A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF AGENCY

by

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DEDICATION

To Sri H. H. Swami Chinmayanandaji who initiated,
inspired and taught me to appreciate the Vedanta.
ABSTRACT

Culture plays an important role in the development of counselling concepts. The concepts imbibe significant aspects of the culture mirroring the values and goals of the culture they are born in. In this research an attempt has been made to examine three agency concepts from a religio-cultural perspective different from the one in which they were developed.

Three counselling concepts, namely, locus of control, learned helplessness, and self-efficacy have been reviewed to identify common themes across the concepts. A Hindu philosophical perspective was discussed drawing upon the Advaita Vedanta of Sri Shankaracharya, and concepts from Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Limitations of the common themes identified were then examined from this Vedantic perspective to arrive at propositions about the agency concept, and counselling implications.

Agency in the three counselling concepts is found to be equated to the self. The self is seen as a product of the mind, its beliefs, expectations, and thoughts; the actions performed; and the outcomes achieved. The self is thus buffeted by failures, negative outcomes, undesirable events. Future decisions and actions are influenced by past outcomes making it hard to 'let go' of the past and act in the present. Also, the self is constantly monitored and evaluated through the data provided by the mind, and the outcomes attained. Great deal of faith is placed on the mind and its processes. The mind is viewed as an appropriate and accurate instrument for understanding the self. Due to this mistaken identification of agency with the self, individuals seek unrealistic and confining ends, distorting reality and the conception of the self.
Counselling, based on these concepts, is likely to generate limited and problem specific solutions entrenching the individual in the doership and enjoyership.

In contrast, self in the Vedantic perspective is not agency. Self is the unchanging, eternal essence due to the presence of which agency is experienced, but is different from agency. The notion of agency belongs to the field of the not-self. The mind and its processes are constantly changing, and creating structures which are considered unreliable bases upon which action can be based. Mind therefore is considered to be the not-self. This kind of discrimination of the self from the not-self is deemed to be an important and necessary step to growth. Due to the broad perspective of self, there is a greater potential for remaining free from notions of agency and outcome orientation. This enables individuals to persevere regardless of the outcomes attained, 'let go' of the past, and act in the present.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Counselling concepts are embedded in the cultural context within which they are developed. Agency concepts such as locus of control, self-efficacy, and learned helplessness are backed by cultural beliefs. They operate under the belief that individuals need to be in-charge of their destiny and therefore be in control of all their life pursuits and outcomes. Cultures differ in their beliefs and goals, and hence in their views of agency. Concepts could be enriched through a process of understanding and exchanging ideas from other cultures. Counselling concepts are used as a framework for individual growth. It is therefore of importance to ensure that the concepts facilitate growth and develop an overall perspective towards the process of living.

It is in the light of the above that three agency concepts, namely, locus of control, self-efficacy, and learned helplessness have been chosen to be examined from a different viewpoint. The Hindu Advaita Vedanta perspective is the viewpoint from which these agency concepts will be examined. The Advaita Vedanta perspective is selected as sages have grappled, with questions pertaining to agency, for several centuries. They endeavoured to understand the self, and the aspect that is involved in day-to-day interactions with the world. This understanding has freed many an individual from the shackles linked to action and outcomes.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter II is a review of all the three agency concepts. Common themes have been identified in the three agency concepts in order to set the stage for a critical examination.

Chapter III is an introduction to various concepts drawn from
Advaita Vedanta, and the Bhagavad Gita to prepare the ground and develop a Vedantic perspective related to agency.

Chapter IV is an examination of the limitations of the agency concepts. Several propositions have been made on the concepts of agency, concept of self, counselling implications, and transition.

**Background Notes**

Concepts from Advaita Vedanta used for the critical examination are discussed in detail in Chapter III. Here information related to the period of the work, the nature of work, and the author, is provided.

**Advaita**: Non-dualism or monism. "The fundamental thought of the Advaita Vedanta is that the life-monad or embodied soul (jiva) is in essence the Self (atman), which being beyond the changing, transient, phenomenal apparitions of our empirical experience, is none other than Brahman, the sole and universal Eternal Reality, which is beyond change, self-effulgent and ever free, and defined as "one-without-a-second" (a-dvitiya), "really existing" (sat), "purely spiritual" (cit), and "sheer bliss" (ananda)" (Zimmer, 1951, p. 456).

**Sri Shankaracharya**: (Shankara-Samkara). His doctrine is often called Advaita. He is assigned to the eighth century (788-820?) Shankaracharya wrote commentaries on the principal Upanishads, (Chandogya, the Brhadaranyaka, the Taittiriya, the Aitareya, the Svetasvatara, the Kena, the Katha, the Isa, the Prasna, the Mundaka, and the Mandukya); the Bhagavad Gita, and the Vedanta Sutra. His works Upadesasahasri and Vivekachoodamani reflect his general position.

**Srimad Bhagavad Gita**: It is attributed to the poet-seer Vyasa of the epic period 400 B.C. to 400 A.D. The philosophic background of the Gita is believed to be taken from the Upanishads.
Upanishads/Vedanta: The Upanishads (Upa means near, shad means to sit) form the concluding portions of the Veda, and are therefore called the Veda-anta, or the end of the Veda, suggesting that they contain the essence of the Vedic teaching. They are deemed to have been composed between 1000 B.C. and 300 B.C. Unfortunately very little is known of the lives of the great thinkers whose reflections are embodied in the Upanishads. The aim of the Upanishads is to bring peace and freedom to the anxious human spirit.

Vedas: These are considered the earliest documents of the human mind. There are four Vedas: Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva. The Vedic period extends from 1500 B.C to 800 B.C.

Vivekachoodamani: ("The crown jewel of discrimination") is an original philosophical work of Shankaracharya. The theme of this work deals with the development of discrimination, between the real and the unreal, the true from the false.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF CONCEPTS: LOCUS OF CONTROL, LEARNED HELPLESSNESS AND SELF-EFFICACY

The aim of this chapter is to examine the nature of agency in locus of control, (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972; Lefcourt, 1982), learned helplessness (Garber & Seligman, 1980), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986a). Aspects emphasized in the examination are the constructs, profiles of preferred orientations of belief and behaviour, nature of the part involved in the experience, its relation to action and outcomes, its role in making sense of the experience, and its relation to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural impact arising from the experience.

**Locus of Control**

'Locus of control' refers to a construct which has its roots in Rotter's social learning theory (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972). According to the social learning theory, locus of control is a generalized expectancy related to the connection between the personal characteristics or actions of the subject and experienced outcomes. The theory posits that the outcomes or reinforcements in turn act to strengthen an expectancy that a particular behaviour or event will be followed by that reinforcement in the future. The expectancy therefore generalizes to situations that are perceived as similar or related. Through several experiences a generalized belief or expectancy of the causal relationship between behaviour and outcome is formed, which along with the value of potential reinforcements determines choice of behaviour. Locus of control hence is viewed as a mediator of involved commitment in life pursuits (Lefcourt, 1982).

Social learning theory (Rotter, 1954) therefore focuses on the interactions of individuals with their meaningful environment and on the instrumental behaviours used by them to attain satisfaction or avoid frust-
Internal control and external control

Rotter (1966) defined belief in internal control and external control as follows: When subjects perceive that an event is contingent upon their own behaviours or their relatively permanent characteristics, it is termed as a belief in internal control. When a reinforcement is perceived by subjects as not being entirely contingent upon their action, but resulting from luck, chance, fate, or from the control of powerful others, or from unpredictable events because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding them, they are said to have a belief in external control.

Internals in contrast to externals

Hersch and Scheibe (1967) showed that the personality of internals was more positive than of externals. Internals, in contrast to externals, demonstrated more coping behaviour on a perceptual task (Phares, 1962), availed themselves of information even if it had negative connotations for themselves (Seeman & Evans, 1962), were alert to useful information (Seeman, 1963a), were more perceptually sensitive (Wolk & Ducette, 1974), were more able to exclude intrusive thoughts during meditation and be cognitively alert (Dinardo & Raymond, 1979), attended to cues that helped resolve uncertainties (Lefcourt & Wine, 1969), made more accurate judgements (Ducette & Wolk, 1973), were more successful in school (Crandall, Katkovsky, & Crandall, 1965; McGhee & Crandall, 1967), placed greater value on skill or achievement reinforcements (Franklin, 1963; Rotter & Mulry, 1965), did consistently better on both intentional and incidental learning measures (Wolk & Ducette, 1974), were more concerned with their abilities than their failures which they tended to forget (Efran, 1963), were more dissatisfied with failure on easy tasks and less discontent with failure on difficult
tasks (Karabenick, 1972), were less apt to demonstrate extreme and nonadaptive behaviour (DuCette & Wolk, 1972), took steps to improve their environmental conditions (Strickland, 1965), exerted influence (Phares, 1965), were resistant to subtle attempts of influence (Crowne & Liverant, 1963; Strickland, 1962; Getter, 1962), devoted more attention to decisions about skill-related matters (Rotter & Mulry, 1965), needed more time to make decisions as difficulty of decision making increased (Julian & Katz, 1968), scored higher on moral judgement maturity (Alker & Poppin, 1973), were more tolerant of discomfort in doing what they considered to be correct (Johnson, Ackerman, Frank, & Fionda, 1968), enjoyed life tasks with curiosity as to purposes and meanings of the tasks (Lefcourt, 1982), revealed greater deficits when under high helplessness conditions (Pittman & Pittman, 1979; 1980), were more defensive (Lipp, Kolstoe, James, & Randall, 1968).

Manuck, Hinrichsen, and Ross (1975a, 1975b) hypothesized that internals were more likely to feel anxious about failure and disappointments because they attributed causes of failure to themselves. While Lefcourt (1982) related internal control expectancies to vitality in affective and cognitive activity that indicated, an active grappling with self-defined important events, and a connection between an individual's desire and his or her subsequent actions, Wong and Sproule (cited in O'Brien, 1984) saw internals to be optimistic controllers who overestimated their own capabilities to control and underestimated the strength of external constraints.

Externals in contrast to internals

Externals in comparison to internals used fewer problem solving methods and more emotion directed coping devices (withdrawal, hostility), showed little variance with difficulty level of task (Julian & Katz, 1961), were more likely to perceive themselves as being stressful, reported higher
state anxiety (Manuck et al., 1975a, 1975b), lacked hardiness with low
degree of commitment and responsiveness to challenge and exhibited a linkage
between incidence of stress and illness (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982), exhi­
bited superiority of resistance to extinction of verbal expectancies in the
partially reinforced condition, took longer to make discrimination in a
chance situation (Rotter & Mulry, 1965), devalued tasks on which they failed
(Phares, 1971), accepted instructions more readily when those directions
emphasized chance determination (Lefcourt, Lewis, & Silverman, 1968),
behaved like internals in achievement tasks if experimenter made explicit
reference to the meaning of the task in which the subjects were to be
engaged (Lefcourt, 1967), showed greater discontent with failure experiences
on tasks perceived to be difficult (Karabenick, 1972), showed a decrement in
performance from the low helplessness treatment compared to the no treatment
control subjects but showed lesser difficulty compared to externals when
exposer to high helplessness (Pittman and Pittman, 1979).

Cromwell, Rosenthal, Shakow and Zahn (1961) found schizophrenics
more external than normals. External beliefs were associated with apathy
and withdrawal (Lefcourt, 1982), and externals were viewed as unrealistic,
pessimistic controllers who underestimated their capacity to control and
overestimated the strengths of external constraints (Wong & Sproule, cited
in O'Brien, 1984).

Responses to negative and positive outcomes

Gregory (1978) found that persons who were assessed as being inter­
 nal for both positive and negative outcomes did not differ in the time they
spent making decisions in reward or punishment conditions. Likewise, the
externals did not differ with the conditions. However, those who were
internal for positive and external for negative outcomes spent more time
working under the reward than punishment conditions. Conversely, persons external for positive outcomes and internal for negative spent more time working under punishment instructions.

Positive and negative reinforcements were found to lead to greater increments and decrements in verbal expectancies among internals (Rotter, Liverant, & Crowne, 1961) while externals showed smaller increments and decrements in expectancy statements following success and failure (James, 1957).

Externals were generally found to be more disturbed in moods than internals, except when the latter had encountered a high incidence of negative life events. When that was the case, internals equalled or exceeded externals in their reports of mood disturbances. The greater goal-directed activity of internals who get involved in new pursuits with lesser lasting effects of past events was considered unlikely to be true for externals who were likely to retreat from challenges (Lefcourt, Miller, Ware, & Sherk, 1981). Mischel, Zeiss, and Zeiss (1974) found that measures of internality for success experiences, predicted persistent effort in activity directed toward the attainment of desired goals, whereas an equivalent measure of internality for failure predicted behaviour aimed at avoiding consequences. Internals and externals showed no difference in tendency to take personal credit for success. When outcomes were negative, internals blamed themselves more than externals (Manuck et al., 1975a, 1975b; Davis & Davis, 1972).

