UNIT 6 SELF AND OTHERS

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

Individuals in a social setting, by and large, make a series of decisions to guide their behaviour under conditions of social events. These decisions are based on the schemata (cognitive mapping of elements), which are developed from their perceptions of the environment in general and self and other relationships in particular. Effective interpersonal communication depends mainly on this self and other relationships (Self-Other Orientation) as perceived by the individual.

This unit discusses the inevitability of interpersonal and personal communication in social or group situations, the context of self-other orientation, the concept of self with its characteristics, different types of identities, types of self-other relationships and freedom, autonomy and choice in different types of self-other relationships.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss inevitability of communication in interpersonal relationships in group settings,
- describe the context of self-other orientations,
- explain the concept of self and its characteristics,
- discuss the different types of identities,
• classify different types of self-other relationships,
• discuss different types of self-other relationships in your interactions,
• describe autonomy, freedom and choice in different self-other relationships,
• discuss self-other interaction patterns in different categories.

6.3 COMMUNICATION OF SELF: AN INEVITABLE PHENOMENON

In any social/cultural situation, it would be impossible for any of us to live without communication. In the first place, we can hardly succeed in avoiding people even if we desire to do so and secondly, we cannot communicate in the presence of others. Even if an individual does not communicate verbally, he/she communicates messages through body language, facial expressions etc. It is through this process that messages are carried out either verbally or non-verbally, consciously or unconsciously, or purposefully or non purposefully. While a part of our communication is carried verbally, under conscious control and towards the intentional attainment of a specific goal, much of our presentation is non-verbal, casual, habituated and natural in our daily conversation. Many a time, these non-verbal messages have more impact on interpersonal relations than occasional, overt, or verbal statements. For example, if a teacher ignores the presence of other teachers in a group consciously or unconsciously, he/she is only disconfirming them. Therefore, there appears to be very little room for disagreement with the conclusion that interpersonal communication is inevitable. In fact, the quality of our interpersonal communication influences personal growth, psychological health, success, and a sense of well being in general. Thus, it is essential to understand self-other orientations for effective communication and well being.

Activity 1

To understand the inevitability of interpersonal communication, you should work on the following exercise:

(i) Observe your colleague’s reactions (facial expressions, body language, intonation etc.) to another colleague of yours with whom you are not interested in communicating verbally. Explain your understanding of the same to your colleague.

(ii) Observe your students’ reactions in a classroom when they are not communicating verbally and reflect upon your ‘understanding’ of their communication.

(iii) As a teacher you might have experienced the inevitability of interpersonal communication in any group situation. Try to recollect such a situation and write down your experiences.

6.4 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIP: SELF AND OTHERS

In social psychological theories of personality, adaptation to social environment by any individual is presumed to be mediated by self-other
It is proposed that social stimuli are screened and translated into personal meaning through mappings of the self in relation to significant others. This is shown in Figure 6.1.

![Figure 6.1: Self-Other Relationship](image)

A fundamental framework of the theory of self-other orientation derives from Brunswick's (1956) theory of perception. He stressed the interaction of organism and environment. Cues of the environment are presumed to be processed by an individual in relation to needs. In terms of interpersonal perception, social stimuli are presumed to be mediated by schemata, which map the relation with self and other. In this framework the crucial link is between social stimuli and social response, which is mediated by self-other schemata. The social stimuli are coded by individuals in terms of self-other orientations using mappings of self and significant others. For example, an individual in a discussion group may use the schemata of his/her self-other relationship i.e., self-ranking among the group members to help him/her decide whether or not to speak or how often to speak. Thus, the way we perceive other people has a strong effect on the way we relate to them. The way we relate to each other is affected by the way we relate to ourselves and particularly, how we perceive ourselves. With the aid of these mappings of self-other orientations, decision making for interpersonal behaviour is facilitated.

Now, let us understand how individuals learn these mappings and what constitutes them.

