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THE INDIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN DISCIPLINE AND "THE DESTINY OF ONE NATION", 1905–1947*

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In the age of decolonization, Indian psychology engaged with and nationalized itself within global networks of ideas. While psychology was eventually applied by public intellectuals in explicitly political arenas, this essay focuses on the initial mobilization of the discipline's early Indian experts, led by the founder of the Indian Psychological Association, Narendranath Sengupta. Although modern critics have harshly judged early Indian psychologists for blind appropriation of European concepts, an analysis of the networks through which the science of psychology was developed challenges this oversimplification. Early Indian psychologists developed their discipline within a simultaneously transnational and nationalistic context, in which European ideas overlapped with ancient texts, creating a deliberately "Indian" brand of psychology. As the discipline of psychology exploded across the world, Indian psychologists developed a science of swaraj*, enabling synergies between modern psychological doctrine, philosophy and ancient texts. This paper explores the networks of ideas within which modern Indian psychology was developed, the institutional and civil environment in which it matured, and the framework through which it engaged with and attempted to claim credence within transnational scientific networks.*

In his 1934 Presidential Address to the Psychological Section of the Indian Science Congress (PSISC), Manmatha Nath Banerji argued that psychology was the crucial fix desperately needed by a dying world, plagued by war and economic insecurity:

There is no denying of the fact that Experimental Psychology is the youngest of all experimental sciences but it seems that Psychology being the science of the mind [and] the

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ruler of the phenomenal world, is destined to play the most important and predominating role . . . in the welfare of mankind in the near future.[1]

According to Banerji and his peers, psychology had the power to guide the world through the perils of modernity. Further, they believed that India had the power to offer unique support to the global community, through the vessel of psychology. As British dominance in India drew to a close, India's early psychologists engaged with transnational and multidisciplinary ideas to develop a discipline worthy of both international credibility and national relevance, a global modern science grounded in India's nascent nationhood.

Although the interaction between mental health sciences and the colonial state is becoming a field of increased historical interest, the role of indigenous psychological movements has received little attention.[2] Outside India, Plotkin's 2001 book *Freud in the Pampas* charts the passage and adaptation of psychoanalysis to Argentina. Similar, smaller-scale studies undertaken by Kapila and Hartnack have devoted attention to the development of Indian psychoanalysis;[3] as a discipline, however, early Indian psychology has not been adequately studied as a locus for intellectual dialogue and a pathway for Indian intellectuals to access and define modernity within a scientifically global and politically nationalist context. Although psychology became the fodder of public intellectuals and politicians, it was early Indian psychologists who pioneered the development of modern Indian psychology. This essay will explore the ideological construction of the formal discipline as a project of perfect synthesis, poised to adapt and transcend the bounds of philosophy and science, ancient and modern thought, and transnational intellectual traditions.

In *The Dialectical Imagination*, cultural critic Martin Jay challenged the notion that intellectual thought exists outside the bounds of modern life. Instead, he argued that intellectuals work to bridge the gap between the "externalisation of [intellectual] thought" and reality.[4] Jay argued that the sciences of the mind offered intellectuals the perfect adhesive for disparate humanist and scientific

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1 M. Banerji, "Applied Psychology", *Indian Journal of Psychology* (hereafter *IJP*) 9/1 (1934), 1–18, 2.

2 For more information on the historiography of colonial mental health science see M. Vaughan, "Introduction", in M. Vaughan and S. Mahone, eds., *Psychiatry and Empire* (Basingstoke, 2007), 1–16.

3 See, for example, S. Kapila, "The 'Godless' Freud and His Indian Friends: An Indian Agenda for Psychoanalysis", in Vaughan and Mahone, *Psychiatry and Empire*, 124–52; and C. Hartnack, *Psychoanalysis in India* (New Delhi, 2001).

4 M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (London, 1973), xxviii–xxix.

disciplines, and the ideal vessel for communicating political and social ideologies.[5] Although Jay's analysis was in reference to the leftist intellectuals of the Frankfurt school, his portrayal is applicable to the study of late colonial Indian psychology. Invented at the end of the nineteenth century and expanded to encompass a multiplicity of definitions, psychology was the ideal discipline for intellectuals to "bridge the gap" between science, nationalism and the pursuit of various manifestations of modernity.

INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY IN ANCIENT TIMES

Although the history of psychology as a bounded discipline dates from 1879, when German doctor and academic Wilhelm Wundt set up his research laboratory in Leipzig, the study of human behaviour pre-dates Wundt by millenia. As twentieth-century Indian psychologists eagerly pointed out, many ancient Hindu texts can also be described as psychological tracts, where philosophy, science and religion are seamlessly interwoven to create a unique approach to the study of the mind. Before outlining the twentieth-century trajectory of the modern discipline, it is crucial to lay out the history of ancient Indian psychology, as it was remembered by the discipline's modern pioneers. Many of the Upanishads, a set of scriptures devoted to developing knowledge of self and reality, contain psychological treatments of human nature and organization.[6] The centrality of psychology in the Upanishads is illustrated in the fact that the scriptures are concerned with *brahmavidya*—literally the science of God—attained not through empirical study of exterior phenomena, but through inwardly focused scientific study of human reality.[7]

The psychology of Vedic ideology is also described in India's most celebrated ancient psychological text, the Bhagavad-Gita. The Gita consists of a battlefield conversation between Krishna, a central Hindu god, and Arjuna, one of the heroes of the Mahabarata, the famous epic containing the Gita. A major battle is about to begin, and Arjuna is suddenly wracked with doubt as he realizes that his battlefield opponents are also his teachers, family and friends. He turns to Krishna for guidance, and Krishna responds to the warrior's insecurity with detailed descriptions of ancient and seminal Hindu philosophies. Although not technically an Upanishad, the Gita is essentially a summary of ancient Hindu thought and Vedic philosophy.[8] Moreover, the Gita provides an initial clue of

5 See, for example, Jay's discussion of Marxism in ibid., 92.

6 H. Nakamura and T. Leggett, *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy* (Delhi, 1990), 10–12.

7 See E. Easwaran, "Introduction", in Easwaran, ed., *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Tomales, CA, 2007), 17.

