



**BLOCK 3**

**INDIAN THOUGHTS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

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## UNIT 7 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIAN AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY\*

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### 7.1 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the historical background of the development of Indian psychology;
- describe the meaning and scope of Indian psychology;
- appreciate the contemporary relevance of Indian psychology in the global context;
- describe the fundamental differences between Indian and Western psychology; and
- appreciate the importance of yoga, meditation and other indigenous systems.

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## 7.2 INTRODUCTION

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Indian psychology refers to the rich body of knowledge that we have inherited from our ancient thinkers about consciousness, mind, and behaviour embedded in the three major traditions viz., Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Since most of the material related to the nature of consciousness, self, and mental activities emerged and developed as part of religious and spiritual teachings and practices in these traditions they are viewed either as religious or as philosophical. Those topics are discussed quite often in religious discourses and philosophical debates in India, but their psychological import and significance have remained obscure to both lay people and scholars and professionals. Our traditions are like gold mines. Gold is available all over in the pits. But we need to extract it by separating it from the earth. In the same way, we have to examine the traditional Indian sources to get perspectives on the nature of consciousness and mind for a better understanding of human nature and behaviour. Indian psychology is not only for Indians but it is for all humanity.

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## 7.3 INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY – MEANING, NATURE AND SCOPE

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Let us first know the meaning of Indian psychology and discuss its nature.

### 7.3.1 Meaning and Nature

The term Indian psychology in contemporary literature has different meanings. If you read a few articles and books discussing about Indian Psychology, you will find that different authors use this term with slightly varied connotations. They emphasize different aspects. Some highlight the ‘spiritual view’ and others ‘socio-cultural view.’ When differentiation between Western and non-Western/Asian Psychology emerged within modern psychology itself, some advocated “indigenization” of psychology and others development of “indigenous” psychology. Thus, we find the terms “indigenous,” “indigenization” and “Indian” psychology being sometimes used interchangeably leading to confusion. Hence, there is a need to differentiate these terms. You can see below the five different ways of understanding Indian psychology given by Salagame (Salagame, 2001; 2011).

- a) ***Psychology in India*** – Many writers particularly those who are not professional psychologists like travellers, scholars from other disciplines, and a few foreign psychologists use the term Indian psychology in a general way to refer to the *academic and professional status of the psychology discipline* in India. All the other usages listed below can also be included here.
- b) ***Indian psychological thought*** – This is the primary sense in which the term is used for over a century. It refers to *the psychological insights that are available in the scholarly literature produced by thinkers* in the Vedic, Jaina and Bauddha traditions, which are the *most ancient* and *indigenous* to our country. Many people are actively involved in developing them. They include Indians as well as foreigners.
- c) ***Psychology with an Indian identity*** – The terms like *Vedic Psychology, Buddhist Psychology, Yoga Psychology, Hindu Psychology, Jaina Psychology, and Dravidian Psychology* have been used by some, all of which are *part of Indian thought traditions and reflect Indianness*. Here also we find the contributions of people from all over the world.

- d) **Psychology developed around the philosophy of an Indian thinker** – Though modern psychology is an outcome of the collective work of many scientists, we often come across different schools whose *foundation was laid by the philosophical vision of one particular individual*. In India, a contemporary example is that of *Integral Psychology* that was inspired by the *integral vision* of Maharshi Aurobindo. We find both Indians and foreigners who are followers of Sri Aurobindo's vision and teachings contributing to the development of Integral Psychology.
- e) **Psychology of Indian people** – Those who adhere to socio-cultural viewpoint primarily *emphasize on understanding the behaviour of Indian masses*. They are not very particular about employing Indian indigenous concepts and theories. They use Western ideas and methods also. For example, Sudhir Kakkar, an Indian born psychologist trained in Psychoanalysis under Erik Erikson has applied psychoanalytic theory to understand the Indian psyche and has published several books and articles.

But there are also a few attempts to employ Indian insights and concepts to understand the behaviour of Indian people. For example, a psychiatrist, Prof. Neki, found that a “guru-chela” kind of relationship works better in psychotherapy situations with Indian clients and patients. An organizational behaviour specialist, Prof. J.B.P. Sinha coined the term “nurturant task leadership” to suggest that with Indian employees those who are in their leadership position can achieve best results when they show nurturing attitude to get the work done. Both of these examples illustrate that we Indians carry some dependency attitude with elders.

Because of such different ways in which the term Indian Psychology is used, it is essential that we pay attention to the orientation of the specific author or researcher whose article or book we read.

Further, it is also important to remember that even today a majority of the population in India who identify with Vedic or Jaina or Buddhist traditions live according to the values, beliefs, customs, and habits laid down in them for several centuries. Hence, the meaning of Indian Psychology as given in the second and fifth points above are intimately related. These traditions have influenced many other religious systems which have emerged later on within our country and also those religions which were introduced to India by missionaries and invaders.

To understand it more clearly, let us see what Indian psychology is ‘not’.

- Indian psychology is *not* the indigenous psychology of a specific group or tribe living in India.
- It is *not* indigenizing psychology, which means to adapt Western psychological theories and models to suit the Indian context.
- It is *not* limited to the people living within the geographical boundaries of India.
- While it helps to understand the behaviour of Indian masses, it is *not* the psychology of Indian people.

The term Indian only highlights the unique and distinctive insights on consciousness and the nature of mind discussed and described in our ancient texts and treatises. It also refers to the Indian perspective on human life and other aspects of behaviour. But, all of these are applicable universally. In a way, it is an extension of the existing scientific psychology.

### ***Indigenization of Psychology***

Unlike indigenous psychology, indigenization of psychology calls for rendering the basic concepts, theories, and models, and measures of modern psychology suitable to a local socio-cultural context. The spirit of developing universal laws and principles is accepted. Whereas in developing indigenous psychology “culture is the source” of ideas, in the indigenization of psychology “culture is the target” (Sinha, D, 1984). Those who advocate indigenization strongly hold on to the idea of scientific psychology that aims at universal laws and principles. For example, Kamala Chaudhuri adapted the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) by changing the pictures to suit the Indian social context. Binet-Kamat test of intelligence is another example where items are changed from the original to suit the Indian setting. In both of these adaptations, the basic ideas of projective psychology and that of IQ assessment remain without any change. Similarly, J. B. P. Sinha came up with a new idea of leadership style that is more suited to Indian work culture, and he coined the term “nurturant task leadership.” So far, from the beginning in India, many psychologists have attempted to indigenize psychology rather than developing indigenous psychology.

### ***Indian Psychology***

Initially, when Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Jadunath Sinha, and others wrote about Indian psychology, their inspiration was nationalistic. They wanted to highlight the uniqueness of Indian culture and traditions. They wanted to emphasize the indigenous perspectives, and in the context of modern scientific developments and materialistic worldview, they wanted to highlight the importance of spiritual worldview of India. They focussed on how our ancient thinkers understood the nature of consciousness, mind, self, and other related topics and how they are different from the understanding of Western psychology. Therefore, attempts to develop Indian Psychology from a spiritual viewpoint continued for some time drawing inspiration and ideas from our scriptures. But those early academic psychologists initially trained in the Western empirical tradition resisted such efforts by dubbing them as a regressive move towards superstition (Sinha, D; 1984; Dalal, 2002).

However, because of the developments in consciousness studies and the emergence of Transpersonal Psychology and also due to the emphasis on culture specific psychologies, in the past five decades psychologists in India have taken different approaches leading to multiple views on what Indian Psychology is all about. Hence, there is a necessity to clarify these different views and attitudes.

### **7.3.2 Scope**

Indian Psychology is not limited only to spirituality and religion. Our thinkers did not leave out any aspect of behaviour. They have focussed on various aspects of human behaviour. We find information about developmental aspects (described as *shodasha samskara*), about abnormal behaviour (in *Ayurveda*), about sexuality and sexual behaviour (in *Kāmasūtra*), about economic and political action (in *Arthashastra & Chānakya Neeti*), about social psychology (in *Dharmashastra* and *Neetishāstra*) and so on. Similarly, we find lots of information on cognitive psychology in *shat darśanas* (six systems of Indian philosophy) and Jaina and Bauddha *darśanas*. Indian thinkers covered bio-psycho-social aspects of behaviour discussed in modern psychology and also about the spiritual dimension. Thus, the scope of Indian Psychology is “from sexuality to spirituality” (Salagame, 2013).

### Self Assessment Questions I

1) What do you mean by Psychology developed around the philosophy of an Indian thinker?

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2) What do *Arthashastra* & *Chānakya Neeti* discuss about?

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3) 'Nurturant task leadership' was given by whom?

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## 7.4 HISTORICAL SOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

Indian psychology has a short history of about a century, but it has long past. Its roots are in antiquity that dates back to almost to the year 10,000 B.C.E, to which the first book of the Vedas are traced. As per our traditional belief and scholarly opinion, the Vedas are our earliest source of knowledge in all branches. Psychology as an independent branch of knowledge never existed in our country in the modern sense. It was not a *shāstra*, studied in ancient gurukula or universities like Nalanda and Takshshila. But, that does not mean Indian thinkers did not dwell on the topics and themes that we study in contemporary psychology.

### 7.4.1 Sources for Indian Psychology

S. K. Ramachandra Rao wrote in his classic book *Development of Psychological Thought in India* (1962) that though the study of mind was not an independent branch of knowledge in ancient times, in India, there was enough "psychologising." Indian thinkers dwelt on almost all the aspects of behaviour as and when it was necessary, in different contexts. They discussed the nature and functions of mind and differentiated it from consciousness in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the Yogasutras, in Dharmashastras, in the Natyashastra, and so on. Jaina and Buddhist texts and teatises also discuss the nature of consciousness and mind extensively. There

are other specific subjects for example,  *jyotishyashastra*,  *arthashastra*,  *natyashastra*, and  *dharmashastra* in which many topics of psychosocial importance are discussed.

