

Preface

I think it is important to trace the personal history of researchers while discussing their programs of research because scientists are also human (Hofstede, 1994), and their cultural values not only shape their values and beliefs but also their research questions and methodology they use (Bhawuk, 2008a). I think it would provide the context in which this book was written if I presented some autoethnographic account (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Anderson, 2006) here. This presents a glimpse of the interaction between the subjective and the objective, where the observer himself is being observed! It is akin to story-telling of the personal disclosure type (Jounard, 1971), and the message is to be constructed by the reader by reflecting on his or her own journey, as there is no explicit goal of sharing this story.

My interest in indigenous psychology started when I was in graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign working under the supervision of Professor Harry C. Triandis. While reading one of his papers on individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1990), I noticed a Kuhnian anomaly (Kuhn, 1962). Triandis observed that individualists are more creative than collectivists, which did not sound right to me. I mulled over it for years, from 1992 to 1998, building my argument that people spend their energy in what is valued in their culture, and the reason people in collectivist cultures appeared not to be creative was because they were being evaluated on criteria that were of value to the western or individualist cultures. With my interest in spirituality and observation of the Indian society, it dawned on me that in India people value spirituality and hence much creativity was likely to be found in this domain.

As I developed my thought, I recalled meeting people or reading articles or books that supported my conjecture. For example, I recalled meeting a monk in 1979 who was an engineer by training and with a degree in rotor dynamics from Germany. Today he is the head of a successful *ashram* in Gujarat. The famous Indian journalist, Arun Shourie, who exposed the blinding of prisoners in Bhagalpur and was responsible for many such exposés, was an economist by training but had written a book on Hinduism (1980). One could argue that I was using self-deception, the tendency to use one's hopes, needs and desires to construct the way we see the world (Triandis, 2009). However, when one is on a spiritual journey the only desideratum that matters is honesty, which is also true for research. The researcher has

to constantly question his own intention of crafting a theory or finding something that fits his or her thoughts and ideas. I make conscious effort to be honest, but I could never rule out inadvertent self-deception.

When I came across the work of Simonton (1996), I found the literature that allowed me to present my ideas in a full length paper, which I presented at the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) conference in Bellingham in 1998 and published it a few years later (Bhawuk, 2003a). Professor Triandis was concerned because I was in the early phase of my academic career and the paper did not fit the western mold of what were recognized as scholarly publications. Nevertheless, he encouraged me to try the top journals because he saw the paper as original. He wrote to me on September 12, 1998, "I thought that both papers were well done. The culture and creativity is not 'mainstream,' so it may be more difficult to publish it. I would think the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* might be more lenient than the other journals. But start with *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* and see what they say." He wrote again on September, 15, 1998, "I looked at the papers again, and did not change my mind. The only problem I see is that the one on spirituality as creativity is unusual, and may not be publishable in a mainstream journal. On the other hand, one could make the case that just because it is original it might be acceptable. Why don't you try the top journals first? It all depends on the reviewers. Do not get discouraged if they reject it."

My experience with rejection of the paper by the top journals, both *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, led me to write another paper about how science has a culture of its own and the need for cross-cultural researchers to watch how their own culture shapes their research questions and methodology. I presented this paper at the IACCP conference in Pultusk in 2000 and published some excerpts from it a few years later (Smith et al., 2002; Bhawuk, 2008a).

An invitation by Dr. Girishwar Misra to write a paper for the special issue of the *Indian Psychological Review* in the honor of Professor Durganand Sinha led me to write my first paper on the *bhagavadgItA* (Bhawuk, 1999), which was my second paper on Indian Psychology. I must say that I did not feel very encouraged those days as the reviews for the culture and creativity paper were not encouraging, and I felt that my work was less appreciated because of where I was – in the USA. However, Professor Tony Marsella's work (Marsella, 1998) and a personal relationship with him (as he was at my university in Culture and Community Psychology, and was instrumental in inducting me in that department as a graduate faculty) encouraged me to work in the area of indigenous psychology. I also felt appreciated by Professor Triandis and Brislin, my two cross-cultural psychologist mentors, who always encouraged me to do what I valued. With these three papers I saw an emerging stream of research in Indian Psychology. I discovered the classic works of Professor Jadunath Sinha while working on these papers, and also got to know Professor Anand Paranjpe personally whom I met at IACCP conference at Bellingham, and we talked for hours like two lost brothers uniting after many years. I read his work with delight and awe, and did not feel so lonely doing research in

Indian Psychology. Learning about his experience also prepared me for the rough journey ahead.

