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## **History of Psychology & Indian Psychology**

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Today, psychology is defined as "the scientific study of behavior and mental processes." Philosophical interest in the mind and behavior dates back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Persia, Greece, China, and India. For a condensed overview, see the Timeline of Psychology article. The history of psychology as a scholarly study of the mind and behavior dates back to the Ancient Greeks. There is also evidence of psychological thought in ancient Egypt. Psychology was a branch of philosophy until the 1870s, when it developed as an independent scientific discipline in Germany and the United States. Psychology borders on various other fields including physiology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, sociology, anthropology, as well as philosophy and other components of the humanities.

Psychology as a self-conscious field of experimental study began in 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt founded the first laboratory dedicated exclusively to psychological research in Leipzig, Germany. Wundt was also the first person to refer to himself as a psychologist. Other important early contributors to the field include Hermann Ebbinghaus (a pioneer in the study of memory), William James (the American father of pragmatism), and Ivan Pavlov (who developed the procedures associated with classical conditioning).

Soon after the development of experimental psychology, various kinds of applied psychology appeared. G. Stanley Hall brought scientific pedagogy to the United States from Germany in the early 1880s. John Dewey's educational theory of the 1890s was another example. Also in the 1890s, Hugo Münsterberg began writing about the application of psychology to industry, law, and other fields. Lightner Witmer established the first psychological clinic in the 1890s. James McKeen Cattell adapted Francis Galton's anthropometric methods to generate the first program of mental testing in the 1890s. In Vienna, meanwhile, Sigmund Freud developed an independent approach to the study of the mind called psychoanalysis, which has been widely influential.

The 20th century saw a reaction to Edward Titchener's critique of Wundt's empiricism. This contributed to the formulation of behaviorism by John B. Watson, which was popularized by B. F. Skinner. Behaviorism proposed emphasizing the study of overt behavior, because that could be quantified and easily measured. Early behaviorists considered study of the "mind" too vague for productive scientific study. However, Skinner and his colleagues did study thinking as a form of covert behavior to which they could apply the same principles as overt (publicly observable) behavior. The final decades of the 20th century saw the rise of cognitive science, an interdisciplinary approach to studying the human mind. Cognitive science again considers the "mind" as a subject for investigation, using the tools of evolutionary psychology, linguistics, computer science, philosophy, behaviorism, and neurobiology. This form of investigation has proposed that a wide understanding of the human mind is possible, and that such an understanding may be applied to other research domains, such as artificial intelligence. Indian psychology is an approach to psychology based on the Indian ethos, the characteristic spirit of the Indian civilization. One could also say that it is a psychology rooted in the consciousness-based Indian worldview, yoga and a life-affirming spirituality.

As such, it is thus not a psychology specifically or exclusively suitable for people living in the Indian sub-continent or of Indian origin: We feel that the Indian tradition can make valuable contributions to the psychological understanding of all human beings, irrespective of their descent or cultural background.

It may help to clarify that with "yoga", we do not mean the darshana (the philosophical school) of the same name. We also do not limit its meaning to any of the many specialised schools of yoga, like hatha yoga or raja yoga. We take the word "yoga" in its widest sense, in which it indicates all systematic efforts to become consciously one with the Divine, not only in its passive, transcendent aspect, but also in its manifest, dynamic presence. Similarly with a life-affirming spirituality we mean a spirituality that accepts the world and human nature as a field for the Divine to manifest, as a "work in progress", as a reality that needs to be transcended in order to be transformed.

In other words, we feel that Indian, consciousness-based approaches to psychology can make a crucial, and urgently needed contribution to our global civilization. To support this development, the Indian Psychology Institute has been set up with the specific objective of assisting with the introduction of concepts, theories and practices from Indian Psychology into academics and the professional practice of psychology.

By Indian psychology we mean an approach to psychology that is based on ideas and practices that developed over thousands of years within the Indian sub-continent. In other words, we use the word 'Indian' to indicate and honour the origin of this approach to psychology—the origin of the underlying philosophy, the conceptual framework, the methods of enquiry, and the technology of consciousness that it uses to bring about psychological change and transformation. It may be useful to make explicit that we do not use the word 'Indian' to localize or limit the scope of this approach to psychology; we do not mean, for example, 'the psychology of the Indian people', or 'psychology as taught at Indian universities'. We hold that Indian psychology as a meta-theory and as an extensive body of related theories and practices has something essential and unique to contribute to the global civilization as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

In short, we do not look at psychology as something that belongs only to India or the past, but as a rich source of psychological insight and know-how that can be utilized to create a better future for the whole of humanity.

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