Chapter IV

Psychological Bases of Annie Besant's Educational Thought

All the great educationists of the world tried to bring forth their educational theories based on the principles of psychology, and Annie Besant is not an exception to this widely accepted truth. Annie Besant also planned to give, first, the psychological justifications to her ideas and then implemented them, as educational principles, in the educational institutions established by her in India. This clearly reveals that Annie Besant was primarily a psychologist and everything else, afterwards.

Even in her earlier stages of life Annie Besant was very much interested in Psychology. When she was busy in her work for socialism, she was also trying to understand different aspects of psychological knowledge, which were rapidly developing in Europe at that time, but the study of materialism and socialism could not give sufficient knowledge of Psychology to her. Writing in a letter to one of her close friend, W.T. Stead, Annie Besant said that she "could find no answer to problems of life and mind in Materialism, especially as touching --
1. Hypnotic and mememic experiments, clairvoyance, etc.
2. Double consciousness, dreams.
3. Effects on the body of mental conceptions.
4. Line between object and subject worlds.
5. Memory, especially as studied in diseases.
7. Thought transference.
8. Genius, different types of character in family, etc."

So Annie Besant left the ranks of Socialism for ever and became a theosophist only for the sake of getting a thorough knowledge of psychology, with which Theosophy, as a science of psychology, was greatly brewing at that time. Annie Besant being a voracious reader of books, especially concerning the social and psychological topics, tried to refresh her knowledge of psychology from time to time. She did not feel shy to tell others openly about her ignorance of detailed knowledge of Psychology. It would be interesting to note that in 1886, Annie Besant felt worried that her psychological knowledge, she writes, "was not sufficient; that life and mind were other than, more than, I had dreamed. Psychology was advancing with rapid strides; hypnotic experiments were revealing unlocked of complexities in human consciousness, strange middle of multiplex personalities, and

most startling of all, vivid intensities of mental action
when the brain, that should be the generator of thought,
was reduced to a comatose state. Fact after fact came
hurting in upon me, demanding explanation I was in-compe-
tent to give. I studied the obscure sides of consciousness,
dreams, hallucinations, illusions, insanity.¹

Annie Besant studied Sinnett's books and H.P.B.'s his-
toric "Secret Doctrine" and thus was able to find a satis-
factory knowledge concerning her doubts about psychology.
In 1889 when Annie Besant joined Theosophy a vast field of
psychology was flung open before her. At that time Theoso-
phical thinkers were trying to collect knowledge from dif-
ferent religious and philosophical schools about man and his
problems. Annie Besant studied all the works concerning
theosophical psychology and tried to enrich that psychology
with her life-long experience and thorough study. Annie
Besant being a modern of moderns in psychology found the need
for modern psychology in the life of a man like the need of
a lamp in a dark place. She contributed a large number of
books to the world of psychology.

In 1885 Annie Besant wrote the book "In the Outer
Court" which contains two important chapters "Building of
Character" and "Spiritual Alchemy". In these two essays

Annie Besant gives broad principles and clear details of psychological knowledge.

In 1901 Annie Besant wrote "Thought Power: Its control and Culture" in which she presented a keen-edged tool, but one easily wielded even by the inexpert to build the personal self nearer to the heart's desire. Her work on thought power antedates the later western schools of psychology concerning thought and memory training with the chapters on "Thought Transference" and "Concentration".

In 1904 Annie Besant delivered six lectures which were published as a book "Theosophy and Modern Psychology". In these lectures she dealt with the difficult paths of the sub- and super-consciousness, of Clairvoyance and Clairaudience. She also dealt the problems of fixed ideas, of premonitions, madness, genius etc.

The full knowledge of the psychology of consciousness was unfolded in Annie Besant's masterpiece in this field, "A Study of Consciousness" published in 1904. This book gives a deeper understanding of consciousness. In the second part of this book, essays on "Will, Desire and Emotions" are given in detail.

In 1907 Annie Besant carried the subject of psychology into another field, Yoga, with the lectures, and later the book "An Introduction to Yoga". That is, Yoga, the law of psychology, "the systematised knowledge of the unfolding of
unconsciousness applied to the individualised self. In this field of mystical psychology it is difficult to attain goal because the practice of Yoga is beyond the purview of an average person.


In most of her pamphlets and books on Psychology, Annie Besant seems to draw her maximum knowledge from ancient wells of Aryan wisdom. She uses Hindu terms, in her psychological writings, taken mostly from the scriptures -- Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, and develops her theories in Indian setting. Annie Besant is not an arm chair academic psychologist, who constructs theories on the conclusions drawn by others; but she is a practical and, rather, mystical psychologist and develops her school of thought, having a firm faith in the truth of the mighty powers of hidden consciousness and is believed to have glimpsed the truth of the vast scheme of the universe, with life indwelling in all things.

Annie Besant has a deep faith in Indian Psychology and considers Indian psychological system as a most advanced system of science to interpret all the terms of
psychology intimately concerned with a man and his growth. Though Annie Besant takes Indian psychology as an advanced science, but she does not limit has psychology to Indian knowledge alone. To prove as an up to date science Annie Besant's psychology "holds its mind open to all new facts and truths; that is not content to march along a beaten track; that is willing to consider facts the most abnormal, provided only they are demonstrated to the reason.....The new psychology walks with its eyes open, it does not reject methods because they are new, nor facts because they are unknown".  

