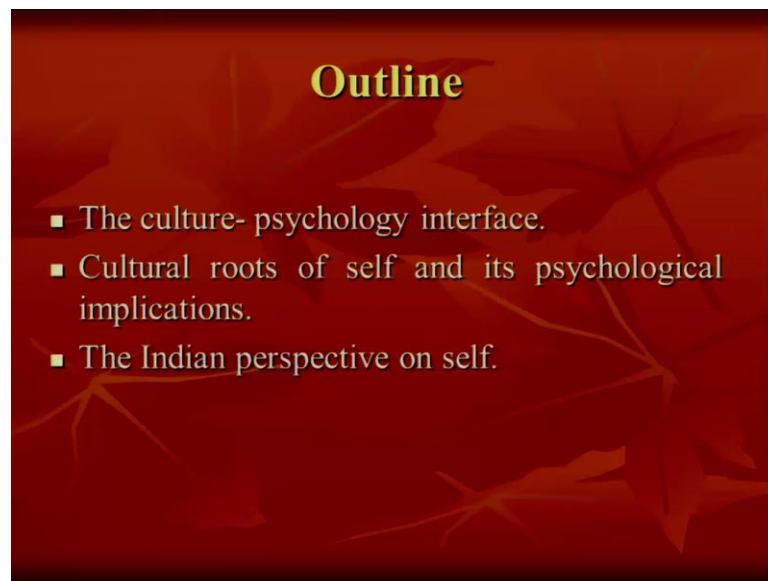


Selected Topics in psychology
Society, Culture and Psychology
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Module - 02
Lecture - 08
Culture and Self: Implications for Social Behavior

Friends, the today's topic for discussion is about a very significant aspect of life. It deals with self. All of us have a notion of self and we use that notion to relate to our environment. In fact, we consider our self as an agent and we use that notion of agency to organize our behavior this kind of dialogue, which occurs between me and I is a continuous process. And throughout the day, we engage with others, using self as an anchor. Today's discussion will focus on, how culture shapes the notion our self.

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The agenda for today's discussion is, one which deals with the relationship between culture and psychology. What are the cultural roots of self and its psychological implications and the Indian perspective on self.

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Let us begin with three important submissions. I propose that for any culture, the way we consider a person as an agent and the way, we consider a person in relation to other fellow beings in community are two important tasks. They may be considered as the notion of the agency and the notion of communion. One has to resolve, how we structure the notion of agency and how we structure the notion of communion. I also propose that, the notion of self becomes a bridge between self, between the individual and society.

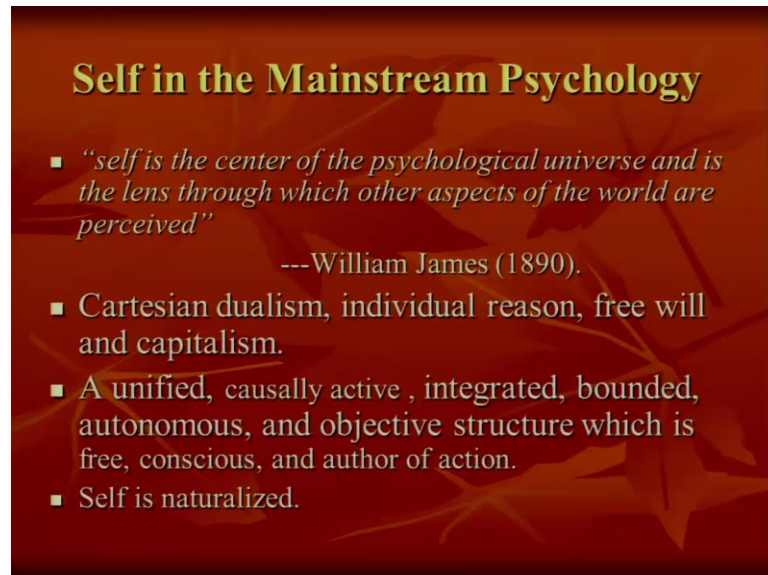
Now, individual and society are important components in any kind of conceptualization of social behavior. The notion of individual as a separate entity and the notion of society as a collective are important ingredients in thinking about social behavior. As we will examine the two notions are considered quite differently in different cultural contexts. The third important point, that I want to share with you is, that emotional experiences and expressions are very intimately related to self and shape our social interaction.

In recent developments in the study of self and emotion, it has become quite clear. That the way we conceptualize our self is very closely related to the movements, in which we are emotionally engaged. We become aware about our self, when there is some kind of emotional involvement. It is an important proposition in some form or the other. It has been with us in theorizing about self.