8 Ibid., 48.

the close, subtle link between Indian psychology, public intellectualism and nationalist thought. The 2010 *Modern Intellectual History* forum on the Gita highlighted the extensive influence of the text on both transnational and distinctly domestic networks of ideas, providing context for dialogue on subjects from literature to liberalism to revolution.[9] The Gita's influence on the development of Indian psychology is similarly immense. As Kapila and Devji point out, the Gita's "lack of historicity made the text potent for the future".[10] For India's early psychologists, the text was ancient without being old-fashioned, thus providing an alluring package of innovative "Indian" concepts supported by the credibility of antiquity. In the twentieth century, the Gita served as a seminal text for both Mahatma Gandhi and early Indian psychologists, all of whom linked the ancient thoughts to their modern activities of non-violent rebellion and psychological practice.

Thus, when stirrings of modern psychology born in a Leipzig laboratory first reached India at the start of the twentieth century, the discipline was not quite foreign, and not quite familiar. In one sense, psychology had lived in India since antiquity; however, having had its heyday in the first millennia BCE, the science of the mind in India had lain untouched for millennia. With the advent of modern psychology and the movement of Western ideas, psychology's dormant status was about to change. As India moved towards decolonization, the formal discipline of psychology experienced an unprecedented explosion. While Indian nationalists fought for legal independence, early pioneers of Indian psychology worked to secure their intellectual freedom and scientific authority, in the hopes of earning for India a seat among the world's modern nations—not as a dependent pupil, but as a global leader—in the nascent field of psychology.[11]

THE WIDENING SPHERE OF WESTERN INTELLECTUAL INTERACTION

In the development of their discipline, Indian psychologists drew on a wide range of sources, extending far beyond the bounds of the British Empire.

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9 S. Kapila and F. Devji, "The Bhagavad Gita and Modern Thought: Introduction", *MIH* 7/2 (2010), 269–73. See also C. Bayly, "India, the Bhagavad Gita and the World," *MIH* 7/2 (2010), 275–95; and M. Sinka, "Corrigibility, Allegory and Universality: A History of the Gita's Transnational Reception, 1785–1945", *MIH* 7/2 (2010), 297–317.

10 Kapila and Devji, "Introduction", 272.

11 While this paper explores the development of Indian psychology, it is important to recognize the body of work arguing that early Indian psychology was derivative (see, for example, A. Nandy, "The Non-paradigmatic Crisis in Indian Psychology: Reflections on a Recipient Culture Science", *IJP* 49/1 (1974), 1–20, 7.

There is ample historiography outlining the impact of English education on the development of an Indian intellectual elite.[12] However, historians such as Andrew Sartori are expanding our understanding of the intellectual sphere of influence that energized India's educated elite. Britain was an element of the West, but was not the West in its entirety; rather, at the turn of the twentieth century, Indians were increasingly steeped in German, French and American schools of thought, through both direct and indirect diffusion of ideas. In "Beyond Culture-Contact and Colonial Discourse: 'Germanism' in Colonial Bengal", Sartori charted the passage of German ideas, from Germany to Britain and finally to colonial Bengal, where German-influenced philosophies were adapted for nationalist discourse. By his account, when the Bengali elite actively embraced German ideas in the twentieth century, the same ideas had already been infused and adapted within the Indian context for nearly a century.[13]

For the story of Indian psychology, this internationally expansive framework of the transmission of ideas is important for two reasons. From a practical perspective, German thinkers—namely Wundt, Hegel and Kant—and the Austrian Freud played a crucial role in the development of Indian psychology, as did the nineteenth-century Bengali elite, who created the intellectual atmosphere which spawned the twentieth-century discipline. From a theoretical perspective, Sartori's situation of ideas within a global framework eliminates the need to question the "dependence" of Indian psychologists on their colonial occupiers. Rather than debating the historiographical representation of a colonial elite parroting its master, Sartori's geographical contextualization of ideas renders such a dialogue overly simplistic. If Indian psychologists appropriated ideas from the British, it is likely that those same ideas were borrowed from German thought, and there is no consistency in branding one of those transactions a global intellectual dialogue, and the other intellectual imperialism.[14] Bayly's characterization of the colonial history of Indian liberalism also rings true for Indian psychology: even in an India under physical British domination, the intellectual seeds of Indian psychology were already, and would remain, transnational.[15]

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[12] See, for example, S. Bose and A. Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York, 2004), 64–6.

[13] A. Sartori, "Beyond Culture-Contact and Colonial Discourse: 'Germanism' in Colonial Bengal", *MIH* 4/1 (2007), 91–3.

[14] A. Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History* (Chicago, 2008), 19.

[15] C. Bayly, "South Asian Liberalism under Strain, c.1900–1940", 2007 Wiles lecture series, Queen's University Belfast, 18 May 2007.

INDIAN SCIENCE AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF THE MIND

The transnational atmosphere that fostered Indian psychology was reflective of a more actively politicized aspect of the discipline's development: the quest towards the intellectual decolonization of the Indian mind.[16] While Indian colonial elites embraced the introduction of Western sciences, which they perceived as harbingers of much-needed modernity, they were equally keen to use Western sciences to support the development of authentic, modern Indian disciplines.[17] By the turn of the twentieth century, Indian intellectuals were increasingly interested in the creation of a national science academy, featuring a fusion of Western and Indian science in the pursuit of mental decolonization through modernity.[18] To borrow Ngugi Wa Thiongo's language, Indian scientific thinkers were engaged in the "decolonisation of the mind", not through the re-emphasis of vernacular language, but through that of the development of Indian science. Although psychology entered the Indian scientific canon slightly after the heyday of scientific enchantment, which Kapila dates from 1890 until 1910, the scientific environment remained fertile for the growth of Indian psychology.[19]

Scholars mark the formal inception of Indian psychology from 1905, when Calcutta University, at the behest of Vice-Chancellor Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, was the first to offer psychology as an independent subject. Calcutta would remain the locus of Indian psychology—ten years later, the university was the site of the nation's first psychological laboratory. Calcutta's laboratory was as notable for its personnel as for its novelty: the facility was run by Dr Narendrenath Sengupta, who had studied psychology in the United States under the tutelage of Dr Hugo Munsterberg, a German American psychologist who had worked under Wundt in Leipzig. Sengupta, who was widely seen as the Indian father of experimental psychology, became involved in nationalism as a student at Bengal National College. His life is representative of the ongoing challenge for early Indian psychologists to fuse dissonant strands of science with nationalism, and European ideologies with Hindu theologies, in a quest to generate a discipline deserving of both international acclaim and domestic authenticity.

