

The Role of Psychology in Indian Philosophy

Dr. Poonam Kumari¹, Kajal Srivastava^{2*}

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complex interplay between psychology and Indian philosophy, emphasizing how ancient Indian thought might enhance our understanding of human cognition, emotion, and awareness to advance contemporary psychology. Indian philosophical traditions surpass the empirical self to investigate a dynamic web of interrelated relationships across several existential aspects to comprehend human experience. This holistic approach fosters self-actualization, ego dismantling, and altruism to enhance human performance. These traditions elucidate human existence and its connection to the environment and consciousness. This notion posits that comprehending self-necessitates recognizing its integration within a cosmic framework, wherein human prosperity is interconnected with global equilibrium. This work seeks to combine traditional Indian philosophical psychology with contemporary Western psychological paradigms to achieve a more comprehensive and culturally informed understanding of mental health and well-being. It asserts that psychologists might develop more effective and culturally attuned therapeutic approaches that tackle spiritual and existential concerns by integrating these concepts. This synthesis can yield a more comprehensive psychological science that unites, redirects, and integrates traditional understanding of mental states. This interdisciplinary approach is crucial for psychological understanding, particularly when contextually sensitive methodologies and varied cultural epistemologies are required.

Keywords: *Indian Psychology, Consciousness, Cognition, Meditation, Yoga, Self-realization, Well-being*

For long years Indian philosophy has been a rich and vast subject which draws scholars and lovers of philosophy from all over the world. The relevance and influence of psychology has been a topic of continuous exploration within this large tradition. Indian psychology refers to the various ways of understanding the human mind, behavior and wellbeing based on our ancient scriptural and philosophical texts. (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012) Indian psychology and philosophy provide a distinctive perspective on the human situation that contrasts with Western methodologies. Indian philosophy and associated disciplines have thoroughly examined human existence, consciousness, and their interactions with the environment. The notion that psychology is predominantly Western overlooks the essential psychological insights found in classical Indian philosophy, which has influenced perceptions of the mind and health for millennia. This extensive past

¹Assistant Professor Department of Psychology Women's College, Samastipur, Bihar, India

²Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: December 19, 2025; Revision Received: January 26, 2026; Accepted: January 30, 2026

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corresponds with and frequently preempts contemporary psychological perspectives, particularly about self-awareness, consciousness, and therapy. Ancient Indian texts such as the Bhagavad Gita explore psychological ideas such as atman, consciousness, needs, and emotions, offering frameworks for mental equilibrium that influence contemporary discussions on morality and psychology. Meditation and prayer enhance well-being and alleviate stress, as elucidated by these ancient philosophical traditions regarding the intricate connection between spiritual practices and mental health (Srivastava et al., 2025). The Bhagavad Gita specifically explores the human psyche through the lens of ethics, duty, and inner turmoil. This archaic manuscript analyzes the ego, consciousness, and aspirations. Profound ideas remain relevant to contemporary psychology. It underscores self-awareness and self-comprehension to mitigate psychological discomfort and cultivate morality and mental fortitude. Ancient Indian thoughts on mental health are comprehensive and frequently neglected in contemporary mental health literature. These strategies encompass the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of human experience.

Understanding the Foundations of Indian Psychology

The Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita of the ancient Indians have a wealth of psychological knowledge (Satija, 2013) The Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita contains enormous psychological knowledge. These sacred texts are entirely psychological. They cover mind, emotions, self-realization placing the basis for Indian psyche analysis. A prominent academic in the field notes that “Indian psychology can also mean the psychology done by psychologists in India but is not limited to this even though this is what most think it is” (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012). In fact, Indian psychology is more than what is often seen as a ‘psychological service, Indian psychology reaches past Western modern psychological services.

Integrating Indian Wisdom into Contemporary Psychology

More and more, people have been getting into Indian psychology and how it is relevant to modern mainstream psychology. More and more contemporary scholars of psychology have tried to make use of India and its psychological practices, concepts, tools, and processes in their efforts to bridge the gap of psychology to bring about an effective working science.

