Human Living, Explained:

A short introduction to the Jeevan Vidya Coexistence Workshop.

1. 25 Typical Topics related to Life (18 pages)
2. A short summary of the full workshop reader. (38 pages)

LIFE TOPICS

Explored in the Jeevan Vidya SahAstitva (Coexistence) Workshop

25 typical topics with their descriptions

This introductory note originally written by Praful Patil | student | Nagpur June 2024, repurposed by Shriram Narasimhan, student, Pune October 2026

Purpose: to give the newcomer a peek into the concepts and positions held by SahAstitva-vaad · Not a substantiative introduction.

Source: madhyasth.org/jeevan-vidya-shivir-workshop/life-topics
Based on the original 'Madhyasth Darshan by' · A. Nagraj · madhyasth.org

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How to read these descriptions: each one proposes ideas and questions for you to examine through the workshop, further study and your own experience. Nothing here is offered as a conclusion to be taken on belief. Descriptions are adapted from the Life Topics pages on madhyasth.org.

01 Depression & Anxiety अवसाद और चिंता

> Is it only a chemical 'locha', or could it also be a signal from within that something in the way we live is unresolved?

Physiological factors can play a part in our mental states, and this workshop does not dismiss them. It also invites you to explore a possibility: that states like anxiety, depression and stress (तनाव, अवसाद) may have roots in our own consciousness (जीवन) as well.

When we live with unresolved contradictions (असंतोष, अशांति), with little clarity about our purpose, and with a constant conflict between what we desire and what is real, it is worth asking whether our inner state could be in continuous turmoil. One possibility explored is that this inner chaos and lack of harmony shows up as what we call depression and anxiety — as signals that our way of living, thinking and believing may be out of step with reality.

Related: Happiness · Suffering

02 Climate Change जलवायु परिवर्तन

> Is climate change only an environmental problem, or could it also point to something in how we understand ourselves and nature?

We usually see climate change as a technical problem of emissions and resource depletion, to be addressed with new technology and policy. These matter. The workshop asks whether they address the whole picture, or mainly the symptoms.

One possibility explored is that the crisis is also rooted in human consciousness — in a relationship with nature shaped by confusion (भ्रम). Two aspects are examined:

The belief that happiness comes from unlimited consumption: It is worth asking whether the assumption that happiness lies in accumulating and consuming things drives an insatiable desire for more (संग्रह कामना), and with it the exploitation (शोषण) of natural resources beyond what is needed.

A sense of separation from nature: We often see nature as a separate "resource" to be used. The workshop explores what might change if we saw ourselves as an integral, interdependent part of a larger whole (सह-अस्तित्व).

It also explores the idea of Prosperity (समृद्धि) — the feeling of having enough. If we can identify our essential physical needs, could we live in a relationship of mutual fulfillment with nature, focused on its nourishment (पोषण) rather than exploitation?

Related: Money

03 Marriage विवाह

> Beyond rituals, adjustments and compromise, is there a deeper purpose to being married together? What might it be?

Society often frames marriage as a social contract of duties, adjustments and compromises, and we tend to focus on its external aspects. This workshop invites you to explore what else this relationship might be.

One proposal explored is that marriage (पति-पत्नी संबंध) can be a relationship of mutual development towards a shared goal — awakening (जागृति) — and that its fulfilment might be described as "one mind and two bodies" (एक मन और दो शरीर), where two people act from a shared understanding.

The possibility examined is that this arises not through compromise but through mutual fulfilment of values such as Trust (विश्वास), Respect (सम्मान) and Affection (स्नेह): helping each other resolve inner confusions and contradictions, and creating a harmony that could become a foundation for family and society.

Related: Relationship

04 Consciousness चेतना

> Have you ever wondered what consciousness is? Am I only this physical body, or is there something more to 'me'?

This is among the most fundamental questions of human existence. Modern science often explores consciousness as a product of the brain, while traditional views can be mystical. This workshop invites you to investigate the question for yourself, step by step, with reason and your own observation.

One proposal explored is that the 'I' who experiences, thinks and desires may be a conscious Self, called जीवन — and that the body (शरीर) may be its instrument, a complex biochemical machine. In this view the जीवन is the seer (दृष्टा), the doer (कर्ता) and the experiencer (भोक्ता).

Observe your own needs: some of them, such as the need for happiness, are continuous. The workshop explores whether, if the Self's needs are continuous, the Self itself could also be continuous.

It also explores the idea that this जीवन may be submerged in an all-pervading reality (व्यापक वस्तु), and that human life may be a journey of consciousness development: from जीव चेतना (focused on survival), to मानव चेतना (living with resolution and values), and possibly to दिव्य चेतना (experiencing co-existence).

Related: Mind

05 Money पैसा

> You know how to earn money, but have you explored what makes one feel prosperous regardless of the bank balance?

Our society often equates money with security and happiness. This can lead to endless accumulation, because the feeling of "enough" may never arrive. The workshop invites you to ask whether this is so.

It makes a distinction to explore between Wealth (धन) — the accumulation of material things — and Prosperity (समृद्धि) — a feeling of having more than is required for your physical needs.

One idea examined is that our physical needs are limited and can be identified, and that when we produce or acquire more than that, we may feel prosperous. A person with ten crores may feel deprived, while a person with one lakh may feel prosperous, depending on how clearly they know their needs. If this is so, prosperity would be more a matter of understanding than of a number in an account, and money (अर्थ) a tool for exchanging physical goods rather than the source of happiness.

Related: Climate Change

06 Spirituality अध्यात्म

> What if spirituality is not about leaving the world, but about understanding our role in it?

Spirituality is often associated with renunciation, rituals or the search for a mystical experience, separate from daily life. This can create a conflict between our "spiritual" and "worldly" duties. This workshop invites you to explore a different possibility.

It explores whether spirituality (अध्यात्म) could be a direct engagement with reality — the effort to understand existence (अस्तित्व) as it is. The inquiry covers understanding the Self (जीवन ज्ञान), the whole of existence (अस्तित्व दर्शन ज्ञान), and how to live in harmony with it (मानवीयतापूर्ण आचरण ज्ञान).

In this exploration, the "divine" is not assumed to be separate from reality. The possibility examined is that the order and harmony of co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व) is itself what is being pointed to. Spirituality would then be a journey from illusion (भ्रम) to awakening (जागृति), lived fully within family and society — resolving inner conflicts and contributing to the order around us.

Related: God

07 Mind मन

> Where does the mind exist? Is it a part of the brain, or something else? How does it function?

The mind is often a mystery — thought to be somewhere in the brain, yet intangible. This workshop proposes a model that you can examine and verify in your own experience: it places the mind (मन) as a faculty of the conscious Self (जीवन) rather than of the physical brain (मेधस).

The proposal explores the जीवन as having five interconnected faculties:

- **मन** (Perception or Interactive Mind): the faculty of tasting (आस्वादन) and selecting (चयन). It interfaces with the body's senses and seeks pleasurable sensations.
- **वृत्ति** (Intellect or Discerning Mind): the faculty of analyzing (विश्लेषण) and comparing (तुलन).

चित्त (Psyche or Visualising Mind): the faculty of imagination/visualization (चित्रण) and contemplation (चिंतन). This is where desires take shape.

बुद्धि (Intuitive Intellect or Cognitive / Ego): the faculty of determination and knowing (बोध) the truth.

आत्मा (Soul, Seer): the faculty of experiencing (अनुभव) reality as it is.

In this model, the brain (मेधस) is the physical hardware that the मन uses to receive signals from the senses and send commands to the body, while the मन itself is a non-physical activity of the जीवन. The workshop explores the possibility that in confusion the मन acts as the master, dependent on external stimuli, and that in an awakened state it could act as a regulated faculty, guided by वृत्ति, चित्त and बुद्धि — leading to stable happiness rather than fleeting pleasure.

Related: Consciousness · Emotions · Desire · Ego

08 God ईश्वर

> Instead of only praying to a higher power, what if we could explore the order of existence itself?

Humanity has long prayed to, feared, and sought favours from a personal God, often rooted in mystery and the unexplainable. This workshop does not ask you to accept or reject any belief. It invites you to explore a possibility.

The workshop proposes and explores the possibility that God (ईश्वर) or the Supreme Being may not be a person, but the all-pervading, omnipresent reality which we usually call 'space' (व्यापक वस्तु or सत्ता) — a non-active, transparent, energy-filled "emptiness" in which all of nature, all matter and all conscious units, is submerged, energized and regulated, inspiring all activity to happen in a regulated, orderly way. In other words: God is Space, and God is not a creator.

Existence is then examined as co-existence, with inherent, unchanging laws (नियम) — a perfect order that governs everything from atoms to galaxies. Instead of praying for intervention, the exploration is whether understanding this universal order (व्यवस्था) and aligning our own lives with it could lead to harmony and fulfilment.

Related: Spirituality · Truth · Religion

09 War & Peace युद्ध और शांति

> Have you ever imagined a world with no possibility of war? What could we explore to understand how that might happen?

We think of war as a conflict between nations, fought with soldiers and weapons, and we seek peace through treaties and negotiations. Yet external solutions have not created lasting peace. This workshop invites you to look at another possibility.

One proposal explored is that the war outside (युद्ध) may be a large-scale projection of the conflict inside human beings. The possible root examined is a confused (भ्रमित) consciousness acting from fear and from a belief in separate, competing identities (my nation vs. your nation, my religion vs. yours) — "us vs. them" thinking rooted in ignorance (अज्ञान).

The workshop explores whether a world without war might become possible when enough individuals attain inner peace — Resolution (समाधान), a state free from internal contradictions. Someone living in Co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व) may see the fundamental oneness of humankind (मानव जाति एक) and the world as one undivided family (अखण्ड समाज); for such a person, war may appear absurd.

Related: Social Conflict

10 Love प्रेम

> What if love is not only a fleeting feeling, but could become a stable state arising from understanding?

We often experience affection as a powerful but temporary wave, dependent on the other person's behaviour and our own moods. This workshop invites you to explore whether it might be a glimpse of something more stable.

The proposal explored is that true, unconditional Love (प्रेम) may be the culmination of understanding — a value that emerges from a fully awakened consciousness (जीवन), arising when we see ourselves in others, rooted in the realization of Co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व). It is described as the combined expression of compassion, grace and mercy (दया, कृपा, करुणा).

Unlike fleeting emotions, this love is explored as a stable state (भाव) that could radiate from within once inner contradictions are resolved. The journey is proposed to begin with Affection (स्नेह), the feeling of being non-opposed to another, which is the foundation of justice (न्याय).

Related: Relationship

11 Happiness सुख

> You have been chasing happiness your whole life — what if it can be understood from within?

Our lives are full of pursuits of happiness, in the belief that it lies in the next achievement, the next purchase or another person's approval. Sensory pleasure (इन्द्रिय सुख) rarely lasts, and we go on to chase the next thing. This workshop invites you to ask whether this chase might itself be what keeps us from lasting happiness.

The proposal explored is that human beings are naturally सुखधर्मी — that being happy may be our innate nature — and that continuous happiness might be an internal state rather than an external reward: the result of Resolution (समाधान), where our "whys" and "hows" about life are answered and inner contradictions cease.

The workshop explores four states of being: Happiness (सुख), Peace (शांति), Contentment (संतोष) and Bliss (आनंद). It examines whether they could be experiential outcomes of harmony within our

consciousness (जीवन) — between Perception (मन), Intellect (वृत्ति), Psyche (चित्त) and Intuition (बुद्धि).

Related: Suffering · Depression & Anxiety · Religion

12 Relationship संबंध

> Tired of managing expectations? What if there are universal expectations in relationships that need no managing?

Much of our exhaustion in relationships may come from managing a web of undefined and often conflicting expectations. We expect others to behave as we want, and they expect the same from us, leading to friction and disappointment.

The workshop explores whether relationships are meant to be recognized (पहचानना) and fulfilled (निर्वाह करना) rather than "managed". It looks at definite relationships (such as parent-child, friends, partners) and the values (मूल्य) that may be inherent in them — Trust (विश्वास), Respect (सम्मान), Gratitude (कृतज्ञता) and Affection (स्नेह).

One idea examined is that these values are the natural expectation of every human Jeevan (consciousness), and that understanding and living them might dissolve the need for "management". For example, trust may be an assurance about the other person's fundamental intention; if I can see and ensure this for the other, trust could become a stable foundation.

Related: Marriage · Love · Good Parenting

13 Good Parenting सही परवरिश

> You give your child a good education for their career — have you also considered helping them develop clarity to understand life themselves?

As parents, we often focus on providing the best schools, facilities and opportunities for a successful career, and we try to impart values (संस्कार) through instructions and rules. This workshop asks a deeper question: what is the purpose of parenting — a successful professional, a resolved and happy human being, or both?

One proposal explored is that parents (माता-पिता) may best support a child by providing an environment in which the child can develop Right Understanding (ज्ञान) and Resolution (समाधान) — helping them understand themselves (the जीवन and the शरीर), their relationships, and their role in the larger existence.

Children may learn less from our words than from our way of being. If we ourselves live in confusion (भ्रम), anxiety and contradiction, can we offer an environment of clarity and fearlessness (अभय)? The possibility examined is that the greatest gift might be our own resolved state — our own जागृति (awakening).

Related: Relationship

14 Motivation प्रेरणा

> Why rely on temporary motivation from outside when a lasting inspiration may be found within?

We constantly seek external motivation — from speeches, books or the approval of others. It can fade quickly, leaving us needing another fix. This workshop invites you to explore whether there is a more stable source.

The possibility explored is a source of inspiration (प्रेरणा) within, born from clarity of purpose rather than from a fleeting emotion. If our true goal as human beings is sustained, comprehensive well-being (happiness) through awakening (जागृति) and co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व), then our actions might align with that purpose.

It is proposed that the source of inspiration (प्रेरणा स्रोत) for positive action could be the experience of knowledge itself (ज्ञान). With Resolution (समाधान), one may no longer be pushed and pulled by external circumstances, and actions could flow from understanding — a steady drive that external motivation may not match.

Related: Laziness

15 Emotions भावनाएं

> Are you driven by your emotions, or could you learn to understand and be the master of your inner world?

