

Chapter 11

Indian Psychology in Prospect



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Abstract This chapter clarifies the meaning, substance, and relevance of Indian psychology, the points of confluence, and the sources of variance between it and positive psychology. It emphasizes that IP is psychology in the making that has enormous implications for broadening the scope of psychology. It goes on to suggest that humans are not merely biologically driven machines, but they are also consciousness-manifesting beings. As such they need to be studied not only at the neurophysiological level but also from the perspective of consciousness as such. This opens up new doors to discover numerous hidden human potentials and how they may be harnessed for common good and individual happiness. To illustrate this, general contours of applied Indian psychology are drawn, and their implications to health and wellness are outlined. This enables one to see the substantive areas for possible collaborative efforts by those working in the areas of positive psychology and Indian psychology.

Keywords Applied Indian psychology · Biology-driven psychology · Classical Indian ideas · Gandhi · Indian psychology · Positive psychology · Samadhi · Transpersonal

Indian Psychology and Psychology in India

I would have thought that the distinction between Indian psychology and psychology in India would be fairly obvious by now to all psychologists in the country. Regrettably, it does not appear to be so. In a recent major review article “At the Edge of (Critical) Psychology”, Dhar and Siddiqui (2013) write in a footnote:

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Provisionally Indian Psychology refers to a different approach to psychology based on knowledge and perspectives gained from Indian sources, and it is differentiated from mainstream (western) academic psychology by those practising it, whereas psychology in India is psychology as it is practiced in the last 100 years in India, and it could well be a copy or version of mainstream (western) academic psychology. However, one lurking doubt remains: can the insights culled out of ancient or medieval Indian texts constitute a corpus that could be called 'psychology'? Is or is not psychology a foundationally modern vocation? (p. 507)

The above footnote suggests to me (a) that the distinction between Indian psychology and psychology in India is not known to even senior psychologists in India and (b) that they do not appreciate it when the distinction is brought to their attention. In my Presidential Address to the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology at its annual conference held at Osmania University on February 25, 1988, I raised the question "What is Indian psychology?" and clearly pointed to the distinction between Indian psychology and psychology in India (Rao, 1988). This distinction has since been reiterated by me and several others, more recently in the *Handbook of Indian Psychology* (Rao et al., 2008). It would seem that we have not succeeded in informing our colleagues in a sufficient manner on this matter.

Again, during the past ten-fifteen years, we made a concerted effort to show (a) that the classical Indian texts and the medieval commentaries on them constitute a body of knowledge, which merits the name Indian psychology, (b) that we have here an alternate model of the person significantly different from those in mainstream psychology, and (c) that this model can be developed into a violable psychological system like psychoanalysis. Apart from numerous papers, there are now several books that make a clear and convincing case for this (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Rao & Marwaha, 2005; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; Rao et al., 2008).

The tendency to question whether classical Indian psychological thought would constitute a body of knowledge in the domain of psychology is not very different from the way Indian philosophy was looked at by western scholars for a long time as some kind of faith and dogma and not genuine philosophy. We find this attitude, expressed from the time of Hume and Locke, through Husserl, to Flew. For Hume (1935) and Locke (1894), Indian philosophy is a bunch of superstitions. Husserl (1960) saw no more in Eastern philosophies, including Indian, than fostering "mythical-religious attitude". Again, for Flew (1971), there is no philosophy east of the Suez.

As I reflect on this state of affairs, I come to realize increasingly that this kind of misunderstanding of Indian intellectual tradition stems from the way philosophy is done in India from its very beginning three thousand years ago and the failure of western scholars to appreciate it. Original ideas are seen in the Indian tradition as having their origin in intuitions, which are later rationally elaborated and interpreted. Second, ideas are taken as transpersonal and not belonging to or owned by one or more persons. For this reason, Vedas are considered *revealed* and not *authored*. Indian history has very scant references to persons and hardly any mention of dates.

Persons and their identities are not considered important in the history of ideas. Indian thought, it seems to me, is a kind of heuristic hermeneutics, creative interpretation of intuitive insights. It all began with Vedic saints and Upaniṣadic seers who recorded their intuitive insights, which were codified and systematized during the

Sūtra period and elaborated by successive commentators. No claims of originality were made by thinkers contributing to the development of these ideas. They attributed all to the original source in Vedās and Upaniṣads in the case of Hindu systems and to the Buddha by the successive Buddhist thinkers and so on.

It does not follow, however, that there is little that is original in the enormous literature flowing from the original sources. Śaṅkara is as much an original thinker as Kant. Kant also had drawn much inspiration from his predecessors; this makes his contributions no less original. There is much in Śaṅkara's writings that is not in the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgita*, and the *Brahma Sutras*. Śaṅkara's most important and I may add original contributions are contained in his commentaries on these texts.

Śaṅkara as well as other classical thinkers considers their thought and ideas as stemming from their meditation on the original texts. At the same time, their writings are full of rational arguments accompanied by impeccable logic, but they are subordinated to the intuitively revealed truth. To deny philosophical merit to a system like Advaita is to misconstrue creativity and originality.

Fundamental ideas, according to the Indian tradition, cannot be invented; they are there to be discovered. Reason and logic help us to uncover, understand, and elaborate them, but they do not create new ideas. Direct, true access to ideas is through intuition. This is a significant departure from western epistemology and is thus the main source of ignoring and denying creativity in Indian thought by some western scholars.

