

Positive Psychology, Indian Psychology and Spirituality

PRIYANKA SHUKLA

Abstract

Positive psychology is a relatively new field that examines how ordinary people can become happier and more fulfilled. Positive psychology is a science of positive aspects of human life, such as happiness, well-being and flourishing. Indian psychology is an approach to psychology based on the Indian ethos. Indian Psychology is essentially positive and rooted in the consciousness-based Indian worldview, yoga and a life-affirming spirituality. Human life is a journey of the soul which resides in the human body. Indian psychology highlights the pathway to make this journey easy and the ultimate goal of liberation of the soul (*moksha*) achievable through yoga, meditation and prayer. Humans are made of the body, mind, intellect, ego and soul and only soul can help to attain ultimate happiness and bliss through spirituality. The present paper is an attempt to explain that both positive psychology and Indian psychology focus on human happiness and their unique strength; and discusses how goals of positive psychology can be achieved through the rich Indian spiritual heritage. Indian psychology and spirituality share a framework that human has enormous potential hidden in its being. Indian scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga, Bhagavad Gita) and spiritual practices (Yoga, meditation and prayer) help to discipline the mind to achieve balance, (*samyavastha*) to overcome the hindrance in the pursuit of happiness and to improve the qualities of different roles we play in our lives. In this way the Indian spiritual practices have important implications for the achievement of goals of Positive Psychology i.e. wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice and transcendence and makes life worth living.

Key words: Positive Psychology, Spirituality, Indian Psychology, Pappiness and Well-being

The origin of Positive Psychology

In today's world, society is facing extremely tough challenges in the form of global warming, natural disasters, economic recession, unprecedented homelessness, terrorism and the draining continuation of war. With all this sadness and negativity, there is a need of positive rays which help to make normal life more fulfilling. Thus positive psychology is a relatively new field that examines how ordinary people can become happier and more fulfilled. Scientific researches are increasingly making it clear that the normal functioning of human being cannot be accounted for within purely negative (or problem focused) frame of reference. Positive Psychologists try to explain the nature of effectively functioning human beings who successfully apply evolved

adaptations and skills and thrive despite all the difficulties that life poses before them. Positive psychology has its primary focus on the strengths, virtues, and talents that contribute towards successful functioning and enable individuals and communities to flourish better.

The term "positive psychology" appeared first in Abraham Maslow's book (1954) *Motivation and Personality*. Thus, Positive psychology has a very long past but only a very short history (Peterson, 2006, p.146). Positive Psychology is a recent branch of psychology the purpose of which was summed up by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) as psychology of positive human functioning. "What's right about people" instead of "what's wrong with people" is the question that is being answered by positive

psychologists. They are adopting a scientific and applied approach to uncover people's strengths and promote their positive functioning (Seligman 1998a).

According to Seligman (2002, p.126), the basic assumptions of positive psychology are: That there is a human 'nature'; That action proceeds from character; That character comes in two forms, both equally fundamental—bad character and good virtuous (*angelic*) character.

The goal of positive psychology is to identify and enhance the human strengths and virtues that make life worth living. Positive psychology focuses on wellbeing, happiness, flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, imagination and characteristics of positive groups and institutions.

Positive psychology concentrates on positive experiences at three time points: (1) the past, centering on wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction; (2) the present, which focuses on concepts such as happiness and flow experiences; (3) the future, with concepts including optimism and hope. Not only does positive psychology distinguish between wellbeing across time points but it also separates the subject area into three nodes: *the subjective node*, which encompasses things like positive experiences and states across past, present and future (for example, happiness, optimism, wellbeing); *the individual node*, which focuses on characteristics of the 'good person' (for example, talent, wisdom, love, courage, creativity); and *the group node*, which studies positive institutions, citizenship and communities (for example, altruism, tolerance, work ethic) (Seligman, 1998b).

The field of positive psychology is intended to complement, not to replace traditional psychology. It does not seek to deny the importance of studying how things go wrong, but rather to emphasize the importance of using the scientific method to determine how things go

right. Positive psychology has an extremely close relationship with Indian psychology because both are concerned with personal growth and meaning. Positive psychology, which is influenced by Aristotelian ethics, concentrates on those aspects of human behaviour that are thought to contribute to personal and community flourishing. Socrates, Aristotle and Plato believed that when people pursued a virtuous life, they would become authentically happy. Epicurus and later utilitarian John Stuart Mill preached that happiness was indeed the abundance of positive feelings and pleasures. Positive psychology has traditionally conceptualized authentic happiness as a mixture of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The hedonic perspective suggested that maximising one's pleasurable moments was the pathway to happiness, whilst eudaimonic advocates argued that living a life of virtue, and actualising one's inherent potentials was the way to wellbeing (Delle, Massimini, & Bassi, 2011, p.3, 18). These philosophical traditions have since been translated to contemporary psychology for the development of a science of wellbeing.

The WHO conceptualizes health as a state of complete physical, mental wellbeing and not merely the absence of infirmity incorporating well-being in its broadest sense, not simply the absence of illness (WHO, 1946). In classical Indian tradition also, health is conceptualized as a state of delight or a feeling of physical, mental and spiritual well-being (Dalal, 2006). Obtaining well-being as conceptualized by WHO and our Indian tradition would have been a mystery, but with more and more scientific researches in Positive Psychology as well as in Indian Psychology, we are now having better and clearer insights to achieve well-being for both the individuals and the society. The present paper is a humble attempt to enumerate how Indian psychology can contribute to achieve the goals of positive psychology.

