CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
In the history of philosophy, the problem of mind or soul is regarded as one of the vital problems, which attracted philosophers a good deal. Man as an intellectual being; always tries to inquire into his own mind. It is a bare fact that we have a mind and it is accepted by every person. Although "mind" is an ambiguous term no body would accept that he has no mind, but it does not mean that he knows the meaning of it or he is pointing out something to be his mind. The mind is perhaps the deepest mystery, the most profound paradox of all existence. Philosophers from the past up to this highly developed scientific era have also been talking about mind and a branch of philosophy has been formed in the name as "The Philosophy of Mind". The crucial concept of the philosophy of mind is consciousness. The problem of consciousness is one of the fundamental problems of humanity. Consciousness reveals the nature of man and his inherent divine nature. As D. C. Dennet observes: "The most important feature of mind, the 'phenomenon' that seems more than any other to be quintessentially 'mental' and non-physical, is consciousness."¹

It is said that the logical definition of consciousness is not possible. It is an ultimate and unique fact, and cannot be brought under a higher genus or class. Consciousness is, in fact, sui-generies (of its own kind), so we cannot explain it by likening it to anything else. E. B. Holt says that to define anything is to point out by word or gesture that is its essence bared of all its accidents, "how can a being comprehend
and define consciousness when his own entire experience is just or case of it?" Although we cannot logically define consciousness we all know what consciousness is, because, as conscious beings we experience it within ourselves. Consciousness can be understood only by being directly experienced. John Dewey, in his "Psychology" regards consciousness as indefinable. As he says, "Consciousness can neither be defined nor described. We can define or describe anything only by the employment of consciousness. It is presupposed, accordingly, in all definitions; and all attempts to define it must move in a circle....Consciousness is necessary for the definition of what is itself unconscious. Psychology, accordingly, can study only the various forms of consciousness, showing the conditions under which they arise."  

A host of opinions are found as to the exact concept of consciousness each of them pointing to different meanings and uses of the term "consciousness". It is difficult to determine which one of the divergent views of the problem of consciousness is to be taken. Of course it will be determined by the standpoint one occupies in viewing the problem. In this present work the standpoint, as suggested by the title, is that of Rene Descartes. It is helpful to survey the meanings of the word "consciousness" before going further to discuss about the concept of consciousness. Let us clarify the etymological meaning first.
The word "consciousness" is derived from the Latin word "conscire". The word "conscire" means "to know things together". William Mc Dougall says that the word "consciousness" if it is to be used at all, should be used to mean "the act of knowing or thinking of things." He also pleaded for using the word "conscire" which is better than consciousness for psychological purposes. But he was not followed by others for "consciousness" has wider sense than that of Mc Dougall's. Consciousness means something more than simply "to know something". The nineteenth century psychologist G. T. Ladd admits the meaning of consciousness in this way:

"What we are when we are awake, as contrasted with what we sink into profound and perfectly dreamless sleep, or decline an overpowering blow upon the head that is to become conscious. What we are less as less as we sink gradually down into dreamless sleep, or as we swoon slowly away: and what we more and more as the noise of the crowd outside momentarily arouses us from our after dinner nap or as we come out of the midnight darkness of the typhoid fever crisis – that is to become conscious."

Thus consciousness means the mental process with the help of which we can regard someone to be conscious. Consciousness means the state of mind. The etymological meaning of consciousness cannot include all those phenomena to which it is referred generally and philosophically. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary reads:
“Consciousness (n) 1. The state of being conscious: The blow caused him to lose consciousness, recover/regain consciousness after an accident.

2. the state of being aware: awareness: my consciousness of her needs.

3. all the ideas, thoughts, feelings etc. of a person or people: attitudes that are deeply ingrained in the child’s consciousness.”

