

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Individual Differences in Personality

Science of psychology is young in the sense that as a systematic body of knowledge about the phenomena of behaviour it came to be studied very recently. Those who devoted fully their time and energies helped to give it a self-contained shape. However, psychological thought as such can be traced back in the remotest antiquities, scattered through the writings of several ancient thinkers. The references to personality and individual differences date back to the Greek thinkers. Plato classified individuals into three categories: intellectuals, soldiers and labourers. Hippocrates and Galen differentiated four temperamental types: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. These

types were popularly accepted for a long time. In India, the Sankhya philosophy described individual differences in terms of the predominance of 'Satwa', 'Rajas' and 'Tamas' factors. The four-fold classification of castes into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra was based on an individual's ability to perform 'Karma' appropriate to one of these four categories. The fact of individual differences in personality is not a new idea. It has always been there. However, it has been greatly substantiated and elaborated in the present century.

Individual differences were perceived, perhaps as contributions of persons to their own good as well as to that of a community. It means that some individuals were more successful than those in making their own lives richer and happier, and also in making some positive contribution to the welfare of the society in which they lived. In a competitive society of today these differences are greatly exaggerated, and are more conspicuously perceived and consciously felt. A university announces its results. A few come out with flying colours, certain percentage passes out, while the others fail. An employer receives hundreds of applications for a post, interviews a few and finally selects one. Examples of this type can be multiplied

indefinitely. They all point to one fact that individuals differ. They differ in a number of aspects and the differences are manifest in all walks of life.

Within the individual himself there are different factors. One is good at a few, average at some, and inferior in others. The factors at which he is good are his assets on which he can generally capitalize and succeed in future. There are, therefore, differences between personalities and also there are differences within personality. If it is possible to discover the strong and weak points of an individual and if his energies and resources can be directed accordingly, perhaps the psychologists might be able to erase the word 'failure' from the dictionary.

A vocational counsellor says that in order to get success in a certain occupation, a person must have a certain level of intelligence, a special ability or aptitude, an inclination to do that kind of work which is involved on that job - this he calls the interest - and a particular set of personality characteristics. It has been proved by a number of research workers that every occupation has a minimum requirement in term of intelligence or general ability. If a person having lower

level of it than required enters it, his chances of failure are very great. Similarly he must have a set of special abilities or aptitude. A man who is low on the mechanical aptitude may not be a successful engineer. If he is good at the musical aptitude he has good chances of becoming a successful musician. Same is true about interests also. Eventhough one has an aptitude for a particular line, he may not be successful in it. Ability to do the job is a latent factor, just like the capacity of a steam-engine. But in order to exploit work from it, one needs motive power. The engine can work only if there is steam or any other power to operate it. A person's ability may also remain unexploited or unused if he is not interested in using them. The interest provides motivation. As such it is a dynamic factor. It plays a great role in an individual's performance on his job. But perhaps even more important than his abilities and interests is his personality make-up. Broadly speaking, personality includes the other factors in its frame of reference. For convenience, ability part is always treated separately. Interests can be said to be dependant upon the underlying personality characteristics. At times they are taken as direct manifestations of an

individual's personality traits. Therefore, personality is more fundamental to the study and understanding of an individual person.

The understanding or the insight gained into this internal structure of a man can help parents in bringing up children wisely, teachers in making their classroom instruction more effective, counsellors in planning the educational and vocational careers of their counsellees, in helping them through their various problems - personal, social or educational in nature-in marriage counselling, and the authorities in the selection in school, college or for employment. These are the important areas of application of the personality measurement, but in fact it is applied in much greater variety of situation. Like any other measurement, it is a problem of measurement of personality for the prediction and control of behaviour in future with a view to fostering individual happiness and his social efficiency and worth.

Definition of Personality

It is very difficult to define personality in such a way that it would be acceptable to all. 'Allport, who has written the classic introduction to this field,

discuss some fifty definitions without doing more than scratching the surface.¹ And it will not help very much to enter into the controversial issue. However, for the necessary understanding of the term 'Personality', a little discussion is inescapable. The word 'Personality' is derived from Greek actors to characterize their roles. According to Allport, the term personality is used in four different senses in the writings of Cicero. First, personality is regarded as an assemblage of personal qualities, in this sense it represents what the person is really like. Second, personality is regarded as the way a person appears to others, not as he really is. Third, personality is the role a person plays in life, for example, a professional, social, or political role. Finally, personality refers to qualities of distinction and dignity. All these four meanings have their roots in the theatre. In the first interpretation personality pertains to the actor, in the second to the mask the wears, in the third to the role or character he plays and in the fourth to the star performer. In a deeper sense, personality is the most inclusive frame of reference in which an individual can

¹ Eysenck, H.J., Sense and Non-sense in Psychology, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1957, P. 175

be judged. It includes sum of all his characteristics and his behaviour - his intelligence, knowledge, attitudes, interests and his response to and interaction with his environment. Personality thus broadly conceived is the total of all of these qualities, together with the effects of combination of what he thinks, feels, says and does.¹

If we can accept such a broad definition of personality, we may go to a step further and suggest that personality has two aspects: inner and outer. The inner phase refers to the adjustment of the individual within himself. The outer or interpersonal phase of personality concerns the individual's relationship with other people. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of adjustment in the definition of personality. Indeed, the individual who is well-adjusted is most likely to be happy and to have a personality which makes a favourable impression on others. Conversely, the poorly adjusted person almost by definition, is unhappy and consequently his relationship with others will tend to be strained and difficult. Thus one's personality is not some superficial

