

C-PSY-05: DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THOUGHT

Unit 1: Understanding Psyche: A universal quest for
understanding Consciousness.

Indian Perspective: Yoga and Vedanta

CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS FROM INDIAN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES:

- ✘ Western Psychology is largely concerned to two dimensions which are both fully accessible to the ordinary waking consciousness- the physical and the social.
- ✘ The intellectual tradition of India starts from radically different assumptions. Indian tradition takes it for granted that there are also various types and levels of non-physical existence- entire inner 'worlds' which are not directly perceptible to ordinary waking consciousness, but are ontologically as real, or even more real than ordinary physical world. These non-physical realities are considered to be intermediate planes of conscious existence between the absolute, silent consciousness of the transcendent and the apparent unconscious matter. As a result, physical and social factors are accepted as a part of causal networks, but not as the full story-events are thought to be influenced by a wide variety of forces that includes factors belonging to non-physical realities.

CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS FROM INDIAN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES:

- ✘ The Western view of human relation between ego and consciousness is spelt out clearly by Carl Jung, who does not admit consciousness without ego at its centre (Jung, 1971).
- ✘ The Indian tradition agrees that in the ordinary waking state the ego seems to be the centre of one's consciousness, but it does not limit consciousness to the ordinary waking state.
- ✘ Western researchers have paid more attention in the distinction between pure consciousness and mind, and the corresponding identity sense.
- ✘ In Eastern cultures the conception of transcendental "Self" is more prevalent than Western cultures.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ According to Upanisadic sages, consciousness (chaitanya) vests not in the body or the mind but in the self. Consciousness is an attribute of the pure self, or the ultimate reality. Upanisadic psychology starts with four states of consciousness, the wakeful, the dream, the sleep and the super-consciousness corresponding to the four such states of cosmic consciousness namely the Virat, the Hiranyagarbha, the Isvara and Brahman. Again, consciousness is not an attribute of mind but of the self, which illuminates both mind and body.
- ✘ The Carvakas are a vigorous school of thinkers in India who repudiated the concept of mind and consciousness and asserted that all our experiences are due to the coming together of the elements of nature. According to them, consciousness arises out of the combination of material elements. It is mere product of matter.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ The Concept of Consciousness has played an important role in Buddhism. Buddha does not believe in the existence of permanent self, but a stream of consciousness. According to the Buddhist Philosophers, consciousness also is not immune from this constant variation and defunctions, it is also equally momentary.
- ✘ The concept of Consciousness is an important concept of Jainism. According to them, consciousness is the essential characteristics of the self. Consciousness is always present in the soul, though its nature and degree may vary. Every soul from the lowest to the highest possesses consciousness.
- ✘ Sāñkhya philosophers regard consciousness as the essence of Purusa. Purusa is itself the pure and transcendental consciousness.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ The concept of consciousness in Yoga system is similar to Sāṅkhya philosophy. Consciousness is not the essence of mind or citta. Citta is the first evolutes of *Prakṛti* and therefore, it is unconscious. The self wrongly identifies itself with its reflection in the citta and appears to be undergoing changes and modification. So, citta is the physical medium for the manifestation of the spirit. It is due to reflection of *Pūrūsa*, citta appears to be conscious.
- ✘ According to Nyāya, consciousness is a stream of awareness. Consciousness is an accidental property of the soul.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ According to Vedanta, consciousness is the basis of all experience whether it is psychic or physical. Denial of consciousness means denial of everything else. Advaitin holds, after Upanisads, that the self is non-different from Brahman, which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss (Sachchidananda). According to Sankārā, Brahman is pure consciousness. Consciousness and Brahman are identical. Atman or self is nothing but Brahman or pure consciousness.
- ✘ Advaita Vedanta follows the Upanisads in enumerating four states of consciousness, viz., 1) The wakeful (*jagrat*), 2) the dream state (*svapna*), 3) the sleep (*susupti*), and 4) the super consciousness (*turiya*).

