

Some Characteristic Features of Our Tradition



Sushanta Banerjee

Co-Founder & first Executive Director – Sumedhas Academy for Human Context
Founder & CEO Samuday Psycon (OD Consultants)
sushanta@samuday.com

www.samuday.com

www.sumedhas.org

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Abstract

Process Work has acquired several 'rupas'. All these have a great deal in common especially at the intent level and yet have distinctive features characterising their working. The traditions are distinct in terms of their axioms and methods. These constitute the tradition.

We, process workers in Sumedhas and Aastha share our original tradition dating back to the early 90's. The origin was nucleated in 1978 and chiefly anchored by the late Prof. Pulin Garg. He emphasised "no books" but advised reading of history, mythology and literature instead and emphasised the reality that process work is heavily influenced by the culture. He brought in several Indian tools as well as techniques originating in Indian literature and tradition. His Key emphasis was on studying, understanding and intervening in human processes through persistent practice.

This essay is an attempt to outline the nature of this tradition that based itself in Indian thought in that at the core it subscribed to the idea that reality is not only that which is manifest but consists as well of the unmanifest and the manifesting. This is completely opposite to the western definition which takes reality as that which is manifest. The tradition's emphasis is on being human. This tradition recognises and works with the idea that the self is infinite.

This essay goes on to outline some of the assumptions about the nature of man, the nature of phenomena and the nature of reality. It goes on to state a few distinctive activities of this tradition that centrally subscribes to an existential view of man, nature of existence and the world.

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A. Prologue

Where am I with 'Our Tradition'

The need to write about process work comes with an intertwined opposition, a contradiction as it were. By definition, process work deals with experience and action using knowledge from the social sciences. All these are multidimensional. How can experience be written about except by reducing the multi-dimensional to only a two-dimensional, linear presentation. The only way out is in fact to begin with a statement of my own position. This acknowledges a cardinal reality of process work itself and that is, that process work is essentially an enterprise in subjectivity, judiciously balanced and supported by empirical data.

I begin this essay thus with my story of entry and subsequent immersion in process work. I will then go into the agreed upon topic and that is, characteristic features of the tradition that Aastha and Sumedhas share. The reader may, if so desired, skip the Prologue and go directly to the next section.

In order to talk about the distinctive features of this tradition, it might be very interesting and useful to develop a comparative chart as it were, between the several traditions of process work available today. I hope this essay will give birth to such an exercise that will require the participation of representative holders of each tradition. I am restricting myself in this essay to articulating what I see are the distinctive features of our tradition. In all fairness each

tradition must be represented and vocalised by members of that tradition. Gathering material on the other traditions would require a much larger exercise and will likely span a much longer time than the few months which it has taken for this exercise to materialize. I have therefore in this essay restricted myself to articulate our tradition. I cannot take myself as the sole holder of our tradition. I hope this essay will provoke many others of the holders to come up with other facets and better expositions than have materialised here. In fact if we were to embark on such an exercise we are likely to set off a fountain of innovation.

My entry into Process Work and our Tradition

My formal education had given birth to the firm view that if everybody in the world were to be as objective as I believed I was, then mankind would surely reach its goal of utopia. This utopia was nothing other than the Reader's Digest and Life magazine picture perfect packaged view of the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand societies. Sitting here in India, it was impossible to see the underbelly of these societies. The redeeming feature however were writers like Aldous Huxley (Brave New World), short stories by Somerset Maugham and other writers that were challenging the synthetic utopia of the European culture and society. Needless to say, there was widespread indoctrination of low self-worth as Indians. The ethical frames to be adopted/aspired towards were like the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant/Fabian Socialist/Post-Victorian/ Post-Modern ones. As an individual, I used to find this repugnant but knew no way of finding my way out of this collective self-hate. One simple statement of protest was my preference for Indian dress on formal occasions and rejection of suits and ties.

