CHAPTER - 1
SELF – ACTUALIZATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAME

Nobody seems to understand the meaning of self - actualization. The quest for sophistication and a state of mind for scholarly pursuits often destroys one’s sense of simplicity. The seeking eye of the mind works wonders when it overshoots the domain of the obvious. Depth – seekers develop a propensity to ignore the most commonplace observations.

And that is what seems to have happened in identifying the self-actualization need. Each individual in his totality is a unique expression of life – the only one of his kind. There is no attempt to compare and contrast the similarities and differences. There is no attempt to explain what parts make the whole. Not even about one’s bigness or meanness, blackness or whiteness etc - none at all.

Right now there is no analysis on the plane of a scholastic appreciation of what makes an individual. For the moment, the focus is on the expression of his holistic existence as unique, and his frame of reference as he is, the only one on earth.

Each individual is what he is and he is only in one mission of life and that is – in every single act or expression of his life he is only self-actualizing himself. No human being has any other need except to self actualize himself. The researcher ventured to examine a bold postulate: each individual is under compulsion to self - actualize his existence, to express himself in every part of his behavior – no matter how odd and difficult his circumstances and how feeble or forceful his existence. The researcher considered self in this holistic perspective and actualization as its dynamics of expression in behavioral terms without going into unnecessary psychological and philosophical dissection and dissertation. Management perspective of self is more important to this study than the meditation perspective. By management perspective of self, it is
understood how an individual develops an understanding of what he wants, what are his needs, what is he.

The questions those derive present investigation are:

How does one become increasingly aware of one’s own internal structures and their expressions in one’s actions, emotions and thoughts?

How does one create his own empire?

Why one pursues what one pursues?

Why does one stop?

Why does one become helpless, hardcore?

How does one find oneself compelled to do what one must do, no matter what?

How does one travel on endlessly in what one seems to be defined or destined in?

Consciously, not – consciously, whether or not one defines one’s life into a mission, why does one travel on a timeless plane often extending much beyond one’s expected physical lifespan?

Why does one dream?

What fires one’s quest for knowledge and what lights one’s spirit of imagination?

How does one innovate, improvise, or invent methods or machines or materials?

How does one actualize the reality of what one wants to accomplish?

These and many more related questions became the guide to answer and explain the management aspect of self or self-actualization. The researcher was conscious all along that relevant theoretical aspect of the whole game of self-actualization shall have to be incorporated even when the focus is ‘play’ and not ‘commentary’. The bias in the study is well defined in favour of the ‘practitioner’ of self-actualization and not the theoretician.
When Maslow began theorizing human needs and their play – he could see a pyramidal or hierarchical structure in which a person tries to satisfy his/her physical, security, social and esteem needs – but along with these he identified something more, something more special, something very unique and rather unidentified need, particularly important to each individual, in which he observed that there is some sort of special actualization taking place that is characteristic of the person. He rightly observed that the person is in an effort to do or become what he wants. He defined this as highest human need and termed it has self-actualization.

He defined it by saying ‘a man must be what he can be’.

He observed a gap between a person’s present status and what he is trying to be and introduced the concept of ‘potentialities’ – that is, he thought, that every human being tends to grow up to fulfill his own ‘potentialities’. That is where, according to the researcher, he skipped the obvious. Being a highly skilled psychologist dealing with psychoneurotic cases and also driven by his own conception of some sort of hierarchical order in the satisfaction of human needs, he placed self-actualization on top of the ‘needs pyramid’.

Surprisingly, he did have the understanding that a man is what he is – but he ignored it and assumed that only very special kinds of people whose lower needs are already met tend to self-actualize themselves though he observed that every human being has this need but defined it as dormant or weak till it surfaces for self-actualization.

It is this observation that perplexed the researcher.

This need did not seem to exist at the top of the pyramid but looked all pervasive and highly potent and appeared to work all the time in everybody no matter what one thinks, feels or does. It seemed to give ‘uniqueness’ to an individual’s existence and expression.

