A Reflection on the Human Goal and Influencing Factors^

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Abstract

Certain existential challenges facing mankind are increasingly impacting people in multiple locations, whatever their nationality, religion or political beliefs and regardless of personal, organisational and community goals and aspirations and priorities. As more people recognise a shared interest in survival and join in collective action to address them, there might be more unity of purpose and a greater alignment of influencing factors and previously contending interests. Addressing climate change may become a priority goal for people, organisations, communities and societies around the world. Whether the result of an inherent drive for survival, a rational calculation reflecting a current situation and available options, or a desire for a more balanced, harmonious and sustainable relationship with the natural world, momentum may be building for collaboration and collective action in conformance with Indian ancient wisdom. If we are to benefit from it, relevant ancient wisdom needs to be protected, classified, interpreted, reviewed and applied.

Introduction

People and organisations often pursue a variety of different types of goal and there are a range of biological, psychological, contextual, economic, social and other factors that may influence their adoption and prioritisation. Different goals may or may not be aligned, consistent or in conflict to varying degrees and human goals can have unintended and negative consequences for individuals, groups and the natural world. This article reflects on different approaches, perspectives, belief systems and realms of thought, and in particular Indian ancient wisdom. It considers: (a) whether addressing certain existential challenges facing mankind and living in harmony with nature could become a unifying and inclusive goal, the pursuit of which might benefit from an alignment of influencing factors and support from both the scientific and spiritual realms to the mutual benefit of both; and (b) whether in view of its openness, flexibility, systemic understanding and recognition of interdependence and the importance of balance, areas of Indian ancient wisdom could support this process.

Do and should human beings individually and collectively have a particular and widely shared goal, goals or a purpose and where might this come from? Can and/or should they individually or collectively periodically consider, decide and review their goal, goals or purpose, or are there other internal and/or external factors that determine or influence them? To what extent are they contextual? Alternatively, is there an over-arching or core goal that ought to be pursued by all capable members of the human race that is possibly immutable and unique to our species? Could ignoring an intrinsic drive and/or external pressure or pressures to pursue such a goal be construed and portrayed as acting against ones nature?

Questions relating to purpose and goals are not just of intellectual interest. Mankind faces a number of shared and global existential challenges that result from past and, particularly, more recent human activities and lifestyles derived from our collective drives, goals, preoccupations and priorities (Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2021; UN Climate Change, 2021; UNEP, 2019). With a deceasing window of opportunity to agree and implement the collective and collaborative responses required to prevent a rapid limiting of life prospects and ensure a sustainable future, purpose, goals, aims, objectives and priorities may need to change and

quickly. The extent to which this can be done may depend upon their drivers and influencing factors and the extent to which they are aligned and can reinforce each other.

Approach and Scope

Ordinarily, an academic enquiry would explain whatever approaches and methods have been adopted, justifying their selection and providing evidence collected. This article looks beyond traditional sources relating to current existential challenges and contemporary western science at whether useful insights might be derived from other belief systems, different realms and particularly ancient wisdom that has survived, appears relevant and is accessible. The holistic approach taken by some belief systems and the range of perspectives that could be used to explore possible influencing factors means that to be manageable this article represents an initial reflection rather than a fuller investigation.

Issues faced by mankind such as climate change already affect many people and a growing number of human activities and organisational operations. Given their inter-connectedness and multidisciplinary nature, one might need a library of books to provide a satisfactory literature review. This reflection comments on selected aspects of the topic. It adopts a pragmatic approach, suggests further questions that could be asked and considers whether a greater diversity of perspectives might be helpful in addressing our common challenges if one looked across realms for links, patterns and relationships. Are there areas of potential alignment or consistency that might enable further and wider collaboration and larger numbers of people to be engaged and motivated to change?

Understanding Influencing Factors

Assessing the relative impact of different influencing factors relating to the goals we pursue, whether an association or cause and effect are being observed, and whether one factor might influence or be the cause of another can be challenging and the source of protracted debates. For example, is aggression instinctive as suggested by Lorenz (1966), or is it learned by a process of socialisation. Different disciplines sometimes adopt similar thought processes and cross-fertilise as in the case with evolutionary biology, which might also explain our attitudes towards the morality and degree of social acceptance of certain goals (Wright, 1995).

A biological goal such as survival may be achieved partly by conscious and collective effort and partly by other and involuntary factors such as a process of natural selection (Darwin, 1859; Williams, 1966). Particular goals may reflect differing needs and priorities at different stages of life and development (Maslow, 1943). They might also be influenced by factors such as national cultures, for example whether individualist or collectivist, which may account for varying values and behaviours, such as the extent to which people conform or think for themselves across different locations (Hofstede, 1983, 1993, 1994 & 2001).

Moral codes often reflect their context and time, and even within a religious setting they may be subject to questioning rather than be regarded as an absolute (Jayyusi, 2010). They might need to be shared and backed by sanctions or incentives of some form to influence behaviour. To the cynical they sometimes seem to support the status-quo and those that have. They may also come to the fore, whether supported by one or more religions or not, when cooperation and collaboration is required to cope with adversity or seize opportunities. Certain character attributes might be developed, recognised and rewarded because they are regarded as acceptable and/or good, and/or because they seem to have a better track record of leading to

successful outcomes. Attributes considered positive and behaviours sought tend to be those that appear to work, whether from the perspective of an employer, an entrepreneur, an individual seeking to benefit either themselves or those they aspire to help, a community or a wider society.

Within the natural and social sciences, while influencing factors may still be debated, a consensus is emerging in relation to certain existential challenges such as climate change about what our goals should be (IPCC, 2021; UN Climate Change, 2021). Do we need to move beyond scientific knowledge that can be increasingly handled by applications of digital technologies and devote more effort to understanding our belief systems, religions and spiritual motivations if we are to achieve more sustainable responses to contemporary challenges (Halal, 2021)? There are so many different possible influencing factors that it might take some time for a multi-disciplinary team to discuss and prioritise which ones might be most susceptible to agreed and aligned human intervention.

Nature or Nurture

A relevant and longstanding philosophical debate is the extent to which human behaviour is determined by nature or nurture and whether individuals have a free will to decide what their goals, priorities and purpose in life should be, or whether these are predetermined (Alexander, 2017). It is one in which participants and protagonists sometimes take strong positions (Franklin, 2017). In relation to influencing factors, it may be that both voluntary and involuntary ones are involved and that they are inter-related. From a pragmatic point of view, ought those concerned about certain existential challenges endeavour to re-direct aims towards the achievement of more sustainable and less environmentally damaging outcomes using whatever combination of influencing and reinforcing factors might be appropriate?

