

RESEARCH ON INDIAN CONCEPTS OF PSYCHOLOGY: MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE ACTION

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Abstract

In India, psychology as a science is a century old. Since its inception in 1905, considerable research has taken place. However, the volume of research is not comparable to the amount of research conducted in developed countries. Lack of state and private funding for research in psychology, inadequate avenues for publishing research data, reduced motivation of psychology graduates and mentors may have led to low research publication from India (Manickam, 2003). When the volume of published psychological research literature is evaluated, it is seen that the number of research studies conducted in India focusing on Indian concepts by Indian researchers is considerably low (Manickam, 2002). In this chapter some of the obstacles in conducting research on Indian concepts, the conflicts that have struck the researchers and the means

Indian Concepts and the Research Scenario

In psychology, from the time of James (1902) and Jung (1933) onwards, there were references to concepts from Indian thought. Since that period, some of the concepts have been kept alive in some way or the other in the development of psychological science. Kilby (1968) made valuable observations regarding the potential of the Indian concepts, which he termed as the “philosophical psychology in India”. Walsh (1988) focused on some of the important concepts in Indian thought that have significant role in developing a comprehensive psychological science. These writings inspired many researchers to explore Indian concepts from a Western psychological perspective. Indeed, published research literature on Indian concepts in relation to psychology and mental health are more from developed nations than from India.

It is not that Indian psychologists have not taken initiatives in this direction. Durganand Sinha (1997) has discussed two facets of indigenization of psychology in India. First is purely the product of culture, the concepts and categories that are culture-bound. The second is the product of the interaction of cultural variables with concepts, theories and methods introduced from outside. J.B.P. Sinha (2002) has referred to these two as endogenous and exogenous indigenization. The endogenous indigenization refers to Indian psychology rooted in theories, concepts and methods of Indian origin. The works of Paranjpe (1984, 1998), Rao (2002), Cornelissen (2001), and Manickam (2002, 2003) fall in this stream. Many major obstacles have impeded the progress of what can be called philosophical psychology in India.

Major Research Obstacles

Apart from the material and physical limitations in conducting psychological research in India, there are other

factors, which hinder the process of conducting research on Indian concepts. Some of these are discussed here.

Language

Majority of the ancient Indian texts are in Sanskrit and Pāli, and that poses a great problem in comprehending the concepts in English. It is further complicated by the fact that even in Sanskrit the same word has different meanings. The different translations and diverse interpretations of the terms in English lead to a clutter in the meaning of concepts. To the same Sanskrit term in the original text, different meanings are attributed in English without providing the context. A student of psychology, trained from a Western psychological perspective, might find these terms confusing. For example, the concept of *viññāna* is considered as intelligence by Radhakrishnan (1952, p.165), and knowledge by Sri Aurobindo (1988, p. 268). In a translation of *Ṣaṅkarā's* commentary on the *Upaniṣads*, *viññāna* is translated as consciousness. It is further complicated by the inconsistent use of the terms in Indian philosophical psychology literature. Therefore, many new entrants to this field neglected the concepts for want of clarity and felt these concepts were “absurd” and “silly”. Psychologists, who study the concept of intelligence from the scientific psychological perspective, get bewildered in comprehending *viññāna* as intelligence, knowledge and consciousness.

Equating with Religion

Another factor is the tendency to equate Indian philosophical concepts to the Hindu religion. This confusion does arise because of the very nature of the Hindu religion, which is not strictly a “religion”, as the other “revealed” religions. Rather, it is defined as a way of

life, drawing its principles from the various schools of philosophical thought. For instance, the Vedas are philosophical treatises, which have been accorded a divine status due to the wisdom contained within them. Further, the spirit of critically questioning these principles, in the light of contemporary evidence and the natural process of socio-cultural change is not encouraged. Thus, the line dividing the sacred and the secular is rather blurred. Hence, these concepts are kept outside the realm of scientific enquiry or, at best, approached with trepidation, by contemporary researchers. Further, as Indian philosophy has veered towards emphasizing the spiritual dimension of humankind, the dividing line has been further blurred. For instance, in 2000, the concept of karma was the focus at a conference organized by the International Interfaith Institute at Oxford, UK. The objective of the conference was to enquire the theological convergence of the concept of karma through interfaith dialogue. Leaders representing different major faith groups discussed the understanding of “karma” from their own religious perspective. Thus, focus of karma as a religious concept hinders its value and relevance from a psychological perspective, thereby restricting research on karma as a principle and as a belief (Manickam, 2003).