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16 C. Bayly, "Afterword", *MIH* 4IV/1 (2007), 163–9.

17 D. Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India*, The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 3, part 5 (Cambridge, 2000), 2.

18 Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine*, 2. For a wider study of the Indian pursuit of decolonization and tensions between history, modernity and nationhood see P. Duara's chapter "The Critique of Modernity in India and China", in Tan Chung, ed., *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China* (New Delhi, 1998).

19 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi, 1981). S. Kapila, "Godless Freud", 126.

NARENDRENATH SENGUPTA AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

While most histories of Indian mental-health sciences have focused on Girindrasekhar Bose, my work here differs from Kapila's, Hartnack's, Nandy's and Arnold's accounts of Indian psychology, in my positioning of Sengupta as the progenitor of the modern discipline. In order to focus solely on the development of modern Indian psychology, I am sidelining Bose, whose major contributions lay in the field of psychoanalysis, which I am conscious of differentiating (despite overlap of personnel and ideas) from experimental psychology.[20] Bose was a respected member of transnational and domestic psychoanalytic communities; however, the identity of Indian psychology was shaped under the tutelage of Narendrenath Sengupta.

Born in 1889 into a family from a medical Brahmanic sub-caste, Sengupta's association with science started at birth. His formal engagement with psychology began in 1910, when he was sent with a handful of other promising students to study at famous American universities, with the purpose of developing a domestic cohort of qualified Indian scientists who, upon their return, could disseminate modern, Western scientific knowledge to reduce Indian dependency on British institutions of knowledge.[21] Sengupta, the only student to study psychology, thrived as a Harvard student; in addition to receiving a prestigious scholarship, Sengupta was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, an elite academic honor society. His interests extended beyond psychology, as he perceived himself to be a cultural ambassador. When Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, Sengupta delivered a public talk on the poet, and the *Harvard Crimson* published his letter celebrating not only Tagore's lyrical aptitude, but his lesser-known "well-developed system of philosophy" which was "concerned with the daily problems of life".[22] Sengupta was the protégé of both European and Indian intellectual thought, and his later actions and writing reflected his commitment to both these legacies. The study of European and American psychology entitled Sengupta to scientific authenticity both in India and on an international stage, while his knowledge of Indian intellectual traditions prevented him from potential domestic accusations of a loss of Indian authenticity and international perceptions of European mimicry. Sengupta's commitment to developing an "Indian" form of the discipline indicates a belief that, far

[20] See, for example, ibid.; and A. Nandy's chapter on Bose in A. Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (New Delhi, 1995), 81–144.

[21] B. Sarkar, "The Making of Naren Sengupta", *IJP* 19/3–4 (1944), 125–34, 19.

[22] N. N. Sengupta, "Mr. Rabindranath Tagore", *Harvard Crimson*, 17 Feb. 1913, available at www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=171257.

from being derivative, the development of psychology in India was an act of nationalist assertion and a movement that would entitle Indian psychologists to claim relevance and exert both domestic and international influence.

Soon, Sengupta's laboratory no longer remained the sole facility for experimental psychology, as universities such as Mysore and Decca followed Calcutta's example by starting their own laboratories. In addition to the research laboratories, other institutions began to offer undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology; before Independence, psychology was taught in Calcutta, Decca, Mysore, Lucknow, Madras, Patna and Lahore.[23] Outside academic institutions, the small but growing numbers of Indian psychologists began to coalesce as a professional entity. In 1925, the Indian Psychological Association (IPA) was formed, Sengupta being appointed its first president; the following year, the *Indian Journal of Psychology* (*IJP*) began publication. In the first issue, the editors wrote that the journal's purpose was to provide "an atmosphere of active thought from which . . . a new science, in order that it may live and grow . . . may breathe in its sustenance".[24] The *IJP*, which published on issues ranging from the role of Indian psychology in the modern world to experimental research on the induction of emotional states, would remain a critical forum for debate within India's psychological community.

As psychological laboratories, degrees, publications and organizations began to spring up in India, psychology was increasingly applied in the clinical realm. A Child and Youth Guidance Clinic opened in Lahore in 1935, and general psychological clinics were opened in Calcutta and New Delhi.[25] Furthermore, according to Bose's report on the status of psychology to the Indian Science Congress in 1938, the discipline was being disseminated to the public through modes such as the radio, public lectures and survey classes.[26] Indian psychologists were also supporting industrial-, educational- and military-related research for the Indian government.[27] During the same period, Indian psychology began to gain prominence outside colonial borders. For example, at the 1929 Ninth International Congress of Psychology, six Indian members attended—more than from Austria, France and a slew of other European countries.[28] Three Indians presented papers, and an Indian member was elected to the International

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23 C. Hartnack, *Psychoanalysis in India*, 92.

24 "Foreword", *IJP* 1/1 (1926).

25 G. Bose, "Psychology", in B. Prashad, ed., *The Progress of Science in India in the Past Twenty-Five Years* (Calcutta, 1938), 337.

26 Ibid.

27 "Notes and Comments", *IJP* 20/1–4 (1945), 119.

28 J. M. Cattell, *Ninth International Congress of Psychology: Proceedings and Papers* (Princeton, 1930), 4.

Committee. Thus, even from an early stage, Indian psychologists were moderately successful in their agenda to promote their discipline to a status of prominence.