For most of us, days are a rollercoaster of emotions: happy when things go our way, angry or sad when they don't. These reactions are often tied to sensory experiences and to beliefs about what is pleasant or unpleasant, beneficial or harmful (प्रियाप्रिय, हिताहित, लाभालाभ).

The workshop proposes a model of our inner world — our consciousness (जीवन) — as having a definite structure. It explores the possibility that in a state of confusion (भ्रम), our mind (which interfaces with the body's senses) is driven by sensory gratification and the need for external validation, leading to chaotic emotions and reactions.

A possibility examined is that harmony could be achieved within consciousness: the Self, through the faculty of the True Intellect (बुद्धि), guides our deeper understanding (चित्त) and intellect (वृत्ति), which in turn guide the mind (मन). If our feelings and actions then arise from clear understanding (ज्ञान) rather than external material and behavioural circumstances, feelings might become stable values — trust, respect, affection — rather than reactive emotions.

Related: Mind

16 Desire इच्छा

> Your desires are endless — have you investigated where they come from?

We live with endless desire (इच्छा): the moment one is fulfilled, another takes its place. The workshop explores whether, in a state of confusion (भ्रम), our desires are largely driven by sensory gratification and the need for external validation, and bring only a temporary pause in our restlessness. On the other hand, many desires driven from hidden beliefs and conditioning we carry.

It invites you to investigate the root of desire. One proposal is that desires originate in the चित्त (the faculty of imagination and deeper conscience) of our consciousness (जीवन) — which, when

confused, may keep creating images of what will bring pleasure, based on past sensory experiences and ideas borrowed from society.

The possibility explored is that in an awakened state (जागृति), इच्छा could align with our natural goal: continuous happiness through resolution (समाधान) and co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व) — replacing the randomness of desire with a clear, fulfilling purpose.

Related: Mind

17 Liberation मुक्ति / मोक्ष

> What if moksha is not freedom from the world, but freedom from our own confusion — while living in it?

Liberation (मोक्ष) has often been understood as an escape from life, relationships and worldly responsibilities, creating a dichotomy between living in the world and being free. This workshop invites you to explore a different possibility.

It explores moksha as freedom from illusion (भ्रम मुक्ति): the possibility that the bondage lies not in the world but in ignorance (अज्ञान) and the internal contradictions it creates — for example, in believing that we are only this physical body (शरीर) and that happiness comes from sensory gratification.

Liberation would then be an inner shift: right understanding (ज्ञान) of what reality is, who "I" (the जीवन) am, and my purpose within co-existence. A liberated person (जागृत मानव) might not run away from the world, but live fully within family and society, acting from resolution (समाधान) and harmony rather than confusion and reaction, free of the suffering caused by anger, fear and ego — and perhaps helping others on their own path.

Related: Rebirth

18 Rebirth पुनर्जन्म

> Before worrying about the next life, have we explored the 'Self' that is living this one?

The idea of rebirth often leads to speculation about past lives and future destinations, which may distract us from the life we are living now. This workshop brings the inquiry back to the present.

One proposal explored is that the "I" or Self (जीवन) is a conscious, atomic unit that is continuous (अमरत्वधर्मा), while the body (शरीर) is a temporary, physical instrument. Observing that some of our needs — such as the need for happiness — are continuous, the workshop explores whether a Self whose needs are continuous could itself be continuous. The end of the body is a certainty (शरीर का नश्वरत्व); whether the जीवन continues (जीवन का अमरत्व) is something to examine.

If so, what carries forward might be the state of the जीवन — its accumulated understandings and unresolved illusions (संस्कार) — and its journey through bodies might be a journey towards Awakening (जागृति). The question then becomes how to resolve our illusions and develop right understanding in this life, and whether achieving liberation from illusion (भ्रम मुक्ति) now could end the cycle of confusion.

Related: Liberation

19 Truth सत्य

> We argue about what is truth — what if truth is not something to believe, but something to understand?

We are taught to believe certain truths — religious, scientific or social. This can lead to dogma and conflict, as one person's belief clashes with another's. This workshop invites you not to accept anything on belief alone, but to examine it.

It explores Truth (सत्य) not as a belief system but as reality as it is. The proposal examined is that the ultimate reality could be Co-existence (सह-अस्तित्व) — all of nature (जड़-चैतन्य प्रकृति) eternally submerged and energized within an all-pervading reality (व्यापक सत्ता). This is offered as something to be known, understood and verified, not simply believed.

Related: God

20 Religion धर्म

> Beyond organised religion, have you explored what might be the universal dharma of being human?

Religion is often associated with specific communities, books and rituals, which can become sources of division and conflict. This workshop invites you to explore the meaning of Dharma (धर्म) more universally.

One proposal examined is that the Dharma of any entity is its intrinsic, inseparable nature — that which cannot be separated from it. For a material object, for example, it could be existence (अस्तित्व धर्म).

What, then, might be the Dharma of a human being? The workshop explores the possibility that it is to live in continuous happiness (सुख) — that just as a material object's nature is to exist, a human's nature may be to be happy, and that our struggles, desires and actions may all be driven by this pursuit.

Related: God · Happiness

21 Laziness आलस

> Is it laziness, or could it be that your inner self is not finding a clear purpose to work for?

We often label our inaction or procrastination as laziness (आलस्य) and try to fight it with willpower. This workshop invites you to explore whether it might be a symptom of something deeper.

It describes laziness as not doing a task even after accepting its rightness and utility — a state of internal conflict. A proposal explored is that the Self (जीवन) is inherently active and wants to express itself, but when there is no clarity of purpose — when we don't understand why we are doing what we are doing — our inner self may feel no inspiration to act.

If our work isn't aligned with our natural desire for happiness through resolution, or is born out of fear and compulsion, perhaps our consciousness resists. The feeling we call "laziness" might then be a signal that our actions are disconnected from our core purpose. With a clear, inspiring goal — such as achieving resolution (समाधान) and contributing to a harmonious order (व्यवस्था) — the energy to act may flow more naturally.

Related: Motivation

22 Ego अहंकार

Is your 'I' your true self, or could it be a collection of assumptions you have never questioned?

The word "ego" (अहंकार) is often used to mean pride or arrogance. This workshop explores a more precise and fundamental meaning.

The proposal is that अहंकार may be a state of the Intellect (बुद्धि) when it is disconnected from the Self (आत्मा) and its ability to experience reality directly. In a state of confusion (भ्रम), the psyche (चित्त) might operate on unexamined beliefs and assumptions (मान्यताएं), taken from society or from sensory experience, and this collection of borrowed beliefs may create a false sense of "I" — leading to pride.

The workshop explores whether this could be the root of many of our problems: the "I" that believes "I am this body", "I am my possessions", "I am superior/inferior", or "My belief is the only truth." If such assumptions are not aligned with reality, they might lead to internal contradictions, conflict with others and suffering. The true "I" could be the जीवन — the continuous, conscious Self — and the ego a mask of assumed identities.

Related: Mind · Inferiority

23 Inferiority हीन भावना

Feeling inferior or superior is tiring — what if you could simply be your natural, complete self?

The constant mental game of comparing ourselves to others — feeling superior to some and inferior to others — is exhausting. This workshop explores whether this entire spectrum of comparison may be a symptom of a confused state of being.

One proposal is that these feelings stem from identifying ourselves with temporary and variable things: our body (रूप), physical strength (बल), position (पद) and wealth (धन). Since these vary and can be compared, we may be caught in a loop of अधिमूल्यन (over-evaluation), अवमूल्यन (under-evaluation) and निर्मूल्यन (devaluation) of ourselves and others. In this framework, हीनता

(inferiority) is described as a form of non-human nature (अमानवीय स्वभाव), alongside helplessness (दीनता) and cruelty (क्रूरता).

The possibility explored is a shift of identity: from these temporary attributes to the true self — the जीवन (consciousness). If the जीवन in every human is fundamentally alike in its potential for understanding and happiness, the very basis for comparison might dissolve.

Related: Ego

24 Suffering दुःख

> Are others causing your suffering, or could there also be a storm of contradictions within?

It is natural to blame our suffering (दुःख) on external factors — other people's actions, our circumstances, or bad luck. This places us in the position of a victim, powerless to change our own state. This workshop invites you to look inward as well.

The proposal explored is that while external events can trigger pain or discomfort, the root of suffering (दुःख, क्लेश) may lie in our own internal state of illusion (भ्रम) and contradiction. A confused person (भ्रमित मानव) may be at war with themselves — for example, the mind (मन) wants sensory pleasure, while the intellect (वृत्ति) knows it might be harmful. This inner conflict between the faculties of the जीवन could be what manifests as suffering, anxiety and restlessness.

An awakened person (जागृत मानव), whose inner faculties are in harmony and aligned with reality, may not experience suffering even in challenging situations, but rather resolution (समाधान): the body may feel pain, while the जीवन remains stable and peaceful.

Related: Happiness · Depression & Anxiety

25 Social Conflict सामाजिक संघर्ष

We fight over our differences — have we explored our fundamental human oneness?

Social conflict — based on caste, religion, class or ideology — may arise from identifying ourselves and others with our differences: our beliefs (मत), our group affiliations (समुदाय), or the circumstances of our body's birth, all of which are temporary and superficial. This workshop invites you to explore this possibility.

The proposal is that the human race is one (मानव जाति एक). While our bodies, beliefs and customs differ, the conscious Self (जीवन) within every person may be fundamentally alike — with the same innate faculties (Mind, Intellect, etc.), the same potential for awakening, and the same ultimate goal: continuous happiness through resolution (समाधान).

Without this understanding, we may operate from समुदाय चेतना (community consciousness), where our identity is tied to our group and "us vs. them" conflict follows. One idea examined is that the 'profit' (लाभ) motive in the unawakened जीवन could lead to a tendency towards exploitation and power, which may further spiral social instability. A question to explore: might those primarily responsible for stoking conflict — through exploitation, power, repression, war and crimes — also be acting in their own attempt to be happy (सुख)?

The possibility explored is to move to मानव चेतना (human consciousness), seeing the universal human characteristics first and foremost.

Related: War & Peace

A short companion reader* to the Jeevan Vidya Coexistence Workshop.

***Objective**: Provide an accessible companion reader* to the 'Jeevan Vidya Coexistence' workshops, that seek to introduce the 'Coexistential Philosophy' (Sah-Astitva-vad, Madhyasth Darshan) by Shri A.Nagraj.*

***This Book:** This short Summary was created by 'Claude LLM -Opus' in July 26: Based on the 400 page 'workshop companion reader' by Shriram Narasimhan (zshriram@gmail.com).*

See more introductory material here.

***Madhyasth Darshan:** *This book is not a scholastic introduction to 'Madhyasth Darshan', which provides a new Ontology, Metaphysics, Epistemology & Axiology for Human Understanding. Not meant to replace the Originals in any way. See www.madhyasth.org for more Robust information.*

***Not a Belief System:** Everything here is offered as a **proposal** — something to examine yourself — a reflection of reality. Not as a 'doctrine' to accept, or a 'cult' to follow.*

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1. Why This Book Matters

Imagine someone who has done everything right. Good schooling, a good college, a well-paid job by the age of twenty-one, the respect of family and friends. And then, two years in, a quiet realisation: something is missing. His friends' marriages were fraying. The newspapers were full of scams and a farming crisis. And he noticed he had grown intolerant — hard for even his own loving parents to talk to.

He put it to himself in one sentence: I know how to make a living. I have no idea how to live.

That gap is the starting point of everything that follows, and it is not an individual failing. Look at what we are taught. Physics, biology, engineering, medicine, commerce — every one of these trains us on external realities. Almost nothing trains us on the internal ones: understanding ourselves, our purpose, our relationships, how to live in a family, a society, or with nature.

Worse, the subjects arrive in fragments, and specialisation narrows them further, until many adults live in silos of expertise. But living itself is whole. A person lives with thoughts, feelings, values, relationships, work and consumption all at once — never one at a time. When a student finds a subject dull, it is usually because they cannot see how the fragment connects to the larger picture of their life.

Add rote learning and intense competition, and the typical product of an education is a person in the singular pursuit of wealth, success and fame. That is one part of a human life mistaken for the whole of it.

The single premise everything rests on

Here is the pivot on which this entire philosophy turns:

> We humans behave and live according to our understanding, beliefs or assumptions.
> As this understanding or belief changes, so does our behaviour and living.

Read it slowly, because a great deal follows from it. If it is true, then the world we see — its kindness and its cruelty, its cooperation and its wars — is nothing but the collective projection of the assumptions living inside individual human beings. And if that is so, then changing the world is not primarily a matter of changing laws or technologies. It is a matter of changing understanding.

Which puts education at the centre. Education is what moulds our assumptions during the years when they set.

What is actually missing

UNESCO describes four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Our schooling concentrates almost entirely on *learning to do*, with some *learning to know*. *Learning to be* and *learning to live together* are largely absent. We run occupational education, not education for living — and consequently, we have problems.

At one gathering of teachers, the participants were asked what assumptions students carry today. Four came back: *money brings happiness; earn it with the least effort; material things and position matter most; life is a struggle and competition is everything.* Then they were asked what in the current curriculum addresses any of these four. The room fell silent.

The specific human capacities missing are namable. Critical thinking — the ability to evaluate one's own beliefs. Absolute self-confidence — confidence not built on comparison with peers. The ability to relate to others in family and society. An understanding of one's larger role with society and nature. And the capacity for self-study that produces qualitative inner change.

Value education has been attempted in many forms, with little inner change to show for it — some versions abstract, some parochial, some moralising, some faith-based. A genuine alternative would have to satisfy five things. It must be Universal — secular, natural to existence. Eternal — not tied to an era. Communicable — non-mystical, addressed to reason. Liveable. And Verifiable — testable intuitively, rationally and experientially, by you.

Where this comes from

The philosophy summarised here is called Madhyasth Darshan, or Saha-astitva-vad — "Coexistential Philosophy." It was arrived at by Shri A. Nagraj (1920–2016), born in Karnataka into a family steeped in Indian philosophy, and troubled from youth by questions about the purpose of life and by inconsistencies he found even in revered scriptures. Between 1950 and 1975 he undertook a sustained meditative investigation, and came to understand — in his own account — entire Existence as Coexistence, and how a human being can live within it.