If you remember the psychoanalytic thought, very clearly implicates the emotional changes of yours in relation to thinking about self. The further development that has

taken place in humanistic psychology, which takes another dimension, there also self transformation is consider quite relevant. Where, emotional change is very crucial.

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Self in the Mainstream Psychology

- *“self is the center of the psychological universe and is the lens through which other aspects of the world are perceived”*
---William James (1890).
- Cartesian dualism, individual reason, free will and capitalism.
- A unified, causally active, integrated, bounded, autonomous, and objective structure which is free, conscious, and author of action.
- Self is naturalized.

Now, we would like to see, how self has been treated within mainstream psychology. I would like to begin with the proposition by William James, who happens to be the senior most psycho logistic in American tradition. He has treated self as a puzzle of puzzles, according to him; self is the central concern in our behavior. As you can see, he treats self as the center of the psychological universe. And it works as a lens, through which other aspects of the word are perceived.

So, how we organize our self concept, what are it is elements? What are the boundaries of this self? All these things are going to shape the way, we relate to others, the way we conduct ourselves and treat various aspects of social environment. The notion of self and the division between the individual and society have a tradition in the Euro American thought. And the key features include a kind of dualism, between mind and body knownd as Cartesian dualism.

There is emphasis on ability to reason and free will and finally, a kind of capitalistic spirit. Where, individual is considered to be an agency to achieve, it is goals and realizes it is aspirations as an independent entity is centra. If you read the literature, examine the various ways in which self has been conceived. You will see that, it has a peculiar

structure. It is a unified, causally active, integrated, bounded, autonomous and objective structure.

All these terms are crucial. They tell that, self is an integrated structure and it is related to activities in a causal fashion. It has a definite boundary. We separate self from other things at the others and it is autonomous in terms of ability to initiate action. You will recollect that self efficacy appears to be a major concept in social psychological tradition, which talks about was ability to perceive ones capacity. How you think that, you can perform in various situations, your perception of self competence is very crucial in directing your behavior, influences your motivation and action.

This kind of notion, which considers human action as authored by the self is very familiar in the Euro American thought. And it has been considered to be a kind of a proto type to think about self and it has become naturalized. That is, this is the objective nature of self. We forget that this kind of proposition, which is the proposition shared by most of the theories is one, which is contributed by a particular kind of cultural discourse.

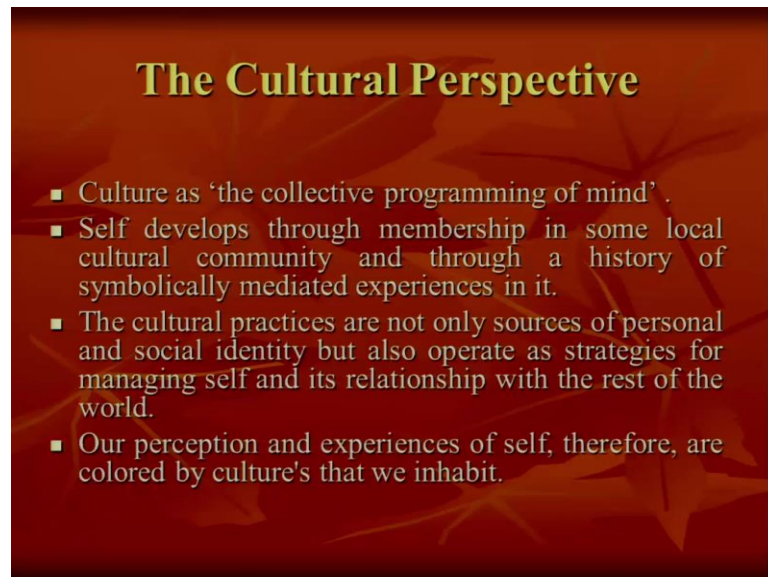
If you go to psychological literature, you will notice that, there has been considerable change in interest in the notion of self. While, William James did talk about self and particularly attended to issues of self esteem. And the way, we think about different kinds of self, all those things are there. But, after that, we find that with rise of behaviorism, self became a theme of very little interest.

Because, it did not provide an opportunity to examine behavior in objective way and it was more philosophical than psychological. Only recently, perhaps in ethics, the interest in self has revived. And today, at least there are 40, 50 terms, where self is used and epithet. You have self determination. You have self efficacy. You have various notions, like self esteem. I have checked in the American psychological abstract, that there are about 50, 60 terms, where self is used.

