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REVIEW

Combining Indian and Western Spiritual Psychology: Applications to Health and Social Renewal

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Abstract We introduce the topic of Indian/US collaboration in studying religion and spirituality (R/S), providing both historical and philosophical context. A fully in-depth and comprehensive study of R/S will require taking into account three potential types and sources of knowledge: (1) theoretically and intellectually oriented knowledge as exemplified by William James; (2) empirically oriented knowledge as exemplified by Gordon Allport; and (3) experience- and realization-derived knowledge based on reports from eminent spiritual figures. We sketch the distinct but mutually informative challenges of clinical and epistemic integration. We suggest several topics for future collaboration, arguing that the most comprehensive study of R/S will require combining the western attention to empirical knowledge with the Indian psychology movement's attention to realization-derived knowledge. Suggested topics include processes of learning from spiritual exemplars and teachers; health effects from engagement in Hindu or other Indian religious practice; psychological and health effects of specific spiritual practices; the importance and influence of the focus used in meditation; the effects of japam, Ramnam, or similar repeated short prayers; how diverse spiritual practices affect mindfulness; and the nature and means of fostering skills for living in a religiously plural society.

Keywords Indian psychology · Hinduism · Religion · Spirituality · Mindfulness · Health

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> The history of science is rich in the example of the fruitfulness of bringing two sets of techniques, two sets of ideas, developed in separate contexts for the pursuit of new truth, into touch with one another.
> – J. Robert Oppenheimer (1954, p. 96)

> We should consider the Western and Indian approaches not as either or but mutually complementary and reinforcing models.
> – K. Ramakrishna Rao and Anand C. Paranjpe (2015, p. 128)

Interest in the psychology of religion and spirituality[1] (R/S) is surging in both India and the west, although driven by differing forces. In the west, the American Psychological Association recently launched two dedicated journals, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (vol. 1 in 2010) and *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* (vol. 1 in 2014), and has published close to a dozen books, including the landmark two-volume *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality* (Pargament, 2013). Western psychology has changed considerably since it was dominated by Freud's skeptical and dismissive attitudes toward religion. Helping drive this change has been empirical evidence supporting the value of R/S for health. More than 3000 empirical studies of R/S along with dozens of meta-analyses now link R/S, mostly favorably, to physical and mental health (e.g.,

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[1] In modern western social science, religion and spirituality tend to be viewed as distinct constructs, although neither possesses a single preferred definition. Viewed as overlapping constructs, "spirituality" is often viewed as emphasizing individual seeking (e.g., of sacred realities or realizations, such as *mokṣa*) and/or cultivation of virtues, whereas "religion" is often viewed as emphasizing social structures and organizations intended to foster spirituality. Indian adults have demonstrated similar understandings ($n = 100$, Bakshi & Thaly, 2013). See Oman (2013a) for further discussion.

Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012) (see also Editor's introduction, this issue).

Twenty-first-century Indian psychologists have also directed attention to R/S via modern social scientific research paradigms (e.g., Bakshi & Thaly, 2013; Basu, Ahluwalia, & Gangjee, 2006). Equally significantly, India is witnessing a new "Indian psychology movement" (Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma, 2014, p. 20) that redirects the attention of academic psychologists to the psychological riches embedded in Indian traditional philosophies, texts, and practices, which each give a prominent role to the spiritual life. Early in the new millennium, more than 150 Indian psychologists published a "Manifesto for Indian Psychology" (Cornelissen, 2002). Since then, these scholars and scientists have published a series of volumes reclaiming and setting forth psychological models and insights from major indigenous Indian philosophies (e.g., Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma, 2011; Rao & Paranjpe, 2015; Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008). Indian psychology is not simply "'the psychology of the Indian people', or 'psychology as taught at Indian universities'" (Cornelissen et al., 2014, p. 11). Like modern psychological paradigms, many indigenous Indian paradigms are framed universally and can be explored for relevance to diverse populations worldwide. The Indian psychology movement aims to reclaim traditional riches while expanding and refining the best of modern psychology (see epigraphs).

Combining the complementary strengths of Indian and western psychologies holds promise to benefit the whole world. To date, however, Indian and western psychologists of religion/spirituality have engaged in surprisingly little direct collaboration. To encourage such collaboration, this paper describes the promising types of knowledge that might emerge from such Indian/western collaboration, specifying a variety of potentially generative topics that we hope can serve as catalysts for expanded collaboration.