Judging that what he had found belonged to the whole human race rather than to any tradition, he wrote it down in Hindi and, in 1985, founded a public programme called Jeevan Vidya ("the knowledge of living"). Since 1988 it has been taught mainly through week-long workshops run as

dialogue rather than sermon. It is never charged for. It does not seek to found a sect. It is not based on any existing religion or ideology. It is offered as a third option — an Alternative to both Materialism and Theism — for human beings to evaluate for themselves.

One last framing. Life is a laboratory. Every proposal here is to be observed, tested and verified across the actual situations of your own life. You are not required to agree with all of it. What matters is that you begin to think about these questions at all.

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2. Two Questions, and a Third

Behind everything we do — study, work, shop, travel, plan — sits some goal or desired outcome. So two questions stand above all others.

1. Why do I live? This is my fundamental desire, my aspiration — my Goal for life.
2. How do I live? This is the way of living that fulfils that goal — my Plan for life.

Nearly every other question folds into these two. And they are not optional or academic. If the goal itself is unclear, incomplete or simply wrong, then no matter how hard I work on the plan, I will not be satisfied. If my destination is unclear, how would I even know where I am going?

This is not a students' question. Everyone — farmer, homemaker, accountant, engineer — has assumed some goal, clearly or vaguely, and built a way of living around it. Our desires come in short, medium and long terms, and some are subtler and half-hidden: to come ahead of everyone, to be remembered, to have influence.

Because the subject under study is *you*, a third question is needed before either of the first two can be answered honestly:

3. How do I study this? This is the Method.

We will take the third question first, then return to the first, and spend most of our time on the second.

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3. What Do I Actually Want?

Our aspirations mostly present themselves as *wants*, and they fall into recognisable groups.

There is the want of becoming something — an engineer, a doctor, rich, famous — which gives a sense of accomplishment we read as happiness. There is the want of doing something — to study, build, write, play — where we seek successful outcomes, and what we feel on achieving them is a kind of peace. And there is the want of acquiring something — material things and bodily sensations, or the company of good people.

Now ask what all of this finally delivers. The answer is happiness — and note that we want it *uninterrupted* — along with a feeling of material security.

That points to a fourth category we rarely notice: the want to do with our "being." To be balanced, composed, peaceful, contented. This is the silent final experience behind everything else, and most of us miss spotting it our entire lives. The first three categories are only *means* to this fourth one.

Happiness, defined

When we accomplish what we seek, there is no discord inside us. When we cannot, a gap opens between what we wanted and what happened, and that gap is felt as conflict. So:

- Happiness is to be in a state of non-conflict — of harmony — to live with a feeling of acceptance.
- Unhappiness is to be in conflict — disharmony — to live in unacceptance.

Happiness in this sense includes peace, contentment and bliss.

Two objections are worth clearing immediately. First, that happiness is a trivial subject everyone already understands. But the claim being made is precise and strange: *each of us wants to be happy at all times, and it is unacceptable to be unhappy for even a small instant.* This is our most fundamental motivation — and we have never actually studied it. Second, that happiness and sadness are two sides of one coin. They are not. Unhappiness is simply the absence of happiness, as darkness is the absence of light. You cannot carry a bucket of darkness into a lit room. We seek happiness; we recognise unhappiness only as its lack.

Prosperity is not wealth

Wealth is quantifiable — money, land, things. Prosperity is a *feeling*, an outcome of understanding, and cannot be quantified at all.

A wealthy man who inwardly dreads a guest staying for a meal has wealth and feels deprived. A person with very little who welcomes you warmly and helps when you are in need feels prosperous. So:

> Prosperity is the feeling of having, producing, or being able to produce more material things than are required.

It is the absence of the absence of material goods — a felt abundance. Two things are needed for it: we must correctly identify what our material needs actually *are*, and we must have or be able to produce more than that. Without defining the need, accumulation is like filling a glass with no base. It never fills.

So the answer to *Why do I live?* is: Happiness and Prosperity.

Three aspects of living — and where the conflict comes from

Our happiness and its absence arise across three aspects of living.

- The material aspect — bodily sensations and physical things, and with them our work and our relationship with nature, since everything material comes from nature.

- The behavioural aspect — our relationships with people, in family and in society.
- The intellectual aspect — our inner world: the self, our thoughts, our choices.

(A fourth, the spiritual, will be defined later and sits alongside the intellectual for now.) These are the full span of our living — the minimum and the maximum.

Conflict in any of them is unhappiness. In the material aspect: cravings, sickness, endless dissatisfaction with what we own, ecological ruin. In the behavioural aspect: arguments, competition, a quarrel that clings all day — and at scale, crime and war. In the intellectual aspect: anger and stress we cannot account for, shifting goals, fears, and existential questions that have no answers.

Why do these arise? Because we act on incomplete understanding and assumptions. We handle water competently because we understand its properties; a person who mistakes a rope for a snake in the dark does not. The philosophy names these: an incomplete view is *apoorna darshan*, a wrong assumption is *manyata*, the resulting state is illusion, *bhram*. The chain runs:

Incomplete view / assumption → problems and conflict → unhappiness.

Reverse the chain and you get resolution. When I understand why I get angry and how to stay composed; when I understand what others actually expect of me; when I know the role and the limit of bodily sensation; when I know what my material needs really are; when I live in synergy with nature — I arrive at a settled state. The word for it is Resolution (*samadhan*):

> A state of being and of living in which I already know what is happening and why, and what to do about it — across all the aspects of living.

Resolution is the absence of conflict. So the first question resolves fully: Why do I live = Happiness and Prosperity = Resolution (*samadhan*) and Prosperity — happiness being the *outcome* of resolution, not a thing pursued directly.

The plan, in outline

If resolution comes from understanding, what exactly must be understood? And by whom? By *me* — I am the one who lives, and who becomes happy or unhappy.

Four realities emerge, and none can be dropped:

- Myself — the human being.
- My relationships with other humans — in family and in society.
- My relationship with nature.
- Nature and existence — all that exists.

The fourth is not optional philosophy. We live on a spinning planet suspended in space among other planets and galaxies, and the question of why any of it is here does press on us. Existence simply means *all that exists*.

And these four cannot be separated from one another. I cannot be separated from my family, my family from society, any of us from nature, nature from existence. Taken together, the entirety of these interwoven realities is what this philosophy calls Coexistence.

So the second question resolves too: How do I live = study, understand and live in Coexistence.

Note carefully what is *not* being said. We are not being asked to build this order. It already exists. Our task is only to understand it and live in it.

One test you can run right now. Ask yourself: *Do I want conflict within myself? In my family? In society? With nature?* The No is instant. There are three logical options — to want conflict, to merely avoid conflict, or to want order and synergy — and our nature accepts only the third. Merely avoiding conflict is not enough for us.

That instant No is the first evidence of something the philosophy will lean on heavily: a capacity present in every human being, regardless of country, culture, age or gender, to sense what is naturally acceptable.

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4. How to Study Anything Here

Because the subject is you and your own living, the usual academic method — assume what is taught, memorise it, reproduce it — cannot work. The method has two movements: listen, then reflect and verify.

Listening

Listening means attending to *meaning*, not to words. Two distinctions help.

Word and meaning. A word is only a pointer to a reality. The same word — "happiness," "love," "respect" — carries different meanings for different people. When a term here is given a specific definition, the definition has to be re-associated with the word, or you will unknowingly read your own meaning into it and conclude you already knew this.

Hearing and listening. Hearing attends to sound; listening attends to meaning. We truly listen only when we are interested — at which point an image of the meaning forms inside us, the way you *see* an event a friend is describing. And note: merely remembering something is not the same as understanding it.

Reflecting and verifying: the four steps

Every proposal in this philosophy is meant to be run through four steps.

- Scrutinise. Is this statement naturally acceptable to me as a human being, and is it true to Existence?
- Examine. Does it hold together as a whole? Is it logically consistent, and does it connect coherently to everything else I have understood?
- Survey. Is it the same for every human being, in every place, at every time?

- Live. Does living by it produce mutual fulfilment with other humans, and mutual enrichment with nature?

A word on each. In Scrutiny, statements about humans concern either our qualities (*is affection naturally acceptable, or hatred? trust, or conflict?* — the answer rises from within, unlearned) or the activities within us (*do you think? imagine? choose? feel joy and sorrow?* — all confirmable by simple self-observation). Statements about Existence are checked the same way.

In Examination, we look at a scrutinised truth from every angle — its purpose, its connections — so that discrete findings knit into a coherent picture rather than a heap of separate facts.

In Survey, we ask whether the finding is universal. There are many ways in which we can be wrong, but only one way in which we are right. No human being, anywhere, in any age, finds injustice in relationship acceptable. This is why proposals that begin as subjective — about *you* — turn out to be objective, about every human.

In Living, we verify by practice. Living with affection proves fulfilling. Living to exploit nature damages our own health and happiness — so that answer is not natural, and we return to scrutiny. The four steps run in a circle, and that circling *is* reflection.

The marks of natural acceptance

What is naturally acceptable to us has four recognisable marks.

- It is present in every human.
- It is continuous — the mere thought of cheating or humiliating someone produces an instant inner contradiction. No action is required for the contradiction to appear.
- It is intact — unaffected by belief or conditioning. Call it an incorruptible core provided by natural design.
- It is invariant — it does not change with time or place.

Do we actually reflect this way today? Mostly not. Trained to memorise and reproduce, we have largely forgotten how to think for ourselves — copying others in something as basic as how we dress, while believing we chose freely. And so we carry unexamined assumptions like *you have to deceive people to survive*, without ever asking the obvious question: is deceiving naturally acceptable to me? Does it fulfil me?

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5. I Am Not (just) My Body

Picture a human being and you see a body. But you also sense an *alive-ness* — expressed not only in heartbeat and breath but in feeling, thinking and believing. This alive-ness refers to itself as "I."

We already distinguish it from the body in ordinary speech. We say "I want to be a great person," never "my body wants to be an engineer." We say "I have a good body" — the "I" owns the body.

This alive-ness is called the Self. And so the foundational proposal:

> A human being is a coexistence of the Self — the conscious aspect — and the Body — the material aspect.

The feeling of one's own existence is the most natural and indubitable experience anyone has. No one can consistently deny the existence of his self, because the act of denying presupposes a self doing the denying.

The proposal can be examined from four angles.

First: our needs come in two kinds

Write your wants in two columns. On one side: happiness, peace, curiosity, knowledge, love, respect, security, confidence. On the other: food, water, clothing, shelter, medicine, transport. Neither column can be dropped. And six differences separate them.

- Purpose. The Self needs resolution and happiness. The Body needs health — so that it can serve the Self.
- Type. The Self's needs are non-material. The Body's are material.
- Fulfilment. The Self is fulfilled by understanding and humane feeling — mental effort. The Body is fulfilled by material things — physical effort. Sit in a comfortable aircraft seat beside someone you dislike: the body is well looked after, and affection and happiness are entirely absent.
- The role of money. Money can source material things for the Body. It cannot buy anything the Self needs. Confusing these two is the source of an enormous amount of modern unhappiness.
- Requirement in time. The Self's need is continuous — we do not wish to lose happiness or respect for even an instant, and its enjoyment lasts. The Body's need is periodic — even air is inhaled and then exhaled — and its enjoyment is momentary. A friend force-feeding you your favourite sweet turns a treat into a punishment within minutes.
- Nature. The Body's needs are quantitative — a dozen gifted cars become a parking problem. The Self's are qualitative — nobody has ever asked for a kilogram of respect or two litres of affection.

Two fundamentally different sets of needs. Therefore two fundamentally different programmes are required to meet them.

		Self (*jeevan*)	**Body**
Needs	*Purpose of Need*	Happiness, respect...resolution	Nourishment, Protection - Health
	In Time	Continuous	Limited
	Nature of Need	Qualitative, weightless	Quantitative, has weight
	Fulfilled By	Understanding	Material things
Activities		**Knowing-Assuming-** Recognizing-Responding *Desiring, Thinking, etc - weightless*	Recognizing-Responding *- Breathing, heartbeat, etc – has weight*
Type		**Conscious** *Seer, Doer, Experiencer*	**Physico-Chemical** *Body is an accessory*

Second: our activities come in two kinds

Our activities are either intentional — seeing, talking, eating, walking, thinking, getting angry, where "I" am responsible — or automatic — breathing, digestion, blood flow, the heartbeat, which happen by themselves, with my consent but without my participation. The automatic activities, plus the intentional ones the body executes, together constitute the Body.

This carries moral weight. You cannot harm someone and then plead that "the mind did it" or "something went wrong in the body." Responsibility for what happens in the Self is ours.

Among intentional activities, some need *both* Self and Body — walking, dancing, eating, where the Self chooses and the Body executes. Broken legs will not walk; but a perfectly fit body will not walk either unless the Self wants to. And some need *only* the Self — thinking, believing, feeling angry, which continue whether you are sitting or running.

The Body passes *information* to the Self — a wound signals as pain — but it cannot control the Self. How to respond is up to me. Absorbed in a game, you may not notice a cut until the blood has dried.

The Self controls, affects and regulates the Body. The Body is an instrument for the Self.

Third: the difference between recognising and assuming

Here is a sharp illustration. A doctor pricks you with a needle; a stranger on the street pricks you with a needle. The Body's response is identical — skin pierces, blood oozes. The Self's experience is completely different, and the difference comes entirely from its *assumption* about who is doing this and why. The same perfume, sweet, song or person is evaluated differently depending on what the Self assumes about it.

The Body's fixed-input, fixed-output behaviour is called recognising-and-responding (*pehchan–nirvah*). The Self adds a third thing: assuming (*manana*). From this come two definitions used throughout:

- Entities that only recognise and respond are material (*jarh*) — insentient.
- Entities that also assume are conscious (*chaitanya*) — sentient.

A human being is the coexistence of a conscious Self and a material Body.

Fourth: who is it that experiences?

