

Sketching Positive Psychology in the Pluralistic Society of India

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ABSTRACT

To be happy and lead a joyful life is a human desire and purpose for every individual across the globe. Irrespective of the socio-culture reality of an individual, the purpose of one's life is often narrowed down to be happy and lead a life which is meaningful. However, it is the difference in the meaning which an individual associates with happiness and ultimately strives for. Not only does this difference exist at the individual level but also amongst the cultures. One of the most quintessential examples of the same is the dichotomy that exists between the eastern world view and western world view pertaining to the notion of happiness. This eventually becomes the basis of the behavioral sciences which enables the psychologists to further understand the nature of the human mind, its functioning and the thoughts that gets translated into the behavior. It is the eastern world view which construes the beliefs and knowledge given space in Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads, which gives supremacy to the role of consciousness in an individual to achieve the goal of self-realization. And it is the human mind according to the western world view which plays an active role in according meaning to the purpose in one's life. But what is noteworthy is the fact that both of the worldviews have something unique and significant to offer to the field of the psychology. The recent developments in the field of psychology claiming to be more scientific in their outlooks and drawing parallels with different perspectives of the field, seems to be selectively fit to be applied across the cultures. The latter is the field of positive psychology, with its PERMA model of well-being which aims towards the fostering of well-being and leveraging of academic achievement amongst the learners in the school setting. To analyze the implementation of the same in the Indian educational setting, this paper makes an attempt to analyze the ontological and epistemological premise of positive psychology in the light of humanistic and Indian psychology. Secondly it also analyzes the various predictors of well-being in the Indian context to redefine the transactional strategies pertaining to implementation of positive psychology.

Keywords: *Positive psychology; Indian psychology; well-being; humanism; PERMA Model*

Acknowledging the primary goals of human beings to be able to live a life which is flourishing and allows the scope of optimal functioning, the pioneers of the field made an attempt to explore and understand the conditions and processes that can result in the same. It is with the help of empirical evidences and the scientific outlook; the field makes an attempt to understand and enhance human functioning throughout the life time.

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The life of people will always be a journey of both positive experiences and the negative ones. The latter ones always seem to have a prolonged effect on the mind of the person. And it is not just the mind that gets affected but also the physical body which is impacted. “*Bad is stronger than the good*”, is what reflects the tendency of human nature. (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001 cited in Baumgardner & Crothers, 2015) Acknowledging the prevalence of both the sides of the coin, this movement perpetuates the idea of ‘*Life above Zero.*’ (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2015) Zero being the line that separates illness from health and unhappiness from happiness, and ultimately the aim of the life should be to envision and ensure a life which is inclined towards the right-hand side of the zero.

Right hand side of the zero construes the subjective experiences and the positive individual traits which an individual possesses, making them the locus of happiness. As Seligman states, “*The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about positive subjective experience: well-being and satisfaction (past); flow, joy, the sensual pleasures, and happiness (present); and constructive cognitions about the future- optimism, hope, and faith.*” (Seligman, 2002) Ascribing a central role to the human being themselves, the field of positive psychology focus on what can be done in terms of interventions to enable individuals discover their potentials to the fullest and create a life which is worth living.

An attempt to quantify and fabricate well-being amongst individual in the pursuit of leading a flourishing life, marks the essence well-being theory. The key elements that individuals pursue in life and positively correlated with the well-being of an individual can be conceptualized as the PERMA model.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: A BRIEF HISTORY

Prior to World War II, psychology was characterized with three distinct missions. Firstly, curing mental illness. Secondly, making the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling and lastly identifying and nurturing high talent (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2015). The field made conspicuous contributions in the academic body of knowledge. However, it was post World War II which marked its growth as a profession. Few of the significant advancements that marked the post-World War II era were the emergence of Veteran’s Administration and the National Institute of Mental Health, shifting the entire focus to professionalize the study of psychology with respect to healing mental illness. The post war American life led to exponential growth in every field of the psychology which created a high demand of professional psychologists. (Buchanan, 2003; Pickren, 2005 cited in Pickren, 2007). This led to the boost in therapy for mental illness as near about 14 disorders were scientifically explored in order to heal the people. (Seligman, 1994)

The developments in the field of psychology catered largely to the pathology which led to an unbalanced approach of human functioning. The study of human behavior in regard to fulfilled individual and thriving community was neglected. Most of the researches in the field of psychology stressed upon understanding of negative emotion such as shame, anger, depression and guilt (Buck et.al., 2008). The other two missions of psychology were sidelined as not much attention was given to them. It was in response to this unbalanced practice, the movement of positive psychology was launched in the year 1998 by Martin Seligman. As Sheldon stresses that positive psychology movement started as a reaction to the idea that psychology was “*focused too narrowly on the medical model of dysfunctional abnormal behaviour*”. (Sheldon et.al., 2001)

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However, the origin of its roots can be traced back to Aristotle's '*Nicomachean Ethics*' which focused on eudaimonia, parallel to the concept of authentic happiness comprehensively dealt by positive psychology. (Kim et.al, 2012) Aristotle conceived happiness as the final goal which encompasses an individual's totality of life. Happiness as the ultimate purpose of human existence signifies the ultimate value of one's life as lived up to a particular moment, which makes it difficult for an individual to conclude one's life as happy or unhappy until it is over, it is the due course of experiences which collectively measures how well an individual have lived up to the full potential as a human being. (Aristotle on Happiness (pursuit-of-happiness.org) As Aristotle puts it, "*for as it is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes a man blessed and happy.*" (COLANG, 2021)

Apart from Aristotle, the contributions made in the domains of functional psychology, experiential psychology and humanistic psychology by respective pioneers have paved way for the study of optimal functioning of human beings. It was William James, Dewey, and Maslow who called for the evolution or recreation of sciences with respect to lived experience. (Rathunde, 2001) As he puts that, "*James, Dewey and Maslow clearly recognized that the inclusion of experience in the purview of science was appropriate and essential but, at the same time, challenging to traditional scientific values.*"

The trajectory of positive psychology began its journey with William James. One his works related to psychological analysis of the religious experiences of leading figures in traditional world religions led him to the understanding of dichotomy between 'morbid-minded' people and 'healthy-minded' people. And it is the practice of 'mind-cure' that resonates with healthy-minded temperament. Extending the practices and views related to healthy-minded people beyond religions, James in a presidential address to the American Psychological Association on '*The Energies of Men*' in 1906 called for "*a new field of psychology that would scientifically study and apply more broadly the psychological principles underlying the success of mind-cure.*" (Pawelski, 2003) It was with a vision to understand why some individuals are able to make maximum use of the resources available to them and other are not, he highlighted two questions that needs to be explored in order to understand the potential of human functioning. The questions were "*(a) What were the limits of human energy? And (b) How could this energy be stimulated and released so it could be put to optimal use?*" (Froh, 2004) The questions and the concern raised in the address highlights the interest in the study of optimal human functioning, which has now created its space in the positive psychology literature.

It was approximately 92 years later, when Martin Seligman in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association reiterated the idea of focusing on the scientific study of human experiences in regard to the positive value it withholds. (Pawelski, 2003) The insights drawn by William James seem to be extended by the pioneers of positive psychology, not in regard to the basic underlying idea of optimal human functioning. Rather it is also the methodological deliberations which tends to establish the work of James as the predecessor of positive psychology.