Some issues

The preferred orientation appears to be internal locus of control (Davis & Phares, 1967; Gore & Rotter, 1963; Phares, 1968; Seeman, 1963) suggesting superiority of internals in dealing with the environment and in
their activity level in manipulating the environment. Though internality seems to be the preferred orientation, the internality/externality dimension interacts with the success/failure dimension creating several possibilities that are not all preferred. Internality with success leads to persistence, while internality with failure leads to avoidance. When outcomes are negative, externality seems to lead to less self blame. Also smaller increments and decrements in expectancy statements were noted for externals following success and failure. Thus the studies do not show internality to be a preferred dimension under all circumstances. Rotter (1966) himself suggested a curvilinear relationship between locus of control needs and assessment of maladjustments, because he observed that individuals who feel themselves to be entirely at the mercy of external circumstances would be no more irregular in their daily function than persons who believe that they are responsible for each and every important event that occurs throughout lifetime. Lefcourt (1982) stated that in the latter, we approach pathological cases associated with paranoia, ideas of reference, delusions of grandeur, whereas the former would lead to depression, withdrawal, apathy, and retreatism.

Studies have shown that neither internality nor externality was preferred as there was no simple relationship between locus of control and maladjustment (DuCette, Wolk, & Soucar, 1972). Research has shown that both externals and internals have distorted views of the nature of social reality (O'Brien, 1984); that in certain circumstances one's expectations or belief about control or about anything was of no consequence (Lefcourt, 1983). Rigid beliefs in self-determination and possibility of attaining desired reinforcements through personal efforts were seen to define an unrealistic internal (Spector, 1982). Others attributed external locus of control to individual shifts toward realistic perception (Gorman, Jones & Holman, 1980;
The difference between internals and externals was found not due to the propensity to reaction arousal but in their different responses to different types of threats to freedom (Cherulnik & Citrin, 1974). These authors predicted more reactance for internals when there was personal threat to freedom (threat based on their personal attributes), whereas externals were expected to demonstrate more reactance when there was an impersonal threat to freedom (threat based on an external source). In their study, when internals increased their favourable rating of the eliminated poster in the personal elimination condition, and externals increased the favourableness of their ratings of the poster in the impersonal elimination condition, they interpreted this as confirmation of their theory that internals perceived more behavioural freedom for events under their control whereas externals perceived more freedom for obtaining externally provided rewards, thus leading to differential reactance as a consequence of the two modes of threatening freedoms.

Given the above, it appears that the perception and expectancy of the individual and the assessment of the environment play a key role in choosing a behaviour. A mix of internality and externality may be appropriate. An imbalance in the pattern of subjective percepts for control could be detrimental (DuCette, Wolk & Soucar, 1972). The above are aspects of locus of control that need to be borne in mind in designing counselling interventions that aim at changing the perception of causality (Lefcourt, 1982), weakening the inadequate response, and strengthening the correct or adequate response or doing both (Rotter, 1954).

**Learned Helplessness**

The original hypothesis of learned helplessness (Overmier & Seligman, 1967; Seligman & Groves, 1970; Seligman, Maier, & Geer, 1968;
Seligman, Rosellini, & Kozak, 1975) emphasizes the interference with adaptive responding. Learned helplessness refers to the perception that one's responses and reinforcements are independent. Learning that outcomes are uncontrollable results in three deficits: motivational, cognitive, and emotional. The old hypothesis however did not distinguish between cases in which outcomes are uncontrollable for all people and cases in which they are uncontrollable only for some people (universal vs. personal helplessness). It also did not explain when helplessness is general and when specific, or when chronic and when acute (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). The theory was revised to include attributional processes of human helplessness and a link between attributions, expectations, helplessness, and depression. The flow of events leading to symptoms of helplessness are as follows:


The reformulated learned helplessness model proposed that individuals with a "pessimistic" explanatory style were more likely to display helplessness deficits when confronted with a bad event than individuals with an "optimistic" explanatory style (Seligman, Abramson, Semmel, & von Baeyer, 1979). When events such as a relationship break-up are explained with global (I am incapable of doing anything right), stable (I always screw up my personal relationships), and internal (It was all my fault) attributions, helplessness and lowered self-esteem result. This is therefore a pessimis-
tic explanatory style. On the other hand an external, specific, and unstable attribution is considered to be an optimistic explanatory style leading to less depression, more persistence, and actualization of one's potential (Trotter, 1987). Both the old and the reformulated hypothesis emphasized the expectation of non-contingency as the crucial determinant of the symptoms of learned helplessness. That is the expectation that whatever action a person takes cannot affect outcomes. In short, nothing one could do would matter.

**Dimensions of attribution**

Three dimensions of attribution have been identified to resolve the inadequacies of the original hypothesis of learned helplessness - Internal—External, Global-Specific, Stable-Unstable (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980) based on Weiner's (1972, 1974) attributional analysis. The first inadequacy related to the absence of distinction between cases in which individuals lacked requisite controlling responses that were available to other people, and cases in which no individual possessed controlling responses. The attributional dimension of internal-external defines the distinction between universal and personal helplessness to resolve the first inadequacy.

Universal helplessness is characterized by the belief that an outcome is independent of every response of the subject, as well as the responses of other people. Individuals with this belief had low expectation (no responses produce outcome) and made external attributions of failure (Abramson et al., 1980). Personal helplessness refers to the case where individuals believed that there existed responses that would contingently produce the desired outcomes, although they themselves did not possess those responses. Personal helplessness is therefore a refinement of the old help-
lessness hypothesis. Individuals who believed in personal helplessness had a low power expectation and a high outcome expectation (the response is unavailable to the person) and made internal attributions of failure (Abramson et al., 1980).

The second set of inadequacies of the old helplessness model referred to the generality and chronicity of the expectation of response-outcome independence (Abramson et al., 1980). The old model did not distinguish between general and specific helplessness, nor between chronic and temporary helplessness. The revised hypothesis of learned helplessness proposed that the helpless individual initially learned the independence between responses and outcome and then made attribution about the cause. The attribution then determined the generality, chronicity and the severity of the resultant feelings. The chronicity or the consistency overtime is described by the attributional dimension, stable-unstable. While stable factors are long-lived and recurrent, the unstable factors are shortlived and intermittent. Individuals could attribute causes of an outcome to an internal-stable factor (ability), an internal-unstable factor (effort), an external-stable factor (task difficulty), or an external-unstable factor (luck).

It was shown that helplessness could be inappropriately generalized from one situation in which an organism did not have control to one in which it did have control (Roth, 1973; Roth & Bootzin, 1974), and to situations quite different from that employed in training (Hiroto & Seligman, 1975). The generality of helplessness across situations, with the new hypothesis, is accounted by the global-specific dimension of attribution. While global factors affect a wide variety of situations, specific factors are applicable to the original situation alone.

The depression deficits are associated with attribution of help-
lessness to factors that are global (generality), stable (chronicity), and internal (self-esteem), called a pessimistic explanatory style (Trotter, 1987; Seligman & Schulman, 1986). All the three dimensions internal-external, stable-unstable, and global-specific, are continua treated as dichotomies both in theory and research for the sake of simplicity.

**Effects of helplessness**

According to the new hypothesis of learned helplessness, learning that outcomes are uncontrollable results in four classes of deficits: motivational, cognitive, emotional, and self-esteem.

The motivational deficit involves retarded initiation of voluntary responses, arising as a consequence of the expectation that responding is futile. The cognitive deficit consists of difficulty in learning that responses produce outcomes. With the cognitive set that X was irrelevant to Y, it became difficult to learn that Xs produced Ys, when they did. At the emotional level all the four deficits were associated with depression (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980). Low self-esteem has been associated with a tendency to attribute negative outcomes to internal factors and positive outcomes to external factors (Ickes & Layden, 1978).

Most of the available studies are based on the old hypothesis of learned helplessness. Motivational deficits were evidenced by failure to escape noise (Glass, Reim, & Singer, 1971; Hiroto & Seligman, 1975; Klein, Fencil-Morse, & Seligman, 1976). O'Rourke, Tryon, and Raps (1980) demonstrated that helplessness could be induced using positive reinforcement and that contingent non-responding was not a sufficient condition for helplessness. Mikulincer (1986) found that exposure to uncontrollable events impaired performance, deteriorated performance under conditions of high importance low success expectations and low importance of task and high suc-
cess expectations. It was concluded that learned helplessness is a product of the interaction between stability attribution and the importance of uncontrollable tasks.

Cognitive deficits in terms of failure to see patterns in anagrams were studied by Hiroto and Seligman (1975) and Klein et al. (1976). In tasks of skill, helpless subjects exhibited small expectancy changes suggesting a belief in external control (Miller & Seligman, 1976; Miller & Seligman, 1975) whereas subjects not made helpless exhibited large expectancy changes, suggesting a belief in internal control. Douglas and Anisman (1975) found that subjects who failed on what they believed to be a simple task showed cognitive deficits later, whereas subjects who failed on a supposedly complex task did not. From the basis of attributional analysis, Abramson, Garber and Seligman (1980) suggested that this could be due to the differences in attribution of causes with subjects on simple task attributing the failure to more global and internal factors (I am stupid) while subjects on complex tasks attributing their failure to external and more specific factors.

When expectation of response-outcome independence was related to lack or loss of a highly desired outcome or to the occurrence of a highly aversive outcome, it led to an emotional component of depression. The depressed affect was therefore outcome-related (Abramson et al., 1980) and could occur in cases of personal or universal helplessness. Subjects deprived of control reported feeling frustrated and helpless (Roth & Bootzin, 1974) and rated themselves significantly more hostile, helpless and passive than controls (Krantz, Glass & Snyder, 1974 expt. 2). Depressed subjects tended to attribute failure to internal factors (Klein et al., 1976). Rizley (1978) found that depressed students attributed failure to incompe-
tence (internal, global, stable) and success to ease of task (external, specific, stable), whereas non-depressed students attributed failure to task difficulty (external, specific, stable) and successes to their ability (internal, global, and stable). Kuiper (1978) suggested that depressives may have a more general tendency to assume responsibility for outcome regardless of their hedonic valence. Weiner (1974) suggested that failure attributed to internal factors produced greater negative affects than failures attributed to external factors, making depressed affect more severe in personal helplessness. Helpless and depressed subjects were found to be measurably similar (O'Rourke, Tryon, & Raps, 1980).

In addition to the motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits of helplessness, there is a fourth deficit which is low self-esteem. Snyder, Stephan, and Rosenfield (1978) suggested that a negative outcome like failure threatened self-esteem when the failure was attributed to self and when this attribution was relevant to self-esteem. In an attempt to reinterpret helplessness from an egotism explanation, subjects were found to perform poorly because they were motivated to avoid trying so that failure could be attributed to lack of effort rather than lack of ability, thus not only making an external attribution but protecting one's self-esteem (Frankel & Snyder, 1978). They also found that describing a task as highly difficult rather than only moderately difficult improved the performance of those previously given unsolvable problems. The egotism explanation predicted that adding an element alleged to inhibit performance (for example, distracting noise) allowed subjects to try without fear of attribution of low ability (Snyder, Smoller, Strenta, & Frankel, 1981).

Results of empirical studies exhibit a vagueness as to what kind of manipulation created helplessness. While some experiments showed that sub-
jects became helpless when exposed to uncontrollable noise, other experiments showed no helplessness (Hiroto & Seligman, 1975; Thornton & Jacobs, 1971). This may be due to the causal attributions made. According to the revised theory, while attribution predicted the recurrence of the expectations, the expectation determined the occurrence of the helplessness deficits.

Interventions

Four strategies have been suggested by Abramson et al. (1978) for the treatment of helplessness: a) changing the estimated probability of the outcome by changing the environment so as to reduce the likelihood of aversive outcomes and increase the likelihood of desired outcomes, b) making the highly preferred outcomes less preferred by reducing the aversiveness of unavoidable outcomes and the desirability of unobtainable outcomes, c) changing the expectation from uncontrollability to controllability when the outcomes are indeed obtainable, d) changing unrealistic attributions for failure and success to more realistic attributions. A brief examination of the interventions shows an emphasis on either changing the environment to produce desired outcomes, or on replacing one set of outcomes with another, one expectation with another, and one set of attributions with another. Also, the mode of handling success and failure varies with explanatory styles. A preferred attribution for failure is one which is external (It is not my fault), unstable (It happened this once), and specific (I am capable except in this case). Preferred attribution for success is one which is internal (I made it happen), stable (I can always make it happen), global (I can make most things happen).