Enhancing the life of enjoyment (pleasant life), creating the life of engagement (good life) and promoting the life of affiliation (meaningful life) are the goals of positive psychologists. In other words, positive psychology aims at building positive qualities. It is envisioned to have three levels-subjective, individual, and collective. a) “*The subjective level* is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)”; b) “*At the individual level*, positive psychology is about a number of individual traits such as – the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom”. c) “*At the group level*, the concern of positive psychology is about the civic virtues like responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance and work ethic and the institution that moves individuals toward better citizenship”.

Positivity in Spirituality and Indian Psychology

Indian psychology is an approach to psychology that is based on ideas and practices that have been developed over thousands of years. According to Srivastava (2001), ‘practical attitude’, ‘prospective approach’, ‘introspective character’, ‘focus on super-sensible experience’, ‘dynamical–functional approach’, ‘continuity with other disciplines’, ‘purposivistic attitude’, and ‘an organismic and integral approach’ are the eight fundamental characteristics of Indian psychology.

Auluck (2002a) has identified the following salient features of Indian psychology. (a) It is holistic and ideographic in approach. (b) It is aimed at understanding the workings of ‘I-world’, to bring improvement and growth of self, through acquisition of mastery over the ways of mind to ultimately seek liberation from all

enslaving forces. (c) It goes deeper and explores both phenomenal and noumenal reality—*vyāvahārika and pāramārthika satya* in the words of Shankaracharya (Vedanta Philosophy). (d) Unlike Western psychology, the *Māndukya Upanishad* comprehensively analyses waking, dreaming, and sleeping states, and proves the ‘inevitability of a common substratum, that is, *aatman* which cannot be identified with our common sense notion of waking self’.

Auluck (2002b) notes that Indian thinkers in search of the self, discovered a totally unexpected dimension of man’s existence, that is, *aatman*— the truth of existence itself. An honest analysis of oneself reveals to us the sources of stress, problems, sorrows, conflicts, and so on, which provides a clue to free oneself from their debilitating effects. Hence, according to the author Indian psychology has all the essentials of applied psychology (p.374, 398). Moreover, Menon (2005) takes the view that Indian psychology has expanded the conventional definition of psychology from the “science of human behavior” to “human possibility and progress”. It has nurtured a world view incorporating continuity, interdependence and connectivity across all life forms. Thus, Indian psychology is positive, inclusive and holistic and it aims at elevating humans to a higher level of being.

Indian Psychology rooted in the psychologically relevant spiritual practice, has a long and valuable tradition in which spirituality plays a significant role. The hindi translation of the term spirituality is ‘*adhyatm*’ which means “*atmanah sambadham gyanam*” which means “the knowledge related to the nature of the soul”; or “knowledge related to mind or *mana*”. Spiritual matters are thus those matters regarding ultimate nature and purpose of human beings, not only as material and biological organisms but as being with a unique relationship with something which is beyond time and material world. This simply

means that concept of spirituality should be understood in its true sense.

Spirituality to the Hindu is to strive for the eternal search for the divine “*Brahman*, the Supreme Immanent and Transcendent truth or the Cosmic spirit .This is *Dharma*, or individual ethics, duties and obligations. *Moksha* (Salvation) of every soul can be achieved through variety of paths such as *Bhakti* (Devotion), *Karma* (Selfless action) and *Gyana* (Enlightenment, Knowledge) and *Dhyan* (Meditation). Liberation from material bondage and cycle of birth and death and developing a relationship with the “Universal Spirit” is known as *Moksha* which is the ultimate goal of all Hindus. Virtuous actions take the soul closer to the Supreme Divine, and lead to a birth with higher consciousness. Evil actions hinder this recognition of the supreme divine and the soul takes lower forms of worldly life. *Guru*, (the teacher) can guide the *Shishya* (the disciple) to the virtuous path of life .Thus it can be said that Eastern spirituality focuses on being and becoming, oneness of spirit (soul) and matter (body): one giving meaning to other and considers everything in the universe as God (Kakar, 1978, p.15-22).

Indian views on spirituality

In India we have several schools and philosophers who have presented their views regarding Spirituality. We have Vedic literature, Charvaka School of philosophy, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christians and Islamic literature on Spirituality/Religiosity, but the milestones of Spirituality reveals that Vedas are world’s oldest books of knowledge.

1700-1100 B.C	Rig Veda the oldest of the four Vedas was written during this period
6 th Century B.C.	Prosperity of the Charvaka School of Philosophy.
525 B.C	The birth of Mahavira, who outlined the Doctrines of Jainism
563 B.C.	The spreading of Buddhism in India.
3 rd Century B.C.	Spread of Buddhism by Ashoka
400 B.C. -1000 A.D.	The golden age of Hinduism
52 A.D.	Thomas the Apostle landed at Kerala.
64 A.D.	Malik Dinar and Companions hit the Malabar coast with the message of Islam

(Vasudev, 2007, p.80-84)

According to Narayanasamy, (1999):

Spirituality is rooted in an awareness which is a part of the biological make up of the human species.

Spirituality is present in all individuals and it may manifest as inner peace and strength derived from a perceived relationship with a transcendent God / an ultimate reality, or whatever an individual values as supreme.

The spiritual dimension evokes feelings which demonstrate the existence of love, faith, hope, trust, awe, inspiration; therein providing meaning and a reason for existence.

It comes into focus particularly when an individual faces emotional stress, physical illness or death.

According to Hussain, (2005), the term spirituality refers to the “individual’s experience of a dimension of power and meaning transcendent to the ordinary sensory reality”. Following other definitions of spirituality has been given by Hussain, (2005):

Spirituality refers to the relationship with self, others, God and the universe.

Spirituality refers to the relationship between me and others, and between me and God.

Spirituality helps people in: reaching and exploring challenges ,seeking personal truth, developing the sense of unity of life and developing a personal philosophy.

Spirituality develops a sense of higher consciousness that connects the creator and the created.

Spirituality is an inner belief system which concerns the essence of my being.

