Global Essay Competition 2023

Title: Prosocial Behaviour as an added metric for evaluation in the opportunity driven ecosystem: A replacement to the long-standing regime of sole meritocracy

Essay:

Context

They told me that in order to be a future leader, I need to read.

So, I woke up in the morning and grabbed the first thing I could find – a newspaper. I saw that there have been conversations making rounds about the World Bank updating the International Poverty Line thereby pushing more people under the belt, a staggering 80% increase in people experiencing food insecurity over last few years, an impending risk of global warming reaching 1.5 degree Celsius that is bound to bring upon us further climate hazards. Focussing on India, there is a little less than half of the population that continues to defecate in the open, with 50% villagers having no access to healthcare systems. Not to forget, apprehensions about a sudden pandemic taking away numerous lives.

As I closed the paper, I realised that it would not be wrong to say that we are making our way through multiple varied-length crises. The greatest danger to the world is believing that someone else will save it. We need to take matters in our own hands and do our bit to make lives better. It is times like these when we require our global and country leaders to step in.

A leader is expected to uphold a pivotal characteristic of his role during the time of a crisis – by making a change in people's lives. But in a world where we have witnessed big banners underpaying taxes, raised prices of limited essentials, toxic corporate culture, misuse of information, mistreatment of employees, where exactly are we going wrong?

Legacy

How do our legislators, managers, senior officers, leaders and eminent professionals in the country reach their position?

In ancient mythology, academic intelligence was associated with gods and goddesses. In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, was known for her intelligence and was the patron god of Athens, a city known for its intellectual and philosophical traditions. In many traditions, priests and priestesses were considered keepers of knowledge and wisdom, responsible for recording and passing down important historical and religious texts. Those who were highly educated and accomplished in academics were often held in high esteem and were considered to be the most respected members of the society.

The development of writing systems and the creation of libraries and schools in ancient Greece and Rome, for example, allowed for the preservation and dissemination of knowledge and the cultivation of intellectual abilities. The concept of "intelligence" as a measurable trait also has its roots in early 20th-century psychology and the development of intelligence tests. The development of these tests, and the subsequent use of intelligence scores as a metric for academic and professional success, helped solidify the link between intelligence and academic achievement in popular perception. These tests were often used to determine suitability for certain jobs, educational opportunities and military services.

Even today, top companies in India, such as TCS, Wipro etc. use aptitude tests as a part of their recruitment process. Life altering professions require good scores in entrance tests like NEET for medicine aspirants and JEE for engineering aspirants to get into top colleges of India. Administrative

services require one to prove their intellect and memory skills through one of the toughest exams (UPSC) in the world with just 0.2% success rate. Individuals who wish to be in management have to clear CAT entrance test followed by an interview only to be in the top 5 percentile in order to join a prestigious institute. Many Public Sector Undertakings in the country use aptitude tests to hire employees. Needless to say, that majority of such individuals go on to make the most out of their career in terms of power, position and pay.

While this practise of measuring intelligence, memory and subject matter expertise to award life-defining opportunities of education and occupation is intuitively justified and well balanced; should there not be a way to analyse an individual's intent and willingness to contribute to the society considering the power these opportunities bring to him?

Problem

The man seated on the big round table can help. But does he want to?

In times of crisis, we require individuals to come forward and take steps to reach solutions. The individual coming up to provide support, will need to have both **resources** and the **intent** to do good.[1] Talking about resources, we have our structure designed so that a majority of wealth resides with the top richest in the country. As per the State of Inequality in India Report, 2022, over 30% of the country's wealth resides with the top 10% richest population. Situation is not much different globally where the top 10% richest population owns about 57% of the global wealth. *(World Inequality Report, 2021)*

In India, the structure for distribution of wages is such that the highest pay resides with occupations such as Legislators, Senior officials, Managers and Professionals. It is almost twice that of clerks and ten times that of agricultural workers. *(India Wage Report, 2018)*

When a certain section of the society earns in multiples compared to the others, they are entitled to certain benefits that are not reachable by the weaker. It is imperative that besides hard cash, there will be responsibility towards the society that comes along with the power and position.

He has to be ready to take the responsibility up.

While giving him the seat on the big round table we made sure he had the cognitive capability to lead. But did we make any effort to know his social construct and empathetic ability?

Idea

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

- *Aristotle*

Our education system is so built that we have given substantial importance to intellect. It is not wrong per se, but to look at things in a different perspective, we require individuals entering rich institutes and joining high ranked jobs to be socially conscious and giving as human beings. The way the world is headed, we require leaders in every field to be concerned about the planet, the workers operating under him, and have potential ideas to help around. Although it is not easy to measure a person's emotional intelligence and rank his social consciousness explicitly, some measures could be a start in the direction. Getting individuals (mainly pupils and employable class) of the country to practise social contribution through their early, growing years can help in development of their character and building a better society in general.

