

**SELF INQUIRY IN PROCESS WORK**

**BY**

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## **SELF INQUIRY IN PROCESS WORK**

### **The Quest:**

*Is self-enquiry as I have understood and process work that I am engaging, parallel to each other? Am I engaging with two disconnected areas of self-level work? What are the spill offs for a person engaging in both simultaneously?*

*Well! these were some of the questions, reflections and mental conflicts I went through in my early years of being a process worker.*

*Having debated, mulled, experienced and introspected on the two processes, I am excited to write a paper on the connect and significance of self-enquiry in process work.*

### **Abstract:**

*In my journey of seeking truth...., I have experienced the need to support process work with self-enquiry. In a nutshell, process spaces and process work has facilitated in identifying my band of identities, meanings I have given to experiences and roles. To examine the kinds of introjects I carry and the lenses through which I view the world. That I often see a mirror of myself in the other and the other in me. It has helped me to move from a choice less situation to an empowering one. It has changed the quality or nature of roles I have taken or held in different contexts. The principle of adding on and not deleting, has been a very humanizing process.*

*The path of self-enquiry or the search for 'who am I?' has been an ongoing process and liberating in nature. It has been instrumental and directed towards seeking deeper levels of truth. Although, the direction towards seeking the truth in both have remained the same, the modalities have differed. This often led to questions about the connection or disconnection between the two approaches, process work and self-enquiry.*

*What is self-enquiry? What is the modality? why is it important? How and why it could be linked to process work? how is it different and how is it similar? these are some of the questions I will attempt to delve through my paper.*

*The sources for this will be my experiences, other's experiences and researched content. I must admit that there is no destination to reach in the journey to unravel the truth. However, there are layers of unfolding that is, and will be ongoing.*

**Process work and self-inquiry:**

*I would like to begin by reflecting on one of the aphorisms on being human by Professor Pulin K. Garg*

*Quoting from the aphorisms on being human, Pulin K. Garg, who has been credited for introducing process work to India, suggests that the reader of Aphorisms should not take them literally or as final. The reader will have to feel deeply into his own experiences with himself and his life space. He would have to articulate his own orientations and the world-view of life.*

*As such, I would like to begin with the following aphorism in process work stated by*

*Him: I quote....*

*"The first step to get in touch with the dynamism of Being is the recognition of the potency of residues that distort the modes of relatedness and expression.*

*Loosening the hold of residues clears the first barrier on the path of getting in touch with the prototype of Being. "It also says, "The Being is medium for Self to unfold into the phenomenological world." Here the Self is described as a cosmic entity with no quality. He goes on to say, that this self has a call to feel alive and discover the wholeness of existence. In response to the call, Self, mobilises some elements to form a prototype of Being.*

*The Being is constituted by a limited number of elements of Self. The prototype of Being inherently carries a prototype life-space and world-view held within the Self.*

*From the above aphorisms, the following can be interpreted:*

*A} Engaging with the potency of the residues of our experiences is imperative to the quality of our relating and expression.*

*B} The prototype of the life-space and world-view along with the residues exists in our own minds*

*In my journey through process spaces, I was engaging with residues of my experiences by sharing narratives of life-spaces and world-view with other beings. I also noted that in this process, I was simultaneously experiencing the space between the experience, the experienced and the experiencer. The question that gave fuel to my journey of self-inquiry was, if I am the experiencer who had experienced the experience, collected residues of the experience, interpreting and articulating the residues, then, who is observing the experiencer? and who am I?*

*That brought me to the following questions:*

- a) What and where is the experiencer?*
- b) Where and how are the residues formed?*
- c) What is the self that I am enquiring?*

*Answers to these existential questions I learnt can be accessed from knowledge that*

*emerged from experiential self-inquiry practised by self and others.*

*In the past, the ones who set off into the journey of self-enquiry did by entering into*

*deep silence. The truths discovered so was experiential and have been documented in*

*the Upanishads and the Vedas. The Bhagavat Gita and the Puranas have been*

*instrumental in simplifying the essence of the Upanishads by embedding it in stories. In*

*my paper, I will attempt to weave in connected stories and essence of Advaita Vedanta*

*and Samkhya philosophy to put forth my learnings and quests.*

**Experiencer:**

*Thousands of years back, a very powerful line was said in the 'Vedas', which is*

