What do we mean by Indian 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.

It may also be useful to make explicit that this volume is not about the past, but about the present and the future. You will look in vain for chapters about the history of Indian philosophy or religion as they developed over the ages. Many such texts are already available, but this is not one of them. This volume has contributions that demonstrate how ideas and practices from the Indian tradition can be used to tackle issues in contemporary psychology and constructively inform its disciplinary practice by helping theory building and application.

Psychology as taught at present, all over the world, is still amazingly unicultural. This is rather remarkable if we consider the intensity and ease of international communications, and the fact that it is almost half a century since the political decolonization of Asia and Africa was completed. Though the large component of European and American thought in psychology is understandable historically, it is not any longer excusable. For it is not that the rest of the world has not thought about human nature, and it is definitely not that contemporary psychology has found the one and only correct way of doing so. In this context, one could argue that Indian psychology will be relevant particularly to Asian, African, or Latin-American countries which share alternative non-Western world views about mind, psyche and various psychological phenomena such as healing, health, self, or personality; but we strongly believe that in spite of all cultural differences, there is a large common core to human nature, and that, to the extent that Indian psychology deals with that common core, it should be of interest to all members of the human family.

In short, we do not look at Indian 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 utilised to create a better future for the whole of humanity.

What the Indian civilization can contribute to psychology?

The unique contribution which the Indian civilization can make to modern psychology can be looked at as consisting of three distinct elements—a sophisticated and well-worked out, psychology-based meta-theoretical framework, a wide repertoire of psychological practices, and a rich treasury of psychological theories. These three are, obviously, closely interconnected, and it may be clear that none of them can be fully understood without a fairly complete understanding of the other two. Yet, as language is inevitably linear, we will give here a separate short introduction to each of them.

A psychology-friendly meta-theoretical framework

The first major contribution the Indian civilization can make to psychology is a psychology-friendly meta-theoretical framework. To delineate the underlying theory, the basic 'paradigm' of the Indian tradition is, of course, a pretentious undertaking fraught with possibilities of error. The Indian civilization is immensely complex, and, given the abundance of different—often contrary—voices it harbours within itself, it is hard to state anything about it that cannot be contradicted with a striking counter-example. And yet, it is useful to give it a try, for the simple reason that without this background it is impossible to fully understand its psychological practices and its theories.

When one looks at the Indian civilization as it developed over the ages, it becomes quickly clear that within it there exists such a huge variety of distinct cultural traditions, that one may doubt whether it actually makes sense to speak of a single Indian tradition and whether it would not be more accurate to speak of Indian traditions in the plural. The doubt is understandable, but we would contend that in case of the Indian tradition, singularity and multiformity are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A rich variety of expressions does not preclude the possibility of a common thread, a single foundation supporting the variety, and we are inclined to think that especially in India such a common core indeed does exist. In fact, the idea of a single truth supporting a variety of manifestations is itself one of the core-characteristics of the deep view of reality that underlies the whole wide gamut of Indian traditions. One of the most-often-quoted aphorisms expressing this acknowledgment of divergent views in spite of a single underlying reality is probably: *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*, which means, 'the truth is One, but the wise call it by different names'. An interesting aspect of this saying is that the differences are not described as errors: it is the wise that give different names to the one truth. Moreover, one would miss the point if one were to take this saying as no more than a polite exhortation for religious tolerance. It rests on a deep, psychological understanding of the human condition, which says that reality as it really is, will always remain beyond our limited mental capacity to grasp, and that each individual can perceive of that reality only as much as their individual capacity and inclination will allow.

There is another ancient saying which goes a step further. It deals with the different perceptions that arise from affirmative and agnostic approaches to reality. It says—and one can immediately see how close some ancient Indian thinkers came to postmodern constructivism—that not only the name we give to an experience, but even the experience itself is determined

by our 'set'. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.6.1), for instance, says, *asann eva sa bhavati, asad brahmeti veda cet, asti brahmeti ced veda, santam enaṁ tato viduḥ*, meaning, 'whoever envisages it as existence becomes (or realizes) it as existence, and whoever envisages it as non-being becomes (or realizes) that non-existence'. It may be noted that in the Indian tradition such differences are not attributed only to the different cultural priming; they are attributed primarily to the different type, level and quality of the internal state of the observer. And this brings us to what might well be described as the most important difference between the Indian and the Western paradigm.