### 6.5 CONCEPT OF SELF AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

The concept of ‘self’ is very important in relational communication because it greatly determines a kind of self-presentation and the interpersonal response that we make to others. In this context, let us understand certain basic questions that hold good for interpersonal relationship.

(i) How do we come to view ourselves and find initial answers to the question of “who am I?”

(ii) What kind of self-concept will develop as a result of communication?”

(iii) What kind of a person do we choose to present to others?”

This concept of self is most frequently expressed in the questions “who am I”. The answer to this question largely determines and describes our lives and relationships. A better understanding to this question is to experience it. Therefore, take a few moments to jot down your own answers to the question of:
"WHO AM I?"

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Through this exercise, you will come to realize that human identity is nothing more than the cognitive image (schemata) that we have of ourselves by which we define and differentiate ourselves from others. A number of individual self-perceptions, which we call identities, constitute self-concept. All the responses (self-perception) made on this Twenty Statements Test could, thus, be considered as identities while the total of all the self-perceptions will constitute self-perception.

Identities are the building blocks of self-concept, which are developed as a result of interpersonal communication. The development and maintenance of
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identity or self-concept is based on certain basic characteristics. Therefore, it is required to understand the basic characteristics of identities. These are:

(i) **Identities represent the unique interpretations of culture and group:**
The way we learn to view ourselves is a product of how we have been taught to view a particular cultural or family value and how important it is to subscribe to or hold this particular interpretation of social reality. For example, a boy brought up in a traditional, conservative Brahmin family has much value for conventional "pooja" and "karmakanda" than a child brought up in an urban, free liberal family.

This characteristic has very important implications for interpersonal relationships. There is a range of interpretation as to what constitutes a "good" life-style, an "appropriate" behaviour, a "meaningful" use of time and energy, as well as what constitutes the "correct" social position. The point is that different value orientations may result in different forms of identities which affect interpersonal relationships.

(ii) **Human identities are learnt through a continuous process of interaction with others:**
The main focus of this characteristic is that all the ways in which we come to view ourselves are learnt through the process of socialization and through communication with others. One of the roles of education is to teach succeeding generations what it is to be good and how one should behave, as well as the perspective from which one should view the world. In other words, this is an attempt by teachers, parents and adults generally to impose their worldview or their own perspective related to various social realities on the minds of the young.

One of the implications of this assumption is that children not only learn identities that are supported by their environment, but also they learn only those identities that they have access to within their environment. For example, comparison of self-concept of children living in the urban rich families with that of their counterparts in the villages has a wide range of identities between them. Although the learning process is the same, the identities that the children from rural and urban areas have access to are drastically different.

(iii) **Human identities are observable or have observable manifestations:**
Identities and self-concepts are mentalist concepts, and they exist initially and primarily in the mind or cognitive processes of the individual. How we perceive ourselves is often subtly communicated to others or, more frequently, is openly presented to all those who have interest in perceiving and evaluating us. Paul Watzlawick has suggested that, indeed, there is no such thing as not communicating, that all behaviour that is observed has information value. And certainly a major aspect of that information value has to do with the self-concept of the individual being observed. For example, most of us have probably sat in a public place observing people as they walked by and then speculated about who they were, what their job profession was, what their tastes were like, whether they were single or married, etc. And on the other side of the fence, we have been keenly aware that we were being observed and speculated about. In these instances we usually became consciously aware and sensitive to the impression we were making or to the identities that we
were presenting. Thus, both verbally and non-verbally, we are constantly communicating our identities and our self-concepts.

It is our power of observation that can make an important contribution to our ability to predict the behaviour of others. But it is very important to remember that our perceptions are bound, not only by the time frame, but also by the social and interpersonal context in which that observation occurs.