Spirituality brings a feeling of unity with nature and people .It integrates body, mind and Spirit, without spirituality there is no integrity.

Spirituality nurtures values such as maturity, piety, balance, compassion, wisdom, humility and serenity.

Spirituality fills the gap between the missing links. It is a strength which helps in searching the existence of God.

Spirituality is unique to each individual, influenced by culture, development, experiences and ideas, meaning, transcendent, hope, love, quality, relationship and existence.

Spirituality is the source of self-confidence, without which nothing is accomplished.

Considering all of the above mentioned views, spirituality is adopting a framework or a creative positive attitude towards the supreme higher power or God, self, others, nature and life ensuring well-being of the self and society as a whole. In other words, spirituality is that which gives meanings to one's life and draws one to transcend one's material self. There are two paths to ultimate truth. One is the extrovert western path of pursuing physical and biological sciences that comprises intense analytical study of the nature around us. This path creates material comforts as

by products but also generates internal and external turmoil in society and the environment. The other is the introvert and spiritual Indian path of intense self analysis, meditation and yoga that lays little emphasis on comforts but generates internal and external peace and harmony as by products.

Spirituality and Religion

The exploration of spirituality, one holistic purpose of world religions (Smith, 1994) shares some characteristics common with religious perspectives such as search for what is sacred or holy in life, coupled with some kind of transcendent (beyond the self) relationship with God or higher power or universal energy (Thoresen, 1998). But spirituality is a broader concept than religion (Astrow, Puchalski & Sulmasy, 2001). Although spirituality is about the search for transcendent meaning, most people express their spirituality in religious practices. Others express it exclusively in their relationships with nature, music, arts, or a set of philosophical beliefs or relationships with friends and family. Religion, on the other hand is a set of beliefs, practices, and language that characterize a community that is searching for transcendent meaning in a particular way, generally on the basis of belief in a deity. In fact different religions have a special role to play in the awakening of spirituality by enhancing certain qualities like compassion, forgiveness and harmony, which are more or less prerequisites for fostering spirituality in a person.

In view of the above discussion the following differences can be made between spirituality and Religion.

Spirituality	Religion
A quest for answer to ultimate questions	An organized system of beliefs, symbols and Practices
Focus on individual growth	Focus on establishing community
Less objective, less measurable	More objective, more measurable
Intrinsic (Experiential)	Extrinsic (Practice oriented)
Outcome ¹	Path ¹
Less formal worship	Formalized worship practices
Less authoritarian, few prescriptions	More authoritarian, prescribed patterns
Liberates soul	Shapes history
God is pervasive	God is a father/ mother figure
Freely available to anyone	'Your' and "then" mentality

Paranjpe (1988) states: "It is useful to refer to a distinction commonly made in India between "Spiritual" as opposed to "Religious" pursuits. The word "Spiritual" refers to a deeply personal concern about psychological and moral well-being – regardless of the theological dogmatic, ritualistic, liturgical, magical or mystical aspects often associated with religious life. The Sanskrit term *Adhyatmic* conveys this sense of the spiritual and is essentially untranslatable into English. Yoga and Zen are spiritual in this sense, and have little to do with what is called "religion" in the English language (p.1, 50).

Spirituality is the most important theme of Indian philosophical thoughts and has been understood as "a universal and primary concern for, and almost a preoccupation with, matters of spiritual significance" (Moore, 1967, p.12). In stating how closely Indian Philosophy is related to life, the general agreement seems to be that truth should be realized, rather than simply known intellectually. This further emphasizes and clarifies spirituality as the way of living i.e. not merely to know the truth but become one with the truth (Sheldon, 1951, p.288-97).

Spiritual Nature of Human Being

The nature of human life is twofold, i.e., combination of matter and soul. All the literature of spirituality reveals that soul is in consonance with God or Higher power or cosmic force or Supreme energy. Soul is the part of this supreme energy. In material terms, it is the spiritual spark, existing in this material body. Spirituality is the drawing out and infusion of this Supreme energy into one's life.

The infusion of supreme energy into life may be possible only when the nature and characteristics of supreme energy or God as well as the human soul are comprehended well. For this purpose few *shlokas* of *Rigveda*, *Samveda* and *Atharvaveda* can be mentioned. Human soul must strive to attain the Godly qualities since it is originated from God (*Atharvaveda*, 4/14/1); is compounded with God (*Samveda*, Uttar, 850); is similar and alike God (*Rigveda*, 9/32/3) and also it is beyond senses (*Rigveda*, 10/61/13) (Prakash, 2004). The Godly qualities as described in the Vedas are the originator of the whole world (*Rigveda*, 10/81/3); pervasive (*Yajurveda*, 32/4); detached (*Rigveda*, 8/19/1); patron of all animate and inanimate things (*Rigveda*, 1/7/2); undecayable (*Rigveda*, 10/88/3, 6/5/7); pure and sacred (*Rigveda*, 8/95/8) etc. From these Godly

qualities, sprout the characteristics which have to be achieved by human soul in order to be spiritual. But the moment soul is combined with matter (the body), the expression of these Godly qualities becomes limited since the inherent quality of matter is “limitation”. Therefore the attainment of these Godly qualities by human soul must be understood in that light only (Pradhan & Shukla, 2008). Human beings should also try to get rid of vices and evil qualities in life and to inculcate the Godly qualities. *Vedas* are full of mantras for praying to God for the removal of vices and bad things from life and infusion of purity, positivity and what is good for the self:

*Om vishvanidev savidurduritani parasuva,
Yad bhadrū tann aa suva. (Yajurveda, 30/3)*

Possessing and practising the divine qualities in lives, may establish an individual in human as well as divine group of existence simultaneously. Individuals have been viewed to be of three kinds, i.e. *rakshasa gana* (demonic group); *manushya gana* (human group); and *daiva gana* (divine group). Depending on this view of human nature, three perspectives of human life emerge, i.e. hedonistic, transcendent and collectivistic. The level of happiness and well-being is related to how one views the nature of human being and which perspective is valued (Kumar, 2006).

