

## 2

# Indian Thought and Tradition: A Psychohistorical Perspective

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Psychology as a scientific discipline has a short history of hundred and odd years but it has a long past as a subject of human inquiry. In all cultures we find some psychological concepts and theories employed by people. Different labels like *naïve* psychology, commonsense psychology, ethnopsychology, everyday psychology, and the psychology of the populace are used to refer to them (Thomas, 2001). The agenda of modern scientific psychology is to move from these naïve and commonsense notions towards a universally applicable set of concepts, principles and theories. In the jargon of cross-cultural psychology, the attempt is to move from “emic” to “etic” or from “culture specific” to “culture free” knowledge. Unfortunately, however, the scientific psychology that emerged in the West has itself turned out to be another version of emic or culture-specific or ethnopsychology, being heavily influenced by the cultural values and outlook of the Western world (Tart, 1975a; Kim and Berry, 1993; Much, 1995). Its claim of universality is being viewed as “imposed etic” rather than “derived etic” (Kim and Berry, 1993). Modern scientific psychology fails to account for all the variations of human behaviour across cultures and it is also limited in its scope and leaves out all those aspects of human nature and experience that do not fit the framework of scientific approach. It is in this scenario that psychologists all over the world have felt the need to examine the “indigenous psychologies” (Kim and Berry, 1993; Kim and Park, 2005) for their contemporary relevance to account for behaviour, locally and globally, wherever they have the potential utility. While there are some who hold that psychology by its very nature cannot claim to be culture free and universal laws and principles cannot be arrived at, there are others who strongly believe in such a possibility. This has resulted in what is known as contextualism – universalism debate (Bem and Looren de Jong, 1997; Capaldi and Proctor, 1999).

It is interesting and instructive to note that Wilhelm Wundt, who first established the experimental psychology laboratory, also devoted himself to examine the socio-cultural influences in psychological processes and authored a ten-volume work on *Volkerpsychologie*. For him, *Volkerpsychologie* (folk psychology) concerned “those mental products created by a community of human life and are therefore inexplicable in terms merely of individual

consciousness, since they presuppose the reciprocal action of many” (Wundt, 1912/1916, p. 3, cited in Thomas, 2001, p. 1). Thomas has used the term folk psychology, in keeping with Wundt’s definition, to mean “a collection of beliefs, shared by members of a cultural group, regarding how people think when they interpret life’s events” (2001, p. 1). They include events that are physical, biological, economic, social, personal, and more. For instance, Heimann (1964) in her *Facets of Indian Thought* notes that all aspects of Indian tradition are governed by a transcendental world-view.

According to Thomas, folk psychology can be understood with reference to a pair of questions. (a) By what thought processes do the members of a cultural group account for the events of the world – including their own and other people’s behaviour? (b) What beliefs (Wundt’s “mental products”) do people acquire by means of those processes? Wundt’s and Thomas’s conception of folk psychology involves people’s notions about how humans think and also the products of mind that result from such thinking. The latter includes what is otherwise known as indigenous knowledge. It is defined as people’s “cognitive wise legacy as a result of their interaction with nature in a common territory” (Maurial, 1999, p. 62, cf. Thomas, 2001, p. 7). It is also defined as the “knowledge that has evolved in a particular societal context and which is used by lay people in that context of life in the conduct of their lives” (George, 1999, p. 80, cited in Thomas, p. 7). Such indigenous knowledge prevalent in different cultures and societies leads to diversity of viewpoints on reality, knowing, cause, competence, innate characteristics, attributes of self, esteemed traits, consequence of behaviour, values, prohibitions, life versus death, human versus nonhuman, happiness and sadness, normal versus abnormal, family structure and function, social class, justice, ethnicity, work and play, and so on (Thomas, 2001). All these taken together constitute folk psychology and it means something more than just theories of mind and behaviour prevalent in different cultures.

Many contemporary researchers who are using the phrase *indigenous psychology* often limit its meaning and scope to indigenous theories of mind and behaviour divorcing it from the “mental products” that result. Thomas is convinced that understanding of folk psychology is delimited by this. He argues that a group’s beliefs serve as “valuable lenses through which to view the member’s shared thought process” (ibid, p. 4). That is, interpretations of how people think – people’s mental functions – are typically inferences drawn from those individuals’ expressed beliefs and displayed behaviours and hence indigenous psychology needs to be defined in this inclusive sense, synonymous with folk psychology. In this chapter I will use the term indigenous psychology with this broader connotation. In Indian tradition, the four *Vedas*; 108 principal *Upaniṣads*; the six orthodox systems (as *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (*Vedānta*), *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, and *Vaiśeṣika*); the two heterodox systems – Jainism and Buddhism; *Dharma Śāstra*, *Gr̥hya Sūtras*, *Purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Āyurveda Saṃhitās* and others are the repertoire of indigenous knowledge and constitute indigenous psychologies. These are the Wundt’s “mental products”, created by the ancient seers and sages, which serve as valuable lenses to understand the Indian psyche.

### Some Characteristics of Indian Psyche

India has been a home for many diverse groups of people from all over the world from ancient times. Geographically, in ancient times, India was known as *Bharata Khanda* stretching extensively in the North, North-East and North-West. It was a continent (*khanda* in Sanskrit).

People from all parts of the world settled in *Bhârata*. For example, there were “the Eolithic Negroids from Africa; the Proto-Australoids and the Austric peoples, probably from Western Asia; the Mongoloids from the Far East in their various ramifications; the congeries of the Asian peoples who appear to have brought the Dravidian language and culture into India; the Indo-Europeans in their various elements, racial and linguistic – not only Nordic, but also Mediterranean, Alpine, and Dimaric in race as well as language; Aryan – both as Indo-Aryan Iranian – as well as Proto-Hellenic and historical Hellenic; and other races and peoples, [redacted]” (Chatterji, Pusalker and Dutt, 1958, p. viii-xi, emphasis added).

In addition, in the long history many other people arrived, including “the Assyrio Babylonians, the ancient Persians, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians and other Iranians, the Turks, the Muslim Persians, the Armenians, and the modern West European peoples like the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the English; possibly a backwash of Polynesians, besides, Elamites, Finno-Ugrians and some others” (Chatterji, Pusalker and Dutt, 1958, p. xi). It appears *Bhârata* was a colourful mosaic a few thousand years ago with all these different races living in one land and they jointly built up the culture we associate with India. They built up “the Wonder that is India” (Chatterji, Pusalker and Dutt, 1958, p. xxxix) and succeeded in flavoring the unique picture of multiculturalism. Hence, it is wrong to treat Indian psyche as a homogenous entity from a cultural point of view. We have “multicultural minds” (Hong, Morris, Chiu, Benet-Martinez, 2000) in India and we have indigenous psychologies!

It is such diversity with some sort of unity that has baffled many scholars, foreign and Indian, who have attempted to understand the uniqueness of India. Ramanujan (1990) has raised a fundamental question – “Is there an Indian way of thinking?” This question is very important from the point of view of developing Indian psychology. He has parsed the question in four different ways: *Is* there an Indian way of thinking? Is there *an* Indian way of thinking? Is there an *Indian* way of thinking? Is there an Indian way of *thinking*? Each of them laid emphasis on a particular issue. His answers to these questions reveal how difficult it is to understand and develop Indian psychology and make us wonder about the reality of such an enterprise.

Ramanujan’s first question, “*Is* there an Indian way of thinking?” raises the most fundamental issue. If there is nothing like that, all this talk of Indian psychology is irrelevant and useless. Ramanujan says there was an Indian way of thinking and it is not so any more. Therefore, if one wants to learn about it, he says “do not ask modern – day citified Indians”, instead, go to the pundits, the *vaidyas*, and the old texts. However, in the next breath he asserts, “India never changes; under the veneer of the modern, Indians still think like the Vedas” (p. 41). Ramanujan’s answers appear paradoxical, yet on serious consideration, we can very clearly see that though forces of modernisation and Westernization have brought substantial changes in our country, we have still retained many characteristics of the past that may be called Indian and we necessarily have to go back in time if we want to develop that. However, as he points out in relation to his second question, there is no single Indian way of thinking. We have great and little traditions; ancient and modern, rural and urban, classical and folk. Each language, caste and region has its special worldview. This substantiates what I have said earlier, that we have indigenous psychologies. Yet we can think of Indian psychology because, “under the apparent diversity, there is a reality, a unity of view point, a single super system...” (ibid. p 41–42). What

is that, which can be called Indian? This brings us to Ramanujan's third question, "Is there an *Indian* way of thinking?" According to him, this question can be answered in both ways. He states from an onlooker's viewpoint, there is nothing special to India. It can be characterised as nothing but pre-industrial, pre-printing press, face-to-face, agricultural, feudal, etc. Marxists, Freudians, McLuhanites, and other theorists according to their scheme of social evolution have their tables and can fit India in one of their stages. India is only an example of their scheme. Others, however, would argue about the uniqueness of the Indian way and how it turns all things, especially rivals and enemies into itself. They assert there is an *Indian* way, and "it imprints and patterns all things that enter the continent; it is inescapable, and it is Bigger Than All of Us" (p. 42).

Lannoy (1971), for instance, has highlighted three features of Indian thought that have demonstrated 'survival value' over a long stretch of time, which originated in remote antiquity. They are: 'the absolute authority of the Word as universal metaphysical principle'; the concept of the 'flux of all things'; and 'hylozoistic thinking' (Hylozoism is the philosophical doctrine holding that all matter has life, which is a property or derivative of matter). According to him the outstanding characteristic of a primitive society is its sense of the unity of all life, the sense of solidarity and emotional sympathy. This is reflected in the primitive tendency to draw no clear distinction between matter, life and mind, which he terms as 'hylozoistic thinking'. He notes that this idea is encountered in the theory of *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*), which is the common stuff of both mind and matter. Lannoy hastens to add that this type of thinking should not be misconstrued as some form of 'pre-logical irrationalism'. On the other hand, man as a microcosmic organism under primitive, pre-technological conditions, sees himself as an exact counterpart of the macrocosm-Nature and hence obtains knowledge of the latter in a direct way by immediate sensory awareness. ~~On the other hand, man as a microcosmic organism under primitive, pre-technological conditions, sees himself as an exact counterpart of the macrocosm and hence obtains knowledge of the latter in a direct way by immediate sensory awareness.~~ Thus both pre-Socratic Greek thought and Indian thought started from the assumption that without an identity between the knowing subject and the reality known, the fact of knowledge would be unaccountable. Referring specifically to Indian thought, Lannoy notes that for Indians, subject and object, thesis and antithesis, are not opposed to one another, but constitute two aspects of the same thing and all differentiation springs from the *coincidentia oppositorum* of a unitary Absolute. Lannoy further adds that the identity between the knower and the known was not just an assumption, "but was a mode of perception". He also clarifies that there is nothing 'mystical' or 'uncanny' in this kind of thought if one uses the word mystical in the sense which Santayana gives it – the most *natural* mode of thinking. It was suppressed in Western thinking for many centuries through specialization in a certain kind of consciousness. While Lannoy's understanding of Indian thought seems accurate, the question to be asked here is whether the mode of perception he refers to can be called primitive since that term has a pejorative connotation in modern context.

