

SELF-EXPLORATION

Self-exploration is the process to find out what is valuable to me by investigating within myself, what is right for me, true for me, has to be judged within myself. Through self exploration we get the value of ourself. It is a process of focusing attention on ourself, our present beliefs and aspirations vis-à-vis what we really want to be (that is to say, what is naturally acceptable to us). If these two are the same, then there is no problem. If on investigation we find that these two are not the same, then it means we are living with this contradiction (of not being what we really want to be) and hence, we need to resolve this contradiction this conflict within us. It is a process of discovering that there is something innate, invariant and universal in all human beings. This enables us to look at our confusions and contradictions within and resolve them by becoming aware of our natural acceptance. self exploration we get the value of ourself. For self exploration we need two aspects

1. Natural acceptance: Natural acceptance implies unconditional and total acceptance of the self, people and environment. It also refers to the absence of any exception from others. Once we fully and truly commit ourself on the basis of natural acceptance, we feel a holistic sense of inner harmony, tranquillity and fulfilment.

2. Experiential validation: Experiential validation is a process that infuses direct experience with the learning environment and content. It may be regarded as a philosophy and methodology in which the direct experience and focused reflection of the individual helps to increase knowledge, develop skill and clarify values. Self-exploration takes place in the self and not the body.

Purpose of Self Exploration:

Self-exploration is the process to find out what is valuable to me by investigating within myself, what is right for me, true for me, has to be judged within myself. Through self-exploration we get the value of ourself. The purpose of self-exploration is:

1. It is a process of dialogue between “what you are” and “what you really want to be”: It is a process of focusing attention on ourself, our present beliefs and aspirations vis-à-vis what we really want to be (that is to say, what is naturally acceptable to us). If these two are the same, then there is no problem. If on investigation we find that these two are not the same, then it means we are living with this contradiction (of not being what we really want to be) and hence, we need to resolve this contradiction this conflict within us. It is a process of discovering that there is something innate, invariant and universal in all human beings. This enables us to

look at our confusions and contradictions within and resolve them by becoming aware of our natural acceptance.

2. It is a process of self-evolution through self-investigation: It successively enables us to evolve by bridging the gap between ‘what we are’ and ‘what to be’. Hence, the self-exploration leads to our own improvement, our self-evolution – we will become qualitatively better.

3. It is a process of knowing oneself and through that, knowing the entire existence: The exploration starts by asking simple questions about ourselves, which gives us clarity about our being, and then clarity about everything around us.

4. It is a process of recognizing one’s relationship with every unit in existence and fulfilling it: It is a process of becoming aware about our right relationship with other entities in existence and through that discovering the interconnectedness, co-existence and other in the entire existence, and living accordingly.

5. It is a process of knowing human conduct, human character and living accordingly: It is a process of discovering the definitiveness of human conduct and human character and enabling one to be definite in thought, behaviour and work.

6. It is a process of being in harmony in oneself and in harmony with entire existence: This process of self exploration helps us to be in harmony with ourselves and with everything around.

7. It is a process of identifying our innateness and moving towards self organization and self expression: This process of self exploration helps us to identify our swatva and through that acquiring Swatantrata and Swarajya.

Swatva: Innateness of self – The natural acceptance of harmony

Swatantrata: Being self- organized – Being in harmony with oneself

Swarajya: Self-expression, self- extension – Living in harmony with others

Swatva → Swatantrata → Swarajya

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Terms Swatva, Swatantrata and Swarajya:

This process of self exploration helps us to identify our swatva and through that acquiring Swatantrata and Swarajya.

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Swatantrata means being self- organized – Being in harmony with oneself

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The swatva is already there, intact in each one of us. By being in dialogue with it, we attain swatantrata enabling us to work for swarajya. Living in contradiction, means we are not self-organized and living with pre-conditionings where we have assumed certain things, have accumulated desires without having first evaluated them, then it means we are partantra. On the other hand, when we identify our innateness, what we really want to be and establish a dialogue with it, it enables us to start living with this harmony, it starts expressing itself through our harmonious behaviour and work, and it naturally extends to our participation with the surroundings. This is working towards swarajya.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self Awareness is having a clear perception of your personality, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions. Self Awareness allows you to understand other people, how they perceive you, your attitude and your responses to them in the moment.

