



Indigenous Indian management (IIM): constructs, models, theories, and methodologies

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Abstract A model of indigenous knowledge creation is presented to show how colonization has caused the neglect of indigenous ideas. To reverse the effects of colonization, it is necessary to develop indigenous constructs, models, theories and methodologies. Efforts made in this direction is enumerated. It is hoped that developing indigenous constructs and theories will enrich global psychology and management.

Keywords Indigenous constructs · Methodologies · Theories

The natural process is for human beings to employ human intelligence and creativity to address issues arising in their ecology in the historical context of the development of that society. People on islands face different issues from those who live in deserts, the arctic region, or mountains. Each ecology calls for unique intervention employing natural resources available in the region. Learning from their experience people develop cultural insights that are indigenous in nature. Cultural insights are tested in solving problems and indigenous theories are developed. Colonization has a deep and fundamental negative effect

on the cognitive structures of the minds of colonized people. Unfortunately, colonization thwarts this natural process (see Fig. 1), and people constantly look to the society of the colonizers, and assume that the solutions tried by them are better. The colonized mind (Bhawuk 2008a, b) stops examining issues from indigenous perspectives, and constantly draws from the knowledge structures imposed by the colonizers. This continues years after the colonizers are driven away whether peacefully or aggressively.

The Western world claims science as an inherent part of its culture, and often presents their cultural knowledge as universal scientific knowledge. This leads to complete disregard of valid indigenous solutions to human issues and problems. The economic development of the western countries funded by exploitation of resources in the colonies has created a historical blindness in the West toward the economic wealth of nations of Asian, African, South American, and North American nations before the viral growth of colonization. This historical blindness has created a sense of cultural superiority and the Western nations even foist their cultural solutions under the guise of scientific universal solutions. One of the consequences of this blindness is to define native practices as problems, which pushes the colonized people in a perpetual conflict trying to identify with the colonizer, and never quite becoming one like them.

Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, and biology capture human knowledge that do not vary across cultures. This has led to the development

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of the idea that all knowledge is universal, and there is a Procrustean search for universals in every domain of knowledge. I have called this ethnocentrism of universalism (Bhawuk 2021a). This is untenable since phenomena are shaped by ecology and human adaptation to the various ecosystems. India produced more than 25% of world GDP until 1760, and it fell to 4% in the next 180 years because of colonization by the United Kingdom (Kennedy 1987; Maddison 2006). The trajectory of India's economic growth has irreversibly changed and where India might have been had colonization not happened can be speculated and modeled, but would mean nothing to the economy of India today, and in the future. Also, complaining about colonization is not going to help the growth of Indian economy. Therefore, it is best to accept all the sad consequences of colonization and move forward with determination as a nation to reclaim its economic position in the world. This will require understanding the indigenous culture in all its diversity in all areas of knowledge, namely, philosophy, economics, psychology, sociology, and management, to name a few. Contributions of Indians in the area of mathematics, logic, astronomy, and natural sciences must also be documented to correct the distorted histories presented by the colonizers. Hence, I appeal to stop criticizing Western management and other fields of research and to plunge into developing indigenous knowledge systems, specifically, the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Criticism is necessary and must be employed when tracing the history of knowledge systems. However, for a gainful dialogue to take place, we need to present alternative theories, constructs, models, worldviews, and methodologies. In the absence of this, dialogues cannot even be started (Bhawuk 2020a). For example, presenting an Indian model of concept of self that includes *Ātman*, *buddhi*, *manas*, the sense organs, physical body, and social self (Bhawuk 2005, 2008a, b, c, d, 2011) allows us to examine how independent and interdependent concepts of self presented in the Western literature (Marcus and Kitayama 1991) are limited to social self only. Each of the senses is associated with an industry. For example, taste is associated with food industry, smell with fragrance, touch with garment, auditory function with music industry, and sight with tourism and video industry. The Indian concept of self allows us to include the physical body

and senses in the analysis of how the self interacts with the world. Therefore, the responsibility for delivering indigenous constructs, models, and theories rests on our shoulders, and researchers are accepting the challenge to deliver Indian concepts, models, and theories (see Rao et al. 2008; Paranjpe 2022, Bhawuk 2011, 1999; Pandey 2022). Presenting Indian ideas and theories will help Indian scholarship to reclaim its original place in the world of knowledge that it has lost since the burning of *takṣaśilā* and the brutal implementation of Macaulay's education policy that was designed to humiliate Indians and to socialize them to serve the colonizers.

In the last 30 years, I have been working on Indian constructs, models and theories.¹ I have explicated constructs like *lajjā* (Bhawuk 2017, 2019a, 2021a, b, c, d, in press) *śraddhā* (Bhawuk 2020b), *tapas* (Bhawuk 2022a, b), *adhyātma* (Bhawuk 2019b, c), and *prema* (Bhawuk 2021a, b, c, d). I have presented models of *śānti* (Bhawuk 2011, 2018), theory of *karma* (Bhawuk 2011), theory of self or Indian concept of self (Bhawuk 2011), and theory of *krodha* (Bhawuk 2022a, b). I have discussed about culture and creativity, capturing creativity in the domain of *adhyātma* in India (Bhawuk 2003), and presented an Indian theory of creativity (Bhawuk 2019d). I have developed a scale to capture Indian perspectives on leadership by developing the items from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (Bhawuk 2019b). To understand Indian perspectives on leadership, I have presented an Indian typology of leadership (Bhawuk 2008a, b, c, d), and also developed the concept of *lokasaṃgraha* (Bhawuk 2019e, 2020c). I have been engaged in a program of research to examine how *sādhus* lead in the Indian society. This has led to the development of *sādhu-mārga*, *the way people who have renounced the world act in the world*, as an alternative model of

¹ Translations of indigenous constructs by single words in English is erroneous. *Ātman* is not soul; *buddhi* is not intellect; *manas* is not mind; *lajjā* is not shame; *śaddhā* is not faith; *adhyātma* is not spirituality; *prema* is not love; *śānti* is not peace; *karma* is not action; *lokasaṃgraha* is not social responsibility; *krodha* is not anger; *sukha* is not happiness; and *ānanda* is neither happiness nor bliss. The readers will see that it takes much research and effort to present an indigenous thick description (Bhawuk 2022a, b) of constructs. Cross-cultural researchers have warned against using translations, and we need to be cautious in discussing constructs and theories that cannot be translated readily.

