CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"AUM! Sarbesam swosti bhabatu,
Sarbesam shantih bhabatu,
Sarbesam purnam bhabatu,
Sarbesam mangalam bhabatu,
Sarbe bhabantu sukhinah,
Sarbe santu niramaya;
Sarbe bhadrani pashyantu,
Ma kashchit dukha bhag bhabet.
AUM! Shantih, Shantih, Shantih".

(Aum! Auspicious be unto all,
Perfect peace be unto all,
Fullness be unto all,
Prosperity be unto all,
May happiness be unto all,
May perfect health be unto all,
May all see good in everyone,
May all be free from suffering.
Aum! Peace, Peace, Peace.)
The Problem:

Pain, Stress, and Disadvantage as Universal Phenomena

Most Vedic prayers end with "Aum ! Shantih, Shantih, Shantih", meaning "Aum ! Peace, Peace, Peace". This triple prayer for peace is intended for the cessation of "tri-tapa" (three-torments), the three sources/kinds of pain. Tapa or torment is synonymous with pain, affliction, misery, agony, sorrow, distress, and suffering. All creatures in this universe suffer and seek relief from these three types of pain. Pain and suffering are immanent in all aspects of life. In India, philosophers as well as common people accept the view that the 'samsara' or phenomenal/life-world of every creature is an ocean consisting of six 'urmis' or waves: 'shoka/grief, 'moha/confusion, 'kshut/hunger, 'pipasa/thirst, 'jara/aging or decay, and 'mrityu/death; each of which usually entails or is associated with pain. The three types of pain arise out of, manifest themselves, and/or are caused by basically three factors: (a) 'Adhyatmika' pain relates to the self, which may be physical, mental, and/or spiritual. Physical pain is produced by intra-organic disharmony; due to disturbance of the flatulent, bilious, and phlegmatic humorous of the body. Mental pain is produced by mental agitations, emotions, and passions; due to desire, anger, greed, delusion, fear, envy, dejection, and non-perception of particular features of objects. Spiritual sufferings are caused by the lack of integration or harmony or.
equilibrium in the functioning of the body, mind and spirit; resulting in alienation, anomie, meaninglessness, valuelessness, and/or spiritual void. (b) \textit{Adhibhautika} pain relates to beings in the society, culture, and environment and arises from known external environmental conditions. (c) \textit{Adhidaivika} pain relates to the nature and fate, and is caused by imperceptible natural or super-natural agents. Closely related to the above three types of pain is Bertrand Russell's view that the human being is perennially engaged in three basic types of conflicts: (a) against her/himself, (b) against others in the society, and (c) against nature. Philosopher Houston Smith compared these to human being's psychological, social, and natural problems and predicaments.

Pain is a psychic state arising from highly intense or damaging effects threatening the organism's survival or integrity. Pain is a highly valuable acquisition of animal evolution. Pain is a clinical symptom of disturbed development of normal physiological processes. Painful sensations are depressive and distressing emotionally, often tantamount to suffering, and serve as stimuli for various defence as well as coping mechanisms aimed at removing external or internal irritants that had caused these sensations in the central nervous system. Painful sensations are to some extent subject to the influence of higher mental processes associated with cortex activity and dependent on such personal traits as attitudes, beliefs, value orientation, etc. Pain response is the most inert
and unconditioned reaction. Research and observation show that both personal courage, competence, and coping make one invulnerable to pain, not to succumb to pain, and to act in line with high motives. Similarly, cowardice has been found to be associated with preoccupation with painful sensations (Petrovsky & Yaroshevsky, 1987).

Pain as an unpleasant life experience has been perpetually puzzling the human mind since the Vedic times. While the intent of most Vedic prayers was for peace by the cessation of three kinds of pain; one finds following in the Yajur Veda: "Oh misfortune, I welcome you. Pervade my body and mind. Release me from the bondage. Certainly I shall reap the fruits of my 'karma' (action). So, Oh sorrow, as the consequence of my sins, please come to me, burn me, purge me, and liberate me. At times of happiness and comfort, I forget my own 'swarupa' (real self). At times of sorrows and sufferings, I remember my inner spirit. Then I get back my self-control and self-realisation. In the burning pyre of sorrow, my intellect becomes clear and pure. Oh misfortune, you try and test me repeatedly through sorrow and suffering. You are really my true friend. So, I bow down before you and welcome you" (Yajur Veda, Chapter 12, Mantra 63).

