

Chapter 2 | Self-exploration as the Process for Value Education

Recap

In chapter 1, we discussed the need, basic guidelines, content and process of value education. We saw that the value of any entity is its participation in the larger order. As a human being, we feel happy when we are fulfilling our participation, our role i.e. we feel happy when we are living in accordance with our value (i.e. living in harmony within, living in harmony with other human being as well as with every unit in nature/existence). Value education is about understanding our values and living accordingly. We also mentioned that the process for value education is self-exploration.

In this chapter, we will elaborate on the process of self-exploration with the help of some examples.

What is Self-exploration?

Let us begin by understanding what is meant by self-exploration. It is a process of seeing the truth about a reality on our own right, by our own investigation, observation and analysis. Through this process, we are trying to understand the reality that exists and our participation with it, which we are calling values. It is for you to decide what is valuable for you and what is not. Whatever is given in the book is just a proposal for you for your self-verification.

Now, how do we verify a proposal? Do we compare it with our existing notions, existing beliefs? Do we compare it with what we have heard or read? Is such a process assuring for us?

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

For example, if you ask yourself, what is naturally acceptable to you – 'to be in relationship with your family members?' or 'to be in opposition with them?' The answer may be obvious and quite spontaneous. How did you get this answer? You see, we have such answers within. We don't have to learn them or get them from outside or refer to some instrument! We are calling this faculty as natural acceptance. It is naturally a part and parcel of our being. We only need to start referring to it. Each one of us i.e. every human being has this faculty of natural acceptance and therefore, the potential for self-exploration. We do not need any special qualification for it. We only have to start exercising this capacity to convert our potential into competence.

Naturally, we want to be in relationship with our family members, regardless of the way they are living or we are living. It is something that each one of us can easily verify. Many a time, we might be living with a feeling of opposition, even with our family members, but that is not naturally acceptable to us. With a feeling of opposition, we feel uncomfortable within and want to resolve the situation. It is the feeling of relationship only that we always aspire for.

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

The Dialogue Within

Let us look at the dialogue within. It is a dialogue between "what I am" and "what is naturally acceptable to me" (refer to fig. 2-1).

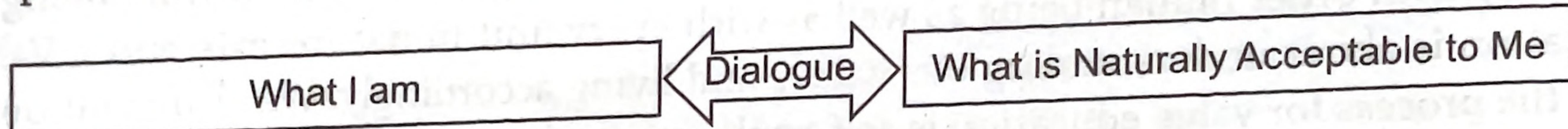


Fig. 2-1. The Dialogue Within

Try to see your present state. Find out if,

- you are clear about your natural acceptance and whether that is guiding you or,
- you are not very clear about your natural acceptance and you are deciding on some other basis.

Many a time, there is a gap between what you really want to do and what you actually do. Find out if there are occasions when you end up saying "I did not mean to say..." or thinking "Oh! How could I have done something like this? I really did not mean to do it". This kind of dichotomy is uncomfortable to us because there is some basic issue that needs to be resolved. Normally, we may not be able to do anything to address these contradictions. Here we are trying to get to the basic issues, so they can be resolved.

"What I am" has to do with my desires, my thoughts, my expectations, my imagination and all that is going on within me (refer to fig. 2-2). It includes the way I feel, the way I think, how I make decisions, what I expect from others and all that. It is my current competence on the basis of which I live.

"What is naturally acceptable to me" is my natural acceptance. It is my intention. It is "what I really want to be". It is a basic reference which is a part and parcel of every human being. We may or may not be referring to it at present, but it is always there. I may or may not be living according to it, but I can see "what I really want to be". For example, we can easily see that we want to live in relationship, we want our bodies to be healthy and so on. That is our natural acceptance.

We may be largely unaware of ourselves, i.e. own desires, assumptions, beliefs and pre-conditionings etc. Now, if you have to look at "what you are", if you have to look at your

own desires, thoughts and expectations, if you have to see your imagination, where do you have to look – within yourself or outside yourself? Of course, you have to look within. Similarly, to see “what is naturally acceptable to you”, you have to look within. These are two realities within each one of us.

Earlier in this chapter, we asked what is naturally acceptable to you – “to be in relationship with your family members” or “to be in opposition with them”? You can see what is naturally acceptable to you. Also, when you look at “what you are”, what do you find? Do you think of relationship all the time? Or sometime you think of relationship and sometime you think of opposition? Or you think of opposition all the time? Only you can see what you are, what is going on within you.

When you are able to see both these realities, you can find out if they are same or they are different, whether they are in harmony or they are in contradiction. This is the dialogue within. You may well ask as to why this is important.

Let us take an example to find out. Let us say that you are thinking of taking revenge from someone. After two hours of thinking how to take revenge, you drop the idea. Now, during these two hours, were you comfortable within or uncomfortable within?

Not at all comfortable, isn't it? You dropped the idea, so nothing was expressed to the other person, but what about you? You made yourself uncomfortable for two hours! We can see, when we are thinking of taking revenge from someone, we have a feeling of opposition in us. Since this feeling of opposition is not naturally acceptable to us; what we are feeling and thinking is in contradiction with our natural acceptance. We are uncomfortable because of this contradiction. Like that any contradiction, between “what you are” and “what is naturally acceptable to you”, will be a source of discomfort for you.

This dialogue within yourself is in terms of first finding out, “what is naturally acceptable to you” and then finding out “what you are”. After that it is about finding out whether “what you are” is in line with your natural acceptance or it is in contradiction with your natural acceptance. This is the meaning of dialogue within oneself. We are trying to initiate and facilitate the process of dialogue within you. We are trying to give the right proposals which you can verify and find out whether these are naturally acceptable to you or not.

Once that dialogue starts in you, you will yourself start asking the question whether your desires, thoughts are in line with your natural acceptance or are they not in line with your natural acceptance, whether they are in harmony or in contradiction. We have already seen that when they are in contradiction, we are uncomfortable within. We will further see that when they are in harmony, we are comfortable within. Once this dialogue within ourselves has been established, we start to be in harmony within. The very process of being in this dialogue starts facilitating one's self-evolution and we start becoming more and more comfortable within.

Now let us see what happens when you are in harmony within. Let us say, you have a feeling of relationship and you are thinking of relationship. Since your natural acceptance is also for relationship, you are in harmony within – “what you are” is in line with “what is naturally

acceptable to you". Like this, when you are in harmony within, you are comfortable within. Try to observe whether you feel happy or unhappy.