However, as psychology began to grow in importance and become formalized as an academic discipline, Indian psychological pioneers were challenged to assert their expertise and modernity in a field where practitioners from developing countries were viewed with paternalism and scepticism. For early Indian psychologists, authority and credibility lay in harnessing the rhetorical power of an introspective, intellectual "India"; from historical legacy to modern nationalism, Indian psychologists selectively applied their culture and history to claim a domestic space and international prestige for their discipline.

MEDIATING DISCIPLINE: PSYCHOLOGY AS A MODE OF ENTRY INTO MODERN SCIENCE

The international respectability of India's academic (and primarily scientific) endeavours was traditionally limited by two major factors. First, with an educational system directly transported from Britain, Indian academia was perceived to have no claim to originality; rather, it was simply a less-developed version of "mother institutions of the West".[29] Second, India suffered from physical and intellectual isolation from the metropole. Although early scientists and anthropologists flocked to India, their attraction was based on the collection of research material, rather than dialogue with Indian intellectuals. In his 1932 article on the history of Indian psychology, prominent IPA member N. S. N. Sastry claimed that "old and time-worn ideas used to be dumped upon India. India would very often become genuinely interested in some fact of research, many years after it had become a house-hold concept in the West". For Sastry, this time lag proved crippling for the nation—"Intellectually [India was] years behind the progressive West".[30]

Indian psychologists, however, believed that psychology had the potential to be different. The promise of unprecedented international respectability and relevance came from psychology's simultaneously brief existence and ancient nature. The nascence of modern psychology meant that, unlike in other disciplines, India was not entering the field far behind its Western peers. When Sengupta returned to India, psychology was undergoing rapid development and expansion in countries such as the United States, Britain and Germany; at the same time, the formal discipline was less than fifty years old. In his preface to the 1932 *IJP* volume dedicated to Wundt, IPA president Manmatha Nath Banerji trumpeted the cutting-edge nature of Indian psychology, claiming not only that

[29] N. S. N. Sastry, "Growth of Psychology in India", *IJP* 7/1 (1932), 1–40, 34.

[30] Ibid.

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"since the foundation of the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology in India, [the Bengal school has] always been abreast of all modern developments in the field", but also that psychologists at the University of Calcutta "had recognised the outstanding work of Prof. Freud before many Western universities did".[31] Chakrabarty has charted the influence of historicism on colonial intellectualism, moving from a "first in Europe, then elsewhere" environment at the end of the nineteenth century to a fiercely anti-colonial "in India now" environment in the twentieth century.[32] Arguably, while Indian psychology was influenced by the surrounding historicist atmosphere, it was actually unique in its more coeval self-conceptualization.[33] Indian psychologists were anxious to prove their legitimacy, but did not express concerns of delay or a need to catch up to Western innovation in the field. For Banerji and his peers, Indian psychology was not only current with modern trends, but potentially ahead of them.

The strength of Indian psychology's claim to relevance, however, did not simply lie in its ability to keep pace with modernity. Just as psychology was situated as a mediating field between the empiricism of science and the intellectualism and spiritualism of philosophical enquiry and humanism, early Indian psychologists also harnessed the meditating power of their discipline to link Indian tradition with scientific modernity. While Sengupta and other early Indian psychologists engaged with the works of Wundt, Freud and other modern psychologists, psychoanalysts and anthropologists, they also drew heavily on the psychology of ancient texts such as the Upanishads. By asserting their ancient legacy of psychological thought, Indian psychologists crafted a position not of modern adequacy, but of superiority. Wundt may have opened his laboratory at the end of the nineteenth century, but in the ancient days when Wundt's homeland was populated by warring Germanic tribes, psychological thought was, according to Indian psychologists, taking root in their ancient homeland.

MODERN INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND THE APPROPRIATION OF VEDIC SCIENCE

As with other scientific disciplines, both the conception and the application of Indian psychology occurred within a broader, overtly politicized context in which science was celebrated as the cornerstone of Indian nationhood and

[31] M. N. Banerji, "Preface", *IJP* 7/3–4 (1932).

[32] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 7–10.

[33] I borrow the concept of coevalness from J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983), chaps. 1 and 2.

modernity.[34] One of the key tools in the conceptualization of scientific modernity and the corresponding emergence of the nation was India's ancient philosophical traditions, such as the Vedas. Jawarahal Nehru, for example, identified India's "ancient sciences as [the nation's] vital force".[35] Science—and explicitly the modern reimagining of Indian scientific tradition—served as a key component of "an ideology of modernity" intricately linked to conceptions of nationhood.[36]

The psychological application of the Vedanta was pre-dated by the intellectual transformation of Vedic tradition during the so-called "Bengali Renaissance". Led by Rammohan Roy, Bengali elites approached Vedic ideology from the modern Enlightenment perspective, and read the texts as monotheistic, rational doctrines on modern life.[37] According to Sri Aurobindo, another major supporter of a return to Vedic living and Sengupta's English professor at Bengal National College, India needed to reinvigorate and expand the scope of Vedic practice.[38] Rather than needing to be discarded, the Vedas needed to be purified, to create an ideal atmosphere for modern life.

As Sartori noted, the transformation from Vedantic to "neo-Vedantic" thought (a term I borrow from Hatcher) relied heavily on German philosophy. For example, the Vedic journey towards self and universal unity was reflective of Hegel's philosophy.[39] In addition to the cultural reinterpretation of Vedic thought, science in particular was perceived to have the power to fuse the traditional and religious with the modern. Kapila has charted the history of India's founding "national scientist" Mahendra Lal Sircar, who led the late nineteenth-century movement towards reconciling science with a purified form of Vedic thought and identified psychology as the ideal discipline to extricate the hidden intricacies of religious thought.[40] Thus twentieth-century Indian psychologists were not only part of a wider trend towards reclamation and modernization of ancient texts, but

34 G. Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, 1999), 3–11.

35 Ibid., 118. While this essay is focused more specifically on the doctrinal development of the discipline of psychology, Prakash's book offers useful insight into the broader scientific context; the myriad pressure points between science, politics and nationalism; and the tensions between conceptualizations of Indian sciences and the undertones of entrenched orientalism.