¹ Noll, Victor H., Introduction to Educational Measurement, p. 277, Boston Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957

characteristic that may be briefly adopted; rather it is a reflection of the person's innermost self, and it influences and becomes a part of everything he does. The definitions of personality can be classified into various ways. Here the classification adopted by Guilford is followed.¹

Personality as a Stimulus

This class of definition is a sociological interpretation of the term. The example of such definition is May's interpretation of personality as a man's social-stimulus value. 'It is the responses made by others to the individual as a stimulus that define his personality.'²

Very few of those who study personality accept this point of view. In this sense it has an evaluative connotation. If carried to its logical extreme, it loses sense completely, because in that event an individual's personality is measured not by studying the individual himself but the reactions, judgements and prejudices of others who can pass remarks on him.

¹ Guilford, Personality (New York; McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959)

² May, M.A., 'The Foundation of Personality'. In Psychology at Work, P.S. Achilles, Chapt. IV, 1932.

Perceptions vary according to the individuals, and therefore, an individual in question might be described as different by different judges.

Omnibus Definitions

Personality is 'the sum total of the reactions of an individual to all the situations which he encounters,'¹ or 'a constellation of the following event patterns - somatic reactions, autistic reveries, adjustive thinking and object orientations,'² or 'the sum-total of all the biological innate dispositions, impulses, tendencies, appetites, and instincts of the individual, and the acquired dispositions and tendencies - acquired by experiences.'³ These are the typical examples of the Omnibus sort of definitions. No attention is paid to the most outstanding characteristic of all mental life, namely, the presence of arrangements and organization, 'The mere cataloguing of ingredients defines personality no better than the alphabet defines lyric poetry.'

¹ Lowrey, H.D., In Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Personality Investigation. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1930), p. 151.

² Lasswell, H.D., Power and Personality, (N.W. Norton & Co., Inc., New York, 1948), p. 151.

³ Prince, M. The Unconscious, (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1924), p. 532.

Integrative Definitions

'As the designation of this class signifies, such definitions stress the organization within personality, most unlike the omnibus definitions. Warren and Carmichael defined personality as, 'the entire organization of a human being at any stage of his development.'¹ Maccurdy defined it as 'an integration of patterns (interests) which gives a peculiar individual trend to the behaviour of the organizations.'² The organizational aspect is given due importance in such definitions and also reference to made by some to its uniqueness. But still some are still vague, when they use such phrases 'entire organization of a human being' or 'integration of patterns', etc.

Totality Definitions:

William James, MacDougall, Bridges, Heider, Blondel, Martin and many others view personality as an integrated whole with more elaborate organizational pattern, a sort of hierarchical one. These are levels or layers of dispositions or characteristics usually with a unifying or

¹ Warren, H.C. and Carmichael, L., Elements of Human Psychology, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), p. 333.

² Gesell, A. Proc. Second Colloquium on Personality Investigation, 1930, p. 149.

integrative principle at the top. Literally taken again, they create confusion due to lack of clarity in expression, but if taken simply as integrative ones with greater stress on organizational pattern, they are useful. Eysenck has elaborated this concept recently and given it a very clear form. 'Explicit in Eysenck's writing is the conception of personality as composed of acts and dispositions that are organised in a hierarchical fashion in terms of their generality or importance.'¹

Personality as Adjustment

When evolutionary interpretation is applied, personality becomes a way of adjustment, a mode of survival. Biologists and behaviourists are more inclined to attach this meaning to personality. It is fully developed by Kempf whose conception is, in Allport's words, the integration of those systems of habits that represent an individual's characteristic adjustments to his environment.

There are other definitions of personality such as, 'personality is the organized system, the functioning whole or unity of habits, dispositions and sentiments that mark off any one member of a group as being different from any other member of the same group.'² It is 'that particular

¹ Hall, C.S. and Lindzey, G., Theories of Personality, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957), p. 384.

² Schoen, M., Human Nature, 1930, p. 397.

pattern or balance of organized reactions which sets one individual off from another.'¹ 'Personality refers not to any particular sort of activity, such as talking, remembering, thinking or living, but an individual can reveal his personality in the way he does any of these things.'² - this means that it is a style of his life. When revised, this was put thus: 'Personality can be broadly defined as the total quality of an individual's behaviour, as it is revealed in his habits of thought and expression, his attitudes and interests, his manner of acting, and his personal philosophy of life.'³ These definitions emphasize the uniqueness of the individual.

When Allport⁴ summarizes all these definitions in his monumental treatise, he puts forth his own, encompassing the essential characteristics of all of them. According to him, 'personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment.' By far, this definition still remains the most comprehensive expression and it does try to give a clear picture of what is understood by the term personality.

¹ Wheeler, R.M., The Science of Psychology, 1929, p. 34.

² Woodworth, R.S., Psychology (New York: Henry, Hold & Co., 1929), p. 553.

³ Woodworth, R.S., and Marquis, D.G., Psychology (London: Methuen, 1947), pp. 87-88.

⁴ Allport, Personality, a Psychological Interpretation (New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1937), p. 48.

However, the real problem arises when one attempts to measure personality, defined so differently and extravagantly by many. The ways to measure personality attempted so far have been reviewed in the next chapter.