Ego, Mind and Intellect

Humans are made of body, mind, intellect and ego. In the Vedic times yogis investigated the deepest nature of human being. They developed a philosophy on human existence on the material, psychological and spiritual levels. The vedic model of human psychology consists of Panchkoshas representing body, mind, ego, intellect and self.

In Darshana Shastra, Tattvabodha explained Mind as ‘*samkalpa-vikalpātmākam*

manaḥ’ (Tattvabodha, 30/3). *Samkalpa* means decision and *vikalpa* means indecision. Tattvabodha says that decision and indecision are the nature of the mind, explaining its vacillation. Mind is the connecting factor between *anthaḥkaraṇa* (internal sensory organs) and *bāhyakaraṇa* (external sensory organs) and hence, is considered as the single important factor in spirituality. Mind is one of the amazing instruments of human life. It develops likes and dislikes from the three *guṇa*-s. More than the mind, its subtler aspect, the subconscious mind is more powerful. Next to mind is the intellect also known as *buddhi*. Tattvabodha describes the intellect as ‘*niścayātmikā buddhiḥ*’ (Tattvabodha, 30/4). *Niścayātmikā* refers to the inherent nature of the intellect viz. its form of certainty. The indecisive nature of the mind now looks up to intellect for guidance. If the mind is the disciple, then the intellect is the guru. Tattvabodha, explains ego as, ‘*ahamkartā ahamkāraḥ*’ (Tattvabodha, 30/5). This means the thought of doership is ego. Ego is a vital component of one’s very existence. One has to understand the ego in order to transcend it. Though one can transcend it, one cannot live without it. When ego is transcended, Reality is revealed (Ravi, 2011).

There is a self or divine spark in each of us, the innermost center of the panchkoshas. This divine spark or self is in bliss, untouched by any of the events that are happening around. Animals, plants, humans and even objects, have such a spark in them. In deep sleep and in Samadhi, mind, ego and intellect are inactive, and then the self likes to enjoys the drama of life. It is because of one’s unfulfilled desires of the ego that the combination of self, intellect, ego and mind incarnate again and again, until the ultimate desire to merge with God is fulfilled. Then all individuality, including the individual self, is dissolved into the cosmic consciousness.

While talking about consciousness, Tattvabodha says, ‘*cintanakartr cittam*’

(Tattvabodha, 30/6) which refers to the capacity to perceive. Consciousness always depends upon the impressions in the subconscious mind. If the subconscious mind is crowded with bad experiences, the outcome of one's actions will be bad. On the other hand, if one leads a religious and pious life, the impressions in his subconscious mind will be good. When the consciousness turns to the subconscious mind, it will find only positive and pious experiences stored there and consciousness will come to a decision to produce a positive effect. Though consciousness and mind are not the same, yet they are interdependent. Any creation of the Brahman is dependent on another creation. Consciousness is not just restricted to the mind, but throughout the body. It is the foundational aspect of the physical body. The purification of individual consciousness begins in those persons who have higher spiritual intellect and higher standards of moral living (Ravi, 2011).

Achieving Goals of Positive Psychology from Indian Perspectives

Positive Psychology uses specific terminologies to describe its goals and its successes. The essential overall goal is 'happiness', which is defined as the absence of negative experiences which is also the ultimate goal of spirituality. The 'Core Virtues' and 'Signature Strengths' of Positive Psychology can find some correlation in the terms of Indian spirituality. Indian spirituality has important implications for attaining the goals of positive psychology achievable. It is interesting to see the goals of Positive Psychology i.e. wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence as envisioned by Snyder and Lopez (2007) in context with the Indian spirituality. These goals have received attention from the Indian sages since the ancient times. In Indian perspective, the Bhagvad Gita provides comprehensive models of highly developed human potential or godly qualities as

well as emphasizes the Triguna view whereas Upanishads laid down the Panchkosha theory. Sri Aurobindo has given a comprehensive system of one's being based on his studies on consciousness.

Level of Consciousness

Bhagvad Gita says that *Gyan* acts like a sun that makes everything that is worth knowing known to the person. When a person attains such knowledge, his *buddhi* or intellect is drawn to *Brahman*; his *atman* is in unison with *Brahman*, he is situated in *Brahman* and takes complete shelter in *Brahman*. Such a person attains a stage from where he has not to return to the material world and all of his ignorance and false ego are destroyed by such knowledge (Geeta, 5/16-17). **Gyanyogi** is neither delighted in achieving what is pleasant nor does he get upset while coming across what is unpleasant. Such a person with stable *buddhi* or intellect is not bewildered by material objects, knows *Brahman* and is situated in *Brahman* (Geeta, 5/20). He enjoys infinite happiness.

The above view highlights that the Bhagvad Gita focuses on being soul conscious and considering oneself as a 'soul' instead of a 'body'. A closed minded and a timid person can never become soul conscious, for such a knowledge deep inquisitiveness, open mindedness, self introspection, reflection, creativity, perspective taking and love for learning new things are required. Level of consciousness colors the perception of self, others and the world. If the person becomes soul conscious and follow spirituality in life, the intellect will be functioning effectively enabling the person to take good decisions and judgments, think realistically and hold only the rational and logical beliefs in life. This would bring positivity, fulfillment and meaning in life.

Nandy (2000), while analyzing the discourse on well-being, calls for attending to the plurality of the notion and emphasizes on the need

to bring to our psychological inquiry “something of the sagacity, insights and cumulative wisdom of the people with whom we live.

