

Agamic Psychology, Social Interaction and Learning.*

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Sinopsis:

Dalam rencana ini ada diterangkan suatu teori pembelajaran baru yang dibentuk dengan menggunakan idea-idea psikologi negara-negara Asia. Ada ditafsirkan bahawa pembelajaran ialah jenis tingkahlaku atau tindakan untuk mengurangkan kejahilan. Proses pembelajaran juga dibahagikan kepada tiga jenis: pembelajaran α , β dan γ . Pembelajaran α ialah hampir sama dengan pembelajaran instrumental yang telah dikaji oleh ahli-ahli psikologi behaviorisma. Pembelajaran β ialah pembelajaran mengenai diri sendiri, di mana beberapa tindakan dilakukan untuk mendapat kefahaman mendalam mengenai diri sendiri. Pembelajaran γ ialah pembelajaran jenis berbentuk ugama atau falsafah. Teori pembelajaran ini juga dikaitkan kepada suatu teori penanggapan yang hampir sama dengan teori penanggapan Gestalt. Tetapi dalam teori ini, penanggapan menyeluruh mengenai dunia, kehidupan dan sebagainya (dipanggil T-URU) ditekankan kerana inilah yang menentukan sikap-sikap 'moral' seseorang dalam kehidupan seharian.

Introduction

By agamic psychology is meant the psychological system embodied in the agamic/tantric tradition, and more specifically that which goes by the name of Saiva Siddhanta. While it has been long in the making, it was formalized as a system by Meykandar only in the 13th. century and elaborated further by a host of able disciples and followers. The soundness of the central concepts of this system has reemerged in the contexts of a new linguistic theory viz. process Grammar (Loganathan Mutharayan K., 1983). The system can said to be fundamentally developmental where **development** itself is considered both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. It is also to be noted that creature development is seen as an outcome of **learning**, where learning itself is seen as **reduction in ignorance** that results as consequence of effectations of different kinds of actions.

Knowledge or consciousness (jnanam) is classified into three distinct types, viz. **paca jnanam** (instrumental knowledge or knowledge of objects and things that are binding), **pacu jnanam** (self-knowledge or consciousness of the psychic entity) and **pati jnanam** (transcendental knowledge or consciousness of the Supreme Deity).

This classification is founded upon the following basic assumptions:

- a) There are three eternal, uncreated and indestructible (anati) categories of objects — innumerable psyches or selves, a single and unique Deity and a cluster of real entities that delimit the consciousness of the psyches, constraint and bind them in many different ways.
- b) Any living creature is a Deity-Psyche-Body system and any attempt to eliminate the Deity or the psyche in the explanation of creature behaviour will be reductionistic and hence incomplete and misleading.

- c) Creature behaviour is essentially that of doing something, acting in order to accomplish something, and therefore three parameters viz. intention, action and consciousness are absolutely necessary for a true and accurate description of creature behaviour. (1)

Human development is cognitive in a sense but it is more specifically bringing into consciousness what remains in Cognitive Darkness (anavarul) through the effectations of various kinds of learning acts. It is a process whereby there is both **differentiation** within a categorical realm and 'reaching out' or expanding consciousness into the deeper and more hidden object realms.

The Theory of Perception in Agamic Psychology

A theory of perception similar to that of the Gestalt School and a theory of learning quite distinct and unique constitute the psychological component of the system.

The essences of the theory of perception can be stated in the following terms:

- a) Practically all perceptions are perceptions of URU i.e. Gestalts, archetypes or more generally the overall organisational or structural forms of whatever that is cognised.
- b) Human perceptual consciousness is simultaneously multi-dimensional in which the global and individual constitute the bipolar opposites.
- c) We have to distinguish between simple **apprehension** and **comprehension** of an object — it is the latter that is **meaningful** to an individual.

The term URU (i.e. shape, form, structure) is used here to capture the most general sense of such terms as Gestalt, archetype, pattern, structure, organisational form, law and so forth. The following aspects of URU should also be stated here:

- a) Consciousness of URU is simultaneously consciousness of both form and elements that constitute the basic of the form.
- b) The URU perceived may give rise to doubt, vagueness, uncertainty and such other unclear forms of consciousness. Where this is so the URU may be clarified, ascertained and so forth through more critical examination and analysis.
- c) Every object is in fact a **realization** of an URU and it may be possible that the realized URU is not in fact perceived. In such cases we have misperceptions and they are corrected only by subsequent behaviour where the wrong URU is displaced by the correct one.
- d) Where an object is cognised in terms of its intrinsic URU, that perception can be termed **comprehension**. The aspects of consciousness of an object devoid of URU constitute pure **apprehension** where there is awareness only of elements purely as stimuli. An individual comprehends an object in terms of an URU and that comprehension determines the meaning he sees in the object. The apprehension of an object may remain invariant though the comprehension may change due to further analysis, investigation, examination and so forth. Comprehension, in other words, may reveal the subjectivity of the perceiver while the apprehension is neutral with respect to that.
- e) No URU stands on its own. The URU is systemic and relational. If U and V are URUs, then either one **includes** or **excludes** the other. However both may be included by another higher level URU even though these two are mutually exclusive.