Garber and Hollon (1980) suggested that interventions aimed at expectancy were more superior to those intended to alter attributions.
Dweck (1975) found that before training, all subjects showed severely deteriorated performance following failure. Problems that they had been solving became sources of great difficulty as evidenced by a decrease in the rate of problem solving, increase in error, and behavioural indications of withdrawal. Children taught to attribute failure during training to insufficient effort were able to persist after failure in the test situation. Subjects in the success only treatment did not show any consistent improvement in their responses to failure, but continued to display a marked impairment of performance following failure. Similarly subjects exposed to uncontrollable stimulation in the training session exhibited less helplessness in the testing situations than subjects who were not (Thornton & Jacobs, 1972; Roth & Bootzin, 1974). According to the theory, behavioural immunization such as prior experience at controlling outcomes or a success experience in the training session, immunizes subjects against the effects of procedures that otherwise lead to expectations of noncontingency (Seligman, 1975). This was considered to be an easy and effective means of preventing learned helplessness. The effects of immunization have been explained through attribution analysis. The initial success experience made the attribution for a subsequent helplessness experience less global and therefore less likely to produce an expectation of helplessness in the new test situation (Abramson et al., 1980). Though real success experiences and recalling past successes were equally effective in shifting attribution for initial failure from internal to external factors, only real successess were found to reverse the helplessness performance deficits (Teasdale, 1978). What seems to have a significant impact was knowing that one had the behavioural response available that could reduce the aversiveness of the event, prevent anticipatory anxiety and physiological arousal, and help possess cognitive
control and retrospective control to mitigate anxiety and give meaning to the event, respectively (Thompson, 1981). Buchwald, Coyne and Cole (1978) argued that immunizing effects of success did not provide sufficient support that such manipulations affected the expectation of relationship between response and outcome.

Issues

The learned helplessness hypothesis reflects Seligman's view that the way we explain bad things could affect our future behaviour and could have serious implications for our mental and physical health. People who habitually provided stable, global, and internal explanation (such as stupidity) for their failure were less likely to persist, take chances, or rise above their potential than those who explained failure in unstable, specific, and external terms (such as luck) (Trotter, 1987).

The theory offers an explanation provided that people have made attributions. However, the reformulated hypothesis has not investigated in specific the properties of the attribution itself (Abramson et al., 1980). Questions concerning whether or not people always make causal attributions for success and failure are still important (Bem, 1967; Diener & Dweck, 1978; Wortman & Dintzer, 1978). Huesmann (1978) suggested that processes involved in the formation of attributions needed to be specified through an algorithmic model. He also pointed out that the heuristics used by the subject needed to be enumerated, and the connections between attributions and subjective expectancies identified, in order to have a falsifiable attribution model. In all, the theory lays greater emphasis on explanations one gives oneself to make oneself feel good, rather than on the acceptance of the actual happening.
Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an important concept in the social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1977). The theory (like the theories of Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972; Lefcourt, 1976; Garber & Seligman, 1980) attempts to link knowledge and action through the prediction of self-referent thought (Bandura, 1982). Among the self-referent thoughts, self-efficacy is considered to be central and pervasive (Bandura, 1986a).

Perceived self-efficacy is thought to involve self-referent judgments, stemming from cognitive processing of diverse sources of efficacy information. Self-efficacy or personal efficacy is concerned with judgments about how well one could organize and execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations containing many ambiguous unpredictable and often stressful elements (Bandura, 1982).

Given that people are required to make continuous decisions as to whether or not to attempt certain courses of action, and how long to continue those they undertake, judgments of efficacy become indispensable as they partly determine those decisions. Such judgments are concerned with what one could do with what one has (Bandura, 1983) rather than with what one had or the consequences of one's behaviour. Accurate appraisal of capabilities is of considerable value to successful functioning. While overestimation of capability could lead to unwarranted failure, underestimation of capability could result in self-limiting decisions, avoidance of environments and activities conducive to personal enrichment.

In the social cognitive model of agency, persons serve as a reciprocally contributing influence in a system of reciprocal causation consisting of personal determinants (such as conceptions, beliefs, self-perceptions), action, and environmental factors. These determinants are believed
to affect each other bidirectionally (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1986a). In other words, persons, actions, and environment interactively determine each other. Since self-efficacy as a concept involves the person and action, it could be located in the overlapping area between action and personal factors (Bandura, 1977).

Sources of efficacy information

Self-efficacy judgements are made by selecting, weighting, and integrating information obtained from performance accomplishments (enactive attainment), vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1986a). As information is not inherently enlightening, it is raw data that must be cognitively appraised, (Bandura, Adams, Hardy & Howells, 1980). Judging self-efficacy is an inferential process in which relative contribution of various personal situational factors to performance successes and failures are weighted and assessed. The four sources of information and the various factors that influence selecting, weighing, and integrating of the information are discussed. It is in the light of the above, that the social cognitive model views people as endowed with a number of basic capabilities, such as symbolizing, forethought, vicarious learning, self-regulation, and self-reflection (Bandura, 1986a).

Enactive efficacy information and processing

Performance accomplishments provide the most influential source of efficacy information because such information is based on actual mastery experiences. Successes raise efficacy appraisals and repeated failures lower them, especially if they occur early in life and were found not attributable to lack of effort or adverse external circumstances. Individuals who have had several successes were likely to attribute causes of occasional failure to situational factors, insufficient effort, or poor strategies
(Bandura, 1986a). Once established, enhanced self-efficacy generalized to other situations, especially those in which performance had been hindered by preoccupation with personal inadequacies (Bandura, Adams & Beyer, 1977; Bandura & Cervone, 1983).

The degree to which people are likely to raise their perceived efficacy through performance experience depends on factors such as the difficulty of the task, the amount of effort expended, amount of external aid received, the performance circumstances, and the temporal pattern of successes and failures (Bandura, Adams, Hardy, & Howells, 1980; Bandura, 1986a). The weight given to new experiences is based on the nature and strength of the existing self-perception of efficacy into which they are integrated. High self-efficacy is inferred from successes achieved through minimal effort on difficult tasks and low self-efficacy is inferred from easy tasks requiring high effort. Successes achieved with external aid lower efficacy value while faulty performances under adverse conditions have fewer effects on efficacy.

High efficacious children ascribed their failure to insufficient effort, whereas those who regarded themselves as ineffectual viewed the causes of failure as arising from low ability (Collins, 1982). Individuals with a low sense of efficacy inaccurately ascribed personal competency to situational factors attributing their achievements to external factors rather than to their own ability (Bandura et al., 1980). Underestimation of self-efficacy also occurred due to selective attention and recall of negative aspects of performances (Bandura, 1986a). Several performers judged themselves to be unable to repeat a feat already accomplished and lowered their aspirations (Bandura & Cervone, 1983), showing that positive performances were not always motivating.
Suggested interventions to increase self-efficacy are mastering challenging tasks with minimal external aids to help verify personal capability (Bandura, 1977b), verbalizing aloud thought processes during mastery experiences to make explicit the cognitive processing of enactive efficacy information (Bandura, 1983b), and self-modeling with emphasis on successes (Dowrick, 1983; Gonzales & Dowrick, 1983).

Vicarious efficacy information and processing

Self-efficacy appraisals are in part influenced by vicarious experiences. Observing or visualizing other people, similar to oneself, perform successfully could raise self-precepts of efficacy (Bandura, Adams, Hardy & Howells, 1980) and observing other similarly competent people fail despite high effort lowered observer's judgement of their own capabilities in turn undermining their efforts (Brown & Inouye, 1978). Where individuals have had no prior experience, modeling can help establish a base evaluation of their capabilities. Self-efficacy could be boosted through modeling of coping strategies for those who have had many experiences confirming inefficacy (Bandura, 1977b; Bandura, Reese & Adams, 1982). When prior experiences were combined with the influence of modeling, the mixed experiences caused self-doubts. In the absence of factual evidence of performance adequacy, personal efficacy was gauged in terms of other's performance or through social comparative information. Modeling influences that enhanced perceived self-efficacy are believed to weaken the impact of direct experiences of failure by sustaining performance in the face of repeated failures (Brown & Inouye, 1978).

Self-efficacy appraisals are arrived by extrapolating from past performance similarities and knowledge of the model's attainments in the new situation. For example, students judged how well they might do in chemistry
from knowing how persons who performed comparably to them in physics fared in chemistry (Bandura, 1986a). Similarity with models is judged by personal characteristics, pre-conceptions of performance capabilities according to demographic factors even when performance varied within the groups, cultural stereotyping, and attribute similarity. Judging self-efficacy by social comparison could be self-limiting especially if models verbalized self-doubts (Gould & Weiss, 1981). Also, irrelevant and salient characteristics of the model could sway observers more than relevant ability indicators (Kazdin, 1974b). Comparisons with superior performance could give rise to self-deprecation and despondency. However, competent models could teach effective strategies especially when inefficacy reflected skill deficits. Also, observing failures due to use of insufficient strategies could enhance self-efficacy.

Modeling performances are designed to alter coping behaviour by emphasizing predictability and controllability which in turn was found to be conducive to the enhancement of self-percepts of efficacy (Bandura et al., 1982). Diversified modeling was considered to be superior to being exposed to the performance of a single model (Bandura & Menlove, 1968) as it exposed observers to variations that evened out the effects.

**Persuasion efficacy information and processing**

Self appraisals are partly based on the opinions of others who presumably possess evaluative competence. It was found more difficult to produce enduring increases in personal efficacy by persuasive means than to undermine it (Bandura, 1986a).

Persuasive efficacy appraisals are weighted in terms of who the persuaders are, their credibility and how knowledgeable they are about the nature of the activities.
Evaluative feedback is one form of enhancing self-efficacy through persuasion (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1982, 1983). Other forms of increasing self-efficacy through persuasive means are suggestion, exhortation, self-instruction, interpretive treatment (Bandura, 1977).

Physiological efficacy information and processing

Information of physiological state contributes partly to the judgment of capabilities. High arousal is associated with impairing of performance. People construed symptoms such as fatigue, windedness, aches and pains as indicative of physical inefficacy when activities involved strength and stamina (Taylor, Bandura, Ewart, Miller & Debusk, 1985). Anticipatory self-arousal occurred when fear reactions generated further fear. Fear arousals were found to arise from perceived coping inefficacy (Bandura, Reese & Adams, 1982; Bandura et al., 1980). Treatments that eliminated emotional arousal were found to augment perceived self-efficacy with corresponding improvements in performance (Bandura & Adams, 1977).

Bandura (1986a) noted that arousing experiences consist of three significant aspects: affective elicitors, internal arousal, and expressive reactions. Emotional reactivity is believed to arise from cognitive processing. The cognitive processing of emotional activity involved several factors such as appraisal of sources of arousal, the level of activation, the circumstances under which arousal was elicited and past experiences on how arousal affected one's performances. Knowledge concerning bodily states was believed to be acquired through social labelling processes (Bandura, 1986a). The way in which the labelled arousal affected performance in the past, had implications for self-efficacy. The level of arousal carried a greater weight in judging capability than the arousal itself. High achievers were believed to view arousal as a facilitator whereas low achievers
responded to it as a debilitator (Hollandsworth, Glazesi, Kirkland, Jones, & van Norman, 1979). Given a tendency to attribute arousal to personal inadequacies excessive attention to personal cues resulted in reciprocally escalating arousal (Sarason, 1975).

Interpretations of physiological arousal are made based on foci of attention. At times, a prior experience may be misassigned to a prominent element in a new situation. Individuals who perceived themselves as inefficacious were especially prone to misjudge arousal as a sign of coping deficiencies (Bandura, 1986a).

Moodstates affected cognitive processing and retrieval of experiences (Bower, 1981; 1983). Physiological arousal from the same source may be interpreted differently depending on the emotional reactions of others in the same setting (Schachter & Singer, 1962).

Treatments that eliminated emotional arousal to subjective threats improved self-efficacy with corresponding improvements in performance (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Other treatment modes for dealing with emotional arousal are, attribution, relaxation, bio-feedback, symbolic desensitization, and symbolic exposure (Bandura, 1977b).

Self-efficacy and inefficacy

Bandura (1984) believed that people who regarded themselves as highly efficacious acted, thought, and felt differently from those who viewed themselves as inefficacious. Clear demarcation of the two typologies is difficult, firstly, due to the range of factors involved in appraising efficacy, and secondly, as self-efficacy is regarded as a generative capability tailored to a particular domain of functioning rather than a global disposition. However, an attempt is made to pull together various data pertaining to efficacy and inefficacy.
People who regarded themselves as highly efficacious, set themselves challenges (Bandura, 1977a), trusted their capabilities and intensified their efforts when their performances fell short of goals (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Bandura, 1984; 1986), persevered despite repeated failures (Brown & Inouye, 1978; Schunk, 1981), made causal ascriptions for failure that supported a success orientation (Collins, 1982), approached potentially threatening tasks non-anxiously, and experienced little in the way of stress reactions (Bandura, et al., 1982). Their self-assured behaviour produced accomplishment. In contrast those who regarded themselves as inefficacious shied away from difficult tasks, distrusted their capabilities, were discouraged by failure, slackened their efforts and gave up readily in the face of difficulties, dwelled on their personal deficiencies thus deterring attention from task demands, and lowered their aspirations and suffered much anxiety and stress (Bandura, 1986a).

Self-efficacy as a determinant and a mediator

Research by Schunk and Gunn (1984) showed that perceived self-efficacy was both a determiner of causal attribution and a mediator of their effects on performance. Self-efficacy predicted persistence at a task, future performance levels, choice of contingent over non-contingent rewards, use and abuse of alcohol (Kirsch, 1986), achievement and fearful behaviour (Bandura, Adams, Hardy, & Howells, 1980), and contributed to motivation across a range of discrepancies between comparative standards and attainments (Bandura & Cervone, 1986). According to Bandura (1986a) past behaviour affects future actions partly through impact on perceived self-efficacy and perceived self-efficacy affects act independently of past behaviour or arousal.