Soul is the blueprint of life which contains purpose for coming into body. Connecting to one’s soul automatically provides inner guidance, empowerment, co-creation of outer reality and divine love. In body-consciousness, we think mistakenly that the physical world and physical relationships can provide peace, love and happiness. However, these are not the properties of matter, but the characteristics of soul. When one becomes attentive, concentrate within the self by withdrawing from outside, soul consciousness can be developed.

Knowledge about the Qualities of the Soul

The *vedic* view guides to achieve the qualities of God who has been depicted as patron of all, undecayable, away from any fault. Identifying with such a father image through self experience and meditation to establish a link with Him would provide the strengths or courage in the face of adverse circumstances. Such inner strength and sense of security would make the person brave not being shaken by external threats, challenges, difficulties and pain and persisting the goals despite obstacles. The person will collaborate with God in solving day to day problems. Moreover, only a secure, brave and courageous person can lead a life with integrity and authenticity.

A true understanding that we are souls would not only empower the self but also improve interpersonal relationships. This notion is based on the following reasons:

- i) A soul conscious person would not be attached to different roles of life. His happiness and contentment in life will not be dependent on roles of self and others. Such detachment would save the person from getting hurt by non-fulfillment of expectations by self and others in different roles.
- ii) A soul conscious person would also perceive others as souls performing their respective roles in life. If anyone else falls short of his /her roles in life, a soul conscious person will be able to forgive and still continue to value close relationships, be generous, nurturant, loving, caring and compassionate. There would be no expectation of any gain, benefit or return in relationships.
- iii) A soul conscious person will always be in a stable, calm and balanced state of mind which would help in becoming objective in understanding the motives and feelings of self and others, knowing how to deal effectively with different social situations and developing social and interpersonal skills of maintaining good interpersonal relationships.
- iv) A soul conscious person will not be dependent on others for emotional security and support since he will be directly connected with supreme source or God for infusing supreme energy in life. Whenever there would be depletion of energy in him, he will recharge himself by connecting with God with pure heart through Meditation and Prayer. As a result he will be empowered not only to deal with personal emotions but also by being stable, provide support, guidance and strength to others enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Connecting the self with loving, caring and almighty image of God would be providing a sense of security to the person in the face of adverse circumstances. Enhancement of interpersonal strengths that involve being loving, kind, generous, caring, nurturing, compassionate and forgiving with others can be also be achievable after knowing the qualities of soul.

Indian Spiritual Practices

The desire for the well –being of everyone has been a core Indian concern that has panhuman relevance (Dalal & Mishra, 2006).

Indian culture is basically collectivistic in nature since birth, a child is socialized in such a way so as to develop a collective identity. Collective identity refers to that part of individual's self concept which derives from his/her knowledge of and positive attitudes towards membership in a social group. Different religions prevail here which promote group practices like *Katha*, *Satsang*, *Kirtan*, *Havan* and various *samskars* throughout life which foster collectivity. Vedic literature highlights that the prayer to God should be performed not only for the well-being of self but also for others as well.

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah,

Sarve bhadrani pashyantu ma kaschit dukh bhag bhavet.

(Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad, 1/4/14)

Havan is an important religious/spiritual practice which includes chanting collectively various mantras while offering *Samidha* to fire. At the end of many of these mantras *idann mum* is spoken which means that this *havan* is not for me but for the well-being of others. Such a practice generates positive vibrations and promotes collective strength.

Spirituality denotes a belief in a transcendent force for a divine entity, the possession of which transforms the understanding of material world, relationships, values and institutions. Consequently, those who possess the spiritual qualities view the world differently than those who lack it. Current researches provide evidence to it demonstrating a positive relationship between Spirituality/ Religiosity and positive outcome measures including civic engagement (Hart & Atkins, 2004, p.157-72); volunteer work in the community (Youniss *et al.*, 1999) and decreased delinquent behaviour (Johnson *et al.*, 2001). This follows, therefore that people possessing spiritual qualities perform social responsibilities in better ways. Healthy community life is possible only when their citizens understand

the importance of volunteering and participating in social and community activities, eliminating corruption, irresponsible or unethical behaviours bringing harm to the community, its people or the environment. Only an empowered, person full of positivity in life can bear these social responsibilities. *Rigveda* is full of *mantras* for praying to God for the removal of what is not good for life and infusion of positivity and what is good for the self. For example:

Om bhurbhuvah svaha tatsaviturvarenyam

bhargodevasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

(Rig Veda, 3/62/10)

These practices give useful insights for meeting the goals of justice, fairness and good leadership and develop healthy community life.

Yoga

In *Bhagavad Gita*, there is a concept of "*sthit pragya*", which is a state of balanced mind. This state of mind gives us true happiness and peace-which is called "*Sat Chitt Anand*". The "*Sthit Pragya*" people have balanced lives as described in *Bhagavad Gita*:

"Established within themselves, they are equal in pleasure and pain, praise and blame, kindness and unkindness. Clay, a rock and gold are the same to them. Alike in honour and dishonour, alike to friend and foe, they have given up every selfish pursuit. Such are those who have gone beyond the gunas" (Easwaran, 1985, p.203).

"*Arjuna*, those who eat too much or eat too little, who sleep too much or sleep too little, will not succeed in meditation. But those who are temperate in eating and sleeping, work and recreation will come to the end of sorrow through meditation. Through constant effort they learn to withdraw the mind from selfish cravings and absorb it in the self. Thus they attain the state of union" (Easwaran, 1985, p.160).

The balance in life or middle path in life has also been emphasized by Lord Buddha “All self inflicted suffering is useless as long as the feeling of self is dominant. You should loose your involvement with yourself and then eat and drink naturally, according to the needs of your body. Attachment to your appetites – whether you deprive or indulge them can lead to slavery, but satisfying the needs of daily life is not wrong. Indeed, to keep a body in good health is a duty, for otherwise the mind will not stay strong and clear” (Bancroft, 2001, p.46).

