

# Personal Growth – A Holistic Perspective

Presentation by Anil Chawla



[www.samarthbharat.com](http://www.samarthbharat.com)

Note: Readers who do not have patience for a long presentation, may start from the last slide and move backwards.

Western and so-called scientific / economic view of man is always partial. It treats man as an island removed from other human beings, nature and the cosmos. Religions, especially the ones not based on a single book, have always taken a more holistic view. Unfortunately, the holistic view is often articulated in terms that are not understood by the modern man trained in the present-day science.

This presentation provides a simple intellectual framework before moving on to defining growth of an individual from a holistic perspective. At the end are some recommendations about what to do and what to avoid. There is nothing new in these recommendations, which have been preached for thousands of years by various saints.

## Western View of Man

- Man as a stand-alone self-centered individual
- Social contract theory
- Maximization of what individual can take
- Survival of fittest – race to grab by all means
- Constant strife, unrest and violence in the society and also in the life of an individual
- This view is product of Modern Scientific Vision
- Christian “Love Thy Neighbor” is ridiculed by Science

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

2

Western cosmic view is shallow and limited in scope. It is as if the earth is enclosed in a polythene bag with no connections to the rest of the cosmos. What is the basis for this view? No one seems to know. This cosmic view is superimposed on individuals. Each individual is a reflection of the earth as seen by modern man – enclosed in an invisible bag.

Social Contract Theory starts with this man-in-a-bag theory. An individual enters into contract with everyone around him giving up some things and getting some others in return. In this business-like approach one who can negotiate a better deal is smarter and hence better than the one who gets a bad deal. So in the USA, a Wall Street banker is better than a general of US Army.

When all relations are based on contracts and negotiations, one tries to maximize one's benefits, pleasures and possessions. Life becomes a series of iterative struggles with each step helping one to move to more of something or the other. A person who has a girl friend with not-so-perfect vital statistics keeps an eye for the one with 90-60-90 figure and pounces to get her as soon as she is within reach. Everything is measured in some terms or the other and there is a constant fight to get the best – whether it be clothes, house, vacations, food or even spouse and children.

Extension of Theory of Evolution to human relations is inexplicable. Evolution is a species wide phenomenon. Species who have high level of intra-species cooperation have a higher chance of survival than the ones who have bitter fights. Ants outnumber any other creature on earth. Compare the existentialist journey of ants with that of lion, tiger or cheetah. Ants are surely better than any other species in the race to survival. Yet, the modern mankind has chosen to emulate animals on verge of extinction rather than the ants.

Violence, unrest and disturbances of all types are a natural result. In the past fifty years, rape rate in India has increased from 0.5 per 100,000 to 1.5 per 100,000, while it is more than 32 per 100,000 in USA. Rape is a by-product of the self-centered mindset of getting what “I” want by all means. It is also abetted by the value that the society places on persons who are go-getters and leave no stone unturned in getting all that they want by hook or crook.

Surely, modern science never talks about these issues openly. These are the beliefs that are never questioned by mainstream academicians of physical as well as social sciences.

## Understanding Science

- **Popular conception** – Science encourages questioning
- **Truth** – Questioning must be within a framework and limited in scope
- **General Rule** – “How” or “Why” is never permitted beyond second / third level

Of the millions who study science, hardly a handful study methodology of science.

In every age, including the modern one, science follows a paradigm whose basic foundations are not questioned by practitioners of the science.

Attention is drawn to Thomas Kuhn's **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions** for a detailed discussion of scientific paradigms.

## Examples of Not Asking “How / Why”

- **Law of Gravitation** – My shoe knows exactly the mass of each of the objects lying on the dining table of your house as well as the distance. How does it know? Does it mean that my shoe is more intelligent than me?
- **Newton’s Laws of Motion**
- **Electromagnetic waves**

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

4

Have you ever seen a proof or explanation of Gravitation? Matter has been split by scientists into sub-atomic particles. Yet, we do not know how the calculation of distance and mass of other objects takes place within matter. We do not even know which sub-atomic particle does this calculation. Is it not ridiculous?

