



## Global Contributions Of Ancient Indian Knowledge System In The Field Of Psychology

Dr Kavita M Chandak<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Sam Global University, Department Of Arts, Humanities And Social Sciences

**\*Corresponding Author:** Dr Kavita M Chandak

\*Sam Global University, Department Of Arts, Humanities And Social Sciences

### Abstract:

One can look at knowledge systems other than one's own in two ways: one spiritually as a source of insight that can potentially enrich, complement or even replace one's own way of looking at reality, or objectively, that would become a cultural characteristic of others than oneself. The another one is the approach of the most historical way of study. For almost a century, academic psychology in India has continued to be an alien discipline. In the beginning of the last Century, psychology was imported lock-stock-barrel from the West and was first implanted in 1916 in Calcutta University. The Western model of research and teaching provided the basis on which Indian research grew for a long period. For Indian psychologists trained in the western traditions, it has been a long journey to turn towards their own heritage and take Indian concepts and theories germane to understanding Indian social reality Throughout its existence as an alien implant, **psychology has been struggling to ground itself in the Indian soil and adapt to local conditions.** Over the years this implant has grown, with branches spreading all over the country. However, it has not borne fruits as expected

### **We are in dire need to rediscover the knowledge rooted in scriptures and folk practices, and explore its relevance in the present times.**

There are no data which official agencies, like the University Grants Commission, Indian Council of Social Science Research, or Department of Science and Technology can furnish. One estimate (A. K. Jain, 2005) suggests that there are more than 15000 psychologists in India. In any case, India has the largest number of psychologists outside the Western block, and is considered a 'publication giant' among all developing countries (Gilgin & Gilgin, 1987). This rapid expansion of the discipline has aroused many hopes and expectations about its possible contribution to the success of nation-building projects

It is true that for a long time Buddhist and Hindu cultures are accepted as part of our collective heritage. It is to admit that Buddhist and Hindu scriptures contain many truths that can help people with a certain disposition in their personal life, but the contribution Indian thought can make to mainstream modern science is largely ignored. The Indian tradition has produced knowledge that is undeniably more comprehensive, reliable and socially relevant than what the as yet largely modern western science is producing. A prime example of such a subject, to which the Indian tradition can make extremely valuable contributions, is Psychology.

20th century psychology in India: a western implant Indian scriptures dating back thousands of years extensively dealt with the analysis of states of consciousness and contents of mental activities. The important feature of this early exposition is that it is mostly experiential and is a culmination of centuries-old tradition of self-verification. In the ancient Indian scriptures no rigid distinction among religion, philosophy, and psychology was maintained. The overriding **consideration was to help individuals in their pursuit of selfrealization and liberation from the miseries of life.** In this world-view, the source of all suffering was presumed to be within the person, and thus the **emphasis was on exploring the 'world within', to alleviate the suffering.** The goal was to seek enduring harmony of spirit, mind and body for everlasting happiness. **The yoga system evolved very sophisticated mind-control techniques in this pursuit. In contemporary literature this broad field of inquiry is referred to as "Indian Psychology".**

### **How Hindu socialism affecting the western world of psychology**

The recently emerging awareness among Indian psychologists of the profitability of looking for certain basic concepts in ancient Indian thought, and building up an indigenous psychology.

In fact, Yoga, meditation and other practices have come to attract even the attention of western psychology, to a considerable extent.

To a large extent western psychology has been looking for elements like sensation, feelings, emotions, reflexes, etc., which are supposed to be the ultimate psychological or behavioural facts.

Ancient Indian psychology looked at the human individual as the centre of the scene. Mere analysis, description and classification of actions and behaviour, while it may satisfy a very naive definition of a science, cannot be of value in helping us to understand the real nature of human behaviour. Early western psychology to reduce all mental phenomena to bodily processes or brain processes. Ancient Indian teachers hold this to be a fatal mistake. While psychological and

mental processes may find expression through bodily processes and neural actions, it does not mean that mental processes are just products of these actions or just these actions.

Hindu psychology believes that ultimately mental acts and the mind are realities by themselves. It is encouraging to note that this is very much similar to the views of **Carl Jung** who held psychic reality to be fundamental.

In the words of **Swamy Akhilananda**, “Hindu psychologists are primarily interested in the study and development of the total mind rather than in the different functions considered separately. The experimental psychologists of the west are interested in the particular phase of mental activity. Some of them go to an extreme in the specification when they study only nerve action and think they will be able to comprehend the mind itself, while they study mere instruments of mind.”

It is interesting to note that **Prof. Hocking** rightly says in his evaluation of western psychology... “but the exact science or sciences of mind have presented us not the mind itself but substitutes of mind near minds we may call. Hindu psychologists on the other hand have been totally concerned with the study of the mind, the ideal mind and hold that various activities like cognition, conscious activity, volition, etc. can be understood only from the concept of mind”.

**The real purpose of Indian psychology was not only to study the mind but develop it and integrate it with character and personality. Ancient Indian psychologists formed part of all our literature like the Upanishads, the Gita, Philosophy, etc. Yogic literature essentially deals with these applied aspects and describes various means of reaching the state of super consciousness or samadhi.**

According to **Patanjali**, the human mind, when it is properly and systematically controlled can transcend the limitations imposed by the body or the nervous system and directly experience the reality of super consciousness and understand the unconscious, conscious and super conscious. Such a mind exposed to this state of consciousness becomes a center of power, and experiences perfect peace and harmony.

An individual in such a mental condition not only experiences super consciousness and the powers, but “radiates them”, and he becomes a luminous personality. It is also worth mentioning that ancient Indian Psychology developed in the context of social and moral considerations.

#### **Thought on Cognition /Perception:**

The human mind, according to Indian thought, is just not a sequence or set of sensations. It is an internal agency, which helps to observe, analyse and integrate different sense impressions both from outside and inside. It is at the same time an experience and an observer. It is an inner instrument or antahkarana.

#### **It has four functions:**

(A) **Manas** or oscillatory function.

(B) **Buddhi** which is a decisive state and which identifies external objects as a tree or cow.

(C) **Ahankara**, here the mind realizes that it knows and

(D) **Chitta**, here the present experience is linked up with the past and thus a meaning is established.

The mind is the instrument whose activity helps an individual to identify objects in the environment.

Indian psychology made a distinction between **Indriya**, an internal implement for sensation as different from the nervous system and the sense organs receiving stimulus from the environment. The indriya is an instrument of the mind. It is active and dynamic and reaches out to the external objects.

This idea is something alien to western psychology. If the indriya does not so react to outside objects actions, etc., then new sense impressions cannot result in perception. In fact, the concept of indriya can explain many phenomena of extrasensory perception where there is no contact through the sensors.

