Chapter IV

THE ROLE OF REALITY IN ETIOLOGY

I

Exposition

It has been rampant that Freud's theory is a closed system, thereby making it clear that there is absolutely no room for the reality, i.e., social, cultural and physical environmental factors. This general impression is connected with the concept of conflict which is the source of neuroses. D. Yankelovich and W. Barrett state: "Conflict is probably the key notion throughout all Freud's thinking" (Erikson states that psychoanalysis is the view of man as conflict). Now this conflict is psychic conflict, or, to be more precise, intra-psychic conflict, a term which was frequently and familiarly used by Freud. The term has a long history in the long process of psychoanalytical development. First, it was conceived of as taking place between two strata of the psychic apparatus—preconscious and the unconscious. Second, conflict was among the instincts— the sexual instincts of the dynamic unconscious against the self-preservation instincts of the ego. In more speculative writings, the conflict was presented in broader terms as the instinct of life (Eros) versus the instinct of destruction and death (Thanatos). Finally, it was presented as between two major psychic structures, the id and the ego.

1. Ego and Instinct - W. Barrett & D. Yankelovich, p. 29
2. Ibid.
As to the exact nature of connection between the
trend and the conflict. No other entity is required in the
ensuing of conflict between the opposing entities, say, for
example, between the unconscious and the preconscious. So is
between the instincts and between the structures. Of course,
co-operation and competition can be noticed between the life
instinct and the death instinct. So also between the psychic
structures. This does not, however, rule out the presence of
conflict between the entities. It is on this basis that the
trend has been gathering strength. B. Bose sums up: "To seek
the cause of mental phenomena within the domain of mind is an
important canon in psychoanalysis."

However, this is one side of the whole picture. Freud's
views can be observed from other angles as well. Let us have
a look at Freud's own statement, "... the excessive
power of the reality is decisive for neurosis and for psychosis
that of the id." 3

We may now come to the question - what is reality?
It will mean all social institutions and sub-groups and
cultural organisations which can affect the thought and action
of the individual. Further, it will include the world of
objects, both animate and inanimate, such as trees, hills, wild
animals, human beings as individuals other than the individual
concerned. Furthermore, all natural events including calamities

3. Samiksa - Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 147
4. The loss of reality in neurosis and psychosis - S. Freud
such as lightning, flood, earthquake will be taken into account. Psychoanalytically, the body of the individual also is considered as a part of reality in its growth, decay, death, along with its shape, size, structure, colour, capacity, etc. As T.C. Sinha observes, "... the body of the individual is also considered as external reality by the ego."⁵

Coming to the role of the reality in neurosis, we may refer ourselves to many schools of psychology. In this connection, J.A. Smith has noted, "The history of the treatment of the mentally ill is understandable only in the light of the society in which the patient existed ... ."⁶ The role of reality, although not directly stated, is emphasized indirectly.

Alfred Adler, a disciple of Freud, broke away from the master, and founded the school of individual psychology. As the name of the school suggests, the importance of individual differences in personality was emphasised. Unlike Jung, Adler rather emphasised the importance of environmental factors. In spite of Freudian conception of infantile sexuality, he put forward two fundamental attitudes in the child - desire to dominate and resistance to domination. The unconscious central force in man is not sexuality but "will-to-power". This central force is augmented by child's feeling of helplessness and "organ inferiority. Several environmental factors or physical and organic handicaps may further serve as impetus to the sense

⁵, Samiksa - Vol. 25, No. 1-4, p. 1
⁶, History of Psychiatry - J.A. Smith, p. 3
of helplessness. Responses are made by the individual to the sense of helplessness in either of the following ways: (a) successful compensation, (b) defeat and some form of retreat, (c) compromise or over-compensation, i.e., a neurotic reaction. In this way, self-assertive impulse is the major drive in human behaviour and its frustration by environmental factors leads to neuroses. During childhood, the child develops certain attitudes towards life by living with parents and other members of the family. It develops a particular 'style of life'. Heredity and innate drives could not enjoy the favour of Adler, who, however, maintained the polarity of motives. In his contention, the neurotic does not suffer from sexual complexes, but from lack of balance between individualistic and social drives. That results in hampering the style of life.