Thus the discussions happened in different settings and contexts – astrology, economics and statecraft, dance, drama, and music, and moral, legal, and social ethics – with different purposes. Many of the ancient texts are also in different languages – Vedic Sanskrit, later Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Ardha Magadhi. Thus, it is a huge task to bring together all the ideas spread across the different literature. It appears no body bothered to do that in ancient times. This literature grew further immensely in scholarship and volume in the age of  *darshanas* (systems of Indian philosophy) and in medieval and modern times. It is a Herculean task for any single person to collect all the scattered ideas together which no one undertook till modern times; We don't find in a single place all the psychological theories and concepts that emerged and developed in India until 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Some modern authors suggest that Patanjali's  *Yoga Sūtra* is a classical text on Indian psychology. True, it does discuss about the nature and functions of mind and about various states of consciousness,  *samādhi*. As Swami Vivekananda noted Patanjali brought together all the ideas related to Yoga - its theory and practice - that existed in his lifetime and wrote his sūtras to help those who wish to go beyond mind and all states of consciousness to reach what is called  *kaivalya*. He has termed it as “practical psychology.” (Vivekananda, 2003).

But the goal of Patanjali's work is not to study mind or states of consciousness in detail the way we are doing it in modern psychology for our day-to-day understanding and application. It is aimed at transformation of a person to realize his true nature or identity as a 'witness'. It is a manual for Self-realization. So it cannot be considered as a text book of  *manah shastra* (Salagame, 2008, 2011). It is not text on Indian psychology similar to an introductory text on modern psychology that you have studied in your first semester.

#### 7.4.2 Development of Indian Psychology

We can speculate that the term  *manashastra* must have been coined as a Sanskrit/Hindi equivalent of Western Psychology after its introduction in our country first in the University of Calcutta in 1906. Some have used the term  *Bhāratīya manah shastra*. Otherwise, to the best of our understanding, there is no reference to this field of study in our tradition. Many scholars used the term Indian psychology since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So far it is not sure with evidence which scholar first used this term and when. But we find this term being explicitly used by Swami Vivekananda in the year 1900 in his lectures in the United States of America. He has drawn the attention of his audience to the differences between 'Indian Psychology' and 'Western Psychology' in those lectures (Vivekananda, 2003). Subsequently, this term was used by Sri Aurobindo in his Essays on Education (Aurobindo, 1910).

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were other scholars Western and Indian who authored books under the titles 'Buddhist Psychology,' (Rhys Davids, 1914, 1936), 'Hindu Psychology,' (Akhilānanda, 1948, 1952), and 'Jaina Psychology' (Mehta, 1957) which highlight the psychological insights present in our country from ancient times in these traditions.,

However, the credit for collecting all the diverse viewpoints scattered in different sources and bringing them together goes to Jadunath Sinha. He was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta between 1933 and 1969. In the three volumes,  *Indian*



*Psychology – Cognition, Indian Psychology – Emotion and Will and Indian Psychology – Epistemology of Perception* (Sinha, J.N. 1958, 1961, 1968), he was able to cover almost all the topics of importance and also those not commonly discussed in the text books of modern psychology. Subsequently, many other scholars and psychologists wrote about Indian Psychology of which Raghunath Safaya's book *Indian psychology: A critical and historical analysis of the psychological speculations in Indian philosophical literature* provides a comprehensive idea in a concise way.

Attempts to develop Indian Psychology was viewed as a “regressive” movement, going back to superstition (Sinha, D. 1984). Though during the years 1960s, 70s, and 80s, a few universities offered courses on Indian Psychology for some time the courses were discontinued since they were not matching with the scientific psychological approach. Andhra University published a journal, *Journal of Indian Psychology* for a few decades (Dalal, 2002). But none of these could continue and make a dent in introducing Indian Psychology in graduate, post-graduate and research levels in a significant way.

However, since the year 2001 onwards there is a sudden spurt in the development of Indian Psychology in the form of many national and international conferences, seminars, and workshops organized across the country. There is an increase in the number of publications – research articles and books. A few important publications include *A Systematic Survey of Indian Psychology* (Srivastava, 2001); *Perspectives on Indigenous Psychology* (Misra & Mohanty, 2002); *Handbook of Indian Psychology* (Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008); *Foundations of Indian psychology*, Vol. 1 and 2, (Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma, 2011a, 2011b); and *Psychology in the Indian tradition* (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). These publications include contributions from Indian and foreign psychologists and also from other scholars, researchers, and professionals from Ayurveda, Sanskrit, Humanities and Social Sciences, Organizational Development and Human Resources Management.

In a conference organized in the year 2002 at Puducherry, a Manifesto was brought out by 160 delegates urging psychologists in India to develop and promote Indian Psychology. Matthijs Cornelissen, a citizen of Netherlands, who has been living in Puducherry following the teachings of Maharshi Aurobindo organized that conference under the aegis Sri Aurobindo International Centre. He also founded the 'Indian Psychology Institute' ([www.ipi.org](http://www.ipi.org)) a few years ago to offer courses and conduct research. A few departments across the country have since then started offering classes in Indian Psychology. Recently, an expert committee constituted by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to revise and update the model curriculum for Psychology has added a few courses on Indian Psychology at different levels that can be offered by Colleges and Universities.

### **Self Assessment Questions II**

1) What is the name of the classic book written by S. K. Ramachandra Rao?

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2) Name a few sources for Indian Psychology?

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3) What are *darshanas*?

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## 7.5 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIAN AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

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The differences between the two psychologies are not just a matter of identifying how Indians and Westerners differ in this or that aspect of behaviour. It is not a matter of labelling Indians as introverts or as collectivists; as low on need achievement and high on need for dependence and so on. Finding out such source and surface trait differences have been the focus of cross-cultural research for many decades. We can find such differences among people of many cultures, not only that of India.

### 7.5.1 Differences in the Worldview

The more significant differences are fundamental issues of philosophical significance or the **worldviews** underlying Indian and Western psychology. Koltko-Rivera (2004, p. 4) defined the term worldview as a “way of describing the universe and life within it, both regarding *what is* and *what ought to be*.” Assumptions and beliefs related to the nature of reality are related to social and cultural **worldviews**. Koltko-Rivera (2004, p. 4) points out that, worldview has gone by many names in the literature such as “philosophy of life” (Jung, 1942/1954), “world hypotheses” (Pepper, 1942/1970), “world outlook” (Maslow, 1970a, p. 39), “assumptive worlds” (Frank, 1973), “visions of reality” (Messer, 1992, 2000), “self-and-world construct system” (Kottler & Hazler, 2001, p. 361), and many others. In anthropology alone, worldviews have been denoted as “cultural orientations” (Kluckhohn, 1950), “value orientations,” “unconscious systems of meaning,” “unconscious canons of choice,” “configurations,” “culture themes,” and “core culture” (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1973, pp. 1–2).”

Koltko-Rivera lists three main features of a worldview, which are as below.

- 1) A given worldview **is a set of beliefs** that includes
  - a) limiting statements and assumptions regarding what exists and what does not (either in actuality or principle).
  - b) what objects or experiences are good or bad, and what objectives, behaviours, and relationships are desirable or undesirable.

- 2) A worldview **defines**
  - a) what can be known or done in the world, and
  - b) how it can be identified or done
  - c) what goals can be sought in life,
  - d) what goals should be pursued.
- 3) Worldviews include **assumptions**
  - a) that may be unproven, and even unprovable,
  - b) but these assumptions are superordinate,
  - c) They provide the epistemic and ontological foundations for other beliefs within a belief system.

Further, Koltko-Rivera (2004) says that “sets of beliefs and assumptions about life and reality” can “powerfully influence human cognition and behaviour.” They have implications “for theories of personality, cognition, education, and intervention” at the individual level and at the collective level, they “can provide a basis for psychological theories of culture and conflict, faith and coping, war and peace.” (p. 1).

This recognition alerted many psychologists across the globe to the possibility that the dominant worldview prevalent in Western societies, which is materialistic, has shaped modern scientific psychology and there are other societies and cultures which share a different worldview that can lead to other psychologies.

### 7.5.2 Indian Worldview – Darśana and Dharma

We have already noted that Indian culture is characterized by spiritual worldview. Two terms *darśana* and *dharma* are used in India which refer to many elements included in the definition of worldview given above. They are grounded in the spiritual experiences of ancient seer, sages, and saints that later led to logically arrived systems of understanding of the nature of reality. Hence, Hindu, Jaina and Bauddha darśana, and dharma form the foundations of Indian psychological thought. There are many differences in the three traditions. But they also agree on certain basic features, which help us to highlight the differences between Indian and Western psychology. Most important of them are listed below in the next section from among several such features.

### 7.5.3 Some Important Differences between Indian and Western Psychology

#### 7.5.3.1 Human Nature

The traditions agree that humans have specific instinctual or biological needs for food, security, sexuality, and sleep like other animals. But, a person can sublimate or conquer his/her basic needs, emotions, passions, and desires. S/he has the potentiality to actualize and develop capacities which are extraordinary that transforms her/him into a superhuman being, who may be called Divine or God. Such persons can go beyond the barriers of space-time and experience connectedness with the whole of the universe. That provides them access to information about fellow humans, animals, and also about what happens at far off places on this earth and even in parallel unvierverses (*loka*). That makes them omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

### 7.5.3.2 Life and Death

Life and death is a cycle and a continuous process. All organisms pass through this cycle. Humans undergo such repeated sequences, and bodily death is not the end of life force (*jiva*). It can continue the journey and return to earth through another fresh body, immediately or after a duration small or significant.

