

Psychology of Everyday
Prof. Braj Bhushan
Dr. Alok Bajpai
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture – 08
Revisiting Normal-Abnormal Dilemma – IV

So, continuing from the last session, when we were talking about going through the suffering and rising and not getting caught and why these type of life incidents emotions which are still there. We are always woven into a narrative and never considered as a pathology and through the story. Through the life stories through the incidents, the way out was always discovered probably that is why they did not become pathology. Because pathology means.

Yeah.

Separation, a separate partly, because as you said that these two-threese ways are beneficial for most people and, to maintain the social order the term you use. So, let me ask you what people think if this is not the best alternative, what are the alternatives then?

I think there is always a critical mass who thinks that this is the way thing should be approached.

Right.

And, this critical mass constitutes of those who have experienced certain suffering in their life. So, they have the experience of sinking and then sailing across and then finally, coming to the shore. So, they are the ones who have experienced all the three stages. So, in a sense they have become little wiser in their life and they have accepted that suffering is an integral part of human living. They have also realized that while they were sinking they had to compromise with their duties and as a duty-bound human being after they started sailing, they must have realize they have to reach the shore because duties are still left out. And, this wisdom either a critical mass which would have definitely experienced it would have shared with others.

And, those who would have bought the idea they would have been the ones who would have been on one side who we are now referring to as normal people and there would have been some experimentalists who would still have some conviction with whatever we are talking about, but would have their own critical way of looking at things. And, would like to introduce some manipulations in their life which would safeguard them from these kind of life experiences.

Right.

And, these manipulations are perhaps the ones know we were referring to when you mentioned that in Mahabharata also you have many things know to take care of lust, to take care of greed, to take care of.

Yes.

Other kinds of human feelings, emotions and this we find in the modern time also. It is not that people who are exercising certain experimentalism in their life. They do not know that being duty-bound is important.

Right.

Getting liberated from such kind of.

Right.

Say not so stable kind of anchors in life is important.

Right.

But, then they still have somewhere an experimentalist in their brain which tells us let me do this and see if this succeeds then I will.

Absolutely.

Keep the other root.

Absolutely.

And some of them succeed perhaps because.

Right.

The attempt.

Right.

Survives in the society.

Right.

So, there would be some success models.

Right.

Which others are trying to follow.

Right.

And, many of them or I should say some of them who are not able to successfully move on this track perhaps they are the ones who become who deviate and of those who deviate are the ones who would some of them would come to the clinic who would be then classified suffering from one of the.

Right.

Other kind of a deviation.

Right. So, given that the human mind has lot of reward centers. And, dopamine and that is how it is evolved it is a appetitive, explorative, it will always keep trying to do new things. Some of these things have succeed and they continue in genetic mutation or cultural means as Richard Dawkins says. Some of these things which bring in bad result tell the mind that it is not right maybe that was the beginning of morality.

Yeah.

We do something, you get a negative feedback your mind does not feel good you do not do it. As long as you can continue doing it you will keep experimenting. At some point of time these conflicting situations may come to head within the mind outside.

Yeah.

Mind, and then people have a chance to change, but whether people will change or not they have a conscious choice in that or it is still the unconscious which pushes them their conditioning and that is how addictions and all these happen. People continue doing the same thing one out of many may really at a critical point may decide to take a different trajectory like it happens in chaos. Change the initial condition and so, all these keeps happening in human mind right.

Now, so, that means, if we leave apart 5 – 10 percent of people who have real illnesses. Real illnesses like schizophrenia which obviously, require some other intervention. 90 percent of people whom we are talking in clinical psychology and psychiatry and all may actually not be having illness.

Why they are called illness because there is a fallacy also. Now, that irrational fear happens in a situation for example, you are talking about it now and you go and study, you will find some genes connected to it because obviously, it was always there. It has come into your brain networks.

Yeah.

Everything is happening through brain only.

So, obsession is happening in the brain. Is it not?

Yeah.

So, obsession maybe some people have more predilection to have obsessive symptoms. Or they are more obsessive than others. All of us know what obsessions are. Nobody can say they have never experienced what an obsession is. If a mind gets stuck into some personal crisis, if we go in loop what will people do? They again do the same thing, they move on. So, alternative of not moving on is getting head-on and destroying like wars. So, but wisdom you use the word I think humanity is mind is still not matured.