36 Ibid., 3.

37 For a detailed study of the reappropriation of Vedic thought in nineteenth-century India see B. Hatcher's 2007 book *Bourgeois Hinduism, or Faith of the Modern Vedantists* (New York, 2007).

38 S. Bose, "The Spirit and Form of an Ethical Polity: A Meditation on Aurobindo's Thought", *MIH* 4/1 (2007), 129–44, 139.

39 Sartori, "Germanism", 91.

40 Kapila, "Godless Freud", 125–6.

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they were also already operating within a privileged perspective of both ancient Vedic and modern scientific authority.

Indian psychologists were keen to capitalize on the movement towards Vedic revival and reinterpretation, and in the *IJP* they touted both their illustrious history and their penchant for applying ancient texts to modern psychology. For example, in his 1932 history, Sastry outlined the "growth of Psychological knowledge in India", spanning a period of over 2,500 years.[41] He celebrated the "spirit of scientific curiosity, the intense fervour and zeal, and the outstanding psychological outlook of the ancient seers displayed in their search after truth".[42] In the first twenty years of the *IJP*, the majority of articles devoted significant attention to theories outlined in the Upanishads and the Gita, such as the power of the Samkhya-Yoga tradition of Indian philosophy to help achieve mental clarity—in fact, one university considered offering a class on experimental psychology and Hindu yoga traditions.[43] Furthermore, various contributors to the journal challenged the accusations that classic Hindu thought was devoid of true science. In his Presidential Address to the Psychology Section at the 1930 Indian Philosophical Conference, Bose proposed, "In no western system of philosophy has the psychological material been so dominant [as in Indian philosophy] . . . A psychologist, therefore, is more in his element in the domain of Indian philosophy than in the province of western thought".[44] Bose devoted a portion of his address to his hypothesis that the Vedas and Upanishads contained evidence of the scientific method, as they used observational data to develop supported conclusions:

> Just as the facts of observation in physics and chemistry are independent of the intelligence of truthful observers, so the human passions, cravings and impressions recorded in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* may be described as independent of the intellect of their unbiased observers.[45]

According to Bose's address, ancient Hindu philosophies were psychological in nature, and scientific in methodology.

Thus the first Indian psychologists operated under the assertion that modern psychology was young enough to make their contributions current, and furthermore that ancient psychology was located within the purer, more scientific aspects of their cultural heritage that were the key to Indian modernity. Psychology was the perfect mediating discipline, grounded in tradition but

41 Sastry, "Growth of Psychology", 33.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 39.
44 G. Bose, "The Psychological Outlook in Hindu Philosophy", *IJP* 5/3–4 (1930), 119–47, 120.
45 Ibid., 136.

adaptable to change and positioned to incorporate modernity into a rich traditional framework. Indian psychologists used the rhetorical construction of their discipline as the ultimate mediator, to illustrate the power of Indian psychology to fuse Vedic psychology with the postulates of Freud and Wundt, resulting in the creation of a science of the mind with limitless potential.

PRODUCTIVE SYNTHESIS: ANCIENT SCHOLARSHIP AND MODERN METHODS COMBINED

When conceiving of the intellectual development of their discipline, Indian scientists advocated for a project of synthetic grandeur, in which ancient traditions, modern science and humanistic ideologies would combine to create a mental science of unmitigated insight. In his 1934 Presidential Address to the PSISC, Banerji articulated this fusionary goal, and the necessary first step: a move towards the West. "There was a time", he said, "when India led the whole world by her culture and learning founded on Psychological concept [and] applied Psychological principles in evolving the social and religious fabric of the community".[46] But the ancient grandeur of India could not be maintained, and, at the turn of the twentieth century, Indian intellectualism was a husk of its intellectual self. To save India and restore its past glory, Banerji recommended looking West, to the "advanced nations [who] provide the model for the guidance of humanity".[47] Rather than advocating mimicry, however, Banerji's project involved the adaptation of Western thought within the Indian context.

In *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, Chatterjee introduced his argument of the Indian claim to the "spiritual domain". At the *moment of departure*, when nationalist ideologies are grappling with rationalist thought, it is only through the purported ownership of spirituality and culture that a colonial nation can begin to earn its freedom. According to Chatterjee, "true modernity for non-European nations would lie in combining the superior material qualities of Western cultures with the spiritual greatness of the East".[48] This synthetic argument grants non-European nations access to Western thought in their pursuit of nationalist agendas. The pioneers of Indian psychology clearly applied Chatterjee's argument of a "moment of departure", through claims of Indian traditions of introspection, and the potential for greatness through the melding of modern Western psychological principles with the greatness of ancient Eastern thought.

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46 M. N. Banerji, "Applied Psychology", *IJP* 9/1 (1934), 1–18, 2.

47 Ibid., 4.

48 P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London, 1986), 51.

Banerji, who served as IPA president for many years and as *IJP* editor from 1929 to 1939, demonstrated in his career his belief in the potential of Indian psychology. He was the first student to receive his Masters in psychology in India in 1916.[49] After graduation, he worked under Sengupta to help develop the laboratory and the psychology courses at the University of Calcutta. In his 1934 address, he stated that, "for the salvation of India, there is now no way out but to accept the applications and formulations of scientific research *after modifying them to suit Indian social and communal conditions*".[50] By proposing a modification of international ideas before applying them on Indian soil, Banerji proposed an Indian discipline with Western innovation, rather than a scientific mimicry. Furthermore, he was particularly clever in his ability to frame not only psychology but the entire enterprise of intellectual transmission as a Hindu tradition. In discussing the incorporation of foreign intellectual traditions, he said that "there is authority for this sort of action. The great Hindu medical writer of the hoary past, Charaka said 'For the intelligent, the whole world is the teacher'".[51] By linking the transmission of knowledge with Hindu tradition, Banerji was able to recast the application of Western ideas as an Indian exercise.

