

Psychology of Everyday
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Lecture – 03
Understanding Day-to-Day Behavior- I

Now, let us talk about certain kind of situations that we see in and around us. Take for instance, the kind of scenario that we see on the roads for example, road races, honking, physical brawls between people there, and when we see the kind of conversation that goes on the social media. When we see people debating and say 2, 3 people sitting in a canteen or any informal setup and having a debate, mostly one dominant pattern that one will observe is that there is a majority view which dominates.

And, however sane or however justified the minority opinion is it is usually sidelined in most of the cases. This happens even in case of academic discourse when large number of admissions now talking about and endorsing one point of view. At the cost of the view which might appear rational to still a minority group. As a one good example would say like in psychology we have this debate, whether post-traumatic stress should be considered as a disorder or not.

Right.

Now, the academic side of researchers of PTSD they endorse that fine, this is an exceptional kind of response to an unexceptional situation. And therefore, this should not be classified as a disorder rather it should be considered only as post-traumatic stress.

Right.

Whereas those into practice they endorse that you know, there is a disorder element here. And if you have a set of symptoms after 30 days, then it should be considered as a disorder. So, let us talk about how the majority view dominates.

Right.

How the stronger party.

Right.

Endorses and transplants his or her view on the weaker party.

Right.

It could be in terms of thought; it could be in terms of action.

Right.

And gradually this becomes a phenomenon that we find in society.

Right.

Like cases of domestic violence.

Right.

Cases of other kinds of physical atrocities on the weaker section, on women.

Right.

And children.

Right. So, if I have understood you correctly we are talking about one level we are talking about thoughts, where people do not agree. And at the second level we are talking about, how these thoughts are discussed or imposed or defended is not it?

Yeah.

And where aggression comes in. When these thoughts translate into action.

Right, right.

So, the basic emotive content of any debate or any action is aggression, what we are trying to focus.

Yeah.

Right.

Right now, let us talk about with respect to aggression.

Aggression, ok. Now, aggression I think we should split it, aggression although it sounds a very very singular homogeneous term, but I think it is scaling up. Like if you look at and you would know it has a primary emotion, rage is a primary emotion, which is present in all mammals right, even. Now, whether that rage is destructive, you would tell more about it or like a tiger going for hunt is having a rage, this is a very very goal-directed rage. But a somebody who hits a car on the road and comes and shoots; Delhi it has happened probably shoots or recent case with New Zealand mosque which was an extreme of it.

So, the rage which is the primary emotion, obviously converts to anger and that anger is mixed with various complex cognitive things like thought, decision and judgment which is impaired or not impaired is a different issue right. We will come to it when it is impaired and then it is not impaired.

Yeah.

And that converts to social behavior, where aggression becomes predominant. And that shouting, hitting, throwing things even going up to physical violence, murder, isn't it?

Yeah.

Sometimes it can be interjected and people self-harm.

Yeah.

They do suicidal attempts. So, it can go both ways. So, am I right?

Yeah, yeah.

When I am talking about this aggression, right. So, one thing when you talk about let us put this word called rage.

Rage is a biological necessity and it is inbuilt into evolution, all animals exhibit rage at some point or the other. Partly it has a biological underpinning from whatever imaging and neuroscience research which we know at present. See human brain has one very simple thing, it functions essentially for two things if you ask me to just put the whole functioning of brain what is it for, there are two bottom lines. One in all conditions the brain will always act for survival of the individual, who holds it right.

Yeah.

For survival, it has to do two things; one whatever a stimulus comes in whether it is internal or external, it has to evaluate on a fear threat parameter.

Perception.

Alright. It is one of the views which I have written in my book, which is based on this course called how the brain creates mine and the book you must have seen it Maya is Reality. So, whatever goes in even you are sitting next to you, and I know that you are a friend and you are a decent man, I might mind amygdala would not get fired, my brain would not send signal to amygdala of threat. But suppose if you have a gun hanging next to you, then I may be in a different.

Ha.

Mood.

Yeah.

Right and that is what happened let me tell you very common thing. If somebody has a altercation with somebody, somebody has said something to you in the past and I have felt bad about it. For example, somebody has said doubted my integrity or doubted my skills set, next time maybe I meet that person after 5 years; my brain would remember that emotional turbulence.

So, even the person may not be maybe he has changed his opinion about me, but even before he speaks my mind would have told me be aware, this may be a threat to yourself on ego. So, I would already start behaving very very defensive or aggressive that is what happens.

Yeah.

It happens in marriages, husband, and wife after many years even before they speak they will everybody will start trying to explain, so that is the cause of lot of justification and lot of explanation.

