



Debating the colonial ascendant in decolonization of psychology—perspectives from Indian psychology

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Abstract

This article explores the discourse and initiatives regarding decolonization within the field of Psychology, highlighting the perspectives from Indian Psychology (IP). It discusses the historical trajectory and the emergence of IP in response to the discontent among Indian Psychologists with the non-relevance of academic Psychology to India's socio-cultural ethos. Rooted in ancient Indian knowledge traditions, IP endeavors to make Psychology a culturally sensitive science of human potential and growth. Despite the emergence of formal international dialogues on the need for decolonial Psychology, the disproportionate influence of Western perspectives—particularly former colonizing nations, still persists in the globally recognized decolonization initiatives. Efforts to address colonialism's negative impacts must recognize and build upon the legitimate advancements in formerly colonized nations like India. Through critical reflection on contemporary decolonization endeavors, this article advocates for amplifying the voices and perspectives of non-Western traditions within decolonization initiatives.

Keywords Indian psychology · Decolonization · Non-western perspectives · Intellectual decolonization · Indigenous psychology

Decolonization, in its literal interpretation, refers to a political endeavor aimed at dismantling foreign, notably Western hegemony and control over other nations. The United Nations (UN) established the Special Committee on Decolonization in 1961, dedicating its efforts exclusively to the political emancipation of territories from colonial rule. As of 2018, the UN identified 17 territories as colonized or non-self-governing, wherein, majority were colonies of the United Kingdom, followed by the United States of America.

The UN's decolonization efforts center on the principle of self-determination, affirming the right of individuals to determine their political sovereignty and participate in shaping discourses on knowledge relevant to them. This principle has spurred 'intellectual decolonization,' aimed at contesting Western hegemony within universal knowledge and epistemology (Martin, 2016). Western authority on objective and pure sciences may pose fewer challenges compared to its influence in social and humanities fields

such as Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology. Assumption of universal applicability of Western theories in social sciences raises concerns regarding minority and indigenous representation, as well as, cultural appropriation. Therefore, intellectual decolonization within the social sciences is imperative to ensure contextually relevant research and knowledge that are able to inform socially impactful policy. This is particularly pertinent in Psychology, given its focus on human wellbeing. To foster a truly inclusive and comprehensive understanding of human behavior and wellbeing, decolonization becomes imperative for the future of Psychology.

Tracing the journey of decolonizing psychology

The influence of Western notions of health and normality often marginalizes non-Western perspectives, thereby, constraining our understanding and approach to human wellbeing (Bhatia, 2020; Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). This limitation impedes holistic and inclusive approaches to human health and society. In response to these concerns,

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the Journal of Social and Political Psychology dedicated a special thematic section in 2015 to the topic of ‘Decolonizing Psychological Science’ (Adams et al., 2015). However, years before this, the discourse of Psychological decolonization had already emerged in Africa through the seminal works of Fanon (1961), and in Latin America through the insights of Martin-Baro (1987), among others.

Fanon (1961) underscored the profound psychological impact of colonialism, including the internalization of racism, the development of inferiority complexes, and the onset of identity crises among colonized populations. This legacy persists in Africa, where Western psychology fails to adequately address the realities faced by individuals shaped by inter-generational trauma resulting from apartheid (Long, 2016; Pillay, 2017).

Liberation Psychology, as advocated by Martin-Baro, emphasized the principles of social justice, human rights, and the liberation of oppressed groups (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). It argued that Western Psychology inadequately addressed the needs and realities of marginalized and oppressed populations, emphasizing the importance of understanding the socio-political context in which psychological processes occur. Moreover, it advocated for participatory research and interventions aiming to empower individuals and communities (Torres Rivera, 2020).

Lacerda (2015) highlighted the emergence of Cuban Psychology within the context of social insurgency against colonial power, asserting that psychological theories need not solely rely on Western intellectual advancements, but that context specific social struggles can foster critical perspectives within the field.

While these early articulations represent initial efforts in decolonizing Psychology (Adams et al., 2015), the first formal international dialogue occurred only in 2019 when the American Psychological Association (APA) collaborated with South African partners to organize the conference ‘Toward a Decolonial Psychology: Theories from the Global South’ in Cape Town, South Africa. Should this not invite a critical reflection on the dynamics and power structures within contemporary decolonization efforts?