"Learn to suffer. Go through the process of suffering. Experience it fully. It will purge you, cleanse you. Suffering shall make you humane." - these statements summarise the teachings of great Indian saints and philosophers. Swami Vivekananda declared, "Misery and happiness are equal factors in
the formation of character. ... In some instances, misery is a greater teacher than happiness. ... In the vast majority of cases, it would be found that it was misery that taught more than happiness, it was poverty that taught more than wealth, it was blows that brought out the inner fire more than praise".

"Without suffering and struggle, there is no enlightenment. With every struggle you evolve a little", wrote Swami Sivananda. Philosopher J. Krishnamurti (1960) wrote, "To suffer and to understand suffering, you must look at it - you must not run away. With the understanding of sorrow, there is freedom from it. ... But sorrow is not to be compared. Comparison breeds self-pity, and then misfortune ensues. Adversity is to be met directly, not with the idea that your's is greater than another's." "Suffering is not an accidental accompaniment of life, but is central to it. In pain and travail all high achievement is wrought. The end of life is not pleasure (‘preyas’), but the realisation of good (‘sreyas’). A life of joy and the joy of life are not the same. If suffering leads us to the fulfilment of our ideal, it is as much happiness as a life of pleasure is. The most poignant pain can be joyously accepted if it is recognised as contributory to the realisation of one's ideals", wrote Radhakrishnan (1985, p. 48).

Viktor Frankl, the founder of "Logotherapy" representing the third Vienese School of Psychoanalysis after Freud and Adler, has said the following about pain and suffering. "Not every conflict is necessarily neurotic; some amount of conflict is normal and
healthy. In a similar sense, suffering is not always a pathological phenomenon; rather than being a symptom of neurosis, suffering may well be a human achievement, especially if the suffering grows out of existential frustration" (Frankl, 1984, p.108). Frankl wrote earlier, "The right kind of suffering - facing your fate without flinching - is the highest achievement that has been granted to man. (p. xiii) ... However, pleasure belongs to that category of events which cannot be brought about by direct intention; on the contrary, it is a mere side-effect or by-product. Therefore, the more one strives for pleasure, the less one is able to attain it" (p. 223) (Frankl, 1946/1955).

Thus, it appears obvious that pleasure alone cannot be pursued and pain alone cannot be shunned, as pleasure and pain both have been found to have positive contributions to life. Pain and suffering have to be accepted as not only unavoidable, inevitable, and immanent in all aspects of life; but also, to some extent, even, essential and beneficial.

**Stress and Disadvantage as**

**Psychologically Critical Life Situations (PCLS)**

Stress has been defined as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it" (Selye, 1974), "reacting typically with exquisite awareness to slightest threats from the outside" (Cohen & Lazarus, 1973), "feeling of being at the mercy of external controlling forces" (Rotter, 1966), "competing constantly and excessively against everyone and everything".
(Friedman & Rosenman, 1974), "eventually collapsing into helpless and hopeless positions" (Schmale, 1972), "a state in which a person finds himself under conditions which hinder his self-actualisation" (Savenko, 1978), "state of internal imbalance, reflecting the unrelieved dominance of arousal or inhibition" (Stephens, 1987), and any "repetitive or chronic situation in which adaptation disorders may show themselves" (Fraisse, 1966).

Selye, the pioneer researcher of stress, goes further and says that "even while fully relaxed and asleep, you are under some stress" and that "complete freedom from stress is death" (Selye, 1974). However, it has also been claimed that stress is "the leading stimulus of life-assertion, creativity and development"; "providing the foundations of all aspects of human life" (Ushakova & Ushakov, 1977). More detail information on stress will be presented in Chapters II and III.

Following an integral, universal approach, Dash (1989) defines the "disadvantaged child" as one (a) whose basic needs and internal necessities remain unfulfilled, (b) whose "Rights" have been denied or violated, (c) who suffers from a prolonged deprivation and/or a continuing inadequacy of the minimum necessary provisions of life, and (d) who is subject to developmentally detrimental external stresses of any kind - natural or man-made. And as a consequence, the disadvantaged child, thus, fails to attain optimal growth and development in physical, mental, and spiritual domains and/or educational, vocational, and social spheres. Disadvantages prevent the child
from achieving the limits of her/his inherent potentials. The disadvantaged children's eco-cultural environments have deprived them materially, their families have failed to provide effective upbringing for their optimal development, and their social-support networks are weak or nonexistent. As a result, their internal psychological conditions and competencies, have remained relatively undeveloped, inadequate, or weak; ultimately leading to, failure, frustration, anxiety, depression, and unproductive coping efforts. Disadvantaged children suffer due to no fault of theirs. Research evidence suggests that this suffering contributes positively towards developing certain competencies and coping skills, thus making the individual resilient, invincible, or invulnerable to pain and suffering arising from the disadvantages of life. Therefore, disadvantages do have certain advantages too.