Attitudinal Effects

In analysing the stunted growth of research related to Indian concepts in psychology by Indian researchers, one could identify several attitudinal effects. These can be broadly delineated as: import-manufacture effect, India-made foreign effect, Jasmine in one’s own courtyard effect, crab in the open jar effect, and connected within and unconnected outside effect.

1. **Import-Manufacture Effect:** This is related to the psychological interpretation of the Indian concepts in some of the published papers that are related to psychology and mental health from our country. Psychological concepts or processes of Western origin are selected or chosen, analysed from the perspective of Indian philosophical psychology, and claimed that, “...it is not a new concept, it has been prevalent here for centuries” or “It is propounded by the Indian sages centuries ago” or “it is revealed in the ancient texts”. This phenomenon is seen with regard to concepts, theories and therapies, for e.g., psychotherapy (Balodhi, 1990), behaviour modification and self-actualization (Sharma, 1986), Āyurvedic psychotherapy (Paramesh, 2003). Because of distorted interpretations of Indian concepts

by Indian psychologists, the uniqueness of the concepts in Indian thought are either misinterpreted or not perceived. This discourages an inquisitive researcher with the thinking that, “If Indian thought does not have anything new to offer to psychology, why should I explore the literature?”

2. **India-Made Foreign Effect:** Concepts that have originated in Indian thought are depicted as or equated to well-known or popular concepts of Western psychology. This is a reverse of the import-manufacture effect. This is done with the justification that the use of the equivalent psychological term to the Indian concepts would help psychologists’ abroad to easily understand the Indian concepts. However, this led to the misperception of the rich concepts and limited the scope of study. For example, yoga is equated to relaxation (Nathawat et.al., 1999), behaviour therapy (Balodhi and Mishra, 1983) and de-conditioning therapy (Vahia, 1973) by different researchers. The efforts of some Indian psychologists in interpreting psychological concepts in Indian thought into the framework of Western psychology led to either misperception of the concepts or their neglect.

3. **Jasmine in One’s Own Courtyard Effect:** There is a Malayalam proverb, which when translated would mean that, “The Jasmine, which flowers in one’s own courtyard, does not have any pleasant smell at all.” Majority of the psychologists in India are not aware of the importance of the psychological concepts of Indian origin and are unwilling to explore or experiment with the concepts. More than four decades ago, Kilby (1968) also observed the same. One of the Indian professors who taught us theories of personality at the master’s level more than two decades ago refused to talk to us about the Indian concepts related to personality. He repeatedly warned us that, “Personality is personality. There is no Indian concept of personality.” The irony was that the same teaching department of psychology had offered “Indian psychology” and “Psychology of Religion” as separate optional subjects. Due to the extreme influence of scientific psychology, and inability to identify significant Indian concepts that have high relevance to the contemporary local or global situation and indigenous context, psychologists continued research on concepts of Western origin and replicated the research in India with minor variations. The same trend is manifested in the publication policies and guidelines of the scientific

journals. Review studies or conceptual papers related to Indian philosophical psychology were not easily accepted by majority of the scientific Indian journals of psychology until recently.

