CHAPTER II
THE CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL

In this chapter the Indian philosophical concept of the individual is discussed. Indian philosophical literature contains considerable psychological matter. This is so because "self-psychology or ego-psychology as the foundation of philosophy was thought to be an essential counterpart of philosophy itself."\(^1\) Since "all systems have for their ideal, complete mental poise and freedom from discord and uncertainties, sorrows and sufferings in life",\(^2\) it is natural that they contain abundant psychological material.

The approach in this chapter is to identify and to portray the basic characteristics of the ideal individual and not to develop a highly technical understanding of individual psychology, the primary reason for adopting such an approach being the need of social work practice. It is not essential for the social work practitioner to possess highly technical knowledge relating to individual psychology. The social work practitioner should primarily be able to identify an adequately functioning individual with a mature personality and be able to distinguish the immature person and help the latter to grow up. What is necessary towards this purpose is to have a sound understanding of the characteristics of a mature
personality. Therefore, the attempt in this chapter is to identify such characteristics, the impediments to developing such a personality, and the necessary methods to overcome such impediments.

The Sources

The major sources that are referred to in this chapter are the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gīta and Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali. These three occupy a unique position in the understanding of the Indian psychology. The Upaniṣadic ideas form the very basis of psychological principles developed in later philosophies. The Gīta offers a comprehensive portrayal of a fully evolved person. The Yoga is considered to be the culmination of Indian psychology. For the purposes of this chapter, the Upaniṣadic views provide the introductory understanding about the nature of the individual; the Gīta provides the description of the perfect individual and the Yoga explains the impediments to the development of perfection and the methods for overcoming them.

Incidently, the Vedānta system of philosophy acknowledges the Upaniṣads as its base. Therefore, when the Upaniṣadic views are presented, the Vedāntic views are also considered. Similarly, the Yoga system is an extension
of the Sāṃkhya system, as Yoga accepts the metaphysics of Sāṃkhya. So a brief presentation of the Sāṃkhya view is also presented. Thus ultimately, the views of three of the six systems of philosophy are presented, thus making the presentation quite representative of the śat-darsanas or six systems of philosophy.

Nature of the Individual - The Upaniṣadic Views

The Upaniṣads describe the individual as an integrated entity possessing physical, psychological, mental, intellectual and spiritual dimensions, the true nature however being spiritual. The human being is not merely a bio-psycho-social entity but a spiritual entity who happens to be existing in a bio-psycho-social frame work. The true nature of the human being is the imperishable spirit, a spark from the divine termed Ātman. Ātman which is "smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, dwells in the heart of all creatures"⁵, "being finitized by emotions, intellect, will and imagination"⁶. The ultimate goal of human life is to become aware of this true Self and to realise it. While all creatures can achieve the state of Self-realization or liberation through divine grace, it is the human being who has the potential to become aware of this true Self and make the efforts to realise it through self-efforts. Thus, the human beings occupy a supreme position.
Identifying the true nature of the human being to be spiritual, the Upaniṣads present a well balanced picture of the human being. They do not create a dichotomy between the spiritual and the mundane. While they never compromise on the point that spirituality is the sum and substance of human life they do not negate the worldly life. Sufficient importance is given to the worldly existence of the human being. It is well recognised that the individual and the human life co-exist at the different physical, physiological, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels.

The first verse of the Tān̄avaśya Upaniṣad declares that all that exists in the world is pervaded by God. The very next verse states that "always performing works here, one should wish to live a hundred years". In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad the teacher prays "may I become famous among men. May I become more renowned than the rich. May I enter into Thee, O Lord! Do Thou enter into me O Lord! In Thee consisting of thousand branches, may I be cleansed. As waters run downward, as months run into years—ever so, O Lord, may students flock to me from every side." In the same Upaniṣad the teacher urges the student, "do not cut off the line of progeny. Do not swerve from truth, do not swerve from duty. Do not neglect well-being. Do not neglect prosperity. Do not neglect the study and the teachings of the Veda."
The importance given to the physical form is expressed in *Aitareya Upaniṣad*. According to this *Upaniṣad*, in the beginning there was nothing but Ātman, and it created firstly the world; then the human beings and immediately after that food was created for the sake of the human beings. 10

The positive and fundamental psychological stage in which the individual likes and accepts his self is clearly identified in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. It is said that the husband, wife children, wealth, Brahminhood, the worlds, Gods, creatures and everything is dear to a person for the sake of his own Self; not because all these have intrinsic worth. 11 The various grades of self seeking and personality development from the empirical level to the highest level of spiritual development are only reflections of this innermost Self. Social life and Self realization are complimentarily placed in the Indian system which believes in integration of personality at all levels.