One of the more common and compelling postulates presented in early scholarship is the connection between Western psychological conceptions of human consciousness and evolution, and the three *gunas*. According to the Vedas, the material world is composed of three types of existence, or *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva*, which constitutes lightness and balance, is associated with righteous conduct and order. *Rajas*, which represents movement and gives force to matter, is reflective of conduct motivated by a means to an end. *Tamas*, which literally means "darkness", has been interpreted as the destructive counterpart to the other two *gunas*. While they create and dynamize matter, *tamas* works against creation and development. The three *gunas* are often described as stages of human progress, and linked with the Freudian id, ego and superego.[52] Furthermore, the *gunas* are linked with English philosopher Bertrand Russel's "three types of life—life of instinct, life of mind, and life of spirit", with man starting in *tamas*, moving to the intellectual reason of *rajas*, and finally, if he has the mental development and self-control, to the divine *sattwick* stage.[53] The connection between the *guna* and psychological theories is only one of numerous instances in which Vedic thought is reinvigorated as modern science. However, for prominent early Indian psychologists, the invocation of Vedic thought to claim modernity was not

[49] A. Datta, "Obituary for Mr. Manmatha Nath Banerji", *IJP* 21/1 (1946), 94.

[50] Banerji, "Applied Psychology", 4, my italics.

[51] Ibid., 4.

[52] B. C. Ghosh, "Theories and Levels of Consciousness", *IJP* 11/1–2 (1936), 87–100.

[53] Ibid., 100.

limited to psychological thought. They asserted that India's rich mental-health history was not only continually applicable, but incontrovertible proof that the Indian mind was uniquely endowed to work on issues of mental life.

PERFECT SYNTHESIS AND INDIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL PROWESS

According to Indian psychologists, the synthetic nature of Indian psychology was particularly potent because of the purportedly inherent Indian propensity towards psychology. For example, in his 1932 account of Indian psychological history, Sastry ended his tale of ancient psychological grandeur with the claim that, owing to the existence of such an illustrious past, it is "sufficiently evident [that] the Indian mind seems to be peculiarly gifted in analyzing psychological events, in positing psychological causes of human behaviour, and in observing peculiarities of mental characteristics and offering explanations thereto".[54] Sastry took his argument a step further, claiming that "with this inherited wealth of introspective capacity", it would be wasteful of Indians not to invest energy in psychological discovery, and foolish of the world not to respect the Indian contribution:

> It has been often said that Indians are essentially an introspective nation and that the attitude they present while tackling problems of human conduct and behaviour, is characteristic of the nation. Though in the intellectual internationalism of the search after Truth there could be nothing essentially nationalistic, yet it might be the destiny of one nation, situated as it is, by virtue of its heredity and culture, to contribute something characteristic of itself to the common fund of knowledge . . .[55]

Sastry's rhetoric had three prongs: first, he used history to demonstrate inherent and unique Indian capacity; second, he posited this inherent ability as proof of the potential of Indian contribution to modern thought; finally, he used the uniqueness of Indian ability to argue that Indian contribution to psychological thought was not only possible, but *essential* for the growth of the discipline. These tactics were employed by many early Indian psychologists, who cited the introspective, analytical nature of their nation as proof that the psychological world could not develop without them. Such a claim was reflective of broader social movements—many of which originated in the West—celebrating the capacity of the Hindu mind, which psychologists applied to legitimize their mental science. By asserting their importance, psychological thinkers like Sastry were able to oppose the notion of their professional inferiority, for how could

54 Sastry, "Growth of Psychology", 32–3.

55 Ibid., 40.

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Indian psychology be immature and solely receptive if it was responsible for the development of the discipline?

THE SCIENCE OF *SWARAJ*

By claiming an ancient legacy, modern adaptability and natural aptitude, Indian psychologists actively defined their discipline as both internationally potent and deeply Indian. However, the language of early Indian psychology suggested that the discipline's pioneers took an even more active role in their fusion of Western science and an Indian prerogative. They never staked an explicit claim, but Indian psychology was arguably the scientificization of *swaraj*, the science of *swadeshi*. While Gandhi used *swaraj* as a political concept, India's early psychologists supported it through science.[56]

In his conclusion to *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi clearly outlined what he believed *swaraj* and *swadeshi* should mean to India. He argued that freedom from the British would first require freedom from the self, and the triumph of self-control over instinct and desire.[57] As Goswami has argued, the pursuit of *swadeshi swaraj* demanded a complete transformation, away from individualism and towards "an organic national whole".[58] To achieve this total transformation, humans needed to be unified with their immediate surroundings, and to rely on them for all material and spiritual needs.[59]

In a replication of Gandhi's idealized *swaraj*, the primary goal of early Indian psychology was to facilitate the progress of humanity towards achieving control and self-unity, something most psychologists believed they could achieve while their Western counterparts floundered in spiritual despotism. In his 1946 Presidential Address "On the Urge for Wholeness", Indra Sen compared the approaches of a whole canon of thinkers such as Jung, Freud, McDougall, Bose and Aurobindo before concluding that "the standpoint of Indian psychology" was the ultimate "evolutionally possible goal of human consciousness". According to Sen, Indian psychology possessed "the knowledge and the means . . . of the realisation of the wholeness in life" and the power to help the "normal individual

[56] For an analysis of the scientificization of *swaraj* for nationalist discourse see S. Kapila, "Self, Spencer and *Swaraj*: Nationalist Thought and Critiques of Liberalism, 1890–1920", *MIH* 4/1 (2007), 109–27.

[57] M. K. Gandhi, "Hind *Swaraj*", in *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. A. Parel (Cambridge, 1997), 116–19.

[58] M. Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago, 2004), 254–7.