So, different facets of self are being examined very seriously. And people are looking at self as a cognitive structure. The way, we represent self and the way, we organize our self, usually, psychologists ask the question, who are you and a person has to respond to that. And whatever reflections are given, they are used to describe self, there are majors of self concept.

There are also attempts to look at specific aspects of self functioning. And as you must have seen, the interesting review by Markas Ankithayama. How the notion of self, where is a cross cultures and how the variation in the notion of self relates to cognitive and affective functioning.

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When, we talk about culture, we need to recognize, that as half steady as mission. Quite interestingly, that culture at slike, a collective programming of mind. How, people in a particular culture, share certain notions, certain ideas, certain meaning systems, certain practices. And according to that, we organize our behavior, our thoughts, perceptions, motives; emotions are organized according to the notion of self.

The systematic investigation of self that has taken place in recent years has shown that, there are many more dimension for instance, markers and neurosis. They have talked about the notion of possible selves. That how, you think about your future, how you organize your thoughts about future. And I think the engagement in thinking about your future self, becomes a motivating force.

I just wanted to share, that self has returned to the scheme of psychological thinking in a big way. And it is now related to almost all cognitive and motivational processes. Self is not a biological phenomenon. Self is not something, which can be reduced to neurological activity. Self is a phenomenon, which is organized around the discourse to which we are exposed in the course of our early life.

The kind of activities, the kind of arrangements, the kind of stimulates are present in our immediate social environment, help us to develop in notion of self. I remember an interesting notion, which was given by Cooley and that was about the notion of looking glass self. We see our self as others tell, the significant others informers, they tell that, who are we.

So, what are the characteristic that are present in us? They are identified with the help of this kind of learning. So, self is something, which is acquired from various kinds of experiences that take place in our life. It has been reported, that human beings has this peculiar capacity to make the self as an object. And this is possible, because of the capacity of reflection.

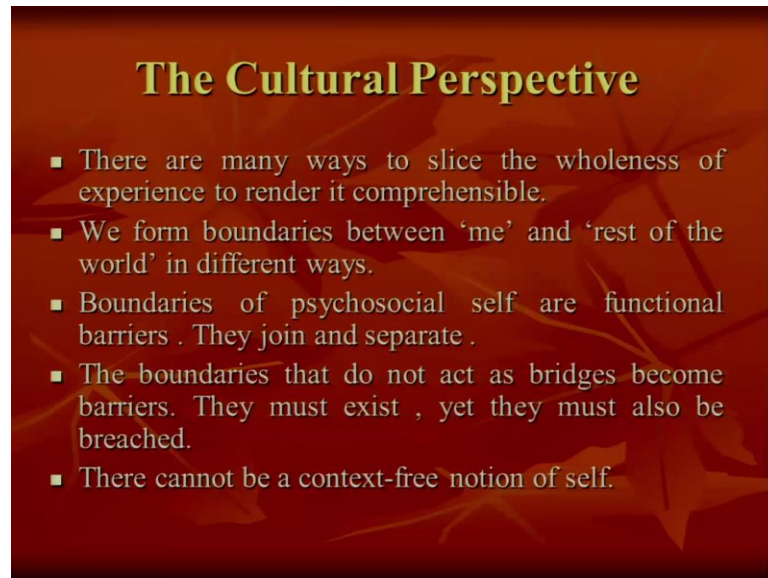
And this capacity is missing in animals; there are some reports about chimpanzees. That they do have some kind of notion, but the full phased notion of self is missing in their behavior. It is around one and half years, that a child starts recognizing his own body and thinking that, he is the self, if the child looks into the mirror, can recognizes the self accurately. Before that, they do not recognize themselves, when they look into the mirror.

So, the point is that, during early years children start recognizing themselves as a separate entity. And formation of this self in particular direction is guided by the opportunities for learning, which are available in family in school and in community settings. So, culture develops through membership in some local cultural community. And through a history of symbolically, mediated experiences in that context, I have already explained this point.

That you participate in the activities of a group or community and through that, you identify yourself with certain features, certain characteristic. The cultural practices are not only sources of personal and social identity, but they also operate as strategy for managing self and it is relationship with the rest of the word. The cultural practices not only describe the self and it is properties, but they also provide certain ways, techniques, methods to arrange the relationship to regulate the relationship between self and others.

Finally, our perception and experiences of self are colored by cultures that we inhabit. This summarizes the cultural perspective, which recognizes the necessity of cultural learning for formation of the notion of self. Let us see cultural variations in self.