Human beings are also called the "children of immortal bliss." 12 The idea of pañca kośas summarises the entire concept. The Ātman or the real nature of the human being has five sheaths called pañca kośa. The first is the "anna maya" or the food sheath forming the material body. The second is the "prāṇa maya" or the vital life.
the mental level is the third and "viṣṇana maya" or intellect is the fourth. The fifth and the last is the "ānanda maya" or bliss. Thus, to begin with the human being is the physical form made up of the food that the person consumes. Starting from the physical level the human person possesses the physiological, mental, intellectual and ultimately the pure joy dimensions.\textsuperscript{13}

The human being is also considered to have three bodies. The first is the dense, gross physical body or sthūla ṣarīra. Then comes the subtle or sūkṣma ṣarīra. This is an exact replica of the physical body, but intangible. The third is the kāraṇa ṣarīra or causal body.\textsuperscript{14}

There are three stages of awareness which the normal human being experiences the three states being jāgritha or waking, swapna or dream and śuṣupti or deep sleep. There is the fourth state of super-consciousness called the turiya.\textsuperscript{15} The correlation of the pañca kosas, three ṣariras and the avasthas can be presented as follows.
The **Upánisad**s also contain references to the physical faculties of the human person.¹⁶

The **Sāṅkhya** View

**Sāṅkhya** is a dualistic philosophy, as it believes in the two principles of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is the spirit while the *prakṛti* is the nature. All evolution takes place when the *puruṣa* agitates the *prakṛti*. Everything that exists in creation is a product of this combination.

According to the **Sāṅkhya**, twenty five tattvas or principles are present in everything that is created. The following list illustrates the twenty five tattvas.¹⁷

1. **Puruṣa** - Spirit
2. **Prakṛti** - Nature
3. **Buddhi** - Intellect
4. **Ahamkāra** - The subject or the I-ness
5-9. **Five Tattvātras** - Essence of sound, touch, colour, taste and odour
10-14. **Five Buddhindrayas** - Perceptive organs
15-19. **Five Karmendriyas** - Active organs
20. **Manas** - Mind

Since everything that is created comes out of prakṛti, all the creations will have these twenty five factors operating in them. Thus, even a human person has all these twenty five factors.

Sāṅkhya also discusses three guṇas or qualities called the sattva, rajas and the tamas. "Sattva is the principle of poise conducive to purity, knowledge, joy. Rajas is the principle of motivity leading to activity, desire, restlessness, or disquietitude. Tamas is the principle of inertia resulting in inaction, dullness, delusion."¹⁸ These three guṇas are the primal constituents of prakṛti and therefore are present in all the products of prakṛti and thus they are present in the human being also.

In summary, the understanding of the human person from the Sāṅkhya point of view is that the human being comes into existence because of 'a peculiar combination' of puruṣa and
prakṛti and as a result of such a combination and also as a product of prakṛti the human person possesses the twenty five tattvas. The human person also possesses the three gunas; the gunas may be present at different levels of combinations. In other words, one particular guna may be more dominant than the others. The overall personality will be affected by the interplay of these gunas. The gunas will be discussed in greater detail later.

Like all other systems Sāṅkhya considers liberation as the goal of human life. "Kaivalya" is the term used by Sāṅkhya to refer to the state of liberation.

Characteristics of a Perfect Person - The Gītā View.

The Gītā like any other Hindu scripture has spirituality as the substratum of all human life and looks at the human person and human life as an integral whole. None of the eighteen chapters of the Gītā contain an exclusive discussion on the nature of the individual. However the nature of the individual and characteristics of an evolved person are a recurring theme. At least ten chapters of the Gītā contain such descriptions. Terms like Sthitapragñā - steady minded, jñāni - wise, bhakta- devotee, sama-dharsanaha-viewing equally, are some of the words used to refer to a perfect being. An analysis of these various passages, describes the perfect person, and presents a
complete picture of the qualities of the fully evolved
person. The following section presents such an analysis.

The sixteenth chapter begins with a description of the
perfect person:

"Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in Yoga-
of-knowledge, alms-giving, control of the senses, sacrifice,
study of the sastras and straight forwardness...

Harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation,
peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to beings,
non-coveteousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickle-
mindedness...

Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of
hatred, absence of pride. These belong to the one born for
the Divine Estate, O Bharata." 19

In these three verses twenty four qualities are listed.
These qualities can be classified into psychological,
ethical, moral and social as follows.

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The qualities classified as psychological predominantly refer to personality traits. The second classification of ethical is based on the fact that these are aspects of good conduct. Moral qualities arise out of a person's inherited and acquired values. Social, imply the person's extension to others in thought word or deed. The above classification clearly shows the multi-dimensionality of the human being. The human being should possess personal qualities like fearlessness; the person should also have right conduct and values; the person should be sensitive to the needs of others in society; and the person should have spiritual inclinations. Thus, a person should be psychologically healthy, ethically and morally sound, socially aware and also be conscious of the spiritual dimension of life. These qualities are repeated in different places in different words, whenever a perfect person is being described. Some of the passages highlight only one, while some highlight more than one.