He went through conceptualization rather hurriedly and did not substantiate much on the nature and play of self-actualization and opened the field for research. Subsequent researchers could not prove what he postulated and thus
the highest and the most potent, the most important and the all pervasive human need was shelved – unidentified, unexplained. At least theoreticians certainly did do that though practitioners, even today, find self-actualization concept highly useful and effective in clinical psychology.

As a student of self-actualization, the researcher observed that every individual is hardcore and invincible in what he is. He is willing to leave everything. He does not bother about his life or death. But he is not willing to leave what is him. It was this point that the researcher was conscious of and wanted to investigate. It was imperative not to make the mistake Maslow did – did he?

What does this whole self create?

Dreams, imagination, thoughts, feelings, actions - that is all.

There is need to define consciousness also.

From the management perspective, all knowledge that is live and awake and accessible to an individual may be defined as consciousness.

And whatever one does not know at present or does not have access to, can be defined as subconscious or unconscious or not – conscious. For the purpose of avoiding confusion arising out of accepted meanings of these terms in vogue, the term ignorance is picked to define all that one does not know or not aware of. Since the present study is not going to deal with any process that can not be related to consciousness, everything else is shelved into the domain of ignorance.

An attempt is made here to deal with consciousness in a very practical way – to recognize only those dreams that one has become conscious of, dreams those have become imagination; imagination that has now become a thought; a thought that one now knows has become a ‘feeling’; a feeling that has now produced action; and actions that have become effective and produced results.

It is also understood that dreams get consumed to produce imagination; imagination gets consumed to produce thoughts; thoughts vanish into the making of feelings; feelings drive and control actions to produce desired results.
and desired results produce the status of ‘fulfillment’. This status of fulfillment ensures and validates that a particular stream or sub process of actualization is complete. To the researcher, this process that translates dreams into the reality of fulfillment is what self-actualization is all about.

Maslow did identify that one is constantly in a desire for fulfillment namely to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is. This is the point he saw and missed. This tendency for a person to be himself is the driving force for his expressions and actions and not the goals and motives because unless he is externally actualized in what he is internally, his internal drives do not let him rest and demand external expressions. The basic difference in focus between Maslow’s approach and the present investigation is that he sees actualization as external performance and achievement and this study sees internal compulsions seeking actualization in external expressions. He sees only very special status of competence and achievement as self-actualization and the researcher sees every individual in a very special and unique actualization process, all the time, in all his actions and expressions, however great and grand or however feeble or filthy.

That is the basis of this study.

Gandhi remained all he was, all his life. All throughout, he remained unchanged though his size of operations and quality of expressions kept on enhancing or diminishing through cycles or through circumstances.

Going a step forward, a person is what his make up is ‘internally’. When he is placed in ‘external’ situations, a dynamic process of interaction starts between his internals and externals resulting in his quest for a new equilibrium. This quest results in pursuit for new knowledge. He searches new ideas through the dreams or imagination or thinking or references. He hunts for appropriate methods and tools for action that could possibly promise him desired results. One can not have fulfillment unless acceptable results are achieved. Unless one’s internals spread into his externals and one has actualized what he actually is inside, one does not rest. This interaction for fulfillment results in his inner
self assuming bigger dimensions. Every time one grows big, one also refines his inner being. One sheds off the not wanted, and reinforces and reconstructs what is truly him. The delicate point to see is that he does not change, he only grows like a seed to a sapling to a giant tree but a mango remains a mango and does not become an oak and vice versa. It is this dynamism that never dies. Social structures do create bonsai beings from the banyan but only the size changes. External forces can dwarf people but they can not destroy the nature and form and the uniqueness of individuals.

This raises a controversy and contradiction regarding change dynamics, development, growth, evolution. Does it mean that an individual is born into what he is? If not, when does he get made into that uniqueness which one says does not change?