The differences

Western psychology is largely confined to two dimensions which are both fully accessible to the ordinary waking consciousness—the physical and the social. Genetics, neurophysiology and the cognitive sciences are typical for sub-disciplines with a focus on the physical dimension, and the various offshoots of psychoanalysis, social constructivism and cross-cultural psychology could be considered typical for those who focus on social factors. Between the two, there is still, in spite of many attempts at 'softening' psychology, a widespread tendency to take the physical dimension more seriously than the social. Even within the field of consciousness studies, the existence of physical reality tends to be taken for granted, while the ontological 'reality' of consciousness and subjective experience is open for discussion. Their apparent existence needs some kind of justification, and both are commonly considered epiphenomenal products of material processes. Related to this, in terms of epistemology, the ordinary waking consciousness is considered the only acceptable state for the researcher to be in, and a clear rational mind is taken as the ultimate arbiter of truth. In fact, non-ordinary states of awareness are primarily associated with drugs and somewhat frivolous new-age activities. Finally, in terms of practical methodology, objectivity is taken as the ultimate ideal, and first-person, subjective observations are taken seriously only if they are embedded in statistics and third-person objective measures to counteract their inherent weaknesses. Obviously all this is a simplification and there are exceptions to this pattern—one could, for example, think of phenomenology—but still, a strong physicalist bias, an absolute faith in the ordinary waking consciousness and a total reliance on objective methods are so much part of mainstream psychology that amongst psychologists, they are commonly considered indispensable elements of the scientific method.

The intellectual tradition of India starts from radically different assumptions. Ontologically, the most fundamental reality is not matter, but spirit; or more precisely, the indivisible unity of *saccidānanda*, of absolute existence, consciousness and delight. In other words, the Indian tradition includes psychological phenomena like consciousness and joy as core-elements of reality, and in fact it takes not physics, but 'knowledge of the self' (*adhyātma-vidyā*) as the fundamental science. Accordingly, the possibility and cosmic importance of an absolutely silent, transcendent consciousness are hardly ever doubted, while there are major schools of thought that do doubt the importance and even the reality of the material pole of existence. While Western science has come to terms with the fact that there are many different types of physical energies and substances, of which some are not directly perceptible by the human

senses, the Indian tradition takes it for granted that there are also various types and levels of non-physical existence—entire inner 'worlds' which are not directly perceptible to the ordinary waking consciousness, but that are ontologically as real, or even more real than the ordinary physical world. These non-physical realities are considered to be intermediate planes of conscious existence between the absolute, silent consciousness of the transcendent and the apparent unconsciousness of matter. As a result, physical and social factors are accepted as part of causal networks, but not as the full story—events are thought to be influenced by a wide variety of forces that include factors belonging to non-physical realities. Similarly, epistemologically, a rational mind is appreciated and cultivated, but it is understood that there are higher sources of knowledge and the possibility of a direct, intuitive apprehension of truth. Finally, objective, sense-based knowledge is considered a minor form of knowledge (or even ignorance, *avidyā*) and an immense collective effort has gone into the development of processes that can make us more open to the subtle worlds, and especially to the pre-existing inner knowledge, *vidyā*.

It may be clear that these two basic views of reality lead to a very different sense of what psychology is about, how it is to be conducted, and what can be expected from it. For those under the influence of the physicalist worldview, psychology deals either with outer behaviour or with mental processes that happen within the neuro-physiological apparatus of individual human beings; even those who stress social influences, tacitly assume that such influences are transferred by physical means. It is taken for granted that consciousness, whether individually or socially determined, depends on working neural systems. Non-physical realities are illusionary and parapsychological phenomena are 'anomalous'. For an eternal soul there is no place (except as a belief of others, not as an 'objective' reality that exists in itself). Methodologically, one has to rely on statistics and sophisticated third-person methods of research. In terms of application, one aims at (behaviourally verifiable) changes in others.