In this article, my contention is that despite efforts towards decolonizing Psychology, there remains a disproportionate influence of Western, predominantly North American perspectives, even within literature and initiatives focused on decolonization that garner global attention. Specifically, I shed light on Indian Psychology (IP) and its contributions to the decolonization of Psychology, predating internationally accepted initiatives. IP draws from ancient Indian philosophy and traditions, offering culture-free measures of human prosperity and wellbeing. It holds implications for human rights, minority group representations, mental health interventions, and psychological science. Despite its existence

since the 1980s, IP’s potential remains largely unrecognized in global research and discourse (Bhatia, 2018).

Is behavior a product of (western) culture?

One of the earliest explorations of the intersection of behavior and culture was in the 1930s, in the works of Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory. It emphasized the role of social and cultural factors in shaping behavior, particularly in child development.

Carl Jung is credited to have introduced Eastern philosophical traditions to the Western world, while also emphasizing the necessity of understanding the cultural contexts. In his autobiography Jung (n.d.) expressed a profound interest in Oriental philosophies. He was notably influenced by his exploration of projection and self-reflection during his time in India, which is reflected in his therapeutic approaches (Richter, 2020). Despite this influence, Jung cautioned against the uncritical ‘export or import’ of therapeutic techniques (Richter, 2020).

Later subfields like cross-cultural, indigenous and cultural psychology had emerged along with establishment of the International Association of Cross Cultural Psychology in 1972. Furthermore, developments had also been in coming up with specific concepts of cultural dichotomy and its impact on behavior in organizational settings (Hofstede, 1984), political, social, religious, and economic settings (Triandis, 1995), and familial relationships (Kagitcibasi, 2005).

Although these developments acknowledged the importance of considering cultural context, they failed to mitigate the Western influence on the field. As indicated in a review by Arnett (2008), 95% of research contributors and samples in the publications of top 6 APA journals are North American followed by other English-speaking, Western nations. Despite recognizing human behavior as a product of culture (Hofstede, 1984), normative standards disproportionately represent Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, Democratic (WEIRD) nations and their cultures (Henrich et al., 2010). This overgeneralization hinders the understanding of social issues like illiteracy, unequal access to health and poverty prevalent in non-Western, non-industrialized, and previously colonized nations (Yakushko, 2021; Bhatia, 2020). Besides, one cannot fully comprehend the social realities of indigenous communities affected by segregation, discrimination, and colonial domination using the Western or Euro-American theories developed and tested within contexts of social power and affluence (Bhatia, 2020).

Moreover, the goal of Psychology to work for human wellbeing requires culturally appropriate concepts. Drawing conclusions about human behavior based on a minority

of the world's population raises questions about the validity of psychological principles (Chaudhary et al., 2022; Arnett, 2008). Dudgeon and Walker (2015) noted the failure of Western theory based approaches to contribute significantly to the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians, while Gone (2021) explored the potential transformative impact of decolonization on improving the effectiveness of therapeutic practices within American Indian communities. This underscores the importance of acknowledging and incorporating diverse perspectives into the discourse and practice of Psychology (Chaudhary et al., 2022), especially of countries like India that was historically marginalized by colonial systems.

Based on my personal experiences as a student and educator in India, I can reflect on the alienating impact that lack of cultural representation in even the basic textbooks of Psychology can have.

Psychology in India - from colonial to postcolonial period

Psychology in India has undergone a transformative journey from its colonial inception to its current state, marked by efforts to indigenize the discipline and address contemporary social issues. Initially introduced as an academic discipline within the Philosophy Department of Calcutta University in 1905; the establishment of the first independent Psychology Department in 1916 chaired by Narendra Nath Sengupta heralded the emergence of similar departments in Lucknow, Mysore and Patna Universities (Dalal, 2011). These early departments established prior to India's independence from British colonial rule, were deeply influenced by British Universities and mirrored Western research and theories (Dalal, 2011). Aligned with Euro-American trends of the time, Psychology in India strived to establish itself as a scientific discipline akin to the physical sciences, largely adhering to positivist objective principles.