All our activities are either observing and understanding, doing and creating, or experiencing. In each case, ask *who* — and the answer is always "I." No part of the body wants respect, or justice, or truth. So the Self is the seer (the one who understands), the doer (the one who acts through the body), and the experiencer (the one who undergoes pleasure and pain).

And trace any desire to its root and you find the Self's basic desire for happiness, peace and contentment. All our other desires are means to that end.

Because the Self expects to live — *jeene ki asha* — it is also called *jeevan*.

The confusion this clears up

Unable to tell Self from Body, we mix up our needs. We try to fulfil a *continuous, qualitative, non-material* need of the Self by doing something *temporary, quantitative and material* through the Body. The results are necessarily mixed. Can a bank balance produce resolution? Can respect be bought by accumulating things?

We do need material things — but in *definite and limited* quantity. What we need is a material plan for material things, and a conscious plan for what is conscious.

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6. Inside the Self

Having separated Self from Body, we can look at what the Self actually does. (The Body we leave to physiology.)

Start with something obvious: we all imagine. The mind takes off during a dull lecture. Imagination includes holding images of how we want to be, working out how to get there, and enjoying the imagined success in advance. Humankind imagined flight and space travel long before achieving either.

We also possess freedom of action — the ability to give material form to our mental images. Cars, aircraft, the internet all began as somebody's imagination.

Both reside in the Self, not the Body. A blind person still imagines; an ill person still chooses. We use imagination to observe — to take things in and form a view — and to express — to live that view out through work and behaviour. It is impossible *not* to express. This entire complex — tasting, thinking, storing images, forming and modifying views, desiring — is Imagination

(*kalpanasheelta*). It does not depend on the Body, is present in every human, is not diminished by the hour of day (in dreams it intensifies), is inexhaustible — using it never depletes it — has no size or weight, and is faster than anything the body can do.

Ten activities, five pairs

Now the central proposal about the Self: the conscious Self is a coexistence of five pairs of inexhaustible activities — ten activities in all. The first three pairs, taken together, are what we just called Imagination.

Each pair has a Force (*shakti*) — the basic capacity — and an Activity of Motion (*gati kriya*), the outward doing by which we recognise it, guided by an inward Activity of State (*sthiti kriya*). Working from the surface inward:

The Mind (*mun*) —

the Force of Expectation (*asha*), whose activity is Tasting and Choosing (*asvadan / chayan*). Since the Self's goal is happiness, we are constantly *choosing* from the environment (outward) in order to fulfil a *taste* (inward) we already carry. You pick the samosa over the kachori because you already hold both tastes within you.

There are three kinds of tasting — which are the three ways human beings seek happiness:

- Interest-based — sensory pleasure through the five senses. This is the *material* aspect, and it is inherently bounded. Pizza moves from *necessary and tasteful*, to *unnecessary but tasteful*, to *unnecessary and tasteless*, to *intolerable*.
- Values-based — happiness tasted through feelings in relationship: trust, respect, affection, gratitude, kindness. This is the *behavioural* aspect. A hungry mother attends to her crying child first, and is not making a sacrifice — she is tasting a higher happiness.
- Purpose-based — the fulfilment of a larger goal: resolution, trust, coexistence. This is the *intellectual* aspect.

Purpose-based tasting subsumes values-based, which subsumes interest-based.

The Disposition (*vritti*) —

the Force of Thought (*vichar*), whose activity is Evaluating and Analysing (*tulan / vishleshan*). What we loosely call thinking is mostly *analysing* — breaking an image into detail, as when planning the rooms of a house. But behind every thought sits a perspective (*drishti*) that does the *evaluating*.

Show the same empty plot of land to six people. One thinks "beautiful." One thinks "a good place to exercise." One thinks "money to be made." One thinks of his mother's health. One thinks of a school the community needs. One asks what the purpose of the Earth is. Those are the six perspectives:

- Likes (*priya*) — what is agreeable, sense-driven. In overdrive, this becomes consumption mania.
- Health (*hith*) — what is good for the body; this is why we swallow bitter medicine.
- Profit (*labh*) — to give less and take more. In overdrive, a madness for profit.
- Justice (*nyay*) — our humane responsibilities in relationship. Without mutual fulfilment there is no justice.

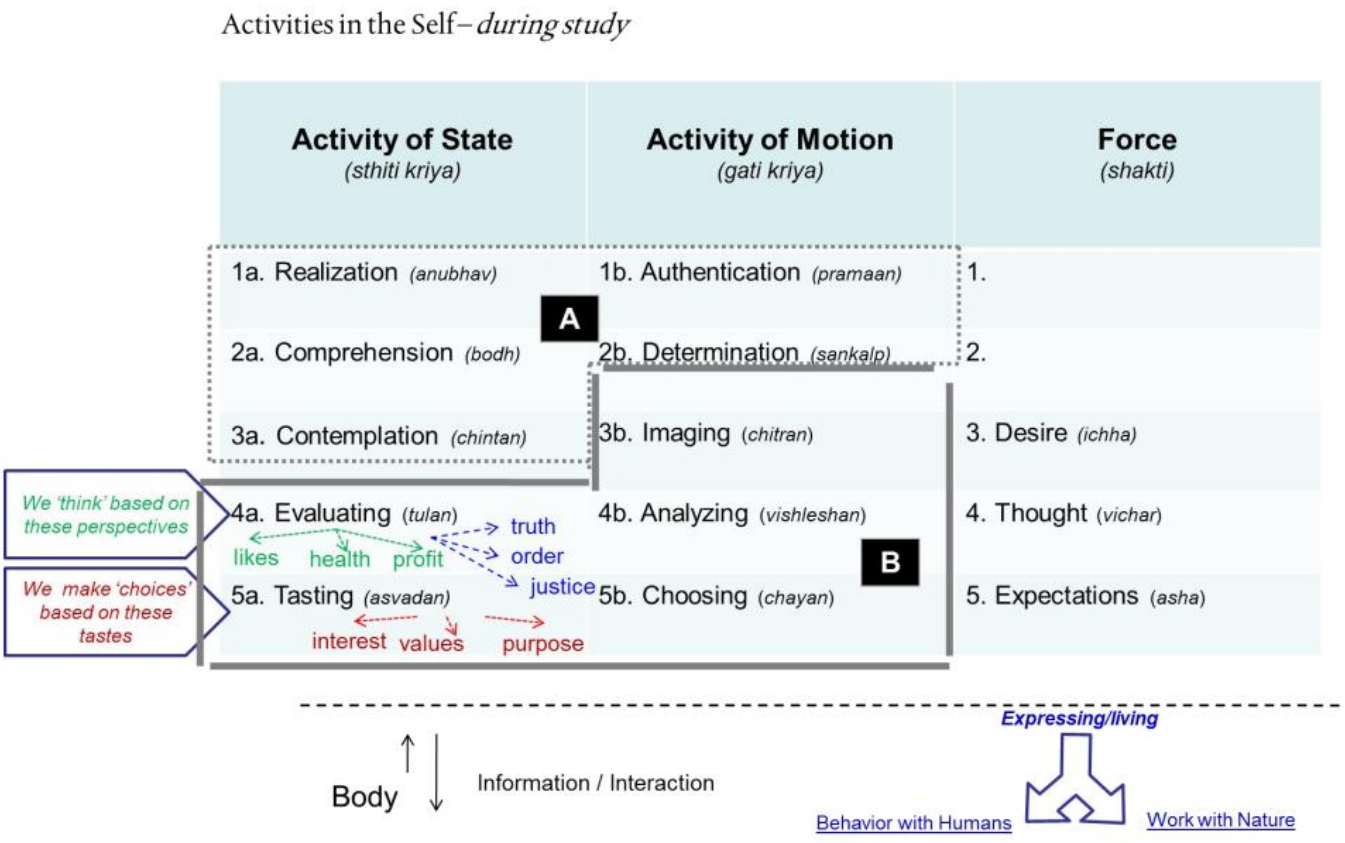
- Order / Resolution (*dharma*) — working for the universal common good.
- Truth (*satya*) — whether something exists in reality, and why. The widest perspective; it subsumes the rest.

Now note the crucial asymmetry. Likes, health and profit vary from person to person and change over time. Justice, order and truth can be the same for every person, because they are not based on preference or bias.

The Psyche (*citta*) —

the Force of Desire (*ichha*), whose activity is Imaging (*chitran*). Subtler still. We continuously absorb images from our environment — of things we like, people we admire, tastes we enjoy — and store them. That store is memory. When we resolve *I want to acquire this image*, the image becomes a desire.

This is precisely why advertising works. An advertisement plants an attractive image, which becomes an aspiration, which we later experience as "my own" desire — while we are in fact fulfilling *the advertiser's* desire. A celebrity leaping off a cliff tells you nothing whatsoever about a soft drink, and yet the image lodges.



How these flow

The three work in both directions. Outside-in: a sensation is chosen and tasted, triggers evaluation and thought, and forms an image that may harden into a desire — a large car is seen, judged agreeable, and "respect through a car" becomes something wanted. Inside-out: a desire sets thoughts running that plan how to fulfil it, leading to choices that acquire it.

Desires come in three grades: subtle (a vague wish to visit Ladakh, with no plan), causal or inspired (planning Ladakh only because friends are going, lasting only while that support lasts), and intense (pursued regardless). And every image and desire, without exception, falls within four domains: myself, human relationships, nature, and existence.

Images arise from three sources: sensory experience; assumptions and conditioning — opinions about a region or a faith absorbed wholesale from others; and understanding of reality, verified for oneself and therefore universal and lasting.

Our accumulated images become our beliefs and our personalities. How one assumes or understands is how one behaves and lives. Image nature as something to exploit, and you will exploit it. Image relationships as mutually complementary, and you will seek to fulfil them.

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7. Why We Suffer

If our images are mostly borrowed and unverified, four problems follow. They are worth naming precisely, because most personal unhappiness sits somewhere among them.

One: short-lived happiness. Assuming ourselves to be the Body, we make sensory pleasure our primary source of happiness. But sensory pleasure is bounded — recall the samosa sequence — so it never lasts. What is left is an endless cycle of repeating and accumulating. This is why we scroll, why we flip channels: we are trying to assemble a continuous happiness out of discrete sensations that cannot deliver it.

Two: conflict and indefiniteness. Our desires, thoughts and choices conflict internally. We want recognition and also a relaxed life. We want to help a friend and also worry about being repaid. We swing between the likes–health–profit perspectives and the justice–order–truth ones, producing behaviour that surprises even us. Some of our beliefs also conflict directly with what is naturally acceptable — plan to cheat someone, and the inner contradiction appears in that very instant, before you have done anything.

Three: assumed goals, lifestyle and personality. Because our images are set from outside, our goals keep shifting, and our confidence becomes relative — it holds only as long as others approve. Hence the need to keep displaying, and the copying of other people's lives in order to belong.

Four: the basic yearning stays unfulfilled. Even after what everyone agrees is success, something is missing. We accumulate degrees, money and awards — quantitative improvement *around* us — while "I" remain exactly as before, gathering information and very little wisdom. This is the midlife crisis; this is the successful professional who abandons a career for family, or a cause, or religion.

The single cause

All four come from one root: we do not understand; we only assume. And we assume because only part of the Self is functioning.

To see why, note that every entity has four dimensions:

- Form (*rupa*) — appearance, shape, volume.
- Properties (*guna*) — how it affects its surroundings.
- Basic-Nature (*swabhava*) — its purpose and participation in the larger order.
- Innateness (*dharma*) — the fundamental nature without which it would not be that thing at all. Growth, for a plant. Wanting happiness and wanting to know, for a human.

With only part of the Self active, we perceive form and properties and merely *assume* about basic-nature and innateness. And of the six perspectives, only the first three — likes, health, profit — function fully; we even judge justice, order and truth *through* them. Reckoned across the activities of Imagination, roughly 4.5 of the 10 activities are working.

Partial perspective gives partial cognition, which gives partial understanding, which gives a life confined to the material aspect. We do not know. We assume. And assumptions cause problems.

What activating the rest looks like

The remaining activities are not absent — they are dormant, and they come online in sequence as study proceeds.

- Contemplation (*chintan*) — identifying and accepting the missing dimensions. Also called *sakshatkar*, direct perception.
- Comprehension (*bodh*) and Determination (*sankalp*) — integrating them into a stable whole, and resolving to live by them.
- Realisation (*anubhav*) and Authentication (*pramaan*) — complete acceptance, and its expression in actual living.

Understanding deepens through four stages: glimpse (*bhaas*) → semblance (*abhaas*) → certitude (*prateeti*) → realisation (*anubhav*). Because the resulting acceptance rests on the real order of existence rather than on preference, it is definite. It aligns desire, thought and choice — and dissolves each of the four problems.

Not every belief is a problem, incidentally. Sensory images that nourish and protect the body, and verified general knowledge — the Earth is spherical, this is how an engine works — are perfectly fine. But all of that is *material*-aspect knowledge, and cannot be the primary basis of living. It is our beliefs about the behavioural and intellectual aspects that are almost never tested. Until they are, we may spend a lifetime pursuing desires that were never ours.

Two planes of consciousness

This yields one of the philosophy's key ideas.

Living on assumptions, with a primary focus on consuming material things — with about 4.5 activities working — is underdeveloped consciousness (*aviksit chetna*), also called animal

consciousness (*jeev chetna*). The name is not an insult but a description: like animals, our basic goal is sensory pleasure, and we take the Self to be the Body. We simply consume with more sophistication — forks and water-beds instead of grazing. It is also called living in illusion (*bhram*).

When all ten activities function — when we understand the Self–Body distinction and live with definite humane conduct — that is developed or human consciousness (*viksit / manav chetna*), also called awakening (*jagruti*).

Survival alone is not sufficient for a human being. The need for happiness *and* for understanding is exactly what distinguishes us from animals. Therefore: consciousness development through knowledge is the fundamental human need.

Finally, four functions mark the conscious Self: Knowing (*janana*) — seeing all the dimensions of existence as they are; Assuming (*manana*); Recognising (*pehachanana*); and Responding (*nirvaah*). Today our sequence runs assume → recognise → respond. We assume a snake and respond accordingly. Knowing lies dormant, and most of us mistake imagination, memory or thought for knowledge.