Self-efficacy was found to be a mediator in coping behaviour

**Issues**

Cognitive processing in assessing self-efficacy is rendered challenging by its complexity, the various pitfalls in information processing, multidimensional nature of information, potential for misjudgement, and ambiguity in appraisal. Differential cognitive processing could lead to quite different perceptions of physical capability and self-efficacy. Errors in judgement could arise from disincentives, performance constraints, consequences of misjudgements, temporal disparities (time elapsed between assessment of self-efficacy and action), faulty assessment of self percepts or performance (level, generality, and strength), misweighting requisite subskills, obscure aims, performance ambiguity, and possessing faulty self-knowledge (Bandura, 1986, 1986a).

In arriving at efficacy judgements people need to deal not only with different patterns of efficacy relevant information conveyed, but also need to weight and integrate the information from diverse sources. There has been little research on how people process multidimensional efficacy information (Bandura, 1986a). Due to the complexity of the process, individuals were found to rely on simple judgemental rules leading to ignoring or misweighing relevant information (Bandura, 1981, 1986a). Actions are often
performed in situations containing varied evocative stimuli. This creates ambiguity about what caused the physiological reactions. The efficacy import of the resultant arousal on self-efficacy would vary depending on the factors singled out and meaning given to them (Bandura, 1986).

**Common Themes**

**Control**

The concept of agency in the three concepts takes the form of controlling outcomes, reinforcements, aversive events, behaviour, and cognition, influencing life events, and establishing a contingency between subject and environment. Expectancies of desired outcomes and attaining them play an important role. In all the cases the attempt is to influence and control life events so as to attain desired goals and avoid undesirable ones and in the process experience controllability and predictability reducing uncertainty. Control or termination of aversive stimuli is believed to diminish the impact of stimuli, while perception of uncontrollability led to helplessness.

**Outcomes**

Outcomes and their assessment have a significant role and a bearing on the interaction between the individuals and their actions, individuals and their environments either directly or indirectly. Implications of outcomes to future expectations, behaviour, and sense of well-being have been discussed in all the concepts. In all three concepts, the individual's satisfaction is dependent on attaining the desired outcomes.

In the case of locus of control and learned helplessness, outcomes play a direct role in subsequent expectations, perceptions, and behaviour. Indirectly they influence self-efficacy by providing personal and situational information on capabilities which in turn become inputs for future
action.

The impact of positive outcomes or successes and that of negative outcomes or failures is remarkably different and has varied implications to the subjects and their behaviour under all the concepts. Various measures have been suggested to reduce the impact of negative outcomes and increase controllability and predictability of desired outcomes. However, the three models do not provide a way of accepting undesirable outcomes. The attribution processes suggested are polarly different for desirable and undesirable outcomes.

Outcomes seem to play a prominent role in deciding treatment plans: lowering the expectancy or increasing it in order to lead to gratification; changing environment to change the probability of outcomes; reducing likelihood of aversive outcomes and increasing likelihood of desired outcomes; decreasing desirability of preferred outcomes and decreasing aversiveness of outcomes of unavoidable outcomes; and changing the expectation of uncontrollability to controllability when outcomes are obtainable.

Emphasis on positives

Just as a preference is evident for positive outcomes and efforts are made toward it, the preferred orientations of subjects in all concepts have by and large been depicted with positive qualities, as in the preference for internal control, non-helplessness (controllability), and self-efficacy. The three models themselves are aimed at attaining desirable goals and satisfaction, and avoiding frustration.

Despite the claims of theorists about the continuous nature of the variables and dimensions used (internal and external locus of control, internal-external, stable-unstable, global-specific, efficacy-inefficacy), they have not only been reduced to dichotomies but show a clear preference
for internality, non-helplessness, and efficacy. The processes of attribution have been used greatly in the service of emphasizing the positive.

**Attribution**

A major process that is involved in the interpretation of outcomes is attribution. Attribution is stressed in all three concepts with a belief that causal attributions are linked to emotional reactions and future behaviours.

A great deal of effort from theorists has gone into determining what attributions lead to persistence in the face of failure, motivation, low affective arousal, and protection of self-confidence and self-esteem. The attributional processes are rendered dynamic by varying them according to the outcomes.

The explanatory styles and attributions for bad events are considered to affect future behaviour and voluntary initiation of behaviour. The attributions suggested (success orientation) in the face of negative outcomes, are made outside the individual (external), to a particular situation (specific), and to variable factors (unstable). This is considered to be mobilizing. However, attributions for successful or positive outcomes are preferred to be made to internal, global, and stable factors to help enhance the well-being of the individual.

In the effort to generalize positive experience to other situations and to other times, achieve a sense of well-being at any cost, and curtail the recurrence of negative experiences, a variable attribution process has been advocated.

**Making sense of experiences**

How do subjects assess their outcomes and debrief their own experiences? The data obtained from experiences is largely subjective in nature.
Information sources are qualitative and relative: perceptions, expectations, beliefs, thoughts, feelings. The processes used for making sense of the experiences are again subjective such as attribution, comparisons with past experience or internal/external standards, identifying similarities and dissimilarities, most of which are self-referent thought processes. Objective and quantitative data to measure adequacy of behaviour are rarely available.

In all the three concepts, cognitive processes play a significant role in understanding experiences. Knowledge and insight obtained from experiences are dependent on the selection, weighting, and integrating of information which in itself is biased by what aspect of the experience is singled out, where the focii of attention is, and what meaning is given to it. The extrapolations made and decisions arrived at are prone to misassignments and misjudgements. This understanding then becomes the basis for future decisions, action, and change.

Change

The change processes, interventions, treatments suggested in all the three concepts are aimed at strengthening the adequate responses and weakening the inadequate ones. This has been operationalized in terms of changing and altering expectations and perceptions so as to increase or decrease desirability of outcomes, and their probability of occurrence. Change therefore either accounts for past experiences or ensures future behaviour. There is a tendency to accept the desirable aspect of the experience and reject the undesirable aspect.

Some of the processes adopted replace past beliefs, expectations, perceptions, and attributions with new ones. They are modeling, exhortation, suggestion, increasing preferences, increasing likelihood of desired
outcomes, increasing expectancy of controllability and predictability, reducing likelihood of aversive outcomes, reducing aversiveness, and desensitization. With the attainment of a desired outcome, the next desired outcome is an increment over the previous one, thus moving the threshold of acceptance of an outcome higher. Individuals thus aspire toward fulfilling greater aspirations.
CHAPTER III: CONCEPTS FROM VEDANTA

It is realistic to assume that not all happenings in life can be pleasant or palatable, and to suppose that it is nearly impossible to make all the things we desire come true. Human beings are therefore likely to face undesirable things happening and desirable things not happening. In order to explore the possibility of obtaining satisfaction under all circumstances, certain questions need to be raised and answered. It is in this context that it is of significance to find answers to queries related to, the part of human beings that is involved in day-to-day experiences of the world outside; its relation to action and outcomes; its nature; its relation to the experiences and in turn to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects of the individual; its role in making sense of experiences, and in change and transition. An understanding of these would help in developing a larger perspective within which the process of living could be anchored, and enable human beings to experience life as a more wholistic and continuous flow rather than as discrete experiences of partially related events. This would also help in the process of releasing a great deal of energy that is tied up in the fragmentation.

Advaita Vedanta philosophy was found appropriate and suitable to provide a perspective on these issues, as sages in India have grappled with queries of similar nature for many centuries.

The ideas and concepts presented in this chapter are largely drawn from several interpreters of Shankaracharya's philosophy like, Dasgupta, Zimmer, Chinmayananda, Vivekananda, and Radhakrishnan. These interpreters referred to Shankaracharya's Vivekachoodamani, and his commentaries on the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.
Background

Sages and spiritual masters in India explored their inner worlds in an attempt to discover satisfactory solutions for life's day-to-day problems. The attempt of the scriptural masters was to analyze man who came into contact with the world outside. They discovered what the vehicles or instruments that constituted the 'experience of life' are, and how best they could be controlled, purified, and readjusted so as to bring forth greater success and happiness into life (Swami Chinmayananda, 1980).

The Upanishads (meaning sitting at the feet of the master and learning) are revelations and represent the experimental data gathered and conclusions arrived at by generations of sages. Their theories and conclusions have been verified through subjective experience, by several mystics all over the world. The philosophical and religious meditations of Upanishads are called Vedanta (the end of Veda). According to the Vedanta, the ultimate goal and purpose of all life and evolution is the liberation from the bondages and limitations of Avidya (ignorance) and becoming immortal (Brahman). This is well depicted in a verse from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: From the unreal lead me to the real; From darkness lead me to light; From death lead me to immortality.

Advaita or the non-dualistic philosophy is a branch of the Vedantic schools, which propagates the idea of one Reality. Sri Shankaracharya one of the greatest philosophers and contributors to Indian philosophy was an exponent of the Advaita philosophy. Sri Shankaracharya an interpreter of Vedanta not only wrote commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita but also wrote many primary texts introducing the seeker into Vedanta. One such text is the Vivekachoodamani (viveka: discrimination, chooda: crown, mani:jewel, altogether meaning the crest jewel of discrimi-
nation) to which a great deal of references have been made in this paper. Sri Shankaracharya's contribution to Hinduism was so great, that Indian philosophy has come to be identified with Sri Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta. According to him, "Brahman the Absolute Alone is Real, the world is unreal, and individual's soul (Atman) is not different from Brahman," (Vivekachoodamani verses 20, 283). This can also be said as "God is true, the world is fleeting, man's soul is God and nothing else." (Max Muller, 1955, p.91). In explaining the Advaita philosophy, Shankaracharya advocated the theory of phenomenal appearance of superimposition (Adhyasa). He exemplified this through an example: Just as a snake is superimposed on a rope, in the twilight due to delusion, this world and body have been superimposed on the substratum of Brahman and Atman, the Supreme Reality, due to ignorance (Avidya). When false knowledge is removed, just as the illusion of the snake on the rope would vanish, the veil of ignorance would be destroyed and the individual ego (Jeeva) would shine in its true divine glory (Vivekachoodamani verses 138, 202). (The example of the snake and the rope would be dealt with in greater detail later in the chapter). The example depicts how through ignorance a human being identifies the self with the not self, which in turn becomes a bondage that brings the experience of miseries.

In order to set the context for the discussion of self in Vedanta philosophy, an overview of the major concepts in Advaita Vedanta as viewed by Shankaracharya, is found necessary. Some of Shankaracharya's concepts have been elaborated by his followers (Dasgupta, 1963). Despite the difficulty in accessing the original meaning of the words (as some of the concepts are open to several interpretations) and the cumulative nature of Vedantic knowledge, an attempt has been made to stick as close to Shankaracharya's interpretation as possible. This has been made possible
with the help of the commentaries and works of Dasgupta, Zimmer, Vivekananda, and Radhakrishnan, and translations and talks on Shankaracharya's works by Swami Chinmayananda. For the concept of Karma Yoga references have been made to Srimad Bhagavad Gita through the elaborations of Vivekananda, Zimmer, and Chinmayananda. Shankaracharya himself did not claim to be an inventor or expounder of an original system, but saw himself as an interpreter of the Upanishads and Sutras in order to show that there existed a connected and systematic philosophy in the Upanishads (Dasgupta, 1963). The major concepts of Vedanta elaborated here are Brahman, Maya, Moksha, and Karma.

**Major Concepts**

**Brahman:** In describing the indefinable reality, scholars and religious heads have used different descriptions. Though seemingly different, the descriptions have a common theme of infiniteness, limitlessness, and eternality. It is considered to be the timeless reality of all things in time. "The absolute is neither the infinite nor the finite, self or its realization, the one life or its varied expressions..." (Radhakrishnan, 1940, p. 173).

Brahman according to Sri Shankaracharya is "the transcendental, real, one-without-a-second, the extremely pure, a homogeneous mass of pure knowledge, taintless, supremely peaceful, devoid of beginning and end, beyond activity, of the nature of eternal bliss, transcending all diversities created by Maya, eternal sense of joy, indivisible, formless, immeasurable, unmanifest, nameless, immutable, irreducible, self-effulgent, having no distinctions of the knower, the knowledge, and the known, and that which lies beyond the limits of mind and speech (Vivekachoodamani verses 237-240). Brahman is "the cause from which proceeds the origin, subsistence or destruction of this world, which is extended in name and form, which includes
many agents and enjoyers, which holds the experience of fruits of deeds determined in specific space and time, and following upon definite causes - a world, the formation of which is inconceivable even by the longest imagnation of our minds" (Dasgupta, 1962, p. 164). Brahman is conceived by Shankaracharya as the cause and intelligent source from which the world has sprung into being; and as" immediate consciousness (saksi) which shines as the self, as well as through the objects of cognition which the self knows" (Dasgupta, 1963, p.438). It is the "pure transcendental metaphysical essence (Brahman) beyond all attributes and personal masks one-without-a-second, pure bliss, pure sentiency, and consciousness, ..." (Zimmer, 1951, p. 425). "Brahman is infinite not in the sense that it excludes the finite, but in the sense that it is the ground of all finites. It is eternal not in the sense that it is something back beyond all time, as though there were two states temporal and eternal, one of which superseded the other, but that it is the timeless reality of all things in time" (Radhakrishnan, 1940, p. 173).

