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Resolving Human Psychological Problems through Select Philosophical Isms

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ABSTRACT: Centuries have rolled down yet certain recognized human psychological problems have been posing same challenges. The major problems could be owing to more than a dozen factors influencing the human psyche directly or indirectly. Most of them usually exist in the dormant state and that is why they go either unnoticed or get deliberately dismissed as not worth paying any heed. The major handicap seems to be firmly rooted in not acknowledging the presence or possibility of such problems. It is very commonly considered as a stigma in the society where only an idealized human personality as a whole is adored and expected. On the physical plane the reality automatically surfaces and therefore no one can deny or question it. The society also categorises all such variations. To the contrary on the mental plane only clinically proved personalities which are deranged are looked upon as misfits and a very few workable remedies are proposed. This paper attempts to bring forth the other possible shades of human personality and subsequently their limitations. One of the possible rays of hope is suggested through philosophical 'Isms', first to understand human personality in this perspective and then taking on the necessary and workable philosophical approaches.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of common understanding that every human being has a certain set of circumstantial conditions which shape the life. Though there are many theories and practical suggestions put forward yet it all depends on one's innate capacity to battle or face without any resistance. Scientifically speaking an idealized life could be the one always desirable but rarely attainable. The moment it is achieved, its value and subsequently importance are lost. Nature itself does not have a balance in its seasons and particularly when we speak of various states of matter, we realize that the molecules that seek freedom on own would remain in the so called ideal state only under forced conditions of pressure and temperature. Therefore, it is difficult to suggest one particular way out or avenue to tread on to achieve stability in life. However, on an average one can standardize the rules on the ethical and moral planes so that an idealized path may be useful for the majority atleast. From the historical perspective it is crystal clear that in ancient times humanity as such was completely engaged in knowing the mystical phenomena of Nature, concerned over own existence and further the family. With the progress in all fields man started thinking about the "self" and its needs. May be the problems of today were in their dormant stage and got either ignored or never recognized at all. One may say that it was merely an effort to know the intricacies of the Nature and further the ongoing phenomenal changes. Present day scenario is not totally new. From the past couple of centuries, the same psychological problems have been discussed and certain novel ideas or theories have been put forth to combat. Sadly, from the surveys it is clear that somehow though the present generation is well equipped with so many amenities, yet there is no concrete success worth claiming. With a meagre percentage of exceptions on an average human personality as such is notably weak. It is in fact burdened mostly on the mental plane with wistful thinking, suspended illusions and unscientific approach towards life. On physical plane compared to the animal kingdom, humanity has severe limitations which is generally accepted by all. The educated and genuinely cultured lot of the population gropes in darkness with a hope to catch the sunny ray at the end of the tunnel but finds none. It is only the reconciliation with the crazy order of the mundane activities, that could silence the mind but that too temporarily. Majority thinkers, philosophers particularly the religious philosophers manage to keep hope kindling and the followers also without hesitation or pruning, trust their words. There are two schools of thought in which one of them presupposes many of the postulates recommended by a theory and march optimistically with enthusiasm, while the other one exerts considerably to confirm the veracity or validity of the postulates first and then decides the course of life. It would be a disputable topic to infer which thought is really correct or more profitable. Life as

such is an ongoing process and therefore no solution can have an eternal appeal or strength to mend as per one's desire.

The Psychological Challenges

"Psychology has a long past but only a short history" wrote Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850-1909). 'He meant that people have been thinking about human thought, emotion, intelligence and behaviour for thousands of years but as a discipline based on facts rather than speculation psychology is still in infancy. Even though he made his statement a hundred years ago, psychology is still considered young.'¹ There have been many recognized psychological disorders. At times it is difficult to isolate some of them because a person might undergo the rigours of more than one type of disorder. Although theoretically we have a clear line of demarcation in all the types yet there could be alloying of the disorders resulting into a complex hybrid form. We can form a list comprising of Clinical Depression, Anxiety Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Dementia, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Schizophrenia, OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), Autism, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder etc. Symptoms of some of these are clearly visible but in some cases there is only a continual impression may be gathered. However those which have been specifically categorized as purely mental are Mood Disorders, Schizophrenia, Psychotic disorders, Dementia, Anxiety Disorder and Eating Disorder.

