



Universal Human Values Handout 1 of 5 Introduction to Value Education



Need for Value Education

All human beings aspire for a happy, fulfilling life. For a human being, there are two important questions pertaining to this:

- What is my aspiration? (What to do?)
- How to fulfil my aspiration? (How to do?)

The purpose of education is to facilitate the development of clarity on the aspiration and adequate competence to actualize it.

For this, it is essential to understand what a happy, fulfilling and successful life is – what is really valuable for human being; what is our purpose as a human being? Understanding human aspiration, or what is really valuable for human being, is the value domain. The subject which enables us to understand this domain is called ‘Value Education’ (VE). It enables us to understand our aspirations and visualise our goals for a fulfilling life and indicates the direction for their fulfillment. In relation to these issues, it also helps to remove our confusions and contradictions. In that sense, VE addresses the issues related to ‘what to do?’.

It is also necessary to learn the skills to actualise our aspirations. This is the skill domain. The subject which enables us to learn the skills is called ‘Skill Development’ (SD). It enables us to learn the science, technology, management and other skills for fulfilling our aspiration. In that sense, SD addresses the issues related to ‘how to do?’.

Values and skills go hand in hand. Both values and skills are required. There is an essential complementarity between the two. The priority is values, then skills; i.e. first understanding ‘what to do’ and then developing the skills for ‘how to do’. And of course, checking if this results into a fulfilling life!

The present education system has largely become skill-biased. For developing skills, the prime emphasis is on science and technology, without a base of values. Skills can only help to provide the means to achieve what is considered valuable. It is not within the scope of science and technology to provide a way to decide what really is valuable. The consequence of skill-biased education is clearly visible in the form of serious crises at the individual, societal and environmental level. Thus, there is a strong need to rectify this situation. Value education is a crucial missing link in the present education system.

But more importantly, the prime need of value education is to understand human aspirations, to discover what is truly valuable in life; and work out the program for its fulfillment.

Guidelines for Value Education

For any input to qualify for Value Education, the following guidelines for the content of the course are important:

Universal: It has to be universally applicable to all human beings for all time and all places. This implies that values should not change according to sect, creed, nationality, gender, etc.

Rational: It has to appeal to reasoning; and not be based on dogmas or blind beliefs. It has to be open to address the related questions. It cannot be a set of sermons or do’s and don’ts.

Natural and Verifiable: It has to be ‘naturally acceptable’ to the human being and there needs to be every provision in nature for its fulfillment. It needs to be experientially verifiable, and not based on dogmas, beliefs or assumptions. It is not merely an intellectual exercise or information transfer.

All Encompassing: It needs to cover all dimensions (thought, behaviour, work and understanding) and levels (individual, family, society and nature/existence) of human life.



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Leading to Harmony: It ultimately needs to promote harmony within the individual, among human beings and with the entire nature.

Content of Value Education

The value of an entity is its participation in the larger order of which it is a part. The context is always the larger order. Value has to do with the participation of a unit in the larger order. E.g. a piece of chalk is a unit. The classroom is the larger order for this unit. The value of chalk is that it can be used to write on the blackboard for the desired functioning of the classroom.

The value or role of a human being is its participation in the larger order. E.g. my role in living with the other human being is to ensure the feeling of respect in the relationship. Interestingly, I feel happy in fulfilling my role; and it is fulfilling for the other as well!

This value is worth understanding, worth thinking about, worth living. The value of human being is to ensure mutual fulfilment in the larger order¹, i.e. in the entire nature/existence, but starting from within themselves, then extending in their family and in the society.

Hence, to understand human values, we need to study the human reality along with all that is there in the entire nature/existence which constitutes the larger order. We need to explore and understand things as they are; so that we are able to recognise and fulfil our participation with them.

That means the content or scope of study has to be all encompassing, i.e.

- It has to cover all dimensions of human being – thought, behaviour, work and realisation.
- It has to cover all levels of human living – individual, family, society, nature and existence.