The basis of neurosis for Horney was not the Oedipus complex but basic anxiety which is defined in the "Neurotic Personality of our time" (Horney, 1937) as a "Feeling of being small, insignificant, helpless, endangered in a world that is out to abuse, cheat, attack, humiliate, betray, envy." We can notice the similarity to Adler's concept of inferiority feelings. This basic anxiety of Horney is unconscious, i.e., below the level of awareness of the subject. She describes ten neurotic trends developed in an effort to overcome the basic anxiety. Here are some important ones:

7. Psychoanalysis and its derivatives - C. Miller, p. 201
(1) The neurotic need for affection
(2) The neurotic need for power
(3) The neurotic withdrawal
(4) The neurotic submissiveness.

Later, she clarifies these needs into three categories:

(1) Moving towards people - complaint type
(2) Moving away from people - detached type
(3) Moving against people - aggressive type.

All these three attitudes are present in individuals. The normal person handles his conflicting demands in a rational and flexible way and the neurotic rigidly. In this way the neurotic may externalise certain attitudes by projection or may create an idealised image of himself so that he sees only his good points. Mullady cites an example of idealised image in which a large, middle-aged-woman sees herself as a slender young girl. Mullady points out that externalisation is more than projection in that all one's feelings are experienced in others. The kind of disturbance at political operation (really one's own operation) is an example to this sort of defence.

In the foregoing paragraphs my only intention was to show the relative views of Adler and Horney whose views were

8. Our inner conflicts - K. Horney, New York, Norton
more or less close to Freud's. This will slowly pave the way for finally coming to Freud regarding the role of reality in neurosis. Freud's views regarding the role of reality are different from those of Adler and Horney in some ways. Now before proceeding direct to Freud, let us look for a moment at the views of Dr. G. Bose, the founder of Indian Psychoanalytical society, Calcutta. Dr. Bose's views are, of course, not environmental but psychological. However, it is interesting to see that Bose propounded his theory of repression by the time when there was intimate correspondence between himself and Freud on the subject, 'neurosis'.

In analysis of his patients, Bose could trace the mechanism of repression in the field of opposite wishes of the patient. By opposite wishes he meant that for every wish there is an opposite wish - one being of the active type and the other of the passive type. He was having this contention that for every expressed wish there is an opposite wish working in our unconscious mind. He pointed out that when A wishes to strike B, he has also the wish to be struck by B; however, such a wish is usually repressed. When A wishes to strike B, it may be that A feels hurt by B in some way and then retaliates. Any way, A is having the experience of being hurt and, by means of that identification, feels that B will suffer pain which is desired by A to inflict on B. To put it in another way, as an active person hits B and by his partial ego identification

10. The Concept of Repression - G. Bose, Calcutta University Press
feels hurt too. This feeling of being hurt is repressed in case A is aggressively active against B. However, at the same time he is in possession of the idea of being hurt by B. To further clarify the situation, it is necessary to mention Bose's views on wish. In the above example, we have the subject A and the object B and an action situation, i.e., hitting. In any wish situation, Bose contends that there must be a subject, an object and a relationship between the subject and the object or an action situation. In the wish situation again, in the first instance, some portion of the ego of the subject or the subject-ego must have to identify itself with the object-ego, i.e., temporarily change itself into the object ego, in order to understand the object and consequently fulfil its wish about the object. Thus when A strikes B, some portion of the A's ego goes over to the position of B and receives the strike. The presence of such a pair of opposite wish can be seen in all the different situations of life.

Now it may be seen that there is difference between the ambivalence of Freud and the opposite wish theory of Bose. In ambivalence, love is regarded to be the opposite of hate, in the love-hate pair. However, according to Bose, the opposite of the wish to love B, A has also the wish to be loved by B. In case of love or any other wish towards an inanimate object, the opposite wish is repressed. For instance, where we kick a foot-ball, we do not feel the wish of being kicked by the foot-ball. Though this being so, a child may use such expression as "the foot-ball has hurt me" when it feels hurt
in kicking football. The anthropomorphic tendency as may be noted here is also an evidence claimed to be in favour of his theory by Rose. Rose says, "a wish is only repressed by its opposite wish and the social and environmental factors play a secondary role." Every time we come across a strong defensive action attitude in conscious life we may be sure of its opposite counterparts in the unconscious level. In general, therefore, activity is opposed by passivity.

The role of reality in neurosis in the Freudian theory can be seen in several stages of the theory. In his early theory the formation and functions of both the censors clearly indicate the influence of reality. The influence of reality is also attributable to the formation and function of super-ego. In both the early theory and later theory of Freud, the ego also bears the evidence of being influenced by reality.

