

Reclaiming Manasa Mastery: A Conceptual Integration of Manonigraha and Eudaimonic Well-being

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ABSTRACT

Manonigraha, symbolising mental discipline or mastery, is a foundational concept in Indian philosophy that holds relevance across the boundaries of generations. This study aims to explore the integration of this fundamental concept into daily life with the aim of achieving eudaimonic wellbeing, serving the purpose of extending a culturally grounded framework representing the indigenous ideals of wellbeing and actualisation, in addition to and not opposed to, the western dominated science of positive psychology. Through a conceptual study anchored in indepth review of psychological and philosophical literature, this paper maps *manonigraha* onto modern models of eudaimonic wellbeing, such as Ryff's Six Factor Model and Seligman's PERMA framework. The study argues that *manonigraha* provides a uniquely cohesive framework that links selfmastery with transcendence and ethical conduct, while also aligning with principles such as selfcontrol, mindfulness, and resilience. By demonstrating the links between contemporary psychological research and Indian philosophical knowledge, it seeks to broaden the application of positive psychology beyond its dominant Western paradigms. The study concludes by reflecting on how Indian principles of *manonigraha* can guide future studies, treatment modalities and wellbeing initiatives, highlighting the values of indigenous knowledge systems in comprehending and promoting human flourishing and aids in the decolonization of psychotherapy.

Keywords: Indian philosophy, positive psychology, wellbeing, indigenous psychology, mindfulness

Vijñānasārathiryastu manaḥ pragrahavānnaraḥ .
so'dhvanaḥ pāramāpnoti tadviṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam ||9||

Translated to: "He who has intelligence as a charioteer, whose mind acts as reins, he reaches the final destination of the path, which is the Supreme God."

- Katha Upanishad 1.3.9.

Lying at the very heart of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics is the concept of eudaimonia, the peak expression of human flourishing as opposed to mere fleeting happiness. Aristotle (trans.

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Irwin, 1999) described eudaimonia as the life realised through virtuous activity, well in accordance with reason. In contrast to hedonia, which involves seeking pleasure and avoiding suffering, eudaimonia requires that one develop moral and intellectual qualities, match one's behaviors to one's inner purpose, and reach one's full potential (Waterman, 1993). According to Aristotle, virtue of character and logical self-control are therefore essential components of a well lived existence. Early theories of wellbeing in modern psychology were primarily hedonic, focusing on affect balance, life satisfaction, and subjective pleasure (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). Even if these factors are still significant, there is growing criticism that they fall short of capturing the complexity of what it means to live well. On the other hand, the eudaimonic paradigm acknowledges that pursuing virtue, significance, and self-realization is a process that leads to wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Aristotelian ideals of a fully realized life are reflected in Ryff's (1989) seminal Six Factor model, which reframed wellbeing as a multifaceted construct that includes autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The rise of positive psychology has solidified eudaimonia's place in the current conversation about wellbeing. The groundbreaking work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) reframed psychology's conventional deficit focus by placing an emphasis on the development of virtues, strengths, and meaning. By placing purpose and achievement alongside good feelings, engagement, and connections as the primary pillars of flourishing, Seligman's PERMA framework (2011) furthered this agenda. According to this paradigm, living a purposeful life, growing one's abilities, and making a positive impact on society are all components of wellbeing, not just feeling happy right now.

The transforming potential of eudaimonic wellbeing for human progress and societal success is attested to by a substantial body of empirical research. According to research, people with high levels of eudaimonic wellbeing are more resilient, have higher physiologic functioning, and experience fewer cases of mental illness (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Psychological flourishing has been shown to predict higher physical health, stronger interpersonal relationships, and better social integration (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). People who pursue eudaimonic motives, personal excellence, authenticity, and virtue report more life satisfaction and long lasting wellbeing than those who only concentrate on hedonic pleasure, according to comparative studies by Huta and Ryan (2010).

Acknowledging indigenous philosophical conceptions that have long emphasized inner mastery as the foundation of human flourishing is essential to deepening the current conversation on eudaimonic wellbeing. *Manonigraha* is a philosophical idea that refers to the discipline and government of the mind. It is formed from the Sanskrit words *mano* (thought) and *nigraha* (control, constraint) (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). *Manonigraha* is closely related to psychological concepts like self-control, emotional regulation, and conscious detachment, which have been demonstrated to promote moral behavior, purpose, and resilience (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Brown & Ryan, 2003). A more comprehensive understanding of self-mastery that connects personal discipline to moral behavior, transcendence, and meaning can be added to positive psychology by scholars and practitioners by incorporating *manonigraha* into modern models such as Seligman's PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011) and Ryff's SixFactor Model (Ryff, 1989).

Manonigraha's integration into frameworks for psychotherapy and wellbeing further supports the significance of cultural sensitivity in mental health treatment. As the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in promoting mental health is increasingly

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acknowledged (Marsella, 2010; Kirmayer, 2012), *manonigraha* provides a culturally grounded perspective for creating interventions that have a profound impact in South Asian contexts and beyond. The idea supports a larger trend to decolonize psychological science by acknowledging that there are several paths to human flourishing.

