

CHAPTER - 4

A COMPERATIVE ANALYSIS OF YOGA PSYCHOLOGY WITH MODERN WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

a) Comparison regarding the concept of mind :

Psychology in modern period, in the West is generally defined as the science of mind. But psychologists of the different schools differ considerably in their views regarding the nature and content of mind, as a result of which different explanations have been offered on the different psychological problems.

Structuralism may be said to be the first school of modern psychology, in where mind is conceived as the sum-total of different elements. Sensations, fallings and images are such different elements which constitutes the mind.

Functionalism reacted to this static concept of mind of structuralist and put emphasis on the dynamic aspect of it. According to it, mind must be studied from both the points of view of structure and function.

Behaviourism gives psychology a status of exact science and threw the entire concept of mind from the field of psychology because the exponents of this school could not find any mind by the application of their scientific method with the help of external observation and experiment, but found only behavior. In the hands of behaviorists, thus psychology lost its psyche and becomes 'somantology' or physiology.'

According to configurationism or Gestalt Psychology, mind is a creative synthetic principle by itself and mental processes such as perceptions, thoughts, ideas, imagination and the like, are so many structured or organized wholes guided by the purpose activity of its own.

In Psychoanalysis completely new theory is sought to be established regarding the nature and content of mind. According to Freud, the founder of this school and others mainly Adler and Jung, mind is not co extensive with consciousness. By treating the neurotic patients they come to the conclusion that 'the mind is not a collection of sensations, perceptions, ideas and rational processes.... But rather a deep and troubled sea whose secrets are found not in its placid surface of consciousness and reason but in profound unconscious and irrational depth.'¹

Parapsychology investigates into the rare, odd and strange occurrences in life which are not ordinarily explicable and thus ushers in a new frontier of mind. But further understanding of human nature and properties of the mind still remains to the Western Psychologists, vastly unexplored.

Yoga psychology, on the other hand, as revealed in Patanjala Darshana is properly the Psychology of the soul or 'self'. The word 'Psychology' is used here in its original meaning which is the 'science of the soul'. The soul or the self is enclosed within the triple barricade of matter, namely –

- 1) The physical body

- 2) The belt of external sense organs and the reaction effected by the organs of action to sensory knowledge, and
- 3) The group of three identical principles of manas, buddhi and ahamkara.

In short the self is enclosed within the mind body complex. Yoga psychology, thus, is not only a science of the soul, but is the science of body, mind and soul.

What is generally called mind in the Western Psychology, Yoga psychology calls it 'citta'. According to the most of the modern psychologists consciousness is the essential character of mind, whereas Yoga psychology declared that citta is not self conscious. Citta becomes conscious by the reflection of the self on it.

The aim of Yoga psychology is , with the knowledge of nature and functions of citta, is to prepare it to catch a glimpse of the resplendent Atman or soul on the appreciate the real status of the eternal glory of the Absolute. It discovers the techniques or secret of bringing under control the vrittis or the distracted modifications of citta and thus help to concentrate and meditate upon the transcendental Atman , which is the fountainhead of knowledge, intelligence and bliss.

b) Comparison regarding personality :

The concept of personality has occupied an important place in Modern Western Psychology. It has been variously defined and analysed by many modern thinkers and most of them generally maintain

that the personality of a man is the sum total of his capacities, habits, characters, attitudes etc. which distinguish one person from another.

But man is not a mere sum of various qualities. He is something more, something unique. According to yoga, the samskaras or potentialities, accumulated from our past experiences of previous births, mould our personality. Yoga accepts the influence of environment also.

Yoga psychology does not give much importance on the classifications which are mainly based on physical traits or bodily conditions as has been done by many modern psychologists such as Ernst Kretschmer, J.K. Lavater and the like. According to yoga, it is the citta by changing which the whole of our personality can be changed.

C) Comparison regarding instinct and emotion :

Yoga psychology explains the nature and origins of instincts and emotions. Out of the five Klesas, abhinivesa or will to live illustrates the instinctive theory of Yoga. It is the only instinct which is discussed positively in Yoga darsana.

In Western psychology the problems of instinct have been dealt with elaborately by many great thinkers. According to Wundt, the pioneer of structuralism 'instinct is inherited physiological mechanisms'.² McDougall, maintains that instinct is an innate or hereditary predisposition to perceive specific object, to feel specific, to feel specific emotions and to react in a particular manner to a situation.

This view is rejected by Watson. According to him, instinctive actions are only a chain of reflex actions.

On the other hand, according to yoga, as swami Vivekananda interprets, 'instinct is involved reason, that is involved reason, that is experience which has become sub-conscious.' As reason cannot come without experience, instinct also is therefore the result of past experience. Every instinct is the result of a habit or of repeated previous experiences. Every work we do by practice, become instinct. Chickens fear the hawk and duckling love water all these are the results of repeated previous experiences or instincts.

According to Wundt, Cope and others, instinctive actions are racial habits. They have been transmitted to the later generations as instincts. Modern scientific thinkers mostly maintain that it belong to the body. But yoga psychology hold that, "it is the experience of the individual mind, transmitted through the body. This is called the theory of reincarnation."

d) Comparison regarding psychic power :

Yoga psychology state that just as at the bottom of the sea lies the variety of precious things, so also at the bottom of the unconscious state of a person lies the store-house of sakti or psychic powers. They are the inherent powers of citta sleeping submerged under the threshold of unconscious level. When they rise from the bottom to the conscious level, they play the miracles of wonderful powers such as mindreading, clairvoyance, pre-cognition etc. Which constitutes the subject matter of the new science called "Parapsychology". According to Dr. J.B. Rhine, the renowned Western parapsychologist, on the basis of his researches, asserts that nearly every fifth person possesses this power in a lesser or greater degree. But according to most of them such psychic powers are not generic or possessed by all. These are gift of a special

kind accidentally present in some individuals only. Yoga psychology on the other hand declares that such psychic powers are not accidental occurrences in stray individuals. They are general potentialities of every human being lying at the bottom of the unconscious level of citta.

Yoga psychology maintains that there is no mystery in intuition, telepathy and other personal experiences. According to Radhakrishnan's observation also, "these supernormal powers are not considered by Yoga philosophy to be miraculous interferences with the laws of nature.

According to Yoga philosophy these powers and potentialities are to be actualized by conscious effort. They are to be developed by samayama. Patanjali however, does not deny that some men are born with these psychical powers. But in his opinion they had earned those in their previous incarnations by conscious effort and in this life, they are born with those accumulated attainments, to enjoy their fruits. 'It is said to Kapita, the great father of the samkhya philosophy, that he was a born siddha'.⁶

Finally, we may conclude by saying that there is a vast difference between Western view of psychology and yoga psychology. In comparison of both the views, it is seen that yoga psychology is most reliable and deals with actual context of psychology i.e. mind, body and soul.

References :

- 1) Patric – Introduction to philosophy, P-262.
- 2) G. Murphy – An historical introduction to modern psychology, P-151.
- 3) Swami Vivekananda – Rajayoga, P-176.
- 4) Ibid, P-176.
- 5) S. Radhakrishnan – Indian Philosophy, Vol.I, P-367.
- 6) Swami Vivekananda, Pajayoga, P-254.