

What Happens When People Change

An Experiment in Transactional Analysis

Much work has been done in the realm of Transactional Analysis after the ingenious researches of Eric Berne in the mid-fifties. In India, as in all other countries, the subject has evoked considerable interest. Miss **DARSHAN K. SINGH**, Nursing Educator, Voluntary Health Association of India, reports here on a workshop in New Delhi which experimented with aspects of TA with an Indian orientation.

ONE of the new philosophies aimed at helping people to understand themselves and others is Transactional Analysis, originated by Dr Eric Berne in the mid-fifties. The preliminary research done on Transactional Analysis (TA) in India as well as abroad has established that it can be an effective tool in bringing about changes in one's personality. It can provide functional guidelines in living a happy and harmonious life. It has been reported by some researchers that it establishes an integrative communication between the affective and intellectual components of the personality within oneself so that a person is able to use both his emotions and his intellect, not just one at the expense of the other. The TA is based on the assumption that any individual can learn to trust himself, think for himself, make his own decisions and express his feelings.

The application of this theory in India is a recent phenomenon. Although it has not yet found its place in the curricula of the universities, in India, its application has been experimented with by the Voluntary Health Association of India which has arranged seminars and workshops in various parts of the country in the last four years. The specific objective of these programmes was to train the health personnel in the fundamentals of TA so that intimacy in human relations can be enhanced in their functioning. One such workshop was arranged by the VHAI at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi in March this year. The account that follows is what the author was able to assimilate from this exposure, particularly in the light of her previous work in the field of using the TA technique as a nursing intervention for assisting patients to cope successfully with stress while undergoing haemodialysis.

Pleasant and Unpleasant

The participants in the New Delhi workshop were mostly nurses, doctors and professionals. The faculty consisted of Rev. Carlos Welch and Mrs. Sarojini Welch of Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore as chief resource persons, Fr. Oswald Summerten of Indian Social Insti-

tute and Sr. Carol Huss, Mr Tom Kaliath and Sr. Elisa from VHAI. After a formal brief introduction of the core faculty, the participants underwent an informal intimate introduction of one another. To facilitate this process of knowing one another, it was suggested that each participant should share some pleasant as well as unpleasant feelings from the past with another partner. Then the partners were changed in groups with various permutations and combinations. The purpose was to create an environment of intimacy between the participants. It was followed by eliciting of the individual expectations of the participants from the workshop. The most common expectations reported by them were: "I want to understand myself and others," "I want to change myself", "I want to look and listen", and "I want to enrich my life with TA". This provided the organisers with the motivational framework with which each health worker had come to join the workshop.

Interesting Exercises

The training in TA began with the following exercises: (i) We were asked to close our eyes and think of a situation when we talked harshly to somebody and another event when we showed love and concern for someone. The example of the former was telling a noisy child, "You must sit quiet otherwise I will spank you" and the example of the latter was: "I made my son lie down with me, caressed him and said 'You are my loving child' ". Later, we realised that these responses were made from a component of personality called Parent (P) Ego State. An 'Ego State' is a consistent pattern of feeling and experiences directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behaviour.¹ The former response was made from the Critical Parent (CP) and the latter was from the Nurturing Parent (NP). It showed that Parent Ego State worked in two ways, by being *critical* and by being *nurturing*; It reflected ideas, feelings and behaviour of one's own parents or parent substitutes.

(ii) The same exercise was repeated but this time we were asked to recollect a situation when we analysed a problem objectively and realistically. One of the responses was: "I made a decision to complete my work before I went to bed". Obviously, this decision was made by considering various pros and cons. It gave us insight that this response came from another ego state called Adult (A) Ego State. The Adult Ego State is like a computer and uses the problem solving approach.

(iii) Once again we closed our eyes and brought to our consciousness a recent experience of having fun and becoming sad. The responses were: "I love to be out in the rain", and "I felt sad when my friend talked to me indifferently". These responses were explained to have been made as per the TA theory from the third component of personality called Child (C) Ego State. The first response above was explained as Free Child (FC) Ego State and the second response as Adapted Child (AC) Ego State. The Child Ego State is known to consist of all the impulses that come naturally to an

1. Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, *Born to Win*, (Massachusetts): Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1971, p 12.

infant and are inherent in our personality. This Ego State consists of the creative, spontaneous as well as the rebellious and complacent characteristics. These three (PAC) Ego States of personality were represented in the form of illustration as given in Figure 1.