Thus, the first part of Maslow’s statement does make some sense when he says – the desire to become more and more of what one is. But this statement too smacks that a man is striving for becoming more and more. There is no striving in this sense. The process of expression of one’s inner being in seeking external expressions for actualizing himself. This work out expands him and makes him more and more of what he is. We are only expressing ourselves spontaneously.

**Maslow’s Theory of Self-Actualization**

It appears Maslow seems to look at things in a highly magnified way - either some thing distinctly bright or exceptionally hopeless. The less perceptible traits of the average or common people seem to elude him. He thought in terms of goals & destinations as if, a plant is striving for blossoming or bearing fruit; as if the young girl or the woman in her is fighting and struggling for her destination to produce a baby. The concept of human needs in taken as for goals a human being is trying to achieve. The researcher saw life in an expression of goalless, spontaneous evolution interacting with the environment it is placed in. It is natural for the seed to grow or decay in a certain process of evolution under the given circumstances as favourable or unfavourable.
Blossoming and bearing fruit is a natural consequence of its existence and structure.

A human being does not strive for anything, if left for him. He can express into anything on earth from what he is. He does not strive or work hard to grow or to achieve; he just naturally does what he likes to do and he will do a lot effortlessly or without feeling that he is struggling to achieve a destination. The researcher was unable to appreciate the goal theory of growth. Maslow’s approach to self-actualization appeared distorted and open to question.

He says: “what a man can be, he must be.” This has implied distortion: as if, what a man is, is not adequate for him and he must try to be what he can be.

‘Potentialities’ seemed the wrong word attached. ‘can be’ and ‘must be’ needed to be questioned. ‘can be’ defines the ‘limits’ to which a man can grow and ‘must be’ defines a compulsion to reach that level. Potentially every human being is equipped to reach the highest in what he naturally, spontaneously, happily wishes to express himself. Potentially every cricketer can be equivalent to the best in the world; every artist has the potential to produce the finest masterpieces; every human being can be listed in the books of world records. But the element of compulsion or competition is a distortion. There is no compulsion within every human being to strive for setting records or standing in the front ranks. No human being can be defined into a teacher, an artist, a player, a warrior etc. Each human being in his whole is a very unique and special expression of life in a given environment, circumstance or situation. Maslow is missing the totality of a man’s existence. He is focusing on tremendous, magnified, huge, great, as if mundane, small, and tiny, ordinary is not actualizing oneself. A man is what he is, all the time. Going down to what Maslow describes as lower needs viz esteem, love, security, physical, the observations of the researcher were that in the fulfillment of each of his need, each individual actualizes him in a very unique way no matter whether he is satisfying his esteem, love, security or physical needs.
Maslow was quite conscious of what he was attempting in explaining this concept of human need called self-actualization, because he clearly states and expands the concept into ‘fullest (and healthiest) creativeness’ of a human being but raises questions saying that these impressions are, (as yet unconfirmed)

He was not clear about how the final expressions of satisfied and dissatisfied people vary and he leaves the subject with these words: “since, in our society basically satisfied people are the exception, we do not know much about self-actualization, either experimentally are clinically. It remains a challenging problem for research”.

It is at this juncture that the researcher took the challenge to go deeper into not only comprehending the phenomenon of self-actualization but also taking the plunge into finding out processes to successfully conduct the process of actualizing what one is. Since the researcher was deeply involved in the management training processes for effective leadership through the simulation sensitivity training methodology, the trainees were helped at their desks, in their tasks through what they were and what they were trying to achieve. The processes of ‘doing a little better every day in everything’ were translated into the processes of yoga of mind and action, popularly known as yoma. Years of training and deeper understanding produced some beautiful results. There were ample opportunities for research and experimentation in the new found knowledge. So verification and validation of some concepts that evolved became possible. At this stage the ‘Chitwant concept’ started taking shape. The researcher started out growing the business world and moved into the larger arena of life, took to ashram life and traveled far and wide from ‘Kashmir to Kanyakumari’ in search of understanding what ‘Indian life’ is and how to help it blossom into a better and beautiful world. The process brought the researcher face to face with the first and the last man of the land.