The results of actions performed in one particular life time accumulate creating certain tendencies, impressions, habit patterns and constitute what is known as *karma*. The cumulative *karma* of several life times is the force that keeps the cycle of birth and death going. Karma is the prime motivating factor for our actions.

But humans can consciously choose to break this cycle in a particular life period and put an end to this process. That is called liberation or *moksha*.

Such liberated beings are venerated as Divine persons, and they have the freedom to return to earthly life to help others to get liberated.

Western psychology having been influenced by Darwinian evolutionary theory treat humans as superior primates and hence the further evolutionary possibilities available for humans are not considered.

### 7.5.3.3 The Goals and Values of Life - Purushārtha

From ancient times four life goals are recognized. They are *not* the biological needs for food, sleep, security and sex which we share in common with other animals. Instead, they are *purushārtha*, what human beings consciously chose as worth pursuing. They are *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *moksha*. They refer to leading a virtuous life, acquiring wealth, fulfilling desires, and aspiring to get liberated from the cycle of birth and death. The *Kama* here does not mean sexual need as often understood. It refers to our other psychological needs.

The sequence of arranging these four goals has significance. The last one is the most important or the highest or supreme or ideal goal of human existence. Hence, it is called *parama purushārtha*. Humans were urged to satisfy their need for wealth acquisition and fulfilling psychological desires keeping this as the goal post. In pursuing these needs, one should be guided first by certain norms, ethics, and values, which is *dharma*. So one was expected to aspire for other goals within the framework of *dharma*. Hence, *dharma* was the first goal of life. *Dharma* and *moksha* together served as guiding principles of life, as two forces, one pushing from behind and another pulling from the front in the journey of life (Salagame, 2011a).

We should note here that *moksha* as the supreme life goal is highlighted only in our country for thousands of years. Probably in no other country, other than those South Asian countries which were historically influenced by Indian culture, we come across this belief in liberation from cycles of birth and death so widely held and also actively encouraged as a worthy life goal. So many seers, saints, and sages in our country reiterated about this possibility from ancient time onwards till today. While in all countries across the globe the other three goals are defined and pursued, we do not find *moksha*.

The ideas such as cycles of birth and death, life after life, rebirth and reincarnation are not part of Western culture as much as they are of ours. It is this which makes all the difference between what we call Indian Psychology and Western Psychology. But, they are not totally absent in Western societies. People did experience and report such phenomena, and the first Psychological Research Society was established in England to investigate them. That's why Parapsychology as a branch of Psychology continues to exist.

However, in the past 50 years in the entire Western world, there has been a resurgence of spiritual quest. Many people reported such phenomena. Studies on 'altered states of consciousness' (Tart, 1969) picked up very fast. With that, study of consciousness has become a hot topic of research contemporarily. Western researchers have realized that many of the text and treatises related to *Vaidika* and the *a-Vaidika darśana* are full of discussions on the nature of consciousness and mind. One researcher termed them as "Consciousness disciplines" (Walsh, 1980).

#### 7.5.3.4 Consciousness and States of Consciousness

One of the most contemporary burning question for scientists of different disciplines is, what is consciousness? In modern psychology, only three states are accepted and studied viz., waking, dream, and deep sleep states. In the waking state, we usually recognize ourselves as the subject/person experiencing a world which is outside through our sensory organs and understanding them with the help of memory of past experiences and reasoning. In the dream state, we are not in direct contact with the outside world and hence sensory awareness is very limited to some light or sound or touch or temperature variations in the environment, but there is no perception of a physical world as such. Our mind creates a world, 'a dream world,' for us in the dream state with all the biological sensations, feelings and emotions that we experience in our waking state. However, in a deep sleep state, both the sensory awareness from outside and also the activities of mind stop functioning, and we are left with a feeling of peace and rest. During the dream state and sleep state, we may lose our sense of conscious identity as Mr. X or Ms. Y., to different degrees. Still, when we wake up that I-feeling as the same person persists from the previous day to the next day.

While this is a puzzling problem, how we experience this continuity of identity, Indian thinkers resolved it by recognizing that human beings can experience 'transcendental awareness' or 'pure awareness' or 'contentless awareness.' In the Upanishads, this is called *turiya*, the fourth state, in addition to *jāgrat* (waking), *swapna* (dream), and *sushupti* (deep sleep). This *turiya* is considered to be ever present, and we undergo all our experiences in the backdrop of this. Not only that, it is also not personal nor dependent on our mental or bodily state. It is an independent awareness available to all and common to all. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* such awareness is termed as *dr̥stu*, the seer or perceiver, independent of all mental activities (*chitta vrtti*). This understanding is quite radical, and we do not find this in Western Philosophy or Science, except in the teachings of a few Western mystics, saints and poets.

Because of the distinction between waking, dream and deep sleep where the mind is active in different degrees and because of an awareness of continuity of one's existence, even when mental activity is stopped our thinkers made a distinction between 'Consciousness' and 'Mind.' The former is called *chit*, *chetana*, *chaitanya*, *prajna*, etc., and the latter is *manas*, *chitta*, *antahkarana*, etc., in the Vedic tradition. Jaina and Bauddha use different terms.

The clear distinction made between Consciousness and Mind has helped Indian thinkers to understand a variety of experiences possible to human beings that is puzzling to Westerners and also to Western psychologists. Not only our thinkers spoke of Consciousness as independent of Mind, but they also held that it is Consciousness which is the source of light or illumination and all our experiences are possible because of its presence. Mental activities depend on Consciousness for both illumination and energy. Hence, *manas* is *jada vastu*, without life similar to physical matter. When a person dies, this Consciousness and mental impressions together form *Sukshma and Karana Sharira* and separate from the body and continue to exist in subtle form and take on a new shape and come to life again.

Both Jaina and Bauddha traditions also accept some of these possibilities. But they also differ on certain others. For example, Jains consider jiva alone keeps evolving to a perfection through karma and punarjanma and does not accept the notions of Ātman and Brahaman. Buddha, though is revered as an enlightened person, rejected the idea of continuity of Consciousness or Transcendental Awareness or *Ātman*. He proposed that Consciousness is like a stream of water which is flowing and changing continuously. There are such differences in the three traditions.

### 7.5.3.5 Consciousness, Mind, and Mental Activities

Western thinkers do not speak of consciousness and mental activities as distinct. The terms consciousness and mind are used interchangeably. That seems to be the primary problem leading to confusions. Secondly, modern psychologists consider the brain is the organ which produces mental activity. It is called an “epiphenomenon.” But in Indian traditions, the mental action is separated from Pure Consciousness on the one hand and physical body on the other. We use the terms *chetana*, *chaitanya*, *prajña* to refer to consciousness and *manas* and *chitta* to refer to mind. Many thinkers agree with the view of Samkhya theorists that mind is subtle matter and body is gross matter, though both are constituted of the three gunas viz., *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Manas is also considered as an *indriya*, which experiences pleasure and pain, that desires, feels and wills. In the Upanishadic literature, *manas* is between sensory organs and another faculty called *buddhi*. Sensory organs receive impressions from the external world (input), *manas* processes it and submits to *buddhi* for its decision. *Buddhi* borrows the light of Consciousness for its functioning. It is said to have the reflected light just as Moon shines in the reflected light of the Sun. *Buddhi* is also aided by *chitta*, which is a storehouse of all our past impressions and knowledge and hence it is called a ‘memory bank’. When, a person adds his or her I- feeling, which is called *ahamkara*, then a person appropriates or owns the mental activity of *manas*, *buddhi*, and *chitta*. It is possible to have our mental activity going on without this appropriation or owning them. When more and more a person keeps adding this I feeling to all mental activities more and more a person experiences pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and so on. So, the Upanishads tell us to let the mental activities keep happening without appropriating or owning them. Attaching that ‘I-feeling’ to mental activities is not essential for the mind to operate. It keeps itself active. Not having any identification (*abhimana* or *sanga*) with those activities is the strategy to avoid suffering and it is called detachment or delinking to use the modern jargon. Jaina and Buddhist traditions differ from Vedic tradition in accepting some of the views.

#### Self Assessment Questions III

1) What is a ‘worldview’?

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2) What are the three gunas?

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3) Liberation from the cycle of life and death in Indian thought, is known as .....

4) What is *Purushārtha*?  
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5) What are the four states of awareness?  
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## 7.6 IMPORTANCE OF YOGA, MEDITATION AND OTHER INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS

Today the terms yoga and meditation have become very popular all over the world. United Nations declared 21<sup>st</sup> June as “International Yoga Day” on 11 December 2014 and it is celebrated from the year 2015 across the globe in nearly 200 countries (<http://www.un.org/en/events/yogaday/>). Current understanding of popular yoga is often limited to practice of certain body postures (*āsana*), breathing exercises (*prānāyāma*) and meditation (*dhāraṇa* and *dhyāna*). Such simplistic ideas are popularized by many in the past five decades particularly after some early researches showed that practise of yoga can bring about reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression at psychological level and blood pressure, heart rate, muscular tension and so on at physiological level (Murphy & Donovan, 1988; Murphy, Donovan & Taylor, 1997). Most yoga teachers have limited their teaching of yoga to help bring about such physiological and psychological changes and millions of people all over the world have been practising yoga and some form of meditation with that objective. Therefore, yoga and meditation have been regarded as ‘indigenous forms of therapy’. The National Institute of Health of the United States of America consider Ayurveda, Acupuncture, Yoga, and many such methods of intervention under the heading “Complementary, Alternative and Integrative Health Approaches” (<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/integrative-health>). In India, the Government of India has established a separate ministry to encourage different systems other than Allopathy, which include Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH). There are many central government schemes to encourage these systems (see <http://ayush.gov.in/schemes/central-sector-scheme>).