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8. The Body in Order

If the Self is the seer, doer and experiencer, and the Body is its instrument, then responsibility for the Body rests with the Self.

The body is a wonder we take entirely for granted. We grew from a three-kilo infant into an adult without deciding our height, the shape of our nose, or the length of our hands — a self-organised, self-regulated mechanism of billions of cooperating cells. It came free.

Notice the division of labour. When you eat a sweet, *you* get the taste; the *Body* gets the nutrition, and you are entirely unaware of the nutrients being broken down. The Body cannot decide how much to eat. The Self decides.

When the Self takes up the Body's nourishment, protection and proper utilisation, that feeling is called self-regulation (*sanyam*). It is not imposed control or self-denial. It is natural regulation flowing from understanding.

Health can then be defined: *a state in which all the organs of the body are in organisation, and the Body is able to act according to the Self.*

Sanyam rests on three understandings: that I am in coexistence with the Body and use it as an instrument; that happiness is a need of the Self while food, shelter and clothing are needs of the Body; and that health is the body's natural, effortless state, to be ensured through nourishment, protection and proper utilisation — good food, clothing, shelter and exercise (*vyayama*), with medicine (*aushadhi*) used only when order has been disrupted.

Because the body auto-regulates — we never instruct the heart or the pancreas — all we need do is understand its needs and respond. Eat unadulterated, fresh, seasonal, home-cooked food; eat when hungry; stop before full. Keep a daily routine tied to daylight and darkness — watch the

birds. Get real physical exercise, and treat physical labour as a mark of an educated person rather than something menial. Stay aware enough of your own body to intervene simply and early. Focus on staying healthy rather than on treating sickness.

Our present state is troubled on several fronts, and the causes trace back to the same confusion. Food contamination — pesticides, adulteration, polluted air and water. Junk and packaged food, driven by somebody else's profit. Overloading the body — repeatedly extracting a temporary pleasure from it in order to satisfy a continuous need of the Self, which is why the chips and the colas cannot be stopped. Sedentary living and bad timing — late nights, screens after twilight disrupting the body's own rhythms — breeding lifestyle diseases that afflict even the doctors who treat them. The strain of trying to fit in — cosmetics, and addictions now formally recognised as mental-health conditions, where the "need to appear cool" is really a need for *respect*, a need of the Self that can never be met in the material domain. And a medication mindset that fights symptoms and overpowers the body toward a statistical average, breeding side-effects, rather than assisting the body to restore its own balance.

You cannot outsource the care of your body. Every human being has to take up responsibility for their own.

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9. Relationship Is Not Made — It Is Recognised

Now the lens widens from the individual to the spread of our living. Each of us is born into a family we did not create. We have friends and teachers. And we depend on a vast silent web of people — the shopkeeper, the vendor, the bus driver, the farmer — whose participation supplies our material essentials.

The proposal here has five parts. Coexistence exists and has order and relationships within it. A relationship IS between two humans — it does not have to be created. It is recognised and understood by the Self. It carries definite feelings, in the form of expectations, which also reside in the Self. And recognising the relationship and responding to those feelings produces mutual fulfilment.

Take the second part seriously, because it is counterintuitive. We did not create the Earth, air, water, plants or animals we depend on; existence is already a robust symbiotic web of definite relationships. Likewise we are born into family and social webs. We did not invent them.

To be *related* simply means: there is a connection — we humans impact one another.

Watch your own response to three situations: war victims on a news broadcast, a road accident on your street, your mother cutting her finger. The intensity differs, but the immediate response is identical in kind — concern, and the impulse to help. Even for total strangers you will never meet. As long as it is another human being, a connection exists, and our spontaneous natural acceptance is to help.

We reserve the word "relationship" for blood relations, but on investigation we are connected well beyond them; we simply pay it less attention. A stranger who merely stares at you makes you

uncomfortable — which means you already carry an expectation that others behave with mutual respect.

And it is the *Self* that recognises the relationship — with the other person's *Self*, not their body. When your grandmother dies, you miss *her*. You do not miss her nose. The feelings and expectations reside in the Self and are directed at the other Self.

These feelings are definite. We say relationships are complicated only because we have paid them so little attention; in fact there are a small number of basic expectations. Living in relationship is a four-step flow: understand that the relationship IS → recognise its definite feelings and expectations → live with those feelings → evaluate the result, which is mutual fulfilment.

The three ways we reduce relationship

Because most of us do not see ourselves as Self-and-Body, we see the other person as a body only, and reduce relationship to the body or to the material. This happens in three ways.

Body-centric. When a bride joins a household, a near-stranger is suddenly accepted as a daughter — finding a place in minds, in the household's wealth, in rights. That is possible only because the relationship is recognised in the Self. Note too that there is no blood relationship between husband and wife, and that adoption works purely on acceptance. The whole notion of "blood relations" as the basis of relationship needs careful reconsideration.

Material-centric. Assuming we are only bodies, we reduce every relational expectation to money and property. But a father who provides everything materially and gives no time, interest or respect leaves a child unsatisfied. Buying your parents luxuries before placing them in an old-age home does not fulfil them. Ask yourself two questions: are your family problems more from a lack of relationship or a lack of material things? And how much of your time goes to material things versus to relationship? For most of us the answers point in opposite directions.

Assumption-centric. We carry unstated images of how a "wife," "husband," "father" or "son" ought to be — absorbed unwittingly from home, society, books and films. When two people hold different images, the result is mismatched expectations and conflict.

One important asymmetry: pain from a lack of material things is *temporary*, like hunger. Pain from a problem in relationship is *long-lasting*, because it lives in the Self. And both understanding relationships and living them require no money whatsoever.

Trust — the foundational value

Trust (*vishwas*) is defined as *the continuity in acceptance and fulfilment of relationship*. More plainly: the assurance that the other human being's basic-desire is for my wellbeing.

We are comfortable with someone once we are assured they mean us well. We fear them the moment we doubt it.

Everything turns on one distinction: basic-desire — wanting to, which is basic-nature (*swabhava*) — versus capability — being able to, which is properties (*guna*).

Now observe a pattern in yourself. When you judge *yourself*, you judge by your basic-desire: "I wanted to do well, but I couldn't." When you judge *another person*, you judge by their capability — by what they actually did — and then draw a conclusion about their basic-desire: "he couldn't, therefore he didn't want to."

We trust our own basic-desire and refuse to trust the other's. And the other person is doing exactly the same to us. This is the root of the trust deficit.

The friend who walks past without acknowledging you is a snob — until you learn he had just lost his wallet, at which point your anger dissolves instantly. Nothing about his action changed. You had doubted his basic-desire, when in fact only his capability was lacking in that moment. And notice: doubting someone's basic-desire contradicts what is naturally acceptable to you, and creates conflict *in you* in that very instant.

The same logic covers mistakes. No human being actually desires to make mistakes — yet when others err we conclude they meant to, while excusing ourselves.

Why trust is reasonable

The deeper basis for trust is a genuine similarity in the Self.

Consider two lists of human characteristics. Steadfastness, generosity, kindness — these are naturally acceptable to *every* human being, regardless of faith, gender, age, language or nationality. This is our basic-nature (*swabhav*): what we truly want to be. Cunning and hatred are how we sometimes *end up* being — our properties (*guna*), our capability in a state of partial view. And properties are what other people see and mistake for intention.

Every human wants happiness and prosperity. Every human's basic nature is the same. Every human wants out of their own unnatural tendencies. Every human's plan for life is the same. The activities and forces of the Self are present in all of us.

So: *we may look different (Form) and behave differently (Properties), but we have the same basic-desires, aims, plans and potential (basic-nature and innateness).* When I find something to be true for myself, I also know it is true for the other human being.

We fail to trust because we look at a person's Form and Properties — which spring from ever-changing imagination — and conclude about their unchanging basic-nature. And because we evaluate through likes–health–profit rather than justice–order–truth.

The turnaround is precise: how we accept a person is based on their basic-desire; what we do in that relationship is based on their capability. Trust is therefore the foundational value (*aadhar mulya*). When it holds, you can disagree strongly without coming to hate the person. When it goes, so does the relationship — and its large-scale failures are divorce, and war.

Three doubts are worth answering directly.

How can I trust a stranger, or trust blindly? You are not being asked to. Seeing the relationship on the basis of the Self, you recognise the stranger's basic-desire is the same as your own. That is understanding *first*, followed by dealing with people according to their demonstrated competence. It is the opposite of blind trust.

How can I trust someone with bad intentions? A robber "wants" to rob — but that want is his *assumption*, his apparent intention. Notice that he steals only where he sees no relationship. He never robs his own house; he takes the loot home to his family, where he does see relationship. His basic-desire to live with justice and to make himself happy is intact and identical to yours. Seeing that, you can remain at ease, secure yourself against his wrong assumption, and still hold acceptance for the relationship at its base.

Won't people take advantage of me? The opposite. Understanding gives inner assurance and makes you more effective. People take advantage of you when you *lack* understanding, not when you have it. Trust does not make you naïve; it makes you clearer and more complete.

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10. The Seven Fundamental Human Relationships and their inherent Nine Feelings

A relationship is *to be bound with another human being with the objective of completeness* — the acceptance of responsibility (*dayitva*) and duty (*kartavya*) toward the other. Because a relationship *is*, we cannot truly make or break one. Move physically away and it persists in memory.

Each relationship has a purpose in existence, and each can be seen as an *activity* — which means the roles are not bound to gender.

- Mother–Father and Son–Daughter. Our first relationship. The mother's primary purpose is *nourishment* of body and mind; the father's is *protection*; the child's is *obedience*, and its starting value is *gratitude*. The grown child passes care forward to its own children and returns care to its parents, completing a three-generation circle.
- Brother–Sister. To be *complementary* — sharing responsibilities and supporting each other's understanding. Against the media staple of sibling rivalry, it is complementariness, not rivalry, that is naturally acceptable.
- Friends. The same purpose as siblings, differing only in that friends live in their own homes.
- Teacher–Student. Perhaps the most important after parents, with three aspects: *understanding* of values and knowledge, *learning* of information, and *doing* of skills.
- Husband–Wife. A personal and social commitment to live as an integral unit, forming a new family and a web of integration — within which a conjugal relationship and the nourishment of a child most naturally take place. Both roles, procurement and processing, are equally vital.
- Colleague–Coworker. Coming together complementarily on shared work, with mutual respect: the colleague takes primary responsibility for a parcel of work, the coworker assists it. Money here is only a means to what it acquires.
- Societal Order. Our web of interdependence with the wider society — through education, cleanliness, water, health and much else. It is not possible to *not* care about society.

The nine feelings

Being in relationship, we have definite feelings toward the other that no material thing can substitute for. These feelings are the values in a relationship. The familiar complaint — *no matter how much I do, this person is never satisfied* — arises precisely because we supply material things (needs of the Body) while ignoring the expectations in the Self.

The nine are: Trust (*vishwas*), Respect (*samman*), Affection (*sneha*), Care (*mamata*), Guidance (*vatsalya*), Reverence (*shraddha*), Glory (*gaurav*), Gratitude (*kritagyata*) and Love (*prem*).

Of all nine, tellingly, only Care requires material things — food, comforts, medicine for someone's body. The other eight require understanding, not money. A ring or a car may *express* affection; it can never replace or cause it.

Three of the nine repay a closer look.

Respect means *to be evaluated as I am*. Offered the choice — evaluated *as* I am, *more* than I am, or *less* — everyone chooses the first. Over-evaluation makes us uncomfortable; under-evaluation puts us down; and being evaluated as something else altogether (equated to an animal, called a "hippo") simply offends. We commit these constantly while joking, offending others, who do it back — and it escalates, all the way up to broken families and wars.

The true basis of respect is the deep *similarity* in the Self: the same activities of thought, desire and understanding are present in every person, and we differ only in how much we have exercised them. Our basis today is the exact opposite — differentiation, being special — so we chase recognition through appearance, physical strength, wealth, position and intellect. Each of these alienates everyone outside the category, and each has produced real historical harm. And notice how hollow it is: the guard who salutes your car may feel no relationship at all; the salute is mechanical. We climb mountains and buy large houses for recognition, and nothing inside us changes. Redefined: respect is the continuity of the acceptance of excellence in another human being. (Being *similar* is not being the *same* — how we express respect can still vary.)

Affection (*sneha*) is *a feeling of lack of opposition in relationship*. It arises once I recognise that we both wish goodness for each other and are fundamentally similar — that the other is a relative of mine. It fails when we doubt and disrespect; when we blame the other for our problems; and when we evaluate them preferentially, approving some behaviours and rejecting others, getting irritated whenever they are simply being themselves. The other person has their own freedom of imagination, and will change only when *they* wish to.

A common objection surfaces here: *isn't competition necessary?* Three answers. Get ahead *where*, and until when — someone is always ahead of you in something. Do you actually perform better relaxed or stressed? And competition does not exist in nature: if atoms competed, molecules would never form; the cheetah and the deer demonstrate balance, not struggle. Cooperation is the fundamental way of nature. Even when we do compete, we compete *because the other person matters to us* — which is to say, because we are related.

Love (*prem*) is *the feeling of oneness* — with all human beings, and with every entity in existence. It is the complete value. Study begins with affection for one person and expands to all people, and then to everything that exists, leading toward an undivided society: family becoming world family. What passes for love today is assumed to be a special emotion reserved for one person, on the

strength of which we ignore everyone else, develop unrealistic expectations, and curtail the other's freedom until they feel suffocated and ask for space — ending in a break-up. That was an over-evaluation based on appearance and properties, in which the likes eventually gave way to dislikes. Real love is born of understanding: a feeling of responsibility and compassion toward everyone, without distinction.

Justice, and the five common failures

When we fulfil expectations according to these feelings, mutual fulfilment follows — and that is justice (*nyaya*): *the recognition of values in a relationship, the fulfilment of those feelings, and the evaluation of mutual fulfilment.* If only one party is satisfied, there is no justice.

