

## Manache Shlok And Personality Development: An Interpretative Review

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### ABSTRACT

Manache Shlok has been used in the spiritual study of Hinduism for a long time. As the field of psychology and personality evolved over the ages, many aspects of personality have been studied now, enabling individuals to develop and strengthen their personality accordingly. This review aims to justify how Manache Shlok entails details that can improve individuals' personality, encouraging Indian psychology's use of this text in psychotherapy as well.

**Keywords:** *Manache Shlok, Psychology, Cultural Psychology, Indian Psychology, Personality, Personality Development*

Samarth Ramdas Swami composed a compilation of verses called Manache Shlok in the seventeenth century. He was an admired and well-known Indian sage. There are 205 verses in it that are addressed to the mind. It offers pertinent insights into the operation of the mind and its relationship to spirituality. Introspection, self-reflection, and the development of virtue are the main topics of the text. These are all essential for developing spiritually and finding fulfilment.

The relevance of Manache Shlok to contemporary personality development has become increasingly apparent in recent years. As the field of psychology continues to evolve, researchers and practitioners would benefit by exploring the potential benefits of integrating ancient teachings with modern approaches to self-improvement. This interpretative review aims to explore the connections between the teachings in the Manache Shlok and contemporary theories of personality development, shedding light on the potential benefits of incorporating these ancient teachings into modern approaches to personality development.

### PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Personality development is a complex process that involves building one's capacities, nurturing talents, enhancing new skill sets, and transforming weaknesses into strengths (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008). The term "personality" refers to the durable traits, interests, motivations, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns that make up a person's distinct form of adjusting to life (*APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.*). Personality development can enhance people's self-awareness and understanding of their psychological

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Received: April 25, 2023; Revision Received: November 3, 2023; Accepted: November 6, 2023

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traits, motivations, and behaviours (Leontiev, Lebedeva, & Kostenko, 2017). A substantial amount of research has been conducted to understand the factors that shape personality development, including genetics, environment, and personal experiences (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008).

In today's fast-growing and competitive world, there is a paramount relevance for the importance of personality development. A strong, healthy, and optimistic personality may aid in gaining respect, acceptance, and appreciation from the external world. A detrimental personality can act as a hurdle in an individual's achievement-oriented behaviour toward success (Meyer, Fleckenstein, Retelsdorf, & Köller, 2019). The process of developing a strong personality has its relevance in all walks of life, right from childhood to late adulthood (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). During childhood, an individual's personality is developed and strongly influenced by biological maturity, social interaction and social observation, as well as the individual's internalisation and the manifestation of their inner self and the external environment (Thompson, 2023). In adolescence, personality development is important for the integration of a strong identity and a healthy self-concept (Klimstra, 2012). Personality development during young adulthood aids in the establishment of qualities and traits required to thrive in a competitive professional world (Somoray, K., et. al., 2017).

Personality development is especially important in the Indian context because of the culture's strong focus on personal development (Vanparia, Dholariya, Gheewala, 2021). Hinduism, for example, encourages the growth of virtues and principles like compassion, self-control, and wisdom (Whitehead, Bates, Elphinstone, & Yang, 2021). Many people seem to be looking for new opportunities and encountering new difficulties, which may have an effect on their personalities. Furthermore, the availability of resources and information about personality development, such as books, workshops, and online resources has been increasing which has made it easier for individuals to access and explore this field.

In Indian philosophy, the concept of personality is expressed through the Sanskrit term "Swabhava," which directly translates to personality in English (*An Indian perspective to personality*, 2022). However, the meaning of Swabhava may extend beyond the English term, as it is closely linked with other Indian concepts such as Prakriti, Tridosha, Triguna, and the sheaths of mind or levels of consciousness (*An Indian perspective to personality*, 2022). These concepts offer explanations for the different dimensions and aspects of personality, drawing on physiological, hereditary, and psychological factors. The development of personality in the Indian context is often viewed as a way to enhance personal relationships, increase self-confidence, and achieve both personal and professional goals (Kapur, 2022).

### **MANACHE SHLOK**

Manache Shlok, a collection of 205 verses written by Samarth Ramdas Swami, a saint and spiritual teacher from India, is considered to be a guide for individuals on their spiritual journey, offering wisdom and advice on how to control and direct the mind (Ramdasi, 2021; Ramdasi, 2014). The teachings in Manache Shlok emphasise the importance of self-reflection and the cultivation of virtuous qualities. The verses are written in Marathi and are widely considered to be among the most important works of devotional literature in India. Despite being written hundreds of years ago, the teachings in Manache Shlok continue to be relevant and inspiring to people of all backgrounds and religious traditions.

