

Research Paper

## Use of Indian Knowledge System to Train Clinical Psychologists

Tuhina Mukherjee<sup>1\*</sup>, Ishika Saini<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Developed for eons, Indian Knowledge System is vast body of indigenous knowledge rooted in texts like Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Upanishads, Yoga Sutras, Charak Samhita etc. The limitations of previous scenario regarding IKS is that 'THE CEO' has been prioritized over 'THE CLINICIAN' thus limiting our understanding of IKS in therapeutic relationships. Traditionally IKS based leadership is only discussed in fields of corporate hierarchies and does not focus on how apt this skill is when used by clinicians to help people in their psychological transformation. 25 research papers which used surveys and review of literature as their methodology have been reviewed to form the base for this research. The boundless ocean of knowledge of IKS which includes emotional regulation (bhavnatmak niyantrana), dharma (duty), leadership skills, self-realization (aatmanubhuti), selfless action (nishkama karma) etc. can be used to train clinical psychologists so that mental health in India becomes more culturally relevant and a more holistic approach can be used by clinicians to treat various disorders. The philosophy of IKS is present in the customs and values of India, which will be beneficial in increasing the popularity of therapy in India. It will also help therapists to gain mastery that would lead them to succeed in their profession and to reach a state of healthy mental health. This research argues that by blending modern psychological science with indigenous knowledge will form a more comprehensive approach to train future psychologists of India.

**Keywords:** *Indian Knowledge System, Clinical Psychologists, Mental Health, Indigenous Knowledge*

Indian civilization has been well known for its knowledge regarding arts, science, philosophy, governance, literature and medicine. This is evident in texts like Bhagavad Geeta, Arthashastra, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Yoga Sutra, Vedas, Upanishads, Charak Samhita etc. "The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) represents one of the world's age-old and thorough traditions of intellectual investigation intensely rooted in India's culture, spirituality and philosophy." (Khan & Sharma, 2024, p.42). Indian Knowledge System is a way of understanding the actual reality of life and living in harmony with it. Vidhya or knowledge In Sanskrit tradition refers to both knowledge of the outside worlds as well as knowledge within our self or Atman. Thus, IKS includes scientific and technological knowledge, philosophical and spiritual wisdom, cultural and artistic traditions, ethical and social frameworks, practical life skills and environmental understanding. It is built and

<sup>1</sup>Student, School of Liberal Arts, Uttarakhand University, Dehradun 248007, India

<sup>2</sup>Student, School of Liberal Arts, Uttarakhand University, Dehradun 248007, India

\*Corresponding Author

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structured in such a way that the knowledge can be transmitted from one generation to another. Its knowledge is eternal and can be applied to all generation in different traditions.

The spread of Indian Knowledge System has occurred through a continuous process of transmission, adaptation and institutional revival across centuries. It started very early in Gurukuls through the Guru-Shishya Parampara, where the guru transmitted the knowledge of various ancient Indian texts to his students. As Ranade (1998) describes, “Dialogue was regarded essential for firmly rooting a ‘one-to-one’ relationship” (p. 15) in this didactic tradition. This knowledge was mostly transmitted orally and almost negligible written records are available today. These Gurukuls then transformed into monasteries and universities like the universities of Takshashila and Nalanda where students from all over the world came to study medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, arts and linguistics. Although these institutions have declined IKS has survived family traditions, local healers, yoga practitioners and cultural practices. In the modern era IKS is being transmitted through mindfulness practice, government initiative, yoga practice and academic research.

Mental health concerns in India are increasing every day and the majority of the population has no access to proper mental health services. Disorders like stress, depression, anxiety etc have become very common. Clinical psychologists play a very important role in assessing and treating these mental disorders. In a country like India mental health is still treated like a taboo. The treatment gap exists because of the lack of culturally sensitive mental health services being available to people. Hence the success of mental health intervention largely depends on the kind of training the professionals receive. The training that clinical psychologist receive is mostly is based on the western perspective. Western psychology has a more individualistic perspective and the theories derived from it are not suitable for the population of India who follow a more collectivistic approach. This affects their help seeking behaviour and is one of the major reasons why psychology has not flourished well in India.

