

***Handbook of Psychology* by K. Ramakrishna Rao, Anand C. Paranjpe and Ajit K. Dalal (Editors), Foundation Books, Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd, 2008, 648 pages, Rs. 895, ISBN 978-81-7596-602-4**

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The *Handbook* includes thirty one articles written by distinguished scholars around the globe that persuasively draws our attention to some of the significant psychological insights contained in the classical Indian wisdom. Psychology that we teach, learn and practice in India is mostly western. It is widely felt by Indian researchers and scholars that the discipline in India is in a deplorable state and that there is a need to learn from our own traditions and techniques. Indian psychology paves the way for an inclusive psychology, as it not only studies first-person phenomena such as subjective experiences and associated cognitive processes, but also includes the investigation of extraordinary states of consciousness and human abilities. Some transformation practices such as meditation and *yoga* are widely gaining popularity in the West. And this expansion of the subject matter is helping Indian psychology to be established as a scientific discipline. However, due to the scarcity of operational teaching materials, colleges and universities are not offering any courses in Indian psychology. In view of the above need, a group of eminent Indian psychologists came together under the name of 'Indian Psychology Book Project' (IPBP) in the year 2003.

This *Handbook* is the first in the continuing series of books of the IPBP. The contributors are from various disciplines like academic psychology, classical Indian philosophy, religious studies, management, psychotherapeutic practice and pedagogic disciplines. This book works towards bringing out the characteristics of Indian psychology, thereby exploring the concepts, methods and models of Indian psychology that systematically and scientifically understands human nature.

The book is split into three parts. The first part explains the various systems and schools of Indian psychological thought beginning with early systems of Jainism and Buddhism and ending with Ayurveda. It also discusses the transpersonal psychology in the *Bhagavad Gita* and gives a wide coverage to yoga psychology. The second part focuses on specific topics and themes such as motivation, personality, cognition,

emotion, consciousness and values. The third part discusses the applications and implications of Indian psychology. This includes therapeutic aspects, organizational psychology and a case study in self-realization.

The first section opens with Jagadish Prasad Jain's systematic presentation on Jaina psychology. He is a Jain by religion and has authored twelve books on Jain religion and philosophy. With the explanation of the concepts of *jiva*, the evolving nature of reality, the dual nature or two aspects of mind, and *nimittakarana* (the conscious states and brain activities acting as extrinsic, indirect, auxiliary cause of each other), the author features the fruitful approach of Jaina psychology to deal with the mind-body problem, while preserving the mental-physical distinction.

In this section, there are six chapters on Buddhist psychology. The first of these chapters is on early Buddhist psychology by David Kalupahana, known worldwide for his writings on Buddhism as a philosophy, religion and psychology. Kalupahana focuses on the three basic concepts in early Buddhism—"thought", "mind" and "consciousness", which in his view "explain the fundamental aspects of the psychological speculations of the Buddha". The fifth chapter titled 'Varieties of Cognition in Early Buddhism' by Premasiri, a distinguished philosopher and Pali scholar from Sri Lanka, discusses different modes of knowing relative to the purpose for which each mode is perceived. Drawing out the implications of the varieties of knowing discussed in Buddhism, Premasiri points out that Buddhist psychology differs from Western psychology on two grounds. Firstly, unlike scientific psychology, in Buddhism facts and values go hand-in-hand. Secondly, Buddhism by its five-fold classification of cognition widens the restrictive methodology of empirical sciences that have shut out a large body of genuine traditional knowledge, and works toward including transformational knowing, which is private but objective.

This chapter is followed by '*alaya-vijnana*', the unconscious in Buddhism, by William Waldron who begins with a comparison to Freud's work on the 'unconscious mind' from the Western world. Further, Waldron not only reviews the original *Yogacara* literature and discusses it in the context of what he calls *Abhidharma* problematic, but he also relates it to contemporary developments in evolutionary psychology. The seventh chapter on the Buddhist theories of persons developed in India by James Duerlinger, presents an incisive analysis of the concept of person as discussed by the *Abhidharma* theorists, Pudgalavadins as well as Chandrakirti.

The next chapter is contributed by William Mikulas, a psychologist from the US, wherein he provides a Western psychological interpretation of the fundamentals of Buddhist thought with special attention to integration with cognitive science, behaviour modification, psychoanalysis and transpersonal psychology. He uses the expression "essential Buddhism" to mean the fundamental principles of Buddhist thought. Considering suffering, clinging and the four noble truths as the basic constructs of

essential Buddhism, and incorporating the Buddhist meditational techniques of concentration and mindfulness, Mikulas comes up with a psychological theory which he calls "conjunctive psychology". The chapter concludes with the assertion that "Buddhist psychology has much to offer to Western psychology, including new conceptualizations, theories, and practices." At the same time, he points out that "Western psychology has much to offer to Buddhist psychology and practices," and, therefore, pleads for confluence.

The chapter titled 'Transpersonal Psychology in the *Bhagavad Gita*: Reflections on Consciousness, Meditation, Work and Love' by Sangeetha Menon echoes a wholesome account of spiritual living depicted through the teachings of the *Gita*. The chapter begins with the physiognomy of depression, and argues that it can be traced to the distress of Arjuna as depicted in the *Gita*. She concludes that *karma yoga* as enunciated in the *Gita* "will help the cultivation of positive emotions by reducing negative emotions. The *Gita* theory of meditation helps to strengthen the mental faculty by the therapy of watching thoughts."