Every time we do something that is not naturally acceptable to us, there is a contradiction in us. We don't even have to carry out the action – just thinking of something that is not naturally acceptable is enough to create that state of conflict within us. Let us recall the example of thinking about revenge for two hours. We saw that we were uncomfortable within. That is because "what I am" was in contradiction with "what is naturally acceptable to me". This contradiction within is leading to a state of unhappiness.

However, much of the time, we may not be aware of ourselves – of "what is naturally acceptable to me" or of "what I am". Also, the internal dialogue between these two may or may not be taking place. Now, if you pay attention, you can:

- Become aware of "what is naturally acceptable to you"
- Become aware of "what you are", what you are feeling, what you are thinking (of your desires, thoughts and expectations)
- Start/strengthen the dialogue between the two by asking "is 'what I am' in harmony with 'what is naturally acceptable to me'"?

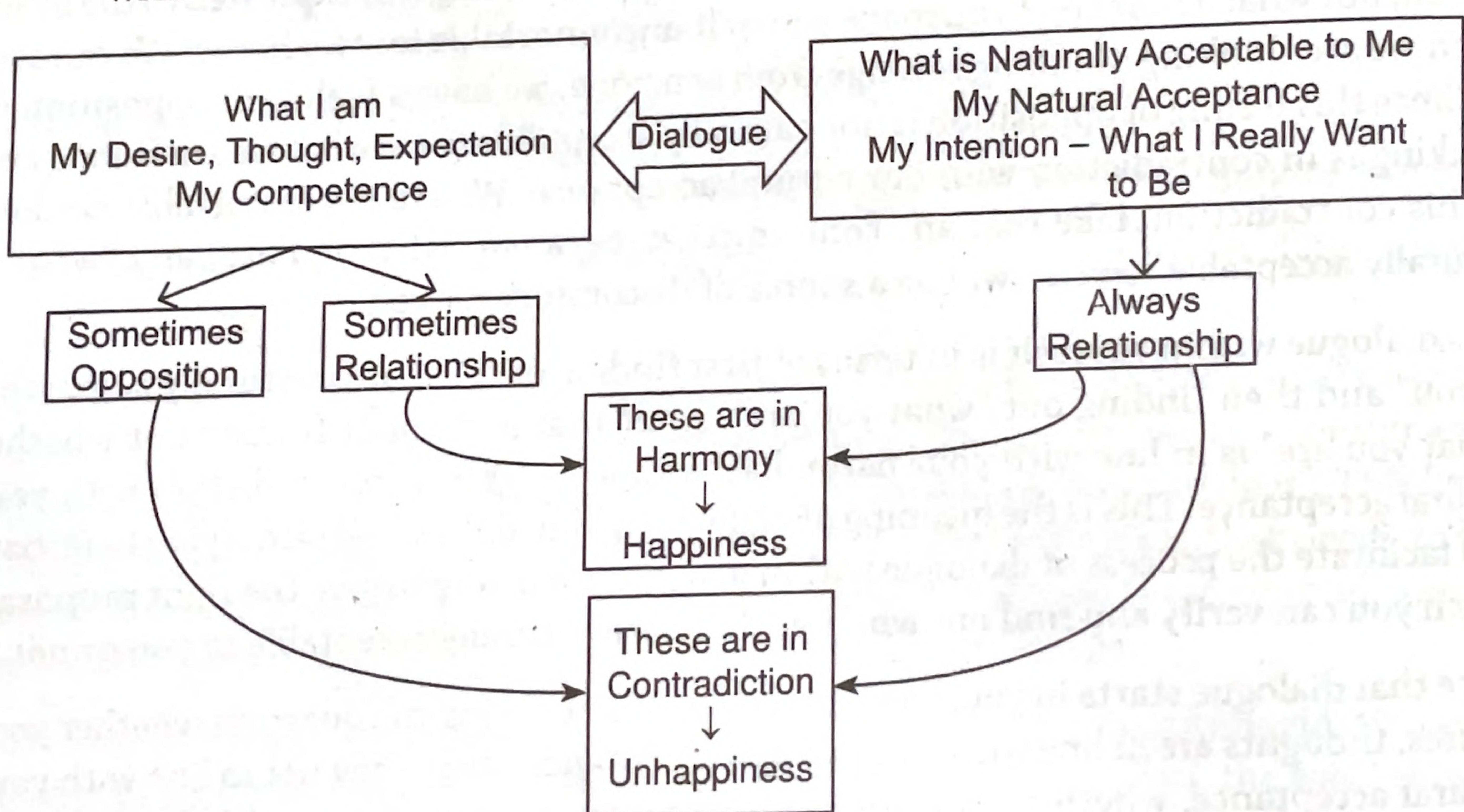


Fig. 2-2. 'What I Am' and 'What I Really Want to Be'

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

Happiness is to be in a state of harmony.

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

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

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

Let us now identify the content of self-exploration and also look at the process in more detail.

The Content for Self-exploration

What should be the content for self-exploration?

Whatever is essential for us to understand for moving towards a fulfilling life should naturally form the content for self-exploration. Isn't it?

Thus, the content for self-exploration basically has the following two sub-parts:

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

First, we want to explore into our desire as a human being, and second, we want to explore into the programme to ensure the fulfilment of that desire. The desire is essentially the basic aspiration, the aim, the objective, the purpose, what we want to achieve – what is our goal. The programme is the process of achieving the desire, the action to achieve our goal.

Are both these questions important for you? Is it important for you to find out what your basic aspiration is? Is it important to find out the programme for the fulfilment of your basic aspiration?

These are two important questions for any human being. Now let us see, if we have answers to both these questions, are there any more questions that we are left with? That is to say, if we know our basic aspiration and we know the programme of fulfilment of our basic aspiration, what other questions are we left with?

If we can get the answer to these two questions, practically all our questions are answered! In fact, most of the questions that we have generated are because of the lack of clarity of these two. If we get the answers to these two questions, we only have to act!

The Process of Self-exploration

We have already started identifying the process of self-exploration. Now we can look at it in more detail.

As mentioned earlier, whatever is stated here is a proposal, do not assume it to be true or false, right or wrong. Verify it – verify it on your own right, on the basis of your natural acceptance.

However, verifying it on the basis of natural acceptance is only a part of the process. What more is needed will now be presented? Look at fig. 2-3. It represents the complete process of self-exploration.

