

Review

What do we mean by Indian psychology?

By Indian psychology we mean an approach to psychology that is based on ideas and practices that developed over thousands of years within the Indian sub-continent. In other words, we use the word 'Indian' to indicate and honor the origin of this approach to psychology-the origin of the underlying philosophy, the conceptual framework, the methods of enquiry and the technology of consciousness that it uses to bring about psychological change and transformation. It may be useful to make explicit that we do not use the word 'Indian' to localize or limit the scope of this approach to psychology; we do not mean, for example, 'the psychology of the Indian people', or 'psychology as taught at Indian universities'. We hold that Indian psychology as a meta-theory and as an extensive body of related theories and practices have something essential and unique to contribute to the global civilization as a whole.

One could argue that Indian psychology will be relevant particularly to Asian, African, or Latin-American countries which share alternative non-Western world views about mind, psyche and various psychological phenomena such as healing, health, self, or personality; but we strongly believe that in spite of all cultural differences, there is a large common core to human nature, and that, to the extent that Indian psychology deals with that common core, it should be of interest to all members of the human family. We do not look at Indian psychology as something that belongs only to India or the past, but as a rich source of psychological insight and know-how that can be utilized to create a better future for the whole of humanity. Thus the term Indian Psychology refers to the psychologically relevant materials in ancient Indian thought.

Spirituality - Foundation of Jnana Prabodhini

Jnana Prabodhini (JP) has pinned its faith on spirituality. This is the basis of all work at JP. Whether it is formal education through industrial activity, or social education through agricultural service to people, spirituality is the basis of all these.

To inculcate spirituality, various sorts of Upasanas are organized regularly for all the employees, associates, students and teachers of Jnana Prabodhini. An Upasana is reciting collectively specific relevant *shlokas* with apt tune and rhythm. Some of the Upasanas are - weekly, *varsharmbh*, *varshant*, *deekshant*, *mahapurush pooja*, etc. The scripts

(pothis) of each of them are published in English and Marathi. The well - researched scripts are popular all over the world, as they are enriched with shlokas and their meanings with due relevance.

The work about spirituality at JP is disseminated through varied ways. Some of the spiritual practices are replicated in other schools also. For example, Sevasadan English Medium School at Pune undertakes Vidyavrat Sanskar for VIII grade students. Sanskrit Sanskriti Samshodhika trains Purohits for the spiritual practices and their services are highly appreciated by the people all over the world. The founder of JP Dr. V. V. Pendse compiled, in a book, his thoughts and experiences about Upasana as a means for restoring health.

Psychology in reference to Indian Scriptures

The major part of ancient Indian scriptures (Hindu, Buddhist and Jain), emphasize self-realization, Samadhi or nirvana. After 1960 Humanistic Psychology emerged and Psychologists became interested in paranormal dimensions of growth. The terms Oriental Psychology, Buddhist Psychology, Yoga Psychology, Jain Psychology, etc. are frequently found in modern psychological literature now.

Upanishads (appendices to the Vedas, which date from 600 B.C.) which describe the Vedanta philosophy and provide the theoretical foundation of Jnana Yoga are of more direct relevance to Psychology. Based on the readings from Upanishads, concepts of mind and of intellect are enumerated. Referring to many Upanishads, they presented a concise and comprehensive view. The researcher enlisted and described many intellectual functions of mind. The emphasis of Upanishads on paving towards self realization with the help of intrinsic motivation as a function of intellect is well illustrated (3).

Nurturance of giftedness for all age levels is a challenging task. At student level it invites crucial methods and techniques. How was it shouldered thousands of years back? Upanishadic view towards nurturing giftedness is stated by picking up two basic principles - acquiring physical, mental, spiritual freedom and sharpening our instruments of knowledge attainment (14). Question - answer method is to be followed for all the human beings in grooming their gifts. The researcher also touched the point of balancing the materialism and spirituality with no extremities.

When Indian central government robustly practices policy of 'Education for All', the need to cater to the special education-needs of children, naturally arises. Does Indian Psychology have a role for mentally challenged children or emotionally disturbed students

or children with malnutrition?

Vedas observed oral chanting method in studying. The belief about constructive effect of Mantras, sounds and tones is worth testing. An experiment testing the effect of reciting vedic Mantras on mentally challenged students is narrated in a study (9). The students' post intelligence test performance was improved and teacher and parent interview analysis supported this finding. Effects of tones and phonetics on the higher functions of the brain were studied for Ph. D. work (5). The researcher undertook a chain of experiments based on the findings on the earlier ones. She varied and combined Hz of 'Aum' and measured the effects on EEG power spectrums, divergent thinking, evaluative thinking, logical and analytical thing, anxiety and concentration. The conclusion was, specific change with higher brain function depends on the structure of sound used.

Contributions of Indian Saints to Psychology

Jnana Prabodhini considers four spiritualists, namely, Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekanand, Samarth Ramdas and Sri Aurobindo as pillars of the JP Philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's thoughts are rigorously studied in JP. The faculty of liberating subliminal mind and awakening that faculty is called as 'Knowledge by Identity' (identification) by Sri Aurobindo. This faculty surpasses intelligence. This process is discussed in details in a research paper (1).