A determinist might view life as rather like being moved around a chess board by a predetermined code such as a set of genes, various possible external forces and their relative strength, divine determination or intervention, and/or the intrinsic logic of a situation. Such a view might limit the usefulness of rhetoric and appeals to morality as influencing mechanisms. A voluntarist might give individual and collective will more scope to influence events and outcomes. Life could be viewed as more of a journey of learning and discovery on which people can to some extent chart their own path in the face of various pressures, move with others, or seek and follow guidance or a guide, guru or mentor.

A determinist-voluntarist debate could also apply to organisations and institutions and their decision making organs such as boards, councils and committees. Nation states, for example, can have goals established by their Governments or leaders. These may be heavily influenced by geographic, economic, demographic and other factors and the nature of the international system of which they are a part. Outcomes might reflect these realities and factors such as power politics, with regimes of differing political persuasions or religious affiliations and ostensibly varying belief systems pursuing consistent and very similar national interests (Schwarzenberger, 1951; Burton, 1968; Northedge, 1968).

Human Organisations and Institutions

Might humans have more discretion in relation to the organisations and institutions they themselves create, for example in determining their purpose and key goals because of the nature of the process involved which may involve interaction, discussion and justification?

Assuming such entities are established, and built for a purpose related to our own purpose or purposes and priorities, and to help us attain our own and/or collective goal or goals, might their organisational and institutional collective drive and corporate aims derive from ours and be influenced by the same or similar factors as those that influence us? An example could be the possible influence of national culture upon organisations and institutions as well as individuals (Hofstede, 1993, 1994 & 2001).

Are some people and communities driven to create and build organisations and institutions in forms that reflect a particular context, political philosophy, religion and/or culture, or where they are at a particular stage of economic, social, political, physical or technological development? Designers of computer games concerning the growth of communities, cities, societies, civilisations and empires over time appear to derive clues from what they perceive as likely goals and steps, influencing factors, and triggers and shapers of different stages of evolution and development. Could a similar approach be taken to modelling a path to more sustainable cities and lifestyles from where they currently are? Certain influencing factors could be given a higher or lower rating depending upon assumptions of how receptive to them those concerned are likely to be.

Corporate Purpose, Vision, Goals and Priorities

Organisations and institutions from businesses and trades unions to public, professional and voluntary bodies that are legal entities in their own right and distinct from the people who form, incorporate or operate with and within them can all have goals. These may need to be consistent with and intra-vires in relation to their purpose as set out in an objects clause or constitution. Directors and boards who establish the strategic direction of organisations are also expected to review and determine their visions, missions, goals, objectives and values. In relation to corporate goals and purpose, the law and governance codes assume that human's authorised to do so may review and change them.

Questions continue to be raised about what a company is for and what the purpose of a company should be (Handy, 2002; Mayer, 2018). Is there a need to address the purpose of board and corporate leadership and how business value and social outcomes can be better aligned (Ahluwalia, 2015; Kempster et al, 2019)? Where directors have a duty to have regard for the longer-term and to take the interests of a range of stakeholders into account, could a responsible purpose be to produce practical solutions to challenges facing people and the planet that are beneficial, profitable and responsible when their externalities, consequences and implications are taken into account (Mayer, 2018; Coulson-Thomas, 2021a)?

Could the state and Government bodies as well as companies play a more positive role in addressing environmental, climate change and sustainability challenges (Mazzucato, 2021)? The purpose of many public sector organisations is set out in an enabling statute. Having a monopoly and a requirement to offer a standard service sometimes limits the scope for experimentation and diversity. Objects or purpose clauses in private sector company constitutions often gives directors and boards much more freedom to decide their own focus and priorities, and greater flexibility in terms of responding to evolving and emerging challenges. They may also have more scope for trying alternatives and doing things differently according to requirements, location and situations and circumstances.

Are re-purposing, goal setting, diversity, innovation and progress largely limited by regulatory and other constraints and the ambition and imagination of directors? Where there

are many players, more options may be kept open and pursued and more minds might be involved in activities that could lead to a breakthrough. Purpose, priorities and strategies can be reviewed by private sector boards. Directors can re-think and re-invent, but in doing so are they collectively influenced by the some or all of the factors that affect them as individuals, for example 'groupthink' (Janis, 1972)? Legally they may be able to take critical decisions, make choices, exercise foresight and endeavour to provide relevant and responsible leadership (Coulson-Thomas, 2021b). However, as with individuals and nation states, are boards consciously and/or unconsciously affected by certain influencing factors?

Influencing Factors and their Limitations

In different contexts, situations arise in which some people resist the power of others, influencing factors and peer pressures (Bond, 2015). They may refuse to obey orders to pursue goals and/or commit acts which they might consider unethical, evil or inhuman rather than just unpleasant or inconvenient, while others implement them to the detriment of one or more people, an element of the natural world or the environment, and they live with the consequences. Resisters might object to the end goals and/or what they are being asked to do to achieve them. What is it that restrains them, above and/or beyond a quick calculation of what might be in their best personal interests? What are the roots of what might be described as a 'conscience' or 'restraining voice' and which some refer to as values, ethics or morals?

A combination of factors might be at work, whether biological, psychological or sociological. Might some of those which form part of the nature of human beings and their inter-actions with others, whether these 'others' are regarded as insiders or outsiders, be inherently or potentially unstable and lead to behaviour that many would want to avoid? Have human societies, and indeed those of some other species, had to evolve shared norms of behaviour and rituals to control certain natural instincts? Within and across human societies are certain mechanisms, organisations and/or institutions and processes required to avoid the consequences of our natures? In their absence, would there be chaos and as Hobbes put it 'a war of all against all' (Hobbes, 1651a & b)?

The goals of political parties and religions might be articulated by their leaders, but they may also be heavily influenced or even constrained by the assumed or reported views of their founders, or certain sacred texts that are revered and maybe regarded as absolute and unalterable by followers. Some political goals that may be shaped by influencing forces and reactions to them may be actively opposed by others. An interpretation of a religious text may inspire and motivate acts that others find repulsive. Influencing factors do not affect all people in the same way. In some forms and beyond a certain point they may become misaligned and one or more factor may become self-limiting and limit others.

