Chapter 13
Positive Psychology and Hinduism

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Hindus represent 15% of the global population, with 99% of Hindus concentrated in the Asia Pacific region, especially in India, Nepal, and Mauritius. The remaining 1% of Hindus are scattered across Europe, Latin America, North America, the Middle East, and Africa. Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, after Christianity and Islam (Oman & Paranjpe, 2020). It encompasses a very broad and diverse array of traditions, rituals, practices, beliefs, and philosophies that originated in South Asia. Hinduism regards the four Vedas as the fountainhead of its wisdom, but it also reveres several other important texts such as the Purāṇas, Laws of Manu, Bhagavad Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata. Collectively, these texts inform, direct, and provide insights on morals, ethics, human functioning, well-being practices, and proper conduct. Specific practices, rituals, and beliefs vary across different states in India, but the overarching aim of these practices and rituals is more or less uniform.

Indian psychology, as derived mainly from classical Hindu thoughts and practices, has global relevance and significant implications for human functioning, suffering, health, and well-being (Oman & Paranjpe, 2020). Mainstream psychology's overall shift towards studying well-being has intensified interest in Hindu practices as well, as is evident in the growing body of research on Hindu practices such as

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meditation and yoga. This empirical scrutiny has corroborated the potential of Hindu thought and practice to both explain and enhance well-being.

Yet intersections between Hinduism and positive psychology still lack adequate visibility in academic discourse. Rao and Paranjpe (2016) have noted two contributing factors: (a) Indian psychology or Hindu sources emphasize theory and concepts, rather than the prototypical forms of evidence recognized by modern science; and (b) psychology, as practiced in academic and professional spaces in modern India, replicates and imitates the Western models that proliferated as Western-trained scholars began working in universities across India. The latter may be called mainstream psychology, which is contrasted with an Indian psychology that is based on native ideas and practices that developed over millennia in the Indian subcontinent. In recent decades, psychology researchers in India have undertaken systematic scholarship to restore balance and recover access to insights transmitted by Hinduism and other Indian traditions, an effort often called the "Indian Psychology Movement" (Oman & Paranjpe, 2020, p. 178; see also Cornelissen, 2002). Contributors to this movement report that underlying different indigenous Indian or "Dharmic" traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, there is a "unifying thread that runs across these different systems binding them together in significant ways [and giving] Indian thought its identity," thereby warranting "Indian psychology" as a broad term that encompasses psychologies embedded in multiple faith traditions (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p. 9).

The present chapter focuses on Hinduism, offering an overview of intersections between Hinduism and positive psychology. We first compare and contrast modes of inquiry used within Indian and mainstream psychology. Second, we explain two influential conceptualizations of flourishing that are derived from traditional Hindu thought. Third, we review empirical studies on selected Hindu concepts and practices, describing their relationship with various well-being indicators. After sketching dissemination efforts by a variety of nonacademic institutions in India and abroad, we conclude by discussing implications and suggestions for broadening scholarship on the intersections of Hinduism and positive psychology.

Hindu View of the World and Human Nature

Meaning of Well-Being: Hindu (Indian) Psychology vs. Mainstream Positive Psychology

Hindu spiritual thought has the aim of elevating human functioning, which resonates with positive psychology's aim of promoting human flourishing. Positive psychology has been responsible for expanding the meaning of human well-being beyond the absence of illness to include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. However, the meaning and experience of every psychological attribute of human existence is moderated by sociocultural factors. For example, in Western

culture and extant positive psychology scholarship, well-being is usually defined in terms of hedonia (pleasure) and eudaimonia (personal fulfilment; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Under this broad umbrella of hedonia and eudaimonia, several models of well-being have been postulated, including psychological and social well-being (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998, 2005), as well as the PERMA model of well-being that reflects an amalgamation of **p**ositive emotion, **e**ngagement, positive **r**elationships, **m**eaning, and **a**ccomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Overall, two noteworthy features of Western concepts of well-being are (a) an emphasis on the biopsychosocial viewpoint of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and (b) a focus on the external conditions of well-being, such as interpersonal relationships and social engagement. In addition to these, the Hindu (Indian) conception of well-being directly emphasizes the influence of consciousness, viewed as transcendental in nature and often called *sat-chit-ananda* (defined in Hindu thought as the inner state of truthfulness, bliss, and consciousness; Srivastava & Misra, 2011). Hindu philosophers have avidly discussed the nature and conditions of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfilment, including how to attain and sustain this state (Srivastava & Misra, 2011).