Now, applying this to Indian psychology, we could say that Indian psychology is to Indian thought what Advaita or Yoga is to the Upaniṣads. Therefore, what some of us have written about Indian psychology is our creative interpretation of the psychological insights in classical Indian thought. It would be futile to argue whether we have faithfully interpreted them. They could be interpreted differently by others. The value of interpretations consists in generating new theories and hypotheses to be tested. In short, their merit consists in the new programmes of research they suggest.

The effort to build a system of Indian psychology should be judged on the relevance of these ideas as developed and interpreted in the context of current psychological discourse. Therefore, what is being touted now as Indian psychology is a heuristic, hermeneutic exercise to creatively interpret classical Indian psychological insights as constituting a coherent system or systems with important implications for psychological study and research. Indian psychology is in the making. It is nascent, future psychology. We have here a real promise of a genuine system of psychology which could prove to be a viable alternative to the reductionist paradigm which currently dominates the mainstream psychology.

Some of us have sought to develop models based on the meta-theoretical base of classical Indian thought and point to their theoretical and test implications to psychology. The BMC Trident model is one of them (Rao, 2011). I have attempted to interpret *satyagraha* and Gandhi's conception of human nature and the nonviolent mode of conflict resolution as logical extensions of classical Indian thought and the BMC Trident model. In Rao and Paranjpe (2016), we have a full length chapter on Gandhi's applied social psychology. Related research in Indian psychology is

already finding its way in published literature (Bhawuk, 2008; Miovic, 2008; Misra & Sharad, 2013; Reddy, 2011; Sharad & Misra, 2013; Tripathi, 2011).

Difficulties of Doing Indian Psychology

We find in the comments some persuasive arguments why it is difficult to do Indian psychology and how it is so problematic to enthruse psychologists to pay attention to Indian psychology (Cornelissen, 2014). First, Indian psychology is too complex and “rooted in a radically different understanding of reality”. It is easy to study humans as “biology-driven animals” than as beings manifesting consciousness. Further, there is significant epistemological divide between IP and mainstream psychology. “Non-dual” knowledge constitutes the core of IP; this makes IP a subject not to everyone. Second, IP deals with issue that are generally associated with religion and spirituality and consequently seen as repugnant to those committed to rigorous science. Third, the name “Indian psychology” carries with it a negative baggage as it is encumbered with chauvinistic connotations.

All the above arguments have surface validity and appeal and may not be easily dismissed. However, they may be seen as challenges to face than inherent weakness of IP. As I see it, one of the main objectives of Indian psychology is to bridge the divide between the so-called non-dual and dual knowledge and between science and spirituality. Indian psychology attempts to understand the relation between the empirical and transcendental realms in our being and between the real and the ideal in our actions. Human beings are “biology-driven animals” as well as consciousness-manifesting beings. It is not either/or. As Mahatma Gandhi repeatedly observed, there is the brute, the animal, as well as the divine in each of us. What is truly human is the divine. Its realization is the goal of human endeavor. One of the main limitations of psychology as currently practiced is its inability to deal with the “non-dual” forms of knowledge and the spiritual aspects of our being. Therefore, all phenomena falling in these domains are either ignored as irrelevant or rejected on a priori grounds. We find departments of biology and theology coexisting on the same university campus making mutually contradictory assumptions about human nature. There is hardly any communication between them. Professors who teach evolution in classrooms worship on Sunday in their church the Lord, the creator. Again, the real and the ideal are two desperate domains; the individual and society remain two distinctive and often conflicting categories with important implications to psychology. Ignoring them may be comforting and non-dissonant, but is hardly conducive for a holistic understanding of human nature.

Classical Indian thought and prevalent practices like Yoga have much to offer to deal with, study and understand the neglected, ignored, and unjustly rejected phenomena, and help meaningfully bridge the dichotomies like the above. Indian psychology has the concepts and methods to deal with them. Many of these avenues remain yet unexplored in our academia. Once again, let me refer to Mahatma Gandhi and how in his thought and practices the spiritual and the scientific, the ideal and

the real blend so harmoniously. Recall, Gandhi characterized himself as a spiritual person; yet he called his autobiography as his “experiments with truth”. Truth and nonviolence are twin principles that are both real and ideal and can be seen from idealistic and practicalist perspectives. They can be embraced as values, and at the same time, they can be contextualized and empirically explored. In Gandhi, *the ideal actualized in life is the real*. Gandhiji’s experiments are explorations into contextualizing and concretizing truth and nonviolence and render the ideal real in life.

Yes, Indian psychology is too complex to be engaged in any casual manner. Yet, it is too challenging to ignore; the rewards of doing it are equally compelling. Now, the matter of name recognition is a problem. We have scratched our heads, searched our brains, but could not come up with an alternate name. So, we are stuck with it; it is a matter of time before it gains greater currency. Personally, I would have preferred the name “spiritual psychology” to Indian psychology, spiritual meaning altruism as Gandhiji used it. In the West, however, the spiritual carries an additional baggage. Spiritualism is associated with the tricks in séance rooms and faking acts of fraudulent mediums. Consequently, it could be a name that would meet with instant revulsion and abhorred by the mainstream as anti-scientific. Anyway, I think, it is not the name but what it stands for that is currently creating confusion and resistance to Indian psychology.