Being a radical empiricist, James's work disregards the use of rationalist approach and reductionist empiricism in the field of psychology as it seems to create a narrow view regarding human functioning. Thus, he cautions about bringing them to use in the field of psychology as former can tend to offer a perspective which is too theoretical and speculative and sideline the concrete facts essential for proper understanding of psychology. The later he

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feels rely only the laboratory methods, and anything that cannot be studied under laboratory setting is not significant. This tends to exclude the diverse realm of subjective experiences and feelings which plays a crucial role in the understanding the psychology of an individual. (Pawelski, 2003) Drawing parallels with positive psychology, it is the first-hand experience of the individuals which accounts for understanding and building strengths amongst the individuals. To what James refer to as the '*energies of the man*' for optimal functioning amongst human beings.

Other two noteworthy contributions made by James which extend its roots to positive psychology is the extensive use of assessments and the development of interventions. The former was introduced with an objective to explore the different kinds of human powers which exist, different ways by which different types of individuals can access and also to determine how can one identify which type a particular individual belongs to. (Pawelski, 2003) The use of similar kind of qualitative and quantitative assessments can be highlighted in one of the most crucial developments of positive psychology i.e., '*The Classification of Virtues and Strengths*'. It focuses on the six overarching virtues comprising of 24-character strengths which is endorsed by cultures across the globe with an objective to enable human beings to thrive. The underlying premise regards positive traits as individual differences which according to positive psychologists exists in degrees rather than all or nothing categories. (Seligman et.al., 2005) The later i.e., the development of interventions is closely related with the empirical testing of the approaches which explore the overall situation comprehensively, to bring the theory into practice with efficient outcomes.

Thus, drawing from the thoughts of functionalism, the field makes an attempt to serve the shared ends with a modification in its epistemological and ontological constructs. These ramifications outline the sustained practice well-being by including the inputs from the empirical sciences and making the process of understanding the subjective reality of the individual in an objective manner. The latest model of this approach not only limits itself just to the understanding, but also its fostering amongst the individuals.

Keeping in mind the critical situation which the country is facing, it becomes all the more necessary to design and implement appropriate interventions to cater the issues at hand. Considering the paramount significance of such an approach, its effect has also been tested in the school setting to analyze its functionality amongst the younger population. Introducing the interventions and the coping mechanisms at an age which is as early as one's primary years of schooling will help them easily assimilate that the locus of well-being is present in the individual itself. With the latest researches in the field of positive psychology, it has also been established that the techniques can also be taught with an integration of academics or without the same. The happiness curriculum which is witnessed in the government schools of India is based on the similar grounds. Drawing from the model of "*Happiness Triad*" propounded by A. Nagraj, 1999, the curriculums outline the systematic outline of activities and concepts to be delivered across the classes from nursery to class 8th. These planned activities align itself in the categories of pursuit of happiness via three diverse pathways i.e., through senses, through feelings in relationship and lastly through & Awareness. (SCERT, 2019)

The field of psychology also proposes their self-developed model of well-being. The well-being theory which the pioneers of the field endorse has been translated into a measurable, concrete model which is the PERMA Model of well-being. This model drawing up from the empirical evidences identifies 5 key components which can be measured, developed and

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sustained a prolonged state of well-being amongst an individual. These 5 components are Positive emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), meaning (M) and accomplishment (A) (Figure 1). It highlights the significance of the multiple psychosocial domains which plays an essential role in the optimal functioning of human beings. As Butler and Kern rightly states that “dynamic optimal state of psychosocial functioning that arises from functioning well across multiple psychosocial.” (Butler & Kern, 2016)

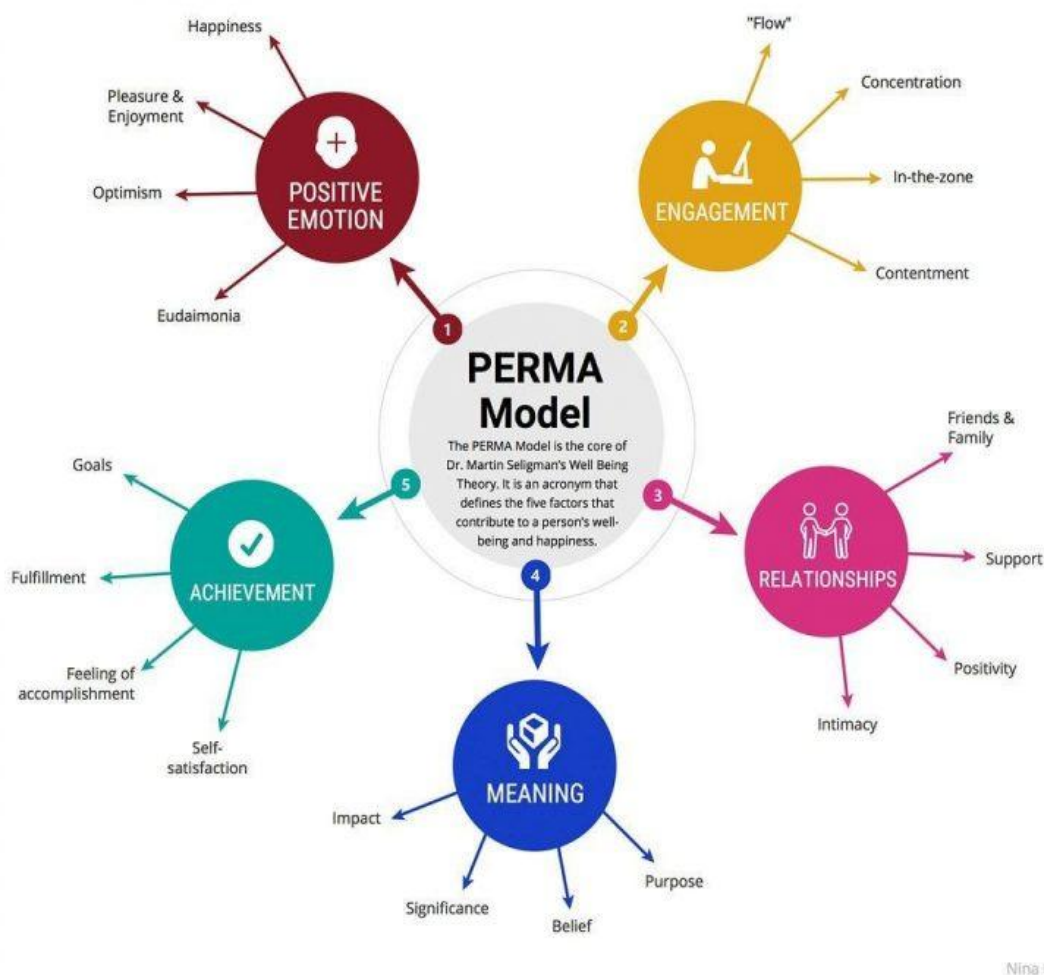


Figure 1: The PERMA Model of Wellbeing. (Source: *The PERMA Model | Foresight Learning*)

This primitive model of well-being as proposed by the pioneers of positive psychology provides space for flexibly curate teaching and learning experiences within the classroom space on the lines of the above-mentioned core elements essential for fostering well-being amongst the children. Being tested in various schools and countries, the model has been found to be positively correlated with both well-being of the students. (Waters, 2011; Au & Kennedy, 2018)

The impact of the model has been tested in the western countries, and its implementation in the Indian context is still a distant reality. And keeping in mind, the diverse socio-cultural realities of the children being a part of the nation, the model cannot be adapted in a similar manner. Thus, analysing the ontological and epistemological premise of positive psychology in the light of socio-cultural predictors of well-being can contribute in theorizing a

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perspective which will account for holistic aspects of well-being and making the model adaptable in the Indian classrooms.