In spite of the enormous amount of Eastern as well as Western literature on the various concepts like pain, suffering, grief, stress, depression, disadvantage, frustration, conflict, crisis, etc.; theoretical representations of these conditions or processes are still inadequately developed. Attempts to bring all these concepts into an ordered mutual relationship, to establish whether they cut across one another, how each of them should, logically, be used etc. - are rare. All this leads to great confusion in terminology. There is an urgent need to integrate this knowledge.
Studies done at Utkal University, India by Rath, Dash, and others (Rath & Dash, 1973; Rath, Dash, & Dash, 1979; Dash, 1989; etc.) on developmental and educational aspects of disadvantage, stress, handicap, and other related problems have adopted certain unique theoretical as well as empirical perspectives. Briefly, these can be stated as follows: (1) Based on the Bhagavad Gita's classification of knowledge into Sattwik (integral, de-centred, universal), Rajasik (differential, socio- or ethno-centric), and Tamasik (egocentric) types; Dash claims that stress and disadvantage can be defined in three ways. (2) Only the definition based on Sattwik knowledge helps us to (a) integrate such diverse concepts like stress, disadvantage, frustration, conflict, and crisis; conceptualised as hierarchical levels of "Psychologically Critical Life Situations" (PCLS), (b) distinguish these from endogenous "Psychologically Critical Life Conditions" (PCLC) like handicaps, and (c) understand their negative, painful, and detrimental as well as positive and growth-promoting effects. (3) The definition based on Sattwik knowledge also helps us to (a) integrate the intuitive, empirical, and experiential approaches to the PCLS and PCLC, and (b) understand these PCLS/PCLC with relation to vulnerabilities and invulnerabilities of the person. (4) This integrative definition further helps us to bring adaptation, defence, coping, and suffering under the term "experiencing" and distinguish between different types of experiencing adopted in PCLS/PCLC varying with the individual's internal life-world and "criticalness" of the external life-world. (5) The overall
conclusion from these studies implies that these PCLS/PCLC, by repeatedly "trying" or "testing" the individual, help to manifest her/his inherent invulnerability and to bring out the best and excellent that are within her/him.

By "situation" we understand the totality of historical, social, cultural, religious, etc. factors which are relevant to the meaning of experience or expression. Psychologically, a "life situation" is determined by, at least, four factors: (a) the actual internal necessities/needs of a person's life at the given moment, (b) the internal assets/competencies of that person, (c) the external, environmental support systems/networks of life, and (d) the means and options available to the person for realising those internal necessities under the given conditions (e.g., defending, coping, or suffering). A life situation or life-world is conceptually very close to Kurt Lewin's (1935) concept of "life space" (Vasilyuk, 1988). A life situation becomes "psychologically critical" (PCLS) when the relationship between these components is such that realisation of the internal necessity becomes very difficult or impossible. While speaking of a PCLS, the objective circumstances should not be treated as circumstances placed outside the subject's "life-space"; but, must be described in their unique context of the given individual's life, i.e., not as physical circumstances but as psychological and existential circumstances (Frankl, 1984, Vasilyuk, 1988); which offer or deprive the person of certain possibilities for the realisation of her/his motives and values. The actual character of a psychological situation is, in the last
PCLS may seem to be objectively insoluble, so long as the individual retains a belief in its solubility, so long as and inasmuch as s/he is making attempts to solve it, that situation has not become critical in the exact sense of the term. Similarly, the behavioural consequences observed in a PCLS must not be viewed merely as consequences, rather as formations which are direct expressions of the individual's actual world-view. Thus, the type of PCLS is determined by the nature of the "impossibility" state in which the individual is trapped. And this impossibility is in turn determined by which life need or necessity remains unfulfilled as the result of the inability of the types of activity available to the individual to cope with the existing external and internal conditions of life.