In this dispensation, 'peace' meant maintenance of status quo and 'change' meant improved versions – more of the same. Any opposition was called rebellion. Behaviour was mostly guided by form and (in today's language, political correctness) a context in which authority figures acquired God-like stature and power. My idealism inspired by Swami Vivekananda, had become progressively muted as I moved beyond adolescence. Any verbalization of the same invited jeering and ridicule from peers and friends.

At an individual level, I found myself holding huge amounts of accumulated resentment and resistance to 'that which is'. Rebellious and isolated, I took refuge in my talents and hobbies. These brought their due rewards but didn't make me any happier.

The nature of the experience when I look back was, a huge gap between what I was experiencing and what I was told to experience. This pathos had taken the wind out of my sails. Ideals such as making India strong, becoming an innovative designer had all taken a nosedive and crashed into the dreary sands of what I perceived as apathetic, uninvolved adults who seemed to be invested wholly and solely to pay, position and power. This included on a significant scale, most of the teachers I had encountered till then.

The Beckoning to Process Work

Deflated and nearly hopeless, I had resigned to the repeated experience of being misunderstood by adults, nine out of ten times. My hope in my future had dimmed to dangerously low levels. That is when I bumped into an adult who was going to become the biggest influence in my life for the next twenty-five years. He was a short, dark, bundle of energy, witty, insightful, extremely sensitive person who spoke with a Californian West UP

accent, often wearing Indian dress to class and sharing a smoke with students. In the early days at IIM Ahmedabad, it was customary for all professors during the induction days, to invite the new students with 'come and visit, whenever you want', which would usually be followed by 'oh, not today, let's try tomorrow.' Pulin on the other hand, not only gave and stuck to appointments faithfully, but he invested in-depth, quality time, including taking some of us through serious psychological tests with extremely helpful feedback sessions. At last, I encountered an adult who was worth looking upto, not only from a distance, but also from close quarters, with whom it seemed possible to strike up a friendship. His candour and stout upholding of the importance of experienced reality vs constructed reality resonated loudly in my heart along with his strong feelings for India. This was the main beckoning for me towards process work.

Open sesame! Onwards to New Vistas

The period following my first lab as a participant (Mount Abu, Summer 1971) while a student at IIMA was building up to a huge change in my innerworld of perceiving “reality”. It started with small incidents that occurred fairly frequently over a period of about six months. I began to, in a very matter of fact way, predict events that were to take place in the near future. I knew the results of a the cricket Test series before the team travelled out (India's first Test series victory overseas, the Ajit Wadekar led team beat England 2 – 1, 1971). Prescient awareness of mundane events became commonplace for me, like who I would meet at the hostel dining room for breakfast, what the conversation will contain, and then, one tragic event – the demise of a friend from a completely unexpected pathology – he was incidentally a top class athlete on the campus! There also were several experiences of telepathy, later

verified over the telephone and letters. I began to wake up to the startling recognition that the universe was far more than what I had “seen” till then. That there are levels of existence that make a mockery of the 'objective' conception/ideal that I had aspired to and imagined worth working towards. I now knew with the certainty of my own spontaneous experience that there are multiple dimensions of existence, mostly beyond our ordinary senses. A second, no less startling, that each of us carried stresses within which when released in the lab, enhanced our performance dramatically. Performance limitations therefore were not structural but fluid and changeable. To my mind, indoctrinated with “objective” frames, this experience was pure magic. It was an experience of a huge liberation. I was drawn to the idea that I might facilitate change for myself and for others, as a calling.

My view of life stood at a brand new threshold. The ideal of an objective world had crumbled to dust revealing now a vast open vista that was waiting to be explored – the feeling was not unlike Sherlock Holmes' famous call “The game's afoot Watson”! I had been gifted a purpose in life. Later, much later I learnt that I was not the first and that this happens to resonate very strongly with the Eastern view of Existence.

My relationship with Pulin was the usual student teacher one, and when I enquired about this strange experience, his response was delightfully matter of fact “Yes such things happen to some people”.

Intuition guides me

I knew formal knowledge was not the way forward for me. I had to confront what was in my mind and struggle with it rather than seek and absorb new things available as knowledge.