4. **Crab in the Open Jar Effect:** As the story goes, while transporting a jar of non-Indian crabs, it is essential to ensure the lid is firmly on, lest they escape. However, if they are Indian crabs, there is no need to have a lid, for, if one crab tries to creep out, the other crabs would pull it down. Even though the field of psychology is vast, there is a tendency among psychologists in India not to let another perform. Within the psychology discipline, research departments do not have a mutually supportive and encouraging environment. With very few exceptions, there is hardly any encouragement from the fraternity to conduct research on innovative topics in any area, as also those related to Indian concepts. Doctoral or academic committees approve research proposals that use conventional scientific approaches or methods, with standard statistical procedures, even if they are obsolete or do no justice to the data on hand. Unconventional areas are not recommended, because the research topics and the methods are not supported by 'earlier research' findings or are too cumbersome to deal with. This curtails the enthusiasm of new entrants from undertaking research in Indian concepts related to psychology and mental health. Research colleagues scorn at those who dare to venture into new areas rather than providing courage and support. It must be sadly emphasized that this state of affairs is not restricted to psychology and Indian concepts only, but is a deep malaise in the Indian research fraternity, irrespective of the discipline pursued. Hence, growth and advances in scientific research are severely curtailed.
5. **Connected-Within and Unconnected-Outside Effect:** The psychologists who take up and continue with research for a considerable period on Indian concepts are well connected within. Being well connected within is consonant with some of the major concepts of Indian thought. However, there appears to be less communication between those who do research in the area. There exists no platform for networking or connecting between those who take up research on Indian concepts. There is a positive change recently with the launching of more number of conferences and workshops on Indian concepts. However, collaborative research or multi-centred research within the country on topics related to psy-

chology or Indian concepts in psychology is an unheard event. Pooling data from different regions and diverse cultural settings are essential in developing the field of psychology, with particular reference to Indian concepts of psychology. Since there are many teaching and research departments of psychology spread across the country, with a concerted effort, it is possible to conduct multi-centred collaborative study. Well-defined concepts can be experimentally studied and experiential data on specific phenomena could be compiled.

Stumbling Blocks, Conflicts and Means to Overcome Them

Indian thought is a treasure trove of numerous psychological concepts that are not yet fully explored by psychologists. Unearthing the tremendous potential of Indian thought in relation to psychology is one of the great challenges to psychologists in the twenty-first century. In order to accelerate the process, the probable blocks need to be identified. From a research perspective, there could be different types of conflicts, which surface because of the confusion and the misinterpretation of psychological concepts in Indian thought in the available literature.

These conflicts lead many to exclude or neglect the concepts from the purview of research. Some of these blocks and conflicts are discussed.

Unity vs. Diversity

Concepts of Indian psychology arise from diverse schools of philosophical thought. However, often the diverse nature is not acknowledged and is presented as the "absolute" one, even though research data does not support the claims. In one sense, there is unity within diversity. However, at the same time, in order to make the concepts clear from a psychological perspective, the diversity has to be spelled out, giving the context or reference to the particular school of thought. For example, the term *dhyāna* has a different working definition in different schools of thought. Hence, it is necessary to state the school of thought, such as *Vipassanā* (Pāli) or Buddhist, rather than referring to it as "Indian meditation" or "Eastern meditation technique". Similarly, the term *karma* has a different meaning and context in the different schools of thought. Efforts to develop a unitary or integrative concept based on sufficient evidence should be developed. Theorists need to ensure that a concept, representative of a particular school of thought, is not presented as an "Indian" thought. By not

doing so, it amounts to imposing the hegemony of a concept irrespective of its validity and reliability.

Science vs. Philosophy

For those psychologists who have not yet looked at Indian thought for want of scientific fervor, Vivekananda's words could be a revelation. Vivekananda (1907/1989) observed, "If a foreigner takes up our literature to study, at first it is disgusting to him; there is not the same stir, perhaps, the same amount of go that rouses him instantly" (p. 274). However, those who delve into this area develop a passion for the concepts and "... as you go on studying them they fascinate you; you cannot move; you are bound; and whoever has dared to touch our literature has felt the bondage, and is there bound for ever. Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world" (p. 274).

Vivekananda's statement is prophetic in relation to the study of the Indian concepts in psychology. Psychologists from other countries appear to be more interested in Indian thought than those from India (Wolf, 1999; Easterlin and Cardena, 1998–1999; Brown and Ryan, 2003). Indian psychologists have been reluctant to explore Indian concepts, due to its lineage to Indian philosophy. As stated earlier, the equating of philosophical concepts to religious doctrines need not cause one to be hesitant in pursuing these concepts and attempting to bring them under the rubric of scientific psychology. Historically, psychology evolved out of Western philosophy and therefore Western psychologists have no conflict in looking at philosophy as a precursor to the exploration of human thought and behaviour. A theological perspective has its own place in understanding human life and existence. Hence, there is no reason for Indian psychologists to shy away from exploring, experimenting, and experiencing the psychological concepts in Indian philosophy. Some researchers have tried to take up psychological concepts that had originated from Western philosophy and tried to establish the link to Indian philosophy, which is deceptive. However, we need to encourage the new generation of psychologists to explore Indian philosophical psychology using the scientific approach and developing concepts present within them.