Diversity and Plurality of Goals

If goals are pre-determined, their fluidity as circumstances change and occasional tendency to lurch from what seems one extreme to another, depending upon the outcome of an election or conflict, suggests the influence of some factors such as genes that may be fixed or alleged absolutes are not always easily apparent. A goal or a purpose might be set by an individual, agreed collectively and subsequently either adopted or accepted voluntarily or imposed. Both could be general or specific and an aspiration or intention. Goals can be varied, reflecting upbringing, context, aspirations and priorities. How the journey of life is undertaken can be the basis of a general aspiration, such as to lead a 'good life', or a more focused objective

such as a judge's aim to arrive at decisions that are balanced, fair and just, to which a pragmatist might add defensible.

It may be assumed that holders of positions of responsibility that result from taking a job or being appointed or elected to a role or office will take on board goals associated with them. Being a citizen or becoming a member of a union, profession or society can involve certain obligations. Someone joining a sports team might be expected to embrace and actively embrace the goal of winning. This shared primary goal during matches may coexist with a variety of other goals. In a team encompassing a diversity of nationalities, religions and beliefs, views relating to a human goal may vary. Where wider societal challenges are inter-related it may be necessary for corporate citizens to pursue a number of relevant and related goals simultaneously, such as UN sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015).

Some goals appear rational, while others may seem irrational. Goals can have negative, neutral or positive consequences or implications for those who formulate them. Steps are usually taken to make people aware of their obligations and responses to transgressions can range from warnings and rebuke to disciplinary action and incarceration. An expected or proselytized goal could be alleged to be divinely inspired with consequences extending beyond this life. Are some institutions such as churches a form of organisation that largely exists to pass on and perpetuate particular values, priorities, perspectives and principles? Could such entities themselves become influencing factors that affect human behaviour?

Motivating Goals and Visions

Some people are involved in the setting of multiple goals for themselves and/or their family, a business, local club or association, or a wider community or society. To what extent might the impact of various influencing factors differ according to the nature of the goal set? Once formulated and/or agreed, a goal may be quickly forgotten, overlooked or ignored. Reinforcement, incentives or inducements may be required (Thaler and Sunstein, 2021). The outcome of certain goals such as entering paradise may be made particularly alluring. Parallels might be drawn between paradise and a garden, or between heaven and the beauty of nature (National Geographic, 2008). Some goals are more developed than others and/or easier to explain. For a pragmatist, an ideal vision is a picture of a future desired state of affairs that is stretching but achievable and which engages and motivates those that share it to want to contribute towards its achievement (Coulson-Thomas, 2007). Could addressing a shared existential challenge become a motivating goal?

Goals could include how one hopes to behave and like goals themselves, behaviours and manners affecting interactions, can be influenced by processes of socialisation that occur within a variety of groups and communities from families to societies and where we prepare for later life such as in schools and through professional bodies (White, 1997). Formal induction processes, rituals for joining a society, community or order and any related codes of conduct or rules may be designed to be memorable and to elaborate and imprint the nature of obligations being taken on. Conforming might be more of a challenge for some people and personalities than it is for others.

Certain goals are more difficult to achieve than others. Sometimes the harder ones are perceived positively as more of a challenge and they are more motivating (Kennedy, 1962). Achieving ambitious and stretching goals can be rewarding and celebrated. It may appeal to a human drive to excel and stand out. Sometimes however, influencing factors act against an

ambitious goal and they may do so together. For example, the law of scale and growth and decay may apply to life forms and also organisations and institutions created by humans such as businesses and cities (West, 2017). In relation to the environment, are their natural limits to human growth and development (Meadows, 1972; Higgs, 2014)? Entropy can also occur.

Unifying and Divisive Goals

Some simple and easy to articulate goals such as the removal of a foreign intervention, the decimation of a particular tribe or the winning of a war might engage and secure almost fanatical support. They can also exclude and have unfortunate and sometimes disastrous consequences for those on the losing side. The divisive demonization of a minority can unify others against them. Rhetoric, motivation, clear visions and particular goals can sometimes be extremely dangerous. Depending upon the goals and objectives different parties set, some people may find themselves facing dilemmas as players in win-lose or even lose-lose games, rather than win-win situations (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). Goals themselves can be rational or irrational from certain perspectives. Some players make irrational choices.

Civil wars in which the goals of different parties are incompatible can divide families and communities. People with largely the same genes and sharing similar belief systems may find themselves on opposite sides and appealing to the same God for victory. Goals set in religious wars can be particularly brutal. Literal interpretations of certain texts may be regarded by fervent wagers of a 'holy war' as absolute and a justification for acts that flout the Geneva Conventions and contravene generally accepted norms. Some religious and political beliefs are not comforting for those adversely affected by them. Balance and moderation and the avoidance of extremism are particularly needed in a time of uncertainty and/or instability (Oakshott, 1939 & 1962).

Why are certain beliefs that constrain and lead to negative consequences actively propagated? Are people being helpful, perhaps seeking to protect others from themselves if one believes a doctrine of original sin, or are they Machiavellian in promoting certain beliefs, values and goals? Have some religions been used at various points in history to control a population and/or promote the interests of a priestly class and/or particular religious institutions? Some of the most ornate and opulent churches and the most fervent believers are found in poorer societies. Can religions also divide rather than unify (Palaver et al, 2020)? Might a secular goal relating to addressing a shared challenge be both unifying and inclusive? Could it also appeal to adherents of some belief systems and moderate followers of specific faiths?

Questioning Goals and their Origin

In certain faiths the goal in this life is to prepare for the next, with a stark and binary divide between expected outcomes for those who follow prescribed teachings and others who ignore them. The dire consequences envisaged for people who do not follow certain rules, for example eternal damnation in the fires of hell, raises questions about why anyone would follow a mind so brutal as to allegedly suggest such a fate other than through insecurity or social pressure, yet many choose to or feel driven or obliged to? What sort of mind would want obedience on such terms? Within ancient wisdom, other belief systems envisage a greater variety of possible outcomes (Coulson-Thomas, 2017b).