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ Consciousness is an individual's state of awareness of their environment, thoughts, feelings, or sensations; in order to experience consciousness, one must be both awake and aware.
- ✘ Philosophy of Consciousness- Philosophers since the time of Descartes and Locke have struggled to comprehend the nature of consciousness and pin down its essential properties. Issues of concern in the philosophy of consciousness include the following: whether consciousness can ever be explained mechanistically; whether non-human consciousness exists, and if so, how it can be recognized; how consciousness relates to language; whether consciousness can be understood in a way that does not require a dualistic distinction between mental and physical states or properties; and whether it may ever be possible for computers or robots to be conscious.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ *The Mind-Body Problem-* The mind-body problem is essentially the problem of consciousness; roughly speaking, it is the question of how mental experiences arise from a physical entity.
- ✘ The first and most important philosopher to address this conundrum was René Descartes in the 17th century, and his answer was termed Cartesian dualism. The explanation behind Cartesian dualism is that consciousness resides within an immaterial domain he called *res cogitans* (the realm of thought), in contrast to the domain of material things, which he called *res extensa* (the realm of extension). He suggested that the interaction between these two domains occurs inside the brain.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ The historical materialism of Karl Marx rejects the mind-body dichotomy, and holds that consciousness is engendered by the material contingencies of one's environment. John Locke, another early philosopher, claimed that consciousness, and therefore personal identity, are independent of all substances. He pointed out that there is no reason to assume that consciousness is tied to any particular body or mind, or that consciousness cannot be transferred from one body or mind to another.
- ✘ American psychologist William James compared consciousness to a stream—unbroken and continuous despite constant shifts and changes. While the focus of much of the research in psychology shifted to purely observable behaviors during the first half of the twentieth century, research on human consciousness has grown tremendously since the 1950s.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ Today, the primary focus of consciousness research is on understanding what consciousness means both biologically and psychologically? The majority of experimental studies assess consciousness by asking human subjects for a verbal report of their experiences. However, in order to confirm the significance of these verbal reports, scientists must compare them to the activity that simultaneously takes place in the brain—that is, they must look for the neural correlates of consciousness.
- ✘ Higher brain areas are more widely accepted as necessary for consciousness to occur, especially the prefrontal cortex, which is involved in a range of higher cognitive functions collectively known as executive functions.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ *Historical Theories of Consciousness*
- ✘ *Mayan and Incan Theories of Consciousness*-The Ancient Mayans were among the first to propose an organized sense of each level of consciousness, its purpose, and its temporal connection to humankind. Because consciousness incorporates stimuli from the environment as well as internal stimuli, the Mayans believed it to be the most basic form of existence, capable of evolution. The Incas, however, considered consciousness a progression not only of awareness but of concern for others as well.
- ✘ *John Locke on Consciousness*- John Locke, a 17th-century philosopher, was one of the first to speak and write on consciousness. He believed that our identity was tied to our consciousness, which he essentially defined as what passes through a man's mind, or memories. He also asserted that our consciousness is not tied to our physical bodies, and that it can survive even after our physical bodies die. In fact, Locke held that consciousness could be transferred from one soul to another.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ René Descartes also addressed the idea of consciousness in the 17th century. He set out to answer the question of how it is possible that our consciousness, a non-physical thing, can come from our bodies, a physical thing. The explanation he came up with was called Cartesian dualism; in short, consciousness resides within an immaterial domain he called *res cogitans* (the realm of thought), in contrast to the domain of material things, which he called *res extensa* (the realm of extension). He suggested that the interaction between these two domains occurs inside the brain.
- ✘ Freud divided human consciousness into three levels of awareness: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Each of these levels corresponds and overlaps with Freud's ideas of the id, ego, and superego. The conscious level consists of all the things we are aware of, including things we know about ourselves and our surroundings.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ The preconscious consists of things we could pay conscious attention to if we so desired, and is where many memories are stored for easy retrieval. Freud saw the preconscious as comprised of thoughts that are unconscious at the particular moment in question, but that are not repressed and are therefore available for recall and easily capable of becoming conscious (for example, the tip-of-the-tongue effect). The unconscious consists of things that are outside of conscious awareness, including many memories, thoughts, and urges of which we are not aware. Much of what is stored in the unconscious is thought to be unpleasant or conflicting; for example, sexual impulses that are deemed unacceptable. While these elements are stored out of our awareness, they are nevertheless thought to influence our behavior.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ *Modern Theories of Consciousness*
- ✘ Developmental psychologists view consciousness not as a single entity, but as a developmental process with potential higher stages of cognitive, moral, and spiritual quality. They posit that consciousness changes over time, in quality and in degree: an infant's consciousness is qualitatively different than a toddler's, a teenager's, or an adult's. Abnormal development also affects consciousness, as do mental illnesses.
- ✘ Social psychologists view consciousness as a product of cultural influence having little to do with the individual. For instance, because different cultures speak different languages, they also codify reality differently. That difference in codification leads to differences in the experience of reality, and therefore of consciousness. Language is the main mechanism for transmitting a mode of consciousness, and an analysis of language can to some extent reveal the mentality of people who speak that language.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ Neuropsychologists view consciousness as ingrained in neural systems and organic brain structures. A major part of the modern scientific literature on consciousness consists of studies that examine the relationship between the experiences reported by subjects and the activity that simultaneously takes place in their brains—that is, studies of the neural correlates of consciousness. The hope is to find activity in a particular part of the brain, or a particular pattern of global brain activity, that will be strongly predictive of conscious awareness.
- ✘ The neural correlates of consciousness (NCC) refer to the relationship between the experiences reported by subjects and the activity that simultaneously takes place in their brains. The physical world is perceived by human consciousness through the senses, which funnel stimuli and information into the central nervous system, and eventually the brain. The brain is the major organ implicated in turning physical stimuli into thoughts and actions.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ Neurobiology and Consciousness- The science of consciousness sets out to explain the precise relationship between subjective mental states and brain states, the relationship between the conscious mind and the electro-chemical interactions in the body. Progress in this arena has come from focusing on the body rather than the mind. In this context, the neuronal correlates of consciousness may be viewed as its causes, and consciousness may be thought of as a state-dependent property of some complex, adaptive, and highly interconnected biological system.
- ✘ Neuronal consciousness is often described as involving two distinct dimensions: arousal and content. In order for the brain to be conscious of any type of content, it must be in a high state of arousal. While awake and dreaming states are fundamentally different states of consciousness, they are both high-arousal, and thus allow for perception.

A UNIVERSAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

- ✘ Brain areas implicated in Consciousness- Another idea that has drawn attention for several decades is that consciousness is associated with high-frequency (gamma band) oscillations in brain activity. This idea arose from proposals in the 1980s, by Christof von der Malsburg and Wolf Singer, that gamma oscillations may link information represented in different parts of the brain into a unified experience.
- ✘ Brain Imaging and Consciousness- One popular theory implicates different patterns of brain waves in producing different states of consciousness. Researchers can record brain waves, or tracings of electrical activity within the brain, using an electroencephalograph (EEG) and placing electrodes on the scalp. The four types of brain waves (alpha, beta, theta, and delta) each correspond with one mental state (relaxed, alert, lightly asleep, and deeply asleep, respectively).

THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY:

‘Yoga’ means union. It is the formula or technique prescribed by seers of truth, to reunite one’s own real self. It is a return journey to the total self.

- ✘ The Yoga philosophy is an invaluable gift of the great Indian sage Patanjali to all bent upon spiritual realization. It is also known as the Patanjali system after the name of its founder. The *Yoga-sutra* or the *Patanjali-sutra* is the first work of this school of philosophy.
- ✘ The Patanjali-sutra is divided into four Padas or parts. The first is called *samadhipādā* and treats the nature, aim and forms of yoga and different methods of yoga. The second is *sadhanāpādā* deals with kriyayoga as means of attaining samadhi. The third or *vibhutipādā* gives an account of inward aspects of yoga and the supernormal powers acquired by the practice of yoga and so forth. The fourth part is called the *kaivalyapādā* and describes the nature and form of liberation.