If we consider consciousness as “the state of being conscious” as in “1”, it is too narrow which includes every conscious state but excludes other states of mind. And if we consider consciousness as “the state of being aware” as in “2”, it is too wide which includes from awareness of trees up to the awareness of human beings. On the other hand, if we consider consciousness as “all the ideas, thoughts, feelings etc. of a person or people” as in “3”, we find that it is the sense in which the word “consciousness” is to be used in philosophy. The philosophical meaning of the word “consciousness” must be referred to the essence of the mind, the thoughts, feelings, doubts, memories, actions etc. As for John Locke, consciousness is self knowledge acquired by virtue of the mind’s capacity to reflect upon itself in introspective acts analogous with perception. By “consciousness” Locke means “the perception of what passes in a man’s own mind.”
The task of the discipline known as philosophy of mind is to make a philosophical study of mind including different mental concepts that involve mind. In “Philosophy of Mind” we make a conceptual study of different mental concepts. One of the significant problems that have been dealt with in philosophy of mind is whether there is some attribute that all of these mental phenomena have in common? Or what is the criterion of the “mental”? It is often maintained that the essence of the “mental” consist of the states of consciousness taken as subjective experience. Rene Descartes was the first philosopher to discover consciousness or thinking as the essence of mind or soul. In search of certainty in philosophical knowledge Descartes found that ‘cogito-ergo-sum’ or ‘I think therefore I exist’ is the single certain truth. After having made it clear that he exists, Descartes tried to find out what he is. He found that he is nothing but a thinking thing. From the scrutiny of his nature or essence Descartes found that his essence is thinking or consciousness. It is because he is aware of himself when and only when he is aware of thinking. He has a clear and distinct perception of himself as solely as a thinking thing. In Descartes’ words: “....simply from knowing that I exist, and that meantime, I do not observe any other thing as evidently pertaining to my nature, i.e., my essence, except this only, that I am a thinking thing, I rightly conclude that my essence consists in this alone, that I am a thinking thing (i.e., a
substance, the whole nature or essence of which consists in thinking)." (A.T., VII, 78, H.R., 181).

In the writings of recent philosophers, it is seen that they used the phrase “mental phenomena” which is to be understood as all phenomena that exclusively involve beings capable of consciousness. A number of theories about consciousness have been found in the history of western philosophy. The various theories of consciousness could be categorized into two general patterns, namely, the first-person account and the third-person account. The first-person account implies that we can learn what consciousness is from our own case. On the other hand, the third-person account implies that we can understand what consciousness is by observing other people’s behaviour. Max Valmans observes that mind viewed from third-person perspective, is the brain, its states, associated processes observable events. For him, consciousness is the mind viewed from the first-person perspective, one’s subjective experience. Colin Mc Ginn regards the first-person account to be the cartesianism and the third-person account to be behaviourism.

Behaviourism defines all expressions, involving consciousness in terms of bodily behaviour, which can be observed in others as easily as in oneself. If a man has been hit on the head, we ask whether he conscious and if he responds to certain stimuli, he is conscious or if he does not, he is not conscious. It pleads that we have to observe other
people's behaviour in order to understand the concept of consciousness. Gilbert Ryle, Russell etc. are philosophers who have given importance on Wittgenstein's philosophical behaviourism.

In the third-person account a problem arises because in some particular conscious states, a person may not be behaving in a noticeable way. He may just be flat on his back, eyes shut, yet he may still be conscious. W. G. Lycan says that behaviourism is a doctrine no one could seriously believe. It is said that behaviourism when on duty were pretending to be anaesthetized. C. H. Whitely is dear about the fact that consciousness is not a behavioural concept. For him, "...to say of something that it is conscious is not to say that it has executed or could execute certain actions..." But the third-person account indeed do considerable justice to a great many of the concepts applicable exclusively to conscious beings. If we say of a person that he is ingenious or witty, resourceful or industrious, ambitious or considerate we are referring predominantly to what he or she does.

According to the first-person account, in trying to understand what consciousness is, we do not have to restrict ourselves to what we can observe in others. We ourselves are conscious too, not just others. If we turn our attention upward to what is going on in ourselves when we are conscious, then we will see that being conscious is not a matter of behaving in particular ways. The behaviour is merely the outward manifestation of the inner states. Because I am conscious my
behaviour demonstrates consciousness. And the inner consciousness is there to be observed by me in my own case. The science of behaviourism cannot account for the inner life. Phenomenology founded by Edmund Husserl is a school of philosophy which offers many careful and elaborate descriptions of various states of consciousness. Husserl held that if I reflect properly on my states of consciousness I will be "Learning thus what is the nature of the psychical and comprehending the being of the soul", and when I follow this procedure to the very end, "I am face to face at last with the ultimate structure of consciousness." According to Brentano, consciousness is always the consciousness of something, that it always about something and directed towards that something. But many philosophers believed that this feature of "about ness" is neither necessary nor a sufficient condition of consciousness. Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that by learning the meanings of expression by a private feeling we cannot apply them to others. Because, how can I know that the inner states of what I know as consciousness in my own case ever occur in case other than my own.