Specific vs. Integrative

Connectedness or interconnectedness is one of the hallmarks of Indian philosophical psychology. However, there are concepts that can be taken in isolation and re-

searched. At the same time there are concepts and theories that are integrative and holistic (Manickam, 1992). However, a careful analysis of the review articles, empirical research and other literature related to Indian concepts reveals that there is "messaging up" of the concepts. When the research findings do not imply the connectedness, it is fair and ethical to state the specificity. A specific concept when interpreted in terms of connectedness leads to confusion. Review studies that follow a philosophical method of study, focusing on integration may do so judiciously without diluting or mixing up the meaning of the concepts. Researchers attempting to study specific Indian concepts using a well-designed method, if it does not reflect the integrative nature, should not interpret or claim it as an integrative one. Rather the specificity should be mentioned. Though majority of the concepts are integrative, a researcher, who is proficient in Western research design and methods, may not be in a position to study the integrative concepts. Hence, with all the limitations, one may have to tolerate those who pursue a well designed experimental research on specific Indian concepts, since that is one of the important options available.

There are eight personality inventories or tools developed on the concepts of sattva, rajas, and tamas (Singh, 1971; Uma et al., 1971; Mohan and Sandhu, 1986; Das, 1991; Pathak et al., 1992; Marutham, 1992; Mathew, 1994; and Wolf, 1999). Three of the studies were specific: Mohan and Sandhu (1986) mentioned that the concepts are based on the Sāṅkhya school of thought, Das (1991) made it specific to the Bhagavad-Gītā, and Wolf (1999) based the tool on the concepts specific to the Vedic theory. The reference to the specific school of thought or context

brings in more clarity of the concepts and opens up scope for further research. Similarly, Kiran Kumar (2003) studied the concept of ahaṁkāra, which is a specific concept, but has implications at the integrative level. But the specific nature of the concept is given prime importance. Similarly, Manickam (2002) identified the concept of sahya (to be borne or endured) from Indian thought, a specific quality of a person or that of a group and brought forth its contemporary relevance in the area of applied psychology. Campos (2002) edited a special series of articles aimed at integrating Buddhist philosophy with cognitive-behavioural therapy in the journal Cognitive and Behavioural Practise. Apart from an introduction to basic tenets of Buddhism for the cognitive-behavioural therapist (Kumar, 2002), the articles attempted to integrate Buddhism and cognitive

behaviour therapy (Hayes, 2002; Robins, 2002). This approach can be considered as specific since the concepts chosen are only from Buddhist school of Indian thought.

However, in order to have a coherent understanding of human nature, across cultures and belief systems, an attempt has to be undertaken to integrate the concepts of the different schools, not only the Indian schools of thought, in order to operationalize the concepts, as aspects of human nature. For instance, the field of neuropsychology explores the human species, rather than humans as a cultural product; the discipline of linguistics, which explores the syntax of language as a human ability, rather than the differences or commonalities between different languages.

Technique vs. Theory

In recent years, different techniques based on concepts from Indian thought are increasingly used in helping situations (Campos, 2002, Brown and Ryan, 2003). Although there may be an overlap of techniques and theory with Western models, concepts of yoga such as āsanas, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhara, dhāraṇā, or dhyāna are often used interchangeably which is misleading.

If the research objective is to study the theory of yoga, as laid out by Patañjali in his Yoga- Sūtras, the integrative functioning of yoga, or the effectiveness of yogic āsanas or other paths (techniques), the objectives should be clearly delineated without using “yoga” as a generic term and mixing theory with the practise.