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY:

- ✘ In the Samkhya–Yoga system, the individual self (jiva) is regarded as the free spirit associated with gross body and more closely related to subtle body constituted by the senses, the manas, the ego and the intellect. The self is, in its own nature, pure consciousness, free from limitations of the body and the fluctuations of mind (citta). **The *citta* is the first product of *prakriti***, in which element of sattva predominates over those of rajas and tamas. It is essentially unconscious; but being the closest proximity with the self it reflects, through its manifesting power, the self-conscious become apparently conscious and intelligent.
- ✘ The self knows the objects of the world through the modifications of citta. The modifications of citta, i.e. cognitive mental states (*cittavrttinirodha*) are many and varied. These may be classified under five heads, namely,

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY:

- ✘ *Pramanā* or true cognition: There are three kinds of true cognition, viz, perception, inference and verbal testimony
- ✘ *Viparyaya* or false cognition
- ✘ *Vikalpa* or merely verbal cognition
- ✘ *Nidrā* or sleep
- ✘ *Smṛiti* or memory

The self appears to be concerned in these functions because it is reflected in citta or the mind which is held up before it as a mirror before a person. It also appears to be subject to the five kleśas or sources of afflictions, namely, (i) *avidyā* or wrong knowledge (ii) *asmitā* or wrong perception (iii) *ragā* (iv) *dvesā* or aversion to pain (v) *abhinivesā* or the instinctive fear of death in all creatures.

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY:

- ✘ There are five conditions or levels of mental life (*cittabhūmi*):
- ✘ *Ksipta* or restless
- ✘ *Mūdhā* or torpid
- ✘ *Viksipta* or distracted
- ✘ *Ekāgra* or concentrated
- ✘ *Niruddha* or restrained

In fact *Ekāgra* or the state of concentration, when permanently established, is called *samprajñātayoga* or the trace of meditation, in which there is a clear and distinct consciousness of the object of contemplation. It is also known as *samprajñāta samādhi*. The state of *niruddha* is called *asamprajñāta samādhi*, because all mental modifications being stopped in this state, nothing is known or thought or by the mind.

THE EIGHTFOLD MEANS OF YOGA:

Patanjali, the sole authority on Yoga offers a valuable package to mankind, to enable them to liberate themselves from the whirlpool of mental turmoil. There are eight steps involved in the journey from the periphery to the centre of 'self'. These are called eight limbs of yoga or *ashtanga*. These are:

Yama: Non-violence, truthfulness, sexual restraint and lack of possessiveness

Niyama: Purity, contentment, austerity, introspection and self-surrender

Asana: Comfortable steady and stable posture

Pranayama: Breath control and regulation of prana, the vehicle of citta

Prathyahara: Sensory withdrawal, fixing the attention on the contents of consciousness

THE EIGHTFOLD MEANS OF YOGA:

- ✘ *Dharana* (Concentration): Concentration, fixing attention to a single vritti
- ✘ *Dhyana* (Mediation): Uninterrupted concentration on the flow of vrittis
- ✘ *Samadhi* (total absorption): Experience of reality which is subjective and objective at once and simultaneous.

Final Steps of Liberation:

The first four steps bring about the organization of vrittis initially and later their minimization. Only when the vrittis are reduced in number and intensity can one begin to practice withdrawal or prathyahara, it would be possible to progress and initiate the last three important steps of yoga which are Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

In liberation all mental modes and their dispositions are completely arrested, the self is disentangled from the meshes of prakrti, becomes pure and isolated and becomes omniscient. When the gunas are merged in Prakrti, one can experience liberation.

