

---

# Guest editorial: Positive organizational scholarship in South Asia

Guest editorial

253

---

Maslow coined the construct of positive psychology (PP) (1954) and visualized the creation of human-oriented organizations by people pursuing self-actualization (Maslow, 1965). However, it took others three decades to pick up the thread (Seligman, 1991, 1999; Snyder, 1995). PP represents a paradigm focused on the strengths of people (i.e. what is right about them) rather than their weaknesses and how people can achieve optimal functioning and full potential (Seligman, 2002). Positive organizational behavior and scholarship have developed on the foundation of PP (Luthans, 2002; Cameron and Dutton, 2003). Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is found to be of great value in almost every aspect of the management of organizations (See Cameron and Spreitzer, 2012). A POS lens looks at the generative dynamics (i.e. life-building, capability-enhancing and capacity-creating) in and of organizations that influences general and developmental experience at work and the cultivation of strengths at individual, group and organizational levels. Normative (i.e. good) aspects of organizational behavior are seriously considered in POS, which in turn affect the nature of relationships between individuals and among team members (e.g. Geue, 2018), organizational performance (e.g. Kelly and Cameron, 2017), organizational strategy (e.g. Stavros and Wooten, 2012) and interaction of business and society (e.g. Mazutis and Slawinski, 2015).

The second wave of PP recognizes the difficulty of categorizing phenomena as either positive or negative, and flourishing is said to be dependent upon a complex balance and harmonization of the light and dark sides of life (Lomas and Ivtzan, 2016). For example, self-esteem is a positive trait, but inflated self-esteem leads to vulnerability to depression in the face of challenging situations in life. Or, for that matter, freedom is desirable but excessive choices lead to lower satisfaction. This special issue attempts to bring the contributions from South Asia to the field of PP and positive organizational psychology. This fits well with the ongoing conversation in the second wave of PP, which emphasizes learning from indigenous psychology.

South Asia has a population of 1.6 billion with much religious diversity. The traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have profoundly shaped South Asia both historically and culturally. These three traditions have influenced the socio-cultural moorings of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal and India. A plethora of insights arising from these cultures are either parallel to or integrated with PP and POS. In response to the special issue of *American Psychologist*, which eventually turned out to be the foundational work of PP others have also noted (see Walsh, 2001) that Buddhism and yoga contain insights for exceptional psychological health and post-conventional transpersonal development. For example, mindfulness practices are derived from Buddhist tradition and have enriched numerous fields of scholarship and practices like cognition (e.g. Gill *et al.*, 2020), promoting wellness and managing diseases (e.g. Victorson *et al.*, 2015), stress reduction (e.g. Praissman, 2008), leadership (e.g. Arendt *et al.*, 2019) and so forth. Warsah (2020) explains that forgiveness which is a very important construct in PP is embraced in Islam and is mentioned in at least 12 verses in Qur'an. Based on the library research he infers that Islam positions forgiveness as a medium of relationships among human being. In context of the work and business organizations it is important to recognize that Islamic work ethics consider that meaning in life is realized through work, and is a means to fostering personal growth and social relations (Ali and Al-Owaihian, 2008). The scholarly work on Indian Psychology



predominantly based on Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies have strong elements of PP. This can be traced back to the three volumes on Indian psychology by Professor [Sinha \(1933\)](#), which are available in many editions. This scholarship is further strengthened in the works on self and identity ([Paranjpe, 1984](#)), leadership and Indian mindset ([Sinha, 1980, 2014](#)), yoga psychology ([Rao and Paranjpe, 2017](#)), yoga and PP ([Salgame, 2014](#)), spiritual climate of business organizations ([Pandey et al., 2009](#)), spirituality in Indian psychology ([Bhawuk, 2011](#)), karma yoga and moral development ([Mulla and Krishnan, 2014](#)), emotions, perceptions, epistemology in various Indian wisdom traditions ([Rao et al., 2008](#)), and Sattvik leadership ([Alok, 2017](#)).

