

Pancha Kosha Theory of Personality

Dr. Biswajit Satpathy^{1*}

ABSTRACT

There exist numerous personality theories. Most of the popular and accepted theories of personality have been developed in the West. But the concepts of personality developed in the Upanishads are full proved and have an intrinsic method to achieve happiness and harmony in life with a higher level of personality. Human personality is a combination of physical/ mental and spiritual dimensions. In the East personality is envisaged as a combination of trigunas (tamas, rajas and satva) which can be referred as the Triguna personality theory. The Taittiriya Upanishad describes human being to be having a five sheaths personality (Pancha Kosha) comprising of the material or gross body (Anamaya Kosha), the vital or instinctual component (Pranamaya Kosha), the mental or psychological component (Manomaya Kosha), the intellectual component (Vigyanmaya Kosha), and the fifth aspect of pure bliss and happiness (Anandmaya Kosha). The Triguna theory of personality has been researched by both the Western and Eastern researchers. But there is a lack of empirical research and development of instruments for Pancha Kosha personality theory. Since the theories are to be culture specific so the Eastern idea of Pancha Kosha should be given proper importance by the researchers of the East and West.

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“Personality refers to the pattern of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviours consistently exhibited over time that strongly influences one's expectations, self-perceptions, values, and attitudes. Personality also predicts human reactions to other people, problems, and stress. Gordon Allport described two major ways to study personality: the nomothetic and the idiographic. Nomothetic psychology seeks general laws that can be applied to many different people, such as the principle of self-actualization or the trait of extraversion. Idiographic psychology is an attempt to understand the unique aspects of a particular individual.”

¹ Professor, Department of Business Administration, Sambalpur University, JyotiVihar, Burla, Sambalpur, Odisha, India

**Responding Author*

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“Personality is a very popular psychological concept of the world. Personality refers to important and relatively stable aspects of behaviour. Personality deals with a wide range of human behaviour. According to many theorists, personality includes virtually everything about a person mental, emotional, social, and physical. Some aspects of personality are unobservable, such as thoughts, memories, and dreams, whereas others are observable, such as overt actions. Personality also includes aspects that are concealed from yourself, or unconscious, as well as those that are conscious and well within your awareness.” (Ewen2003).

“The psychological development of Eric Erikson consists of eight different levels, considering five stages till the age of 18 years and then further three stages, precisely into adulthood. The instinctive approach of McDaugall’s classical and neo-classical or contemporary psychoanalytical theories of personality, Jung’s analytical theory, social psychological theories of Adler and Sullivan; Roger’s person-centred theory, existential theory, Lewin’s field theory, Allport’s psychology of the individual theory, Cattell’s factor theory, stimulus-response theory and skinner’s operant reinforcement theory are the most popular and influential theories that deals with the variant personality pattern and causes of individual difference.” (Kumar and Prasad, 2017)

“The study of personality is one of the major topics of interest within psychology. Numerous personality theories exist and most of the major ones fall into one of four major perspectives. Each of these perspectives on personality attempts to describe different patterns in personality, including how these patterns form and how people differ on an individual level. The four major perspectives as per the Western authors are as follows:

The Psychoanalytic Perspective

The psychoanalytic perspective of personality emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences and the unconscious mind. This perspective on personality was created by psychiatrist Sigmund Freud who believed that things hidden in the unconscious could be revealed in a number of different ways, including through dreams, free association, and slips of the tongue. Neo-Freudian theorists, including Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler and Karen Horney, believed in the importance of the unconscious but disagreed with other aspects of Freud's theories.

The Humanistic Perspective

The humanistic perspective of personality focuses on psychological growth, free will, and personal awareness. It takes a more positive outlook on human nature and is centered on how each person can achieve their individual potential.

The Trait Perspective

The trait perspective of personality is centered on identifying, describing and measuring the specific traits that make up human personality. By understanding these traits, researchers believe they can better comprehend the differences between individuals.

The Social Cognitive Perspective

The social cognitive perspective of personality emphasizes the importance of observational learning, self-efficacy, situational influences and cognitive processes.”