Whatever is stated is a **Proposal** (Do not assume it to be true/false)
Verify it on your own right

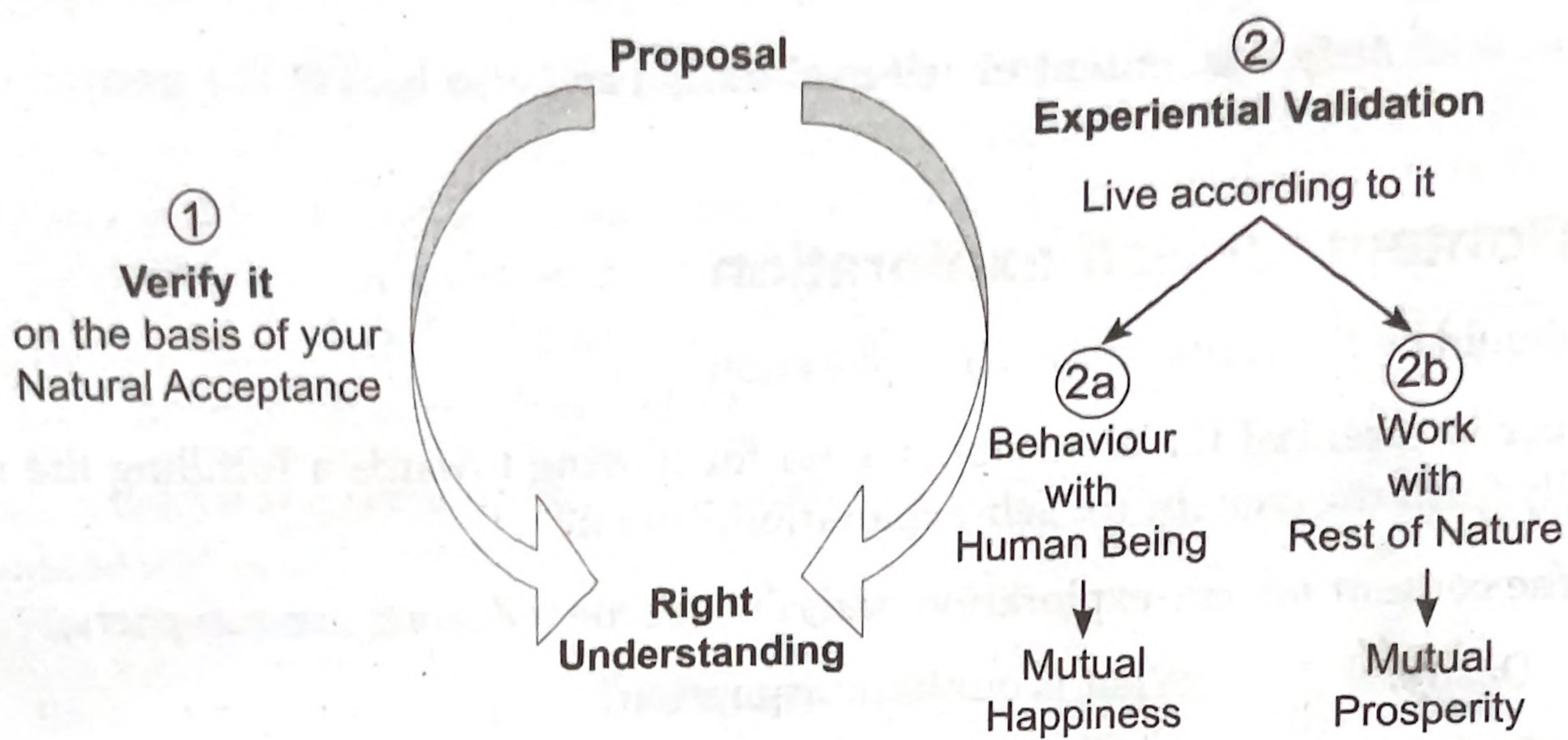


Fig. 2-3. Process of Self-exploration

The first part of self-exploration is to verify the proposal on the basis of our natural acceptance. Once we have verified that a proposal is naturally acceptable to us, we are sure that it is something which we would like to live with.

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

As an example, let us explore the proposal, "the feeling of respect is natural in relationship". As a first part of the exploration, you can verify, whether feeling of respect is naturally acceptable to you or feeling of disrespect is naturally acceptable to you. This is part one of the self-exploration. The second part is living according to the proposal. That is, you have the feeling of respect in you, and now, you are expressing this feeling of respect in your behaviour with the other human being. Let us find out whether it leads to mutual happiness or not. If it does, the proposal is a right proposal, otherwise it is not.

I can see that this feeling of respect is naturally acceptable to me, therefore, it leads to my happiness. Similarly, this feeling of respect is naturally acceptable to you, therefore, it leads to your happiness as well, i.e. it leads to mutual happiness, and hence the second part of the self-verification also holds true. Putting these two parts of self-verification together, now we can say that the given proposal "the feeling of respect is natural in relationship" is a right proposal.

We can also verify this in case of our interaction with rest of nature. Let us check whether 'the feeling of nurturing (enrichment) in our interaction with the environment is natural'. You can verify whether feeling of nurturing is naturally acceptable to you or feeling of exploiting is naturally acceptable to you. This is part one of the self-verification. Further, we can proceed to the second part of self-exploration – living according to it. By nurturing and enriching the environment, does it lead to mutual prosperity? If we can see that the enriched environment facilitates better food production, leading to our prosperity and it also leads to prosperity of the environment in terms of its enrichment, we can conclude that it leads to mutual prosperity. Thus, this proposal passes both parts of self-verification. Therefore, this proposal 'the feeling of nurturing the environment is natural' is a right proposal.

What we are verifying for any proposal in the second part is, "does it lead to mutual fulfilment in our living"? Mutual fulfilment means that:

- Our behaviour with other human beings leads to mutual happiness.
- Our work with the rest of nature leads to mutual prosperity.

At this point, there may be a question, "is it necessary to experientially validate a proposal if it is not naturally acceptable"? It is an important question. What is being said here is that both parts of self-exploration are essential. We may not be very sure of our natural acceptance or we may not have the confidence that we really have the right answers within (that we can really be self-referential). So, we propose that you experientially validate the proposals. Of course, if you are very sure that a proposal does not pass the first test, you need not go to the second test.

When we are able to verify a proposal, both by way of verifying through natural acceptance and by way of verifying through experiential validation, the ultimate outcome is "right understanding". We will explore into the details of right understanding in the chapters to follow.

Understanding Natural Acceptance – The Basis for Right Understanding

(Distinguishing between acceptance and natural acceptance)

When you try to find the answer to the question "what is naturally acceptable to you – to be happy or unhappy", you get the answer quite spontaneously, isn't it? The answer is coming from somewhere deep within. It may appear to be a simplistic or subjective way of finding out, but we will see that it is a powerful way to know what is right for us.

Where does the answer come from? Let us explore these possibilities:

- It is coming from your likes and dislikes, assumptions, preconditionings, beliefs, world-view, perspective, etc.
- It is coming from your natural acceptance.

Let us distinguish between our natural acceptance and our acceptance (likes and dislikes etc.).