MANONIGRAHA AS A CONCEPT

Mano (manas), which means "mind," and *nigraha*, which means "restraint," "control," or "subjugation," are the two Sanskrit roots from which the term *manonigraha* is formed (MonierWilliams, 1899). The term *nigraha* in traditional Indian philosophy refers to the control of the mind's innate attachment and distractional tendencies. This control, which tries to connect the mind with higher goals of self-realization and liberation (*moksha*), is not suppression but rather deft management. Throughout the main schools of Indian philosophy, the idea of mental restraint is prevalent. *Manonigraha* is subtly mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* as a necessary discipline for the aspiring yoga practitioner. "One must elevate oneself by the mind, not degrade oneself," Krishna tells Arjuna. The conditioned soul's mind is both its ally and adversary (Bhagavad Gita 6.5; Prabhupada, 1986). This paragraph emphasizes that whether the mind is a source of freedom or enslavement depends on one's ability to control it. A more methodical explanation of mental restraint can be found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Yoga is the stilling of the fluctuations (*vṛtti*) of the mind stuff (*citta*), according to the fundamental adage *yogaś cittavṛttinirodha* (Patanjali, trans. Bryant, 2009, I.2). In this context, *manonigraha* is implemented by practices that foster steadiness and nonattachment, such as *vairāgya* (detachment) and *abhyāsa* (sustained practice) (I.12–I.16). In early Buddhist philosophy, mental mastery is equally important. The mind is described in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* as a dynamic flow of mental states (*citta*), with a focus on developing *samadhi* (concentration) to overcome ignorance and craving as well as mindful restraint (*samyama*) (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). "The mind is difficult to control, but good is its control," the Buddha urged his followers on numerous occasions. Happiness comes from having a disciplined mind (Dhammapada 35–36; Narada, 1988).

Manonigraha functions closely with other fundamental ideas in Indian philosophy and psychology rather than existing in a vacuum. According to Radhakrishnan and Moore (1957), *viveka*, or discernment, is the ability to distinguish between the real (*sat*) and the unreal (*asat*), or the fleeting and the eternal. *Viveka* allows the practitioner to recognize the restless tendencies of the mind and select the path of clarity and discipline. *Manonigraha* is enhanced by *vairagya* (nonattachment), which cultivates dispassion for mental appetites and sensory things. "Vairagya is the consciousness of mastery over desire," according to Patanjali (Yoga Sutras, I.15; Bryant, 2009). Deeper states of self-realization (*samadhi*) are made possible by *cittavrittinirodha*, the ultimate calming of the mind's oscillations, which is prepared for by *viveka* and *vairagya* working together. In order to achieve inner freedom (*kaivalya*) and eudaimonic flourishing in its purest form, *manonigraha* is therefore a thorough discipline of mental purification, insight, and detachment rather than only selfcontrol in a limited behavioral sense (Dasgupta, 1922).

EUDAIMONIC WELL BEING: A WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Aristotle's philosophy is the earliest and most enduring source of the concept of eudaimonic wellbeing. According to *Nicomachean Ethics*, (trans. Irwin, 1999), eudaimonia is the highest form of human good, a life of flourishing achieved through the cultivation of virtue, meaningful purpose, and the actualization of one's unique potential. According to this traditional definition, wellbeing is a long-term dedication to leading a moral and meaningful

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life rather than a momentary state of happiness. This Aristotelian basis has been broadened by contemporary positive psychology through methodical frameworks that define psychological flourishing. Ryff's (1989) Six Factor Model, which views eudaimonic wellbeing as a multifaceted notion, is one well known example. According to Ryff, there are six essential components of a flourishing life:

- Autonomy is the capacity for independent thought and self-determination.
- Environmental mastery is the ability to successfully manage one's circumstances in order to satisfy one's own goals and ideals.
- Personal growth is the pursuit of continuous improvement and potential realization.
- Having objectives and a feeling of direction that give life meaning is what is meant by having a purpose.
- Building affable, trustworthy, and genuine interactions with others is the foundation of positive relations.
- Keeping a positive outlook on oneself and one's past is known as self acceptance.

Seligman's (2011) PERMA paradigm, in turn, incorporates eudaimonic principles into a more comprehensive framework for comprehending wellbeing. PERMA's pillars of Meaning and Accomplishment represent the essence of eudaimonic wellbeing, even though it emphasizes Positive Emotions, Engagement, and Relationships- all of which somewhat overlap with hedonic characteristics. While accomplishment concentrates on pursuing and reaching worthwhile objectives, meaning refers to being a part of and contributing to something greater than oneself. Both place emphasis on the pursuit of mastery, growth, and purpose, all of which are essential to leading a fulfilling life. When taken as a whole, these models show how eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing differ greatly. According to Kahneman et al. (1999), eudaimonic frameworks define wellbeing as the actualization of one's best self via virtue, purpose, and meaningful engagement with life's problems, whereas hedonic wellbeing places a higher priority on pleasure, satisfaction, and the absence of suffering.