The call to work as Pulin's assistant became like the rabbit-hole of entry into a new world for me. This was an opportunity that overarched everything else – family, career etc. In doing this work, I could engage with the real issues. Real issues meant the inner world of emotions, inner structures, absorbed (introjected and internalized) 'truths' – accompanied with the hellish experience of burning with and through them. The opportunity to join all the participants in going through this process/practice became my chosen way forward. This was the first stage of a sufficient utopia in my world. Of course in 1972 I took a job, not in the Corporate sector but with ISRO focused on the application of Satellite technology to be used for mass communication with villages in India. The salary was exactly half of what was on offer for me from the Corporate sector. I was looking forward to being able to continue remaining associated with Pulin and help conduct the student labs at IIMA, plus, the added bonus of being able to do “something for my country”. I was deeply grateful to ISRO for not objecting. I was and still am grateful To Profs Satish Dhawan and Yash Pal for supporting academic involvements, mine as well as the organisation as a whole. The encouragement and the learning in fact helped the quality of my contribution not only to mine but also to ISRO's goals, including a prestigious UNDP “worlds best” award for a low power TV transmitter ten years later.

B. Characteristic Features of our Tradition as reflected in our Labs for Personal growth

Scope of this statement

I had worked in about nine labs with Pulin between 1972 and 1975. In 1976, I joined the internship program in ISABS who kindly granted me entry directly into phase 2. The entry into the internship program of ISABS brought to light the fact that there were different kinds of process work afoot. The first lab (phase 2, week 1) was a Tavistock style small group. This was a total culture shock for me. It was followed by 2 days of introduction to Transaction Analysis that seemed like a doctor-patient conversation – diagnostic and prescriptive. Similarly I experienced structured and semi-structured exercises in the NTL tradition while working in Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad (1977 to 80).

Pulin's labs were very different from all these. The first cut significant difference was the level of emotionality and richness of touch. As I have stated earlier, here I will refrain from making any further comparative observations and restrict myself to our tradition (see further readings for a few examples). For whatever it would be worth, such an exercise would need to be based on even grounds with appropriate representation of all the traditions.

Aims and Objective of this Essay: The 'Change/Preserve' Dilemma of a given tradition

A tradition consists of knowledge, practices ,preferred approaches etc to form a package that is practical and in some sense proven. Over time small incremental changes as well as significant additions alterations can take place. It is also possible in some cases that the carriers of a given tradition for their own reasons believe in a “preserve the purity” mode and refrain from making any conscious change. However under all circumstances small incremental changes inevitably creep in often times unbeknownst to the carriers themselves. These changes are usually in the nature of “deletions” and when discovered usually seen as a decline. If we look at a tradition as a living entity,over time it inevitably must change, it is equally possible that restlessly new changes are brought in by the carriers giving rise to new directions. If these succeed the carriers call it innovation and experience pride and strength.

The objective of writing this essay is to strengthen the forces of innovation running within Sumedhas and Aastha. Innovation comes when there is a willingness to take chances and risk failures but persist until new successes emerge.

Awareness of the characteristic, if not distinguishing features of our tradition is likely to strengthen the impulse for innovation that always coexists with the holders of any tradition. I am therefore enumerating a few characteristic features, this is surely not comprehensive but are some of the pillars. In my own experience the innovations have come in when someone peeped and probed into the foundations of our tradition. Many seeds were lying in wait for just that drop of water and that ray of sunlight sufficient for a new birth to sprout. I am proud

to say that I have participated in, and been witness to several innovations that arose from building on the received tradition into something that is almost completely new. There was another route to the emergence of innovation – the choice to add to the tradition. This requires audacity and is extremely rewarding.

I am sure there are similar instances to be found in Aastha's work as well.

The Characteristic Features

The Nature and Objective of the lab space

For our current purpose, Pulin had offered a very simple description of his labs. This is valid even today. He said, *'labs are spaces where intimate conversations can happen in a public setting.'* This has a serious implication. Being dedicated to intimate dialogues the space cannot be used for aims of 'changing' anyone. It cannot and in fact must not be used for correctional purposes and not collude with participants who might take a position of “Heres what is wrong with me, please help me change”. Conversely, it is completely unacceptable for anyone in a lab to take a position “Heres what is wrong with you and I will change you”.