Clinical vs. Therapy

Clinical conditions are evaluated by mental health professionals, based on the diagnostic and research guidelines provided by the International Classification of Disorders or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychological Association (DSM). Sometimes clinicians struggle to “label” a clinical state in order to follow a disease model as applied to physical conditions. However, a clinician practicing in India, as in other parts of the world, would experience that there are a number of clinical situations where it is difficult to diagnose or label a person within the available diagnostic criteria. This could be a manifestation of culture specific syndromes and psychosocial situations. Thus, concepts related to the phenomenology and “disorders” require further investigation. Some of the therapeutic approaches stated in the Indian thought could be more suitable and yield better results if applied to the appropriate clinical states, which may not come under the

purview of international classifications

Methods based in Buddhist principles are increasingly used for various situations. Conradsen (2002) used mindfulness meditation based on Buddhist philosophy for promoting holistic health in persons living with HIV/AIDS; Marlatt (2002) used therapy based on Buddhist philosophy for the treatment of addictive behaviour; Toneatto (2002) treated anxiety disorders, using meta- cognitive therapy developed from Buddhist psychology.

Experimental vs. Experiential

The earlier mentioned secular vs. sacred and the material vs. spiritual issues follow us in the development of appropriate and adequate research designs. Psychologists well trained in research methodology find it difficult to venture into this area for two reasons: conceptual and methodological. Brown and Ryan, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Snyder and Lopez, 2001, have carried out research on concepts that are similar to those found in Indian thought.

There is an extensive body of research literature on the implications and applications of yoga for various conditions (e.g., Nathawat and Kumar, 1999; Venkatesh et al., 1994). Sajani Velayudhan and Manickam (2000) studied the effectiveness of integrative art therapy that included Indian music and other forms of art. The study was conducted on adolescent participants of a program on personality development using integrative art therapy and reported the subjective experience of the participants.

Conceptual clarity is required to discern areas for which experiential or experimental approaches can be used in the research design. For this, adequate discussions and exchange of ideas between theorists and experimentalists is required – a state of affairs which is sadly lacking in Indian academia.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

The overemphasis on quantitative methodologies by Indian researchers could prove to be an obstacle in investigating Indian concepts. A substantial proportion of Indian academic and research fraternity do not support research that uses qualitative data. Doctoral committees tend to reject research proposals using innovative and qualitative methodologies, preferring to utilize scored standardized questionnaires, comparing inter and within group scores, using correlation statistics, which, as mentioned earlier, do no justice to some of the research questions. Qualitative methods can be used in different settings to collect data, without simplify-

ing the process and ensuring effective gathering of data through participation at different levels (Kamat, 1996). As we have seen in the history of research related to psychology, development and utilization of new methods have to be encouraged to study the Indian concepts from a scientific perspective, rather than limiting to the available methods. In addition to using first-person technologies, the use of modern technologies such as fMRI, biophysiological equipment has to be incorporated into the research design to produce data that can address questions from many angles.

Practice vs. Publication

Experiential anecdotes of therapists working in India show the application of Indian concepts in the therapeutic process. Alexander (1978) used concepts from the Bhagavad-Gītā in his therapeutic approach. He narrated how a client in Indian setting could be introduced to psychotherapy using the dialogue of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa at the battlefield. He found the concept very useful in his work with clients at a period when psychotherapy as a method of treatment was naïve to the population he dealt with. The new generation therapists explored the concepts in the Bhagavad-Gītā as a result of documentation of his work.

In our regular meetings of clinical psychologists at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, every one reported that they use different Indian concepts during the conduct of therapy depending on the problem, the context and therapeutic phase. But the process of using these concepts was neither documented nor published. The approach of practising psychologists from other parts of the country is unlikely to be different. For the growth of the profession of psychology and to improve upon the research related to the Indian concepts, the experiential anecdotes of professionals working in diverse clinical settings and who use the concepts should be documented and published. This would help preserve the essence and value of Indian thought, before we are forced to learn the distorted versions of the concepts from abroad.

