TRIZ and Spirituality: The methods of Maximizing Happiness

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1. Can TRIZ be applied in Spiritual attainment?

The concepts and principles of TRIZ were derived from a large number of inventions, mostly on technical systems like machines and similar. The tools and methods of TRIZ were also developed keeping their application in similar technical fields. Now the question arises whether the concepts and principle of TRIZ are applicable in other fields or not?

In my understanding, the TRIZ concepts are nothing but pure logic and high level of commonsense, which can just fit into any type of system of any nature or behavior. However, by saying this I don’t mean to say that all the existing TRIZ tools, like principle-x or standard-y or matrix-z will be applicable everywhere. Those tools may not be fully meaningful or applicable in other type of systems because they are all designed for solving problems keeping the technical systems in mind. It is necessary to evaluate the applicability of these tools in other systems and either ignore or modify these tools or develop new tools as deemed necessary for specific other systems.

While establishing the applicability of TRIZ in other systems, I mean to say that the concepts like Contradiction, Ideality, and Trends etc. are just applicable in any branch of study or any problem in life. Some TRIZ researchers have done significant effort in exploring the applicability of TRIZ in other systems like computer, software, business and management etc. In this article, we will do some exercise on applying TRIZ on “Spirituality” and find if any TRIZ method can be applied to increase the concept of happiness.

1.1 Importance of happiness

The whole world is busy for doing something or other. When we analyze the real objective behind all these activities, we find that it is noting but happiness. The immediate objective, in different instances, may be different like getting a job, buying a house, winning a fight or earning some money, but the long-term or ultimate objective is to get happiness. The other important personal goals like education, achievements, fame, satisfaction, security etc. also ultimately intend to earn happiness. Even the concept of large institutions like state, government, court of law etc. are also designed to maintain peace, harmony and improving happiness of larger communities and mankind as a whole. So happiness is so to say is the ultimate objective of all our activities.

We watch a movie > to be happy
We need money > to buy a house > to live happily
We need business > to earn money > to do xxx > to be happy
We study hard > to pass the exam > to do xxx > to be happy and secured
We fight > to win > to be happy
If our activities are not properly oriented then we fail to achieve our goal, which leads to unhappiness. For example, if we go to enjoy a movie, but the movie turns out to be boring, then our happiness turns out to sadness. Similarly, if we visit to some friends, but they don’t behave us properly, then the result is anger or frustration.

1.2 Where the happiness comes from

There are diverse opinions on the concept of happiness. Some say that happiness is a mental phenomenon and purely subjective (created by our own mind), some say that it is objective (comes from outside), some others say that it is a combination of mental and physical phenomena (created by our mind because of events outside).

Different philosophical schools have defined the concept of happiness differently. Some believe that the true happiness comes from satisfaction of doing good things. Some believe that happiness comes from within, from the internal self. Some believe that happiness comes from God. Some believe that happiness comes from the object or person whom you love, may be your spouse, may be your profession, may be from music.

However, we will not get into the controversies of the philosophical discussion and debates of happiness. For the purpose of this article, let’s accept all the existing theories of happiness to be correct to some level and start with the premise that happiness comes from various different sources.

1.3 The philosophy of happiness

Whatever the difference in the concepts and methods of different philosophical schools may be, but one thing is common in every school of thought is that the ultimate goal of the human being is happiness or pleasure or eternal pleasure or peace or eternal peace or similar experiences connotated in different terms.
From commonsense point of view, happiness is a state of mind, which is obtained from various sources and can be disturbed by various factors. Some believe that the intensity of happiness can be measured and two different instances of happiness can be compared in terms of quality and quantity. The source of happiness can be good or bad which indicates the happiness to be justified or not.

Many believe that there are different levels of happiness. The lower level of happiness, known as “pleasure”, comes from physical objects through sense organs. The higher level of happiness, known as “peace”, “bliss”, “nirvana” etc, comes from within the self or from God or from good work by means of knowledge, wisdom and self-realization.

Some believe that there are different degrees of happiness, such as, more happiness and less happiness. Similarly happiness can be short term or long term. When the source of happiness is temporary then the resulting happiness has to be temporary. Some types of happiness diminishes over time. When we feel bored of the daily life or regular happiness we look for adventures or special moments of happiness.