I had critically read the *bhagavadgItA* cover to cover for the first time in 1979, but never found the time to read it again except for occasional reading of a few verses to check the meaning of some concepts that emerged in social conversations. Being a weekly visitor of the ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) temple in Honolulu, I kept getting exposed to the *bhagavadgItA*, and the celebration of *Gita Jayanti* in December 2000 at the ISKCON temple provided the structure for me to study the *bhagavadgItA* for the second time after a lapse of 21 years! At this time, I started working on work values from indigenous perspectives, and started reading the *bhagavadgItA* regularly. Interestingly though I never got to finish the paper on work values despite reading the third Canto of the *bhagavadgItA* many times over the years starting in the year 2000, as opportunities called for writing some other papers. Dr. Paranjpe directed me to the conference in Vishakhapatnam on “Self and Personality in Yoga and Indian Psychology” in December 2003, where I presented a paper on the concept of self, and that led to building a model of self – physical, social, and metaphysical – how it relates to work, and the two alternative paths – material or spiritual – that are available to us (Bhawuk, 2005).

Another conference at the Vivekanand Yoga Anusandhan Samsthan (VYASA) (now Vivekanand Yoga University) in December 2003 allowed me to present a paper, “Bridging Science and Spirituality: Challenges for Yoga,” and as my research stream in Indian Psychology blossomed, my commitment to Indian Psychology became quite firm. I was delighted to join the group of Indian Psychologists from Vishakhapatnam in what I have called the Indian Psychological Movement. One of the tenets of this movement is to continue to synthesize psychology and philosophy in India, unlike their mindless separation in the west.

I have benefited tremendously from the conferences organized by the Vivekanand Yoga University, which has provided me the motivation to build my work in Indian Psychology. For example, the conference in December 2005 on Self and Emotion offered an opportunity to present a paper, “Anchoring Cognition, Emotion, and Behavior in Desire: Perspectives from the *bhagavadgItA*,” which allowed me to synthesize cognition, emotion, and behavior through desire (Bhawuk, 2008c). Similarly the conference in December 2007 presented an opportunity to present the paper, “*manas* in *yajurveda*, *bhagavadgItA*, and Contemporary Culture: Beyond the Etic-Emic Research Paradigm.” At this conference it was decided that Dr. E. S. Srinivas and I would organize a symposium on Indian Psychology at the National Academy of Psychology (NAoP) in December 2008 in Guwahati. This symposium and the resulting special issue of the journal of *Psychology and Developing Societies* (Bhawuk & Srinivas, 2010) and other publications mark a 10 year journey for me in developing indigenous psychological models and contributing to Indian Psychology. I became a member of the Indian National Academy of Psychology (NAoP) in 2006, and have been regularly attending its annual conferences. NAoP has presented me the opportunity to build my cross-cultural psychological research stream from an Indian Psychological perspective (Bhawuk, 2006, 2008d). This book is a synthesis of my contributions to Indian Psychology and extends my past work.

In my research I have decided not to take a shortcut by depending on English translations of Sanskrit texts, and I have made a serious commitment to learn Sanskrit. I work with multiple sources of translations in Hindi, Nepali, and English to ascertain the meaning and nuances of concepts and constructs. I have been fortunate to have the blessings of Professor Ramanath Sharma, a world renowned Sanskritist scholar and expert on Panini in Honolulu. I attended his classes over two semesters in 2001, and he has always been there to walk me through the etymology of Sanskrit words so that a novice like me can appreciate the nuances. I am also grateful to Professor Arindam Chakravarty of philosophy department at my university who has kindly guided me, often fortuitously causing me to think of the presence of a divine guidance, on many occasions in understanding the spiritual dimensions of life.

This research stream has also emerged as I started practicing *vAnaprashta* since 1998. In my personal definition of *vAnaprashta*, spiritual *sAdhanA* (or practice) takes precedence over my worldly activities. Interestingly, it has neither slowed down my research productivity nor taken me away from my other academic duties. Instead, I have become steady in my morning and evening prayers, meditation, and studies of scriptures, which includes regular chanting of verses from them. I have learned to chant the *rudra aSTAdhyAyi*, which is derived from the *yajurveda*. I have learned to chant from *durga-saptazati*, and have committed to memory all the prayers from this text. I started reading the entire text of the *bhagavadgItA*, and began by reading it once a year, then once a month, to finally twice a month. I have also learned from other spiritual traditions, and see the convergence of spiritual practices. I have become a *vaiSNava* in my thinking and behavior, thanks to my wife and children's many reminders and encouragement. I am at peace, and peace and spirituality is no longer only an intellectual pursuit but a way of life for me. I don't think it makes me a biased researcher; instead it makes me an informed researcher. Much like when I teach and write about training and intercultural training, I am able to take the perspectives of both a researcher and a practitioner (i.e., a trainer); I write and teach about spirituality both as a thinker and a practitioner. A current steady *sAdhanA* of 3–4 hours a day has been both an academic and personal investment in self-development, and without the practice of *zravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyAsana*, I could not have come this far in my research program in Indian Psychology.