Locating Positive Psychology in India

“Psychology is both like physics and philosophy. It is a science like physics in that its conclusions are derived from observation and experiment. It is however, different from physics in as much as it cannot claim to have in its body of knowledge laws that are precise, concrete and universally applicable.” (Rao, 2013) What it implies is the fact that human existence is guided through the practice of both the subjective realities of the individual and the objective traits which are translated into actions depending upon the interaction with the surroundings. Assessment of such a reality at different stages gives a measurement of the happiness or the well-being of the individual. As Nandy, 2012 highlights that, ‘happiness’ is something to deal with the *“measurable, autonomous, manageable, psychological variable in the global middle-class culture.”* (Nandy, 2012 cited in Tandon, 2016)

Happiness and well-being have often been used synonymously across the literature and there is no sole meaning which has been associated with them. Across the years, the field of psychology has witnessed an evolution in its conception. It has been conceived differently in different cultures. The two views pertaining to well-being i.e., the eastern and the western world view seems to be distinct as well as similar on certain grounds with respect to the epistemological and the ontological basis of well-being. The eastern view construes the ideologies laid down by the Indian philosophical literature which is resonated across the Indian psychological perspectives. However, with the recent advancements in the global reality in terms of trading of knowledge and information, the curricula in the Indian schools and colleges seems to be overshadowed with the western world-view in general and humanistic psychology in specific. It is the western psychology that occupies a major space in the curricula offered at university stage in India. (Bhatia, 2002; Huppes, 2002, Petzold, 1989; Ramakrishna Rao, 1988 cited in Peter Sedlmeier, 2007) And the underpinnings of the Indian school of thought in the pretext of well-being and psychology in general have limited itself as mere strategies or practices for psycho-spiritual development. Prevalence of humanistic psychology can also be witnessed in the National curriculum framework, 2005 which is being put to use till date and guiding the teaching learning practices across the nation. However, the literature pertaining to the humanistic psychology seems to be borrowing insights from the eastern wisdom traditions. The founders of humanistic perspective took into account the contributions made by Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. (Bland & Derobertis, 2017) The interaction between the two can thus be conceptualised as a two-way channel and both seems to be influenced by each other and contribute unique perspectives to each other.

Humanistic psychology also termed as the ‘third force’ emerged in 1950s and is defined as *“primarily an orientation towards the whole of psychology rather than a distinct area or school...concerned with topics having little place in existing theories and systems; e.g., love, creativity, growth, self-actualization, peak experience, courage, and related topics.”* (Misiak & Sexton, 1966 cited in Froh, 2004) It was the felt disenchantment with the behaviorist reductionism and psychoanalytical determinism during the mid-twentieth century that led to the humanistic movement in psychology. (Rao, 2013)

Not only it had influenced the practices in the eastern world-view, but also extends its contribution to the recent advancements in the field of psychology i.e., positive psychology. The recognition of the underpinning of positive psychology came into existence much

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before when pioneers of the field turned our focus to. It was in 1954, when Maslow introduced the word 'positive psychology' into the literature of psychology. In one of his books, he devotes the last chapter to the same, giving it a title, "*Towards a Positive Psychology*", in which he addresses the issue of inaccurate understanding of human potential and incompetency of the field in terms of exploring the issue with maximum attainment. (Froh, 2004) As Maslow states, "*The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side; it has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology had voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that the darker, meaner half.*" (Maslow, 1954)

The overall inclination of humanistic psychology was to investigate empirically the lives and patterns of the self-actualized people. It is with the help of those insights the pioneers of humanistic psychology aimed to shape the field of psychology with rigorous and systematic methods of studying human beings and rebuilding the fragmentary character of contemporary psychology in an integrated manner. Building its premise on the welfare of human society, the proponents of positive psychology share the same goals as envisioned by the humanistic psychology. The central themes and concerns which runs along the literature of positive psychology seems to share its roots with humanistic psychology.

However, positive psychologists do acknowledge the humanistic psychology a significant contributor of the historical foundations leading to the creation of positive psychology but does not credit it to be one of the significant progenitors. (Waterman, 2013)

Thus, by drawing parallels between the eastern and the western world views and analyzing what it has to offer to the field of positive psychology can help us chart out a more holistic approach to well-being of the learners in the Indian context.

Ontological premise of well-being

Attempts have been made in diverse cultures to understand the questions pertaining to the human existence, their nature and the purpose they hold in life. The ontological assumptions which a person withholds becomes the driving force of human existence. Rest everything which happens in the lifetime of an individual falls back on these assumptions. They basically become the pillar of existence and development of various schools of thought and the reform movements. Understanding of human nature has guided us to analyse their needs which enables them to sustain a life which is meaningful and flourishing. This may follow different pathway as per different sources of knowledge. Analysis of Indian psychological perspectives and humanistic psychology have been done in the given section. Positive psychology being a recent advancement in the field of psychology seems to be sharing certain common grounds with their predecessors. But it also skipped a few significant contributions which would make it universally fit to be practiced across the globe. The gaps and the need of the same in the Indian classroom setting has been analysed.

Nature of well-being

To understand well-being and happiness, the Indian ancient texts are flooded with the terms *ārogya, sukha, samtosha, tripti, tushti, harsha, ullāsa, swāsthya, ānanda* and so on (Salagame, 2006) It is the subjective connotation which the Vedas ascribe to the state of happiness. The use of these terms across the literature provides evidence of the importance which has been given to the happiness and thriving in Indian history and culture. Such

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evidences can also be traced in the folklore which have been a pertinent representation of Indian culture and philosophy.

The views regarding the meaning and understanding of happiness and well-being have been varied and not limited just to spirituality or consciousness. The view regarding the same draws parallel from both the material and spiritual worldviews.

The former being the hedonic perspective of well-being prioritizes a person's own assessment of how well their life is going and whether they are getting the things they want in life- without specific concern for what these 'things' actually are (Diener, 1984). What hedonic well-being comprises of is the cognitive aspects i.e., based on evaluations of how well one's life is going to be relative to an ideal state of affairs. It also comprises of the affective components which deals with the experiences of pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Thus, being pleasure oriented, this perspective in the purview of materialistic world view focuses on fulfilment of desires which are particularly sensory in nature.