One such effort is the emergence of the “Indian way of psychotherapy,” based on the counseling principles in the Bhagavad Gita. According to one expert, “it is the time we try to form one Indian model of psychotherapy, Indian way of talking to the patients or clients to make psychiatry and clinical psychology more acceptable to them”.

Tracing the Foundations of Psychological Thought in Indian Traditions

Since the Vedas, which are the most ancient of the sacred texts, psychological ideas, theories, and techniques have been present in the Indian intellectual and cultural traditions (Paranjpe, 1996). The Upanishads are a set of philosophical texts composed in the later period of the Vedas that deal with the nature of consciousness and the self. For the past few centuries, these Upanishadic ideas were systemized into six great systems of thought, namely Purva Mimamsa, Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika. According to Paranjpe (1996), Indian philosophy has shaped Indian values and consciousness profoundly over the years, owing to its outstanding emphasis on spiritual interiority and social duty. Without exaggerating, any effort to analyze Indian philosophy, religion and culture should recognize the tremendous diversity of Indian history, thought and culture. (Mascolo et al., 2004)

The Concept of Triguna in Indian Psychology

In Indian psychology, there is an important concept of the three qualities or gunas, namely Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. As explained in the Bhagavad Gita and other ancient texts, the three gunas are the basic principles which govern the human mind (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012). When one of the gunas dominates, we find that this reflects in the personality of an individual.

The authors of present study tried to validate the three Gunas concept in modern psychology; taking into consideration the descriptions as delineated in Indian tradition and classical textual scriptures. Further, the experimental psychologists have developed the Mysore Triguna Scale to assess the various compositions of the gunas in individuals. In other words, it can be helpful in the field of psychiatry and clinical psychology. (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012)

Bridging the Divide: Integrating Indian Psychological Concepts into Western Frameworks

The field of psychology is evolving day by day, which would require various cultures and traditions in its study. While the world of psychology has been dominated by Western worldly concepts, a curiosity is being developed to study the insights from non-Western worldly concepts. One such insight can be from Indian psychology.

Scholars say that the application of some Indian psychological concepts like the theory of the three gunas can enrich our understanding. In fact, the study on "Composition of yoga-philosophy based mental traits in major psychiatric disorders" suggests that the guna theory can be clinically useful in predicting outcome of psychiatric disorders and developing targeted interventions.

By bridging of Eastern and Western psychology we can have more holistic and cultural understanding of the human experience.

The Influence of Cultural Factors on Psychopathology and Mental Health

Researchers have extensively studied how Indian culture and psychiatry influence each other. Researchers have shown that the "sat, raj and tam" personality traits and "vat, pitt and kaph" three humours conceived in the Indian sub-continent corresponds to theories of China and Rome, suggesting the similarity of human thinking in health matters at least as regards personality and temperament in the Indian population. According to Gautam & Jain (2010), the exploration of the human mind, its consciousness, functioning, and human behaviour — has been in practice in India for centuries. In fact, this process of much older than what is known to the Western world. There has been research on the demographic factors, cultural factors that influence the presentation of illness, diagnosis of culture-bound syndromes, and cultural factors and belief systems as determinants of psychopathology, stigma, and discrimination against patients. According to Gautam and Jain 2010, these also include cultural factors influencing illness presentation, diagnosis of culture-bound syndromes, and how facets like cultural beliefs affect psychopathology, stigma, and discrimination against the patient.

Bridging the Gap: Integrating Psychological Concepts in Indian Philosophical Frameworks

India's rich intellectual and cultural traditions have long afforded a place to psychological concepts, theories and techniques. The Upanishads, in particular, have probed the nature of

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consciousness and the self. This helped with the ensuing development of different schools of thought. The similarities between personality traits and humors as understood in India, China, psycho-education, and Rome suggest a universal human inclination to confront issues related to the mind and mental health.

Current Studies exploring the interface of Indian culture and psychiatry have thrown light on the role of demographic and cultural factors in the presentation and perception of mental illness and the impact of cultural beliefs on psychopathology, stigma and discrimination.