MANONIGRAHA AS THE PATHWAY TO EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING

Manonigraha, or mental self-discipline or mastery, has its roots in Indian philosophy and can be viewed as an indigenous means of fostering eudaimonic wellbeing. Its fundamental ideas of self-control, discernment, and conscious detachment are in line with the main tenets of contemporary positive psychology and provide a culturally relevant alternative to Western models. First, *manonigraha* places a strong emphasis on self-control, which is comparable to success in the PERMA framework and autonomy in Ryff's paradigm. Self-determination is reinforced when an individual develops control over their impulses and distractions, thereby asserting agency and acting with intention (Bhagavad Gita 6.5–6; Easwaran, 2007). Second, emotional regulation, a critical aspect of personal development, is directly supported by the practice of mental restraint. *Manonigraha* promotes fortitude in the face of hardship and allows the person to grow through life's obstacles by lowering the mind's response to outside stimuli (Bryant, 2009; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). Third, self-acceptance is consistent with the related idea of *vairagya*, or detachment from worldly things to turn focus inwards, which is fostered through *manonigraha*. Maintaining eudaimonic wellbeing requires an attitude of composure and unconditional self-regard, which is fostered by nonattachment to transient needs or ego-driven identifications (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957). Fourth, mindfulness exercises that enhance life's purpose interact with *manonigraha*. The practitioner achieves greater clarity and discernment by controlling mental fluctuations

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which enables intentional alignment with higher aims and values (Patanjali, trans. Bryant, 2009).

From a practical standpoint, *manonigraha* provides a strong foundation for resilience and coping. People with disciplined mental control are better able to handle stress, lessen emotional upheaval, and preserve psychological equilibrium, skills that have been shown to be protective of mental health (Baumeister et al., 2007). Additionally, by establishing the self in thoughtful, moral decisions rather than reactive impulsivity, the self-discipline that characterizes *manonigraha* can promote healthy identity formation (Marsella, 2010). The importance of incorporating culturally grounded frameworks into mainstream psychology is highlighted by *manonigraha*, which shows distinct conceptual links to autonomy, resilience, mindfulness, and purpose. By recognizing the various routes to virtue, self-mastery, and meaning, this integration enhances positive psychology's understanding of thriving. Indigenous concepts such as *manonigraha* can help make interventions more contextually relevant in multicultural therapy settings, enabling clients to use well known cultural resources for self-realization and mental health (Kirmayer, 2012). In the end, integrating *manonigraha* into positive psychology promotes a more pluralistic view of eudaimonia that values various approaches to knowing and leading fulfilling lives, thus advancing the goal of decolonizing psychological science.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Placing *manonigraha* within the context of eudaimonic wellbeing highlights the importance of decolonizing psychological frameworks and expands the theoretical and applied boundaries of positive psychology. By providing a culturally grounded viewpoint on self-mastery, discernment, and moral discipline, *manonigraha*, which draws from ancient Indian philosophical traditions, broadens the largely Western conversation on flourishing. By reminding scholars and practitioners that wellbeing must be viewed in light of many cultural knowledge systems and indigenous wisdom, this integration calls into question widely held beliefs about happiness, autonomy, and growth (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Kirmayer, 2012). Modern therapeutic techniques that prioritize self-regulation, acceptance, and mindfulness are highly compatible with *manonigraha* in practice (KabatZinn, 2003; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2011). *Manonigraha* places self-control and conscious detachment firmly within a philosophical and ethical tradition that is still relevant for South Asian contexts and beyond, in contrast to many contemporary adaptations that run the risk of robbing practices of their cultural depth (Marsella, 2010). Although this study does not conduct an empirical test of *manonigraha* based interventions, it makes the case that its tenets could be meaningfully incorporated into future therapeutic frameworks and wellbeing programs to improve coping, resilience, and value driven living, especially for clients whose identities and worldviews are influenced by these cultural roots. *Manonigraha* shows how decolonizing psychology can broaden its scientific underpinnings and its ability to advance true wellbeing in a global setting by promoting a diverse, inclusive perspective of human flourishing.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental idea of Indian philosophy, *manonigraha*, which emphasizes disciplined mental self-regulation, discernment, and detachment, were examined in this essay. These ideas are closely related to the fundamental aspects of eudaimonic wellbeing in positive psychology. This study illustrates *manonigraha's* ability to contribute an indigenous viewpoint on inner mastery and virtue-based life to the mainstream discourse on wellbeing

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by mapping it onto contemporary frameworks such as Ryff's Six Factor Model and Seligman's PERMA. A more inclusive, decolonized vision of human flourishing that respects non-Western knowledge systems and lived experiences is invited by *manonigraha* as a culturally relevant paradigm. Despite being conceptual in nature, this study provides valuable avenues for future research to experimentally investigate the ways in which *manonigraha* might lead meaning driven psychotherapy, enhance resilience, and inform wellbeing interventions in a variety of cultural contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

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