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About the Presenter:

Title of Paper: **Self, Work and the idea of a 'career'- An Exploration of ideas from an Indian Cultural Perspective**

Abstract:

Theory relating to the Psychology of career and work stagnates in India because of the knotting between the philosophical positions of the Indian thought systems about self/identity, world, the nature of work and the several socio-historical transitions that the Indian culture has gone through. This includes the most recent colonial period, where the nature and understanding of work was dramatically mutated. This paper rests on the premise that unless these philosophical positions and cultural transitions are unravelled, career counselling in India will continue to blindly follow western theoretical models.

This paper is organised along three broad themes. Firstly, an attempt is made to delineate the various philosophical positions about the nature of Self and self expression. Various philosophical positions about self expression yield to paradoxical conceptualisations of the World (and therefore work) as an extension of self and world (and therefore work) as disconnected from self. When these philosophical positions are located within historical and socio economic matrices, a multiplicity of templates regarding the nature of self, the nature of world and the meaning of work emerge. These need to be understood with sensitivity by career counsellors, psychologists and career development practitioners as they try and facilitate personal and career growth. This paper identifies five main templates that may coexist within the person and deeply affect work and career attitudes and decisions, starting from early stages to the later stages of career development.

Finally, the paper proposes that, career and work decision making in the Indian cultural context, whether individually or collectively accomplished, may be characterised by a dynamic interaction between the idea of the world and work as an extension of self and the idea of the world and the work as disconnected from self. In order to understand this in a real time counselling situation, a qualitative narratives approach can be used. The paper



submits that in historically multicultural societies like India, where persons are comfortable with multiple identities, they may also hold multiple narratives about themselves, which may at times compete for being the dominant narrative. Ultimately career satisfaction may be the personal idiosyncratic reconciliation of these narratives to arrive at a single, perhaps nebulous narrative.