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PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

*I*n the previous lesson, you learnt about different theories of personality. These were the psychoanalytic, trait, social-cognitive, humanistic and the Indian approach to personality, based on gunas. If we wish to determine aspects of a person's personality based on a particular theory, there are specific techniques for assessing those. For example, if you wish to know about the dominant traits in a person, e.g., whether he is an extrovert or introvert, there are specific ways developed by psychologists, to get this information. Similarly, if we wish to know about the unconscious aspects of a person's personality, we will have to use psychoanalytic ways of assessing the same. In this lesson you will learn about the different ways of personality assessment.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- assess personality based on different theoretical approaches.

19.1 ASSESSING PERSONALITY TRAITS

There are two ways of assessing personality traits. One method consists of asking a set of questions which a person has to answer about his/her opinions, feelings and actions. For this purpose, a personality inventory is used. In the second approach, some other person makes assessments about a person's traits, based on prior knowledge about that person, or by direct observation of the person. This is called the rating-scale approach.



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Personality inventories are questionnaires where a person has to answer many questions about the way she/he reacts to different situations. A personality inventory may be designed to assess a single trait like extroversion-introversion, or it may assess a number of traits. For example, if a person answers “Yes” to the question “Do you stay in the background in social situations?” this is an indication of introversion. Of course, the assessment will be based on a number of questions relating to different types of situations, not just one question. The Sixteen Factor Personality Questionnaire (16 PF) and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) are two very well known inventories which are useful for obtaining information about a person’s traits.

Inventories are very useful, but when a person has to report about his/her reactions, sometimes we can be biased about our own characteristics. To overcome this problem, another way of assessing personality traits has been developed based on rating scales. For example a person may be asked to describe the self-confidence level of another person, using of 7 point scale ranging from very low “(1) to very high” (7).

There are certain conditions which the raters must fulfil, for the rating to be useful and valid. The raters must (a) be able to understand the scale, (b) know the person well about whom the rating has to be made, and, (c) not get biased in his/her judgment, about the person, and rate in favourable or unfavourable way.

19.2 ASSESSMENT IN PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

As you will recall from the previous lesson, the psychoanalytic approach focuses on a person’s unconscious conflicts and motives. But the unconscious part of person’s personality, (the major part in this view), is hidden from one’s self-awareness. Psychoanalysts, therefore, have to use indirect symbolic information and interpret this to uncover the unconscious conflicts and motives. This approach is called projective technique.

In this approach, if the psychoanalyst wants to obtain knowledge of unconscious processes in a person’s psyche, she/he presents certain ambiguous material and asks the person to describe what she/he sees. This ambiguous material may be on ink-blot, or a picture which leads to the person “reading” or projecting some meaning into it from personal experience or fantasy. In this way, the person’s unconscious mind is tapped and something is revealed about it. The ‘Rorschach Test’ and the ‘Thematic Apperception Test’ (TAT) are two well known projective tests. The former is based on ink-blot and the latter consists of pictures containing human characters. For example, a TAT picture may have an outline of boy from the back, looking at the sun. On being asked what she/he sees, a person may

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respond that “The boy is thinking that she/he will achieve great things in life”. In this way the person may have projected his/her own dream of achieving great things in life.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.1**

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words

1. In _____ a person has to answer many questions about the way she/he reacts to different situations.
2. A description of a person's traits, based on prior knowledge, is called the _____ approach.
3. _____ uses indirect symbolic meaning which is interpreted by the psychoanalyst to uncover unconscious conflicts.
4. _____ test consists of pictures containing human figures about which a person is required to tell a brief story.

19.3 ASSESSMENT IN HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

As you have learnt, the humanistic approach to personality focuses on how a person experiences her/his world. Therefore, assessment here is concerned with understanding the perception of a person about his/her life situation and experience. A number of methods have been developed to measure a person's self-concept. One approach is based on the person selecting, from a number of descriptive sentences, those which describe him/her in an accurate way. (e.g., “I am a confident person”, “I am often nervous”, “I am a sincere and hard working student, etc.). Another approach focuses on a person's willingness to express his/her inner nature or self to others. This approach is based on the understanding that the tendency for very high or very low level of self-disclosure are both an indication of emotional immaturity.

19.4 ASSESSMENT OF GUNAS

In the last lesson you also studied about the Indian approach to personality which emphasises the three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In order to assess a person's nature based on this conception, we need to have an understanding of which Guna is predominant in a person's life, in thought, speech and action, and then which is



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less dominant, and finally which is the least. For example, a person who is extremely truthful, detached, and helpful is likely to be high on Sattva. In order to assess which Guna is predominant in an individual's personality, we have to obtain combined information using questionnaires, observation etc. Some inventories have been developed which gives us some information about the way the Gunas are active in an individual's personality.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.2

Fill in the blanks:

1. In the _____ approach, assessment focuses on how a person perceive his/her world.
2. A person's willingness to expose his/her inner nature or self to other's is referred to as the tendency for _____.
3. Assessment in the Indian Guna approach attempts to find out, which Guna is _____ in an individual's personality.
4. _____ method which is used in the trait approach is also used for the Guna perspective.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Personality assessment is related to the theory of personality through which we want to understand a person.
- The trait approach to assessment uses personality inventories, and rating scales.
- The psychoanalytic approach to assessment uses the projective technique where a person describes ambiguous material like inkblots.
- The humanistic approach to personality assessment attempts to find out how a person perceives his/her world.
- The Guna approach to assessment relies on multiple ways, including inventories.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

Briefly write how personality assessment is done in each of the following approaches:



1. Trait approach
 2. Psychoanalytic approach
 3. Humanistic approach
 4. Guna approach.
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