The concept of Brahman is suggestive of life, motion, and progress, a living unity of essence and existence, of the ideal and the real, of knowledge, love and beauty. The cosmic principle Brahman, and the psychical principle Atman are looked upon as identical (Vivekachoodamani verses 225, 241, 242; Radhakrishnan, 1940, p. 169). Atman the self is similarly limitless, eternal, and subtle (Vivekachoodamani verses 220, 221, 222). The internal reality and external reality are considered to be identical. However, in Vedanta greater emphasis is laid on the search for truth within, as the search for truth outside lends itself to distortions and superimpositions. This is better explained with the help of the concepts of Avidya (ignorance) and Maya (illusion).
Maya: It is Maya or Avidya that veils reality and induces projections (Vivekachoodamani verses 111, 113). It is the Avidya or Maya that projects the entire universe. The world as experienced by individuals is a projection of their minds. The world and the human body are superimpositions on the substratum of Brahman or Atman. Maya is therefore an important ingredient of Sri Shankaracharya's theory of phenomenal appearance of superimposition. The superimposition of the world on Brahman is similar to the superimposition of the snake on the rope. Just as the illusion of the snake would disappear with the knowledge of the rope, the illusion of the world and the human body would disappear with the knowledge of Brahman or the reality.

If Brahman the pure being, pure intelligence, and pure bliss is the ultimate truth then the world as it appears cannot be real (Dasgupta, 1963). "Everything that has form, everything that calls up an idea in your mind, is within Maya for everything that is bound by the laws of time, space, and causation is within Maya" (Swami Vivekananda, 1970, p. 83). It is seen as the "sum total of manifestation" (Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, 1964, p. 66). Dasgupta (1963) observes that "maya or illusion is no real entity, it is only false knowledge (avidya) that makes the appearance, which vanishes when the reality is grasped and found. Maya or avidya has an apparent existence only so long as it lasts, but the moment the truth is known, it is dissolved. It is not a real entity in association with which a real world-appearance has been brought into permanent existence, for it only has existence so long as we are deluded by it (pratitika-satta). Maya therefore is a category which baffles the ordinary logical division of existence and non-existence and the principle of excluded middle. For the maya can neither be said to be "is" nor "is not" (tattvanyatvabhyam
anirvacaniya). It cannot be said that such a logical category does not exist, for all our dream and illusory cognitions demonstrate it to us. They exist as they are perceived, but they do not exist, since they have no other independent existence than the fact of their perception" (p. 442). Three properties or Gunas of Maya are, a veiling power caused by Tamoguna which leads to the non-apprehension of reality, a projecting power caused by Rajoguna which encourages superimposition of reality leading to mis-apprehension, and Sattwaguna which in conjunction with the other two gunas assists in superimposition. Pure Sattwa is uncontaminated and described by characteristics such as cheerfulness, peace, contentment, bliss, and constant devotion. While Rajoguna is characterized by anger, desire, greed, arrogance, hypocrisy, jealousy, attachment, Tamoguna is characterized by absence of correct judgement, doubt, ignorance, laziness, and dullness (Vivekachoodamani verses 111, 112, 113-116, 117, 119). The mind which is the basis of all perceptions is considered to be ignorance itself because all manifestation is through the mind (Vivekachoodamani verse 169).

It is in this light that the world is said to be false and a product of maya, as the plurality of experiences in the world is viewed as a projection of the mind (maya) (Swami Chinmayananda, 1980). So long as the right knowledge of the Brahman as the only reality does not dawn, the world-appearance runs on unquestioned. It is only when the stage comes in which the world-appearance ceases to manifest itself, that from the ultimate and absolute point of view the world-appearance is rendered false and unreal.

Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world, it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is a contradiction, a mixture of good and evil, life and death etc. It is impossible to have one without the other and yet individuals strive to find plea-
sure and satisfaction where it cannot be found, in the world outside. This is due to Maya (Swami Vivekananda, 1970).

Followers of Shankaracharya's Vedanta in explaining the cause of the world-appearanace sometimes lay stress on the maya, ajnana or avidya, sometimes on the Brahman, and sometimes both. Some make a distinction between maya as the cosmic factor of illusion and avidya as the manifestation of the same entity in the individual or jiva (Dasgupta, 1963).

Maya is thus like the darkness which is dispelled by light, the knowledge of the ultimate reality. Maya is dispelled by the knowledge of the true and pure self. Illusion is transcended by the discrimination between things that are permanent and transient, an unwavering disregard for all such illusions, and an indifference to the fruits of action here and the world to come (Bhagavad Gita, 3.19; Vivekachoodamani verse 203). Maya can be inferred by the effects it produces, with help of a clear intellect (Vivekachoodamani verse 108).

The beginning of maya is said to be the identification of the self with the body, the senses etc., and the imposition of all phenomenal qualities of pleasure and pain, etc., on the self (Dasgupta, 1963). The external world and the power of Avidya are brought into cooperation for the construction of world experience. Desires and volitions by which various kinds of relations and interpretations and judgements of value take place, bring the world and Avidya into cooperation. The desires are said to arise from the sub-surface motivating forces called 'Vasanas', and the cumulation of 'Vasanas' is Maya. The relations, interpretations, and judgements work upon the data of experience, forming a concrete experience which remains unconsciously in the mind at each new birth and is further worked upon by new desires. Thus accumulated experiences form a complex fabric of old residues.
and new experiences. The concept of Karma is based on this.

Karma: "We reap what we sow". All activities and reactions of the individual which cause transmigration are called Karma. Superimposition which causes one to see things that are non-existent leads to action-reaction cycles and transmigration (Vivekachoodamani verse 179). Karma is therefore the product of action-reaction cycles. Vedanta distinguishes three kinds of Karma. Sanchita Karma, the seeds of destiny already stored as a result of former acts but which have not yet begun to germinate. Agami Karma, the seeds that would normally collect and be stored if one were to continue in the path of ignorance basic to the present biography, i.e., destiny not yet contracted. Prarabdha Karma, the seeds collected and stored in the past that have actually begun to grow, i.e., the Karma bearing fruit in the shape of actual events. The realization of self is believed to destroy the latent force of Sanchita Karma while detachment or dispassion makes it impossible for the accumulation of Agami Karma. However Prarabdha Karma the germs of individual destiny which yield the harvest of one's present biography cannot be done away. This gives the basis of one's present life. It is the law of Karma that makes us the architects of our future. Our Karma determines what we desire and what we can assimilate. If what we are is a result of our own past actions, it follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions (Swami Vivekananda, 1966).

Karma is therefore the effects of past actions. The identification of the self with the not-self due to ignorance (Avidya or Maya) is the bondage of human beings leading to an unending cycle of action and reaction. Thus new vasanas (sub-surface motivating forces or innate tendencies) are accumulated. The Vasanas are impressions of past actions and thoughts left on the personality. These impressions provide the conditioning for the
present thoughts. The accumulation of these Vasanas in turn leads to more sanchita karma (Vivekachoodamani verses 313, 314). The cycle can be broken through the path of action or Karma Yoga (here karma refers to work or action). Karma Yoga helps in exhausting sanchita karma, and in discouraging the accumulation of agami karma. Karma Yoga is the means of acting without the notions of agency or of enjoying the fruits of action. Karma Yoga thus facilitates detachment and realization of the self, processes described above. The concept of Karma Yoga is elaborated in the Bhagavad Gita which is considered to be based on the Upanishads (Radhakrishnan, 1940).

Shankaracharya himself wrote commentaries on the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita, and viewed Karma Yoga as 'indirect help to the manifestation of Jnana (knowledge) and the means for the purification of the mind' (Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, 1964).

Dasgupta (1962) observes that the mind (Manas) is the nature of all activity. He states that "it is the synthetic function of manas that is called the functioning of the volitional senses by which all actions are performed, and it is for this reason that karma is nothing but manas". By the same logic, he considers maya too as a function of the mind and therefore similar to the concept of karma. Therefore mind itself is the ignorance which is the cause for the bondage of rebirth (Vivekachoodamani verse 169).

Till now Brahman the ultimate truth, Maya the ignorance that masks Brahman from us, and Karma the link (through the accumulation of Vasanas) between the external world and the subjective world creating the world experience, have been discussed. The goal in Vedanta is to subjectively realize and experience the ultimate truth, and this is termed Moksha.

Moksha: Moksha literally means release from the bondage to the sensuous
and the individual, the narrow and the finite (Radhakrishnan, 1940). It is the release from the sheaths of ignorance (Zimmer, 1951). It is the destruction of Vasanas or innate tendencies (Vivekachoodamani verse 317). With the knowledge of the one truth, the Self, the Brahman, all illusory perceptions representing the world as a field of experience, cease. "This knowledge is not something to be obtained but is already present within, as the core and support of our existence" (Zimmer, 1951). "That thou art" (Tat Tvam asi) the comprehension of self as the ultimate truth is the highest knowledge. It is attaining this knowledge that leads to liberation (Vivekachoodamani, verses 124, 283). When the truth is realized, the world as a field of experience ceases to exist not because the connections of the self with the world cease, but because the appearance of the world process does not represent the ultimate and the highest truth about it. Vedanta believes that even when the highest knowledge is attained, and the illusory perceptions cease, the body may last for a while due to the Prarabdha Karma. The individual would walk about and behave as a sage and yet be emancipated acquiring no new Karma.

Since mind itself is ignorance, liberation or moksha is possible only through the purification of the mind (Vivekachoodamani verse 181).

In the light of the above, Brahman is the absolute reality and identical with the individual soul, Atman. It is due to ignorance (Avidya, an individual principle of Maya) that the world is superimposed on Brahman, and the body superimposed on Atman. When one is released from the shackles of ignorance, that is when one attains Moksha then the individual ego shines in its true divinity. Once realized there is no Sanchita Karma or Agami Karma as the realized would cease to have the seeds or latent forces of action and would live in a manner that does not allow the accruing of new
Karma.

The relevance of the above concepts is, in providing a background from the Vedantic perspective, for understanding the aspect of individuals that is involved in day-to-day experiences. It is also of significance to understand the nature of this part involved in experience, its relation to action and outcome, its relation to experiences, and in turn to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of the individual. These provide the basis of making sense of experiences. They also form the platform from which change and transition take place. It is with this in mind that a discussion of self, ego, and not-self from the Vedantic perspective is undertaken.

The relevance of this in everyday life and to the present study is in the benefit of discriminating self from not-self, and in separating action from the fruits of action. The separation of action from its results frees individuals from a sense of agency and enjoyership. Action is performed in the present in a realm of complete involvement, and concentration, with no anxieties of the past or of the future. In discriminating self from not-self, outcomes remain delinked from the self, leading to action that is free, non-evaluative, non-judgmental and devoid of anxiety. Action is thus anchored in a larger perspective of self, a self that is unchanging, timeless, and limitless. To understand the application of Vedanta to counselling, it is useful to examine the nature of mind in Vedanta. Since counselling often refers to thoughts, feelings, and actions, these three are closely examined from the Vedantic perspective along with their link to the self. In Vedanta all the three aspects, thoughts, feelings, and actions, are considered to be manifestations and projections of the mind.
Self

The self, Atman is identical to Brahman. It is described as formless, subtle, 'all pervading'; the essence behind the phenomenal world, the conscious principle which illumines the body, mind, and intellect, and the experience of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states; the witness; the spirit; and the substratum behind all experiences. It is that in which "all variations resolve themselves into an unity; that within the flux of things and concealed by it is an indefinable, immutable something, at once the Substratum and sum of all which Time cannot touch, motion perturb, nor variation increase or diminish, and that this Substratum and sum has been from all eternity and will be for all eternity" (Aurobindo, 1971, p.2)

Inspite of the limitation of language in depicting the infinite, the seers made successful attempts not in directly expressing the concept of self, but in indicating and conveying it to the intuitive appreciation of the seeker. It is this limitation of language and its narrow scope of meaning that led to the need for a teacher to interpret the teachings (Upanishads - sitting at the feet of the master and learning). Using the language of negation, self has been described as the following in the Mandukya Upanishad(7): "It is not that which is conscious of the internal subjective world, not that which is conscious of the external world, not that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass of consciousness, nor is it unconsciousness. It is not perceivable by any sense organs, not related to anything, incomprehensible by the mind, uninferable, unthinkable, and undescribable; It is essentially of the Self alone, negating all phenomena; It is the peaceful and the non-dual..." (translated by Swami Chinmayananda, 1980).