Thus Annie Besant's new psychology does not remain contented with Hindu psychology only, but it also tries to arrange "into some kind of order the chaos of facts presented by modern psychologists", and brings a synthesis of the Hindu school of psychology and modern European psychology in order to present New psychology.

To understand Annie Besant's psychology in its right perspective, it would be worthwhile to explain the main psychological terms interpreted by Annie Besant in her system. She has written in full details about consciousness, Character, Emotion, Desire, will and Thought-Power. Therefore, the present chapter will try to explain

2. Ibid. Foreward.
these terms in brief with the help of Annie Besant's interpretation of them.

(A) Consciousness

To Annie Besant consciousness and life are identical. She regards that consciousness and life are "two names for one thing as regarded from within and from without. There is no life without consciousness; there is no consciousness without life. When we vaguely separate them in thought.....We find that......consciousness turned inward by the name of life; and life turned by the name of consciousness. When our attention is fixed on unity we say life; when it is fixed upon multiplicity we say consciousness, and we forget that the multiplicity is due to, is the essence of, matter".¹

The modern name of consciousness is "awareness". But awareness cannot hang in the void. Awareness implies something of which it is aware, a duality at the least. Otherwise it does not exist. Awareness is essentially awareness of 'limitation' and secondarily awareness of 'others'. Awareness of others comes into being with what we call self-consciousness. So in understanding consciousness we come across inseparable dual terms such as consciousness - limitation, spirit-matter, life-form etc; they exist only in relation to each other.

In Annie Besant's system consciousness and matter definitely affect each other, because they are the two constituents of one whole. Annie Besant writes that they consist of such inseparable duality that "both appearing as they draw apart, both disappearing as they unite, and as they draw apart a relation exists ever between them." Annie Besant tries to explain her concept of consciousness from the Hindu philosophical standpoint. To her consciousness is the All, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Changeless, she writes, "Any reality found anywhere is drawn from consciousness. Hence everything which is thought, is" consciousness.

In understanding the varied manifestations of consciousness it must be remembered that conscious has two facts, firstly, the consciousness of each man is a Unit, thought it appears separate and different from each other, secondly, that all these Units themselves are the parts of the Absolute Consciousness. Annie Besant writes "we cannot too often remind ourselves that consciousness is one; that all apparently separate consciousnesses are truly one, as one sea might pour through many holes in an embankment. That sea-water might issue from the holes differently coloured, if the embankment were composed of differently coloured earths; but if would all be the same sea-water; analysed, it would all

1. Ibid. p. 27. That relationship is magnetic in character. It is of Substance and in it the essence of consciousness and essence of matter exist, polarized but not drawn apart.

2. Ibid. p. 29.
show the presence of the same characteristic salts. So to Annie Besant, all consciousnesses from the same ocean of Absolute consciousness show identical character, though composed of same kind of matter, act in the same kind of behaviour in life.

Annie Besant is very critical about the interpretation of the individual consciousness by the modern psychology, she says, "Modern psychology speaks of dual, and treble and multiplex personality, losing sight of the fundamental unity among the confusion of the manifold. Yet truly is our consciousness a Unit, and the variety is due, to the material in which it which it is working".

States of Consciousness

Annie Besant explains, according to the Hindu psychology, that there are four states of human consciousness. They are: Waking state (Jagrat), Dream state (Svapna), Deep Sleep state (Sushupti) and the Transcendental state (Turiya). Since consciousness is indeed awareness, so these different states denote varying conditions of awareness. No where in modern European psychology do we find such a clear description of the operation of the human mind as is found in the psychology of Annie Besant entitled: "A Study of Consciousness". Where, though borrowed from the Hindu psychology, she

1. Ibid. p.105.
2. Ibid. p.106.
deals with the four states of human consciousness. It must be borne in mind that these states are not separate from each other, rather they together constitute the whole life of a man. Only for the sake of clear understanding they have been separated from each other.

(1) Waking State of Consciousness (Jagrat):

The waking state of consciousness is a consciousness working on the mental plane using mind as its vehicle, seated in the physical brain as self-consciousness, and using that brain with its connected nervous system as its instrument for willing, knowing and acting in life. In waking state of consciousness "the brain is always active, always vibrating; its activity may be stimulated as a transmitting organ from outside through the senses, or it may be stimulated by the consciousness from the inner planes". In this state brain is ceaselessly active and responds to the without and the within behaviour of a man.

For the development of the working state of consciousness a discriminating mind is needed. The discriminating mind is a wakeful mind. But discrimination is possible only in a state of complete freedom where one can perceive all the alternatives and so can choose from them. Thus a mind that is committed to beliefs, ideals, principles is not a free mind and is not, therefore, a discriminating mind.

