

## Psychological capital “Psycap” in the Devi Mahatmyam: discover your “Hero Within”

Dr. Biswajit Satpathy<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to relate the episodes of the Devi Mahatmyam in the light of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) components: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. The Psychological Capital components in the Devi Mahatmyam are portrayed as spelled out in it. A literature review on Positive Psychology and Psychological Capital components has also been conducted in this paper to show the importance of Positive Psychology. The Devi Mahatmyam applies the PsyCap components such as problem solving, goal-orientation, adversity coping etc. through its different episodes when its esoteric meaning is understood properly. Since the Hindu scriptures have practical repercussion, this paper proposes to put forward the fact that focused research towards developing psychological intervention to augment psychological capital is to be made seriously using insights from scriptures like the Devi Mahatmyam. At the end of the paper a model has been shown to depict the idea that enhanced spirituality leads to improvement in Psychological Capital and are interwoven with each other.

**Keywords:** *PsyCap, Psychological Capital, hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism, esoteric, Guna, The Devi Mahatmyam, Spirituality*

The Devi Mahatmyam and similar Hindu literatures put forward valuable knowledge to enrich the field of psychology, philosophy, leadership, and management studies. The Devi Mahatmyam can be seen as one of the classic personal management tool to enrich the Positive Psychological Capital within a person.

Seligman (2002) popularized Positive Psychology where emphasis of research shifted from psycho-pathology to positive facets of life. Positive Psychology research gave evidences of general wellbeing and betterment in organizations. The work of Luthans (2002) led to Positive Organizational Behavior (POB). Further research in this field led way to development of Positive Psychological Capital which facilitated research in Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) to have a comparable and complimentary assessment of human social and traditional capital. Luthans, (2002) identified Hope, Efficacy, Resiliency and Optimism as the components of Psychological Capital. These four psychological

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Department of Business Administration, Sambalpur University, JyotiVihar, Burla, Sambalpur, Odisha, India

\*Responding Author

Received: March 31, 2020; Revision Received: May 15, 2020; Accepted: June 25, 2020

## Psychological Capital “Psychap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

resources can meet the criterion to develop extraordinary abilities and outcomes in an individual. Luthans, (2002) developed the acronym 'HERO within' and termed Psychological Capital as PsyCap. The psychological resources hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism meets the scientific criterion as these are based on theory and research, have valid measurement, being a state as opposed to dispositional trait and is open to change and development as well as have a positive impact on desired attitudes, behaviours and especially performance (Luthans, 2012). Luthans, Avolio and Morgan (2015) have stated that psychological resources like creativity, flow, courage, gratitude, forgiveness, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, authenticity, and spirituality were incorporated to the PsyCap later on.

### WHAT IS PSYCAP?

Psychological Capital or PsyCap is a state of an individual for development of characteristics like confidence (self-efficacy) i.e to put necessary efforts to succeed in challenging tasks; to have a positive provenance (optimism) to succeed now and in the future; perseverance toward goals (hope) in order to succeed; and in adversity, bounce back (resiliency) to achieve success (Luthans, Avolio and Avey, 2007). The four components mentioned above can be measured by six items as stated in the existing published measures. Efficacy can be measured using Parker's (1998), hope by using Snyder et al's, (1996), optimism on Scheier and Carver's (1985) and resilience through Wagnild and Young's (1993) measurements. Positive Psychological Capital (PPC) has an impact on other forms of capital as stated by Luthans et al. (2004) such as economic, human, and social capitals.

Avey, Reichard, Luthans and Mhatre, (2011) have stated that PsyCap is an important factor for work-related behavioral and attitudinal outcomes like increased job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours etc. It is also related to psychological well-being (Avey, Luthans, Smith and Palmer, 2010). Culbertson, Fullagar and Mills (2010) studied and found that PsyCap is capable of predicting an individual's alteration in eudemonic work well-being. In the other hand, PsyCap is negatively correlated to stress, anxiety and cynicism as reported by Avey et al., (2011). It is also negatively correlated to burnout, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment as evident from the study made by Cheung, So-kum Tang and Tang (2011). Recent studies reports that PsyCap is related with personal relationships and health. PsyCap have significant effects in individual's wellbeing and life satisfaction (Luthans and Youssef, 2013).