When I asked myself once again in the recent past, why do people come to our labs? I asked myself why did I go to the first lab? Here is the answer : *People come to our labs to experience being understood.* This is beautifully if tersely stated in the Aphorisms ⁽ⁱ⁾ as

The self has a call to feel alive and discover the wholeness of Existence

The Nature of Reality

Avyakta to Vyakta – from the unmanifest to the manifest to the unmanifest

Over the years, it became clear that our tradition subscribes to the strong Eastern lines of thought beginning with the position that reality consists of both the manifest as well as the unmanifest. As such any understanding of human phenomena is incomplete unless the manifest (visible to our senses) and the unmanifest (the past and the future) are all taken into account. Human experience contains all these in every micro moment. This view thus is diametrically opposed to the position that the manifest is the only aspect of reality and it can be understood in itself ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. As the Bhagvad Gita, chapter 8, verse 18, expresses the Sankhya view

***“Avyaktad vyaktaaya sarva..
Prabhaava antya hara game
Ratriya game praliyante
Tatra yeva avyakta sam janake”***

***“From the unmanifest, all this manifest happens forth
At the beginning of the (cosmic) day
(Cosmic) night comes to the same
Unmanifest, they all dissolve back”***

We may at this point of time, ask the question, 'what is the nature of this observation?' Our answer quite clearly is that it is a description of the very nature of existential phenomena. It is a statement pointing to the very nature of existence in and of which human beings are participants. Here we arrive at the first, most critical distinguishing feature wherein in our tradition human phenomena are the object of study/investigation/exploration rather than promoting efforts to make human beings more 'aligned' with notions of what a human being

ought to be like. It is wholly an existential enterprise closest to the Western tradition of existential group work most significantly threaded to the encounter groups of Will Schutz ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ and group psychotherapy (Yalom).

The Nature of Man

The nucleus of our tradition lies in Indian thought – of the nature of reality, nature of man, and nature of phenomena. Here is a second illustration – one of the statements inherited from Pulin and very much part of our discourse is “I am in you and you are in me”, has a direct resonance with the shloka

***The wise man beholds all beings in the self
and the Self in all beings,
For that reason he does not (need to) hate anyone.***

... Isha Upanishad – verse 6

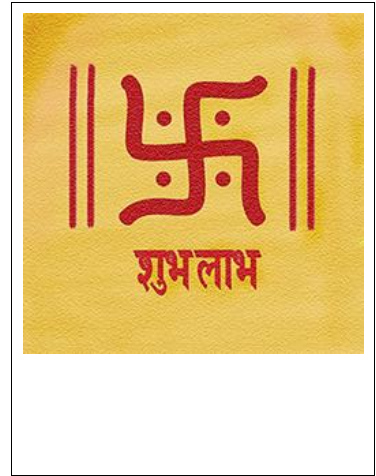
The nature of man under these circumstances clearly moves far away from the idea of human beings as monadic entities. This tradition holds each human being as an infinite phenomenon representing the infinite cosmos. It then naturally follows that human beings are polyphrenic (multiple facets, many persona, each one has internalised many) and at our very basic core, each individual is constantly creating his own reality. The BinduLab creates several opportunities to explore these realities.

In his own ordinary experience a man is both an object by way of being a body, as well as a phenomenon manifested by his thoughts and actions. Curiously reminiscent of the Heisenberg principle of uncertainty isn't it?

The Nature of Phenomena

Simultaneity of Phenomena – its all happening right now

As noted earlier at the very beginning that experience is multidimensional. It naturally follows that so are phenomena, they too are occurring simultaneously in their multitudes at the same time and place. In our tradition therefore reductionist arguments are to be avoided instead we take on multiple phenomena all at once in order to understand the here and now.