Indian Saints' philosophy pivots around education. This becomes evident in a paper about contributions of Samarth Ramdas to educational psychology (4). The researcher discussed Samarth Ramdas's propounding about characteristics of a learner, a teacher and of teaching - learning process as well as about factors of intelligence, and about self development. The researcher also compiled Samarth Ramdas's thoughts selecting some verses from 'Dasbodh' about how to lead a powerful life in a Marathi book. Due to her psychological perspective, the writing becomes appealing. A curriculum based on 'Manobodh' and 'Dasbodh' for enhancing self- development ability of college students was tested and its effects were constructive (16). The results show seed of further extensive research.

Indian Theories of Personality Explored

All sided development of personality is the focus of education. Many Indian theories of personality are experimented at JP. Gurukul system of schooling is being experimented at Jnana Prabodhini Navanagar Vidyalaya, Pune; wherein Panchakosh concept of personality is at the heart. It is the semi-residential section of the school, from grade V to X. It follows S. S. C. board curriculum. Extensive and comprehensive quantitative and qualitative

evaluation concluded in fruitful effects with respect to all sided development of the students. Two Indian models of personality were compared with the help of self report inventories. The development of the instruments and the correlations are discussed along traits in each model. The instruments proved useful to understand physical and mental status. On the basis of Panchakosh model of personality, Teacher Trainers underwent extensive facilitation. The qualitative analysis of the outcomes indicated remarkable improvement in their knowledge, social and teaching skills, creative thinking and in motivation (11), (17).

Continuous development of personality itself can be conceptualized as giftedness. A quite novel process oriented model of giftedness is put forth, which is based on the five aspects/sheaths - Panchakosha - concept of personality (13). It is the life-long expression from within to outside and from one of the aspects/sheaths to other one. A few examples along each kosha expressed in the outer one starting from the soul are enumerated. Indian Psychology provides a strong foundation for thoughts about advanced development of personality. Following multidimensional holistic Indian view of intelligence, and considering the principles and philosophies by Maslow, Dabrowski and Ramdas concept of giftedness as a potential for advanced development is set forth (15). Cognitive, emotional-social, ethical-moral and spiritual aspects are emphasized in describing giftedness.

Studies related to Yoga

Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga is a very systematic presentation of Raja yoga. Both Bhagavat Gita and Ashtanga Yoga are supposed to have been written around the turn of B.C. to A.D. Sankara's writings (8th century A.D.) on the different yogas as well as his Advaita philosophy are considered as classics in the area and are of great value to the Psychology of consciousness as well as personal growth. Modern interest in relaxation can be traced to studies on Savasana. Rising popularity of meditation practice links Psychology to Oriental religious practices and philosophy.

Practicing yoga is a regular exercise for many. It is explored in some of the studies. In a preliminary study children's experience about physical and mental state during and after yoga is assessed (8). The analysis suggested that most of them were aware about the states. They felt fresh, energetic and bodily warm. Validity of subjective experiences was tried to test on patients and healthy volunteers using a sleep profile (6). The hypertensives, asthmatics, diabetics and healthy volunteers had respectively lower chittvikshepas. In a similar try out study whether yoga program acts as a supportive therapy in curing diseases was explored. Positive results were obtained (7). In an empirical study, positive effect of

yoga - sadhana was noted on quality of life (10). Extensive data collection and its analyses is feature of this study. Quality of life and work efficiency had significant positive correlation with sattva guna - a personality trait.

An interesting study about Yoga practitioners themselves was undertaken wherein their emotional status was tapped (12). The 70 profiles were analyzed and they were found to be superior in motivation and in social skills. Significant difference between means in total emotional ability score favored females.

Experiments in Ayurved

The psychosomatic relationship was well known and salient in ancient times. The very first invocatory stanza of Ashtangahridaya (the main text in Ayurveda, written in 4th century A.D.) describes how emotions like desires lead to both physical and mental diseases. Ayurved Samshodhika of JP undertook voluminous research about using medicines in tiny sweet tablets-sukshma form. It is unlike powders, pills and quite user friendly.

Nurturing intelligence opens up many issues right from physiological to spiritual. How far brain nourishment will result in development of intelligence? In what way the IQ controversy should be addressed? Attempts are made to answer this question. Experiments to evaluate the efficacy of Medha Rasayanas - ayurvedic brain tonics - in developing intelligence were executed at Ayurved Samshodhika. Quality of nutrition plays an important role in the development of intelligence only to the individual's optimum genetic limit was the view held in a research paper (2) in reference to prakruti of an individual.

Research put to use

- Jnana Prabodhini imparts facilitation programs for children, youth, parents, teachers, social workers, lay persons and employees. The programs are based on the research findings about theories, models and principles in Indian Psychology. It is specifically true about the programs about leadership development, cognitive development, stress management and personality development in general.
- The guidance and counselling services at JPIP are backed up with the research.
- Gurukul at Navnagar Vidyalay, Nigdi is the experiment about application of Indian psychological principles.

What is needed?

Indian Psychology is grounding its roots in the research with modern methodology. A thought needs to be given to how research methodology can be followed rigorously. For JP many issues for research in future may be suggested as,

- Effects of Upasana on certain psychological processes in varied samples along some variables
- Qualitative analyses of JP *purohita*'s experiences
- Comparative studies about *shlok* chanting
- Attempts to apply and to study techniques in Indian psychology, such as, meditation, *avayav dhyana*, *tratak*, upasana, etc. in guidance, counseling, facilitation, personality development, etc.
- Developing psychological instrument battery to assess personality along Panchkosh concept
- Case studies of JP *pratijnit* individuals
- Inclusion of spirituality in leadership training program and test its effectiveness
- Exploring *antahkaran chatustaya* concept

Online References

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