Swami Ajaya (1983), a disciple of Swami Rama of the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga, has noted that there are two kinds of opposites – "antithetical" and "complementary". He proposes that complementarity of opposites is a characteristic of what he calls "dualistic" thought which is a stage beyond Piaget's formal-operational thought. An Indian example of this thought is Sâmkhya and Western examples are Jung's theory and systems theory. Beyond this dualistic thought there is "unitive thought". Advaita Vedânta is an example of this stage. In

support of his propositions he cites the work of two developmental psychologists, Herb Koplewitz and Klaus Regal, who have postulated these two stages of development beyond Piaget's four stages. Ajaya hastens to add that unitive thought is different from "unitive consciousness", also known as "pure consciousness" or *BrahmanĀtman* in Indian tradition. Ajaya's hypothesis indicates that the psychological foundation of Indian tradition is qualitatively distinct from that of Western thought and also possibly of a higher stage in intellectual development. In view of this it may be detrimental to the cause of Indian thought to understand it from one of those readymade Western theories available to us. Many cross-cultural psychology and social psychology researches use one of those Western generated templates of social evolution to characterize Indian society and to describe the behaviour of Indians. Characterizing India as a collectivistic society is an example of this, though Indian researchers have found that both individualism and collectivism trends are present in our culture (Sinha and Tripathi, 1994). Similarly, Kakar's (1996) *Indian Psyche* from Freudian perspective is another instance of such an approach. While such an approach can throw useful light, it can also distort reality to some extent.

The task at hand for us is to identify what is that *Indian* way, rather than making use of one of those Western templates readily available to fit the Indian psyche to that. If we have to do that we have to take Ramanujan's fourth question seriously i.e., Is there an Indian way of *thinking*? Referring to this, he observes that this may mean whether Indians think at all, because there is an opinion developed among scholars that it is the West that is materialistic and rational. On the other hand, Indians have no philosophy, only religion; no positive sciences, not even a psychology; in India matter is subordinated to spirit, rational thought to feeling and intuition. Ramanujan observes, even when people agree that this is the case, we can have arguments for and against it. "Some lament, others celebrate Indian's un-thinking ways" (1990, p. 42). The implication is that the thought pattern of Indians is distinctly different from that of others and we have discussed it in the previous paragraphs. What is important for us is to decide whether lay people and seers and sages shared a similar thought pattern or whether a distinctive thought pattern was characteristic of the latter.

In his attempts to find an answer to this question Ramanujan approaches the subject from a linguistic view point and applies grammatical rules as a tool for this purpose. He refers to two of them, viz., "context-free" and "context-sensitive". An example of context-free rule is "sentence must have subjects and predicates in a certain relation". An example of context-sensitive rule is "plurals in English are realised as *-s* after stops (dog-s, cat-s), *-es* before fricatives (e.g., latch-es), *-ren* after the word *child*, etc." (p. 47). Extending these rules to cultures, Ramanujan observes that cultures have a tendency to idealize and think in terms of either one of them and people are guided by them in their behaviour. According to him, in cultures like India the context-sensitive kind of rule is the preferred formulation and it is evident in almost all aspects of Indian life.

Ramanujan (1990) attributes it to the Hindu concern with *jāti* – the logic of classes, of genera and species, of which human *jātis* are only an instance. In his view, "each *jāti* or class defines a context, a structure of relevance, a rule of permissible combinations, a frame of reference, and a meta-communication of what is and can be done" (p. 53). In his opinion the various taxonomies of season, landscape, times, qualities (*guṇas*) and their material bases, tastes, characters, emotions, etc., provide the context and are basic to the thought work of

Hindu medicine and poetry, cooking and religion, erotic and magic. However, he notes that societies have “underbellies” and if one rule is predominant the other will be the dominant ideal and surfaces in the form of counter movements. In his opinion, in traditional cultures like India, where context-sensitivity rules and binds, the dream is to be free of context. That is the ideal and it expresses in different aspects of life.

*Rasa* in aesthetics, *mokṣa* in the ‘aims of life’, *sanyāsa* (renunciation) in the life stages, *sphoṭa* in semantics, and *bhakti* in religion are examples in Indian culture. They define themselves against a background of inexorable contextuality. The ancient seers, sages, and thinkers of India seem to have developed a concept and system of life that structured around a movement towards the context-free rule from context-sensitivity as recognisable in these domains. Referring to *puruṣārthas* (goals of life) he states that *kāma*, *artha*, and *dharma* are all relational in their values, tied to place, time, personal character and social role, but *mokṣa* is the release from all relations. Similarly, referring to four *āśramas* he states that while the first two, *brahmacārya* (celibate studentship) and *gṛhastha* (householder stage) are preparation and fulfillment of a relational life, *vānaprastha* (the retiring forest-dweller stage) and *sanyāsa* (renunciation) loosens the bond and cremates all one’s past and present relations. In the realm of feeling, *rasa* is generalized, it is an essence. On the other hand, *bhāvas* are private, contingent, context roused sentiments, *vibhāvas* are determinant causes, *anubhāvas*, the consequent expressions. In the field of meaning, *sphoṭa*, an explosion, a meaning which is beyond sequence and time is the culmination of the temporal sequence of letters and phonemes, the syntactic chain of words. “In each of these the pattern is the same: a necessary sequence in time with strict rules of phase and context ending in a free state” (ibid. p. 54). However, *bhakti*, according to him, is an exception and it denies the very need for context. “*Bhakti* defies all contextual structures: every pigeonhole of caste, ritual, gender, appropriate clothing and custom, stage of life, the whole system of homo hierarchicus (everything in its place) is the target of its irony” (ibid. p. 54). This is the transcendent orientation of Indian culture which Heimann (1964) sees in all its aspects.

Context-sensitive and context-free rule can be meaningfully employed even in understanding certain complex concepts of Indian tradition. In the discussion on the states of consciousness, *Advaita Vedānta* posits that the ‘reality’ of phenomenal experiences of *jāgrat* (waking) and *svapna* (dream) are relative to those contexts and what is context-free is *turīya*, which can be approximately translated in English as “pure consciousness”. Therefore, *Advaita Vedānta* treats waking and dream states at par. Tart (1972) proposed the concept of “state-specific sciences”, which seem to be modern psychology equivalent of the context-sensitive notion, and James (1902/1968) spoke about types of consciousness and corresponding realities. It should be emphasized here that it is the ‘experience’ of *turīya* (pure consciousness) by ancient seers and sages (and also modern ones) that formed the fulcrum of what we may call Indian psychology, from which perspective only the relative validity of all human experiences in different states can be appreciated.

Some of these features that characterize Indian thought suggest that all the theories and models of modern psychology cannot explain all the behaviour of Indian masses and we need to look within for indigenous knowledge to develop a psychology of our own. On the other hand, some of the features like hylozoistic thinking and an urge towards context-freeness appear to be present universally among the peoples of other cultures and they find Indian culture and

its thought personally meaningful for them. Many foreigners who got interested in spirituality and dedicated themselves for it serve as the best examples of this. What it means is that the psychology that we propose to develop from within is not only useful for our people, it also has psychological significance for persons from other cultures and hence the potentiality to be universal, not just contextual. Therefore, Indian psychology that is being discussed here is a value addition to the existing psychology expanding its scope and application rather than a regressive movement.

### Indian Psychology – a myth or reality?

Though this handbook is aimed at Indian psychology the above question is relevant and valid and needs to be addressed in order to make certain things clear. As noted earlier, we have many indigenous psychologies in India, because of the great diversity of ethnic groups who settled here. If we take a close look at our intellectual legacy it is surprising that in India we do not have a well-known classic on psychology as we can find for other branches of knowledge. For instance, we have *Āyurveda* as a branch of knowledge and *Caraka* and *Suśrutha Saṃhitā* as *āyurvedic* texts deal with medicine, surgery and longevity. We have *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* of Īvara Kṛṣṇa and a number of other texts and treatises that deal with the *Sāṃkhya* system of philosophy. We have Pāṇini's *Aśādhyaī* which is an epoch making work on Sanskrit language and linguistics. We also have Vātsayāna's *Kāma Sūtra*, related to human sexuality. However, we do not have one such well-known text that directly addresses the nature and functions of mind. The celebrated *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali though deal with the subject to some extent, it is a practical manual for transcending the functions of mind and hence it is not considered as a text on psychology proper in the modern sense.

Regarding this glaring omission in Indian tradition, S. K. R. Rao (1962) observes that in India, our ancient thinkers did not give psychology an independent educational status as a branch of knowledge, nor do we find an exact word for psychology in Sanskrit. They did not consider it worth pursuing as an independent subject apart from their spiritual pursuits and discouraged others from doing so, since they perceived too much preoccupation with mind and its function as a hindrance in achieving transcendence. This point is made by Chennakesavan (1980) as follows: “the purpose of the *Upaniṣads* is to reveal *Brahman*, the supreme self, and a distinct warning is sounded to the seekers of truth, not to be carried away by *manas* and its attributes, but to try to know the thinker (*mantr*). It is stressed often that *prajñā* which is the self or *Ātman* is responsible for the activities of *manas* which means mind, therefore, plays only a secondary role in knowledge.”

Nevertheless, as Rao pointed out, there was enough *psychologising* and our ancients in their attempts to solve the philosophical problems necessarily addressed psychological topics such as consciousness, experience, perception, illusion, will, desires, emotions and others. Enquiries concerning those psychological processes did not occur in a single context, or as a connected account. The field of philosophical enquiry was structured into numerous interests – orthodox and heterodox – and the compilation of relevant reflections of all of them concerning a specific problem was almost impossible. Further, Indian works are written in multiplicity of languages. *Vedas* are in archaic Sanskrit; the *Upaniṣads* and later scholastic works are in classical Sanskrit; the early Buddhist texts are in Pāli; and the Jaina texts are in Ardhamagadhi and mixed-Sanskrit. A competent presentation of Indian psychological thought requires “knowledge

of Sanskrit, Pâli, and Ardhamagadhi (all three languages are almost dead now); acquaintance with Indian philosophy and allied branches of study; and academic training in modern psychology” (Rao, 1962, p. vii). With the exception of Professor Rao himself, such a combination of excellence is rare to find.

Further, psychological speculations existed in diverse and even disparate disciplines like metaphysics and medicine, logic and sexology, and religion and poetry. No writer could be expected to have enough mastery over all of them to sieve out the psychological contributions (Rao, 1962). No ancient thinker seems to have attempted to integrate and systematize them and hence we do not find any classical text or treatise exclusively devoted to this subject. In other words, for ancient seers and sages delineation and discussion of mind and its functions was like describing the many places visited by a traveller in his travelogue, whose destination is something far away from all those places. Therefore, we do not find readily available models, theories, and systems of Indian psychology. So in creating a body of knowledge called Indian psychology, out of diverse sources, we face many problems like lack of clarity, lack of details, lack of compatibility, lack of continuity and such others, of ideas and views. Given this type of a situation, contemporary efforts at carving out Indian psychology appear both challenging as well as perplexing.

In contrast to this situation there is the initiative of some Western scholars a century ago in bringing together the scattered ideas of psychological nature of Indian tradition, which laid the foundation for Indian psychology. Although the term “Indian psychology” was used explicitly by Sri Aurobindo in one of his writings on education in 1910 (Chakraborty, 1991), perhaps the first published work on this subject is the first of three volumes by Jadunath Sinha named *Indian Psychology: Cognition* in 1933. Following this was Mrs. Rhys Davids’ 1936 volume titled *The Birth of Indian Psychology and Its Development in Buddhism*. Prior to this, Davids published *Buddhist Psychology* in 1914, but no known published work seems to have existed explicitly with a title on Indian psychology before her work. However, there were other publications also in the West to compare the nature between modern psychology and Indian psychological thought. That include *Western Psychotherapy and Hindu Sadhana* (Jacobs, 1961) and *Yoga and Western Psychology: A Comparison* (Coster, 1934). Following this some Indians also authored a few books, most notable among them are *Hindu Psychology: It’s Meaning for the West* and *Mental Health and Hindu Psychology* (Swami Akhilananda, 1948, 1952) and Jadunath Sinha’s two volumes on *Indian Psychology, Vol. 2 - Emotion and Will* (1961) and *Indian Psychology, Vol. 3 - Epistemology of Perception* (1969). Such initial attempts stimulated others to work in this direction.