Some goals are so vague that it becomes easy to reduce aspirations in the light of achievement and rationalise a failure to accomplish them, while knowing when they have

been accomplished might not be clear cut. The achievement of certain goals such as going to a heaven or paradise as a consequence of ones conduct, whether living a virtuous life or being a suicide bomber martyr may be difficult to verify. The faith and/or motivations of some individuals and groups are such that they will endure great sacrifice to achieve a certain goal considered appropriate and the right thing for a human to do. Similar self-sacrifices by individuals to protect a group have been observed in other species and choices between species can raise ethical issues (Bailey, 2009; Framarin, 2017).

Might a goal or goals be pre-ordained, affected or conditioned by human biology, for example individual genes or those of parents or influential others who are met on the journey of life? Could an understanding of conscious and unconscious factors that affect our drives, motivation and behaviour and an ability to detach ourselves from our emotions enable us to resist social pressures and conformity and develop a personal sense of purpose (Greene, 2018)? Might Indian ancient wisdom help and support a process of detachment? In relation to the natural world, is it also aligned to a goal of enabling human activity to respect and sustain the interests of other species in limited natural capital? Could it be helpful in relation to a shared challenge such as climate change (Lal, 2015; Rao, 2021)?

Accommodating Diverse and Contending Goals

One person's goal might be a desirable option should an appropriate opportunity arise, while for other people a goal could be the driving force in their lives. Some people are full of good intentions but lack the will, energy, commitment and perseverance to accomplish their goals. Individuals can vary in the number of goals they pursue, not all of which may be regarded as equally important and some of which may be unconscious. A purpose or rationale could represent a framework that could accommodate a number of goals, perhaps acting as a means of helping to ensure, if a purpose is shared, that different goals and those of various parties are consistent and aligned. Those affected might be encouraged by a belief system, religious and/or political leaders, or regulators and/or legislators to ensure goals and purpose are consistent with and support or reflect certain principles, values, norms and/or codes.

Mechanisms often evolve to accommodate differing aspirations and priorities within families, communities and wider societies, a process which may need to confront and accommodate certain influencing factors (Turner and Maryanski, 2008). Some people and elements of communities or a wider population may disagree with certain goals and purposes. The level and extent of this may provoke various forms of opposition, from speaking or writing against to taking more overt and even armed action in the case of a revolt. Societies usually assume that a multiplicity of different goals will be not all necessarily be aligned. Incompatibilies of goals and actions to achieve them can result in disputes that may need to be resolved by political or legal means, or by arbitration, administrative decision or diktat.

Within the realm of politics there may be significant differences of view on what a group's objectives and priorities should be, that reflect differing views on goals and purpose and a variety of perspectives and values. Political debates often centre on the purpose of certain institutions or measures and/or the goals that should be pursued and outcomes sought. Political parties sometimes associate formally or informally with certain religious organisations or communities that have shared values or are otherwise compatible or complementary. Within a vibrant democracy there might always be some vested interest, contrarian view or alternative viewpoint opposed to a proposal or change however

appropriate, sensible and ethical it might appear to be. Some frustration may need to be borne to avoid the dangers, disadvantages and risks of other political systems.

Resisting Influencing Factors

People can vary in the extent to which they may be influenced by a process of socialisation and their upbringing, education, context and experience of life (White, 1997). They may resist promotional messages and social pressures. Even a beneficial innovation may initially only be taken up by a relatively small number of early adopters (Rogers, 1962). Other people may be more easily influenced by those they encounter, learn about or follow. They may go along with certain goals by default, because they do not have the time or the inclination to think for themselves and challenge them. They may also copy or imitate those they consider role models. Such influencers may be able to monetise large numbers of followers, in some cases by being visibly associated with the offerings of those who pay for this 'service'.

The role of social networks in the development of religious sects and cults is not a recent phenomenon (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). Some traditional religions based on sacred texts have lost ground in certain places. The development and expanding use of social media has resulted in the rapid building and expansion of new cults and movements based upon emotion and the lure of propaganda. Misinformation and dramatic, emotive and simplistic distortions can sometimes seem to engage some easily impressed people more than verifiable evidence and quickly secure large numbers of followers.

Some people join political movements, churches and other groups and communities because of a desire or drive for affiliation and to belong. They may in part define themselves by their roles and allegiances. This may explain why some young people who are disaffected become radicalised sufficiently to behave in ways that to a non-believer may seem against their own interests and those of others, especially when they are engaged through social media in ways that relate to their needs at the time, possibly exacerbated by peer pressure. Would the goal of addressing a shared existential challenge quickly reach and motivate particularly receptive groups (Maynard, 2019)? Might more than scientific knowledge, and/or some reinforcement and/or some alignment of influencing factors be required to achieve this outcome?

Aligning and Prioritising Goals

Role models, politicians, philosophers and religious leaders may all express views on what human goals ought to be. These sometimes extend to acceptable behaviours for achieving them. While some goals appear highly contextual, attempts are also made to establish universal principles, values and norms (Sharma, 2021). Examples include various international treaties and the purposes and the remits of international organisations. Some are relatively well known such as the Geneva Conventions and amending protocols and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The latter is one of those intended to protect people and their rights from the impacts of goals and decisions (Draft Committee, 1948).

Human societies evolve mechanisms for establishing and articulating principles, laws, rules, regulations and codes that distinguish between desirable aims and means and those which are not acceptable. These may or may not be enforced or lead to some form of retribution. Some people are tolerant of those who have different aims and ambitions, as is much Indian ancient wisdom, while other individuals and groups seek to impose their views on other members of their communities and societies. Radicals and revolutionaries may seek to overthrow an

existing order so as to achieve different ends, while conservatives may prefer to respect the past (Scruton, 2017). Fundamentalists might seek to seize power in order to enforce their views and punish those of a different persuasion.

Thinkers as varied as Plato, Machiavelli, Bentham and Marx have articulated views of the outcomes that should be sought or how leaders should behave to achieve them. Political systems provide mechanisms for determining what collective goals should be, not all of which might be agreeable to all those involved. Societies and political systems are not always benign. In totalitarian societies, people may be encouraged to follow a leader and support a nation or state. The individual may be considered subservient to the whole. The pursuit of a goal might be expected to be unconditional and take priority over all others. This can be dangerous for those who disagree with them. Some societies are deeply split in terms of which goals should be supported and which goals should be pursued. In relation to the environment there is concern from philosophers across the political system, including from a conservative supportive of responsible and sustainable capitalism which appears aligned to the respect for natural ecosystems evident in Indian ancient wisdom (Scruton, 2012).