In Anxiety disorder the victim always responds to the circumstances around with an awe that turns into a sort of dread. This is furthermore strengthened by physical symptoms like palpitations, perspiration and a continual anxiety. Sometimes under a severe attack it might lead to a continuous phase of despondency which is difficult for an onlooker to even analyze. There could be various forms in this panickstricken situation which may be considered as a generalized anxiety disorder or social anxiety disorder. In case it goes uncontrolled or unattended it may lead to a permanent shock or what is generally referred to a type of Phobia. On the other hand in case a person experiences uncontrolled moods with sudden deviation or fluctuating moods which go to the extreme and opposite poles then there is a likelihood of having Mood disorder. This is also called Affective type of disorder. This involves sadness spreading sometimes periodically or even trapping the person for a fairly long time causing a lot of damage to the personality as a whole. In the dormant stage one may not quite understand it because the person may pass over the extremes in moods from a state of dejection to a hilarious nature. This is quite dangerous because it is difficult to understand the very cause of these fluctuations. Generally this is referred to bipolar nature or Cyclothymic disorder which is in fact a sign of extreme depression. The other one which is quite common is Psychotic disorder which has no semblance in the thinking pattern and is influenced by false or unchecked beliefs which damage the persons mental frame because it would be full of delusions. The person may experience hallucinations. Ultimately it would definitely lead to Schizophrenia. This however can be easily detected or inferred from the behaviour of the person wherein the normal habits may outrightly change like expressions of the person which could involve eating habits and burst of emotions. Many times the victim has little control on the physical plane owing to which he/she may put on considerable weight and would not bother for the common mannerism in behaviour. There have been certain technical terms used to describe this kind of unusual disposition like Bulimia Nervosa, Anorexia Nervosa, Binge eating disorder and furthermore the Impulsive behaviour which can be confirmed from even day today activities of the person. In certain cases the impulsive nature takes so much control on the person that he or she is not able to understand the consequences of their act. This is normally observed in those who get trapped in certain activities which are not morally or ethically sanctioned. Some of the examples could be like Klyptomania, Pyromania or Gambling and getting addicted to Drugs or Alcoholic beverages. This in fact causes uneasiness or harm to self as well as to those who are related to the person. Sometimes it is also found that certain undesirable experiences in society or even in childhood would carry the element of unhappiness throughout. This may result into antisocial activities and the person may reason it out as the correct response. Rather the act would be justified. This falls into a Paranoid Personality disorder. We also commonly come across people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder commonly referred to as OCD which actually grows out of a sort of insecurity or fear. The thought process is also damaged owing to which one finds a sort of comfort in doing the act repeatedly as if carrying some ritualistic act. However, a commonly observed disorder particularly with sensitive persons is The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder -PTSD. It is difficult to treat such a person because wiping out the memories is highly improbable. The person would need to divert the mind to a very large extent busying the mind in some other worthwhile activities. Even then it is difficult to claim a total recovery. Majority times this happens due to the loss of a dear one or even separation. The bad memories would be periodically tossing up in the mind though outwardly the person may pretend to have a calm composure. This shows that most of the times the effect of any type of disorder is realized only when it grows fully otherwise it is a usual practice to ignore in its dormant stage. The remedies proposed have been obviously having more inclination towards the medicines of high potency and this could no doubt repair but in the process can damage also. As far as possible if care is taken from the beginning in educating the upcoming generation exposing it to the total reality of the phases of life, the problems could be

tackled efficiently. In this regard some of the philosophical practical outlooks with wisdom can be used. Many a time it is found that the problems arise with loneliness and despondency. Expecting too much from the mart of this world and getting attached to everything may pose problems as we advance in life.