Starting Points for Collaboration

Indian and western collaboration in the psychology of R/S can be beneficially launched or intensified in several ways. An elementary but important activity is engaging together in international work. At the beginning, such work may rely heavily on one of the pre-existing approaches to the psychology of religion/spirituality. For example, Kamble has collaborated extensively with western psychologists using western empirical approaches to the psychology of R/S (e.g., Kamble, Watson, Marigoudar, & Chen, 2014). At times, his studies also integrate indigenously inspired interpretations (e.g., Kamble, Sorum, & Mullet, 2012). Similarly, international teams might work together on scholarly and theoretical reviews to distill psychologies

embedded in indigenous Indian tradition (e.g., Cornelissen et al., 2011). Such reviews and analyses have been a dominant mode of work inspired by the Indian psychology movement. All such international endeavors can foster shared expertise ("human capital") and build human relationships ("bridging social capital") that serve as essential foundations for further and deeper collaboration.

But an integrated psychology that fully embraces the strengths of both Indian and western psychology must coordinate approaches and views based on divergent methods and epistemologies (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015). Accordingly, to offer an integrative vision for future work and collaboration, we analyze and discuss three modes of knowing that arguably underlie both Indian and western psychologies of religion/spirituality. Whereas contemporary Indian and western psychologies have each separately emphasized only two of these modes, we argue that drawing actively on all three modes will provide the most powerful integration and penetrating psychology.

Combining Three Modes of Knowing

Human groups and individuals learn over time in a variety of ways. Of special interest are forms of learning that are *cumulative*, establishing an expanding base or pool of accessible knowledge. In this sense, both science and religion support collective learning processes that are in part cumulative. For present purposes, three broad and partly overlapping categories of cumulative collective learning processes are relevant: theoretical/intellectual learning, empirical learning, and experiential/realization-based learning.

Theoretical/intellectual knowledge has been a major emphasis of Indian pandits since ancient times, and western scholars since presocratic Greek philosophy. William James represents a modern illustrative example of high theoretical/intellectual learning in psychology. Such theoretical knowledge is typically recorded in words and ideas and preserved in texts. New knowledge may be generated by reflecting on everyday experience or criticizing, reinterpreting, or reshaping previous scholarship or other information. Texts that exemplify theoretical/intellectual knowledge include James' (1902/1961) *Varieties of Religious Experience*, as well as many recent texts in Indian psychology.

In contrast, empirical knowledge emphasizes the analyses of systematically collected data. As Rao and Paranjpe (2015, p. 20) pointed out, the empirical approach in modern psychology usually means findings derived from "running subjects" through experiments or surveys. Less commonly, qualitative interviews or single-subject studies

may also be employed. An illustrative exemplar of this approach is Gordon Allport, whose distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness launched decades of western quantitative research (Donahue, 1985). Employing a modern empirical approach requires developing, validating, and sometimes culturally adapting measurement instruments (e.g., self-report scales) or other experimental equipment. Empirical approaches have dominated recent western psychology of religion/spirituality (e.g., Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). Such empirical methods have occasionally also been used to study Indian psychological constructs (e.g., Pande & Naidu, 1992). Like intellectual/theoretical knowledge, empirical knowledge is typically recorded and accumulated in texts.

A third mode of knowing is based directly on religious and spiritual *experiences*. Exemplars of this mode of knowing include many religious founders and mystics, such as the Buddha, Jesus, Moses, Plotinus, Ramana Maharshi, Saint Tukārāma, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo. All major religious traditions have been profoundly shaped by teachings derived from such religious experiences. While human beings may effortfully prepare themselves to receive such experiences, human volition alone is typically viewed as insufficient for their induction. James (1902/1961, p. 332) suggested that religious experiences can hold an evidential force that "absolutely escapes [the] jurisdiction" of conventional rationalism. Thus, knowledge transmitted in such experiences has at times been designated as "self-evidencing" (*svatassiddha*, Radhakrishnan, 1937, p. 92), "self-authenticating" (Davis, 1989, p. 3), "self-certifying" (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015, p. 338), or—in western traditions—"revelation."