(iv) **Human Identity is dynamic and ever changing:** The very basic idea that underlies this assumption is that people and events are constantly changing and are never the same from one moment to the next. Although some changes in identity are expected and indeed sanctioned by culture, much of the change that each person undergoes is unique. These changes occur as we interact with different individuals at different occasions and in different contexts. This is to say, each of the individuals with whom we come in contact and each new experience, to which we are exposed, changes our worldview, and self-concept to some extent. The impact may be strong and readily apparent, or it may be subtle and leave no immediately visible effect. There is no disagreement that change is indigenous to life; it is built into the system and each of us will pick up, try out, and undoubtedly discard a large number of identities in our lifetime as we are exposed to new experiences, people, and ideas. A recognition of this will become extremely important when we begin talking about interpersonal relationships and especially those relationships that are designed to be enduring and long term, that is, those we engage in with teachers, marital partners, parents, children, close friends, and colleagues.

Thus, we have discussed that human identity or self-concept is defined as the cognitive image that each individual holds of himself. According to the basic assumptions, human identity is directly drawn from cultural and group values, acquired through the process of learning and, as a result of the varied experiences of human life, constantly subject to change. In addition, identity possesses observable manifestations and more importantly, must be supported and maintained through interaction with others. Therefore, human identity should be viewed as a relational concept.

### 6.6 TYPES OF IDENTITIES

We have discussed that the individual’s self-concept is composed of a number of self-perceptions or identities, each of which is unique in its meaning to that individual. Let us now look at the levels and types of identities that make up one’s self-concept. As you might be aware, self-concept consists of three types of identities: personal, interpersonal and social-role identities. Each of these types is derived from different levels of analysis. Although each type represents a different level of analysis, all three types are interrelated. Let us discuss each type of identity in brief.
6.6.1 Personal Identities

The first level of analysis is the *intra-personal level* and identities of this level are termed as *personal identities*. One can infer from the term intra-personal that identities of this level can best be conceptualized as *within* the individual and only indirectly acquired as a result of interaction with other people. This type of identity has some observable physical or measurable mental referent that has some genetic basis. Therefore, personal identities refer to those self-perceptions that are based on genetic traits or that are directly derived from the inherited characteristics of the individual. For example, if we view ourselves as either tall, short, heavy, pretty, smart, intelligent, male, female, black, or white, we are talking about personal identities.

In addition, there are a number of derived self-perceptions that result from combinations of personal identities and thereby can also be considered as personal identities. Examples of such self-perceptions are athletic, intellectual, feminine, or attractive. To elaborate, the self-perception of attractive may be viewed as a product of personal identities as tall, pretty, smart and female. In total, personal identities refer to that part of the self-concept that was genetically dealt to us at conception and later interpreted for us by other people in our lives.

6.6.2 Interpersonal Identities

The second level of identity is the *interpersonal level* and the identities at this level are accordingly called *interpersonal identities*. As the term suggests, interpersonal means between people. Interpersonal identities refer to those self-perceptions that reflect our own interpersonal style of communicating- that is, how we see ourselves relating to others in our interpersonal lives. Examples of such identities include self-perceptions as quiet, reserved, warm, friendly, sincere, open, dynamic, outgoing, gregarious, talkative, shy, or cooperative. These identities are communicated to others through verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication includes our selection of words and the way we qualify them vocally, with inflection, tone, etc. It indicates to others how we see ourselves in relation to other people and the manner in which we wish to be perceived and supported in regard to that particular interpersonal identity. Similarly, our facial expressions, eye movement, the spatial distances we elect to maintain between ourselves and others, and the gestures we employ to complement our verbal speech, all indicate that we see ourselves as relating or communicating with others in a personalized manner that is fairly consistent over time.

One of the avenues through which all types of identities are presented is through the artifactual code of the nonverbal band of communication. These kinds of manifestations of self-concept are the artifacts- that is, the clothing, automobiles, books, office and home furnishings etc. with which each one of us surrounds oneself.