On the similar grounds is the perspective resonated by the humanistic psychology. Relying on the grounds of existentialism foresees individuals as the locus of activities which are essential for creating meaning in life amidst the social interactions in which the individuals are embedded. The human beings are guided through their consciousness for the actions they perform in order to truly define themselves. It is the generic nature of the human beings which guides them to do what they are ought to do, however the degree to which they perform and act relies on the individual. This makes them autonomous agents with the ability to make decisions irrespective of the existence of external influences on the decisions.

The latter perspective pertaining to the spiritual world-view is the perspective is the transpersonal perspective which is highlighted in the Taittiriya Upanishad, revolving around the idea of self (Atman or Chitta) enclosed within the five layers of awareness, or what is termed as 'Koshas'. (Shrivastavaa & Misra, 2011). The idea of happiness is to discover each layer which brings the individual closer to oneness with the universe and the true self. 'Ananda' or bliss which refers to the 'state of consciousness, characterised by positive feeling, which is not depended on any object or events of external reality" is perceived as the ideal condition of human beings which characterise 'Atman', the pure consciousness or the transcendental self (Salagamne, 2003).

The concept of 'self' is not unique to the Indian psychology, it also seems to be supported by the humanistic psychology. The 'self' in the case of latter is a broadened perspective which also takes into account oneself in relation to others. Contrary to the narcissistic view of self or individual fulfilment, the idea of self as elaborated by Maslow and Rogers seems to be including the feeling of empathy. (Bohart and Greening, 2001)

Forming relationships with others is also an integral component of the PERMA Model of well-being. According to the model, this aspect resonates the significance of the social environment of an individual and the role one plays in sustaining the bonds one forms in that space. However, what is lacks to incorporate is the component of empathy which can not only strengthen the bonds one share with the people around them, but can also contribute in developing sensitivity and practice of acceptance amongst the people. considering the prevalent situation in mind and specially the recent riots (Anti-CAA, Hindu-Muslim protests during Ramadan, etc.) that have been witnessed by the citizens of India, fostering such a trait

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is the need of the hour. Thus, it is the “*growth-producing interpersonal relationships*” that the model should strive for. (Bohart & Greening, 2001)

This perspective resonating with the transcendental perspective explores the concept of happiness and well-being through the lens of subjective reality which holds no space for dependency on the objective conditions of reality, including one’s state of body-mind also.

Positive psychology on the other hand reflects the idea of existence of both generic nature and individual nature simultaneously within an individual. This idea can be traced from the widely common concepts of eudaimonia and character strengths that runs along the positive psychology literature. (Waterman, 2013) Potentials of the individuals are highlighted through the individual nature they portray. Being unequivocal about the assumptions of freedom, the pioneers of positive psychology functions on generally accepted belief which informs that there exist certain uncontrollable external factors whose influence on the individuals can be excluded from scientific consideration. This existence of dual nature of human being is also reiterated in the Indian psychological perspectives, and Guna theory in specific.

It takes into cognisance the eminent concept of character strengths and marks a shift from the exclusive preoccupation with the *artha* and *kāma* as goals of life towards the understanding of ‘Satva Guna.’ (Salagame, 2002a, 2002b, 2003) Guna Theory informs about the three qualities which the matter possesses i.e., lucid (sattva guna), the passionate (rajas guna) and the sluggish (tamas guna). It is the sattva guna that enables the man to lead towards spirituality and must be the ultimate goal. Th rajas guna takes the man towards achievement and stokes passion and lastly the tamas guna drives the individual towards laziness and stokes sluggishness. Drawing from the Sankhya philosophy, the significance of the guna theory can be useful to explain the classification of the behaviour as positive and negative ones in the current scenario and trace the sources of traits in Indian psychology which guides the determination of personality traits. (Khanna, et al, 2013)

What is noteworthy in the guna theory is the fact that, predominance of one guna does not implies the absence of the other two guna from the personality. Rather it is emphasised that the other two either must be present in the subdued form or in the varied proportions. What it tends to imply is that the maintenance of a balance by accepting suffering as a part of life, reiterated by the Eastern thoughts of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. And it is the development of certain character strengths in an individual which leads to them to a life which is flourishing. (Misra, 2014 cited in Ghosh & Deb, 2016) And this is certainly central to the movement of positive psychology which the pioneers wish to intend, i.e., developing mechanisms to supplement and not replace the human sufferings, weakness and disorder. It is the development of the specific character strengths and virtues which can be developed flexibly amongst all the individuals based on their needs and subjective experiences.

Apart from hedonic and the transcendent perspective, the eudaemonic nature of well-being focuses of on the certain needs or qualities which are essential for one’s psychological growth and development. And it is the fulfilment of these needs which enable them to reach their full potential. This approach according to Ryff lists out the six key features which characterises the individual to be ‘*fully functioning*.’(Ryff & Singer, 2008) These six features are as follows:

1. Autonomy
2. Environmental mastery

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3. Positive relationship with others
4. Purpose in life
5. Personal growth
6. Self-acceptance

These 6 characteristics have been acknowledged by the pioneers of positive psychology and given space in the PERMA Model of well-being. The idea of forming positive relationships, purpose in life and environmental mastery are completely on the line of eudaemonic pursuit of happiness. The same can also be reflected in the humanistic psychology. The central theme of provide the learners with the autonomy to choose form the diverse learning experiences is nothing but an implication of the eudaemonia perspective. The same can also be reflected through the Maslow's' hierarchy of needs whose ultimate is aim is to strive for self-actualisation.

Thus, exploring the various perspectives pertaining to the nature of well-being propagated by different schools of thought highlights the fact that not all the schools of thought focus on a comprehensive and holistic perspective of the same. They seem to be sharing common aspects and yet offer something new to the understanding of well-being, as depicted in the figure 2.



Figure 2: Conception of nature of well-being

The discourse pertaining to the nature of well-being highlights that it is the assumption regarding human nature which bifurcates the existence of human being into two types i.e., the individual self and the generic self. The two seems to be guided by their respective purpose and engage in tasks which are necessary to keep their state of mind in equilibrium and avoid a state of conflict amongst the two. The idea of well-being according to the literature available in the field of psychology takes in to consideration either of the one type of self and thus limits the well-being specific to that type. The hedonic perspective takes into account the general nature of self and thus the individual character strengths and virtues are not given well-defined space. This idea of existence of character strengths and virtues is shared by both the Indian psychology and the positive psychology and seems to be significant for dealing with the holistic well-being of an individual.

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Keeping in mind the Indian classrooms which is characterized by a pluralistic nature, not every child can be taught on the lines of the generic nature of human beings. The diverse realm of experiences of the children can only be given space in the classroom, if there is a realisation that each child holds an individual self which is guided by their innate potentials and reality of events which they have witnessed. This individual self may be influenced by the other predictors of well-being, which will be discussed in the later section.

Another missing feature which is lacking in both the Indian psychological perspective and the positive psychology movement is idea of *inclusiveness and openness to alternative viewpoints* which has been accorded supremacy in the humanistic psychological thought. The child-center approach which have been well-appreciated in the schools of India is based on this ideology of inclusiveness and openness to alternative viewpoints, as it makes an effort to address the individual differences which the children posses and respond to their needs in the altered manner. The pioneers of positive psychology also take into consideration the specific character strengths and virtues to be developed flexibility amongst all the individuals which may be based on their needs and subjective experiences. Drawing from the lines of humanistic perspective, in Indian context if the character strengths and virtues build with an aim towards promotion of inclusion and openness to alternative viewpoints, what can be envisioned is a harmonious, peaceful and democratic country with children capable of engaging in dialogue, critical and rational thinking in the welfare of not just themselves but the whole society in general.