Besides its therapeutic application, Yoga is also regarded as a sports activity and Yoga competition are held everywhere. Recently Yoga is also declared as a sports activity under the non-Olympic sports discipline by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India (<http://www.iyc-yoga.org/yogaassport.html>). All these developments have turned Yoga into a multi-billion dollar industry (<https://www.franchiseindia.com/wellness/Yoga-A-multi-billion-dollar-opportunity-market-poised-to-grow.8983>).

In psychology, psychiatry, and other related mental health disciplines, Yoga and a variety of meditation techniques from different traditions are approached primarily in three different ways: (a) as a stress reduction strategy; (b) as a therapeutic adjunct and as a

growth promotion technique; and (c) as a technique to induce altered states of consciousness. Researchers and therapists have attempted to understand the mechanisms and processes involved in them with reference to mind-body interaction. Neuropsychological, Psychophysiological, Psychoanalytic, Behavioural, Cognitive-Behavioural, and Humanistic models and theories have been made use for this purpose. All such efforts can be considered as “Psychology of Yoga”. (Salagame, 2011a).

However, such approaches fail to do justice to the original intent and purpose for which Yoga and other meditation techniques were developed in the Indian context. Primarily they were aimed at quietening or stilling all the mental activities to experience a state of awareness beyond the ordinary waking state (*yogah chitta vrtti nirodha* – Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Chapter 1, sutra 2). This spiritual aim of Yoga is diametrically opposite of the contemporary approaches to utilize Yoga to enhance mental activity. The four different types *jñāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *rāja yoga* and *karma yoga* have been developed in India as different pathways to attain transcendental Self-realization to cater to the individual differences in temperament and motivational traits of people. Each of them have different prescriptions to be followed in daily life. Hence, there is a need to distinguish the contemporary approaches to Yoga from the original objectives of Yoga as a system and the psychological aspects involved in them which may be called “Yoga Psychology” (Salagame, 2011b). In order to appreciate this difference and the real significance of Yoga, it is necessary to take a detailed look at some of the contemporary developments in our discipline.

### 7.6.1 Contemporary Developments in the Psychology Discipline

Contemporary Psychology is in cross-roads. When it was formally founded as a scientific discipline back in 1879, it was forced to adopt the materialistic view of the universe that characterized physical and natural sciences. As a consequence, it had to give up the study of the soul and consciousness because they were considered metaphysical ideas, without any empirical evidence. They could not be studied using then extant scientific methodologies. Thus, mainstream academic psychologists for almost a century neglected them and even rejected them as proper subjects for scientific scrutiny. Though Carl Jung, William James, and the parapsychologists had interest in the study of consciousness and psychical phenomena, their work remained in the fringe and never found any mention in the popular text books of psychology. Though, this situation has not changed significantly till date many developments within the physical and natural sciences have suggested that the materialist paradigm which governed modern science and modern psychology no more hold good. The belief that ‘matter is primary’ and ‘material universe alone is real’ is slowly eroding.

The latest discoveries in physical sciences itself are pointing towards ‘the primacy of consciousness’. A new view of the universe is emerging that emphasizes that consciousness plays a vital role in our understanding of the nature of reality. A few have even suggested that consciousness shapes reality. Hence, the study of the nature of human consciousness has taken centre stage, and it is a hot topic in contemporary physics, biology, neuroscience, and psychology. Researchers who are interested in the study of consciousness have realized that there are many valuable and useful insights embedded in the mystical and spiritual traditions of the world, especially those which emerged in India such as Hinduism and Buddhism. For them, these traditions are not just religions. They represent one particular type of psychology. Terms like “esoteric psychology,” (Ornstein, 1972), “spiritual psychology,” and “transpersonal psychology,” (Tart, 1975) are used to emphasize this. Walsh (1980) describes them as “consciousness



disciplines.” Tart (1975) listed some characteristics that differentiate “orthodox Western psychology” and “Transpersonal Psychologies.” Developments in the study of consciousness and the field of Transpersonal Psychology called for a revisioning of psychology, both concerning the subject matter and the methodology followed.

In contrast, many investigators observe that Asian societies have still retained the “spiritual” worldview.’ Hence, the primary argument is that modern psychology which developed within the framework of material worldview adopting the current scientific approach does not do full justice to the behaviour of those people who still hold a spiritual worldview and function accordingly. The claim that modern psychology is universal psychology is questioned leading to the distinction between Western and non-Western psychology/Asian Psychology. (Sinha, D, 1984).

But as research advanced, psychologists found that even within Western cultures there are many significant differences. Some authors remarked that much of modern psychology reflects the values of American society and not of all Western societies. It is “*by Americans, for Americans, and of Americans*” (Kim & Berry, 1993). An American researcher has gone a step further to assert that this so-called Americanized psychology does not even represent the full population of North Americans. It is just psychology developed from the studies on first year undergraduate students, and hence it is “sophomore psychology.” (Much, 1995).

From a methodological point of view, many psychologists felt that quantitative and experimental procedures employed in psychology fail to do full justice to psychological phenomena because they tend to arrive at the law of averages rather than understanding individual uniqueness. They are “nomothetic” rather than “idiographic” as Gordon Allport put it. Hence, the need for developing other qualitative procedures. Thus, the growing realization among psychologists about the limitations of modern psychology regarding its generalizations across populations within the Western world and outside of it has resulted in the need for “rethinking of psychology” and “rethinking of methods in psychology” (Smith, Harre, & Langenhove, 1995a & b).

All these developments gradually led to what is now known as “indigenous psychology movement.” Psychologists from all over the world took an interest in developing the psychological insights and perspectives available in their respective cultures. The countries include – Africa, Canada, China, Fiji, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Latin America, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Scandinavia, Taiwan, Turkey, Venezuela, Zambia, and even the USA! (Kim & Berry, 1993). The rationale behind such attempts is to develop a ‘truly universal psychology,’ by deriving common insights and understandings obtained in culture specific indigenous psychologies.

In this context, development of Indian psychological thought is important from the socio-cultural view point, that can provide valuable insights for the development of truly universal psychology. Thus both from a consciousness perspective and from a socio-cultural viewpoint Indian Psychology is contemporarily relevant.

Though in the 19<sup>th</sup> century physical and natural scientists were not so much concerned about it, many developments that occurred in the field of physics, biology, medicine, and neurology have pushed the problem of consciousness to the forefront. A few of the scientists from these fields have begun to openly acknowledge that the materialistic worldview which proclaimed that what exists in the universe is only matter, is not defensible. They say that consciousness is primary, not matter, in the universe. With this change of perspective, they have also taken a serious interest in studying the spiritual texts of Vedic tradition such as the four Vedas, Upanishads, the writings of Vedanta

systems and Kashmiri Shaivism, Yoga Sutras, Nyaya and Navya-Nyaya, the four orders of Buddhist tradition, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. Jaina texts are not studied because they have yet to catch the attention of these scientists. While physical and natural scientists are examining how their knowledge matches with these traditional texts about the nature of reality and the universe, medical scientists are puzzled with the problem of mind-body relations and the relation between brain and consciousness.

Altered states of consciousness reported by many lay people and also by researchers and professionals under the influence of drugs like Marijuana, Psilocybin, and LSD; during hypnotic states; during meditation practice; and even during what Maslow called “peak experiences,” has added fire to the quest for understanding the nature of consciousness. They break all our understandings and beliefs about what reality is. Many have found their experiences to be similar and sometimes even identical with the descriptions given in India by experts of Kundalini Yoga. The descriptions of stages of samadhi in Vedanta literature and the Yoga Sutras; and the first personal account of the mystical experiences reported by many seers, sages, and saints of the ancient, medieval and modern period have many parallels.

While Transpersonal Psychologists have been busy trying to develop the phenomenology, models, and theories of states of consciousness, neuropsychologists are busy trying to examine the brain and nervous system correlations. The phenomena of what is called Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs) and Near-Death-Experiences (NDEs) have challenged them because all the existing theories of cognition based on our sensory awareness fail here. The experiences reported in OBEs and NDEs not mediated through the five sense organs do not conform to the parameters of ordinary waking consciousness experiences. Particularly in NDEs, the person who reports such experiences after he/she gets back to the ordinary state often appears to be either in a state of coma or feared to be dead by attending surgeons, physicians, and other medical experts.

If a person can consciously through the practice of Yoga or Tapas realize the distinction between Consciousness and mental activities and identifies with that Consciousness, he/she is called Self-realized (*Ātma jñāni*). For such a person the cycle of life or cycle of birth and death ceases once the present body dies. He/she is said to have attained *moksha* or *jeevanmukti*.

Contemporary Transpersonal Psychologists are more familiar with Buddhist literature because Buddhism is widespread in many countries. However, many of them have also studied firsthand the literature of Vedic tradition under spiritual masters and have also practised Yoga and done sadhana. Though Jaina literature has the potential to make a significant impact and influence the direction of Transpersonal Psychology many are not aware of it.

The Indian views on consciousness and the descriptions of states of consciousness are relevant to contemporary science because our ancient thinkers did not limit their awareness to sensory perception alone. *Aparoksa anubhuti* and *yogipratyaksha*, which are direct and immediate cognition not dependent on sensory awareness are also possible. Our rishis, yogis, munis, siddhas, and other spiritual masters had this unusual capacity. They could ‘know’ things happening at a far off place or in other people, without actually visiting a site or without being verbally or non-verbally communicated about other people. Modern science and psychology have still not come to terms with such human capacity.