While perception is the most common mode of acquiring knowledge, there are also other means like authority of experts or elders. Similarly very often we also infer from experience and use logic. We may now appreciate, why ancient Indian thinkers laid so much emphasis on the role of the Guru or the preceptor. The Guru or preceptor provided the opportunity to learn and accept, those facts of life which a young individual cannot directly perceive and understand.

#### **Insight on Consciousness:**

Perhaps the most elaborate discussion of a “psychological content” in ancient Hindu texts relates to consciousness. Western psychology, early experimental psychology, concerned itself purely with conscious experiences like sensations, feelings and images.

The advent of psychoanalysis and the writings of **Freud** shifted the focus of the entire psychological thinking on the “unconscious”. Psychoanalysis brought out the importance of unconscious mental activity in influencing the behaviour of people.

According to Freud, the unconscious is the storehouse of biological and instinctual impulses and the associated mental processes on the one hand and on the other, repressed contents which could not be permitted entry into the consciousness.

Western psychology thus gradually came to realise the importance of unconscious mental contents and processes. A few psychologists like **William James** also extended their analysis to religious and mystic experiences.

Hindu indian psychology on the other hand recognised four stages or levels of consciousness, the sleep stage (Susupthi), the dream stage (Swapna), the waking stage (Jagruthi), and an expanded super conscious stage (Turiya). Secondly this view of conscious stages did not share the pessimistic view of psychoanalysis about the nature of the unconscious or subconscious.

According to Indian psychology the subconscious region of the mind consists of “inherent tendencies or past impressions” (sanskaras) and these impressions may be good or bad or neutral. They can occasionally become active and powerful and strongly influence the conscious stage.

As observed by **Swamy Vivekananda**, bad words heard by a man, bad thoughts which he entertains and bad actions can influence conscious thoughts, and actions without his becoming aware of the same. Good thoughts, good actions and good words, equally have a good effect. Thus unconscious thoughts and experiences can have a compelling influence on an individual’s conscious thoughts, feelings and actions.

Indian psychology definitely allows for the influence of the thoughts and actions of one individual on others thus agreeing with the views of Jung on the collective unconscious, but one significant difference is that unlike the western view, indian psychology holds that impressions from a previous life can also become part of the unconscious.

This is in accordance with the Hindu belief in the doctrine of rebirth and continuity of the soul. The stages of *susupthi* and *swapna* belong to the subconscious stage. Indian psychology further holds that an awareness and integration of the subconscious, conscious and the super conscious is a royal way to reach total development and experience complete bliss and harmony.

Yoga prescribes many ways which can be adopted and practiced to achieve this. However, these techniques are different from the techniques of hypnosis and psychoanalysis developed by western psychology, in that they involve the active participation of the individual.

In a way, **the technique of self- analysis advocated in western psychology may be said to work towards psycho-synthesis rather than psychoanalysis**. Mere analysis of the subconscious contents will not go far. Such an analysis must result in a synthesis of the different stages.

### **Outlining Super-Conscious:**

The concept of the super-conscious state is unique to indian thought. According to Indian Hindu psychology one of the basic preconditions for reaching the state of super-consciousness is an absolute ethical living.

According to the **Katha Upanishad**, he who is devoid of proper understanding, thoughtless and always impure, never attains that goal, and gets into the circle of birth and death. **“But he who is intelligent, ever pure and with the mind controlled, reaches that goal whence none is born again”**.

Contrary to the popular belief, a person who is a real mystic and who has spiritual realisation of the super-conscious experience is very much concerned and interested in the welfare of others. Further, what is ordinarily referred to as extrasensory and occult experience has nothing to do with super-conscious experience.

A person who has had super-conscious experience, is a totally transformed individual and can achieve this only through rigorous training and spiritual practices under a realised teacher. Such a realisation of the super-conscious proceeds in stages.

In the first stage, there are certain spiritual experiences. This is followed by the stage of *Samadhi* where one experiences a freedom from distinctions between happiness and misery, and light and darkness. In the words of **Akhilananda** **“A man who enters the super-conscious stage as an ordinary person comes out of this, as a better man. His entire personality is transformed, his emotions are totally controlled, he is master of himself, his will is extremely dynamic, he can achieve what he needs to do and he gains knowledge which he never had.”**

The individual is completely transformed, intellectually and emotionally and is in a state of bliss.

He derives unique knowledge which is also universal and in turn he uses it for the welfare of others. India based thinkers made a distinction between two stages of super-conscious experience or *Samadhi*. In the first one, known as *Savikalpa Samadhi*, the person experiences the immediate presence of God while he himself remains separate.

He experiences God as a personal experience but in the other stage called *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* the individual transcends the limitations of the personality and personal identity, and experiences oneness and total integration with the absolute.

At this stage, all limitations in terms of time, space, causation and subject-object distinction vanish. This stage of existence is sometimes manifested in physical changes and expressions. The actual nature of this stage however varies from individual to individual.

**Patanjali describes eight steps that should be followed for reaching the stage of super-consciousness. These are, Yama (Mental Control), Niyama (Physical Regulation), Asana (Posture), Pranayama (Breathing Control), Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the Mind from Sense Objects) Dharma (Concentration), Dhyana (Meditation) and Samadhi (Super consciousness).**

### **Understanding Emotions**

Almost every cognitive act is accompanied by a subjective reaction which is ‘emotion’. It is difficult to separate the cognitive component from the emotional component. Emotions result not only from external experiences but also from one’s own primitive urges.

One can see here a similarity between the Indian view and the view of Prof. **McDougall** who also considers emotions to be an integral part of human nature and holds that every instinct has a characteristic emotion attached to it.

By and large one may say that the area of feelings and emotions has been the “blind spot” of modern western psychology. According to ancient Indian psychology, emotions have their roots in desires and are bi-polar in nature. A sense of happiness or joy results if the desire is achieved and sadness and unhappiness occurs if the desire is not achieved. **The affective process of emotion cannot be reduced to mere physiological reflexes or awareness of such reflex actions**. Further, desire, and for that matter emotions and feelings are the activities of the total individual.

In the words of Swami Abhedananda, “**What is an emotion? Who feels? Is the brain feeling? No, brain does not feel. We feel; the individual, the personality feels, feels certain conditions, such as joy, grief, love, hatred, anger, fear, and pride. All these are emotions**”.

It may be seen here that what is important is the effect; that there is feeling and also that it is the total person or individual who feels. No doubt, there are bodily responses and changes. The theory of western psychology that emotions are nothing but a set of bodily changes or actions or a reaction to this, cannot be accepted because there is a feeling and it is the total individual who feels.