Some believe that individual happiness when combined together creates a collective happiness or societal happiness. The happiness for all the people of a state, or all the people of the world, or all living beings are more important than individual happiness.

2. Theories of maximizing happiness

By and large we see that different philosophical schools accept happiness as a goal of individuals and society. Let’s see how different philosophical schools define their concepts of happiness and what methods they advise to increase or maximize the happiness in life.

2.1 Hedonism

Hedonists believe that pleasure is the only intrinsic good. Any action that yields pleasure is good and any action that yields pain is bad. As a result any action that yields maximum pleasure and minimum pain is considered as a good action. (To refine the position, “pleasure is intrinsically good” does not simply mean, “all pleasure is good”.)

Charvaka was one of the ancient (600 BC) philosophers from India creating his hedonistic school by defying all scriptures. Similar schools were found in Greece by Democritus and Epicurus (400 BC) who also believed that the ultimate goal is to lead a happy and peaceful life without fear and pain.
In later period hedonism was advocated by Bentham (18th Century) who believed that the maximization of collective happiness was the correct criteria to determine the right or moral behavior. Maximum happiness is that which is enjoyed by the maximum number of people. This is known as the greatest happiness principle.

2.2 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a kind of hedonism advocated by John Stuart Mill who also believes that a proper course of action is that which maximizes the overall happiness. That means the moral worth of an action is determined by all its resulting outcome. If more results are good or the results are more good then the action is good no matter whatever the method or path is followed. On the other hand, if the resulting consequences are bad then the action is bad.

The Utilitarian theory differs from Bentham’s theory in its understanding of the nature of pleasure. According to Mill, pleasure can be of different types like physical and mental, and of different degrees like higher and lower. This is also known as Prudential Hedonism or Qualitative Hedonism, which focuses on the quality of the pleasure.

2.3 Thomas Aquinas

The thought of Thomas Aquinas (13th Century) is a combination of Aristotelian concepts and Christian Theology. Happiness is understood in terms of completion, perfection or well-being. Achieving happiness requires a range of intellectual and moral virtues. However, Aquinas believes that we can never achieve complete or final happiness in this life. Final happiness consists in beatitude or supernatural union with God, which is not possible through our own capacity, rather needs the help of God.

2.4 Libertarianism

Libertarianism is a recent concept of 20th Century, popular in America and some other countries. This view believes that the individual liberty is the basic moral principle of the society. It advocates for maximizing individual liberty and limits governmental activities of interference. There are diverse beliefs in libertarianism; two of them are deontological libertarianism and consequentialist libertarianism.

Deontological libertarianism, also known as natural rights libertarianism or libertarian moralism believes that all acts of force and fraud should be opposed because they are always immoral regardless of their effects. No human being holds the right to initiate force or fraud against the person or property of another human being under any circumstances.
Consequentialist libertarianism believes that all cases of force and fraud are not immoral. As the goal is to maximize liberty, force is justified if applied to achieve maximum liberty.

2.5 Idealism and transcendental Idealism

Idealists believe that the knowledge is acquired by a priori process. For example, human beings have some innate ideas and inborn knowledge, which are not acquired through experience, such as ethical truths, notions of good and evil, logical and mathematical truths, transcendental objects like God and soul etc.

Transcendental Idealism, advocated by German philosopher Immanuel Kant (19th century), believes that the external world is unknowable. Everything is created by the subject who perceives it. If the subject is removed then the whole material world will vanish immediately. The humans have the limitations to perceive only those objects which fall within the framework of space and time. Hence the human mind tries to structure all the incoming data into the framework of space and time in order to process them or understand. Hence, the objects and properties are not as they appear to us. What appears to us are subjective but with necessary preconditions of any given object.

2.6 Vedanta concept of peace

Vedanta, the most popular Indian philosophy, advocates that every thing is Brahman including the whole universe and ourselves. It is the maya or avidya or our ignorance which prevents us knowing the truth about us. Brahman is nothing but sat-chit-ananda or eternal bliss. If we increase our jnana or wisdom then we can destroy maya and experience Brahman or eternal bliss.