As experts in mental health engage with cultures, one of the preoccupations is the cultural specificity of the Western concept of mental health while the alternatives offered by indigenous cultures may not be panaceas.

Unveiling the Nuances of Consciousness and the Self in Indian Philosophy

The Upanishads have been a significant source of many discussions in Indian philosophy in respect of the nature of consciousness and self. For many years the Indian philosophical tradition engaged with the concepts of consciousness and of the self. Upanishads were a source for this contention. These dealt with the working of the mind, the working of the mind, and so on. Thus, many schools emerged from these ideas like Purva Mimamsa, Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika, among others.

The frameworks greatly shaped Indian values and consciousness concerning the self, divine and society. Engaging with Indian Philosophy can lead to better understandings of the 'Self.' It also provides ways to balance the demands of the external world with one's internal world. Thus, it can help modern psychologists gain a better sense of the 'Human Being' in their context, potentially also providing common grounds for collaboration (Mascolo et al., 2004).

Contemplative Practices and their Psychological Dimensions in Indian Thought

The Indian mind has been alive with the idea of the importance of contemplation (meditation, yoga, etc.) for a long time now, as a way of exploring the human mind. The Indian philosophical and religious traditions have long understood the significance of practices—yogic and meditative—that are aimed at controlling the mind.

According to the conceptualization of personality traits and humors of the Indian, Chinese, and Roman cultures, there are many similarities. Therefore, the natural tendency to understand the complexities of the mind and mental health seems to be common between humans.

By using these practices and philosophy of India, mental health professionals can develop a more holistic approach.

Moral Psychology and Ethical Development in Indian Philosophical Discourse

The Indian Philosophy has a long history of relationship between ethics, morality, and psyche. The Upanishads and the emphasis on spiritual interiority and social duty have significantly influenced Indian values and consciousness. The Indian philosophical tradition has long been concerned with ethics and morality and their connection with the human psyche. The impact of the Upanishadic stress on spiritual interiority and social duty has strongly shaped Indian values and consciousness. (Paranjpe, 1996)

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In studying the aforementioned philosophies, psychologists will engage in a more detailed understanding of morality and its development as well as ethics and its understanding of the integration of the two schools of thought. (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012) (Satija, 2013) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012) (Paranjpe, 2011)

Emotions, Affect, and their Representation in Indian Philosophical Texts

Indian philosophy has long recognized the importance of emotions and affect in the human experience. Several scriptural works, such as the Upanishads, have dealt with the nature of consciousness, the self and the workings of human behaviour along with the mind.

These ancient texts laid the groundwork for the rise of different philosophical schools like Purva Mimamsa, Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika. These in turn impacted the ways in which Indians think and what they do with respect to the self, its relationship to the divine, and the social context.

The resemblance between how personality traits and humors are conceptualized in Indian, Chinese, and Roman cultures indicates that human propensity to understand thoughts and behaviour and mental health are all universal, and not specific to any culture. Research on Indian culture and psychiatry has been well documented in the last few years. Specifically, the Indian psychiatrist investigates the demographic and cultural influences on the presentation and perception of mental illness, and cultural beliefs influence psychopathology, stigma, and discrimination (Gautam & Jain, 2010). The more the mental health professionals interact with the diverse cultures, the more it becomes important to understand the complexities involved in using the western models on the non-western cultures.

Cognitive Processes and Perceptual Frameworks in Indian Philosophical Thought

The philosophical tradition of India has long debated the nature of knowing, perceiving and the mind. The Upanishads have explored the issues of consciousness and the self in great detail, which paved the way for the emergence of schools of thought.

The influence of these philosophical frameworks on Indian values and consciousness is immense. It has changed the way in which, the self, its divine relation and thoughts about the self (individual) in society work.

The Indian conceptualization of personality types and humours may be similar to the notions put forward by the Chinese and Roman cultures. This shows that humans in ever culture tend to understand the mind and mental health. Recent studies, which overlap Indian culture and psychiatry, highlight the demographics and cultural manifestations of mental illnesses. Furthermore, researchers have elucidated how cultural beliefs determine psychopathologies and how stigma and discrimination further troublesome experiences for people with infection or other states of mental illness (Gautam & Jain, 2010).