*"Yatha Drishti, thatha Shrishti". It simply means, how you see the world, the world will appear to you in the same way. The doctrine of creation through perception, is an offshoot of Advaita Vedanta, the doctrine maintains that the perceived phenomenal world comes into existence only in the process of man's observation of the world which is seen as a world of his own mental construction. This was termed as the doctrine of 'simultaneous creation' by the great saint Ramana Maharshi. This theory maintains that the world only exists when it is perceived with the appearance of the I-thought.*

*The doctrine of simultaneous creation as well as the impact of residues on one's expression and relatedness clearly indicates that experiences or shrishti by themselves have no potency as does our perception or dhrishti, by which the experiencer experiences the experiences.*

*A story from Ramayana exemplifies the connection between drishti, influenced by the state of mind and shrishti.*

*After the culmination of the war between Rama and Ravana, back at Ayodhya, Rama asks Hanuman in the presence of Lakshmana to describe Ravana's kingdom. Hanuman was describing the beauty of the kingdom and the beautiful white lotus in the pond. Hearing this, Lakshmana refutes and claims that the lotus was not white but red in colour. An argument goes on between the two about the colour of the lotus. Rama intervened and asked them both as to when they had seen the lotus. Hanuman said he saw it after the war, after the victory, on their way back. Lakshmana said that he saw the lotus when they were preparing for the war. Rama says, the lotus was white to Hanuman as he was serene and peaceful after the war. However, it was red to Lakshmana, as he saw it while he was in rage and ready for attack before the war.*

*The myth only indicates the difference in the shrishti based on the dhrishti, influenced by the state of mind. We would have often come across varied responses by individuals to similar*

situations and even varied responses by the same individual to similar situations in different frames of mind. The Dhrishtva or the experienter is the accumulation of the impressions created and attracted by our mind from our experiences. This in turn contributes to our band of identities or patterns of thought, feelings, actions and beliefs.

**My unrest:**

As a process worker, engaging with meaning making processes and potency of residues, had empowered me in my life-spaces. However, I was intrigued by the source of the residues and the patterns of the mind.

Interestingly, the seekers of self over ages have also given us an in-depth knowledge of the mind, its behaviour as well as the role of the mind in processes of inner and outer well-being. **Selves and Self:**

Do we have one Self or multiple selves? This has been one of the most long standing puzzles of human psychology. In the blog on selves (Psychology Today), Gregg Henriques says, If you have ever been surprised by how you acted, or felt confused, conflicted, or uncertain about who you truly are, or realized how dramatically different you feel in different situations or in different moods, then you know this thing we call the 'Self' can have many different and often competing facet and states-and if you haven't had this experience, then you probably have not been paying too much attention!!

**Personal experiences of multiple selves:**

My different selves: I have often experienced my emotional self, my psychological self and my spiritual self as distinct and yet embedded in my mind.

My psychological self was the dimension of my mind which held and identified with my beliefs, philosophies, my understanding of the human mind, my value systems, and more. I had gathered them in my life's journey, I could easily access it, redefine it or drop it. It has been continuously evolving based on my interactions with people, situations, questioning,

*readings, narratives that I had heard, as well as the meanings that I made from these. It has influenced my world view, quality of my interactions and relatedness as well as the choices that I made or was a part of.*

*My emotional self, I realized had a mind of its own. I often could not comprehend it by logic, it would often manifest as impulsive, incomprehensible, illogical responses or reaction to experiences of self and others. On paying attention to the nature of my responses, I could identify patterns in my compulsive actions or inactions. It was also often the voice of my intuition and discretion. Engaging with this self, brought out my band of identities. Which were patterns of my thought, feeling, actions and beliefs. Owning some of my identities, enabled me to unhook myself from what I had for long labelled as choice less situations. It also called for an expansion of the limited meanings I gave to my experiences, thus increasing the choices I deployed in my roles. Engaging with this self, brought vibrancy to my different roles as well as helped me humanize myself and others. Which in turn enabled me to have an expanded field of experiences and enriched my world view. I must however admit that I had a default pattern of engaging more with my psychological self and needed deeper attention, self-disclosure as well as an openness to receiving feedback from others while inquiring into my emotional self. My conviction of my multiple selves was strengthened, when I had to admit to myself that my accumulated resources of my psychological self was not a big resource while engaging with my emotional self*