What it implies that choosing extreme ends of the continuum of the nature of human beings can lead to a fragmented perspective about one's personality and the also the pathway they adopt to define and practice well-being. Thus, to cater to the wholeness of one 's identity the well-being can be defined as a psychological state of experience sense of belongingness, security and satisfaction within the immediate environment enabling oneself to have a positive self-esteem. It also encompasses the ability to cope up with the problem situation through engagement in an acceptable behaviour. Engagement in an acceptable behaviour requires inputs from the consciousness, which plays a crucial role in accepting and rejecting the demands of the Id by majorly residing in the *Ego* of an individual.

Dichotomy of mind and consciousness

The analysis of the Indian tradition in psychology reflects the existence of mind and consciousness as two distinct entities. (Rao, 2013) The distinction between the two has not been given space in the literature comprising the western school of thought and specifically the positive psychology. The pioneers of positive psychology emphasize on the need of developing character strengths and virtues which enables one to lead a flourishing life. The development of these strengths and virtues is to do with the role that mind plays, and it is often claimed that well-being can be taught in the classrooms. The empirical knowledge base of the field embraces the processes and the knowledge about the conditions that contribute to flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and intuitions.

Positive psychology aligns itself with the western and in specific the 'American' ideologies of individualism or liberal individualism. This kind of self is characterised with a dichotomy between the inner subject realm of experiences and the outer objective real world full of abstract facts. What it leads to is a notion of '*fixed, essential self that is separate from others and the world it inhabits.*' (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008) One of the major problems that is related with the reliance on the objective outer real world is the biasness which gets unattended in the process. Foucault's framework informs about the nature of the real

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knowledge of the world which is result of influence of dominant ethical and moral codes of one's culture. As he states, "*power and knowledge directly imply one another, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.*" (McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008)

The role of mind is also acknowledged by the humanistic psychology on the grounds of constructivism. It the mind of the human beings which plays an active role in constructing the meaning out of the social interactions which they witness and the perception they form regarding various aspects. And the pathway to self-actualisation pertains to the evolution of a person in terms of the various needs they feel at different point of time and how well that need has been addressed. It the knowledge which plays an essential role in vertical mobility of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

This role of mind can also be highlighted in the various forms of practices and the activities which are conducted in the purview of both humanistic and positive psychology. The process of construction of schemas and its subsequent assimilation and accommodation, involves the use of mind.

On the contrary, the most prevalent thought which determines the human nature and so does the function of society is the role which both mind and consciousness plays. "The mind is thus the interfacing instrumentality between the external world mediated through the brain and consciousness reflected on it. Consequently, mental phenomena manifest the influence of consciousness as 'subjects' and the world of things as *objects*" (Rao, 2013) It is thus the consciousness which is within an individual, playing a primary role across the ancient Indian literature. Irrespective of the acknowledgement of the interdependent relationship shared by both mind and the consciousness, the supremacy is accorded to the consciousness as it leads towards the conscious contact with the internal and the external world. Ultimate aim of self-realisation has been a matter of concern for which the evidences exist in the different form of practices, different types of yoga to be specific. Under the label of Yoga, are comprised various methods which are "*special psychological processes founded on fixed truth of nature and developing, out of normal functions, powers and results which were always latent but which her ordinary movement do not easily or do not often manifest.*" (Sri Aurobindo, 1996 cited in Peter Sedlmeier, 2007) Other form of practice is the meditation, which inform an individual about the realities of the inner self. The mediation between mind and consciousness can be conceptualised in three stages which are as follows:

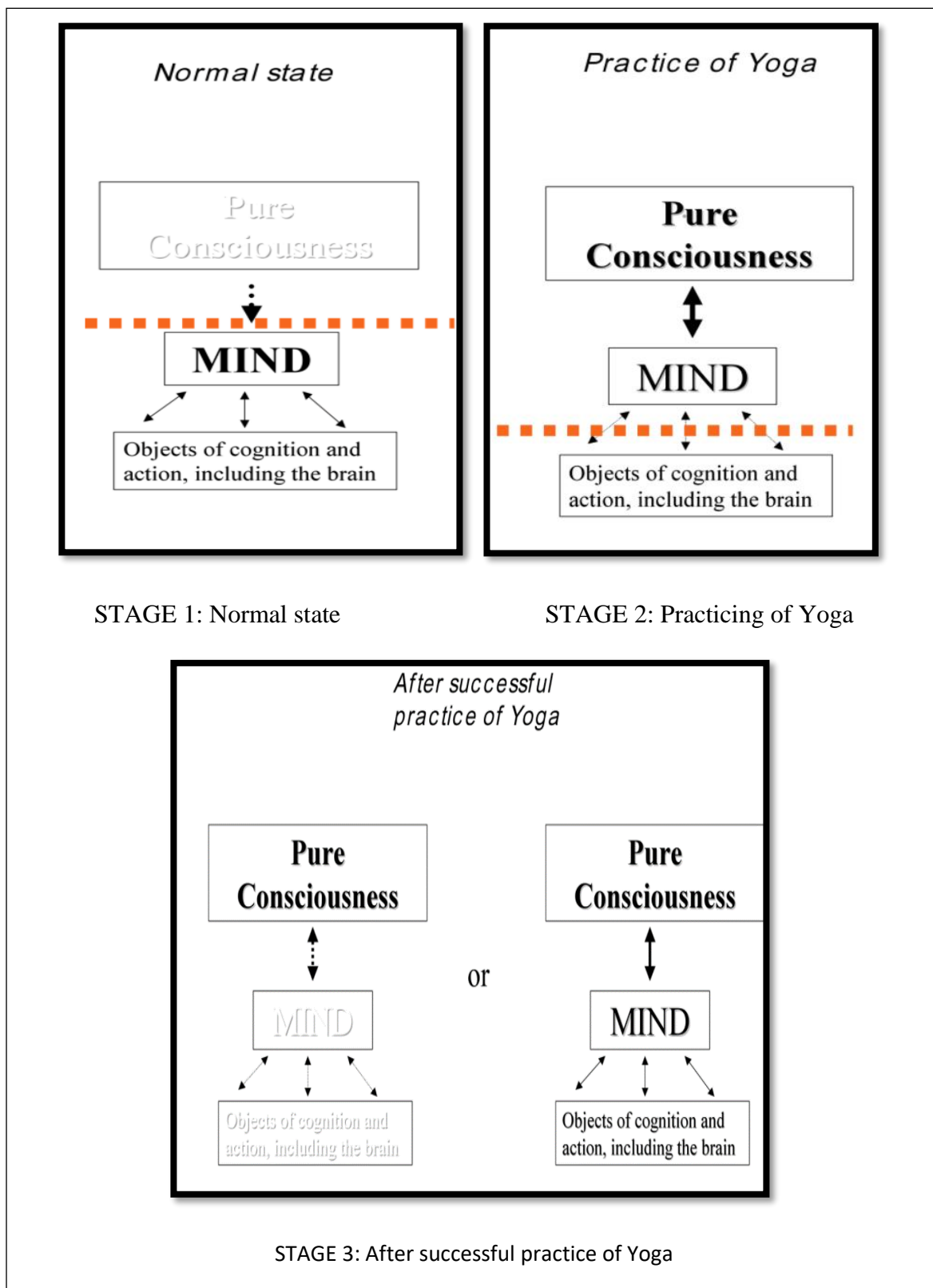


Figure 3: Stages of the meta-theory (Source: Peter Sedlmeier, 2007)

