Basically, the present work entitled "The Concept of Consciousness in Western Perspective with Special Reference to Descartes" is an attempt to understand the concept of consciousness. Here I have tried to present the problem of consciousness in western perspective. In his Meditations Descartes first proved that his essence is thinking or consciousness and established the primacy of mind in his famous "cogito-ergo-sum". Descartes is called the father of modern philosophy who has interpreted the problem of mind and consciousness and philosophers after him have followed his path. Even contemporary and recent discussion on consciousness includes Descartes' view either in support or against. Thus I have decided to give special reference to Descartes while discussing the problem of consciousness.

The problem consciousness is discussed by many philosophers of eastern and western philosophy. In order to make a certain limited area of research it is decided to study the concept of consciousness in western perspective rather than eastern or Indian perspective. The problem of study includes consciousness, its subject, its relation to non-mental or material body and its existence after death.
etc. All of these are studied in the western perspective and special reference is given to Descartes.

Although various discussions have been made on the concept of consciousness in the western philosophy it still needs more detailed interpretations. Philosophy has never been stable and as time passes philosophical problems arises with new directions of study. Descartes, in his Meditations, proved that his essence is thinking or consciousness and discussed the nature of mind, its relation to material body and consciousness without the body etc. We observe his presence in the writings of successive thinkers after him as well as in contemporary writings. Western philosophers are indebted Descartes for his valuable contributions to the philosophy of mind as well as to the problem of consciousness.

The present work comprises six chapters. The first introductory chapter is devoted to focus on our total approach to the problem. It describes the concept consciousness as the essence of mind its meanings and significance in the philosophy of mind. Moreover, it discusses some philosophical viewpoints and theories of consciousness.

The second chapter, as the title suggests, discusses the concept of consciousness as studied in psychology. For psychology is the science of mind and consciousness. Here it is tried to describe how psychology itself is indebted to Descartes who led the way to
psychology as a separate discipline. It is a comparative and critical analysis of the concept of consciousness as revealed in psychology.

The third chapter discusses the concept of consciousness in Rene Descartes' philosophy. It emphasizes how Descartes has discovered and proved thinking or consciousness as the essence of mind. It also describes Descartes' conception of consciousness and the body, consciousness without the body and mind as the subject of consciousness. It is a critical and comparative apprehension of Descartes' philosophy of consciousness.

The fourth chapter discusses the problem of consciousness in Indian philosophy. It shows how consciousness played a vital role in the Indian philosophical systems. It discusses the similarities and differences between Descartes' conception of consciousness and the concept of consciousness in Indian philosophical systems.

The fifth chapter describes how Descartes has been followed by his successive thinkers up to the contemporary philosophy. Here an attempt is being made to illustrate and compare the opinions given by philosophers like Gilbert Ryle, Wittgenstein, and Russell etc. with Descartes' concept of consciousness. It deals with the main criticisms against Descartes and describes how much Descartes influenced the philosophers of mind.
The final one, "The Conclusion" is an extraction of the conclusions from the whole thesis. It summarizes the previous chapters. Finally, it discusses how Descartes' concept of consciousness has influenced and dominated the western philosophy of mind having a lot of similarities with Indian philosophical systems.

(Bimal Chandra Gogoi)

Date:- 7 - 9 - 67