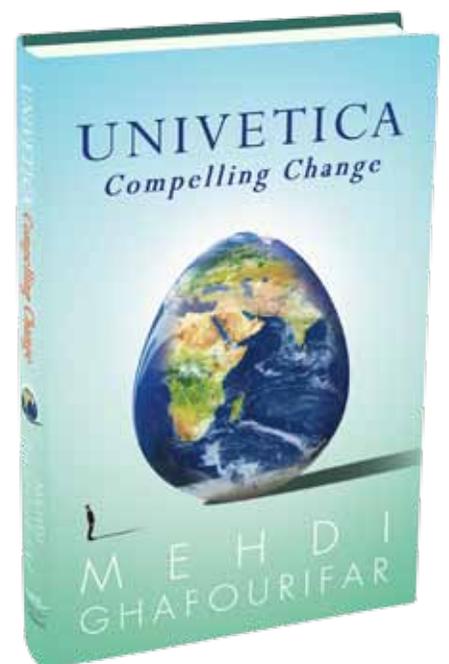




Univetica: Compelling Change
by Mehdi Ghafourifar

DISCUSSION GUIDE



www.univetica.com

About the Guide

While the airwaves are choked with news of social and environmental crises and divisive ideologies, pundits and politicians offer ineffective and sometimes disingenuous solutions that build on what divides us. In a time of great upheaval, we need, more than ever, a better way forward. A way to a thriving global community.

Univetica: Compelling Change offers a fresh, intelligent approach to life and the difficult challenges facing all of us. It is only when the global community is working at its full potential that we, as individuals, can hope to realize our own.

Univetica and this discussion guide are meant to foster a new conversation for all of us who embrace change and are compelled to stimulate human progress. We hope this guide helps you in sharing your ideas and applying Univetican principles to everyday life—at home, work, or school.

About *Univetica: Compelling Change*

Social entrepreneur and global citizen Mehdi Ghafourifar has taken a new approach to examining and addressing current global challenges. In *Univetica: Compelling Change*, he questions our notions of happiness, success, education, political and religious beliefs, consumerism, patriotism, and, of course, the self to reveal the vulnerabilities in our traditional views of the world. *Univetica* redefines life as a concept that is relative, based on one's impact upon the environment. *Univetica* asks each of us to reexamine basic ethical dichotomies that have shaped humanity for millennia. It turns the concept of free will on its head and urges us to move away from declaratives and instead embrace the act of questioning.

With humanity facing unprecedented global challenges, from terrorism and environmental crisis to poverty, discrimination, and educational inequities, *Univetica* proposes a better way forward, one that is both effective and within our grasp. The straightforward idea that humanity's success is determined by the individual's ability to progress more than he or she regresses forms the very foundation of the Univetican approach to life. *Univetica* empowers us to overcome divisive ideologies and better understand what unites us all.

Questions for Discussion

1. As of today, how is humanity faring? Do countries as well as various religious and political groups seem to be working together to improve our collective welfare or have we retreated further into our respective corners, leaving dialogue and understanding by the wayside? Discuss chapter one and analyze the book's perspective on divisive ideologies and the way they affect our ability to progress. Which of the various influences mentioned in the chapter as leading to divisive ideologies do you consider most powerful?
2. *Univetica: Compelling Change* is less a book than it is a conversation with the reader about progress and the need for meaningful change to resolve our current global challenges. Chapter two examines the ways our perspectives tend to be parochial and rigid and asks the reader to consider a broader way of looking at the world using the Univetican approach. One of the key principles of *Univetica* is global-realization. Discuss the elements of global-realization, as well as its role in the next phase in human development. To what extent is seeing the self in a global context a matter of upbringing and social influences? How do objective and subjective realities play roles in global-realization?
3. One of the most thought-provoking elements of chapter three is the introduction and discussion of the Univetican definition of life. Do you agree with the idea that life is "relative, not absolute"? Why or why not? Discuss how society would be impacted if everyone were to view life as "relative, not absolute."
4. What's the purpose of life? Why are we here? How should we act? *Univetica* addresses these questions by offering a simple, yet not simplistic, concept: P>R. Discuss the concept of "netProgression." Do you think such an approach answers these questions? If so, why? How would the world be affected if all human actions were guided by the P>R mission?
5. Chapter four outlines the "amazing potential for contradiction" in conventional definitions of virtues and vices. To what extent are your actions guided by categories of conventional virtues and vices? Which definitions do you accept and which ones do you reject? How do you reconcile those that are paradoxical? Discuss *Univetica's* universal ethics as specifically defined in the chapter, along with the concept of WECORE. Can you think of a real-life decision or action that wouldn't be improved using WECORE as a guide?