We might quickly assume that we are self aware, but it is helpful to have a relative scale for awareness. If you have ever been in an auto accident you may have experienced everything happening in slow motion and noticed details of your thought process and the event. This is a state of heightened awareness. With practice we can learn to engage these types of heightened states and see new opportunities for interpretations in our thoughts, emotions, and conversations. Having awareness creates the opportunity to make changes in behavior and beliefs.

Why Develop Self Awareness?

As you develop self awareness you are able to make changes in the thoughts and interpretations you make in your mind. Changing the interpretations in your mind allows you to change your emotions. Self awareness is one of the attributes of Emotional Intelligence and an important factor in achieving success.

Self awareness is the first step in creating what you want and mastering your life. Where you focus your attention, your emotions, reactions, personality and behavior determine where you

go in life. Having self awareness allows you to see where your thoughts and emotions are taking you. It also allows you to take control of your emotions, behavior, and personality so you can make changes you want. Until you are aware in the moment of your thoughts, emotions, words, and behavior, you will have difficulty making changes in the direction of your life.

Self-Awareness in Relationships

Relationships are easy until there is emotional turmoil. This is the same whether you are at work or in your personal life. When you can change the interpretation in your mind of what you think you can change your emotions and shift the emotional quality of your relationships. When you can change the emotions in your relationships you open up entirely new possibilities in your life.

Having a clear understanding of your thought and, behavior patterns helps you understand other people. This ability to empathize facilitates better personal and professional relationships.

Develop Self-Awareness

Self awareness is developed through practices in focusing your attention on the details of your personality and behavior. It isn't learned from reading a book. When you read a book you are focusing your attention on the conceptual ideas in the book. You can develop an intellectual understanding of the ideas of self awareness from a book, but this is not the same. With your attention in a book you are practicing not paying attention to your own behavior, emotions and personality.

Think of learning to be mindful and self aware as learning to dance. When learning to dance we have to pay attention to how and where our feet move, our hands and body motion, what our partner is doing, music, beat, floor space, and other dancers. Dancing isn't learned from books and Self Awareness isn't either. A dancer needs awareness of their body movements. Self awareness is what you develop when you pay attention to your expressions of thought, emotions, and behavior. In my years of study and working with clients I have discovered many useful techniques that accelerate this learning.

In the process of these sessions I am not telling anybody what to believe, how they should think, or what they should do. I am basically sharing with people exercises in raising their self awareness. When you become more self-aware you instinctively begin to see aspects of your personality and behavior that you didn't notice before.

If you have an emotional reaction of anger or frustration, you notice many of the thoughts and small triggers that build up towards those emotions. You also notice moments when you can change the interpretations in your mind, or not believe what you are thinking. In this heightened awareness you instinctively make better choices in your thought process long before an emotional reaction or destructive behavior.

SELF-SATISFACTION

Almost everyone, at some point or the other in their life, might have asked themselves about the reason of their birth, the purpose of their life, and the goals that they would like to pursue. These questions, if left unanswered continuously keep posing troubles to the individual and lead to an unknown displeasure and unhappiness.

No matter how much success a person gets, no matter how rich a person becomes, and no matter how many goals are achieved, somehow these questions keep on confronting the person. This will continue until and unless such accomplishments do not lead to self-satisfaction.

The only answer to these questions is to seek self-satisfaction. It is self-satisfaction that can keep an individual away from these troubling questions. Self-satisfaction should thus be the sole quest for human beings. Self-satisfaction should therefore be the ultimate goal of life.

Self-satisfaction is a sense of absolute fulfilment with oneself and one's accomplishments. As simple as may it sound, achieving self-satisfaction is not at all an easy task. But, there are ways in which one can constantly look out for self-satisfaction and in the process find answers to the many unanswered questions that life imposes upon us.