2.7 Buddhist concept of happiness

Nirvana is the stage of ultimate peace or happiness. It is a state of mind which is not disturbed by anything and which is devoid of any condition or fabrication.

The pain and sorrow is caused by desire, greed, anger, worry and fear. When these elements are emptied, the mind becomes free from the compulsions and thereby experiences the real peace. This is possible through meditation, which releases suffering and stress, and makes the mind peaceful.

2.8 Bhagavad Gita concept of happiness

Bhagavad Geeta, the Indian spiritual scripture, says that there are three kinds of happiness, Sattwik, Rajasik and Tamasik. Sattwik is the best kind of happiness, which initially appears to be bad but in the end is felt like nectar. Rajasika is the sensory happiness, which appears to be nectar in the beginning but creates problem at the end. Tamasika is the worst kind of happiness, which deludes the
self, such as, laziness, negligence etc. (Bhagabat Gita, Chapter-18, Sloka 37-39).

As we see here, the concept of sattwik happiness and rajasik happiness give you some kind of happiness whether short term or long term. But tamasic happiness, such as laziness, negligence and confusion does not give you any happiness. This type of happiness is created by our own ignorance.

“There is no being, either on earth or yet in heaven among the gods, which can exist free from these three qualities [gunas] born of material nature [prakriti].” (Bhagavad Gita 18:40). However we should try for sattwa, which leads to liberation or a state that is beyond these three gunas (trigunatita). According to Gita, peace (shanti) and happiness (sukham) are possible through meditation.

3. Methods of maximizing happiness

If we believe in quantifying happiness then the total happiness is a function of the pleasure and pain. In other words, it is necessary to minimize pain in order to maximize happiness.

\[
\text{Net Happiness} = \text{all happiness} - \text{all unhappiness or pain} \\
\text{Happiness Indicator} = \frac{\text{all happiness}}{\text{all unhappiness or pain}}
\]

Let’s see what are the different methods advocated by different philosophical and spiritual schools in order to maximize happiness and minimize pain.

3.1 Emotional detachment

The reason of our unhappiness is because of our attachments with the objects around us. Attachment creates fear of loosing, fear creates mental disturbances and unhappiness. When somebody steals our money we feel unhappy because we have attachment for the money. When somebody misbehaves us in public we are afraid that we might loose our image and dignity. When our family member marries to somebody of a lower caste or lower economic status, we are afraid that our social status is gone. All this is because we are attached to some physical or imaginary objects and have a fear of loosing them.

One solution is to develop an emotional detachment. Emotional detachment will reduce emotional disturbances, anger and stress. This can be practiced at home, with relatives, at work and everywhere. Many scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, Moses, Buddha and Jesus teach “detachment” as a superior way of life. Bhagavad Gita teaches to do action without desire (niskama karma) in order to get steady peace (Chapter-5, Sloka 11-13). At a very high level of contentment the person will not be affected by hunger, thirst, tiredness, disease, fear and other sources of unhappiness.
TRIZ based analysis
The problem here is the disturbance of mind because of our emotional attachment to different things. If the attachment is taken out then there will be no negative impact on our mind. (TRIZ Principle-2: Taking out).

Problem
However this method has some drawbacks. When we withdraw our attachment from the material world, we no-doubt get freed from the external disturbances, but we also loose some valuable inputs like motivation and encouragement. For example, in case of extreme detachment we may ignore our family, property and neglect our duty.

Contradiction: We want to detach from the negative elements but don’t want to detach from positive elements, inspirations, motivations and working spirit.

3.2 Pranayama
Pranayama is a breathing exercise to control breath, an ancient Indian practice to control mind and maintain physical and mental health. Many ancient Indian Yoga schools discovered that there is a link between mind and breath. When mind is disturbed breathing is disturbed. When breathing is controlled, mind is controlled. Patanjali Yogasutra, Hathayoga Pradeepika, Siva Swarodaya, Pavan Vijay xxx and many other ancient yoga books reveal this direct relationship between mind and breathing.