The Select Philosophical Behavioural Sciences in Brief

Life goes on and nothing remains forever is a simple phenomenon oft proved even empirically. First understanding self with its limitations can be one of the major solutions to most of the problems the humanity is facing. This could be a guidance straight from Socrates with his famous dictum, "Know Thyself". With an extension further, now the need of the hour is knowing self as well as the surroundings. This would bring us close to the Thermodynamic principle also. Functioning of a System does depend on the Surroundings and certain conditional factors. Therefore, there have been types of System in Thermodynamics. Matching our potential with the Ideals set forth impartially is a basic requisite. Even the educated class fails to perceive this fact. This is the reason as to why even those who have all general amenities of convenience and are fortunately placed at the higher rung of the society, face loneliness and isolation. Unless we accept our own limitations at all the planes it is difficult to match our expectations and the reality. Wider the gap more would be the rough passage throughout the life. In fact we have to educate self from the animal world where the creatures have accepted this fact while combating with Nature. There have been scores of philosophies but most of them cling to an academic discipline contributing to the vast subject in some branch or the other. Very few philosophies are pointing directly to our common problems. Of course, most of the eastern religious philosophies are more inclined to solve the social and personal problems but mostly on the religious axis which points towards the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient nature of God. Entrusting everything to the higher force and accepting the dictates without questioning is one of the common viewpoints in all such philosophies. That of course is one of the routes to silence self. With the recent trends in philosophy there have been quite different outlooks which do help us to take on life with its challenges quite courageously and efficiently. In fact the philosophical isms which are displayed here are not new as such but they are given complete consideration in the modern life and they are followed earnestly by the recent past and present generations.

II. STOICISM

Epictetus says, "Of things that are, some are good and some are bad and some are indifferent: the good then are virtues, and the things which precipitate in virtues, and the evil things the opposite; and the indifferent things are wealth, health, reputation."² Most of the philosophies have been presented to us in such a verbose or wordy way that by the time the reader completes them would be at a loss for not knowing their applications in the practical sense. Present day circumstances need a quick and brief way of expressing the ideas or views in a precise manner. This is more true in case of religious philosophies which are more engaged in the ritualistic affairs than standing for the humanity as a trustworthy guide. Stoicism and a few more isms stand as an exception to this. It is a guide type manual for making this life worth living happily or atleast living away from unhappiness. To begin with it teaches us to accept the physical realities and possible challenges in the society on the mental plane too. We are social animals and so we cannot do away by rupturing social bonds or relations. We have to move forward always by using the knack of filtering the unwanted feelings which burden ourselves by storing. The stoics preferably refer to the four popular cardinal principles or virtues that are drawn from Greek philosophy. They are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. They could also be considered as equivalent to Wisdom, Morality, Courage and most important Moderation. The last one is highly emphasized in Buddhism. Most of the times Stoics insist on developing an excellent mental state which is possible only by managing a virtuous life with a rational outlook. This would further mean that managing calmness towards the external factors which are totally out of our control is of utmost importance. That could be an ideal life wherein a harmony is developed with Nature. Since we are part of Nature it is better to align with its shades rather than combating with the external events. Another handicap with us is entertaining the destructive emotions which always stem out of our erroneous judgements. Going against the dictates of Nature is a falsifying outlook and that would without any doubt will land us into difficulty. As an ethical doctrine Stoicism expects us to release self from the shackles of passions that would result into nothing else than anguish, suffering and repentance. This could be done by remaining always reasonably emotional but keeping on the pursuit of reason and what is popularly known as "Apatheia"

III. PHILOSOPHICAL PESSIMISM

The two extreme viewpoints that are often referred to for describing human mood are Optimism and Pessimism. Both have opposite outlooks. Normally pessimism is looked upon as a depressive one forcing us to look to the darker side and dragging to despondency which is obviously damaging. On the other hand, optimism instils confidence and energy to conquer the adverse forces. Some scholars hold that Philosophy should be