Some original contributions have come from the life-world of South Asia, which reflects the positive aspects of human functioning at micro, meso and macro levels. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan coined the construct “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) in 1972 emphasizing the non-economic aspects of human well-being ([Ura et al., 2012](#)). This was adopted in the Bhutanese constitution as an alternative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Product (GNP). The idea was finally adopted by the United Nations Organization in 2011 as a holistic approach to development. Many organizations in South Asia are exemplars that present themselves as models of positive organizational behavior. For example, Amul, founded in 1948 as a cooperative that has more than 3.6 million milk producers as members today, is a case study in POS. [Bhawuk et al. \(2009\)](#) showed how Grameen and Amul present an approach for developing a community-focused organization, which is inherently positive in its philosophy and spirit as these organizations are dedicated to serve the needy and increase the well-being of the community. In Bangladesh, Professor Muhammad Yunus created the concept and practice of micro-finance in 1976 ([Yunus, 1999](#)), which led to the creation of the Grameen Bank in 1983. Grameen Bank has 8.9 million members reaching about 20% of the population of Bangladesh, which was recognized for its excellent service to the rural communities by the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. The concept of microfinance is a positive construct since it is founded on the belief that poor people are honest and can be trusted with a loan without any collateral, which is supported by Grameen’s 99.2% rate of recovery of loans. Grameen Bank’s work has been replicated in various countries ([Ferguson, 2007](#)), including the United States.

Further review of the Western literature shows that hedonism refers to life occupied by the search for pleasure, and eudaimonia refers to happiness that arises from good work. This distinction was implicitly accepted during most of the earlier years of the development of PP. However, in the wake of the second wave of PP, the distinction between eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well-being is blurring in light of the recognition that both of these aspects can operate in tandem. For example, flow, intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, feeling of competence, belonging may be categorized as eudaimonic but they have both; hedonic (or subjectivist pleasure) and eudaimonic (objective sense of virtue) elements. South Asian cultures offer an opportunity to enrich such discussions. We can take at least two examples in this regard. The first example is the notion of “Chaironic” happiness. It takes a different approach by considering the influence of spiritual and transcendental elements in wellbeing. [Rizvi and Pasha-Zaidi \(2021\)](#) explain that for practicing Muslims, the goal of life is not the attainment of complete happiness, but rather a complete submission and orientation toward God. The second example is drawn from Vedantic tradition which one of the most prominent tributaries of Indian culture. It holds the four broad aims of life (Puruṣārtha), Dharma, Kāma, Artha and Mokṣa. These are widely subscribed in the Hindu view of life. This quadrature supports an integrated perspective of hedonistic pleasure and eudemonia. Dharma is righteousness, virtue or duty. Kāma refers to the fulfillment of our biological needs and sensual pleasures. Artha refers to the fulfillment of our social needs, including material gains, acquisition of wealth and social recognition. Mokṣa means liberation from worldly bondage and union with the ultimate reality ([Radhakrishnan, 1927/2009](#)). POS includes instrumental concerns but puts an increased emphasis on ideas of “goodness” and

---

positive human potential. It encompasses attention to the enablers (e.g. processes, capabilities, structures, methods), the motivations (e.g. unselfish, altruistic, contribution without regard to self) and the outcomes or effects (e.g. vitality, meaningfulness, exhilaration, high quality relationships) associated with positive phenomena.

Many ideals held high in the Buddhist and Hindu cultures are parallel to the enablers and motivations of POS. For example, the notion of *Rna* suggests that all human beings must discharge certain obligations. Among these obligations are *Pitr-ṛṇa*, *Ṛṣi-ṛṇa*, *Deva-ṛṇa* and *Bhūta-ṛṇa*. *Deva-ṛṇa* is an acknowledgment of the manifestation of *Īśvara* or supreme power in the form of all creation and expressing our gratitude for all that is given to us. *Pitr-ṛṇa* is about bonding with and caring for the parents and forefathers. The individual is considered independent and yet an essential and integral part of a larger family unit and community. *Bhūta-ṛṇa* arises from the obligation toward all non-human forms of life. Human beings have a duty toward all non-human species because they contribute to the sustenance and quality of life. The foundation of Buddhist teaching is the noble eightfold path comprising of right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The eight-fold path is clustered into *śheel* meaning morality and *samadhi* meaning meditation, keeping the mind attentive within self and *pragya*. Buddha likened the Noble Eightfold Path to a wheel with eight spokes that collectively support each other and the wheel of *Dhamma* or Dharma (Payutto, 2011). The notion of *Dhamma* engrains the notion of harmony in macro and micro realms, understanding and compassion for all, and constant efforts to dispel our ignorance and retain awareness.