Though Western scholars were aware of the value of psychological insights available in Indian tradition a century ago, interest in them did not percolate into the work of academicians in India barring few exceptions. Durganand Sinha (1993) who advocated indigenization of psychology in India, initially expressed reservations against the idea of Indian psychology on the grounds that scientific laws and principles are of a universal character and they cannot be delimited by geographical boundaries. He also pointed out that the early attempts at formulation of Indian psychology were rejected by empirically trained psychologists in India, on the grounds that the notions of *karma*, reincarnation, self-realisation and others, which are central to Indian tradition, are unscientific. This is an instance of rejecting the mental products and the thought processes that are integral for an indigenous psychology as defined in the beginning. Further,

Krishnan (1994) points out that majority of the psychologists have preferred to work in the mainstream since the traditional ideas may not help in academic progress, in gaining recognition, and in securing grants for research projects. Adair *et al.* (1995, p. 393) have found that academic psychologists in India expressed significantly greater need for indigenization, but they did not endorse substantially the idea that psychology can be made more relevant to the local context by a “return to Vedic or other traditional writings”. As a result, though many psychologists in India in mid 1960s and in 1970s recognized the need for making psychology relevant to their sensibility, it largely remained a-cultural (Pandey, 2001). These reasons have obscured the value and significance of Indian psychological thought and they have remained isolated without being integrated into the academic pursuits of psychologists in India.

A question that may arise is why bother about those ideas, which our ancestors themselves did not consider worthy of independent pursuit. Further, one may also wonder in what way are those ancient speculations relevant in this post-modern context, either for India or for a universal body of knowledge. To answer these questions we need to examine the contemporary status of scientific psychology.

Ever since its inception, scientific psychology progressively veered away from the psyche in its original sense (soul) as the subject matter of study. The definition of psychology underwent changes replacing its subject matter from consciousness to mind and then to behaviour. This movement reflects the need felt by those pioneers in the field to make psychology rigorously scientific. As a result, much of what rightfully belongs to human experience was relegated to the background as non-scientific, as “not me”, resulting in what may be termed here as the “subconscious region of psychology”, in the Freudian sense. For behaviourists it is the ‘unconscious region’! Whatever that is termed as mainstream scientific psychology, with which many psychologists identify as “me”, can be called the *conscious region of psychology* by analogy. In other words, through the behaviourist era, many concepts like consciousness, dreams, free-will, extrasensory perception, intuition, wisdom, transcendence and others were not considered as valid subject matter and often one does not find them in textbooks of introductory psychology. Even if they are, their discussion revolves around certain limited aspects related to what is accepted as scientific. For instance, discussion on dreams involves the physiological correlates rather than the phenomenology of dreams. Consciousness is discussed in terms of reticular formation and higher cortical processes. Similarly love is discussed in terms of its underlying glandular basis or cerebral correlates. This exclusionist and reductionistic approach in psychology has been a point of dispute ever since its inception and its adequacy and validity as an appropriate paradigm for psychology are being increasingly questioned in recent years (Bem and Looren de Jong, 1997). A conflict has always been there between the subconscious and the conscious regions of psychology.

A consequence of this situation is the emergence, over the past several decades, of many psychologies and perspectives that address all those ideas, concepts and approaches that constitute what I have termed as the subconscious region of psychology. These include such major movements like humanistic and transpersonal psychology (Maslow, 1971), and also such specific schools and/or approaches like indigenous psychology (Kim and Berry, 1993); phenomenological psychology, symbolic interactionism, social representations, cultural psychology, feminism and psychology, discursive psychology, dialogical psychology, narratology, ideography and the case study (Smith, Harre, Van Langenhove, 1995). It is to be

emphasized that all these have emerged in the Western context itself alongside mainstream scientific psychology and hence amply indicate that at present, psychology as a discipline is multivocal. Thus, in contemporary psychology we can identify two distinct pursuits of interest, viz., mainstream scientific psychology that is dominant and adhered to by majority and alternative schools, systems, perspectives and movements spearheaded by either individual or cohorts of psychologists, which differ either in focus or in approach or in both from the mainstream.

Among these, two specific developments in the discipline have played key roles in stimulating investigators to examine and incorporate Indian psychological thoughts into current literature. First, in 1960s and 1970s, the increasing popularity of meditation and Yoga (Naranjo and Ornstein, 1971), the increasing interest in the study of consciousness (Ornstein, 1972, 1973; Tart, 1969; 1975b) and the emergence of transpersonal psychology (Tart, 1975a) brought to focus the Indian religio-spiritual and philosophical traditions as valuable resources to understand the nature of human mind and consciousness. Psychologists in the West found that these sources can provide theoretical and practical knowledge on exploring human psyche beyond the range of ordinary awareness and also fill the void in modern psychology regarding the understanding of self (Tart, 1975a). In recognition of this, Tart (1975a) considered them “transpersonal psychologies” and Walsh (1980) termed them as “consciousness disciplines”. With this many investigators have taken interest in studying *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Yoga-Sūtras*, *Bhagavad-Gītā* and other related literature not as holy books, but as the psychological documents of universal significance. Many Indian concepts have found their way into academic discussions and writings in the West.

Secondly, the increase in cross-cultural research and the development of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, Poortinga, Dasen and Segall, 1992) led to greater appreciation of the paradigmatic limitations of modern scientific psychology, which render the claim of its universality doubtful. A common refrain is that the so-called universal laws and principles of modern psychology are nothing but one type of “indigenous psychology”, developed within the Euro-American ethos determined by the underlying worldview of the West and hence cannot be generalized to other cultures (Kim and Berry, 1993). Many psychologists have been arguing that culture and psyche are integrally related and one cannot be understood without the other (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock and Misra, 1996), and more and more psychologists – western and non-western – emphasized on understanding human behaviour within a cultural context and on the necessity of developing local or indigenous theories and perspectives (Kim and Park, 2005). It has been expressed differently by investigators, viz, “ethnopsychology”, “cultural psychology” and “folk psychology” (Thomas, 2001). Some researchers in India have been pursuing their interest from this perspective. Thus, contemporary interest in ancient Indian thought and psychological speculations available in them have to be understood in this broader context, because it is not just a matter of nationalism or patriotism of a few Indian psychologists.

In view of the contemporary usage of the phrase “Indian psychology” by many scholars in different contexts, it can be interpreted in five ways: (1) psychology in India, (2) Indian psychological thought, (3) psychology with an Indian identity, (4) a psychology created by Indian psychologists, and (5) psychology of Indian people (Kumar, 2001).

“Psychology in India” refers to the history and current status of psychology as an academic discipline or a professional specialty within the country (see A. K. Dalal, 2002; Misra and Mohanty, 2002).

“Indian psychological thought” represents the psychological insights available in different orthodox systems like *Vedānta*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika* and heterodox systems like Jainism and Buddhism and other sources. Indian scholars trained in modern psychology like J. Sinha (1933/1958; 1961, 1969), S. K. R Rao (1962), Safaya (1975), Atreya (1985), Kuppuswamy (1985), Paranjpe (1984, 1998), Srivastava (2001), K. R. Rao (2005) and several others have endeavoured to collate and present these insights in a manner that is compatible with modern psychological texts.

“Psychology with an Indian identity” refers to such terms as “Buddhist psychology” (David, 1916, 1936), “Vedic Psychology” (Dandekar, 1941/1981), “Hindu Psychology” (Akhilananda, 1948, 1952), “Jaina Psychology” (Kalghatgi, 1961; Mehta, 1955), “Psychology of Yoga” (Taimni, 1973), “Dravidian Psychology” (Shaktidharan and Sathya Kumar, 2001), etc.

“Psychology created by Indian psychologists” refers to a system(s) of psychology developed by Indian psychologists, who adhere to a meta-theoretical or philosophical position. Examples of this are “Integral Psychology” (Sen, 1986) and “A Greater Psychology - An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo” (A. S. Dalal, 2001), both derived from Sri Aurobindo’s writings.

“Psychology of Indian people” refers to a body of psychological knowledge, about patterns of thinking and behaving and to the understanding of the behaviour of Indian masses. Researchers mostly working in the area of cross-cultural and social psychology have made some of the major arguments in favour of a cultural approach to the development of such a psychology of Indian people (Krishnan, 2003; Misra, 2000, 2001; Misra, Jain and Singh, 1995; Neki, 2000; D. Sinha, 1997). The contemporary attempts at developing Indian psychology reflect many of these concerns and we find researchers working from different perspectives (see Kumar, in press).

## Origins of psychological thought in ancient India

As noted earlier, *Bharata Khanda* was vast and many ethnic groups settled in different parts of this continent. The sophisticated Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3300–1700 BCE) flourished 2600–1900 BCE), flourished in the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra river valleys primarily in what is now Pakistan and Western India, parts of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Another name for this civilization is the Harappan Civilization, after the first of its cities to be excavated, Harappa. The Dravidians of South India are ancient inhabitants of the Indian peninsula, with their distinct language and culture existing to date. In Northern India, waves of invaders made the peninsula their home and added to the cultural fabric of India. The conglomeration of different worldviews and indigenous psychologies over few thousand years seem to have coalesced due to mutual influences of cultures and some kind of synthesis has taken place as reflected in indigenous knowledge related to reality, knowing, cause, life versus death, attributes of self, human versus nonhuman, happiness and sadness, consequence of behaviour, values, justice, prohibitions, social class, family structure and function and others. The differences between them have not disappeared, but exist alongside and developed into the different orthodox and heterodox Indian systems. The orthodox is so called because all the thinkers in those schools owe their allegiance to *Vedas* as authority, whilst the heterodox schools do not accept the authority of *Vedas*. Most scholars refer to the psychological perspectives available in orthodox and heterodox schools as Indian psychology proper. Thus we have two basic streams of thought development in Indian

tradition, which may be considered as the precursors of Indian psychological thought. However, all these schools have been influenced by the indigenous psychologies of diverse ethnic groups about which we have no knowledge. Jadunath Sinha's three volumes on *Indian Psychology – Vol. 1 Cognition, (1933/1958), Vol. 2 Emotion and Will (1961) and Vol. 3 Epistemology of Perception (1969)* are monumental compendiums of all the classical ideas scattered in various sources of orthodox and heterodox schools.

It is conventional in Indian tradition to trace all the ideas and concepts related to indigenous knowledge to the *Vedas*, which were the first literary products of our ancestors, faithfully passed on in a continuous oral tradition without much distortion. Often there is a tendency to identify India with *Vedas*, Vedic tradition, and Vedic Aryans exclusively. Vedic tradition, in particular, has retained its oral character even today in the age of information technology and digitization. It has also spread to the European and Western countries and there are many in those countries who are able to chant the *Vedas* exactly the same way as a traditional Brâhmin can do it or even much better (this author was a witness for the chanting of *Rudram* and *Camakam* by lady disciples of Swami Muktananda in California, USA, all wearing T-shirts and Jeans on a Ūivarâtri festival day!).

However, as Professor Dandekar, a reputed indologist states: “As a matter of fact, a large number of elements in the classical Hindu way of life and thought clearly betray a pre-Vedic non-Aryan origin” and “the Aryan Vedism may be regarded as a grand interlude in the continuity of ancient Indian thought” (1941/1981, p. 339). Unfortunately we do not have much information about pre-Vedic people and their culture and hence cannot say anything about their contribution to the development of Indian thought but for some indirect inferences drawn from the remains of Indus Valley Civilization. No accurate historical or archaeological evidence is available to fix the dates of pre-Vedic and Vedic period. S. K. R. Rao (1962) notes that Jainism is perhaps the oldest religion in the country and even in the Indus Civilization traces of Jaina practises like nudity, asceticism, bull-worship, etc. are discernible and it was probably pre-Aryan. Kalghatgi (1961) has noted that Jacobi (1946) traces Jainism to early primitive currents of metaphysical speculations and according to Zimmer (1951), Jainism reflects the cosmology and anthropology of a much older pre-Aryan upper class of North-Eastern India. Hence, from the point of view of the origins of psychological notions, the influence of Jaina worldview and of Indus civilization is no less important than Vedic and post-Vedic period. For the purpose of tracing the development of psychological thought in India it may be essential to consider the influence of pre-Vedic and Vedic traditions.

