



APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

Applied social psychology has been around since the dawn of human civilization. Social character of man has piqued the interest of thinkers, artists, and social reformers throughout recorded history. Understanding how individuals interact with each other and conduct their social lives is a major focus of their research. Everything from ancient texts to artefacts to music and poetry has played a role in this project. Evidence of both universality and distinctiveness in diverse civilizations has attracted researchers. People have coexisted as family, community, and nation throughout history, despite the fact that they may not have learnt how to do it peacefully. Since then, human nature has remained virtually unchanged. Many of the problems that ancient social psychology posed seem to be the same ones that modern social psychology is attempting to address. Many new concerns for social psychologists have been raised by the fast social, economic, and political changes that have swept throughout the globe and continents. In order to discover the underlying principles of social interaction, several novel ideas and methodologies are now being created.

Key words: social, psychology, political economy, sociology and anthropology etc.

Introduction

Traditional Western social psychology can be called modern social psychology in India, and vice versa. Traditions like Dharmashastra, Arthashastra, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas, to name a few, have shaped much of traditional social psychology throughout the centuries. Up to the dawn of the twentieth century, the social psychology ideas and notions embedded in these writings not only reflected Indian civilization, but also prescribed forms of social behaviour. India has a vast history of sociology and anthropology, but it has a little history of social psychology. There were sadhus and snake charmers and the supernatural in India for the British. "An Englishman's mind was boggled by the many caste, religious, tribal, and rural community systems, rituals, beliefs, and traditions of India. It was unlike anything anybody had ever encountered in Western society", it's a. Mistakes in interacting with people without an understanding of their social context frequently resulted in their getting into problems. Because of this lack of understanding, the mutiny of 1857 was mostly blamed to Britishers who did not understand the ramifications of breaking cultural norms. It was essential for the colonial government to understand Indian customs and traditions in order to run smoothly. These fields were firmly established in Indian academia by the turn of the century thanks to the backing of the British. The colonial rulers did not have such benefit, and social psychology study was mostly neglected.

The first psychology department at Calcutta University was where modern social psychology got its start. The first chairman of the Department, N.N. Sengupta, graduated from Harvard alongside Hugo Munsterberg. Despite his background in experimental psychology, he had a strong desire to learn more about Indian culture. He collaborated with a renowned sociologist, Radha Kamal



Mukherjee, at Lucknow University in 1928 on the book, "Social Psychology," which was published in 1929. The book was published in London and came out just a few years after Allport's book (1924). It was, however, not followed in much of the following work in social psychology in India, where sociologists and psychologists worked together. It turned out to be an exception to the norm, not the rule itself. No structured scholarly contact between sociology and psychology existed during the early years or even later. That is why it was impossible for social psychology to serve as a link between the two sciences. Sociological methods of survey and participant observation, focusing on Indian social structures and their relationship to social role-specific behaviour, were well developed in India. Marx, Durkheim, Manneheim, and other European sociologists influenced their use of primary and secondary data analysis. Most social psychologists with a psychological training followed the American model, which placed a high value on rigorous methodology. Very few psychologists have dealt with the traditions, rituals, and social structures of India. In an endeavour to establish psychology as a scientific field, Indian psychologists expanded the gap between themselves and Western psychologists. The work done in the West had a profound impact on them.

Potentials and Futures

- **Increase our data source**

Data and theory in social psychology in India are based on samples from educated urban middle-class populations. This means that we need to increase our data source. The structure and pattern we receive is primarily a result of our methodological choices. Rural and underserved populations are almost never mentioned. Sample selection has an obvious social class bias.

- **Need for a Cultural Social Psychology**

In order to understand the field of social psychology, it is necessary to consider a variety of viewpoints. These differing viewpoints are meant to be complimentary, not competing. An open-minded approach would be theoretically relevant as well as useful for practical purposes. When theories are overly enthusiastic, they might hide their ability to generate new ideas. It is possible to broaden the spectrum of social psychology discourse by being more open to other viewpoints.

- **Cultural Social Psychology Is Necessary**

So far, social psychology has been a cultural phenomenon. It was viewed as a separate entity that transcended all cultural boundaries. For western civilizations, it was inclusive, while for non-western cultures, it was exclusive. Disparate research practises among groups of scientists from throughout the world were made feasible by the camouflage and power imbalances that pervaded those groupings. The utilisation of culture was problematic if it was employed.

- **Emancipatory Criticism Is Necessary**

In recent years, psychology has seen a rise in critical thinking. It acknowledges that mainstream social psychology's conventional procedures and norms are often in conflict with social justice and may be harmful to people and communities in general, as well as to oppressed groups. They claim that by supporting the individualistic ideal, it discourages social connection and communication.

As a practitioner of social psychology, you may face several dilemmas

(1) Interdisciplinary vs. Disciplinary loss:



Academic freedom may be curtailed by the decision to integrate social psychology with other disciplines, which might diminish its distinct character. Conventional markers were used in the old division of labour to determine what was and wasn't appropriate for different professions. This resulted in a ferocious struggle to separate themselves from each other. Their followers acted like opposing factions and went to great lengths to maintain their distinct identities. Separation of academic units, study topics, investigative techniques, academic publications, and professional organisations were all part of this. The posture of independent identity has strengthened throughout time as a result of all these constructions. As a result, there has been a breakdown in communication. Inter/multi/cross-discipline viewpoints have been increasingly popular in recent years, and this has led to confusion among some academics.

(2) Indigenization vs. relevance:

There has been an upsurge in calls to indigenize psychology in general and social psychology in particular during the last several years. This approach relies largely on the use of symbolic resources and practises that may be found in certain cultures in order to reinterpret the discipline. However, there isn't just one way to go about this enterprise; instead, there are several ways to go about it. In addition, its findings have not yet been integrated into the major body of sociology. Additionally, there is a worry of becoming obsolete and incongruent with current social psychological practises. Indigenous psychology applications also raise the topic of relevancy. Indigenous psychology has been questioned by some psychologists because of its emphasis on tradition and culture. Due to a lack of indigenous psychology, the situation is currently quite unclear.

(3) Disciplinary advancement vs. Significance for the society:

The academic study of social psychology has developed primarily as an academic endeavour committed to theoretical advances in the discipline. In order to do this, larger and more complex studies were being designed and conducted with newer variables and an increasing degree of control over key factors. In this manner, scientific research was a sort of filtration system. In the course of a scientific investigation, the topic of practicality is not raised. Following research or contemplation is the task of determining if the study can be used.

(4) A comparison between data-driven and theory-driven research:

Psychologists tend to favour studies guided by theories rather than empirical findings. As a result, theories make predictions, and researchers work to show that these predictions can be verified empirically. As a means of predicting the dependent variables under consideration, researchers frequently look at combinations of several factors to make their predictions. Instead, data-driven research that begins with observation of a phenomenon is uncommon. An strategy that relies on grounded theory hasn't been widely adopted. The theory-data distinction is incorrect in practise because no one functions in a vacuum.

Conclusion

To describe reality, social psychologists in India have used Western conceptual categories that have nothing to do with the cultural basis of such concepts. In recent years, reassessment has begun, and cultural context has become more important to consider. Several examples of this welcome transformation have not only broadened the spectrum of variables but also improved our



conversation by providing an insider's perspective on Indian society. An effort is underway to explore the limits of concepts and the way they operate in diverse cultural situations. Symbolic and behavioural social psychology may be able to identify answers to Indian problems from an Indian perspective by exploiting underutilised cultural resources. Individuals and society are intertwined rather than separated in this view, which emphasises the interconnectedness of the two parts of social existence.

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