With the end of British colonial rule in August 1947, India faced tremendous civil and social challenges – notably the partitioning of India on religious grounds into two separate countries (India-Pakistan). It induced forced displacement, mass massacres, loss of social and economic support, poverty, in addition to the already existing problems like illiteracy and social discrimination. Despite these significant challenges, Indian psychologists overlooked the partition-induced trauma which is in sharp contrast to the considerable research attention garnered by other psychologically impactful incidents of the 20th century, like the Holocaust (Jain, 2018). This disconnect between Indian psychologists and the pressing social issues in India can be attributed to the foreign education most of them received in that period

(Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). Trained in Western traditions, Indian psychologists primarily focused on teaching and conducting research that mirrored Western principles on Indian samples (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). Moreover, the adoption of positivist methodologies advocated by the Western frameworks failed to adequately grasp the nuances of Indian social realities (Dalal, 2011). Thereby, Psychology remained within the bounds of Indian universities as an academic discipline alienated from Indian socio-cultural realities (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020).

By the 1970s, Indian psychologists began to express dissatisfaction with the lack of relevance of the field to the social issues facing the country's population (Dalal, 2011; Dalal & Mishra, 2010). Similar sentiments were observed in Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world (see Fanon, 1961; 1965, 1967; Martin-Baro, 1987). These trends were exacerbated by growing discord surrounding the use of positivist, objective and reductionist methodologies derived from the natural sciences in studying human and social affairs. A paradigm shift emerged, embracing an experiential, subjective, and constructivist approach to scientific methodology in Social Sciences including Psychology.

Furthermore, despite Philosophy being the disciplinary root of Psychology, there was a notable absence of representation of India's rich philosophical knowledge traditions in the Psychology that existed in India (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). Motivated by these factors, Indian psychologists initiated efforts to 'indigenize' Psychology, both at its conceptual level to include Indian knowledge traditions and at the application level to make it impactful to Indian social issues (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). By the 1980s and 90s, these efforts culminated in the emergence of IP, viewed by its proponents as a new perspective in Psychology (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). IP strives for universal applicability while integrating contemporary psychological concepts with ancient Indian knowledge traditions and practices.

Indian psychology - a new perspective

India has a rich philosophical tradition deliberated upon by generations of thinkers and depicted in the ancient texts and cultural practices. Indian knowledge system, in all its plurality accommodates diverse traditions like that of the Yoga system, Ayurveda, religious scriptures of Buddhist, Hindu, Jainism, Sufi, Bahai faiths and so on. While Indian Philosophy and religion are not interchangeable (Gupta, 2021), but without making strict distinctions between the two, the ancient Indian knowledge systems explored various topics like the states of consciousness, mind-control techniques, mindfulness, contents of cognition, happiness (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). These topics are also areas of interest and

extensive empirical intervention in modern Western Psychology. Describing Indian Philosophy and IP in its entirety is beyond the scope of this article. Here, I will discuss some defining features of IP and highlight its parallels to certain Western Psychology's conceptual counterparts.

The guiding principle of Indian Philosophy which is also the central premise of IP is encapsulated in the concept of '*Ātmānam viddhi*', translated as "know thy self" (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p.1). In Indian Philosophy, it is reiterated that the *ātman* (self) is identical to *brahman* (everything), and "to know *brahman* is to know everything" (Gupta, 2021, p.32). This belief underscores that by knowing one's true self (self-realization), one acquires access to all essential knowledge, as the truth is inherent within the self; that is, '*tat-tvam-asi*' (Gupta, 2021).

Guided by this principle, IP focuses on studying the person "in order to understand human potentials and their realization in life" and emphasizes authentic living (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p.1). Indian Philosophy states that authentic living can be achieved through a deliberate pursuit of an individual's authentic values and aspirations (Salagame, 2013). Specifically, it entails a harmonious pursuit of the four *Purushārtha* or life goals: *dharma* emphasizes the "fulfilment of one's duty"; *artha* focuses on the "acquisition of wealth and power"; *kāma* centers around the "fulfilment of desires"; and, *mokṣa* aims for "liberation" which is considered the ultimate goal of humans (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p.50). "In *mokṣa*, one is awakened to one's true being" (Gupta, 2021, p. 11) and is attained by self-realization or knowing and accepting your true self. Although, what is considered 'self' (*ātman/brahman*) in Indian Philosophy is varied from its Western counterpart (Gupta, 2021), but the underlying theme is similar to what modern Psychology conceptualizes as living in tune to your authentic self (Seligman, 2002).