The integration of IKS in the training of clinical psychologists can prove beneficial in many ways. Firstly, it would provide a more holistic approach towards mental health focusing more on prevention of mental disorders rather than their treatment. As cited in native psychology literature, “Indigenous views regarding health and well-being are connected to holistic and socially-driven approaches, such as the linkage between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health” (Arredondo et al., 2025). India is famous for its rich cultural heritage and by understanding the knowledge of IKS a therapist will be able to understand the spiritual and cultural context of the client. Mind and body exercise like yoga is important to maintain a healthy mental state for the therapist and they will be able to regulate and emotions and prevent burnout. The idea is not to disregard the western perspective of psychology but rather integrate IKS with the western outlook so as to provide better and improved mental healthcare services for the people of India.

Recent educational reforms in the New Education Policy 2020 have made the integration of IKS in all educational domains including the psychology curricula. “The NEP acknowledges the rich cultural legacy of India’s traditional knowledge systems and seeks to blend them together into the prevailing educational framework” (National Education Policy 2020 as cited in Exploring the Role of NEP-2020, 2024). This shift emphasises on the need and importance of including the indigenous knowledge of India with modern scientific principles. However, when it comes to training clinical psychologists, the systematic integration of IKS has remained unexplored. There is very limited discussion in existing

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literatures on how IKS can be used to enhance the therapeutic skills of a clinical psychologist. There is an urgent need to develop a curriculum that is holistic and culturally relevant so that the population of India can feel encouraged to ask for help regarding mental health. By reviewing existing literatures, articles and journals and understanding the rich knowledge of IKS, the paper seeks to highlight how the Indian Knowledge System can contribute in the development of skills of future clinical psychologists. Equipped with these skills these psychologists can provide better mental health services to the vast and diverse Indian society.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study of how Indian Knowledge System can be used to train clinical psychologists has been done through qualitative research design in the form of review of literature. This study has employed a narrative literature review style to summarise and interpret the topic. Accurate and relevant data has been collected from various peer reviewed journals, articles, research papers and academic databases like Google Scholar, Research Gate and Sodhaganga. A total of 25 articles and research papers have been carefully studied to form the base of this research paper. No particular time frame was taken into consideration while choosing the research papers. Books, newspapers, non-academic papers and non-English papers have not been included in the subject matter of this study. The exact keywords used to browse for articles include 'Indian Knowledge System', 'mental health', 'clinical psychology' and 'Application of IKS'. After searching for duplicates and scanning of titles and abstracts the relevant researches were obtained. The data from these researches were analysed and examined to identify the major gaps and limitations of this research. The method of analysis used in this research is content analysis. Proper citation and acknowledgements have been provided for all the sources to ensure that ethical guidelines have been followed.

### ***Objective***

The primary aim of this paper is to systematically review the literature on Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to identify fundamental ideas, practices and pedagogical tools that can be embedded into the training of clinical psychologists to promote a culturally grounded and holistic approach to mental health.

### ***Conceptual Integration***

To analyze and map classical Indian psychological constructs, such as triguna approach (personality types). The focus of this theory is to evaluate the effectiveness as an analytical framework for trainee psychologists to understand interaction patterns and psychological balance whereas in Western psychology, we use the DSM or Big Five Traits that includes conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, extraversion, neuroticism.

Along with Triguna approach as a diagnostic tool we have Panchkosha Model (five layers of being) as a holistic map that can be taught to clinical students as a multi-dimensional tool for tackling the energetic, mental, intellectual and blissful layers of a client's experience.

### ***Indigenized Initiative***

It involves the training that moves beyond "one-size-fits-all" western models to use approaches that match the Indian patient's values and beliefs. The key components of Indigenized Initiative include:

- Culturally relevant ways of expressions in therapy sessions to make concepts more relatable. For instance, concepts from Ramayana.

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- Unlike Western individualistic model, indigenization takes initiatives to prioritize the collectivistic models like the influence of joint family systems and social support systems.
- In psychotherapy, the therapist is seen as an advisor, like a Guru, who helps an individual, like a Chela, find serenity and feel better.
- Indigenization use constructs like Dharma (righteous living), Karma (actions) and Moksha (liberation) in order to help people find meaning and purpose.

### ***Precautionary and Long-term wellness***

In Indian based knowledge training, precautionary and long-term wellness shifts the clinical focus from treating symptoms to preserve a natural state of balance. It mainly focuses on:

- Dincharya: Arranging daily life that includes waking in brahmamuhurat(early morning), timely meals and proper sleep in order to control cortisol and balance mood.

Ritucharya: Modifying diet and behaviour according to seasonal shifts to avoid seasonal affective disturbances and preserve immune-psychological strength.

- Yamas and Niyamas: Rehearsing non-violence (Ahinsa), truthfulness (Satya) and contentment (Santosh) acts as a way to keep your emotions and relationships healthy.