Stagnant vs. Vibrant

Should we stay stagnant with the ancient concepts or should we think in terms of finding its relevance in the contemporary context? Stagnation sets in if one perceives the concepts presented in classical texts as sacrosanct. While adapting the concepts to psychology, some of the interpretations provided by the earlier theorists in relation to psychology may have to be discarded. For instance, the twentieth century saw Freudian psycho-

analytical concepts followed by behavioural concepts governing all aspects of psychological thought. However, after extensive research, many aspects of these models have been discarded, as they do not present an accurate view. This is the process of science – openness and willingness to accept different views in the light of evidence, even if this evidence contradicts long cherished beliefs. Some of the explanations given to the terms by earlier interpreters may not stand the test of time, though its essence would. This must be done carefully without distorting the essence of the concepts. Orthodoxy in thinking may dissuade one from including the Indian philosophical concept to the realm of psychological research. At the same time, replacing the terms in Indian thought with scientific psychological terms will not help in comprehending the Indian psychological concepts. Stagnancy has also set in by not attempting to understand the concepts from the contemporary perspectives. Let us be realistic and not deny the fact that some of the concepts and procedures do not work in all situations and may not be applicable to the current situation. Because of the changing times, living conditions, and environment, some concepts may have to be interpreted cautiously. For example, though experimental studies have shown that different yogic āsanas do have positive effects on various parameters, in clinical practice, a number of clients do not practise the āsanas as instructed. The clients report various difficulties like lack of time, restricted living space and disadvantaged life setting and resources. Sri Aurobindo (1988) also observed the limitations of one of the yoga, “But the weakness of Haṭha yoga is that its laborious and difficult processes make so great demand on time and energy, and impose so complete severance from the ordinary life of men that the utilization of its results for the life of the world becomes either impracticable or is extraordinarily restricted” (p. 29). Therefore, the situation compels us to develop an alternate method or a modified version of the yogic techniques or to explore and identify the problem-matched yogic āsanas to reduce stress.

Another experience in the clinical or counseling situation is that parents or relatives of persons who have psychological problems, irrespective of caste or religion, do look out for an alternate form of healing other than modern medical or psychological form of treatment. When persons undergo stress and suffering, manifest abnormal behaviour or experience unusual perceptions, they or their relatives consult astrologers or soothsayers for black magic (Manickam et al., 2003). The literature

on Āyurveda states that some of the mental aberrations are caused by evil spirits (Balodhi and Chowdhary, 1986). The clients or their relatives follow the 'prescriptions' provided by the traditional healer and they often get negative results. We need to sieve the traditional literature of healing methods that are based in superstition and/or inadequate information, and subject other methods to proper experimentation in order to use traditional methods as legitimate approaches in the healing sciences.

Perspectives for Future Action

To develop a wider perspective, researchers interested in this area have to come together to work out new strategies. Four stages are envisaged in order to accelerate research on psychological concepts in Indian thought.

Accept/Enquire

The first stage is to facilitate the researchers to accept that there are concepts in Indian thought that have significant role in the development of psychology. Many Indian psychologists are not convinced about the importance of Indian concepts. Even if one prefers to go solely on scientific evidence, the research findings related to Indian concepts both from India and abroad cannot be ignored. Acceptance does not mean a blind faith that the Indian concepts are the only concepts that could lead to the growth of psychology. Making the psychology community aware that there are concepts originating from Indian thought with significant relevance to the field of psychology is the first step. The available experiential and qualitative research findings have to be enquired and accepted. Incorporating philosophical psychology as part of the graduate and master level curriculum could help some of the students of psychology to take up the issues for research at the Masters and Doctoral level. Parker and Manickam (1995) introduced Indian psychological concepts in the curriculum of psychology course as part of the Masters level program in Applied Theology of the West Minister College, Oxford, UK, for their distance education program offered in India. As a result, several Master level theses on integrating Indian psychological concepts and theology were produced. Indian psychological concepts were also made part of the compulsory course work of the Master level psychology program of the University of Kerala. However, it was discontinued, as there were no faculty members to follow up the initiative.

Acceptance of the importance of the concepts leads to the commitment to enquire about the concepts. For those working in therapeutic situations, the task is eas-

ier. Clients' narration of varied and diverse cultural and philosophical experiences compel the therapists to enquire more about the Indian psychological concepts to help the clients grow. To ease the therapeutic process, knowledge of Indian thought is found handy.