Light travels from the sun to earth. How does it happen? There are theories and laws that explain it. Yet, it must be admitted that the theories and laws are conjectures that cannot be conclusively proved.

Just because we do not know how the light travels from the sun to earth, can we deny that the light travels to earth?

## Principles Learnt

- Just because we do not know How / Why, we cannot deny the event / phenomenon
- Truth need not be reasonable
- Truth may even be ridiculous
- Truth of some fundamental laws is proved by the fact that the opposite cannot be proved conclusively and it is convenient or beneficial to assume that the laws are true

The above epistemological principles (rules that define our process of acquiring knowledge) are foundation blocks of science, though very few students of science are aware of them.

These principles have been stated here to lay the foundation for the Fundamental Holistic Laws stated in the next slide.

## Fundamental Holistic Laws

1. Universe is ONE and man is a part of the ONE
2. Law of Karm –  
What you sow is what you reap
3. Dev-Danav context –  
The Divine Paradox

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

6

The above laws are not from any one text or book. However, the three are the essence of Hindu thought. Almost every sacred book of Hindus has a direct or indirect reference to at least one of the above laws.

The Three laws are explained in the slides ahead.

## Understanding First Law

- Universe in its entirety has no beginning and no end. It has a life of its own.
- Each part of the universe is linked to the rest of the universe by relationships that may be direct or remote
- Relationships between (a) different parts and (b) between a part and the whole can be seen or felt but need not be subject to cause-effect or mathematical patterns.
- Inability to understand the “How / Why” of a relationship is no reason for denying the relationship.

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

7

Universe / cosmos is often referred to as BRAHM in Hindu books. BRAHM is wrongly translated as God in some western texts.

God in Judaic religions is an entity which is different from his creation. They argue that the creator and his creation cannot be the same. This duality of the creator and creation is denied by Hinduism as well as by most pagan religions.

On the other hand, in the Hindu cosmic view, I am a part of the cosmos and the cosmos is within me. To give an example – One can point at the steering wheel of a car and ask “Is that car?” The answer is yes. We know that the answer will be yes for each and every part of the car as long as it is functioning within the car. Removed from the functions, the steering wheel is not car. Similarly, each one of us is the cosmos and the cosmos is within each one of us as long as we are carrying out the assigned duties and roles.

Complex relationships in any system cannot always be tracked in terms of one-to-one causality. Often the model of one-to-whole is more appropriate. Whether the relationship can be tracked or mapped or not is an issue that is independent of the existence of the relationship. A relationship may exist even when human mind is unable to understand it.

## Understanding First Law (Continued)

- Man is not a stand-alone creature
- Each individual has a relationship with other individuals, society and the nature or universe
- Every individual plays multiple roles – son, brother / sister, husband / wife, father / mother, employee, boss, subordinate, colleague, citizen, etc.
- **Relationships and roles define a person**

An individual does not exist independent of his / her relationships.

The first and foremost relationship that a person has is to his / her own body. One owes duties and responsibilities to the body since it will be impossible to carry out any other roles if the body becomes dysfunctional or if the relationship of the body to the person becomes disturbed. Nevertheless, there are times when one puts one's own body at risk for the sake of some other relationships. For example, a soldier risks and sacrifices his life for the sake of his country.

Relationships of an individual to other individuals, nature, society and the universe are based on what the individual's aptitude (*swabhav*) is. One can serve all the roles assigned to one only if one knows one's own swabhav or aptitude. The satisfaction that one gets by serving one's role is far superior to pleasures of the body.

Moving focus from one's pleasures and possessions to roles and responsibilities is the essential shift that holistic perspective aims to bring in every person.



## Understanding Second Law

- Karm or action is fundamental to human existence; Even inaction is an act
- Every action yields results either in near or faraway future (in this life or future life)
- Results are decided by the Universe based on factors that human beings cannot often decipher
- What one sows is what one gets – generally speaking
- Kindness begets kindness, cruelty begets cruelty and so on.

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

9

To give an example of Karm – eating food is karm just as not eating food is a karm. Both actions produce different results based on the health of the individual and many other factors.