1. Ibid. p.169.
The characteristics of the waking state of consciousness (Jagrat) are: (i) a perception of alternatives, and (ii) a putting aside of the non-essential, from among those alternatives. Both these processes are relative to the individual, for one person may see a large number of alternatives, while another may see only a few. The important point to note here is that each man should see for himself what the alternatives are and put aside those which he considers non-essential in terms of his own experience. In Hindu Psychology the awakened man (Jagrat) is one who has great consciousness; he is a man of awareness; conscious about the external world. But to him only awareness is not adequate, he must have, awareness coupled with the element of choice. Then the waking state becomes complete.

(ii) Dream State of Consciousness (Svapna):

Western psychologists tell us that in dream there is to be seen a display of unfulfilled desires. But these psychologists talk of the superficial layer of dreams where the physical brain is passive and where the mind is only active\(^1\). Therefore to these psychologists the dream is that condition where unworkable actions have been put aside, but not necessarily the unfruitful motives. In such dream conditions there is an awareness without any choice.

But in the dream stage, as explained by the Hindu psychology, there is a deeper layer of choiceless awareness.

\(^1\) Ibid. p.106-107-
It arises only when the mind in its waking state has put away not only the unworkable way of action but also the unfruitful pursuing of motives.

Annie Besant calls the state of dream consciousness by the name of the "Super-physical consciousness", because the dream is the most generally recognized a universal form of other consciousness. While explaining her point Annie Besant says, "In the East, this state of other consciousness has for long ages been regarded as higher than the waking state, as that of the consciousness set free from the narrow limits of the physical brain, and acting in a subtler and more plastic and congenial medium. Dream has been regarded as one phase of this super-physical activity, and has a touch with the higher world; and means have been taken to arouse self-consciousness in the dream-world, to set self-consciousness free from the physical body at will, so that instead of the vague and confused answers to impacts from higher worlds in undeveloped dream states, self-consciousness may be established therein with clear and definite vision."

So in the dream state we find the procession of events moving up and down without any desire to interfere with the self-consciousness of an individual -- thus this condition is that of choiceless awareness.

1. Ibid. p.174.
(iii) **Deep Sleep Consciousness (Sushupti):**

The third state of consciousness, as described by the Hindu Psychology is Deep Sleep. Annie Besant says "The consciousness of deep sleep or trance induced by raja-yoga practice, unaware of the physical and emotional worlds but aware of and contacting the mental world, is Sushupti or deep-sleep consciousness".¹

Deep sleep does not mean a state of oblivion, no is it a condition of stupor. It arises only when the mind is in a condition of choiceless awareness. Deep sleep is only possible when there is no interference even of the dreams. In dreams the mind watches the movement of thought and these movements bring no interference because with interference dream state comes to an end and man is brought again to the waking condition.

Thus in the condition of deep sleep mind is completely silent. In other words we can say that in the condition mind has reached a state of Mindlessness or silence of the mind. But can the mind be silenced with a conscious effort? Obviously this cannot be done, for any conscious effort to silence the mind keeps the mind caught up in a thought-process. It is a common experience that any conscious effort to sleep drives the sleep away. Silence comes to the mind; it cannot be sought after. So the sensitivity of deep silence comes only when the conscious effort of the mind has ceased. Sushupti is indeed a realm of the deep consciousness, where alone the Voice of the Silence can be heard.

(iv) Transcendental State (Turiya):

It is the fourth state of consciousness. It is not easy to describe Turiya as it is a condition of Transcendental Experience. Every description of that experience will be an effort on our part to make it immanent. But transcendence cannot be caught in immanence. Thus the Transcendental Reality has always been described by negation.

The state of Turiya is the state of direct, immediate experience which can never be communicated except through similies, comparisons, contrasts which form symbols and help in the presentation of the direct experience of a man. But a symbol is merely an approximation of a substance and not the substance itself. Symbol only indicates the path. Thus for contacting the substance or a reality the symbol has to be given up.

In the silence of the deep state (Sushupti) where the duality of the observer and the observed has vanished, there arises this state of direct experience which is Turiya. It may be noted that all direct experience comes to man in only in silence. Where there is even the slightest noise, there the element of effort is invariably present and the experience cannot be direct and immediate.

Since Turiya state of consciousness can only be described in the language of communication, so it can be known as "Awareness in Action", because no other language can explain Turiya state so it can only be known through the
patterns of behaviour of an individual himself. As Turiya is 'Awareness' in Action which means actions expressed and explained for providing a clear understanding of transcendental state of consciousness.

The Mechanism of Consciousness:

In the psychology of Annie Besant, it is correct to say that the human body through willing, thinking and acting forms the mechanism of consciousness but she suggests that the nervous apparatus of the body must be called the special mechanism because it is that important apparatus which controls and directs the whole consciousness. Annie Besant writes "Every cell in the body is composed of myriads of tiny lives, each with its own germinal consciousness, each cell has its own dawning consciousness, each cell has its own dawning consciousness, controlling and organizing these; but the central ruling consciousness which uses the whole body controls and organizes it in turn, and the mechanism in which it functions for this purpose is the nervous system."

In explaining the process of consciousness Annie Besant seems to be influenced mostly by the Hindu psychology.