Let us first see the impact of reality on censorship. As soon as the drives come up from the unconscious, they are censored by the first censor stationed between the preconscious and the unconscious. We can now say that this censor must have the idea - how to censor - before the actual act of censoring. Of course, we can imagine a time in the life of the individual patient when the role of the censor is not specific. The so-called censor might not be there by then in its mature form. May be that it was nuclear in its form and function. Actually, the censor serves as a mediator or as a co-ordinator between the preconscious and the unconscious for the fact that there are differences in the contents and functions of both of them.
Because of this difference, anything and everything referred by the unconscious to the preconscious cannot be admitted in the latter, where admission must be done under the influence of reality. Somehow or other the censor might have come into existence by this time. Perhaps this will be true of the 2nd censor stationed between the conscious and the preconscious.

At this stage two kinds of reality can be noted. One is "past reality" which contributed to the formation of censor, while the other is "present reality" in the light of which a drive is to be censored. So every time that a drive is censored, the contents and capacities of the censors increase.

The role of reality is noticeable also in the formation/growth and function of conscious and preconscious. These two may be considered the residues of experience under the constant influence of reality. Formerly, in the life of an individual only unconscious was there with all its drives. Gradually, for the purpose of gratification of the drives, the conscious and preconscious might have come into existence. They might be there in some form or other but not in their mature forms as in the adult. The power and function of the censors greatly depend upon the nature and function of the contents of the conscious and the preconscious. Once again, the fate of a drive also depends much upon the nature of the power and function of the censors.

Next, we come to the unconscious. The contents of the unconscious are increased or decreased occasionally. It happens
because of the nature of functions of the censors and the ego which work in tune with the reality. In case the reality is welcoming and cordial, then the censors and the ego will act in such a way as can reduce the contents of the unconscious. The result is that the chance of neurosis is dim. On the other hand, there is another way of reducing the contents of the unconscious. This is by means of the defence mechanisms conducted by the unconscious with the help of the ego. The defence mechanisms in question are wit, humour, fantasy, slips of tongue, day-dream, dream, etc. which will work properly only under the proper atmosphere of reality.

When the defence mechanisms work also in excess, neurotic symptoms will be found. The function of the mechanisms in excess is partly due to the influence of reality. But this is not all about the influence of reality.

The libido theory of Freud also reflects the social situation of his time in another sense. It is established on the concept of scarcity assuming that all human strivings for lust result from the need to rid oneself from unpleasant tensions, rather than that lust is a thing of abundance aiming at a greater intensity and depth of human experiences. The principle of scarcity as mentioned here is characteristic of middle class thought, reminding Malthus, Benjamin Franklin or an average business man of the nineteenth century. Although many ramifications of the principle of scarcity are possible,

11. Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life - J.C. Coleman, p. 68
essentially it means that the quantity of all commodities is necessarily limited and hence that equal satisfaction for all is impossible because true abundance is impossible. In such a framework, scarcity becomes a most important stimulus for human behaviour.

Freud's new appreciation of destructiveness had its roots in the experience of the First World War. This is one generally accepted and I also think there are good grounds for it. This war shook the foundations of the liberal optimism which had filled the first period of Freud's life. Until 1914, it was believed by the members of the middle class that the world was quickly moving towards a state of greater security, harmony and peace. The 'darkness' of the middle ages seemed to glide down from generation to generation. It was hoped that very shortly the world or at least Europe would resemble the streets of a well-lighted, protected capital. It was also easily forgotten that the picture was not representative of the majority of the workers and peasants of Europe and even quite less so of the population of Asia and Africa. The hope was belief by the war of 1914 in its long duration and inhumanity of practices. Freud was one who believed in the justice and victory of the German cause. It is natural that he was much disturbed at a deeper psychic level than the average, less sensitive person. Perhaps he thought that optimistic hopes of enlightenment were illusions and concluded that man, by nature, was destined to be destructive. Precisely because he was reformer, the war might have disturbed him all the more.

forcefully. Since he was no radical critic of society and no revolutionary, it was impossible for him to hope for essential social changes, and he was forced to look for the causes of the tragedy in the nature of man.13

The role of reality can be traced as well to the development of infantile sexuality. The libidinal development occurs under the proper condition of Freudian reality, i.e., father-son-mother and father-daughter-mother relationship situation. Both the complexes, sedipus and electra, are thus formed in their respective ways. What Freud said was for all children for all time and places.

