

Unit II: Self and Personality

Concept of Self

Self-concept is collection of beliefs about oneself. Generally, self-concept embodies the answer to “Who am I?” Self refers to the totality of individual’s conscious experiences, ideas, thoughts and feelings with regard to herself or himself. Self is one of those central concepts that are frequently used in everyday life. We are occupied with the feelings, perceptions and real or imagined ideas about ourselves. It is indeed the Centre of all human activities. Interestingly enough, we are not born with the notion of our own ‘self’ as distinct from others self. It has been observed that children start showing some idea of ‘self’ around two years of age. In the beginning they learn about own self from parents, friends and teachers etc. The social interaction with them provides the basis of the experience of self. The structure of self, therefore, is open to modification in the light of our experience in the world.

Thus, self involves the mental representation of personal experiences and includes a physical body, thought processes and a conscious experience that one has separate existence. Taking these into consideration, it may be said that self refers to the totality of an individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to

him or herself as an object. It must be noted that self-concept is not a mirror like reflection. Instead, it is based on the integration from several sources. Once formed, the self-schema influences a person's behavior in important ways.

Self in the Indian notion: The notion of self develops in a cultural context. The Indian cultural context has elements of continuity and change. It is marked both by tradition and modernity. In the contemporary period the impact of science, technology and the western education has also influenced the Indian mind.

The Indian notion of self encompasses the physical, social, mental as well as spiritual aspects of human existence. The notion of selfhood in Indian context can be approached in terms of the model of human being. In an interesting analysis R.S.Tripathi has drawn attention to the following features:

- The self is viewed as a witness and non-participant. It is not the Ego.
- Self is not separate. It participates in a unity with all things.
- Self operates within the context of greater degree of dependence.
- The change and development are not linear.

- The universe is viewed as possessing the same properties of life as human beings including consciousness.

Self-esteem:

Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of their own worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride and shame. Self-esteem is an important aspect of our self. As persons we always make some judgment about our own value or worth. This value judgment of a person about himself is called self-esteem. Some people have high self-esteem, whereas others may have low self-esteem. People with high self-esteem are active, successful and optimistic. They are endowed with self-confidence. Those who have low self-esteem are often found depressed and feel discouraged. The impressions and evaluations of others about us play important role in determining our self-esteem. The sense of identity is the perception of one's self as distinct from other people and other things are related to one's self. Self-esteem shows a strong relationship with everyday behavior.

Self-efficacy

is another important aspect of our self. People differ in the extent to which they believe they themselves control their life outcomes or the outcomes are controlled by the luck or fate or other situational factors, e.g. passing an examination. A person who believes that she/he has the ability or behaviors required by a particular situation demonstrates high self-efficacy.

The notion of self-efficacy is based on Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura's initial studies showed that children learned behavior by observing and imitating others. People's expectations of mastering or achievement and their convictions about their own effectiveness also determine the type of behavior in which they would engage, as also the amount of risk they would undertake. A strong sense of self-efficacy allows people to select, influence and even construct the circumstances of their own life. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy also feel less fearful.

Self-efficacy can be developed. People with high self-efficacy have been found to stop smoking the moment they decide to do so. Our society, our parent's and our own positive experiences can help in the development of a strong sense of self-efficacy by presenting positive models during the formative years of children.

Self-regulation and its techniques

Meeting the diverse needs and challenges of life often demands that we are able to resist situational pressure and show control over ourselves. The role of human will or volition is very crucial in this regard. We can internally control or interrupt our behavior. We can choose to delay or defer the gratification of our needs. Learning to defer gratification is called self-control. We do it in view of attaining the long-term distant goals. In Indian context Vrata, Upvas, Roza and austerity have been emphasized. The control of internal states is possible with the help of bio-feedback, Zen yoga, Meditation; Auto-suggestion etc. some of the techniques used in promoting self-regulation are given below:

Some techniques for self-regulation: Self-control can be enhanced by using the following psychological techniques.

- 1. Observation of own behavior:** One can organize understanding of self by systematically noting down the details about own behavior. These details may furnish the necessary information to change, modify or strengthen aspects of self.
- 2. Stimulus control:** This involves attempt to learn to do set of activities under the presence of certain

stimuli and not to perform certain activities in the presence of other stimuli.

3. Self-reinforcement: People often find certain behavior pleasant or unpleasant. They often reward the pleasant ones and increase their probability. This leads to change in the self-concept.

4. Self-instruction: we often talk to ourselves. This has been systematically used in changing ones ideas about self and behavior patterns. By giving instructions to oneself one asserts and moves to behave in that direction.