The following three chapters are on *Yoga Psychology*. Ramakrishna Rao and Anand Paranjpe, two of the editors, begin with a brief account of *Samkhya-Yoga* metaphysics and goes on to state the psychological assumptions contained therein. With an attempt to construct a coherent psychological system for future study and research, they explain the basic concept of consciousness, mind cognition and *Samadhi*. The chapter also discusses the applications of *yoga* not only for health and adjustment but more importantly for personal transformation.

William Braud, in his chapter on *yoga* and psychic powers (*siddhis*) discusses the principles and practices contained in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*. It discusses parapsychology (psi research), that is, the empirical and scientific study of *siddhis*; talks about the interrelationship between *Yoga-Sutras*, *Siddhis* and psi-research. Braud concludes that the practice of *yoga* "can be associated with certain extraordinary accomplishments and with more effective ordinary accomplishments." He also deals with the alternative modes of interpretation, implications, applications and extensions of *Patanjali Yoga-Sutras*.

The final chapter on 'Yoga Psychology and *Samkhya* Metaphysic' by Eugene Taylor, an internationally recognized scholar on the life and work of William James, and Judith G. Sugg argues that the philosophy accompanying the popular *yoga* practices in the West "appears to be derived more from the Vedantic interpretation of the original *Yoga* texts, rather than that of *Samkhya* metaphysics".

The chapter on 'Psychology in *Advaita Vedanta*' tradition by Anand Paranjpe and Ramakrishna Rao aims at interpreting the consciousness and self, the two being the core of *Advaita* system as psychological concepts that are significantly related to current

psychological issues of concern. One of the distinctive marks of *Advaita*, they point out, is the recognition of the fourth state of consciousness (*turiya*), cultivation of which enables the person to achieve self-realization. This is followed by a discussion on *Nyaya-Vaisesika* system by V.N. Jha, a *Nyaya* thinker and Sanskrit scholar, who presents issues relating to the relation between language and cognition and the different elements involved in the process of cognition.

The last chapter in the section on systems and schools is by Malavika Kapur, a senior psychologist, well known for her studies in developmental psychology. This chapter on Ayurveda provides the scientific methodology involved in Ayurveda and explains the psychological theories in it, with a special focus on mind and consciousness. She stresses on its developmental perspective and the child rearing practices based on them.

Part II of the *Handbook* focuses on a variety of topics ranging from perception, motivation, personality, consciousness, to cognition and emotion. Chapter 16 by S.R. Bhatt, an Indian philosopher and eminent scholar, gives a detailed account of perception with a review of views of other classical Indian philosophical systems and their limitations, as seen from the Buddhist perspective.

In the chapter on motivation, A.S. Dash says that it is believed by Indian thinkers that actions guided by *moha*, delusion, leads to maladjustment and harmful consequences, whereas those voluntary actions based on due deliberation and devoid of preoccupation with excessive cravings result in happiness and ultimately to self-realization.

Lilavati Krishnan and V.R. Manoj, in their chapter on Indian Psychology of values, bring out a special reference to the concept of *daanam* (giving). Considering *daanam* as a perennial value in Indian thought and tradition, the authors analyse it from various perspectives and compares with the Western notion of pro-social behaviour. They conclude with their suggestion of possible convergences that may be applicable in wider cultural contexts.

Part II concludes with Aruna Mohan's comprehensive essay on J. Krishnamurti, who is an eminent philosopher and spiritual teacher. Being a devout scholar and disciple of Krishnamurti, she explains Krishnamurti's emphasis on self-knowing for experiencing transcendences in one's self.

The third section begins with Michael Miovic, a psychiatrist and Sri Aurobindo scholar, reviewing the history, methods and aims of psychotherapy as practiced in the West and attempts to integrate them into the world views of Indian Psychology. He believes that Indian Psychology can help expand the conceptual framework of psychotherapy by providing an inclusive consciousness perspective. This section calls for reorienting Indian research in organizational psychology employing Indian concepts

and models. In the following chapter, Sam Manickam, a practising psychologist, draws out the challenging implications of the applicability of native concepts and models for future work.

Chapter 27 on meditation by Jean Kristellar and Kobita Rikhye describes the major Indian classical meditative traditions, their entry into the West and their contemporary forms. It provides an extensive review of empirical research within the framework of what they call “the multi-domain developmental model of meditation effects.” The chapter on Sri Ramana Maharshi by Anand Paranjpe is an exploration of the *Advaita* concept of self-realization in the life of a person reputed to have achieved a state of self-realization.

The *Handbook* concludes with the chapter titled, ‘Altered States of Consciousness and the Spiritual Traditions: The Proposal for the Creation of State-Specific Sciences’ by Charles Tart, a pioneer in popularizing studies of altered state of consciousness. He expresses the hope that “essential scientific method can be used to winnow and refine spirituality”, and “essential spirituality can refine and guide scientific endeavour in a similar way.” He concludes by saying that Indian psychology is one of the possible venues for that kind of scientific-spirituality symbiosis.

The book aims at explaining Indian Psychology in a very systematic and lucid manner, and brings out the relevance of Indian Psychology to contemporary psychological study and research. It successfully puts forth an Indian psychology that is, a psychology that is practical, positive, holistic and inclusive. The book has been well compiled and is more than a classroom textbook; however, it might be slightly hard-hitting for those with little or no philosophical background, as such, some of the chapters are essentially philosophical in their presentation. Indian psychology has the potential to be the forerunner of future psychology. Thus, the *Handbook of Indian Psychology* is a right and earnest step towards this direction by the Indian Psychology Book Project (IPBP).