Positive Psychologists highlight the development of self regulation (self control) as essential for temperance. *Patanjali* defined *Yoga* as a “subjugation of the thought waves of the mind”. According to him, the mind is like a lake that is constantly having thought waves (*vritti*). As a result one is not able to see self that is at the bottom of the lake. The aim of *Yoga* is to develop self-control over ongoing tendencies of mind, the senses and the intellect. *Yoga* practices help to achieve control over subconscious mind (the seat of creativity and immense potentialities) with the help of conscious efforts.

The eight limbs work together: The first five steps — *yama*, *niyama* *asana*, *pranayama*, and *pratyahara* — are the preliminaries of *yoga* and build the foundation for a spiritual life. They are concerned with the body and the brain. The last three, which would not be possible without the previous steps, are concerned with reconditioning the mind. They help the *yogi* to attain enlightenment or the full realization of oneness with Spirit. Enlightenment lasts forever, while a flat tummy can disappear with a week of binging.

Yama- It refers to five abstentions - *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (not stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy in unmarried and monogamy in married people) and *Aparigrah* (non-possessiveness) .

Niyama- It refers to individual discipline (physical and mental) these are *Shaucha* (cleanliness), *Santosh* (contentment), *Tapas* (austerity and associated observances for body discipline and thereby mental control), *Svadyaya* (study of vedic scriptures) and *Ishvara Pranidhana* (Surrender to God).

Asana-It refers to discipline of the body: rules and postures to keep the body diseased free and for the preservation of vital energy. Correct postures are the physical aid to meditation, for they control the limbs and nervous system and prevent them from producing disturbances.

Pranayama-It refers to control of breath which is beneficial to health, steadiness of body and is highly conducive to the concentration of the mind.

Prathyahara-It refers to withdrawal of senses from their external objects.

Dharana-It refers to training the mind to focus without any distraction which can serve as a preparation for meditation.

Dhyana or Meditation-It refers to the practice by which there is constant observation of the mind. It means focusing the mind on one point. Stilling the mind in order to perceive the self. It is an uninterrupted flow of concentration which is aimed to heighten one’s awareness and oneness with the universe. It is also an important tool to achieve mental clarity and health.

Samadhi- The ultimate goal of the eight fold path to *Yoga* is *Samadhi* or absolute bliss. This is pure contemplation, super consciousness in which a state of God union is achieved.

Indian traditions recognize two aspects of spirituality i.e. a) experiencing paranormal and supernatural phenomena b) leading a value oriented life. The former is referred to as *anubhuti* or gaining experience through *yoga*, meditation and prayer and the latter as *dharma* in its all-encompassing sense. Positive Psychology

emphasizes more the value dimension of Spirituality i.e. positive traits, strengths and virtues at individual and group level than the paranormal and supernatural dimensions. But Indian cultural heritage not only emphasizes the importance of life based on love, forgiveness, humility, self regulation, transcendence, gratitude but also highlights the pathways to achieve such a life. *Yogic asanas* provide a person with a sense of physical fitness and mental alertness. The practice of meditation provides an experience of attaining a union with the God and empowers the person to follow values in life. This is to be noted here that only a peaceful, pure, happy, contented and courageous person can follow the virtues of unconditional love, forgiveness, humility, gratitude and self control.

Indian thinkers have provided an elaborate understanding of what is truly satisfying or fulfilling, what are the limitations of *artha* (wealth) and *Kama* (desires), how human beings experience frustration and anger? What's the role of temperament and personality in the feeling of well-being and what is the ideal state of well-being?

Theory of Panchkoshas and Triguna

Positive Psychologists seek the development of strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning in life as an important goal. Moreover, development of appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor. Spirituality and vitality are the sub goals under this head. Indian Vedic and Upanishadic literature is full of the quest for ultimate truth. The ultimate truth has been defined as permanent (*satya*) and eternal (*nitya*) rather than that which is momentary (*kshanika*), transient (*anitya*) and liable to undergo decay and destruction (*kshara*). In Indian tradition nature of happiness and well-being is understood solely with reference to *nityanitya viveka* (the discrimination of the eternal from non eternal) which has

influenced our ethos (life ways) and eidos (thought ways) (Kumar, 2006).

The Vedas and the Upanishads regarded *Atma* or soul as *satya* and *nitya* and urged all human beings to realize it so as to escape from all kinds of pain and suffering and to enjoy permanent bliss (*ananda*). The attainment of soul consciousness and considering God and soul as one is considered as liberation (*moksha*) which is the highest purpose of human existence. This transcendental view of life and existence is the essence of Vedic and Upanishadic traditions of India.

In Indian perspective, the level of good life and well-being depends on the evolutionary status of the consciousness of an individual. Indian thinkers consider human being not only as an "organism" having animalistic characteristics but also as a "being" who has potentialities to achieve "divinity" besides human characteristics. Indian scriptures highlight four *Purushartha* (goals of human existence) i.e. *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Depending on one's evolutionary status people may consider pursuit of desires (*kama*), pursuit of wealth (*artha*), pursuit of values (*dharama*) and pursuit of liberation (*moksha*) as the goal of their lives. *Dharama* and *moksha* are the sign of higher level of evolution as compared to *kama* and *artha*.

Taittiriya Upanishad gives the concept of Panch Koshas and their development. It says that starting from Annamaya Kosha and reaching the Anandamaya Kosh, our existence has 5 layers or sheaths called Koshas. The gross body that we see is Annamaya Kosha. The subtler body made of pranic energy is called as *Pranamaya Kosha* or vital sheath. The third kosha is *Manomaya Kosha* or mental sheath comprised of one's feelings and emotions. The fourth one is *Vijnanamaya Kosha*. It is comprised of imagination, memory, knowledge, insight and understanding. The fifth is *Anandmaya Kosha* or sheath of bliss. Its characteristics are creativity, joy and bliss.