Many self-certifying religious experiences are said to contain ineffable elements that cannot be expressed in or reduced to words. Thus, while many self-certifying experiences are recorded in scriptures and other religious texts, transmission through teacher/disciple (*guru/śiṣya*) and spiritual fellowship is regarded in some traditions as essential for preserving, transmitting, and accumulating self-certifying knowledge. Rao and Paranjpe (2015, p. 30) noted that in Indian traditions, "*realization*… is distinct from *understanding* [and] engenders instant conviction of certainty…. In the Indian tradition the *guru* (preceptor)…. occupies an intermediate position between first-person experience of the practitioner and the final self-certifying state of pure consciousness, playing an indispensable role of mediation and providing a second-person perspective to supplement third-person and first-person approaches. … [which yields an] important methodological addition to psychological research suggested by Indian psychology".

James (1902/1961, p. 332) argued, however, that even the most persuasively self-certifying experiences need not be regarded as evidence that is binding on "outsiders [who]

feel no private call" to belief. A similar respect for limits of self-certifying knowledge is evident in Mahatma Gandhi's response to his 1933 experience of hearing "the Voice of God…. like a Voice from afar and yet quite near" (Gandhi, Prabhu, & Rao, 1967, p. 33). Gandhi wrote that he could offer little evidence to convince a "sceptic [who] is free to say that it was all self-delusion… It may well have been so" (p. 33). But Gandhi also affirmed that "I can say this, that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God" (p. 34). Some scholars assert that while individual experiences may each be doubted, one may form a compelling "cumulative argument" that integrates a range of different types of evidence into a whole greater than the sum of its parts (Davis, 1989, p. 109). However, universal assent to such rational arguments seems unlikely in the near future by either the public or scientists (e.g., Adams & Robson, 2016). How, then, should professional psychology accommodate diverse stances toward self-certifying experiences?

Clinical and Epistemic Integration in Diverse Traditions

Psychologists have responded on at least two levels. Within clinical practice, *clinical integration* may be defined as efforts to tailor psychotherapy to a client's religious background and spiritual concerns. Similar to cultural tailoring, such an approach does not imply particular beliefs by the psychologist (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000).

On a deeper level, psychologists connected to diverse religious traditions have engaged in what we may call *epistemic integration*. These scientists and clinicians have generated texts and conducted research that explicitly respects one or more R/S traditions as sources of knowledge. Such epistemic integration is not an historical anomaly—as Barbour (2000) has demonstrated, integration has been a recurring mode of interaction between science and religion wherever they have been deemed separable. In recent years, R/S-psychology integration efforts have been conducted by Christians (Stevenson, Eck, & Hill, 2007), Muslims (Rassool, 2016), Jews (Milevsky & Eisenberg, 2012; Spero, 1992), and Buddhists (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Leading spiritual figures have occasionally engaged directly in collaborative research (e.g., Ekman & Lama, 2008). The Indian psychology movement may be viewed as in part an epistemic integration attempt and in part as an attempt to expand modern psychology. Epistemic and clinical integration efforts are distinct, but can inform each other dialectically.

Importantly, epistemic integration efforts within different traditions have been independent but partly interlinked. Many concepts and measurement instruments have been adapted

Table 1 Questions for generating Indian/western collaborative research on the psychology of spirituality/religion, and for integrating theoretical, empirical, and experiential/realization-based modes of knowing

#	Question
Q1.	How does Hinduism foster learning from spiritual exemplars?
Q2.	Does religion/spirituality affect health in Indian populations?
Q3.	Does the focus of meditation matter?
Q4.	How is "mindfulness" affected by Hindu, Islamic, and other religious practice?
Q5.	What are skills for living with religious/spiritual diversity?
Q6.	Is mantram repetition (Ramnam) helpful for disadvantaged populations?
Q7.	What is the spiritual role of psychological attachment to the divine?
Q8.	What are similarities/differences in Hindu and Christian cultivation of divine intimacy?
Q9.	What are psychological processes in image worship?
Q10.	Can the "inward, outward, upward" framework help clarify how Indians pray?
Q11.	Does the "open architecture" model apply to Indian or other religious traditions?
Q12.	Can spiritual practice help transmute anger into constructive power for action?