What thus can be implied is that the Indian school though is flooded with the practices and knowledge that can enable an individual to pursue a life which is full-filling and paving way for the possibility of studying subjective experiences in an objective manner. And if supplemented with theoretical framework to develop the capacities of the mind, the purpose

of the movement can be achievement. Mind and consciousness are not the two hierarchical extreme end points present within an individual. They form an interdependency which enables an individual to explore what is present within and what forms the exterior reality. This interdependency is highlighted in the figure 3. As the thoughts mediated by the mind are the thoughts which forms the subjective reality of an individual by bringing it into the consciousness and thus transacting via actions. As Rodrigues et, al., rightly states that, “*the identity is related to the conditions to the constitution of the subject before the world and the circumstances in which it is inserted and acts. To be understood in all its complexity, it is necessary to consider the ontological, cultural and the social aspects that act in its constitution, that is, in its identity.*” (Rodrigues et, al., 2016) It is the rightful duty of the psychologist and the individuals in general to understand the nature of the mind which plays an active role in interpreting and transacting the realities of the objective world, only then can it be shaped to respond to the needs of the human beings. The researches and the developments in the field of positive psychology strike of the significance of the cultural and societal context of life which affects the individual in terms of their personality development, goals and happiness. This can be realised on the basis of the efforts which have put in order to explore the given themes and include them as part of their well-being conceptualisation. (Lopez et.al., 2002)

Also, when talking about the PERMA model of well-being, generating meaning of one’s life is an integral component for achieving the aims of well-being. If this meaning does not resonate with the purpose of one’s life on the authentic pathways of inner reality, it serves a biased perspective of one’s own self. Whose impact may not be lasting enough. What our education system feeds to the students is merely the acquisition of the cognitive competencies and skills which enable them to strive for the routine task. Complementing it with the knowledge and practices pertaining to the exploration of inner subjective world (through the pathway of Indian psychology) and the potentialities of mind (through the pathway of positive psychology) can enable them to become flourishing and thriving citizens of the country. Achievement of the same will not only help them have a knowledge of their true self but will also enable them to become rational beings.

The vagueness in the theory propagated by positive psychology in terms of the view of self and the view what is regarded as the good has also been acknowledged by Christopher. In his review of Rao’s work in pretext of the amalgamation of positive psychology and Indian psychology, he addresses to the concern by stating that, “*by failing to uncover its own presuppositions, positive psychology thus far has been limited by one-sided view of the self that is not only culturally specific but fails to account for the kinds of transformation and development that in many traditions defines the essence of the positive.*” (Christopher, 2013) Many cultural and moral traditions both within non-western and western psychology like, Buddhism, Hinduism, communitarian social thought, transpersonal psychology, etc, reiterates the practice of careful, sustained, mutually respectful dialogue with other cultures and point of view in order to broaden the underpinning ontology of the movement. The former has to replace the ‘*scientifically grounded theory of one’s self.*’ (Christopher et.al., 2008)

Taking into consideration cultural realities

The field of positive psychology as Walsh states, seems “*Ethnocentric*”, as it fails to take into account the non-western psychologies who tends to have built systematic and sophisticated systems of well-being with effective techniques. Few of the contributors of the same are transpersonal psychology and the Asian psychology. The former tends to integrate

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perspectives from both western and non-western psychology pertaining to development of spiritual aspects of human life. The later focuses on the establishment of yoga and meditation as few of the effective techniques by the Indian school of thought for psychological development, post-conventional transpersonal development, individual abilities and methods of cultivating them. (Walsh, 2001)

Conceptualization of cultural factors as one of the predictors of well-being in both Eastern and Western worldview have been discussed comprehensively in this paper. Inclining towards one end of the continuum makes the field selectively fit to be applied in the Indian context. Thus, including insights offered by the humanistic psychology and Indian psychology, might ensure sustainability of the idea for a longer run. One such premise is the lack of Self-consciousness, which is central to the idea of *flow* enabling individuals to be engaged in activities which leads to happiness. (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989) If this idea is complemented with practices of yoga and meditation, the children will be able to identify the areas in which they are capable to contribute with their utmost potential and also have interest for. It is the idea of self-actualization drawing form the lines of humanistic psychology which can enable the children to understand themselves in a wholesome manner. According to positive psychology the interest in the activities will eventually lead towards engagement in certain kinds of activities, with happiness becoming a byproduct of the same. And these interest areas can be best identified with the character strengths and virtues and by putting them to use will prove to be beneficial for them. However, the identification and perpetuation of character strengths and virtues cannot be the sole manner to achieve the ends of engagement. As just determining the mechanical aspects of one's life is a short term goal and what it will lead to is pseudo personality of the person. In order to complement it with the behavioral aspects, the focus should be multidimensional with a balance between the different domains of development such as emotional, social, spiritual, cognitive and physical. The inclusions of activities from the other two perspectives will make the program more durable and sustainable.

Epistemological premise of well-being

To identify the source of knowledge is a key concern to reflect on the practices which will guide the future discourse of action. The knowledge may seem to be derived from the senses of an individual which is based on the nature of experience they have with the various elements of the universe. The contributions to such a perspective have also been made by the Charvaaka epistemology which on the lines of positivism agnize that reality is whatever that can be perceived through our senses. And anything which cannot be supported through the evidence of senses does not comprise of reality. (Salagamne, 2003)

On the similar lines is the practice of Humanistic psychology, as reflected in the discourse of empirical researches conducted for the same. It is influenced by the phenomenological outline brings into practice an extensive and rigorous use of qualitative methodologies in research. This leads to application of narrative, discursive or similar techniques which aims towards exploring the nature of specific effects on an individual.