They know what is good, but they will not do it. Like decision about war, you go you attain a certain victory and get hold of whatever wealth and oil fields or whatever what is the endpoint of it? Does the misery end there? It gives you a sense of get if a dopamine kick, a mind is pushing. Like that Pokémon game.

What do you go and jumping around getting Pokémon like PUBG kids play or like this WWF or whatever thing, it is just about a kick. So, a collective kick or a religious, communal kick or a so, that gives you a certain sense of victory probably victory on the external world probably it appears as the victory over the other person or a group or whatever. Internally it is a again it is just a temporary forgetting of your permanent insecurity in the head.

Yeah.

In that moment dopamine gives you a kick, then you think I am invincible. So, this invincibility often appears in literature and poetry and epics and all. People know that it was what is right and wrong. So, there is this story where Duryodhan, the Kaurava prince, was asked [FL] you do not have any idea about what right the righteous dharma is. He gave a whole lecture on it. So, it is a people said you know it. Is it so? It is not my nature to do this. So, I think this whole confusion of pathology versus non-pathology is because the way it is approached.

So, what was inbuilt in narrative would we call Gandhi as abnormal? Because when the whole England was moving in overcoats and pullovers Gandhi had one shawl and he walked up to Buckingham palace to meet which prompted Churchill to say half seditious Fakir. So, how many people dropped off their clothes when they saw poor people Gandhi dropped. He said I cannot give them. Let me be like them. How many people will do it? We will not even get this idea actually.

Even when you want to help people what we do is, we give something. We never try to come down to alright. So, now, this is abnormal by all standards is in not normal cognitive process, but this is it. So, again we have I will bring a new word now. WHO says mental health is a sense of well being in spiritual so on so forth. Normal is normal healthy.

In fact, WHO's own definition has undergone revision so many times.

Yes.

And every revision has added.

Absolutely.

Few new terms.

Absolutely.

And spirituality and well being, they have been added. Spirituality especially have been added towards the much later review.

Spiritual well being. So, Gandhi by statistical norms was abnormal. By Western standards; by Indian standards he was normal because most people live just in a dhoti in villages right.

He was healthy because instead of getting onto violent ways because he had a very simple thing he defined people ask him what is why are you so against violence? He says it is not against violence. By violence you can eliminate somebody and finish his bad behavior and evil, but nobody is purely bad. So, when you kill him, you will also kill some goodness in him. Now, this is I do not think there any debate in this. Even the worst person would be good to somebody.

Yeah.

So, what happens to that goodness, you have finished that also.

In fact, the epics that we talked about in both the epics Ramayan and Mahabharat all characters uniformly they have both the shades.

Both the shades. So, that.

One side would dominate.

Absolutely.

Compared to the other side.

Absolutely.

But, all of all characters.

Absolutely.

Know have both the shades.

Absolutely.

And, so, is the life of the normal people also.

Normal people. So, normal may be healthy abnormal may be destructive for time, but what we talking for alternatives you can choose to go head-on and destroy and all that, but what will happen the destruction will is it going to last forever no. It will end. Again, you have to leave. So, what happens then? Will people be able to bear the guilt and shame of this destruction? Will they become normal after destruction? Do people become normal after killing? I do not think we have answers for this.

Yeah.

Do people feel happy after insulting somebody or embarrassing somebody or destroying somebody? So, I will take another example move out of India. Jesus Christ, he was taking everybody signor himself Prophet Mohammad he had to fight a battle to establish the order. He was also trying to establish a Dharma nothing else, trying to give a code of conduct to lot of warring factions and the ignorance. All of these people had to fight, but look at it even whether it is mythology or history all these people had to face the exact opposite of what they were professing in their life. Jesus Christ was nailed. He had to go suffering in is death also. Gandhi was shot is it not?

Prophet had to fight a battle all is life. So, that means, this whole concept the way we have simplified it into pathology and all is a artifact of our modern times for convenience sake. That is what I think.

Yeah.

I may be practicing and earning my bread and butter out of that, but that is the different issue.