PLACE OF GOD IN YOGA:

According to the Yoga, God is the supreme person who is above all individual selves and is free from all defects. He is the perfect immortal spirit who ever remains untouched by afflictions and actions, and their effects and impressions. He possesses a perfect nature and has also the fullest possible knowledge of all facts and is , therefore, capable of maintaining the whole world by his mere wish or thought.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- ❑ It refers to the philosophy of the Upanishads (concluding part of Vedas). The concept *Vedanta* was given by *Sankaracharya*.
- ❑ *The Absolute and Individual Self*: He starts with the view that the essence of reality must be its absoluteness: it must remain ever the same, unconditioned by time, space and causality.

The world abounds in evil, and suffering seems to be the lot of every individual. Everybody desires to attain happiness and avoid misery. In fact, all our endeavors are directed towards the end.

- ❑ *Law of Karma*: One of the major aspects of Sankara's thought was the law of *karma*. The law of *karma* in the moral world is the counterpart of the law of conservation of energy in the physical world. Life has continued from eternity, the store of our *karma* must necessarily be inexhaustible, for while part of it is being spent through experience (*bhoga*), fresh *karma* is being added.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- ✘ *Higher Knowledge and Lower Knowledge:* Sankara distinguishes between the Ontological reality and empirical reality. The former is known by higher knowledge (parā vidyā), while the latter is known by lower knowledge (aparā vidyā). Higher knowledge is true knowledge (vidyā) and lower knowledge is false knowledge (avidyā). Brahman is known by higher knowledge.
- ✘ *Perception:* Sankara recognizes perception, inference, scriptural testimony, comparison, presumption and non-apprehension as the sources of valid knowledge.
- ✘ There is one eternal consciousness or Brahman. When it is determined by internal organ, it is called *subject consciousness*. When the eternal consciousness is determined by mental modes, it is called *knowledge consciousness*. When it is determined by an empirical object, it is called *object consciousness*. The mental mode assuming the form of the object called *vrtti*.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- ✘ *Inference*: It is described as reaching a new conclusion and truth from one or more observations and previous truths by applying reason.
- ✘ *Comparison*: It is the means of knowledge by similarity.
- ✘ *Presumption*: It is the assumption of a fact to account for inexplicable fact.
- ✘ *Non-Apprehension*: Non-existence is known as non-apprehension. It cannot be known by the means of valid knowledge.
- ✘ *Testimony*: A sentence refers to an objective relation. That sentence is a valid source of knowledge, which refers to an objective relation, which is not contradicted by other means of valid knowledge.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- ❑ *Atman*: Next concept is the concept of *Atman*, which is declared as immutable and indestructible by Vedanta to be a self-evident truth. It is therefore evident that *Atman* is neither the body nor the senses nor the mind, in as much as all these are state of a flux. In Vedanta, *Atman* is accepted as the reality, the everlasting and unchanging essence of the individual, inasmuch as it is unaffected by psychic or physical changes.
- ❑ *Brahman*: It is the only ontological reality. *Brahman* is infinite, immortal and imperishable. It is not limited by time, space and objects. It is existence, knowledge and bliss.
- ❑ *God* is the determinate *Brahman*. He is not unconditioned, indeterminate, attribute-less *Brahman*. He is personal lord. He appears to be the creator of the world owing to cosmic nescience. But, He is not , in reality, different from *Brahman*.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- ❑ *Maya*: Sankara also explains the concept of Maya (illusion) or *adhyasa* (superimposition), the principle of unifying contradictions-contradiction between self and non-self, the ego and non-ego, the subject and the object, the cause and the effect, Brahman and the world. Suppose you take a rope to be a snake; this is *adhyasa*. You take Brahman to be the world; this too is *adhyasa*. In reality there is no snake, no world, and there should not be any superimposition; Yet it is inherent nature to identify the truth with falsehood.
- ❑ *Levels of Truth*: Although he does not really admit kinds of truth, yet for the sake of convenience he speaks of (i) *paramarthika* truth attributable only to Brahman, (ii) *vyavaharika* truth attributable to the objective world, and (iii) *pratibhasika* truth attributable to the illusions of an individual so long as they last.

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Thank you