Kabir says in Hindi – “Boye Pedh Babool ka to aam kahan se hoye” (If you sow thorny Acacia Arabica, you cannot reap mangoes). That is the simplest way of expressing a basic principle.

Lord Krishn says in Shrimad Bhagwad Gita – You have the right on only your actions. Results are not within your domain. In other words it means that the cosmos decides what results accrue from your actions.

Results are always a function of many other factors. For example, a person goes to a bank and writes a check for Rs. 10,000- the bank pays; at the same time another person enters the bank and does the same action of presenting a check for Rs. 10,000-, but the bank refuses to pay him. It is within one’s right to write a check but what one receives after that is determined by the bank based on one’s balance in the account and various other factors like correct signature, valid check-book etc. The same holds true in life.

The law holds true not just for individuals but also for communities and nations. A nation that is built on prosperity acquired from drug trafficking or after a genocide will get results that are corresponding to the act. What we cannot however predict with any accuracy is (a) the exact nature of results and (b) the time of results.

## Understanding Dev-Danav

- **Dev** – *Jo Deta Hai*; One who gives
- **Danav** – Opposite of Dev; The one who tries to grab all; Maximization of possessions and pleasures is the focus of the danav.

For a more detailed discussion on the subject, please read the author's article "To Be Dev or Danav – The Choice" at <http://samarthbharat.com/devdanav.htm>

The words dev and danav cannot be translated. Some western books translate dev as god. This is wrong.

Examples of dev – Mother-Father who give love to their child, Trees who give fruits and shade, Sun who gives light, Wife who gives selfless love to her husband.

Example of danav – a rapist.

## Dev-Danav War

- Dev always gives away, so he seems to be empty-handed and poor
- Danav grabs from everywhere, so he has resources and strengths.

### The Big Question

In a fight between the Dev and Danav, WHO WILL WIN?

The two epics of India – Ramayan and Mahabharat – are about Dev-Danav war. In Ramayan, the lines are clear: Ram is the perfect dev while Ravan is a danav. In Mahabharat, Pandavs are dev-like but they make mistakes. Despite the mistakes, their overall direction is dev while Kauravs and their leader Duryodhan are clearly danav-like. The complexity of Mahabharat is more akin to the dilemmas that we face in our present-day lives when finding a perfect human being like Ram is almost impossible.

## The Divine Paradox

In a war between Dev and Danav,  
though apparently Dev might appear  
to be weaker, the ultimate victory will  
always be of Dev only.

**Satyamev Jayate**

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

12

This is in essence the message of Ramayan, Mahabharat and many other sacred texts of Hinduism.

The words Satyamev Jayate (Truth alone will win) has been interpreted to mean those who speak the truth will win. There is no reference to speaking here. The truth refers to the fundamental truth of the world. A dev lives by the fundamental truths – accepting cosmos as the reality with a secondary role for self. On the other hand a danav denies the existence of any cosmic reality and declares his own desires, passions, greed, ambitions, dreams and power to be the only reality. In case of a fight between these two conflicting attitudes to life, the one based on truth i.e. the dev (and dev alone) will win.

You may also like to read my article, “Moving Beyond Gandhi’s Truth”  
<http://www.samarthbharat.com/truth.htm>

## A Quick Summary

- Man defined by relationships and roles  
(A man's world is part of him)
- Actions get results
- Dev wins

## Understanding Growth

- Growth must make an individual better, more useful part of the whole
- Growth for an individual must encompass all that defines him / her
- Growth should build positive balance in the Karm account for future
- Growth should move one on the path of being a DEV

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

14

The path to personal growth starts from oneself. However, for each one the journey is different depending on his *swabhav* (aptitude), stage of life and other circumstances.

Every individual must make his / her own decisions for each step on the path to growth. There is no fixed roadmap. The above are guidelines and one always has the option to not grow or even have negative growth. Of course, the laws of cosmos have their own rewards and punishments for every one based on one's positive or negative growth.