( B ) Character:

Annie Besant's lecture entitled "The Building of Character" gives her views in detail about character. In this lecture she talks about the building up, not the character

of any common human being but, of the character of a divine being. As this topic very closely concerns the character of a common human being, so it would be very interesting to know it in brief.

To Annie Besant there is a necessity of building some positive virtues in a man if he wants to attain a noble character. She suggests that the desired positive virtues must be of "an exceedingly high and noble type; virtues which are not those simply that are recognised as necessary in the world, but far rather those which the aspirant desires to achieve in order that he may become one of the Helpers and the Saviours of the world, those characteristics that go to make up one of the world's Redeemers, one of the pioneers of the first-fruits of mankind".1

According to Annie Besant there are many essential principles which must be followed for the building up of a character. These are given as under:-

(1) Deliberate Building: The first thing in the building of character is its exceedingly deliberate nature. Annie Besant writes "It is not a thing of fits and starts, it is not a casual building and leaving off, it is not an effort in this direction one day and in another direction tomorrow, it is not running about seeking for aims, it is not a turning about looking for a purpose; the whole of this at least is definitely done, the purpose is recognized and the aim is

The deliberate building begins with the character as it is recognized to exist having a definite aim in view. So every individual has a definiteness of purpose which leads to deliberateness of action for achieving a right character.

(ii) Choice of Right Thoughts: Annie Besant attaches great importance to choosing right thoughts in the building of character. In her views a man must learn the way to control his thoughts because right thinking and control of thoughts affect others, so in the selection of thoughts one must be vigilant to select those thoughts to which he will be able to bend his energy and calculate the actions of those thoughts on the others. But he must not see only the effect of his thoughts on others but he must also see how those thoughts affect himself because thoughts are the driving force which help in the formation of a character.

(iii) Path of Truth: For building up a highy character a part of truth is badly required to be followed. Truth does not mean, not to speak a lie. To Annie Besant Truth is a very comprehensive term. To her "Truth is the very basis of intellectual character, as love is of moral character". Annie Besant insists that every man should be definitely true "scrupulously and accurately true, not with the

1. Ibid.
common place truthfulness of the world, though that be not a thing to be despised, but of that scrupulous and strict truthfulness which is necessary above all to the student of life.

Annie Besant recommends some kinds of truth to be followed by every sincere man: truth of observation, truth of recording, truth of thinking, truth of speaking, truth of acting. Annie Besant forcefully suggests that where there is not this seeking after truth and a strenuous determination to become true, there is no possibility of building a high character of a man.

When these three, above referred principles are realized and the initial points of character building are understood, an Ideal is formed in a man. The mind working within itself builds an internal image which is made more established as the mind grows in strength. Annie Besant gives a great importance to the ideal of character building, she quotes the Chandogya Upanishad, where it is written "Man is a creature of reflection; what he reflects upon, that he becomes; therefore, therefore reflect upon Brahman". For the mind of a man is a mirror and images are cast upon it and are reflected, and the Soul that in the mirror of the mind beholds the glory of the Lord is changed into that same image from glory to glory. So in the first instance a man must have the ideal

2. Ibid. p.18.
before him in order that he may reflect it.

Annie Besant is a practical psychologist, she does not explain only the ideals of a good character but also tells the methods by which that ideal can be achieved successfully.

Annie Besant gives some workable methods in the achievement of higher ideals of character formation.

(i) Contemplation: By contemplating with a definite purpose, choosing time and not allowing himself to be shaken from it, a man can get the ideal that he has built for him. For perfect contemplation the training in concentration is essential, because for right contemplation mind is not to be scattered. Writing in support of concentration Annie Besant says, "We have to learn to fix it steadily, and this is a thing that we should be working at continually, working at in all the common things of life, doing one thing at a time until the mind answers obediently to the impulse, and doing it with the concentrated energy which bends the whole mind towards a single point".¹

Annie Besant is not very rigid in her methods of building up of character, she even ungrudgingly recommends that if any one finds that he has chosen badly or wrongly, he must change gladly the procedure or practice, she says, "be ready to change what does not work well; but change it

¹. Ibid. p.20.
at your own time and with perfect deliberation; do not change it because on the impulse of the moment, passion or bodily desire or emotion may be ruling; do not change it at the demand of the lower nature that has to be disciplined, but change it if you find that you have badly chosen.¹

The next stage, before Annie Besant, in which character is to be built, is the study of character itself. She takes the ideas of the great men as an example for her ideals. As a lover of Bhagavad Gita she tries to get lesson about the virtues needed for the character of a man from Lord Krishna’s saying.

In Bhagavad Gita, in the sixteenth discourse, Sri Krishana gives a list of qualities, everyone of which might serve as a part of one’s constant thought and endeavour, remembering that the character is built first by the contemplation of the virtues, and then by the working out of that virtue which has become part of the thought into the speech and the action in daily life. The list of virtues which can very effectively cement one’s character are: "Fearlessness, Purity of Heart, Stead-fastness in the Yoga of Wisdom, Almsgiving, Self-restraint and Sacrifice, the Study of the Sastras, Austerity and Straightforwardness Harmlessness, Truth, Absence of Wrath, Reunciation, Peacefulness, Absence of Calumny, Compassion to Living Beings, Uncovetousness, Mildness, Modesty, Absence of Fickleness, Boldness, Forgiveness, Fortitude, Uprightness, Amity, Absence of Pride — these become his who is born with the

¹ Ibid. p.23.
divine qualities".¹

The virtues explained above, taken from the Bhagavad Gita, are very important to help in the building of character. Annie Besant suggests that each of these virtues must be practised in daily life by the children. In the institutions which were established by Annie Besant in India, she laid a great emphasis to the building up of the character of the students, based primarily on the virtues referred to, from the Bhagavad Gita.