The crux of the process of self-realization involves the development of individuals across multiple layers of consciousness – the *kośas* or sheaths (Gupta, 2021). Accordingly, the first level *Annamaya Kosa* or the "bodily sheath" focuses on food, the physical body, and worldly matters. Following this is the *Prānamaya Kosa* which encompasses "vital biological functions such as life-breath, emotions, and bio-energy" (Misra, 2022; p. 37). The *Manomaya Kosa*, constituting the mind, comprises the third level, and the subsequent level the *Vijnānamaya Kosa*, involves higher mental functions such as insights, intuition clarity of awareness (Salagame, 2013). Gradually moving through these levels, humans can reach the innermost core, the *Ānandamaya Kosa* which represents a state of blissful awareness of the true self, offering profound happiness (Gupta, 2021). This concept of gradual progression from a state of physical awareness to the state of self-realization does bear some

resemblance to Maslow's theory of Need Hierarchy which posits that individuals move through different levels of needs, starting with physiological needs, and progressing towards self-actualization. Both frameworks emphasize the idea of an evolving journey towards self-realization/actualization and fulfillment.

To facilitate this journey towards self-realization, IP advocates for controlling fluctuating consciousness through the practice of yoga and meditation to attain mindfulness – an awareness of core identity (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Paranjpe (2022) delved into the intersections of yoga and psychoanalysis particularly in the realm of regression Psychology and the *Patañjali* yoga's concept of '*prati-prasava*'. Both approaches entail a process of shifting across states of consciousness. In yoga, *prati-prasava* involves a purposeful spiritual practice of shifting consciousness from individual selfhood towards spiritual awareness, that is, knowledge of the interconnectedness of everything or true self-realization (Gupta, 2021). Likewise, Freud's concept of regression suggests that self-awareness acts as a catalyst for psychological healing by delving into early childhood memories to uncover repressed traumas or conflicts. While the methodologies and cultural contexts differ significantly between yoga and psychoanalysis, both approaches seek to address human suffering and promote holistic wellbeing through introspection and self-realization (Paranjpe, 2022). While Freud focused on regression-oriented treatment of mental illnesses to enhance wellbeing, yoga emphasizes true self-realization as a means to foster enduring happiness (Rao et al., 2023; Paranjpe, 2022).

In the early 2000s, proponents of Positive Psychology emphasized the need for Psychology to shift from a singular focus on curing mental illness to also include the enhancement of positive emotional states, happiness and wellbeing (Seligman, 2002). Likewise, ancient Indian philosophical literature focused on happiness asserting that it encompasses more than just the absence of ailments but also includes physical and mental wellbeing. Happiness, in Indian tradition encompasses *Ārogyam* ("good health"), *Nirāmaya* ("freedom from disease or illness"), *Swāस्थ्यam* ("sound state of body/mind"), and *Shubha* ("to shine, be splendid, and look beautiful or handsome; eminent, good, virtuous"). Additionally, it includes various emotional states like *Sukha* ("agreeableness"), *Santosha* ("happiness"), *Ullāsa* ("pleasant experience"), *Harsha* ("joy"), *Shanti* ("peace"), *Trpti* ("satisfaction"), and *Tushti* ("contentment") (Salagame, 2013, p.372–373). Built upon these principles; IP "aims at authentic living in pursuit of happiness that is long lasting and not momentary" (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p.1). Lasting happiness is associated to *mokṣa* (Rao et al., 2023), for which one must pursue hedonic or material prosperity (*artha*) and pleasure (*kāma*) in harmony with their duty

(*dharma*) towards the others in society (Bhawuk, 1999). Thereby, IP has long reflected on the complementarity of hedonic and eudemonic approaches to happiness, predating contemporary proponents like Kristjansson (2010) and Kashdan et al. (2008). Moreover, these concepts resonate with Seligman's (2011) ideas on flourishing which encompasses the presence of positive emotions, engagement with life, positive relationships, a sense of meaning and purpose, and accomplishments that contribute to a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in life.