Further, the role of reality is traceable to the formation and function of ego. This was frequently stated by Freud. The ego, he said, is the surface of the id, "that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world ... ."14 Under the influence of the real external world which surrounds us, one portion of the id has undergone a special development ... an organisation ... which acts as an intermediary between the id and the external worlds. This region of our mental life has been given the name of ego."15 These extracts show that reality has much to do with the formation of ego. In its functioning also, the ego always takes into account all noticeable aspects of reality including the stark, harsh, uncompromising aspects.

13. Civilization and its Discontents - S. Freud
14. The Ego and the Id - S. Freud, p. 15
15. Outline of Psychoanalysis - S. Freud, p. 15
Furthermore, we have the marks of reality as imprinted in the formation and function of super-ego. By the time when the Oedipus complex is formed, another counter-movement from the side of parents embodied by do's and don't's in the child's life has come into existence. The child begins to learn much dictates of its parents and we notice the formation of the super-ego. It is further enriched by the child's contact with its seniors, elders, teachers, etc. In its functioning also the super-ego keeps in view the changing realities of the external world from time to time for more accurate adjustment.
II

Discussion

It is highly appreciable that Freud laid emphasis on the socio-cultural factors, i.e., on the reality, in his investigation of the root cause of neurosis. Now-a-days there is a general trend among the psychologists that socio-cultural factors are considered as primarily contributing to the causation of neurosis. This is not, however, totally insensible movement. Mr. R.A. Davies, at one-time Superintendent of the Ranchi Mental Hospital run by the Central Government of India, explained that neurosis problem in India had not been so far assuming huge proportions. Perhaps this phenomenon is traceable to the fact that India is still not a fully developed country highly industrialized with all possible consequent complexities in the social set-up - in comparison with ..., Canada, U.K., etc. where neurosis is a common disease. Thus neurosis is a mental disease of the modern civilization and hence due emphasis on the socio-cultural factors.

This being so, the question as to whether we can place Freud in the galaxy of socio-cultural psychologists who at the same time stress the importance of the environmental factors in the etiology of the neurosis immediately arises. This is not the question of that reality factors are more or less important than other factors. The question is regarding the feasibility of putting Freud at par with the environmental psychologists.

16. Interview with R.A. Davies in his clinic in Ranchi, dated 7th October, 1977
Certainly, a lot of differences between the former and the latter are detectable.

J.B. Watson once remarked, "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed and my own specified world to bring them in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select - doctor, lawyer, artists, merchant-Chief and, yes, even beggarman and thief, regardless of the talents, panchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race of his ancestors." It indicates that he (Freud) was not brave enough nor interested to the extent of giving concession to the environmental influences.

Freud's is that man is primarily an isolated being. His man is the physiologically driven and motivated home machine. But, secondarily, man is also a social being, because he needs other people for the satisfaction of his physiologically rooted drives. The child is in need of mother (in Freudian sense); the adult needs a sexual partner. "Man is primarily unrelated to others, and is only secondarily forced - or seduced - into relationships with other." 18

One attitude of Freud regarding reality is this that the law or concept of scarcity reigns supreme in it so that scarcity always becomes a stimulus for activity. To explain it further, sex is a scarce object and, therefore, never ceases to be a stimulus. This is, however, mostly true in a

17. Psychology from the stand point of a behaviourist - J.B. Watson, p. 104
18. The Crisis of Psychoanalysis - E. Fromm, p. 43
bourgeois social set-up. A happy and normal married life is comparatively out of the reach of individuals in a bourgeois social set-up. In a socialist country, the picture suffers a change. But then a question may arise regarding sexual life during the period of infancy, a thing of which Freud talked quite a lot. In the socialist country children are brought up in such a way as can channelise the sexual energy, whatever the children might have had, into constructive ways for the nation.

Freud's views regarding the role of reality in infantile sexuality are not fully supported by Mallinowski and others. The criticism is levelled against an uniform pattern of reality. In other words, socio-cultural conditions are not the same in all time and places. The life situations of children in different types of families - patriarchal and matriarchal - are different and, therefore, different types of behaviour can be expected. Following it logically, oedipus and electra complexes may not be formed. Similarly, when one of the parents or both remain separated from a child or died, the child's behaviour will be much changed. This was also discussed in the preceding chapter and for the sake of convenience and clarity it is repeated in short.