across traditions. This is possible because numerous key spiritual and religious constructs, such as religious commitment, religious participation, and religious coping possess coherent analogues across major cultures and traditions (Oman, 2009). The same is true of the character strengths and virtues that religions espouse (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Still, cultural details often differ, and some religious/spiritual constructs may be culture specific (e.g., *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti* yogas) (Hill & Edwards, 2013; Mulla & Krishnan, 2006; Tarakeshwar, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2003). Thus, culturally tailored measures are often required. Unfortunately, tailoring is not always done when needed. Nonetheless, some tradition-specific measures have been developed for each major religious tradition. Available measures are most plentiful in Christianity, and somewhat numerous in other Abrahamic traditions (e.g., Abu-Raiya & Hill, 2014; Hill & Hood, 1999). Among indigenously Indian traditions, Buddhist measures are sparse apart from the mindfulness construct, where they are plentiful (Bergomi, Tschacher, & Kupper, 2013; Sahdra, Shaver, & Brown, 2010). Only a handful of Hinduism-oriented measures are available (Mulla & Krishnan, 2006; Pande & Naidu, 1992; Tarakeshwar, 2013), and even fewer Sikhism-oriented measures (Thanissaro, 2011).

Indian Strengths and Needs

As reflected in the paucity of measures, indigenous Indian traditions suffer from comparatively underdeveloped empirical study. Happily, other components of their psychological study are strong and promising. The Indian psychology movement has made substantial strides in incorporating theory- and realization-derived content, as reflected, for example, in frequent productive incorporation of Sanskrit-based concepts in recent publications (e.g., Rao & Paranjpe, 2015; Rao et al., 2008).

Indian and modern western psychologies of religion/spirituality thus appear to possess complementary strengths, the former in experiential/realization-based knowledge, and the latter in modern empiricism. These strengths could and should be fused, and one possible means is collaboration between those with experience and interest. Such a fusion could greatly enrich modern psychology and yield a socially dynamic Indian psychology that is well grounded in all three modes of learning, comprehensively fulfilling Rao and Paranjpe's (2015, pp. 31–32) prescription that "Indian psychology…. subscribes to methodological pluralism."

But fusion and collaboration do not occur in the abstract. Accordingly, Table 1 offers a set of topics deemed generative for collaboration that could draw on all three modes of learning and inquiry. The topics most often emphasize Hinduism, the numerically largest indigenous Indian tradition, although similar questions might be assembled for other traditions, and perhaps for understudied minority psychologies embedded within Hinduism. As noted by Rao and Paranjpe (2015, p. 276), "virtually every community, caste, and creed" in India have given rise to saints. Some of them, such as Tukārāma (profiled in pp. 276–292), came from lower castes and expressed themselves not in Sanskrit but in vernacular languages; any non-standard psychologies embedded in their lives or expressions merit equal attention as Indian psychology.

Generative Topics for Collaboration and Integration

Q1: How Does Hinduism Foster Learning from Spiritual Exemplars?

Indian scriptures have long recognized the importance of social learning. For example, the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:21)

states that "What the outstanding person does, others will try to do. The standards such people create will be followed by the whole world" (*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ | sa yat pramāṇaṃ kurute lokas tad anuvartate*).

More recently, the field of spiritual modeling has emerged in modern psychology to study the social learning of spirituality and religion (Bandura, 2003). This modern field applies established social learning theories to learning of spirituality, identifying potentially universal processes (attention, retention, enactment, motivation), and developing corresponding measures. The field also advocates study of processes of "spiritual mentoring" by gurus, sufi masters, and other spiritual teachers (Oman, 2013b).

Indian culture has produced a wealth of spiritual models and diverse and well-evolved concepts of spiritual teaching processes, such as the role of the guru as mediator (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015; Haberman, 2001; Rao, in press). Studies focused on spiritual modeling processes in Indian populations could help clarify how such processes operate both in India and elsewhere.

Q2: Does R/S Affect Health in Indian Populations?

Indian scriptures offer support for R/S-health links. For example, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (2:13) states that "healthiness [*arogyam*]…is a first result of progress of yoga" (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 723).

As noted above, R/S has been linked to health, primarily favorably, in 1000s of western studies and dozens of meta-analyses based on those studies. A diverse group of R/S dimensions has been associated with health, including methods of R/S coping, R/S worship service attendance, R/S meditation, prayer, and other practices (Koenig et al., 2012).