Thus, there is enough foundation for POS in South Asia. For this special issue, we invited conceptual and empirical papers covering indigenous, cultural, cross-cultural, comparative and other organizational research conducted at the micro, meso and macro levels addressing unexplored questions about the processes, states and conditions that underlie and facilitate individual and collective flourishing. We received 21 submissions, and three papers were selected following the review process of the *South Asian Journal of Business Studies (SAJBS)*.

The paper by Sarkar is on the construct of *ahimsā* (non-violence). The author explains the differences between Western and Indian approaches to the study of *himsā* (or violence). Explaining an indigenous construct necessitates synthesizing the micro-world (or scientific world) and the life-world. The micro-world of *ahimsā* is derived from the texts like the Bhagavad-Gita and PAtanjā Yoga Sutra and from the concept of compassion from Buddhism and Jainism. *Ahimsā* in the life-world is captured in the work of Mahatama Gandhi, who held the highest values of non-violence throughout his life. In this paper, *ahimsā* is conceptualized as a conscious non-violent response to adversaries in the organizational context. In the process, an individual empowers himself or herself and refrains from dehumanizing the other. *Ahimsā* in the workplace transforms a hostile situation into a collaborative one through conscious action, self-empowerment and rehumanization. *Ahimsā* is a significant theoretical contribution to the field of PP from South Asia, and this paper sets the stage for future research in this area.

Kakkar, Degar and Gupta highlight the issue of overconsumption. The importance of this issue for the global village can be seen in that responsible consumption and production are among the 17 sustainability goals adopted by the United Nations Organization. Their paper builds on the Indian typology of *triguna* (i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) from Sankhya Philosophy to interrogate the antecedents of impulsive buying behavior, which is the surrogate for irresponsible consumption.

There is some support that in restraint-oriented societies like Japan and India, people are responsible consumers because of the deeply ingrained values of balance, harmony with nature, temperance and moderation found in these cultures. The authors employ an

indigenous framework of *triguna* to empirically examine how it can elucidate the inner motivation to act sustainably.

Garg, Kumari and Punia examine the linkage between six Indian dimensions of workplace spirituality (*svadharma*, *lokasangraha* alias other's orientation, sense of community, authenticity, *karma* capital and gratitude) and stress in a sample of university professors. *Svadharma* results into meaningful and meditative work. *Loksangraha* is about working for the common good, and *karma* capital promotes excellence and non-attachment. This study shows that constructive deviance mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and stress. Workplace deviance is often conceptualized negatively, and the positive side of deviance has largely been ignored. The results of this study show that workplace spirituality reduces stress through the mediation effect of constructive deviance.

The three articles present three different methodological approaches toward POS in South Asia. The article by Sarkar on *ahimsā* follows the method prescribed by Bhawuk (2010) on developing indigenous constructs from the traditional wisdom text. The article by Kakkar, Degar and Gupta employ indigenous theory from Indian philosophy to empirically test impulsive buying behavior. Garg, Kumari and Punia adopt the synthesis of variables drawn from indigenous wisdom and contemporary knowledge to examine the relationship between stress and workplace spirituality.

South Asia can provide many insights into both the micro-foundations and macro-level expressions (see Pandey *et al.*, 2022) of POS. **Patañjal** Yoga Sutras and Buddhist tradition of mindfulness contain many insights about the functioning of the mind and how to make it calm to experience bliss which can build positive, life-generating capabilities and organizational resources. South Asian traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam, to name a few) are replete with concepts of positive emotions, positive traits, and positive institutions. People tend to integrate harmony with nature in their daily living. They embrace the ambivalence of emotions and are open to the possibility that painful or negative experiences can also lead to personal growth.

At the individual level, cultivating virtues like *ahimsā* (Sarkar, 2022), *lajjA*, *tapas*, *adhyAtma*, *prema* and *lokasaMgrraha* (Bhawuk, 2022) provide insights into foundational psychological constructs. Constructs like *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, world as one family provide insights at the macro level. In the context of positive institution and governance, South Asian wisdom tradition elegantly connects the micro and macro aspects by explaining that the basis of "*sukha*" or all true pleasantness is "*dharma*" or righteous conduct. The basis of all "*dharma*" is "*artha*" or wealth. The basis of all "*artha*" is "*rajya*" or the State. The basis for the stability of the State lies in control over the "*indriya*" or sense faculties providing pleasure (see Pandey and Sahay, 2022 for a discussion).