The actual teaching of the Gītā starts when Krishna starts describing the nature of a sthita pragnya, or a person of steady wisdom. The very first description of the sthita pragnya itself adequately summarises the needed qualities of a perfect person.
"He whose mind is not shaken by adversity and who in prosperity does not hanker after pleasures, who is free from attachment, free from anger is called a sage of steady wisdom." 20

A person should possess considerable psychological strength not to be shaken by adversity. Sufficient strength is required for facing adversities in life. Self-awareness and self-control are required for not hankering after pleasure. The Gīta does not state that one should avoid pleasure; and that one should not be happy. What is prohibited is hankering after pleasure; to become so attached to pleasure that one cannot live if pleasures are not available. One has to become aware of the factors that give pleasure and be able to enjoy these but also be realistic enough to realise that such pleasures end as soon as the stimuli for the pleasures cease to exist. This calls for self-awareness and control. The word "in prosperity" is also significant. Normally human nature is such that if one has some prosperity and comfort, one does not think of anything else except increasing the enjoyment such prosperity affords. Prosperity can become intoxicating and one may, in one's prosperity, lose one's balance and seek nothing but the pleasures of prosperity. This is an unhealthy and unrealistic attitude. Pitiable would be the
plight of the person who becomes intoxicated with good fortune and deeply depressed with bad fortune. Since life has both these alternating, one should have the psychological strength to pass through these phases with as little hurt as possible to the self.

The verse further states that attachment, fear and anger are to be avoided. These three are closely linked. A person obtains pleasure from another person or a material object. Gradually, this person gets attached to that which is pleasure-giving. The next stage could be one when the person becomes possessive. When a person is possessive about something, he fears the loss of it. Thus, a negative emotion develops. This fear may result in anger that is focussed on whoever or whatever is creating the fear of loss. Anger is a highly forceful, blinding emotion that can lead to the destruction of the angered person. Thus, a simple pleasure can subsequently result in the destruction of the person, because one gets attached to the object of pleasure. If attachment is avoided fear and anger can more or less be automatically removed.

Thus, this verse presents a picture of a person who possesses considerable psychological strength; reality orientation and control of emotion.
Self-control:

Self-control as a quality is stressed in the Gītā as the following verses indicate.

"He who is able, while still here (in this world) to withstand before the liberation from the body, (death) the impulse born out of desire and anger, he is a Yogin, he is a happy man."\(^{21}\)

"Resting in Brahman, with steady intellect and undeluded, the knower of Brahman neither rejoices, on obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieves on obtaining what is unpleasant."\(^{22}\)

"Mentally renouncing all actions and fully self-controlled the embodied one rests happily in the nine gate city, neither acting nor causing other (body and senses) to act."\(^{23}\)

"Having restrained them all, he should sit steadfast intent on Me; his wisdom is steady whose senses are under control."\(^{24}\)

"Therefore, O Mighty-armed, his knowledge is steady whose senses are completely restrained from sense objects."\(^{25}\)
"Absolute freedom (Brahmic bliss) exists on all sides for these self-controlled ascetics, who are free from desire and anger, who have controlled their thoughts and who have realised the Self." 26

The above verses stress self-control. Together, these six verses state that one attains self-control by being devoted to God; or realising the true nature of one’s Self. The result of such control is happiness and absolute freedom.

Gīta’s stress on self-control is not unique. Self-control is one of the virtues extolled in the Indian tradition. Control of senses or indriya nīgraha is considered to be one of the sādhāraṇa dharmas. 27 It has been emphasised in the Upaniṣads. 28 According to Pantanjali it is one of yamas or practices in the endeavour towards self-realisation.

However, it should also be made clear that self-control is not a negative phenomenon. It must not be equated with suppression. It is not merely practising oneself not to see, not to hear etc. One should realise that the senses get attracted and will be drawn to sense-objects. The eye cannot but follow the movement of an object; the nose cannot but smell a sudden smell; the ears cannot but hear a sound etc. It would be unnatural if one tries to prevent the
sense organs from responding to sense-objects, because it is the nature of the senses to get attracted. But the sense organ's function is only to become aware of the sense objects and send the message to the brain. It is here that the buddhi takes charge and assigns just the right importance to the sensory messages. Thus one experiences the sense stimuli and enjoys them, but with an awareness of their transience and without any compulsive desire for repetition.

"I do nothing at all, thus would the harmonised knower of truth think, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, seizing, opening and closing the eyes convinced that the senses move among the sense objects", state two verses in the fifth chapter of Čīta.  

These two verses make clear the fact that sense-organs would always move among the sense-objects and that it is natural to do so.

The ability to withdraw one's senses even like the tortoise pulls in its limbs should be the achievement of an integrated person. An integrated person realises the nature of the sense-organs, and so does not get disturbed as the sense-organs come into contact with various sense-objects. It is a situation where a person remains totally objective and perceives all matters in their objective
framework and consequently attaches the right amount of importance to the matters perceived and does not get personally agitated or disturbed. The disturbance in the human mind are caused primarily because of limitations in the subject. Thus, a person who remains objective, perceives all matters in their objective framework and consequently attaches the right amount of importance to the matters perceived and does not get personally agitated or disturbed.

Such objectivity leads to control of oneself. Sense-control is only the preliminary stage, whereas self-control includes control of senses, feelings, emotions and behaviour.

The Gīta lays down the guidelines of achieving such self-control. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Equanimity

At least seven verses describe equanimity as another characteristic of a perfect person.

"He who is the same to foe and friend and also in honour and dishonour who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment..."

To whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent,
content with anything, homeless, steady-minded, full of devotion — that man is dear to Me." 31

"The supreme self of him who is self-controlled and peaceful is balanced in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, as also in honour and dishonour." 32

"He who is everywhere without attachment on meeting anything good or bad, who neither rejoices nor hates his wisdom is fixed." 33

The above four verses describe equanimity as a characteristic, while the following verses explain the results of such a state of equanimity.

"Content with what comes to him without effort, free from the pairs of opposites and envy, even minded in success and failure though acting he is not bound." 34

"He attains peace into whom all desires enter as waters in the ocean, which filled from all sides remains unmoved, but not the desirer of desires." 35

These verses list out a few other qualities besides equanimity. They are: freedom from attachment, contentment, self-controlled and peaceful and dependent on nothing. However, the major emphasis of these verses is on the quality of equanimity.
Equanimity is not merely a quality of a person or a personal trait. It is a state of being. For most, it is a mental state which follows upon certain special efforts wherein a person has balance of mind; calm and serene; not unduly agitated or disturbed. Equanimity comes when one is self controlled, and sure of what one wants to do in a given situation. In other words a combination of objectivity, clarity in thinking, self-awareness and control, self-respect and acceptance result in equanimity.

Non-attachment:

This is another quality that the Gītā emphasises. The central theme of the Gītā is performance of action in a spirit of non-attachment. However, the idea of non-attachment should be clearly understood. Superficially it is liable to be understood as detachment, negation, or escapism. Non-attachment as a solution to many ills of the individual and the society is probably unique to Indian thinking. The appropriate understanding of the concept of non-attachment would be non-possessiveness. Every human being by virtue of his human nature gets attached to various objects and persons. It is impossible for the average human being not to be attached to things. But there is a certain gradation in the different types of attachment. As a child one may like sweets. At a later age it may be a toy or a
game that is more attractive. When the same person grows into adulthood, the person may get attached to power or money. As one grows older, one gets attached to things serving larger interests. If at an extreme a person gets attached to the greatest then all other objects lose their attraction. However, one does not hate or run away from the lesser objects; the lesser objects lose their significance; but not their objective reality or utility. Thus, if a person can get attached to the ultimate reality this attachment will be the strongest and one will continue to carry out the appropriate actions in regard to various matters. In the Indian tradition one is expected to always function with this attitude. This attitude can come only when a person is motivated by higher ideals. Therefore this becomes a means of helping a person to function to his maximum capacity without getting disturbed by the various successes and failures that he may encounter in performing the various actions in life. Thus, non-attachment is to function dispassionately and objectively even as a surgeon would cut open the human body, but not be affected by the action.

The Gita compares the person who functions with such non-attachment to the lotus leaf which does not become wet by the surrounding water.
"He who does actions, offering them to Brahman abandoning attachment is not tainted by sin; just as a lotus leaf remains unaffected by water in it." 36

The verses which emphasise non-attachment are as follows:

"That man attains peace, who abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, without the sense of I-ness and my-ness." 37

"Without hope, with the mind self-controlled, having abandoned all possessions, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin." 38

"Freed from attachment and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire-of-knowledge many have attained My Being." 39

The above verses explain the consequences of non-attachment as peace, not incurring sin, and Self-realisation.

"As the ignorant men act from attachment to action O Bharata, so should the wise men act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world." 40

That the benefits of non-attachment are not reaped by the performer alone; but by the entire society is made clear in the above verse. Normally, any action done by a person
is motivated by self-interest. Whereas if a person acts from a non-attached frame of mind, the motive is not self-interest.

The action may be done for the sake of the action alone in which case it can be performed in the best possible manner. A painter may paint a picture to its perfection because the painting is done for the pleasure of it and not for some narrow personal or commercial reasons. Many creative activities would belong to this category. Specially does this apply to an action done for the good of others. Many leaders of humanity have functioned thus. This is the true spirit of many professions. This is the perspective from which even family members may act when they do something for their families.

This verse is of particular significance to social workers as social work can be done only from this perspective. In doing social work there cannot be and should not be any selfish motive. The worker is a conscious instrument of well-being of the whole society. This attitude of working without attachment is called niṣkāma karma. Banerjee has clearly explained the relevance of the niṣkāma karma approach.43
Respect for others and acceptance of others

A perfect person is expected to also possess certain qualities which are social in their dimension. They are acceptance of others; respecting others and concern for the welfare of all.

"Sages look with an equal eye upon a Brahmana, endowed with learning and humility, on a cow, on an elephant and even on a dog and an outcaste."\(^42\)

A sage does not discriminate between man and man; not even between man and animal. No living being is superior or inferior to another. Every living being has a role to play and each one of them is dear to the sage. The achievement or otherwise, the social status of a person etc, leaves no impression on the sage. Absolute equality that is free from material considerations is the principle that guides the person.

"He who is of the same mind to the good hearted, friends, enemies, the indifferent, the neutral, the hateful, relatives, the righteous and the unrighteous he excels."\(^43\)

The person applies the principle of equality not only to animals and human beings occupying different roles and status. The person also accepts individuals with different attitudes towards himself equally. He accepts relatives,
friends and the good hearted; those who hate him and enemies; people who are indifferent to him; the righteous and the unrighteous.

