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UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

UNITED SECULAR SOCIETY

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UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

Concept of self and self Identity or 'Who Am I'?

The first step to success is to gain a solid understanding of who are as an individual and to know what factors are important to you. We all have our own unique pattern of abilities, interests and personality traits. Self-understanding pin-points what you like, dislikes, strengths and other traits are, and inspires personal growth by helping you define your identity. One's self concept (also called self-construction, self identity, or self-structure) is a collection of beliefs about oneself that

includes elements such as academic performance, gender roles and sexuality, and racial identity. Generally self-concept embodies the answer to "Who am I?"

Baumeister (1999) provides the following self-concept definition: "the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is"

SELF ESTEEM

Self-concept differs from self-esteem. Self-concept is a cognitive or descriptive component of one's self e.g. I am a fast runner, self-concept is made up of one's self-schemas and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. It includes the past, present, and

Future selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming.

Self Esteem refers to the extent to which we like, accept or approve of ourselves or how much we value ourselves. Self esteem always involves a degree of evaluation and we may have either a positive or a negative view of ourself.

High Self Esteem i.e. we have a positive view of ourselves. This tends to lead to

- Confidence in our abilities
- Self Acceptance
- Not worrying about what others think
- Optimism

Low Self Esteem i.e. we have a negative view of ourself. This tends to lead to

- Lack of confidence
- Want to be / look like someone else
- Always worrying what others might think
- Pessimism

There are several ways of measuring self-esteem. For example, Marill Self-Esteem Inventory is a questionnaire comprising 15 statements about a range of interest. Another example is the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), which is a neutral cartoon given to the participant who then has to devise a story about what's going on.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER SELF

Researchers debate over when self-concept development begins. Some assert that gender stereotypes and expectations set by

parents for their children impact children's understanding of themselves by approximately age 3. Others suggest that self-concept develops later, around age 7 or 8, when children are developmentally prepared to interpret their own feelings and abilities, as well as feedback they receive from parents, teachers and peers. Despite differing opinions about the onset of self-concept development researchers agree on the importance of one's self-concept, which influences people's behaviors and cognitive and emotional outcomes including academic achievement, levels of happiness, anxiety, social integration, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction.

PERSONALITY

The term 'Personality' is derived from the Latin word 'Persona' which means

a mask. According to K. Young,
"Personality is a patterned body
of habits, traits, attitudes and ideas
of an individual, as these are
organised externally into roles and
as they relate internally to moti-
vation, goals, and various aspects of
selfhood."

Gr. W. Allport defined it as "a
person's pattern of habits, attitudes
and traits which determine his
adjustment to his environment."

Lawrence A. Pewin has given a
working definition of personality in
these words, "Personality represents
those structural and dynamic properties
of an individual or individuals as
they reflect themselves in character-
istic responses to all the
situations."



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On the basis of these definitions it may be said there are two main approaches to the study of personality :-

- (i) The psychological, and
- (ii) The sociological.

Thus personality is the sum of the ideas, attitudes and values of a person which determine his role in society and form an integral part of his character. Personality is acquired by the individual as a result of his participation in group life. As a member of the group he learns certain behavior systems and symbolic skills which determine his ideas, attitudes and social values.

To sum up we would say that :-

- (i) Personality is not related to bodily structure alone. It includes both structure and dynamics.



- (ii) Personality is an indivisible unit.
- (iii) Personality is neither good nor bad.
- (iv) Personality is not a mysterious phenomenon.
- (v) Every personality is unique.
- (vi) Personality refers to persistent qualities of the individual. It expresses consistency and behavior.
- (vii) Personality is acquired.
- (viii) Personality is influenced by social interaction.

DETERMINANTS OF DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITY

Personality is a result of the combination of four factors, i.e., physical environment, heredity, culture, and particular experiences. Here we discuss each factor determining personality separately.

Personality and Environment

The influence of physical environment that is geographical environment determines cultural variability. Eskimos have a culture different from that of the Indians is due to the fact that the former have geography different from the latter. Man comes to form ideas and attitudes according to the physical environment he lives in.

Aristotle claimed that people living in Northern Europe were owing to a cold climate, full of spirit but lacking in intelligence and skill. The natives of Asia, on the other hand, are intelligent and inventive but lack in spirit, and are, therefore, slave.

Heredity and Personality

Heredity is another factor determining

human personality. He tends to resemble his parents in physical appearance and intelligence. The nervous system, the organic drives and the ductless glands have a great bearing upon personality. They determine whether an individual will be vigorous or feeble, energetic or lethargic, intelligent, coward or courageous.