Identify/Explore

At this stage of identifying the concepts, not only studying the philosophical work, but connecting to different persons working in the related area is required. Reading the texts or the translation of the texts, without skipping the interpretation is useful in identifying the concepts. Active interdisciplinary dialogue with philosophers and linguists is an essential part of the process. This synergy between the psychology, philosophy, and Sanskrit departments and scholars is essential to the adequate understanding of the concepts in Indian thought. One of the features of the Indian thought is that the learner learns directly from the master or guru. This process of discussing with the 'master' definitely helps in clarifying the meaning of the concepts and identifying the appropriate concepts of psychological relevance, due to existing ambiguity and overlapping of concepts from different schools of Indian thought. With advancing technology and if the master is willing, the student can use the different media including the Internet to explore and identify the concepts. However, the researcher needs to connect to people who are working in the related area, discuss the various concepts and sharpen the understanding of the identified concepts.

Maintain/Persist

This stage has two dimensions. The first dimension is one of choice of the psychologists. One may enter into the realm of Indian philosophical psychology and may opt to maintain the interest or leave the area of research. A select few researchers who maintain their interest in and persist with their topic of research could lead to the development of this area of psychology. Developing concepts, techniques and building up theory based on persistent research would open up the field of enquiry for the next generation of psychologists.

The second dimension is related to the concepts. Maintaining the concepts without distortion is an important aspect of research on Indian concepts. Concepts from yoga school of thought or Upaniṣadic concepts need to be maintained without distorting the meaning of the terms. When an appropriate and accurate English translation of the Indian concepts could not be found, the original term in Sanskrit as followed in concepts

like yoga, mokṣa, karma, sahya, vipāṣanā and similar terms may be used, albeit with an unambiguous working definition, to

enable uniformity between researchers. Based on the research data, the contemporary relevance of the concepts may be modified, but not the concepts. Similarly, one may persist with the research on the concepts even if the scientific fraternity is not convinced about the data. Instead of modifying the concepts to match those from a different perspective, it is essential to persist doing research on the concepts. Therapists in India perceive the Bhagavad-Gītā as possessing therapeutic approaches of the major established forms of psychotherapy. Efforts have not been made to systematize the concepts of the Bhagavad-Gītā into a structured form of therapy, and as such, the principles are used loosely in context where appropriate. Hence, the principles contained therein are not amenable to research in order to establish the validity and reliability of the concepts in a contemporary therapeutic situation.

Communicate/Modify

Lack of communication between researchers and their inability to constructively critique work has led to repetition of research on concepts without attempts to build on earlier findings. For example, as mentioned, over the past few years seven personality inventories related to sattva, rajas and tamas were developed. With stringent copyright laws, it might become difficult for the Indian researchers to work more on sattva, rajas and tamas, with the development of a scale in USA (Wolf, 1999). The communication between those who had worked on these concepts could have helped to evolve a more accurate version of the scale. This may well be a consequence of the “Indian crab” effect, as much as the lack of sustained intellectual commitment to the discipline. In addition, the lack of peer reviewed journals of high standards adds to the publishing of papers of poor academic quality. Interdisciplinary and collaborative research is necessary to further research on Indian concepts and the development of a systematized discipline of Indian psychology.

Summary

Research related to Indian concepts in psychology has not shown much growth. Apart from the obstacles related to language and tendency to confuse the secular and the sacred in classical Indian thought, five attitudinal and perceptual effects that block researchers are: Import- Manufacture Effect, India-Made Foreign Effect,

Jasmine in One's Own Courtyard Effect, Crab in the Open Jar Effect, Connected-Within and Unconnected-Outside Effect. Some of the hindering factors and conflicts that plague Indian researchers are related to unity-diversity, science-philosophy, specific-integrative, technique-theory, clinical conditions-therapy, experimental-experiential, quantitative-qualitative, publish-silence and stagnant-vibrant. Four steps suggested for future action are: accept/enquire, identify/explore, maintain/persist, and communicate/modify.

Concepts contained within the varieties of Indian philosophies have to be adequately researched to differentiate those that are truly in the realm of philosophical thought and those that are representative of and a reflection of human nature. They have to be approached differently, lest we lose their richness and relevance. Innovative approaches and methods have to be developed to investigate these, using first-person technologies and advanced scientific technology where appropriate.

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