A group of psychologists who are influenced by “social constructionism,” argue that since culture and psyche are integrally related it is impossible to develop universal

psychological concepts, theories, models, and principles. They say that no such universal laws and principles are possible in psychology and it is a waste of time to seek them. Hence, they argue for developing culture-specific psychologies. On the other hand, many think that it is possible to arrive at a set of common principles and laws that are universally valid, but that can be done only after developing many “indigenous psychologies,” that is culture-specific. To use anthropological terms indigenous psychology is “emic,” universal psychology is “etic.” So, some argue that modern psychology is not truly universal, it is an “imposed etic.” They say to develop genuinely universal psychology we have to develop many “indigenous psychologies” (emics) from different cultures, and then from them, we can derive a set of common principles and laws, which is “derived etic” (Kim & Berry, 1993).

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## 7.7 LET US SUM UP

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The modern scientific psychology that originated in Western cultural context is governed by materialist worldview and reductionist paradigm. A worldview provides a perspective on the nature of reality which in turn creates certain assumptions and limiting statements on what exists, what is possible, what goals can be achieved. From them, the nature of the universe, of man, life and existence as such, of mind, etc., are defined. This has implications for the development of knowledge in any discipline. In psychology, this has limited its scope of enquiry to a narrow range of human experience possible through sensory channels. Second, mind and consciousness are used interchangeably. Nature of mental activity is limited to specific processes governed by the intellect. Man is viewed primarily as an animal, and human behaviour as a whole is considered to be determined by biological and social factors.

In contrast, Indian psychology is governed by spiritual worldview. It proclaims that consciousness is primary, not matter. A distinction is made between consciousness and mind. Human beings are viewed as potentially divine, and the goal life of is to realize the divinity within. All other goals and motivations of life are considered as subsidiary and secondary. Mental activities include intuitive processes. It is possible to have a wide range of experiences beyond the sensory realm. But all such experiences are not viewed as ultimate. Realizing a state beyond all of them, ‘pure consciousness,’ is considered the most important and ideal of human life. Within this framework, human behaviour is understood.

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## 7.8 KEY WORDS

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- Indigenization of psychology** : refers to adapting the basic concepts, theories, models, and measures of modern psychology to suit the Indian context.
- Indigenous psychology** : focuses on “culture as the source” of ideas.
- Indian psychology** : emphasizes the Indian perspective on human life and other aspects of behaviour. It highlights the uniqueness of Indian culture and traditions.
- Worldview** : refers to a “way of describing the universe and life within it, both regarding *what is* and *what ought to be*.” (Koltko-Rivera, 2004).
- Karma** : consists of certain tendencies, impressions and habit patterns that result from the accumulation of actions performed in one particular life time.

**Moksha**

: is called liberation or breaking the cycle of birth and death which keeps going because of the cumulative karma of several life times.

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## 7.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Self Assessment Questions I

- 1) Psychology developed around the philosophy of an Indian thinker refers to the different schools whose foundation was laid by the philosophical vision of one particular individual. For example, Integral Psychology that was inspired by the integral vision of Maharshi Aurobindo.
- 2) *Arthashastra & Chānakya Neeti* discuss about economic and political action.
- 3) ‘Nurturant task leadership’ was given by J.B.P Sinha.

### Self Assessment Questions II

- 1) The name of the classic book written by S. K. Ramachandra Rao is *Development of Psychological Thought in India* (1962)
- 2) A few sources for Indian Psychology are the Vedas, Upanishads, Jyotishyashastra, Arthashastra, Natyashastra, and Dharmashastra.
- 3) *Darshanas* are systems of Indian philosophy.

### Self Assessment Questions III

- 1) Koltko-Rivera (2004, p.4) defined the term worldview as a “way of describing the universe and life within it, both regarding *what is* and *what ought to be*.”
- 2) The three gunas are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.
- 3) Moksha
- 4) *Purushārtha* is what human beings consciously chose as worth pursuing. It consists of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *moksha*. They refer to leading a virtuous life, acquiring wealth, fulfilling desires, and aspiring to get liberated from the cycle of birth and death.
- 5) The four states of awareness are *jāgrat* (waking), *swapna* (dream), *sushupti* (deep sleep), and *turiya* (transcendental awareness).

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## 7.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) How Indian Psychology is different from western psychology in its views on consciousness?
- 2) What are the views on life and death in the two psychologies (Indian and Western)?
- 3) How mind and mental activities are understood in Indian Psychology?
- 4) What are the contemporary developments in psychology that make Indian psychological thought relevant in the global context?
- 5) What is indigenous psychology?
- 6) What is indigenization of psychology?

- 7) What is Indian psychology?
- 8) Distinguish between Psychology of Yoga and Yoga Psychology.
- 9) What are the contemporary developments in psychology that make Indian psychological thought relevant in the global context?

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## UNIT 8 CONCEPT OF SELF IN INDIAN THOUGHT\*

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### Structure

- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 Self, Identity and Self-concept in Western Psychology
  - 8.3.1 Self
  - 8.3.2 Identity
  - 8.3.3 Self-concept
- 8.4 Self, Identity and Self-concept in Indian Psychology
  - 8.4.1 Spiritual Terms
    - 8.4.1.1 Ātman
    - 8.4.1.2 Purusha
    - 8.4.1.3 Jīva
    - 8.4.1.4 Ātman and Jīva – Distinction
  - 8.4.2 Psychological Terms
    - 8.4.2.1 Aham and Ahamkāra
    - 8.4.2.2 Psychological Terms Related to Experiences of Jīva
- 8.5 Development of Self and Identity as per Indian Traditions
- 8.6 The Concept of Self in Relation to Indian Family and Culture
- 8.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.8 Key Words
- 8.9 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 8.10 Unit End Questions
- 8.11 References
- 8.12 Suggested Readings

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### 8.1 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- distinguish between self, identity, and self-concept;
- tell how Indian self-concepts differ from Western ones;
- identify the different self-related terms in Indian psychology with a specific meaning;
- know how self and identity development is visualized in Indian society; and
- appreciate the breadth and depth of the Indian concepts.

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## 8.2 INTRODUCTION

If you are asked to think about or describe your self, how will you do it? Usually you will respond with your name, class, work, gender, caste, community, language etc. Questions related to self and identity – ‘who are you,’ and ‘who am I – are commonly/ generally answered with reference to our body and appearance or looks, name, relationships, material possessions, caste, community, language, religion, educational attainments, likes and dislikes, emotions, motivations, temperaments, attitudes, values, achievements and so on. Thus they represent the biological, psychological, and socio-cultural aspects.

Oyserman, Elmer & Smith (2012) reviewed hundreds of published work on self, self-concept, and identity carried out in modern psychology. They found that there are three core notions related to these concepts on which the many theories converge viz., *mental constructs*, *social products*, and *force for action*. Based on their review they note that “...self, self-concept, and identity are mental constructs that are shaped by the contexts in which they develop and influence action.” (p.75). Because we develop and grow in a social and cultural context, social institutions such as family, community, caste, religion, formal education, marriage, and others exert significant influence in the development of our identity and self-concept.

In the previous Unit we have discussed how worldviews and the assumptions derived from them differ across cultures. Hence, the context in which we develop and grow also vary. Since Indian worldview affirms the spiritual dimension of human existence, our culture and social institutions developed within them are qualitatively different from that of the West, which has upheld a material worldview. Among the many differences the most important and significant one is about Consciousness. We have already learnt that Western worldview limits all human experiences to what happens in ordinary waking state and dream and sleep states. In contrast, Indian worldview adds a fourth, *turiya*, which is “transcendental consciousness” or “pure consciousness.” Because of this, the concepts related to self in India incorporate those who are connected to the bio-psychosocial realm and also those pertaining to the spiritual realm.

In this Unit you will be learning about the Indian concepts of self and identity and how they shape our lives and how we act and react in our daily existence because of them.

## 8.3 SELF, IDENTITY AND SELF-CONCEPT IN WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

To appreciate the Indian concepts better it is useful to learn first about self and identity as understood in modern psychology.

### 8.3.1 Self

In contemporary psychological literature we frequently use terms where the word ‘self’ is used as a ‘prefix’ as in ‘self-actualization,’ ‘self-analysis,’ ‘self-confidence,’ ‘self-efficacy,’ ‘self-esteem,’ ‘self-evaluation,’ ‘self-image,’ ‘self-concept,’ ‘self-development,’ ‘self-awareness,’ ‘self-sense,’ and so on. In addition, we also have other concepts and themes that refer to self like ‘identity development,’ ‘identity formation,’ ‘ego,’ ‘ego-development,’ ‘ego-strength,’ ‘ego-boundaries,’ ‘ego defense mechanisms,’ ‘individuation,’ ‘traits,’ ‘role behaviour,’ and many more. Sigmund Freud proposed ‘psycho-sexual stages of development,’ and Erik Erikson proposed ‘psychosocial theory of development,’ However, interestingly, the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (Colman, 2009) does not list the word ‘self’ separately and does not give its specific meaning or definition!

It is observed that in ordinary discourse the term self refers to “a warm sense or a warm feeling that something is ‘about me’ or ‘about us’, which are ‘self-feelings’ and ‘self-images’ associated with different senses – “sense of what they sound like, what they feel like tactically, a sense of their bodies in motion.” William James’s initial conceptualization of self referred to these aspects, but they received less empirical attention in modern psychology (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p. 69).

In addition to feeling about ourselves, we also think/reflect on ourselves. Everyone, whether one is a philosopher or not, sometime or the other, reflects on one’s self. It requires an ‘I’ who reflects on a ‘me’ as the ‘other’ or as an object of reflection. That is, the term self includes the ‘thinker’ and the ‘object of thinking.’ The one who does this is not only able to think, but is also aware of doing so; as the famous French philosopher Rene Descartes, said, *cogito ergo sum* – “I think therefore I am.” This process involves, *thinking, being aware of thinking, and taking self as an object for thinking* and it is termed as “reflexive capacity”. Contemporary theories of self do not distinguish between I and me. Instead they consider the three aspects together (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p. 71).