Psychology in India

It is a matter of some discomfort that we need to make a distinction between IP and psychology in India. The distinction, however, is valid and unavoidable; this is besides the fact that much of psychology in India is seen as imitative and replicative; this is not simply by those committed to promoting Indian psychology but numerous others including Professors Asthana (1988) and Kao and Sinha (1997). At the same time, I resonate sympathetically and agree with Pirta (2014) that we need to speak more precisely when we speak of psychology in India keeping in correct perspective its content, its time, and context. Again, we must avoid generating any impression of “aversion” to it.

Clearly, I do not approve of or rejoice at the proliferation of voluminous work that is merely imitative and replicative. Replications are sometimes necessary, but they are not an end in themselves. Unfortunately, very often it seems to be the case in psychological research in India. I welcome replications when they are needed for cross-cultural validation of constructs and for establishing generalizability of results. In this context, I would like to make two other points, viz. (a) Indian psychology is not opposed to “biology-driven” psychology; and (b) there are some psychologists of Indian origin who made significant contributions to its advancement within the western paradigm. These contributions are laudable and deserve our appreciation.

We are to a great extent “biology-driven-animals”. Our behavior is conditioned to a significant degree by animal drives and instincts. Even to control or correct them, we need to understand them and their influence on our behavior. Therefore,

their study is a necessary, unavoidable, and often a useful exercise. Neuropsychology is thus as important as any other branch of psychology. No developments in Indian psychology, I am convinced, will ever replace neuropsychology. Problems arise when one overgeneralizes and concludes that the “biology-driven” animal is all there is to humans. Such a stance has numerous adverse effects. It limits human functions and compromises on the inherent, but hidden potentials. It will condemn humans as no more than ego-indulging, selfish, power hungry, and competition-driven beasts. Altruism will be a myth. We could easily imagine where such a stance would lead the world to. It is indeed a frightening scenario. Indian psychology can help to correct this unfounded bias by recognizing the intrinsic, altruistic, and transpersonal nature in us. At the same time, it would be foolhardy to think that biological pursuit of human behavior would be totally replaced. The most that could be hoped for is that what ever Indian psychology brings would be a great supplement that would have enormous beneficial consequences to human kind, without invalidating in anyway the empirical data currently collected in the mainstream areas.

It follows, then, that psychologists in India could work within the current mainstream paradigm and yet make significant contributions to advance psychology worldwide. In fact, we have a few who achieved a measure of recognition that makes us all proud. One among them is Das who in his mature years migrated to Canada and made important contributions to cognitive psychology. A school is named after him at the University of Alberta. Professor Das is an interesting example. Interesting because he, the hard-nosed scientist, who spent most of his professional time exploring the “biology-driven animal”, moved in recent years into the territory of consciousness. In his soon to be published book *Consciousness Quest* (Sage), he “focuses on where the Eastern contemplative traditions meet contemporary western scientific paths to understanding consciousness”. He raises the question: “If consciousness is a product of the brain with its neural connections, are we to believe that we are nothing but this, that our thoughts and feelings are completely describable in terms of neural correlates?” He goes on to say that a quick answer is “No!” There is thus a ray of hope that we can understand the beast and the human, the devil and the divine in us together without committing category mistakes. Psychologists in India can do Indian psychology as well as psychology with a neurobiological base.

Indian Psychology and Positive Psychology

The peer comments on the relation between IP and PP are indeed helpful in bringing clarity to their convergence and complementarity, the differences and the diverse perspectives of Indian psychology and positive psychology. Proper understanding and assessment of these aspects would, I hope, enable us to appreciate the respects in which there are, or not, sufficient grounds for mutual reinforcement between IP and PP as I have advocated.

Dalal (2014) summarizes four common factors between IP and PP. (1) Both IP and PP grew out of disenchantment with the current state of psychology. In that sense, they

are protest movements. (2) Though the IP and PP movements are formally launched in the beginning of this millennium, both have had their origins much earlier. (3) Both IP and PP focus on positive human strengths, potentials, and possibilities. (4) IP as well as PP claim universality and cultural independence. Salagame (2014) regards IP and PP as “birds of the same feather”. While noting that IP and PP “are similar in their intent of bringing some more ‘goodness’ into mainstream psychology”, Cornelissen (2014) thinks that “their similarity ends there”. Again, the claim of universality of PP is a suspect as Professor Christopher (2014) has clearly illustrated the Western cultural moorings of positive psychology (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008).

The comments focus on two significant differences between IP and PP that make their congruence in some ways problematic. One relates to the epistemological assumptions and the other to their respective ontological presuppositions. Dalal (2014) refers to the two kinds of knowledge conceived in the Indian tradition—*para vidya* and *apara vidya*. In a similar vein, Cornelissen (2014) refers to “non-dual” knowledge in the Indian tradition, which makes little sense from the western perspective. From the ontological side, as Christopher (2014) points out, positive psychology appears to be tied to the western individualistic view of the self, which is significantly at variance with the collectivist perspective of the self in the Indian tradition. Altruism and ego-transcendence as advocated in Indian psychology call for a collectivist conception of the self.

Are these differences between IP and PP sufficient to derail the hoped for mutual reinforcement? The differences are indeed salient and may not be easily brushed aside. However, they are not sufficient, I believe, to preempt their possible collaboration. In fact, I would like to argue, these differences themselves are at the root of some of the problems, and any attempts to overcome them require that these differences are narrowed, if not eliminated. For example, the notion of “happiness” in PP has its theoretical origin in the utilitarian philosophies of Jeremy Bentham and Mill. Pleasure is behind happiness. Much of PP’s research in the areas of happiness and subjective well-being is anchored in the utilitarian thought.