At an ethical plane we may draw upon a folk illustration in which two words and a figure are drawn as an auspicious strength giving symbol. The two words are laabh and shubh along with a swastika

Laabh means profit, shubh means 'beneficial for all' and the swastika simply symbolises the word swa(self) + aastha (faith, grounded, reliance) = faith in oneself (and good health). All phenomena are to be simultaneously addressed. (Please also see *Simultaneity* by Ashok Malhotra, (www.sumedhas.org))

In the logic of simultaneity nothing can be overlooked or excluded, all phenomena, all people, all past and present are acting in simultaneity and as such must be considered at all points of time.

Three Levels of Engagement/Inquiry

In light of the above, we have then, three levels in which human phenomena unfold. The normative, the existential and the phenomenological

Normative Level

The first is human beings in roles, in engagement with other roles, engaging in transactions that constitute the living process. This is the normative level where constructs of social order, encounter with “oughts” and “shoulds” and exploration of the world of becoming form the main body. It looks at the dynamics of norms, causes, effects, consequences, residues, choices, options and possibilities.

Existential Level

The second level is the existential level created by my relationship with myself. Any wholesome exploration of the normative world will automatically lead to entering into the existential world. The characteristic of the existential world is 'I am the only human being' and 'all human beings are contained in me'. It automatically then follows that 'I am there in all human beings'. It is this level that engages in communing with the unknown macro of the universe. Most of our rituals in our work are in this level (ex the Threshold Ritual used at the end of the Internship journey for entry into the Fellowship)

Phenomenological level

The third level is the phenomenological level which focuses on tracking the flow of energy through resonance, evocation and touch involving the group at hand. Human beings by our very nature identify with whatever we perceive. This of course includes other individuals. As

such by the very nature of our being, we are in communion with other beings. This communion is beyond communication. Every resonance creates energy. In any group or in any association, the dynamics of energy – nucleation, resonance, dissonance, amplification, communion are occurring simultaneously. This can be observed, recognized and when articulated, leads to intense experiences of liberation. Sri Aurobindo chose the word contagion to describe this, in later times this idea is being used to study/predict crowd behaviour. In Sumedhas we use this in our BinduLab as well as at times in our community exercises.

Intelligence of the Body

Pulin brought in the idea of working with the body. We have in contemporary culture come to treat the body as a silent accompaniment, witness, recipient and instigator of a great deal of our thought, feeling and action processes. The body is also a godown of contractions in reaction to stresses from as far back as birth or even earlier. Process work which ignores or takes for granted the roles of our bodies can only lead to intellectual and conceptual re-organization. Exploration at the deeper end of human phenomena becomes possible only when an alliance with the body has been firmly re-established. The body is an ubiquitous partner in all our experiencing processes, yet our social and educational systems and culture treat it as a mute vehicle – giving rise to disease on a large scale. In Sumedhas we work with the body to varying degrees in all our programs. Special attention is given in the BinduLab, the Gender and Identity Lab as well as the Learning Theatre.

Three Spheres of the Phenomena of the Self and Identity

Being, Becoming and Belonging

Our tradition firmly distinguishes between the worlds of Being , Becoming and Belonging. The imperatives, inevitables and choices related to these three domains of our experiencing of ourselves others and our worlds . The world of becoming begins at the normative level. It asks the question, 'What have I become? What am I becoming?' and carries the burden of expectations of the world and expectations of myself. Exploration of the world of becoming classically lead to encounters with the unmanifest world of guilt/shame, acceptance/rejection, self-acceptance/self-hate, and begins to bring to light 'the wounded self' created in the first three to five years of our lives (belonging). The world of becoming invariably is associated with the universe of relationships and their management.

Residues from the world of becoming end up getting stored as pathos in the being. The being in turn has a single point agenda of experiencing stillness and wellness. In our tradition, personal growth work is considered incomplete unless and until the world of being has been explored and integrated with the current exploration. The work with the being is largely in the existential and body domains whereas the work with the becoming and the belonging are in the normative domain. These three spheres intersect/overlap like in a three dimensional Venn diagram. This requires the Anchor Persons in our tradition to be conversant with the imperatives and inevitables of the intersecting spaces.