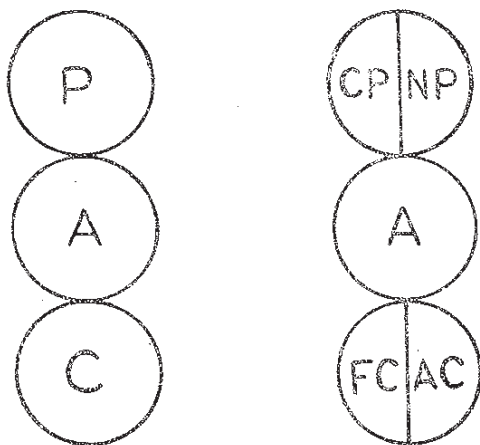


Fig:1 A diagram of human personality.

Individual Egograms

According to the TA theory, we function fully when energy flows from one Ego State to the other. An Egogram represents the intensity and amount of energy emanating from an Ego State. The Egogram also provides a graph of the spectrum of Ego States and their relative dominance shown by the height of columns.² We all shared the experience and drew Egograms for ourselves and for our partners. This was done on two occasions, at the beginning and at the end of the exercise. A specimen of these Egograms is given in Figure 2.

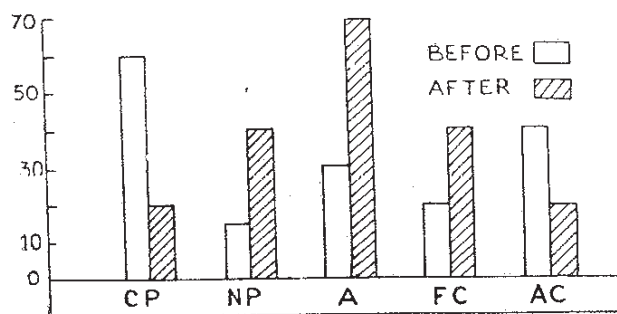


Fig 2 Egogram before and after the exercise.

It was interesting to observe and to share that some of us drew egograms for others that were almost the same as others did for themselves. Drawing Egograms enabled us to observe the way we directed energy into different Ego States. This experience also provided us with insight that we could control the flow of

energy from one Ego State to the other. As a result, many of us made decisions to change the pattern of our Egograms by our personal efforts. It meant that we could strengthen any particular Ego State which we wanted.

The objective of the next exercise was to analyse our Strokings pattern. A Stroke is a recognition, appreciation and acceptance given to oneself and others. Strokes are Positive and Negative. Positive Strokes are like a warm smile, a genuine touch and saying words of praise. Strokes are Unconditional (for being) and Conditional (for doing). One example of Positive Unconditional Stroke given was, "I like you because you are Meena" and another example of Positive Conditional Stroke was "I love you because you are very understanding". We were asked also to give examples of Negative Strokes. An example of Negative Conditional Stroke was, "I don't like Shamim because she is very annoying", and of Negative Unconditional Stroke was "I hate Shanti". With the help of various examples given by all of us we came to realise that Positive Strokes made us feel good and Negative Strokes made us feel unwanted and hurt. The type of Strokes which we give and receive can be measured by a Strokogram. All of us drew our Strokograms which made us aware of the Strokes we gave and received.

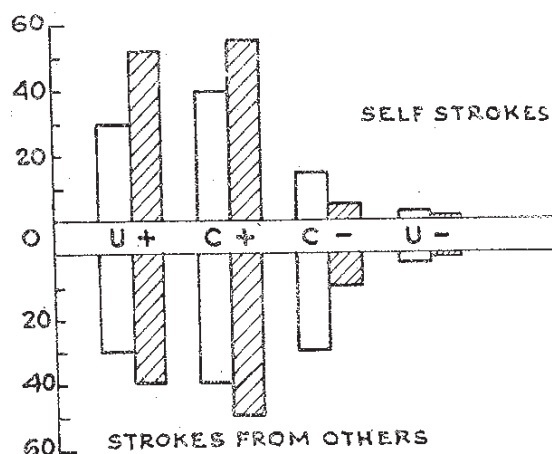


Fig: 3 Strokogram before and after the exercise.

Through this exercise we realised that most people have Stroke deficit. Only a proper give and take of Strokes maintains our Stroke Economy. Often we can give Strokes to ourselves and ask others to give us Strokes. By the time we finished the Workshop our Stroke Banks were full.

In the next exercise, the Workshop highlighted the different ways we communicated with other people. We discovered that sometime we communicated directly (Complementary Transactions) and the message was simple and straightforward. This type of communication facilitates healthy human relationships. The following is an example of such a communication and

2. John M Dusay, "Egogram and the 'Constancy Hypothesis'", *Transactional Analysis Journal*, July 1972.

it can occur between any two Ego States as from Adult-Adult in Fig. 4.