The Role of Intuition and Insight in Indian Psychological Perspectives

Indian philosophical tradition has emphasized upon importance of intuition and insight in exploration of mind and attainment of spiritual enlightenment.

These schools include Purva Mimamsa, Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika. The Indic philosophers had expounded on how one's identity and self

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need to be understood and conceptualized in order to figure out how that self is related to the divine and to the societies and the other selves.

Indian, Chinese and Roman conceptualizations of personality traits and humours, for instance, suggest a universal, human tendency to grapple with the complexity of the mind and mental illness across cultures. Researches done in India about psychiatric and psychological disorders within the Indian ambit indicate that there is a strong cultural relationship between our Indian culture and psychiatry. One of them illustrates the various demographic and cultural factors responsible for presentation and perception of mental illness in India recently. (Satija, 2013) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012)

Examining the Notion of Mental Health and Wellbeing in Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophy considers mental right and well-being is a long tradition. Upanishads and other texts devote considerable attention to subjects such as consciousness, the self, and the roles it plays in various behaviours.

These philosophies have influenced Indian values and consciousness in manifold ways.

The similarities between the conceptualizations of personality traits and humors in Indian, Chinese and Roman cultures appear to imply that the human tendency to understand the intricacies of mind and mental health is a common one. Scholars have done extensive studies on the Indian culture and psychiatry. The culture and demographics have influenced how and where they present mental illness. In addition, cultural beliefs modify psychopathology, stigma and discrimination. As mental health professionals have engaged with cultural issues in the past, applying Western models to the East itself is complex and runs the risk of cultural injustice (Gopalkrishnan, 2018). (Shilpa and Murthy, 2012) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012) (Tiwari and Pandey, 2013)(Satija, 2013)

Therapeutic Approaches and Practices in Indian Philosophical Traditions

Indian philosophy and culture have always regarded mental health as a significant aspect. The Upanishads and other ancient texts carry a dearth of knowledge regarding consciousness, the self and human behaviour.

This sin has persisted in Indian ideals and consciousness over the ages, since the inception of philosophy in cultures. A further parallel in the three traditions lies in the similarities in the conceptualization of personality traits and humors, which points to the human universal propensity to try to understand the inner workings of the mind and mental health. Recent studies into Indian culture and psychiatry have illustrated various demographic and cultural aspects of the presentation and perception of mental illness. It has also been noted that various cultural factors play an important role in psychopathology and impact the stigma and discrimination that patients with mental disorders experience. With the engagement of mental health professionals with different cultures, there is complexity in the use of the Western model in a non-Western setting. (singh 2022) (Tiwari & Pandey, 2013) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012) (Hwang, 2016) (Conflicting Concepts of Mental Health in a Multi-Cultural Society, n.d.)

Psychological Perspectives on Suffering, Attachment, and Liberation in Indian Thought

Understanding and suffering attachment and liberation is an important aspect of Indian philosophy. The Hindu and Buddhist concepts of atman (the true self) and moksha (the state of liberation from the cycle of birth and death) has shaped the Indian view of the human

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condition and the attainment of well-being and plays an important part in the philosophy of the region.

These philosophical frameworks have significantly shaped Indian values and consciousness which influence how one understands the self, the divine and one's social world. The similarities seen in how Indians, Chinese, and Romans conceptualized personality traits and humors further reinforces the understanding that the human tendency to understand oneself, mind, and mental health is certainly universal and not culturally bound.

There has been thorough research in recent times between Indian culture and psychiatry, involving its demographic and cultural manifestations of mental illness, cultural perception of mental illness and its impact on psychopathology, stigma, and discrimination. (Mascolo et al., 2004) (Paranjpe, 1996) (Singh, 2022) (Gautam & Jain, 2010)

Reconciling the Individual and the Collective in Indian Psychological Frameworks

The philosophical tradition in India has understood the interplay between the individual and the collective through mental health and wellbeing. The concepts of "storage" and "to release" hold importance within the Indian philosophical tradition. The condition of "storage" and "wellbeing" is also influenced by how Indians understand the meanings of their readymade concepts.