Many Indian R/S practices may plausibly affect health through pathways documented in western samples, such as salutary health behaviors, social connections, greater access to religious/spiritual methods of coping, and beneficial effects of prayer/meditation. However, only a small number of R/S-health studies have been conducted in Hindu or Indian samples (e.g., Basu et al., 2006; Duggal & Basu, 2012; Kamble et al., 2014; Kumar & Kumar, 2014; Kumari, Joshi, & Jain, 2013; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003). In the words of a recent review, "Clearly, far more research is needed" (Tarakeshwar, 2013, p. 661).

Q3: Does the Focus of Meditation Matter?

Worldwide, most non-Buddhist R/S meditation appears to involve a mental focus on the divine or symbols of the divine (Goleman, 1988; Plante, 2010). For example, the word "God" was recommended as a focus by the medieval *Cloud of Unknowing* (Johnston, 1996, ch. 39, p. 98). In the Indian context, the *Bhagavad Gītā* (6:14) advises that the aspirant, "Controlling the mind, with thoughts fixed on Me, He should sit, concentrated, devoted to Me." Similarly, the *Yajur Veda* instructs the aspirant to meditate (*dhyāna*) on God (*Hara*) (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1:10 in Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 715).

Modern writers sometimes assert that the choice of focus for meditation is of "minimal" importance (e.g., Wright, 2001, p. 96). Yet such claims appear naïve from the perspective of modern advertising, a multi-billion-dollar industry that exploits the power of repetitive messaging to cumulatively affect consciousness and conduct. Repeating a corporate brand name gradually fosters matching consumer preferences, just as listening to prosocial or violent musical lyrics fosters corresponding attitudes and behaviors (Greitemeyer, 2011). Indian tradition repeatedly asserts a variant of the Vedic claim that "One becomes what one meditates on" (*Yajurveda* 10:5:2:20, translated by Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 159). This verse was approvingly quoted by Śankara in his commentary on *Brahma Sūtra* 1:1:11 (for Sanskrit, see Oman & Bormann, in press). The *Bhagavata Purana* (11:9:22) expresses similar views, and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa stated that "If you meditate on an ideal you will acquire its nature" (Ramakrishna & Gupta, 1942, p. 657).

Modern empirical evidence also supports influences from the choice of meditative focus. Three randomized trials by Wachholtz and colleagues showed that using a spiritual mantram, such as "God is peace," led to fewer migraine headaches and less medication usage than meditating on a similar secular mantram (Wachholtz, Malone, & Pargament, 2015, p. 3). Similarly, a randomized trial by Oman and colleagues found that college undergraduates ($N = 44$) who meditated on a Psalm or Gita passage experienced greater learning from spiritual models than did those engaging in a primarily breath-focused or open-focus meditation (Oman et al., 2007), perhaps by enhancing the mental accessibility of spiritual motives and perspectives (see Oman & Bormann, in press).

At present, however, much western research investigates only "mindfulness" (open-monitoring) or breath-focused meditation, which risks propagating illusions of the superiority or sole worthiness of such methods. With its deep heritage of religious devotion and respect for diverse forms of meditation, India is well positioned to redress this imbalance through research on more devotional forms of meditation.

Q4: How is "Mindfulness" Affected by Hindu, Islamic, or Other Religious Practice?

"Mindfulness" has become a hot topic in western health research, where "Mindfulness-based interventions" are widespread (see Kristeller & Jordan, in press). Thousands of empirical studies have linked mindfulness, generally favorably, to diverse health variables ranging from stress reduction to cancer (Singh, 2014). The topic has spawned a high-impact journal *Mindfulness*,[2] and by the year 2022, mindfulness psychotherapies are predicted to increase in prominence more than any other approach (Norcross, Pfund, & Prochaska, 2013). Mindfulness has also drawn widespread attention as an organizational workplace intervention (Singh, 2014).