According to swara sastras the normal length of our breathing is 12 fingers. The length increases during physical exercise and restlessness. We can control breathing and reduce its length through pranayama. At the ultimate stage of pranayama, the length of breathing slowly reduces to zero and the person gets samadhi.
TRIZ based analysis
If reducing the length of breathing is good, then zero length or no breathing will be the best (Ideal Final Result). Interestingly ancient yoga texts also say the same thing. The yoga practitioner does not breath at the last stage of yoga, i.e. samadhi. He gets various powers like astasidhhi and wins over death.

Problem
Although yogic scriptures say that breathing stops at the stage of samadhi, medical science does not agree that a man can live without breathing.

3.3 Keeping yourself busy in good actions
One of the tricks to be happy is to keep yourself busy in good activities. May it be playing games, listening to music, doing social work, reading books, praying God or similar. Watching comedy shows or reading jokes may also be useful.

TRIZ based analysis
This theory uses TRIZ Principle-8: Counterweight. When mind is burdened by disturbing elements, put more burdens (good quality burdens) on it. When mind will be overburdened with new burdens it will remove the old burdens (bad burdens or disturbances) automatically. As the person remains busy in work he never gets time to feel sad or pain.

Problem
The method works fine to forget pain. But it fails to increase happiness per se.

3.4 Keep others happy theory
There is another theory which says keep others happy which will bring you happiness. At least try to make one person happy every day.

This is an interesting theory.
- As you make a person happy, the total number of unhappy persons is reduced by one.
- If you could do it as a target, this will give you some satisfaction and happiness when you achieve the target.
- If a larger group of people practice this method, it can significantly work on the society at large and somebody else will also make you happy on some day.

TRIZ based analysis
Ideally all people should be happy (Ideal Final Result).

This theory also works in that direction. If more people practice this method then more people will be benefited. This is very simple and logical result.
1 person practices > one person becomes happy
100 persons practice > 100 persons become happy
If everybody practices it > everybody will be happy

Problem:
It is not an easy task to make somebody happy.
If we fail to make somebody happy then we may feel dissatisfied and unhappy.

3.5 Happiness is within us

Many contemporary spiritualists like Swami Sukhabodhananda also advocate in the same direction as Vedanta and Bhagavad Gita. Happiness does not depend on circumstance, objects or events. It is nothing but a part of our internal consciousness. As the sun is hidden by clouds, as the treasure is covered by the muddy water, the internal happiness is covered by our thoughts, worries and desires. Once we silence our thoughts, burn our desires and worries; we can experience the eternal happiness within us.

Some thinkers differentiate between pleasure (sensory or lower level) and happiness (higher level). For example, you may eat all good foods, live in a good house, have a good bank balance but still may not be happy. The pleasure or happiness that is gained from outside is dependant on the source and lasts till that source is available. But the happiness from inside is permanent. This happiness cannot be disturbed or taken away as it does not depend on any external object or event.

TRIZ based analysis

This method, instead of seeking happiness from outside, advises to forget searching happiness and security. When the mind is free from all types of thoughts and worries, it will automatically find the happiness inside us (TRIZ Principle-13: Other way round).

4. Applying TRIZ to maximize happiness

In the above methods of maximizing happiness we found that the concepts and principles of TRIZ were applicable, such as, emotional detachment (Principle-2: Taking out), staying busy in good actions (Principle-8: Counterweight), Keep others happy (Principle-20: Continuity of useful action), Happiness is within us (Principle-13: Other way round) etc. Let’s see how is TRIZ coherent in other aspects of maximizing happiness.

4.1 Happiness and TRIZ Ideality

If happiness is good then the highest happiness is highest good. The TRIZ function of ideality is as follows.
If we follow the TRIZ concept of ideality, maximizing happiness would involve factors as below.

- Maximizing happiness for the self
- Maximizing happiness for greater number of people or all people in the world
- Achieving higher level of happiness or peace or bliss or nirvana
- Achieving higher degree of happiness or intensive happiness
- Removing or reducing pain and sorrow
- Removing or reducing pain for all the people in the world.
- Achieving long-term happiness or eternal happiness.

4.2 Contradictions in happiness

The concept of “contradictions” in TRIZ is similar to the concept of “paradox” in the study of Logic. (A paradox is a statement or situation that contradicts itself). Let’s see what contradictions are there in achieving maximum happiness.