For those under the influence of the Indian system, consciousness is primary. It is taken to be all-pervasive, and as existing within space and time, as well as beyond both. The borders of the individual are porous, and the individual consciousness is found to extend through space and time, to others, to all kinds of inner worlds, and even to what is beyond all manifestation. As a result, non-physical realities and parapsychological phenomena fit perfectly within this explanatory framework, and there is no difficulty accepting an eternal soul as our real self. For research in Indian psychology, sophisticated first person methods are the natural first choice. In terms of application, Indian psychology aims primarily at the mastery and transformation of oneself.

When one lists these differences in this manner, the two systems seem to belong to different worlds, and not only serious misunderstandings, but even a certain mutual distrust appears almost inevitable. Historically this has indeed been the case. In the Indian tradition, right from the *Upaniṣads* and the stories of the *Purāṇas*, the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions of modern psychology are looked at as beginners' errors, remnants of an ordinary, naive way of looking at the world that stand in the way of a deeper understanding of how the human mind, consciousness in general, and even the physical reality actually work. Seen from

the other side, from the perspective of mainstream psychology, giving up its positivist, constructivist, or agnostic assumptions looks like a return to a superstitious past, a giving up of the most valuable accomplishments of the European Enlightenment, a recipe for disaster.

Roads to reconciliation

There are several factors that may, however, help to overcome these difficulties. The first is that the inability of modern science to deal effectively with non-physical realities and 'the divine', may not be intrinsic to science as such. Future generations, who are likely to have a more globally informed cultural background, may ascribe this inability largely to the vagaries of European history. It might well be found that in the early years of modern science, Europe left these inner realms aside, not because it is intrinsically too difficult to research them in an intelligent and open-minded manner, but simply because they were too encrusted in the religious environment of the time. It is true that neither alchemy, nor the later efforts of parapsychology have led to sufficiently concrete results to convince the skeptics; but that might well be because their studies were hampered on the one side by the lack of a sufficiently supportive philosophical framework, and on the other by their failure to develop effective powers within the inner realms they purported to study.

As we will try to present in this volume, the Indian tradition might be able to provide both. Though the Indian civilization has had its own difficulties—800 years of foreign interference not the least of them—such a dramatic split between the physical and the inner domains is not part of the Indian story. In fact, the social structures and mental attitudes supporting spiritual pursuits in India are much closer to those of European science than to those of European religion. Even Śaṅkara—who arguably comes closest to what in the Christian tradition would have been called a church-father, given his role in founding centres of religious authority and power—in the end puts personal experience (*anubhava*) above tradition. In his *Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya* he says, for example (18, 66), 'Even a hundred scriptural passages will not become authoritative when they, for instance, announce that fire is cool or dark' (Rao, 1979, p. 65). The methods of yoga and meditation are nowadays primarily looked at soteriologically, that is, as a means for salvation, as a means to arrive at *samādhi* or *nirvāṇa*—at least if they are not seen as a means to arrive at physical health and the survival of a corporate lifestyle. In the culture of origin, however, they are part of a coherent knowledge system and they are clearly looked at as a way to arrive at reliable knowledge. This is most clear in the case of *jñānayoga* (the yoga of knowledge); but one can easily discern elements of the pursuit of truth even in *karma-* and *bhaktiyoga* (the paths of works and devotion), which also, in their own way, have methods to reduce the distortions of perception and affect that are part of the ordinary human consciousness.

The good news then is that modern scientific and ancient Indian approaches to psychology may not be so much contradictory as complementary. It is true that they are based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions, that they use different methods, and to some extent, that they look at different sides of the human enterprise, but in the end, they are based on the same human urge for true knowledge, pure love, effective power and happiness. It may

not be easy to come to mutual respect and understanding, but the effort will be worth it, for our preoccupation with knowledge and power in the physical domain has not solved humanity's problems. On a global scale, suffering due to poverty, violence and disease is still rampant, and we have added a considerable risk of sudden environmental self-destruction. One could well argue that the one thing we need most at present is a more comprehensive understanding of our own nature. As editors of this volume, we would like to argue that Indian psychology can make a valuable contribution to that endeavour.