### 'PSYCAP' IN DEVI MAHATMYAM

#### *Hope in Devi Mahatmyam*

We find in the text of the Devi Mahatmyam in at least four places when the Devatas including Brahma and Lord Vishnu have prayed Mother Goddesses with the hope to be rescued from the tyranny of the Asuras. Firstly, the Devi is adorned by Brahma as the incomparable Goddess, the queen of cosmos, the supporter of the worlds, the cause of the sustenance and dissolution alike to awake Vishnu from Yoganidra, when challenged by Madhu and Kaitabha. Secondly when Lord Vishnu got up and fought with the two demons for five thousand years, using his own arms as weapons but could not kill them HE prayed Goddess with the hope to mislead the Asuras so that HE can kill them. Thirdly when the Devatas recited the '*The Devi Stuti*', to liberate them from the oppression from Mahishasura and fourthly when Shumbha and Nishumbha, dispossessed the gods, stripped them of their powers and took away their wealth and privileges, the gods thought of the invincible Devi and made '*The Aparajita-stuti*' with the hope to get back their deprived lordships and sovereignties.

## Psychological Capital “Pyscap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

Though the Devi Mahatmyam seems to be a narrative of the battle between the Devi and the Asuras, there is a deeper meaning to these demons and the battles. It is a metaphor to the inner battle between the divine and the demoniac forces present within the human psyche, between the positive and negative Pravrttis. The battle ground is the human consciousness. The demons are symbolic of the psychic forces. The Divine Mother is the Self, the divinity and wholeness of the Self. Our Self clashes daily with the demons symbolizing the outward and inward psychological struggles. The Devi confronts the demons of Ahamkara or ego, our mistaken perception of self-identification. Our excessive Tamas and Rajas, gives birth to demons of unwarranted craving, greed, anger and pride, and of never-ending CittaVrttis. Thus this myth teaches us to hope for the transformation of the human consciousness. Hope leads to many positive outcomes like happiness, better achievements and lowers the risk of death. In hard time, hope is the necessary ingredient to get through it. Our hope shapes our level of meeting everyday goals. Everyone can benefit from having hope. Psychological research suggests that hope is a learned behavior and everybody can learn how to be more hopeful.

### *Efficacy in Devi Mahatmyam*

Self-efficacy is the confidence to put necessary efforts to succeed in challenging tasks. Lord Vishnu lost his confidence when HE could not defeat Madhu and Kaitabha. HE had to invoke Mother Adi Sakti or Moola Prakrti to delude the Asuras by the Goddess. The two demons were tricked by Goddess and thus Lord Vishnu got the confidence to kill the Asuras. The Gods bowed before the Devi, to the Mahadevi and said our salutations to HER who is ever favorable and who is the Primordial Prakrti and the ever benign. We offer our humble obeisance to the Devi. The Gods requested the Mahadevi to rescue them from the subjugation of Sumbha and Nishumbha.

Goddess emerged from Parvati's body sheath (kosa:sheath), and came to be known as Kaushiki in order to annihilate the enemies of the Gods. After this the Gods got the confidence and also for the well-being of the great Gods, there issued forth, endowed with exceeding valor and strength, Shaktis from the bodies of the Godheads in the same form advanced to fight the Asuras.

The war between the Mother and the Demons actually refers to the continuous conflict between the righteous and unrighteous urges. These are the two opposing psychic forces prevailing within all of us. When the unrighteous urges become more powerful and dominate the righteous urges, we suffer from lack of motivation, confidence, and becomes self-deluded. At this point of time we have to be self disciplined and gain positive psychic energy. This exactly what the Gods did and they connected themselves with the Moola Prakrti or the pure consciousness which is the Kaushiki Devi. The Self being the same as the pure consciousness gets powerful when both are connected. According to the Guna theory confidence, efficacy and positive drive comes when the SattvikGuna dominates the Rajo and TamoGuna. The Devi Mahatmayam narrates this sublime philosophical concept depicting the divine immanence and transcendence, a little understanding of which can help us as a coping mechanism to overcome the stresses of our daily living.