The meaning of this verse is extraordinarily similar to one of the principles of social work. One of the values of social work is the recognition of the worth and dignity of the individual. Arising out of this value, every social worker is trained to accept all human beings irrespective of the person's psycho-social and economic background. Every human being has inherent worth and all human beings are equal by the virtue of this worth. It is the acceptance of this value that makes it easy for a social worker to accept anybody who needs help, whether that person is a criminal, a beggar, a leprosy patient, an alcoholic or a rich man.

Acceptance of others and working for others results in nothing less than the achievement of the supreme puruṣārtha of mokṣa, assures the Gīta.

"Those Rsis obtain absolute freedom or Mokṣa — whose sins have been destroyed, whose dualities are torn asunder, who are self-controlled and intent on the welfare of all beings."
In Summary

A concise summary of the foregoing analysis of the description of a fully evolved person is available in the following verses of the Gīta.

"He who hates no creatures who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving.

Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he my devotee is dear to me." 45

These two verses are self-explanatory and the qualities listed here have been already dealt with, in the earlier sections. Perhaps, the one description that needs further elucidation is "with mind and intellect dedicated to Me." It simply means that the person surrenders himself to God. Spirituality is the fundamental basis of Indian philosophy. Being and becoming spiritual is considered possible through devotion, self-less action or knowledge. Being and becoming spiritual, realising one's true Self, is the aim of human life and this is implied in the statement "dedicated to me." Doing everything in life as a sacrifice - as an offering to God - is considered an essential task of the human person, as implied in this verse.
Impediments to the Development of a Perfect Personality

The above analysis presents the Gīta description of a perfect person. But achieving such perfection is possible only through discipline and effort. The Gīta also identifies and explains the obstacles that impede the attainment of this state of perfection.

The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, is the other major source which explains the state of perfection and the obstacles to the achievement of liberation and the means to overcome such obstacles. The basic psychology of the human being as expounded by Patanjali in his preliminary steps to Yoga are a good source of living in harmony at the individual and social levels. One of the solutions offered by Patanjali is to develop the habit of concentration which in course of time may lead to the cessation of thoughts. However, control of thoughts is not easy as "sickness, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, sloth, craving for sense pleasure, false perception, despair caused by failure to concentrate and unsteadiness in concentration; these distractions are the obstacles to knowledge."46

All these obstacles excepting sickness are psychological in their nature. These psychological factors are at the root of afflictions (kleśa) in the form of emotional and physical disturbances.
"These distractions are accompanied by grief, despondency, trembling of the body and irregular breathing" states the 31st aphorism in the first chapter of the Patanjali Yoga Sūtra.

The modern concept of psycho-somatic illness which explain that when a person is disturbed mentally for one reason or the other, the disturbance is manifested in the form of a physical illness is similar to what is stated in the above two verses. Many cardio-vascular disorders, ulcers, migraine, arthritis, are some of the examples of psycho-somatic disorders. These physical diseases are found to have their origin in deep seated and perhaps unacknowledged psychological disturbances. The above mentioned two verses clearly and positively indicate the effect of mental and emotional states on the body.

Having identified the obstacles, Patanjali states that they can be removed by the practice of concentration upon a single truth and "undisturbed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating friendliness towards the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and indifference towards the wicked." 47

Reflection of the four qualities enumerated will make it clear as to how the qualities yield calmness of mind.
Friendliness towards the happy implies sensitivity towards others. If one is able to delight in the virtue of others, it can act as a motivating factor for one to become virtuous. On the whole these qualities imply the fact that a person is not upset by the good or bad in others; but is able to accept positively the different qualities of others and personally benefit out of it. Here again, is a situation where a person operates from an objective perspective, and not a subjective perspective.

In the early section of the chapter describing Yoga and its practice five afflictions or klesas are explained and pointed out as causes of all human suffering. ⁴⁹

"These afflictions - the causes of human sufferings - are ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion and the desire to cling to life." ⁴⁸

"Ignorance created all the other obstacles. They may exist in either a vestigial form, or they may have been temporarily overcome or fully developed." ⁴⁹ ⁵⁰

"To regard the non-eternal as eternal, the impure as pure the painful as pleasant and the non-Atman as the Atman - this is ignorance." ⁵⁰

"To identify consciousness with that which merely reflects consciousness is egoism." ⁵¹
"Attachment is that which dwells upon pleasure."\textsuperscript{52}

"Aversion is that which dwells upon pain."\textsuperscript{53}

The first aphorism enumerates the five afflictions and the others define each of the afflictions. Ignorance – avidya – is listed as the first of these afflictions and is stated to be the cause of all other afflictions. From the Indian point of view this ignorance refers to the ignorance of the human being of the fact that the person in reality is divine; that the true self of the person is spiritual. Instead of the real Self being the yardstick of measurement of the impact of the events of life, the bodily existence becomes the yardstick and so the person suffers needlessly. Thus, problems pertaining to ordinary life are magnified by a person who regards himself as only a physical being, due to ignorance.