According to Indian psychology, any particular emotion is primarily an activity of the mind that results in the bodily changes and not the other way. Thus, emotions and feelings are a result of a desire which is an activity of the individual's personality. **The Bhagavad-Gita gives an excellent account of how to deal with one's emotions.**

Desire, according to the Indian psychology is the creative effort of the mind and that is at the bottom of all other activities. In Sanskrit it is called ‘**Vasana**’ the first impulse that is in the living substance or soul. All our actions arise out of desires. When our desires are gratified we feel happy. But the curious fact is that if a desire is completely satisfied, then the desire is dead.

It cannot any more be a cause or motivator for action. Of course, for a desire to become strong and initiate activity, there must be energy, physical energy and much more important mental and psychological energy. Desire, then depends on the mental and physical energy available for continuing to be active and keep our emotions going.

If there are too many desires, then the energy gets exhausted and no desire succeeds. It is here that one can appreciate the general teaching of Indian thought that one should learn to give up lower order desires so that one may seek better satisfaction of higher order desires.

### **Emphasis on Personality and Individuality**

Indian system of psychology accorded a central place to personality. In fact the entire emphasis in psychology was on personality. Western psychologists have in a way employed the term personality to mean individuality. Thus, definitions of personality which have emphasised the “uniqueness” of an individual's behaviour or highlighted individual differences have used the two terms almost interchangeably.

According to ancient Indian psychology, there are two aspects or sides to personality. One may be called the ‘me’ and the other may be called the “I”. The two together make up our personality. **In the words of Abhedananda, “the ‘me’ refers to something objective that one knows whereas ‘I’ refers to something which is unknown.**

The me component; has different types of constituents, material constituents, social constituents or components and spiritual and moral components. The body is a basic material component, then there are other ingredients like the members of the family, community and others with whom a person relates or identifies; then there are other material goods.

Similarly others from whom we expect love, approval, affection and recognition also become part of our personality. Thus, one's personality at any time is a sum total of these including spiritual elements like the God and our belief in moral principles which we try to uphold.

“Yet another feature is that though over years we change and things, people around us change, there is a certain ‘consistency’, or core which one identifies as oneself. For example, in the case of a 70 year old person, his surroundings, his peer group, all are different at this age from what they were when he was 20 years old or 40 years old. But one often overlooks or ignores these changes, is often unconscious of them and sees a continuity.

Perhaps, this continuity over time is due to our ability to remember. But ability to remember by itself cannot explain this identity. Some writers advance the view that consciousness flows like a stream, and even when the stream changes course its identity as a stream remains.

This pure ego is the one which is active and which thinks. This pure ego, when it is clothed by thoughts and thinking power of the mind becomes a thinker. When it is clothed with garments of ideas of emotions and feelings, it becomes a feeler. When it is clothed into the garments of the sense power, it becomes a perceiver” says Swamy **Abhedananda**.

“It is the I or Individuality which holds our sensation, feelings, perceptions and ideas together and this individuality which is not a thought, not a function of the mind, not a function of our intellect, not a sensation, not a percept or image, but which is the unifying element of all which makes each of them related to me”. Says Swampy **Abhedananda**.

This individuality is the background or core of our personality and this does not change. We may call this “I” or pure and non-empirical self or ego. Individuality, therefore, refers to this stable in us. It is this “I” which gives reality to our dreams. It is the greater self and at a higher level it is the cosmic self, where the ‘I’ in its pure and total form, is free of all transient and empirical contents. It is a knower not the known, a perceiver, not the perceived, and a thinker not a thought.

### **Prominence to the Self**

Though terms like soul and selfoccupied a prominent place in the psychology of the west, later on both European experimental psychology and American behaviourism discarded this concept.

The pioneering efforts in this direction were those of **Carl Rogers, Gordon Allport and Henry Murray** to give importance to the concept of self .

It is observed that it is primarily the growth and development of the phenomenological approach in psychology, clinical and counseling psychologies and psychotherapy, that led to rediscovery of the concept of self by western psychology.

Ancient Indian psychology on the other hand was totally centred around the concept of self or soul. According to this view, the self is the beginning and end of psychology, the prime mover of all human activity, and self-development or realisation is the ultimate objective of all efforts. Thus, the self is the source, means and end of all human activities.

Being so, India based psychologists held that self is a basic and fundamental reality and that too over, above and beyond the body. **According to ancient Indian psychology the self does not exist in the body, but it is the other way; the body, the mind and even the objective world exists in the self. The self is thus the prime mover.**

If this is so, the self has an existence independent of the body, before, during and after one's life. Perhaps a individual fed entirely on contemporary western psychology would find such a view a little difficult to understand and even unscientific. This is an instance perhaps, where partial knowledge and biased knowledge imprison us and makes it difficult for us to understand and appreciate more wholesome and true knowledge.

Indian psychologists use the term "Atman" to describe such an active, dynamic and eternal real entity. The Atman is the self in the individual and is an integral part or even a constricted and restricted form of the universal or cosmic self known as Brahman.

The ultimate goal of life or ultimate happiness can be reached only when the Atman or the individual self is able to free itself from its constraints, restraints and bondages which hold it, making it impossible to realise its oneness with Brahman. This is not possible as long as it remains bound by the bodily processes, including sensation, desires, and limited knowledge acquired through the sense. **Yoga, meditation, sadhana, tapasya all these are methods prescribed by ancient self to look beyond and realise that it is a part of the Brahman.** When such realisation comes about it may be either a dualistic samadhi (Savikalpa) or an integral samadhi (Nirvikalpa).

when we discuss the Indian concepts of personality, a distinction was made between the term 'personality' and 'individuality', the 'me' and 'I'. The individual can here see that 'I' is very closely related to the concept of self.

The self at the same time is different from the mind which is only an instrument of the self. Thus, according to the Indian psychology, mind and all other agencies are subordinate to the self. Such a view is perhaps something unbelievable and incredible to western psychology. Even if they grant the reality and validity of the terms like mind and self, their argument will be that the self exists in the mind and is a part of personality and not the other way.

The nature of Atman or self freed from the body and which is supreme, is described by the Upanishads. Mention a few of these descriptions given in the Chandogyia Upanishad (VIII. II, 12).

This description takes the form of an answer by Prajapati to a few questions posed to him by Indra, the Lord of Gods and his followers – "verily Indra, this body is subject to death but is at the same time the vesture of an immortal soul. It is only when soul (self) is enclosed in a body, that it is cognizant of the pleasure and pain. There is no pleasure or pain for the soul once relieved of its body... This serene being arises from the mortal body, reaches the highest light and then appears in its own form. This serene being who appears in its own form is the highest person." Such a soul freed from its body is immortal and incorporeal.

According to the **Mandukya Upanishad**, the soul freed from body passes through four stages of consciousness, the first quarter or "Pada" of the self is called Vaisvanara who is conscious of external reality and objects. The second stage is called Taijasa whose sphere of activity is dream stage and who is aware of internal objects and experiences. The third stage is Prajna, a stage of deep sleep where there is a state of unification of all experiences.