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These verses apply to all individuals regardless of age, gender and social background. Many of the verses are devoted to self-discipline and control, proper devotion, and helping self and others. They also provide practical direction on leading a meaningful and fulfilling life. In today's era, where people are facing increasing stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, Manache Shlok proves to be a source of comfort, inspiration, and guidance. Its teachings have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant in developing India as people seek spiritual as well as moral guidance to navigate the complexities of life.

### MANACHE SHLOK AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

In this day and age where mental issues are more prevalent than ever, it is a need to find creative solutions to common problems. Even a completely healthy individual benefits by developing their personality. Personal growth and development are as important as physical fitness. Thus, this paper outlines the main points from the age-old Manache Shlok as interpreted from the views of personality development. Some of these verses can be classified as follows from the perspective of developing the personality: Effective communication, rational thinking, beneficial company and controlling arrogance or pride.

#### *Effective communication and honesty*

Effective communication and honesty are crucial components of healthy relationships and successful interactions (Human and Health Services Department, 2019). According to a study, communication quality was found to be the most significant predictor of relationship satisfaction and stability (Dainton & Aylor, 2002). Honest communication, in particular, is key to building trust and understanding with others and is associated with higher levels of trust, which is a key factor in building positive relationships (*Characteristics of healthy & unhealthy relationships*, n.d). Effective communication, on the other hand, allows us to convey our thoughts and ideas clearly and efficiently, enabling us to achieve our goals and collaborate effectively with others. A meta-analysis of research on job security in the workplace found that effective communication was positively associated with job security (Keim, Landis, Pierce, & Earnest, 2014). In both personal and professional settings, cultivating honesty and effective communication may make all the difference in creating strong, positive relationships and achieving success.

Manache Shlok has verses that explain this same concept in various methods such as analogies and metaphors. More specifically, the importance of effective communication and honesty can be found in verses 19, 23, 24, 25, 43, 44, 48, 49, 52, 53, 57, 111, 152 along with a few others. A lot of these verses imply speaking about Lord Ram and if interpreted as honesty or effective communication, the use of these verses can be done to learn to communicate well. Verse 19 speaks of holding on to the truth while speaking and reading only the truth. According to verse 53, those who behave honestly, refrain from telling lies, and act consistently are blessed. Verse 111 explains the need to share the truth for the good of all.

#### *Rational thinking*

The concept of rational thinking is popularly used in therapy techniques like Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy by Albert Ellis. Rational thinking has been studied widely since ages by philosophers such as Aristotle, Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant. Rational thinking involves the ability to use logical reasoning and critical thinking skills to make informed decisions based on facts, evidence, and sound arguments requiring the ability to consider different perspectives and evaluate the validity and reliability of information (Galotti, 2017). Thus, rational thinking can be effective in developing a strong personality.

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REBT distinguishes between rational and irrational thinking as individuals have the ability to respond to failure, abuse, and misfortune with either healthy or unhealthy emotional and behavioural responses (Turner, 2016). An example of an irrational belief may include 'I must succeed at everything' whereas a rational belief may sound like 'I may not succeed at everything and that is all right.' In the Manache Shlok, rational thinking is encouraged by verses that may be interpreted as explanations as to why and how to avoid sinning. These 'sins' generally entail emotions such as greed, lust and envy, which are unhealthy negative emotions caused by irrational thinking. Unhealthy negative emotions refer to a range of distressing feelings, such as anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, and depression, that are prolonged, intense, and disruptive to a person's well-being and daily functioning. These emotions may be triggered by various life stressors and may lead to maladaptive behaviours and poor health outcomes. Similarly, healthy emotions are associated with healthy behaviours. In the Manache Shlok, the shlokas outline the necessity of rational thinking as follows. In verse number 4 for example, it is stated that extreme desires, in the end, are unhelpful and one should regulate their thoughts so that one can be better. Similarly in verse number 5, we can interpret sinful thoughts as irrational ones. Thus, it talks about letting go of irrational thoughts and embracing rational ones. The consequence is also given in the same verse, saying that sinful thoughts lead to vices. Shlok 11 prompts introspection on the question of who in the world is truly happy, leading to the conclusion that no one can truly be happy. Among the previous and many others, verse numbers 14, 17, 19, 40, 61, 63, 66, 152, 187 and 205 compel the readers to start thinking rationally.