Five misapprehensions cause most relational trouble: deficits of trust (doubting the other's basic intent), of respect (looking down, or taking someone for granted), of affection (a biased lens on their behaviour), of steadfastness (blaming others, unwilling to change ourselves), and of kindness — where kindness is defined as *letting the other human live*, so its deficit shows as dominating and insisting the other agree with us.

These accumulate quietly over years — between siblings, spouses, parents and children, neighbours, and eventually countries — building toward divorce and war.

The remedy is to study ourselves and coexistence, to evaluate through justice–order–truth rather than likes–health–profit, to discover that the other's true nature is the same as ours, and to begin practising in the family. The family is a laboratory. It is where you find out whether any of this works.

One line worth keeping: humans make mistakes by mistake. No one knowingly makes mistakes.

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11. From Family to Society

Family is the first place to understand relationship — but the start, not the stop. Since relationship rests on the Self, it extends beyond family to *all* human beings. Self-scrutiny confirms that we want to feel related to everyone, and naturally wish the wellbeing even of strangers.

Order in the family is the building block for order in society, leading toward an undivided society (*akhand samaj*).

From "existence is coexistence," and from "the basic human need is happiness through resolution," a universal human goal emerges in four parts:

- Resolution / understanding (*samadhaan*) in every individual.
- Prosperity (*samriddhi*) in every family.
- Fearlessness / trust (*abhay*) in society.
- Coexistence (*sah-astitva*) with nature.

The first question of life can now be stated fully: *Why do I live = my basic desire = my goal = Resolution, Prosperity, Fearlessness and Coexistence = Happiness, Peace, Contentment and Bliss.*

All four are required, and each flows from the one before. So we begin with resolution — and prosperity follows from it, because if I do not understand how much I need, no amount of production will ever feel like "more." Since the Self's needs are continuous, wealth-accumulation becomes endless by default, and depravity is more or less guaranteed without understanding.

Measured against these four, our present state is poor. Resolution in individuals is neglected — we teach information and skills, and ignore understanding of living. Prosperity in families is not even discussed, because we talk only about *wealth* and cannot distinguish it from prosperity. Fearlessness in society recedes as we grow more paranoid and stockpile more weapons — less than one per cent of annual global spending on weapons would have been enough to put every child into school, and it did not happen. And coexistence with nature has been replaced by ever-better ways of exploiting it.

The five systems

To reach the human goal, a society needs five dimensions of human organisation, which between them cover every fundamental activity:

- Education and Impressions (*Shiksha–Sanskar*)
- Health and Discipline (*Swasthya–Sanyam*)
- Justice and Protection (*Nyaya–Suraksha*)
- Production and Work (*Utpadan–Karya*)
- Exchange and Storage (*Vinimaya–Kosh*)

The family is the basic unit that operates all five — a microcosm of society, in which every member lives the seven relationships and holds the four goals.

Education (*shiksha*) is the process of imparting understanding across all four aspects of living; impressions (*sanskar*) are the right values thereby transferred, giving a student the ability to live in coexistence. Today education is partial and rote — *I* am mostly missing from it; commercialised — money spent measured against money and fame earned, hence cheating and fake degrees; competitive, alienating students and breeding jealousy; and run on fear and reward.

Health and Discipline serves the Body as education serves the Self. Of the two, self-regulation comes first, since the Self decides what and how much to eat. A consumerist society trying to eat and drink its way into happiness has produced more of a disease-care system than a health-care system — profit-centric and disease-focused — pointing to a need for integrated medicine that combines quick relief and surgery with affordable, holistic, restorative healing.

Justice and Protection. Justice is complementariness in relationship between two people; protection is simply its *outcome*. A just relationship is automatically protected and needs nothing extra. We require police and armies precisely because we lack justice — and jails can become schools for the next crime. You refrain from harming someone not merely from fear of the law, but because you feel no inclination to. So crime ends when the justice–order–truth perspective prevails, which is education's task. With nature, justice means proper utilisation (*sadupyog*) and protection (*suraksha*) — growing rice in a way that enriches both me and the soil, wasting nothing. Today we live in an era of wastage: overproduced clothes, electronics and phones; food dumped to hold up prices.

Production and Work. *Work* is the physical effort humans apply to nature; *production* is its material output. Three questions govern it: what to produce — determined by proper identification of human needs; how much — limited, once we grasp that the Body's needs are limited; and how — within nature's framework, which is cyclic (*avartansheelta*) and mutually enriching. Today we produce much that is harmful, overproduce most of the rest, and use non-cyclic, depleting, polluting processes.

Exchange and Storage. Exchange trades material things *after* a family's own needs are met; storage banks what remains. Both must run on justice–order–truth rather than profit. Today the seller maximises the rate and the buyer minimises the cost in a constant tug of war; middlemen, cartels and hoarding leave the actual producers — farmers — struggling; and stock markets see insider trading and manipulation even among the highly educated. This is the overdrive of the profit motive.

A distinction underlies all of it. Value is a thing's usefulness — its participation in the larger order, its utility. Price is its exchange value, based on the effort put in. We confuse the two constantly. Designer clothes, an autographed bat, a waxed apple — the utility value is unchanged while the price multiplies, because the price is now tracking perceived respect, likes, ownership and sensory enjoyment. Those are needs of the Self, and money cannot buy them.

Our needs are not unlimited

Check honestly how much food, space and clothing you and your family actually need for health and protection. Each turns out to be limited.

We hold a common misconception that human needs are unlimited. That confuses the Self's *continuous* needs with the Body's *limited* ones. Nature already has more than the body needs — more coconuts than we can eat, more wheat, more oxygen, more water.

Only when this is seen does prosperity become possible at all. And the consequence is practical: in merely having wealth and feeling deprived, we accumulate. In being prosperous, we share, and we do not exploit.

One caution on livelihood. The "educated" tend to move away from primary production, wanting to consume goods without producing any, and to earn more money for less work. This is a form of indirect exploitation — it offloads our family's weight onto other families, the farmers and the service workers. Each of us can instead choose to earn in a way that is conducive to a humane society.

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12. Nature and Our Place in It

Everything on the planet falls into one of four orders.

- The Material Order (*padarth avastha*) — soil, water, air, minerals, fossil fuels; and beyond the earth, stars and planets.
- The Bio or Plant Order (*prana avastha*) — grass, shrubs, trees, and ocean flora.

- The Animal Order (*jeev avastha*) — animals, birds, large fishes.
- The Human, or Knowledge, Order (*gyaan avastha*) — human beings. It is called the Knowledge Order because the need to understand is the most basic need distinguishing us from animals.

By quantity each order vastly exceeds the next: material > plant > animal > human.

The first three coexist in mutual complementariness (*paraspar poorakta*). The material order gives plants their nutrients. Plants decay to enrich the soil, hold it with their roots, and produce oxygen — and decayed plant matter became the oil and coal stored deep underground, which serves as insulation against the heat of the molten core below and the sun above. Animals enrich soil with excreta and pollinate plants; plants feed animals; the material order provides the medium for movement. None of them denies another.

Add the human being, and the pattern breaks. Each of the other three orders fulfils us, and we fulfil none of them in return. We depend on soil and pollute it. We depend on plants and clear forests. We depend on animals and drive them to extinction. Except the human, the remaining orders are mutually complementary. The human alone is disturbed within, and spreads that disturbance outward.

So the honest question is simply: do you want to live in harmony with the other three orders, or to exploit them?

The order that is already there

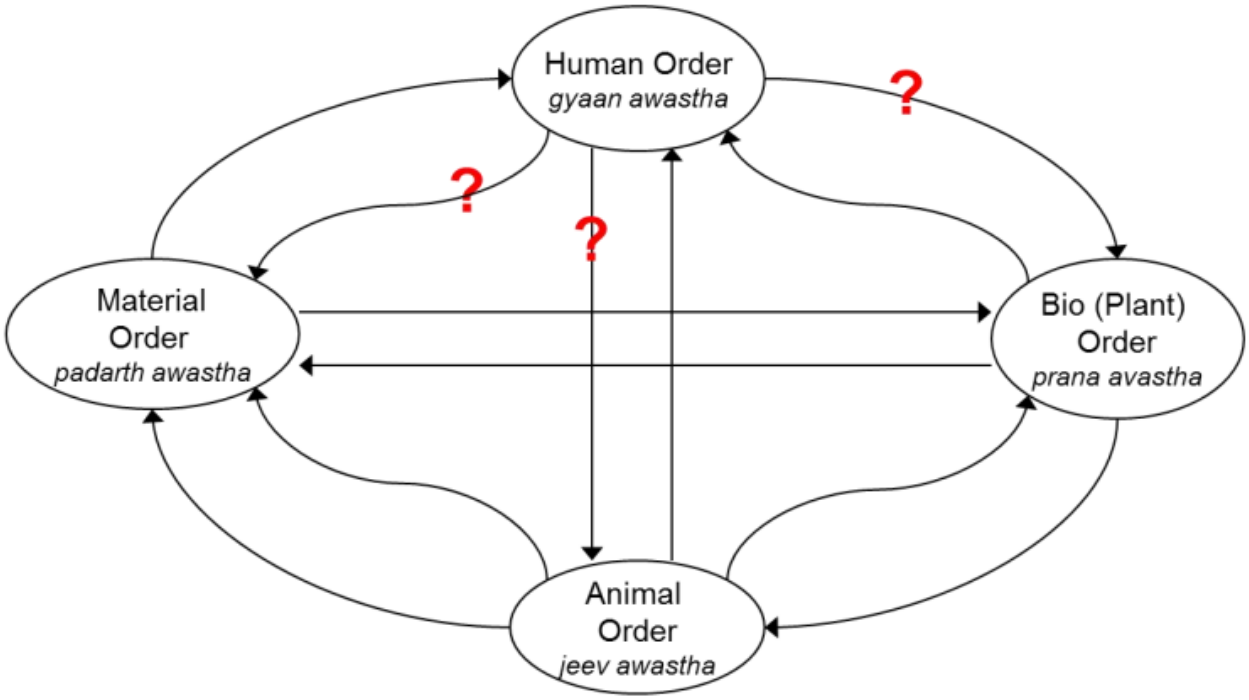
Nature displays a fourfold order.

Every thing has a definite, specific conduct — this is Law (*niyam*). Gold, a mango tree, a cow, a human heart each behave predictably; it is precisely by this that we recognise them at all. Every thing displays those properties stably and continuously — this is Regulation (*niyantran*); a neem tree grows and then holds a stable size. Every thing stays useful and complementary in well-maintained proportions — this fine, robust proportioning is Balance (*santulan*).

And nature runs on cycles that are self-regulating and leave no by-product unabsorbed. Nature makes no plastic and no foam. A seed becomes a tree, which bears fruit full of seeds, which fall and decay into manure, and sprout again — soil enriched, seeds multiplied. There is a tradition to the process. It is both cyclic *and* enriching.

The value of this is vivid only if you imagine its absence. If the cycle stopped, trees would fruit once and quit, and we would spend our lives gathering seeds by hand. If leaves were not biodegradable, they would pile up beyond management. If nature were not enriching, we would have to manufacture every gram of fertiliser ourselves and the water tables would never refill.

Add auto-production: a growing plant manages its own water and nutrition. We do not "grow" trees. They grow. We only facilitate — and we facilitate well only after understanding.



Where we stand, and why

Very poorly. Nature's processes are cyclic — closed-ended. Ours are acyclic — open-ended. Burning coal is irreversible and cannot be undone, and it does two kinds of harm: fossil fuels serve to keep the earth cool, so depleting them tampers with the planet's own temperature regulation; and burning them poisons the air our children will breathe.

Nor are we enriching. Chemical fertilisers render land unfit within years. Pesticides poison bodies and birds. Thousands of species have gone extinct. Even modern sanitation denies the soil its natural manure. Global assessments now put roughly one in four assessed species at risk, with extinction rates around a thousand times the natural background, and some twelve million hectares of tropical forest lost in a single recent year — about thirty football fields a minute. Biodiversity is our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting safety net, and that safety net is stretched close to breaking. The last comparable event was about sixty-six million years ago and was caused by an asteroid. This time we are the cause.

Three assumptions drive it.

Infinite needs and finite resources — rooted in the belief that Self = Body, so that my needs seem unlimited and my happiness must come from material things, making consumption and economic growth the primary and only way of life. Infinite material wants meet a finite Earth; we are bound to run out.

An exploitative relationship with nature — a human-centred view in which nature was made for our enjoyment, so everything is ours to consume.

A wrong perception of natural design — assuming nature is inherently in conflict, so that our added conflict and our effluents seem not to matter much beside the profit.

Beneath all three lies underdeveloped consciousness: with only part of the Self functioning, we see appearance and properties while basic-nature and innateness stay obscured, and the perspectives of justice, order and truth go unused.

What follows

The pivotal realisation is that we do not have to *create* order in nature. It already exists. We have to understand it and be in it.

Break it and we cause either depletion — consuming what nature cannot replenish — or pollution — outputting faster than nature can cycle.

This is not an argument for producing less. Produce plenty — but by nature's cyclic principle, since that is the larger framework we live inside. On honest examination, we find that we *want* to live harmoniously with nature: it is naturally acceptable and essential to our own happiness.

So the natural law of living is usefulness and complementariness with everything in nature, within regulation and balance. It is a shift from consuming our way into happiness to understanding our way into it — which auto-regulates material needs and leaves us sharing more and feeling abundance. Many of our "material needs" are only assumed images; seen clearly, letting go of them becomes effortless rather than forced.

The practical measures follow naturally: reduce consumption to actual need, reuse, recycle, switch energy to solar and wind and better-designed homes with less diesel and less air travel, plant and protect trees, forests and water bodies, and make a difference through work and policy, since change at scale also needs industry and government to move.

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13. Four Dimensions of Everything

Something is still missing after studying ourselves, our relationships and nature: how does it all fit together, how did it come to be, how is everything interrelated? The reason this matters is practical rather than academic. Unless we really know how a stone, a plant, an animal and a human being *are*, we cannot understand them in a fundamental sense — and what we cannot understand, we cannot live with. Besides, knowing is itself a basic human need.

One caution before we start: these realities are not always seen through the senses. We *understand* them in the Self.