The self is metaphorically compared to the pure light, which cannot be directly perceived but is seen by its reflection on objects. According
to the Vedanta, since the Atman (self) is the self present everywhere (Brahman the Supreme Reality), self-realization is considered never complete by a mere recognition of the intrinsic divinity or perfection in the self within, excluding the self expressing in the pluralistic world. To realize oneself in Vedanta is to realize at once its oneness with the All Self (Brahman). The individual self is realized as the eternal self with the discrimination between self and not-self, and the removal of the ego (Vivekachoodamani verses 203, 205). The self in Vedanta is a state that individuals strive to reach, and a truth individuals endeavour to attain. It is reached by the self and through a subjective enquiry and experience, and through no other instrument. Atman the self is "that which knows everything that happens in the waking, dream and deep-sleep states, That which is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions, That which is the essence behind the ego, ..." (Vivekachoodamani verse 126).

Not-Self

In differentiating the real from the unreal, and the self from the not-self, the sages used a systematic process of negation. Through a careful examination (Vivekachoodamani verses 154-188) everything that has the qualities such as finiteness, change, limitedness, is related to the field of matter, is insentient, momentary, perceivable through the sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin), is characterized by pain and sorrow - all aspects that did not match the qualities of the self is designated not-self. According to the Vivekachoodamani (verse 122) "all equipments, the body, sense organs, physiological functions, mind the ego, all modifications like pain and pleasure etc., all sense objects, the gross elements (such as air, water, earth, sky, and fire), and the perceptible world of objects, emotions, and thoughts upto the unmanifest (Vasanas - innate tendencies) all
are the not-self (Anatman)” (translated by Swami Chinmayananda, 1981). By this token, all expectancies, perceptions, desires, self-referent thoughts, judgements, feelings generated from helplessness and other feelings, success and failure belong to the field of the not-self.

The Ego

The ego is the experiencer or the perceiver-feeler-thinker entity. It is the part which is involved in day-to-day experiences of the world. Ego is considered to be the first modification of ignorance (Avidya or Maya) (Vivekachoodamani verse 298). With ignorance the ego arises. It is the 'I-ness and my-ness' idea. Shankaracharya in Vivekachoodamani (verse 197) indicates that "the delusion or non-apprehension of Reality gives rise to the misapprehension that 'I am the body', 'I am the intellect'. With reference to the world of objects there arises a feeling 'I am the doer'. With reference to the mind and intellect there arises the feeling 'I am the enjoyer. These feelings in their aggregate constitute the 'jeevahood' or the ego" (translated by Swami Chinmayananda, 1981). The self thus identified with the body, mind and intellect becomes the ego. The self and ego are explained symbolically in the Vivekachoodamani as follows: "When we perceive the reflected sun in a jar of water, there are three things, the jar, the water in the jar, the reflection of the sun in it. As long as our attention is on the reflection, the real sun is not perceivable. In order to see the sun, we will have to lift our eyes high up from the jar, the water and the reflection. In the sun there is no jar, no water, no reflection. These three are symbolical examples to help us understand the play of the self...". "Once you know the sun you will understand that it is the illuminator of the jar, the water, and the reflection. Nobody need illumine the sun. It is self-effulgent. It is its own light. In the light of the
sun all other things are illumined" (Vivekachoodamani verse 219). In the above example the jar is the body, water the thoughts, and reflected sun the ego, the self being the sun. Max Mueller (1955, p.50) observes "what we commonly call our Ego is determined by space and time, by birth and death, by the environment in which we live, by our body, our senses, our memory, by our language, nationality, characteristics, prejudice and many other things. All these make our ego or our characteristics, but have nothing to do with the self." Ideas such as 'I am the controller of life events', 'I am the producer of my own destiny' fall under the purview of the ego. According to the Vedanta, it is the confusion of the ego and the not-self with the self, that sows the seed of unhappiness (Vivekachoodamani verse 137). In confusing the ego and the not-self with the self, all actions and outcomes are attributed to the self. The self is evaluated and judged from the standpoint of these actions and outcomes generating a plethora of emotions. This experience is then stored to be referenced in future actions and evaluations. "It is without beginning, is of the nature of the ego and is called the jeeva, which carries out the entire range of activities on the relative plane. It performs good and evil actions according to its previous vasanas, and experiences their results. It comes and goes, up and down, taking birth in various bodies. The waking, dream and other states, and the experiences of joy and sorrow, belong to this intellectual-sheath" (Vivekachoodamani verses 186, 187).

The Vedanta believes that the ego as the experiencer, and the not-self, are constantly changing and fluctuating making actions based on them unreliable and misleading. In differentiating the self from the not-self and ego, all aspects that are changing, fluctuating, transitory, limited, and uncertain have been simultaneously isolated, building a basis from which
experiences could be reliably decoded. Depending on the nature of the reference point used, the texture of experience would change. The quality of experience would be very different if based on the benchmark of the ego and not-self (as in the agency concepts), from that based on a larger definition of self (as in Vedanta).

Vedanta advocated a discriminate understanding of the self from not-self at all levels including the intellectual, emotional, and action levels. Acting with discrimination was discovered to bring greater reality orientation, ability to act in the present, acceptance of positive and negative outcomes without differentiation, perseverance irrespective of results. In order to be able to discriminate accurately, fine tuning of the instruments of perception especially of the mind, was found to be a prerequisite. Without the tuning of the instruments of perception, the data generated and analyzed is observed to be unreliable, incorrect, and misleading, as the instruments themselves are clouded, veiled, and limited in perception. Swami Vivekananda (1970) claimed all knowledge to be objectification. In memory, all the things are objectified and projected. Reasons as to why mind and its products such as intellectual understanding, emotions, and action outcomes cannot be reliable sources of discrimination, and bases for action, are elaborated below. The processes recommended for fine tuning the instruments of perception in preparation for the discrimination, are briefly indicated.

**Intellectual Understanding**

The intellect is the observing, analyzing, thinking, judging, coordinating, understanding, reasoning, willing, wishing, and discriminating faculty in the human being. Like all other instruments of action and perception, the intellect comes alive in the presence of consciousness (the
self). Also, the discriminating function was observed as not being constantly available, limited, and dependent on the data provided by the sense organs through the mind, and based on past experiences and memories (Vivekachoodamani verses 184-188). The nature of the mind itself is determined by the nature of thoughts flowing through it. As the thoughts are in constant flux and continuously changing, the mind changes too. Also, the mind can only conceive of things known and is ignorant of things unknown. Present boundaries of knowledge are the outermost frontiers to which a mind could be extended, which is often limited. From the standpoint of the mind, the body and sense organs, and the objects of the world, are objects. "The mind continuously delivers for the experiencer, (1) all sense objects, gross or subtle, without exception, (2) distinctions based upon body, caste, order-of-life and creed, as well as, (3) the difference of qualities, actions, motives and results" (Vivekachoodamani verse 177). Not only does the mind project all these objects but having projected develops an attachment for the objects due to the function of ego which develops the feeling of 'I' and 'mine'. The intellect and its discrimination is limited by the nature of data and information furnished to it.

Experience is believed to begin in the reaction produced by the mind when it comes in contact with the world. Stimuli from the world are reported to the mind by the sense organs. The mind in consultation with the intellect arrives at certain "opinions". The opinions themselves are arrived at by comparing the present with similar or dissimilar experiences that are stored as impressions in the memory for the purpose of ready reference. Each of the impressions are labelled as good or bad, joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, love or hatred. Thus impressions of the past, accurate or inaccurate, play a significant role in intellectual understanding.
'Vasanas' are the sub-surface motivating forces or innate tendencies within each individual. In Vedanta the total 'vasanas' are called Maya. The masters found that 'Vasanas' express themselves as desires in the intellect. These desires in turn cause agitations in the mind and express themselves as actions. The agitations are also found to be such that they do not lead to permanent satisfaction even when desires are gratified, only kindling more desires leading to more action (Vivekachoodamani, verse 313). According to the Vedanta, the desire to be a controller of one's destiny or of one's outcomes and reinforcements, and a producer of one's own future not only arises from the 'Vasanas' or urges but becomes a disturbance in the mind that compels action with every outcome leading to more unsatiatable desires. The desires grow irrespective of success or failure of the outcome with successes leading to a desire for greater successes and failure leading to the desire for success and a desire to escape failure. This is exemplified by the example of a silkworm. Explaining how an individual could get caught in a continuous action-outcome cycle originated by the 'Vasanas' and perpetuating more 'Vasanas' Swami Chinmayananda (1981) elaborates Shankaracharya's idea: "the silkworm spins fine threads from its own saliva and weaves a cocoon around itself. The cocoon becomes stronger and stronger until at last the worm gets entangled in it and cannot come out. Similarly, once the misunderstanding that 'I am the body' arises, this false notion makes endless demands for the preservation of the body. These demands multiply and they become so strong that individuals get gagged and bound by them." Therefore, what is often identified as a desire and as a basis for action is itself believed to arise from the sub-surface motivating forces 'Vasanas' which are difficult to identify. This difficulty keeps one continuously preoccupied in action.
Intellectual understanding could also arise from faulty perceptions and misjudgments, and limitations of knowledge. The phenomena of superimposition of Sri Shankaracharya briefly indicated earlier elaborates these.

The process of superimposition is believed to consist of two main aspects. Firstly, a thing is not correctly seen for what it is, secondly, due to this, arises an error of judgment leading to the substitution of another object in its place. This trick of the mind is called superimposition or the mind's process of self-projection (Swami Chinmayananda, 1980; 1981). An example of superimposition is analyzed as follows: When a rope is not seen as a rope, the error of judgment gives the misconception that it is a snake, or a streak of water, or a piece of wood, or a crack in the earth. When such superimposition starts, the superimposed illusion completely covers the reality. When truth is not recognized as truth, there is no sorrow. There is ignorance. However, when ignorance breeds misapprehension then sorrow arises. The sorrow is not therefore due to the non-apprehension but is because of the misapprehension. In the process of superimposition not only is truth misapprehended as the illusion, but the illusion is believed to be the truth. The superimposition itself is found to follow certain laws. When a rope is not seen as a rope, it is rarely seen as an elephant, or a cow, or a building, instead of a rope. Also, once the snake is superimposed on the rope, the qualities of the rope, its colour, the shape, and the rough surface are not seen, and the colour of the snake, the shape, and the smooth surface of the snake are transferred to the rope, with the existence of the rope temporarily loaned to the snake (as the snake is seen while the rope is not). Another aspect of the superimposition is that it is always complete, a half-snake-half-rope vision is not possible (Swami Chinmayananda, 1980). It is due to this that even a glimpse of the real
nature is said to end the ignorance.

The veiling and projective effects of the mind create the non-apprehension and the misapprehension respectively. Applying the phenomena of superimposition to the agency concepts, it is evident in the form of constructed realities, self-fulfilling prophecies, and attributions. When the real reasons for outcomes of actions are not perceived, a number of causal attributions are made in an attempt to explain the situation. In not being able to see the complexity of forces operating in a given situation undesirable consequences are either ascribed to the self or to the unresponsiveness of the environment. In dealing with complex and multidimensional information, individuals were found to rely on simple judgmental rules leading to ignoring or misweighing relevant information (Bandura, 1981, 1986a).

The objects were also found to provide entirely different experiences depending on the mood and condition of the subject, with the same object giving rise to varied experiences (Swami Chinmayananda, 1980). The mood state of the individual colours the nature of experience. With an alert mind there is found to be greater awareness of experience than in an inactive state of mind. In an agitated state of mind, the individual is driven to action. As the mind is, so the actions are often referred to as 'you are what you think'.

It is for the reasons mentioned above that a subjective experience was preferred to intellectual understanding. Were we to base our life pursuits on intellectual understanding and thoughts, we would be basing them on the past (memories), on opinions, on desires arising from unidentified sources, misapprehensions, and mood states, forming a very unreliable and ambiguous basis for action.
Emotions

Emotions have been observed to be transitory and constantly in flux, like thoughts. In Vedanta, the nature of mind is the nature of thoughts that flow. When the thoughts are agitated or sad, the individual feels agitated or sad. Due to the mistaken identification of feelings as an important aspect of the self, feelings are often given an important place in decision making. The masters in Vedanta observed and found that every feeling and thought has the quality of arising and passing away, and to make decisions on the basis of this was equivalent to acting from unsteady ground leading to an impulsive action-reaction cycle generating more 'Vasanas'.

The classification of experiences as good and bad is again considered subjective, arbitrarily based on previous experience, a phenomena of memory, and it is the classification that is believed to lead to emotional arousal - feelings about feelings. For example, not having control over a situation is considered and labelled undesirable from which helplessness and other deficits arise. It is therefore the labelling of undesirability that causes emotional arousal. Further, in making future decisions and generalizations based on the helplessness would be not only inappropriate, but ensure more emotional arousal. From the Vedantic angle, labelling and attribution are discouraged. According to this perspective, the search to find causes with the existing untuned and coarse nature of sense organs could only lead to further misunderstanding and confusion. The action reaction cycle is kept up by a process which itself generates unreliable data due to the inaccuracy and coarseness of the instruments of perception. Mind is thus considered both the cause of bondage, as well as the cause of liberation (Vivekachoodamani verse 174).

The process advocated both at the intellectual and emotional levels
is one of a non-judgmental and equanimous stance that allows the unhindered rising and passing away of the inherent defilements, thus exhausting and purging the 'Vasanas' or the innate tendencies. This process simultaneously encourages the experience and acceptance of the totality with no fragmentation of experience while purifying the equipments of perception to fine tune them and set the stage for sharper discrimination.