6.6.3 Social Role Identities

The third level of analysis is the cultural level and the corresponding identities are termed as *social role identities*. The identities of this level refer to those self-perceptions that are derived from culturally defined roles and the
behaviours have been specified by that culture or subculture. More specifically, social role identities refer to those self-perceptions that have been learned through interaction with others and that they carry certain rights and privileges, as well as behavioural duties and obligations, consistent with a particular role location or position in the social system. Examples of social role identities include such self-perceptions as mother, father, husband, wife, businessman, homemaker, teacher, student etc. Like personal and interpersonal identities, social role identities are communicated to some extent through the verbal channel, they largely depend on nonverbal artifacts and behaviours for presentation.

Certain roles prescribe very specific artifacts that individuals must display if they are to receive support for those identities. For example, the wearing of uniforms by policemen, nurses, nuns, wedding rings by husbands and wives and business suits by executives are all important in maintaining the existing social order.

Along with the other identities, the most important feature of social role identities is that the individual is expected to fulfill or at least act in accordance with them. If an individual fails to live up to the role expectations that others have for his social role, they are likely to withdraw the role or at least withdraw their support for that role. And social roles typically provide a great deal of identity support.

6.6.4 Interrelatedness of Identities

It is obvious that personal, interpersonal and social role identities are interrelated. They are built on one another, and they are not mutually exclusive. In effect, the individual determines the type of identity on the basis of the meaning that he/she attaches to it. Thus, a self-perception given to the self represents him/her. For example, with the identity of mother, if a woman views herself primarily from a child-bearing capacity perspective, then that identity may be classified as a personal identity, since it is connected with her physical feminine being. If a woman views herself as being nurturing toward her child, then it can be grouped with the interpersonal identities, as the motherly identity is manifested in the type of interpersonal behaviour. And if a woman is primarily concerned with performing those behaviours which are deemed socially appropriate for that role, then that role is termed as a social role identity. Therefore, how you classify any given identity depends heavily on how you perceive that identity: whether you view it as to its inherent physical and/or mental uniqueness to you (personal identity), in relation to or with others (interpersonal identity), or in relation to cultural context and norms (social role identity). Figure 6.2 shows the interrelatedness of identities and its configuration.
Fig. 6.2: Interrelatedness of Identities and Its Configuration

All these identities together in totality form the uniqueness of the self/individual and form the base for self-other relationship.
6.7 TYPES OF SELF - OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

As discussed above, an individual's perception about himself/herself in relation to others plays a significant role in interpersonal communication. By and large, individual's perception about himself/herself in relation to others is classified into three major categories. These are:

- Self below others
- Self above others
- Self with others

We will discuss each category of self in brief.

6.7.1 Self Below Others

Individuals in this category perceive themselves as inferior in relation to others. They are usually estranged or withdrawn from other persons whom they are ordinarily expected to associate with. It is basically an expression of non-belonging or non-caring. In fact, this is a mode of experience in which a person experiences himself/herself as an alien in group settings. They are passive, inactive and dependent on others in any of the decision making processes of the institution. The individuals of this category usually experience
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powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, estrangement, etc., in situations such as meetings or participation with colleagues. For example, the individual who maps himself/herself apart from and inferior to friends, teachers, colleagues is expected to perceive himself/herself as excluded from others and behaviourally tends to move towards activities, which do not require companionship. One can observe the individuals of this category communicating more through their non-verbal behaviour (facial expression, body language, intonation etc.) rather than verbal behaviour as they communicate less verbally.

Teachers of this category are basically not bothered and not sensitive about the things that happen around them. However, their statements express weakness, helplessness and submissiveness. For example:

- **Showing pity:** "Oh! Poor fellow! That is terrible! I feel so sorry for you; what a thing to happen to you”.
- **Ignoring students and their feelings:** “Madam, I got the first rank in the class.” A teacher reacts, “Um.... Go and do your work.”