Each of the four orders can be studied through the four dimensions introduced earlier: Form, Properties, Basic-Nature and Innateness.

Form (*rupa*) is how a thing appears to the senses. The "things" of each order run from soil, metals, gases and water in the material order; to all vegetation in the plant order — and crucially the cell, the basic building block of every animal and human *body*, which is why those bodies belong to the plant order; to animals and humans, each a coexistence of Self and Body. Materials, plants and animals span many species and races. Human beings belong to one species and one race — ethnic differences being only bodily features.

Properties (*guna*) are how a thing interacts with its environment: iron rusts, neem is bitter and cooling, a jackal uses cunning. In human beings, the *unawakened* show a wide and shifting range — friendly, moody, frightened, obstinate, ambitious — while the *awakened* are simple, affectionate, composed and generous.

The principle by which properties remain definite and repeat is Inheritance (*anu-sangita*). Matter conforms to its constitution: every iron atom behaves as iron because of its structure. Plants conform to their seed: as the seed, so the plant. Animals conform to their race: as the lineage, so the animal — a cow's child is always a cow.

The human being is the exception, and this is one of the most consequential points in the whole philosophy. Our Body is seed-conforming — you resemble your parents. But our mind is not lineage-bound. As the assumptions, so the human. Our desires, thoughts and choices — together, our *sanskar*, our mental impressions — can come from anywhere: parents, environment, media, memory. The software in a human being is changeable; we are programmable in this sense.

Which means definite human behaviour can come from only one source: knowledge. A human being needs definite mental impressions, and that is possible through knowledge of coexistence.

Basic-Nature (*svabhava*) is the *value, purpose and participation* behind the properties — what a thing contributes to existence. Unlike properties, it is the *same for all things within an order*. For matter it is composition and decomposition — without death there cannot be birth. For plants, enhancing and worsening — a plant aids some neighbours and deters others, keeping balance. For animals, brutal and gentle — a lioness brutal to prey and gentle to her cubs, maintaining the carnivore–herbivore balance.

For the human being, the Self has *two planes*.

In the unawakened human, basic-nature shows as Wretchedness (*deenta*) — feeling incompetent and then blaming others; Cunningness (*heenta*) — betrayal in its forms, cheating, duping, deceiving, hypocrisy; and Brutality (*krurta*) — force applied to wealth (stealing), to body (harm), or to mind (assault, domination, hatred). Living this way is living in animal consciousness, and traces of it are visible in animals.

In the awakened human, basic-nature shows as Steadfastness (*dheerta*) — firmness in living with justice, not reacting to harm; Courage (*veerta*) — effort so that *others* too have just and humane relationships; and Generosity (*udarta*) — offering help gladly. Beyond these lie Kindness (*daya*), Grace (*krupa*) and Compassion (*karuna*). These humane qualities are naturally acceptable to us; they are our basic-desire. Living against our own basic-nature produces internal conflict, which we experience as stress.

The type of activity by which each order expresses its basic-nature is *recognising and responding* for matter, plants and all bodies; animals add *assuming* in the Self; and human beings add the need to know — the ability to observe, evaluate and know oneself and reality. This is why humans form a separate order.

Innateness (*dharma*) is the aspect that defines a unit's very being and cannot be separated from it — its basic aim. The word comes from *dharana*, "to be inseparable," much as the English *religion* derives from *religare*, "to adhere."

For matter, innateness is existence — matter can be converted but never annihilated. For plants, existence plus growth — you cannot stop a living plant from growing. For animals, existence and growth in the body, plus the expectation to live in the Self. And for the human being, existence and growth in the body, plus the expectation to live with happiness in the Self. Each of us not only wants to live; each of us wants happiness, at every instant.

Which gives a striking equivalence: the religion (*dharma*) of the human order = resolution = happiness = innateness.

This is also why belief never quite satisfies. Every human wants to *know*. And what we need to know is Coexistence, which yields answers to all situations, which is resolution, which is happiness.

Note what we currently ignore: exactly the two dimensions that are the *same for every human being* — basic-nature (trust, affection, steadfastness, kindness) and innateness (happiness, peace, resolution) — while fixating on Form and on shifting Properties.

What changes and what does not

Form and Properties change. Form decomposes; nothing lasts forever. Properties, though definite, shift with environment — water behaves differently at different temperatures.

Basic-Nature and Innateness do not change. They are absolute. All matter always composes and decomposes and can never be annihilated. Every plant enhances and worsens, exists and grows. Every animal is brutal and gentle, with an expectation to live. Every human carries a fixed basic-nature and the expectation to live with happiness.

This is the live question in every relationship: do I base my relating on the shifting *rupa–guna*, or on the constant *swabhav–dharma*?

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14. Existence Is Coexistence

So far we have studied *units* — things bounded on all sides. But there is one reality we overlook so completely that we call it nothing: space, or void (*shunya*).

What is between you and this page? Between the earth and the sun? Space. And it is not only *between* things; it is inside them and all around them, everywhere. Because we cannot touch it, we ignore it. But space exists. It is a reality.

Existence = Exist + Essence — the fundamental quality of being. At the deepest level only two realities exist: Units and Space. Nature is the collection of units — the four orders — all submerged in space.

Hence the central proposition of the entire philosophy:

> Existence is in the form of coexistence: units (activities) submerged in space (void).

Existence[114]

Nature		**Space**
collection of units *(ikai samooh)*	{submerged in}	(Emptiness) *khaali sthaan*
1. Limited *(seemit)* Unit *(ikai)*		Expansive, Omnipresence *(vyapak)*
2. Active *(kriyasheel)*		No activity (void) *(kriya shunya, shunya)*
3. Energized *(urjit)*		Constant Energy *(samya urja)*
4. Self-organized *(niyantrit – tva sahit vyavastha)*		Self Organization is available *(niyantran uplabdh)*
5. Each unit is 'reflected' onto the other unit – it recognizes and fulfils its relation with other units, & participates in the whole order *(pechanana-nirvah; samagra vyavastha me bhaigdar)*		Transparent *(Pardarshi)*
6. Is Saturated: *(samprikt)* encircled, soaked & submerged	{in}	Pervasive Void *(pargami, shunya)*

Six attributes contrast the two.

Units are limited; space is expansive and omnipresent (*vyapak*), boundless, with no beginning and no end. Units are active; space has no activity. Units are energised; space is constant energy — the infinite reservoir that every unit draws on, equally and unchangingly.

Units are self-organised (*tva-sahit-vyavastha*). Each maintains its own definite behaviour — iron has iron-ness, a cow has cow-ness — and *nothing external organises them*. Not human beings, not other units, not space. Space merely makes organisation available.

Each unit recognises and responds to its relationships, and is reflected (*pratibimb*) onto other units, while space is transparent — it neither obstructs nor is obstructed. Space is therefore the connecting principle between everything, including between you and me. This reflection is instantaneous, which is why we feel related at all — why a distant human tragedy, or a suffering bird, affects us.

And units are saturated (*samprikt*) in pervasive space — encircled, submerged and drenched in it, so thoroughly that even an atom is over 99.99 per cent empty space.

Three inferences follow. Space does not create and does not control — there is only transformation from one form to another. Every human being naturally accepts self-organisation and rejects being controlled from outside. And units are self-organised on their own.

The five principles

The whole unfolding of existence is captured in five principles.

One — Coexistence. Units saturated in pervasive space, as just described.

Two — Evolution in Nature. Atoms combine into molecules, which form lumps and fluids; fluids are the basis of the plant cell; cells form plants, and then animal and human bodies. Human bodies of every geographic origin share exactly the same anatomy — so again, the human race is one. Nothing controls or creates this. It is self-organised, and our role is to observe and understand it: we are a seer (*drishta*).

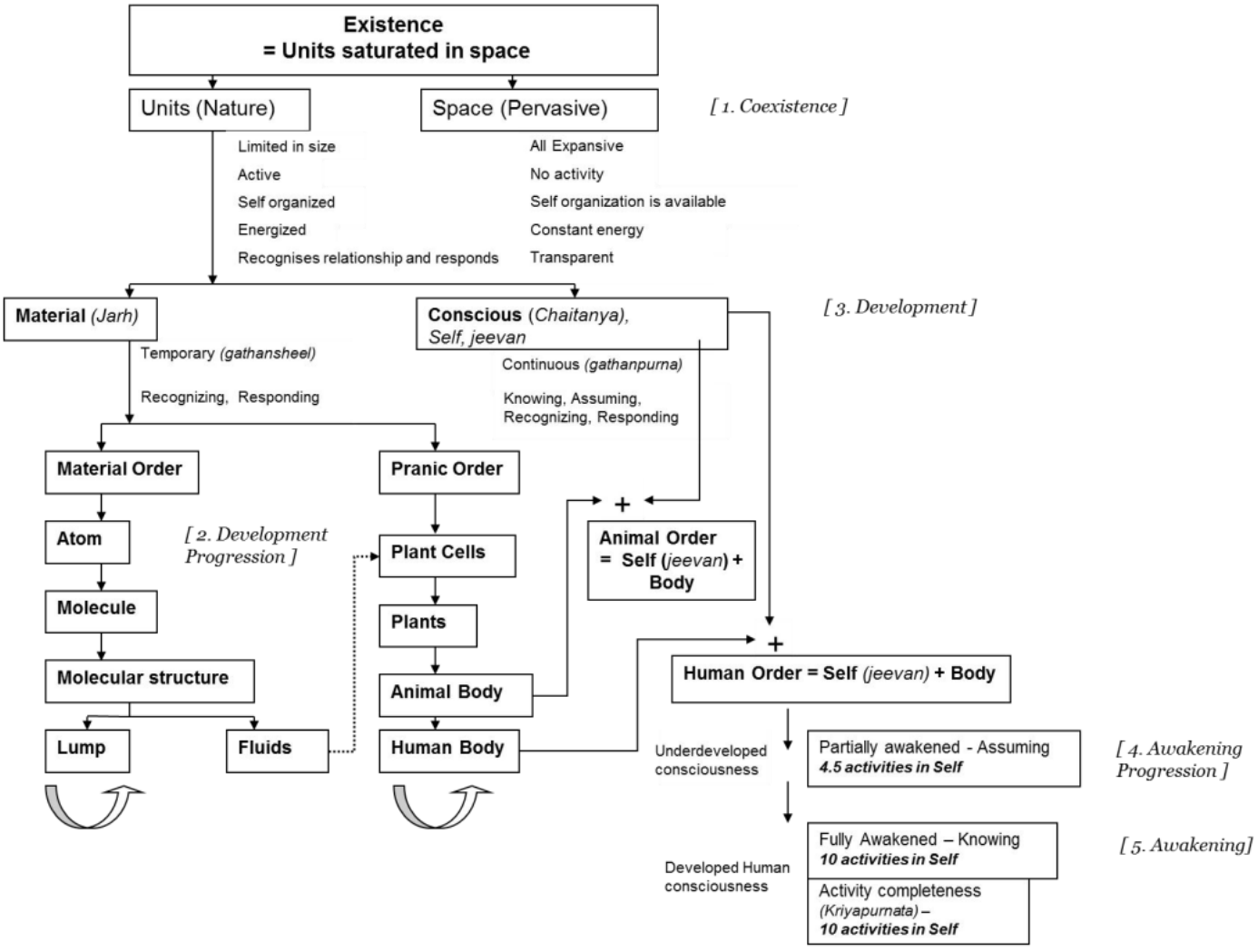
Three — Development (*vikas*): the occurrence of the conscious entity (*jeevan*). Here the material and the conscious separate sharply. The material — stones, plants, and even animal and human *bodies* — only recognises and responds, with no assuming and no will to live. No matter who picks up a stone, its recognition and response are identical. The conscious Self also *assumes*, and carries the need to know, the will to live, and the experience of pleasure and pain. Recall the needle: whether you assume a nurse is helping you or a stranger is attacking you, the response of the skin is the same. The differing assumption is in the Self, not the body. Material units are temporary (*gathansheel*) — constitutionally incomplete; conscious units, the Self of ten activities, are continuous (*gathanpurna*) — constitutionally complete, admitting only *qualitative* change.

Four — Awakening progression in the human being. This one is ordinary history. Cave-dwellers; differentiation and war over ethnicity; kings as representatives of God; organised religions; the movement from hunter-gatherers to villages to cities to nation-states; three centuries of science

reshaping the material world; the United Nations; the growing recognition of education and equality. Through all of it, reality did not change. What changed was human awareness of it. We have used likes–health–profit heavily, and are still awaiting the understanding of, and the living with, justice–order–truth.

Five — Awakening in the human being. All ten activities functional; living with humane basic-nature and *dharma*, in happiness, peace and bliss. This is developed human consciousness, living with resolution — called activity-completeness (*kriyapurnata*) and, when fully expressed in living, conduct-completeness (*acharanpurnata*).

On this planet, progress has already reached the fourth stage. Only the fifth remains — and it requires understanding.



My role in all this

Look at the whole picture and ask: what have I done for space, atoms, plants, animals, my own body, my own existence, to exist? Did I create any of it? Am I controlling the formation of molecules, the growth of plants, the beating of my own heart?

We are doing none of it. We are responsible for none of it. Nor does space control us — and we would not accept being controlled from outside in any case.

All I can do is understand all this and learn to live with it.

That is a smaller job than creating a universe and a much larger one than it first sounds. It is the seer's role. And it is the one thing that produces the resolution and happiness that are my own innateness.

The overall inference about existence: it is ever-active presence (*nitya vartmaan*). There is no absolute creation and no absolute destruction. Void is neither the material cause — no creator, no destroyer — nor the controller, since units are self-organised. There *is* law (*niyam*) in coexistence, and in human beings that law appears as Justice, Religion and Truth (*Nyaya, Dharma, Satya*). And I, the conscious entity, am seer, doer and experiencer — the void does not know, do, or feel. All of this is offered not for dispute with any existing belief, but for your own scrutiny.

The whole study now organises into three knowledges: understanding Existence is Knowledge of Existence (*astitva darshan gyan*); understanding ourselves is Knowledge of the Self (*jeevan gyan*); understanding our relationships with people and nature is Knowledge of Humane Conduct (*manviyata purna acharan gyan*). And living accordingly is Ethics + Values = Humanness.