Psychological practices

According to a survey commissioned by the Yoga Journal, there were in February 2008, some 15.8 million practitioners of (*haṭha*) yoga in the USA alone, and amongst the rest of the adult population, another 8 per cent, or eighteen million people, were 'very or extremely interested in yoga'. Over the years, thousands of researches on yoga and meditation have been conducted (Murphy & Donovan, 1997; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006), but according to the latter, this research is as yet rather imbalanced. Most research is conducted with beginning practitioners, and the vast majority of researches have been carried out with not more than three basic techniques—*haṭhayoga*, *vipassana* and Transcendental Meditation (TM). Almost all research is, moreover, in a mode that cultural anthropologists would call etic, rather than emic. In other words, the research is done from an outsider's, rather than from an insider's perspective; the techniques are decontextualized, and their effectiveness is measured in terms that belong to the theoretical framework of mainstream psychology. This is in itself not surprising, for measurement involves the use of standards, and in science these standards have to come from previously conducted research. But the result is that the effects of yoga and meditation have been measured almost exclusively on variables like blood pressure, anxiety, depression and extroversion, which have little to do with what would have been considered relevant in the culture of origin, such as equanimity, compassion, wisdom and detachment.

While reflecting on the scope of existing research on yoga and meditation, there is another issue that warrants careful consideration. It is true that India has developed an astounding variety of structured methods to 'do' yoga and meditation. There can also be no doubt that it is worth studying these techniques, and that one should not do this only by etic, but also, or even especially, by emic approaches. The methods of yoga should be understood on their own terms, and ideally not only in their gross 'effectiveness' but in terms of the underlying spiritual and psychological processes. But even a sympathetic, insider's look at these techniques will not give us the whole story. Amongst the Indian psychological practices that could benefit humanity, there are not only such formalised methods and techniques, but there is also an implicit, informal know-how that is orally transmitted from teacher to student within the *guru–śiṣya paramparā* (the master–disciple relationship), or passed down from generation to generation in the form of social institutions, customs, and culturally prescribed—but individually adopted and adapted—attitudes and inner gestures. When we look at yoga not only as a way to find the Divine but also as a way to bring our entire life more in harmony with the highest we can conceive and experientially 'realise', then it becomes clear why these informal, implicit aspects of yoga play such a big role in the Indian civilization, and why they are so

interesting for modern psychology. An anecdote from E. Richard Sorenson (2008) may illustrate the point. Sorensen relates an experience he had in a Tibetan monastery where most of the monks were young, and where he had noticed earlier that the novices were always 'eagerly rushing to share whatever special tidbit [sic] might have come their way (whether material or ideational)' (p. 46). As he relates:

> *One day, while having lunch with a group of novices, a burst of mirth snared my attention. An adolescent novice had just selected, as if solely for himself, the largest apple off a plate. Bursts of laughter from the others, no verbal comment, just hilarity, as several then did much the same, usually with some special fillip or perspective of their own. There was no obligation to be either different or the same ... they were just nuzzling at a trait all had seen outside.*

The interesting part is that amongst these youngsters, there were no pejorative remarks or outbursts of self-righteous indignation. Egoism was for them not something natural and tempting, yet socially unacceptable, but an utterly hilarious trait they had so far noticed only in the behaviour of people outside their own community. Presuming there is no major genetic difference in such matters, it is clearly worthwhile to study what it is exactly that made sharing the natural baseline for these children. It seems extremely unlikely that such a fundamental difference can be brought about by formal exercises or explicit instructions.

Regarding the spiritual core of the Indian psychological tradition, there is amongst professional psychologists a similar tendency to focus on formal practices and specialised techniques. Yet, in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, the undisputed authority on *rājayoga*, only one of its many *ślokas* deals with *āsanas* (yogic postures), and the *Bhagavad Gītā* hardly mentions strongly structured practices at all. Even in our times, some of the greatest sages of modern India, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sai Baba of Shirdi, Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo, did not advocate the use of highly structured and formalized techniques at all. They worked instead through a focused, specialized application of—in itself quite simple—psychological processes and powers. There is an enormous variety of those, and even though all the great gurus had their own favourites—for example, Ramakrishna's absolute devotion to the Divine Mother, or Ramana's sustained and unremitting focus on the question, 'Who am I?'—they typically adjusted their method of teaching to the needs of each disciple at any given moment.