### 6.7.2 Self Above Others

Individuals of this category perceive themselves as superior in relation to others. They are usually dominating, controlling, criticizing or showing power to the persons with whom they interact. It is basically an expression of authority and power. The individuals of this category usually feel themselves to be not dependent on others, or not controlled by others; they expect others to do what they want to do. They are independent and active in the decision-making process and expect others to follow their decisions. They are usually independent, powerful, norm-makers, etc., in all situations. For example, the individual who maps himself/herself apart from and superior to friends, teachers, and colleagues is expected to perceive himself/herself as independent of others and behaviourally tends to move towards activities which do not require companionship.

Teachers of this category are usually found to be interacting in the following manner:

- **Giving orders:** “Just get on with your work and stop arguing with me.”
- **Threatening:** “If you talk once more, I am going to send you to the principal.”
- **Moralizing:** “A boy of your age should be able to behave in a more mature manner.”
- **Giving advice:** “Go and tell him that you are sorry; explain why you did not do the work.”
- **Interrogating:** “What on earth do you think you are doing? Did you not know that these things happen? Didn’t you realize he would be angry if you don’t do the homework? (Too many questions even before students start thinking of answering).
Individuals of this category consider themselves as a part and parcel of the community or a group. They are usually in contact with others. It is basically an expression of interdependence, mutual respect and cooperation with others. Individuals of this category are open, democratic, and are ready to accept others' opinions in group settings. Individuals of this category involve as many people as possible in the decision making process. They are usually concerned about others; are supportive, innovative, empathetic and genuine in their relationship with others.

Teachers of this category are usually found to be interacting with students in various manners. For example:

Attending to students' problems: “Why did you not bring your homework?” (‘Attending to be with’ both physically and psychologically with the intention of knowing the reasons for not doing the homework).

Also, they are found to be actively listening to the students’ problems, being friendly with students/colleagues, cooperative with the staff, empathetic in their responses and accepting individuals unconditionally.

Let us try to understand all these three categories with the help of an example:

An individual who perceives self below others tends to speak less or does not speak at all in a group discussion, whereas an individual who perceives self above others tends to speak more frequently and forcefully in a group discussion. On the other hand, an individual who perceives self with others tends to listen, support and cooperate with the group in the decision making process.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Classify different types of self-other relationships and explain each of them.

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2. Recall your experiences of working in Navodaya Vidyalaya where:

• you had dominated students/colleagues,
• you had submitted to the principal/students/colleagues,
• you were supportive to the students/colleagues.
6.8 FREEDOM, AUTONOMY AND CHOICE IN SELF-OTHER RELATIONSHIP

As different individuals perceive themselves differently in their relation to others, they use autonomy, freedom and choice differently. These three categories of individuals mentioned above differ in using freedom, autonomy and choice in terms of degree. The individuals who perceive themselves below others do not realize their freedom; they are normally submissive to others’ choices and decisions. They do not think that they have their own choice; they allow others to choose for them even for their personal lives.

The individuals who perceive themselves above others exhibit their freedom in every aspect/dimension of their interaction. They don’t allow others to use their freedom and they try to choose for others. They perform everything by their choice in every relationship.

The individuals who perceive themselves with others exhibit their freedom. Unlike the individuals who perceive themselves above others, they allow others’ freedom as well as choice. In every/most of the interactions, they use their freedom and choice and also allow others to use their freedom and choice.

It is desirable for teachers to use their freedom and choice and to allow their students to use their freedom and choice in their interaction. This relationship has been shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Freedom, Autonomy and Choice in Self-Other Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Self below Others</th>
<th>Self above Others</th>
<th>Self with Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Does not realize</td>
<td>Uses one’s own autonomy but does not allow others’ autonomy</td>
<td>Uses one’s own autonomy as well as gives others autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Does not realize</td>
<td>Experiences one’s freedom but does not allow others’ freedom</td>
<td>Freedom is experienced by both self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Does not realize</td>
<td>Uses one’s own choice but ignores others’ choice</td>
<td>Uses one’s own choice as well as respects others’ choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.9 LET US SUM UP