Infiniteness, the Cosmos in us.

The Aphorisms on Being Human mentions at the very beginning (page 2) that the self is a cosmic entity, it follows then that the self is infinite. Thereafter he has not built upon this idea. Pulin probably would have written another book and opened out another canvas. In my work very clearly, this seed has flowered revealing several facets of this idea. It has gently flowered into recognising the various faces of the infiniteness that we all carry.

It is very easy for us to conceive ourselves as small specks in an infinitely large Cosmos. It has now become possible to begin exploring its obverse – and – that is to explore the Cosmos in us. The Bindu has been probing in that direction now for several years with delightfully liberating outcomes for many.

Distinctive classes of activities

The Alter Ego

The term alter ego is also in use in Moreno school's psychodrama work. The alter ego in our tradition is somewhat different from the Moreno tradition. In our tradition, the alter ego is an alternate ego and an additional voice of the being that the protagonist in the lab is. The alter ego unhesitatingly states through possible alternatives, the inner thinking of the protagonist, thus helping him widen the canvas of self-disclosure. This is in my opinion the unique characterizing feature of our tradition and an extremely powerful invitation. It can be operationalized in normative, existential and phenomenological domains.

Rituals as an Epistemological Tool in Existential Exploration

The second very powerful and unique form in our tradition is the use of rituals. Our opening and closing ceremonies are ritualised actions that invariably lead to significant opening of doors. Unfortunately, the word rituals has been hijacked by the political discourse of religion, by doing which we have done great injustice to ourselves. Rituals in fact are the only way that man knows of creating a friendly equation with the infinite unknown. Each individual present can establish for however brief a spell, or an extended sense of contact with all that is grand, infinite, inviting and peace giving – without any intermediary.

De-ritualized cultures or thinking will necessarily configure the unknown to be something which consists primarily of fears and negative potentials. De-ritualised cultures believe in the ultimate value of coercive power. Rituals on the other hand reinforce experientially the fact that each one of us is as much part of the unknown thereby strengthening our hearts to not only live with the unknown, but in fact, to provide the light and reveal the joys hidden in that which we call the unknown.

Rituals have formed a significant part of the design of our programs. Rituals are a critical instrument for communicating the wisdom of the community and the potentials of the collectivity making these accessible to the individual. That which can be learnt from participating in rituals can in no way be learnt through methods of communication, because rituals rely on processes of communion rather than communication. Rituals are a gateway through which the cosmos, metaphorically speaking can enter and expand our consciousness which we otherwise restrict only to ourselves.

Drama, story telling, space exercises and solitude

Two other distinguishing features are the use of dramatized situations such as the magic shop, encounter with multiple identities and other forms of encounters that explore the universe of choice making and role taking without getting into the world of benefits and losses, but helping explore these in the context of the choice maker himself, thus promoting visibility and recognition of complex emotions and decision making.

Story telling to illustrate the width and depth of human experience is a frequent recourse in our explorations. The Four Princes story is the most prominent example, the double bind story is another. It is possible to take from mythology and folk tales to build this up.

Likewise structured spaces for example: laying out the body on the floor and then exploring the choices made by the participants, or the Role Space exercise where the structure of the space is allowed to generate itself in a random setting, and then choices are reflected on – these reflections are mainly existential but have great ramifications in the Identity world of the participants.

One of my favourite class of activities is the blind walk, it offers immense possibilities to explore the inner storehouse that we use in order to project meanings onto the empirical world and then treat these projections as objective truths.

C. Concluding statement

So I asked myself the question, 'where do I stand after 47 years of practice in this tradition?' For one, I remain a student and a teacher simultaneously. What is common to both is practice. I shall go ahead and share where I stand at the end of 47 years of immersive practice, teaching, coaching, personal growth and organization development. I shall first address the question, what is reality, what is a human being, state afresh a prime goal of process work and then address the issue of Future Directions.

What is Reality, what is a Human Being

“Reality” has several connotations and an obvious meaning in common parlance. It points to empirical objects (including pieces of information) whose existence is agreed upon. The evidence of their existence may be undeniable, or turn out to be non-existent.