[59] Gandhi, "Hind *Swaraj*".

raise himself above conflict [created by the drive for desire and the response to instincts] to the status of whole living", otherwise known as *swaraj*.[60]

Furthermore, Gandhi saw *swaraj* as intimately connected with the philosophy of desireless action, as expounded in the Gita. Psychologists such as Sen believed that their discipline had the power to help India and the world realize the peace and unity of desireless action, when "the dualities of experience have been transcended and reconciled".[61] In his paper at the Ninth International Congress of Psychology in New Haven, Connecticut, R. Sharma heralded the Upanishadic psychological focus on non-attachment, which led to a stronger sense of peace and self-realization.[62] Unlike Gandhi, however, who remained sceptical of the spiritually draining impact of European modernity, the scientific *swaraj* of Indian psychology used modernity—namely modern scientific techniques—to pursue freedom through the goal of self and communal unity.

By operating within the framework of scientificized *swaraj*, the goal of Indian psychology was defined in distinctly Indian terms. Where Western psychology analysed the mind by taking it apart, thereby further separating the strands of human existence, Indian psychology had the power to unify the whole, rather than add to the alienation of modernity. Through knowledge of the self and mind, and the tools to tame desire, Indian psychologists promoted a journey towards the self-unity and desireless action of *swaraj*, and used their science both to legitimize the goal of self-awareness and to position themselves as the primary professional actors in the India-wide pursuit of *swaraj*.

PSYCHOLOGISTS OUTSIDE THE ACADEMY

Within the sphere of the academy, Indian psychologists carved for themselves a niche social role, using the rhetorical power of their hybridized doctrine both to shape international scientific communities and to contribute to Indian intellectual movements towards decolonisation. Outside universities, professional societies and journals, psychologists employed a variety of media to negotiate space for themselves within domestic intellectual debate and the wider public sphere.

The *IJP*'s readership was limited to an academic elite—although many of the journal's readers were philosophers or educationalists, rather than psychologists, the vast majority were located within the academy. Indian psychologists were aware of their journal's limited, elite readership, and worked to remedy the

60 I. Sen, "On the Urge for Wholeness", *IJP* 21/1 (1947), 1–31, 31.

61 Ibid., 30.

62 R. Sharma, "New Light on Dream Psychology", in Cattell, *Ninth International Congress*, 379–80.

exclusivity of psychological information. At the IPA's first annual meeting, prominent psychiatrist Owen Berkeley-Hill "urged that measures should be taken on behalf of the Association to enlighten the public opinion concerning the nature, progress and utility of scientific society".[63] Berkeley-Hill's sentiments were echoed by his peers, many of whom worked to raise the profile of psychology outside the institution by focusing on public education and engagement.[64] Academics and students disseminated psychological information through the radio, public talks and the circulation of printed material in both English and Indian languages, and as the years passed their ventures became increasingly successful.[65] In the IPA's 1931 Annual Report, for example, Berkeley-Hill and Bose were praised for raising the public profile of psychology:

> Amongst the public the interest in psychology is growing amazingly rapidly. We are deeply indebted to [Berkeley-Hill and Bose] . . . [who] have in the year under review held many public lectures and addressed numerous private audiences which have [removed] many misconceptions among the public regarding the . . . usefulness [of psychology] in the practical affairs of life.[66]

Predictions of the widespread applicability of psychology were proven true, as psychology was also beginning to proliferate in print media. Intellectual engagement with psychological ideas was made possible and powerful by the public interest in the modernized sciences of the mind. The depth and breadth of psychological permeation of public discourse in the 1920s and 1930s was reflected in the prevalence of psychologically oriented language, stories and advertisements in Calcutta's elite but widely influential daily English newspaper *The Statesman*.[67]

Most obviously, the new prominence of psychology is demonstrated in the centrality of stories on psychology, when compared with other Indian scientific disciplines. In *The Statesman*'s coverage of the 1941 Indian Science Congress, Princeton-trained Israel Latif's talk on "Psychology and the Future of Mankind" is featured far more prominently than similar stories on engineering, geography and

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63 Another key figure in the development of Indian experimental psychology, Owen Berkeley-Hill was born in England in 1879 and joined the Indian Medical Service in 1907. Berkeley-Hill later served as superintendent of the European Asylum in Ranchi. "Owen Berkeley-Hill 1879–1944", *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 25 (1944), 177.

64 "The Indian Psychological Association First Annual Congress", *IJP* 1/2 (1926), 133.

65 S. C. Mitra, "History of the Psychology Department of the University of Calcutta", *IJP* 12/3 (1937), 151–62, 159.

66 "Annual Report", *IJP* 6/2–3 (1931), 49–50.

67 This essay focuses on Indian psychology in *The Statesman* as a case study of how psychology permeated print media; however, psychology also played a prominent role in other media, such as in the Theosophical journal *Aryan Path* and in *Congress Socialist*, the All-India Congress Socialist Party's paper.

chemistry. The article, entitled "How Psychology Can Help Mankind", opened with the conclusion from Latif's talk, in which he claimed,

> Mankind has reached a critical point in its life-history where two alternatives irrevocably confront it. It must either seriously set about the task of emotional re-education and mental re-orientation towards problems of human life and experience or it must face the alternative of self-extermination.[68]

Thus psychology was presented not only as a field of renewed interest, but—as IPA members claimed within their own circles—as a tool with which to shape both a modern India and the modern world. In addition to presenting psychology as an important scientific discipline, media sources reflected the claim that psychology was inherently Indian. For example, *The Statesman* summarized a 1936 speech by the maharaja of Indore who claimed that "in the regions of the subconscious mind, science was helpless while Indian psychology . . . put [the soul] on a scientific basis instead of neglecting it".[69] Psychology permeated every aspect of *The Statesman*; the book reviews page often contained works related to psychology, and major psychological figures were frequently mentioned in reference to conferences, academic works and university activities.[70]

In addition to raising the public profile of the Indian discipline, psychologists asserted their influence by contributing to prominent political and social debates. For example, Sengupta was particularly interested in studying inherited mental traits and deficiencies, and he directed professional energy to writing about the psychology of beggars. In 1943, Sengupta published his article "Mental Traits of Beggars" in the *Indian Journal of Social Work*. His work was later published as a chapter in the 1945 book *Our Beggar Problem*, a multidisciplinary study of Indian beggars. In his chapter, Sengupta compared beggars to the appendix, claiming that they were the "vestigial remains of the social past" who needed to be permanently institutionalized to ensure that beggar and society remained "in healthy isolation from each other".[71] Sengupta's study of beggars was later cited in major Indian and international sociological works, and his claims carried the force of perceived scientific fact. Again, the rhetorical synthesis of modernity and history, European knowledge and ancient Indian philosophy proved an effective combination to inspire legitimacy and thereby exert influence, both domestically and via transnational networks of psychological exchange.