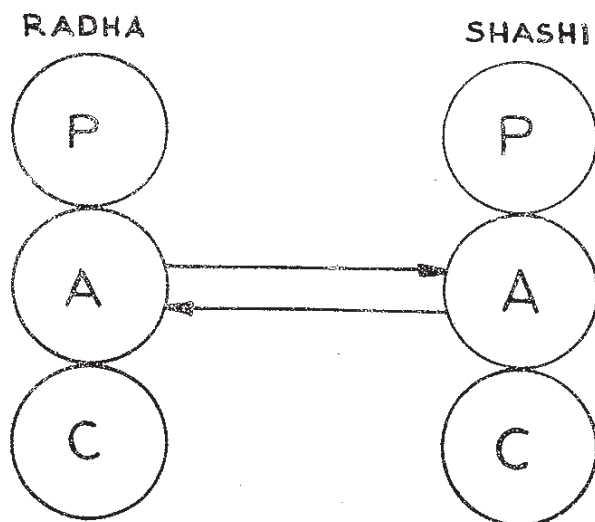


Fig: 4 Complementary Transaction.
(Adult-Adult)

Radha : What time do you eat ?
Shashi : 8 p.m. Will you be joining us ?

Since Radha's message was very clear, the communication channels between both of them would remain open and they would continue transacting normally.

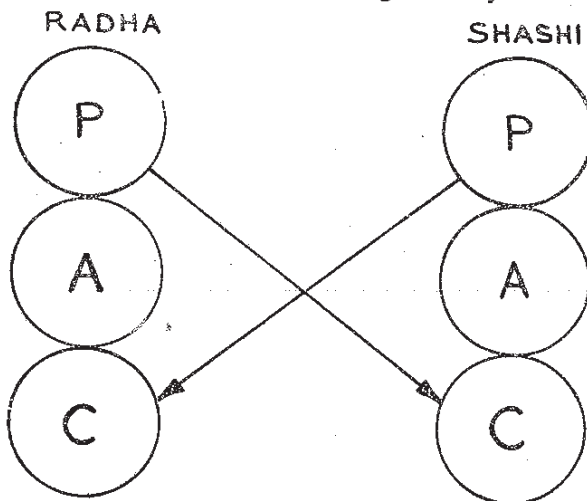


Fig: 5 Crossed Transaction.
(Parent- child)

Radha : This exercise will be good for you.
Shashi : You need to learn to talk with your proper senses.

We noticed that at other times when we gave or got unexpected responses to direct messages these resulted in misunderstandings. Thus, the problems of human relationships were evident. The unexpected response of such a nature is called Crossed Transaction. example would make the meaning clearer, as indicated in Figure 5.

We also learnt that our communication ways might also be accompanied by some kind of hidden messages. This type of communication is called Ulterior Transaction. The example given in Figure 6 would be helpful in understanding its meaning.

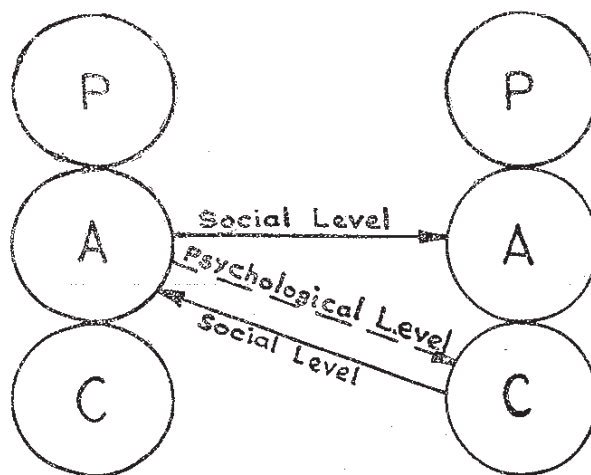


Fig:6 Ulterior Transaction.

Radha : I am going to a very famous movie, *Mukti*, but you have to submit your assignment tomorrow.
Shashi : I will come with you.

In this example, Radha gave Adult message at Social Level but at Psychological Level the message is hidden, conveying an entirely different meaning. As a result, Shashi got entangled and responded from the Child Ego State to go to the movie. Continuation of such a communication would result in playing of Psychological Games³, the ultimate product of which would be bad feeling like sadness, anger, resentment and jealousy. This exercise led us to analyse our Psychological Games. Fr. Oswald Summerten took an interesting session on analysis of Games. Psychological Games keep us away from being intimate with the people and are the cause of unhealthy interpersonal relationships.