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

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

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

On the other hand, if we are asking questions relating to the details of how to fulfil these basic desires, if we are asking questions relating to our expectations from outside; the answers are not definite. For example,

- Is eating rice naturally acceptable or eating wheat is naturally acceptable?

This question cannot be resolved by referring to our natural acceptance. We need to relate it to the basic desire i.e. 'to nurture the Body' which we have already verified through our natural acceptance, and then check for the detail under consideration. In this case, if rice is going to nurture the Body, it is acceptable to eat rice, if it is going to harm the Body, it is not acceptable to eat rice.

To see if a specific choice is in line with our natural acceptance or not, we have to see its compatibility with naturally acceptable feelings or natural purposes. Then we can find the answer.

Specific choice → feeling/purpose → natural acceptance	Can evaluate on basis of our natural acceptance
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Specific choice → natural acceptance	Can't evaluate on the basis of our natural acceptance, so we need to reformulate the question to check the associated feeling/purpose
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With this at the background, now we can evaluate cases of natural acceptance and the cases of acceptance based on likes and dislikes, assumptions, preconditionings, beliefs, world-view, perspective, etc.

For example, we may have a liking for some specific type of tasty food, say a particular type of chocolate. We have an acceptance for it, but is that acceptance in line with our natural acceptance or not? We have to refer to something more fundamental, something more basic, something related to the feeling or purpose to find the answer. If we have asked ourselves "do we want to nurture the Body or exploit it?" and found the answer that we want to nurture the Body, we can ask ourselves if that specific tasty food will nurture the Body or exploit the Body. If we find that the given chocolate,

will not really nurture the Body or harm the Body, we can conclude that the choice of that chocolate is not in line with our natural acceptance. While we have a liking for the taste of that particular chocolate, we have an acceptance for it, but it is not in line with our natural acceptance. You see, acceptance and natural acceptance are two different things, and we shall explore this as we go along.

To take another example. We may have been influenced by our friends to use foul language while speaking to each other on the grounds that it is indicating that we have grown up, we are independent or we are close friends. We may have adopted such a way of speaking also. We may even fit-in with our friends by doing so. While we may have an acceptance for using foul language, is it naturally acceptable to us? Once again, we have to find out if this choice is in line with our purpose or naturally acceptable feeling. Ask yourself, again, if the feeling of relationship is naturally acceptable or a feeling of opposition. Now, when you ask yourself "does the use of foul language always used to express relationship or is it sometimes used to express opposition", you may find that it is not necessarily fostering relationship. You can easily see that you have an acceptance for this assumption, but it is not in line with your natural acceptance.

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

We do develop an acceptance for many things which are not naturally acceptable to us. However, given an open choice, we would not choose them. We may have accepted competition but is our natural acceptance for collaboration and cooperation or for competition? Similarly, we may have accepted 'struggle for survival, survival of the fittest'. Now check if your natural acceptance is for mutual fulfilment or to struggle for survival? We may have accepted opposition but our natural acceptance is for relationship. When we think of opposition, or we live in opposition, we are not comfortable within; it is not comfortable for the other too and yet we keep living that way because we are made to believe that there is no other way out and we have developed an acceptance for it. However, given an open choice, given a possibility that we can live in relationship leading to mutual happiness as well, we would immediately opt for relationship. When we think of relationship or we live by it, we are comfortable within and it is comfortable for the other as well, therefore, it is in line with our natural acceptance.

Then, how can we be sure that the answer we are getting is coming from our natural acceptance? Some of the characteristics of natural acceptance are:

- (a) **Natural acceptance does not change with time:** What is naturally acceptable to you today is the same as what was naturally acceptable to you yesterday, and what will be naturally acceptable to you tomorrow. For example, our natural acceptance for the feeling of trust, for the feeling of respect in relationship remains invariant with time: a child naturally accepts having the feeling of trust. Twenty years later, when (s)he becomes a youth, she still has a natural acceptance for trust; and when she grows into an old person, (s)he continues to have a natural acceptance for the feeling of trust – there is no change in the natural acceptance with time for any given person.

- (b) **Natural acceptance does not change with place:** Naturally acceptable feelings, like trust, respect, affection, etc. remain invariant with place. These feelings are naturally acceptable to me when I am in India, in America, in Africa, in Europe or in any other place. Like that, my natural acceptance to keep the Body healthy does not change with place. No matter where we are, we have the same natural acceptance at all the places.
- (c) **Natural acceptance does not change with the individual:** Natural acceptance is the same for all of us; it is a part and parcel of every human being; it is part of our human-ness. We can check with the naturally acceptable feelings once again and find out if they are naturally acceptable to Indians, to Americans and to any and every human being. Our assumptions, our likes and dislikes, our views on issues may vary; but the feelings that are naturally acceptable to one are also naturally acceptable to every human being. In that sense, natural acceptance is universal. That is why by understanding our own natural acceptance; we can also understand the natural acceptance of others.
- (d) **Natural acceptance is uncorrupted by likes and dislikes or assumptions or beliefs:** We have taken the examples of this above also. When we ask the right questions, we can see our natural acceptance and it is there. Natural acceptance remains unaffected by our likes and dislikes, our belief systems and our preconditioning even if they are very deep and influence our thoughts day and night. For example, even if we are preconditioned for years 'not to trust anyone', if we ask the question as to what is naturally acceptable 'trust or mistrust', the answer is in favour of trust.
- (e) **Natural acceptance is innate; we don't need to create it:** Whatever be the background of a person, this faculty is very much there. For example, the moment we think of disrespecting someone, how does it feel within? Comfortable or uncomfortable? Similarly, the moment we think of opposing anyone, how does it feel? Are we at ease or we feel uneasy? Of course, uneasy. Why is this happening? Because we have the faculty of natural acceptance as a part and parcel of our being and it keeps hinting that what we are feeling, thinking or doing is in harmony with our own natural acceptance or not. We can start referring to it at any time, it is always there.
- (f) **Natural acceptance is definite:** It is for relationship, harmony and co-existence which is universal. This we can directly verify by asking, what is naturally acceptable to us – relationship or opposition, harmony or disharmony, co-existence or struggle? When we look into the details of relationship, harmony and co-existence, in chapters to follow, we will ask these questions again regarding each and see that these three – relationship, harmony and co-existence, ultimately provide the guidance for our living in harmony, happiness.

This natural acceptance is innate in each of us; it is uncorrupted and it is universal, i.e. it is invariant with respect to time, place and person. It may seem very simple to begin with, but we shall see that this becomes a very powerful way for us to know what is ultimately true for us on our own right. All we have to do is to start referring to it and validating it

in our living. Since we have so many strongly held beliefs, we may confuse them with our natural acceptance. The experiential validation gives us another opportunity to examine the proposal. That is why both the parts of self-verification are essential.

