

## 1 Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, are a universal framework aimed at creating a better and more sustainable world by 2030. They comprise 17 goals with 169 specific targets that address the pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges faced globally. Key objectives of the SDGs include:



## 2 Present State:

As of 2024, progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains significantly behind schedule. Only 17% of the targets are currently on track to be met by 2030, with approximately one-third showing no progress or even regressing. This stalled momentum reflects the impact of compounded global challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, rising inequality, and climate issues have hindered advancement in areas such as poverty, hunger, and climate action.

In specific terms, poverty and hunger have seen troubling setbacks. An additional 23 million people have fallen into extreme poverty, while the number facing food insecurity has risen by over 100 million compared to pre-pandemic levels. Despite some gains in renewable energy and education—such as increased internet access and improved school attendance for girls in some regions—the overall pace remains insufficient to meet the ambitious SDG targets. Globally, many developing nations face a substantial funding gap of \$4 trillion per year, limiting their capacity to invest in sustainable development.

Geopolitical issues also play a significant role in obstructing progress. Conflicts have displaced nearly 120 million people, and civilian casualties have surged by 72% from 2022 to 2023, underscoring the urgent need for peace to create stability for sustainable development efforts. On the climate front, 2023 was recorded as the warmest year, with global temperatures nearing critical thresholds that endanger natural ecosystems and human livelihoods.

The present state is shown in the following diagram.



### 3 Need to Explore Sustainability in a More Fundamental Way

Looking at sustainability in a fundamental way, it reveals that all human beings actually aspire for the continuity of their happiness and prosperity, and therefore, it is essential to correctly understand these basic aspirations. This will also enable an appropriate characterisation of human needs. Then, for sustainable fulfilment of these needs, it is also crucial to understand the inherent interconnectedness and other salient features of the natural order. Only by developing such an understanding and the competence to live in accordance with it we shall be able to move towards sustainability in an effective way. The need for such a holistic worldview has been repeatedly emphasised by many great visionaries, spiritualists, seers and other personalities who have been hailed as men of wisdom by humanity at large. For example, the Gandhian vision of development, Kumarappa's concept of 'Economy of Permanence' and the essence of Buddhistic economy as elucidated by Schumacher - all point towards a developmental vision taking due cognisance of the interconnectedness and coexistence in Nature, reverence for the natural order and a correct vision of human happiness. The exploration of these aspects is described in the next two chapters. Needless to say that our worldview affects all the aspects of our life, namely lifestyles, behaviour, economic activities, social set-up, technological systems and so on. Therefore, acquiring a more authentic worldview becomes of prime importance, in the light of which all aspects of our lives and activities can be suitably modified.

## 4 A Critical View at the Prevailing Worldview Regarding Happiness and Prosperity

In the worldview that has dominantly influenced modern development, the perception of human happiness has become primarily materialistic - it conceives that pleasant sensory interaction with selective material objects is the prime source of happiness. However, since all the sensory interactions are inherently transient in nature, this can never lead to sustainable happiness. In an attempt to make it perpetual, continuous effort is made to maximise and perpetuate happiness through this mode by trying to evolve and indulge in more and more pleasurable material interactions of newer kinds. This naturally gives rise to ever-increasing 'consumerism' or the tendency towards unlimited material needs. It is also responsible for the widespread modern ethos for profit maximisation and increasing accumulation of enjoyable goods and services. The fallacy inherent in this perception can easily be recognised as on the one hand, it directly leads to the unbridled exploitation of the natural environment as well as other human beings, leading to strife, disparities, violence and continuous environmental degradation; on the other hand, it is also responsible for engendering restlessness, tension, insecurity, fear, psychological problems and other incongruities within the human beings. Therefore, it proves counter-productive on all fronts. Any effort carried out under this worldview to perpetuate happiness, in fact, results in increasing misery on all fronts.

Further, under the influence of such a perception of happiness, efforts to ensure prosperity (which essentially implies the feeling of adequacy in the fulfilment of our material needs) manifest in the form of triggering more and more accumulation of enjoyable goods and services. Yet, one keeps feeling 'deprived' and wants more and more because no material accumulation can make happiness sustainable. Thus, with such a paradigm, moving towards sustainability in the real sense will never be possible.