## Holistic Growth

- Growth, other than as discussed, is cancerous
- Holistic Growth includes all roles and relations of individual so everyone around such a person benefits
- Cancerous parts need to be removed and cosmos does it in its own way

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

15

If a person's one leg becomes double the size of the other, it is a sign of a disease and is not growth. Similarly when one aspect of a person starts growing disproportionately, it harms him / her as well as the whole society.

On the other hand when a person is growing in a balanced manner taking care of all his relationships (including to his / her body, mind, family, society, country as well as to all other creatures) it benefits everyone and the person becomes a source of strength for the family, society, country and the world at large.

As the person becomes a source of strength for the system, it is natural that the system strengthens the person. An analogy of a tree is most appropriate. The part of the tree that feeds the whole tree keeps growing and becoming stronger. On the other hand, the part that stops transmitting nutrients to other parts becomes dead wood and is discarded by the tree.

It has been found that men tend to die earlier than women. This has been explained by the fact that old women continue to play a role in the family as grandmothers taking care of children, while old men become useless soon after retirement.

It is easy to be self-centered at any age focusing only on one's own pursuit of happiness / pleasures ignoring all relationships, duties and bonds. Be sure that in such a case the person soon becomes a dead wood whom the cosmos wants to discard.

## Positive Values for Growth

- Duty (*Kartavya*)
- Love (*Prem*)
- Compassion (*Karuna*)

*Kartavya* - Doing one's duty in each relationship / role with commitment, sincerity and passion.

*Prem* – Love involves transcending one's own self and giving without any thought of getting something in return. Human mind is generally so engrossed with itself that any act of moving beyond seems to require a great deal of effort. But there are moments that one does it almost effortlessly. A mother breastfeeding her child loves the child. She is giving away without expecting anything in return. A mother is therefore the first image of divinity that a child experiences.

Please read more about love in my article “Love – A Divine Gift to Oneself” at <http://samarthbharat.com/love.htm>

You may also like to read my mini-book “Love for You” Please download from <http://samarthbharat.com/files/loveforyo.pdf>

*Karuna* or compassion involves seeing another person's sorrow as one's own. The moment someone else's sorrows become mine, I get linked to the other person in a manner that is almost mystical. When one has *karuna*, one is linked not just to one individual but to the whole cosmos. *Karuna* like love takes one into the realm of selflessness.



## Acts Contributing To Growth

- *Satsang* (Good company)
- *Abhyas / Prayas* (Constant practice)
- *Daan* (Donating or giving)
- *Sewa* (Service)

*Satsang* involves being in company of people who follow the path of holistic growth. If one spends every evening sitting in a bar with people who are enjoying their drinks, one's attitudes are bound to be influenced by them. Choosing one's friends wisely is very important. Books are a man's best friends. Discretion needs to be also exercised in one's choice of books. Thrillers can be good pastime, but they do little to move one on the path of growth.

*Abhyas / Prayas* is a process of constantly struggling to find the right path and to exert on the path without any sloth or procrastination.

*Daan* involves donating or giving without expecting anything in return and even when one is not strictly duty-bound to give. It is a form of love. There are various forms of *daan*. One may give knowledge. One may give one's labor. One can give one's time. Of course, one can also give money. *Daan* must not be an act of ego-building for the giver. It must be an act of humility accompanied by love and compassion.

*Sewa* is a form of *daan*. It has been mentioned separately only because it is very important. *Sewa* makes one more useful for the cosmos. When one does service without expecting anything in return, it becomes truly an offering to the cosmos for which the cosmos always rewards the doer.

## Negatives To be Avoided for Growth

- *Ahankar* (Ego)
- *Krodh* (Anger)
- *Bhay* (Fear)
- *Nirasha* (Pessimism)
- *Lobh* (Greed)
- *Chinta* (Worry)
- *Eirshaya* (Jealousy)
- *Aalasya* (Sloth)
- *Moh*
- *Anastha* (Thinking that Fundamental Laws are not true)

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

18

Each of the above negatives takes one away from the cosmos and makes one more self-centered.

All the above negatives are inter-connected. One always lead to the other. For example, a person with high level of *ahankar* is more likely to get angry than the one who has humility.