Rene Descartes, who is regarded as the father of modern philosophy, has interpreted the problem of mind and consciousness. He wanted to establish unity and certainty in philosophy and applied the method of doubt to attain a single certain truth from which all philosophical knowledge could be deduced. He doubted everything but
at last found that everything could be doubted but the denier remains. The whole content of consciousness is destroyed; but consciousness itself, the doubting activity, the being of the thinker is indestructible. He had discovered consciousness as the essence of mind and the mind to be a separate entity which is distinct from the body. According to William G. Lycan, "Cartesian first-person perspective dominated the philosophy of mind, as well as metaphysics and epistemology generally, from the seventeenth century through the first-half of our own."10

It seems that both first-person and third-person accounts are essential. In order to show others we need the third-person account of consciousness. On the other hand, in order to know or realize consciousness in our own case we have to depend upon the first-person account. But some philosophers express their views against both of the first-person and third-person accounts. As K. Ramakrishna Rao observes: "...the distinction between first-person consciousness and third-person consciousness adds little to the clarity of the concept of consciousness. Consciousness is consciousness whether we look at it from a first-person or third-person perspective. It may manifest different characteristics at different levels of observations, but it underlies all awareness. Consciousness is what makes awareness possible. It is the ground condition for all forms of awareness, like
matter which is the ground condition for all the material forms we experience."

The existence of consciousness is accepted by all or it is indubitable that consciousness exists. Whatever man may be, there is no denying the fact that consciousness does exist, for if it did not exist then neither would I be aware of writing the present work nor would you be aware of comprehending it. But philosophers differ while saying about the subject of consciousness. There is something that has mental phenomena or consciousness. This particular thing is the subject of consciousness or mental phenomena. Regarding the subject of consciousness we observe different theories like dualism, materialism, and the person theory.

Materialism is the theory which held that only matter exists and the so called mental events or consciousness is really nothing but physical events occurring to physical objects. We observe four forms of materialism namely, the unintelligibility thesis, the avowal theory, behaviourism and the identity theory. The unintelligibility thesis maintains that the terms used to refer mental events have no real meaning at all and should be dropped from the language. The avowal theory regards the statements concerning mental events to be bits of behaviour, the effects of certain inner physical conditions. Behaviourism held that expressions referring to mental phenomena
can be expressed in purely physicalistic terms. Consciousness is nothing but dispositions of behaviour. The identity theory regards mental phenomena to be identical with the physical phenomena.

Materialism is not a satisfactory theory of consciousness for it cannot do justice to the self conscious human being. The followers of the unintelligibility thesis would not agree if it is said that their "unintelligibility thesis" is meaningless for it is the result of logical thinking. While saying conscious mental events as dispositions of behaviour a behaviorist must remember that "the behaviour and behavioural dispositions" do not furnish an exhaustive analysis of the mentalistic terms. It is a fact that we do not call mental events to be physical events; the one cannot be either completely or partially identical with the other. Thus identity theory is not satisfactory.

The person theory attempts to advocate that the subject of consciousness is neither a purely immaterial substance nor a purely material substance. The person is the subject of consciousness for a person is subject to both mental and material happenings. But the person theory is unable to meet the difficulty of giving the nature and definition of a person and it seems to end with absurdity that a person's body is not a physical thing.
It is seen that neither materialism nor the person theory could do justice to consciousness while saying about its subject let us turn to dualism. According to Descartes, the subject of consciousness is the mind which is separate from the body. The essence of mind is having consciousness. Thinking of consciousness is his essence. The essence of a thing contains only what is necessary for the existence of the thing. Descartes found that his essence is thinking or consciousness and the essence of body is extension. It seems that Descartes' dualism did enough justice to the conscious subject.

In our investigation it is tried to see that the Cartesian conception of consciousness has dominated the discussions of philosophers and others either as follower or as opposer. Only a dualistic theory could explain the reality of consciousness. Mental events cannot be reduced to physical events. Dualism has to face a difficulty while maintaining the subject of consciousness as a thing or entity. If we say that it is an entity which persists in time, has states, undergoes changes, engages in processes and yet is invisible, intangible, without size or shape or mass, then here it is not clear what the subject of consciousness is. Moreover, in case of personal identity, individuation etc. we have to depend on physical body. Hence, it can be said that the nature of the subject of consciousness must include
some reference to material bodies though not identical. If so we need to see the relation between consciousness and the body.

Consciousness cannot be defined in terms of physical and consciousness is not identical with physical body. But it seems to have intimate relation between consciousness and physical body. Regarding the relation between consciousness and physical body we observe three main theories namely interactionism, parallelism and epiphenomenalism. According to interactionism, the states of consciousness can be causally affected by the states of the body and the states of the body can be causally affected by states of consciousness. Hence, the mind and the body can interact, Descartes was the prime advocate of interactionism.