Ignorance can be total or partial. In total ignorance a person knows nothing whatsoever about something. Partial ignorance is when a person's awareness is inadequate. When a person is completely or partially ignorant of something and does not possess complete awareness, insecurities and anxieties will arise. For example it is the ignorance about the questions that will appear in the examinations that creates tensions for the student. Not being completely
knowledgeable about the outcome of business makes a businessman anxious. It is ignorance of various kinds, like one's social acceptance, one's success etc., that creates psychological disturbances in the individual. These disturbances can eventually result in the complete breakdown of the individual.

An individual with ignorance and egoism – avidya and asmita develops limited identity and in turn it limits the individual's perceptions, actions, and capacities. On a psychological plane, egoism can be explained as excessive self-feelings. It is normal, that the individual should possess self-respect and self-acceptance. But in the process of achieving proper personality development the individual inclines towards maladjustment, if self-feelings dominate.

Attachment and aversion rāga and dveśa the next two afflictions, are opposite reactions but interrelated psychologically. Attachment dwells upon pleasure and aversion dwells upon pain. In the experience of pleasure or pain, subjective perception predominates. No situation or object exists which gives constant pleasure to all people or constant pain to all people. An object or situation that is pleasurable to an individual at a given time may cause pain to the same person at different times or due to various reasons.
The Indian tradition therefore believes that pleasure and pain are not in the object or a situation, but exist in the mind and perception of the individual. Therefore an individual is advised to seek śreyas and not preyas. Preyas is something that is pleasurable, whereas śreyas is that which is good. All that is pleasurable may not be good. Alcohol which gives great pleasure to the person also causes the person's death. The same is true of many things in life. On the other hand śreyas is that which is good but may not be pleasant, even like the bitter medicine that cures diseases. Preyas attracts human beings and so normally the human beings go after preyas or pleasure and grow attached to the person, object or situation that is conducive to pleasure. The Katha Upanishad suggests that one should discriminate between preyas and śreyas and go after the śreyas. Not doing this, seeking after pleasure and being afraid of pain are two afflictions creating a long chain of sufferings.

Abhinivesa the next affliction that Patanjali mentions arises with reference to the idea of immortality. It is believed that the Self moves from one physical frame to another. Those who do not understand this reality get agitated by the thought or the actual event of death. So, it is the lack of understanding about one's own self that
results in the desire to cling to life. The desire to cling to life could imply inability to face realities. The most disturbing reality in human life is death. If one can accept even death, there is no calamity that the person cannot face. Acceptance of death comes, when a person accepts it as a part of life. Such acceptance is an indication of the maturity and reality-orientation of the person. Therefore, the desire to cling to life could also be interpreted as the inability to face reality.

The Gīta explains that "When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire arises anger..."

"From anger comes delusion, from delusion loss of memory, from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination, from destruction of discrimination he perishes."54 In conclusion it can be seen that the inability to reach perfection lies within the individual himself. One's own self-understanding and acceptance of the world, ability to face the realities of life, assigning the appropriate significance to the various phenomena in life lead a person towards perfection while lack of these qualities prevent one from the achievement of perfection.
Methods to Overcome the Obstacles

The methods suggested to obtain perfection include self-awareness, self-acceptance and objectivity.

"Austerity, study, and the dedication of one's work to God; these are the preliminary steps towards yoga." \(^{55}\)

Austerity implies a certain discipline one follows. According to Geraldine Coster, such discipline is necessary for relaxation of tension. Coster translates study as aspiration and dedication of one's work to God as an attitude of acceptance of life. \(^{56}\)

In addition to these three attitudes one should be energetic and active. "Success in yoga comes quickly to those who are intensely energetic." \(^{57}\)

In addition to the above four the seeker should also practice the eight different steps, the steps being:

**Yama** — abstention from harming others, from falsehood, from theft, inconsistencies and greed.

**Niyama** — observance of purity, contentment, mortification, study and devotion to God.

**Āsana** — adoption of a firm but relaxed posture
Pranayāma - control of vital energy.

Prathyahāra - control of senses

Dhārana - concentration

Dhyāna - meditation

Samādhi - absorption in the Ātman.58

Yama and niyama emphasise ethical discipline and moral attitudes. Āsana deals with the physical while pranayāma deals with the physiological and vital, and dhārana and dhyāna relate to the mental state. The ultimate result of all these is the Samādhi. Thus, the eight limbs of yoga start with tangible daily life and end on a transempirical super conscious level. They move from that which can be easily done to that which requires more effort. This is the practical guide offered by Patanjali as a means towards perfection.

Patanjali also offers some more techniques for control of the mind.

"The mind may also be calmed by expulsion and retention of breath."59

"Concentration may also be attained by fixing the mind upon the inner light, which is beyond sorrow; or by
meditating on the heart of an illumined soul, that is free from passion; or by fixing upon a dream experience or the experience of deep sleep; or by fixing the mind upon any divine form or symbol that appeals to one as good."\textsuperscript{60}

The first of the aphorisms suggests a form of physiological exercise. All the others suggest the method of fixing one's thinking on a specific factor. The factor could be an idea about God, the Divine within oneself, the heart of a noble person or one's dream. Thus, focusing the entire attention on something good or pleasant is the technique that is suggested.