THE VEDANTIC PERSPECTIVE

The Triguna Theory Most of the Western theories of personality deals with one or some aspects of person and generally believes that the personality is a fixed set of behaviour. “However it does not perceive the notion that the people can change over time and personality can be modified by the person concerned through his free will. As per the ancient Indian philosophy personality can be refined with ‘tapas’ and value based education.” (Kumar and Prasad 2017)

“One of the Indian concepts of personality is the Triguna theory. In the East Triguna is considered an important personality concept. Compared to Western models of personality, Triguna is less popular. Even in the East, research on Triguna is scarce. From the perspective of personality psychology, Guna are considered more durable and lasting in a person, if the element of inner freedom is not used to consciously override behaviour. This means that the majority of the people, who are propelled into action without using their inner freedom, are more likely to express trait aspects of Guna. The behaviour of those who consciously try to use their inner freedom may be less predictable as they may consciously override inner tendencies to behave constructively. Given an element of inner freedom, therefore, Guna may be both trait and state, with predominance requiring judgment according to context. In general, the Guna are considered as a trait concept. In Ayurvedic text also it can be found that personality is described as 16 types, seven sattva, six rajas and three tamas, which are majorly trait characteristics. There are about a dozen questionnaires to assess Guna. These Guna questionnaires were mostly developed in 70s and 80s, mainly from India. The Vedic Personality Inventory developed by David Wolf, (1999) developed in the western population, is one of the most rigorously validated questionnaires until date, in which the author has used statistical procedure called factor analysis for validation. The most recently developed tool is the Mysore Triguna Scale developed by Shilpa et al.(2012). In this work, the authors have attempted to develop scales both based on Triguna and on Tridosha, an Ayurvedic concept to classify people based on their prakriti.” (Ilavarasu 2013)

"The theoretical expositions on Triguna and their manifestations in human nature have attracted the attention of Indian psychologists. The concept has been examined theoretically (Boss, 1966; Mishra, 2001; Parameswaran, 1969; Rao, 1962, 1979) and empirically (Kapur et al., 1997; Marutham, Balodhi and Misra, 1998; Mathew, 2004; Mohan and Sandhu, 1986, 1988; Pathak, Bhatt and Sharma, 1992; Rao and Harigopal, 1979; Sebastian and Mathew, 2002; Sharma, 1999; Singh, 1972; Sitamma, Sridevi and P.V.K. Rao, 1995; Uma, Lakshmi and Parameswaran, 1971; Wolf, 2000)". (Essays, UK. November 2013).

“The Tridoshas form a bottom-up processing from the atomic and cellular level to give us an understanding of the person as a whole while the Triguna form a top-down processing from

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the intellectual/ psychological level to give us an understanding of the person in totality. These two systems form the body-mind-spirit holistic unit of understanding personality that is very important and is a well-developed and tested methodology from Ayurvedic (principles)- (the medical aspect of Indian tradition) perspective, which has been handed down through the millennia, leading to a better understanding of human traits, types, behaviours, interests, attitudes, and natures. These two comprehensive methodologies of understanding people is pan-global and is applicable to people of all races, religions, ethnicities, genders, languages, cultures, geographical indicators and any and all divisions across the world and human civilization, without distinction. This respects that we are all a part of the same species while also allowing us unique personalities with different combinations of the same Pancha Mahabhutas.”

PANCHA KOSHAS PERSONALITY THEORY

There is another way of understanding the personality from the point of view of Pancha Koshas theory, mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanishad. This is the vedantic psycho-philosophical view of human personality and similar to the trait perspective of personality where each Kosha exhibit certain characteristics. “The ancient Indian model of “Personality”, given in the Taittiriya Upanishad, consists of the ‘five’ sheaths. They are ‘Annamaya’ (food sheath), ‘Pranamaya’ (vital air sheath), ‘Manomaya’ (mental sheath), ‘Vijnanamaya’ (intellectual sheath), and ‘Anandamaya’ (bliss sheath). ‘Annamaya’; a segment of human system is nourished by ‘anna’, that is, food. ‘Pranamaya’ is that segment which is nourished by ‘prana’, that is, ‘bioenergy’. ‘Manomaya’ is the segment nourished by ‘education’. ‘Vijnanamaya’ is nourished by ‘ego’ and ‘Anandamaya’ is the segment nourished by ‘emotions’.” (Srivastava 2012)

No research paper has yet come to our notice relating to Pancha Kosha and its impact on personality. This research paper is an attempt to highlight the Pancha Kosha Personality theory in the arena of personality research. Pancha Kosha theory is a hierarchical theory of personality. The five Koshas are the five sheaths of human personality. Each sheath has its own characteristics. Our body-mind system is a complex structure. “Human body has three bodies where all these five Koshas reside. They are: Gross body (Sthula Sharira), Subtle body or Astral Body (Linga Sharira) and Causal body (Karana Sharira). Gross body or Sthula Sharira is the physical body. Subtle or Astral body or Linga Sharira is the vital energy field, mental and intellectual state. Causal body or Karana Sharira is the ego. The Gross body is controlled by the Astral body. Astral body and the Gross body both are controlled by the Causal body. The physical sheath is the Gross body; the sheath of prana (the vital air) is in the Astral body. **Astral body** contains Pranamaya Kosha (sheath of prana), the Manomaya Kosha (sheath of mind), and the Vigyanmaya Kosha (sheath of intellect). Anandmaya Kosh (sheath of bliss) resides in the Causal body (Karana Sharira). These sheaths are located one inside the other with the sheath of the physical body being the outermost and the sheath of bliss being the innermost. Karana Sharira or Causal body is the map template which is the sole cause for the gross and subtle bodies.” (<http://www.thekundaliniyoga.org/>)