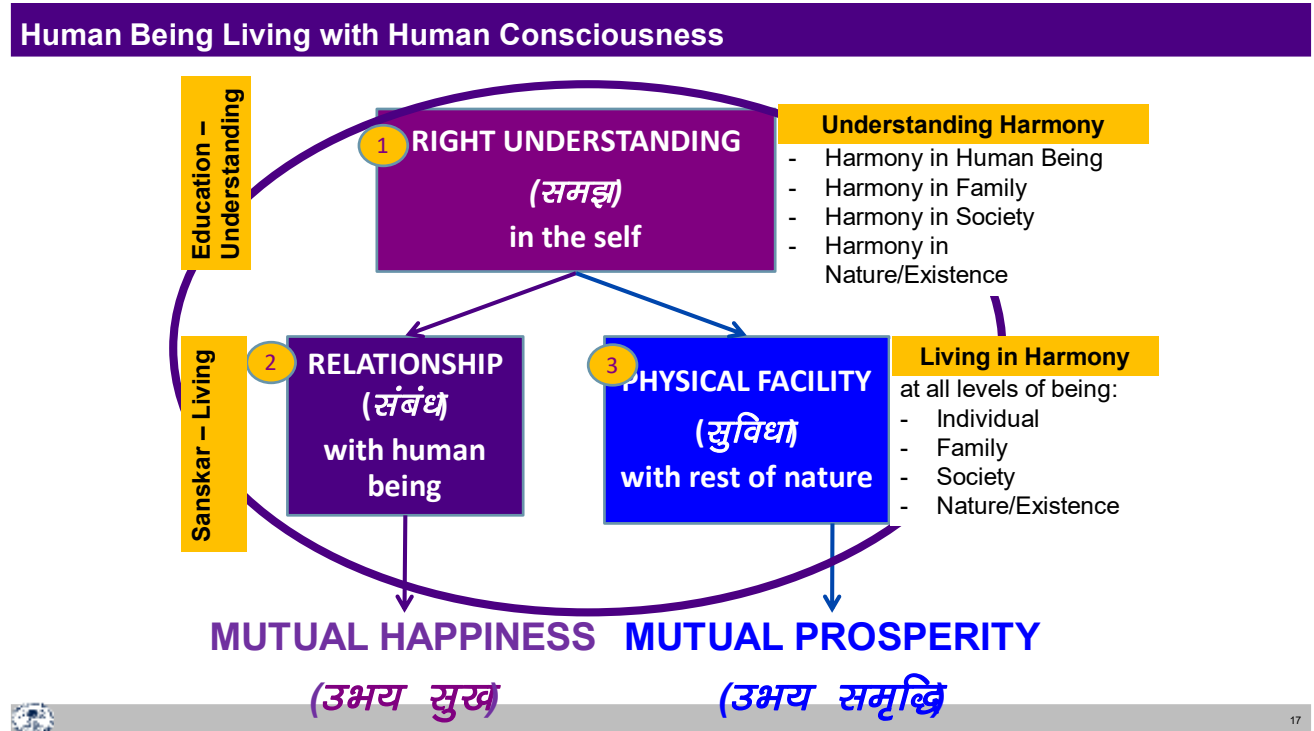
In fact, with the modern worldview, humanity today seems to be gripped with the following predicament:

**If we discard the present model of development model, how else do we live? And if we continue to embrace it, shall we at all live?**

## 5 UHV Point of View on Addressing SDGs at the Root

As discussed in section 3, there is a need to ensure a holistic worldview that gives a corrected perception of human beings, happiness and prosperity to live a sustainable life.

As shown in the diagram below, the worldview can be achieved through the right understanding (understanding of harmony in human being, family, society and Nature/existence). The right understanding forms the basis of universal human values and facilitates transformation toward a holistic worldview or the 'human consciousness'.



### 5.1 Understanding Human Being

It is easy to understand that a human being consists of an intimate 'coexistence' of two quite different kinds of entities, namely, a material body organism and a non-material sentient constituent, which may be referred to generally as mind or consciousness. Even though our normal perception of ourselves tends to remain mostly body-centric, it is not difficult to visualise that there is a mental or a 'psychological' aspect associated with the human reality and other 'somatic' or body-related aspects. Therefore, a human being is a 'psycho-somatic' entity.

# Addressing SDGs at the Root

<b>Human Being</b>	Self ← <b>Co-existence</b> → Body	
	<b>Need</b>	<b>Physical Facility</b>
	Happiness (e.g. Respect)	(e.g. Food)
<b>In Time</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Temporary</b>
<b>In Quantity</b>	<b>Qualitative</b> (Is Feeling)	<b>Quantitative</b> (Required in Limited Quantity)

We can understand that human reality is a coexistence of the self and the body. As we explore the respective roles of these two constituents, the self is found to be the knower, the doer and the enjoyer, continuously making use of the material body as its essential instrument of interaction. It is the self who recognizes the basic aspiration of happiness and prosperity and continuously aspires for these. It is the self who bears the responsibility of nurturing, protecting, and making the right use of the body instrument in all situations. It is the self that recognises relationships, emotions and values. Thus, the needs of the self may be observed to be of non-material and continuous in nature. The human body, being a material entity, has material needs such as food, clothing, shelter and the instruments to facilitate its functioning with the outside world etc. The self also experiences the feeling of prosperity, but it is related to the material needs of the body. Also, these material needs required by the body are time-dependent and specific. Of course, they vary from situation to situation and can be correctly characterised.