South Asia is a developing region. On the one hand countries in South Asia are rich in traditions and culture and on other hand they are going through restructuring or redefining their social, economic and political landscape in different degrees to provide a better quality of life to their citizens. Rich cultural knowledge and values of South Asia need to work together with an increasingly globalizing world which is open, cross cultural and diverse in nature. Order of democracy, openness in social and business exchanges, technological advancement and greater interaction of the people located in different regions of the world are some of the irreversible changes observed at present. Any development in future will be inevitably linked to these changes. South Asian societies and organizations need to identify and embrace the values and practices that help them create the systems and processes which contribute to harmony in this region and in the world. The ideas discussed in this issue like *ahimsā* or nonviolence, conscious consumption, working for the greater good fit this need. We hope that the articles in the special issue will stimulate future research on indigenous theories and constructs emerging from PP in South Asia, and contribute to the POS.

**Dharm P.S. Bhawuk***Department of Management, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, and***Ashish Pandey***SJMSOM, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai, India***References**

- Ali, A.J. and Al-Owaidan, A. (2008), "Islamic work ethic: a critical review", *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 5-19.
- Alok, K. (2017), "Sattvika leadership: an Indian model of positive leadership", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 142 No. 1, pp. 117-138.
- Arendt, J.F., Pircher Verdorfer, A. and Kugler, K.G. (2019), "Mindfulness and leadership: communication as a behavioral correlate of leader mindfulness and its effect on follower satisfaction", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 10, p. 667.
- Bhawuk, D.P.S. (2010), "Epistemology and ontology of Indian psychology: a synthesis of theory, method, and practice", *Psychology and Developing Societies*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 157-190.
- Bhawuk, D.P.S. (2011), *Spirituality and Indian Psychology: Lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita*, Springer, New York.
- Bhawuk, D.P.S. (2022), "Indian management: constructs, models, and theories", in Pandey, A., Budhwar, P. and Bhawuk, D.P.S. (Eds), *Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives*. London, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8_3).
- Bhawuk, D.P.S., Mrazek, S. and Munusamy, V.P. (2009), "From social engineering to community transformation: amul, Grameen Bank, and Mondragon as exemplar organizations", *Peace and Policy: Ethical Transformations for a Sustainable Future*, Vol. 14, pp. 36-63.
- Cameron, K. and Dutton, J. (Eds) (2003), *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Cameron, K.S. and Spreitzer, G.M. (Eds) (2012), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, OUP.
- Ferguson, K.M. (2007), "Implementing a social enterprise intervention with homeless, streetliving youths in Los Angeles", *Social Work*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 103-112.
- Geue, P.E. (2018), "Positive practices in the workplace: impact on team climate, work engagement, and task performance", *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 54 No. 3, pp. 272-301.
- Gill, L.N., Renault, R., Campbell, E., Rainville, P. and Khoury, B. (2020), "Mindfulness induction and cognition: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *Consciousness and Cognition*, Vol. 84, 102991.
- Kelly, J. and Cameron, K. (2017), "Applying positive organisational scholarship to produce extraordinary performance", in *Positive Psychology Interventions in Practice*, Springer, Cham, pp. 207-217.
- Lomas, T. and Ivtzan, I. (2016), "Second wave positive psychology: exploring the positive-negative dialectics of wellbeing", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 1753-1768.
- Luthans, F. (2002), "The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 23 No. 6, pp. 695-706.
- Maslow, A.H. (1954), *Motivation and Personality*, Harper and Brothers, New York, NY.
- Maslow, A.H. (1965), *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*, RD Irwin, Homewood.
- Mazutis, D.D. and Slawinski, N. (2015), "Reconnecting business and society: perceptions of authenticity in corporate social responsibility", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 131 No. 1, pp. 137-150.