Accordingly, the content of Value Education has to be to understand human being, human aspirations, happiness; understand the goal of human life comprehensively; understand the other entities in nature, the innate inter-connectedness, the harmony in the nature/existence and finally the role of human being in this nature/existence.

Continuous Happiness and Prosperity as Basic Human Aspirations

Whatever we think, whatever we do is with some end state in mind. That end state is our basic aspiration.

When you ask yourself:

- Do I want to be happy?
- Do I want to be prosperous?
- Do I want the continuity of happiness and prosperity?

The answers are in affirmative yes. We have a natural acceptance for continuity of happiness and prosperity. These are our basic aspirations.

¹The word 'order' is used interchangeably with the word 'harmony', throughout



Basic Requirements for Fulfilment of Human Aspirations

When we try to find out if we have fulfilled our basic aspiration, it is not always so affirmative. There is quite a gap between our basic aspiration and our state of being.

When we reflect on all the effort we are making, we can easily see that we are generally working for accumulation of physical facility!

The basic problem is that we have assumed that ‘happiness and prosperity will automatically come when we have enough physical facility’.

This is something we need to explore in our own life. Where are we putting in our effort?

If continuity of happiness and prosperity is not achieved by just accumulating physical facility then what else is essential to do? Let’s try to find out by asking this question to ourselves:

Is the unhappiness in my family

- More due to lack of physical facility or
- More due to lack of fulfilment in relationship?

When you explore into it, you will find that the major reason for the unhappiness in the family is the lack of fulfilment in relationship and not just the lack of physical facility.

Now to look at the investment of your effort, find out:

- How much time and effort you are investing for physical facility, and
- How much time and effort you are investing for fulfilment in relationship?

Generally, most of the time and effort is being invested for physical facility, assuming that everything is going to be fine when there is enough physical facility, and there will be no unhappiness in the family.

The problems are more due to lack of fulfilment in relationship, and we are investing major part of our time and effort for physical facility.

With this discussion, the conclusion that we want to draw out of this is a very simple one:

For human being physical facility is necessary, but relationship is also necessary.

In fact, by seeing this, we can understand the difference between animals and human beings. Physical facility is necessary for animals as well as for human beings. For animals, it is necessary as well as adequate. But when it comes to human beings, that is not the case – physical facility is a necessity, but physical facility alone is not going to suffice for the fulfilment of human being.

When a human being has lack of physical facility, (s)he becomes uncomfortable and unhappy. Once (s)he gets the physical facility, (s)he forgets about it and starts thinking about many other things.

So, we can conclude that physical facility is necessary for animals; it is necessary for human beings also. However:

- For animals, physical facility is necessary as well as adequate.
- For human beings, physical facility is necessary, but physical facility alone is not adequate.

While we do have a natural acceptance to live in relationship, are we actually able to ensure living in relationship? Have we understood this or just assumed it? To explore this further, find out if:

1. You want to live in relationship (harmony) with others or
2. You want to live in opposition with others or
3. You believe, living has to be necessarily in opposition with others, i.e. there is 'struggle for survival', 'survival of the fittest' and if you feel happy living this way?



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A little introspection will show that out of these three, what is naturally acceptable is the first one. You certainly do not want to live in opposition with others. But you may be conditioned to think in a manner as mentioned in the third option. If we adopt the third option, it has significant negative implications in our life, in the family and in the society. We can see this all around today.

In relationship, what is generally happening today is something like this:

Every time when there is fight, we want to resolve it. We start the next day with the thought that we don't want to fight today; but a fight takes place again (sometimes by the end of the same day).

Does this happen with you, with your brother, sister, father, mother, spouse, children, with your friends, co-workers, etc.? Getting irritated, angry, not speaking for days, dragging each other to court, divorces, etc. are indicators of the situation in relationship.

For ensuring fulfilment in relationship, it is necessary to have right understanding about relationship.