A man with a good physical structure and health generally possess an attractive personality. A man of poor health, pigmy size and ugly physical features develops inferiority complex. The growth of his personality is checked. Rejected and hated by the society he may turn out to be a thief, decoit, or drunkard. It is also probable that he may become a leader, or a genius like Socrates and Napoleon. Likewise the nervous system and glandular system may affect the personality of an individual.



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Personality and Culture

According to some thinkers, personality is the subjective aspect of culture. They regard personality and culture as two sides of the same coin. Spiro has observed, "The development of personality and the acquisition of culture are not different processes, but one and the same learning process." Personality is an individual aspect of culture while culture is a collective aspect of personality. The culture provides the raw material of which the individual makes his life. The traditions, customs, mores, religion, institutions, moral and social standards of a group affect the personality of the group members from the moment of birth, the child is treated in ways which shape his personality. Every culture exerts a series of general influences upon the individuals who grow up under it.



Personality and Particular

Experiences

Personality is also determined by another factor, namely, the particular and unique experiences. There are two types of experiences one, those that stem from continuous association with one's group, second, those that arise suddenly and are not likely to recur. The type of people who meet the child daily has a major influence on his personality. The personality of parents does more to affect a child's personality.

If the parents are kind, tolerant of boyish pranks, interested in athletics and anxious to encourage their child's separate interests the child will have a different experience and there shall be different influence on his personality than the one when the parents are unkind, quick tempered and arbitrary. In the home is

fashioned the style of personality that will by and large characterize the individual throughout his life.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SOFT SKILLS

What is communication? A definition of communication will include these attributes :-

- It is a process that is continuous in time.
- It is interactive between people.
- Its purpose is to transmit facts, thoughts, ideas, interpretations, desires and emotions.

Soft skills is a term often associated with a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient) which is the cluster of personality traits that characterize one's relationship with other people. These skills can include social graces, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive or emotional empathy and leadership traits. A person's soft skill EQ is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. Organizations which deal with customers face-to-face are generally more successful if they train their staff to use these skills. Screening or training for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications.



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Below are some soft skills sampling categories that might be helpful for achievement:

1. Communication

- Presentation skills
- Spoken communication
- Difficult conversations
- Professional writing
- Effective email writing

2. Teamwork

- Inter-team cooperation
- Intra-team cooperation
- Diversity
- Productivity
- Goal setting and action

3. Leadership Skills

- Empowerment
- Planning



- Confidence in leaders
- Vision & direction
- Supervision
- Coaching and/or mentoring

4. Decision Making & Problem Solving

- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Team problem solving

5. Managing Time and Pressures

- Change
- Time management
- Effective meetings

6. Self Management & Attitude

- Stress management
- Positive attitude and influence
- Initiative
- Concern and compassion for others

SELF AND IDENTITY

Self and Identity is a subfield of psychology. As the name implies, it deals with topics pertaining to both self and identity. What distinguishes self and identity as a discipline is its scientific character. There are two levels of analysis that one can look at self and identity. One level of analysis is the self on the individual level for example: self-states, self-motives, self-efficacy etc. Self-states are self-process that include unbiased self-awareness. However, self-motives are more serious impulses to action something that is innate and universal to all.



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situations. People join groups for a multitude of reasons, most frequently because membership satisfies a need of the individual. Group membership can provide companionship, survival and security, affiliation, status, power and control, and achievement. There is currently no universal description of what constitutes a group, though research has identified a few common requirements that contribute to recognition of a group:-

- Interdependence - Individual members must depend, to some degree, on the output of the collective members. Social interaction - accomplishing a goal requires some form of verbal or non-verbal communication among members.

- Perception of a group - all members of the collective must agree they are part of the group.

- Commonly of purpose - All members of



The collective come together to attain a common goal.

Favoritism — Members of the same group tend to be positively prejudiced toward other members and discriminate in their favor.

YOGA FOR PEACE AND HARMONY

21st June is declared by United Nations Organization (UNO) as the International Day of Yoga with the slogan, "Yoga for Peace and Harmony". This declaration is a formal acknowledgement of the universality as regards acceptance and popularity of Yoga all over the world. This declaration is a feather in the cap of India as regards its national and ancient heritage that is Yoga. The Yoga

Protocol laid down by the Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India, it is in order to take a perspective as regards the essence and efficacy of Yoga.