What has emerged in this journey is an approach or a methodology for developing models from the scriptures that can be used in general for developing models from folk wisdom traditions. In my research, I have never worried about the methodology, and have instead focused on the questions that have interested me, and the methodology has always emerged. I followed a historical analysis and complemented it with case studies to develop a general model of creativity, which served me well in pursuing the research question that was somewhat unprecedented (Bhawuk, 2003a). The model building efforts (Bhawuk, 1999, 2005, 2008b, c) have also not followed any prescribed methodology, and thus contribute to the emergence of a new approach. The foundation of this emerging methodology lies in the spirit of discovering and building indigenous insights (Bhawuk, 2008a, b), which in itself is a new approach to indigenous psychological research.

This book would have never happened if I did not start an academic pursuit in cross-cultural psychology and management. So, I am grateful to my cross-cultural mentors, Professor Harry C. Triandis and Professor Richard W. Brislin; to my colleagues Professors Tony Marsella, Dan Landis, Anand Paranjpe, K. Ramakrishna Rao, Giriswar Misra, Janak Pandey, Alexander Thomas, E. S. Srinivas, and Acarya Satya Chaitanya; all of them have inspired me with their own work and life, and encouraged me to pursue research in indigenous psychology and management. This book also would not have happened if I did not have a spiritual bend, which was nurtured early on by my mother (Late Rukmini Devi Sharma), father (Thakur Krishna Deva Sharma), brothers (Chandra Prakash Sharma and Om Prakash Sharma), and sister (Usha Sinha); and later by my wife (Poonam Bhawuk), sons (Atma Prakash and Ananta Prakash), and many friends (Arjun Pradhan, Ganesh Thakur, among others). Professor Ramanath Sharma has guided me over the years and provided me with many *mantras* that have become a part of my spiritual practice, and he has also taught me Sanskrit, and helped me explain many esoteric concepts and given me feedback on my writings. Mother Kume, Mr. Merritt Sakata, Mr. Mohinder Singh Man, Professor Arindam Chakravarty, Randolph Sykes, Sister Joan Chatfield, Manjit Kaur, and Saleem Ahmed have also guided me for years by sharing their wisdom and insights. The South Asian community in Honolulu, the visitors of Wahiawa temple, and the ISKCON temple have been anchors for my spiritual practice, and I owe my spiritual growth to many friends there. I must thank my students for bearing with me while I sounded my ideas on them in class and in personal dialogues. I owe my gratitude to Vijayan Munusamy, David Bechtold, Keith Sakuda, Susan Mrazek, Kat Anbe, Sachin Ruikar, Anand Chandrasekar, and David Jackson.

Many ideas in this book build on Triandis's work, but there are some ideas that contradict some of his. Our worlds, Harry's and mine, have intriguingly merged as Harry has written a formidable book on self-deception, which, I think, is marginally related to his 50 year contribution to cross-cultural psychology, but relevant to my work on spirituality. Harry thinks spirituality is self-deception, and I think all material activities, career, family, etc., are self-deception, and only when we start our spiritual journey do we begin to stop the process of self-deception that we are so wired into socially. I also think Harry is an advanced *karmayogi*, and I have seen none more advanced like him – he works for the joy of work, and is yet not addicted to it or its fruits. This book would mean nothing without living and practicing *karmayogis* like him.

I hope the readers of the book not only get academic value but also some spiritual insight and direction. Much of what I have written has been extremely useful to me on my spiritual journey, and is thus experientially validated, something that I encourage researchers to do in their life with their research work. To those who will only examine the intellectual content of the book, I hope they find a new method of doing indigenous psychological research and examples of what this method can contribute. This book has given me much happiness in writing it and living it, so if it gives you, the reader, a similar happiness, please share it with others. If you don't like the book, please mail it to me, and I will send you the money you paid for the book, and my sincere apology is yours to keep. I think it is only fair but morally and spiritually right that I give the reader such a guarantee.

Spirituality and Indian Psychology

Lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita

Bhawuk, D.

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