- Mulla, Z.R. and Krishnan, V.R. (2014), "Karma-yoga: the Indian model of moral development", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 123 No. 2, pp. 339-351.
- Pandey, N. and Sahay, A. (2022), "Social entrepreneurship in India", in Pandey, A., Budhwar, P. and Bhawuk, D.P.S. (Eds), *Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives*. London, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8_11).
- Pandey, A., Gupta, R.K. and Arora, A.P. (2009), "Spiritual climate of business organizations and its impact on customers' experience", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 88 No. 2, pp. 313-332.
- Pandey, A., Bhawuk, D.P. and Budhwar, P. (2022), "Emergence of Indian management: cultural ideals, uniqueness, and behavioural manifestations", *Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives*. London, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 523-561.
- Paranjpe, A.C. (1984), *Theoretical Psychology: The Meeting of East and West*, Plenum Press, New York.
- Payutto, P.A. (2011), *The Brief Introduction of the Buddha-Dhamma*, Phli- Dhamma Publishing, Bangkok.
- Praissman, S. (2008), "Mindfulness-based stress reduction: a literature review and clinician's guide", *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 212-216.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1927/2009), *The Hindu View of Life*, HarperCollins Publishers, Noida.
- Rao, K.R. and Paranjpe, A.C. (2017), *Yoga Psychology: Theory and Application*, Springer, Singapur.
- Rao, K.R., Paranjpe, A.C. and Dalal, A.K. (Eds) (2008), *Handbook of Indian Psychology*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi.
- Rizvi, S. and Pasha-Zaidi, N. (2021), "Health and wellbeing: bridging secular and islamic worldviews", in Pasha-Zaidi, N. (Ed.), *Toward a Positive Psychology of Islam and Muslims* (pp. 183-206). Springer, Cham.
- Salagame, K.K. (2014), "Positive psychology and Indian psychology: birds of the same feather", *Psychological Studies*, Vol. 59 No. 2, pp. 116-118.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (1991), *Learned Optimism*, Knopf, New York.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (1999), "The president's address", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 54, pp. 559-562.
- Seligman, M. (2002), *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment*, Free Press, New York.
- Sinha, J. (1933), *Indian Psychology (3 Volume Set on Cognition, Emotion, and Will)*, Kegan Paul, London.
- Sinha, J.B.P. (1980), "The nurturant-task leader: a model of the effective executive", *Concept*.
- Snyder, C.R. (1995), "Conceptualizing, measuring, and nurturing hope", *Journal of Counseling and Development*, Vol. 73 No. 3, pp. 355-360.
- Stavros, J.M. and Wooten, L. (2012), "Positive strategy: creating and sustaining strengths-based strategy that SOARs and performs", In Cameron, K.S. and Spreitzer, G.M. (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* (pp. 825-839). OUP USA.
- Ura, K., Alkire, S. and Zangmo, T. (2012), *Bhutan: Gross National Happiness and the GNH Index*, The Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu, available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/11798>.
- Victorson, D., Kentor, M., Maletich, C., Lawton, R.C., Kaufman, V.H., Borrero, M., . . . and Berkowitz, C. (2015), "Mindfulness meditation to promote wellness and manage chronic disease: a systematic review and meta-analysis of mindfulness-based randomized controlled trials relevant to lifestyle medicine", *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 185-211.
- Walsh, R. (2001), "Positive psychology: east and west", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 56, pp. 83-84.
- Warsah, I. (2020), "Forgiveness viewed from positive psychology and Islam", *IGCJ: Islamic Guidance and Counseling Journal*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 108-121.
- Yunus, M. (1999), "The Grameen Bank", *Scientific American*, Vol. 281 No. 5, pp. 114-119.

---

**Further reading**

- Bates, W. (2009), "Gross national happiness", *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 1-16.
- Bhawuk, D.P.S. (2003), "Culture's influence on creativity: the case of Indian spirituality", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 1-22.
- Fredrickson, B. and Losada, L. (2005), "Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60 No. 7, pp. 678-686.
- Hertz-Bunzl, N. (2006), "Financing hope: improving microfinance", *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 27 No. 4, p. 32.
- Mishra, S.K., Mahapatra, G.P. and Dagar, C. (2022), "Innovative practices in management education in India", in Pandey, A., Budhwar, P. and Bhawuk, D.P.S. (Eds), *Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives*. London, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-87906-8_15).
- Navare, A. and Pandey, A. (2022), "Karma Yoga: scale development and studies of the impact on positive psychological outcomes at the workplace", *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 14705958221111239.
- Paranjpe, A.C. (1998), *Self and Identity in Modern Psychology and Indian Thought*, Plenum Press, New York.
- Seligman, M. and Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000), "Positive psychology", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55, pp. 5-14.
- Sinha, J.B. (1995), *The Cultural Context of Leadership and Power*, Sage, New Delhi.

**About the authors**

Dharm P.S. Bhawuk is a professor of Management and Culture and Community Psychology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Ashish Pandey is an associate professor of Human Resource Management with Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in Mumbai, India.