Essence of Yoga

Yoga is one of the six (Shad Darshana) astika or orthodox Indian philosophies which, like the other five philosophies, aims at liberating man ultimately from the miseries and sufferings of human existence. It is a Moksha Shashtra and hence the final goal of all Yoga practices is Moksha or Kaivalya. On the path towards this goal all the dimensions of human personality are benefited - these dimensions being social, personal, physical, physiological, mental, psychological, intellectual and spiritual. Hence, on the path of Yoga the total personality of the human being is developed. But this development of the personality is a means

to the final goal of Kaivalya and not an end in itself. To put it differently, personality development or physical and mental health are by-products on the path of Yoga and not the ultimate purpose of Yoga practice. Hence, being attracted to Yoga for making the body beautiful or fit or getting health benefits or relief from ailments (which is what is happening today) may be under-utilizing the potential of Yoga, if not misusing Yoga. It has to be recognized that the true spirit of Yoga lies in its preventive aspect rather than its therapeutic aspect. Yoga, as practiced in ancient times, is a lifestyle and not a style of life!

Efficacy of Yoga

Yoga practices yield unimaginable positive effects and without any adverse effects! They cater towards



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Both, health and healing, in the empirical world. There is hardly any other discipline or regimen which caters to the total personality of human being as Yoga does. Practicing of Yogic principles, which is the same as 'Being Yogic' renders one conflict-free in society. It makes the body beautiful, fit and healthy. Mind becomes peaceful and calm and intellectually sharper. With increasing awareness levels resulting from practicing Yoga an individual is unburdened of his heavy conditioning and rigid habit patterns. He is able to take more from the moment and ultimately more from life. The Yoga practitioner does experience glimpse of the "peace that passed all understanding."

Realization of Essence and

Efficacy of Yoga

The most significant condition for realizing



The essence of Yoga and enjoying the efficacy of its practices is that the practitioner needs to practice Yoga for prolonged period with perseverance, without any break and with full faith and respect towards it.

Contribution of Bharatiya Sanskriti

Peetham to Yoga

K. J. Somaiya's Bharatiya Sanskriti Peetham is gradually and definitely making its presence felt in the firmament of Yoga. It is an institute to reckon with when it comes to its contribution in the Yoga field. It initiates an individual into Yoga with its Certificate Course and P.G. Diploma Course and sustaining the interest of the adherent encourages the pursuing of its B.A. and M.A. in Yoga Shastra Degree Courses. To complete the journey of Yoga Education, it is one of the few Institutes which offer Ph.D. in Yoga. The strength of BSP is that it

generates Yoga sadhaks who are not only well-versed in the physical practices of Yoga but who are also thoroughly knowledgeable in the theoretical and philosophical aspects.

BREATHING EXERCISES

The first act of life - breathing
The last act of life - breathing

Everything else lies somewhere in the middle but seems to assume utmost importance in our life. And this key element called breath, driving our very life journey, how often do we stop to observe the process of breathing in and out during the day? We don't feel the need to because it is so natural. But do you know a little attention on the way we breathe can open up numerous secrets to good health. Increased immunity, a calm and relaxed

mind, and a happy state of being for starters? All this by learning to breathe right!

But who needs to learn how to breathe? Doesn't it keep happening on its own all the time? Yes, but pranayamas help regulate the flow of breath, removing any blocks in the nadis so that both our body and mind stay healthy.

Relaxation In Difficult Asanas By Being Aware of Breath

Can you imagine relaxing in Boat Posture or Superman Pose? Sound impossible? Well, it can be possible only by paying a little attention to our breath while we hold in these postures. What happens by bringing your awareness on the breath? The mind becomes relaxed and so you are better able to relax in the pose. From concentrating on the discomfort in the posture, the attention



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shifts to relaxing more in the pose.

Another advantage of coordinating breath with the body postures — sometimes the mind may wander off on its own trip as you exercise. The body keeps moving but the mind is elsewhere. On such moments, gently bringing your awareness to the breath brings back the mind to the present moment so that you are aware of the stretch where it happens and give your 100 percent to the asana practice.

HOW TO DO BREATHING EXERCISE ?

Kapalbhati Pranayama

Benefits : cleansing, invigorating, warming, prevents illness and allergies



This breath consists of rapid, forced exhales followed by passive inhales. In Kundalini practice, Kapalabhati breath is sometimes done while holding poses.

1. Come to sit in a comfortable cross legged position.
2. Take two or three deep inhales and exhales through the nose to prepare.
3. Inhale to a comfortable level, and then exhale sharply and forcefully through the nose, drawing the belly in as you exhale.
4. Let the inhale happen passively, and continue this cycle of forceful exhales and passive inhales at a fast pace, so that the belly is pumping continuously.
5. Do three rounds of thirty breaths each, coming back to deep inhales and exhales between each round.

6. Come back to normal breathing if you feel lightheaded at any time.

Shitali Pranayama cools and calms you slowly sip air through a rolled tongue or pursed lips. Try it on a hot day or at the end of a vigorous yoga session. It's pretty subtle, so you can even do it in a crowded subway car or elevator for a little cooling relief. Here's how:

1. If you can, come to sit in a comfortable cross-legged position.
2. Take two or three deep inhales and exhales through your nose in preparation.
3. Roll your tongue, curling the sides in towards the center to form a tube. Stick the end of the tongue out between your pursed lips. If you can't roll your tongue, just purse your lips making a small "O" shape with your mouth.