*Access to an experience of my spiritual self was made possible while practising periods of deep silence and stillness, when I consciously shift my awareness beyond my physical, psychological and emotional self. In such times, I experienced glimpses of a blissful and unfragmented self. My practices helped me become aware of a self, beyond the multiple selves. This could not be known or described but could be experienced in stillness and silence alone. It also enabled me to be mindful of others as well as of spaces. It seemed to have created spaces between what I experienced as me and mine. This distinction of me and mine reduced my intensities of pain, anger, guilt, regret, frustrations. I was able to*

*engage in my roles with more wholesomeness and acceptance in the here and now with serenity. This practice also enabled me to tune in more naturally with my ecosystem and access wisdom that was not limited to information gathered.*

*In my work space, I saw the impact of practising stillness with children having reduced aggression as well as having increased tolerance amongst children of the Primary section in Prakriya Green Wisdom School. I started this experiment with children as well as teachers from the beginning of the last academic year.*

*The above experiences, combined with my interest in matters of Philosophy, spirituality, ecology, mythology and the human mind triggered my journey of exploring deeper connections through self-inquiry and unfolding the layers of truth.*

### **Self inquiry:**

*Self-inquiry is defined as the process of redirecting our attention away from outward objects, events and experiences and towards the experiences within our body mind and spirit. including subtle experiences within awareness itself. Eventually this inward focus can lead to an experience of our ultimate true nature.*

*Advaita Vedanta, which traces its roots in the oldest Upanishad, refers to the term advaita as the idea that the true self, Atman, is the same as the highest metaphysical reality referred to as Brahman.*

*Thus, self-inquiry through the lens of advaita Vedanta can be described as introducing oneself to our pure infinite conscious self, called Brahman. Advaita also, necessitates the process of self-inquiry, for the removal of ignorance of our true self. This ignorance of our true self has been revealed as the source of human suffering, unhappiness as well as non-well-being. It explains all reality and everything in the experienced world to be same as the Brahman. The paths of experiencing our true self is called yoga.*



Here we look at self-inquiry, as a practice described in Jnana yoga. Of the different practices of self- inquiry, the approach of experiencing the Self by the knowledge of the seer and the seen is called 'Drig- Drishya Vivekam'. This approach calls for application of knowledge at the locust of ignorance. It suggests that the intellect is the locust to apply the knowledge of the Self, as the intellect is also the realm of ignorance of our true self.

**Drig- Drishya Vivekam:**

The Seer and the Seen approach establishes that we are Brahman and it is so established in the here and now. This approach takes us from the known to the unknown in four stages. In each stage, the seer and the seen are not hypothesis, but facts that can be confirmed by us in the process of inquiry itself. We also observe that the nature of the seen is ever changing in each step in relation to the seer, till we experience the unchanging seer or our true Self that cannot be seen. The four stages of inquiry is as follows:

Stage 1: The principle of the seer and the seen are different. For example, Eyes see an object. The eyes are different from the object. Eye cannot see the eye themselves. The seer is one and unchanging, the seen are many and ever changing. This can be understood as a fact.

Stage 2: The eyes themselves become the seen and the mind becomes the seer. The mind and the eyes are different. The conditions of the eyes have changed over time. Seer, or the experiencer is one and unchanging in this context, the seen are many and keeps changing. This is also a known fact.

Stage 3: The mind can be experienced to be feeling happy, sad, etc. Mind can be recognized as being able to understand or not understand concepts, mind is aware of remembering or forgetting. Mind is observed to be able to perceive things.

*In this stage, it can be recognized as a fact that the mind has become the seen and is ever changing. There is a witness or a seer of the mind, termed as Saakshi. The seer and the mind are different. Thus, we can conclude that we are not the mind.*

*Stage 4: This is the stage, when we note as a fact that the witness cannot become the seen or an object of experience. Thus, defining the witness as the one never changing seer, the one infinite consciousness, which is one's ultimate true nature or the ultimate true self.*

*This knowledge is internalized through 3 steps, namely listening, understanding and meditating.*

**Mind and its role:** *The connect or disconnect of the mind and body with the infinite conscious energy is significant in eliminating ignorance of our true self as well as with working with pathos of our multiple selves.*