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Now, before, we come to examine the various types of self construal's that are observed in different cultural contexts, it is important to realize, that cultures help us to organize the word of our experience. We as human beings, try to reduce the complexity in our environment. Cognitive psychologists say that, we are cognitive misers. And in order to reduce the complexity of the word of experience, we use categories. We make distinctions on the bases of categories.

We divide the word between the self and the other and how this partitioning takes place. In other words, what will be included in the category of self and what will be included in the category of other is provided by the cultural background, the cultural experience of a particular individual. So, we form boundaries between me and rest of the word in different ways. And the boundaries of psycho social self are functional boundaries.

Their functional boundaries in the sense that, they allow you relate to others. And they also help you to create a definite structure called self. They are like doors. They join and separate. It is through self that you relate to others and you also distinguish yourself with others from others. The boundaries, that do not act as bridges become barriers. There are different ways of creating the boundary.

The boundary between self and other may be a permeable boundary, where others have this possibility. That can become members of yourself or boundary, may be a solid one, which maintains a clear separateness. And the self and other are put in two distinct

categories. I would like to mention here an interesting proposal by Professor R. C. Tripathi and Professor Sinha.

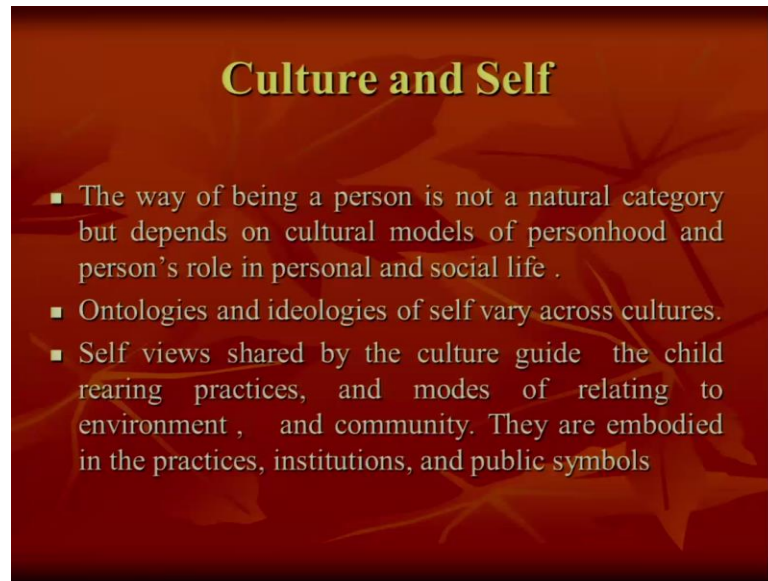
In an interesting analysis, they have proposed that, here the individual and family, there are referring to the Indian context. Individual and family form a kind of permeable boundary and there is a possibility of exchange. The elements, within the self can go to the family or the elements in the family, can come to the category of self. So, there is possibility of movement or exchange between these two categories.

Now, it is very important to recognize, that a boundary can become a barrier or it can be a bridge, bridge which allows for movement. The barrier like, Line of Control, LOC, does not allow, others to come. Finally, it is important to recognize an assumption by cultural perspective that the notion of self cannot be context free. You define self in a particular context. You have various notions of self.

There is an interesting analysis by ((Refer Time: 21:36)) would talks of different kinds of self and it is very interesting. He says that, there is an ecological self, self as a physical entity. You are a person in flesh, in bones and that is an objective reality, which can be seen and which can be recognized. Then, there is a self, which is available to you only, your personal self which is based on your memory.

There is a social self, which embraces in the context of relationship with others. And finally, he says that, there is a conceptual self. That we mean by self, we also learn, what is the meaning of self? That is conceptual self. So, self can be understood in many ways and there are different contexts in which self can be understood.

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So, one of the learning that comes from the cultural analysis of self is, that the way, we consider our self hood. The way of being a person is not a natural category, but depends on cultural models of person hood and persons role in personal and social life. Cultural models are very crucial in the sense, that they provide a kind of space to recognize yourself and articulate the notion of self. We will respond to this challenge, after a few minutes. When, we will examine the Indian context of self hood.

But, it is the important to see that, there is a model, which considers self in terms of search for a deeper reality like Bramhan, which is something non objective in the sense. That it can be conceptualized, but it cannot be experienced like a physical entity. It is a continuous search for higher reality or consciousness. So, that is one kind of model or when you think of the notion of self and if you use a psychological test of self concept, you have a definite set of qualities.

And you identify, that you are high on this quality or low on this quality. And you the answers that are obtained provide one picture of self, fine you may be happy with that. So, there are different kinds of modules, which are available. One which goes beyond the objective reality or one which identify self with certain features, which can be described, which can be identified. So, there are different models which are available.