The frameworks of atman and moksha have greatly influenced the Indian psyche and values, and their impact can be observed in almost every aspect of Indian conscious living and activity. The existence of overlaps in personality traits and humors suggests that people across cultures, such as the Indians, Chinese and Romans, like to make sense of the complexities of the 'mind' and 'mental health'.

In the past few years, much research has happened on Indian culture and psychiatry, which explains about demographic and cultural issues in presentation and perception of mental illness by various psychiatry cultures catharsis.

Subsequently, examining the impact of culture on psychopathology, along with the related stigma and prejudice given the continuing interaction of mental health professionals with different cultures, it is vital to understand the complexities and difficulties of applying Western-centric models of mental health in non-Western settings. (Mukhopadhyay, 2012) (Tiwari & Pandey, 2013) (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012) (Worthington & Gogne, 2011)

The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Modern Psychology and Mindfulness

Indian philosophy has significantly influenced the growth of modern psychology and mindfulness-based practices significantly, particularly in the last few decades. The Indian traditions, including some classical texts like Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, have largely contributed to the theory and practice of transpersonal and humanistic psychology as well as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. Concepts like self, consciousness, suffering, wellbeing, etc., have been elaborated in such texts.

Roughly similar conceptualization of personality traits and humors in India, China and Rome suggests there is something universal in a human desire to understand mind and mental health issue. In recent years there has been a remarkable amount of work done at the juncture of Indian culture and psychiatry. This research has illuminated the ways in which presentation and perception of mental illness are influenced by demographic and cultural

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factors As well as how cultural beliefs influence psychopathology, stigma, and discrimination. (Mascolo et al., 2004) (Paranjpe, 1996) (Singh, 2022) (Gautam & Jain, 2010)

Exploring the Intersections of Indian Philosophy and Western Psychology

For centuries, the rich philosophical traditions of India have recognized the significance of the human mind, human consciousness, and wellbeing. Approaches based on wellbeing can be seen in Indian philosophy. These include Vedanta, Buddhism, Yoga, etc. They have contributed to the development of psychology.

While the West can learn from East about Indian psychology, the east must not give into the western culture always and understand the benefit of balance. There are many researchers studying the ways cultural dimension such as the conceptualization of the self, the role of family and community, and the impact of spiritual beliefs shape the presentation, diagnosis and treatment of mental health across Indian populations. All this will improve mental health care in the Indian context and also in some multicultural contexts.

Universality and Cultural Specificity in Indian Psychological Conceptualizations

The Indian philosophy has a long tradition of acknowledging certain common psychological principles while also recognizing the cultural specificity of different peoples' experiences and desire for well-being. The concepts of "atman" and "moksha" in Hindu and Buddhist thought, for example, have parallels with self and self-realization in the West, yet they are laden with different cultural and spiritual significance.

Also, the Indian theories of personality, humours, and psychopathology, like "tridosha" and "gunas", are useful for self-understanding and the formation of well-adjusted communities, thus contributing to the overall wellbeing of society. These frameworks have affected modern psychology, especially in terms of transpersonal and humanistic approaches, while posing fresh hurdles and possibilities for intercultural discussions and unification.

Researchers have looked at how the Indian understanding of the self, the family, the community, and spirituality influence the expression, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health problems. There are positive and negative outcomes of such perspective taking on mental health problems. Comprehending the challenges pertaining to cultural and religious beliefs will facilitate the development of more culturally sensitive initiatives in mental health (Varma, 1988) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012) (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012).

Methodological Considerations in Studying the Psychology of Indian Philosophical Texts

Assessing psychology of Indian philosophies requires expertise and complexity that must be taken from a multidisciplinary approach. Further, this assessment involves a process of cultural translation and demands additional reflexivity in application.