### ***Beneficial Company***

Social relationships that tend to have a positive effect on the individual's mental and physical health can be referred to as a beneficial company. Those who have strong social connections and engage in positive social interactions tend to experience better health outcomes and may have a lower risk of developing chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and depression as described as follows. Social isolation and loneliness have negative health effects that are comparable to risk factors such as smoking, obesity and physical inactivity (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris, & Stephenson, 2015). When confronted with a viral challenge, people with greater social support displayed lower levels of inflammation than people with weaker social support (Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Having good company has been associated with several health benefits, such as boosted immunity, decreased inflammation, and lowered stress.

Overall, the research suggests that beneficial company is an important factor in promoting good health and well-being, and highlights the need for individuals to foster and maintain positive social connections throughout their lives.

Manache Shlok has verses that repeatedly point out how having moral company around one is beneficial as compared to having people who are negative, immoral, or unhelpful. One study also suggests that relationships beyond family are associated with greater life satisfaction (Amati, Meggiolaro, Rivellini, & Zaccarin, 2018).

The term "emotional contagion" refers to the phenomenon whereby one person's emotions can affect the emotions of another person or group, frequently leading to the spread of an emotional state. (Barsade, 2002). Various techniques, such as body language, tone of speech, or facial expressions, can cause this. Both positive and negative emotions are susceptible to emotional contagion. A new concept called digital emotional contagion has also been identified which relates to the effects of emotional contagion as observed in digital media

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users (Goldenberg & Gross, 2020). This may suggest that the more we are around people who are negative in thinking and emotions or have behaviours that are not acceptable or lead to unhealthy consequences, the more we start to behave and think the same way (Goldenberg & Gross, 2020). The teachings of Manache Shlok suggest that it is better to be around positive, wise people who can teach us good things, instead of people who have bad qualities. This is because being around negative people may lead to irrational behaviour.

### *Pride/Arrogance (Ahamkar)*

Pride is a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority. Ahamkar is a concept deeply rooted in Indian philosophy, particularly in the schools of Hinduism (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1989). It refers to the ego or the sense of self that individuals possess, which is often seen as an obstacle to spiritual growth and enlightenment due to identification with it. According to the Advaita Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy, ahamkara is one of the four fundamental aspects of the mind, along with manas (the emotion mind), buddhi (the intellect), and chittam (the memory) it is responsible for creating a sense of individuality and separateness.

In Manache Shlok, there are several verses that emphasise the importance of avoiding the Ahamkara or the sense of self, in order to attain fulfilment. For instance, verse 24 suggests that one should refrain from indulging in mindless chatter in order to avoid being egoistic and selfish. Verse 103 advises against coveting the possessions of others, such as their wealth and women, as this is a behaviour driven by the ego. Verse 110 explains that arguments often arise due to self-centeredness and suggests that controlling this behaviour can lead to better conversations. Another verse highlights that the ego can lead to excessive worrying and negative thoughts, and thus, letting go of selfishness can help individuals connect with their true selves. These are interpreted as becoming self-aware and transcending the limitations of the ego.

## CONCLUSION

Manache Shlok can be carefully analysed to draw the conclusion that there are at least four efficient ways to grow one's personality. This interpretation provides insightful information that can be used to improve everyday functioning and promote personal development. One of the most important lessons learned is the value of open communication, which can be achieved by avoiding arguments and only sharing information that is absolutely essential. The interpretation also emphasises how important it is to identify negative thought patterns and swap them out for healthy ones in order to better one's way of thinking. It also emphasises the advantages of keeping a healthy social network and picking friends wisely to foster personal growth. Finally, the interpretation cautions against becoming prideful, selfish, or arrogant, as these qualities can impede personal growth. By following these steps, one can effectively integrate them into their personality, thereby achieving a more fulfilling and satisfying life. The review also offers a foundation for further research on the benefits and usage of Manache Shlok on personality development and self-improvement. Further research could focus on experimentation on the recitation and application of these verses. These verses can thus also be used in psychotherapy of the Indian context and further research can be done on the same.

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### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Marutibua Ramdasi's book titled 'Manachya Shlokatil Rahasya' and Bhaskarbua Ramdasi's Saarth Manache Shlok for their in-depth offering of knowledge on the Manache Shlok.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interests.

**How to cite this article:** Kulkarni, A. & Khaladkar, S. (2023). Manache Shlok And Personality Development: An Interpretative Review. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 1083-1089. DIP:18.01.095.20231104, DOI:10.25215/1104.095