Another aspect I think is also associated with this. When I in the modern times when I am myself being apprehensive of my behavior and trying to find out if I have a pathology. Or, if somebody like you tells me that no you deviate from the normal course by this much and this is termed as some kind of a pathology for which you have an pharmaceutical or behavioral intervention. But, one important thing would also be that whatever abrasion or deviation I am thinking of or others are pointing out to, do they

really make a difference in my life. For instance, I prefer arranging papers and books all my belongings on my table in order. For me that is an order that I like to see an order that I like to maintain. And for somebody it is a reflection of OCD: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Now, my arrangement of a stationary does not interfere with my productivity, it does not interfere with my normal course of life. And not does it affect anybody else who crisscrosses my way of life. So, why this should be classified as a disorder? I should be happy with the way I am doing things. Similarly, say like if I am.

Lot of see, I will also tell you I will bring in another complication.

Yeah.

Lot of this highbrow thinking scientist may frowned at me, but I am also from their side only lot of morality is involved in all these. Let me extend this. One person may have hundred relationships and he can maintain that without each interfering into the other one. It becomes the moral issue for the society, he is not disturbing anybody. So, where does the concept come from? Concept comes from possessiveness. That love is some quote of hundred. You have to minus and distribute, but in older times this morality was not there.

Yeah.

People use to have 10 marriages. What older times even recent times kings were supposed to do, who objected to them?

Yeah.

But, if you apply modern lens to how kings were living I think you will always find that they were lecherous people and but, what is all these happening in media and people being blamed and all these are same stuff. Now, are they psychiatrically ill?

Can we answer this question? No. Can we all pick up a newspaper, any newspaper when you are saying this it is not disturb disturbing anybody's life, what is the problem? And, this is a simple excise which everybody I think should do by the next session. Just pick up newspaper for 2 – 3 days, just listen to some news especially after elections are over

not now. And, just note down one or two sentences of 10 incidents and the type of people whose on whom news is being made right. Just do not bother whether just look at it and ask is it abnormal or normal?

That would be a good exercise.

It will be a good exercise.

Good exercise and in fact, if we get the feed from others.

Yes.

What they think.

Yeah. So, if it is abnormal, then why are not they be psychiatrist? And, if they have to be psychiatrist, then half the world will end up with psychiatrists actually.

See this is the type of a stuff which is happening in psychiatry. When I said problem of living the stuff is there is a relationship issue. Two intelligent people will not sort out, they will go to a psychiatrist. A kid is not studying if he is not studying because of learning disability, you get a screening learn and all that nothing is there even then treatment.

In India they would say there is a word in Hindi called [FL] I am not feeling up to it. Now, feeling up to it cannot become an illness. And, especially what do you said social thing in a country like India or country like third world countries where there is are so many problems of living. Where the man in a average man is in a grind in life of earning his bread and butter bringing up his kids, where is the relief and if once his mind gets off it and he feel does not feel like working. Would you call it abnormal?

Suppose, I decide I suppose sitting in India say a 6 months I do not want to do psychiatry for example, and I say I want to maybe give you give me a lab job 20,000 rupees, I will be happy coming 9 to 5 not taking anything.

Because 20 years people what will you say? What will you suggest me? Let us do it exercise here itself.

In fact, in a country like ours this option is never open to you.

But, same thing my colleagues in Australia after 10 years of work they take a 1 year of sabbatical.

In US they can go and work as a bartender.

Exactly.

That is accepted there.

Sabbatical is an option even here, but then it is open only to academics.

It is not open to me.

It is not open to everyone.

Yes, so.

And, US of course, gives you that option know that you can switch from one to the

So.

Other professions.

What is a happening lot of people leave medicine in US.

You burnout is a reality. So, when we as technical people sitting in our academical areas can talk of burnout, why does not a normal average clerk burnout? He also burns out.

Yeah, that is true.

So, now this is a source of pathology. This guy one day says enough. These are the type of people who are brought to clinic in India. One person who is not talking suddenly for 2-3 months he is become quite, he is not socializing, does not want to do, the whole family brings saying he is not talking, he is changed and the psychiatrist because they also have an anxiety of being medically oriented. They tend to diagnose and treated. Now, but the question is, is it pathological?

But, of course, there is a can it admission from your side. But, most of the practitioners would not even admit this.

So, why I am saying why is it a pathology that this person does not want to work?

I would I say I do not want to see any more patients may be 20 years of psychiatry has told me that I have a limited influence. There may be people who will be benefiting from me. But still for me it is listening to misery everyday becomes a.