The abovementioned exercises and experiences helped us to recognise that we could behave as we wanted to provided we were consciously aware of our actions. As a result many of us made decisions of behaving consciously in a particular way. By becoming responsible for ourselves, many of us made Contracts to function from a particular Ego State. A 'Contract' is an Adult commitment to one's self and/or someone else to make a change. Contracts can be established to change feelings, behaviour or

3. Berne, Eric, *Games People Play*, Sterling, Reprint 1976.

psychosomatic problems.⁴ Since a Contract is a very useful tool to strengthen any Ego State, many of us made contract to function consciously from Adult, Child and Parent Ego States. Usually the people who made Contracts would report each morning to the group.

Structuring of Time

In another session, Time Structuring was highlighted. We were all asked to show on a Structogram how we spend our time. We analysed our time keeping in mind the many ways in which people spend their time. Time spent was divided into Pastime, Rituals, Activities, Withdrawal, Psychological Games and Intimacy.

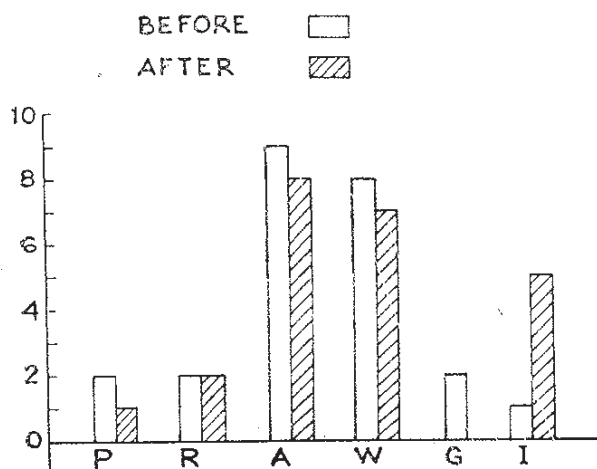


Fig:7 Structogram before and after the exercise.

Since time structure is the basic need of all people, each one structures his/her time accordingly. Most people's Time Structure showed very little Intimacy. Intimacy is closeness to other people. It is achieved with love and trust. In our Time Structure analysis, we came to know that lack of Intimacy was often the cause of problems in human relationships. The above illustration shows the decision to make changes in Structogram primarily to increase Intimacy.

Life Scripts

Another important activity of the Workshop was to analyse our Life Scripts. This was done by analysing our earlier, later and present life experiences. According to the TA theory each individual's present behaviour is usually guided by his childhood experiences and early decisions. We live our Life Scripts day by day. The analysis of our Life Scripts gave us an insight into our own behaviour. We wrote our Life Scripts, made contracts for changes and worked out bad feelings. The expert Therapist facilitated this process so that members of the group felt free to talk about their feelings and to go through (Relive) their past experiences. These experiences helped us to reform our lives on the basis of our personal insight in our behavioural patterns. Some of the problems and feelings worked out were: problems of inter-personal communication, lack of recognition and

appreciation, fear of rejection by others, passivity, sadness, loneliness and bad dreams.

By the end of the Workshop, members of the group felt genuinely intimate. Some of the faces that were grumpy were lit up with love and cheer. We felt a sense of recognition and belonging to one another. It was exciting when one of us in the group handed over a bar of Cadbury to the participants. It was a joyful experience to share with others.

Bibliography

- Berne, Eric. *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* N.Y., Bantam Book; Grove Press Inc., 1973.
 ——— *Games People Play*, N.Y. 1964, Sterling, 1976.
 Dusay, John M. "Egograms and the 'Constancy Hypothesis'", *Transactional Analysis Journal*, July 1972.
 Darshan, K. Singh. *Use of Transactional Analysis as a Nursing Intervention for Assisting Patients to Cope Successfully with Stress while Undergoing Haemodialysis*. Unpublished Master's Dissertation, University of Madras, April 1976.
 James, Muriel and Jongeward, Dorothy. *Born to Win*, London: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1971.
 Prashantham, B. J. *Indian Case Studies in Therapeutic Counselling*, Vellore, Christian Counselling Centre, 1975.
 Steiner, Claude M. *Scripts People Live*. N.Y: Grove Press Inc., 1974.

DONATIONS : Jan.-Mar. 1977

NURSES WELFARE FUND

Mrs. P. Bajwa, Jullundur	Rs. 100.00
Smt. K.D. Makwan, Calcutta	Rs. 15.00

FLOOD RELIEF FUND

Miss P. Thomas, New York	Rs. 110.00
Smt. K.D. Makwan, Calcutta	Rs. 25.00
Usha V. Patole, Bombay	Rs. 10.00

GENERAL FUND

Smt. K.D. Makwan, Calcutta	Rs. 10.00
----------------------------	-----------

4. James, M. *op. cit.*, p 242.