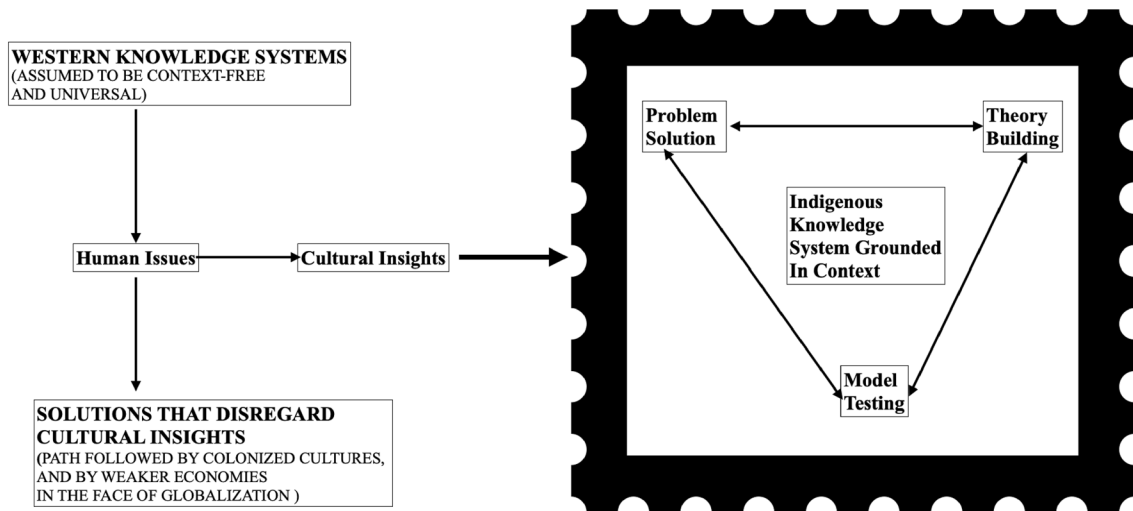


Fig. 1 Colonizing the mind by Neglecting Indigenous insight: a process model (Adapted from Bhawuk 2008a, b, c, d, 2010a, b)

leadership (Bhawuk 2022a, b). Work is in progress on the constructs of *sukha* and *ānanda*.

In the process of working on Indian psychology and management, I have employed a variety of methodologies. First, models exist in texts, often in a verse or two, and they simply need to be deciphered and explained (see Bhawuk 1999, 2005, a, b, 2011, 2022a; b). Second, we can go through the entire text and see how a construct is defined in the text (see Bhawuk 2020d, e). I have employed the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in developing constructs, like *śraddhā*, *tapas*, *adhyātma*, *lokaśaṅgraha*, and *sukha* following this method. We are able to derive an indigenous thick-description (Bhawuk 2022a; b) of an Indian construct following this approach. Employing the same approach, I was able to develop the construct of *prema* from the verses of Sant Kabir Das. I am also working on developing the construct of *brahma-jñāni* from the *Sukhmani Sahib*, and some other constructs from the *Dhammapada*.

Third, we can employ multiple texts to develop a construct. I used this methodology to develop the construct of *lajjā* employing the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Durgā-Saptaśati*, and *Kamayani*. Fourth, we can employ textual analysis in combination with other methods. In the study of *lajjā*, I have employed proverbs, focus groups, interviews, and autoethnography. Fifth, we can employ historical analysis to study

a phenomenon. I used this approach in the study of creativity and *adhyātma* (Bhawuk 2003; see also Bhawuk 2012). Sixth, we can use cases to study a phenomenon. I used this to study creativity in India (Bhawuk 2003), *adhyātma* (Bhawuk 2019a, b, c, d, e; Bhawuk 2011), and community development (Bhawuk et al. 2009).

Seventh, we can study texts as the representative of the scientific world or micro-world, and dialogues of saints as the representative of life-world (see Bhawuk 2019b). Eighth, starting from the Western literature, we can compile words that capture a construct, its synonyms, and its antonyms. Then we can translate all these words in an Indian language (or a language of interest in other parts of the world for developing an indigenous construct). I call the space marked by these words as the conceptual space that allows us a comparative study of the construct. This method has provided significant insights into *lajjā* (Bhawuk press) and *haya* (Albugami and Bhawuk, in press). Ninth, autoethnography is a useful approach to study Indian constructs, especially in the study of *adhyātma*, *yoga*, *prāṇāyāma*, and other areas where one's personal experience is a source of information or evidence (see Bhawuk 2009 for an illustration in the social domain).

Finally, when employing a multi-method approach we can combine any of the above and other

approaches to examine a research question. Research methodology should follow the research question. We will also need to strive beyond multiple methods to include multiple paradigms (Smith et al. 2002). It should be noted that we can and should employ the experimental method, but this can neither be the only method or even the method of choice. At the same time, rejecting the experimental method will be as much a flawed approach as employing it as the only method or method of choice. We are responsible for employing suitable methodologies beyond trashing positivism, and for demonstrating that philosophy and psychology need not be divorced the way they are in Western literature.

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