From the preceding discussion, it may be concluded that **for fulfilment of human being– physical facility, relationship and right understanding – all three are necessary.**

We can see that physical facility, relationship and right understanding are three distinct realities. All three are required for fulfilment of human being. One cannot be substituted for the other.

If we investigate into the priority among these, we can see that right understanding is the first priority, fulfilment in relationship with human being is the second priority and ensuring physical facility with rest of nature is the third priority.

Right Understanding, Relationship and Physical Facility

Human being wants to live with continuous happiness and prosperity and this is possible by ensuring right understanding, fulfilment in relationship and physical facility in the correct priority. This is living with 'human consciousness'.

On the other hand, if one is living for physical facility alone, and not ensuring right understanding and right feeling in relationship, s(he) feels unhappy and makes others unhappy too. This is one outcome.

The other outcome is that if the right understanding is missing, one is not able to identify the need for physical facility. Now, if we are not able to identify our need for physical facility then regardless of how much physical facility we accumulate, we never feel that we have enough. We keep wanting more. This feeling of not having enough is the feeling of deprivation. As a result, one is deprived, exploiting and depriving others.

While physical facility alone may suffice for animals, it is not adequate for human being to be fulfilled. Under this condition, one is living with 'animal consciousness'.

There are generally two kinds of people today:

1. Those lacking physical facility, unhappy and deprived
2. Those having physical facility, and yet unhappy and deprived

Try to find out where you are – at 1 or at 2?

Whereas we really want to be is in the following state, i.e.

3. Having physical facility, happy and prosperous.



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It is easy to see that we naturally want to be in the state 3, of having more than required physical facility, happy and prosperous. However, today we seem to be at 1 or 2 and our effort is generally for 2. You can see that what is called development today largely takes us from '1' to '2'.

Now, if we are able to ensure all three, i.e. right understanding, relationship and physical facility, in that order of priority, let us see the outcome (refer to fig. 3-5).

- Through right feeling in relationship, based on right understanding, we can ensure mutual happiness – happiness for ourselves as well as happiness for others.
- With right understanding, we can identify the need for physical facility. We can also learn how to produce using a mutually enriching production process. Once we are able to ensure the availability of more than required physical facility, we have a feeling of prosperity; isn't it?

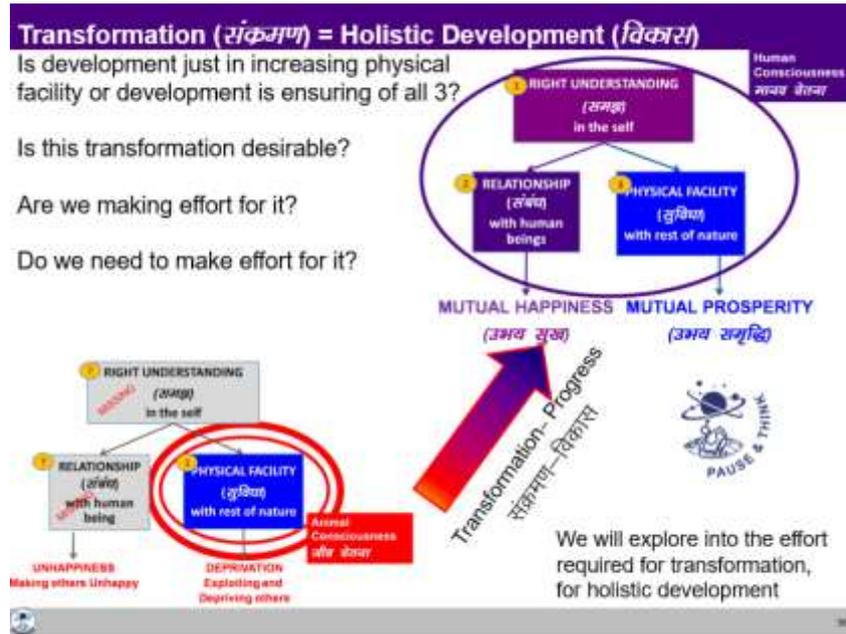


Development of Human Consciousness

We can clearly envisage holistic development as the transformation of consciousness –to human consciousness. Of course, it will necessitate working on all three – right understanding, fulfilment in relationship as well as physical facility; and in that order of priority.