In the past we have introduced subjects like Moral Science and Ethics in course curriculum for exams at school and college level, but such subjects are read only superficially in the classroom with hardly

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[1] *For a simpler analysis and ideation, we will focus on one country for examples, here India.*

any retention and a lack of motivation to implement. We need to have a system where there is considerable understanding of what help is required and how help can be provided at an individual level. There has to be an **incentive-linked motivation** that promotes participation with the objective,

a) to acquaint the subject to the habit of social contribution, and

b) promoting prosocial behaviour to reach the broader idea of alleviating the needs of the society.

(The big picture)

An ecosystem of social awareness should be built into the education system as a mandate for furthering career prospects. The concept of '**social rating**' to be introduced on a nationwide scale to promote a helping hand to any citizen in distress, which in turn would contribute to the social rating of the helping hand. Although the system should be available to all, social ratings should be a mandate for entry into colleges and jobs which shall build an impetus for the students and targeted working population to increase their ratings thereby causing a successful implementation of the idea. Planting trees for a NGO, helping an old man fetch groceries or teaching a poor child before his finals without pay could all be potential contributions. Donation of funds or asking for monetary favours shall not be a contribution. The system should be available to all, but particular focus is being made on the 15- to 32-year-old population who are more inclined towards climbing the ladder to success. There should be mandates on social rating growth per term within school or college curriculum. Job switches or promotions could also be linked to the same. Basis the success, the system could be implemented with other regular day-to-day incentives to increase involvement of the higher aged population as well.

The proposal for implementation of such an ecosystem is the creation of an app – *Helping Hand*. If it is being considered for India, as we have for most part of this discussion, it could be similar to the CoWin app that was created by the Centre as a repository base for covid vaccination and background data of all Indian citizens. In a likewise manner, this app could have the registered background data (including name, date of birth, occupation, address, and identity proof KYC[2]) for all the citizens. It will have the option to post any need under the available tabs – *educational, household, emergency, environment*.[3] A citizen when in need for help, can post their requirement under the specific tab and reach out for help. There is a geolocation enabled feature on the app that alerts citizens within a particular radius, say of 1 km, about the helpee. The alert provides the name of the helpee, his area, and the kind of help required. Once it is accepted by another citizen, the alert ceases and the helpee is informed of the helper's details. They can then coordinate through app enabled chat feature to take the conversation forward. The radius keeps increasing if nobody reaches out within time, until a helping hand signs up.

Every time one helps a citizen in some manner, he gets stars (similar to a rating system). The stars are awarded by the helpee to the helper basis his satisfaction (say 1 being minimum and 5 being maximum). Considering the need for an environmental change at this hour, the app builder could create an algorithm that requires more stars to be allotted for an environmental help. In order to prevent tampering, or double crossing the app through fake ratings, there could be a different metric, say badges allotted for helping any new individual. With every new individual helped, a citizen shall earn a badge.

The final social rating could be calculated as[4], *(0.4 x Stars) + (0.6 x Badges)*

A 2:3 ratio has been assumed with greater importance for every new individual helped, so that,

a) advantage of helping different individuals supersedes any malpractice of unfair social rating through false accounts

b) a lower importance to *Stars* because the satisfaction of a helpee is subjective and cannot be explicitly measured

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[2] Know Your Customer
[3] more tabs based on the kind of societal requirements that are needed/can be fulfilled by an individual
[4] This is subject to debate and more justified ratio could be reached

There needs to develop a system where entry into institutes and jobs, and semester gradings are so structured that a substantial weightage is given to the *social rating through Helping Hand* in addition to the academic score, for final evaluation.

Parting Thoughts

Every year over 12 lakh students sit for JEE and over 8 lakh aspirants sit for UPSC exams. Increase in the average working hours in India from 48.5 hours in 2019 to 50 hours per week in 2020 *(CMIE Report)* and delay in retirement age to 60 years in 2020 *(EPFO)* show the hunger driving the population for sustained advancement in their career trajectory. Under such circumstances, a scheme to uphold humanity and improve societal conditions can be best achieved through an opportunity linked incentive mechanism. Although the model has been ideated for India, a similar system can be brought to practice in other nations as well.

We try to reach the idea of choosing individuals for leading in various fronts, who are community minded and shall not hesitate to do the best for their surroundings in times of need. They should be well acquainted with the practise of social engagement and proactive to contributions using the resources they have earned, in order to make the world a better place.

They should tell me that in order to be a future leader, I need to also be a helping hand.

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