Since we do not know who were the first dwellers of Indian subcontinent and what was their cognitive structure we cannot speak with certainty on how and when the first psychological notions emerged in India and what thought characteristics distinguished Indians from others. Therefore, to identify what is uniquely Indian that characterizes the multicultural minds and has survived all these years is really a formidable task and we need to consider pre-Vedic, Vedic, and post-Vedic period, as well as the period extending from the time of Mahavîra and Buddha to modern times, spanning almost 5000 years. A problem that we face in this endeavour is that of ancient India's characteristics, i.e., its a-historical approach to men and matters. This has something to do with the transcendental orientation of Indian tradition already referred to. We do not find either oral or written records of events and personages regarding the time of their occurrences in most cases till Buddha's period (fifth century BCE). Therefore, much of the

historical work related to ancient India is not very accurate with respect to time. Similarly, regarding the authorships of many ancient works there is uncertainty, because authors often did not care to leave any signs of personal identification. Nevertheless, chronological sequence of events have been maintained and passed on from one generation to the other in continuous oral tradition enabling us to get a sense of what has happened and historians have made attempts to date them depending on the circumstantial and secondary evidences, available in the tradition. Based on such observations scholars have attempted to trace the development of the intellectual legacy of India and their efforts form the base of this essay. Hence, no claims are made to provide an accurate picture of the historical developments of psychological ideas and perspectives. On the other hand, an attempt is made to provide an overview of them.

### ***Muni-Yati* and *ṛṣi* traditions**

The variations in *ethos* (life ways) and *eidos* (thought ways) of Indians in different regions have been influenced by the psyche of the ancient people who came to India in pre-historic and historic periods. Based on the knowledge of socio-cultural practises prevalent in ancient times Dandekar (1959/1981) distinguishes between “two patterns of life and thought”, viz, Non-Aryan, pre-Vedic and Aryan-Vedic. He refers to them as *muni-yati* tradition and *ṛṣi* tradition respectively. According to him *muni-yati* tradition is primarily characterised by (1) prevalence of Siva religion and the practises and cults associated with it; and (2) glorification of a life of renunciation, asceticism, wandering mendicancy, and severe austerities. It was an “iconic religion” and idol worship was its chief feature. *Pûja* (rituals) and *bali* (offerings) were part of this. Some kind of yoga practises, involving “concentration” aimed at “mental control” was another feature (Dandekar, 1959/1981).

In contrast, *ṛṣi* tradition of Vedic-people was characterised by (1) *homa*, offering oblations to God through fire; and (2) an ideal of a materially secure and prosperous family life. Idol worship was entirely unknown to the Vedic religion (Dandekar, 1959/1981). The Vedic religion did not believe in a personal God. To begin with, it consisted of hymns in praise of various deities who are personifications of the different powers of nature like water, fire, wind, and the like. In addition, there were hymns which describe charms for curing diseases, prayers for long life and health, imprecations against demons, sorcerers and enemies, charms pertaining to women to secure their love, etc. These prayers were recited in the performances of certain prescribed rituals, called *yajña* (sacrifices) (Dasgupta, 1927). The aim was obtaining material prosperity and happiness. “Sacrificial mysticism” is the term used by Dasgupta (1927) to refer to Vedic Aryan ritualistic religion. He has used the term mysticism and religion interchangeably. In addition, there were other cults like that of Vratyas, the Munis, and the Brahmachârin, which were closely allied to *Râdra-Ūva* worship, who followed a fundamentally different life style from that of the Vedic Aryans (Dandekar, 1959/1981).

The *muni-yati* tradition of pre-Vedic people had spread far and wide and was well established in India. Idol worship, which was its chief characteristic, implies a concrete representation of some higher force, wherein the signifier and the signified are not of the same order. It represents such distinctions as man, God, worshipper and worshipped, individual self and higher self, etc. The emphasis on a life of renunciation, asceticism, wandering mendicancy, etc., suggests that people were seeking to go beyond the ordinary life and had the notions of transcendence and spirituality. It further suggests that those people had already found a means or a way of

transcendence. Faith in such a religion implies that pre-Vedic non-Aryan people probably shared a world view and thought pattern, in which there was a clear demarcation between the personal self and a higher reality. They also had a perspective on life not limited to physical reality. It also suggests that among those people there was a tendency to go inward and away from an active involvement in material life, probably to realize something beyond the mundane existence. In a tendency, one can speculate, heralded the development of those schools that emphasize transcendence in one or the other way. It is interesting to note that while *Sāṃkhya* emphasizes on realizing the *puruṣa* beyond the *prakṛti*, *yoga* is defined by Patañjali as *citta vṛtti nirodha* (restriction of the fluctuations of mind). Similarly, Jainism and Buddhism as spiritual movements, emphasize on progressive withdrawal from an active life to attain *nirvāṇa*. All these represent a dualistic thought.

The emphasis on enjoying material prosperity in the *ṛṣi* tradition of Vedic people on the other hand, suggests a tendency to go outward and towards active life. It should be noted that the *Vedas* have many insights of a transcendental nature and hence one need not think that the Vedic seers and sages were interested only in material life. This is exemplified in hymns which say: let one live 100 years in seeing, 100 years in hearing, and so on (*pasyema aradaṣaṭam, avyema aradāṣaṭam*). As the oral traditions say, the great seers like Vasishṭha, Viśvāmitra, Yāgnavalkya, and others were married, had children and lived full lives.

It is difficult to tell whether the idea of transcendence is of pre-Vedic or Vedic origin. However, the inward and outward emphasis, the introverted and extraverted trait, in the two traditions seems to represent the temperamental difference between the two periods. These two traditions have influenced all the subsequent developments in the Indian sub-continent and psychological notions are no exception to this. But one thing is sure that in Indian tradition transcendence as a human possibility has been in the centre stage from ancient times.

The pre-Vedic non-Aryan way of life and thought was so very deeply rooted among large sections of the people that the Vedic-Aryans could not resist its pressure as a popular tradition and were obliged to accept and incorporate many of its features. For instance, the Vedic God Rūdra, is an Aryanised version of the proto-Indian *Ṛva* (Dandekar, 1981, pp. 337–339). In Dandekar's opinion the pre-Vedic pattern had extended far and wide and had become firmly established on the Indian soil and influenced the Vedic Aryan ideology in unmistakable terms. Albert Schweitzer (1935) notes that there are two great fundamental problems common to all thoughts: (1) the problem of world and life affirmation, and world and life negation; and (2) the problem of ethics and the relations between ethics and these two forms of man's spiritual attitude to Being. World and life affirmation refers to the human tendency "to regard existence as he experiences it in himself and as it has developed in the world as something of value *per se* and accordingly strives to let it reach perfection in himself, whilst within his own sphere of influence he endeavours to preserve and to further it." (p. 1). On the other hand, world and life negation refers to the human tendency to regard "existence as he experiences it in himself and as it is developed in the world as something meaningless and sorrowful" and the person "resolves accordingly (1) to bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will-to-live, and (2) to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in his world" (ibid, pp. 1–2). *Muni-yati* tradition seems to reflect the world and life negation tendency and the *ṛṣi* tradition suggests the world and life affirming tendency.

Schweitzer has distinguished these two tendencies from optimism and pessimism. According to him, world and life affirmation and negation are not determined by one's disposition. It is determined by a person's inner attitude towards his affirmation or negation of life. It consists in a determination of the will. He notes: "The most profound world and life affirmation is that which has been hard won from an estimate of things unbiased by illusion and even wrested from misfortune, whilst the most profound world and life negation is that which is developed in theory despite of a naturally serene disposition and happy outward circumstances" (ibid, pp. 2–3). This point is very important because the Indian orientation to life is often branded as pessimistic.

As to the origin and prevalence of these two orientations in India, Schweitzer notes that it has nothing to do with racial differences and observes that the Indian Aryans show an inclination to world and life negation, the Iranian-Persian and the European-Aryans to world and life affirmation. He also emphasizes that Indian thought is not exclusively world and life negating and that in the *Upaniṣads* there is also a certain element of world and life affirmation and it expresses strongly in many writings of Indian literature. He concludes that both of these are present side by side in Indian thought but world and life negation occupies a predominant position. He rejects the possibility of Vedic Aryans being influenced by pre-Vedic non Aryans in adopting a world and life negating stance. His view is as follows: "The simplest hypothesis is then that the Aryans were originally all followers of the world and life affirmation, and that world and life negation originated among the *Brâhmins* under the influence of the idea of being exalted above this world which was developed from magic-religious ideas and the experience of ecstasy. Only in this way is it comprehensible that the idea of world and life denial in the more ancient period was only represented by the *Brâhmins*, or to put it better, by certain circles among the *Brâhmins*, whilst the people held fast to the world and life affirmation which was natural to them. World and life negation belonged to a sacerdotal form of thought which was developed alongside popular thought" (ibid, pp. 25–26). Schweitzer's hypothesis lays emphasis on the primacy of inner experience in transforming one's orientation to world and life and it appears plausible if we take into account the biography of many sages and saints of the past and present. Most importantly the biography of Sri Ramaṇa Maharshi (see chapter 31 by Anand Paranjpe on Ramaṇa Maharshi, this volume) attests this hypothesis. Schweitzer commenting on the role of warrior caste (*Kṣatriyas*) in developing world and life negating orientation says that: "We do not know how far they made effective the idea of being exalted above the world of the senses to which their thought attained in world and life negation" (ibid, p. 26). For this we find an answer in another source.

Barua (1921) has made a significant observation that not only addresses Schweitzer's doubt but also contradicts a popular belief prevalent in the Indian tradition that world and life negation is Brâhminical. He notes that in the post-Vedic period *Brâhmins* and *Kṣatriyas* were advocating two different modes of life and thought. It was the *Kṣatriyas* who were advocating "the subjective mode of attaining true self-hood and living an ascetic life in the forest, practicing penance and cultivating inner culture and faith" (p. 116). Brâhminic thought, "tended to justify the civic duties of man on the ground of the gradual development of self or gradual manifestation of the potentialities of life..." (p. 116). Ancient seers had anticipated the two growth possibilities for humans, "self-actualization" and "self-transcendence" that Maslow (1971) spoke of.

Taken together the views of Barua, Dandekar and Schweitzer suggest that ancient Indians operated at two levels and two parallel worldviews developed simultaneously, one adopted by lay people and the other by a limited group of persons irrespective of caste. Thomas (2001) has emphasized that a key consideration in recognising a folk psychology is its group membership. To be considered as a folk psychology a group's belief system should have adherents from among specialists in knowledge system such as philosophers, priests, shamans, anthropologists, psychiatrists, professional psychologists, medicine men but "most of its members must be 'common folk', ones drawn from the lay public" (p. 11). He further states that "virtually all religions qualify as folk psychologies, except those few practised solely by a coterie of specialists (monks, nuns, shamans) who make religion their life's work and whose beliefs and rituals are not embraced by a lay public" (p. 15).

When we examine the Indian scenario and its religious, philosophical and spiritual aspects we find that they are not completely separated and they have been incorporated into the daily life of common folk also. However, both of them have influenced each other mutually and what we have inherited as Indian *eidos* (thought ways) and *ethos* (life ways) today, is a 'compound' but not a 'mixture' (in the chemical sense) and hence inseparable. That is why many scholars who are knowledgeable about Hindu tradition are weary of the term Hinduism and prefer to define it as *Hindu way of life* or as *sanâtana dharma* (eternal way of life and values). This can be applied to some extent even for Jainism and Buddhism also. The ancient Indian sages and seers managed to provide an integrated perspective on life which incorporated the material and spiritual aspects and practises.