### *Resiliency in Devi Mahatmyam*

Resiliency is the ability to recuperate quickly from adversities. Psychological studies show that resilient persons can better handle hardship and rebuild their lives after a disaster. Changes and losses are inevitable to come in one's life. In everyone's lifetime varying

## Psychological Capital “Psycap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

degrees of setbacks are to be experienced. Some are relatively minor, while others are devastating. The way these problems are dealt with plays a vital role on the outcomes and affects the psychological consequences. Resilient individuals can better utilize their talents and strengths to cope and recover from disastrous situations. One of the factors that can make an individual resilient is to make pragmatic plans and implement them. To be resilient one must view himself as a fighter rather than a victim of the situation. The best way to be resilient is to focus on the positive things that can be done and getting out of a negative mindset.

In the Raktabija episode the Great Goddess was perplexed to see that each drop of blood bleeding out of Raktabija's body in the battle field was getting transformed into another Raktabija with equal power as it touches the ground. Raktabija got wounded, but drops of blood falling on the ground gave rise to countless Raktabijas with equal strength and valor. Mother and the Matrikas were in deep trouble. Mother being the epitome of resiliency adopted a unique strategy to annihilate him. From a blazing burst of energy rising from HER third eye SHE created the dark skeletal and most fierce looking Goddess Kali. Great Goddess ordered Maa Kali to open her huge mouth and mammoth tongue and gulp up every drop of blood coming out of Raktabija's body. Maa Kali did so and ferociously swallowed up Raktabija's blood, and thus stopping further uprising of Asuras. Ultimately, Raktabija was killed. This is a perfect example to show that even the most powerful persons face adversity in their life but proper planning and implementation with positive psyche can make them victorious.

In a deep philosophical and psychological view Maa Kali is the mother of time. Everything is devoured by time. None is above time, how strong and cleaver he may be. Due to illusion in mind we separate ourselves from the limitless wonders of oneness in life. We are confused to know why adversities visit us. Since time is unknown and the future is uncertain we should abandon our ego and behave with resilience to cope up with the situation. Sattvik attitude and egolessness can be a better strategy for having a healthy psyche. Raktabija is our desires or cittavrttis. You satisfy one and then numerous desires take birth in the mind. As a person we have desires but then these are also the foundation of all suffering. When desire overwhelms the mind we helplessly wonder what to do. How can we get relieve from the endless desire gratification and frustration? For that we should have the ability to separate desires from needs. All needs are to be satisfied but not all the desires.

### ***Optimism in Devi Mahatmyam***

Optimism in a person is the expectation and self-assurance that the future or the success of something is assured. According to some research studies conducted in U.S. and Europe optimism can be beneficial in coping with diseases and recovery. It has profound impact on overall mental and physical health. It provides long life and quality of life gets better. Research shows that an optimistic view can envisage better health and a lower rate of mortality. Even it is reported that optimistic people are less prone to viral infections. In his research Martin Seligman, a pioneer in the field of positive psychology has confirmed this fact. Both hope and optimism are similar but not the same and are significantly correlated with mental/ physical health and resilience. Hope is a motivating factor to believe that the individual can achieve the goals while optimism is an outlook for the future.

Philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's thought about optimism is that we live in the best of all possible worlds (*le meilleur des mondes possibles*). According to him God has created a

## Psychological Capital “Psycap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

physical universe that is governed by certain rules therefore we can predict the outcome if we know the rules. Francois-Marie Arouet de Voltaire's philosophy too subscribes to this idea. Sir Isaac Newton viewed this physical world to be a divinely ordered human condition. Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* too advocated the philosophy of optimism. Philosophers have agreed with the fact that there exists a positive correlation between the physical and spiritual planes of human existence.