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Role of Education-Sanskar

(Enabling the Transformation to Human Consciousness)

The role of education is essentially to facilitate holistic development, i.e. the individual transformation to human consciousness as well as the societal transformation to a humane society.

For this, the education-sanskar has to ensure:

1. Right understanding in every child,
2. The capacity to live in relationship with other human beings, and
3. The capacity to identify the need for physical facility, the skills and practice for sustainable production of more than what is required, leading to the feeling of prosperity.

Education is developing the right understanding (holistic perspective).

Sanskar is the commitment, preparation and practice of living with right understanding. The preparation includes learning appropriate skills and technology.





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Key Takeaways

The prime need of value education is to understand human aspirations, to discover what is truly valuable (human value) in life. Value of any entity is its participation in the larger order of which it is a part. The value of human being is its participation towards mutual fulfillment (harmony) starting from within themselves, then extending in their family, in the society and in nature. The content of value education has to be universal, rational, natural, verifiable and leading to harmony. The process of value education has to be a process of self-exploration, rather than being prescriptive.

The basic aspiration of a human being is continuity of happiness and prosperity. To fulfil this, three things are required in order of priority: right understanding, relationship and physical facility, and one cannot be substituted for the other.

Human consciousness is living with continuous happiness and prosperity by ensuring right understanding, fulfilment in relationship and physical facility in the correct priority. Holistic development is the transformation from animal consciousness to human consciousness. Education-sanskar has the most significant role to play in this transformation.



Process of Value Education – Self-exploration

Human Values can be understood by an appropriate process of self-discovery, because they are potentially there in each and every human being. There is already a natural acceptance for values in a human being. It is only that we have to discover them or become aware of them. Thus, the process for Value Education has to be that of self-exploration, and not of giving sermons or telling dos & don'ts. Whatever is found as truth or reality may be stated as a proposal and every student is to be encouraged to verify it on his/her own right.

You can check if you want to be able to decide on your own right or you want somebody else to decide for you? This somebody may be a group of people; it may be the society or the education system, etc. If you are not able to decide on your own right then:

- Someone else is programming you (deciding what is valuable and what is not valuable for you)
- Unconsciously you keep accepting those things as values
- You get busy with how to implement them, how to realise them and materialise them

This process of Self-exploration has to be in the form of a dialogue – a dialogue between the teacher and student to begin with; and finally, within the student – between ‘what I am’ and ‘what I really want to be’, which is the innate natural acceptance.

What is Self-exploration?

It is a process of seeing the reality on our own right, by our own investigation, observation and analysis. Through this process, we are trying to understand the reality that exists and our participation with it; this participation is what we are calling values.

The first step is to verify the given proposal on your own right, by referring it to your ‘natural acceptance’. If the proposal is naturally acceptable to you, it is right for you. If it is not naturally acceptable to you, it is not right for you.

Further, self-exploration is a process of dialogue. To begin with, it is initiated as a dialogue between us and you. This course systematically presents a series of proposals for your exploration. As you explore, you try to verify the proposals and start asking these questions to yourself. Then, it turns into a dialogue within your own Self.

The Dialogue Within

It is a dialogue between “what I am” and “what is naturally acceptable to me”.

“What I am” has to do with my desires, my thoughts, my expectations; all that is going on in my imagination. It includes the way I feel, the way I think, how I make decisions, what I expect from others and all that. It is my current competence on the basis of which I live.

“What is naturally acceptable to me” is what I really want to be, that is my natural acceptance. It is my intention. It is a basic reference which is a part and parcel of every human being. We may or may not be referring to it at present, but it is always there.