Nevertheless what we find in actual practise is that there is a vast majority whose religion/philosophy/way of life is not the same as those of the few specialists. Iyengar (1909) in his *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, referring to Hindu tradition, has made the following assertion, which elucidates this point well. "Though the Hindu venerates the *Veda* as self-revealed and takes pride in calling himself a *Vedânti* and has recently proposed to himself to carry the light of *Vedânta* to the West, yet the living religion of India, what one may call the 'working faith' of the Hindus of today, is based on the *Âgamas*, ■iva, ■akta, or Vai■ava..." (Preface, p. iv). *Âgamas* are those which prescribe the rules and regulations related to rituals and worship. Even after a century since these observations were made, the *Âgamas* seem to have a greater influence on our thought patterns and life style, as compared to the *Vedas*. *Pâja* (ritual), *bali* (sacrifice), *homa* (a sacrificial offering of ghee) and *yagna* (ritual of sacrifice) have been an integral part of life of the Indian people even today. Rituals and offerings are the predominant ways of relating to the divinity by the masses, be it in Buddhism, Hinduism, or Jainism. Details may differ from one religion to another, but the essence is the same. Lord Mahavîra and the other Tîrthankaras and the Buddha are also worshipped in temples, like the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. When we consider other practises we find the same tendency. For instance, the Kumbhamela has a greater mass appeal than the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Sri Ramaña Maharshi. Festivals such as ■■■■■ and Kṛṣṇa Janmâshtamî draw more crowds to temples as compared to the study of *Upaniṣads*. Similarly many rituals connected with birth and death, initiation, marriage, and other ceremonies have elements of pre-Vedic and Vedic rituals. Even among those who seek to go beyond the ordinary life, to realize a higher reality, we find more people opting to practise asceticism, wandering mendicancy, yoga, etc., than following the philosophies of the Vedânta. Many of these practises are clearly influenced by

the iconic religion of pre-Vedic non Aryan people. Thus, we have many *sādhus*, *sanyâsis*, yogis, but not as many Vedântins in India. Vedânta is not the religion of common man. Either it is considered as philosophical and other worldly or is not suited for the layman. Whilst on one hand the Indian masses display a culture of faith, devotion, and worship, which seem to have been inherited from pre-Vedic period, on the other hand, inquiry concerning the nature of reality, self, life, as pursued by Vedic and post-Vedic philosophers has progressed in a different direction to be pursued by a few. This distinction is crucial in understanding the Indian psyche and also in developing Indian psychological thought.

Dandekar (1941/1981) observes that it is inadequate to seek the origins of all Indian thought in *Vedas* alone and notes that concepts such as atomism has no Vedic origin. Further, he observes that a critical study of *Sâṃkhya*, Yoga, *Vaiçṣika*, Buddhism, and Jainism would show that “there existed in these systems a substratum of common concepts which were not definitely derived from the *Veda* but which might be traced back to a pre-Vedic Magadhan thought complex” (p. 339). However, he has not elaborated upon what is its nature and hence it is difficult to state in what way Vedic and pre-Vedic thought differed. For our purpose it may be worthwhile to consider Vedic and these other traditions as two different streams of thought parallel to each other, representing some fundamental distinctions. Considering the underlying concepts and processes, it may also be necessary to distinguish the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Pûrva Mîmâṃsâ* and *Vedânta* from *Sâṃkhya*, Yoga, *Vaiçṣika*, Buddhism and Jainism, although traditional scholars group them as orthodox and heterodox as already noted. In order to understand the underlying thought process we need to examine the origins of *Veda* that gives some definite clue.

## ■ *Ṛuti* and *Smṛti*

Though it is said that pre-Vedic culture had significant influence on ancient Indians, it is conventional to trace the first literary manifestations of Indian thought to the *Vedas* (Dandekar, 1959/1981). The *Vedas* are basically oral in nature and they are *mantras* produced spontaneously, not thought out. They are also called *sruti* which in Sanskrit means “that which is heard”. What is implied here is that the *mantras*, also called *ṛk*, are known to have always existed independently in the universe, and may be as patterns of sound vibrations and that the sages have just perceived them acoustically. That is, *ṛṣis* did not compose the *Vedas*, but they cognized them. Hence, they are known as *mantra draṣṭâ*, ‘seers’ of the *mantra*. For example, the famous *Gâyatri mantra* which addresses *Sâvitṛ* (Sun God) was composed in a particular meter termed as *Gâyatri chhandas* (hence the *mantra* is named after that meter). This is the traditional understanding. Barua (1921) notes that Buddha regarded the following ten sages as the ancient and real authors and reciters of the *mantras*: Astaka, Vâmaka, Vâmadeva, Vishwâmitra, Yamadagni, Âṅgîrasa, Bharadvâja, Vasîṣṭha, Kaṣyapa and Bhṛgu. It was their duty to invoke several deities, such as Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Îsâna, Prajâpati, Brahma, Mahiddhi and Yama. The relation between *ṛṣi*, *mantra*, and *devatâ* is of an integral nature.

*Veda* is derived from the Sanskrit root *vid*, to know, and hence also represents knowledge, whose origin is *sruti* (cosmic sounds of truth). Thus, in Indian epistemology *śabda prâmânya* or *sruti prâmânya* (“scripture” as source of valid knowledge) refers to *Veda* as authority. Hence *ṛṣi vākya*, utterance of the seer, carried the stamp of authority and was relied upon. From a psychological point of view it may be worthwhile to raise a few questions on the nature of the

*Vedas*. What is that experience of hearing? What are the contents of what one hears? Can one have them now? Does it represent any specific mode of cognition or mentality? How does it attain the status of valid knowledge?

Julian Jaynes (1976), in his theory on the origins of human consciousness, has noted that *Veda* is an example of a particular type of human mentality that existed before the second millennium BCE, which he calls “bicameral mind”. Based on extensive archeological, ethnographic, anthropological, historical, linguistic and biological evidences collected from ancient civilizations across the globe, Jaynes postulates that in the bicameral era ancient peoples from Mesopotamia to Peru could not “think” as we do today, and were therefore not conscious. Unable to introspect, they experienced auditory hallucinations, voices of Gods actually heard as in the *Old Testament* or the *Iliad*, which, coming from the right hemisphere of the brain told a person what to do in circumstances of novelty or stress. This ancient mentality he has called the bicameral mind and notes that bicameral cultures and bicameral kingdoms existed up to second millennium BCE.

Summarizing his arguments Jaynes states: “I have endeavoured...to examine the record of a huge time span to reveal the plausibility that man and his early civilizations had a profoundly different mentality from our own; that in fact men and women were not conscious as are we, were not responsible for their actions, and therefore cannot be given the credit or blame for anything that was done over these vast millennia of time; that instead each person had a part of his nervous system which was divine, by which he was ordered about like any slave, a voice or voices which indeed were what we call volition and empowered what they commanded and were related to the hallucinated voices of others in a carefully established hierarchy...The total pattern, I suggest, is in agreement with such a view. *It is, of course, not conclusive*” (pp. 201–202, emphasis added).

Further, he notes that in the bicameral era man had no internal ‘space’ in which to be private and no analog ‘I’ to be private with and all initiative were in the voices of Gods. There were no private ambitions, grudges, and frustrations. The bicameral mind was the social control, not fear or repression or even law. Within each bicameral state, the people were probably more peaceful and friendly than in any civilization since that time. The problems were complex and quite different at the interfaces of different *bicameral civilizations* (Jaynes, 1976).

However, the second millennium BCE did not last that way. There were wars, catastrophes and national migrations. Hierarchies crumpled. “Between the act and its divine source came the shadow, the pause that profaned, the dreadful loosening that made the Gods unhappy, recriminatory, jealous. Until finally, the screening off of their tyranny was effected by the invention on the basis of language of an analog space with an analog ‘I’. The careful elaborate structures of the bicameral mind had been shaken into consciousness” (p. 204). Then onwards the Gods needed to be assisted by their divinely dictated laws only in the late federations of states.

Referring to the *Vedas* he states: “In India, the oldest literature is the *Veda*, which was dictated by Gods to the *ṛṣi* or prophets; these too were poetry...Poetry then was divine knowledge... The poet and divine seer have a long tradition of association in the ancient world, and several Indo-European languages have a common term for them...”. Jaynes further notes that “among the early Arabic peoples, the word for poet was *sha’ir*, ‘the knower’, or a person endowed with knowledge by the spirits; his metered speech in recitation was the mark of its

divine origin....Poetry then was the language of Gods” (pp. 361–364). No wonder that we have many terminologies associated with the *Vedas* like, *Œuti*, *Mantradraata*, *Kavi*, *Udghoaa*, *Udgeeta*, *Devatâ*, *Chandas*, *Œutipramâna*, and others, which refer to aspects of bicameral mind that Jaynes has postulated. After the breakdown of the bicameral mind, poetry was the sound and tenor of authorization. Yet, it is doubtful whether the *Vedas* really are products of a bicameral mind and whether they were dictated by Gods because he has made another observation about the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*: “Indian hurtles from the bicameral *Veda* into the ultra subjective *Upaniṣads*, neither of which are authentic to their times” (Jaynes, 1976, p. 313). This observation is very important because Jaynes recognizes that *Veda* is not necessarily hundred percent bicameral. It also shows that the *Vedas* could have been of a later date than what Jaynes terms as bicameral era, though it has bicameral features.

The idea that the *Vedas* are a product of a different type of human cognitive ability finds support in Sri Aurobindo’s writing. Sri Aurobindo (1956) reported that he had a unique auditory experience when he was in jail as a freedom fighter, for which he had not found sufficient explanation either in European psychology or in the teachings of Yoga or Vedânta. Only later in Pondicherry when he read the *Vedas* for the first time *Veda mantras* illuminated with a clear and exact light the psychological experiences he had in the jail, and he realized his experience was an instance of cognizing of *mantras*.

Veda...is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. In that original epoch thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning and speech accepted modes of expression which in our modern habits would be inadmissible. The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind’s ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origins of the *Vedas*.

Sri Aurobindo (1956, p. 11).

Further, Sri Aurobindo opines that *Vedas* are the ancient psychological science and the art of spiritual living and the *Upaniṣads* are the philosophical outcome and modification of *Vedas* and that *Vedânta*, *Sâmkhya* and Yoga are the late intellectual results and logical dogma. Sri Aurobindo’s experiences and observations attest to the traditional claim that *Veda mantras* exist in their own right in the universe and they are accessible any time under certain conditions. It supports the belief in Indian tradition that *Vedas* are *apauruṣeya*, i.e., of non-human origin. The *Vedas* seem to have some unique knowledge, which neither modern psychology nor Yoga and Vedânta can help us to understand and hence we surmise that their cognitive bases are different. The *Vedas* stand in their own right.

A question that arises is whether bicameral mind and intuitive mind are identical. Jaynes proposes that there are three kinds of human awareness: (1) the bicameral or God-run man, (2) the modern or problem-solving man, and (3) contemporary forms of throwbacks to bicamerality, such as hypnotism, schizophrenia, poetic and religious frenzy and other such phenomena. But he is not clear about the intuitive mind. Then what exactly is the mental faculty from which the *Vedas* have emerged?

Sharma (1973) in his discussions on the age of the *Veda* notes that there are four different lines of approach for determining it: linguistic data, geographical conditions, archaeological evidence and astronomical evidence. Referring to the linguistic data he notes that according to

Yâska, the author of *Nirukta*, the *Vedas* were revealed to ancient seers and sages and were taught to the first three generations through the oral tradition. Later generations declined the oral instruction for want of intuition and required texts which could explain to them the Vedic meaning and other things connected with it. As a result, six auxiliary treatises, the *Vedângas*, were developed.