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‘to know who I am and to learn how to express what I am and also to discover how to better myself’ lead the researcher to a beautiful domain of learning and doing whatever was needed. All that knowledge has been conceptualized and generalized for effecting self-actualization in the ‘Chitwant concept’ for self-actualization. The whole concept is summarized in the next chapter.

Maslow talked about an individual’s need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of himself/herself, for self respect or self esteem and for the esteem of others based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others. The one aspect he particularly explains is the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Whether or not this particular desire is universal is not known. He raises the crucial question, especially important – “will men who are enslaved and dominated, inevitably feel dissatisfied and rebellious?” On the basis of commonly known clinical data, he says ‘a man who has known true freedom will not willingly or easily allow his freedom to be taken away from him’. He raises more important pointers.

Referring to Gandhi, one sees parallel syndrome in south African setting among the populations of Indian origin.

One segment was of people who had lived as free people and at considerably higher social status in their own country, who were respected by others and had a fairly firmly based possession of self-respect. As for example, Gandhi, son of a prime minister, educated in London in law. Others from business community of Mohammedans, Pathan and high caste Hindus and so on.

The other segment of the population belonged to the untouchable and downtrodden labouring classes. The ruling Europeans treated Gandhi and others as ‘coolies’, as ‘worthless’, ‘vermin’ etc not distinguishing at all between the educated well placed self respecting individuals from the rest among the ‘coloured classes’. Whites vs. Non whites class war manifested quite a lot of what Maslow pointed to – ‘you kick a self respecting man and ill treat him, you face a rebel in him and you buy an enemy.'
Maslow also talked about freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express one’s self, justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness etc. Thwarting of these requisites, he said will be reacted to with a threat or to emergency response. These conditions are defended because without them the basic satisfactions are quite impossible, or at least, very severely endangered.

There is another relevant observation Maslow made. He said people who have been satisfied in their basic needs throughout their lives, particularly in the earlier years, seem to develop exceptional power to withstand present or future thwarting of these needs simply because they have strong healthy character structure as a result of basic satisfaction. They are the strong people, who can easily weather disagreement or opposition, who can swim against the stream of public opinion and who can stand up for the truth at great personal cost. It is just the ones who have loved and been well loved and who have had many deep friendships who can hold out against hatred, rejection and persecution.

According to Maslow, an average person is satisfied with respect to all his needs as follows:

- Physiological needs – 85%
- Safety needs – 70%
- Love needs – 50%
- Self esteem needs – 40%
- Self-actualization needs – 10%

He ascribes mostly unconscious character to these needs in an average person, but goes on to admit that they may with suitable techniques, and with sophisticated people become conscious. That’s where the researcher got the impetus to conceptualize the ‘Chitwant’ model. Chitwant means ‘possessor of consciousnesses’. The Chitwant concept of self actualization is directly based on this assumption that consciousness can be brightened up and a man can attain greater and greater access to his own self and actualize himself by
acquiring suitable knowledge and by learning management skills to translate this knowledge into reality of his life. That is where the whole difference lies in the east and the west. Culturally he says an individual’s conscious motivational content will usually be extremely different from the conscious motivational content of an individual in another society.

However, it is the common experience of the anthropologists that people, even in different societies, are much more alike than we would think from our first contact with them. Maslow describes the differences in style of dress, clothes and food etc as superficial than basic. He explains in part his attempt to account for this unity behind the apparent diversity from culture to culture but he makes no claim that what he says is ultimate or universal for all cultures. The claim is made only that it is relatively more ultimate, more universal and more basic than the superficial conscious desires from culture to culture.

Maslow failed to see the total of a man, his whole of him, actualizing in every act of his behavior. The researcher was able to postulate that a man does what he is. He only self actualizes himself, no matter what he is doing: eating, sleeping, making sex, loving, behaving in whatever big or small, at a point of time or over his lifetime. Further observations point out that whether a person has the knowledge of his self or not – he only self actualizes himself all the time, all his life. While distinguishing between expressive behavior and coping behavior, he says - an expressive behavior does not try to do anything; it is simply a reflection of the personality. He makes a very significant observation: a stupid man behaves stupidly, not because he wanted to, or tries to, or is motivated to, but simply because he is, what he is.