It is true that, as Salagame (2014) and Mehrotra (2014) point out, there is felt dissatisfaction with this posture even among positive psychologists and several studies in positive psychology with alternate research programs have come out. These go under the name of “eudaimonia” distinguished from “hedonia”. It is also true that there are studies in PP relating altruism to health and well-being pursued in PP. It does not follow from the above, however, that ego-transcendence and altruism as psychological constructs are not unique contributions of IP. I would like to suggest that “happiness” and “well-being” as pursued in research labeled as “hedonia” have theoretical base in western utilitarianism, whereas eudaimonia studies lack adequate theoretical base in the western scholarly tradition. It is this needed theoretical base that IP can provide for positive psychology moving away from hedonia and toward eudaimonia. It is to this I have referred in suggesting that Indian psychology has the necessary theoretical base to sustain the positive psychology movement. As Christopher (2014) writes: “From the perspective of many non-western traditions, positive psychology’s individually focussed and defined sense of the good and meaningful is a kind of hubris that should be replaced ...”.

Flow and Samadhi

The notion of “flow” as researched and elaborated in PP (a) is not coherent, but a jumble of descriptive characteristics; and (b) it lacks the necessary theoretical base required for a sustained and systematic progress of research in this area. What may be really central to flow is a state of mind akin to *samādhi* as conceived in Indian psychology. Professor Salagame writes that “attempting to equate ‘flow’ with ‘*samādhi*’ is comparing oranges and apples” since these “two constructs developed in two entirely different contexts are not comparable”. He goes on to say that “pitting one against the other is doing in-justice to both, though there may be some underlying similarities in the states described by the respective authors”. I beg to disagree with Professor Salagame. His argument, as I see it, is not sustainable for more than one reason. The analogy of oranges and apples applies equally to IP and PP which grew in entirely different cultures and contexts, and this fact did not prevent Professor Salagame from calling them “birds of the same feather”. It is therefore no sufficient reason to reject the attempts to study them together. Further, viewing positive psychology and clinical psychology as representing *sukha* and *dukha*, as Salagame (2014) suggests, is no better mix than apples and oranges.

On a more substantive level, my position differs from Salagame (2014) in two important respects. Notwithstanding my enchantment and engagement with Indian psychology and optimism for its future, I cannot share Salagame’s contention that IP has solid empirical support. While I do take the Indian tradition and the legendary experiences of yogins, etc., as suggestive of a variety of phenomena that psychology should deal with, I cannot regard them as providing solid empirical support for them. Consider, for example, *siddhis* and numerous accounts of paranormal phenomena from *Mahābhārata* to frequently reported mundane experiences. The belief in them is common in our culture. Can we take them as providing solid empirical support for the existence and exercise of these abilities? I am of the opinion that we need more than folklore to claim that we have solid empirical support. Empirical support may come from first-person, second-person, or third-person methodologies or combination of them. They, however, need to be credibly documented. This is a task that those involved in Indian psychology may not take lightly; this is what I am pleading for in suggesting that we strengthen the empirical base of Indian psychology.

An equally important point I wish to emphasize is that *samādhi*, as it is used in Indian psychology, is not a total *niruddha* state where all mental activity ceases. *Niruddha* state is the goal and the end point the yogin is attempting to achieve. However, the yogin through his practices attains a state of *samādhi* well before he reaches the *niruddha* state. Further, there are various grades and shades of them. These are clearly distinguished in the literature. The division of *samādhi* into *samprajñātā* and *asamprajñātā* states is fundamental and noteworthy in this context. There is no complete cessation of mental activity in *samprajñātā* or *savikalpasamādhi*. As Sadānanda points out in his *Vedantasāra*, *savikalpasamādhi* is experienced through the agency of the mind. In Yoga, four kinds (stages) of *samprajñātā* are distinguished—*vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda*, and *asmitā*. What

the yogin does is to achieve progressively control of his/her mental activities. This is accomplished in various degrees ultimately culminating in the ability to totally control/eliminate all mental activity, a state in which the mind entirely disintegrates. In that state, the *sattvic* part of *buddhi* becomes so pure that it is for all practical purposes indistinguishable from pure consciousness.

In this pursuit to gain control over mental functions, the yogin passes through various stages of *samādhi* and acquires different degrees of control over the mind, and in the process, I believe, she achieves a variety of excellences, including, I may add, cognitive excellence. Some of meditation research suggests that such is the case. The aim of Yoga is to transcend the mundane mental activity, to gain control over mental functions to the point of ultimately achieving a state of total cessation of all mental activity. “Flow”, as described by Csikzentmihalyi, does of course involve mental activity (*cittavrttis*), as some states of *samādhi* do. In my opinion, “flow” as researched in PP is a low grade *samādhi*.

Continued practice of focused attention has at least three distinctive effects. First, focused attention, leading to preliminary states of *samprajñātāsamādhi*, gives cognitive excellence by progressively controlling biases that embellish cognitive knowing. Second, following suppression of sensory content in meditation, a new source of trans-cognitive knowing becomes functional. One has intuitive realization. Third, beyond intuitive realization is self-realization, which is accessing consciousness as such, where knowing, feeling, and doing blend with being. This is the state of *asamprajñātāsamādhi*. Comparable distinctions are also made in Buddhist literature. The first four *jhana* states roughly correspond to the four stages in *samprajñātāsamādhi*.