Sri Aurobindo (1956) notes that there was a change in the mental mode with the beginning of the Upaniṣadic period, which is dated as 1000 BC when the “Age of Intuition” was passing away into the first dawn of the “Age of Reason”. The Upaniṣadic *ṛṣis* sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge through meditation and spiritual experience. They used the text of the ancient *mantras* as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions. The Vedic word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. We can also recount here that Lannoy (1971) termed Indian thinking as hylozoistic which involves some kind of immediate awareness, which Sri Aurobindo terms as “knowledge by identity”. Prasad (1958, p. 82) notes that the dialogue and discourses that characterized the Upaniṣadic period naturally resulted in the formulation of definite methods of debating and forms of reasoning, which gave rise to a science originally called *ânviksiki* (the science of enquiry), then *tarka-vidyâ* (science of reasoning), and ultimately *Nyâya-Ûstra* (the science of logic). *Ânviksiki* began as a science of general enquiry, which included in its scope both metaphysics and logic. Later on it assumed a more specified form and became the science of pure reasoning. The transitions from the predominance of intuition to the intellect mode seem to have reached stability during the period when the *Nyâya* school of thought came into predominance.

What came out of this gradual transition in the mode of thought and of subsequent period are collectively called *smṛti*. It means that which was recovered, recollected, recognised, and remembered. The insights recovered by Upaniṣadic seers and sages were further elaborated, interpreted, commented, and explained in different sources. They include *Dharma Ûstra*, *Nibandha*, *Purâṇa*, *Itihâsa*, *Âgama* and *Tantra*, *Vedânga* and *Upa Veda*, *Ṣaṭ Darâna*, and other scriptures like *Yoga Vasîṣa*. *Ṣaṭ Darânas* includes *Mîmâṃsâ Sûtra*, *Brahma Sûtra* (*Vedânta Sûtra*), *Sâṃkhya-Sûtra*, *Yoga-Sûtra*, *Nyâya Sûtra*, and *Vaiûṣika Sûtra*. *Vedânga* includes *ûkṣâ*, *vyâkarana*, *kalpa Ûstra*, *nirukta*, *chandas Ûstra*, and *jyotiṣa*. *Upa Veda* includes *âyur Veda*, *dhanur vidyâ*, *artha Ûstra* and *gandharva Veda* (Pandit, 2001). *Smṛtis* are derived from *sruti* and hence they are secondary sources. The tradition of *sruti* and *smṛti* lead to generation of innumerable treatises on all subjects: physics, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, political science, economics, art, literature, linguistics, medicine, philosophy, theology, and spirituality. In addition, scholars from other traditions like Jainism and Buddhism also contributed their insights on the above subjects. Alongside, there is the *Siddha* tradition, which is primarily of Dravidian origin, that address different subjects mentioned (Shaktidharan and Kumar, 2001). The popular belief that *Siddha* is a system of medicine is a narrow understanding of the tradition.

The distinction between *sruti* and *smṛti* is very important from the psychological and epistemological view point. The distinction between the revealed and the recovered has also lead to a distinction between two types of knowledge viz, *pratyakṣa jñâna* (direct and immediate) and *parokṣa jñâna* (indirect and mediated). Much of Indian theory of knowledge and perception centre on this fundamental distinction and has significant implications for cognitive psychology.

## Content of the Vedas

**V**eda, which is the first and ancient among the four Vedas is the store house of earliest poetry that arose among the Indo-Aryan and in this collection one finds the highest thoughts, priestly poetry, spells, philosophical thoughts and also purely secular compositions (Sharma, 1973). From the psychological point of view, Sri Aurobindo (1956) notes that the contents of Vedic hymns have led to the formulation of the notions of states of consciousness and corresponding worlds (*lokas*). They are seven subjective principles of consciousness and corresponding seven worlds. The principles are *sat*, *chit*, *ânanda*, *vijñâna*, *manas*, *prâna*, and *anna*. The corresponding principles of existence are *satyaloka*, *tapoloka*, *janoloka*, *maharloka*, *swaraloka*, *bhuvraloka*, and *bhûloka*. In other words, the Vedas propounded what may be called a “theory of psycho-cosmic correspondence”. Sri Aurobindo states that human beings have subjective faculties hidden in them, which correspond to all the tiers and strata of the subjective cosmic system and they form for us so many planes of our possible existence. In his view this material life and our narrowly limited consciousness of the physical world are not the sole experience permitted to man. He can awaken to profounder depths and higher heights within and such awakening is his intended progress.

William James (1902/1968) had earlier come to a similar conclusion after examining the varieties of religious experiences. He stated that normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness. Surrounding it but separated from it by the “film of screens” there lie potential forms of consciousness that are entirely different and of which we are not aware. But if we apply the requisite stimulus they come to our experience as definite types of mentality, which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. James says, no account of the universe in its totality can be final without recognizing them and they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. The reality of the *lokas* or potential forms of consciousness/reality is disputed, however, some of the first person accounts of altered states of consciousness in modern times and the theory following that seem to confirm their validity (Grof, 2006).

The inference we can draw from these two observations is that Vedic *ṛṣi* explored all possible states and their understanding of psyche was vastly different in nature and scope from that of modern psychology. They did not close their account with reality prematurely. This is reflected in the postulate of pure consciousness (*turîya*) as distinct from the three states: *jâgrat*, *svâpna*, and *suapti*, that are discussed in *Bṛhadâraṇyaka* and *Mândukya Upaniṣads*.

## Vedic, Post-Vedic, Neo-Vedic and Sophistic Philosophies and Philosophers

Traditional scholars of India mark four distinct periods in the transition from *sruti* to *smṛti*. They are *Samhitâ*, *Brâhmana*, *Âraṇyaka/Upaniṣad* and *Sûtra-Vedânga* periods (Dandekar, 1959/1981). In tracing the history of Indian philosophy in pre-Buddhistic period, Barua (1921) divides the stages of development into Vedic, post-Vedic, and neo-Vedic and Sophistic periods. Each of them has one primary focus, viz., *cosmological*, *physico-psychological*, and *logico-ethical*, in that order. In between two main periods there were transition periods. Barua makes a distinction between ‘early’ Vedic *ṛṣis*, already cited, and ‘later’ Vedic *ṛṣis*, whom he calls as philosophers. In his scheme of classification, Vedic philosophy is constituted primarily of *Samhitâ* and some *Brâhmana* texts. The important *ṛṣis* who are considered as Vedic philosophers

by him are Aghamarúana, Prajâpati Paramesthin, Brahmanaspati, Anila, Dîrghatamas, Nâgârjuna, Hiranyâgarbha and Viṣvakarman. The chief interest of the Vedic thinkers was centred upon the physical world as a whole.

The history of the post-Vedic period includes the works of a few ancient *Brâhmana* schools such as the Aitareyas, the Cândogyas, the Kausitakeyas, the Taittirîyas, and the Satapathas. The important *ṛṣis* considered as post-Vedic philosophers are Mahidâsa Aitareya, Suravîra-Sâkalya, Mândukeya-Kaunthâravya, Raikva, Bâdhva, Uândilya, Satyakâma, Jabala, Jaivali, Gârgâyana, Prâtardhâna, Uddâlaka, Varuna, Bâlâki, Ajâtasatru, and Yâgnavalkya. According to Barua, the principal combatants in philosophy in this period were Brâhmins and Kṛatriyas. He places the lower limit of this period nearer to 900 BCE, considering the process of thought-evolution. The chief concerns of the post-Vedic thinkers are the organic world and man.

The neo-Vedic-and-Sophistic philosophical period, according to Barua, stretched from 900 BCE up to the time of Mahâvîra, the twenty fourth Tîrthankara and the founder of Jainism as a formal religion. The neo-Vedic period is the *Sûtra* period, as per the history of Indian literature. In the history of Indian religions it is the period of *Āramaṇas* and *Brâhmins* or wanderers and hermits. This period “was so far removed from the ancient Vedic tradition that thinkers had in course of time ceased to feel the fascination of, and cherish admiration for, Vedic learning and Vedic rites” (ibid. p. 193). These were the Metaphysicians (Âsuri, Pippalâda, Bharadvâja, Naciketas, Pûrna Kaṛyapa, Kakuda Kâtyâyana, Ajita Keṛakambalin, and Maskarin Gouḷa); the Skeptics (Sanjayâ) and the Moralists (teachers of ethical morals – Vâtsayâna; teachers of political morals – Kautilya and the teachers of juristic morals).

## Systems and Schools of Indian Psychology

It is premature to speak of the systems and schools of Indian psychology. However, it is possible to identify certain trends in ancient thought that later developed into different philosophical systems from which we can derive schools and systems of psychology. For this the stages of philosophical development are important. It is evident that much of the *Upaniṣadic* thinking that has formed the basis for both *Sâṃkhya* and *Vedânta* systems which are considered as primary sources of Indian psychological thought happened in the post-Vedic period. By neo-Vedic period the allegiance for the *Vedas* as authority had waned and philosophers of this time were independent thinkers who came up with their own reflections that often deviated and was in contradiction to Vedic lore and insights. It is therefore necessary to keep Vedic and post-Vedic thought development separate from neo-Vedic thought development.

It is necessary to distinguish *Veda mantras* and Vedic philosophy. *Veda mantras* can be adequately delved into to understand more about the transpersonal dimension of human existence and the dimension of psyche and consciousness as Sri Aurobindo's observations suggest. Vedic psychology itself can exist in its own right because of its intuitive cognitive basis. As regards Vedic philosophy, which is less intuitive and more intellectual, each of the three periods identified by Barua has its own focus and physico-psychological problems were the focus of post-Vedic philosophers. He points out that though Vedic philosophers primarily focused on cosmological issues, Dîrghatamas' hymns anticipated the problems of the post-Vedic period. Some of them include the expression “What thing I am I know not clearly”, conception of truth (*satya*) and right (*dharma*) as *ṛta* denoting the eternal order of things (X. 85); the conception of faith (*araddha*) as the yearning of the heart for better condition of existence (X. 85); the vague

notion of the four stages of the development of the fetus in the womb (X. 85); and the equally vague notion of rebirth and the two paths, *devayâna* and *pitryâna*, along which the soul after death proceeds to its destination” (Barua, 1921, p. 413).

Referring to the problems of post-Vedic philosophy Barua states that on the contemplative side “the main question with the early post-Vedic thinkers appertained to Yoga – the inner culture of faith and intellect” (p. 44). It is related to the religious aspiration of man to unite with what is divine in nature and it was never absent from the Vedic or Indo-Aryan minds. The fundamental question, “How can I unite with him?” might have led to two distinct problems of philosophy: (1) Who is he with whom I shall unite? (2) Who am I who shall unite with him? Here was the beginning of Indian psychology of self and identity. Another characteristic of this period was the development of logic (*tarka*) and dialectic (*mîmâṃsā*) that has seeds of Indian psychology of cognition.

Barua draws our attention to a distinction between the chronology of literature and that of thought, which I think is useful from the view point of developing systems and schools of psychology. He notes that there are some schools such as the Aitareya Brâhmana and the Âryankas, omitting the *Upaniṣad* portion, which represent together a homogenous body of doctrines that may be judged as the formulation of a particular individual or of a particular school of thought, i.e., of Mahidâsa Aitareya or the *Aitareya* school. On the other hand, the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* contains the views of many other individuals and schools in addition to those of *Aitareya* school. *Taittirîya Brâhmana*, *Âraṇyakâ* and *Upaniṣad* represent the views of *Taittirîyas* only and hence can be termed as *Taittirîya* school. Varuna, father of Bhṛgu Vâruni, is considered as the best exponent of *Taittirîya* school. However, *Kausitiki*, *Bṛhadâraṇyaka*, and *Candogya-Brâhmana Upaniṣads* are compilations containing the views of several teachers, differing in content from one another (Barua, 1921). Such distinctions indicate that it is possible for us to trace and understand the different psychological views available in Indian tradition to Aitareya, Taittirîya and other schools. Aitareya and Taittirîya schools have their origin in *Ṛgveda* and Krishna *Yajurveda* respectively. *Aitareya* school was earlier than *Taittirîya* school.