In her educational institutions Annie Besant incessantly advised the students to imbibe these virtues in their daily lives. Her constant preaching to the student was to practice, practice, practice these virtues "not by hardening yourself but by making yourself responsive"² to these ideals so that a high character of each one may be built.

(C) Emotion

To Annie Besant, Emotion is not a primary state of consciousness, but it is a compound made up by the inter-

¹. Annie Besant & Bhagwan Dass (translators) 'The Bhagavad Gita', pp.271-72. In the opening three couplets Lord Krishna says:

². Ibid. p.23.
action of two of the aspects of the Self—Desire and Intellec-
t. She writes that "The play of Intellect on Desire
gives birth to Emotion; it is the child of both, and shows
some of the characteristics of its father, Intellect, as
well as of its mother, Desire".¹

Annie Besant considers emotion as a great motive
force in man as it stimulates all thoughts and impels
them to action. Without emotions the life of a man will
become passive and inert. But emotions also subjugate
some persons who are continually harassed by their own
mental conflicts. Annie Besant suggests that if good
results are desired right reason must always govern and
direct emotions. She writes "Emotion should be the impulse
to action, but not its director; direction belongs to the
intelligence, and its guiding prerogative should never
be wrenched away from it. where the consciousness thus
works, having strong emotion as the impulse and right
reason as director, there is the sympathetic and wise
man who is useful to his generation".²

Annie Besant warns that man must not be a slave to
the desires, because desires as are rooted deep in emotions,
when become limitless direct emotions to wrong channels.
The activities must thus be the result of intelligence and
emotions and not purely that of unintelligent desires.

2. Ibid. p.297.
She writes "Emotion gives the movement, intelligence controls and guides, and then the Self will use activity to the best advantage, as becomes the ruler of the emotions, not their victim". 1

When Annie Besant finds emotion to be a motive force to action, she also finds a distorting wrong desires caused by alluring sense-perception. Annie Besant finds it very difficult to master perfectly one's emotions, but she suggests some methods of practical utility for obtaining a control over the emotions.

Annie Besant recommends the following forceful methods for achieving a mastery of the emotions:

1. Meditation: Annie Besant attaches a great importance to meditation. She is confident that by meditation disturbed emotions can find peace. She suggests that for effective results the best time for meditation is the morning time, just after a peaceful sleep of whole night, when the desire body or the emotional nature is more tranquil than after it has plunged into the hustle and bustle of the day's work. She records the afficaciousness of the morning time meditation when she writes: "From that peaceful morning hour will stream out the influence which will guard during the day, and the emotions, soothed and stilled, will be more amenable to control". 2

1. Ibid. p.298.
2. Ibid. p.302-303.
2. **Careful consideration before Speech:** Second method, recommended by Annie Besant, for curbing the emotions is to think over what is going to be said before speaking. She writes that "the person who never speaks a sharp or ill-considered word is well on the way to control emotion. To rule speech is to rule the whole nature. It is a good plan to speak... until one is clear as to what one is going to say, is sure that the speech is true, that it is adapted to the person to whom it is to be addressed, and that it is such as ought to be spoken."  

3. **Refusal to yield to Impulse:** Another method of mastering emotion is by refraining from acting on impulse. Annie Besant criticises the present age because to hurry to act is characteristic of the modern age and people in line with modern times consider the excess of the promptitude as a virtue. Annie Besant writes "When we consider life calmly we realize that there is never any need for hurry; there is time enough, and action, however swift, should be well considered and unhurried. When an impulse comes from strong emotion and we spring forward in obedience without consideration, we act unwisely. If we train ourselves to think before we act in all ordinary affairs, then which prompt action is necessary, the swift mind will balance up the demands of the moment and direct swift action, but there will

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1. Ibid. p.304.
no hurry, no inconsiderate, unwise blundering. In Annie Besant's psychology the above explained three methods are very useful for every student of educational psychology to turn his emotions into useful servants instead of making them dangerous masters. Annie Besant herself employed these methods profitably in the educational institutions which were established by her in India.

( D ) Will

Annie Besant means by the Will, the Will of the Self, of the individualised Self which draws a man into manifestation. The great Will, of which a man's will is a part draws him towards manifestations, it draws not by any compulsion or by external necessity or by anything opposed to him from outside but only to exercise power to make movement and to enveil life in matter.