Christopher states more elegantly than I was able to do why and how positive psychology, which in most part aggrandizes the individualistic self, may benefit by incorporating some salient assumptions of Indian thought. “While concepts like flow”, writes Christopher (2014), “have the potential to undercut the legacy of individualistic ‘bounded and masterful self’—these implications have yet to be pursued. The result is a kind of impoverished view of human nature, especially in contrast to the kind of potentials that the Indian tradition envisages”.

Dalal (2014) expresses the concern that the attempts to forge any close association of Indian psychology with positive psychology may not be in the interest of IP because “positive psychology is making inroads into Indian academic psychology and may take over Indian Psychology in coming years. If we go by the history of psychology in India, the danger is real that rather than being mutually supportive some key concepts of Indian psychology may be subsumed within the broader theme of western psychology.” This concern is something that does not worry me at this time. Nor does it bother me that positive psychology has already made “a major impact in terms of published papers, books and ‘name recognition’, while Indian Psychology is still no more than a fringe phenomenon that is hardly on the map, even in India” (Cornelissen, 2014).

The reason for this state of affairs is simple. It is easy to do the kind of science, where there is simple data collection. It is more difficult to conduct theory-based research. It is difficult to sustain theoretical discussions in science without the

supporting empirical structures. That is the reason why I am pleading for generating the empirical base in terms of credible data for IP. This can be done in two ways. First by generating theories from our models and by drawing out the test implications of theories and thus build a body of data. Second, focus on the data already available, for example, in positive psychology, and fit them into theories of Indian psychology. In both ways, we can enrich Indian psychology as a viable school with promising theories and credible data.

Data collection and hypothesis testing involve measurement and assessment. They need not be restricted to assigning numbers and to third-person observations alone. Indeed, Indian psychology has not only first-person-based methods but also, more importantly, ways to objectively observe subjective experience. It provides for second-person mediation to bridge the first–third-person perspectives. I have written about this in some detail elsewhere (Rao, 2011).

In the unlikely event that Indian psychology's major tenets are incorporated into positive psychology and absorbed into the mainstream and Indian psychology loses its identity, I would not be unhappy. There would be nothing here to bemoan. Indian psychology would have served its purpose and become history.

Applied Indian Psychology

It is unlikely, however, that Indian psychology will be absorbed beyond recognition by positive psychology or any other emerging psychology. This is primarily because of the foundational theoretical structure of Indian psychology. At this juncture I would like to briefly describe the applied Indian psychology model in its bare essentials.

Psychology in the Indian tradition aims at (a) liberating the person from the existential constraints, which are seen as sources of human frustrations and consequent suffering, and (b) elevating her to a state of bliss and unconditioned existence through a process of self-realization. It is conceived that it is possible to achieve such liberation by continuous effort to create conflict-free conditions of living and by cultivating necessary psychophysical and spiritual habits conducive for personal growth and transformation. Such effort essentially involves promotion of common good. The constraints engulfing the person that condemn him to constant suffering include (a) ignorance of one's true nature, (b) mistaking the ego for the true self, (c) attachment to pleasure, (d) experience of hate and aversion, and (e) overindulgence in life and consequent will-to-live at all costs. What fuels these hindrances to healthy life is unsteady mind, the control of which is basic to transcending the constraints. Such a control calls for practice of mental concentration (*abhyāsa*) and cultivating the habit of non-attachment (*vairāgya*). Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtras* is one of the basic texts which discusses the nature of these existential constraints and the methods of overcoming them. Cultivation of the opposites of the natural hindrances to happiness one faces is recommended as an important way of overcoming them.

The subject matter of Indian psychology, as we noted, is centered around the person. The person is conceived as a unique composite of consciousness, mind/self,

and body. Mind and self constitute the two sides of the person and stem from the same base of human psychic system. The mind is the cognitive instrument; the self is the agentic center of thought and action. The psychic system itself is a composite of *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and *manas*. The functions of mind/self are attributed to this trio, which enables us to acquire knowledge, exercise volition, and experience and express feelings and emotion. Apart from being a cognitive instrument, the psychic system in its interaction with the body and its association with consciousness take the agentic role. In that role, it is seen as constituting the self, and the person becomes the knower (*jñāta*), enjoyer (*bhokta*), and doer (*karta*). Here again, the influence of the trio—*buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and *manas*—is variously felt because they constitute the psychic system.

We have referred to *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and *manas* as the three functional modes of the person. Each of these is a ground condition that facilitates a special relationship between mind/self and the body of the person. The prime affinity of the *buddhi* is with the mind. In that sense, it constitutes the mind and becomes its essence. It is the affinity with the self for the *ahamkāra* and *indriyas* (the sense and the relevant bodily process) for the *manas*. The ego is the clone or outward cloak of the self. It is the manifest, empirical self, and at the same time, it shrouds the true self. The manifest self is a product of *ahamkāra*, which veils the true self and reins ignorance. The *manas* reaches out to the world outside through the gateway of the senses, processes the inputs, and forwards them to *buddhi* via *ahamkāra*. The result is the manifestation of *vr̥ttis* in the mind. The mind functions via *buddhi* as the cognitive instrument of the person. The *vr̥ttis* are formed from the inputs provided by the *manas*, appropriated by *ahamkāra*, and registered in the *buddhi*. Now, the reflection of consciousness on the *vr̥tti* contents of the mind gives the person the awareness of the world and herself. The manifest self-functions as the agent of the person. It gives the person his/her identity and creates the separation between “I” and the “other”.