IP intersects with Western Psychology in its perspectives on personality as well. Indian Philosophy has several conceptualizations of personality, many of which have been embraced and elaborated within IP. Notably, the *Guṇas* -“quality”, (Gupta, 2021; p. 133) and the ancient Indian medicinal system, *Āyurveda*'s typology of *Prakṛti* - “natural, inherent, or innate condition - constitution” is relevant (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; p. 157). As per the former typology, the three *guṇas* are represented in various proportions in everything in the world. The *sattva guṇa*, “promotes moral and intellectual qualities of goodness, virtues, and truth-seeking”; the *rajas guṇa* “promotes energy, activity, and movement”; and the *tamas guṇa*, “promotes and maintains laziness, inactivity, and sleep” (Gupta, 2021; p. 133). The nature of individuals is categorized into one of three kinds— *sātvic*, *rājasic* and *tāmasic*, based on their dominant *guṇa* (Gupta, 2021) according to the personality classification system introduced in the *Bhagavad Gītā* – a Hindu text and philosophical poem. It acknowledges that all three *guṇas* coexist in varying degrees within individuals. While the dominant *guṇas* of individuals' serve as the relatively stable traits, they also manifest as temporary states influenced by specific conditions such as environmental changes or dietary habits. It recognizes that personality is not rigid and there is a scope for personal transformation, primarily relevant to individuals' spiritual progress (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016).

Likewise, *Āyurveda*'s *Prakṛti* typology identifies three fundamental bodily constituents—*vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*, which are considered real substances responsible for creating, sustaining, and nourishing the body (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). A state of inner balance between the constituents is considered essential for good health, while any disturbance is indicative of pathology. The dominance of a particular constituent accounts for the inborn constitution of individuals and shape their physical, mental, emotional characteristics, forming their stable personality traits. However, fluctuations in constituents due to various internal and external factors account for momentary shifts in personality characteristics. This typology has practical implications, as it can guide *Āyurvedic* practitioners in diagnosis and prescribing appropriate therapies to correct imbalance between

the constituents. Merenda (1987) explored intersections of this typology to Hippocrates's four temperament theory that classified people in fundamental personality types (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic) on the basis of body fluids and temperament.

Both the *Guṇas* and *Prakṛti* typologies' notion of multifaceted, flexible and context depended nature of personality aligns with contemporary Psychology's view of personality as both trait-like and state-dependent (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Additionally, these typologies were also implicated in developing standardized personality assessment instruments (see Uma et al., 1971; Mohan & Sandhu, 1986; Wolf, 1998; Shilpa & Murthy, 2011, 2012; Roy & Sharma, 2017).

In emphasizing on the understanding of mindful consciousness and the interconnected self (*ātman /brahman*), IP diverges from a singular, human-centered focus on self-growth. In the Hindu foundational texts called Upanishads (Gupta, 2021) humans beings are considered “integral part of the world of plants and animals” (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p.44). It is highlighted in the phrases *ahaṃ brahmāsmi* (“I am Brahman”) and *sarvaṃ khalividam brahman* (all this is Brahman). This perspective underscores the “coherence and final unity of all things; everything is brahman” (Gupta, 2021; p. 38). Guided by the principle of underlying oneness that connects everything, IP advocates for social and environmental harmony as essential for human self-realization, peace, and personal growth (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). Therefore, while the self and consciousness remains the unit of analysis in IP, it conceptualizes human consciousness as a responsible and interrelated part of the environment. IP's focus on human-environment relationships, such as social peace, harmony, and pro-environment behavior (Bhawuk, 1999), aligns with the disciplines of Social and Environmental Psychology.

As the self and consciousness formed the primary unit of analysis in IP, it shaped the method of inquiry to be of a post-positivist, phenomenological and subjective approach. Scientific observation remains central to research in IP, emphasizing first-person observation to evaluate and explore the transcendental states of consciousness, and third-person observations to assess mind-body associations, as seen in the yoga tradition (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Thus, IP espouses a scientific approach in its method of inquiry which is appropriate to its metaphysical and spiritual subject material.

Towards decolonization in psychology: challenges and prospects for IP

In an effort to systematize the decolonization endeavors in Psychology, Adams et al. (2015, 2017) proposed three key strategies:

1. **Indigenous resistance** - In this approach local knowledge is utilized and practices are promoted to create theory that is relevant to local socio-cultural realities of people.
2. **Accompaniment** - This approach requires ‘global’ research experts from the hegemonic (mostly Western) Psychology community to work in the marginalized communities alongside the local researchers and practitioners.
3. **Denaturalization** - This approach entails the utilization of indigenous or non-Western epistemic knowledge base to make sense of the realities and practices of people in the colonial world.