*The analysis section of drig- dhrishya viveka reveals the nature of the mind or anthakarna by dividing the mind into two dimensions.*

- a) *Ahankara or Ego and b) The rest of the mind, consisting of the thinking and feeling mind, known as manas, the intellect and memory known as budhi and pure intelligence, known as chitt.*

*The infinite conscious self is compared to the ever luminous Sun. The mind is compared to the moon. As the moon reflects the light of the Sun, the mind reflects the infinite conscious self.*

*Thus, the knowledge establishes the fact that I am not the mind or the body as I can experience both. However, the nature of the Ego is to identify itself with the body, mind as well as the Self. The Ego, which is the dimension of mind that gives us a sense of individuality, is connected to the mind as a mirror is to its reflected images. Thus, the Ego or the 'I' identifies with the neural maps or residues that is attracted and accumulated by the mind. This gives fuel to our identity patterns and personalities. The Ego is also connected*

to the body by the law of 'karma' and disconnects with the loss of the body. Thus, the identification of the Ego with the body as well as mind creates a gamut of emotions such as fear, anger, rejection, guilt, frustration and so on.

However, advaita Vedanta reveals to us that the Ego is connected to the infinite consciousness as an error. Which means, in reality it is not connected to the infinite consciousness, but appears to be.

The process of self-inquiry involves knowing the absolute self and applying this knowledge in slicing or disconnecting the Ego from its identifications. The slicing of the Ego through knowledge is compared to the knowledge of disconnecting oneself from ones reflected image in a mirror. Which is possible only with true knowledge of the self. Tatvamasi, Thou art that.

### **Knowing the Ego or the 'I':**

The I-thought or the Ego is that part of our mind which expresses individuality. That which gives us the sense of "I" or mine. As a rule, there cannot be any activity, mental or physical, any understanding, feeling, or desire, without the sense of individuality in the background. There are of course exceptional situations when the I-sense can disappear completely. It happens when we are deeply engrossed in some artistic object or while listening to beautiful music that we forget ourselves. It also happens in deep sleep and certain types of religious experiences, where the devotee is so moved by divine love that the Ego drops. Thus, the nature of the Ego is that it can manifest as well as be dropped. It also has to identify with something, or else it cannot express itself. For example, when the Ego identifies with the body, I say, I am healthy or unhealthy. When the Ego identifies with the thoughts, I say I think or I thought. When the Ego identifies with emotion, I say, I am angry, happy, sad and so on. There is no limit to the objects or ideas with which the Ego can connect itself. When we speak of ethical or cultural life, the Ego is also there.

The journey of self-inquiry begins with the ego and culminates in the realization of the self.

**Mythological symbol of dissolving Ego:**

*The story of Keerthi Mukha, symbolises the role of the Ego to realize the self.*

*A powerful demon, who had conquered everything, challenged Shiva to give Parvathy to him. In anger, Shiva creates another demon to devour this powerful demon. However, in the meantime, the powerful demon realizes his mistake, and seeks the mercy of Shiva. Shiva grants him protection. The demon created by Shiva, was now restless, lean and hungry. He demanded Shiva to give him something to devour. Shiva, asked him to devour himself. Which the demon does, till only his face is left. This face is known as Keerthi Mukha. It finds its place in front of Shiva temples denoting the significance of 'I' devouring its identifications to reach the self.*

**Split between spirit and matter:**

*Spiritual science and our individual experiences tells us that the cosmic and conscious energies are united in the creation of a living being. The cosmic energy, being the 5 elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) or the pancha mahabhutha. Our body is born out of the 5 elements and goes back to it at death. However, the mind has its source in the pure conscious energy, which permeates everything and is the source of everything. We have all experienced a no mind state in deep sleep. Seekers of the self-have left us with the question of who is it that is conscious of a no mind state?*

*Earlier philosophers in the West had engaged in the study of the soul, its source, its journey and more. However, History has shown us how the philosophy of Rene Descartes, a French philosopher and scientist, influenced and augmented the drive of the western mind towards the materialistic world. He is credited with being the "Father of Modern Philosophy". His theory on the separation between the mind and the body went on to influence subsequent Western Philosophy*

*The influence of this philosophy was wide spread. The significant outcome of this was to reduce everything to matter and truth was only that which was measurable. The effect of this split between mind and body and the legitimization of the measurable as the only truth, also led to rendering of the knowledge of the self as non-existent or illegitimate. This paved the way to impact our emotions, our residues as well as the dynamism of our Beings.*