Victor Frankl talked about meaning of life and will to meaning, which means that if an individual has certain meaningfulness in life, then that becomes a driving force for the individual to move forward in life. Frankl says that people tend to go through a blandness or emptiness in life, which refers to existential vacuum and not being able to come out of it is known as existential crisis. The will to meaning helps an individual to overcome this existential crisis. According to Frankl, if a person has a meaning of life, then he/she can survive the toughest conditions of life and come out of it in a positive manner. This will to meaning enables the individual a personal choice to grow and develop, which leads to triumph and self-fulfillment.

According to Frankl, when people go through existential crisis, they try to fill the void by guiding themselves by conformity, conventionality, and traditionality, which do not provide

any kind of help. People do not use the freedom to make their own choices in life in order to find their own meaning.

Frankl suggests three ways of finding meaning in life. The first is by experiencing something or someone valued by the individual. This mainly includes experiencing the value of another person such as parents, siblings, friends, lover, etc. In order to develop meaning in the life of the valued person, the individual can develop meaning in his/her own life. The second is by involving oneself in creative deeds such as art, music, writing, invention, etc. The third is by developing virtues such as compassion, bravery, good sense of humour, etc. Once a person finds meaning in life, he/she sets off to a journey of achieving self-satisfaction.

Carl Rogers talks about congruence and incongruence. According to him, people have a real self and an ideal self. The real self is what the person actually is or can be. It is the true potential of the person. The ideal self is what the person feels that he/she should be, which may not be the real potential of the person. People, at times, tend to move towards their ideal self rather than their real self, due to expectations or external pressure. This creates a gap between real self and ideal self. Rogers calls this gap as incongruence. If there is no gap between a person's real self and ideal self then it is referred to as congruence. In a state of congruence, the individual is well-adjusted and mentally healthy and is maladjusted in the state of incongruence. The more the gap between the real self and the ideal self, the more there is inner conflict and displeasure. The individual feels threatened and anxious. They become defensive, and their thinking becomes rigid and constricted.

For instance, a youngster has his/her own interests and is perhaps very good at it, but chooses not to take it up as a career because it is quite risky and decides to go for something that is more secure. Going for a career that is more secure is more acceptable in the eyes of others and also somewhat guarantees quick success. Here, the real self of the person is that he/she is good in some other activity. But, due to external demands he/she prefers to go away from his/her real potential and prefers to go for something that is more secure. This might prove to be worthwhile initially, but in the long run it only gives dissatisfaction. There is no harm in going for something that is more secure, but it should not be at the expense of one's true potential and definitely not at the expense of satisfaction.

According to Rogers, we should try not to conform to the expectations of others. We should rather come to terms with our own nature, trust one's own experience, and accept the fact that other people are different. In this way, the gap between the real self and the ideal self will

become lesser and a state of congruence will come into place. Once this happens, in terms of Rogers, the person is said to have become oneself. The becoming of one's self makes the person what Rogers calls a fully functioning person. The fully functioning person, according to Rogers, acknowledges and expresses all his/her feelings, has no rigidity and preconceptions about what he/she should be, make and rely on their own decisions, acknowledges the feeling of freedom and takes responsibility of his/her decisions, and contributes to life. Becoming oneself and being a fully functioning person brings the person closer and closer to self-satisfaction.

Abraham Maslow talked about self-actualization. Self-actualization is the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is and it is to become everything that one is capable of becoming. It involves the continuous desire to fulfil potentials and become the most complete, the fullest.

According to Maslow, people who have achieved self-actualization have some distinguished features. Self-actualized people are realistically oriented; they accept themselves, others, and the natural world for what they are; they have a lot of spontaneity; they are problem-centered instead of giving up to life difficulties; they have a need for privacy; they are autonomous and independent; they do not buy into stereotypes; they have few intimate relationships that are deeply emotional rather than having shallow relationships with many people; they do not confuse means with ends; they have a philosophical sense of humour, preferably directed towards themselves rather than being directed to others; they have a great ability to be creative; they are non-conformists; and they are open to individual variety.

Apart from this, self-actualization involves what Maslow calls peak experiences. This is a feeling of being more integrated, more at one with the world, more their own boss, more spontaneous, less aware of space and time, and being more perceptive. Being self-actualized and having peak experiences that Maslow talks about, is more or less being self-satisfied.