We also propose that, ontology's and ideologies of self vary across cultures. We will examine it, more seriously, in the next up, few minutes. That what constitutes self, what

is the reality of self? It is ontology. And the movement of self, in terms of certain ideological preferences, varies across cultures, the self use that we have, they are shaped by the cultural. And they guide the child rearing practices.

We treat children, we tell them, how to behave, how to act, how to distinguish, how to relate in the Indian context. A child has to learn different kinds of brothers and sisters and uncles, there are specific names for all the relationships and they have to retain that. As compared to many other cultures, where such sophisticated relational network in the family is missing.

So, the ontologies and ideologies vary and cultures provide certain practices, certain kinds of guidelines for child rearing, modes of relating to environment and community. They are embodied in the practices institutions and public symbols. Now, this point reminds us, that the notion of self's is reflected at the label of social functioning. It is also reflected in terms of various kinds of representations, which are found in artifacts.

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Let me mention, that the notion of self, which is prevalent in the Euro American context is individualized self. By individualized, I want to emphasize the fact, that the goal of development is individuation becoming more and more distinct. Creating an image, where self is independent from others. And it is unified, we have mentioned these terms earlier.

And it is an indivisible entity. I am reminded of the notion, which is contrasted this individual unit. The notion is one given by an anthropologist Macey Meriot, who says that, Indians are devisuals. They consist of different elements. They are constituted by various elements is not individual entity, it is divided. So, it is structured by relationships, it is a composite of various kinds of inputs objects relationships.

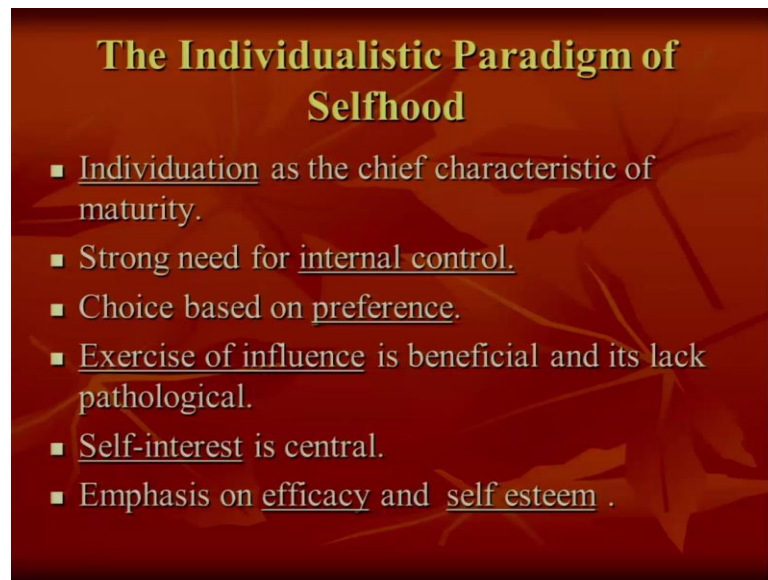
Another important feature of this self is, that it has capacity to choose and influence. Choice is a very powerful concept in western psychology. IF you epchoice, then you have control, if you epchoice, then you have freedom. And the development of individual growth of an individual is treated in terms of increasing capacity to choose and control. The entire system of motivation is routed in this kind of philosophy, choice and control.

In fact, many studies in the western world indicate that even maintaining an illusion of control is good for health. So, internal control being independent and influencing the environment is a big challenge in this kind of notion. If you look into the literature, you will see that, the notion of competence is defined in terms of once ability to influence the environment.

White, who has studied the notion of competence, he uses the word effectance; that if you are able to influence, if you are able to change, then you have competence. So, this kind of notion, which is separate, which is independent, which is able to influence others, which is able to create and which is able to perform things. According to once own characteristics and features is one trend in the review of Markers and Kethayama. These features are put together, under the title of independent self.

And that independent self is one, which is bounded separate. And provides, different way to look at the reality, different way to feel motivated, different way to engage and emotional relational ships. So, there is emphasis and efficacy self esteem power, it is self centric and as own researcher has termed. It has a transmitter orientation, it goes to others and it goes towards environment and tries to influence. So, this is one model of self, which is reflected in most of the prevalent psychological notions in literature.

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To summarize this perspective, we find a model of self hood, where individuation is the chief characteristic of maturity. If are independent, different, you do not try to be dependent on others. Then, you have developed, there is strong need for internal control, choice based on preference, experience of influence is beneficial and it is lack is pathological.

