

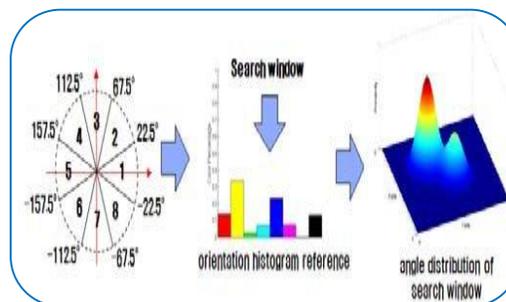


## PROBABILISTIC ORIENTATION: ORIGIN AND ITS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### ABSTRACT :

The hypothetical construct, probabilistic orientation was coined by Narayanan, a psychologist in 1977. It consists of seven factors viz., unbounded expectancy, sensing unlimited possibilities, insight into bias, healthy skepticism, unconditional acceptance, appreciation of chance and awareness of probability. Probabilistic Orientation refers to the relatively long enduring personality disposition of an individual to have an openness of perception that enables him to be aware of the predetermined harmony of nature and accept occurrence of every event as a natural outcome of the random order inherent in stochastic unfolding of the nature. In short, it focuses on the random nature of events and represents the phenomenological style of life of an individual.

**KEYWORDS :** Probabilistic Orientation.

### CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PROBABILISTIC ORIENTATION

The term probabilistic orientation was introduced in literature by Narayanan (1977) to connote a seminal construct developed by a poet by name Kavian Poonkundranar, who lived in Tamil Nadu during the *Sangam period*, 2000 B.C. (Iyer, 1971). The construct succinctly describes the life style of the saints and seers who lived in *Sangam* age. The construct representing the life style of highly matured individuals of the ancient period is labeled, for want of a better term as probabilistic orientation. Thus, probabilistic orientation connotes a set of beliefs and convictions that give rise to a mature way of viewing the occurrences in nature and life, and adopting a smooth adjustment to the challenges in the course of living.

The style of life of saints and seers is implicitly stated in an ancient poem in Tamil by a poet by name Kavian Pookundranar (Narayanan et al., 1984). The English translation of the poem is as follows:

All places are my abodes dear,  
And every one is my kith and kin;  
Good and bad are caused by none,  
Sickness and convalescence are just but natural;  
Nothing is new in death,  
Rejoice life as sweet we do not,  
Nor despise it as sour;  
Since,  
Convinced are we through the serene vision of the seers,  
That,

*Along with lightening pour down cold drops;  
The Mighty river rolls down the stone  
Into pebbles with constant noise, lo!  
The Boat sails in the river.  
Likewise precious life has it's course  
In the course of Nature.  
Hence, We do not wonder at the great  
Nor look down upon the small.*

According to the poem, Nature is a system characterized by a supreme order and every event that occurs is bound by the system's characteristic. It also accounts for individual differences in attitude and perception. Nature is the supreme system and all the event of life are well programmed within the system. This implies two seminal constructs: (1). There is a supreme order pervading forever. (2). Our life on earth is ordered by evolution.

Once an individual implies the spirit of the above two constructs he can easily appreciate the facts expressed in the first part of the poem above. Since no one has a choice to choose his place of birth which happens according to evolutionary process, there could be no reason to feeling attained to place of birth, nature place or community. Since, the same fund of life energy is prevailing for ever, its beginning and redistributing itself again and again in the evolution, it is quiet reachable to regard every one on this earth related to each there and there need not be any special significance to be attached only to blood relation. Since every happening in life the cause of evolution any process is a random event and not directed specifically against or for any one in particular. There is nothing to be labeled 'Good' as 'Bad'. Life is a continuous process as one would know that sickness and convalescents are natural process. Thus, death is a natural event and does not assume any great significance. Thus, knowing the nature of a "Nature and Life" in their total perspective, one will neither find reasons to rejoice life as sweet or despise it as some of a natural perspective to nature and life is the best perspective to be adopted.

A Probabilistically Oriented individual is given to a balanced perception of events. He accepts nature as it is, and is aware of factors that permit as well as limit freedom of choice in his actions. At the same time he finds and accepts that there is already a pattern of programming that is set and existing in Nature. Rational acceptance of the scope for freedom of choice and relative deterministic nature of the behavioural field is the hall mark of Probabilistic Orientation (Natarajan, 1983). Probabilistic orientation is not fatalistic. It does not reflect fatalistic beliefs. Belief in fate or fatalistic belief seals a person and his personal freedom is limited and in course of time an individual does nothing about it and his behaviour comes as a result of fate. The distinctive style of probabilistic orientation perceives fate not as the final frame but dynamic as per the stochastic principle. It has the power of reasoned agreement of the opportunity for freedom of choice and relating deterministic nature of the behavioural field (Narayanan, 1984). Probabilistic orientation helps an individual to have an openness to experience. Such individual have a balanced view of both good and bad events. They bring out modern modes of behaviour in every art of life. It is rediscovery of oriental identification of personality (Narayanan, 1979).