In this context, it is necessary to note that the psychic system with its three constituents—*buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and *manas*—and the associated body evolve out of *prakṛti*, and as such they comprise the three primal elements—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in various proportions. Consequently, their proportionate combination and balance between them become factors in the healthy functioning of the body and the mind. From the perspective of the mind, they give rise to different typologies of the person—the *sāttvic*, the *rajasic*, and the *tamasic*. From the perspective of the body and physical constitution, there are three factors, *vāta*, *pitta*, and *pañcā* as presupposed in Ayurvedic medicine that need to be taken into account in addressing the imbalances—psychological as well as biological—that contribute to the behavioral instability and the disturbed physical and mental health conditions of the person.

Psychological pathologies may be seen as occurring either because of the disturbances in the mind caused by imbalances or lack of coordination between the three constituents of the mind or because of failure in integrating the knower–doer–enjoyer aspects of the self. In this view, pathologies are, on the one hand, a consequence of physically disturbed mind. On the other hand, they are born of consequent instability of the imbalanced self. When dissonance between thought, action, and feelings arises, there is conflict, which leads to different degrees of disintegration of the self. Here,

we are referring to the empirical self or the surface self, as we would like to call it, as distinguished from the transcendental or the subliminal, spiritual self. The empirical self is what Neisser (1988) called the ecological self. Tart (1993) gave it another name—Mind Embodied (ME). The central point here is that whereas the surface self reflects the mind–body nexus, the mind and the psychic system in their association with consciousness give us the reflections of the spiritual self. Disturbances in the mind–body nexus give rise to one kind of problems, and difficulties in the interface between mind and consciousness result in a different set of problems. These may be seen as two levels of psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual ailments.

In the empirical world and the *samsāric* condition of life, there are, according to Hindu as well as Buddhist traditions, built-in conditions that occasion conflicts. Therefore, it is suggested that we cultivate habits and practice a lifestyle that minimize the occurrence of such conflicts, help us gain right knowledge and engage in righteous/virtuous action. The prime source of conflicts in the person rests in his/her dual nature. He/she has in him/her an element of the divine as well as the imprint of the devil. The divine, is what is truly human, realization of which is the ultimate endeavor of the person. The devil is the animal instincts of the body driven by the ego and selfishness. The divine drives us to seek the truth, to be altruistic and to strive for common good. The devil lures us into being selfish and leads us to succumb to the temptations of life—the so-called natural appetites. There is a constant struggle between these two tendencies leading the person in opposite directions. Human endeavor is to check and stop this tendency. The goal therefore is to drive the devil out and experience the divine within. It may be described as humanizing the human condition by de-demonizing it. Such humanization brings out personal transformations that make ordinary men extraordinary and enable them to experience higher states of being.

When pathologies do manifest, there are varieties of ways by which they could be addressed. Indian psychology is, however, less focused on fixing the disturbed mind and disintegrated self than developing a healthy mind and integrated self and to learn how the person may be led on a path of freedom from existential constraints and toward perfection in thought, passion, and action. Perfection in thought involves realizing truth. Perfection in feeling consists in experiencing bliss. Perfection in action leads to selfless action and righteous discharge of one's duties (*dharma*) for common good. Indian psychology in its applied format is psychology for all and not merely study of the sick and the crippled. It is psychology for personal growth and social transformation for common good.

It is clear that Indian psychology is not a value-neutral science. Rather it is a value-loaded discipline. Indeed from the Indian perspective, values are at the very base of human behavior and its eventual outcome. The overarching goal is to realize the divine within, which is none other than realizing one's true self. Realizing true self consists in accessing consciousness as such by the mind, dissociating itself from the constraints imposed by its embodiment. Such self-realization is not merely accompanied by positive mental health, tranquility, peace, and freedom, and it also results in significant enhancement of human potentials. Thus, as applied psychology, Indian psychology suggests ways to

- (a) create conflict-free conditions, conducive to mental health and hygiene that help prevent pathologies of the mind and the self
- (b) aid in fixing the broken psychophysical system in the person
- (c) enhance one's cognitive and other potentials
- (d) enable the person to achieve self-realization and become truly human
- (e) help bring about societal transformation for common good.

The self-realized person is the ideal person. He is the one who practices what he knows as truth. There is no conflict in him between thought, passion, and action, between cognition and conduct. Instead there is harmony between them. This is something that can be cultivated. However, what is more important is that such cultivation (*abhyāsa*) is anchored in adherence to the primary value of altruism. Altruism involves selflessness, detachment, and above all love and compassion for others. Self-realized person need not be a recluse. If there is any renunciation in his part, it is renunciation of selfishness and his indifference to fruits of action rather than to action itself. The above model has several significant implications for applied psychology, and in some respect, it contrasts sharply with the western notions, including positive psychology.

In the prevailing western scientific tradition, it is the body which is the primary and possibly the only factor to be considered in relation to health and illness of the person, including the psychological. The more liberal and less prevalent model of mental health is incorporated into the so-called mind-body medicine in the West, where a functional distinction between mind and body is made, and their reciprocal influence is accepted. In the Indian model we are advocating, the relationship is three-way involving consciousness, mind, and body. It is their relationship and the harmony between them that are behind one's health and psychological well-being.