The contrast, which is made, in various contrasts that we have created in social psychology in psychology of motivation, provides this kind of perspective. Self interest is central and emphasis and efficacy and self esteem is something, which is central to effective functioning of a person.

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Now, in a simplified manner, if we look into many non western settings, there are studies from china, from Japan, from Korea, from India, from Indonesia, which provide a picture, which offers a different perspective oneself. Here, we find a kind of group orientation sensitivity to the goals and needs of others, readiness to cooperate and maintain permeable boundaries. We also notice that, there is more emphasis on duties than rights, more emphasis on the roles, obligations and adjustment.

And here, there is recognition, that there is social and a spiritual or divine component of self. And self is located in that context. In contrast to that transmitter orientation that we noted in the independent self, here we notice a receiver orientation, where the emphasis is more on an inner directed discipline. Let me make it clear, that the port trail of the independent and interdependent self. Or, as I have presented here, the notion of self in the two contrasting categories is a kind of statement to recognize cultural differences.

It does not imply that everyone, who belongs to one kind of cultural setting, has the imprint in the same manner. And everybody shares all this characteristics in the same way. And the same is true, about the western notion that I have presented. You will find cultural variations, variations within culture and there is a possibility.

And yes, they are findings where these elements are present in both kinds of cultural settings. Perhaps the degree of availability of these models is relatively different in the two kinds of cultural settings.

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A notion, which has been popularized by half stead and trandis and several other colleagues. In India, Professor J. B. P. Sinha initiated a number of studies in that context. And that, deals with individualism and collectivism, as a cultural dimension. And the kind of correspondence between interdependent self and independent self and collectivism and individualism is quite interesting.

We find considerable similarity in the characterizations, one follows one method and orientation and the other approach follows a different orientation. But, they do meet in certain ways. So, the collectivist relational self, which is prevalent in the non western setup, is found to share certain features and I think it will be useful to briefly refer to those features. Here, self is defined in terms of membership in n groups.

So, one person may introduce that, I belong to a particular family or a particular community. I remember some researchers have used the phrase indexical self; that you have to understand in terms of the features of that group to which you belong. The referential self is one, where you tell that, I am intelligent, I am bold, I participate in activities. That is referential notion of self, which comes very close to the independent notion of self, often found in the western context. And here, it is the indexical self, which is more prominent.

So, sharing of resources within group members, maintaining normative orientation and feeling interdependence and involved in the activities, unless of fellow beings. That

becomes very central. Achieving the goal of interdependence is, something which is very important. We often go together; we try to perform various things. However, it is a complex challenge; that in spite of collectivist orientation team work is quite problematic in the Indian context, cooperative activities quite difficult.

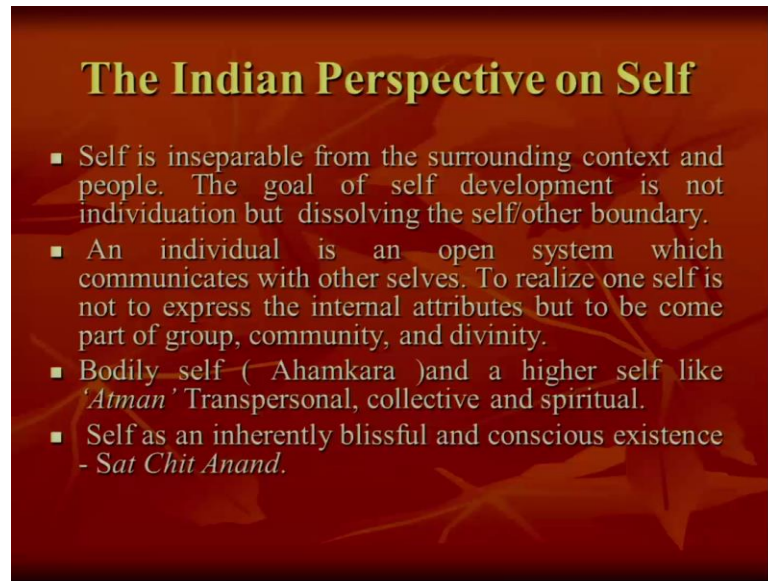
So, one has to see all this puzzle can be solved, but it is there. That on the one hand, there is collectivism, there is recognition of others is important component in our life. At the same time, there are difficulties in relating to others. Control is self directed discipline and tolerance instead of ability to influence others. I think that, the kind of cultural learning that takes place.