Achar Rasayana: Behavioural “revitalization” through honourable conduct (e.g., respecting others, staying calm) is instructed as a method to construct permanent psychological wellness.

- Instead of hoping for a “Disorder” to display, psychologists use Yoga and Meditation as “routine practices”.

### ***Methods of Personal Reflection***

In modern clinical practice, “objective” methods often include external observation, tests and assessable data. However, Indian Knowledge System (IKS) debate that since mental suffering is sensed internally, the most straightforward way to understand it is through “Subjective Inquiry” or “Personal Reflection”- the focused observation of one’s own mind.

In a therapeutic setting, this converts the client from a passive subject to an active “self-scientist”.

- Svadhyaya (Self-study and reflection): To recognize the “Root” of a psychological complex instead of just handling surface behaviour by motivating the clients to keep introspective logs or involve in thoughtful discussion to monitor the movement of Vrittis (mental fluctuations).
- Sakshi Bhava (The Witness Consciousness): Clients are trained by psychologists to develop a “Witness” perspective in the direction of their own thoughts and emotions. Instead of saying “I am angry”, the client is instructed to observe, “There is anger arising in my mind”.

This generates a cognitive gap among the self and the emotion, preventing the client from being flooded by their symptoms.

### ***Socio-Emotional Intelligence***

In Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Socio-emotional intelligence is not just perceived as a “interpersonal skill”, but as the development of Chitta-Shuddhi (purification of the mind or consciousness).

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- Indian psychologists use the characters and ethical dilemmas in The Ramayana and The Mahabharata as “Reflective Practices”.
- Examining the emotional resilience of characters like Sita or the virtuous clashes of Arjuna helps patients handle their own complicated responsibilities.
- Socio-emotional intelligence includes the capacity to make decisions based on Dharma (righteousness/duty) instead of spontaneous sentiments (Raga-Dweshha).
- Socio-emotional intelligence is attained when an individual can connect to the society without being a slave to these two forces i.e. Raga (attachment) and Dweshha (Aversion).

### *Integration of Indian Knowledge System with Clinical Psychology*

#### **Emotional Regulation**

Indian Knowledge System provides a comprehensive framework on how individuals can regulate their emotions. Texts like Mahabharat and Charak Samhita talks about the various ways in which emotions can be controlled to reach a balanced state. Bhagavad Geeta talks about Samatva which refers to a balanced state of mind which is not attached to anything. As Krishna instructs in Bhagavad Gita, “You have a right to execute your responsibilities, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions” (Bhagavad Gita 2:47, as cited in BookMyPooja, 2025), demonstrating the principle of emotional detachment and balance. Clinical psychologists can be trained to guide their clients in stressful situations by being calm in all situations and not taking decisions irrationally. Ayurvedic perspective lays emphasis on mind body balance in order achieve control over emotions. Clinical psychologist should be trained to take proper care of their diet and sleeping schedule so as to regulate their lifestyle in order to achieve good mental as well as physical health. Yogic practices of breath control (pranayama), mindfulness practices and meditation can be taught to trainee psychologist. This will enable them to control their own emotions an prevent mental burnout. They can also teach their clients to follow these beneficial practices so that they are also capable enough to get a hold of their emotions and understand what is going on in their mind.

#### **Dharma and ethical decision making**

Dharma refers to our moral values and ethical guidelines which form the very base of the Indian Knowledge System. Indian Knowledge System can enrich the training of clinical psychologists by integrating dharma based ethical decision making and reasoning in their skills. Trainee psychologists can learn and take inspiration from Maryada Purushottam Lord Rama who is considered as embodiment of Dharma. Clinicians should be aware of the important role that they are playing in their client’s life during therapy sessions (Svadharm). There are many instances where the clinician needs to take important decisions during therapy sessions. When they know about the importance of Dharma then all of their decisions will be aligned with it. These decisions will guide their clients in the right direction and provide them comfort at their time of distress. Dharma will ensure that no matter how difficult the decision is, it will always be for the benefit of the client. Hence clinical psychologists should have proper knowledge about Dharma.