## 5.2 Understanding Happiness in the correct way

The right understanding of the entire existence, i.e., “realisation of co-existence,” “understanding of harmony,” and “contemplation of relationship.” Once we have this right understanding and when our imagination is fully guided by it, we reach a state of continuous harmony and happiness within.

## 5.3 Understanding Prosperity in the correct way

Needless to say, the prevailing worldview about prosperity is towards accumulating more and more wealth, which implies more and more resources for sensory enjoyment. Naturally, this view is the outcome of our tendency to primarily dwell on sensory happiness and painfully try to make it sustainable. This tendency is responsible for creating crises at multiple levels. This way, one can never really feel prosperous because there is always a scope for needing more. That is why, in present times, we talk about a poverty line but never about a prosperity line! Now, let us move towards a more correct view of prosperity. In reality, prosperity implies the feeling of adequacy in fulfilling our well-defined and appropriate material needs in harmony with Nature and with the correct perception of happiness. In this context, our material needs are well defined, and there is the possibility of their fulfilment in a sustainable way.

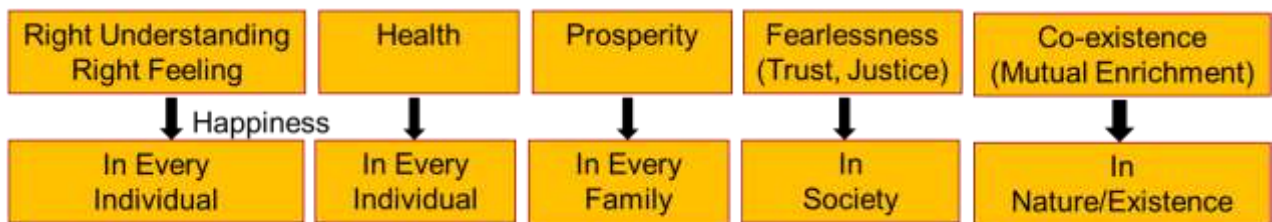
It may be concluded that acquiring right understanding about happiness and prosperity as indicated in this chapter coupled with the understanding of inherent coexistential characteristics of Nature,

provides us with a holistic worldview. This worldview will enable us to visualise our material and non-material needs appropriately. It will also enable us to anchor firmly to wisdom-based happiness and accordingly modulate our sensory propensities. This forms an essential prerequisite to facilitate the transition towards sustainable development and a sustainable lifestyle, thus naturally achieving SDGs.

## 6 Vision to address SDGs at Root

The efforts towards SDGs indicate an increasing concern and are definitely well-intentioned, but they seem to be rather `symptomatic' and are likely to produce only superficial effects. The enunciated goals actually present an exhaustive `wish-list' whose implementation presents a lot of difficulties and contradictions. Of course, in the midst of increasing crises, it is being generally recognised that along with economic development, the environmental and social aspects are also quite important. But in real-life situations, these appear to be in contradiction. As a result, the main thrust of development continues to be driven primarily by economic considerations only. This section discusses the vision required to achieve SDGs.

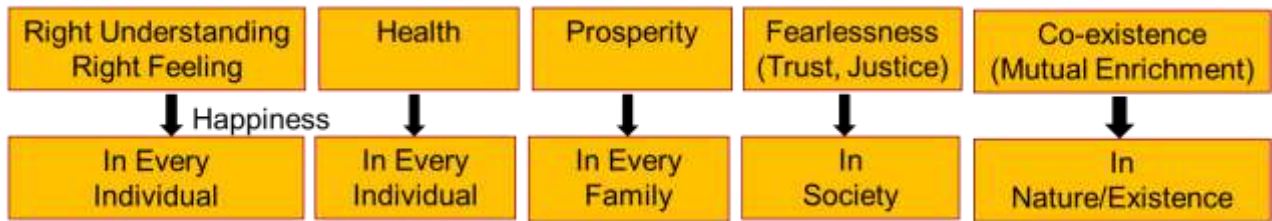
UHV proposes a vision for a humane society that consists of an Undivided Human Society and a Universal Human Order. The following goals are proposed to achieve the humane society:



If we try to achieve the above goals, SDGs will naturally be ensured.

Achieving SDGs 4 and 5 can be naturally attained by focusing on Human Goal 1 through human-centred education. Expanding efforts to Human Goals 1 and 2 can realise SDG 3. By addressing Human Goals 1, 2, and 3, we support SDGs 1, 2, 8, 9, and 12. Extending to Human Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 facilitates progress toward SDGs 10, 11, 16, and 17. Finally, encompassing Human Goals 1 through 5 promotes the achievement of SDGs 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15.

## 7 Implementation to address SDGs at Root



In the last section, we discussed the above goals to achieve a humane society. The goals can be achieved through the following eight-dimension system.