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68 "How Psychology Can Help Mankind", *The Statesman*, 8 Jan. 1941.

69 "Scientists Aid to Assist Ryots", *The Statesman*, 7 Jan. 1936.

70 "New Books Reviewed: Comparative Religions", *The Statesman*, 19 Jan. 1935.

71 N. N. Sengupta, "Mental Traits of Beggars", in J. M. Kumarappa, ed., *Our Beggar Problem* (Bombay, 1945), 37–9.

In addition to their extensive research, publication and teaching activities, India's early psychologists felt the responsibility to apply their craft in the service of humanity, and, perhaps more importantly, the nation. The public ethos of the professional discipline was captured by Banerji in his 1934 Presidential Address to the Psychology Section of the Indian Science Congress, where he urged his peers to apply their science to "the present needs of India . . . [which] can only be solved by the application of Psychology".[72] The sense of social responsibility and power to influence society felt by early Indian psychological thinkers was evident in their vocations. Headed by Banerji, the University of Calcutta led the field in the public application of psychology. As the first student in India to receive an MSc in psychology, Banerji remained committed throughout his life to applying psychological knowledge to daily life. In addition to serving as IPA president from 1939 to 1941, Banerji was responsible for the Applied Psychology Section at the University of Calcutta—the first Indian psychological body specifically committed to "conduct vocational guidance".[73] In the late 1930s, he spearheaded the first vocational psychological fieldwork in India, at a steel and iron factory and a chemical and pharmaceutical plant in Bengal.[74] Beyond vocational psychology, Calcutta psychologists also began to develop and apply various metrics for intelligence testing, and liaised with law enforcement agencies to provide psychological assessments for criminals.[75] As Calcutta's Applied Section of the Department of Psychology continued to grow, other psychologists began to discuss the idea of creating an All-India Institute of Applied Psychology. After widespread dialogue, however, it was decided that applied psychology should be developed on the regional level. In 1942, Calcutta's Applied Section published a major report on its activities, which included educational testing in Bengal schools and capacity testing of a "criminal" tribe.[76]

As universities expanded their involvement in public affairs, Indian governmental divisions began to harness the political power of psychology. In 1945, for example, the government of the province of Behar created a Psychology Section in its Department of Education, to undertake psychological research and educational testing in schools, with the potential for expansion to other sectors.[77] Furthermore, the government provided funding to Patna University

72 Banerji, "Applied Psychology", 1.

73 A. Datta, "Mr. Manmatha Nath. Banerji", *IJP* 21/1–4 (1946), 94–5.

74 Mitra, "History", 159.

75 Ibid.

76 "Report on the Working of the Applied Section of the Department of Psychology Calcutta University" (special section), *IJP* 17 (1942), 24–5.

77 "Notes and Comments", *IJP* 20/1–4 (1945), 119.

to fund an Applied Psychology Department, to produce research relevant to educational and vocational concerns.[78] The Second World War saw an overall boom in public psychological activities, as the army relied on the expertise of Indian psychologists. In 1945, for example, the government of India appointed a psychologist and a psychiatrist to serve as advisers on the new Employment Selection Bureau, which was created to select the optimal military officers.[79] Army vocational testing represented the first widespread application of formal psychological practice, and the members of the IPA viewed the government army testing activities as "a great wealth to the science of Psychology and of immense practical use to India".[80]

INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND THE END OF EMPIRE

In late colonial India, psychology was constructed as a synthetic project poised to incorporate ancient philosophies, modern Western science and religious ideologies. By making psychology a synthetic and distinctly Indian blend, the early pioneers of the discipline were able to assert their modern scientific relevance within a specifically Indian and implicitly nationalistic framework. Within transnational scientific communities, Indian psychologists invoked ancient and synthetic tropes to claim scientific authority; within Indian society, psychologists used this authority to raise the profile of their discipline, and to use psychology to influence social debates.

The independence of India and Pakistan also marked the start of a new period of maturity and prominence for Indian psychologists. After spending thirty years creating an identity for the nascent discipline, psychology was thrust into a position of unprecedented prominence. India and Pakistan were bursting with flows of refugees, and shocked by violence. In post-colonial India, psychology became a crucial tool of analysis for government officials to understand the chaos and violence that followed the creation of two states. For example, from 1950 to 1952, Indian and Western psychologists combined forces to work on a UNESCO-funded project to study the causes of and potential solutions to the religious conflict in Aligarh.[81] Additionally, various counselling and guidance bureaus were established, to offer intelligence tests and counselling services to

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 "Notes and Comments", *IJP* 19/3–4 (1944), 222.

81 G. Murphy, "Introduction", in P. Ram and G. Murphy, ed., *A UNESCO Study of Social Tensions in Aligarh 1950–1951* (Aligarh, 1954), vii.

the general public. Psychologists also supported industrial and military activities, including selection of personnel by military units.[82]

After creating a simultaneously Indian and transnational discipline, psychology was truly at the center of current global events. In societies suddenly descended into violence, the science of the mind had the authority to offer an explanation, and to help rebuild a modern but distinctly Indian nation. After years of claiming ownership over their discipline, post-colonial Indian psychologists began to be afforded the political right to apply psychology to analyse and shape their new societies.

[82] See Ajit Dalal's "A Journey back to the Roots: Psychology in India", in R. M. Matthijs Cornelissen, Girishwar Misra and Suneet Varma, eds., *Psychology in India*, vol. 1 (New Delhi, 2011), 27–57.