#### **Leadership**

Ancient text lay a lot of Importance on the Guru Shishya relationship where the guru acts as a mentor and guide for his disciples and guides them in various aspects in life. A clinical psychologist is also like a mentor and guide for his clients. Hence having good leadership skills is of utmost importance in a clinical setting. Trainee psychologists should be taught

the concept Loksangraha (welfare of society), so that they understand that good leadership skills will lead to the upliftment of the society as a whole. Case based learning by taking example from Lord Krishna's leadership skills in the Kurukshetra War or Lord Rama's leadership skills in leading the Vanara Sena can be used as excellent examples on how good leadership skills can help in achieving success. Role play practice can teach the young psychologists how their quick and ethical decisions will make the leaders in the future. Feedback from mentors after such activities is also of great importance. This experimental, reflective and culturally grounded approach helps transform leadership skills from theory into real clinical competence.

### **Selfless Action**

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to perform his duty without attachment of result. He tells him to focus on the controllable efforts rather than the uncontrollable outcomes. This knowledge of Nishkama Karma holds a very important place in a clinical psychologist's life. As mentioned in The Bhagavad Gita, "Krishna teaches that we must act with dedication but remain detached from the fruits or our actions. By doing so we can avoid the anxiety that often occurs from a longing for results" (BookMyPooja, 2025). In a therapeutic setting a psychologist is often burdened by emotional exhaustion, burnout and performance anxiety related to the outcomes of every session. Selfless action promotes reflective practices. Regular journalling can help trainee psychologists to focus on everyday progress rather than just focusing on results. Therapy is a lengthy process where a psychologist can often focus on the result and become impatient. Thus, by practicing and training young psychologist with the concept of Nishkama Karma, a new generation of psychologists will be created who will serve clients with dedication while maintaining their own inner balance and peace.

### **Self-Realization**

Shitaprajna or one with steady wisdom as described by Lord Krishna is a person who is free from lust, fear and agitation. This pure state of mind is very important to achieve the True Knowledge, the knowledge about our True Self or Atman and how our Atman is a very small part of the Supreme Consciousness or the Brahman. This Atma jnana or Self Knowledge is crucial for Self- Realization. The Upanishads highlight that "If a man knows Atman here, he then achieves the true goal of life. If he does not know it here, a great devastation waits for him" (Upanishads, as cited in Yogananda, n.d.), emphasising the importance of self-knowledge. Clinical psychologists should be introduced to texts like Bhagavad Geeta and Upanishads and should be taught the difference between Maslow's Self Actualization which is a need and Self Realization which is transcending beyond one's ego. The route to self-realisation contains "Shravana (Hearing): Listening to the lessons of the Upanishads from a skilled teacher; Manana (Reflection): Reflecting upon these lessons intensely to eliminate confusions; and Nidhidhyasana (Meditation): Meditating on the teachings to absorb the knowledge of the Atman" (Atma Bodha Upanishad, as cited in Hindu Blog,2019). Discussions should be carried out on Ahamkara (ego) and Sakshi bhao (observer self). Self-introspection and penning down the epiphanies are essential to understand their true self and what is stopping them to walk on the path of self- realization. Practices from Patanjali's Yog Sutra like Pranayama, Dharna and Dhyana are important for calming the mind which facilitates introspection. Thus, by integrating self- realization into clinical psychology will nurture self-aware, ethical and culturally grounded therapists who will have a balanced mind set and will be well equipped to guide their clients towards holistic well-being.

### Compassion and Empathy

Rooted in Sanskrit, compassion (Karuna) goes beyond empathy to a deep, active desire to ease suffering. It is seen as a “moral and purposeful reaction” to know a person’s pain and act to ease it while empathy (samanubhuti) suggests a profound, shared experience of another’s mental state. Indian Knowledge system acknowledges hardship or suffering on physical, mental and spiritual levels demanding a holistic approach to healing. Training modules for clinical psychologists concentrates on merging traditional practices with modern psychological techniques that includes nurturing pure and harmonious traits like increasing Sattva (calmness, purity) while handling Rajas (restlessness) and Tamas (lethargy) to make sure the psychologists stay emotionally balanced and compassionate along with awareness that has been derived from Buddhist and Yogic traditions, this includes cultivating impartial, intentional awareness, helping counsellors stay grounded rather than flooded by client sufferings or distress and also inspires counsellors or psychologists to work steadily for the client’s well-being without being emotionally absorbed by the outcomes, thus avoiding burnout.