Accommodating Nature Related Goals

Might most forms of life have individual and collective survival as a goal? Is their purpose also to help ensure the survival of a family, community, tribe, nation, race or species, or of their equivalents? Some belief systems have sought to determine and emphasize what humans have in common with other species, while others prefer to stress what is different or unique about human beings. Many people like to think they are special or have been 'chosen' to be different and rank above other living creatures. Large numbers of them claim to follow a particular religion. Such devotion might suggest a preoccupation with self and our fates. However, across faiths attitudes to other life forms can be as varied as indifference and reverence. The latter would seem more sensible, given our dependence upon eco-systems and in relation to survival as a goal (Dasgupta, 2021).

The feeling that people are special can be unfortunate for members of other species who are consequently regarded as on earth for the benefit of mankind and whose interests may therefore be rarely taken into account (Dasgupta, 2021). To what extent do or should other forms of life have moral standing (Framarin, 2017)? Actions have consequences, and well-meaning people can pursue goals that have unintended consequences. Pointing them out can be helpful, although some might portray doing this repeatedly as interference. Articulated goals are often different from the outcomes of human activity. Its impact upon the environment suggests the prevailing achieved outcome is environmental degradation, reduced biodiversity and increased global warming (Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2021; UN Climate Change, 2021; UNEP, 2019).

Natural selfishness related to survival may explain why so many people put their own interests as they see it ahead of that of other species and the environment (Dawkins, 1976). Given the 'selfish gene', as they become more aware of the longer-term consequences of their actions, how many of them will reflect and change as opposed to continuing as before and leaving tough decisions to others, or for a later date? As more people become aware of existential threats such as climate change, will enough people and decision makers have sufficient time to adapt in order to survive as suggested by evolution when both goals and related behaviours may need to quickly change (Williams, 1966; Dawkins, 1976)?

Acting to Protect, Restore and Regenerate Creation

Where a selfish gene comes from and which realm it relates to can depend upon whether or not one accepts evolution as a satisfactory or plausible explanation, or looks for additional or alternative understanding among one or more of various creation assumptions, stories or myths that have appeared and in some cases persisted across human recorded history. Might a creator have consciously wanted people to have a selfish gene and/or self-serving instincts, perhaps so they could be tested and sorted into those to be rewarded or punished? Why a creator would want to do this is a mystery, as is creating a universe with a finite life and endowing humans with the ability to destroy life as we know it on earth long before an expanding sun achieves the same outcome. Why put the natural world, such a magical element of what some allege to have been created, at risk (National Geographic, 2008)?

If there is ignorance or misunderstanding, why would an alleged or suggested creator with the power to do so not intervene to clarify their message and address any misrepresentation? In the absence of such clarification, might certain influencing factors also affect the perceptions, interpretations and articulations of believers and followers of what an alleged creator and/or imagined, discovered or revealed divinity is supposed to have ordained and any related or consequential over-riding goal, goals or purpose? Irrespective of one's religious beliefs, from a pragmatic perspective, if creation is the environment in which we live, we are dependent upon it and there is clear evidence that it is under threat, shouldn't our efforts be devoted to protecting and sustaining eco-systems (Dasgupta, 2021)? Should our goal be to move successively through protection to sustainability by means of restorative initiatives and re-generation? Could we learn from Indian ancient wisdom and work in harmony with nature in arenas like seagrass and other forests, wetlands, mangrove swamps and salt marshes?

Assembling Contributions from Different Belief Systems

If collaboration and collective responses are required to address existential challenges facing mankind, does there need to be more dialogue across belief systems and different dimensions or realms of thought such as the scientific, political and spiritual? The scientific evidence for some of the challenges such as the environment, degrading ecosystems and climate change is becoming clearer (UNEP, 2019; Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2021). In other realms such as the spiritual, core beliefs that have transcended generations may need to be brought together and related to particular existential challenges to influence required behaviour changes. Environmental challenges might also be an ethical issue and require action in this dimension (Gardiner, 2004). Relevant guidance and teachings, such as those relating to the environment, may need to be highlighted and given a higher priority (Coulson-Thomas, 2019). Their relevance may help to build desirable mutual understanding and appreciation. It might reinforce calls for action. Should each realm be encouraged to assemble beliefs and teachings related to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015)?

Purpose and goals can vary by realm, for example understanding in science, salvation in certain western religions, or enlightenment or unity with areas of Eastern thought. Are we moving from a knowledge age to a new age of consciousness in which there will be more of a fusion of science and spirit (Halal, 2021)? Could the perceived utilitarian relative value and potential contribution of each realm be related to the stability and acceptability of the context, the pressing nature of challenges and the time available to agree responses and develop solutions? For example, might the emphasis be upon science when seeking innovation and greater cost effectiveness in areas like renewable energy and carbon capture, while Eastern

mysticism might be seen as a more effective route to encouraging the abandonment of materialism to save natural capital, the embracing of simpler and healthier lifestyles and switching attention from external trappings to inner contemplation?

Assessing Belief Systems for Contemporary Relevance

A goal might be easily achievable or over ambitious. In relation to an existential challenge such as climate change, shared goals may not be attainable without significantly more collective effort (UN Climate Change, 2021). An educationalist might feel that people should be helped and encouraged to achieve their full potential. To what extent could learning from ancient wisdom and the practices of indigenous peoples help us to overcome resistance and collectively accomplish more? Ancient texts reflect influencing factors at the time of their creation and subsequent translation and interpretation. Elements of some factors might be immutable, while others may evolve, wax or wane over the centuries.

Religious belief systems range from those that seem relatively pacific, benign and inclusive to the intolerance and divisiveness of suggesting that the heads of unbelievers should be separated from their bodies. They can also vary in contemporary relevance and alignment with current sensibilities and priorities (Coulson-Thomas, 2017b). Some passages in certain religious texts are incoherent, unpleasant or cruel, depending upon one's perspective. The Christian Old Testament request to a supporter to sacrifice a son to demonstrate his obedience does not exude caring concern. The Ten Commandments do not explicitly refer to the environment, nature or our planet and its eco-systems. They could apply to human behaviour and interaction a digital or imaginary world.