4. Inhale through the tube of the tongue.

5. Exhale through your nose.

6. Repeat 5-10 times as you feel the cooling effect.

Lion's Breath relieves tension in the face by stretching the jaw and tongue. It can be done in almost any pose.

1. Come to kneel with your seat resting in your feet.

2. Place your hands on your knees.

3. Inhale through the nose.

Exhale through the mouth, making a "ha" sound. As you exhale, open your mouth wide and stick your tongue as far out as possible towards your chin.



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5. You can also bring your drishti towards your third eye as you exhale.

6. Inhale, returning to a neutral face.

7. Repeat 3-5 times.

Anulom Vilom

1. You can practice this breathing exercise in any seated position. Make yourself comfortable in sukhasana, half lotus, virasana, vajrasana, or even sitting in a chair. You will be sitting for several minutes, so use props as necessary so you can maintain your posture.

2. Position your right hand in Vishnu mudra by folding your pointer and middle fingers into your palm, leaving your thumb, ring finger, and pinky sticking up.



3. Bring your thumb to the right side of your nose and your ring finger to the left side.

4. Close your eyes or take a soft gaze downward. Inhale and exhale once to prepare.

5. Close off your right nostril with your thumb.

6. Inhale through your left nostril.

7. Close off your left nostril with your ring finger.

8. Open and exhale through your right nostril.

9. Inhale through your right nostril.

10. Close off your right nostril with your thumb.

11. Open and exhale through your left nostril.

12. Inhale through your left nostril.

13. At first, you might only make it through a few rounds of this breath. Try to work up to doing at least 10 rounds. You can also take a break and then resume the exercise.

14. If your mind begins to wander, focus on counting the length of your inhales and exhales or on the sensation of your breath on the skin under your nose. It may feel cool as you inhale and warm as you exhale.

15. If you ever begin to feel light headed, release both nostrils and breathe normally.

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MEDITATION

Meditation is the practice of turning your attention to a single point of reference. It can involve focusing on the breath, on bodily sensations, or on a word or phrase known as a mantra. In other words, meditation means turning your attention away from distracting thoughts and focusing on the present moment.

FORMS OF MEDITATION

Physical Postures

Various postures are taken up in some meditation techniques. Sitting and standing postures are used. Popular in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are the full-lotus, half-lotus and kneeling positions. Meditation is sometimes done

while walking, known as kinhin, or while doing a simple task mindfully known as samu.

Some mantra techniques do not require learning special position, only sitting comfortable with eyes closed.

Prayer beads

Most of the ancient religions of the world have a tradition of using some type of prayer beads as tools in devotional meditation. Most prayer beads and Christian rosaries consist of pearls or beads linked together by a thread.

The Roman Catholic rosary is a string of beads containing five sets with ten small beads. Each set of ten is separated by another bead. The Hindu japa mala has 108 beads (the figure 108 in itself having spiritual significance as well as those used in Jainism and Buddhist prayer beads. Each bead is counted

once as a person recites a mantra until the person has gone all the way around the mala. The muslim mishbaha has 99 beads. Specific meditations of each religion may be different.

Health Benefits of Meditation.

Though meditation is usually recognized as a largely spiritual practice, it also has many health benefits. The yoga and meditation techniques are being implemented in management of life threatening diseases in transformation of molecular and genetic structure, in reversal of mental illness in accelerated learning programmes, in perceptions and communications beyond the physical, in solving problems and atomic and nuclear physics; in gaining better ecological understanding; in management of lifestyle and future world problems. Some benefits of meditation are:-

- It lowers oxygen consumption.

• It increases blood flow and slows the heart rate.

• It decreases respiratory rate.

• Increases exercise tolerance in heart patients.

• Leads to a deeper level of relaxation.

• Good for people with high blood pressure as it brings B.P. to normal.

• Reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate.

• Decrease muscle tension and headache.

• Builds self-confidence.

• It increases serotonin production which influences mood and behavior. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression, obesity, insomnia and headaches.

- Helps in chronic diseases like allergies, arthritis etc.

- Reduce Pre-menstrual Syndrome.

- Helps in post-operative healing.

Enhances the immune system. Research has revealed that meditation increases activity of 'natural-killer cells', which kill bacteria and cancer cells.

- Also reduces activity of viruses and emotional distress.



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POEM ON SELF

As I look into the mirror

I'm not who I want to be

I want things to change

I need things to change

But I have to start within me

If I can change my thought process

And exceed my expectations

Of myself then may be

Just maybe

I'd think highly of myself.