Becoming aware of the Self and being able to be happy with one's own self is the emphasis of the \textit{Gītā}.

"He who is happy within, rejoices within, who is illuminated within, that Yogi attains absolute freedom or Moksha himself."\textsuperscript{61}

"When a man completely casts off O Partha, all the desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self by the Self then is he said to be one of steady wisdom."\textsuperscript{62}

Both these verses emphasise knowledge of Self. The Self as used here refers to the real-Self or the \textit{Ātman}. One who becomes aware of one's own real-Self is not perturbed by
the pains and pleasures of life. The sources of happiness and satisfaction cease to be outside a person; realising one's self and one's immense potentials, one begins to look more and more within oneself for satisfaction, serenity and strength. This idea is stressed in the above two verses. However, this is not egoism, or escapism. Because the Self that the person realises is not a limited, personal self; it is a part of the large, universal, all-inclusive Self. Consequently, the identity of one's self extends beyond one's physical self and all thought and acts are performed with reference to the extended identity. Thus to become aware of the real Self is not selfishness or escapism. A person with the extended identity lives better and functions better in society. Becoming aware of one's Self, does not convert a person into a recluse who has no concern for society. While the realised being may not have the need for society, he certainly does care about it. Realising his oneness with God, and the oneness of God and all human beings, he realises the oneness of all human beings. Thus, awareness of others increases and consequently his concern for them also increases.

It is possible to operate from such a base when the person has reached a highly evolved state. Even at a less evolved state, the idea that by knowing oneself one can
become harmonised is valid. Most of the times one is not aware of one's own motivations, attitudes, needs etc. The lack of understanding about one's own self results in perplexity, frustration and failure. One of the hallmarks of a mature personality is understanding and acceptance of oneself, leading to self-respect. Thus, the *Gita* is applicable not only to the spiritual but to the psychological dimension of life as well.

**The Three Gunas**

In relation to self-awareness that was discussed earlier the three *gunas* assume great importance. A major dimension of becoming aware of one's self includes also becoming aware of the kind of *guna* that dominates in one's self. In other words, first of all a person should know that these types of *gunas* exist. Secondly the person should realise that these *gunas* exist within one's ownself and be able to identify the pattern of the interaction of the *gunas* within oneself. By thus becoming aware, one could work towards changing it for the better or maintaining these *gunas* in such a balance that the person can become integrated and live in harmony.

**The Karma Theory**

Yet another major theory that has to be taken into consideration in order to understand the human person is the
theory of Karma. Karma literally means action and in very simple words the theory of karma states that every action and thought of a human being will have a reaction. The basic idea of karma therefore is that every action—mental or physical, causes a reaction. The reaction in turn becomes a cause, creating an effect which in its turn becomes another reaction. Thus, there can be an unceasing cause-effect phenomena. The law of karma operates in and through all forces of nature and covers moral, mental and physical aspects of life. There is nothing in this universe that is not affected by the poser of karma. "It is a law of causation, action and reaction, compensation and retribution." Karmas come into existence because "no one can remain absolutely inactive even for a moment. Propelled by the power of nature one is forced to work. Every human being is constantly engaged in action mental or physical or both."63

Karma is misinterpreted as fatalism. Therefore it may be believed that because of one's past karma, one's life becomes pre-destined and that there is very little that one could do to change the events of life. But however, there is no room for fatalism in the theory of karma. "A believer in the law of Karma is a free agent and is responsible for all the good and bad results of his own
action that attend to his life. He knows that he creates his own destiny and moulds his character by his thoughts and deeds. He never blames another for his suffering and misery which come to him. He learns by experience the true causes of events and removing the bad or evil, he performs such actions which produce good to all as well as to himself." 

Thus, that one's life is already destined is only one aspect of karma. The other aspect is that, whatever one is doing at a given time is deciding the future events in a person's life. So, it is a law that combines freedom with pre-determination. Whatever a person may be in the present, that person is building the future with his present actions. Vivekananda puts this idea very succinctly in his famous words "you are the master of your destiny."

The theory of karma has tremendous significance for social work. Lack of proper understanding of the theory of karma can make a person desperate, helpless and hopeless, destroying all initiative. Positively the right understanding and belief in karma can make a person realistic, accept his life, as well as provide the motivation to do his best in the right manner.
In Summary

The uniqueness of the Indian approach to the understanding of the human being lies in the fact that it considers all human beings to be basically spiritual. The entire approach is based on the realisation of the Spirit in man. Indian psychology has been described as "Atman Psychology." While Western psychology tends to reject any phenomenon which is not subject to empiricism, the Indian approach is based on empirical and transempirical realisation of the spirit in man.