Indian ancient wisdom encourages awareness of the natural world as the context of our existence, and responsible and reverential attitudes towards it and thought about it (Coulson-Thomas, 2019). It is regarded as sacred. Digital alternatives to internal arenas of reflection, exploration and meditation assume the continuing availability of rare earth minerals which is under threat due to continuing over-use and running down of natural capital. Many Hindu pilgrimage sites are associated with natural features such as rivers (Lal, 2015). Hindu Vedas show an understanding of the importance of environmental protection and ecological balance for sustainability (Sharma, 2013). The most ardent rationalist and detractor would surely empathise with their holistic systems thinking and understanding of the inter-relationship between different life forms and their interdependence, alongside recognition of their key building blocks or compositional elements.

Recognising the Contemporary Relevance of Ancient Wisdom

In many parts of the world water shortages are commonplace. As droughts become more severe and with over-exploited aquifers running low, there may soon be insufficient rainfall and groundwater to grow the food required to feed a significant proportion of the world's population (Gleick, 2014; Rowe, 2019). Indian ancient wisdom recognises the importance of water in a way that many people today do not (Sharma, 2005). Not surprisingly perhaps, the IUCN global standard to facilitate nature based solutions to certain existential challenges incorporates traditional knowledge and lessons from the practices of indigenous peoples that have been passed on through the generations.

Will we pass on a bitter heritage? We and contemporary leaders can learn from ancient wisdom and past practices about ways of addressing certain arenas of challenge such as the

environment using materials that are not as scarce as the rare earth minerals that many advanced products today require (Dwivedi and Tiwari, 1987; Coulson-Thomas, 2017b). Advice can be found on ethics, values and conduct that has resonance and relevance today (Renugadevi, 2012). Indian ancient wisdom's acknowledgement of human potential might also be welcomed as a relief from the stress upon human imperfections and original sin found in certain religions. Suggesting the immutability of influencing factors could encourage fatalistic resignation rather than offer hope and encourage collective action.

Nature and the natural world feature across Indian philosophies and cultural traditions (Baindur, 2015). From a pragmatic perspective, it makes sense to use them to inspire wider action to achieve a shared goal relating to a contemporary challenge (Analayo, 2019). Ancient advice can be relevant and might resonate with elements of a younger generation concerned with environmental and eco-system issues (Maynard, 2019). Hindu Vedas encourage living in harmony with nature rather than its exploitation (Renugadevi, 2012). Mankind is portrayed as an element of nature rather than above it. To keep the ecosystem in balance it is suggested that one species should not encroach upon another. The special importance of air, water and vegetation is referred to and the role of the latter in reducing pollution is mentioned, an example and early exemplar of systems thinking. Practical steps such as the use of trees to prevent erosion are alluded to. Thinking longer term such as the planting of trees for future benefit is encouraged (Dwivedi and Tiwari, 1987).

Pragmatically Avoiding Distractions

Some beliefs although light in responses to some 'why' questions are concerned with our origins, rather than how we should conduct ourselves. In relation to the natural world and the environment, they can provoke more questions than answers (Coulson-Thomas, 2019). Do creationists know the will of a creator or the rationale of creation? Can it be assumed that the environment, plants, creatures and natural forces are for our benefit or to help, challenge or test us? Are they to be exploited or revered and protected? How does one achieve the right balance between contending forces? What might a creator think about the disrespect shown by mankind to the natural world, bio-diversity crises and our general treatment of the planet? How important are such questions when the issue is action to address existential challenges?

Certain views found in some religious texts might be viewed as irrelevant or distractions by non-believers. They may also be regarded by devout followers as the word of God and so absolute and not able to be challenged. Where such views advocate opposite behaviours, those who hold them may be resistant to adopting a more sustainable path. The possible and various options, events, outcomes and evolutionary paths found in the natural world, their implications and consequences and those of humans within it, suggest that any alleged creator may not have perfect foresight. Why should such pronouncements be regarded as absolute? Could they co-exist and be compatible with scientific questioning and testing of hypotheses?

Some factors that influence human goal selection may be positive up to a point and then become negative. Religions may have the potential to become counter-productive and to enslave. A theocracy could begin to rule in the interests of a favoured group and promote their interests ahead of others, including those portrayed as 'outsiders'. Taken to extreme this could lead to Jihad or holy war. In a civil or religious dictatorship particular viewpoints can be imposed. To address existential challenges we need creativity and innovation. This requires tolerance and the active promotion of diversity (Coulson-Thomas, 2017a & c). Within a belief system and in respect of areas of Indian ancient wisdom there may be diverse

views relating to meaning, significance and relevance to particular contemporary challenges (Swearer, 2006). When looking for possible reinforcing influences a pragmatist may need to be selective and avoid distractions.

Some people lack the time and motivation to think about their goals and whether or not there is or should be an over-riding and/or universal purpose to their lives, let alone access, understand and internalise a number of different ways of thinking. Hence they resort to exploring packaged sets of beliefs from particular realms and perhaps adopting one. Some may do this because they feel they are missing something or there is a gap in their lives. They may form or join a group that might be targeted by certain cults. Some religions are more active than others at proselytizing and attracting coverts to their ranks. Will AI ever be able to operate across different belief systems and realms of thought and switch between them to anything like the extent of some human? Could it help us to look for similarities, areas of alignment, links, patterns and relationships that might enable us to identify factors that could increase awareness, understanding and/or action in relation to what needs to be done?

Examining Cross-realm and Multi-realm Similarities

Are there similarities in how humans endeavour to build their understanding of the world, their place in it and reflect on their purpose across and within different realms such as the scientific and spiritual (Capra, 1975; Zukav, 1979)? Are the same biological processes at work? If there were more dialogues across and between different realms, might this result in more compatible or even shared goals? By approaching people who locate themselves in different realms in ways that resonate with language they relate to and a common rationale, might larger numbers of people be encouraged to live more sustainably in ways that would make sense from their particular perspectives? Each community might have particular hot buttons that could be pressed to achieve similar responses, even though they may have very different beliefs about the purpose of life and what happens after it.

Within Eastern thought some elements of the whole can have a degree of fluidity and can change (Capra, 1975). Such views seem consistent with and supportive of evolution, while some elements of certain Western religions such as creationists still object to the notion of evolution to the extent of trying to ban certain books from schools. Systems thinking and certain areas of science stress the inter-relatedness of events, elements and factors, as does holistic Eastern ancient wisdom (Siu, 1957). The search continues in Physics for an overarching 'Theory of Everything'. In the biosphere, the interlinking of eco-systems is such that consequences of collective human behaviour such as climate change and environmental pollution are negatively impacting many areas of our experience and other species (Dasgupta, 2021). It would be remarkable if inter-relationships and interdependence were denied and people questioned whether activities such as breathing were necessary.