In contrast to the mainstream psychological emphasis on identifying contingent well-being predictors such as relationships, traditional Hindu thought affirms that well-being is ultimately not contingent on any objective, tangible conditions (Salagame, 2013). Instead, experiential *knowledge of the self* is regarded as pivotal, with self-inquiry viewed as one important facilitator of self-knowledge. The Hindu view parallels some concepts of humanistic psychology, such as self-actualization and the fully functioning individual, that recognize the quest to achieve full human potential as an inherent individual motivation (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016). Consistent with these humanistic views, positive psychology also recognizes the importance of human existence as multilayered, and it recognizes the importance of emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments in healthy and optimal human functioning (Seligman, 2011; Singh & Raina, 2020). In Hindu thought, attaining the state of *sat-chit-ananda* results in harmony in life (a sense of balance, flexibility, and meaningful mutual relations) and peace of mind (affective well-being and an experience of serenity and calmness; Singh et al., 2016). In sum, whereas Hindu thought posits self-inquiry and self-management as precursors to well-being, Western thought, spurred by a materialist worldview, has considered meaningful relationships and positive external experiences as precursors to well-being (Salagame, 2013).

The Meaning of Self in Hinduism vs. Mainstream Positive Psychology

Consistent with the Hindu emphasis on spiritual as opposed to material dimensions of human existence (Salagame, 2013), Hinduism also emphasizes a spiritual understanding of the self. The Western worldview uses notions such as self-concept and

self-identity to explain the meaning of the self, which generally is viewed as a social-cognitive construction (Oyserman et al., 2012). In contrast, the Hindu notion of self clearly distinguishes the materially experienced human body (*deha*) from the spiritual existence of human life (*jiva*). One clarifying example is Hindu rituals of death: Rituals for the dead body before cremation are distinguished from rituals for the spiritual self (*jiva*), which are performed to facilitate the soul's journey (Salagame, 2013).

Similarly, although Hindu concepts of well-being center on holistic individual emancipation (which involves expansion or elevation of mind–body–consciousness as a whole), mainstream psychology has emphasized therapeutic adjustment as a practical goal and the creation of universally generalizable knowledge as its methodological ideal (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Although positive psychology and Hindu thought converge regarding well-being and optimal human functioning, their uses of concepts diverge, with the former relying heavily on scientific, reductionistic methodologies. More broadly, Hindu concepts of human nature and the sources of well-being are rooted in Sanskrit and related Indic languages, and many terms are "'Sanskrit [or other Indic language] non-translatables' [that] cannot be translated by a corresponding English word without reducing their original purport" (Choudry, 2017, p. 443; see also Choudry & Vinayachandra, 2015; Malhotra & Babaji, 2020). Bearing in mind such limitations, the next sections discuss some common Hindu models of well-being and how their constituent concepts are problematized and studied in Hinduism versus positive psychology.

Hindu Models of Human Well-Being

Bhawuk (2011) presented models of human flourishing and happiness drawn from Hindu texts. Here we discuss some key concepts and their intersections with positive psychology.

Anāsakti*: The Root of Developing the Virtue of Temperance*

Perhaps the most influential Hindu model of flourishing is presented in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a sacred text dating in its present form from approximately the second century BCE. The *Bhagavad Gītā* stresses the attainment of *sthitaprajña*, which refers to being established in a state of wise equanimity or temperance. This state is attained when thoughts, emotions, and desires are managed effectively through *niṣkāma karma* or dispassionate action (Singh & Raina, 2015). Using this basic tenet of *Bhagavad Gītā*, Bhawuk (2011) explains how thoughts, cognition, and behavior are intricately woven and how their interactions can affect human well-being and flourishing. He explains that when an embodied individual becomes attached to a goal, a strong desire to achieve the goal erupts. At this stage, the individual engages in