If you and you see in politics every day's if you say something against the political leader, his followers would not look at the marital objectivity of it, they would immediately take a (Refer Time: 08:30) that why are you saying this. So, because amygdala starts firing when there is a threat, fear also causes aggression. So, lot of this aggression which happens in the world and between countries, between communities, rights, I think the real issue is nothing.

So, is it let us say fear would make you apprehensive.

Yes.

And you will make an anticipatory action.

Anticipatory.

And that anticipatory action, you are saying that.

Exactly, correct.

It would have an element of aggression.

Right.

Some so you brought in this word called majority and minority. A minority already the brain of minority senses that if something goes wrong, then we will be overtaken by the majorities. So, if they have no power, they will say come; but if they have some power, immediately they would start off with a bit of aggression.

And this majority, minority we can see within the family, within the subset of friends.

Anywhere.

At the social level, at a larger level.

From a dyad of husband and wife to almost any group in at a level of nations also.

At the level of nations as well.

A level of wars happen because of that right. So, all this loose talk which politicians do, India we know lot of this communal stuff I think it is the paranoia is that continuous fear

of majority taking over or the majority thinking that minority is too aggressive right. So, the process the same as you said while telling about psychology, the process is simple the brain whether individual or collective senses threats. So, brain has to take an anticipatory mechanism which is aggression that is one way of looking at it, but in each case its amygdala which is firing.

Collectively when the taught pervades that we are in a insecure thing and as shared by lot of people, even then they always ready to. So, once amygdala fires you see the part of the brain called dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is the decision making thing, have a left side. The cortex this part of the brain the higher cortex came much later in evolution, initially, it was emotional brain and motor brain.

So, animals do not think nothing inhibits them, but animals are lucky, because they are in tune with nature. So, they only become aggressive, when there is a need of food or sex or something and they become cyclically, they all the year they are not. Human being unfortunately after standing out from 4 to 2 has become sexual all the time, violent all the time, human history is replete with violence. So, and it happens history knows this cords.

So, what is happening actually the moment amygdala starts firing and that fear and threaten a grip and the anticipatory aggression is building up, these inhibitory neurons and the cortex is there to inhibit all these primitive impulses in your brain, otherwise society will go ever, rather psychologically you can call it as a superego, what Freud use to say. So, higher thinking cortex is the controlling part of it, which has evolved with the societal rules with morality with right, wrong, rules and all. But when there is a treat, trust me all this inhibition of higher control goes off.

In fact, there are the good number of studies suggesting not at once you have a fear getting activated.

Yes.

Your brain processes it on priority.

Yes, absolutely.

Thus everything will be put aside.

Because that is survival.

And you think only of survival.

Survival.

Anything more than that.

So that means, all our education, knowledge, spirituality is all layers and layers of some illusion in the method of crisis, the brain really gets down to the same old behavior. And that is why when I say Mahatma Gandhi, it becomes important for Gandhi probably realize this very early in his life and his non-violence was a true non-violence. He was training his mind 24 into 7 that for every act, every stimulus, which can he did not know about amygdala of course, every stimulus which can push me to violence, I have to give an alternative to my mind at the same time to be non-violent; that means his brain would have grown in a different way with did not have mechanisms to restrict at that time.

Empathy became very important thing, because he use to say that you and me are same we are equal, so how can I get aggressive with myself; so either I identify with everybody and then I will not get angry. So, anger is one of the complex emotion, aggression is the motor act of it probably verbal or motor act and rage is the basic phenomena.

I will just take you little back, usually in psychology the argument is unlike the common sensible understanding that aggression is always destructive, psychologist argue that there is a constructive site to aggression.

Right.

So, if you assert yourself.

Right.

In a threatening kind of a scenario.

Right.

Where you know that your integrity is at stay; so, if you assert yourself and thereby you show aggression that aggression is constructive.

Yes.

And if your intention is to control, if your intention is to modify, if your intention is to manipulate the other party.

Right.

Then it is a destructive site of the aggression.

Destructive site, right.

Ok.

Yeah we can take the Freud thing also into that.

The defense mechanisms, the mature defensive mechanism of sublimation, humor.

Ha.

Humour often is very very caustic and satirical it is all aggression only, right.

But you laminate it.

You laminate it and you suddenly laugh at the surprise of it or you supplement it into cinema and art and lot of this modern literature which talks about gender, caste and racial discrimination or I think all of that emanates from anger. But probably what you are saying is very important that if you compare this type of aggression which has taught as a mode of action, then you can supplement and become constructive and they become aggressive, I still would write a poetry or make a film or.