In spite of his treatment of human body as part of reality, Freud failed to describe the psychological phenomenon in which the physiological realities also take part. This is an unhappy situation; for, a man's life and thought are much affected by his physiological realities - complexion, strength, shape, structure, size, disease, immunity of the organs etc.
And in some cases, health means everything.

What kinds or grades of reality the censors represent are not shown clearly. It seems that realities represented by the censors will be different because their lines and standards of action are different. It is necessary to establish relationship in between them. Further, it is necessary to establish relationship between the realities thus represented by the censors and the "general reality" (let us say so) which is out there beyond the individual psyche. All this has not been done by Freud. Perhaps it is due this complicity that Freud did not reserve strictly for the censors in the later stage of the theory.

The physical side of reality, i.e., nature - the world of objects, both animate and inanimate with the exclusion of man and his culture, say, for example, trees, stones, hills, rivers and lakes, domestic and wild animals etc. and also natural events, such as flood, earthquake, lightning, climatic conditions etc. - is not fully emphasised by Freud. Man is to struggle against nature, society and himself. This is for his peaceful survival on this earth planet. When the struggle against any of them is not crowned with success, the individual psyche is not in tact and always liable to become abnormal. One thing is this that the struggles and successes against each of them must be relatively proportional.

The term "differentiation", is used in the material domain. It is used in the explanation of problems in the natural sciences. This was imported in the realm of psychology.
and utilised in the explanation of the development of the ego from the id under the influence of reality. The process of development is described as differentiation. The details of this process are not worked out in the Freudian theory. As the ego psychology becomes more important than ever towards the end of Freud's life, the explanation becomes all the more important.

The realities handed over the children by the parents, seniors, elders, teachers, etc., for the formation of super-ego may not be fully representative of the "general reality" in the sense that individual opinions of the parents, teachers, etc., are incorporated. As such, they are not objective and are more or less subjective. This may pave the way for more and more faulty learning and eventual social maladjustment. The importance of faulty learning in maladjustment is stressed by humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers, Maslow, etc.

One of the most distinctive features of environmental psychology is the concept of "reality-oriented drive." It means a drive or an urge or a need based on reality. To be brief, the drive or the urge or the need is born and brought up in reality. This concept is akin to that of "relative drive" as opposed to "constant drive" or "fixed drive" of Karl Marx. 19 He took great pains in making a clear-cut distinction between drives and instincts which have been the subject matter for controversy among the modern psychologists. Under the category of the fixed or constant drive fall the sex and

19. Ibid., p. 65
hunger, for example. Avarice, however, falls under the category of relative drive.

In the Freudian theory, however, there is no reason for such a distinction. We find, so to say, a kind of drive, better say, instinct, which is closely linked up with the physio-chemical process. The purpose in explaining the concept of "reality-oriented drive" is that the influence of reality while it is being traced in this chapter cannot find a big place in Freud as in environmental psychology.

Adler's theory of neurosis comes quite near to the present line of discussion in his treatment and development of "self-assertive impulse" as the major drive. Its theory and practice have, however, been condemned by psychoanalysis as "hasty and superficial". Its system is, still, useful in making good various maladjustments in children. "His theory, while certainly not a depth psychology, does contain much commonsense truth that is applicable to daily life and his conception of the "style of life" is a valuable contribution to the still embryonic psychology of character and personality." 20

The "basic anxiety" of Horney bears a soft fervour of environmentalism as noted above. It is, however, a reinterpretation of Adler's feelings of inferiority in the sense that both are seen arising from marked position of inferiority. For Adler this means that the individual strives to become superior; for Horney that he strives for security.

20. Contemporary Schools of Psychology - R.S. Woodworth, p. 197
The creation of externalized images also resembles Adler's fictive goal, an unrealistic style of life and also Freud's projection. In this way, Horney has reinterpreted the clinical findings of Freud and Adler but in different languages. In the orthodox psychoanalysis, basic anxiety is oral anxiety as well. The complaint type is similar to Freud's oral erotic character and Fromm's receiving orientation. The aggressive type has close affinity with Freud's oral sadistic character and Fromm's exploiting orientation. The detached type resembles Jung's extravert. In this way, we find that the character type analysis has much in common with the views of Freud, Fromm and Jung.