The final stage Turiya is a 'super conscious' stage and there is a cessation of all phenomena; it is a state of bliss, peace and non-dualistic. At this stage, the freed Atman is the same as Brahman when it reaches full self-consciousness.

As observed by Prof. **Ranade**, "thus by a survey of the different approaches to the problem of reality, namely cosmological, the theological and the psychological, we see that Upanishad philosophy tries to establish reality on the firm footing of self-consciousness. Existence is not existence if it does not mean self-consciousness."

The supreme value attached to self-awareness is again emphasized by **Yajnavalkya** in the Brihadaranyka Upanishad (II, IV, V ).

"It is the one concrete reality, whereas what are popularly known as realities are abstractions. The self is naturally dear to everyone of us and it is the presence of self in things and persons around us that makes them dear to us. Some of the other characteristics of such supreme self is that it is self-luminous, it is infinite and eternal."

The above account of the self is based on the Upanishadic text as interpreted by **Adi Sankaracharya** from the point of view of Non-dualism or Advaita. The central argument of Advaita is that there is only one reality and in the ultimate reality the micro and macro, the finite and infinite, the ephemeral and the eternal are the same. While this trend of argument, no doubt, represents the main thrust of vedantic philosophy, nevertheless, there have been certain other approaches. We may take a brief look at these.

The Nyaya doctrine is essentially atomistic and argues for spiritual plurality. It holds that matter and spirit are separate entities and realities. According to Nyaya, the infinite source is not mortal, human beings are distinct and separate from the supreme-self, and are mortals.

The Sankhya system proceeds along a different line. According to this system the causality of the world lies in the Prakriti, which is eternal and unborn and gives rise to other creatures, whereas according to the Upanishads, Brahman is the prime cause of creation. The Upanishads assert that there is only one ultimate real self or soul, all others being ephemeral or unreal. The Sankhya system as such holds that there is plurality of souls of selves.

**In the Visistadvaita School of Ramanuja one finds three basic principles, matter, soul and God; matter and soul being absolutely dependent on God. According to Ramanuja, God is the soul of souls.**

Ancient Indian psychology was essentially individual-oriented and calculated to help an individual to develop self-awareness; this way it was highly pragmatic and not merely descriptive, numerative and classificatory; while certain general concepts and principles were enunciated more in the form of books and guidelines for individuals to live their lives, seek and find happiness, ultimately, ancient Indian psychology held that every individual is unique, influenced by

his past knowledge and experience; the past here means not only experiences and knowledge of the present birth but those acquired during several earlier births.

The Jataka tales of Buddhism present a classical example of such wisdom accumulated over several births.

### **Introduction on the Process of Development of an Individual**

Different psychologists have discussed the process of the development of the individual from birth to old age in different ways. Such developmental stages have been described by **Freud, Erikson, Piaget** and many others.

**Freud's** scheme of stages have been based on his theory of psychosexual development. **Erikson** has conceptualized his stages against the basic problem of identity formation, while **Piaget's scheme** of stages essentially relates to the development of the cognitive and intellectual processes.

Ancient Indian thinkers also viewed the process of development in terms of stages, but different from the theories in that their concept of developmental stages' were more comprehensive and socio psychological in nature, taking into account the demands of society. This scheme was based not only on the "internal" states of the individual, but also attempted to integrate these states with appropriate behavioural experiences and developmental tasks.

**The developmental stage concept of ancient Indian thinkers is referred to as the "Asrama" theory. The Asrama system divides the whole life span into four different stages.**

While ancient Indian thinkers expounded the Asrama theory, they nevertheless had in mind the fact of individual differences, and also the basic Hindu doctrine of rebirth and continuity of the soul. Thus an individual may not go through all the four stages in a single life, particularly, the last stage of Sanyasa.

This possibility of going through all the four stages, depends on his "Sanskara" or good deeds of his previous birth and also the present one. Thus the example of "Dhruva" illustrates that even as a child he could enter the Sanyasa stage.

**Attempts have been, made to compare the Hindu scheme of "Asrama" with the scheme of developmental stages put forth by Erikson. One point of similarity between the two schemes is that both take into account social factors and expectations.**

**Sudhir Kakkar** in attempting a comparison of the two schemes concludes that the 4th and 5th stages in Erikson's scheme, school age and adolescence correspond to Brahmacharya stage, the successive stages of young adulthood to the early part of grahastha, the stage of "adulthood" covers the latter part of Grahastha and also Vanaprastha and the last stage to the Hindu view of Sansyasa.

Of course, as Professor Kakkar observes, while one can see a convergence of the two schemes, there are also differences. In the words of Professor Kakkar "... it appears that there is a suggestive convergence (though of course not an absolute correspondence) of the image of the human life cycle as expounded by the unknown or at least mythological builders of the asrama dharma".

Both schemes see human development in terms of stages of life, each of which contributes a specific strength, with the strengths (and the stages) integrated into a functional whole, the object of which is self-realisation and transcendence. In both theories, the individual at any stage is not viewed in isolation, but in interaction with the sequence of generations and shared mutuality; but there are three fundamental differences.

First of all, the Hindu view is an ideal one while Erikson's approach is clinical and developmental; secondly the Indian theory gives importance to a certain combination of traits or (Gunas) from previous lives in considering the psychological development of the individual and finally, the Hindu theory ignores Erikson's first three stages as well as infantile sexuality, insights which we owe to the breakthrough of modern psychology with man's individual prehistory".

### **Five areas of Indian contributions to the science of psychology**

There are five distinct areas in which the Indian tradition can make a major contribution to Psychology as an academic science:

1. *Philosophical Foundation.* The Indian tradition provides a comprehensive philosophical framework that can not only support the enormous wealth of psychological knowledge inherent in its own spiritual paths, but also, and with equal ease, all branches of modern psychology. The core of this philosophical framework is its insight into the nature and role of consciousness, which provides a considerably more fruitful foundation for the social sciences than the materialist-reductionist theories and methods on which Western science presently bases itself.
2. *Subjective areas of knowledge .* Based on this consciousness-based theory, the Indian tradition contains a perfectly coherent theory of knowledge that has spawned numerous rigorous and effective techniques to arrive at valid and reliable insights in the subjective domain.
3. *Theories of Self and Personality.* The Indian tradition has an understanding of the Personality and the Self that is more comprehensive, coherent and rewarding than any other personality theory presently available in academic psychology.
4. *Special Areas of Psychology.* There are a number of specialized fields of psychology to which the Indian tradition has made extremely interesting contributions. **Subjects that come to mind include emotions and aesthetics (eg, Bharata's theory of bhava and rasa), language, motivation, human development, dancing forms , forms of meditations, child psychology, parenting etc..**
5. *Healing Psychology: Pathways for Change.* the different approaches to Yoga contain insights and techniques to bring about psychological change, that can revolutionize applied fields like psychotherapy and counseling .

