

## LESSON 22

# PERSON PERCEPTION AND INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

### SUMMARY

Achieving a sense of self is an important achievement. A neonate may not be able to distinguish between self and others. Our self-knowledge is peculiar in the sense that we are aware that we have a self. This kind of self-consciousness is a major achievement. It may be easily guessed that the knowledge of self does require some kind of social knowledge. In the beginning the infant lacks distinction between his and her world which includes other persons. The child is immersed in the social environment. From there, the child gradually attains an awareness of self.

### Perception of others

Toward the end of infancy children start constructing a representation of the self as an objective entity. The cognitive and linguistic development facilitates interaction with others.

By third year children indicate existence of internal processes, appearance, opinions and volition. As they grow their self-concept become more and more differentiated. It may be noted that the development of self-concept is primarily a social activity. The other persons present in the

environment provide context and guidance to them. They talk about various events and happenings in the child's environment. All these situations help child to learn about 'self'. In particular children learn about emotional regulation.

However, it would be inaccurate to view self merely something to be shaped by others. It is a complex social product in which child's own experience also plays an important role.

While learning about self, children also develop an understanding that people are different from other things, they have certain characteristics and have independent psychological existence.

It has been found that the understanding of others is related to understanding of the self. The awareness grows and gets elaborated with advancing age. The school age children provide elaborated and complex descriptions of others. The children actively construct a social understanding. This involves finding out the similarities between child's own psychological processes and those of others.

### Impression formation

When we perceive others, we do not simply add various pieces of

information. Rather we perceive the various traits in relation to others. We form a dynamic whole.

We form an impression of the whole person. The traits do not remain in isolation. They interact with each other and form a new whole. While forming impressions we rely on and give greater weightage to the sources we trust or admire. Similarly, we often emphasize more the negative information. Also, we give more importance to unusual information. Finally, the first impressions are given more weightage than subsequent information.

It has been found that when we make judgments about others, we recall examples of their behaviours and base our judgments on them. We also use previously formed abstractions or representations in mind while forming impressions and making decisions.

## Dealing with social world

**Interpersonal attraction** - The self realizes itself while relating to other persons. In this way the processes taking place between persons is known as interpersonal processes. Given below are factors that influence attraction:

- **Physical Attractiveness:** It has generally been found that we react more positively to people who are viewed as physically attractive.
- **Similarity and Complementarity:** We like people who are similar to ourselves. Complementarity is a situation in which we find that people who are different but complement each other, like to interact more with each other.

- **Familiarity and Propinquity:** Propinquity means nearness or physical proximity. Thus, nearness and familiarity shape our attraction to other persons.
- **Reciprocal Liking:** Whether we like someone or not depends on the fact that whether the other person likes you or not.
- **Affect:** it refers to the feelings and emotions which vary in intensity and direction. Thus, our feelings can be very intense or less intense and can be positive or negative.
- **Need for Affiliation:** We spend a lot of our free time interacting with other persons, because affiliation improves the chances of survival. Enduring Relationships: Many of our relationships continue for long periods of time. They may be lifelong like friendship, marriage etc.

As person children are treated by mothers using a certain type of attachment. It can be secure, avoidant or ambivalent. Psychologists think that infants learn to trust and to love another person, to mistrust and avoid or a mixture of the two on the basis of the kind of attachment they are exposed to. It has been found that mothers contact with the infant (tactile, visual and verbal) and her awareness of and responsivity to infant's needs leads to secure attachment.

### Virtues emphasized in Indian society

- **Charity:** Helping, forgiving and tolerating parents.
- **Justice:** Fulfilling obligations to parents and respecting their rights.
- **Prudence:** Using reason for their benefit.
- **Fortitude:** undergoing hardships for their benefit.
- **Temperance:** Controlling disruptive emotions and practicing self-discipline.

Close relationship is found when friends spend a considerable amount of time together, interact in a number of settings, and provide emotional support to each other. During childhood children desire to share activities with

friends which both parties tend to enjoy.

During adolescence and young adulthood friendship tends to become more intimate. Intimate relationship is expressed in a variety of behaviours including self-disclosing behaviour, emotional expression, giving and receiving support, experiencing trust, and feeling relaxed in the company of each other.

### **Evaluate yourself**

1. What are the factors that influence attraction?
2. Describe virtues that are emphasized in Indian society.
3. Discuss the process of impression formation.