While promoting inclusivity and universal applicability, grounded in a scientific approach and drawing from non-Western knowledge traditions; IP aligns with these strategies (Bhatia, 2018, 2019). Despite its potential to deconstruct Western-centric narratives and foster a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior, various challenges impede its full realization.

IP has actively embraced the strategy of indigenous resistance by incorporating the vast traditions of Indian knowledge systems in contemporary psychological concepts. Through subject matter appropriate scientific methodology and advocating practices like yoga and mindfulness, IP seeks to translate theoretical insights into actionable strategies for personal growth and wellbeing. Yet, challenges related to local relevance emerge, as critical social issues continue to be neglected; such as, gender equity (Somani, 2022), unequal access to healthcare based on factors like gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Acharya, 2022), as well as, topics like HIV prevention (Tarugu et al., 2024), caste, poverty, and deprivation (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). These challenges primarily stem from Euro-American hegemony and the prevalence of Western frameworks within the conceptual and methodological practices of Indian psychologists (Misra & Paranjpe, 2021; Misra & Singh, 2023). This issue also manifests in various aspects of academia, including the absence of cultural references in textbooks, dominance of Western tests in universities and the lack of culturally adequate test norms (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020).

Recent scholarly works in India do reflect some efforts to develop culturally nuanced approaches to address relevant

issues like “Psychology’s engagement with social policy in areas like health, mental wellbeing, education, intergroup relations and environment, socioeconomic inequalities, psychological aspects of development” (Misra & Singh, 2023; p. 5). Other authors (see Cornelissen et al., 2010; Kakar, 1996; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; Rao et al., 2008) highlighted relevance of IP for establishing alternate Psychology, yet these efforts have proven insufficient (Misra & Singh, 2023).

In addressing these challenges, Jaan Valisner’s Cultural Psychology approach (Valisner, 2014) has been recognized for acknowledging the potential of IP to pursue the accompaniment decolonization strategy; while Valisner is considered a “mentor for several Indian psychologists” (Chaudhary, 2021; p.298). “Cultural Psychology is a group of approaches that share a common interest in explaining how human psychological functioning is expressed in relations between persons, their meaning constructions, and their social contexts” (Chaudhary, 2021; p.298).

Although pursuing accompaniment strategy can potentially contribute to elevate the positioning of IP concepts within the discipline’s global mainstream, accompaniment ensued collaboration between global experts (primarily Western Psychology) and Indian researchers face challenges. This is chiefly due to the prioritization of Western frameworks by Indian psychologists (Misra & Paranjpe, 2021; Misra & Singh, 2023). Additionally, some Indian psychologists resist IP perceiving it as an “imposition of fundamentalist Hindu, upper caste ideology, not inclusive of India’s plurality”, thereby creating an internal impasse (Chaudhary, 2021; p.299).

Indifference toward IP among Indian and Western research communities may also stem from its metaphysical and spiritual orientation, which diverges from Western scientific standards (Sinha, 1965; Chaudhary, 2021). However, Indian knowledge systems do not separate science and spirituality as strictly as Western traditions (Dalal, 2011). Mindfulness, for instance, is a transcendental state of pure consciousness with scientifically proven benefits but to attain mindfulness is a journey of spiritual self-discovery. Excluding spirituality from psychological study risks overlooking its significance in Eastern cultures, argues Sotillos (2021), who advocates for its inclusion to dismantle colonial ideologies.

Moreover, IP’s reliance on first-person observation challenges Western empirical standards (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). Highlighting this, Sinha (1965) raised concerns regarding the uncritical adoption of positivist methodologies by Indian psychologists, emphasizing incompatibility of the metaphysical, spiritual aspects of IP and the positivist science doctrines. Western psychometric norms may not be adequate to evaluate IP concepts.