Has greater emphasis on shaping self's looking into the inner features and doing some activity, which deals with self transformation or self realization and movement towards higher goals in the inner journey. This does not mean that, the cultures live in separate worlds. There is cultural cooperation, there is a culture and there is influence of different cultures on other cultures.

And the more recent developments through globalization have brought different cultures closer to each other. So, culture should not be considered at very tightly organized categories. So, there is variation within cultures. In fact, I think forget the name, but it is interesting work, we talk about moving cultures. That how people move across cultures and how cultural changes are taking place. And shaping self's in ways, which are very different. There is interesting work by Rollant.

We start of bicultural self, people from India, living United States, how they are developing certain features from the other culture. And maintaining certain features of their original culture, such situation is quite common in many countries.

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Let us examine, some of the key distinctions, which provide the perspective represented in the Indian context. These include, the first is self is inseparable from the surrounding context and people. This has a very interesting kind of back drop in various kinds of philosophical treatises, in folk mind. There is recognition of how one person thinks and how other person thinks. These two can be connected on the assumption; that is self is one which is shared by both.

At one level, people talk that the atman is same for everyone. A ground is created that people share the same atman, the notion of purush or jeevatma provide a kind of orientation to recognize similarity, across individuals. Then, there is another orientation, which is very central. And that is, that the constituents, the elements, the panch maha boothas are the same, which constitute the external physical involvement and the person, there individual.

So, there is a kind of continuity between the self and not self or the other. The goal of self development is another important feature. And at least ideologically, it is considered desirable, that one should move towards the notion of self, which is increasingly more and more income passing. So, one has to move forward in the direction of dissolving the boundaries between self and other or increasing the range or becoming one with the entire world.

The term brahman refers to a broader reality, which includes everything. So, the goal is to become Brahman. The goal is to recognize the entire world in terms of one entity. So, ideologically, particularly the vedhantic thought, emphasis this kind of notion. That one should dissolve the boundaries between the limited self and others and move towards the higher inclusive or incoming passing self.

And individual is an open system, which communicates with the other selves. This simply refers to the notion of permeable boundaries. That there is an exchange relationship between the individual and the other person, to realize oneself is not to express the internal attributes as we find in the case of independent self. Instead, there is emphasis on becoming part of the group or community or divinity.

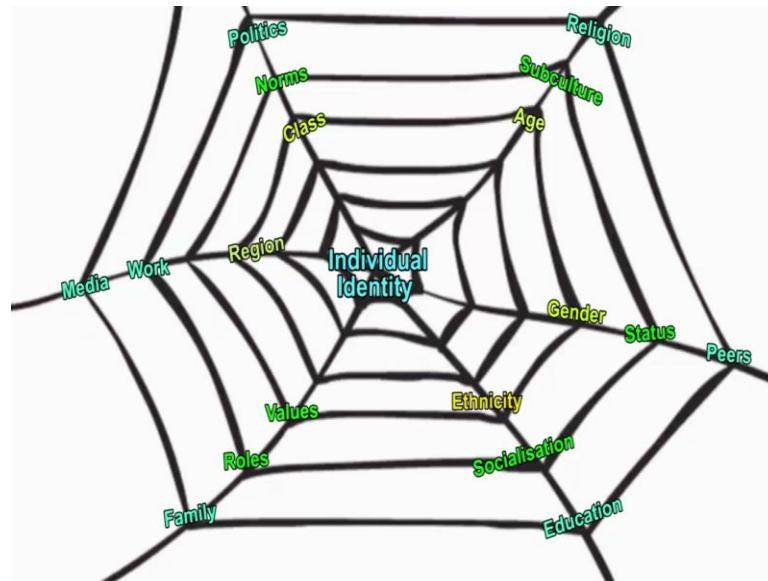
So, the movements of self growth are change or transformation of self is in the direction of moving towards a higher entity. A broader goal is there, rather than enhancing the self. In almost, all traditions available in the Indian thought, a distinction is made between the broadly self, which is often termed as Ahamkara or ego. And the higher self atman, the atman is considered as transpersonal, collective and spiritual.

And it is often considered, that the real self is one which is inherently blissful, conscious, existence are Sat Chit Anand. And the spiritual training is for the purpose of recognizing this kind of self. Now, there is an important commentary on this whole thing from the school of vedhanta, it is proposed that the difficulty in life is because; we do not recognize the true nature of self. And the true nature is, Sat Chit and Anand.

We recognize the limited self as the real self. And the moment, we recognize that is the false self, when the Vidya is gone, when ignorance is gone, then the person will realize his or her true nature, which is blissful conscious existence. Now, this kind of proposal is not present in the western kind of analysis of self particularly. The way, we analyze the notions, within the psychological research.