When we are in harmony within, we are in state of happiness. When we are in a state of contradiction within, we are in the state of unhappiness.

Therefore:

Happiness is to be in a state of harmony.

Unhappiness is to be forced to be in a state of contradiction.

We don't want to be in contradiction, so whenever there is contradiction, we want to run away from it; but if we cannot run away, and if we are forced to be in that state, we call it unhappiness.

It is possible for each one of us to do this self-exploration. The dialogue within constitutes the major part of it. Through this, we:



1. Discover our natural acceptance
2. Become aware of “what I am”
3. Can make effort to ensure harmony and happiness within by ensuring that “what I am” is in line with my natural acceptance.

The Content for Self-exploration

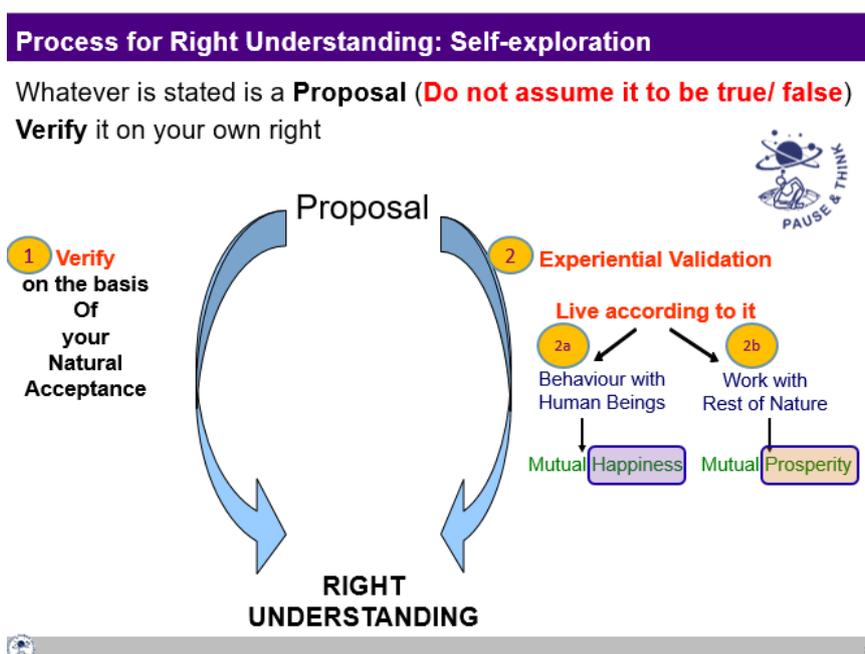
The content for self-exploration has two sub-parts:

- a) Desire: What is our basic aspiration?
- b) Program: What is the way to fulfil this basic aspiration?

If we are able to get the answer to these two things, practically all our questions are answered

The Process of Self-exploration

Whatever is stated here is a proposal; do not assume it to be true or false, right or wrong. Verify it – verify it on your own right, on the basis of your natural acceptance. This is the first part of the process.



The second part of self-exploration is experiential validation. It means trying to live according to the proposal. In living, there are two parts – one is the behaviour with other human beings and the second is work with rest of nature. When we are behaving with human being on the basis of this proposal, we want to verify whether it leads to mutual happiness or not. If it leads to mutual happiness, it is a right proposal; if it does not lead to mutual happiness, it is not a right proposal. Similarly, when we are working with rest of nature on the basis of this proposal, we want to verify whether it leads to mutual prosperity or not. If it leads to mutual prosperity, it is a right proposal; if it does not lead to mutual prosperity, it is not a right proposal.

Understanding Natural Acceptance – the basis for Right Understanding

(Distinguishing between acceptance and natural acceptance)

Natural acceptance has to do with something fundamental, something related to our purpose, something related to our basic desires. When we ask a question related to these, we get a definite answer from our natural acceptance. For example,

- Is happiness naturally acceptable or is unhappiness naturally acceptable?
- Is it naturally acceptable to live in relationship or in opposition?
- What is naturally acceptable – to nurture your Body or to exploit it?