The changing and the relative nature of understanding at intellectual and emotional levels makes it an unreliable basis for judging experience and actions, or for self-unfoldment. The same reason contributes to the discouragement of preferred models and typologies of human behaviour. Behaviour relevant to a situation and a context, the appearance of which is dependent on the internal state of the perceiver, is deemed to have little relevance as a basis for action. In Vedanta, qualities and characteristics of seekers that facilitate choosing suitable paths and the movement on the path, are identified. However, the final stage itself is without attributes.

The Bhagavad Gita (translated by Swami Chinmayananda) specifies several paths of self-unfoldment related to the varied nature of the individual seekers. Some of them are 'Jnana Yoga' (path of knowledge), 'Bhakti Yoga' (path of devotion), 'Karma Yoga' (path of action), and 'Sannyasa Yoga' (path of renunciation). The paths however are overlapping to the extent that an individual choosing a path of action, would need to exert efforts not only in action but also at the cognitive and emotional levels which would involve areas of Jnana and Bhakti. The path of action is discussed here, as it is found to be a more appropriate comparable point to the three concepts of agency discussed in Chapter II. The mode of action enumerated also depicts a harmonious orchestration of 'letting go' of the past and acceptance of the present briefly indicated earlier.
Action

Action too can be misleading when the bases for action, such as desires, sub-surface motivating forces Vasanas, are themselves suspect. Action is often a result of cognitive processes of the mind and can be deceptive. Action arising from ignorance is believed to lead to increasing bondage (Vivekachoodamani verse 145). "Everything that you do under compulsion goes to build up attachment" (Swami Vivekananda, 1966). Attachment results in greater bondage. The bondage is a result of mistaking the not-self to be the self (superimposition), ignorance, and craving for the fruits of action. It is for this reason, a path of action or Karma Yoga has been delineated.

Path of Action

The path of action is described as a means of self-unfoldment because by "working in the world with neither the egocentric concept of agency nor the egocentric desires for the fruits of those actions, we are causing the urges (vasanas) to play out without any new precipitate of fresh impressions" (Bhagavad Gita translated by Swami Chinmayananda, p.340). The fresh impressions correspond to the residues and reactions accumulated from experiences. Karma Yoga "requires that the individual should continue carrying on his usual duties and activities of life, but with a new attitude of detachment from their fruits, i.e., from the possible gains or losses that they will entail. The world and its way of actualization is not to be abandoned, but the will of the individual is to be united in action with the universal ground, not with the vicissitudes of the suffering body and nervous system" (Zimmer, 1951, p. 386).

The path allows, in not holding a concept of agency, the release of energies of the intellect, and in giving up the desire for the fruits of
action the release of the mind from the emotional arousal following the achievement or non-achievement of results. Thus released from the agency as well as the outcomes, individuals are free to apply their efforts untiringly into constructive action. 'Letting go' of the sense of agency is believed to lead to greater concentration and contemplation of the true self. Performing desireless actions allows the urges 'Vasanas' to play out without the accumulation of new ones. This in turn reduces the agitations in the mind setting the climate for greater contemplation and sharper discrimination of the real from the unreal.

The path of action therefore is a purifying process in turn leading to the fine tuning of the mind to facilitate the discrimination of the self and the not-self. A Karma Yogi is one "who in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity finds the silence and solitude of the desert" (Vivekananda, 1966, p. 12).

The very process also provides a model of living and facing everyday challenges, without being caught with issues of control and losing control or with outcomes that are desirable and undesirable. "Give thought to nothing but the act, never to its fruits, and let not thyself be seduced by inaction. For him who achieves inward detachment, neither good nor evil exists any longer here below" (Srimad Bhagavad Gita, 2-47).

Change within this model is continuous and spontaneous as processes of 'letting go' and acceptance of present are by-products of the path of action. When the path is followed, it allows for very little to deal with by way of 'letting go', providing at the same time openness toward new experiences, as the individual functions dispassionately in the present.

With a continuously changing reality within the individual and an
unpredictable environment which follows its own laws, Vedanta with the help of the above processes fulfills its aim of maintaining one side of the equation constant - process of discrimination leading to right understanding of the subject thus saving the individual from being buffeted by the vicissitudes of life. The effort is therefore toward experiencing truth and from that standpoint re-evaluating things and beings, and re-adjusting one's relationship with the world around. The goal is of controlling, training, and culturing the mind in a way that it can only react equanimously to any set of objects under any circumstance thus converting all reactions and actions into constructive ones.

The perspective in this chapter is elaborated more for the purpose of understanding the important dimensions of experiencing life and decoding experiences, than as a philosophy into which individuals would be coached. As such the nature of self, and the action emerging henceforth seem to have an important bearing on how individuals receive and debrief experiences. This is examined in greater detail in chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV: LIMITATIONS OF THE CONCEPTS OF AGENCY - A CRITIQUE

In this chapter the adequacy of the concepts of agency (namely, locus of control, learned helplessness, and self-efficacy) are examined from the perspectives of Advaita Vedanta, and concepts drawn from Srimad Bhagavad Gita. This examination covers propositions related to the concepts of agency and the concept of self, counselling implications, and finally issues pertaining to an illustrative case of transition and the process of 'letting go'.

Proposition I: Aspects of Agency are Mistakenly Identified to be the Self

Agency concepts are based on control, expectations, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, experiences, outcomes, efficacy, capabilities which are accepted as important. All these are considered to be significant aspects of self that need to be recognized, protected, and acted upon. Expectations, beliefs, and outcomes determine the nature of self - locii of control, efficacy, and the power to act. When action is inhibited, or when expected outcomes are not attained, or when the individual lacks control over the situation, the individual experiences an emotional impact as if the self were violated. This in turn leaves a residue that determines future actions, decisions, and behaviour, thus generalizing one experience to other situations. Inability to act and realize one's expectations is equated to a serious lapse or deficiency within the self. The self is defined by its control over situations (doer), and its ability to take action that produces expected results (enjoyer), all of which describe the agency concept. When the individuals cannot achieve what they desire, they experience aggression, repression, withdrawal, projection, depression (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972). The 'doer' 'enjoyer' or the perceiver-feeler-thinker entity of the
ego appears in all the three concepts of agency. In Rotter's (1966) definition it appears as the perception of contingency between events and behaviour, or events and characteristics within the individual. In the learned helplessness hypothesis the 'doer' and 'enjoyer' appear as the relatedness between responses and reinforcements. Finally, in the self-efficacy concept, the ego operates as the judgement of how well one uses one's capabilities with prospective situations. The expectancies of affecting events, perceptions of affecting reinforcements, and judgements of one's skills in meeting various situations, all belong to the finite, changeable, limited, transient qualities of the mind and intellect corresponding to the ego and the not-self in the Vedanta. Therefore agency seems to be erroneously equated with the self. Consequently, all experiences arising from the notion of agency are attributed to the self, sometimes with debilitating consequences. Let us take the example of a person (A) who has an opinion and sets about to convince another (B). If B gets convinced A has attained his/her own expectations and feels good that he/she possesses the ability to convince, or that he/she has reasonable opinions, or that B now shares the same opinion. The act of convincing gained importance because A sees his/her opinions as his/her self. If B is unconvinced, then A feels rejected or a sense of failure again because opinions are thought as the self, or as important aspects of the self.

According to Vedanta, the agency concepts fall under the jurisdiction of the ego and the not-self as they are all open to change, impermanent, transient, and uncertain. The not-self functions due to the presence of the self, however, the self itself remains untouched by the experiences of the not-self. Confusing the not-self to be the self is like taking the chariot to be the charioteer, and identifying the experiences of the chariot
with the charioteer. Without the ability to differentiate the chariot from
the charioteer, every pleasant and unpleasant experience of the chariot is
attributed to the charioteer. The discrimination of the self from the not-
self is therefore considered to be an important step to all growth.

**Proposition II: Self as Mind Provides an Unstable and Error-
Ridden Basis for Evaluating Events**

Expectations, beliefs, thoughts, feelings are considered to be the
products of the mind, according to the Vedantic perspective. The quality of
the mind itself is determined by the nature of thoughts that flow through
the mind. Therefore mind is viewed as a constantly changing phenomenon as
there is a continuous and uninterrupted flow of thoughts. As it is the
basis for all perceptions (since all manifestations are through the mind),
it is considered to be the basis for ignorance. When expectations, beliefs,
thoughts, and feelings are equated with the self or significant aspects of
the self, then the mind - an unstable and a constantly changing phenemonon
- becomes the self. As elaborated in the previous chapter, intellectual
understanding is based on the data the mind provides. The nature of data
the mind provides is again dependent upon the state of the mind, perception
and judgement of the situation. Like the "the eye of the beholder", every
perception and judgement is coloured by the mood of the perceiver, and by
what the perceiver uses as a frame of reference, and what is projected on to
the object. The colouring in perception and judgement plays an important
role even when evaluating events, leading to an erroneous assessment of the
situation. Also the same individual is capable of arriving at different
conclusions at different points in time with no certain way of predicting
what the conclusion would be. Equating the self with the mind, and accept-
ing the evaluations arrived by the mind as reliable bases for actions, can
only generate data that is constantly changing and contradicting, forcing individuals to find other ways of maintaining a constancy and stability. In the agency concepts, attribution is resorted to as a way of maintaining a stable view of self, and reducing the debilitating impact on the individual. This forces yet another error into the process of perceiving reality. Decisions, actions, and assessments based on these errors of attribution and evaluation set up a chain of errors. Action based on unstable elements takes on a trial and error format. The assessment of self based on action, and the evaluation of experience become error-ridden because the aspects assessed as well as the instrument of measurement (mind) are continuously changing. Even when the mind produces consistent and similar responses it simultaneously creates structures which determine future actions as in the case of learned helplessness. The quality of action performed is thus determined by the evaluation processes of the mind, and the structures created by the mind, that are considered to be concrete and related to the self. For example, let us imagine A dissatisfied with the performance of B and telling B about it. B now feels totally shattered and feels scared that he/she may be fired. Then on, all his/her decisions and actions are based on this experiential structure. When B evaluates the experience, B looks at what the experience meant. Since it is likely that the feelings are poignant, B is likely to believe that it is the self which is feeling and it is therefore hurt. Like all other products of the mind, feelings come and go. However, B is likely to hold on to the feelings, remind himself/herself of those constantly, and act from there. The error in the evaluation process arises from several quarters. It comes from confusing feelings with self, from believing that feelings are permanent and constant entities, and from using these as reliable structures and bases for future actions. Agency
thus depends on constant evaluation and monitoring of self. This is done by establishing relationships between experience and the self and making attributions. The basis for doing this is shifting, fallible and undependable. None of the agency theorists consider the basis upon which agency derives its solidity. In discriminating the self from the not-self all aspects that are changing, fluctuating, transitional, limited, and uncertain, are simultaneously isolated. Action thus becomes free, non-evaluative, non-judgemental, devoid of anxiety and is anchored in a larger perspective. It is this broader perspective that creates more room for individuals to act, and experience varied outcomes without harming themselves.

**Proposition III: There is No Conception of Preparing the Mind to See Clearly, in the Concepts of Agency**

In assuming the mind and its processes to be concrete, the agency concepts place a great deal of confidence on the ability of the mind to arrive at accurate perceptions, judgements, and conclusions. Every feeling, thought, expectation, belief is believed and accepted as a true and real event. The fleeting and changing nature of these aspects is not recognized. The agency concepts recognize poor attributions or misattributions, but have no recourse to anything but "empirical" observation. That the mind is capable of creating its own data, projections, and structures, is not taken into consideration. As a result, the findings and products of the mind are deemed as solid bases for the self to act from. From the Vedantic perspective, the products of the mind are its own creations. The mind is conditioned by its past experiences to respond in set ways, and unless detrained it continues to respond in similar ways. In every perception the mind tends to refer to its past memories and compare the present with the past. It is this comparison and verification that contributes to projection. In order
to be able to perceive reality as it is without any projections, certain methods are suggested. Thus purification and preparation of the mind precedes understanding in Vedanta. Any attempt to understand without such preparation is believed to lead to greater misunderstanding and misery. The mind without the training and purification tends to constantly project, superimpose, create its own structures and generate erroneous data. In the case of Vedanta, the purification comes from the knowledge of what is self and not-self. For example, an individual perceives a snake in a rope, believes it to be a snake (creating a structure) and experiences great fear. The superimposition or the projection of the snake on the rope disappears only with the knowledge that it is actually a rope and is different from the snake and that the two have been mistakenly confused. It is the knowledge, and the ability to differentiate the rope from the snake that enables the individual to perceive clearly and be liberated from the fear. Mind according to Vedanta, is both the cause of bondage as well as liberation from bondage. When mind is not purified and detrained, it is incapable of differentiating the not-self from the self, and hence creates more bondage. Liberation from such bondage is possible with the recognition of the true self. Agency theorists lack any consideration of development or of an expanded possibility of selfhood.