### 8.3.2 Identity

Another important concept is identity. Often the terms self and identity are used interchangeably in the literature. Erik Erikson (1951, 1968) a Freudian psychoanalyst proposed a widely used theory that focused on the development of identity via exploration and commitment. He extended his argument to social factors that influence one’s growth in contrast to the sexual urges which Freud emphasized. Hence, Erickson’s approach is known as ‘psychosocial’ and Freud’s theory is known as ‘psychosexual.’ Erikson used the term identity synonymous with what others termed self-concept.

However, Oyserman, Elmer & Smith (2012) suggest that the term identity can be conceptualized as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept. For example, one can have a religious identity that contains relevant content and goals, such as what to do, what to value, and how to behave. They note that we do not have one identity. Instead, we have identities. According to them, “*Identities* are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is.” (p. 69).

They also note that both the terms self and identity are used in two significant ways. First is, “in reference to the process of making sense of the world in terms of what matters to “me” or to the consequences of social contexts on a variety of beliefs and perceptions about the self, or simply to refer to membership in sociodemographic categories such as gender or social class ....” (ibid, p.74). Second, to “an implicit sense or a warm feeling of relevance and inclusion rather than a cold feeling of irrelevance and exclusion...” (ibid, p.74).

Social psychological and sociological theories of identity distinguish between *personal, social, and role identity*. “Personal identities reflect traits or characteristics that may feel separate from one’s social and role identities or linked to some or all of these identities... Thus, personal identities refer to content quite isomorphic with what is typically referred to as self-concept in the psychological literature.” (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p. 74).

“Social identities, as defined by Tajfel involve the knowledge that one is a member of a group, one’s feelings about group membership, and knowledge of the group’s rank or status compared to other groups. Though this definition does not focus much on the content of in group membership beyond knowledge, regard, and rank, other definitions

have highlighted that social identities include content. (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p. 74).

“Role identities reflect membership in particular roles (e.g., student, parent, professional) that require another person to play a complementary role. One cannot be a parent without a child, a student without teachers, or a professional without clients or peers who recognize one’s role.” (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p. 74).

### 8.3.3 Self-concept

According to Oyserman and Markus self-concepts are cognitive structures. They can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgements. As you have studied earlier in Section 8.3.1, self has the reflexive capacity with an “I” and “me” components. It is the “I” that thinks and “me” is the content of those thoughts. An important part of this “me” content involves mental concepts or ideas of who one is, was and will become. These mental concepts are the contents of self-concept. Since these concepts are about our identities together, they make up one’s *self-concept*. Self-concept is described variously, “*as what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself, one’s theory of one’s personality, and what one believes is true of oneself*” (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p.69). They are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one’s goals, and protect one’s sense of basic worth.

Thus, the age old philosophical questions of ‘who am I’ (*koham*, in Sanskrit) and ‘who are you’ (*khastvam*, in Sanskrit), relates to self, identity, and self-concept.

#### Self Assessment Questions I

1) How do psychologists describe the term self?

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2) What are the three types of identities?

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3) What is self concept?

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## 8.4 SELF, IDENTITY AND SELF-CONCEPT IN INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

When we consider the notions on self we find that in our culture also thinkers have defined and distinguished self-related ideas in a way similar to what modern psychologists have done. The main difference however emerges because of the spiritual worldview of our culture. We have to understand our self-related concepts and theories in this background (Salagame, 2011a). In Indian psychology we can distinguish two kinds of terms related to self and identity: (1) those that represent our spiritual side such as *ātman*, *purusha*, *jīva*, *jīvātman* and so on; and (2) those which are conceptual such as *aham*, *ahamkāra*, *ahambhāva*, *abhimāna*, and *asmita*.

### 8.4.1 Spiritual Terms

There are different terms related to the spiritual aspect. The first set of words refer to that which is real and existent. It is not imagination and it is not conceptual. Indian culture differentiates between *deha* and *Jīva* and affirms that both exist as entities. That is why when someone dies, the body is treated like a lifeless entity; whereas *Jīva* is believed to continue its journey. Therefore, *shrāddha karma*, rituals of death, has two portions. One for the dead body before it is cremated. The other is for *Jīva* to facilitate its journey further. This distinction between the physical and spiritual is the primary focus of Indian psychology and spirituality. Hence, we need to understand the two sets of concepts separately.

#### 8.4.1.1 Ātman

The term *ātman* is the most frequently used word to represent self. Many people are familiar with the usages *ātma sākshātkāra* (self-realization), *ātma jñāna* (self-knowledge), *ātma sthairyā* (self-determination/grit), *ātmābhimāna* (self-respect), *ātma samarpaṇa* (self-surrender) and so on. Among them *ātma sākshātkāra* and *ātma jñāna* often refer to spiritual experience and the term is used with an upper case as in *Ātma* and *Ātman* to represent it. This term is more frequently used in *Atharva Veda* than in *Rig Veda*. The word has undergone changes in its connotation from its early usages in the Vedas to the later Upanishads.

Tracing the origin and development of this term, S. K. Ramachandra Rao (1962) notes that the origin of the word *ātman* remains obscure, although there is a Greek word structurally similar to *ātman*, 'atmos,' meaning 'smoke,' 'vapour.' He suggests that Vedic *ātman* may be an alternate expression for *prāna* or *asu*, both of which indicate life, the former signifying the actual vital process and the latter stating vital principle. S.K.R. Rao observes that the term *ātman* lends itself to different interpretations depending upon where the emphasis is laid. For instance, Vedic commentator Sāyana 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 *ātman* is the dynamic principle of breathing. On the other hand, Nirukta (the branch of knowledge related to the semantics of Sanskrit words) attaches importance to the root *at*, which means 'to spread,' 'to pervade,' 'to fill.' Rao further notes that the suggestive ending of the word attracts modern scholars with '+an,' 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). (Salagame, 2008).

The understanding of *ātman* as the most essential or central vital principle as suggested by the emphases on breathing, movement, action, pervasiveness, filling, and enlivening,

seem to parallel the conceptualization of self by William James. 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 banished this separate principle, in Indian psychology it has occupied a central place. Ānandagiri, a later philosopher, provided a synthetic view of the centrality of *ātman* that was current in a rudimentary form in Vedic age. Ramachandra Rao 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). In one of the early Upanishads, all mental functions are considered as modifications of *Ātman* only (*Aitareya Upanishad*, Chapter III, *śloka* 1–4). (Salagame, et al., 2005; 2008).

#### 8.4.1.2 Purusha

Similarly, the word *purusha* is also used in the spiritual sense and even in the bio-psycho-social sense. In the former sense, it represents one of the fundamental principles of this universe along with *Prakṛti* as defined in Sāṃkhya system. Here it represents the principle of Consciousness and *Prakṛti* represent the principle of Materiality constituted of *triguna*, the three *guna* viz., *satva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. When it is used in the bio-psycho-social sense, it represents a ‘person’ in a gender neutral sense and refers to the individual self or soul. However, over the years, the term is also used to represent male by lay people and in common discourse. The principle of Consciousness inheres in every human being and to realize that, is the ultimate purpose of existence according to the Sāṃkhya system.

#### 8.4.1.3 Jīva

*Jīva* represents life as against *nirjīva* (lifeless). This distinction is equivalent to animate and inanimate. It has the connotations of energy, movement, and action all derived from vitality or life principle. It is this *Jīva* that is believed to depart from the physical body, and it is called death. *Jīva* is the equivalent of ‘soul,’ and it is common to say ‘it’ left the body. It is gender neutral. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna compares death to an ordinary event like throwing away a worn out cloth. He says, just as a person throws away a tattered cloth and puts on a new dress, the ‘person in the body’ (*dehī*) casts away the old or worn out physical body (*deha*) and takes on a new one (Ch. 2, *śloka*, 22<sup>1</sup>) and affirms that it is the *Jīva* that takes repeated births.

Padmapada, a foremost disciple of Adi Shankaracharya, describes the conditioned existence of *Jīva*. An English translation given by Safaya (1976, p. 213) is reproduced below.

*And that Jīva - of the nature of “not this” conditioned as ego in the waking and dream state; and conditioned in sleep by avidya which has within it trace of the impressions (that the inner sense has left behind) which is the opposition of Jñāna and which obstructs the light (of Atma) - keeps going forwards and backwards and as such is termed in Sruti, Smṛti in common parlance as Samsara, Jīva, vijñanaghana, vijñanatma, prajña, sariri, sarirah, atma, samprasadha, purusa, pratyagatma, karta, bhokta, and Ksetrajña. (Panchapadika of Padmapada XXXIV 135, Pp. 100-101)*

For the specific meaning of the terms used by Padmapada to describe the different conditions of *Jīva* see the Table 8aT in Section 8.4.2.2.

Jaina thinkers hold that everything in the universe is either *Jīva* (soul, spirit) that embodies

<sup>1</sup> *vāsāmsi jīrnāni yathā vihāya navāni grñhāti naroparāni |  
tathā sharīrāni vihāya jīrnānayāni samyāti navāni dehī||*

bliss, energy, and infinite consciousness or *ajīva*, all that is non-living. All living beings are souls (*Jīva*) “entrapped in a material (*ajīva*) body, a result of the interaction between these two.” *Jīva* includes plants, animals, and humans. *Ajīva* refers to ‘matter,’ ‘space,’ ‘time,’ the ‘medium of motion,’ and the ‘medium of rest.’ These two can neither be created nor destroyed, and they are eternal. However, mutual interaction between them can change their forms (Parikh, 2006, p.8). *Jīva* is conceived as the life force in an individual, which later comes to mean the empirical self/subject of phenomenal experience.