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6. Chapter five argues that “the path to progress is paved by questions.” Why are questions vital to progress? To what extent do you consider society open to the idea of challenging convention? In your view, should anything be left unquestioned?
 7. Discuss the positive and negative attributes of the modern-day global population explosion noted in chapter six, as well as the analogies made between our individual existence and the lives of sperm. What can we learn from sperm and honeybees in “their collaborative efforts in support of one another?”
 8. The concept of free will is ingrained in many societies. Yet chapter seven questions our traditional view of free will in a world constrained by cause and effect. Discuss the idea of free will presented in chapter seven. Can you identify a cause without any effect or an effect without an underlying cause? Which one of the nine points listed under “The Free Will Challenge” argues most effectively against our traditional view of free will? Why? What other logical claims can be made in favor of or against the existence of free will?
 9. To what extent do you consider the consequences and impacts of your actions on others and the environment? What are the most effective methods in measuring the consequences and impacts of human thoughts and actions on other living and nonliving things?
 10. In chapter eight, the book weaves a common thread between fortunetelling, wisdom, and intuition. What do you perceive to be tangible differences, if any, between the three?
 11. Religion is perhaps one of the most inflammatory topics of discussion. In chapter nine, Univetica carefully examines the concept of religion and reasons out the two main factors that make religion a complex and volatile topic: ambiguity and misinterpretation. Discuss these two factors. Why is there so much ambiguity in religion? Why is there so much misinterpretation both within and across religions? Can any religion be immune to these two factors?

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12. The word “God” conjures different images for different people. What image does the word “God” conjure for you? What influences most contributed to the formation of this image?
13. Discuss “The Truth Marble Theory” and ask yourself and one another whether the experiment results match your own conclusions. To what extent does religion influence your personal daily life? How do you see the impact of religion, particularly religious fundamentalism, in the coming decades? Will religious influence on politics, economics, and education strengthen or weaken over time? Why?
14. In discussing the idea of “finitude” in chapter ten, the book states “that which can be achieved can be defined.” What’s your position on this statement? Does infinity exist outside the world of mathematics? If so, in what form?
15. Chapter eleven presents an objective formula for achieving happiness. Discuss the formula itself. In addition to approaches discussed in the chapter, in what other ways can you lower expectations and boost experiences?
16. Discuss emotional states of love, hate, and neutrality as noted in chapter twelve, specifically the way they relate to one another. Do your experiences support the perspective presented?
17. Chapter thirteen includes a section regarding natural laws and human-made laws. Analyze the following paradox: while laws are needed to maintain “our social order,” they must be challenged to ensure “equity and progress.” How can we reconcile this paradox? Is it possible? Give examples of current human-made laws that threaten equity and progress. What practical steps can be taken to correct them? What is your position on challenging our leaders on laws that they legislate? Are rules “made to be broken”? Explain.
18. After reading the introductory story in chapter fourteen, discuss what, specifically—if anything—differentiates terrorism from patriotism? Discuss why this question creates such an emotional response. In addition to the strategies offered in the chapter, what other approaches can help us overcome terrorism and conflict?

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19. Which one of the various threats discussed in chapter fifteen do you consider most damaging to our environment? Discuss the strategies for overcoming our global crisis outlined in the chapter. What other strategies might be useful in managing the crisis?
20. To what extent does capitalism contribute to or even create poverty? How can the power of capitalism be harnessed to eradicate the inequities created and exacerbated by poverty? Aside from the strategies outlined in the chapter, what other approaches might help us overcome poverty?
21. Discuss the distinctions made in chapter seventeen between inequality in terms of unequal characteristics versus inequality in terms of unequal “rights, access, or opportunities.” Do you have a personal discrimination story to share? Discuss the strategies outlined to overcome inequality and discrimination. Do you think they would be effective approaches? What are some other approaches?
22. Discuss and analyze the three basic categories of education as described in chapter eighteen. Which category was most instrumental in your personal development? Which was the least? Are our educational standards proving competitive in these changing times? Explain. Do you support flexible, customizable education for our children? Do you consider education a “right” or a “privilege”? Should education be compulsory? In addition to those offered in the chapter, what other strategies can help us overcome educational dilemmas?
23. Discuss the five steps involved in applying Univetica’s approach to life as outlined in chapter nineteen. What suggestions do you have that can assist in “opening the mind”? In better understanding how to ask the right questions, which sample exercise proved most effective? Can you suggest other sample exercises?
24. Chapter twenty is all about Univetica and you. Do you support Univetica’s P>R mission? Univetica makes it possible for anyone to participate in the creation of a thriving world. How do you see your role? Please visit www.univetica.com and join the conversation.

About the Author



Mehdi Ghafourifar is a social entrepreneur with an established track record of developing innovative projects that touch the lives of many people. His passion for social justice and education is underscored by his more than twenty years of dynamic business experience in both for-profit and non-profit sectors. Mehdi's client portfolio has included thousands of companies and executives in 350 business categories. His life's work is dedicated to the advancement of positive social change and global citizenry. Mehdi lives in California with his wife and two children.

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