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For all these questions, we get a definite answer when we refer to our natural acceptance.

On the other hand, we have an acceptance for our likes and dislikes, assumptions, pre-conditionings, beliefs, world-view, perspective, etc. but these may or may not be naturally acceptable to us.

Of course, all acceptances are not wrong. Passing them through our natural acceptance will validate them and contribute to our self-confidence.

Some of the characteristics of natural acceptance are:

- *It does not change with time*
- *It does not change with place*
- *It does not change with the individual*
- *It is uncorrupted by likes and dislikes or assumptions or beliefs*
- *It is innate, a part and parcel of our being; we don't need to create it*
- *It is definite*

As we refer to our natural acceptance, we become self-referential.

To conclude, the complete process of self-exploration yields right understanding as the tangible outcome.

Right understanding obtained through self-exploration can be recognised as follows:

- a. It is assuring
- b. It is satisfying
- c. It is universal
 - i. Time: It holds good for all time – past, present and future
 - ii. Space: It is the same at all places or locations
 - iii. Individual: It is the same for every human being

In case the outcome of self-exploration does not fulfil any of the above three criteria, it means that it is not the right understanding. It could be a pre-conditioning or we have made a mistake in looking into our natural acceptance and so, we need to continue exploring.

Self-exploration ultimately results in right understanding of the entire existence, i.e. “realisation of co-existence”, “understanding of harmony” and “contemplation of relationship”.

Key Takeaways

Self-exploration is a process of seeing the reality on our own right, by our own investigation, observation and analysis. It is a process of dialogue between “what I am” and “what is naturally acceptable to me”. It includes verifying the proposals on the basis of natural acceptance (which is not the same as acceptance) and validating experientially in living.



Exploring the Meaning of Happiness and Prosperity

As stated earlier, the proposal for happiness is:

“The state or situation, in which I live, if there is harmony / synergy in it, it is Naturally Acceptable to me to be in that state / situation”.

“To be in a state / situation which is Naturally Acceptable is Happiness”.

i.e. “To be in a state of Harmony / Synergy is Happiness”.

i.e. Happiness = Harmony.

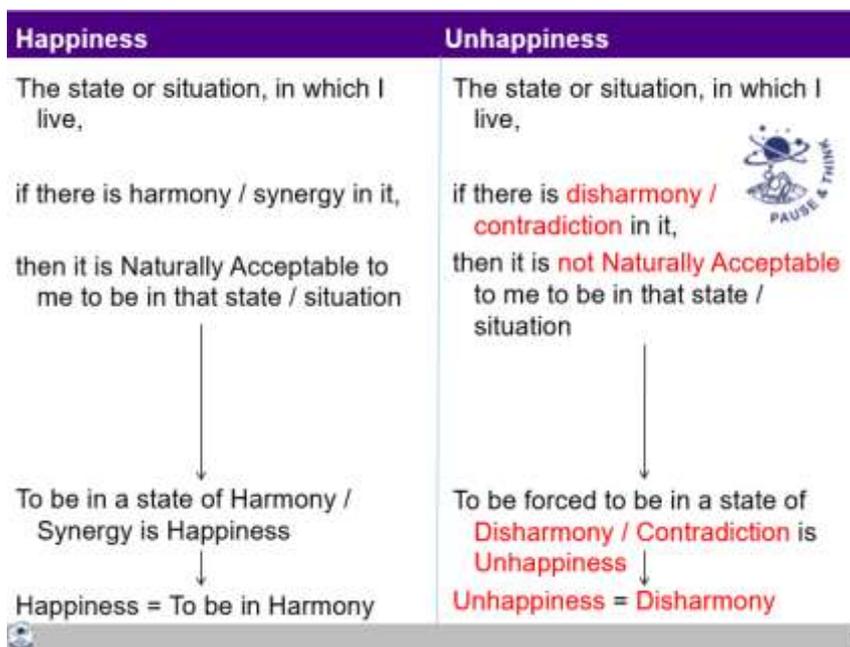
Some exploration will show that when we are in a state of harmony within, we feel happy because that state is naturally acceptable to us. When we are in a situation with the outside world in which there is harmony, we feel happy as the feeling of being in that situation is naturally acceptable to us. This state or situation of being in line with natural acceptance is happiness. Similarly,