#### 8.4.1.4 Ātman and Jīva – Distinction

Though both *ātman* and *Jīva* are associated with the life principle, in the early Vedic literature, later as discussions on the nature of self progressed from the Vedic period to the Upanishadic period the two terms acquired different connotations and significance. Whereas *Jīva* represented an empirical entity that undergoes experiences in the three states and also life after life, *Ātman* served the spiritual core.

*Ātman* is understood as the innermost essence common to all beings, and it is the same as *Brahman* the fundamental principle of the universe in the *Upanishads*. It represents both awareness and energy. The Mandukya Upanishad provides a succinct definition of *Ātman* and emphasizes the transcendent nature.

*“The Fourth (turiya), the wise say, is not inwardly cognitive, nor outwardly cognitive, nor cognitive both-wise; neither is it an indefinite mass of cognition, nor collective cognition, nor non-cognition. It is unseen, unrelated, inconceivable, un-inferable, unimaginable, and indescribable. It is the essence of the one self-cognition common to all states of consciousness. All phenomena cease in it. It is peace. It is bliss; it is non-duality. This is the Self, and it is to be realized.”* (MU, 7, Tran. Swami Sarvananda, 1976).

Here *turiya* refers to the ‘ground’ of awareness, on which waking, dream, deep sleep, and other experiences happen with a ‘subject-object/self-other’ duality as ‘figure.’ It is also referred to as ‘pure consciousness’ and ‘pure awareness.’ Whereas the three states are given a specific name, *jagrat* (waking), *swapna* (dream) and *sushupti* (deep sleep) this ‘ground’ of awareness is just called fourth, *turiya* in Sanskrit. This is to emphasize that it is not one more state with different characteristics. It is considered as the essence of the ‘one self-cognition common to all the other states.’ It is the transcendent Self to be realized – *sa ātma sa vijneyaha*.

Mandukya Upanishad uses three terms to represent the self-sense associated with the three states viz., *viswa* or *vaishwānara*, *taijasa*, and *prajña*. On the other hand, *Ātman*, represent the Self in the intuitive sense that gives that feeling of continuity of one’s existence and which is beyond all kinds of cognition (Safaya, 1976). So, it is the *Jīva* referred to as *viswa*, *taijasa*, and *prajña* respectively in the waking, dream, and deep sleep.

Much of the discussion on the nature of self has taken place in the Upanishads. Many of the ideas in them have been later developed in *darśanas*, i.e., systems of Indian philosophy which are the primary sources to establish Indian psychology. Indian thinkers went a step ahead of lay people in their analysis of self and non-self. They declared that even the commonly understood self of *jagrat*, *viswa* or *vaishwānara* is also non-self and proclaimed that only true self is that ‘ground awareness,’ *Ātman*. The *rishis* attributed all phenomenal experiences to *Jīva* or *dehin* and regarded *Ātman* as ‘experience-less’ as the term experience is commonly understood concerning an empirical subject. They used the term *anubhūti*, instead of *anubhava*, which refers to phenomenal experience.

Therefore, they emphasized on delinking the self-sense from *Jīva*. Understanding this difference between the social and spiritual nature of self, and realizing the latter, *Ātma sākshātkāra*, is considered as the ultimate or supreme aim of human life which results in *moksha*, and regarded as *parama purushārtha* (Salagame, 2005).

The bone of contention between the orthodox systems of Indian thought and that of Buddhism is whether such an experience-less *Atman* is a reality at all. Buddhists do not admit that possibility, i.e., of ‘ground awareness’ or *Atman*. This is one of the critical, contentious issues that psychologists have to address in future research.

## 8.4.2 Psychological Terms

Indian traditions use some terms of a psychological nature that refers to self and identity. Among them *aham*, *ahamkāra*, *mamakāra*, *abhimāna*, and *asmita* are important and more commonly used. The word *aham* denotes ‘I’ and we can use it as a prefix to speak about ourselves as in ‘I am so and so.’ *Ahamkāra* technically means the ‘sense of agency’, i.e., one who acts, enjoys, and suffers. *Mamakāra* is the feeling of ‘me’. *Abhimāna* is the ‘feeling of involvement and identification.’ *Asmita* refers to our ‘identity’, which may be personal, social or role identity.

### 8.4.2.1 Aham and Ahamkāra

The term *ahamkāra* is derived from the Sanskrit word *aham* which is equivalent to *me* of the English language. So, in the question ‘who am I’, ‘*koham*’, the questioner is interested in the real nature of *aham*. We may think of ourselves in many ways. For example, Upanishads declared, *aham Brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman. One may also say *aham Ātman*, *aham Purushah*, *aham Jīvah*, and *aham Bhoktā* and so on. When one speaks of Brahman, it means the person has become one with the universe. When one speaks of Ātman or Purusha one is experiencing I at the level of pure consciousness. When one speaks of Jīva one is speaking of I as an entity undergoing cycles of birth and death. When one speaks of Bhoktā (experiencer) one is speaking of I at the mental level. These may be understood as referring to ontological, transcendental, empirical, and psychological categories. Therefore, the feeling of I or *aham* can happen to people at any level, and there are enormous individual differences (Salagame, et al., 2005; Salagame, 2011b).

In Advaita Vedanta, the feeling that “I am the doer” (*aham kartā*) is defined as *ahamkāra*. It is this sense of doer-ship or the “sense of agency” that is considered to be one of the primary characteristics or manifestations of *ahamkāra*. Therefore, it is regarded as a mental function. *Ahamkāra*, I-sense manifests in four different ways viz., as a sense of agency (*kartrtva*), differentiation/separation (I and You – *dvaita bhava*), individuality (*vaishishtya*), and identification (*abhimāna* and *sanga*). These are the four factors of *ahamkāra* (Salagame, 2005).

### 8.4.2.2 Psychological Terms Related to Experiences of Jīva

We already noted that according to Indian thought, *Jīva* is real. *Jīva* is conceived as the life force in an individual, which later comes to mean the empirical self/subject of phenomenal experience. It is the *Jīva* or *dehin* who undergoes all experiences in the three states and hence considered as real by all of us. It is the *Jīva* that undergoes conditioned existence and cycles of birth and death and has many functions. We find different terms being used to represent them. A list of them given by Padmapada cited in Section 8.4.1.3 have the following specific meaning used in different contexts (see Table below).

**Table 8aT: Specific meaning of the terms used by Padmapada to describe the different conditions of Jīva**

<i>Jīva</i> – soul;	<i>Pratyagātma</i> – self as Brahman
<i>Purusa</i> – human being	<i>Prajñā</i> – self as cognizer
<i>Sariri</i> – one who is embodied;	<i>Vijñānātma</i> – prime mover of discriminatory knowledge
<i>Sarirah</i> – the equipment that which enables the Jīva to function in the phenomenal world;	<i>Vijñāna ghana</i> – the embodiment of discriminatory knowledge with a spiritual dimension;
<i>Samsāri</i> – involved in worldly enjoyment and activity	<i>Ksetrajna</i> – knower of the field.
<i>Karta</i> – self as agent;	<i>Samprasādha</i> – the self-sense present in the dream
<i>Bhokta</i> – self as experiencer/enjoyer/sufferer	

Source: Salagame, et al., 2005

All the above terms have been used in Indian traditions with great sophistication in different contexts and they provide rich insights into our understanding of self and identity.

**Self Assessment Questions II**

1) What is the difference between ‘deha’ and ‘jiva’?

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2) Differentiate between Atman and Jiva.

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3) Define aham and ahamkāra.

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## 8.5 DEVELOPMENT OF SELF AND IDENTITY AS PER INDIAN TRADITIONS

More commonly a layperson's understanding of one's identity or self-sense is rooted in his/her daily experiences. The 'experiencer' or the 'subject' who participates in all experiences during the waking state is regarded as the real self. A layperson defines 'who one is' from his/her daily experiences during *jāgrat* (waking state). This includes our body, our mental states, and our social relationships. So we incorporate most experiences of *jāgrat* as part of our identity. Hence, a layperson's identity is bio-psycho-social. In simple terms, one's identity derives from, what does one identify oneself with. Body is the basis or foundation for the development of identity because, to begin with, we experience ourselves as someone in the physical body. But as we grow up, we also identify with many other things – material and non-material – all of which adds to our sense of identity. So we have identities, not just identity.

A layperson also usually treats specific experiences of waking as 'not me' and does not identify with them. All of us treat dream experiences as not part of our self though at the time of dreaming its reality is no less real than that of *jāgrat* experience. Similarly, there are many other types of experiences classified as paranormal or psychical, mystical, religious, and spiritual. Many people dismiss such experiences and do not consider as part of self. Freud, his followers and other psychologists who adhered to materialistic perspective considered them as unreal, a figment of imagination, hallucination, delusion, far fetched, regressive, pathological and so on. In other words, those experiences are treated as 'non-self.' Thus, whatever one tends to identify with becomes part of self and whatever one denies becomes non-self. Therefore, a layperson's identity is limited by bio-psycho-social aspects experienced in the waking state. Hence, non-self includes a vast domain of possible human experiencing (Salagame, 2005). Most modern psychological conceptions of identity and self-sense are thus related to and limited by the experiences in our ordinary waking state.

In contrast, in India we have a history of several centuries in which hundreds of *rshi*, *muni*, *yogi*, *siddha*, *avadhuta* and such other exceptional people have confirmed and reconfirmed that the range of human experience is not limited to *jāgrat* state. We can go beyond the limitations of time and space and experience phenomena which are not ordinary. They have devised many techniques all of which are generically termed as Yoga to transcend. Based on their experiences only they have realized that the bio-psycho-social self that we develop is limited in scope and we can expand it to include our spiritual side. Hence, they assert that our 'true identity' lies in this.