Dimensions of Human Order

1. Education
2. Health
3. Justice
4. Production, Service
5. Exchange, Distribution
6. Right Utilisation
7. Preservation
8. Dimensions of Service
  - a) Administrative Service
  - b) Social Service

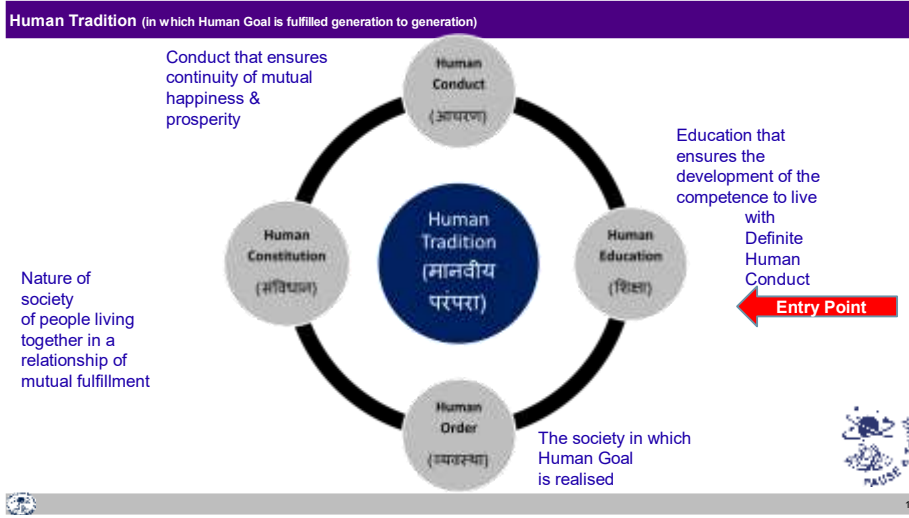
### Scope – From Family Order to World Family Order (Universal Human Order)

Family Order → Family Cluster Order → Village Order → Village Cluster Order  
→ City Order... → Nation Order... → World Family Order

The primary step to moving towards a holistic way of life is to develop the right understanding among humans, commitment to live accordingly, and then the requisite skills and knowledge systems to implement the right understanding in real life. Thus, it calls for a change in the education system towards humanistic education. The right understanding provides us with the vision of such a humanistic education.

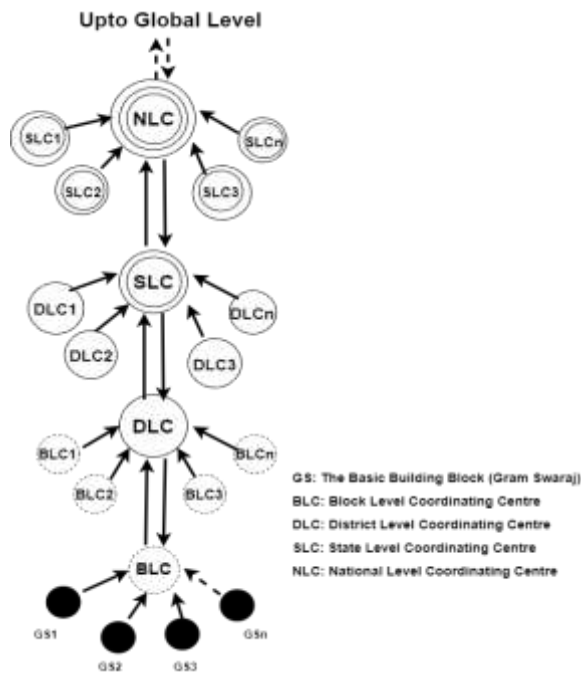
The humanistic tradition can be visualised in terms of the following four aspects of a humane society-

- Humanistic Education
- Human Conduct
- Human Constitution



If there is effort for these goals in the family, the family is in harmony. In other words, there is a family order. Society is made up of many families living together in a relationship of mutual fulfillment. The scope of harmony in society starts with the family order and extends all the way to the world family order in steps, from family order, family cluster order and so on to national family order and, ultimately, world family order. This extension of harmony, from family order to world family order, is a universal human order.

The above tradition can be ensured through the decentralised socio-economic structure given below.





## 8 Example

Few efforts at AKGEC use value education to achieve SDGs directly or indirectly. Through value-based courses and workshops for students and Faculty Development Programs for faculty members, we have found changes in their worldviews. Due to the changes, we are moving indirectly towards Goals 4, 6, 12 and 16.

Steps taken at AKGEC, Ghaziabad related to SDGs 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16



Eco Friendly, Trash Free Green Campus



Rainwater harvesting System and  
Sewage Treatment Plant



330 KW Solar Power Generation System & Solar  
Water heaters in all hostels

Educational institutions can and must urgently work on teaching UHV, research and extension of sustainable technologies...

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