It is also the case that the visibility of the objects varies depending upon the position and the power to “see” of the people in the conversation. A simple example is that of atoms and molecules or for that matter cells. These are invisible without the aid of specific instruments. Therefore what “exists” is dependent on the “seeing power” of the “subject” and the “visibility” of the “object”. What we are able to see is not all that exists. There are therefore multiple levels of reality all coexisting simultaneously. Just as you and I can see each other we accept that you and I are constituted by organs, cells molecules etc.

This is a reinforcement of the idea of “vyakta - avyakta” – manifest and unmanifest. This principle or self evident truth applies to all that exists and is not eternal. That means all that exists changes over time (hence not eternal) and has a corresponding invisible reality. It is safe to say then that the “unmanifest” is perhaps better announced as manifesting – is in the process of becoming manifest, waiting to manifest. The shloka from the Bhagvad Gita quoted earlier asserts that.

The human being too is subject to this principle, as much as the “reality” that we believe he populates. The empirical reality which he is supposed to “populate” itself is in movement – and the human being is a spectator/witness to this movement (while he too is forever unfolding – being to becoming – living to dead). Process work therefore makes great efforts to circumvent/avoid the “scientific” position of the subject-object divide.

The aim of process work spaces is to activate the witness/drashta position for, a review of the self and the reality simultaneously, with the aim of expanding our perception, action potential and, action choices. This aim applies to process work at individual, group and organisation levels.

Future Directions

When the seeker is capable but caught in self doubt, the wise man he has approached for advice about an important choice of directions, the wise man’s preferred response is “follow your nose”. Of course this can cover up the advisor’s incapability, but is actually not frivolous at all. It is a prod to the seeker to not be guided by estimation of profits or outcomes. Instead to make choices based on “instinct, intuition, impulse”. In other words critical choices are best when they arise from

creativity rather than being based on outcomes (intellect not senses). Choices based on outcomes invariably are in the nature of conservatism, safety seeking and change averse decision making.

I believe our tradition in Process Work prods us to act from convictions not only consequences to guide ourselves forward while looking at future directions. Conviction will necessarily carry the seeds of your assessment of the reality, not just external but also your own internal reality. Convictions will also carry the seeds of aliveness, not mere safety.

Where I stand today the future for our tradition is a wide open field. It has always been this way and will remain so. Whenever a new idea comes, if I am feeling conservative the new idea lingers, pickles and eventually vanishes. It leaves behind regret, self doubt and a flavour of despondency. Whenever the new idea has been accompanied with “I will make this happen, come what may”, I get ahead with it. Many have dried up some have survived and in their own way flourished bringing in fulfillment. The future is created by “what you sow, is what you will reap” (Luke 8..4-18), in other words the investment you are willing to make *now*.

As I am right now, the following is what makes sense:

1. Probe deeply into the Indian origin ideas and notions and build on them. One simple step would be to take up Indian origin nuggets and build on them. Develop a study circle of Process Workers and study the Yoga Sutras, or any piece of choice - Drg Drsya Vivek, Ashtavakra Samhita there are so many such pieces that have direct bearings on our work and will open new doors.
2. Develop a systematic articulation and exploration space for our tradition, let this one be the seed producer. Our exercises have not been systematically written out, is

Aastha ready to join Sumedhas in sponsoring/funding developmental projects of this nature?

3. I am willing to anchor workshops to generate a glossary of terms such that they do not dissipate off. Remember language is what helps preserve and grow knowledge.
4. Keep strengthening the proficiency of our members in conducting the community sessions and other skills. Completing the Internship has become like the Civil Services, once you have cleared the entry barrier you “know it forever”, - not true – as process workers we need a PW Gym to remain fit and not assume that even if I don't work in a PW setting for many years I am good enough to come as program Faculty to conduct a lab, maybe after three years of no touch with PW.
5. Go ahead and develop new designs, new programs. Your creativity is your best friend for life, it never gives up on you!! (except when you seek safety).