Therefore, in realizing our true self and identity, two processes play a crucial role. One is *viveka* (discrimination), between bio-psycho-social self and a Transcendental Self-awareness emerging from "pure consciousness". The other is *vairāgya*, the process of dis-identification or detachment to bio-psycho-social self-sense. As long as we are still involved in social life fulfilling our biological and psychological needs, we tend to strengthen the bio-psycho-social identity. That will not help to experience 'pure consciousness', because we are always immersed in waking state mundane existence. Hence, there is a need to develop detachment and withdraw from active social life. But that cannot be done without reasonably fulfilling our needs to some level of saturation. Therefore, ancient spiritual masters have proposed four stages of life – *brahmacharya* (studentship), *gārhastya* (householder), *vānaprastha* (retiring to the forest) and *sanyāsa* (renunciation). While in the first stages we develop our bio-psycho-social self and identity, it is in the last two stages that we will be free to explore consciousness and

realize our true identity. There are individual differences and people may skip some of these stages. But this course of development is suggested for most people.

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## 8.6 THE CONCEPT OF SELF IN RELATION TO INDIAN FAMILY AND CULTURE

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Let us now explore the concept of self in relation to Indian family and culture. In this regard, studies have been done by various cross-cultural psychologists. Cross-cultural psychologists are those who are interested in studying the relevance and applicability of modern psychological concepts and theories which were first developed in the West. In the course of their research, they gradually realized that there are many limitations to the universalization of psychological concepts, theories, laws, and principles. They found significant cultural differences in many domains. Among them self and identity are one of the primary areas of focus. It is found from the cultural comparisons that Westerners and non-Westerners, particularly Asians, think about themselves in characteristically different ways. Those differences are described in terms of specific constructs such as “individualism” and “collectivism” (Hofstede, 1980), “independence” and “interdependence” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and “relational self” (Ho, 1993; Mascolo, Misra, & Rapisardi, 2004). Based on such studies some generalizations are drawn that Western people have more individualism, independence, and autonomy in how and what they think about their self and identity. Asians tend to be more collectivistic, interdependent, and relationally oriented in their self-construal. However, recent researchers show that such differences can be present within the same societies and the distinctions are not absolute. Further it is also demonstrated in cross-cultural studies that even the same person may think about oneself in both ways depending on circumstances across time and space and a dichotomous way of conceptualizing self and associating them with American and Indian (Mascolo, Misra, & Rapisardi, 2004) and East and West (Vignoles, et al., 2016) is not tenable.

When we consider how self and identity are developed in the Indian context, we can agree with many researchers that we are guided primarily by a group or collectivist orientation. Caste, community, religion, language, and family lineage continue to exercise a dominant role in our identity formation, even though under the influence of Westernization and Globalization we are tending to be more individualistic in the present generation. Because of the predominant collectivist orientation we develop thinking more about ‘others’ and society at large than about ‘me’. In other words, our self-concept is dominated more by elements of social and role identities rather than those of personal characters.

Oyserman, Elmer & Smith (2012) note that in the same person there can be “me” and “us” aspects in the self. Focusing on ‘me aspect’ can lead to an “immersed individualistic sense of self” which leads people to think of themselves regarding “how one is separate and different from others.” On the other hand, focusing on ‘us aspect’ will lead people to consider “how they are similar and connected via relationships” which is sometimes called “collectivistic perspective.”

Mascolo, Misra, & Rapisardi (2004) from their comparative study of an American and Indian sample (n=38 in each sample) have found that there can be four different ways of construing our self in relationships viz., *independent*, *interdependent*, *relational*, and *encompassing*. They found that Indian participants reported more of relational and encompassing self-descriptions as compared to American participants. Relational self is a way of construing ourselves in which I and the other are not treated as entirely separate, though there are two or more persons involved. “From this view, although

selves are distinct from each other, they are not independent of each other...self and other act with reference to each other; neither is independent of the other's functioning." (p. 23-24). According to them "encompassing refer to a sense of the self being subsumed by the other or otherwise embedded in a relationship that extends beyond the self alone." (p. 24). This type of self sense "arises in relationships where one person is obligated to, is responsible for, or views himself or herself as the caretaker of the other." (p. 24).

The authors observe that encompassing sense of self experience is likely to be represented explicitly in hierarchical relationships of the kind found in India between parent-child, superior-subordinate, and husband-wife (and even sibling) relationships. In such relationships neither person is passive. Both the superior and the subordinate have moral duties about each other, even if those duties exhibit hierarchical asymmetry. A father, mother, superior, or brother may be responsible for protecting a child, subordinate, or sibling. In turn the latter individual plays a role in actively respecting, obeying, and appreciating the sacrifice and care provided by the elders. This they point out is part of what we call *dharma*. However, an encompassing sense of self does not necessarily imply a blurring of boundaries between self and other. Each person in the relation knows what is expected of him or her, which is represented in the word *kartavya*, duty.

Thus, *dharma* and *kartavya* play a significant role in our development of self and identity, in the Indian context. The four stages of life, *āśrama*, as they are called has its *dharma* and *kartavya*. A *brahmachāri*, a *gṛhastha*, a *vānaprasthin* and a *sanyāsi*, each has his/her *dharma* and *kartavya* and that becomes part of self-representation.

### Self Assessment Questions III

- 1) A lay person's identity is characterized by spiritual aspects. (True/False)
- 2) The four stages of life are ....., ....., ....., and .....
- 3) Asians tend to be more interdependent and collectivistic as compared to the western people. (True/False)

## 8.7 LET US SUM UP

The difference between the conceptions of self and identity in modern psychology and Indian psychology can be summarized as follows. Modern psychology affirms a narrow range of human experience as real and denies a vast domain as unreal. Therefore, most concepts of modern psychology are with the waking state and to some extent to dreams. Second, since our experiences in these states are bio-psycho-social, current psychological theories of self and identity are only rooted in these levels. In contrast, in Indian psychology not only waking, dream, and deep sleep is recognized, other kinds of human possibilities such as paranormal, mystical, and spiritual are also validated. Since the likelihood of experiencing pure consciousness is upheld, the notion of transcendental Self is also affirmed. Accordingly, Indian psychology declares all human experiences involving subject-object/self-other dichotomy as relatively real and are only 'figures' in the backdrop of a 'ground awareness', which is the only real Self and the rest as non-self. Hence, for them, *jīva* (soul) or *dehin* (owner of the body) is also non-self, and it is a wrong understanding to treat non-self as Self. This is called *ajñāna* (lack of transcendental Self-knowledge) and that leads to wrong identifications with non-self - *jīva* or *dehin* instead of *Ātman*, which is the root of human problems and suffering (Salagame, 2005).

The solution for human suffering, therefore, lies in first obtaining the right understanding of the distinction between non-self and Self called *viveka* (discrimination) through the process of listening to what *rishis* say (*śravaṇa*) (in modern times includes other means of acquiring information) and reflection (*manana*). Then make a conscious attempt to overcome the wrong identification through a process of meditation (*nidhidhyāsana*). Then a person becomes *jñāni* (Self-realized). Therefore, in the *rishis* scheme of understanding of self and identity, two processes play a crucial role, one is *viveka* (discrimination), and another is *vairāgya*, the process of dis-identification or detachment. This is the Indian way.

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## 8.8 KEY WORDS

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<b>Self</b>	: refers to feeling, thinking and reflecting about me.
<b>Identity</b>	: is conceptualized as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of self-concept.
<b>Self concept</b>	: are cognitive structures that includes content, attitudes and evaluative judgement.
<b>Purusha</b>	: refers to a person in a gender neutral sense and indicates the individual self or soul.
<b>Turiya</b>	: refers to the 'ground' of awareness and means the 'pure consciousness'.
<b>Ahamkara</b>	: is defined as the feeling that "I am the doer".
<b>Relational Self</b>	: refers to a way of construing ourselves in which I and the other are not treated as entirely separate, though there are two or more persons involved.

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## 8.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Self Assessment Questions I

- 1) Psychologists describe the term self in terms of feeling, thinking and reflecting.
- 2) The three types of identities are personal, social and role identities.
- 3) Self-concept is described variously, "as what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself, one's theory of one's personality, and what one believes is true of oneself." (Oyserman, Elmer & Smith, 2012, p.69).

### Self Assessment Questions II

- 1) 'Deha' refers to the body which is treated like a lifeless entity after death; whereas 'Jiva' is believed to continue its journey even after death.
- 2) *Jīva* represented an empirical entity that undergoes experiences in the three states of 'jagrat' (waking), 'swapna' (dream), and 'sushupti' (deep sleep), and also life after life. *Ātman* is understood as the innermost essence common to all beings, it is the spiritual core, and it is the same as *Brahman* the fundamental principle of the universe in the *Upanishads*.
- 3) The term *ahamkāra* is derived from the Sanskrit word *aham* which is equivalent to *me* of the English language. In Advaita Vedanta, the feeling that "I am the doer" (*aham kartā*) is defined as *ahamkāra*. It is this sense of doer-ship or the "sense of agency" that is considered to be one of the primary characteristics or manifestations of *ahamkāra*.

### Self Assessment Questions III

- 1) False
- 2) Four stages of life – *brahmacharya* (studentship), *gārhastya* (householder), *vānaprastha* (retiring to the forest) and *sanyāsa* (renunciation).
- 3) True

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## 8.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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- 1) Distinguish the terms self, identity, and self-concept.
- 2) Describe the worldview guiding the Indian concept of self and identity.
- 3) Distinguish between spiritual and psychological terms used to describe self and identity.
- 4) Examine how development of self and identity is conceptualized in India.
- 5) Distinguish between Western and Indian conception of self.
- 6) Examine the role of family and culture in India in the development of self sense.

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