I have not translated the word *Moh* since I do not know any equivalent word in English. I quote here from my article "Love Without Moh":

Love is giving while *moh* is holding and being held. Love gives and lets go, while *moh* gives with one had and tries to tie up with the other. Love liberates while *moh* enslaves. Love has no expectations while *moh* is full of expectations. Love does not possess, *moh* is based on a sense of possession.

To read the complete article, please visit <http://samarthbharat.com/loveandmoh.htm>

*Anastha* is mentioned at the end of the list. However, it is probably the most important. Anyone who loses faith in the Fundamental Holistic Laws is bound to develop all the above negatives. Western societies are going through the results of decades of preaching *Anastha*. The turmoil in the societies is there for all to see. Unless the process is reversed soon, the malaise will only aggravate.

Ayurveda, which is a holistic system of medicine, says that elimination of the above negatives drastically reduces the chances of large number of diseases.

## A Simple Path - Bhakti

- Choose any ONE incarnation of the Cosmic Being / *Brahm* (Ram, Krishn, Shiv, Vishnu, Durga, Hanuman, Budh or even Jesus or any other)
- Surrender your I-ness (ego or *ahankar*) completely before the chosen One
- Immerse your mind, heart and soul fully in the chosen One
- Do *Daan* and *Sewa* (Donation & Service) as much as possible

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

19

The path of Bhakti (called Bhakti Yog) needs no understanding of the Fundamental Holistic Laws mentioned in the previous slides. For those who found the discussions and prescriptions in the previous slides too difficult or bothersome, this is the best path.

Bhakti is the path of love. It is the path where one loves the Cosmic Being through an incarnation – a human being or a deity. Love on the path of bhakti is no different from the love we have discussed earlier. It has to be selfless and must involve giving away oneself completely to the beloved.

When one surrenders in love, the feeling of I is the biggest obstacle. So, one must give up one's sense of I and accept the chosen one as the doer of everything.

Process of immersing one's mind, heart and soul completely is aided by prayer and also by music and hymns.

Daan and Sewa take one further on the path of the perfect unison with the Cosmic Being.

## Benefits of Holistic Growth

- **Swasthya** (Good Health – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual)
- **Sukh**
- **Shanti** (Peace) – internal as well as external
- **Samridhi** (Prosperity)

Above not just for individual, but for the whole family and society

Personal Growth - A Holistic  
Perspective

20

*Swasthya* is often described as the First *Sukh*. Hence, many texts do not mention it separately. I have chosen to mention it separately only to emphasize it.

*Sukh* is another term that I choose to not translate. I reproduce here from my article “Understanding *Sukh*”:

In the dev world-view, *sukh* can only be experienced by giving and by sharing. *Sukh* does not come from a flashy car or from an expensive bottle of wine or from a vacation in an exotic location. *Sukh* is running one’s fingers through one’s children’s hair. *Sukh* is not in the bed of the world’s most shapely prostitute.

To read the complete article, please visit <http://samarthbharat.com/sukh.htm>

*Shanti* or Peace is not absence of war. It is a positive state where the best of human mind flourishes and contributes to the growth of the society and the world.

*Samridhi* is a state of abundance which cannot be compared to merely having a massive balance in one’s bank account. Having all the necessities for life in abundance and having peace in one’s family and environment for enjoyment of the necessities creates *samridhi*. In Urdu (and I guess in Persian) the term used for this state is *Barkat*.

*Wish the Best of*  
**Swasthya (Health)**  
**Sukh**  
**Shanti (Peace)**  
**Samridhi (Prosperity)**

**For you, your family, society, country and the world**

Anil Chawla

[www.samarthbharat.com](http://www.samarthbharat.com)

Cell - 09425009280

Thanks for your patience!

This presentation has been created as an offering to the Cosmic Being. I do not wish to profit from it in any way.

Like all my other writings, it is classified as COPYRIGHT ALL RIGHTS FREE.

Please feel free to use it in any way that you like. You can print or publish it electronically or in any other manner. You can use it to make presentations or deliver lectures. There is no need to seek my prior permission or even inform me.

I only seek your blessings and good wishes.

27 August 2010