Let us not assume even this to be true. Let us explore and find it out for ourselves.

Appraisal of the Current Status

Today, we have so many inputs available to us – from family members, friends, teachers in school/college and from the society through social media, newspapers and so on. We are told what we should do, what we should think, what is valuable and what is not. We do not evaluate our beliefs or assumptions as we treat them as our personal domain. This ‘my way’ is treated as our personal domain. Living on the basis of it is assumed to be freedom which is very dear to us. When it comes in conflict, we try hard to search out justifications and make all efforts to defend our own assumptions. Since we do not have a readily available means to verify, we continue with a life, which is sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy. If we really look into ourselves, we will find that we are all looking for a way to discriminate all the inputs as well as to verify what we have already assumed on some definite basis.

Now, if you observe a child, (s)he wants to understand what is right, to learn right skills and to do what is right. Initially it goes by what is given, learns by observation and practice. The child learns language like this, for example. However, as the child grows, it wants to be assured of its assumptions, assured that living accordingly will indeed lead to happiness and prosperity.

It is true that we can understand from those who have understood life and are living a happy life. The parents, friends, teachers and role models in society are all essential as a help in the process of learning. Their conclusions are useful as proposals for us. But, to internalize something, to make it a part of our understanding, it is necessary to explore within. Only after we are able to see or know the reality as it is, we become self-assured, self-confident.

We will discuss this in detail when we elaborate on the system of education in chapters to come. However, let us now see what happens, if we go by exploring within; and what happens if we go otherwise, by assuming without exploring.

If we can see things clearly for ourselves through self-exploration and if these are reinforced by observation and practice, it becomes part of our understanding. Once we have understood something, we are sure, we are self-assured, we are self-confident that living like this will lead to mutual fulfilment. In living, when we are able to validate this understanding and it gets further reinforced. Such a state may be called self-organised. We are able to make decisions that are right, i.e. decisions in the interest of mutual fulfilment, i.e. mutual happiness and mutual prosperity. We are able to take the inputs from outside without being over-powered by others, by peer pressure, by our own whims and fancies, etc., but rather we are able to see things clearly ourselves; and help others also to see the possibilities of living in a mutually fulfilling, self-organised manner.

On the other hand, if we are unable to see the things for ourselves and the assumptions remain unverified, the feeling of assurance is absent; and we are not self-confident. Rather, in adverse conditions, we may become reactive and try out various, even arbitrary options. In this process, we are susceptible to outside influences and pressures as our own unverified assumptions are not stable. In this case, generally, we tend to live by prescriptions, do's and don'ts; i.e. our living is largely dictated by others (human beings or prevailing conditions). This is a state of enslavement (enslaved by our own wrong assumptions)!

One can take many examples like:

- We believe that it is a good thing to respect elders. However, when it comes to living with it in our day-to-day practice, are we able to ensure it? 100% of the time?
- We think it is good to eat food that is nutritious. But, is that a part of our living always? Or we tend to eat food that is tasty even if it is not good for health, or we eat junk food because our friends keep talking about it.
- The choice of clothes; is it our own choice based on our natural acceptance to protect the Body or it is a choice influenced by the advertisement or by the wish to fit into our peer group?

By and large, we tend to reinforce what we already believe. It is comforting for us. We tend to go with prevailing notions, so as not to be an odd man out. By and large, we have been trained to take the word of some authority and not think for ourselves; so, we generally tend to doubt ourselves. However, somewhere deep within, we are all seekers; we want to know things as they really are and live accordingly.

We are seeking to look within, at our natural acceptance so that we may be able to find out what we really want to be; and living accordingly leads to mutual happiness and mutual prosperity. For that this book is a set of proposals to help us see the reality. When we explore into them and find the meaning in them, only then it becomes our thought; and potentially, our understanding.

Let us see how we are going in the colleges and universities today, where we are dealing with youth. Are these inputs going by:

1. **Self-exploration:** Inputs are in the form of proposals, there is space for self-verification, asking questions, discussion and we are able to draw our own conclusions or
2. **Accepting assumptions:** Inputs are in the form of do's and don'ts, given statements and we are led to go by what is given.

Reflect which of the above methods is naturally acceptable to you. In this book, we are taking the first approach of self-exploration. Thus, all that has been written in this book is to be taken as a proposal. Do not assume it to be true or false, but verify it on your own right!

The Way Ahead

In any child, the basic process of understanding starts with imitation. (S)he imitates and learns the language, mannerisms and so many things. Further, (s)he obeys what (s)he is asked to do; (s)he works with basic discipline provided; (s)he is i.e. obedient. But as (s)he grows, (s)he wants to verify things and decide on its own right. That is the time when (s)he needs both, the right content in the form of proposals and the right process in the form of self-exploration. Also, (s)he needs encouragement to verify things through the process of self-exploration, so that (s)he develops a holistic vision/perspective of human existence (as discussed in chapter 1). It includes understanding of harmony at all levels of human existence – from individual to family, society, nature and existence; and then, the competence to live in harmony at all these levels, leading to a fulfilling life, a life full of happiness and prosperity. This is expected to be the main emphasis of education and sanskar in future.

Important Implications of Self-exploration

It will be quite educative to learn that the process of self-exploration can result in the following important implications, which will be conducive to a fulfilling life.

1. It is a process of knowing oneself and through that, knowing the entire existence.
2. It is a process of recognizing one's relationship with every unit in existence and fulfilling it.
3. It is a process of knowing human conduct and living accordingly.
4. It is a process of being in harmony within and in harmony with the entire existence.
5. It is a process of identifying our innateness and moving towards self-organization and self-expression.
6. It is a process of self-evolution (evolving as a human being) through self-exploration.

Now, let us elaborate a bit on each point.

1. **It is a process of knowing oneself and through that, knowing the entire existence.**

Going through this process of self-exploration, we are able to know about ourselves; we are able to see our natural acceptance, we are able to see 'what we are' in terms of our desires, thoughts and expectations; we are able to see whether things are in harmony or disharmony within. It is a process of knowing oneself.

The Self is the knower. When we know the Self, through the Self we can know about the other: the other human being, the rest of the nature and ultimately the entire nature and existence.

It is important to know oneself first. When we are sure about ourselves, only then we can know about other things properly, we can be sure that we are not looking at the world through our coloured perception.

On the other hand, when we try to understand things around us without first being sure of ourselves, all the preconditionings we have within, the contradictions we have within, reflect in our perception of the world. With that, when we interact with the things around us, we end up with mixed results – sometimes happy and other times unhappy.

2. It is a process of recognizing one's relationship with every unit in existence and fulfilling that relationship.

Through self-exploration, when I know about myself and I know about the other, I know about the nature and the whole existence; then I am able to recognise my relationship with other units in nature and also, I am able to see how to fulfil that relationship. It is a process of recognizing one's relationship with every unit in nature, in existence and fulfilling it.