Though the Will is essentially and fundamentally free in its origin, being the Power of the Self, becomes bound and limited in its attempts to master the matter in which the Self has entered. It is idle to speak of a free will in a man because he is the slave of the objects around him. Annie Besant writes about the man that "He is ever in bondage, he can exercise no choice; for though

1. Ibid. p. 307
we may think of such a one as choosing to follow the path along which attractions draw him, there is in truth no choice nor thought of choice. So long as attractions and repulsions determine, the path, all talk of freedom is empty and foolish. Even though a man feels himself as choosing the desirable object; the feeling of freedom is illusory, for he is dragged by the attractiveness of the object and the longing for pleasure in himself. He is as much, or as little, free as the iron is free to move to the magnet. The movement is determined by the strength of the magnet and the nature of the iron answering to its attractions.¹

While explaining the freedom of the Will Annie Besant tries to solve the riddle of life that 'whether we are free to choose or not?' She says that "The question is not: 'Am I free to Act?' but: 'Am I free to Will?' And we see clearly... that the will is determined by the strongest motive as the basis of all organized society, of all law, of all penalty, of all responsibility, of all education. The man whose will is not thus determined is irresponsible, insane...who cannot be appealed to, cannot be reasoned with, cannot be relied on, a person without reason, logic, or memory, without the attributes we regard as human.....A Will which is an energy pointing in any direction, pushing to action without motive, without reason, without sense, might perhaps be called "free",

¹. Ibid. p. 321.
but this is not what is meant by "freedom of the will".\textsuperscript{1}

In Annie Besant's system a common man's will is considered to be a little will and that of the God's, a great will. The little will works constantly within the great will. The little will is always determined by motive conditioned by the limits of the matter that enveils the separate Self. Annie Besant explains the freedom of the will by saying that "freedom is to be determined from within, bondage is to be determined from without; the will is free, when the Self, willing to act, draws his motive for that volition from sources that lie within himself, and has not the motive acting upon him from sources outside".\textsuperscript{2}

Thus man finds freedom because the greater Self, in which he moves is one with him, and the vaster Self in which moves that greater Self is one with that vaster, and so on and on, in huger and huger sweeps, the Self goes higher with the Inner Self, the Brahman, and therefore man finds himself truly free. Looking outwards man seems to be bound, though the limits of his bondage recede endlessly; looking inwards he seems to be free, for he is a part of Brahman, the Eternal. Annie Besant does not feel shy to give the real truth when she says "To all intents and purposes the will of us is not free. It is only in process of becoming free, and it will only be free when the Self has utterly mastered his vehicles

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid. p.323.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. p.327.
and uses them for his own purposes.....completely responsive to his every impulse, and not a struggling animal, ill-broken, with desires of its own. When the Self has transcended ignorance, vanquishing the habits that are the marks of past ignorance, then is the Self free. Then can be realized the meaning of the freedom of will.

The Power of the Will: The power of the Will, which has been recognized in Occult science as the spiritual energy in man, is being grasped after also in this world, and being unconsciously used as a means for bringing about unattainable results.

The Power of the Will is being used now by the medical sciences in treating patients suffering from nervous and mental ailments. With the Power of the Will purification of thoughts and desires is done. Will-cure brings purity to the mind, which causes the health to the body. To Annie Besant "Purity and health truly go together".  

But Annie Besant does not favour too much use of the will-power in the service of body. She regards it to be an inferior act to put the body to a high pinnacle and thus lose the occult power given by God to a man. She writes: "By using the Will to serve the body, we make the Will its slave, and the practice of continually removing little aches

1. Ibid. p.328.
2. Ibid. p.339.
and pains by willing them to go saps the higher quality of endurance. A person thus acting is apt to be irritable under small physical discomforts which the will cannot remove, and the higher power of the will which cannot control the body and support its work, even though it be suffering, is undermined. Hesitancy to use the power of the will for relief of one's body need not arise from any doubt as to the soundness of the thought, the reality of the law, on which such action is based, but from a fear that men may fall under the temptation of using that which should lift them to realms spiritual as the minister of the physical, and may thus become slaves of the body, and he helpless when the body fails them in the hour of need.\footnote{1}

The Goal of the Will: The goal of life is to form a union of the separate will, of a man, with the one higher will of Brahman, for helping the evolution of man. Annie Besant insists upon that a man should not live separately from others but one with them, and he must "realize that the sufferings and the striving are the more efficacious as we suffer only in the sufferings of others and feel not suffering for ourselves, we shall rise into the Divine"\footnote{2} and thus attain a union with the Divine will.

In the interpretation of the term 'Will' we find that Annie Besant handles it philosophically and not psychologically.

\footnote{1}{Ibid. pp.340-41.}
\footnote{2}{Ibid. p.345.}
To Annie Besant, Desire shows the energy and the impelling characteristic of will, but matter has wrested away its control and direction from the Spirit and has usurped domination over it. Desire is a discrowned will and is slave of matter. It is not self-determined but is determined by the attractions around it.

Annie Besant states that will and Desire are same by their innermost nature because they are due to one determination, the one motor-power of man, that which impels man for activity. When the self determines the activity, uninfluenced by attractions or repulsions towards surrounding objects, then Will is manifested. When outer attractions and repulsions determine the activity and the man is drawn forcibly by these, deaf to the voice of the Self, then Desire is seen.