action to achieve the goal, which can result in a plethora of emotional outcomes. For example, if the individual is successful in achieving the goal, it can result in the person experiencing greed to achieve more, and failure can result in anger. These emotional reactions serve as reinforcers that influence future decisions. An individual continues to be mired and burdened with emotions and thoughts, as desires are understood to be "fire that is never satiated" (*Bhagavad Gītā*, Verse 3.39). Desires have the capability to overpower an individual's intellect and mind, and the fulfilment of one desire leads to the birth of another. Thus, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā,* the only way to lead a happy and purposeful life is by managing our desires. To achieve this, individuals must pursue all their worldly duties and desires dispassionately (*niṣkāma karma*). This essentially means pursuing every task and desire wholeheartedly but without personal expectation or embroilment. It is the shedding of attachment to the results, and maintaining a state of non-attachment (*anāsakti*). This can be achieved through meditation and contemplation, as we critically examine and question our desires and how they affect us. As we wean ourselves from attachment to results, the vices of human nature (namely, greed, anger, lust, pride, and attachment/ego) vanish, and we become established in a steady state of temperance. When we pursue our life dispassionately, we lead ourselves towards the habitual experience of temperance. In terms of positive psychology, the concept of non-attachment (*anāsakti*) has some resonance with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) model of character strengths and virtues—specifically the virtue of temperance, which encompasses the strengths of humility, forgiveness, and self-regulation (e.g., of emotional reactions to disappointments and insecurities).

Yoga: The Path of Achieving Inner Balance

Western popular culture recognizes a set of practices called "yoga," which are often presented as a psycho-physical therapy aiming to integrate the mind, body, and spirit. However, this Western yoga, which scholars have called "transnational anglophone yoga," is most often restricted only to *āsanas* or physical postures to gain body flexibility and strength (see Oman & Paranjpe, 2020, pp. 191–192; Raina & Singh, 2018). Although terms like *jīvanmukti* and *kuṇḍalinī yoga* are very popular in the West, the meanings of these terms have been lost in translation and are mostly restricted to body postures. Even with the often very limited modern understanding of yoga as involving primarily postures (*āsanas*), a plethora of research studies support the efficacy of yoga practice for human health and well-being (Ross et al., 2013; Ross & Thomas, 2010; Sengupta, 2012; Simard & Henry, 2009). However, the word *yoga* traditionally means a state of union achieved through various paths of unification. The Sanskrit word *yoga* is derived from the root "yuj," which means to bind together. The union here refers to the union of an individual soul with the absolute, often translated as God (De Michelis, 2004).

Due to our socialization, we are reinforced positively or negatively to respond to our environment in a conditioned manner. An individual responds to these desires in different ways, often leading to an experience of an ever-oscillating mind. The *aṣṭāṅga yoga* (literally, eight-limbed yoga), taught in the *Patañjali Yogasūtras*, emphasizes cultivating mental focus through concentrative meditation and other practices. This practice leads to freedom from many common manifestations of mental instability, which itself is understood to be a root cause of unhappiness.

Many people within and outside contemporary India have come to regard Indian wisdom traditions as a fountainhead of immense knowledge on the meaning of self and on understanding the antecedents of human well-being and flourishing. However, given its complex nature, Hinduism's deeper concepts have sometimes been misunderstood as relevant only to mystics or sages who are committed to a spiritual path. Furthermore, mainstream Western psychology has long focused on pathology and has only recently begun to emphasize well-being (mostly since the emergence of positive psychology). For this reason, scientific understanding of many positive psychology constructs is still relatively nascent. Furthermore, perhaps due in part to the methodological differences noted earlier, there has been minimal exploration and assimilation of Indian psychological constructs into mainstream positive psychology until just recently.

Self-Observation/Introspection: Different Methods Based on Different Philosophies

Because the idea of the holistic self is embedded in the ethos of Hindu (Indian) thought, Hinduism uses first-person approaches to self-observation/introspection as its main tools for studying human functioning. Whereas mainstream psychology understands and uses observation to systematically record manifested behavior, within Indian thought, observation includes both internal/experiential self-observations and external/manifested observations. According to tradition, the complex theories of human cognition, flourishing, and well-being presented in classic Hindu texts were generated after careful self-observation of human processes on body–mind–consciousness levels (Cornelissen, 2011; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Within Hinduism, consistent with the aims of knowing the self, the internal observations of the human mind and consciousness play a centrally important role in the process of human unfolding towards flourishing. Fortunately, psychologists have begun considering cultural nuances in understanding and explaining human functioning and have started to integrate the scientific methodologies and basic tenets of Hindu thought to advance understanding and enhancement of human flourishing (Salagame, 2013).

Using Scales to Assess Key Indian Constructs: Strengths and Weaknesses

To bridge the methodological disconnect between Hindu wisdom (Indian psychology) and mainstream positive psychology, recent studies have focused on quantifying a variety of key Indian constructs. The scales have enabled researchers to identify meaningful correlations between some of these Indian constructs and other well-being indicators, and more importantly, they have allowed researchers to explore the culturally situated meaning of happiness and well-being among Hindus. In the next paragraphs, we discuss select Hindu measures that have been developed and describe their scores' correlations with existing positive psychology concepts.