Just as systems thinking found in Indian ancient wisdom has influenced a succession of disciplines such as biology, political science, computing and natural sciences, might one expect certain perspectives, approaches, methodologies and ways of analysis and problem solving to appear and be used in different disciplines and realms (Scerri, 1989; Lederman, 1993; Walker, 2012)? It is not unusual for multi-disciplinary teams composed of a mix of people with different approaches and perspectives to produce a stimulating working environment that may result in more creative outputs and solutions than a team made up of people from a particular discipline with similar backgrounds who tend to approach problems

in the same way (Coulson-Thomas, 2017a & c). Perhaps artists in residence should be joined by Eastern mystics or philosophers as a means of increasing creativity.

Accommodating Science and Spirituality

Because of similarities of certain elements, is it misleading to suggest that science and spirituality are incompatible or at war (Chopra and Mlodinow, 2011)? Can they be aligned? Could Western religions and/or Eastern spiritualism be of help in influencing human goals and behaviour in relation to an existential challenge such as climate change? Individual proponents of approaches from either realm might see themselves as competing for attention, but as each may appeal to a different or not entirely overlapping constituency, by collaborating to tackle a shared problem, each might be able to learn from and reinforce the other. Greater diversity can be supportive of questioning, challenge and innovation (Coulson-Thomas, 2017a & c). If behaviour change is sought by working together, the realms of science and spiritualism might also be able to reach and influence a greater number of people.

Although sometimes opposed to new thinking, as when church authorities and representatives persisted in asserting that the earth was the centre of the universe, religion *per se* is not necessarily anti-science as evidenced by the range of breakthroughs that occurred in multiple fields in some countries and during eras of Muslim dominance (Al-Hassani et al, 2006). However, religions can sometimes have strong and standard views on what the goal and purpose of human existence should be. Some of those who claim to be religious may be intolerant of those with different belief systems. This intolerance, as already mentioned, can lead to hostility towards other faiths and on occasion open and extended warfare (Palaver et al, 2020). It can also inhibit cooperation for mutual benefit.

Although they may claim to be divinely inspired and articulating divine guidance, religions are not immune to splits or schisms and the factionalism found in other human institutions and realms. Differences of view and robust arguments are found within the scientific community, but scientists do not go to the extreme of seeking to blow each other up and destroying the buildings of members of other factions as sometimes happens in relation to the Sunni-Shia schism within Islam. Inflexibility can be a barrier to effective collaboration. In many eras the unexpected has appeared. We need to be prepared for novel situations, new challenges and unforeseen events. We also have to be ready to cope peaceably with any associated uncertainty, differences, anxiety and stress.

Accommodating or Countering Western Religions

Organised religions bring comfort and hope to a great many people, although not necessarily in relation to contemporary existential challenges. They have waxed and waned over the centuries. They can enable the poor, the weak and the excluded to join a community of fellow believers and feel special and wanted. However, believing that the whole of creation is for our benefit can lead to the over-exploitation of natural resources and the collateral damage to eco-systems we see today around the world (Dasgupta, 2021). Pope Francis (2015) highlights the mountains of rubbish that result from our attitude towards natural capital and behaving in our common home as if we are the "lords and masters, entitled to plunder at will".

On occasion, and in times of revolution, war and famine, the veneer of civilisation has seemed very thin and there has been a breakdown of law and order. Hobbes believed that religion can have a role in Government (Hobbes, 1651). Weak and/or potentially vulnerable

rulers have sometimes actively sought the endorsement and support of clerics and priests. Official religions supported by temporal authorities can help to maintain order by endorsing particular conduct, people and institutions, and promising rewards for certain behaviours and punishments for others. The emergence of new forms of religion at the expense of previous ones can impact both the goals that many people set and the steps they take to achieve them, as evidenced by the role religion played in European social and economic development and the emergence of capitalism (Weber, 1958; Tawney, 1926). It is this development and associated materialism and overuse of natural capital that has subsequently damaged eco-systems and now needs to be countered rather than accommodated (Dasgupta, 2021).

Alternative Sources of Inspiration and Redirecting Effort

Advocates of determinism since Stoic philosophers may have questioned the extent to which we have a free will, but every day we make choices (Bobzein, 1998; Alexander, 2017). Some choices may be instinctive, others considered. Some are made by individuals others by groups. There are wise people and there is the wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki, 2004). It may make sense to search for positive inspiration in areas of thought that are respectful of the natural world and more open to the possibility of change through the exercise of human will such as Indian ancient wisdom, which may also resonate with large numbers of people. The proportion of the human population that is willing to embrace a different lifestyle and changed aspirations could be very significant for addressing the challenge of climate change.

Some choices delight while others disappoint. Some decisions have unexpected and unwelcome results. Some innovations fail. Others are counterproductive or have unintended consequences. Dualism seems ever present, whether success and failure, good and evil, heaven and hell, helps and hinders, supporters and opponents, rich and poor, friends and enemies, citizens and aliens and believers and unbelievers. Richer thought systems have more gradations. In relation to existential challenges, we need to progress and pursue multiple initiatives in the hope that enough will succeed to the extent of turning tides.

At times, certain religions have seemed more concerned with death than life. There has been a preoccupation with death and what may or may not come next. Despite the lure of what might happen to the obedient and righteous, many of the most devout make every effort to stay alive. Some societies devote substantial resources to postponing death, and release from what might have become be a poor quality of life, by months, weeks or just days. In comparison, preventive medicine and healthier diets and lifestyles may be under-funded and far less support may have been provided to these people when they were younger. Miniscule amounts are devoted to trying to learn from ancient wisdom and disseminate guidance that might make a difference throughout many years of active life and for future generations.

Incorporating and Learning from Ancient Wisdom

For over five and a half millennia, religions have portrayed human existence as a struggle between good and evil. Motivated by a view of human nature that is bleak or realistic, depending upon one's point of view, some of the punishments for what many today might regard as minor transgressions have been draconian. Some of the promised rewards have been literally 'out of this world'. People have been reconciled to exploitation and ill fortune in this world by the prospect of better circumstances and experiences in the next life.

More recently in relation to the biosphere and the risk of pandemics, life may still be a struggle, but one between life and death (Dasgupta, 2021). In their daily fight for survival, living in harmony with nature is still for some indigenous people a way of life.