3. It is a process of knowing human conduct and living accordingly.

Definite human conduct is living in a manner that we are able to fulfil our definite relationship with other units in nature/existence. When we know what definite human conduct is, we express it in our living. It is mutually fulfilling conduct.

Therefore, first we know the Self and through the Self we know the other units in nature, in existence. Second, we are able to identify our relationship with the other units in nature, in existence; and third, we know what our conduct as a human being needs to be, and then we live accordingly. This is how we can develop this competence to live with definite human conduct. The major role of education is to facilitate the development of the competence to live with definite human conduct.

4. It is a process of being in harmony – within oneself and with the entire existence.

When we know what definite human conduct is, we can live accordingly. In this way, we are able to live in harmony within and with others and ultimately, we are able to live in harmony with the entire existence; it is desirable and also naturally acceptable to all of us.

5. It is a process of identifying our innateness and moving towards self-organization and self-expression.

Now, we can see that through self-exploration – first we know our natural acceptance, what we really want to be, what is our essence, our innateness. Once we know what is naturally acceptable to us, we are able to live in accordance with it. Then we are in harmony within. When we are in harmony within, our behaviour and work is going to be naturally acceptable to the others also, therefore, we will be living in harmony with others too. And when we expand this to every unit in nature, in existence then we will be able to live in harmony with the entire existence.

6. It is a process of self-evolution through self-exploration.

When we do this self-exploration, we discover what is naturally acceptable to us and also become aware of 'what we are'. The very process of being in a dialogue within

facilitates self-improvement. We are basically aligning 'what we are' and 'what we really want to be'. We are lining up our desires, thoughts and expectations with our natural acceptance. By doing this, gradually we are more in harmony within and therefore, more in a state of happiness within. Thus, this process leads to our evolution.

In fig. 2-4, the self-evolution and self-expression is shown.

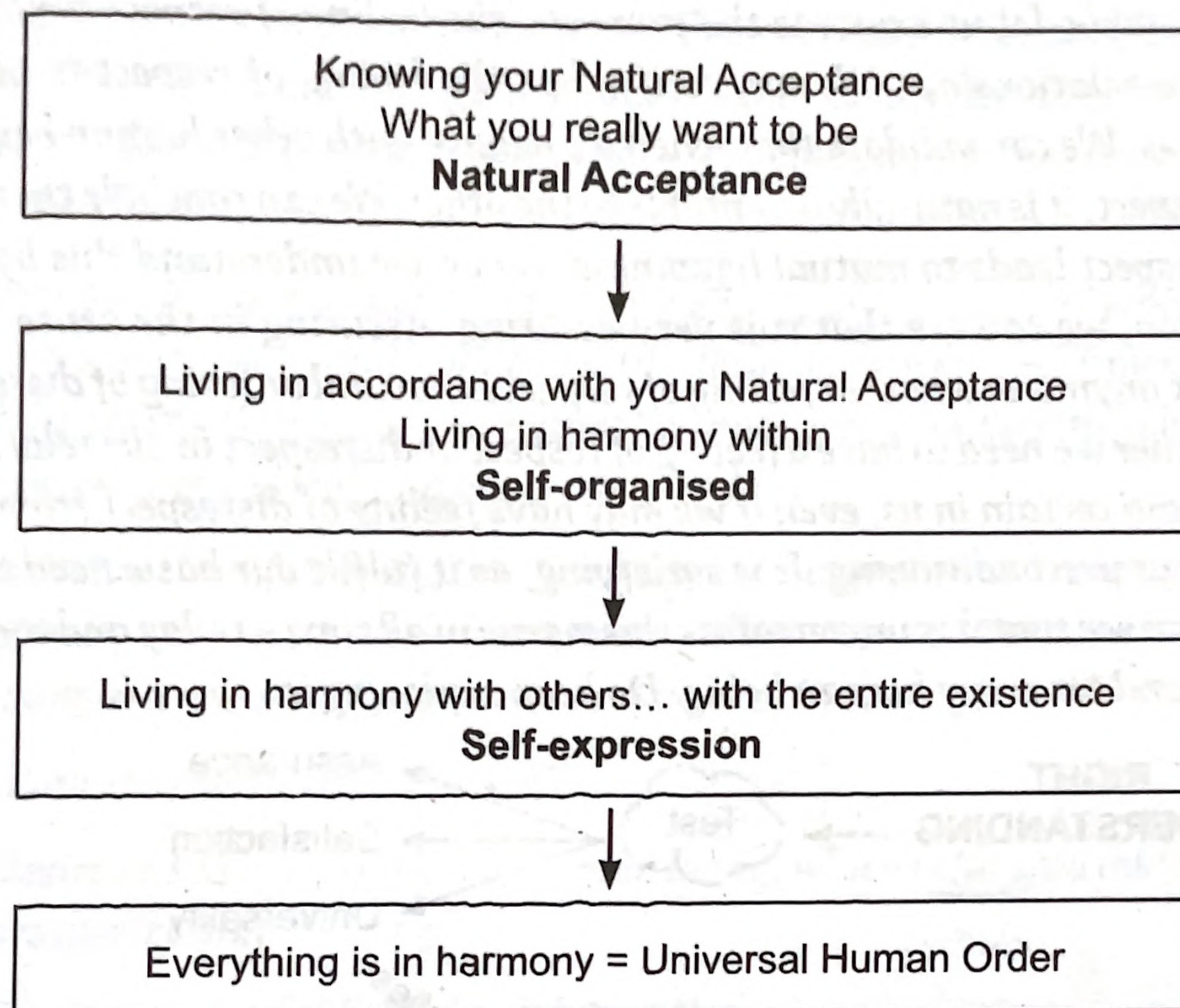


Fig. 2-4. Self-evolution and Self-expression

The purpose of this book is to initiate or augment a process of self-exploration in the reader. You can check for yourself, whether this is desirable for you or not.

We are placing this up-front so that you have a full view of where we aim to reach. It is this exploration that will help us develop a holistic perspective that was mentioned in chapter 1. As we go into further chapters, these points will be detailed and clarified.