Throughout the Devi Mahatmyam we can see that the Gods were optimistic about their future and had a strong believe that Mother Goddesses is definitely going to rescue them. This optimistic view made them face the adversities caused by the Asuras. If we look at the philosophical aspect we come to know that Rajo and TamoGuna controls all psychological and sensory functions of the individual under the influence and he gets focused only on the gross and the material plane and loses the original orientation to the Pure Consciousness. The duty of the individual in such condition is to once again recoup with the original state of Bliss. But this can be achieved only by directing the mental power and resolving to orient it back to the Supreme Bliss. This is precisely what Gods did in the story. Optimism is an outcome of a strong resolution to change our outlook towards the future.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL (PSYCAP) AND SPIRITUALITY**

Psychological capital (PsyCap) and spirituality are significantly correlated to quality of life. Narsa (2018) in her project has reported that intrinsic religious orientation is positively related to PsyCap. Research studies confirm the fact that there exists a negative correlation between spirituality and stress which signifies that with the increase in the level of spirituality in an individual the stress level goes down (Bhatnagar et al2020). Religious and spiritual thinking and practices gives motivation that drives toward a satisfying future. It gives power to have a sense of internal locus of control to face the adversities. Spirituality is an inner awakening process of an individual to discover the ‘Self’ and realize the unbound happiness of his being. Jena & Pradhan (2015) in their paper have mentioned that psychological capital and work place spirituality are positively related. Fry et al., (2005) reports that an increase in one’s sense of spirituality leads to increased level of organizational commitment and productivity. Peterson and Seligman (2004) in their *Values In Action* (VIA) classification have mentioned about the spiritual strengths (transcendence).

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is directly related with personal well being, organizational performance, stress management etc along with work place spirituality. So we can safely conclude from the above literature review that spirituality enhances psychological capital. Psychological capital is the positive psychological state and a practical and flexible approach towards life and is considered as a higher-order construct having four constructs of “hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy”. A combination of these constructive variables gives a synergy. Bano& Hasnain (2015) have reported that spirituality and religion in combination which are based on rituals and good human values provides a deep faith in God and brings positivity in one’s life. Positivity enhances wellbeing in life (Bano& Hasnain, 2017). In other words psychological capital as a positive psychology and as a higher-order construct is positively affected by one’s spiritual growth.

A model has been shown below which depicts that spirituality as the central theme and the four constructs of PsyCap as a higher-order construct are interwoven with each other.



## CONCLUSION

All the four elements of PsyCap are clearly depicted in the Devi Mahatmyam, in line with their definition and developing criteria. Apart from the four components, there exists a clear-cut description of 'flow - the experience of complete absorption in the present moment', while narrating the stories by the Rishi to the king and the merchant (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Devi Mahatmyam is a rich storehouse of PsyCaps HERO. The spirit of the Devi Mahatmyam can be seen as an application of the PsyCap components hope, efficacy, resiliency and optimism in adversity, resolving problems and directing the individual towards a goal-oriented life. The esoteric meaning of Devi Mahatmyam can be seen as an encyclopedia to learn the art of rising above life's problems and to achieve a permanent state of happiness and self-competence. We can conclude that the Devi Mahatmyam is a repository of PsyCap and is one of the most popular Sakta texts depicting the four components of PsyCap. It can also be inferred that the Devi Mahatmyam is a precious resource for developing psycho-spiritual mediation, applicable in dealing with issues of every walks of human life. Lastly in the paper a model has been shown to depict the idea that enhanced spirituality leads to improvement in Psychological Capital.

## REFERENCES

- Avey, J. B., Luthans, F., Smith, R. M. & Palmer, N. F. (2010). Impact of positive psychological capital on employee well-being over time. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 15(1), 17.
- Avey, J. B., Reichard, R. J., Luthans, F. & Mhatre, K. H. (2011). Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. *Human resource development quarterly*, 22(2), 127-152.
- Bano, S., & Hasnain, N.(2015).*Spirituality and wellbeing among believers and non believers*, LAMBERT Academic Publishing (LAP), OmniScriptum GmbH & Co.KG, Saarbrucken, Deutschland/Germany. ISBN 978-3-659-80409-0
- Bano, S. & Hasnain, N.(2017) *Role of Psychological Capital and Spiritual Transcendence in Quality of Life Among Social Workers*. OPUS Volume 8 Issue 2 Avail from:[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323255268\\_Role\\_of\\_Psychological\\_Capital](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323255268_Role_of_Psychological_Capital)

## Psychological Capital “Psycap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

and Spiritual Transcendence in Quality of Life Among Social Workers [accessed Mar 31 2020].