The basic premise of the probabilistic orientation is that commitment to a unique and distinct set of constructs may influence the behaviour and the level of conscience of the individual in a specific manner (Kelly, 2000a, 2000b; Narayanan, 2003). Thus, probabilistic orientation is construed by commitment to a unique set of constructs and adhering to them in thinking, willing and feeling by an individual. The basic constructs of probabilistic orientation are:

- That there exists limitless spiritual energy that is responsible for the order perpetuated in the universe since its inception.
- That the spiritual energy, in unfolding the universal order has set in motion the evolution. The flux of evolution adheres to stochastic process, i.e., the evolutionary process manifests itself in the form of periodically evolving different systems in the span of time.

Commitment to the above set of constructs by an individual has various implications for his behaviour and level of conscience: The universal order of the nature has been set to unfold in a systematic manner by the spiritual energy. Evolution is only an outcome of the universal order. Since evolution enforces an order of its kind on earth and the course of life on this earth, the evolutionary process governs one's scope for freedom and constraints through bondages in the course of one's life. Hence, attribution of 'good' or 'bad' labels to outcome of any event in the course of life seems to be obsolete and futile. Every happening in life is attributed to the unfolding of the stochastic probabilities attached to the occurrence or non-occurrence of various events. Hence, Nature is set or poised neither for nor against any single individual Nature ever remains unbiased. The potentialities, abilities and the achievements of an individual are determined by the stochastic unfoldment of the evolutionary order determining the events and happenings in individual's life. Hence, it helps an individual to avoid attaching labels involving attributions to any event or happening as 'good' or 'bad', 'luck' or 'odd-luck'. A factual and neutral point of view in dealing with any occurrence in life seems to be appropriate. Everything is probable and nothing is certain in the unfolding of evolutionary order. Thus, orienting oneself to probabilistic nature of Nature in evolution would help sailing through smoothly in life without conflict or frustration, stress or strain.

A factor analysis of responses of individuals to Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire (Narayanan, 1977) has revealed probabilistic orientation to be construed through seven factors:

- *Unbounded expectancy*: The goodness and the meanness of thoughts cannot influence the course of action and one should expect that anything can happen in spite of goodness.
- *Sensing unlimited possibilities*: It is not possible to enumerate all the possibilities and predict. By being open and alive, one can spot new possibilities in situations.
- *Insight into bias*: It emphasizes the unbiasedness of nature. An insight into this bias will help to view situations as they are without any individual colouring.
- *Healthy skepticism*: Scientific invention tempered with skepticism is a healthy attitude. It is both positive and progressive.
- *Unconditional acceptance*: It means not to label anything as good or bad. This is a higher order resolution.
- *Appreciation of chance*: Chances work more than human effort and chances of achievement can be improved by better efforts.
- *Awareness of probability*: It includes uncertainties of life. Yet the more realistic the estimate of the probabilities, the more accurate will be the predictions. (Narayanan, 1977, 1999).

All outcomes are looked upon similarly by the probabilistically oriented individual without trying to accept or to reject it due to his personal interest. He does not attach any value-judgments regarding the outcome. Probabilistic orientation does not foster a pessimistic or an optimistic attitude. It predisposes an individual towards contributing to innovation and creativity in different conditions. Such individuals contribute towards social change and act as change agents too (Narayanan, 1979).

Belief in chance, fate or control by super natural powers is quite often held in Indian culture. The reasons for resistance to change may be attributed to traditionalism, conventionalism and conservatism of individuals. But it should be noted that Indian culture is not confined only to a strong belief in fate, the probabilistic orientation is also one of the significant orientations typically found among people in India (Narayanan, 1983).

### PROBABILISTIC ORIENTATION COUNSELLING

Probabilistic orientation counselling is essentially a professional approach to help those with psychological problems arising due to improper and inappropriate ways of coping with uncertainties (Narayanan, 2002, 2003). The probabilistic orientation counselling, sets out to make the client aware of the seven factors: unbounded expectancy, sensing unlimited possibilities, insight into bias, healthy skepticism, unconditional acceptance, appreciation of chance and awareness of probability to analyze his/her problems with reference to them and to attempt to resolve the conflicts by adopting

appropriate adjustment with reference to the factors construing probabilistic orientation. An individual who is given to probabilistic orientation looks at all outcomes with equanimity. He does not resist or instantly accept anything based on any compulsion or obsession due to his complexes resulting from what he has already believed and trusted. He does not attach any value judgments regarding the outcome.

Probabilistic orientation counseling share the following steps in imparting counseling to the client.

- Establishing rapport
- Understanding the problem
- Facilitating condition of motivation
- Providing alternative perspective
- Encouraging the client to adapt the new perspective
- Monitoring the adoption of the newly developed perspectives
- Encouraging the client further to enhance his perspectives

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