Despite this enormous attention, consensus is lacking on how mindfulness should be defined or measured in modern contexts. The modern empirically studied mindfulness construct, sometimes called "psychological mindfulness," is ostensibly derived from Buddhism, where one step on the Noble Eightfold Path is "right mindfulness" (Pali: *sammā-sati*, Sanskrit *samyak-smṛti*). Yet at least eight distinct and often competing self-report measures of psychological mindfulness now exist (Bergomi et al., 2013). Furthermore, scientific and Buddhist critics have both pointed out that modernized conceptions of mindfulness differ from traditional Buddhist conceptions in a variety of important ways, leaving the modern conception comparatively "depleted," and potentially affecting long-term personal growth and spiritual well-being (Oman, 2015). Some also argue that the importance of mindfulness per se has been exaggerated—mindfulness interventions typically contain a wide range of active components and therefore "could as much be called wisdom-based as mindfulness-based" (Rosch, 2007, p. 262). Mikulas (2007) pointed out that "mindfulness and concentration are often confused and confounded…. many mindfulness-based programs are actually cultivating both concentration and mindfulness, but all results are attributed to mindfulness" (p. 20).

Regardless of how such conceptual issues are ultimately resolved, an important but neglected question is how spiritual and religious practices outside Buddhism affect mindfulness. Randomized trials have documented, for example, that measured mindfulness can be raised by interventions based on mantram repetition or on concentrative meditation (Oman & Bormann, in press). More generally, Singh (2010) asserted that mindfulness is fostered by practices within all major religious traditions.

Interest in modern psychological mindfulness is beginning to appear in Indian studies (Bajaj & Pande, 2016; Roberts & Montgomery, 2015) (see also Christopher, Oswal, & Deokar, 2013). Of great interest would be studies of how measures of mindfulness, concentration, and related constructs are affected by the rich and variegated set of indigenous Indian meditative practices, especially concentrative and other non-breath-focused forms of meditation (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015).

Q5: What are Skills for Living with Religious/Spiritual Diversity?

With globalization comes an ever greater need to live with spiritual and religious diversity. Attitudes toward expanding religious/spiritual diversity have been analyzed by sociologists (e.g., Wuthnow, 2005). But psychologists are especially equipped to facilitate *constructive responses*. Living with R/S diversity while holding true to oneself is in part a learnable and transmissible skill set. Akin to other types of education and training, psychologists could (1) analyze relevant skill sets, (2) identify skill exemplars, and (3) develop and test interventions to foster such skills. Such skills merit dissemination in educational, organizational, community, and interpersonal settings. Initial analyses have already been conducted for some settings, such as the practice of psychotherapy itself (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000).

Importantly, the aggressively materialistic features of modern culture pose similar challenges for adherents to many religious traditions and spiritual paths, thereby generating common ground. In daily living and coping, people not uncommonly look past theological differences to support each other in adhering to spiritual rather than material values, or maintaining daily worship routines (see Oman, 2016b). What skills are exercised by everyday exemplars of religious pluralism, and how are such skills learned and disseminated?

India seems a natural leader for addressing this challenge. Respect for R/S diversity is deeply rooted in Indian tradition, as evidenced by the well-known Vedic statement that "Truth is one, sages call it by many names" (*ekaṁ sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*, *Ṛgveda* 1:164:46). Similarly, the *Bhagavad Gītā* (4:11) states that "As people approach me, so I receive them. All paths lead to me."[3] Much insight might come from studying daily coping with diversity in samples culturally steeped in such attitudes.

Other Potentially Fertile Topics

Many additional potentially generative topics can also be identified, as illustrated by questions 6 through 12 in Table 1. For example, what are the rural and urban Indian

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[3] *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham | mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ.*
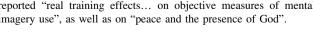
prevalence rates of the practice of Ramanama, the frequent repetition of a holy name or mantram, a central feature of Mahatma Gandhi's system of "Nature Cure" (Q6)? He viewed the practice as "suited to the millions of India's poor…. the sovereign cure of all ills is the recitation from the heart of the name of God" (Gandhi, 1949). Do Indians receive health benefits as described by Gandhi, or as documented in several western randomized trials (see Oman & Bormann, in press)?