Considering these differences we have to treat Vedic and post-Vedic philosophy as one unit contributing to a major movement of psychological thought and neo-Vedic as another contributing to a different line of thinking. It is likely that neo-Vedic thought was influenced more by pre-Vedic traditions. Hence, Vedic and post-Vedic thought and neo-Vedic thought could be treated as precursors for two independent systems of psychology, within which we can identify many schools. These different systems have affirmed monistic or dualistic world-view and it is not necessarily characteristic of either of the systems. For instance, we have *Advaita Vedânta* (Non-dualism) and *Dvaita Vedânta* (Dualism) both of which belong to the Vedic stream. Neo-Vedic philosophers seem to have influenced Jaina and Bouddha traditions more. If we accept the suggestion of Ajaya (1983) that Indian systems can be hierarchically arranged beyond Piaget’s formal operational thought as “dualistic” and “unitive”, then all Indian thought systems may be considered to have emerged from post Piagetian stages, be it different schools of *Vedânta*, *Sâṃkhya*, Yoga, and others except that of *Cârṇvâka* school, which is out and out materialistic and reductionist. Hence, the primary and fundamental assumptions and tenets of systems and schools of Indian thought cannot be understood with reference to modern scientific psychology and its systems.

Just as we have specific schools and theories focused on one or the other aspects, like behaviourism was focused on learning, gestalt theory on perception, humanist psychology on personality and growth, psychoanalysis on unconscious, existentialism on the issue of meaning of life, free will and determinism and so on, the different systems and schools of Indian thought have also focused on certain processes and issues. Some of them are listed as examples as potential sources for developing specific theories and models of psychology. For instance, contemporarily both Western and Indian psychologists have concentrated on *Vedānta* and Yoga as psychologies of consciousness and transcendence. Upaniṣads and *Vedānta* can contribute more for the understanding of consciousness and self, from ordinary to extraordinary states and empirical to transcendental self. Similarly many Indian psychologists have already explored the concept and theory of *triṅga* in *Sāṃkhya* for their potential to develop psychological typologies and have developed instruments (see Murthy and Kumar, 2007 for a review of this work). Along with the concepts *ahamkāra*, *buddhi* and *citta*, a comprehensive theory of motivation, personality and values can be developed. The many discussions on the theories of knowing and epistemology in *Nyāya* addresses cognitive processes like perception, reasoning and criteria of truth and right knowledge and also errors and distortions in cognition and hence can contribute to developing a cognitive psychology that also takes into account intuition as a valid source of knowledge. The *Vaiśeṣika* with its emphasis on determining the specific nature and property of objects and also uniqueness can help in developing a psychology of individual differences. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* with its emphasis on what is known as *karmakānda* and *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s emphasis on *niṣkāma karma* can help develop theories of human motivation and action, of control and of personal efficacy. *Dharma Śāstra* and *Gṛhya Śūtras* speak about one's social life, conduct, and ethics and also about social institutions like marriage and family, which can help develop developmental and social psychology. *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata and the entire Sanskrit literary works can help us develop an understanding of human affect. *Vyākaraṇa* is psycholinguistics. *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Yogavasīṣṭha*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavad-Gītā* can provide insights into the practical aspects of dealing with life's problems and help develop counseling psychology. The *Āyurveda Saṃhitās* can be used to develop an understanding of biological processes in body, mental illness and therapy. This list can be continued but is not meant to be exhaustive and readers may think further on these lines.

### Notions about psyche, mind and mental functions

So far, this chapter has discussed the historical influences in the development of Indian thought, their characteristics and the potential inherent in them to develop systems and schools of Indian psychology. Now it may be worthwhile to pay attention to the concept of mind itself. As mentioned, the Indian sages and seers were weary of pursuing the inquiry into the nature of mind for its own sake and did so in the context of realising the ultimate reality termed as *Brahman* in the Vedic tradition. Although Jainism and Buddhism have dwelt on this subject in great detail, the focus in this section is on the historical development of these concepts.

It was noted in the section on the characteristics of Indian psyche that primitive societies were characterised by hylozoistic thinking, as Lannoy puts it, which refers to a tendency to draw no clear distinction between matter, life and mind and represented a sense of unity of all life. For instance, with reference to the language of the *Iliad*, Jaynes (1976, p. 69) notes: "The word *psyche*, which later means soul or conscious mind, is in most instances life-substances,

such as blood or breath: a dying warrior bleeds out his psyche into the ground or breathes it out in his last gasp. The *thumos*, which later comes to mean something like emotional soul, is simply motion or agitation. When a man stops moving, the *thumos* leaves his limbs. But it is also somehow like an organ also...". Similarly, words such as *phren*, usually used in the plural as *phrenes*, is anatomically localised as the midriff, or sensations in the midriff. It is another term that has a similar use, which centuries later comes to mean mind or 'heart' in its figurative sense. *Noos*, which is spelled as *nous* in later Greek, is derived from the word *noein*, that means to see, and it later comes to mean conscious mind.

In another context Jaynes (1976, p. 271) observes that the term *psyche* has probably come from *pschein*, to breathe, and it has become internalised into life substances in its main usage in the *Iliad* and has been used in the sense of life. He hastens to add that the usage is not as time span between birth and death. Instead, "the emphasis is on vitality or that which makes living possible." He cites the following examples from the *Iliad* (sixth-seventh century BC): "When a spear strikes the heart of a warrior his *psyche* dissolves (5:296), is destroyed (22:325), or simply leaves him (16; 453), or is coughed out through the mouth (9:409), or bled out through a wound (14: 548, 16:505)...it (*psyche*) is very simply a property that can be taken away, and is similar to the taking away, under the same conditions, of *thumos* or activity, a word with which *psyche* is often coupled". That is, life and activity go together. "In a sense, *psyche* is the most primitive of these preconscious hypostases; it is simply the property of breathing or bleeding or what not in that physical object over there called a man or animal, a property which can be taken from him like a prize (22:161) by a spear in the right place." Thus, the linguistic origins of mentalist notions clearly betray an organic/biological basis to them, in the Western tradition.

The connotation of the term *psyche* has developed in five stages in Greek history from the period of Homer (sixth-seventh century BCE) to fifth century CE. During this long interval of almost three thousand five hundred years the term has been used to refer to: (1) a kind of breath which is blown out at death; (2) the seat of emotion; (3) intellectual "interpreter" of sense data; (4) moral as well as intellectual faculty; and (5) to "a person and within a person a soul". The term has also been used to denote a thing, a process or an agent (personal or divine). While Plato (428/427 BCE–348/347 BCE) understood *psyche* or soul as an immaterial entity which apprehends an ideal world, Aristotle (384 BCE–322 BCE) used soul and mind synonymously and regarded *psyche* as process, form, or function and defined it in terms of its activity (Cohen, 1972). The contemporary usage is clearly Aristotelian. There seem to be a lot of parallels in the way notions about *psyche* and mind have developed in the West and in India. In Indian tradition too, Vedic literature provides us many notions related to *psyche* and mind, some of which are strikingly parallel to the Greek notions, both in terms of their origin and meaning and very much betray an organic/biological basis to them.

### ***Asu, Prâna and Manas***

Dandekar (1941/1981) states that primitives believed in a universal all-penetrating magic fluid like *aronda* or the Vedic *asu*, the amount of which, and not the possession or non-possession of any special mental or physical faculties, determined the gradation among beings in the universe. S. K. R. Rao (1962, p. 5) notes that *asu* is an energizing influence, it is a distinct principle, distinct from the body and devoid of it the body is dead and men are described as "possessors of *asu*". Hence, *asu* is synonymous with *psyche* as used in ancient times. Another

term that has direct parallel with psyche is *prâṇa*. *Prâṇa* is a physiological reality and is the essential vital constituent in the organism.

Yet another term for the magic fluid is *mana* which was supposed to have the capacity to bestow upon beings some kind of occult power which made them ‘men’. The words *manas*, *manus*, *man*, *mensch*, etc., have come into existence as the result of the influence of primitive thought and those words  not originally denote exclusively psychological or non-material notions. In many of the *ṛg* vedic passages, *manas* suggests a dualism with the physical body, not in the sense of “*cogitatio*” and “*extensio*”, but in the sense of a potence-bestowing substance and its substratum. The loss of *manas* results in virtual death. In early Vedic literature *manas* is often represented as being capable of modifications, which are usually associated with matter. For instance, *manas* is considered to be capable of movement in space and no function of *manas* is possible without some movement on its part. There are references to the ‘placing’ of *manas*; “yoking” or “directing” of *manas*; and ‘grasping’ of and by *manas*. Many more such usages are found. “Such descriptions may not be explained away as *mere imaginative or poetical representations* of the activities of *manas*. They clearly betray the original “somatic” nature of *manas*. *Manas* must have been regarded as a kind of “material substance”, and its activities were, therefore, necessarily described as mechanical and dynamic modifications of that “substance” (Dandekar, 1941/1981, pp. 246–50, emphasis added).

Regarding the organic or somatic basis of mental functions, Dandekar (1941/1981) noted that Indo-European people had fair knowledge of the human anatomy which has given rise to a large number of words in many Indo-European languages denoting several parts of the human body, which in turn is the basis of words denoting “sensations”, “emotions”, and other such non-physical (or psychological) phenomena. He cites the following examples. In Homeric language *zred*, *zreues*, *prapides* (connected with diaphragm) denote almost all the varieties of will, thought, understanding, etc. He suggests that the words *kholos* (anger), *kerdos* (advice, gain), and *kerdosune* (cunning, will) are connected with *kardia* (heart). Similarly, in later Greek, the entrails (*dplankuizomai*) seem to be regarded as the seat of feelings and emotions. The Latin words, *vecors* (wrong-sensed), *recordari* (remember), etc., indicate that those faculties were again connected with *cor*, *cordis* (heart). In the Slavonic languages, particularly Russian, anger and excitement are associated with liver. Even in Indian languages we can find many emotions and affective states being referred in terms of visceral organs.

The Vedic word *hṛd* (heart) is frequently associated with *manas* and there are numerous references to mind being “located” in the heart in Vedic texts. According to Dandekar (1941/1981) it is merely a rhyme–word for Indo-European *ker(e)d*, which has its linguistic counterpart in Gk. *kardia*, Lat. *cor*, Air. *Cride*, Got. *hairto*, etc. Linguistically the word *hṛd* has to be traced back to Indo-European *ghrd* which later has been preserved only in Aryan languages. In certain Vedic passages it also means “belly” or “stomach” . Thus, he asserts that the “association of *manas* with human psychology is, therefore, clearly an afterthought” (p. 247). S. K. R. Rao (1962) notes that when *manas* is used in association with *hṛd* it represents the stirred up state of the individual and it is identified as the source of all involuntary, irrational and normally uncontrolled psychological processes such as desires and urges, emotions and moods – in general, the ffective aspect of human nature

But, it is doubtful whether the Vedic *hṛd* is the same as the physical organ located on the left side of the chest, because *hṛd* in some ancient spiritual literature refers to a location on the

right side of the chest and is considered as the seat of the transcendental self. In modern times Sri Ramaṇa Maharshi categorically states this and hastens to add that reference to a physical location is only an aid to understanding and *âtman* as transcendental Self has no meaning if it can be located in a physical space (1996, p. 11 and 62).

According to Dandekar (1941/1981) in Vedic literature itself, the term *manas* is used in two distinct ways. He notes that in the *Ṛgveda*, particularly in 57 and 58 *sûkta* of Tenth *mandala*, the term is used in the sense of a material substance and in *Vajasaneyi-Samhitâ* 34 the term is used in the sense of the faculties of the human mind. Dandekar observes that the substance notion of *manas* persisted even in the *Upaniṣads*, Buddhism and Yoga, and influenced the way the nature and activities of psychological functions are represented. As he notes, *Cândogya Upaniṣad*, (VI, 5.4: 6.1–2) states: “*annamayam hi somya manah*” i.e., “*manas* is said to have originated out of the food that we eat” (p. 251). Similarly, in *Sâṃkhya*, the concept of *prakṛti* represents the fundamental material principle and 24 *tattvas* are supposed to have originated from this. Both mind and matter as differentiated in Western thought are considered here as two manifestations of *prakṛti*, constituted of *triguṇa*. It is necessary to recognise that the notion of materiality as understood in Indian tradition is not at the level of gross matter, what is referred to as a fundamental material principle is perhaps even subtler than what modern physicists call ~~quark, charm, spin, which are subtler than~~ fundamental particles. In Indian thought there are concepts like *pancabhûta* (five elements) and *pancatanmâtra* (five subtle elements) that represent the subtlest of the subtle nature of matter.