- Bhatnagar, A. (2020) An Assessment of Spirituality and its Relationship to Stress with Special Reference to Post Graduation Diploma in Hospital and Health Management Student, *Journal of Research in Medical and Dental Science*, Volume 8, Issue 1, Page No: 86-95
- Cheung, F., Tang, C. S. K., & Tang, S. (2011). Psychological capital as a moderator between emotional labor, burnout, and job satisfaction among school teachers in China. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 18(4), 348.
- Choudhary, S.P. The Glory of the Goddess-Devi Mahatmyam. Available at: [https://www.vedicastrologer.org/mantras/chandi/chandi\\_inner\\_meaning.pdf](https://www.vedicastrologer.org/mantras/chandi/chandi_inner_meaning.pdf)
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Culbertson, S. S., Fullagar, C. J., & Mills, M. J. (2010). Feeling good and doing great: the relationship between psychological capital and well-being. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 15(4), 421.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Branigan, C. (2005). Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. *Cognition & emotion*, 19(3), 313-332.
- Fredrickson, B. L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C. E., & Larkin, G. R. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crisis? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 84(2), 365.
- Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 693-727. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leafqua.2003.09.001>.
- Fry, L. W. (2005). Toward a theory of ethical and spiritual well-being, and corporate social responsibility through spiritual leadership. *Positive Psychology in Business Ethics and Corporate Responsibility*, 47-83. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leafqua.2005.07.001>.
- Jena, L.K. & Pradhan, R.K. (2015) Psychological capital and workplace spirituality: role of emotional intelligence. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* Vol.7 No.1
- Koenig H, King D, Carson VB. (2012) *Handbook of religion and health*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lochtefeld, J. G. (2002). *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Hinduism: AM (Vol. 1)*. The Rosen Publishing Group.
- Luthans, F. (2002). The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 23(6), 695-706.
- Luthans F. & Youssef, C.M. (2004). Human, social, and now positive psychological capital management: Investing in people for competitive advantage, *Organizational Dynamics*, 33(2), 143-160.
- Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. (2007). Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel psychology*, 60(3), 541-572.
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M. & Avolio, B. J. (2007). *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge* (p. 3). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J. & Youssef-Morgan, C. M. (2015). *Psychological capital and beyond*. Oxford university press.
- Moreira-Almeida, A., Sharma, A., Janse van Rensburg, B., Verhagen, P. J., & Cook, C. C. (2015). WPA position statement on spirituality and religion in psychiatry. *World Psychiatric Association*.



## Psychological Capital “Psyscap” In the Devi Mahatmyam: Discover Your “Hero Within”

- Narsa (2018). The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital on the Linkages between Religiosity Orientation and Job Stress. <https://www.researchgate.net/project/The-Mediating-Role-of-Psychological-Capital-on-The-Linkages-Between-Religiosity-Orientation-And-Job-Stress>
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. Oxford University Press
- Seligman, Martin EP. (1998). "What is the good life?" APA monitor 29.10.2.
- Seligman, Martin EP. (2002) "Positive psychology, positive prevention, and positive therapy." Handbook of positive psychology 2: 3-12.
- Snyder, C. R., Irving, L. M., & Anderson, J. R. (1991). Hope and health. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.) (1991) Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective (pp. 285-305). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
- Snyder, C. R., Sympson, S., Ybasco, F., Borders, T., Babyak, M., & Higgins, R. (1996). Development and validation Psychology, 70, 321-335.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** B Satpathy (2020). Psychological capital “Psyscap” in the Devi Mahatmyam: discover your “Hero Within”. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(2), 13-20. DIP:18.01.002/20200802, DOI:10.25215/0802.002