#### **1. Philosophical Foundation**

### ***The all-pervading Brahman***

The heart of Indian philosophy is the concept of the *all-pervading Brahman* (see Philips, 1997). It is remarkable that in the ancient scriptures the simple mentioning of Brahman's name is enough to settle all doubt.

When we take the gods as divine personifications of fundamental psychological powers and processes, the interpretation of the story is not difficult: Agni, the basic human drive and aspiration, Vayu, the cleaning force of the pure heart, and Indra, the Lord of the mind, are great powers, no doubt, but by themselves they have neither power nor value. In fact by themselves they could not even exist. As Uma, the first dawn of pure discernment, points out to them, there is a "secret ingredient", an Absolute that makes them what they are and that, at the same time, infinitely and eternally surpasses them. That secret One is Brahman, at once the ineffable Transcendence, the all-comprehensive Cosmos, and the ultimate individual Presence.

### **2. Epistemology (theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.)**

The one contribution is derived directly from the Vedic ontology. Starting from the idea that consciousness and being are in essence one, Truth is considered a quality of being, more than an attribute of sentences. With the exception of the highly sophisticated metaphysical and logical debates between the medieval *darshanas*, the cultural stress in India has been on experience, rather than on information. Popular Hinduism is full of stories in which the genuine wisdom of kings, old women and ignorant girls is successfully pitted against the experientially empty scholarship of learned pandits. True knowledge is something you have to own with your whole being, you have to become it: **the real knowledge is, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, knowledge by identity.**

Modern science and Indian spirituality are both aware of the fact that Reality surpasses our capacity to understand it. Openness to what is beyond our (present) knowledge is an essential element of science as well as of spirituality. There is however one big difference between the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and the pursuit of scientific knowledge. While in science the "extra" is seen as "more of the same", in the Indian spiritual tradition the "extra" is seen as something of another *order*, something ineffable beyond the whole category of mental statements.

Another Indian contribution to epistemology is based on the first one combined with the insight that there are many different types and levels of consciousness present amongst men. The one ultimate Truth is ineffable, or rather "of infinite quality" as the much richer Sanskrit equivalent, *anantaguna*, says, but it manifests in the form of many smaller truths that all embody entirely different and often contradictory parts and aspects of the One. In the field of religion, this leads to the wonderful concept of the *Ishta Devata*, the idea that the one ineffable supreme, can come to his devotees in myriads of forms. In the field of ethics, or truth in action, this idea of multiformity arising from a deep underlying unity leads to the marvellous concept of the individual *svadharma*, the personal truth of action which is not universal but is meant to guide the individual about what he or she should do in harmony with his or her own *Svabhava*, essential nature, under his or her specific circumstances. Again it may be clear how a deep understanding of the twin concepts of *svadharma* and *svabhava* would lead to major changes in psychotherapy, education, developmental psychology, business management and even law enforcement.

The third major epistemological contribution of the Indian tradition to psychology is its methodology. In all areas of science it is implicitly understood that the nature of the researcher does play a role. A student of physics or medicine does not only learn the established facts of his subject, or even the right research methods, but in the process of his studies he *becomes* a physicist or a doctor. But this inner change is not the key issue in his studies.

### **3. Models of the self and the personality**

When we finally come to the content of psychology, the most important contribution made by the Indian tradition is no doubt its concept of the Self as the Atman, the Purusha, and the relation of this Self on the one side to the ego, the *ahankara*, and on the other to the cosmic and transcendent realities of Prakriti and Brahman. Together with this, one has to consider its fine understanding of the different types of consciousness (the *koshas*), the centres of consciousness in the human body (the *chakras*), the varieties of mind like *vijnana*, *buddhi*, *manas*, and the way they relate to the *chitta*.

One of Sri Aurobindo's main contributions in this field is his distinction between the immutable Self, the Atman, above, and the evolving soul, the *chaitya purusha*, which he calls "the psychic being". Another major contribution is his detailed description of the different types of consciousness, right from the consciousness of the body to the higher ranges of mind, and especially the distinction he makes between the Overmind and the Supermind (e.g. 1972a, 271-89). Of major practical importance is also his understanding of how the vertical Vedic system of different planes of consciousness interacts with a concentric system consisting of the outer nature, the inner nature and the *purusha* on each of these different levels.

### **4. Special areas**

There are many specialised areas of psychology in which the Indian tradition can make major contributions. One can for example think of Bharata's detailed study of aesthetic pleasure and emotions; cognition, perception and awareness; language; personality types (*gunas*, *varnas*); life-cycles (*ashramas*), etc. One of the most interesting for modern psychology is perhaps the Indian approach to developmental psychology. In this field, the contributions from the Indian and the modern Western tradition are clearly complementary. Western developmental psychology has done a lot of work on what is unique to early childhood. Just as in pre-modern Europe, the peculiarities of early childhood have not received much attention in the Indian tradition, and what happens during this period of life is taken largely as not more than a specific application of general principles. But what the Indian tradition can add to developmental psychology are its



insights in the evolving soul. While the debate in modern Europe has been largely between nature and nurture, the Indian tradition brings in a third element, the self, the soul. In the Indian tradition our biological endowments, what we would now call the genetic foundations of the personality, are not taken as part of the self, *purusha*, but as part of Nature, *prakriti*, and as such as part of the circumstances of life. The real “I” is the eternal soul, and the focus is first about what the soul does to create the environment it ends up living in, and second how this soul subsequently should deal with that “environment” (which includes the peculiarities of its own character).

## 5. Change

**This is the area where the Indian tradition has probably had the greatest influence on the evolving global civilization, not only in the subculture but also in mainstream Psychotherapy and Human Resource Development.** The latter is probably due to the fact that these fields of applied psychology are much less theory driven than academic psychology proper and as such more open to new ideas, irrespective of whether they fit in what is traditionally considered scientific or not, as long as they can be shown to work. This pragmatic focus is an advantage as well as a disadvantage. **In Western psychology, meditation and yoga are widely recommended as “relaxation techniques” without the slightest hint of their deeper spiritual meaning and cultural context, which is a rather tragical travesty of their original intent.**

In this area too, Sri **Aurobindo** has made a number of significant contributions. The most important is perhaps that he realised that yoga is nothing but practical psychology (1972b), and that he worked out in great detail how the basic natural processes at work in our psychological nature can be used to uplift and transform our existence. In harmony with his vision of an ongoing evolution of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo sees as the ultimate aim of Yoga not only liberation, but also transformation. His yoga involves a triple transformation: first a perfecting of the outer and inner nature as an instrument in service of the soul, then a bringing of more and more of one’s being under influence of the higher ranges of the mind and spirit, and finally a supramental transformation which he considers to be the inevitable next step in the evolutionary process

## The Indian Concept of Consciousness

The heart of the Indian contribution to modern psychology is its wonderfully rich and comprehensive conceptualisation of consciousness.