To conclude, the complete process of self-exploration which is depicted below (fig. 2-5) yields right understanding as the tangible outcome. Right understanding can be recognised as follows:

- It is assuring:** We feel assured, we have no doubt about it. This is because it is based on our natural acceptance, which is intrinsic to us, inseparable from us. We only have to become aware of it. Once we are aware of it, once we know it, it remains obvious. No amount of input or preconditioning otherwise can influence or change understanding based on natural acceptance.
- It is satisfying:** We all have the need to know, to understand. When we understand something, it is satisfying, it is fulfilling for us.

c. **It is universal:** We are able to see that right understanding is definite and invariant with respect to:

- Time:* It holds good in all time – past, present and future
- Space:* It is the same at all places or locations
- Individual:* It is the same for every human being

To take an example, let us examine the proposal ‘the feeling of respect is natural in human-human relationship’. We can verify that the feeling of respect is naturally acceptable to us. We can validate that when we behave with other human being with a feeling of respect, it is naturally acceptable to the other. We can conclude that having a feeling of respect leads to mutual happiness. When we understand this by way of self-exploration, we can see that it is very assuring. Assuring in the sense that we have no doubt anymore; whether feeling of respect is natural or feeling of disrespect is natural; whether we need to have a feeling of respect or disrespect in our relationship. This will remain certain in us, even if we may have feeling of disrespect from time to time, due to our preconditioning. It is satisfying, as it fulfils our basic need to know. Further, we can see that it is universal: as this is true in all time – today and tomorrow; in all places; and for every human being. Do keep exploring it.

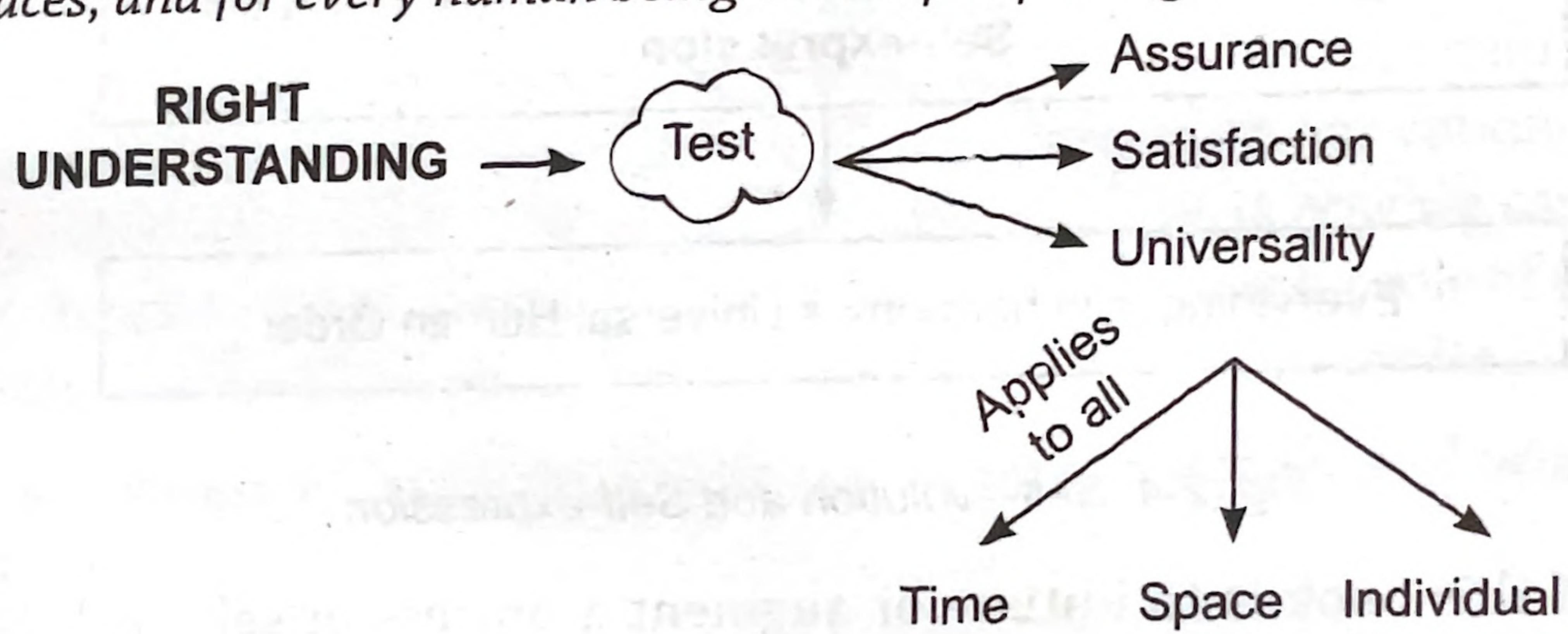


Fig. 2-5. Characteristics of Right Understanding

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

Self-exploration ultimately results in right understanding of the entire existence, i.e. “realisation of co-existence”, “understanding of harmony” and “contemplation of relationship”. Once we have this right understanding and when our imagination is fully guided by it, we reach to a state of continuous harmony and happiness within. This is expressed in our behaviour, our work and in our participation with every unit in nature in a harmonious manner. It ultimately becomes the foundation for an undivided society and a universal human order. Further, when this is passed down from one generation to the next in continuity, generation after generation, it forms a human tradition of happiness and prosperity for every human being. This is the coveted outcome of value education.

The process by which we try to understand is very important. What we intend to do through this book, is to initiate, facilitate and support a process of self-exploration in you which is starting as this dialogue between us and you.

Salient Points

- *The process of understanding human values is self-exploration, i.e. by exploring within, on the basis of natural acceptance; and with that, experiential validation, i.e. by exploring outside.*
- *Natural acceptance is the innate capacity of every human being to see the intrinsic purpose, to see what is natural, what is right and thereby conclude what is not right (wrong). It is not the same as the likes-dislikes or assumptions and beliefs but something definite that does not change with time, place or person. It is innate, invariant and universal. There is a natural acceptance for relationship, harmony and co-existence in each one of us.*
- *Self-exploration is a process of dialogue within us – between “what I am” (my desire-thought-expectation) and “what is naturally acceptable to me” (my natural acceptance). Once we start referring to our natural acceptance for questions relating to feeling and purpose, we get the right answers from within.*
- *When “what I am” (my desire-thought-expectation) is in harmony with my natural acceptance, I am in a state of happiness. When there is a contradiction between these two, I am in a state of disharmony and unhappiness.*
- *The content of self-exploration is:*
 - a) *Desire or basic aspiration of human being, which is for continuity of happiness and prosperity and*
 - b) *Programme to fulfil the basic aspiration.*
- *The process of self-exploration is self-verification. Whatever is stated is a proposal. Do not assume it to be true or false, right or wrong. First, verify it on the basis of your natural acceptance. Next, verify it experientially – if the behaviour with human being results in mutual happiness and the work with rest of nature leads to mutual prosperity, only then the given proposal is right for you, otherwise it is not right for you.*
- *One evolves through self-exploration – by knowing oneself, knowing the entire nature/existence and the inter-relationship with every entity in nature. Through self-exploration, one is able to know human conduct; and live in harmony within oneself, in family, in society and in nature/existence.*
- *The outcome of self-exploration is development of right understanding. Right understanding is the understanding of the harmony from the Self to the entire existence, i.e. realisation of co-existence, understanding of harmony and contemplation of relationship; and on that basis, understanding human conduct. Right understanding is definite; it is assuring, it is satisfying and it is universal.*
- *Living on the basis of right understanding (living with right understanding as our internal guide), one is in a state of harmony within, i.e. one is self-organised. With the state of harmony within, one is able to live in harmony with the outside world – the behaviour with human being leads to mutual happiness and work with rest of nature leads to*

mutual prosperity. This is referred to as self-extension, extending the harmony within to the world outside. Being in harmony within and being in harmony with the outside world is living with continuous happiness which is the basic aspiration of human being. For this, self-exploration is the essential starting point.