Scholars have pointed out that we need to move away from the "dogmatic approach" to psychotherapy. We need models that are more flexible and better attuned to the social, cultural, and religious-philosophical beliefs in India. This method requires rigorous engagement with great texts, a willingness to suspend the taken-for-granted universality of western post-enlightenment psychology, and attention to the peculiarities of the Indian context (Varma, 1988). This also involves the deep involvement of Indian practitioners and communities in the development process, as well as the immediate involvement of Indian

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practitioners from the commencement of the process. (Varma, 1988) (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012)

Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Indian Psychology with Contemporary Paradigms

Combining Indian psychology with western psychology can prove to be an asset and a challenge.

There is a difference of opinion between Indian and Western thinkers in terms of the application of concepts and theories, scientific and otherwise. Indian psychology, which stresses the spiritual, experiential, and holistic aspects of the human experience sometimes does not fit with Western psychology approaches due to their empiricist and reductionist character.

In this way, a little bit exposure to Indian psychological concepts, including the theories of personality, the nature of the self, and the quest for well-being, can also enrich and expand Western psychology towards more culturally-sensitive and holistic models of the human mind and behaviour.

This process of merging both Indian and western psychology can allow new approaches to develop that can enhance the best strengths from both to offer new and transformative solutions that can meet psychological demands of various groups. (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012) (Varma, 1988) (Mukhopadhyay, 2012).

The Evolution of Psychological Concepts in the Diverse Philosophical Traditions of India

Indian psychology is an output of Indian philosophical traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and several other schools of thoughts.

The traditions have dealt with the questions on self, suffering and well being and evolved many advanced theories and practices which have been quite helpful in the development of modern psychology.

For example, the Buddhist concepts of “non-self” (anatta) and the “four noble truths” have influenced the development of mindfulness-based interventions, while the Hindu concept of “dharma” has inspired holistic approaches to mental health and wellbeing. Like Buddhist principles the Jain principles inspire the stress relieving techniques (self-care methods) used in modern psychology.

Through studying various Philosophical traditions, researchers could have better understanding of the human condition and could deliver better solutions to cure people on a holistic level through evidence based practice of working with mental health therapies.

Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Modern Psychological Inquiry in the Indian Context

Merging old Indian philosophical and psychological knowledge with new psychological research and practice has many challenges and opportunities.

In one way, the vast differences in the assumptions, methods, and language of these two traditions may pose immense difficulties in translating and integrating them across cultures.

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The Indian psychological frameworks, which focus on spiritual and existential concerns, may not always easily reconcile with the empiricist and reductionist tendencies of Western psychology.

On the other hand, Indian psychological concepts like personality theory, nature of self, and pursuit of wellbeing can also create impact on the West. Such concepts can expand the scope and horizons of Western psychology and can lead to the formation of more culturally-sensitive models.

The process of Indian and Western psychological theories' integration presents opportunities for hybrid approaches that help develop novel ways of tackling psychological issues through use of both Indian and Western approaches.

To successfully merge Indian wisdom with modern psychology, we need to engage more with the primary sources and be sensitive to the historical and cultural contexts from which they arise. We also need to be carefully suspending any assumptions regarding the universality of Western psychological theories.

CONCLUSION

In the sphere of Indian philosophy, the role of psychology is complicated and multidimensional, and it is important to give thorough study to this aspect of the topic. An increasing number of authors are coming to the realization that there is a need to connect with India's unique philosophical and psychological traditions (Mukhopadhyay 2012; Paranjpe 2011; Shilpa & Murthy 2012). This is in contrast to the fact that Western theories and models have been at the forefront of the discussion.

All of the attempts that have been made to initiate a conversation between Western psychology and Indian philosophy are worthy of praise. Researchers and practitioners in the field of psychology are working toward the goal of developing a more complete and culturally appropriate knowledge of human behavior and the mind by bridging the gap between contemporary psychological theory and practices and ancient philosophical conceptions.

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Acknowledgment

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

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumari, P. & Srivastava, K. (2026). The Role of Psychology in Indian Philosophy. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(1), 278-288. DIP:18.01.024.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.024