in the society in contemporary times that will guide your curiosity.

Let us take another example. Irrespective of how pro-or anti-American one was and irrespective of how much one approved of terrorism as a module, everyone was extremely curious to know what happened to Osama Bin Laden till his death was officially declared. The process of interest for Doremon and Osama Bin Laden are not that different. You have been told by the extraneous forces that here is a high price target. The reason for the pricing is told to you and this guides your curiosity.

Similarly, when you watch a documentary feature on National Geography or Discovery channels you find a pattern in their presentation. They lead the story to a certain point, leave it half way and start another story. Say, the narrator who is describing the state of monkeys in India might first personalize a monkey— ‘Rakesh, a six year old monkey in Bhuvaneshwar.....’ and the story leads you to a certain point and then they show temple life in old Bhuvaneshwar city. Story about monkey is terminated and it is now all about the temple

till a time comes when monkey and temples are put together. Then they show something about modern lifestyle and then it is monkey, temple and modern life style put together. This is how you play with curiosity of human beings. This is how you ensure that viewers will watch it for full 45 minutes, otherwise if they keep on telling you about Rakesh, after 10 minutes, you will lose interest. This could be one of the reasons why classroom lectures seems boring as the same topic continues for 50 long minutes. You tend to lose interest. If the instructor is replaced by a guest lecturer, it is little more interesting as certain things have changed. You must have heard few speakers who know how to initiate, where to terminate, and when to restart. Their lectures are invariably more interesting.

This curiosity has very interesting aspects. A good number of people around the world are indulged in R&D activities. They are occupied in different types of research, whether it is excavating fossils in Africa or developing new vaccines for cancer or AIDS or finding water on Mars; even very farfetched goals with no certainty of success also drags our attention. This tendency keeps us engaged and helps us in finding meaning in our enterprise in life. As human beings we keep on evolving and adding new features to it. This is beneficial on individual as well as on collective level.

Think of a possibility that you are a man without curiosity. Although it happens with all of us, but fortunately while losing curiosity in few things we keep becoming curious about something else. Say, first time when you saw the sun rising or the full moon in the night and you realized how beautiful the sight was; complete darkness, moonless nights or evenings are very interesting to you. Gradually you lose interest in these things. They become common events. Fortunately when you lose interest in these things you keep adding certain other areas to your curiosity. When you hear that there was a snowfall 15 kilometres from here and you want to visit that place is an example of something which you have not seen before and is curious to see and know about. This is how you delete certain elements from your curiosity

and add new elements. This exercise continues throughout our lives. But remember, the beauty is to understand that whatever you are curious about today is bound to lose its curiosity the next day. If I stretch it a bit, this is how many human relations fail as many things are taken for granted. You do not behave the way you behaved with your parents and your siblings. You do not treat your husband or wife the way you did when they were your boyfriend or girlfriend or when you were newlywed. The treatment varies because certain things are taken for granted. The joy of togetherness is depleted when your level of involvement and certain degree of curiosity are compromised with. The moment you delete curiosity from the equation, predictability sets in and life seems repetitive and monotonous.

The good aspect is that we are still very curious about things which can be achieved and in many cases about things which cannot be achieved. I know that I can never see or meet God but I pray and worship him on important occasions. All of us are very sure that God will never come, yet we are still curious about mystical things. You know that you cannot become an astronaut but still you are curious to know the latest development in Mars exploration.

Very interestingly we will find that this element of curiosity, at times, especially during school or college education, is tried to be trimmed by the society. For example, you are really curious about butterflies after seeing them in your school book. On seeing a butterfly in your home or school you want to know more about them but your parents or your teachers tell you that this is not the time for that, this is the time to learn mathematics or other subject matters. Exploring the details of butterflies is unwanted. Your curiosity is impeded. Today you say that you are really interested in your B. Tech project. You want to cut on your course load because you want to dedicate yourself to your project but the education system will not allow you to do so. You will find that the stakeholders, the teachers and parents or

your significant others, always try to cut down something so that they provide directionality to your curiosity.

Overall curiosity is considered to be the prime factor in human nature that somewhere still helps you remain interested in your life and you do not lose interest or get depressed. Even while facing odd times in your life you are curious enough to see the other end of the tunnel. You might fail in certain things in your life but still curious about those or other things. Certain momentary changes in your life do not allow you to sink down. You still carry on and keep floating anticipating that in those areas you will soon start swimming. Therefore, curiosity plays a vital role in human adjustment process. The more curious you are the more you try your best to understand things; interpret things in much better manner.

The moment you start looking for who, what, why, when all you are trying to do is to define a set of rules which will govern a given process. For example, take all the inventions in this world. We know that majority of them were accidentally achieved. The scientist concerned was looking for something else and in the process found something quite different. From a socio-political angle, when you win an election in democracy, the truth is also that a sizeable percentage of the voters did not vote for you. You are celebrated for the votes you got but not penalized for the percentage that did not. Similarly, if a scientist finds something else by accident, he is celebrated for what he discovered and nobody blames him for not finding what he was initially trying to. This world is like this. You are curious about something; you put in effort, time and resource for that and accidentally find something else. With that you try to define the what, when and how of the event. Once you define all this, you claim of having set things in order and this is the step by step order that can be replicated. The whole of science is based on understanding and ordering and this helps us in understanding and predicting life and its events more and more.