In some studies, overall well-being has been operationalized as *sat-cit-ānanda*, which is traditionally understood as a natural state of every human being that involves inner happiness, bliss, and well-being—an emancipated state that every human strives to achieve (see Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; Singh et al., 2014b). In developing a 17-item Sat-Cit-Ānanda Scale, Singh et al. (2014b) found evidence that sat-cit-ānanda is comprised of *cit* (or *chit*, consciousness), *antaḥśakti* (or *antahshakti,* inner strength), *sat* (truthfulness), and *ānanda* (bliss). These revealed factors indicated that *cit* or consciousness relates to taking responsibility for one's thoughts, emotions, speech, feelings, and actions. *Sat* or truthfulness is seeing positivity and good qualities of others, having the sense of belongingness with one another, seeing goodness in nature, and loving (all) people. *Ānanda* or bliss refers to the state of mind when an individual ceases to be afflicted by reactivity to the thoughts, behaviors, and actions of others. *Ananda* is the ability to see events happening around us without getting swayed by them. Apart from the theoretically defined sat-cit-ānanda (the three expected factors), another supporting factor emerged in the statistical analysis—antaḥśakti, or inner strength, which was highly correlated with the other three factors. That factor encompassed items assessing energy, initiative, standing up for oneself, challenges in dealing with difficult people, and ways to achieve what you want to achieve. Sat-Chit-Ananda Scale scores have shown positive correlations with satisfaction with life, subjective happiness and flourishing, peace of mind, harmony in life, and experiences of positive emotions, and they have shown inverse correlations with experiences of negative emotions (Singh et al., 2014b, 2018).

Assessing a Pathway to Well-Being

A similar concept of well-being is offered in the *Patañjali Yogasūtras*' presentation of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* (eight-limbed yoga) as a pathway to a state of ultimate well-being and bliss. Scores on the newly developed Ashtanga Yoga Hindi Scale have shown correlations between *aṣṭāṅga yoga* practices and higher flourishing, greater positive emotions, and lower negative emotions (Raina & Singh, 2018).

Furthermore, concepts such as *anāsakti* (detachment) have been conceptualized as a stress-coping mechanism wherein dispassionate action is thought to be associated with well-being (Singh & Raina, 2015). *Anāsakti* refers to the ability to take motivated action without the expectation of rewards or punishment. It is characterized by faith in God, outcome vulnerability, empathy, persistence and fortitude, frustration tolerance, and emotional equipoise. Using the newly developed Anāsakti Scale, several researchers have found evidence that *anāsakti* is linked to the experience of lower stress–strain (Banth & Talwar, 2012; Jha, 2002; Pande & Naidu, 1992) and higher well-being (e.g., flourishing and positive emotions; Singh & Raina, 2015).

Similarly, in Hindu thought, the absence of *anāsakti* and the presence of *vikāras* (affliction of mind) constrain one's ability to experience a state of bliss. Paralleling positive psychology's efforts to undo the ill effects of negative emotions, Hindu thought has identified five traditional *vikāras* or vices/internal enemies (Sharma & Singh, 2016): lust (*kama*: intense desire or obsessive need for sensual gratification), anger (*krodha*: strong feelings of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility), attachment (*moha*: obsessive attachment to objects or people), greed (*lobha*: intense desire for material possessions), and pride/ego (*ahamkara*: vanity or grandiosity). Many empirical studies have found correlations between *vikāras* and negative psychosocial outcomes. For example, anger is positively related to depression, pride is associated with narcissism, and gratitude is inversely related to greed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sharma & Singh, 2016). Sharma and Singh (2016) reported that the *vikāras* were related to the concurrent experience of higher negative emotions and lower positive emotions.

Hindu Practices for Enhancing Well-Being

In this section, while not losing sight of relevant concepts of health and well-being, we give primary attention to the *practices* for enhancing health that are recommended in Hindu thought. Along the way, we draw parallels between several of these traditional practices and their modern-day manifestations, including "yoga," mindfulness meditation, and others. We also briefly review empirical studies evaluating the efficacy of modern variants of these practices.

Mind–Body Unity

Hinduism encompasses multiple schools of thought that offer diverse perspectives and explanations of human functioning and flourishing. These perspectives are discussed as six systems of thought, often called philosophies or *darśanas* (views) in the Hindu tradition (Oman & Paranjpe, 2020). Both within and between schools of

thought, Hinduism has consistently applied itself to intellectual debates involving philosophical introspection (Salagame, 2013).

