

III-8. Beginning of a Decision

Actualities seem to float in a wider sea of possibilities from out of which they were chosen; and somewhere determinism says, such possibilities exist, and form part of the truth (*reality*).

- *William James*

Ability to realize potential (#A142) is a part of sustainable interdependence (*pajatta*). Most choose not to do so. More we know less we want to tender our ability to make choices. Choice is not about apparent product parity, but about exercising deeper appreciation of the goal and consequences.

Being inspired.

- When you are inspired, everything seems to work (Patanjali).
- By meaning more, our lives yield more. It is no longer a zero-sum game (An Arihant adage).
- Do the right things, not because of any rewards, but rather to prevent any regrets. (Advice to a young Samurai).
- Impossibility is the highest state of contradiction.

Avoiding regress. Actions based on unformulated models interfere with validation of perception and contribute little towards awareness. Pragmatism requires not digging dry wells in the pursuit of what cannot be proven affirmed or falsified. A model supported by matrix of questions and concerns is a useful way to explore the domain of reason without invoking anything out of the ordinary. It is an algorithmic way of processing information for relevance in terms of defined criteria. It builds on

a grammar of perceptual relations, that is different than the grammar of language or logic.

Like the routines of life, steps of algorithms may appear repetitive. However, at a deeper level hardly anything is ever repeated. One has to learn to see the difference and build on the distinctions. Gross similarities belie the subtle but critical differences that become far more significant in the action consequence cycle. The difference between the first and second place finish in an Olympic race is often less than tenth of a second.

To avoid regress one moves up a level with each iteration. It is like beating one's own previous best. Algorithmic approaches without regress are remarkably effective for contemplation, self-study, and self-improvement. It is possibly the way we build from the experiences to remain faithful to reality and develop more consistent and coherent perception.

The goal of experience is to internalize. Most people tend to lose sight of the wood by focusing on trees. Specifics of facts and experience are highly context-dependent. Often they lose relevance with change of place and time. It is up to individual perception to recognize the moment and find its relevance. Contemplation of the evident and inferred in terms of the past helps reestablish their relationship. It is a part of the decision-tree.

If nothing else a search stays on course as long as we heed and build on feedback. The purpose of the search is not the mere assimilation of facts. It is to gather and process facts relevant for the anticipated situation. Such abilities are developed through an appreciation of the way of asking a question, relating it to the relevant information, and then evaluation of the question and the information to seek relevant answers.

Progression in stages minimizes chances of regress. Progress in recognizable stages is forward-looking. It is the

strategy of dividing the task to conquer each limitation that can be defined. Since a search always starts with the present, clear recognition of the present includes a realistic assessment of the resources that includes the past. By taking stock of where you are, one gets insights into what lies beyond. New start is made after identifying with certainty where one stands. Relevance of the change may relate to personal growth, self-discovery, self-improvement, and other desirable behaviors.

Developing strategy. In matters of choices, all searches require inputs, resources, and reliance on rules and assumptions. Such considerations include.

1. A systematic search begins with a critical evaluation of the present to identify the resources and liabilities.
2. Real-time decision-making begins by identifying and weeding out contradictions.
3. Pragmatism calls for avoiding irreversible action and keeping viable options open as long as possible.
4. To avoid the wishful it is often necessary to identify the doubtful and evaluate its origins.
5. Feedback calls for discarding that which does not work, and including newer options.
6. Develop explicit criteria to resolve areas of conflict.
7. Thoughts and words guided by actions is not intended as doctrine but to guide choices and decisions by the feedback from practice.
8. Liabilities can be identified by systematically looking for broader consistency in a value-free fashion.
9. Not all ideas are created equal. Options are mental constructs of the future possibilities to facilitate the search, and initiate a dialog for understanding.

10. There is always something that lies beyond what we know. But we know that the infinite knowledge, wisdom, power, information, matter, or energy does not exist. Vigilance and prudence is also required in dealing with other wishful, paradoxical, and self-referential constructs.

Significance of enduring thoughts and words develops through practice. Mahatma Gandhi insisted that his truth-seekers (*sat-agrahi*) preach the way they live, and not the other way. Rai Chand Mehta brought this insight to his attention in 1891-92 during the morning walks. Gandhi applied it to develop a novel approach to resolve social and political conflicts.

Dynamics of evolution of a viable theory (*keval*) seeks coherence with practice. It searches for relevant alternatives (*anekant*) in the context of doubt and uncertainty (*syad*). This matrix of empirical thought is remarkably similar to the modern scientific methods that rely on hypotheses and models that conform to experimental results. Each cycle of the search is extended through reality based-assumptions to extend algorithm by adding yet another dimension to the search matrix.

When do we know we are there? Or are we there yet? Those who have played with Rubik cube know that even for a defined goal *often one does not know until we are there or at least close enough.*

Against Gods and Humbug

Preface

1. Paradox of Choices
2. Representation for Potential
3. Feedback from Interactions
4. What Is Rationality?
5. Meaning to a Speck of Dust
6. The Unknown and the Doubtful
7. Actions Have Consequences
8. Beginning of a Decision
9. Tools for Thought Search
10. Living with Doubt
11. Who to Trust?
12. Living with Incomplete Knowledge
13. Do People Tell Lies?
14. Social Influences of Non-violence
15. Greed and Grab
16. Conduct with Consistency
17. An Activist Perspective
18. Causality: End or Means to Reality
19. Negate the Wishful
20. Man is Capable of Being Rational
21. Making Decisions
22. Keeping Viable Options Open
23. Inference and Successful Behavior
24. Genesis of Syad: The Logical Doubt
25. Science-based Conduct?
26. Philosophy and Logic for Action
27. Actions That Matter
28. Tragic versus Tragedy
29. Representation of Order with Room for Doubt
30. War Promises Meaning to the Otherwise Meaningless Lives
31. A Peace to End All Peace
32. Knowledge: Been There
33. Equation for Potential
34. Why I Am Not Moral
35. Unleashing Thought: Taming Brawn, Grunt, and Smarts