Different aspects of consciousness can conceptually be separated, but they are still part and parcel of the single reality of Brahman. Awareness and form-giving Energy, Oneness and Duality, Self and Nature. The following 12 points should thus not be considered in isolation, or in opposition to each other, but together, even where they *seem* to contradict each other.

## Twelve Aspects of Consciousness

### 1. Consciousness is Awareness.

Consciousness is the light in which all is seen.

The first and most obvious aspect of consciousness is “awareness”, but it is amazingly difficult to describe what awareness actually is. Awareness seems to belong to the same category as Time, of which Augustine said, “If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it..., I do not know” (Augustine, 440/1955, Bk. 11, Ch. 14). *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines “awareness” in terms of “knowledge” and “perception”, but then defines “knowledge” and “perception” in terms of “awareness”. The Oxford editors cannot be blamed for this circularity: like time, awareness is one of the foundational elements of our existence, and classical definitions of the Aristotelian type, that start from a more general term and then narrow it down, don’t work. There simply is no appropriate more general term to define awareness with.

In the Indian tradition it is often said that consciousness is the light in which the world is visible. This “light” in which everything is seen is the “Purusha”, the Self. In the *Kena Upanishad*, it is the secret unknowable that sees in the seeing, hears in the hearing, and knows in the knowing, and this brings us to the second aspect of consciousness.

### 2. Consciousness is the source of our individual Identity.

Consciousness is our self, or at least a power of the self.

Consciousness is very closely related to our Self. It is the basic source of our identity. When you wonder what the difference is between a camera and a human being, you could simply say, “in the camera, there is nobody home.” The technology is there, but the person is missing; the seeing is taking place but there is nobody home who sees it. In short, the question of the *Kena Upanishad* is not answered. Sri Aurobindo calls consciousness a power of the Self but the two are so close that many scholars simply identify both as one and the same thing. For this reason both Purusha and Atman are sometimes translated as consciousness and sometimes as Self. Experientially one could well argue that we humans are, more than anything else, our consciousness.

### 3. Consciousness is not only Individual, but also Transcendent and Cosmic.

Consciousness is the transcendent source and all-pervasive upholder of the universe.

There is no consensus in modern science on any aspect of consciousness, but in the most common view all the consciousness that exists on earth occurs inside our human bodies, or at most in a few other highly developed animals or perhaps machines. Consciousness is nowadays widely considered to be an “emergent property” of information processing, that is to say, as something that comes into being during information processing when it reaches a certain level of



complexity. As such it can exist only inside those animals (or machines) that have a brain that is complex enough to generate it. According to the Indian tradition, it is just the other way around. Consciousness is the very stuff of which the world is made. It is primarily transcendent, secondarily universal and only in the third instance individual. Our little individual centres of consciousness are small emissaries of the real thing who mistakenly identify themselves with an individual mind, ego, life and body, just as if waves would think themselves to exist apart from the ocean. Through yoga we can retrieve our Selves from this entanglement and re-identify ourselves with the one cosmic and transcendent consciousness, which we always have been in our essence, even at the time when our surface mind was imagining itself to be separate.

#### **4. Consciousness is Unitary.**

There is only one light in which all is seen.

A fourth basic and fascinating attribute of consciousness is that consciousness is unitary: there is basically only one consciousness. This singularity is true again on many different levels. One of the big issues in neuroscience at the moment is the “binding problem”: it has been found that at any given time hundreds if not thousands of parallel processes take place in the brain but there is no clear anatomical structure that is responsible for the fact that in the end we have only one integrated view of the world. In our subjective experience we can *consciously* only do one thing at a time and all the rest is done subconsciously. Even when we compare, for example, different ways of looking at reality, we still rely on one extra frame into which we put all these different smaller frames together. The Indian tradition has focused on the unitary aspect of consciousness on a quite different scale, the scale of the manifestation as a whole.

#### **5. The individual Self is one with the Cosmic and with the Transcendent Self.**

This is “the Knowledge, which, once known, makes everything known”. Each individual can realise his identity with the Absolute, every other & every thing.

**If you add up the first four factors— that consciousness is awareness, that it is the source of our identity, that it can manifest on an individual, a transcendent, as well as a cosmic level, and that it is basically one—the conclusion imposes itself that in essence our own individual consciousness is one with the consciousness of the whole. As such, it should be possible to “realise” this in one’s experience. And this is, of course, exactly what the great mystics have managed to do, and what they say each one of us can do if we care to put in the necessary effort.**

#### **6. Consciousness is Joy.**

Joy is the affective essence of consciousness and of all that is. The ultimate reality is *Sachchidananda*.

This sixth aspect of consciousness, that it is one with Joy, is derived from the concept of *Sachchidananda*. The idea that the ultimate reality is an inalienable oneness of Existence, Consciousness, and Joy, is one of the greatest masterpieces of Indian thought and for psychology perhaps more important than Einstein’s famous equation of mass and energy for physics.

One way to understand the contradiction between the yogic assertion of all-pervading joy and the everyday pervasiveness of suffering is to compare joy with temperature. If you need a domestic scale of temperature you can use Celsius or Fahrenheit. Both start at an arbitrary place that happens to be convenient to us, like the temperature at which water freezes. Anything above that is called positive, warm; anything below that, is called negative, cold. With joy we do the same thing. Anything that is somehow within our range of liking we call positive, joy; anything outside this narrow range we call negative, suffering. The scientific way of measuring temperature, however, is Kelvin, which starts at absolute zero, and as such it has no negative points. In Kelvin, *any* temperature is positive. Only with such an absolute scale it is possible to work and think effectively and scientifically with temperature. With joy it might be the same thing. For domestic use the usual scales of pleasure and pain with a fairly arbitrary zero point in between are appropriate. But if you want to deal effectively with and think seriously about the basic Joy of Being, you have to start at the absolute zero and take everything beyond that as positive. After all, it is just our human smallness and ignorance that make us look at some things as suffering and some things as joy. They have no absolute meaning and the border between them is much more arbitrary and nebulous than popular sentiment presumes. Anybody who has tried even a little bit of self-mastery, knows that there are many things that in the ordinary, egoic life produce suffering, but that with a little effort can be made interesting, if not positively enjoyable. This is, like so many things, true at the top and at the bottom of human experience. At the top end of the human ladder as well, we see that many great mystics have suffered pain with a happy heart. And in between these extremes people do like to put in effort, and people actually enjoy discomfort, for example in sport or during holidays, as long as they manage to see it “as part of the game”. Essentially it seems to be only our human smallness and our ego that make us dislike pain and feel suffering. When our consciousness increases, our capacity for both joy and suffering increases. In fact, initially one may become more aware of the pain than of the joy inherent in life, just as one becomes aware of the dust in a room only after one starts cleaning the room. But in the end another Joy far beyond pleasure takes over and begins to penetrate every aspect of being.

