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The Limitations of the Western Medical Model and an Introduction of Eastern (Vedic) Psychological Approaches

Chaitanya Pankhania

University of Hertfordshire

ABSTRACT

Psychiatry and the DSM have been the gold standard in Mental Health treatment globally. For India, it was a dominating force which paved the path for the British Raj, India's colonial past. Psychiatrist George Engel posited that all cultural theories of the mind constitute equally legitimate frameworks that potentially advance understanding of the human condition. However, through nationalistic, religious and political motives, the Western world, viewing indigenous people as primitive and inferior, enforced Western health practices. Through imperial channels, the Western Medical Model and Euro-American psychological theories entered India's healthcare provision, largely disregarding the profound cultural and religious insights of the Vedas, which underlie Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Here, I examine the scientific and cultural limitations of the Western mental health approach, as well as its problematic historical trajectory in India. I review the literature and practices of the Eastern (Vedic) psychological model as viable complementary frameworks and analyse efforts to broaden the discipline through the decolonisation of psychology and the Indianization of psychiatry. This literature review provides the foundation for doctoral research on the perspectives and practices of the Eastern (Vedic) approach, with the aim of fostering cultural integration within clinical practice.

Keywords: cultural differences, decolonisation, nationalism, psychiatry, religious prejudice