D. Epilogue

I have spent 92% of my adult life deeply engaged with what may be called Process Work. The circumstances of that stage of my life has been shared briefly in the Prologue. Circumstances predisposed me but the commitment that anchored me firmly in the infinite process of “Atma Vichara” – self enquiry occurred in 1976. An accidental overdose of marijuana landed me on a hospital bed in a remote village near the Nathdwara temple, South Rajasthan. In a dream like state appeared a brilliantly lit vision – perhaps in an instant – or over hours (time had ceased), a few terse messages remained. These were:-

- I. All that is, (object, beings – all) is transparent – nothing is hidden you can make the effort and see inside.
- II. There is no disorder in the universe – it is in fact perfectly ordered (crystal structure/lattice – engineer’s mind!)
- III. Your job in life is to progressively discover higher and higher states of order in all that is
- IV. Human beings (all) have infinite potential
- V. You are your own biggest laboratory
- VI. Your goal is to unravel the infiniteness in the finite (including in yourself.)

It is this commitment that has acted as the motive force, the stabilising keel and the rest giving anchor behind my life these last four and a half plus decades.

The call for finding “future directions” is one of man’s oldest desires which is why in India Yoga, astrology plus ayurveda usually formed a combination of capabilities by wise ones. In our lifetimes however ‘future directions’ is also a management phrase calling for empirical analyses and working out the most profitable course of action. I have a preference rather to trust the innate call at a cellular level, of the human organisation, to express itself. It is called expression – the unfolding of genes- for instance. Every living cell is constantly expressing itself – so are you and I. Trust, foster and welcome this – this is the spring of creativity.

The brief list of further readings at the end is to illustrate the “way forward” chosen by a few of our colleagues in Sumedhas.

In the very founding of Aastha & Sumedhas lie the seeds of the desire to express. What these two bodies have expressed, from the same origin, are delightfully distinct. What both are going to express will be so again.

The way forward then is to recognise, define and understand the tradition and enjoy the audacity to go where the nose leads you. Trust, value and invest in yourself.

E. Endnotes

References

1. Garg, Pulin K: Aphorisms On Being Human - page 3: Private publication 1996, Ahmedabad (Restricted numbers available via Sumedhas Founders on request)
2. Gregorios, Paulose Mar: Who Are We in Bharatvarsha Today? Questions about our own Identity and self Understanding. In THE EYE magazine of Indian thought, Vol IV No 1 & 2, Sept 1998 (A SPIC MACAY publication)
3. Schutz William C. : JOY Expanding Human Awareness; Ballantine Books NY 1967, (See also Yalom Irvin D. : Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy Basic Books NY 1985. Yalom and Schutz give us a detailed and granular introduction to the American antecedents that bear a strong resemblance in our tradition. The Indian material in our tradition can be built on quite easily. The Encounter Group tradition has virtually gone extinct in USA.)

Further Readings

Illustrating the various ways forward taken by some of us.

A Small but detailed peek into Pulin's thinking:

1. Man in Relation to Himself: An exploration into existential dualities and transactional dilemmas, 1984, in ISISD Primer Vol.4 (private circulation). Available with several erstwhile members of ISISD.

Below is a list of application of Process Work at two ends of the spectrum – individual experience – Organisation Development.

1. Sushanta

- i. Pebbles on the beach – 27 year journey with Process Work and Organisation Development (2007)
- ii. Process Centred Institution Building – with a case study (2007)
- iii. Mystery and Magic of the Here & Now – What makes Labs Work (2018)

These three are accessible at www.samuday.com

2. Ashok

- i. Beyond Contradiction – www.Sumedhas.org
- ii. Indian Managers & Organisations – 2019 Routledge, Oxon.

3. Kartikeyan

- i. Discover the Alchemist Within, taking the first step towards Personal Growth; SAGE 2010 New Delhi.

4. Indira

- i. Indira Parikh & S. Jeyavelu – New Trends in Sensitivity training in Organisations: Vikalpa (IIMA) Vol. 27, No.4, Oct. – Dec. 2002

Please visit www.sumedhas.org for a longer list.

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