

# LESSON 1

## PSYCHOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING SELF AND OTHER

### SUMMARY

We are very curious to know the things happening around us. We try to make sense of the available information and form our opinions.

### Need for the study of Psychology

Psychology is the subject that provides insights into various aspects of human behaviour. It aims to provide reliable and relatively accurate understanding of the principles describing the working of the human mind and behaviour. Through psychology, we can develop a better understanding of ourselves and others.

The scope of psychology is broad. It is used in multiple fields, for e.g. – development, teaching and learning, socialization, motivation and emotions, assessment and training.

### Nature of Psychology

Psychology tries to understand the laws and principles characterizing the linkages across them in a scientific manner. Thus, **Psychology is defined as the scientific study of mind, brain and behaviour.**

### What Psychologists do?

A psychologist uses certain procedures and tools to collect information and tries to draw inferences and conclusions about the probable causes of behaviour.

The twin goals of psychologists are-

- understanding and explaining the complexities of behaviour (academic psychologists), and
- Contributing to the improvement of the quality of human life (applied psychologists).

Psychologists are now seen working at different institutions like - research and teaching institutions, hospitals, schools, industries, sports-complexes, military establishments, community centres and so on.

### Development of Psychology as a Discipline

The Indian thought systems like Vedas, Samkhya, Yoga, Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism, etc. have generated voluminous literature relevant to psychological processes. But there is a need to understand the concept in Indian context because social and cultural settings have their own influence on the development of Psychology.

In western world, towards the end of the 19th century, Wilhelm Wundt established the first Psychology laboratory in Germany, 1879. From there on, various schools of thought began. The main schools are as follows:

**Structuralism** (Edward Titchener)

**Functionalism** (William James)

**Behaviourism** (J.B. Watson)

**Gestalt** (Wolfgang Kohler, Kurt Koffka, Max Wertheimer)

**Psychoanalysis** (Sigmund Freud)

In modern India, Psychology started at Calcutta University in 1916. Dr.N.N Sengupta. Gradually psychology departments were opened in various universities like Patna, Lucknow and Mysore.

## Major Psychological Perspectives

As psychology studies human behaviour and human behaviour is easily influenced by various factors. So, it is necessary to keep certain things in mind while studying human behaviour:

Observed changes can be due to maturation, learning and ageing.

Human behaviour is an interaction between personal traits and environment.

The measurement of psychological attributes (e.g., personality, intelligence, interest, and attitude) is usually indirect and based on inferences.

Many aspects of social behaviour are norm-based and culture specific.

Human behaviour is usually determined by multiple factors.

Let's understand the different perspectives of psychology:

**Biological:** It is primarily concerned with the relationship between psychological processes and the underlying physiological events.

**Behavioural:** This perspective stresses on the role of environmental stimuli in determining the way people act. It argues that what we are is largely the result of past learning.

**Psychodynamic:** Focusing on motivational questions about behaviour, this perspective examines the role of internal processes.

**Cognitive:** According to this view, our behaviour involves mental or cognitive processes such as perceiving, remembering and thinking. As active organisms, we process information and act upon it.

**Humanistic:** Often termed as a third force, this view talks about "choice" and "free will" in human behaviour.

**Indian:** In this view, human beings are embedded in relationship with environment and divinity; and harmony of mind, body and soul is emphasized.

## Relationship of Psychology with other disciplines

Now we will focus upon the relationship of psychology with other subjects;

**Sociology:** Society (sociology) is composed of individuals (psychology) and i.e., both the subjects are interrelated. Under this relation, influences of social

context on human behaviour, phenomena such as leadership, socialization etc. can be studied.

**Anthropology:** It focuses on the cultural context of human evolution. In recent years the relationship between culture and psychology has become closer as psychology seeks to understand how the influences of culture, mind, and personality interact.

**Education:** The theory and practice of education is based on the principles and findings about various psychological processes like learning, memory, motivation, personality and intelligence.

**Biology and Neuroscience:** this perspective focuses on the understanding of localization of brain functions, biological factors in arousal and motivation, and the role of various parts of the brain in determining psychological functioning.

## Fields of Psychology

In the following segment, we shall look at different fields of psychology;

**Experimental and cognitive psychology:** Cognitive psychology is a modern perspective in psychology that focuses on memory, intelligence, perception, problem solving, and learning. The goal is to understand the principles underlying sensation, memory etc., processes with the help of experimental methods.

**Physiological and comparative psychology:** Physiological psychology focuses on the analysis of biological foundations of

behaviour. Comparative psychology focuses on the behaviour among animals like rats, pigeons and monkeys and compares those across species.

**Developmental psychology:** The focus is on the changes that occur throughout the lifespan of an individual. These changes take place in physical, motor, cognitive, personality, emotional, social and linguistic domains.

**Social Psychology:** Social psychology tries to understand the influence of other individuals and groups on our behaviour.

**Educational and School psychology:** It helps in solving the problems of teaching and learning. The major focus is on curriculum planning, teacher-training and instruction-design.

**Counselling psychology:** A counselling psychologist deals with people who have milder emotional and personal problems such as marital discord, school maladjustment, dispute in work setting, etc.

**Clinical psychology:** Its aim is to identify the negative or problematic aspects in development and their alleviation, for e.g., - phobia, anxiety, depression etc.

**I/O psychology:** its focus is on the process of personnel selection, training, solving problems related to communication, productivity, and interpersonal and intergroup relations in industries/organizations.

**Environmental psychology:** this field specializes in understanding

the relationship between human beings and the environment.

**Engineering psychology:** it tries to specify the capacities and limitations of human-machine-environment systems so that the system can be operated safely and efficiently.

**Health psychology:** It is an emerging branch of psychology which focuses on understanding the factors that promote the status of health.

### **Current Trends: The changing face of Psychology**

Some of the current trends that are prominent in shaping this discipline are as follows:

1. Emphasis on Cultural Context
2. Breakthrough in Neurosciences
3. Multidisciplinary Concerns

### **Do you know?**

**1879** - Wilhelm Wundt established the first psychological laboratory at Leipzig University in Germany.

**1916** - Dr.N.N Sengupta (HOD) started the first department of Psychology in India at Calcutta University.

**1924** - Indian Psychological Association was founded.

**1925** - Indian Journal of Psychology was started.

**1940** - Lumbini Park Mental Hospital at Calcutta was founded.

### **Evaluate yourself –**

1. Explain the nature of psychology. Write the different schools of thought in psychology.
2. Shed light upon the Indian psychological perspective and how it has advanced through ages.
3. What are the different approaches of psychology? Explain.
4. Briefly describe at least eight fields of psychology.