“The state or situation, in which I live, if there is disharmony / contradiction in it, it is not Naturally Acceptable to me to be in that state / situation”.

“To be forced to be in a state / situation which is not Naturally Acceptable is Unhappiness”.

i.e. “To be forced to be in a state of Disharmony / Contradiction is Unhappiness”.

i.e. Unhappiness = Disharmony.



Is Happiness the same as Excitement?

The question is whether the feeling that we get is happiness or something else.

- What we get from the favourable sensation = happiness?
- Is the favourable feeling we get from the other = happiness?

What we get in both cases is a sort of momentary happiness. This is what is called as excitement. There is confusion between excitement and happiness (a harmonious state within). Excitement is short lived, not sustainable, while a harmonious state within is something which can be continuous and sustainable.

Exploring the Meaning of Prosperity

Prosperity is the feeling of having more than required physical facility.



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There are two basic requirements:

1. Right assessment of the need for physical facility, along with its required quantity.
2. Ensuring the availability/production of more than required physical facility.

We can have a feeling of prosperity only if we are able to do the right assessment of our physical needs. The right assessment of physical needs, along with their required quantity, will come through right understanding. Without that right assessment, the feeling of prosperity cannot be assured, regardless of the availability or accumulation of physical facility that we may have been able to do.

Just assessing the need is not enough. We need to ensure the availability or production of more than the required quantity. This requires skills, technology and production. With both of these, right assessment and availability, we have more than required physical facility. Over and above that, it is a matter of feeling that we have more than enough.

When you have a feeling of prosperity, you will naturally think of nurturing and enriching others. On the other hand, if we feel deprived then we think of exploiting and depriving others.

**Prosperity = The feeling of having / producing
more than required Physical Facility**

समृद्धि = आवश्यक सुविधा से अधिक की उपलब्धि/ उत्पादन का भाव

Prosperity and Possession of Wealth are two different things



Prevailing Notions of Prosperity

By and large, there is confusion between accumulation of physical facility and the feeling of prosperity. It is generally assumed that the richer you are, the more prosperous you are, i.e. the more you have accumulated, the more prosperous you are. With this sort of assumption, we pursue prosperity with an obsession for profit, for accumulation. That is happening all around. The major focus in the society today is on accumulation of physical facility. In particular, there is a major focus on accumulating money.

Today, most of the wealth (money) in the world is owned by a very tiny percentage of people. Many such people are seen exploiting others, and exploiting the Earth, in an effort to accumulate even more. Without clarity about how much is required, the effort is for an unlimited quantity of physical facility, and by almost any means. First the efforts may be by legal means, and then slip to even illegal means. This is all because the quantity required is undefined and there is a feeling of deprivation!

Program for Continuity of Happiness

The expanse of our living is at the following four levels:

1. As an Individual human being
2. As a member of a family
3. As a member of society
4. As a unit in nature/existence

We are living with all this expanse of our being, at these four levels; of course, we may or may not be aware of it.



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Therefore, the programme for ensuring the continuity of happiness is:

- To understand the harmony
and
To live in harmony
- } at all levels of being:
1. At the level of the individual human being
 2. At the level of family
 3. At the level of society and
 4. At the level of nature/existence

Key Takeaways

Happiness is to be in a state of harmony. The expanse of our living is at four levels (individual human being, family, society and nature/existence), and thus the program for continuity of happiness is to be in harmony at all these levels. Prosperity is the feeling of having more than required physical facility.

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