The pan-human theories and approach in IP entails the potential for pursuing the denaturalization approach towards decolonization. There are several IP based concepts and practices that have garnered acceptance in the scientific community, but mostly through similar Western concepts and nomenclature and gained recognition through their Western proponents. For example - the focus on self-realization and personal growth forms the cornerstone of IP and is also the basis of the preventive-model of mental health espoused by Positive Psychology's alternative to the disease-model of traditional clinical practices. In terms of personality, not only the IP based typologies align with the Western counterparts (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016) but assessment instruments like the Mysore Tridosha Scale and Mysore Triguna Scale, assert universal applicability (Shilpa & Murthy, 2011, 2012). However, they failed to garner widespread empirical attention unlike the Western scales like the Big-Five, Cattell-16 PF (Singh, 2021), reflecting the hegemony of Western frameworks in the discipline.

Here, I draw attention to a notable exception -the widespread acceptance and practice of yoga and mindfulness in the Western world. While this seems indicative of successful denaturalization, but despite the global acknowledgment and utilization of yoga and mindfulness in contemporary interventions (Khouri et al., 2013; Haydicky et al., 2015; Kishita et al., 2016), their core principles frequently go unrecognized. As observed by Chaudhary and Sriram (2020), “search of the topic of yoga on the APA website finds about 300 articles that primarily discuss the fitness, medical, and psychological benefits of yoga, while the core ideas of yoga and self-realization are largely ignored” (p. 11). This observation supports Jung's cautionary remarks to Westerners about practicing yoga. As per Jung, while the inner processes derived from yoga and meditation, are universal but the techniques facilitating these processes are culturally bound. He advocated for the development of culturally tailored practices in the West to engage the unconscious, instead of uncritical adoption of yoga (Richter, 2020).

This underscores the importance of a nuanced approach to cultural integration in practices promoting human well-being, as opposed to imposing one culture onto another. To that end, IP is positioned not as a separate sub-discipline but as an alternative perspective within Psychology, advocating for a careful and thoughtful integration of cultural elements (Bhatia, 2018, 2019; Dalal & Mishra, 2010). In this context, Valisner's Cultural Psychology is recognized for its potential to provide a way out of the internal debates regarding IP's validity beyond the upper caste, Hindu ideologies (Chaudhary, 2021), as well as, for advancing IP's position in establishing an universal Psychology relevant to people of all cultures (Chaudhary et al., 2022). Grounded in semiotic dynamics, Cultural Psychology focuses on the dynamic

processes underlying cultures, rather than specific cultural groups (Valisner, 2014). The scientifically grounded concepts and approach of IP have the potential to foster a more inclusive understanding of cultural dynamics that extends beyond the Western cultural frameworks (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

Summary & conclusion

Contemporary 'global' Psychology has evolved from a position of power held by European and North American colonial nations. The political influence wielded by these nations enabled them to shape knowledge structures, leading to the pervasive overgeneralization of behaviors and experiences. Consequently, the experiences of colonized nations were often overlooked, with 'global' Psychology primarily focusing on the social issues and lived experiences of WEIRD countries while neglecting issues of social justice and political discrimination prevalent in colonized nations. This skewed focus has left 'global' Psychology without a theoretical framework or the necessary tools to address issues of social injustice and unequal power dynamics resulting from colonization.

The reluctance of the Western hegemonic Psychology community to address these issues can be attributed to the discomfort stemming from the colonial era's ramifications; including unequal power dynamics, domination, and discrimination perpetuated by colonial powers (Long, 2016). Furthermore, the prevalence of English as a lingua franca in non-English speaking countries has privileged native English speakers in shaping intellectual discourse. In the early development of Psychology in India, for instance, Western-educated English-speaking scholars dominated the field, overshadowing the rich reservoir of ancient Indian philosophies disseminated in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. Similarly, early Psychological decolonization literature in Africa and Latin America, originally published in native languages, struggled to gain international recognition. Even translations into English failed to significantly impact the field, highlighting the enduring influence of Western colonialism on prevailing knowledge structures.

The dominance over knowledge structures has also fostered a superiority complex among English-speaking nations and individuals, perpetuating social discrimination against non-English speaking communities. A decolonized Psychology, therefore, holds the potential not only to create a knowledge structure representative of humanity's reality but also to improve intergroup relationships and the social positioning of minority communities. Nevertheless, a pressing question arises- will the current efforts towards

decolonization suffice while the non-western frameworks continue to be sidelined?