It emphasises self-mastery. According to the Indian thinking, it is but natural that life should have pain and pleasure; good and bad. Such pairs of opposites that exist in life and nature are called as "dvandhas". The human person, realising the true nature of the Self is expected to rise above these "dvandhas". This rising above becomes possible with the increasing awareness of one's true Self and as the person begins to realise that the spirit within is of the nature of Truth-Knowledge-Bliss and that it is not affected by all the events that are taking place in the physical world. In brief, the faith here is that the individual has a spirit within, which is beyond and above the gross, material world and knowing this, being with the spirit a person becomes capable of managing any situation
and remains unaffected by it. Thus, this approach stresses the discovery of the strength of the self that exists within a person. Consequently, it motivates a person to constantly look within oneself for help.

This approach can be diagramatically presented as follows:

![Diagram]

However, two objections may be raised to this approach. First of all, it may be argued that the Ātman cannot be subjected to empirical understanding so any theory that has Ātman as its basis may not be valid. Secondly, even those who believe in Ātman may opine that not all human beings reach the stage of Self-realization and under such a situation this theory can not be operationalised.

The answer to the first objection is whether Ātman is subject to empirical understanding or not becomes redundant because irrespective of scientific verifiability, majority of the Indian people believe in the theory of Ātman, It's immortality and consequently the phenomenon of rebirth. And
this faith is as old as the society and culture of India is. Even an unlettered person would express this idea by talking about the God within the human being.

It is this same point, that is, the belief of a God within that makes the theory operational and that would be the answer to the second objection. While it is true that not all human beings at a given time reach the stage of Self-realization, all of them possess the faith that somewhere in the human being lurks a spark of the Divine. So, instead of drawing strength and support from external agents, one may start drawing strength and support from this faith.

**Application to Social Work**

The matter discussed so far has a two fold application to social work. Firstly, it provides a basic approach to the understanding of individuals as well as working with them. Secondly it offers specific techniques as well. The approach that it provides would comprise of the following components.

1. Recognition of the spiritual dimension as a basic part of the individual nature

2. Viewing the individual as simultaneously existing at physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels.
3. Fulfilling of the different needs of these different levels
4. Recognising and emphasising the ethical aspects of human behaviour.
5. Recognising that individuals possess considerable strength and potentials within themselves.

Secondly, the analysis also offers specific techniques of working with individuals. The techniques that arise out of this analysis have meditation as their nucleus. Meditation can be a simple process of introspection. It can be focused on a problem or experience. Meditation can be therapeutic as well. Assiglioli, founder of Psycho-synthesis has developed several techniques, some of which can be used in social work. The techniques will be discussed in detail in the final chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter has analysed th individual per se. However, individuals are not isolated entities. They are members of society and their social roles cannot be overlooked. Indian tradition takes into consideration this fact and provides the necessary means by which the individuals and the society to which they belong can develop reciprocity and mutual benefit. This is the matter for analysis in the following chapter.
References

1. K.C. Das, Concept of Personality in Sāmkhya, Yoga and the Gītā (Gauhati: Gauhati University, 1975) p. 2.


4. ibid., p. 265.


6. ibid., p. 92.

7. Swami Śarvananda, trans., Īsāvās yopaniṣad (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1981), 1, 2, pp. 1–2.


9. ibid., p. 99.


12. Swami Tyāgīśānanda, trans. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, op. cit., 2–5, p. 44.


14. cf., Ragunath Safaya, op. cit., p. 87


*ibid.*, 2:56, p. 127.

*ibid.*, 5:23, p. 331.

*ibid.*, 5:20, p. 317.

*ibid.*, 5:13, pp. 305–306.

*ibid.*, 2:61, p. 136.

*ibid.*, 2:68, p. 144.

*ibid.*, 5:26, p. 327.

Control of senses as an essential quality of the human beings is a recurring theme in many Dharma Śāstras.

The Kathopanishad equates the senses to horses, the objects of the senses to their roads. The body is the chariot while the intellect is the charioteer and the mind the rein. The Self is the lord in the chariot, thus, the senses even like the horses of a chariot need to be restrained. This is a popular used idea.

*The Gita op.cit.*, 5:8, 9 p. 299

*ibid.*, 2:58, p. 131.

*ibid.*, 12:18, 19, p. 157.

*ibid.*, 6:7, p. 348.

*ibid.*, 2:57, p. 129.

*ibid.*, 4:22, pp. 249–250.

*ibid.*, 2:70, p. 147.

*ibid.*, 5:10, p. 301.

*ibid.*, 2:71, p. 149.
38 ibid., 4:21, p.248.
39 ibid., 4:10, p.228.
40 ibid., 3:25, p.185.
43 ibid., 6:9, p.352.
44 ibid., 5:25, p.325.
45 ibid., 12:13,14 p.749.
47 ibid., 1:32,33 pp.36-37.
48 ibid., 2:3, p.62.
49 ibid., 2:4, p.62.
50 ibid., 2:5, p.68.
51 ibid., 2:6, p.68.
52 ibid., 2:7, p.71.
53 ibid., 2:8, p.71.
55 Patanjali Yoga Sutra, op.cit., 2:1 p.56.
58 ibid., 2:29, p.88.
59 ibid., 1:34, p.38.
60 ibid., 1:36,37,38,39 pp.40-43.