People should be intrinsically motivated in the things that they do. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes from within the individual rather than from external factors such as money or high status. It is the motivation that comes from the pleasure that one gets from the task itself or from the sense of satisfaction that one gets in completing or even working on a task. Being intrinsically motivated is to be motivated by self-generated factors such as responsibility, freedom to act, development and use of skills and abilities, interesting and

challenging work, and opportunities for advancement. These factors have a deeper and longer-term effect.

Usually, in order to earn their bread and butter, people choose a particular career as their work and they have their hobbies for leisure time. They keep their work and hobbies as two distinct things. It will be a lot better if people make their hobby as their work and career. A hobby is something that people enjoy to do and use it as a stress buster when they get tired of their work. Instead, if their hobby becomes their work then they will enjoy their work and be happy with the kind of work they will be doing. This will make them intrinsically motivated towards their work. Not only it will make them enjoy their work, but it will also drive them to excel in it.

The work of a person plays a very major role in one's life. Work should not be seen as something that is burdensome; it should be something that is fun. If a person's hobby becomes his/her work then he/she will have more and more interest in it, which will give a sense of satisfaction. When a person gets up in the morning, he/she should not say, "oh no, I have to work." He/she should rather be excited and say, "oh yes, I am going to work." This excitement and joy can only be there if the person is intrinsically motivated towards work, which can only happen if the person's hobby becomes his/her work. In the long run, this will become an immense source of satisfaction.

A high level of self-awareness is required for self-satisfaction. An individual should have a realization of his/her strengths and weaknesses. This will make the person know about how good or bad he/she is at various things. This will also make the person more focused and will enable him/her to know exactly what he/she wants from life. When a person knows exactly what he/she wants to do, it generates an immense amount of positive feeling within that person and leads to a lot of self-worth.

This high level of self-awareness is very much similar to what Howard Gardner calls intrapersonal intelligence. People who are high on intrapersonal intelligence have a good capacity of being introspective and self-reflective. They are intuitive and skillful in recognizing their own feelings and motivations. It includes having a deep level of understanding, knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, realization of what makes one unique, and having the ability to predict one's own reactions and emotions.

A high level of self-awareness or being high on intrapersonal intelligence also enables the individual to understand the meaning of success in its true sense. Success has different meanings for different people. There are individual differences in what people may desire and

their meaning of success differentiates accordingly. Knowing one's strengths and weaknesses gives a clear picture of these individual differences. This realization helps in coping with failure to a great extent and leads to a lot of emotional stability, which in the long run helps in getting close to self-satisfaction.

The realization of the true meaning of success also leads the person not to make inappropriate social comparisons. Comparing oneself with others is a very common phenomenon and it can turn out to be quite useful in assessing oneself. However, this may also be misleading. If one person is strong in a particular ability then it does not mean that the other person also is strong in that ability. Someone else, due to various reasons, might get success easily. Comparing oneself with that person might be disheartening and may make the person become impatient and lose focus. Rather than following his/her own interests, the person might try to do something else in which he/she may not be that good in. While comparing himself/herself with the other person, the individual might have a sense failure, which is wrong. That person is successful in his/her own way and making comparisons with him/her is inappropriate, which should not be done.

Delay of gratification is something that becomes very important in achieving self-satisfaction. People, at times, forget about their larger goals and become satisfied by smaller and relatively insignificant goals. They also, at times, ignore their larger goals in order to achieve the smaller ones. It is true that achieving small things is important, but it should not be at the expense of the larger goals that are in fact the main goals of the individual. An individual might achieve something that gives immediate pleasure and in the bargain may not be able to look at the larger picture. This can be harmful and cause dissatisfaction in the long run. The person should rather be sensible enough and be able to assess things properly. This may require ignoring the small, little pleasures in order to achieve the larger and much more satisfying goals in life.

Life can be highly unpredictable. Various ups and downs may occur throughout one's life. There are moments of happiness as well as sadness. All this may create a lot of instability within oneself. The only way to maintain a proper composure in life is to seek and eventually achieve self-satisfaction. It is the seeking of self-satisfaction that guides the person through all the turbulence of life. Achieving self-satisfaction should be the main criteria in whatever the person wants to do.

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