Test Your Understanding

Part 1: Questions for Self-evaluation

(Have we grasped the basic proposals made in this chapter?)

1. The process of value education has been proposed as 'self-exploration'. What could be some other possibilities for the process of value education?
2. Explain the process of self-exploration. What is the expected result of self-exploration? Please explain the process, content and natural outcome of self-exploration with a neat diagram and two examples from your life.
3. What exactly are the following realities:
 - a. "What I am"
 - b. "What is naturally acceptable to me"
 - c. The dialogue between "what I am" and "what is naturally acceptable to me"
 Explain each with any three examples.
4. Describe the term 'Natural Acceptance'. How do you make out if it is your natural acceptance or not? Describe the characteristics of Natural Acceptance. Explain with examples from your own life.
5. Distinguish between Natural Acceptance and Acceptance with a few examples.
6. Given any proposal, if one is not doing self-exploration, what are the other possibilities? Give two examples to explain.

Part 2: Practice Exercises for Self-exploration

(To help connect the content to one's life, at least at the level of thought, these exercises may be done individually or in a group, particularly with friends and family members)

1. Find out if the following are naturally acceptable to you

Statement	My present thinking (beliefs) about the statement	Naturally Acceptable?
I want to be happy		
I want to make others happy		
I want to be healthy		
I want to live in relationship		
I want to have more than others		

I want to have more than what I really need		
Feeling of respect in relationship	Only if you have money, people respect you	Feeling of respect is naturally acceptable in relationship
Respect elders		
Respect all		
This is just a sample list. Please make your own list		

Can you observe that when you really try, you can refer to your natural acceptance?

Note any five things that appear naturally acceptable to you. Now, verify for yourself that your 'natural acceptance' does not change with time or place. It does not depend on your beliefs and past conditionings and that it is always there. If not, would you still call it your natural acceptance? And if not, what can it be termed as in place of natural acceptance?

e.g. eating sweets. It may appear naturally acceptable. Now explore, whether it changes with time, place and individual or not. You will see that sometimes you like eating sweets, while sometimes, you do not feel like eating sweets. Same thing happens with place. And not everyone wants to eat sweets. Thus, it does not fulfil the criterion. It is not your 'natural acceptance'. Then what is your natural acceptance? Find it out (here, while eating sweets is your liking, nurturing your Body is the natural acceptance).

2. Look into yourself, into 'what I am' and into 'what is naturally acceptable to me'. Make a list of at least ten things you can observe in your thought, behaviour or work. Now note these down (a sample table is given below):

What I am (My thoughts, behaviour or work)	What is Naturally Acceptable to me	Are these two in Harmony or Contradiction?	Do I feel Comfortable or Uncomfortable?	Dialogue
I make my parents happy	I want to make my parents happy all the time	Harmony	Comfortable	
But I get angry with them sometimes	Getting angry is not naturally acceptable to me. I really want to stay calm all the time	Contradiction	Uncomfortable	See example (b), below
Write down other thoughts you have	Write down your natural acceptance here	Harmony or Contradiction?	Comfortable or Uncomfortable?	

Contd...

(a) Can you see that "what I am" and "what is naturally acceptable to me" are two realities within you? Who else can see these two realities, other than you? Are you able to see that all those things that are naturally acceptable to you are really valuable for you? Write down the conclusions you have arrived at from seeing these two realities.

(b) Can you see that self-exploration only means that you become aware of your natural acceptance, become aware of "what I am" and start the internal dialogue? You are basically asking the question "is it naturally acceptable to me" to yourself?

e.g. if I do not want to get angry ever, why do I then get angry? Find out if you have assumed that on some occasions, it is a must to get angry otherwise the situation will become worse, thus anger is required at times. But when I am angry, I feel uncomfortable within as it is not naturally acceptable to me to get angry! Then what to do? Can there be some other solution?

Observe how the dialogue is taking place in you and note it down. What did you learn from observing the dialogue?

3. Look into what you really want to be and prepare a document (like a resume) as you see yourself three years from now. We can call it "future resume". Please include the following five sub-sections:

(a) About you:

- i. Your academic scholastic and professional qualifications
- ii. Your qualities as a human being (what kind of person you will be)
- iii. Your ability to live in relationship with people
- iv. Your health
- v. Your work skills (what you will be able to do independently, without any help)
- vi. Your hobbies, co-curricular and extra-curricular interests

(b) About your role in your family (what responsibility you will take in your family and also what you will expect from your family)

(c) About your participation in the workplace (what responsibility you will take in your workplace and also what you will expect from the workplace)

(d) About your participation in the neighbourhood / institution / larger society (what responsibility you will take in society and also what you will expect from society)

(e) About your interaction with the rest of nature (what you will take from nature and also what you will do for nature)

Can you see that you already have the commitment and potential for it? And you can make a program to use your next three years productively.

Contd...

Part 3: Projects and Modelling Exercises

You may like to revisit this part of Test Your Understanding after reading through the complete book once and self-exploring all the key proposals. With that, you may have some (or many) aha! moments in which something clicks for you, you understand a proposal. What you have understood may be expressed in various creative ways which appeal to different people. This part is for you to give a creative expression to your understanding. Of course, you can do this in a group also. Creative expressions may be in the form of sketches, drawings, paintings, clay models, sculptures, songs, poems, music, dance, audios, videos, games, puzzles, stories, skits, plays, dramas, charts, diagrams, plans, survey questionnaires, blogs, something on social media and so on. It is the story of your own life – and it matters. While some hints are given above, please feel free to share your real aha's in your own way!

"It is just a proposal. I only have to explore and decide on my own right. Nobody is going to preach to me about what to do and what not to do".

1. Articulate the process of self-exploration. Show the dialogue between "what I am" and "what is naturally acceptable to me". Share some outcomes from your self-exploration – what exactly you understood.
2. What is Freedom (deciding things "My Way") and what is self-organisation (deciding on the basis of natural acceptance)?

Part 4: Your Questions

Write down your questions or doubts in your note-book. If any of the previous questions have been clarified by your self-exploration of the proposals so far, please mark them as answered. We would like to discuss the questions remaining unanswered in your self-exploration.