The literature contains many different lists of desirable inner attitudes and gestures. Typical examples might be: a silent, non-judgemental self-observation; a growing surrender to the highest one can conceive; a sustained aspiration towards the Divine (whether in terms of knowledge, work, love, or oneness); a systematic development of traits like equanimity, calm, patience, vigilance, kindness, compassion, love, joy, harmony, oneness, wideness; small inner gestures of self-giving, consecration, openness, silence, surrender; the relocation of the centre of one's consciousness inwards and upwards. As yet, it is hard to say with certainty, whether such non-sectarian, informal 'paths' will dominate the future of Indian psychology, or the more formalized 'techniques' that have played such a big role in the preservation of the tradition into the present. What seems clear to us is that there is an urgent need for research in both.

Psychological theories

Indian psychology has dealt with most areas in which mainstream psychology is interested, and in many of them it has something unique to add. As we will see, there is a special, common quality to the contributions it can make to all these different fields. If we start with the structure of the personality—as we do in the first volume of Foundations—then we find that the Indian tradition has developed the concept of *ahaṁkāra*, which stands somewhere in between the Western concepts of ego and self-concept. But besides this egoic centre, which belongs to the ordinary waking consciousness, the Indian tradition has also developed a detailed nomenclature for many other, more subtle and non-egoic centres of consciousness; and it has even worked out, especially in certain Buddhist schools, how a consciousness can exist without any centre whatsoever. Similarly, the Indian tradition has found below the surface of our waking consciousness not only the dark 'unconscious' that depth psychology has explored, but a whole range of subtle *kośas* or layers of consciousness, that each have their own characteristic nature. It has even worked out many different ways of 'realizing' in one's experience (or perhaps one should rather say, in one's being) a Transcendent beyond all nature. It has found that all these inner layers, types, and centres of conscious existence have their specific influences on the surface personality, and that a direct access to them can, with sufficient training, enable levels of freedom, peace, joy, compassion, and understanding much beyond what is possible in the ordinary waking state.

In the field of cognition, we see a similar pattern. On the one hand, there is a detailed theoretical understanding of ordinary, sense-based cognition, mostly described as a system of *pramāṇa*, or knowledge-producing events. Different schools developed somewhat different theories about these matters—and they made much of their differences—but there is actually quite a large common base. It is noteworthy that the philosophical school of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which specialised in issues of epistemology and methodology, came to conclusions that are similar to modern thought in many respects. However, just as we saw in the field of Self and Personality, the ordinary sense-based cognition was not enough for the Indian tradition, and it developed besides a detailed understanding of intuition, inspiration, revelation, and various other types of 'intuitive knowledge' for which there are not always equivalent terms in English. The sheer complexity of the terminology, the subtle but significant differences between the various terms, and the stress on concrete methods to develop and refine these various forms of intuitive knowledge may give an idea not only of the enthusiasm and energy with which these possibilities have been explored, but also of the rigour, precision and attention for detail with which this work was undertaken. The study, cultivation and perfection of these subtle, not sense-based forms of cognition, might well deserve to become one of the major thrust areas of Indian psychology, as their development may lead to the creation of appropriate research methodologies for a whole new field of psychology.

Another major area of interest in psychology is that of emotion and motivation. To fully understand the various Indian theories of emotion, one has to go back to what should perhaps count as one of the greatest discoveries of the Indian tradition—the idea that the nature of ultimate reality can be described as an indivisible unity of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda*, or Existence,

Consciousness, and Delight. While in mainstream psychology, it is generally presumed that happiness is dependent on the satisfaction of individual needs and desires, this theory asserts that delight is inherent in existence, even though it can be clouded in humans by their 'ignorance' (*avidyā*). In other words, suffering is attributed to ego-bound deformations and limitations of the over-individualized human consciousness. Seen from this angle, the satisfaction of desires may give temporary relief, but the road to lasting and unconditional happiness and wisdom runs through detachment from the ego, and a rediscovery of one's knowledge of, love for, and oneness with the ultimate reality. With the ideal of perfect detachment and complete equanimity, a series of intriguing questions arises, which have occupied some of the best minds in Indian history, regarding the possibility of action for someone who has completely overcome all desire, preference and attachment. If such 'unmotivated' action is possible—and most schools of Indian thought agree that it is—then what kind of action can that be?