Epiphenomenalism accepts one way causal connection which goes from the physical to the mental but both from the mental to physical. According to this theory, all states and events of mind are nothing but by-products or side-effects of physical processes and themselves can have no effect on those physical processes. George Santayana says, "Mental events are 'a lyric cry in the midst of businesses and a cry which could in no way affect the course of business.' But it is injustice to say that mental events have no effect on physical events, Epiphenomenalists would have us believe that
pyramids and the Empire State Building were erected without the aid of a single thought, that the greatest works of art were created without the effect of a single feeling.

Parallelism denies that there is any direct causal action between the mental and physical events, for there is mere correlation. Parallelism proposed the analogy of two clocks. If there were two clocks, each keeping perfect times, then each state of the one would always be correlated with a corresponding state of the other, but neither would in any way cause the other. But parallelism is not a sound argument since status of consciousness and the physical states do not seem to be analogous. Occasionalism of Malebranche maintains that the correlation between mental and physical is produced by God on the occasion. But such a concept of occasionalism cannot satisfy a modern mind. Spinoza also pleaded for correlation between mental and physical and said that it is produced by a third thing which is called to be God, Substance and Nature. But he fails to give evidence to show that such a thing could indeed explain the sequence of mental and physical events. According to Colin McGinn, there is no mystery about consciousness at all. For him, "The impression of mystery derives from our own cognitive poverty, not from the objective world in which consciousness exists. There is no real magic in the link
between mind and matter, however incapable we are of seeing how the trick is performed.\textsuperscript{12}

So far as no third thing can be proved to exist to produce correlation between mental and physical we need to note that there could be causal connection between them. Hence there is truth in interactionism as advocated by Descartes. Having found that there is a relation between consciousness and the body we face with a question 'Whether consciousness exists without the body?' It is a fact that most of us would not be agree with the conception that our consciousness cease to exist just after destruction of the body after death. We use to condole one's death and pray for his/her soul to rest in heaven. According to a recent newspaper poll in the United Kingdom, 59 percent of respondents stated they believed in extra-sensory perception (precognition, telepathy or Clair voyance) and it is said that one-forth of Americans believe in angels. Public-opinion polls show that half or more than half of Americans believe in extra-sensory perception or claim to have experienced it.\textsuperscript{13} It implies that people believe in the existence of consciousness even after the destruction of the body.

Rene Descartes maintains that consciousness can exist without the body. For him, mind and matter are independent substances and they can exist independently. As he says in Meditation-VI, "I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in as much as I
am only a thinking and un-extended thing, and as, on the other, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as much as it is only an extended and un-thinking thing, it is certain that this I (that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am), is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it.” (AT VII-78, H.R., 181) Religious belief of the immortality of soul, parapsychology etc. gives support to Descartes’ view.

It is hard to accept that consciousness arises out of the material body and cease to exist just after the destruction of the body. The very nature of consciousness deserves to have existence without the body. But the same nature of consciousness is unable to indicate its own existence outside the body. If we try to show that we are conscious we have to take help of the physical body. Without the help of physical body consciousness cannot prove its existence and without proof the concept of 'consciousness without the body' becomes a matter of belief. For example, I can believe that my fore-fathers are in disembodied form and they are in my room looking at me while writing this chapter and helping me. But they cannot look at me because they have no eyes, they cannot help me either by saying or by writing for, they have no tongue, no hands because they had lost their physical body. Looking without eyes, writing without hands, saying without tongue are contradiction in terms. As Peter Geach observes:
"To have the concept seeing is not even primarily a matter of being able to spot instances of a characteristic repeatedly given in my ("inner-sense") experiences; no concept is primarily a recognitional capacity. And the exercise of one concept is intertwined with the exercise of others; as with a spider's web, some connections may be broken with impunity; but if you break enough the whole web collapses - the concept becomes unusable. Just such a collapse happens, I believe, when we try to think of seeing, hearing, pain emotion, etc., going on independently of a body.14

Hence, it is imaginable that consciousness may be existed after death of the body but logically impossible to establish its existence in disembodied form. For, in doing so, the very concept of consciousness would be changed. The lack of proof for the disembodied existence of consciousness made the philosophers to believe in materialism which itself is not in a better position.

In the succeeding chapters we shall concentrate on the concept of consciousness in western perspective specially referring to Rene Descartes. In this connection we shall study the concept of consciousness from psychological viewpoint and try to see what psychologists got to say so far as consciousness is concerned. We shall also deal with Indian Philosopher's viewpoint regarding
consciousness as well as the views of contemporary western philosophers like Russell, Wittgenstein, Ryle etc.
References

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