### Strategic thinking

Strategic thinking in IKS based training for clinical psychologists moves the focus from totally reactive symptom management to an initiative-driven, holistic and value-based structure. It highlights aligning healing measures or therapeutical interventions with universal principles (Dharma) and individual constitution (Prakriti) to attain long term mental balance. Psychologists use the Panchkosha model addressing Annamaya (physical), Pranmaya (energetic), Manomaya (mental), Intellectual (vijnanamaya) and Aanandmaya (Blissful) layers as a strategic map to pinpoint where a client’s “disparity” or “imbalance”. It also includes helping clients balance the four goals of human life: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (material prosperity), Kama (pleasure) and Moksha (liberation). Therapists are trained to embrace “action without attachment to results”, strategically this helps both the therapist and client to concentrate on the process of healing and duty (Dharma) instead of being flooded by anxiety over the specific outcome. It also use values from the Bhagavad Gita to help clients move from “hopelessness to action” by shifting their viewpoint on responsibility and identity, alike how Krishna guided Arjuna through his existential crisis.

### Self-awareness

Self-awareness in IKS for clinical psychologists entails training in self-transcendence, switching focus from the ego to Atman (true self) and developing Viveka (discrimination). The Indian view of self is complex and subjective. A central pillar of self-awareness in Indian Knowledge tradition is the development of Sakshi bhava, the witness consciousness expressed strongly in Bhagavad Gita. Using such texts i.e. Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita etc also helps an individual in order to introspect (to examine one’s own intentions, attachment and biases). It identifies that the counsellor’s consciousness is itself a therapeutic tool.

### Triguna Approach

A Triguna based approach to train clinical psychologists merge the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) particularly the Samkhya and Ayurveda along with contemporary psychotherapy. As described in Hindu philosophy, “The Trigunas in Hindu philosophy — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three essential qualities that administer all of nature and human experience. Sattva represents purity, clarity and harmony, Rajas represents activity, passion and desire while Tamas signifies inertia, ignorance and darkness” (Rudraksha Ratna, 2026). This model emphasises on comprehending the three core characteristics/essential traits of mind-Sattva (balance/clarity), Rajas (restlessness) and Tamas (inertia) that offers a

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socially rooted structure for clinical assessment and interference. Instead of evaluating only the symptoms, clinicians assess the prevailing or dominating guna making the behavioural and emotional problems worse. The training highlights shifting a patient toward a Sattvic state which is known as Satvavajaya Chikitsa along with their own sattvic state to better ease healing in others.

### KEY FINDINGS

This study finds that integrating the Indian Knowledge System with the training of clinical psychologists can enhance their skills and make therapy more culturally sensitive and holistic in a conservative country like India where psychology and mental health are considered a taboo. Skills like emotional regulation is essential to prevent burnout for clinical psychologist and also reduce work related stress. A comprehensive understanding of the Triguna Model enables the clinician to understand the different states of mind and they can thus prepare specific clinical intervention which compliments the client and their dominating guna. As highlighted in modern psychotherapy literature, “Only by getting over rajas and tamas through the advancement of sattva is Self-realisation possible” (Hridaya Yoga,2025), emphasising the therapeutic importance of cultivating sattvic qualities in both therapist and client. The research also emphasizes that by studying the leadership related case studies from Ramayana and Mahabharata a trainee psychologists will develop good leadership skills which will enable them to take quick and efficient decisions. Knowledge about the four goals of human life i.e. Dhrama, Kama, Artha and Moksha. A balanced approach towards these goals is beneficial for the mental health of the psychologist as well as the client. The research also focuses on the importance of introspection in order to know our true selves or Atman so as to achieve self-realization. This state of pure bliss is the ultimate goal for a person. The fusion of IKS aligns with the more extensive shift toward “Indigenous psychologies support the integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices into the broader modern psychology discussion, it aims to shift the emphasis toward promoting socially-based well-being, highlighting both mental and physical health” (Arredondo et al., 2025). The paper concludes by stating that by integrating the knowledge of IKS with the present curriculum of western psychology will create more culturally grounded, emotionally stable and ethically aware clinical psychologists which is the need of the hour in the field of Psychology.

### CONCLUSION

Blending Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into clinical psychology training provides a holistic, culturally evocative approach merging ancient understandings on consciousness, yoga and mindfulness with modern practices. It helps clinicians to tackle mental health by self-discovery and managing emotions, making them better empathetic professionals. It enables psychologists to grasp the distinctive, societal cues that Indian clients express, deal with and express distress leading to improved treatment results by bridging traditional knowledge and modern clinical science, IKS based training can add to more approachable, significant and relevant mental health care. At last but not the least, integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into clinical psychology training not only enhances expertise or proficiency but also strengthens culturally sensitive mental health services, finally aiding a more thorough and humane insight of psychological well-being. This integration of IKS thus is not just about embracing ancient practices, but about applying a scientifically applicable long-standing framework to enrich contemporary mental health interventions.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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