- In some cases if we follow a happy means (e.g., rich food and beverages) we may land up with an unhappy end (e.g., health problem). In other cases we may have to go through an unhappy means (e.g., teachers and parents controlling the child) in order to achieve a happy result (e.g., educating the child).

- A person may feel happy to hurt others but others don’t feel happy to get hurt. A terrorist or murderer may feel happy to kill others, but we cannot justify happy killing.

- When we are hungry we seek food and not happiness. When we are poor we seek money and not happiness. Thus normally we don’t seek happiness unless we are unhappy. In other words, seeking happiness is an action of an unhappy mind.

- According to the law of diminishing marginal utility, if we seek pleasure constantly, we will enjoy it less. The ordinary happiness in the life will be boring. The life will become miserable, as we have to constantly look for higher and greater happiness.

- As feeling of unhappiness is a mental phenomenon, the more we try to get out of unhappiness, the more we get entangled with it.
4.3 Using TRIZ resources to gain happiness

The TRIZ concept of resources reminds us that there are a large number of and large varieties of resources around us, which can be utilized for various purposes. A good resource is that which is free and readily available within the system. (An external and paid resource is comparatively less potential). Let’s see if there are any resources that can help us in increasing our happiness.

- The most interesting resource for getting happiness is GOD. The concept of God is free, readily and permanently available, needs no external support. If somebody can derive pleasure and happiness from God then nothing better than that.

- Another resource of happiness is one’s own self. This resource is equally powerful like God. This has the advantage that the atheists (who don’t believe in God) can also use this resource to derive happiness. This is also a free, internal and permanent resource.

4.4 Applying TRIZ to get long term or eternal happiness

If happiness is good then ideally we should look for and enjoy long-term or eternal happiness (Ideal Final Result).

Suppose we accept to the theory that happiness comes from various different sources, internal and external, material and transcendental. In that case in order to achieve permanent happiness:

- The source of the happiness must be permanent. This is because if the sources of happiness extinguish the flow of happiness will stop. In order to get long-term happiness we have to choose a source that is permanent, such as our own internal self or God or similar (Principle-12: Equipotentiality)

- We may discard one source of happiness when the flow of happiness is over and stick to another source promptly to continue getting happiness (Principle-15: Dynamize).

- The external objects are not under our control. If the behavior of these sources of happiness changes then the resulting happiness may turn into unhappiness. Hence it is better to ignore happiness coming from outside and try getting happiness from inside (Principle-13: Other way round).

- A powerful source can give you better happiness. God is conceived as almighty or the most powerful. In that case, the happiness from God can be better from other sources (Principle-17: Another dimension).
4.5 Trends in Society and happiness

According to the concept of trends, every system is moving towards ideality. That means if happiness is good then all of us are naturally moving towards happiness. Some of the historical trends worth mentioning are:

- Regular warfare between states >> reduced warfare >> only verbal disputes >> no war between states
- Violence between religious groups >> less violence more dialogues >> tolerance between religious groups
- Large number smaller states >> reduced number of countries >> grouping of countries based on economic/other policies >> one world one country
- Slavery >> human rights >> freedom and autonomy

According to Naturalism, the universe is naturally created and governed by natural laws. The scientists can discover the laws systematically. The natural knowledge can be applied to understand the supernatural powers.

According to Bhagavad Gita, the rajasika is moving towards sattwika, sattwika is moving to a state that is beyond all these gunas (trigunatita).

5. Conclusion

TRIZ is a method of high level of commonsense and can be applied in any field, whether social, economical, technical or spiritual. In this article we analyzed the concept of happiness, the ultimate goal of human being, and demonstrated the application of different TRIZ concepts like Ideality, contradictions, Principles, Resources and Trends in different theories of maximizing happiness.

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About the author

After working for more than 18 years in various fields of IT in different organizations Umakant is currently carrying out independent research on TRIZ and IT since 2004. He last worked as Director and Chief Technology Officer (2000-2004) in CREAX Information Technologies (Bangalore). Before that he worked as IS/IT manager (1996-2000) for ActionAid India (Bangalore).

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