*These are six essential, static and passive qualities of consciousness, related to “being”.*

*There are also six dynamic aspects of consciousness, aspects related to “becoming”.*

#### **7. Consciousness is Power; Chit is also Chit-Shakti.**

Consciousness is not only passive awareness, but also form-giving energy, force.

The first of the dynamic aspects of consciousness is that consciousness is power. Consciousness is not only a passive witness. It does something. On the physical level, it is the consciousness in material things that gives them the habit of form and the tendency to obey certain fixed laws of nature. As you go up the ladder of consciousness, consciousness takes different shapes. Will on all levels is conscious power. On the vital plane, for example, both fear and desire tend to attract what is feared or desired.

#### **8. Consciousness is *Biune* (Ishwara – Shakti) and Dual (Purusha – Prakriti), as well as Unitary.**

Consciousness is One, but it can manifest as none, biune, dual, or even many One interesting aspect of consciousness is that consciousness is one, but not only one: it can also manifest as none, biune, two or many. These different aspects of consciousness lead to radically different experiences of the fundamental nature of reality, experiences that are so strong and convincing that they have given rise to different philosophies and religions, which are difficult to reconcile for the narrow logical mind, but which all find expression within the richness of the Indian tradition. Consciousness in the ordinary waking state is largely dual: it has a clearly marked ego as subject and an equally distinct and “real” nature as object. This state and the ideas derived from it are part of the current orthodoxy in the modern Western philosophy of science. As a result, intentionality is widely taken as the main criterion of consciousness. Even Jung, who was otherwise deeply influenced by Indian thought, could not imagine that a state without ego could be anything else than unconscious.<sup>9</sup> At the other extreme are on the one hand the experience of the utter unreality of everything including the self, which leads to the Buddhist concepts of *anatta* and *sunya*, and on the other hand the Vedantic experience of the eternal Self being one with Brahman. In between there are the theistic religions which have different views on the ultimate nature of individual souls, and the Sankhya conceptualisation of many individual Selves, in whose immutable and unstained mirrors a single Nature is reflected.

The Sankhya stress on duality is generally taken as one step short of the Advaita experience of ultimate oneness. But it is such an important tool for progress on the spiritual path that there is virtually no school of yoga that does not in some way or another recommend the development of the pure witness consciousness. It is the easiest way of getting out of our entanglement in our ego. But whatever road one follows, whatever aspect one may try to stress, it seems that in the end one has to accept, realise, and enjoy, the many and the one as two faces of the same ineffable mystery.

#### **9. Consciousness is Love.**

Love is the essence of all relation. Joy and Love are one. Knowledge and Love are one.

The most beautiful form of consciousness is Love. It is as Love that consciousness sustains the world. But, like almost everything else in human life, love gets easily corrupted till, as desire it has turned into it's very opposite. Yet, in essence Love and Joy are the same thing. Love is the dynamic, the active part of That. Joy is the passive, receptive side. And again this is true on the highest level of Absolute Ananda, as well as on the very mundane level of a mother with her child, or of two people “in love” with each other. Love is a simple, unconditional joy in the being of another person. Just as a child comes into being because of the love between his parents, however diminished or perverted that love may be, so this whole wide world would not exist if it was not carried by the Love of the Divine. One could fill volumes with the beautiful texts from the Indian tradition describing on the one hand the Love of God for his devotees, and on the other, the human love for God, which is seen as one of the highest and most profound ways of knowing him.

#### **10. There are many Levels and Types of Consciousness**

There are different *types* of consciousness, physical, vital, mental and beyond mentality. These types exist not only “in us” as states of our personal being: they make up the world we inhabit, as well as the independent, typal worlds. Each world presents a different relation between Purusha & Prakriti.

This is again an aspect of consciousness, which is obvious to all who are even faintly familiar with any occult or mystical tradition, but as we have seen in the introduction, it is at the moment not acknowledged in the given “orthodoxy” in scientific Consciousness

#### **11. In Time, Consciousness Manifests as an Ongoing Evolution of Beauty, Truth and Joy**

Consciousness gradually takes form in space and time. The World is not finished; it is a work in progress.

For me the most fascinating aspect of consciousness is that in space and time consciousness manifests primarily as a big adventure — as an evolution — in which slowly consciousness evolves, both in the individual and in the world as a whole, till, as Sri Aurobindo says, the consciousness of the Divine will be fully manifest in matter. The *Puranas* contain the story of the ten avatars, but till recently this seems to have been understood mainly as depicting stages in the progress of the individual.

#### **12. Consciousness is a Mystery**

One cannot understand God, but one can Love God, Know God, and even, to some extent, Become God.

After all that is said about consciousness, it is still a mystery, and luckily it will always remain a mystery. The more we know about it, the deeper the mystery becomes. The final truth cannot be understood with the mind because the mind itself is only a middle term, a quite limited form of consciousness. You cannot *understand* God; you can become God. You can very much love God, and to some extent you can know God in yourself and in the world, but you can never make a mental understanding that fully encircles it.

## Conclusion

The neatest and most beautiful summary of the Indian contribution to Psychology is formulated in one of the oldest and most recited verses of the whole tradition, the sloka from the *Brihadaranyaka*, which describes our eternal yearning, the quest to lead us *from the non-being to true being, from the darkness to the Light, from death to Immortality*.

## Psychology in the new millennium

Clearly, by the turn of this new millennium, the academic scenario is changing in India. The scientific community is better prepared now than in the past to accept a psychology rooted in native wisdom and philosophical traditions. Psychologists in India are increasingly aware of the wide gap between their academic pursuits and the real-life problems of people. The replicative nature of research endeavours, antiquated and obsolete teaching programmes, and lack of applied orientation have devoid the discipline of any professional momentum. Indian psychologists want to break free from the theoretical and methodological constraints of the discipline to grapple with the real issues of development and to act as social catalysts in the change process. Indian psychologists are also aware that if they fail to take up the challenge, they are likely to be completely marginalized. The need for developing indigenous perspectives of one's culture has been felt by psychologists in many countries in all the continents. It is, however, more than indigenous psychology for the reason that it offers psychological models and theories appropriate to address problems of social conflicts, violence and mental health in other societies. Four factors have contributed to this change of attitudes and perceptions of Indian psychology. One is the failure of Western psychology to deal with their own societal problems. It has increasingly been realized that positivistic psychology only provides a fragmented and superficial understanding of human feelings and behaviour. The growing problems of social and family violence, mental health, moral decay, etc., have brought out the gross limitations of mainstream western psychology. A need was felt to bring back spirituality and religiosity in psychological research, which were banished from psychology for almost a hundred and fifty years (see special issue of the *American Psychologist*, January 2004). The movement toward positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2002) also has many ingredients of Indian psychology.