- f) The URU when clarified through analysis generate the conceptual consciousness. The kind of relationships noted in (e) above among the URUs is retained though now perhaps more sharply delineated. Such 'refined' URUs are the ones that become lexicalized or verbalized by the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs of languages. Through linguistic communication, they also become the shared forms of consciousness of a cultural group.
- g) The pre-conceptual URUs may become the substance of non-rational and symbolic forms of communication and the essence of cultural identity. Such URUs also form the substance of consciousness that evoke a variety of deep psychic and emotional reactions. In this respect, it seems to be empirically the case that the more pre-rational it is, the more emotive its significance for an individual.

The URU and Human Behaviour

Obviously there must be an intimate kind of relationship between the forms of consciousness a person can generate and his behaviour. In Agamic psychology this linkage is seen in a complex way accounting for not alone the incentive or desire related instrumental behaviours but also the non-selfish, altruistic, self-denying, moral and religious behaviour.

In the hierarchy of URUs, let us call the highest and the most inclusive the T-URU (i.e. Totality-URU). This URU has a special significance for an individual. It signifies the manner in which he comprehends the world, sees the social significance of the individuals and also the manner in which he relates himself to the world. In other words, it is the determinant of the values he brings to bear upon his decisions and hence something that directs and constraints his behaviour in a general sense. At pre-rational level it forms the basis of his religious beliefs and is symbolized as a deity. When rationalized it becomes a metaphysical system, a *darsana* i.e. a philosophy of life. Religious beliefs and dogmas constitute verbal sketches of such an image of Totality. The pre-rational T-URU constitute emotionally the most significant organising principle of an individual and any threat to this evokes the most intense animosity towards the source that originates the threat. A change in the structure of T-URU of an individual should in fact be that which brings about personality changes of a significant kind in the individual.