Alternatively, positive psychology being a logical positivist philosophical perspective makes use of quantitative methodologies with rigorous experimental and statistical techniques. The focus is not on the nature of the process, but rather on the degree or measurement of the effect. The dichotomy between the two perspectives is that of idiographic and nomothetic approach of exploration of a specific construct. (Waterman, 2013)

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With regard to the paradigmatic divide, Mruk, 2006 concludes that positive psychology aligns itself with logical positivism which rejects qualitative researches on the grounds of being unscientific or prescientific. And humanistic psychology on the other hand with alignment to post-positivism and its versions, tends to reject the use of quantitative researches, on the grounds of distortion of science misapplied on human beings. (Mruk, 2006 cited in Friedman, 2008)

However, with the evolution in the societal structures, needs and practices, there has been a simultaneous evolution in the conception of human nature. With the advancement in technology, human beings are more or less regarded as the 'brain-driven machines' (Rao, 2013). This conception of human nature neglects the value of the subjective experiences it holds in one's lives. This movement towards objectivity also led to objective based criteria determining the human nature. The behaviourist paradigm pertaining to the stimulus response theory justifies the fact that human nature can be understood in terms of systematically planned and sequenced events and anticipated responses to the same. As Rao, 2013 puts, *"In the eagerness to make psychology a science, psychologist of the last century tended to ignore subjective experience, and hastened to confine psychological research to areas where objective data with inter-subject validity can be collected. Concepts like mind, consciousness and first-person experience lost their relevance to psychological research."* (Rao, 2013)

Narrowing it to the educational settings, the nature of the studies mostly limit itself to identify the causal relationship between various predictors and the well-being of the children and never neglecting the academic performance of the learners. Thus, even the well-being of the learners is conceptualised on the grounds of the scores achieved by the learners. Rejecting an approach outrightly to bring a reform in the field of psychology will lead to a pseudo understanding of the reality. Complementing the studies with equal focus on qualitative as well quantitative aspects will help the community of researchers identify the gaps and build a sustainable community. The same can also be highlighted with the evolution in researches conducted under humanistic paradigm. The literature pertaining to humanistic psychology has witnessed a noticeable shift towards the empirical nuances, which seems to comprise of 69.3% of qualitative studies, 16.3% of studies employing quantitative methods and 14.3% representing mixed-method researches. The data rejects the inclination of humanistic psychology solely towards the idiographic objectives of psychology. (Churchill, 2014) Such kind of evolution is also required in the researches which are being carried out to enrich the field of positive psychology.

The scientific urge to quantify the dynamics of a classroom in order to understand the well-being of learners, fails to take into account the perspectives of the teacher and the realities of the students. The interventions then developed on the basis of these empirical findings makes them selectively fit to be applied in the classrooms. The interventions does provide scope for including the subjective experiences of the children, but development process of those interventions surely lacks the same.

SUSTAINING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

Apart from cultural context determining the meaning to be associated with the subjective experiences, economic status of the community in general also plays a significant role in impacting the well-being of the individuals. Without examining the meaning of well-being from the economic point of view, its understanding will be incomplete.

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GDP or Gross domestic product aims at measuring the total market value of the goods and the services produced by a Nation's economy during a specified year. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009) Researches in the field of psychology specifically those in the pursuit of analyzing the constructs and the correlates of the well-being highlights the fact that it is the relative income (both within countries and between countries) which is positively related to life satisfaction of an individual. Eradicating the previously established results which claimed that GDP and life satisfaction are strongly correlated for low-income countries and past a threshold there exists negligible correlation between the GDP and life advancements. However, with the advancements in the researches in the purview of the same it is highlighted that what affects the well-being of the individual living in a country is their own comparison with the people both of the same country or those outside the country. Implying that it is not the absolute income which affects happiness. (Eastelin, 1974 & Stevenson and Wolfers, 2008 cited in Adler & Seligman, 2016) The economic conditions of an individual do play a certain role in determining the happiness.

The similar effects were also accounted in the Indian scenario, where positive psychology interventions were applied in a low-income group migratory Hindu community living in the slums of Mumbai. Irrespective of the income group, the results informed a positive correlation between the well-being and the economic status of the communities. (Sundar, Qureshi & Galiatsatos, 2016)

The correlation between the economic status and the well-being highlights the need of interventions which can cater to the socio-economic diversity which the country inherits. The economic status of the child will guide the needs, daily routines of the child, his aspirations, beliefs and the coping mechanisms to survive in the varied hustles of life. This part of reality has not been acknowledged by the positive psychology. The field do acknowledge the existence of both negative as well as positive events in one's life, but what it fails to focus on is the daily reality of the life of an individual which itself is a struggle. One of the components of PERMA Model which stresses on the meaning, if includes the understanding of meaning and purpose of life in terms of the financial growth and present situation can guide the practitioners to devise interventions to support their growth mechanism. A child belonging to a low-income group would associate the purpose of the life to earn enough to secure the basic needs of themselves and the family in future. This might or might be true in case of children belonging to the relatively higher income groups. As in case of the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, it the lowest level of needs which gets fulfilled first in order to attain the highest level. The sequential progression towards the growth mindset which Maslow's theory of motivation reflects the idea of development of interventions specific to the level with which the child is currently able to associate with. Systematically developing intervention in the PERMA Model can help every child to be able to respond to the theory of well-being based on the evaluation of their current needs and the goal which they plan to achieve. In bridging the gap between their existing and perceived reality, the interventions arranged and exposed in a sequential manner can act as stimulating tool for scaffolding.

Other factors that seem to be associated with the well-being of the learners are the demographic details of the individual i.e., age, gender, urban/rural setting. A study conducted by Singh & Raina in 2020 on 'Demographic correlates and Validation of PERMA and WEMWBS Scales in Indian Adolescents' found that "*multivariate results indicated significance main effect for gender, school type, place of residence and age*" in examining the relationship between the demographic variables and the well-being as per the different

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domains of PERMA. Implying that children who are getting their schooling from the private schools experienced higher side of positive emotion, accomplishment and engagement. In comparison to those who are studying in government school, where they experience more of anxiety and depression. The reasons for the same are many as highlighted in the study i.e., the time being spent in the schools, kinds of activity being implemented, the inputs from the socio-cultural domains etc. (Singh & Raina, 2020) Demographic sketches of the learners by and large are determined by the socio-economic status of the family. The choices which the family makes in terms of residence, the type of schooling, the lifestyle and career options are a sole indicator of the family's economic status. Thus, the challenges pertaining to the same can be used to explore the actual needs of the learners for enduring a happy life. The science of positive psychology do talks about the strength of optimism, perseverance and resilience in terms of dealing with the challenges of life, but making them a part of one's personality would require a deeper understanding of one's lifestyle and their challenges. So, what is associated with the Western lifestyle may not hold true in the Indian setting. It implies a need of more studies in the different economic groups with different set of interventions, in order to understand what leads to happiness.

The other strand which the positive psychology seems to be lacking in terms of theorisation is the perception of values, virtues and the goodness it offers. It is the intends towards the analysis of the "positive" which the positive psychology has to offers. (Christopher, 2013) The pioneers of positive psychology failed to take into account the layers of social reality an individual possess within. The literature seems to disdain the interrogation power, privilege and social hierarchy as part of the agenda of the movement. It tends to neglect social context and take into account the experiences of individuals belonging to diverse social groups. (Becker & Marecek, 2008)

And if it has to be adapted or adopted in the Indian context, then its success surely is dithering. Living in a pluralistic society (one like India) the meaning of good life and questions pertaining to human nature cannot be dodged. The movement claims and assures to have taken into consideration the values and virtues which are universal in nature and worth including, but what is often neglected in the selection criteria is the instrumental rationale that itself reflects the biases. (Christopher, et.al., 2008)

The country is witnessing a rapid upsurge in the number of cases pertaining to violence, crime, bullying, road rages and corruption. The impact of the same on the well-being of the children is too harmful to be acknowledged by the people engaging in such activities. Thus, education about the same through a subject of value education has been serving the end through decades. But its impact can still not be felt. The primary reason could be the isolation of the subject from the daily life and the other academic areas. Teaching the same has been the only practice which our classrooms have witnessed. But practicing them is what is the need of the hour. This aspect is well-catered by the scientific outlook of the positive psychology. But what values will serve the purpose in the Indian classrooms is an aspect which has not been dealt comprehensively. The pioneers claim to be putting use into the 24-character strengths and virtues which are universal in nature, but keeping in mind the diverse social reality and the existence of individual self, teaching a few pre-decided topics on morality and value education will not serve the end. To resolve the purpose, teachers serve the guiding force of the overall program.

ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CONTEXTUALISING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the learning experiences of the children. She is bestowed with the responsibility of mediating between the imposed curricula and teaching principles and the actual needs and interests of the children. This makes her aware of both the sociological and the psychological mindset of the children in a holistic manner. Drawing from the experiences of the teachers and her critical point of view on the needs of the subject, she fulfils the duty of being both practitioner and a researcher in a classroom.

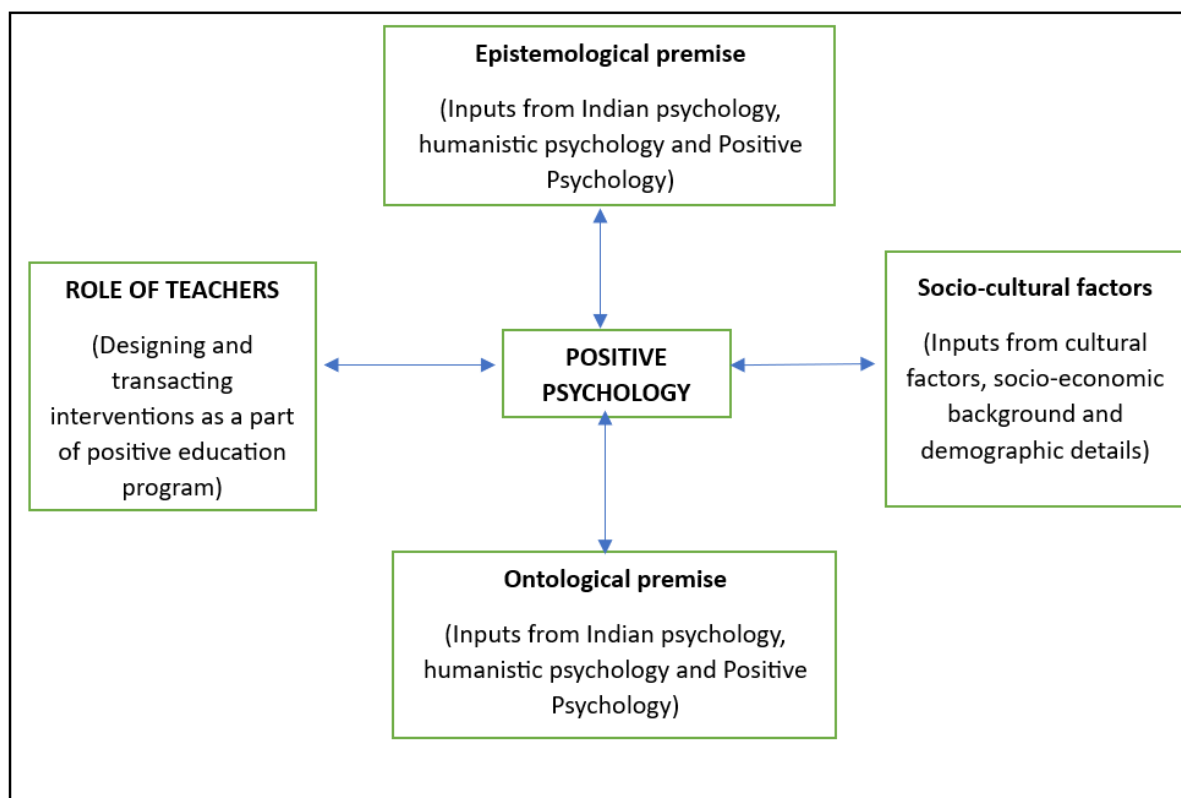
The above discourse of analysis pertinent to the ontological and epistemological premise of positive psychology highlights that, by adopting perspectives from the Indian psychology and humanistic psychology, interventions can be designed which can be made fit to use for all the children in Indian classrooms. By incorporating the perspectives of well-being, values and the needs of children, the teachers can theorize well-being in their classrooms. A wide range of positive education models have been developed by the pioneers of the positive psychology. PERMA model has been the basis of the other models that have been developed and modified in order to cater to the diverse needs felt by the educationist. Teachers using the basic framework of PERMA model as discussed in the paper can systematically plan teaching and learning and complementing the same with their perspectives regarding well-being, child development, human nature and most importantly their background.

Theorizing one's own learning in a classroom is not a cakewalk, what it requires is meticulous planning, analysis and the skill of reflection. Keeping in mind the limited literature and researches in the context of positive psychology which have been carried out in India, there is a need of mass training of the same amongst the teacher education colleges, which not only will help the teachers to gain a perspective and knowledge about the practices that are carried out in positive psychology, but it will also help them develop a vocabulary pertaining to same and adopt the same into their practices. A part of it is catered in the self-development programs which are a part of few of the teacher education programmes, such as B.El.Ed. and M.Ed. Such courses provide exposure to the student teachers in terms of understanding their true self which may hold beneficial not just for their own personal and professional growth as an individuals, but also provide avenues for the development of students. Such types of programs need an equal space in other teacher training programmes, and if complemented with positive education interventions and knowledge about the field will help the student teachers grow holistically.

CONCLUSION

The field of psychology through its scientific methods and empirically sustained set of practices claims to be serving the obliterated missions of psychology. In order to achieve a balance between the pathology and healthy lifestyle, the field made an attempt to scientifically built mechanisms which can help achieving the well-being of the masses. The same has been corresponded with the positive outcomes and have extended its reach to multiple fields of life be it education, health sector, military services or corporate offices. Its interventions based on the idea of making an individual capable of optimal functioning, focuses on acknowledging and building the character strengths or the potentials of the individual which can be translated in the form of appropriate context specific behavior in order to cope with the conflict arisen.

CONCLUSION: PLAN OF ACTION



To make the same more suitable for the diverse classroom in Indian schools, the paper highlights the ontological and epistemological premise of the positive psychology and its analysis in the line of humanistic and Indian psychological school of thought. The analysis informs the perspectives regarding nature of well-being and the dichotomy between mind and consciousness which can be elaborated in order to develop interventions. The narrow rigid conception of self might construe the pseudo reality of the individual, thus the exposure to different stimulations in the purview of their socio-cultural reality is a major aspect which cannot be overlooked. Teachers who have better understanding about the needs and the potentials of the learners can be used a major tool in developing the interventions on the insights drawn from the ontological, epistemological and socio-cultural aspects of positive psychology. The same is highlighted through the plan of action as depicted in the figure 4.

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Conflict of Interest

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