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Pranamaya Kosha, movement of the pranic force directs our physical and mental activities. The Linga sharira (subtle body) surrounds the Sthula Sharira (physical body) as an aura of energy. Mana is the rational, linear, sequential, thoughtful mind. Buddhi is the quality of discrimination which comes through knowledge. The former constitutes the Manomaya Kosha, while the latter is called as the Vigyanamaya Kosha.

“A person who resided predominantly in the Annamaya Kosha believes that he is only the physical body. He is attached and consumed solely by the physical form. He gives more importance to physical things. Such persons are good sports man and loves physical fitness programs like games, sports, aerobics, Karate, body building, physical comfort, food, dress etc. A person who experience Pranamaya Kosha believe for a time that he is the finer energy animating the physical form and gives importance to Meditation and Physical exercise. Such people are very active and energetic. The next is Manomaya Kosha. The person residing in this layer has thoughts and desires which identify with form and name, position and qualities. He is emotional in nature. This person lacks the cognitive abilities of reasoning and is void of any discrimination but may have keen appreciation for fine arts, music and dance and drama. The person residing in Vigyanamaya Kosha is knowledgeable and wise. Loves literature, creative and are good orators. This fourth sheath is the wisdom that lies beneath the processing, thinking aspect of the mind. He knows, decides, judges, and discriminates between the information he processes and is innovative. Discovery, research and management are the areas where these people are involved in.” Persons experiencing Anandamaya Kosha are stable in behaviour and firm in decision, are happy in every state of life and appreciate higher order of things and thinking like Nature, prayers, meditation connection with God etc. They are self realized persons. In the following Table 1, a list of characteristics of different Kosha is given; accordingly a person having consciousness of the specific Kosha would exhibit characteristics of the respective Kosha. For example person having consciousness regarding Manomaya Kosha will be having Will power to perform an action.

Table 1 Depicting the Kosha and Their Characteristics

Kosha	Annamaya Kosha	Pranamaya Kosha	Manomaya Kosha	Vigyanamaya Kosha	Anandamaya Kosha
Characteristic	Inertia	Movement	Passive Knowledge	Acquisition of Knowledge, Decision making	Intuition, Idea generation
Quality	Passivity	Activity	Knowledge	Intellect, Ego	Happiness
Shakti	Āvarana shakti	Kriyā shakti	Ichchā shakti	Gyāna shakti	Bhoga shakti
Power, Energy	Unconsciousness	Activity	Will power	Wisdom	Joy, Pleasure, Blissful

“As discussed above the theory of Pancha Kosha is a way of transformation or transcendence from lower self to highest self and change in personality. A person remains always happy and

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has a cheerful personality if he attains the Anandamaya Kosha, a state of eternal peace, love and harmony. This transformation makes us videh i.e. free from body or detached from body. This is a state of eternal bliss and is beyond all kind of attachment and cravings. You are involved with all but unattached to all. Personality is not absolute but relative and gives the man a chance to introspect and eradicate the defilement of each Koshas step by step. There are many ways to achieve this transformation or transcendence. Examples are Astang Yoga of Patanjali, Budhiest Vipasyana or Integral Yoga of Maharshi Aurobindo. It is up to the person concerned to adopt the way, but once he realizes its importance, through practice success would come to him.”

CONCLUSION

There is a need for developing indigenous psychologies because the theories are to be culture specific. The Western theories are based on the Western culture and their backdrop. So this paper is a humble attempt to understand human personality through Eastern thought and culture. In this paper an endeavour has been made to throw light on one of the most ancient Indian theory of personality that has been over sighted by both Eastern and Western researchers. Some empirical studies are also to be done to establish this concept. The paper assumes that through Yogic training, personality can be changed. There is scope to develop a Pancha Kosha Scale to identify the level of consciousness of a person. People can be trained to transcendence from lower self to highest self and change the personality. In the modern life we have more materialistic avenues but we see more suicide, divorce, crime, family disturbance, less motivation to work and so many other personal and social problems. Man is not happy today. So the research on Pancha Kosha theory may open up new ways for achieving the bliss and happiness for the mankind by modifying the personality from lower self to higher self.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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