In the traditional Hindu view, bodily health and well-being are closely tied to advancement in spiritual pursuit. For example, a healthy, light body with glowing skin, a sonorous voice, and fragrant smell are viewed as signs of spiritual progress (Oman & Paranjpe, 2020). This holistic approach to health and well-being is the central tenet of Āyurveda, a 5,000- year-old, comprehensive, traditional stream of medicine native to India. Āyurveda simultaneously considers both physical and psychological roots of an illness, and it emphasizes the unique physio-psychological constitution of an individual. Because the locus is the unique constitution of an individual, Āyurveda's approach differs from that of modern biomedical sciences, which focus on categories (Andreason, 2007). Āyurvedic treatments hinge on diet changes, herbs, aroma therapy, color therapy, yoga, meditation, and various detoxification techniques (e.g., nasal cleansing, enema, and mind–body rejuvenation techniques like herbal massages and steam baths). Modern science is increasingly considering the mind–body connection (McEwen, 2017), especially when it comes to understanding and treating chronic pain (Leader & Corfield, 2008).

Hindu Practices to Enhance Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual Well-Being

Hinduism enlists several paths of self-growth and mastery by recommending practices that enhance positive human virtues. For example, practicing radical love and devotion towards the divine is encouraged. The spiritual practices associated with these values are *bhajans, kīrtans*, *satsang* (the practice of singing in the praise of the divine), and *mantra japa* ("short spiritual formula for calling up what is best and deepest in ourselves," Easwaran, 2008, p. 12).

Satsang, *kīrtans*, and *bhajans* are community practices (traditionally emerging from South Asia) that aim at personal and spiritual development but are practiced in a group setting. They are usually practiced as a group or community activity that also involves connecting with the community (through religious discourse) in the presence of an individual who has more advanced knowledge of these religious practices (e.g., a spiritual teacher or *guru*; Rybak et al., 2015). Group practice is understood not just as a means for spiritual emancipation but also as a way to foster healthier interpersonal relations, through strengthening social and family support (Singh et al., 2014a). *Mantra japa* (the practice of mantra repetition or chanting) has been understood as a psychological tool that enables an individual to overcome a stressful situation by calming and destressing the mind. When practiced regularly, it has the potential of fostering resilience, thereby contributing to overall improvement in dealing with stress (Bormann et al., 2020; Oman & Bormann, 2021). *Mantra japa* can be practiced at various times throughout the day, in between activities of daily living (Bormann et al., 2020), or it can be combined with meditation. Evidence

indicates the practice fosters long-term psychological benefits such as the development of resilience, healthy coping, and lower depressive symptoms (Wolf & Abell, 2003), effective management of mental health conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder, and improvement in chronic illnesses such as AIDS and cancer (Oman et al., 2022). The practice also induces a deep relaxation state in the brain and body (Harne et al., 2019).

Hinduism also encourages self-inquiry, which involves learning about our true self and using the mind to study the very nature of the mind. Self-inquiry is also referred to as the intellectual path towards enlightenment. The practice is used to enhance the value of wisdom and knowledge by emphasizing the use of reasoning skills. These skills are used for critical self-introspection, involving studying oneself and diligently developing and choosing healthy coping mechanisms.

The practices associated with this school of self-inquiry are *svādhyāya* and meditation. *Svādhyāya* means study of scriptures and self-reflection (Raina & Singh, 2018). This self-reflection involves contemplation of one's motives, behaviors, and circumstances. Indeed, scores on the newly developed Swadhyaya Scale have been linked to greater flourishing, higher positive emotions, and lower negative emotions (Singh & Sahni, 2016). In addition, preliminary evidence suggests that Spiritually Augmented Cognitive Restructuring—a psychotherapeutic intervention that incorporates the practice of *svādhyāya*—is effective in restructuring cancer patients' negative core beliefs through the use of spiritual teaching and practices. More broadly, the integration of spirituality with traditional therapy can enhance religious individuals' well-being (see Captari et al., Chap. 26, this volume), partly by aiding the process of overcoming self-limiting beliefs and assumptions and allowing for an expansion of self-awareness (Cloninger, 2006). In Hinduism, this self-reflection or expansion of self-awareness is the basic tenet and nature of self-inquiry and *svādhyāya*.