*In my journey as a process worker, I see that the ignorance of our true self often leads to our deep identification with the various dimensions of our minds. Such as with our thoughts, emotions, experiences, beliefs, memories, Intellect as well as our roles in life. This also became a source from which springs our pathos, our sense of inadequacy, victimhood, residues and fragmented perception of the world.*

*An excellent example of a personality, who is a victim of the strong hold of his residues and identities is depicted by the character of Dhritharashtra in the Mahabharata. The blind king and father of the Kauravas.*

*The symbolic meaning of his name gives us a window to his personality. The word 'Dhrith' means to clutch on fiercely and 'Rashtra', means possessions. The epic talks about the blind king who also blinded himself to all wrongs in his need to clutch on to his kingdom and his possessions, which also symbolises his perceptions. Through this character, the author conveys to us that a mind that strongly identifies itself with anything will be metaphorically blind. In other words, clutching on to our perceptions, thoughts, emotions and beliefs, fragments our vision and blinds us to expanded meanings and choices. Also, the word personality comes from the Greek word Persona. Which means a mask. This also supports the fact of our true self being separate.*

**Similarities :**

*As processes, Self-Inquiry as well as Process Work are both directed from the gross to the subtle. The seed or objective of both the processes is to empower the individual in their search for wholesomeness and meaningfulness. This in turn will improve the quality of their relatedness and expression in their roles. Both are founded on researched and experiential knowledge and body of work. Both are of relevance to people, irrespective of country, religion, gender, time or age. Both are also processes to be understood and practiced by the individual with consistency as an integral part of our lives.*

**Dissimilarities:**

*Process work, as practiced by Aastha, works towards enabling an individual to integrate his/her thought, feeling and action. Its aim is to free the individual from the compulsions of the past and to find choices for the future that would be relevant to their current living reality. It helps the individual to discover their individual or subjective truth and find immense strength in themselves.*

*This work engages mainly with the emotional mind, self-enquiry into our identity patterns, our meaning making and choice making processes through cognitive re-definition*

*Self-inquiry directs us in knowing our true self beyond the mind and our subjective truth. It also enables us in recognizing the connection between our mind, our emotions, our identity patterns as well as the accumulation of residues and compulsions of our past.*

**Need for simultaneous engagement in both processes:**

*The four tenets of process work as espoused by the “Samkhya” system of Indian philosophy has deep significance in the need for simultaneous engagement in both the processes. The subjective truth discovered through Process work and absolute truth experienced through the practice of Self-inquiry are like two sides of the same coin. Our search for wholesomeness and meaningfulness will be complete when we deploy the four*

*tenets of making the invisible self-visible, articulating the inarticulate self, owning the disowned self, which will enable us to act out the withheld.*

*The Samkhya philosophy also describes the mind or chitta, which we engage in process work, as a part of Prakruthi or the world of matter, which is distinct from the Purusha. Purusha or the self, being pure consciousness and Prakruthi as what the Purusha is conscious of. Prakruthi and Purusha exist in each one of us.*

*However, through self-inquiry, we learn that the chitta or the mind has some default patterns called 'Kleshas'. They are Avidya (ignorance of self), Asmita (egoism or identification with the transient), Raga (attachment or strong likes), Dvesa (aversion or hatred) and Abinivessah (clinging to life and fear of death). As explained in the Patanjali yoga sutras, all the five kleshas are sources of our emotions to human suffering as well as to our non- well-being. The great saint Patanjali takes us beyond mere knowledge of self. He describes certain practices or yoga sutras and the need for consistent cleaning of the chitta to address the 'kleshas'.*

*Combining the knowledge of our mind with knowing one's true self and engaging with our patterns in life spaces not only loosens the strong hold of residues, identities as well as meanings given to experiences. It replaces fragmentation and exclusion with Connectedness and inclusion with respect to ourselves, our ecosystem and each other.*

*In the process of writing the paper, I could connect to the subjective and absolute truth of Prakruthi and Purusha with the example of continuous waves in the sea, which is essentially water.*

*The following quote on our essential nature drives home the need to know thy self and selves.*

*"We are not human-beings living a spiritual life, but spiritual beings living a human life.*

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