The Awakening of Desire: The awakening of Desire takes place in this body of sensations and follows the first dim sensings of pleasure and pain. To explain the awakening of Desire Annie Besant says "Pleasure is a sense of "moreness" of increased expanded life, while pain is a shutting in or lessening of life".¹ As the states of pleasure and pain become more definitely established in consciousness, they give rise to continuation of the attractions and repulsions

¹. Ibid. p.241.
in consciousness. With the fading away of pleasure there is a continuation of the attraction in consciousness and this becomes a dim groping after the feeling of pleasure, similarly with the fading away of pain, there is a continuation of the repulsion of consciousness. These stages give birth to Desire.

The attraction and repulsion are equally of the nature of Desire. Annie Besant writes: "Both attraction and repulsion are Desire, and these are the two great motor-energies in life, into which all desires are ultimately resolvable. The Self comes under the bondage of Desire, of Attraction-Repulsion, and is attracted hither and thither, repelled from this or that, hurried about among pleasure and pain-giving objects." ¹

The Relation of Desire and Thought: When a pleasure has been experienced and passed away, Desire arises to experience it again. This fact implies memory, which is the function of the mind. Repetition of the same perception establishes a definite link in memory between the object and the pleasurable or painful sensation, and when Desire passes for the repetition of pleasure, the mind recalls the object which supplied the pleasure. Thus the mingling of Thought with Desire gives birth to a particular desire to find out the pleasure giving or pain giving object.

¹ Ibid. p.243.
Thus desires impel the mind to exert their inherent activities. Annie Besant writes: "Discomfort being caused by the unsatisfied craving, effort is made to escape the discomfort by supplying the object wanted. The mind plans, schemes, drives the body into action, in order to satisfy the cravings of Desire. And similarly, equally prompted by Desire, the mind plans, schemes, drives the body into action in order to avoid the recurrence of pain from an object recognized as pain-giving".¹

This gives the relation of Desire to thought. In earlier stages the mind is the slave of Desire and it grows rapidly in proportion to the fierce urgings of Desire. When ever we desire we are compelled to think.

**Desire, Thought & Action:** In Annie Besant's Psychology there is a very close relationship between Desire, Thought and Action. The mind having perceived the object of desire leads to action. Action is often said to arise from Desire, but Desire only cannot arouse any movement or action. The force of Desire is propulsive and not directive. Thought adds the elements of direction in it and makes the action purposive. Annie Besant writes: "This is the ever-recurring cycle in consciousness -- Desire, Thought, Action. The propulsive power of Desire arouses Thought; the directive power of Thought guides Action. This sequence is invariable....

¹. Ibid. pp.245-46.
The shaping of Karma can only be achieved when this sequence is understood, for evitable and inevitable action can only thus be discriminated.¹

In Annie Besant’s system of psychology, it is by thought and Desire can be changed and thereby action can also be changed. When the creativity activity of Thought can be exerted in the moulding of Desire and its propulsive energy can be turned into a better direction, in this way Thought can be used to Master Desire and it may become the ruler instead of the slave and "thus assert control over its unruly companion, it begins the transmutation of Desire into Will, changing the governance of the outgoing energy from the outer to the inner, from the external objects that attract or repel to the Spirit, the inner Ruler."²

The Purification of Desire: Annie Besant recommends two methods for the purification of Desire. These methods are explained as under:

1. Encouragement of Good Desires: It is very essential to encourage good desires in the people. Evil desires die away when good desires are fostered and when evil desires do not find any nourishment. The effort to reject all wrong desires is accompanied by the firm refusal of thought to allow them to pass on into actions. Annie Besant writes: "Will begins to restrain action, even when Desire clamours

1. Ibid. pp.246-47.
2. Ibid. p.247.
for gratification. And this refusal to permit the action
instigated by wrong desire gradually deprives of all attrac-
tive power the objects which erstwhile aroused it. . . . The
desires fade away, starved by lack of satisfaction. Absten-
tion from gratification is a potent means of purification.1

2. Utilization of the Repulsive Force of Desire: The second
method of purification recommended by Annie Besant is to
utilize the repulsive force. Sometimes a man finds it impos-
sible to get rid of the evil desires and inspite all his
efforts his mind yields to their strong impulse and evil
imagination riot in his brain. He may conquer by apparent
yielding, carrying on the evil imaginations to their inevita-
ble results. He faces in thought the other side of the evils
and sees the soil and distortion of his own vices pictured
in the suffering and the agony of the craving of desires that
may no longer be fulfilled. Resolutely he forces his shrink-
ing thoughts to dwell on his miserable panorama of the trium-
ph of wrong desires, until there rises within him a strong
repulsion against them, an intolerable fear and loathing of
the result of his present yielding.

Annie Besant discourages this method of purification.
To her this "method of purification is like the surgeon's
knife, cutting out a cancer which menaces the life, and, like
all surgical operations, is to be avoided unless no other

1. Ibid. pp.265-66.
means of cure remain. It is better to conquer wrong desire by the attractive force of an ideal than by the repulse force of a spectacle of ruin. But where attraction fails to conquer, repulsion may perhaps prevail.¹

By higher attraction, by repulsion, or by the slow teaching of suffering, Annie Besant aims only to purify the Desire of a man.