Ancient wisdom like many traditional practices has stood the test of time. It can often be succinct, memorable and have ascribed authority. It is concerned with life as well as death, and recognises the importance of the natural world. The Vedas advise against tampering with the environment (Renugadevi, 2012). They advocate the prevention of water pollution which is linked to the spread of disease (Joshi and Joshi, 2009, Sharma, 2005). The Puranas advise conduct to prevent atmospheric and water pollution (Renugadevi, 2012). Importantly, these particular examples of ancient wisdom could have resonance in the populous country of its origin, namely India which is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Whether or not humanity survives will depend critically upon steps that China, the US and India take to reduce future emissions and help reverse environmental damage that has been done.

The maintenance of balance is important in the Hindu tradition (Shulman, 1980; Renugadevi, 2012). The future impact of religious beliefs and ancient wisdom might depend upon a number of areas of balance (Swearer, 2006; Coulson-Thomas, 2017b). In particular, it may depend upon where the balance is struck between detachment from the cares, distractions and obsessions of this world and personal searches for enlightenment or salvation, and engagement with environmental issues and obligations to society and the natural world and the extent to which they are considered as complementary rather than competing claims to be reconciled. They could be mutually reinforcing as well as complementary.

Seizing an Opportunity for Unity and Alignment

Certain existential challenges facing mankind are increasingly impacting people in multiple locations, whatever their nationality, religion or political beliefs and regardless of personal, organisational and community goals and aspirations and priorities (Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2021). As a number of tipping points are reached in relation to them, it may be that ever more people will recognise a shared interest in survival and join in collective action to address them. As a consequence, there might be more unity of purpose and a greater alignment of different influencing factors and previously contending interests. Addressing climate change by working in harmony with nature might become a priority goal, for people, organisations, communities and societies around the world. The future of mankind depends upon it.

We can learn from own experience of life about what works and does not work, but this sometimes involves learning the hard way and experiencing disappointment, failure and pain. As windows of opportunity for effective collective responses rapidly close, it makes sense to learn from traditional practices and the wisdom of the thoughtful and wise, people who over the centuries and the millennia have thought about what advice to give to others and pass on to future generations. For Hindus, nature is to be revered and Jainism also respects and esteems ecological balance, harmony and life (Renugadevi, 2012). In some parts of the world indigenous people still live in harmony with nature. We also need to learn from them.

Not everything that has been recorded has survived, but that which has such as the earliest cave and rock paintings emphasises our connection with the natural world and dependence upon it (Coulson-Thomas, 2017b). Much has been lost, as when the great library at Alexandria burned. However, much remains and has been painstakingly passed from generation to generation. Such literature and domestic fragments as have survived, suggest

that human nature may not have changed that much over the last few thousand years. Threats and challenges have been an ever present feature of the human experience.

Listening and Learning Leadership

Previous civilisations have been laid low by climate change, war and conquest, inadequate governance and failings of character and morality. Much of what ancient voices communicate can be relevant - indeed especially relevant - for us today. When we see those same and differing attributes of individual character all around us it is a brave, arrogant and perhaps irresponsible person who ignores or refuses to listen to what they have to say. We need listening leadership (Coulson-Thomas, 2014). We need to be open to learning from different belief systems, and use and deploy wisdom which resonates with those whose behaviours need to change in order to increase awareness, understanding and commitment to action.

Belief systems that are open rather than closed may offer both comfort and hope. Ancient wisdom that is aligned with the goal of ensuring human survival and related influencing factors by working with nature and restoring and regenerating natural eco-systems can complement and support scientific and technological initiatives. Engagement with nature and activities such as rewilding can be personally fulfilling and psychologically rewarding. It may enable further progress on a journey to balance and inner peace and assist the transition to simpler, healthier and more fulfilling lifestyles.

To confront shared and existential challenges and seize certain related opportunities we need to be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial (Coulson-Thomas, 2017a & c). We need the courage to discover, explore and pioneer and to be more imaginative in our transformation of cities and urban areas (Dobraszczyk, 2019). Bringing nature into them may help us to better cope with rising temperatures. Regardless of what we do, they are set to continue to increase for some time to come (IPCC, 2021). Responsibly managed and natural infrastructure can appreciate in value while also helping us to tackle certain challenges, unlike much human infrastructure that depreciates over time or material products that end up as junk or rubbish.

Ensuring the Enduring Relevance of Indian Ancient Wisdom

Some belief systems may be perceived as less relevant and helpful than others, because they are inaccessible or closed. Those who claim to be their authorised representatives may be reluctant to allow review and revision. Should one be wary whenever followers or believers are encouraged or ordered not to question? In relation to moving and learning quickly to address existential challenges inflexible individuals, communities and groups are unlikely to be sought after collaborative partners. A pragmatist intent on progress will probably ignore them. Reluctance to face scrutiny can indicate insecurity. Confident entities welcome and may positively invite comment and critique. Those which open doors to relevant knowledge and tested practice, and are willing to engage, discuss and co-create could become complementary partners in collective action.

There may be a case for initiatives to open up access to areas of ancient wisdom that resonate and are tolerant of other beliefs. Over the centuries and millennia, India has been the birthplace and home of a rich tapestry of views, ideas, faiths and philosophies. Throughout this time our ancestors and their predecessors have faced a variety of challenges that in some cases have been similar to those today, whether drought, flood or migration. From a pragmatic perspective, learning from previous generations as well as from our own

experience and contemporary ways of thinking makes sense. Guidance from ancient wisdom may influence and moderate our conduct, enable us to make wiser decisions about what is important and set and prioritise shared goals, and motivate us towards their achievement.

As custodians, we can protect what we have inherited from the past, classifying and interpreting, and reviewing and refining some areas for contemporary relevance, while preserving a valued heritage in others that may have utility in relation to future challenges and opportunities. As their nature and relative importance changes, areas of ancient wisdom will need to be revisited. We should remain open to possibilities and different ways of learning and be pragmatic in sharing purpose, exploring different options and developing solutions. There could be a continuing and important role for an institution like SRISIIM so long as inspiration and diversity of thought are required to address issues that arise, reconcile and align contending interests and make difficult choices during transition and transformation journeys to more balanced and sustainable lifestyles and ways of living in harmony with the natural world and respectful and supportive of nature's eco-systems.

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