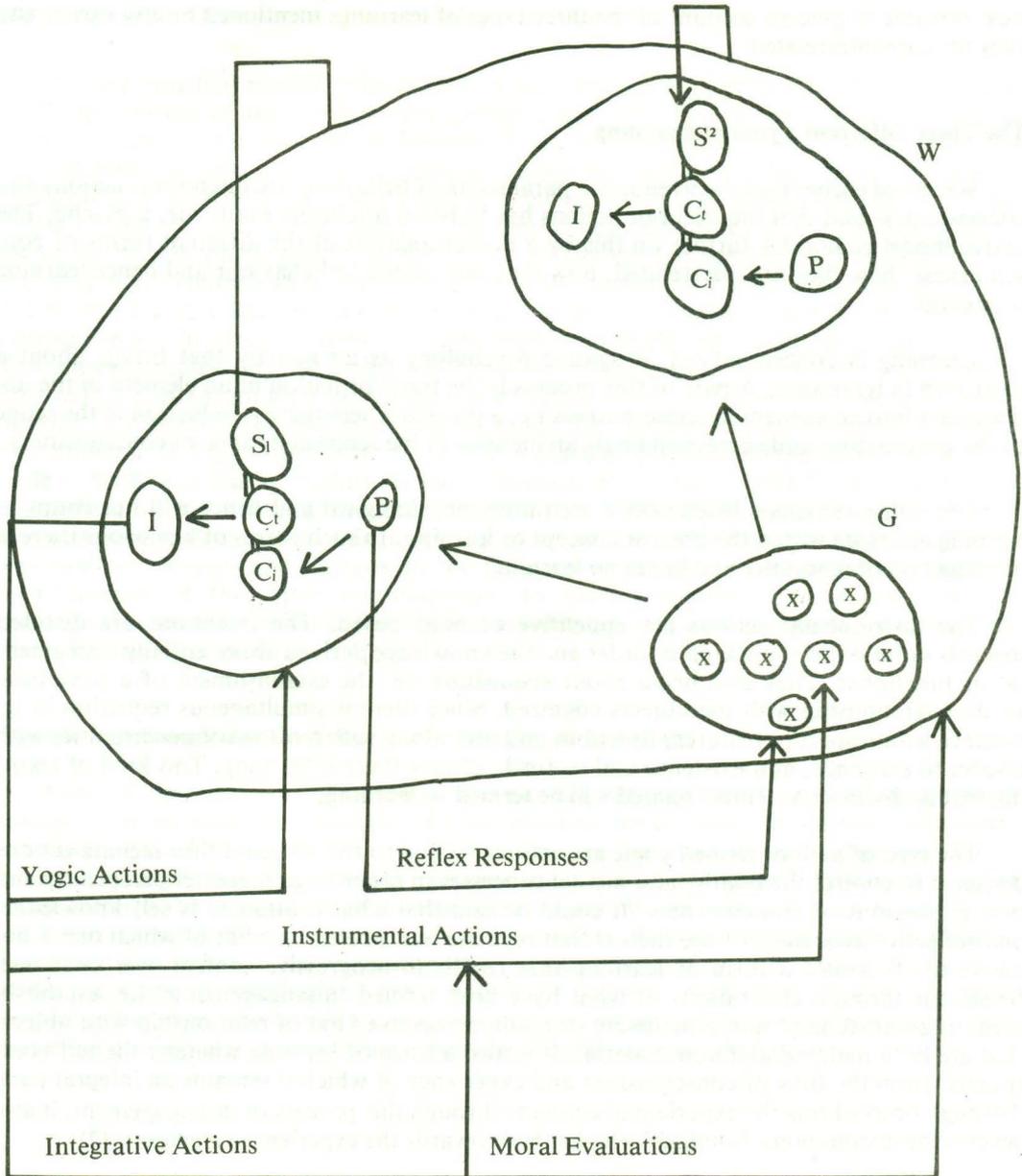
It is not clear what sort of social and psychological processes underlie the formation of T-URUs. But because it is a world view, the most comprehensive picture of the world that grounds the behaviour of an individual, the ecological settings and the social interaction within family and outside that transmit cultural norms will certainly play an important role in the formation of it. It must also be noted that one T-URU may be displaced by another that is more inclusive and so forth. Such displacements constitute the stuff of cultural revolutions, the displacement of one ideology with another in politics, the religious 'conversions' of individuals and so forth. We shall see shortly that such changes also constitute the mechanism where changes in the dominant forms of learning are also brought about.

In contrast to the T-URU, we have also the I-URU (Individual-URU), the least inclusive and the most analytically differentiated form of an entity. One could call this the atomic but with the proviso that just as in the case of T-URU, it is individual relative and that though one could start with some picture or comprehension of a particular, it could be further reanalysed, better differentiated and so forth. Ordinarily human beings (perhaps also other creatures) begin somewhere in the middle and go on upwards to generate more inclusive T-URU and downwards to generate more atomic I-URU.

With the introduction of the concepts of T-URU and I-URU, we are now in a better position to give an account of human behaviour that is rather comprehensive. Meykander (13th. century), the most brilliant philosopher of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition observed that a psyche is simultaneously universal and individual (i.e. sat-asat), an entity that is conscious

of both the differentiated particulars that is analytically derived and the global organisational features of the universe as a whole that remains permanent and unchanging. We are interpreting this observation in terms of consciousness founded by I-URU and T-URU respectively, an interpretation that is well developed in another closely related tradition viz. Vira Saivism.

The diagram below illustrates the manner in which different forms of perceptual consciousness are linked to different kinds of behaviour.



(Religious ritual, metaphysical reflection, etc.)

Fig. 1 Consciousness and Behaviour

- P: Physiological changes arising as a result of stimuli emanating from the elements of the geographical environment.
- G: The environment considered purely as geographical.
- C_i: Consciousness of T-URU arising from a larger vision of the totality.
- I: The intentions that arise and lead to various kinds of actions.

With the above delineations of the different types of perception and human actions, it is now possible to give an account of the three types of learnings mentioned briefly earlier and how they are interrelated.

The Three Different Types of Learning

We noted earlier that the irreducible parameters of behaviour are intentions, actions and consciousness and that the agent of actions has to be an intelligent entity viz. a psyche. The above model elaborates further on this by a deeper analysis of the different forms of consciousness, how they are interrelated, how they are related to behaviour and hence learning in general.

Learning is conceptualized in agamic psychology as an activity that brings about a reduction in ignorance. A part of this process is the transformation of an element in the unconscious into an element in consciousness i.e. a process where there is reduction in the scope of the unconscious and correspondingly an increase in the scope and range of consciousness.

The reflex responses listed above are purely physiological and hence will not count as learning activities within the present concept of learning. In such forms of behaviour there is no reduction of ignorance and hence no learning.