Also of interest is the role in Indian spirituality of psychological attachment to divinities or to other spiritual figures (Q7). Initial Indian and much western empirical research has examined "God attachment" as analogous to the parental and other psychological attachments first studied by John Bowby (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kumari & Pirta, 2009). In the Hindu devotional (bhakti) tradition, Jiva Gosvāmī (c. 1513–1598) identified five relational forms of "deep attachment" (rati) or dominant mood of love (sthayi-bhava) that can be cultivated toward the divine as aids to devotion: peacefulness (shanta), servitorship (dasya), friendship (sakhya), parental affection (vatsalya), and conjugal love (madhurya) (Dasa, 2007, p. 385; Haberman, 2001). Similarly, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa recommended "attachment to God," advising aspirants to "direct the six passions to God" (Ramakrishna & Gupta, 1942, pp. 182, 220). Can empirical research shed light on the prevalence, consequence, measurability, and role of psychological attachment in these spiritual practices?

Rao and Paranjpe (2015, p. 192) have also discussed psychological processes, such as "role play," through which Gosvāmī's relational practices may foster enhanced devotion (see also Haberman, 2001). How do such Indian practices compare (Q8) to Christian methods of cultivating spiritual experience though "playlike activity" (p. 92) that treats God "as a friend" (p. 74) or even as a romantic "date" (p. 80), and relies on imaginative competencies that appear measurably trainable through prayer (Luhrmann, 2012, pp. 92, 74, 80)?[4]

Similarly, what psychological processes are elicited by worship of the divine through images (Q9)? Mahatma Gandhi once described himself as "both a supporter and opponent of image worship," explaining that "investing one's ideal with a concrete shape is… valuable as an aid to devotion," but elsewhere arguing that "attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stock and stone believing it to be God" (Gandhi et al., 1967, pp. 104, 63). India has particularly rich traditions of using images in worship. How does the sustained

use of images affect and transform a person's spiritual attachments or beliefs (Barrett, 1998)?

Ladd and his colleagues have proposed an "inward, outward, upward" model for the diverse foci of connection that are embedded prayers offered by ordinary people (Ladd & Spilka, 2006; Ladd, Ladd, & Sahai, in press). Is this model useful for describing patterns of how people pray in Indian traditions (Q10)? Are the psychosocial correlates of these dimensions in Indian populations similar to those found in other populations?

Malhotra (2014) recently characterized Hinduism in its diversity as supporting a common goal ("access to… ultimate truths," p. 234), but otherwise functioning similarly to an "open architecture" as used in the computer industry. In an open architecture, "One can design… by selecting from a vast range of components… [and] there is a myriad of possible ways to configure perfectly legitimate systems [with] certain common standards" (p. 242). In Indian traditions, he suggests, the "sampradaya (lineage) or an individual guru is, as it were, a systems integrator who chooses the various components" (p. 243). Such a model, especially its "systems integrator" component, is provocative and potentially fertile. To what extent can the model be verified through qualitative and quantitative psychological research (Q11)? Can the model be adapted to study "spiritual but not religious" westerners, especially adherents to what Wuthnow (1998, p. 168) calls a "practice-oriented spirituality"? Or to the study of other religious traditions worldwide (see also Oman, 2016a)?

The Dalai Lama has stated that "anger in the Buddhist definition need not have a harmful component," and that "with an emotion like anger, the primary role really is to push away [an] obstacle" (Ekman & Lama, 2008, pp. 121, 123). Mahatma Gandhi wrote that he had "learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world" (Gandhi et al., 1967, p. 16). Gandhi's transmutation perspective appears consistent with empirical work refuting the value of "venting" and supporting phenomena predicted by sublimation theory (Cohen, Kim, & Hudson, 2014; Lohr, Olatunji, Baumeister, & Bushman, 2007). Can Indian psychology, with its views on devotional "transmuting" of emotion (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015, p. 189), shed any light on practices that might support ordinary people in transmuting anger into constructive power (Q12)?

Conclusions

Interest in R/S is surging in the USA and India. Religion and spirituality can be studied in different ways. In studying religion/spirituality, US psychologists have emphasized

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[4] Luhrmann's (2012, pp. 207, 211) randomized trial (n = 128) reported "real training effects… on objective measures of mental imagery use", as well as on "peace and the presence of God".

empirical work, whereas the Indian psychology movement has emphasized insights from experience and realization. Through collaboration, Indian and US psychologists can learn from each other and combine the strengths of the two approaches. We have identified a diverse array of generative topics that could spawn such collaboration. Such collaboration could provide global benefit and support cultures around the world in drawing on religious/spiritual resources and in managing the challenges of modernity and religious diversity to support human flourishing.

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