If I do not know how to channelize all these, then I would throw things and get angry or drink more or self destructive. Why I am saying this that if you compare with people who have aggression as illness, like some people who have epilepsy, temporal lobe epilepsy; where a certain area of suddenly starts firing and they are aggressive episodes, they have no taught over it.

There are some people who have impulse dyscontrol with serotonin what happens is that the suddenly in one circuit amygdala perceives, now some people say that there is no reason it is unprovoked, but I do not think it will ever unprovoked.

No, but say all impulse control disorder say like kleptomania, say pyromania, say like trichotillomania for instance, all of them have an onset.

Yes.

And there is no what you are suggesting.

Yes.

But unless you have something which.

Something.

Evokes it.

Something, even addictions for that matter

Since, pathological gambling comes under the same pattern.

Sexual addictions at some level this is the queue which triggers, so there the destruction is much later because not causing harm, but what I am saying that for some people that brain just perceives very small things, just of maybe facial appearance lot of young kids have this.

May be they are not studying, they are telling a lie or whatever they are doing, they would see the facial expression of the mother or father and they suddenly blow into rage and they often come and tell; they may feel guilty later right that time they cannot control, because the inhibitory control is gone.

So, this is without thought I think you can only supplement and you can only make it constructive, when there is a while your brain is learning some action the thought that means, the full inhibition of higher cortical center is not gone; where the full is gone, then obviously it has to be an act of violence right.

But when there is a thought that thought itself is giving you a chance to choose, whether you want to make it constructive or destructive, but having said all this I still fail to understand the violence which people do in wars or in rights, because what has triggered off a community or a nation is sense of loss of threat or whatever

But in response there is always a delayed response never immediate, when you prepare for a war, then you go and fight, soldiers will go and kill and do all the things, they had been trained to kill, but I wonder if you ask them one to one whether kill, they will said why. Maybe the whole idea of nations or nationalism of being wrong, then which is at times a political thing also is to pump upright and that immediate threat.

No, but similar kind of phenomena's you also find say for instance, I am as a group of boys in my locality playing cricket and another group of boys have taken my ball which went to their site and I also exchange I plan revenge.

Yes.

I execute that thing.

Yes, yes.

So, again.

I have to keep myself pumped to the point where I can go and do it.

Yeah.

So, what.

Anger.

We were discussing in the initial discussions that human beings are very good at calibration.

And those who are able to calibrate their behavior, they would be coming forward with a proportionate response.

Yes.

Even though it is aggressive response, it would be proportionate.

Yes.

Whereas good number of us, we are not able to calibrate.

Right.

And therefore, we might come across with very disproportionate kind of aggressive retaliation.

Right.

It could be at the individual level, it could be even at the group level.

Yeah. So, this brings me in that into one of the worst forms of aggression which we have seen in today's world is we will come to the smaller cases, where road race and all that is still a small its terrorism. But there is just two-way thing one this people go and do suicide bombing and are they doing, they must be doing it with a cool mind; because obviously, you cannot plan so per precisely unless you have a cool mind, but deeper down there is an intense amount of aggression.

Otherwise, what would push you to a point where you can press a button and blow yourself off. On the contrary, take something like 911, media is creating such amount I think media has started keeping the imagery especially, they are started giving amygdala at a fire threshold almost. The image of 911 was seen by people so many times, these days anything is seen by so many times you naturally you become anxious and anything a small drop can just trigger off aggression.

Is it then in that context, is it say like when you look at the television debates nowadays?

Right.

You have an agenda at hand.

Right.

A panel which sits for discussion.

Yes.

And within 5 minutes or so it.

They are fighting.

Flairs up and then they keep arguing when nobody listens to.

Yes.

What the other party is saying.

Right, right.

And shouting becomes the mode.

Loud.

Of transmission you just become the norm.

Norm.

So, if such programs are telecast day after day, then you are setting up a different standard them. So, whether it is visual of terrorist activity, whether it is discussion discourse of a different kind.

Right.

Whether it is on social issues or it is on political issues academic issues. So, irrespective of what you are talking about and what you are referring to the baseline has now changed, it has gone much beyond what usually we would be considering.

Absolutely, absolutely. We are seeing in our clinics people coming and complaining of anger outburst, right and kids, right from classroom situation it is like a pressure cooker which is always ready to burst, so we all in a pressure cooker situation. Lot of this pressure cooker has not build up from within, it is the continuous input of threatful situation and a stimuli which whether you want or you do not want it is going on into your head; especially post 1990 right, 1990 when the liberalization and globalization happened.