The instrumental actions are **appetitive** or need based. The intentions are directed towards satiation of some kind or order and the knowledge derived are essentially instrumental or functional. They also bring about **acquisition** i.e. the establishment of a possessive kind of relationship with the objects cognized. Since there is simultaneous reduction in ignorance with respect to features, functions and uses along with removal of uncertainties with respect to existence, non-existence and so forth, clearly there is learning. This kind of learning that is obviously incentive related will be termed \propto **learning**.

The type of actions termed yogic are actions related to the self, and they include actions designed to control the bodily, and mental processes in order to gain greater perspicuity and new dimensions of consciousness. It could be said that what is attained is self knowledge, and reflective awareness of the factors that regulate one's behaviour but of which one is not aware of. It is also a form of learning that results in progressive control over ones own behaviour through effectations of what have been termed 'disengagements' i.e. establishment of an attitude of non-attachment or a non-possessive kind of relationship with objects that are both material and non-material. It is also a form of learning whereby the self is extricated from the flow of consciousness and experience of which it remains an integral part. Through objectifying the experiential contents through this process of disengagement, it also severs the unconscious 'bondage' which it had towards the experienced elements. (2)

This type of learning is termed β **learning** and clearly progress in this form of learning, along with greater self - knowledge also results in greater personal autonomy. Where action are related to intentions arising from consciousness grounded by some T-URU, we have various sorts of integrative (i.e. re-ligio) actions. At pre-rational level such actions are essen-

tially symbolic or ritualistic. When such T-URU based insights become the substance of analytical activities, we have the philosophical or metaphysical enquiries.

Such insights are also regulative of instrumental actions. The consciousness of the manner in which this larger vision regulates the appetitive instrumental actions constitute the essence of moral sense. The instrumental actions can be **consistent** or **inconsistent** with this larger vision. The consistent is felt morally right, and the inconsistent morally wrong. The consciousness of this dimension of actions constitute the 'conscience' of an individual. When we note that the moral conflict exists only as long as there is appetitive and acquisitive actions, it can be seen that the function of moral sense is essentially to facilitate a more altruistic and universal forms of consciousness of the world.

The learning that results in the context of such integrative actions is termed δ -learning. The displacement of one T-URU with another that is more inclusive and comprehensive forms the substance of this type of learning. There is reduction in ignorance with respect to consciousness of the world as a totality. Hence we could say that what we have in δ -learning, is a form of learning related to evolving into higher species whereby new competencies and sensibilities are attained. The deep seated delimiting constraints that establish the upper bounds of consciousness the psyche is capable of generating is overcome thereby attaining new competencies for generating even higher and more inclusive forms of T-URUs. The T-URU determines frequently in an unconscious manner, the subjective perspective within which a person 'sees' the world and establishes meaningful relationships. This means progress in δ -learning will bring about a change in subjectivity and personal growth of an important kind. At some point in this progress, the universe ceases to be purely physical — it begins to be seen in organismic terms. The world is seen as intelligent, animated by a Supreme Deity, an Intelligent Power that is ceaselessly active and the causal agent of the cycle of births and deaths, evolutions and involutions and so forth. With this kind of T-URU channelling the psychological processes, we have the advent of a religious form of existence. The primitive man expressed this insight by using models derived from animate objects he was familiar. Rituals and liturgies in the religious practices can also be seen as another manifestation of this inner consciousness. In more advanced cultures, they become theological systems or darsanas (lit: visions, insight) that one uses as a guide for living a life that is supremely rewarding.

Agamic Psychology and the Behavioural Theories of Learning

Most of the ideas for instructional theories currently utilised in education appear to emerge from the behaviour concepts of learning where the concepts of classical and operant conditioning form the basis. The theory of learning outlined here do not use any conditioning concepts at all, learning is seen as a process where there is reduction in ignorance brought about through the effectations of various kinds of actions. In such a view, it is seen that a positivistic or materialist kind of attitude is unnecessary. This has the important implication that moral development, the religious pattern of existence and so forth can also be brought within the scope of **learning** and hence within the scope of psychological enquiries. More researches based on Agamic Psychology may furnish us new kinds of ideas for comprehending child development and evolving even more effective instructional systems.

NOTES

- (1): This concept has also emerged more recently in intensive studies of interactional behaviour. For more details see Adam Kendow (1981) & Florian Coulmas (1981). The Hermenetical model for analysing teaching behaviour also utilises this concept. See R. Loganathan Mutharayan (1984)
- (2): For more details on this see K. Loganathan Mutharayan (1984). This concept has some similarities with that of 'distensing'.

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