Two, is the growing popularity of Yoga and other spiritual systems of India in the West. In the past few decades more and more persons with spiritual training and experiences from India have been visiting other countries and have acquired a large following. They have been responsible for disseminating the Indian spiritual tradition. Among them, **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Swami Rama** are some prominent gurus who have been able to draw the attention of academic psychologists. **Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and Integral Psychology** attracted worldwide attention. **Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation** went through rigorous experimental testing at Harvard and many other universities. Swami Rama offered himself to extensive medical testing at the Meninger Foundation Laboratory, New York, where he demonstrated many yogic feats. These Indian masters were able to demonstrate convincingly the power of mind over body and have contributed significantly towards evoking interest in the Indian psychological perspectives. Publications of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry, and the Himalayan International Institute for Yoga Sciences, Philosophy, and Religion in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, founded by Swami Rama, are valuable for their significant contributions in expounding the psychological insights of Vedanta, Yoga, Samkhya and other Indian systems. These and many other accomplished spiritual masters of the Indian tradition have played an important role in popularizing Indian psychology in the world (Paranjpe, 2005).

Three, is the secular nature of Indian psychology. **It is a gradual acknowledgement that Indian psychology of consciousness has much to offer in terms of self-growth rather than as religious traditions..** It was recognized clearly that modern psychology has nothing to offer regarding the 27 spiritual/transcendental dimension of human nature either to understand others or for personal growth (Tart, 1975).

Four, with India emerging as a major economic power in the world, there is a renewed interest in Indian values, philosophies and practices, as well as in the **strength and resilience of Indian society**. The very Indian culture and philosophy which was debunked for India's poverty and backwardness by many western Indologists (Max Muller, for example) is now seen behind India's success stories. Indian research is now taken more seriously by western psychologists, and as a consequence (ironically), by Indian psychologists themselves. The newly emerging psychology is rooted in traditional Indian thought and practices. As stated in the Pondicherry Manifesto (2002), **"Rich in content, sophisticated in its methods and valuable in its applied aspects, Indian psychology is pregnant with possibilities for the birth of new models in psychology that would have relevance not only for India but also to psychology in general."** The plurality of Indian tradition and an ethos of accommodating diverse thought systems provide a rich gold mine for creatively building a new psychology. However, despite all diversity and distinctiveness there are some features common across all systems and schools relevant to Indian psychology.

Indian psychology can be deemed as universal. It cannot be subsumed under indigenous or cultural psychology if that implies delimiting the scope of psychological inquiry. Indian psychology deals with the perennial issues of human existence which are not bound by any geographical region or time period. Centuries back the sages and thinkers were raising the same questions and dealing with the same problems that are pertinent today, and in this sense Indian psychology is both ancient and contemporary at the same time. Indeed, the use of the term „Indian psychology“ is more of a convenience; may be a more appropriate term is „psychology of Indian origin“.

Spirituality has opened up the possibilities of developing broader theories of human existence to understand paranormal powers, creativity and intuitive thinking, which many people exhibit. It can be stated that spirituality and sacred go together, though in Indian thought no dichotomy is maintained between science and spirituality. Transcendence and state of pure consciousness are held as empirical facts in Indian psychology grounded in the experiences of many and attainable

for anyone who follows systematic procedures and practices. Though spirituality is at the core of most of the Indian theories it is not bound by any particular faith or ism and serves to provide a secular account of human nature.

Methods of yoga and meditation have been used for centuries to test, experiment and empirically validate higher mental states. Indian psychology is applied. It is not just concerned about testing the existing theories and developing generalizable propositions, but more importantly, about the practices that can be used for the transformation of human conditions towards perfection. That is, transformation of the person to higher levels of achievement and well-being.

The goal of Indian psychology is to help the person transcend from a conditional state (mechanical and habitual thinking) to an unconditional state of freedom and liberation. This transformation, in more mundane terms, implies becoming more objective, discretionary, equi-poised and knowing about the sources of distortion. Indian psychology extensively deals with ways to deal with human suffering and lead one on the path of personal growth. The techniques of yoga and meditation have contributed in a significant way in controlling the mind and feelings. This newly emerging science of Indian origin calls for a paradigm shift in psychological research. Whereas the methodology of western psychology focuses on the study of the „other“ person, Indian psychology (as other eastern psychologies) focuses on the study of „own-self“. We need both first person and third person approach to research to bring about desired changes in human societies. The experiential basis of knowledge generation is common to theories and practices of 30 many other eastern philosophies, including Zen, Tao and Buddhism.

In more recent times, efforts to build Indian psychology as a vibrant discipline have intensified. Several conferences (Puducherry, 2001, 2002, 2004; Kollam, 2001; Delhi, 2002, 2003, 2007; Vishakhapatnam, 2002, 2003, 2006; Bengaluru, 2007) in recent times have given impetus to this movement of Indian Psychology. A number of publications on Indian psychology, such as Kuppuswami's Elements of Ancient Indian Psychology (1985), Indra Sen's Integral Psychology (1986), Misra and Mohanty's Perspectives on Indigenous Psychology (2002) have the potential of serving as textbooks. More recently, Joshi and Cornelissen's edited volume, Consciousness, Indian Psychology and Yoga (2004); K.R. Rao and Marwaha's Towards a Spiritual Psychology (2006); K.R. Rao, Paranjpe and Dalal's Handbook of Indian Psychology (2008) and this particular volume provide rich resource material for teaching and research in this area. It needs to be made clear that the purpose of testing ancient Indian theories and knowledge is not to prove their superiority. It is a movement toward contemporarizing Indian theories and testing their relevance for enhancing human competencies and well-being. It is against this backdrop that Indian psychology is gearing itself to usher in a new era of many exciting possibilities.

**Indian psychology** refers to an emerging scholarly and scientific subfield of psychology. Psychologists working in this field are retrieving the psychological ideas embedded in indigenous Indian religious and spiritual traditions and philosophies, and expressing these ideas in psychological terms that permit further psychological research and application. 'Indian psychology' in this sense *does not mean* 'the psychology of the Indian people', or 'psychology as taught at Indian universities'. The **Indian Psychology Movement** refers to psychologists encouraging or carrying out the recently expanded activity in this field

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