Now, the spiritual self the different layers of self, which has been talked about in the panch kosha idea, provide multiple facades of selves. And recognize that, the element of spiritual as in integral part. So, this provides a challenge, before humanity, that how one can transform, there are methods and techniques for that. Now, this kind of approach has yet is not received attention in psychological literature, because of the limitations of the paradigm with then with we work.

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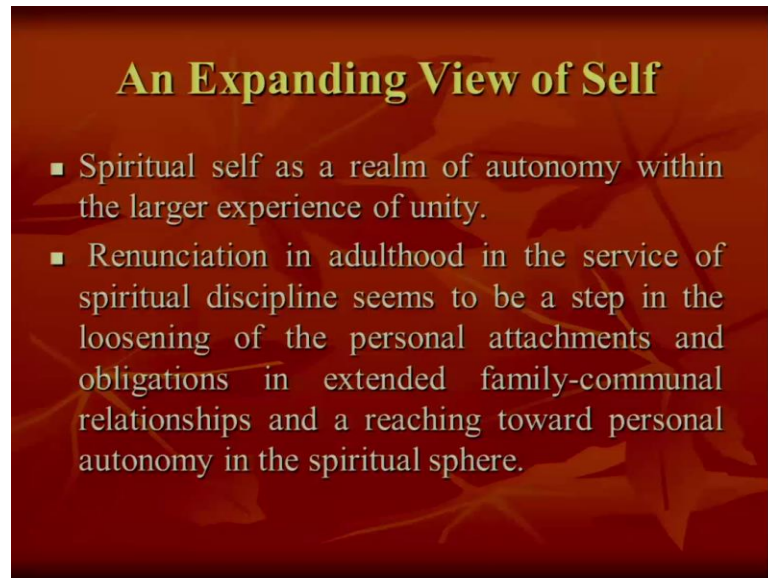


There is not important feature, which needs to be recognized, that of as an individual, we live in a world and we perform different roles like spider's web. Where, the individual has a particular identity and then, he belongs to your particular age group or gender or ethnicity and region social class. The various kinds of socialization practice the status of that individual. Here, in this pictorial presentation, we see that, we are connected with all these.

The vedhantic view says that, search for individual identity is important. And that identity is distinct from the identities, which are given, which are available from the social and cultural context. It is important to recognize the difference, that these are the identities, which are attested, they are not true identities. And if you realize that, these are the specific roles that we perform, they are not stable and they are not permanent. These are like attachments, we use these.

So, the focus remains on understanding and evolving a notion of self, which goes to a higher level of selves. This kind of emphasis is given in different traditions. So, it is not denial of the social context. It is not denial of the membership of the group. But, there is a constant reminder that is not the true self and what should attain to the higher level of self.

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So, it may be proposed that spiritual self is one, which offers an expanded view of self where, autonomy is available in a different way, where we see a kind of relationship with a very broad range of concerns. And in order to organize life, it is crucial that, the broader goals, they may be the societal goals, they may be goals for the ecology and one needs to relate to those goals. Gandhi is one example of such kind of spiritual self, where an individual participates in various social activities performs individual activities. And at the same time, maintains a higher goal.

So, that should not be a conflict between the pursuit of higher self and performing everyday activities, performing the requirements based on role expectations. Balancing the two is a difficult job. The traditional view of life, if you look at the ashram system are the different life stages or stations in life, there is a notion that people must move gradually towards renunciation. They should move towards detachment.

This kind of arrangement provides a space for spiritual discipline and it helps to get rid of various attachments and obligations. So, the movement in the spiritual sphere of life was given an important space. The ashram systems were Bramacharya, Griyasth, Vanaprasth and then, Sanyaas provided gradual change in the degree of attachment relationship with people society and involvement.

And gradually people moved across these stages, that system may not be very pertinent in today's life. But, to recapitulate the notion of self, we need to recognize the fact, that

engaging with selfhood is a demand of everyday life. We reflect about self, we develop a notion of self in the social context. But, the content of selfhood can vary and the way, we organize our self, the way we derive our motives and emotions from the notion of self, give different directions. In today's world the egoic self has become central concern.

And its problems are also obvious. The kind of conflict, the kind of hatred, the kind of violence that we see in domestic life, in social life, demands, that we rethink about the notion of self and there is need to expand the notion of self. This is a big demand as a matter of fact, the various kinds of pathology, which are being recognized in life. Particularly, those which deal with the depression and anxiety disorders, they really reflect the problems of selfhood.