When all the other Koshas are well developed we experience harmony between the inner self and the outer world. This harmony gives us a sense of joy and bliss. The five sheaths are like the layers of clothes worn by a person which are totally different from the wearer. So too, the Atman or the real self is distinct and separate from the five outer layers. The human evolution is conceived in terms of a progressive realization of these different sheaths or dimensions of awareness. The Indian thinkers urged people to transcend the limitations of the *annamaya*, *pranamaya* and *manomaya koshas* and to move on to an intrinsically positive state and experience *ananda* and *shaanti* (Kumar, 2003).

According to Indian spiritual heritage, the ultimate goal of human existence is to achieve the experience of *ananda*, which is actually that state of consciousness characterized by positive feeling not dependent on any object or event of external reality.

According to *Samkhya* system attaining soul consciousness and thereby experiencing oneness or union with God can be attained only by transcending Trigunas. It is the one who has transcended trigunas is the liberated /realized soul, a true *gyani*, freed from births and deaths (Gita). *Samkhya* is a dualistic philosophy which postulates two interdependent, simultaneously existing realities *purusha* (consciousness) and *prakrti* (nature or matter). *Purusha* forms the inner core of personality while any other thing in the universe, physical and psychological including the mind are regarded as originated from *Prakrti* constituted of three gunas e.g. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

The manifestations of trigunas described in *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad-Gita* are exhaustive. *Sattva* which is *priti* (agreeable) is considered to have different manifestations like happiness, lightness, love, agreeableness, renunciation, contentment, joy, bliss etc. They can be summed up as 'pleasant' meaning satisfaction (Larson &

Bhattacharya,1987). *Rajas*, which is *apriti* (frustration) or '*dukha*' (pain) primarily manifests as misery perspiration, anxiety, anger and vanity. It is described in such terms as hate, animosity, jealousy, reproach, rigidity, anxiety, wickedness, deception, bondage, killing, cutting etc (Larson & Bhattacharya,1987); as including hatred, violence, malice, censure, humiliation, envy and disgrace by Narayana Tritha (Larson & Bhattacharya,1987). *Tamas* which is the nature of *moha* (delusion/confusion) and *vishada* (disgust) is described as ignorance, vanity, sloth, fear, misery inactivity, infidelity, sorrowfulness, dream, veiling, covering, ugliness, poverty, idleness, delusion etc; and as deceit, fear, wickedness, imbecility and ignorance by Shiva Kumar (1986) (cited in Larson & Bhattacharya,1987).

Sattva, *rajas* and *tamas* permeate everything in the universe including the animate, the inanimate and the mind. In other words they manifest in the universe as well as the human nature. The coexistence and harmony in the functioning of the three principles is regarded significant for the existence and functioning of everything in the universe. For e.g. the sun manifests all the three gunas, although it is predominantly *sattvic* in nature. The light of the sun is *sattva*; the heat of the sun is *rajas* and eclipse of the sun is *tamas*. *Sattva* is said to be predominant in yogis and among *dharmic* (virtuous) people and regarded as *urdhva strotasas*' as they proceed upwards. *Rajas* is said to be predominant in creatures of middle course such as animals ,men, women, fluids and houses. However, *tamas* is predominant in all inanimate things in plants and animals ,vehicles, insects ,birds, egg laying animals ,insane ,deaf, dumb and the diseased (Murthy & Kumar, 2007).

The result or *phala* of doing *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* deeds are regarded as experience of purity (*nirmalatva*), suffering (*dukha*) and ignorance (*ajnana*) respectively according to Bhagavad Gita (Geet, 14/16).

The improvement of an individual from the bondage and suffering is regarded as through thorough knowledge of *trigunas* and their functioning. Being emancipated from all the three gunas, an individual enjoys ultimate happiness, which is the end stage of personal growth or evolution of mind. This is the stage of attainment of super stability, integration, stress tolerance, invulnerability and transcendence. Mathew (2001) suggests various practices for each type of personality for their personality growth in the model as *poorna chakra*. It is the opaqueness of our mental faculties that obstructs the manifestations and experiences of *ananda*. Greater is the transparency of the mental faculties, i.e. *sattva*, greater is the experience of *ananda* (Kumar, 2003).

Therefore *Triguna* is an important concept in Indian tradition that can help positive psychologists to understand not only human nature but also man's relationship with the cosmos, since they underlie both material and mental manifestations. A harmony among three *gunas* can help people to reveal their excellent performance in all domains of life. Just as sun provides light (*sattva*), heat (*rajas*), and sometimes becomes invisible during eclipse (*tamas*) but owing to the predominance of *sattva*, comes back after sometime, giving hope among people that darkness ends one day and the light prevails. Similarly a predominantly *sattvic* person can be optimistic and hopeful despite adverse and traumatic circumstances in life and reveal resilience.

CONCLUSION

Psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. The treatment is not just for fixing what is broken; it is also for nurturing what is best. Modern life is full of frustrations, negative emotions and general unhappiness. In such times, a relatively new branch of psychology-positive

psychology, the scientific study of human flourishing and the aspects that make life worth living is emphasized upon in today's world. Our ancient Indian thoughts are very practical and can be applied to daily life and in making life more rich and peaceful. These thoughts and concepts may change one's attitude while performing the duties, with learning to maintain a state of emotional stability whilst in the materialistic world. This approach is very relevant in the present day stressful life and might be helpful for achieving goals of positive psychology. Finally, I would like to conclude that it is highly needed to rediscover the strengths and virtues of Indian psychology because it is quite essential for personal and spiritual growth of every human being.

PRIYANKA SHUKLA, PhD., Assistant Professor,
Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh, India.