Proposition IV: Both Ends of Agency Concepts Generate Confining Bonds or Attachments

Internal locus of control leads to an expectation of being in control in all situations, while external locus of control generates a desire for favourable conditions. Self-efficacy prompts individuals to be competent in all circumstances, while inefficacy and helplessness lead to an aversion to the situation with a strong desire to regain efficacy and control.
A successful and positive experience creates a desire for more success. Failures evoke aversion, a strong desire to escape from them, and a desire to obtain success. Individuals thus are bound by outcomes seeking more and more of the same, or progressively greater outcomes. As the outcomes and attainments define the self and the individual's worth the individual is compelled to achieve expected results and is thus bound to ends achieved and not achieved. The attachment is to the outcomes, personal determination of outcomes, and to the preservation of the self image. When individuals attain success, they are attached not only to the outcome craving more such successes, but also to the representation of the self that the outcome helps preserve. Due to this linkage between the self and outcomes, there is a inevitable expectation for desirable and positive experiences. There is very little tolerance for anything less than desirable. The concept of self, the outcome orientation, the desire for positive experiences, and the processes of assessment, force individuals to live by confining definitions putting individuals through an unwarranted emotional roller coaster. For example, first an individual develops a mental view of himself/herself which he/she calls self. If the individual were to see himself/herself with an internal locus of control, this image compells attainment of outcomes that reinstate this belief. Similarly, an individual with an external locus of control is bound to the expectation of facilitating circumstances. The bondage is not only to the need to confirm the original belief, but also to favourable outcomes that indicate such confirmation. A great deal of energy is locked up in allowing desirable outcomes and avoiding undesirable ones. These energies cannot be underestimated when one considers the fact that every experience is made up of both desirable and undesirable aspects, and the assessment of the experience is dependent upon the angle from which the
experience is viewed. This enlocking makes it difficult to differentiate the not-self from the self or realize that the aspects related to agency are other than the self. Since it is unlikely that a person can control outcomes consistently, self is continually threatened or being tested. Insecurity seems to be an inevitable aspect of the conception, diverting attention away from other possibilities for self definition or living and toward a rather narrow bondage to outcomes. The mind thus binds the individual to things that do not lead to the real self or to real satisfaction, keeps the individual preoccupied with the not-self, and generates action that is repetitive. These confining bonds are comparable to the entanglement of a silk-worm in a cocoon woven by itself. A silk-worm expends a lot of energy and puts in a great deal of effort to weave a cocoon only to become a captive in it.

**Proposition V: Both Ends of Agency Concepts are Unrealistic**

To assume one is capable, powerful, and in control of all situations is as unreal as to assume that all things are outside one's control and that one is at the mercy of circumstances. Neither stance captures the complexity of the situation. Unable to account for the innumerable factors involved, simplistic models are designed and utilized. These in turn increase the unrealism. Control, efficacy, and helplessness cannot always exist. To expect one and not the other is like expecting the river to flow only with an upward motion - with crests and no troughs. The unrealism arises from the sense of achieving what is desired at any cost, which does not take the flow and changing nature of agency and situations, into consideration. The agency concepts encourage unrealistic ends because they pose transient and changing phenomena such as expectations, desires, feelings, as though they were stable, constant and concrete structures.
Proposition VI: Agency Attributions Involve a Distortion of Self-Conception and Reality, Requiring Selective Acceptance and Denial

In order to maintain a stable view of self, the agency concepts use attribution processes. When positive experiences and successes occur, credit is given to the capabilities and skills within the self. When a negative experience occurs, failure is attributed to causes outside the self. Instead of accepting agency as a constantly changing phenomena, stability and constancy is maintained by a variational attribution process that always leads to the preservation of the self image. The process is marked by the acceptance of what is viewed as favourable, and by the denial and rejection of that which is viewed as unfavourable to the sense of agency (favourableness and unfavourableness being determined by structures created within the mind. There is thus an unwarranted distortion of the experience of self. Favourable experiences are accepted with no difficulty. Unfavourable experiences become difficult to accept and affect the individual emotionally. Attribution processes are designed to avoid this emotional impact on the individual. When unwanted outcomes occur, attribution is used to release the individual from any linkage or responsibility with the event. With a selective owning of all the positive things, and denial of negative things there is a distortion in the perception of reality. Only a partial reality is perceived and accepted. Acceptance of an experience in the agency concepts, usually establishes a relationship between the sense of agency and the outcome. While favourable outcomes produce a sense of elation, unfavourable outcomes leave a undesirable mark on the individual. It is for this reason that partial acceptance is encouraged. In all the three concepts of agency, when individuals realistically accepted failures, they experienced emotional deficits and difficulty in coping, and generalized the experience
to other situations. Alloy and Abramson (1980) found that individuals who were depressed were more realistic while the undepressed were unrealistic. The choice seems to be between feeling good and being unrealistic, and feeling bad and being realistic.

The distortion of reality takes place also due to the generalization of the experience of a negative outcome over time and to other situations. Instead of perceiving each situation as a new one, in all the agency concepts, there is a projection of the past onto the present. Inferences arrived from past experiences, and their interpretations become the foundation for future action, thus making every reality a constructed one.

**Proposition VII: The Task of Evaluation is Futile and Misguided**

Mind as a vehicle for evaluation creates several errors. The errors occur due to several aspects. First, mind is a constantly changing phenomena and not a concrete entity. Therefore any evaluation cannot be a conclusion. It can at best be a snap shot of a moving phenomena. Second, perceptions, expectations, judgements, and capabilities, are not again concrete entities. They are mental structures or constructed realities that change according to the mental state. Also, what the mind chooses to assess is again a selective perception of the mind. Third, when perceiving an object, the mind tends to refer to its past experiences and memories and in the process tends to project itself on to objects. Given that mind is an instrument, its products and processes have no solidity or permanence, and it seems futile to evaluate, since the evaluations would be far from the truth. For example, an event takes place and the outcome is not entirely satisfactory. What happened? The outcome did not match the expected and painted image in the mind. The question that needs to be asked is, what is so concrete about expectations that one holds on to it?. That it is unsat-
isfactory has been arrived by the mind, by comparing the present experience with so called similar experiences held in memory as reference points. Again, why are comparisons being made and what is so conclusive and final about past experiences that these comparisons become valid? Finally, why is it necessary to hold still a phenomena that is changing (mind) and then evaluate, and how valid and accurate are conclusions arrived through such evaluation? Suppose A decided to assist B. B neither accepted the help nor acknowledged it. Also, for some reason B did not behave congenially. Now, A can evaluate and conclude several things. A could feel rejected because his/her help has been rejected (Is help or action an aspect of self or self itself?). A could feel responsible for B's mood and wonder what he/she could have done differently, or could accuse B for behaving so inappropriately. B's mood and mind states are as variable as A's are. For A the evaluation becomes primary because he/she failed in his/her expectation of rendering help and obtaining recognition for it. A's mind which is the author of the expectation is incapable of moving away from the expectation and assessing the situation objectively. Also, if A's mind is enveloped with regrets then it is even less prepared for an evaluation. A's evaluation ends in a dissatisfaction with the experience either because the experience did not match the expectation, or because it did not match a referential experience stored in memory. The more A is preoccupied with the expectation and outcome, the more he/she is entrenched in the evaluation. During the process of evaluation, A could project a lot of himself/herself onto B. This evaluation then becomes the basis (a structure) for A's future interactions with B. This evaluation would never yield results that are beyond doubt as there are innumerable factors and forces involved in the interaction between A and B, which are hard to take account of let alone identify.
The mind because of its preoccupations is incapable of clear perception and adds its own errors of perception. The only purpose the evaluation serves is to prove that A is capable of evaluation (useful or useless) and provide another preoccupation for the mind.

Self-regulation and monitoring through data accumulation, analysis, and interpretation are believed to lead to insight, understanding, and used predominantly in monitoring one's actions toward goal attainment and improving one's efficiency and effectiveness in performance. While this seems a systematic mode of understanding from objective sciences, it seems inappropriately emphasized in understanding one's own self, as the very process is ridden with subjectivity, misapprehensions, misjudgements, and deceptions that are hard to even identify let alone correct. Given the limited, changing, and transient nature of the mind, not only is it an impossible and a useless task to make sense of the experience but a phenomenal task to identify the sources of error. The mind, which is an instrument of perception, without training is incapable of differentiating its own processes from an external event. Agency rests upon evaluation. However, evaluation itself is dependent on the mind which projects itself on the objects it perceives incorporating a error into perception. Also, with the limitations of the mind it is really impossible to take into account the innumerable factors impinging on a given situation.

In the agency concepts action is evaluated by the outcomes. From the Vedantic point of view, the seeds of action lie in the past and in earlier actions. The outcomes therefore throw very little light on the actions performed.
Proposition VIII: Counselling Strategies Based upon Agency Concepts are Apt to Encourage a Cycle of Limitation

The experience of life is based on the way the self is defined. When self is defined by the narrow concept of agency all action becomes result-oriented. The results attained in turn are assessed and evaluated on the basis of the narrow definition of agency through processes that are error-ridden and unreliable. The analysis and findings not only lead to a plethora of feelings, but also become the basis on which future decisions and actions are based. Both the concept of self as well as the processes of assessment, force individuals to live by past conditionings, and limited definitions. Also, acceptance of an experience in the agency concepts means relating the happening to the self. This again results in great emotional turmoil.

If the goal of counselling was to generate models that free individuals from past conditionings, and help them act under all circumstances irrespective of outcomes, the agency concepts fall short of the goal. The agency concepts are defined by the outcomes achieved, and hence bind individuals to outcomes. Constant self-regulatory assessment assists in bringing the past into the present, thus encouraging repetitive behaviour. Individuals are caught in a cycle of doership and enjoyership. As a result individuals are capable of action as long as there is success or attainment of expected outcomes. When actions do not result in desired outcomes, individuals are paralyzed. They lose the resilience to act and perform with the fervour they initially possessed.

Proposition IX: 'Letting-go' and Transitions are Difficult under the Agency Concepts

In the three agency concepts, generalization of the experience of a
negative outcome over time and to other situations has been a major concern, as past experience plays a major role in determining present and future actions. Positive outcomes too generalized in terms of expectations of similar outcomes for the future. What makes 'letting go' of the experience difficult? The definition of self, the outcome orientation, and evaluation of the experience as a mode of making sense of the experience contribute to the inability to 'let go' of the past.

The self is equated to agency which is the doership and enjoyership. The self is hence defined by its capabilities, sense of control, ability to attain expected outcomes. In a situation where a negative outcome occurs, the individual's sense of control, and capabilities are brought to question. Because this is believed to be the self, the self is violated. It therefore gains pre-eminence and becomes an important preoccupation in the present, and an important input into future decisions and actions.

The evaluation of outcomes and the experience is conducted through a laborious procedure of processing the data, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and judging. Experiences are decoded from various points of reference, such as expectations, beliefs, outcomes, perceptions, and social comparisons. Despite the numerous sources of error possible, the evaluation process, ability of the mind, and the findings are given great credibility as they are again viewed as important aspects of the self. Since perceptions, beliefs, and frames of reference are memories stored, they all belong to the realm of the past. Thus evaluation processes too encourage the operation of the past in the present. Life pursuits based on intellectual understanding and thoughts are based on the past memories (structures).

When concreteness, constancy, permanence, and stability is projected onto factors that are transient and constantly undergoing change, there
is a sense of holding on and a reluctance to 'let go'. Therefore not only is the past allowed to operate in the present, but the present is carried into the future. Because negative outcomes are linked to stable (assumed) aspects in the self, unpallatable experiences appear to exist forever making the emotional impact even stronger making it hard to 'let go'. Also, the attachment to outcomes itself forms a never ending bondage.

According to the Vedantic model and the concepts from Srimad Bhagavad Gita, all the aspects considered as self, under the agency concepts, become the not-self. Actions and outcomes have very little impact on the self. With the dropping of the doership and the enjoyership (realm of the ego and the not-self), individuals are enabled to act with a commitment that is free of the need for results. In turn the results have little impact on the self cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally. This further facilitates performance of actions independent of past and future. When each action is thus performed there remain no residues and therefore very little in terms of 'letting go'. Every action belongs to the realm of the present with all energies focussed on that action.

It appears from the above analysis that a broader definition of self allows greater capacity to accomodate a wide range of experiences, lessens the criticality toward undesirable experiences, increases the acceptance of experiences irrespective of the outcome, enhances reality orientation and the ability to 'let go' of experiences, and makes responses to experiences more emotionally balanced and resilient.

In the light of the above, it may be important for individuals to examine and explore how they define themselves, how this definition has a bearing on their debriefing and acceptance of experiences. Whether or not a person believes the Vedantic model of self, it offers a perspective on the
limitations of agency concepts. The various conceptions of agency are cultural products elevated to universal realities, but lack in their formation a cross-cultural perspective to assess their deficiencies, weaknesses in presuppositions. For this reason, all views of improvement from agency theorists would entrench individuals more firmly in the striving and avoiding that enhance self as an agent. From another perspective, however, a worthwhile goal would be to liberate individuals from such a confining bondage.
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