In the field of emotion, a special place deserves to be given to the ideas of Bharata (400–200 BCE) on aesthetic enjoyment. Bharata starts with the fascinating question, why people enjoy watching tragic plays in spite of the fact that they already know beforehand that watching such plays will make them cry. Considering the emotions that spectators and actors suffer and savour, he arrives at the subtle theory of *rasa*, the basic 'taste', which triggers the original delight hidden in all things.

It is commonly held, especially amongst American authors (for example, Walsh & Shapiro, 2006) that there are several areas of psychology where the Indian tradition has little to contribute. Though this is in itself perfectly plausible, it does not hold for the most commonly quoted examples. In all four areas where Walsh and Shapiro, for example, think that 'the meditative traditions' have little to contribute—child-development, psychodynamics, psychopathology and psycho-pharmacology—there is in fact detailed theoretical knowledge available within Āyurvedic and Siddha literature. In all four fields, the Indian tradition has paid attention to very similar social and physical factors as are taken into account in Western psychology; but there is, besides, an additional interest in influences on more subtle planes. In child-development, for example, influences from previous lives and the unique 'soul-quality' of the child, the *svabhāva*, are acknowledged as major contributors to the child's character and development. A similar multilevel understanding is part of the Indian way of looking at psychopathology, and the developmental stages later in life—the four *āśramas*. The misconception that there is no Indian contribution to any of these fields, is in all likelihood due to the same peculiar way in which Western psychology has studied the Indian tradition that we mentioned earlier. Mainstream academics have either looked at the decontextualized techniques of yoga and meditation, or at the other extreme, at equally decontextualized philosophical systems. The surrounding culture, as actually practiced, and the mediating theories—which are both very well developed in India—have so far not received the attention they deserve.

Indian psychology applied

Psychology is very much an applied science; and fields like pedagogy, education, social work, human resource development, organisational behaviour and therapy can all be looked at as specialized fields of applied psychology. At present, practitioners in these fields often experience a certain tension between the official theory, which prescribes well-defined, explicit methods and procedures, and experience, which tells them that a more personalized, eclectic and intuitive approach works better. The informal experience seems to come closer to reality than the formal theory. Interestingly, there is substantial statistical evidence to support this view. Bruce Wampold (2001), for example, has collected massive meta-analytical data to show that hardly any of the efficacy in psychotherapy can be ascribed to specific methods and theories. According to his findings, the efficacy in therapy is almost entirely determined by factors that either belong to the environment in which the therapy takes place or that are internal to the therapist and the client. While this is hard to understand from within the medical model that is used in most mainstream therapy research, it is in full harmony with Indian psychology, where the focus is on the work people have to do on themselves. The guide—whether he plays the role of pedagogue, teacher, human resource professional or therapist—guides by example, and perhaps even by direct influence. He shows that growing up is both worthwhile and feasible; that difficult material can be learned; that it is possible to master complex social situations in a constructive manner; and that life's problems can be solved. In a very deep sense, the guide guides mainly by sharing who he is in the essence of his being and how he expresses that essence in his life. In many forms of therapy-training this is recognized, and undergoing therapy oneself is then an essential part of the training-process. But in Indian psychology, which is built on self-knowledge rather than on knowledge of statistically generalized others, the demand for self-work, for understanding and mastering one's own self, goes further—both in breadth and in depth. In breadth, because it extends to all fields of applied psychology, and in depth because a good guide is supposed to show that it is possible, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, to 'transcend and integrate': A good guide should be able to show that it is possible to go beyond one's limitations; to live from a higher consciousness; to act from less selfish motives; to work more in harmony with the whole.

The practical application of Indian psychology differs from present-day mainstream psychology in a manner that parallels the differences we found in the various areas of theory formation. There is on the one hand the same constant attention to the multidimensional nature of the personality—a multidimensionality that is not limited to the physical and the social, but that extends to, or rather starts with, the spiritual. And there is on the other hand, a constant awareness that each individual is ultimately unique. Both attention points come together in the important concepts of *svabhāva* and *svadharma*—the recognition that individuals have not only their own true nature, their own unique set of qualities, but also their own truth of action, their own rules of conduct. Both concepts are based on the underlying sense that the individual is not just a cluster of self-concepts and tendencies to behave according to pre-established patterns, but a spiritual being, a soul who has taken birth for a definite purpose, a purpose which it has to find and fulfil.