Dandekar (1941/1981, p. 251) draws our attention to the three types of disturbances in psychical matter, from what he terms as the ‘somatic’ standpoint: first is ‘movement’, ‘vibration’ or ‘oscillation’; the second is ‘solidification’ or ‘thickening’; and the third is that of ‘defilement’ or ‘affliction’. The first is indicated in *citta vṛtti* and as Dandekar points out, this is indicated in the many technical terms used in yoga. In yoga, all consciousness phenomena such as feelings, emotions, perception, conception, knowledge, are regarded merely as either disturbances in or modifications of the psychical substance. *Citta*, referred to by Patañjali as mind, instead of *manas*, is *pariṇâmi*, i.e., it is constantly suffering a thousand modifications and the terms *vṛtti* and *pravṛtti* are clearly indicative of this feature. *Vṛtti* means the activity of an object; *pravṛtti* means the going forward of the *citta* towards its object. *Dhâraṇâ* is the literal binding of *citta* to the desired object; *dhyâna* is explained as the homogeneity of the stream of consciousness. According to Dandekar, the stream of consciousness is not a metaphorical imagery but it is a real flow of the waves of *citta*.

The second, according to Dandekar, is represented in the gradation of the four psychological *skandhas*, viz, *viññâna*, *saṃskâra*, *vedanâ*, and *saṃjñâ*. As Rao (1962) notes in *Maitri Upaniṣad*, the term *skandha* is used in the sense of “branches of a tree” (7, 11). The allusion to solidification or thickening is obvious in this usage. However, the Buddha employed the Pâli term *khanda*, instead of the Sanskrit *skandha*, to designate the items in man’s personality which included both bodily and mental aspects. The psychological *skandhas* represent object experience (*vedanâ*), perception (*saṃjñâ*), volitional organization (*saṃskâra*), and consciousness (*viññâna*). Here again we can see that there is a progressive “solidification” from object experience to consciousness in a metaphorical sense.

The third type of disturbance, defilement or affliction, is indicated by the notions of *kleśa*, *âsrava*, and *prasâda*. “According to the *bhâsya* on *Yoga-Sûtra II*, 11, *citta*, when defiled and

afflicted through *kleśa*, is to be treated in the same manner as a dirty cloth. The *Yogâcâra* school of Buddhism, represented by Maitreya Asaṅga, believes in the divisibility of *citta*. All these conceptions in later Indian psychology clearly remind one of the descriptions of *manas* and its activities in the early Vedic literature” (p. 251).

We should note here that though the *Upaniṣads* and Yoga are considered orthodox (i.e., having allegiance to the *Vedas*) and Buddhism as heterodox (i.e., not accepting the *Veda* as authority), they share some fundamental underlying notions that are more important in developing an Indian psychology than the conventional classification of *darsana* (view, system, or school). According to Dandekar, the substance notion of *manas* leaving its substratum, the physical body, and going forth to the object of comprehension has developed into an important feature of Indian epistemology and Indian psychology.

The implications of Dandekar’s thesis are as follows. First, the primitives and our early Vedic ancestors probably experienced reality without a notion of separate mental faculty. In other words, they were not “thinking beings” in the modern sense of the term. Second, neither can we derive a psychology with a ‘mentalist’ notion from the early Vedic literature, nor can we superimpose one such psychology on our ancestors. Both are misguided attempts. Third, we have to labour hard to find out how and when the transition took place from materialist to mentalist usage of the term *manas*, which is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but probably a fundamental change in the nature of experience of our ancestors. This last one is an interesting problem of Vedic psychology, according to Dandekar, which he has not attempted to answer.

Here an analogy from the field of computer science may be useful. We know today how the computer has changed its structure and function from just an aid for mathematical calculation, inspired by the *abacus* used in ancient times, to a binary digit electronic processing machine that can be used to create art and music, literary works, scientific experiments and even to perform virtual worship using designated software. Thus, the contemporary concept of a computer certainly does not match with what it was when it originated almost a century ago. In a similar way even the notions of *manas* has passed through many vicissitudes like computers, both in the West and in India.

### ***Âtman and Jîva***

Another important term in Indian tradition that has similar connotations with psyche is *âtman*. Although not frequently mentioned in the *Rigveda* (1400 BCE to 900 BCE), there are many *sûktas* devoted to it in the *Atharva Veda* (about 900 BCE). As S. K. R. Rao (1962) notes, the origin of the word *âtman* remains obscure, although there is a Greek word structurally similar to *âtman*, ‘*atmos*’, meaning ‘smoke’, ‘vapour’. He suggests that Vedic *âtman* may be an alternate expression for *prâṇa* or *asu*, both of which indicate life, the former signifying the actual vital process and the latter stating vital principle. Rao observes that the term *âtman* lends itself to different interpretations depending upon where the emphasis is laid. For instance, Vedic commentator Sâyana derives the word from the root *an*, which signifies the breathing process and according to Vopadeva it signifies movement or action. This emphasis leads to the interpretation that *âtman* is the dynamic principle of breathing. On the other hand, *Nirukta* (the branch of knowledge related to semantics of Sanskrit words) attaches importance to the root *at*, which means ‘to spread’, ‘to pervade’, ‘to fill’. Rao further notes that modern scholars “are attracted by the suggestive ending of the word with ‘+man’, which renders it a *nomina actionis*:

the importance of the expression consists in its indication of the spirit's capacity for action" (1962, p. 6).

The emphases laid on breathing, movement, action, pervasiveness, filling, and enlivening, lead to the understanding of *âtman* as the most essential or central vital principle and it parallels the ancient concept of psyche. This ancient distinction between body and a principle, which is responsible for life and activity, is found commonly all over the world. While modern psychology has banished this separate principle, it has been elevated as the highest principle in Indian tradition in the *Upaniṣads*. Ānandagiri, a later philosopher, has provided a synthetic view of the centrality of *âtman* that was current in a rudimentary form in Vedic age. Rao has summarized it as follows: "Ātman fills (the body), receives (the impressions from the outer world), and enjoys (or experiences) the presentational objects" (1962, p. 6). This marks the crucial distinction between modern psychology and Indian psychology.

Another ancient term that has parallels with psyche is *jîva*. *Jîva* represents life as against *nirjîva* (lifeless). This is equivalent to animate and inanimate and it has become associated with the principle of consciousness/awareness in a living organism as against dead. It also has the connotations of energy, movement and action all derived from vitality or life principle. Though both *âtman* and *jîva* are associated with the life principle, the latter is conceived as the life force in an individual, which later comes to mean the empirical self. *Ātman*, on the other hand, is understood as the fundamental principle of the universe in the *Upaniṣads*, which represents both awareness and energy. Even mental functions are all considered modifications of *âtman* only (*Aitareya Upaniṣad*, Chapter III, *śloka* 1–4). It is important to realize that a single principle is upheld as governing everything and *âtman*, *jîva*, and all mental activities are viewed as manifestations of Brahman (supreme spirit/consciousness) alone in different functional ways.

The concept of *âtman* is questioned in other Indian systems, which has significant implications for the development of psychological thinking. Even within the Vedic tradition from which *Upaniṣads* and schools of *Vedânta* have emerged, we find only the *Advaita Vedânta* school not accepting the 'reality' of the distinction between *âtman* and *jîva* in ontological sense, but other schools admitting them.

In summing up this section it can be said that Indian tradition has concepts parallel to the Greek psyche and made similar distinctions in understanding behaviour. The distinction made between *deha* (gross physical body) on the one hand and *manas* and *âtman* on the other in early *vedic* period was the first precursor of later psychological thinking. This tripartite distinction can be found as body, mind and soul in English language also. Unique to Indian tradition and ethos is the concept of *âtman*. Its implication is so vast that it remains as an integral part of Indian thinking – classical and folk – even today, *âtman*, *manas*, and *deha* are in the linguistic repertoire of all Indians – illiterate and literate. While Western thinking progressively veered towards body centeredness, Indian tradition remained predominantly spirit centred, and that is the foundation of Indian psychological thought.

## Models in Indian Thought

William James (1890/1950), in his definition of psychology states that it is a science of mental life, both of its phenomena and of their conditions. Feelings, desires, cognitions, etc.

are the phenomena. Their nature, how and when they occur and their interrelationships are the conditions. In their attempts to answer these questions enlightened persons through the ages and different cultures have proposed different views. Marx and Hillix (1978) have preferred to call such views as “models” rather than “theories”, since the latter term is often used in the context of empirical observation through senses and mental activity is not accessible for such observations. There are many models of mind both in the West and in the East. Model, in an ordinary sense, also implies concrete sensory representations through imagery, diagrams, drawings, analogy and metaphor and also three dimensional visualizations or abstract conceptualizations. In recent times authors have used phrases like “Maps of the Mind” (Turner, 1981) and “Metaphors of Consciousness” (Valle and Ekartsberg, 1989) to represent the different viewpoints in modern psychology. In the Indian tradition, *pancakoka* and *kuṇḍalinī cakras* are the examples of such models related to dimensions of personality and levels of consciousness states. Another model is about the relation of *âtman*, *buddhi*, *manas* and the five sense organs represented visually in the famous *Gîtopadeûa* pictures, where Arjuna is in the chariot; Sri Kṛṣṇa is in the seat of a charioteer holding the reins of five horses. We can find many more of them related to other aspects.

Any theory or model is based on certain fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of the subject about which it is developed. Models of mind are no exceptions and the differences that exist between Western and Eastern models are primarily due to such axiomatic differences. As understood by scholars and philosophers, models of mind available in India as contrasted with those available in the West differ significantly because of the experiential dimension from which the nature of mind is understood. Indian philosophical systems with the exception of the *Cârvaḅa* school, hold that human beings are capable of experiencing a dimension of awareness, which is beyond all mental processes, and affirm that as “pure consciousness”, with orthodox systems equating it with self-realisation. A clear distinction is made between “pure consciousness” and “mental processes”. The equation of “transcendent awareness”/“pure consciousness” with “true identity” freed the ancient Indian *ṛṣis* from identifying themselves with this or that mental processes and thus allowed them to explore freely all the different mental processes. In this sense mental processes were “empirically observed as object” by a “transcended subject”. Models proposed were thus more comprehensive and holistic (Kumar, 1989). Hence, a very important feature of Indian psychology is the distinction made between *uḅḅha caitanya* or *caitanya* (consciousness) and *manas* (mind). Ancient thinkers accorded prominence to the former than to the latter and this difference has played a key role in the development of models in Indian psychological thought.

## Conclusion

Tracing the development of psychological thought in India does not amount to identifying correspondences or isomorphic ideas to those of contemporary psychology. Instead, it would be an endeavour to bring to bold relief ideas and concepts, which may or may not correspond with that of modern psychology yet having its validity in human experience and contemporary context as well. Therefore, in developing Indian psychology, there is a need to distinguish between what is “common to all the schools” and what are the “unique aspects of different schools”, which will enable us to “delineate general characteristics” and identify the “central concerns”. It is a very arduous task and is perhaps the greatest challenge that we have to face in

developing Indian psychology. Even more difficult is the task of tracing the exact origins and history of the development of psychological thought in Indian tradition, given its antiquity and lack of well established time periods for the sequence of events. The task at hand is formidable considering all the above limitations, yet worth the trouble.

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