( F ) T hought - P ower

According to Annie Besant thought has a great power for a man. Every religion speaks very high about thought-power as it influences a man's character, his moral nature and his future life. One of the most ancient of the Indian Scriptures declares: "Man is created by thought; what a man thinks upon that he becomes; therefore think on the Eternal"² Lord Buddha said "All that we are is made up of our thoughts"³ and similar has been said by all religions. So thought has been taken as the parent of action and our nature sets itself to embody that which is generated by thought. Thought has boundless power to shape and mould the human character.

Annie Besant, in order to support her thesis in favour of thought-power, tells how a large number of patients suffering from Atrophy of the nerves were treated by mesmerism, only by utilising thought for the cure. She writes: "I have known

¹. Ibid. p.267.
two cases of blindness, caused by the beginning of Atrophy of the optic nerve cured by thought, after they had unhesitatingly been declared uncurable by the doctors to whom the patients had gone. Now diseases of the nerves are about the easiest things to cure where you utilize thought, because you are dealing with part of the mechanism of thought, and nerve answers more readily to thought than the structures and tissues which are not ordinarily worked on by thought in the same way".  

But Annie Besant does not favour the view of utilizing thought in curing ordinary pains and aches because thought has for more noble uses than curing patients. She thinks that by healing some physical disease or physical injury by thoughts is to make human body for too sensitive to these things. Instead of utilizing thought as our servant, it becomes our master.

This being a practically general appreciation of the power of thought in the system of Annie Besant, it becomes important now to know how Annie Besant wants to use this great power in the highest possible way to the greatest possible effect. She likes to use it in two ways.

1. The Practice of Meditation: To Annie Besant meditation is a concentrated thought with a power of love behind it.

Sho recommends that regularly every morning, before going out into the world, every one should sit down for from three to five minutes and think about any virtue which one wants to imbibe in him. To Annie Besant thoughts are of great importance, she writes: "Thought is dual in its nature: on one side a change of consciousness, on the other side a corresponding vibration in matter. There is no change of consciousness without a vibration in matter, however fine, there is no vibration in matter without a change of consciousness. If you have the change of consciousness that you call prayer, which is concentrated by the earnestness of the suppliant, you get a correspondingly powerful vibration in the matter of the finer, subtler worlds, and this can produce physical effects, just in the same way as the invisible wind.... tosses up the denser water into waves or ripples. Finer forces can work on the grosser matter through the gradations downward from the matter which first they had set moving; and there is nothing unscientific or unreasonable in the idea that by the thought force of prayer you can bring about physical results". ¹

2. Helping a good cause by sending to it good thoughts:

To Annie Besant thoughts are very powerful vehicles of evil or goodness. She thinks that everyone must send good thoughts towards others because right thoughts are continual

¹ Ibid. pp.132-33.
benedictions which each one must radiate. She writes: "Wrong thought is as swift for evil as is right thought for good. Thought can wound as well as heal, distress as well as comfort. Ill thoughts thrown into the mental atmosphere poison receptive minds; thoughts of anger and revenge lend strength to the murderous blow; thoughts which wrong others barb the tongue of slander, wing the arrows loosed at the unjustly assailed. The mind tenanted by evil thoughts acts as a magnet to attract like thoughts from others, and thus intensifies the original ill".1 So in place of ill thoughts man must have good thoughts for others.

Annie Besant advises people that they should understand the power of thought in detail. In her lecture she says:

"The whole world, the whole Universe, is only a thought of God, and you will grow into God's image and His powers will be reproduced in miniature in yourselves. You can build yourselves as He builds His worlds by that creative thought, the power of the imagination and the power of the will. These are the divine powers in every one of you, though more developed in one than in the other. And as you progress in the power of thought and build yourselves by that power your character shall grow nobler, your lives more beautiful, your power to help stronger and stronger, until in time you

1. Annie Besant: "Thought Power and Its Use". This essay given in the book 'The Middle of Life', p.60.
shall awaken to know that you have built yourself into a world's helper, and that the power of thought in you has grown into the power to save". 1

Annie Besant has interpreted many other terms of psychology in her writings and lectures but her purpose to explain those terms is mainly to couple theosophy with psychological knowledge. She has, in a similar way, explained many ethical, moral, metaphysical, scientific and artistic concepts and terms with a chief purpose of making Theosophy a complete scientific knowledge and present it, before the world, as a perfect philosophy covering all the fields of knowledge.

We find that while explaining psychological terms, Annie Besant does not present them in purely an academic manner as a pure science. She handles psychological knowledge in such a way that it may plead the case in favour of Theosophy.

Annie Besant is a keen student of psychology and has an up-to-date knowledge of psychology of her times. She studied this branch of knowledge as a special paper when she prepared for her Teachers' Training degree in London University. The knowledge of psychology, and especially that of educational psychology, made her thoroughly competent.

to establish an array of educational institutions throughout India where she managed the education of the children according to the latest educational principles. But it must not be forgotten that the institutions established by her have a deep imprint of Theosophy over them because these were managed by a board of trustee whose all the members were closely attached to the Theosophical Society.