In terms of maintenance needs, we cannot think of needs playing their roles independently. They will always be a web of events where all these maintenance needs will influence that very event which will finally guide our behaviour. You are curious and hence you try to understand, the more you understand, the more you put things in order, the more you are able to do that, the more is the predictability and replicability factor. You realize that this amount of knowledge is adequate enough, so there is an inward sense of fulfilment and you feel that you should transgress to other fields. For example, someone has learnt playing guitar after retirement. The possibility is that the person concerned thought of his life conditions that demanded him to do something else and now that he has been able to do so, he can venture into some new areas. Ultimately you derive a sense of adequacy after mastering the new skill.

We seek approval from others. This is a part of social life. You must have seen how children grow and learn. Say, a 4 month old child does something and you approve the exhibited behaviour; the child will repeat it. This is how accidental bodily movements get replicated into voluntary bodily movements. Similarly when the child starts babbling, all the sounds are repeated because the external environment forces or reinforces the child to do so. If the child modulates it, the sound has a different meaning. If the child modulates it even more and in much better manner in later part of his life, he or she might become a singer. Most of this behaviour is based on approval. Let us take a little different example. In our culture it is considered bad to reflect negativities of others. Suppose you have a friend with bad voice but interested in singing. When you come across such people and instead of making them realize their bad voice you overtly appreciate; you indirectly approve of their behaviour. Compared to them those who do not get approval refrain from singing in public.

If you are a man of achievement, despite the realization that you cannot modulate your voice you do not mind singing a bit on certain occasion. You are pretty aware that

people will not appreciate your voice rather your effort would be appreciated. This is likely to come only when you realize that you have been able to establish your capability in some other area. You must have seen the cricket players singing on stage in few shows. Another extreme of this is when you sing realizing that there is no possibility of rejection; where approval is not at all needed. All mothers sing before their babies. Grown-up babies will tell you that who sings is important than the voice or song.

Approval plays a big part in broadening our social relationships. You seek approval from people very near to you. When you have your peer group during adolescence, you show loyalty to your group. The fact is that you have now moved beyond yourself and your family and are now thinking about strangers whom you consider important enough and you seek their approval. At a systemic level, a bill is tabled in the lower or upper house and the elected representatives' vote for or against it. This is also seeking approval. When a contestant comes to your constituency asking for vote he or she is seeking your approval. Right from personal to systemic levels we seek and give approval. This somewhere helps putting things in order in a much better manner as you had made things much more systematic and others also feel that they are stake holders in the process.

Finally whatever you are doing in life, you should feel that it has some value. It gives meaning for your survival. Attaching meaning to the things one is involved in makes life and works both valuable. There is a wide range of behaviour that we, as human beings, exhibit. Say, you decide to sacrifice your belongings for your nation. Right from the beginning, you used to participate in all sorts of social movements and thereafter in national level political movements. This is how you have invested your life. Somebody might have invested life in something else. How does one perceive his or her life, is very important.

In every country you will find critical number of people who have invested their lives in a manner that is different from the majority. Recently a doctor in Chhatisgarh was arrested

by the state police because allegedly he used to provide medical aid to naxals. This led to a discussion. Here you have a doctor supposed to be having sympathies for naxals who are otherwise considered armed rebellion against the established government. The forces considered this act to be illegal and they arrest him and he was granted bail by the Supreme Court of India. You say as a professional doctor that I do not discriminate between law abiding citizens and law breaking citizen. All I decide is whether the body in front of me is a diseased or a sound body. As a doctor I am only interested in the remedies I can provide to the diseased body and not who the person is. If you are working with that cause you have given a meaning to your thought processes by the actions you are involved in. If you are a police officer you are interested in interpreting whether the action breaks the law of the land or upholds them. Meaning making and endorsement of action will change accordingly.

There are hundreds and hundreds of such stories. Everyone has their own definitions of what they are doing. Great philosopher Shankaracharya went to the Himalayas for meditation at a age when most people are most fascinated towards worldly affairs. Some people find meaning in meditation and spirituality while some find it in picking up arms against the establishment and the law enforcement agencies. Some say that I have seen how children of sex workers live and suffer in the red light areas so I will start an NGO taking care of their education. When a bandit from Chambal butchered people in *Behmai* village, it was revenge for her. Later, she justified her act. Hitler did the same thing at a much larger scale. Everybody finds meaning in whatever they are doing. Whether it is revenge or glorification of a philosophy or a secondary gain that you are trying to attain, but people get involved in whatever they are doing and have justification for their involvement. Whether good or bad, whether appreciated or condemned, the moment you are able to find meaning in whatever you are engaged in, you have some hope in life. Irrespective of what you are doing, ultimately you are trying to maintain the integrity of your ego and you are happy with

whatever you are and do not end up in a situation where you fall in a condition where your mental balance gets disturbed. You could be a lawyer, a businessman, a teacher, a doctor, a prostitute, a thief, or any other thing for that matter, but you try maintaining your “sane state of mind” according to your society and that is the prime issue when we talk about these things with respect to adjustment.