In the western tradition, as typically represented by psychoanalysis, the basic human drives are lust and aggression. If one manifests love and empathy, they are the sublimated outcomes of basic selfish and aggressive urges. In the Indian tradition, the reverse is the case. It is love, compassion, and altruism that are primary and fundamental characteristics of humans; the ego-driven pleasure and violence are alien attributes arising from existential constraints and demands. This indeed is a radical difference in the conception of human nature from the Western and Indian perspectives.

Another significant difference between the Indian and Western perspectives consists in the postulation of spiritual factor in the Indian tradition, in addition to the bio-social perspective of the western scientific tradition. Further, in Indian psychology, the boundaries of one's self extend beyond the person to include others. This blunts the distinction between individual and society and enables the person to become altruistic and to manifest empathy and love for all, including those who seem to be in opposition.

No less significant is the difference between the Indian and Western approaches in the application of psychological knowledge for human health and wellness. It is the relative emphasis placed on healing the impaired system on the one hand and on building a robust and healthy system on the other. In western psychology, the

overwhelming concern has been to detect behavioral deviance and disturbance and fix it wherever possible. In a sense, this is a negative approach. In Indian psychology, the primary concern is more positive and involves helping the person to understand the existential causes of suffering and how to overcome them. Here, Indian psychology and positive psychology share similar goals. It would appear, however, that the western concerns are more person-specific and ailment-centered, whereas in Indian psychology, the issues are more general and addressed in a holistic way.

The differences between Indian and western psychologies stem from the difference in the basic assumptions relating to the existential condition of humans. In western psychology, the norm is the average, which means that what is existentially given is taken as the norm and regarded as a standard health and ability indicator. Only in cases where that standard is not met, a problem is seen, and attempts are made to address it. In Indian psychology, however, the average itself is a problem. It is assumed that the general existential situation itself is problem ridden and prone to suffering. Therefore, the goal of psychology is to solve this basic problem of human predicament of ubiquitous suffering and consequent emphasis on building the person up so that she would rise above the tides and turbulence of existential conditions and constraints to reach a state of tranquility, peace, and happiness. Thus, transformation of the person to a state of being transcending the existential traps and limitations is an important goal of psychological application in Indian tradition.

It follows from the above that human health is not merely a state the person is in. Rather it is a continuous striving and pursuit for perfection in thought, action, and happiness. Further, the goal is not prolonging the longevity and preserving physical health, but promoting happy and useful life of the person. The former is useful to the extent it is an aid to the latter.

What is happiness (*sukha*)? What constitutes usefulness (*hitāyu*)? According to the eminent classical Ayurvedic physician, Caraka, *sukha* (happiness) is a state without physical and psychical ailments, where a person has energy and strength to perform his duties and knowledge to know what is right and wrong, is able to use his senses and enjoy from there, and is virtuous (*CarakaSamhita*, 1.30-23). Useful life (*hitāyu*) is one where the person attends to well-being of others, controls his passions, shares his knowledge and wealth with others, and is virtuous (*ibid.* 1.30.26).

The above differences between psychology as currently pursued in the mainstream and Indian psychology as we understand it have some significant implications for theory and practice of psychology. Positive psychology shares many of the salient assumptions of western psychology which Indian psychology tends to reject. Psychologists in India engaged in positive psychology research will do well to keep these differences in perspective and attempt to creatively incorporate the Indian psychology perspective instead merely imitating the western studies.

Where Do We Go from Here?

In concluding this dialogue, I reflect briefly on what we may do to build on the strengths of Indian psychology and positive psychology for mutual reinforcement and benefit. In short, what is the agenda of action in the years ahead?

First, let us look at the issues from the perspective of PP. Here, I can offer only the views of an outsider. It is time on the part of positive psychologists to realize that the euphoria generated by the past 10–15 year period of rapid growth, interest, and research in PP is temporary and may not be sustained for long without a solid theoretical base and backup, which it currently lacks. Positive psychology's initial appeal is for two reasons. First, it is the disenchantment with the current state of and dominant trends in psychology that have ignored some basic aspects of human nature. Psychologists around the world are longing for a change and for a more comprehensive perspective. Second, positive psychology has an instant "feel good" appeal; it is comforting to relate to the positive side of our life, which received little attention in the mainstream psychology. Finally, however, reality strikes after the initial euphoria subsides. Then the intrinsic worth would prevail. The sustaining force behind a movement is the one generated by the theoretical challenges and prospects and not the collection of run-of-the-mill data. Therefore, it behaves well for those interested in positive psychology to become familiar with the concepts and categories, methods and techniques, and theories and tenets of Indian psychology and incorporate them appropriately in their research. These have much to offer to strengthen the theoretical base of PP.

As a first step, I suggest that we hold joint meetings of psychologists interested in IP and PP. We may organize national-level seminars and special symposia at NAOP, IAAP, and other psychological forums in India that discuss common issues between IP and PP. *Psychological studies* by promoting this dialogue have already taken the lead and shown the way.

Indian psychologists engaged in positive psychology research need to keep in perspective that if they do not take advantage of the manifold Indian theoretical heritage in doing their research, their work may fare no better than the bulk of the earlier psychological research in India which is derided as imitative and replicative. Here, there is an excellent and uncommon opportunity to produce some original research. These frank remarks may be taken as the observation of a senior citizen psychologist in his fading years, who has weathered the storm of behaviorism and crossed the tides of cognitivism in the West and still holds on to native humanism.