Self-inquiry is also aided by meditation, which is an exercise that relies on two main classes of methods: (a) focused-attention meditation upon a single object, sound, concept, breath, or experience and (b) open-monitoring meditation, involving nonintrusive, nonjudgemental monitoring of the content of experience from moment to moment. Both techniques have documented effects on the regulation of emotions and attention (Lutz et al., 2008; Oman & Bormann, 2021), partly via the creation of a cognitive-control state that impacts how an individual allocates attention over time. Perhaps due to the efficacy of meditation for regulating attention and emotion, its practice is commonly employed across all major branches of traditional yoga.

Community-Level Spiritual Programs

From a health-promotion perspective, it is important to recognize that support for engaging in Hindu practices is widely available internationally and in India. Many social organizations headed by faith leaders strive to help people understand and

experience the benefits of traditional Hindu practices. Organizations such as the Art of Living, Heartfulness, Isha Foundation, and many others (see Appendix 13.S1) have a global presence and many followers, and they all strive toward a vision of enhancing people's health and well-being. They offer various in-person and sometimes online programs on yoga and meditation, and they facilitate access to health and well-being practices, especially among optimally functioning populations. Recent research has supported the effectiveness of such practices for enhancing a variety of well-being indicators, including mental health (e.g., reduced burnout) and physical health (e.g., increased heart rate variability; Arya et al., 2017, 2018; Rangasamy et al., 2019; Waghorne, 2014). Other groups, such as Ramakrishna Mission, Vivekananda Mission, ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), and Sivananda yoga, are worldwide spiritual movements that propagate Hindu philosophy and ideals and facilitate health and well-being practices in the community (e.g., Chaurey, 2000; Seppälä et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Future Directions

In this chapter, we have examined various practices, rituals, belief systems, and paths of self-development prescribed in Hinduism. We have also summarized the theory and research on how all these are related to an individual's physical–mental–social well-being, work, and overall community. In many of these, we have tied them to current positive psychology. Many of the practices have drawn interest across diverse cultures. It is noteworthy and not always understood that the meaning and spiritual relevance of many Hindu concepts and practices have often been lost in translation. Even so, growing empirical evidence supports the benefits of these practices for human well-being and for other outcomes of interest to positive psychology (e.g., virtues).

Hinduism and positive psychology intersect at several points and share the common goal of enhancing human well-being. Although positive psychologists or researchers in India are trained to seek this goal (especially through empirical research), faith leaders have been guided by accumulated traditional experience and wisdom based on what has been called "realization-derived knowledge" (Oman & Singh, 2018, p. 172; see also discussion of *parā vidyā* in Oman & Paranjpe, 2020). Appropriately merging these approaches could yield beneficial synergies that foster improved understanding and practice. Large disconnects persist regarding the administration and implementation of these approaches, but progress is occurring. Further integration of these approaches on the practical or even epistemic levels might enhance motivation to engage more confidently in practices deemed effective (Ford, 1992; Oman & Singh, 2018). Similarly, research can support ongoing social uptake of these practices, ensuring that communities within and outside India continue to receive benefit from these time-tested, health-enhancing practices.

On the other hand, positive psychology practitioners in India need to be aware of the deeper effects of religion and culture that seep organically into the psyche.

Instead of overemphasizing Western-based principles and implementing them as is with Indian locals, it would be more appropriate to make sustained efforts towards clinical integration—tailoring psychotherapy to a client's religious/spiritual background and conducting research to explore the conditions under which spiritually integrated therapies can be more beneficial (e.g., Oman & Bormann, 2021). Referral networks between traditional and modern practitioners may also be useful (e.g., Shields et al., 2016). Practitioners should overcome any mental barriers, imbibed through the conditioning of an education disproportionately steeped in Western thinking, that may undermine their ability to approach the issues informed by an emic understanding.

We also encourage positive psychologists to conduct further research on traditional yet ongoing practices to better grasp their mental health effects and implications for conceptualizing and conducting group therapies. Methods inspired by such indigenous practices, if effective, may potentially be low cost, therapeutic, foster social relationships, encourage community participation, and be serviceable as a form of mental health support for many clients in need.

As we have discussed, Hinduism places much focus on the self and on finding one's own unique identity and purpose. In addition, Hinduism offers many pathways to optimum human functioning and well-being; we have only discussed a few in this chapter. In the encounter between the very young field of positive psychology and the very old and deep tradition of Hinduism, we have identified many commonalities and overlaps as well as important differences. Research to date has only explored a small fraction of the important questions worth exploring. Further knowledge could foster helpful collaboration between Hinduism (Indian psychology) and positive psychology, for the public good. Together, positive psychology and Hindu traditional wisdom might foster a much-needed integration of empirical and experiential forms of learning, building on the best insights and strengths of each collaborative partner.

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