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15. Ethics: The Laws of Living

Everything in the material, plant and animal orders exhibits *definite* behaviour. Iron always has its iron-ness; neem its neem-ness; a cow its cow-ness — regardless of time or place. It is exactly this definiteness that lets us study and identify them. If iron behaved like gold, if neem sprouted mangoes, if the cow turned carnivorous, we would have to rename them. Nature never does this.

The human being alone has indefinite conduct. Ask honestly whether you behave the same way always, or whether it shifts with your mood, the time of day, and the company.

And yet each of us *wants* to be definite. We want to live with trust and respect. We do not like having lied. We do not want to exploit or be exploited. Living otherwise creates an inner contradiction and our own unhappiness. The reason for our indefiniteness is imagination — we behave as we imagine, according to our mental impressions.

Since we must decide our own conduct, we need to understand the Existence we are part of, understand ourselves, and on that basis understand our living with people and nature. That is Knowledge of Humane Conduct, and it has two parts: Wisdom (*viveka*) and Behavioural Science (*vyavhar vigyan*).

Wisdom is *the ability to discriminate between right and wrong, true and false, desirable and undesirable*. It is the same as ethics or character — the laws of living. Living according to wisdom gives rise to human Values, which we then protect through Policy. Together, Ethics + Values + Policy form Complete Humane Conduct (*manviyatapurna acharan*): ethics being the basic laws of self-regulated living, values our participation in relationships, and policy the self-accepted rules for the proper utilisation and protection of body, mind and wealth. The three are one integrated whole — without ethics there are no values, and without policy neither can be secured.

Ethics means living according to the laws of human living, whereby we are able to discriminate between true and false, justice and injustice, order and problems, right and wrong. What makes it dependable rather than a matter of opinion is that each of us can verify it through the four steps: is it naturally acceptable to me and natural to existence; does it fit every aspect of living; is it naturally acceptable to *every* human; does it lead to mutual fulfilment? The ethical turns out to be universal, humane, desirable and right. The unethical varies with time, person and faith.

These self-governing laws cover three aspects.

Ethics in the Self — intellectual law. Erudition (*vidya*) — adhering to what we have found to be true in existence and in ourselves, and not maintaining false impressions. And Straightforwardness (*saralta*) — honesty about our own state (no hypocrisy, nothing to hide), honesty in speech (stating only what actually occurred), and honesty in deed (doing as we said we would).

Ethics with people — social law. Three dimensions. *Occupational ethics, or righteous wealth*: at minimum, not stealing — no theft, cheating or forging, and not even craving another's wealth; and positively, earning through an appropriate occupation that is complementary to society, in production, distribution or service, carried out from the perspective of justice rather than profit. What we expect in return should follow from a proper recognition of the family's needs, the actual effort made, and a non-exploitative relationship. *Marital ethics, or fidelity*: abstention from force, never outraging another's modesty in word or deed; faithfulness to one's partner in word, mind and deed; and no interference in others' marital life. *Behavioural ethics, or kindness*: no hatred in word, mind or deed; live and let live, not interfering in another's freedom of imagination and action — no teasing, dominating, or complicating another's progress; and being of assistance, helping others toward justice, happiness and understanding.

It is worth noting that every crime in a modern penal code, and every so-called social problem, falls under one of these three areas.

Ethics with nature — natural law. That our technologies, our production and our way of life cause no resource depletion and no pollution.

Social law, in essence, is living in self-regulation: not harming, and not coming in the way of another's right to live in coexistence.

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16. The Thirty Human Values

Living with ethics, we also accept, experience and express certain feelings. These are values.

The value (*mulya*) of any unit is its fundamental quality (*moulikta*) and its participation or purpose in the larger order. We know iron's value from its properties, a mango tree's from its benefit to its environment, a cow's from its contribution to soil and dairy. So too the human being: our value lies in our properties, our basic-nature, and — uniquely — our innateness. Since our fundamental inner nature is to be happy, happiness is our basic value.

We express it in four settings, giving thirty human values in four groups.

Values in the Self — four (*jeevan mulya*). Happiness, Peace, Contentment and Bliss. Each arises from the absence of conflict between activities of the Self: happiness when action and tasting match how we think; peace when thinking matches how we image and desire; contentment when desiring matches our understanding of reality; and bliss when understanding matches reality as it is. (Note the distinction from *pleasure*: happiness is internal synergy; pleasure is tasting driven by an external sensory stimulus.) These four are our innateness — once had, we do not wish to be without them for a moment.

Human Values — six (*manav mulya*). Steadfastness, Courage, Generosity, Kindness, Grace and Compassion. These are our basic-nature — how we truly want to be.

Relationship Values — eighteen (*vyavhar mulya*). The nine feelings each appear twice: as an established value residing in us, and as the expressed value it produces, visible to others. Trust → Complementariness. Respect → Cordiality. Affection → Commitment. Care → Generosity. Guidance → Naturalness. Reverence → Veneration. Glory → Simplicity. Gratitude → Gentility. Love → Oneness. A caution here: today we often display only the *expressed* value in the name of civility. Without the established feeling behind it, the display is pretence.

Material Values — two (*vastu mulya*). *Utility value* — transforming nature into a useful form, wood into a chair. And *creativity value* — adding to usefulness or beauty, buttons on a shirt.

These thirty map directly onto the four dimensions: innateness gives the four values in the Self; basic-nature gives the six human values; properties give the eighteen relationship values; and material-aspect qualities give the two material values. So our values in the Self are expressed through human values, which are in turn expressed through relationship and material values in daily living.

Notice what has happened. We began by observing that human conduct is indefinite while the rest of nature is definite — because our partial understanding, built on illusory imagination, had made our innateness, basic-nature and properties inhumane, or animal-like. We have now arrived at humane values as *the very same* innateness, basic-nature and properties — only now known as they truly are.

Two features make these values worth the name. They are natural: once had, we cannot lose them; they need not be memorised, nor enforced through fear, greed or faith, because they are the outcome of understanding. And they are universal: not confined to any faith, sect, region, gender, class, level of education or era, and unchanged by material circumstance, conditioning, or the passage of time.

Hence: Universal Human Values. And note that nothing here needs to motivate you toward them. The desire is already in you, because you are human.

Gather the whole inventory and it comes to thirty-seven items: seven of ethics in living — erudition and straightforwardness in the Self; occupational, marital and behavioural ethics with people; complementariness and non-depletion with nature — plus the thirty values. Together these ensure the continuity and the expression of the four values in the Self.

The point is not memorisation. As we study existence and ourselves, we get a view of all this and our acceptance grows, until we come to remember it the way we remember our own name — and to practise it.

You can test any conduct with three questions. *Is this the way I really want to be? Will this lead to satisfaction for myself, for others, and to coexistence with nature? Will I call myself successful in life and in work if I live like this?* Conduct is ethical when it gives rise to no conflict within, no conflict with existence, no conflict with humans in family and society, and no conflict with nature. Put plainly: what is wrong is not acceptable to both of us; what is right is naturally acceptable to all of us. That is ethics.

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17. The World As It Is

Identifying a problem is the first step, but it is not much use without solutions. So it is worth reading the present state through two lenses: the *cause* — the perspectives of likes, health and profit — and the *resolution* — the perspectives of justice, order and truth.

Ethics today. In the Self, each of us believes his own illusion to be the truth; we wear masks, pad our achievements out of a fear of losing respect, and break promises. With people, marital ethics erode into carnality and infidelity, which flow directly from assuming the Self to be the Body. Behavioural ethics collapse as we sort people into like, somewhat-like and dislike — judging by capability rather than basic-nature. Occupational ethics give way to snatching through cleverness, which we have learned to call good business sense; work becomes solely about money at any cost, on the assumption that money is happiness. With nature, we treat everything as a resource to consume, from the primacy of comfort over *dharma*.

Values today. In the Self, happiness is sought in sensory input, in renunciation, or in chemical states of the brain. Among humans, steadfastness collapses into wretchedness, courage into cunning or brutality, and generosity, kindness, grace and compassion get restricted to our own race, colour or faith. In relationship, every value turns *conditional* and unstable, because like-and-dislike is being used where justice belongs: trust becomes dependent on behaviour and goes missing between nations, faiths, even families; respect is displayed outwardly and passed on to our children as display; affection depends on who is "ours," breeding an over-attachment that stifles; reverence shrinks into asking higher beings for help while making little effort at our own development; and love becomes an infatuation with appearances that shifts as the other's behaviour shifts.

The deeper problem: relative ethics

We currently cannot define what is ethical.

Fire a weapon away from your country at the border and it may be ethical; turn around and fire and it is not — whereas in both cases someone died. Hang a murderer and it is justice — only, now we are both dead. A terrorist is ethically following his organisation's norms. A corporation's wrong practices are permissible under its own unwritten code.

Ethics has become relative to person, place, occupation and era, and is enforced by rules and punishment — out of fear, not out of acceptance and responsibility. So we need auditors, and then an auditor to audit the auditor.

And with wealth-maximisation now the near-universal goal, we get the strange expectation of ethical individuals operating inside collectively unethical goals. Maximising wealth, being ethical, and being just soon turn out to be mutually contradictory.

All of this stems from our faculty of *assuming*. The way out is to base our study on existence and the human being as they actually are — at which point what is ethical becomes ascertainable in an *absolute* sense, because it is naturally acceptable to every human being.

The paradigm shift

Place our fields of study on the map of existence and something becomes visible. The natural sciences study the material aspect — form and properties — where our progress has been spectacular. The social sciences study behaviour and economics. The humanities study society and culture.

What is missing is you and I. The study of the human being — the one who is doing all the studying — is absent from the curriculum. So we study only the material aspect, and even there only form and properties, ignoring basic-nature and innateness.

Meanwhile almost all human activity is aimed at money. Research goes where money goes; we are even patenting truth and selling it. Yet money appears nowhere in the schematic of existence. It is a human notion — a promise of material things that can deliver only transient pleasure and bodily health. Its overdrive breeds three manias: for consumption, for profit, and for carnal pleasure — all three addressing just one of the four aspects of living.

And we misname things badly.

We accumulate the material order and call it growth — though matter's nature is existing, composing and decomposing, not growing. We can accumulate money; we cannot grow money. We try to stop what actually does grow — the plant order — by destroying forests. And we ignore the needs of the Self altogether.

This misdirection produces the cut-throat mentality directly: if I must "grow" what does not grow by design, then I have to snatch it from you. The result is competition and no real growth — while a single banana sapling gives more than we can manage.

The imbalance is easy to see in the numbers. Global annual spending on cosmetics, ice cream, pet foods, cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics and the military runs into hundreds of billions of dollars each. The *additional* sums needed to give every developing country basic education, water and sanitation, reproductive health, and basic health and nutrition amount to a small fraction of that.

Rightly understood, each word would go where it belongs. Transformation belongs to the material order — working within recyclability. Growth belongs to the plant order — enriching nature; there is enough in nature for all of us. And development belongs to the Self — a qualitative, permanent change through understanding.

Every entity in existence except the human being has a definite character. We too want a definite character — and that is where development is required.

Two closing framings. On technology: Knowledge is "why to do." Wisdom is "what to do." Science is "how to do." Today we do not know why, so we do not know what — and yet we are wholly absorbed in how, producing endlessly simply because it sells. Technology is only technique. The answers for living come from wisdom and knowledge. Technology must follow human goals; otherwise we end up following technology. What we need is a wisdom-oriented science.

On education: human beings conform to their mental impressions, not to a biological breed — which is why a child must be taught pretty much everything, and why the images inside each of us, today made of belief and partial view, must be changed to what is naturally acceptable and true. Education is the single most potent means of forming those images. Yet current schools function more like factories producing raw material for industry, turning out workers and consumers living amid the three manias. Therefore the study of the human being should be the primary component of human education, whose real purpose is qualitative transformation — learning with an awareness that changes the individual within, and family and society without. As Einstein put it, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

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18. Where You Can Begin

Everything here has been a proposal. None of it is meant to be believed. The verification is yours to do, in your own life, through the four steps: Scrutinise → Examine → Survey → Live.

The whole arc, stated once in miniature: *Existence is coexistence. I am a conscious Self in coexistence with a material body. My fundamental need is happiness, which is the outcome of resolution. Resolution comes from understanding the four realities of coexistence — myself, human relationships, nature, and existence — and living accordingly, as humane conduct. And the most potent means of spreading this is the humanisation of education.*

Begin with yourself. You can only give what you already have. Study these ideas more than once. Test each of the ethical principles for acceptability, then practise it. Choose one dimension of society you can contribute to. Pursue further study systematically rather than in bursts.

In your relationships and your society, do the ordinary things well:

- Follow traffic rules. Compost and recycle.
- Respect the effort behind your food before bargaining over its price; prefer smaller sellers.
- Engage your local representative, and vote.
- Volunteer. Grow some vegetables.

- Support afforestation, natural farming, or value education.

Society changes when people change; people change through understanding; and understanding happens through education.

With nature: reduce, reuse and recycle; cut fossil fuel use; question the energy-intensive images you have absorbed about how life should look; consume local; move to renewables; and plant more than you consume.

Two cautions and one encouragement.

The first caution is against discouragement. When everything around you seems to be heading in the opposite direction, remember that self-study makes you more genuine and more clear regardless of what anyone else does. At the minimum, your own state within improves — and that is real self-confidence, because no one can stop you from understanding.

The second caution is against preaching. Do not become judgemental. People around you will take to understanding when *they* feel like it, not because *you* feel like it.

The encouragement is this: things are not as bad as they look. People largely still live with trust and respect. The stranger on the road is not out to get you. Once you begin to see coexistence, you find that most situations are already aligned toward it.

The journey is gradual and steady, with something tangible at every step. Even a *glimpse* of resolution is energising, because you can now see why the problems exist and what your own role is in resolving them. It is worth walking with a sense of celebration — existence and nature are in celebration; there is no reason human beings should not be.

This is a journey of life. It may start here. It certainly does not end here.