always be erected on the basis of ordinary or normal experience only. This means that the truths which are acknowledged by the scientists should be given accreditation. This is generally found in Western philosophy and in India Sankhya, Charvaka, Vaisheshika, Jaina, Buddha schools have endorsed to this. On the other hand some of the thinkers are of the opinion that not all philosophical problems especially the metaphysical ones can be solved by this viewpoint. Mimamsa and Vedic schools insist on trusting the experiences of the evolved beings which would lead us to gain transcendental knowledge. Pessimistic attitude is usually concluded as a rigidly drawn view that takes us to the darker shade only. Philosophical Pessimism is quite different and it should never be equated to the general term Pessimism. In fact it is a realistic outlook. Although tainted by negative remarks it trains us to face the existing reality. From some of the eastern philosophical schools we think that the overall functioning of nature is such that one has to embrace the gloomy picture of life and its phases. Philosophical Pessimism should not be construed as an anti-optimistic disposition or merely an emotional outburst. It generally challenges the claims of Optimism which in practice seem to be hollow and misleading. Philosophical Pessimists are mostly existentialists and may even sound to be Nihilists. They do believe and prove that Life as such has hardly any meaning or value. It is our enthusiasm which always metaphysically make it ornamental. When a common man understands the main tenets of Philosophical pessimism, he would hold no expectations from the different shades of life. This would silence his mind or rather lead to freedom and tranquility. In brief this can be clearly understood from Schopenhauer's writings. He thinks, "All willing arises from want and so from deficiency and so from suffering. The satisfaction of a wish ends it, yet for one wish that is satisfied there remain at least ten that are denied. Further the desire that lasts long, and demands are infinite...we can never having lasting happiness or peace."³

IV. MELIORISM

In Madhyamika or Shunyavada school from Eastern philosophical point of view the Universe is considered to be totally devoid of reality. There is of course a correlation between the self, the object and the knowledge sought. Since there is a sort of interdependence, even if one of them is proved to be false the whole unit becomes meaningless. This is normally considered to be a Nihilistic approach in West. Madhyamika philosophy does not deny all the reality but at the same time is not ready to accept the apparent phenomenal world. It imagines beyond the phenomenal world and is convinced of the reality therein. Since Reality is not characterized by the phenomenal attributes it is referred to the term Shunya (roughly equivalent to Zero). This view is also called the Middle path because it deviates from the extreme views which comprise of absolute Reality and absolute Unreality. "When we are young, we may have boundless optimism that good things will happen, without supporting evidence; but as we get older, we appreciate more that it is our beliefs about our capacities based on experience and feedback that is the best predictor of success."⁴ This is Melioristic outlook.

Meliorism is almost a similar stream of thought which potentially avoids the extremities or the two opposing poles viz., Optimism and Pessimism. Many a time trusting Optimism as the only genuine inspiring and guiding force brings us to an utter disappointment. On the other hand in Pessimism we are forced to withdraw self from all activities without any valid reason. Both these are detrimental when carried single handed. None can deny the utility of both. Therefore Meliorism was introduced as a golden mean path by virtue of which we can tackle life problems systematically. According to it this world is definitely not very properly designed to make humanity happy nor at any rate everything should be forwarded to the fatalistic outlook making us inert totally. Therefore Meliorism proposes a solution according to which we can make this world a better place for living. We need not be over hopeful nor dejected so as to withdraw self but neatly draw strength from within and face the problems of life in a dignified manner.

V. PRAGMATISM

Most of the times our failure are much because of our ignorance about the facts of the phenomenal world around us. We generally are emotionally stuck up with theoretical assumptions in all aspects of life. Physical laws can rarely be challenged by us. There we meekly accept but on the mental plane we have all freedom due to which we meddle with the laws and regale with umpteen combinations of thoughts. It is always necessary to know our physical as well as mental limitations. Human personality as such is weakly constituted and therefore our mental makeup is mostly due to our unchecked set of beliefs and misgivings which unfortunately are passed on uninterruptly or easily handed over from one generation to another. William James who classified temperaments on the basis of Tough and Tender minded bluntly says, "The history of Philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments." He means that the conclusions of philosophers come from their personal biases than any objective findings. Their theories, perceived as 'Tough minded' and 'Tender minded' are reflection of their emotional makeup and basic view of the world. A professional philosopher cannot make claims on the grounds of their temperament.⁵

There are many more behavioural sciences which could be helpful in rebuilding our character but in this short survey the impetus has been on giving a free hand to freedom that is necessary for the present and

upcoming generations. This would certainly help combating with the different moods of human beings failing which one may get easily trapped or enmeshed in the web of negative feelings and an escape may be highly improbable.

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