The most frequently used concepts in modern psychology for describing the different types of PCLS include stress, disadvantage, frustration, conflict, crisis, etc. Critical life experiences such as dukha, tapa, klesha, soka, and bishada which refer to internal conditions of sorrow, torment, affliction, grief, and distress, respectively; are the products of the PCLS. The descriptive pattern frequently used to characterise the PCLS states that objective circumstances (e.g., loss or lack, deprivations, disadvantages, hinderances, prohibitions, etc.) evoke subjective states (e.g., frustration, dissatisfaction, depression, stress, despair, helplessness, etc.), which in turn, evoke behavioural consequences (e.g., panic, defence, suffering or coping) or experiencing (Vasilyuk, 1988).
Coping as Experiencing

"Experiencing" is understood in psychology as the direct, internal, subjective representation of a mental phenomenon, as distinct from its content and modality. Experiencing may be viewed in two ways: "experiencing-as-activity" and "experiencing-as-contemplation". Firstly, experiencing is an internal activity needed to take in the facts and events of life, a work establishing correspondence of meaning between consciousness and existence. Secondly, it is contemplation/reflection of the objective world - of which, emotional experiencing is a sub-type. Emotion is treated here not only as a reaction, but also as an action. It is not only as "assessor" of life situations, but also is a "worker"; making its contribution to the psychological resolution of those situations. Experiencing is the response to a situation of impossibility or unintelligibility. Preventing, defending, compensating, coping with, going through, managing, and even sublimating or creatively transforming pain and suffering; have been found to be the various ways of experiencing in the PCLS (Vasilyuk, 1988).

The points at which experiencing becomes essential are always points on a border-line, where the individual comes up against a reality "such as never was", to which s/he has no answer. Thus, such points require creativity and can become growing points of the personality - points where "new conscious experience" is built and where wisdom can be gained. In the Vedanta and Samkshya schools of Indian philosophy and psychology,
the state of absolute extinction of pleasure and pain is attainable only when the individual functions as a *drasta* (seer) or *sakshi* (witness) or *sthita-prajnya* (steady). In Viktor Frankl's (1984) words, "For what then matters is to bear 'witness' to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. When we are no longer able to change a situation - just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer - we are challenged to change ourselves" (p. 116).

The Purpose:

A Developmental Study of Stress and Coping

The study reported in this thesis is a part of an ongoing series of studies on the theme of "Contributions of PCLS/PCLC like stress, disadvantage, handicap, or disability to the development of human excellence through competence, coping, and invulnerability" by A. S. Dash of Utkal University, India. In Part I of this thesis, Dash and his students' research will be reviewed in detail first (Chapter II), and a relevant review of modern psychological studies on stress and coping is presented next (Chapter III).

Part II of the thesis presents an empirical study with two main aspects: (a) empirically interrelating disadvantage and stress and (b) developmentally investigating both negative reactions and positive coping approaches to PCLS like
disadvantage and stress. The study aimed at exploring common stressors (i.e. PCLS) and resultant reactions and actions or coping patterns of adolescent school children of urban, rural and tribal areas of the state of Orissa, India. This study was designed to find answers to the following questions: (a) what sort of PCLS (particularly, disadvantages and stresses) are usually confronted by adolescent school children of our society? (b) what are their reactions or responses to these PCLS? and (c) how do they cope with or experience these PCLS? The purpose was to understand better how children perceive, experience, react to, manage and cope with disadvantaged or stress-producing PCLS at a developmentally critical stage of their lives.

The work is basically a cross-sectional survey, conducted in Orissa, India. Its purpose was to find out similarities and differences: (1) developmental differences due to age i.e. grade; (2) gender differences due to sex; and (3) demographic (urban, rural and tribal areas) differences due to psychosocial disadvantages in children’s experiences of, reactions to, and coping approaches adopted in such PCLS.

Stress experiences and reactions, and coping approaches of Indian adolescent school children may not be similar to those of western i.e., Euro-American or Occidental adolescent school children. Therefore, the "world view" or mentality of Indian children needs to be compared and incorporated with the findings of Euro-American research. It will contribute to a better understanding of children’s stresses in our sociocultural set-up;
and help us to provide better child-rearing, education, and
counselling to our children to maintain an optimal level of
stress tolerance that will make the person invulnerable and avoid
unnecessary stress through appropriate competencies and coping
strategies.