As we are discussing the future of PP and IP, I venture to hazard a somewhat provocative suggestion. The initial manifesto of PP, that we find in the *American Psychologist* article by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000), is "to catalyse a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life." This position is somewhat revised by the more recent emphasis on balancing the negative and positive aspects of being, as pointed out by Dalal (2014). In this context, I am not aware of any sound, overarching theoretical formulation in PP that would move this quest forward in a systematic

way. Here, I venture to hazard a suggestion for positive psychologists to ponder over, which, as I see it, is a derivative from classical Indian thought.

Happiness is more than absence of illness. The latter is of course a source of unhappiness, and consequently, absence of illness is a necessary precondition for experiencing happiness. This is, however, not sufficient to bring happiness to life. It requires cultivated habits and a lifestyle that have significant growth and transformational consequences to the person. Referring back to the brute and the human, the devil and divine within us, translated into psychological vocabulary borrowed from Cornelissen (2014), the biologically driven animal and the consciousness-manifesting person, I would like to suggest that illness, including psychological dysfunctions, belong for the most part to the realm of the “biologically driven animal.” To understand and treat such ailments, biology-driven approach is most appropriate. However, personal growth and transformation to experience happiness and achieve various kinds of excellence, the psychobiological approach by itself is inadequate and even inappropriate. We need to turn our attention to the consciousness-manifesting person and the processes involved in it. Indian psychology has much to offer in this context. The above suggestion, it may be noted, does not pit the psychobiological model against consciousness model. It is not an either/or situation. The neuropsychological model is the best fit in the domain of illness scenario and the repair and readjust endeavor. The consciousness model is more relevant for personal growth and transformation as essential ingredients of happiness. As you will note, the two models do not conflict and contradict but supplement each other. Further, we may add, positive psychology in its quest to secure happiness to human kind cannot afford to neglect the consciousness model. Indeed, it is a challenge for positive psychologists to suggest ways of channeling consciousness in appropriate ways to secure the goal of promoting happiness in human condition. This would indeed be in true contrast to the hedonistic notion of happiness.

Mehrotra (2014) makes some important suggestions for taking concrete steps to help positive psychology move forward in India. These include (1) presenting Indian philosophical thought in a “reader friendly” way to psychology audience, (2) arranging joint forums of Indian philosophers, psychologists, and spiritual practitioners, (3) relating Indian psychological concepts to beliefs and experiences in real life, (4) removing misconception about IP and PP and distancing from “growing pseudo-scientific ‘pop’ literature”, especially in the area of PP, (5) offering suitable courses of Indian psychology in a contextualized form, (6) carrying out “well-being intervention” research based on Indian psychology, and (7) applying critical thinking so as to push positive psychology to the next level of maturity. These suggestions are well taken, but we need to be more concrete about some of them.

I may add a few more suggestions from the perspective of Indian psychology. The crux of my suggestion to anchor Indian psychological theories to a solid empirical base is to essentially urge that we operationalize the concepts and categories used in Indian psychology. These include such concepts as *samādhi*, *turiya*, *guṇas*, *citta*, *vṛttis*, *dharma*, *karma*, *sukha*, *dukha*, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and so on. Operationalization of concepts involves contextualization, which results in concretizing them. Here is an attempt to translate trans-empirical meaning, values, and thought into

empirical reality of communicable facts. Mahatma Gandhi's thought and practices are essentially an exercise in that direction. Therefore, Gandhiji's life and work offer an important source to suggest ways of doing this. For example, the way Gandhiji has attempted to contextualize principles of truth and nonviolence in social action has important lessons for Indian psychologists. We will do well to study and investigate in some depth Gandhian notions of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *sarvodaya*, *swadeshi*, *swaraja*, and *swadharma*.

The Indian psychological tradition harbors potential solutions and alternate approaches to address a number of currently troubling problems ranging from widespread violence, identity conflicts, and local disputes to world peace and conflict resolution in general. Once again, we find in Gandhi's philosophy and practices of nonviolence, inspired by the Indian psychology *Zietgeist*, a number of research issues of interest to psychologists.

Again, in the area of therapeutic applications at the psychological level, Indian psychology has something significant to supplement the existing therapies. We have in the mainstream now, for example, psychodynamic depth techniques, emotive and rational theories, but we hardly hear about "spiritual" therapies devoted to cultivating consciousness for psychological well-being. This is where Indian psychology has much to offer. Paranjpe has often reminded us how the various types of therapies embedded in the *Gita* are spiritual therapies. Further, he himself has done a case study of a *guru* who practiced healing and counseling in a spiritual setting (Paranjpe, 2014a). There are good reasons to think that a state of pure consciousness achievable by practice could be a very effective in creating conflict-free state to resolve all kinds of psychological dysfunctions.

Thus, we may note that Indian psychology goes far beyond positive psychology. It is broader in scope and content and has wider implications and applications. I agree with Paranjpe (2014b) that the "pervasive emphasis on transcendental states of consciousness in IP should not be viewed as neglect of mundane pleasures in Indian thought The relatively stronger emphasis on transcendence and spirituality in IP stands as a worthy complement to the exclusive emphasis on worldly pleasures in PP". I would like to suggest that Indian psychology could be a bridge to connect the mundane and the sublime, the empirical and the transcendental. Further, I agree, conveying the nuances of Indian psychological theory "in the language of PP is not easy; this is one of the challenges in conducting a dialogue between followers of IP and PP" (Paranjpe, 2014b).

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