REFERENCES

- Astrow, A. B., Puchalski, C. M. & Sulmasy, D. P. (2001). Religion, Spirituality and health Care: Social, ethical and practical consideration. *American Journal of Medicine*, 10, 283 - 287.
- Auluck, S. (2002a). Psychology in Indian philosophical thought. *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 20(1), 13–22.
- Auluck, S. (2002b). Self and identity. In G. Misra & A. K. Mohanty (Eds.). *Perspectives on indigenous psychology* (p. 374–98). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Bancroft, A. (2001). The Pocket Buddha Reader. Retrieved on 20/8/2006 from www.shambhala.com.
- Bisht. (1978). WHO Quality of life group. (1995). Position paper from the World Health Organization. *Social science and Medicine*, 41, 1403-1409.
- Dalal, A. K. & Mishra, G. (2006). Psychology of Health and wellbeing. Some emerging perspectives. *Psychological Studies*, 51(2-3), 91-104.
- Delle, F. A., Massimini, F. & Bassi, M. (2011). Hedonism and eudaimonism in positive psychology. In A. Delle Fave (Ed.), *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience Across Cultures: Social Empowerment through Personal Growth* (Vol. 2, p.3-18). New York: Springer.

- Easwaran, E. (1985).** *Bhagavad Gita*. (E. Easwaran, Trans.). Canada: Nilgiri Press.
- Hart, D. & Atkins, R. (2004).** Religious participation and the development of moral identity in adolescence. In T. Thorkildsen, J. Manning, & H. Walberg (Eds.). *Nurturing morality* (p.157-172). New York: Kluwer.
- Hussain, A. (2005).** *Spiritual Psychology*. New Delhi, ND: Global Vision Publishing House.
- Johnson, B. R., Jang, J. S., Larson, B. D. & Li, D. S. (2001).** Does Adolescent Religious commitment matters: A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38, 22-44.
- Kakar, S. (1978).** *The Inner World a Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*. New Delhi, ND: Oxford University Press.
- Kumar, K. S. K. (2003).** An Indian conception of well-being. In J. Henry (Ed.). *Proceedings of European Positive Psychology Conference*. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society.
- Kumar, K. S. K. (2006).** Happiness and well being in Indian tradition. *Psychological Studies*, 51, 105-112.
- Larson, G. J. & Bhattacharya, R. S. (Ed.) (1987).** *Samkhya encyclopedia of Indian philosophies* (vol. 4). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publication.
- Mathew, V. G. (2001).** Models of consciousness and its transformation. In Cornellsen, M(ed.). *Consciousness and its transformation*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurbindo International centre for education.
- Menon, S. (2005).** What is Indian psychology: Transcendence in and while thinking. *Journal of Transpersonal psychology*, 37(2), 83–89.
- Moore, C. A. (1967).** Introduction: The comprehensive Indian mind. In Charles A. Moore (ed.) *The Indian mind: Essentials of Indian philosophy and culture* (p.1–18). Hawaii, Honolulu: University of Hawaii press.
- Murthy, P. K. & Kumar, S. K. K. (2007).** The concept of triguna: A critical analysis and synthesis. *Psychological Studies*, 52, 103-113.
- Nandy, A. (2000).** Towards a new vision of health psychology. *Psychological Studies*, 45, 110-113.
- Narayanasamy, A. (1999).** A review of spirituality as applied to nursing. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 36, 117-125.
- Paranjpe, A. C. (1988).** Introduction. In A. C. Paranjpe, D. Y. F. Ho, and R. W. Rieber (Eds.). *Asian contributors to psychology* (p.1-50). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Peterson, C. (2006).** *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Pradhan, M. & Shukla, P. (2008).** Spirituality and Human Development. In S. Prasad (Eds.). *Psychology of Happiness-Indian Perspective*. (Proceedings of 8th National Conference of PPCRA). New Delhi, ND: PPCRA.
- Ravi, V. (2011).** *Tattvabodha: A Treatise on Advaita Vedanta*. Chennai: Manblunder Publication.
- Seligman, M. E. P (1998a).** Building human strength: Psychology's forgotten mission. *APA monitor*, 29(1), 1. Retrieved from <http://pbi.sagepub.com/content/1/3/181.short>
- Seligman, M. E. P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000).** Positive Psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (1998b).** Positive psychology network concept paper. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved on 20/10/2015 from <http://www.positivepsychology.org/opportunities/conference-archives>
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2002).** *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Sheldon, W. H. (1951).** Main contrasts between Eastern and Western philosophy. In Charles A. Moore, (Ed.). *Essays in East-West Philosophy* (p. 288–297). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Smith, H. (1994).** *The world's religions: A guide to our windows traditions*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Snyder, C. R. & Lopez, S. J. (2007).** *Positive Psychology*. New Delhi, ND: Sage Publication.
- Srivastava, S. P. (2001).** *Systematic survey of Indian psychology*. Bahadurgarh, Haryana: Adhyatma Vijnana Prakashan
- Thoresen, C. E. (1998).** Spirituality, health and Science. *The coming revival?* In S. Roth Roemer, S. Karpivs Robinson, and C. Carmin (Ed.). *The emerging role of counseling Psychology in health care*, New York: Norton.
- Vasudev, S. J. (30 December, 2007).** *More Than a Mere Belief*. (Silver Jubilee Special). *The Week*, 80-84. Retrieved on 1/12/2015 from file:///C:/Users/RP1/Downloads/TheWeek_30Dec2007%20(2).pdf
- World Health Organization (1946).** *Constitution of the World Health Organization*. New York: WHO records, 2:100.
- Youniss, J., McLellan, J. A. & Yates, M. (1999).** Religion, community service and identity in American Youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, 243-253.

¹ Bisht, 1978.