Contemporary discourse on the lack of cultural representation in the methods and concepts of ‘global’ Psychology has gained traction in non-English speaking, non-Western, and previously colonized regions such as the Philippines (Pe-Pua, 2006), Cuba (Lacerda, 2015), and Africa (Long, 2016; Pillay, 2017). Likewise, in India, recent scholarly work (see Chaudhary et al., 2022; Chaudhary, 2021) have recognized IP’s potential in elevating the generalizability of ‘global’ Psychology. IP is not limited to description of ancient wisdom, nor does it claim exclusivity to people of Indian origin (Dalal & Mishra, 2010) or to specific social groups within India (Chaudhary, 2021; Dalal, 2011). At its core IP espouses equality of all human beings by advocating for true self-awareness to promote human wellbeing. While, the nature of the interdependent-self promoted in Eastern traditions and the independent-self promoted in Western cultures (Kagitcibasi, 2005) may differ, IP’s focus on the self can carve out space within Psychology to underscore culturally relevant practices of unraveling the self as imbedded in each culture and promote universal theories of wellbeing.

In addition to advocating for egalitarianism, IP highlights the interconnectedness between humans and their environment (Bhawuk, 1999; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). It is reflected in the concept of Purushārtha which states the importance of respecting others (that includes people and environment), in the self’s context in pursuing prosperity and pleasure (Bhawuk, 1999). Unlike the industrious and development-oriented mindset prevalent in WEIRD nations, IP prioritizes environmental awareness and encourages responsible human behavior. These objectives are crucial for the future of any discipline.

The essence of the *Bhagavad Gītā* implies that one must ‘look inwards’ as true fulfillment lies within oneself and cannot be attained solely through external pursuits (Gupta, 2021). When applied quite literally to the decolonization of Psychology, ‘looking inwards’ underscores the importance of integrating the Psychologies already developed, rooted and striving in the indigenous and non-Western knowledge traditions. Such integration of diverse ideologies can broaden the generalizability of Psychology (Chaudhary et al., 2022) transcending the disproportionate influence of the Western world (Chaudhary, 2021).

In a similar vein, ‘looking inwards’ for IP underscores the responsibility of Indian scholars to not only seek global collaboration but also to assume accountability. It is crucial for Indian scholars to integrate local cultural contexts into their research, advocate for methodological pluralism, engage in interdisciplinary studies, and critically analyze psychological theories (Mishra & Singh, 2023). While international

collaborations are essential, it is pertinent to recognize that international associations often prioritize Western ideas, even in cross-cultural collaborations (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). Therefore, Indian academics must take the initiative to integrate IP with global viewpoints.

The challenges in moving from theoretical advancements in IP to practical applications must be addressed, particularly in confronting the cultural dynamics and globalization affecting psychological knowledge production (Mishra & Singh, 2023). It would entail individual and institutional efforts to facilitate the development of educational curricula, research agendas, and selecting students and psychologists that foster a decolonial attitude (Pillay, 2017). Promoting an interdisciplinary perspective and employing contextually sensitive methodological approaches are essential components of this endeavor. By integrating these considerations into psychological interventions such as therapy, counseling, and assessment, the field can better navigate the complexities of decolonization (Pillay, 2017) and contribute to more inclusive and culturally relevant practices.

Psychology’s historical roots in the dominant colonial powers have hindered its ability to engage meaningfully with the experiences of marginalized communities and to challenge the existing power structures, necessitating the involvement of culturally informed approaches in Psychology. Unlike political decolonization, intellectual decolonization cannot be a radically invasive process. IP does not strive to replace the currently dominant ‘global’ approach to Psychology but challenges the hegemonic status quo of Western psychology (Bhatia, 2019) and seeks to establish a truly global (not just Western oriented) mainstream Psychology (Dalal & Mishra, 2010). Since the 1960s, IP has asserted itself as an alternative perspective to Psychology (Sinha, 1965) presenting a compelling case for its inclusion in the discourse on decolonization within mainstream Psychology. However, despite its alignment with decolonization strategies outlined by Adams et al. (2015), it has received scant attention in international decolonization literature. Any efforts to undo the ill effects of the colonial past cannot successfully proceed by ignoring the legit developments that are already in existence, specifically in the previously colonized nations. Therefore, in pursuit of realizing a truly inclusive Psychology, I advocate for the need to critically assess and decolonize the current international initiatives aimed at decolonizing the field.

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Declarations

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