So, initially your information set was limited, you have to seek books and you too much information overload was not there, now the brain has not altered so fast, brain cannot handle so much information; one that creates anxiety well of course, the bottleneck is attention span that is always cluttered with things which are none of a direct concern.

So that keeps you on the edge and I small trigger, blows off. So, I have lot of children young people who are very very aggressive and when you really boil down to asking what is troubling and they will not so aggressive kids. One or two percent have may have a impulse dyscontrol or mood disorder, lot of this kids feel lot of pressure, because parents will keep telling them making them very competitive that you should succeed in everything. They have their different capabilities, nobody is accepting their differential capability, schools will have a pressure, there is always a pressure of doing something, now it is like bottling up.

Road race is a typical example of it. A person who is driving in metros facing so many traffic jams and obviously the home friends these days are very very troubled, job pressures, meeting target, mind is continuously on that one person who just comes in, but mind you lot of this aggression happens with people. So, brain is never totally off, brain is never totally off, the mind also even while planning aggression in this and it is a millisecond business trust me.

Yeah.

Within 200, 300 millisecond amygdala is fired within 1 second, you have already done it, but brain is a normal healthy brain which is not damaged, it is still is doing proper calculation probability; because if a police car hits your car and the IG is sitting there, you will never get down and slap him.

I would just like to share something, there is a concept of appraisal.

Yes.

Of emotion.

Yes.

And psychology says that with respect to anger which is considered as a goal incongruent emotion.

Right.

They say that we have two kinds of broad filters, the primary filters and the secondary filters. The primary filter has goal relevance, goal congruence and ego involvement.

Yes.

They are the sub-filters.

Yes.

So, if something is not relevant to my life goal, I will not even bother about it.

Right.

So, my brain will not generate any motion; if it is not congruent, it is congruent or incongruent.

Right.

That will decide whether I will have a positive or a negative kind of a feeling.

Right.

So, the first important thing would be the ego involvement.

Right.

So, how much is mine ego at state.

Yes.

And that would decide, what am I going to feel and how much I am going to feel.

Right, right.

And then in the secondary appraisal mechanism, you have criteria's again three criteria's; one of it is the coping potential, the other is who has to be given the credit of blame and the third one is what is the chance of reoccurrence. So, the example that you gave that the police officer sitting in the car; so, my secondary appraisal will tell me that this can lead to a situation which I will not be able to handle, I will not be able to cope and the other person can travel be much more in the coming days.

Right.

So, future expectancy has increased now.

Right.

I will not get support from others.

Right.

So, therefore if I am hit by if I am on a bicycle and I am hit by a car, I show a different behavior compared to when I am hit by a police vehicle the example that you are giving.

Yes, yes. So.

When has it mechanism of.

Yes.

Now, doing that double calculation.

Right. So, I often ask people that are you able to control. So, lot of this people you see is a situation anger, you do at home, you do not do outside, you know always been known that people displace anger on kid, they will slap them and get angry and all that is not it. So, lot of this is maybe angry at your boss, in fact one of the management companies device this mechanism they knew that people get angry, sometimes the whole nation appears angry at what, you know.

So, what they did that they would take a flat put lot of old furniture there and send their employees there [laughter] and tell them that you only go and break. So, some religious and spiritual guru suggested somebody, [FL] why brought that he gets angry at home and. So, he asked him why do you [FL] he said after couple of minutes, he said no no you are not angry at your wife the problem is you are angry at your boss.

So, what you do, he said do one thing you take this picture take your slippers and go [laughter] and slap him 10 times in a day, but it is not something which we are observing. The phenomena and here comes in what we were talking about the social and the biological and the psychological and everything, so we have taken very apt point, because aggression is not only linked to amygdala and all; it is linked to the external stimuli, how the brain perceives it. How the brain perceives it means simply, how your brain has been trained into perceive it.

Yeah.

Which is a psychological part of it, the stimuli is the social part of it and amygdala and the frontal cortex responses the pure neuroscientific nerve neuronal.

Yeah.

Level of it that mean, all three are related and then as you said about a appraisal, there is a action for survival you even that action is embedded in the societal thing.

Yeah.

And from that there is a behavior which will again give a feedback, which will again determine how the whole thing is going to be recycled or cycled.

Now, one somebody goes through successfully after anger, he may repeat it in similar situations, because the brain has learned it.

Learned it.

It needs extinction in a different situation, where the whole thing has been as thought it or there is some appraisal of it.

So, I think we have put it correctly, but from here in the next half an hour I think we will like to extend this whole connection. So, we will talk about it in the next half an hour.

Thank you.