The Perspective and Background of the Study:

At the Centre of Advanced Studies in Psychology at Utkal
University, India; research on experiencing and the PCLS has been
going on in four broad areas. (1) In the social, personality, and
organisational psychology area; studies have been conducted on
helplessness behaviour, stress and coping, psychological well­
being, psycho-social as well as teaching-learning problems of the
disadvantaged children, and creative-coping of the invulnerable
children. (2) In the education and measurement area, studies
include assessment and stimulation or training of cognitive,
academic, social, and motivational processes, competencies, and
skills of tribal and other disadvantaged children. (3) In
cognitive and developmental area, maximum research has been going
on, on the development of normal, disadvantaged, handicapped,
retarded, and invulnerable children; with relation to their
abilities/ disabilities or competencies/ incompetencies and home
as well as socio-cultural environments. (4) In the area of
biosocial foundations of behaviour, a series of experiments has
been done on various kinds of stress (e.g. crowding, ECS, sensory
deprivation, social isolation, etc.) which have been found to
produce hyperactivity, emotionality, and biochemical changes.
Since the early 1970's (Rath and Dash, 1973), Dash has been working on the development and education of disadvantaged children (belonging to low-SES, lower caste, tribal, slum, maternally deprived (orphans and destitutes), and pathological parenting (alcoholic fathers) groups) and handicapped children (belonging to visually impaired (blind), audio-vocally impaired (deaf-mutes), and orthopaedically impaired groups). Data from several studies are available on these children's (a) needs and aspirations, (b) home environment, family effectiveness, and social support networks, (c) cognitive, social-affective, academic, and physical-conative abilities and disabilities, competencies and incompetencies, and vulnerabilities and invulnerabilities; (d) coping and adaptation efforts, approaches, and styles; and (e) compensation, remediation, education, and counselling strategies.

On the basis of empirical findings, theoretical developments in this field, and experiential observations from his 25 years' of research, Dash has developed a theoretical model integrating the ancient as well as modern, Indian and Eastern as well as Western, philosophical as well as scientific psychological knowledge about pain and suffering associated with PCLS/PCLC such as stress, disadvantage etc.. Dash's model of study of these PCLS follows the method of analysis used by the major schools of Indian philosophy, i.e., (1) Heya, (2) Hetu, (3) Hana, and (4) Hanopaya; and the Buddha, i.e., (1) Dukha, (2) Dukha Samudaya/ Samuchaya, (3) Dukha Nirodha, and (4) Dukha Nirodha Pantha.
These four aspects roughly correspond to (1) nature and forms of PCLS/PCLC, (2) their causes, (3) their positive and negative effects on human life, and (4) the ways and means for overcoming or coping with them. Applying this method of analysis, Dash treats *dukha* (sorrow), *tapa* (pain or torment), *klesha* (affliction), and suffering as the products of or closely associated with various PCLS/PCLC; and states: (a) the PCLS are normally distributed in the human population, varying widely between individuals and across the individual's life-span with regard to nature, form, and intensity; and are linked up with the five levels of human existence (material, vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual); (b) these PCLS are caused by both internal (*Adhyatmika* or self-related, personal, intra-organismic) and external (known - external, i.e., socio-environmental or ecological or *Adhibhautika* and unknown - external, i.e., natural and super-natural or *Adhidaivika*) factors; (c) these PCLS produce both positive and negative consequences in life and only by going beyond this bi-polarity through the development of competence (instead of helplessness), effective coping (instead of faulty coping or self-defeating defence mechanisms), and invulnerability (instead of vulnerability) one can bring out the best of human excellence; and (d) there are ways of defending, coping, experiencing, and/or developing competencies to manage, overcome, and benefit from the PCLS. Dash summarises his own research in this way: Even if someone is disadvantaged or handicapped; through the development of internal resources (physical, mental,
and spiritual competencies), extracting maximum support (from the existing external environment and social support network), and using effective coping styles creatively; s/he can become invulnerable or invincible.

The Plan of the Thesis:

A review of relevant Indian, Soviet, and Euro-American theoretical and research literature is presented next (Chapters II and III), which will provide the empirical research base for the present study. Chapter IV presents a background study, the pilot study, the plan and design, and the method of the main study. Chapter V presents the result tables and description of findings. Chapter VI presents the interpretation of the findings of the study, the general discussion from theoretical, empirical and applied perspective, and the conclusions. Chapter VII presents the implications of this investigation in the form of an integrated and comprehensive package of guidelines for developmental counselling and psychotherapy aimed at preventing/controlling/managing stress and developing invulnerability. Finally, references and relevant bibliography for the thesis will be presented.