Time and again Maslow ends where the researcher begins. He says: ‘reader may be assured that this is the only one among many such paradoxes that will appear as we revise our ways of looking at man’s deeper motivations. When we ask what a man wants of life, we deal with his very essence.

Maslow believed that each person has an essential nature, ‘a skeleton of psychological structure’, part of it shared with all human beings, part of it
unique. There is strong genetic component to each person’s nature. Somehow Maslow maintained that this inner nature is not strong and overpowering and unmistakable like the instincts of animals. It is weak and delicate and subtle and easily overcome by habit, cultural pressures or wrong attitudes toward it. Even though weak it rarely disappears in a normal person – perhaps not even in the sick person. Even though denied, it persists underground forever pressing for actualization. He related self - actualization to the most unusual people – Lincoln, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Einstein and some others.

Self - actualization has also been defined as a process: ‘the drive to become what one is capable of becoming; includes growth, achieving one’s potential, and self – fulfillment. Though the theory is intuitively logical and easy to understand, the research does not generally validate the theory. Maslow provided no empirical substantiation and several studies that sought to validate the theory found no support for it. One researcher reviewed the evidence and concluded that “although of great societal popularity, need hierarchy as a theory continues to receive little empirical support ... Available research should certainly generate a reluctance to accept unconditionally the implication of Maslow’s hierarchy”.

Another review came to the same conclusion.

Little support was found for the prediction that need structures are organized along the dimensions proposed by Maslow, that unsatisfied needs motivate, or that a satisfied need activates movement to a new need level.

Paul Hersey and Kenneth h. Blanchard observed that the late Indian leader, mahatma Gandhi, frequently sacrificed his physiological and safety needs for the satisfaction of other needs when India was striving for independence from great Britain. In his historic fasts, Gandhi went weeks without nourishment to protest governmental injustices. He was operating at the self - actualization level while some of his other needs were unsatisfied.
Clare W. Graves has developed a theory that seems to be compatible with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. He contends that human beings exist at ‘different levels of existence’. At any given level, an individual exhibits the behavior and values characteristic of people at that level; a person who is centralized at a lower level can not even understand people who are at a higher level. According to him, most people have been confined to lower (subsistence) levels of existence, where they were motivated by needs shared with other animals. Now, western man appears ready to move up to a higher level of existence, a distinctly human level. When this happens, there will likely be a dramatic transformation of human institutions. When one becomes concerned about esteem, recognition and eventually self actualization money becomes a less appropriate tool to satisfy these needs and, therefore, less effective.

The pointer:

Maslow perceived the human personality as typically being caught in conformity to the demands of society. He wrote that such conformity is not necessary, proposing the idea of self-actualization as a condition that can be reached by everyone if he eschews the conformity brought upon him by the dominance of those needs at the low levels of the hierarchy.

The present research got focused on ‘how can one self-actualize?’ some light is seen. This study does seem to open up a very vital field for experimental research. It appears that this study should be able to invite many individuals who will be willing to explore and experiment with their lives as Gandhi did. In the process, it is hoped, humanity shall witness many great individuals from all walks of life contributing to the goodness of mankind while they discover the beauty of their own existence and expression. The answer to the question on how to self-actualize evolved as a concept through deductions arrived at from a life time of learning and teaching and training processes of the researcher in his effort to help people acquire better competence in whatever they were doing, to help them blossom to their fullest potentials and to help them acquire giant proportions in what they were. In mundane terms, it is stated that
everybody can consciously evolve himself from inferior beginnings to his highest form by continuously doing ‘a little better everyday’. The concept has been named the ‘Chitwant concept’ for self - actualization. (Chitwant means one who possesses consciousness.)