Something that I would like to change.

It will become a pathology. That is why I think in India you find it very rare people changing jobs or leaving jobs.

Now, still this possibility that people in high corporate world they leave and they become one of my friend we has become a mythologies, one is a writer, but on the first go people will say they something wrong with the person.

Yeah, that is true, that is true.

If something wrong with the person brings in moral stance right, social stance, personal-psychological stance and then the next word is what we call is pathological which was not there in ancient India. Sanyas was considered as.

Yeah.

Normalcy.

That is true, that is true. So, you mentioned it rightly know that we had that temporal progression where at the end you know that this is where you are now phasing out gradually.

Absolutely.

And at phasing out was personally and socially both expectable and therefore, there was no pathology involved.

Yeah and this is nothing new. Albert Einstein in his ideas and opinions he has written at one place. He was also Sanyasi in his own way. He had very he was pacifist bothered about humanity, but he would never relate to people personally and he wrote it. He say one hundred talk of piece and pacifisms and all, but personally, I find it very difficult to be close to somebody.

So, he wrote one place that science labs are filled with people who are just running away from the grind of life. So, these were the people who are Rishis also. Who would they have run away from life actually? So, why I am saying this, why pathology was never considered pathology, because Indian society at least Indian society always accepted diversity; I have had a huge sponge-like absorbed absorption capacity. A mentally retarded kid in a village would be taken care by the villagers.

He would never be ostracized. Like today where you need especially schools to send this kids, nobody absorbs them. He would go to school with normal kids other kids will take care pathology disability disappears.

Yeah.

He would be given a job which was up to his caliber. Now, what is the caliber? You have to there is a benchmark. So, lot I am saying this psychopathology on which we thrive on which pharmaceutical industries thrive a lot of it is not all biological. It is of a psychosocial origin.

Get it, get it. Fully agree and in last 5 – 6 sessions we have been thoroughly talking about it.

Yes.

And, let us know in the next sessions.

Yes.

Let us take a specific kind of issues that people experience in their life which are in the modern terms classified as different kinds of disorders.

And, then try to see.

All alternatively.

Because we are doing lot of freewheeling of thought and audience will have to pick it up from the ideas. So, this is almost midway. So, it will be worthwhile if we can get either the audience sends us questions.

We can invite.

On the forum.

We can invite in the small group.

Or we invite few young people.

Revertative of especially.

The (Refer Time: 26:18).

The young people.

Yeah.

Who are living in modern times and who have seen a bit of past and bit of future and we interact for about, but 2 hours with them and let them bring out whatever issues they want.

And we have.

Their perspective of.

Whatever issues. So, whatever issues they bring up we will try to take it from this parameter only.

Of normalcy and abnormalcy. So, it will become a workshop type of stuff.

It is basic, it is basically now understanding things through the lengths of

All perspectives.

All perspectives.

Psychological perspective and we will take. So, then maybe what we have been discussing the initial question that what point of time we decide a clinical requirement what can be done together, what can be done through social support system or religion is not off. God is still not left.

Through that, through meditation lot of people will come and say I will do this meditation, I do reiki, I do this and still I am lock. So, obviously, they have they are doing it, we do not distrust them. But, why is it not helping?

Yeah.

And, what is the guarantee that whatever medicines we are doing giving will cure? Psychiatry does not cure. Let me tell you, we do not cure. What we do is cure means there is an illness, we have given a medicine and the illness has disappeared.

But, episodic illnesses do not disappear they keep coming. The schizophrenia the prognoses has changed, it has improved a lot, but still people require medicines. Panic attack you have to take medicines for 6 months, it can still recover. After stopping medicines the 50 percent probability of anything recurring again.

So, this is not a total myth peoples says [FL] once you become a psychiatry patient your all. So, medicines, depression if you do not treat it is a self-limiting disease endogenous depression right and for depression which is arising out of life situations you have other mechanisms.

Yeah.

So, these are whole conflict then right. So, it will be worthwhile sir, if we can next recall people, let them raise issues from common life.

Yeah.

And, we examine each one of them through its sources biological, psychological social; see where intervention is possible and what can be handled by people themselves.

Exactly.

And, how other mechanisms work.

Sure, we will do it in the incoming sessions.