Communication is the characteristic feature in interpersonal relationships. It is an inevitable phenomenon in the presence of the others. Individual communication depends on the perception of self in relation to others which is known as self-other orientation. Each individual’s self-concept is composed of a number of his/her’s self-perceptions called identities. The development and maintenance of identity or self-concept have certain characteristics. These are:

i) Human identities represent the unique interpretations of culture or group. ii)
Human identities are learnt through continuous process of interaction with others. iii) Human identities are observable or have observable manifestations; and iv) Human identities are dynamic and ever changing. The self-concept is viewed as being comprised of three types of identities: personal, interpersonal and role identities. These identities have perception of self, constitute the uniqueness of self and form the base for self-other relationships.

Individuals’ perception of self can be classified into three categories: self below others; self above others and self with others. Individuals belonging to ‘self below others’ category generally consider themselves to be inferior to others and are submissive, withdrawn and dependent on others in their interactions. Individuals belonging to ‘self above others’ category usually consider themselves to be superior to others and are dominating, active and independent in their interaction with others. Individuals belonging to ‘self with other’ category consider themselves to be one among the group and are supportive, cooperative and interdependent in their interactions with others. These categories are situation specific and the individual adapts according to his needs and interests. Individuals of these categories differ in use of autonomy, freedom and choice in their interaction patterns.

6.10 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Explain the typical behaviour of individuals in the following categories:
   i) self below other-------------------------------------------
   ii) self above others-----------------------------------------
   iii) self with others-----------------------------------------

2. Suppose the following statements are made by a principal in a teachers’ meeting, on change of school timings. Identify the categories of self-other communication from these statements.
   a) “I have decided to change the school timings from 9.30 am to 9.00am. I expect all of you to follow this change of timings from tomorrow.”
   b) “I wish to know your opinion on change of school timings. Will it be all right if we change the timings from 9.30am to 9.00am?”
   c) “I am feeling helpless; I am not able to decide on the change of school timings. I wish you would decide for me.”

3. Record the communication between two individuals in various situations like:
   i) staff meeting for planning an examination or a cultural activity,
   ii) dormitories,
   iii) playground,
   iv) classroom,
   v) staff room.

   Classify the communication into different categories.
4. Explain different types of identities with examples.

5. "Self-concept is nothing but total of self-perceptions or identities." Elaborate the statement with an example from your school situation.

6. Explain interrelatedness of personal identity, interpersonal identity and social role identity with an example.

7. "Interpersonal Communication is inevitable." Share your experiences from your Navodaya Vidyalaya.

6.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress 1

1. A number of individual self-perceptions, which we call identities constitute self-concept. Identities are the building blocks of self-concept, which are developed as a result of interpersonal communication.

The development and maintenance of identity or self-concept is based on certain basic characteristics. They are:

(i) Identities represent the unique interpretations of culture and group.
(ii) Human identities are learnt through continuous process of interaction with others.
(iii) Human identities are observable or have observable manifestations.
(iv) Human identity is dynamic and ever changing.

Teachers of Navodaya Vidyalaya are expected to illustrate all the above characteristics from their experiences.

2. (i) Personal identities, interpersonal identities and social role identities
(ii) Personal identities
(iii) Interpersonal identities
(iv) Social role identities

Answers to Check Your Progress 2

1. (i) Self above others: Individuals of this category perceive themselves as being superior in relation to others. It is basically an expression of authority and power with students or colleagues.

(ii) Self below others: Individuals in this category perceive themselves as being inferior in relation to others. They are usually estranged or withdrawn from other persons whom they can ordinarily be expected to associate with. It is basically an expression of non-caring or non-belongingness.
(iii) Self with others: Individuals of this category consider themselves as a part and parcel of the community or a group. They are usually in relation with others. It is basically an expression of interdependence.

2. Teachers have to identify typical behaviour from their interaction with students and colleagues but for reference of typical behaviour of each category, refer to 6.7.1, 6.7.2 and 6.7.3

6.12 SUGGESTED READINGS