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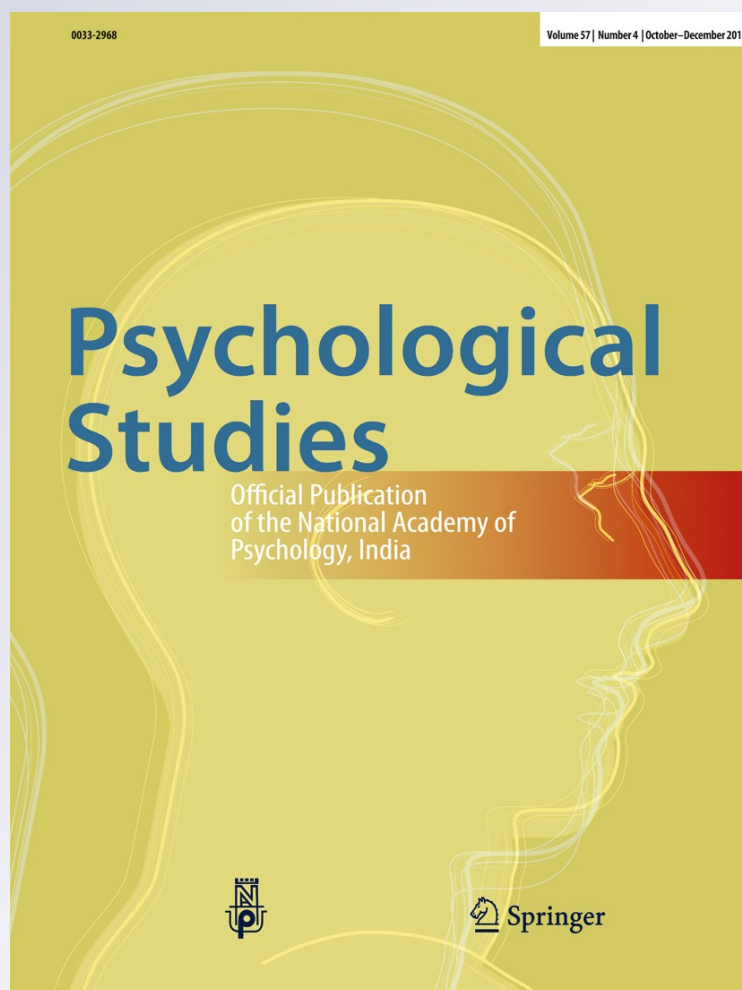
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Some Aspects of Empathy in the Process of Psychotherapy: Learning from Indian Tradition

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Abstract This article focuses on some practices in Indian tradition as interventions for enhancing empathy among aspiring psychotherapists. In this venture, author after briefly looking into the evolution of pro-social behavior, it defines basic nature of bond formation between therapist and client, and then summarizes findings of studies on Eastern meditational practices in the context of empathy. Since there is not much convincing evidence that meditational practices enhanced empathy in psychotherapists, the suggestion is to explore other processes in the Indian tradition. Intuition (*pratibha*) and holistic learning (*vyutpatti*) are among those processes, respectively, for journeys into the inner world and interventions at community level. They are pragmatic ways to sensitize the aspiring psychotherapists.

Keywords Altruism · Affection · Intuition · Empathy · Meditation · Mental health

In 1926 Sigmund Freud wrote, “*it is only by empathy that we know the existence of psychic life other than our own.*” (from Gallese 2006). Therefore an important issue is the sensitivity of young psychologists to mental health problems of individuals and vulnerable populations spread over distant regions of India. The central concern of this paper is cultivating empathy among aspiring psychotherapists, but there are suggestions to include other pro-social behaviors in the psychotherapeutic process. By adopting a comprehensive approach toward contextualizing Indian tradition (religion and

culture) as a factor in imbibing humanitarian spirit among aspiring psychotherapists the paper examines the studies from diverse traditions.

Long ago, in his Presidential Address to the assembly of clinical psychologists of India at Bangalore, Sen (1969) portrayed a challenge emerging from the theoretical structure and therapeutic models in mental health. His major worry lay in the growing faith in drugs among people to cure of mental problems. The consequences he underlined would be the marginalization of clinical psychologists and the deprivation of people from the services of psychology and allied sciences. A far greater loss for a client was his isolation from the community network supported by the moral and religious traditions crucial in shaping his psyche in the social milieu. For Sen, the hope to meet this challenge lay in “*a humanitarian desire to serve the community.*” After half a century, in the scenario of globalization and taking cognizance of the fifth ICSSR survey of psychology, Misra (2010) was not very optimistic that India has adequate number of professional psychologists to meet her dire needs of mental health, a country having merely “*one psychotherapist per half million people*” (Dalal 2011). Moreover, there was fear of subordination to allied sciences among clinical psychologists due to asymmetry in the roles of psychologists and psychiatrists (Chattopadhyay 2010).

An openness towards Indian tradition among psychologists seems to be an important intervention in this scenario. As Manickam (2010) has stated “*Indian philosophical psychology is a treasure to be unearthed in understanding the ‘person’ as well as in helping.*” To this end, a psychologist must explore the meaning of knowing for an average Indian, for, it has relationship with his/her perception of reality (Misra 2011). He further explained that transcendental (*paramarthika*) and empirical (*vyavaharika*) were essential components in these analyses. Moving from this broad orientation to a specific

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theme, which has immense significance to the issue of mental health, was the cultivation of theory and practice of knowledge inherent in one's existence (Cornelissen 2011). This was a movement from outer to inner knowledge and an underlying assumption was that the journey on this path made one aware of unity with others.

Intrinsic connectedness is a core issue in clinical psychology for which Eastern traditions may have important ingredients as noted by Kapur (2001), a fact underlined in more recent review on the subject (Mehta and Gupta 2011) that the traditional social networks still acted as important primary care-givers. In this context, Krishnan (2005, 2011) has provided authoritative exposition of Indian concepts on social service (*sewa*) through giving (*daan*), along with cooperation (*sahayoga*), help (*sahaayata*) and altruism (*paropkar*) that have significance for care-givers and therapists. These psychological perspectives are essential for incorporating values in policies of development. For instance, consider the thesis that disempowerment of forest communities was associated with the rise in violence throughout the middle belt of India (Pirta 2011b). A psychotherapist in India was no doubt aware of such challenges, on the one hand was the issue of professional competence (e.g., Jena 2008), and on the other hand was the issue to remain sensitive to vulnerable populations (e.g., Vahali 2009) yet the perennial problem was to educate aspiring psychotherapists about these issues.

Thus the problem is to sensitize aspiring psychotherapists to the sufferings of others. Most significantly an ardent follower of psychoanalysis has shown curiosity to learn from Eastern traditions so that the relationship between the analyst and the client was a little warmer. In his appeal Kakar (2009) wanted psychoanalysts shun their rationalistic stance to embrace romantic vision so that a psychoanalyst with enhanced connective imagination could touch innermost layers of patient's mind. In this lies what I have termed as *Kakar's dilemma*, which was twofold, opting for rationalistic or romantic vision, on the one hand, and assuming human nature as altruistic or selfish, on the other.

For, an aspiring psychotherapist, it has been felt, apart from empowering with modern behavioral tools, has to cultivate a mind-set, in view of the socio-cultural and religious context (Hoch 1977; Misra 2010). Along with this, ingredients of humanitarian desire to serve the community are also essential. This apparently utopian idea is a point of convergence between two schools of psychotherapy, behaviour therapy (Sen 1968) and psychoanalysis (Kakar 1997), as evident in the argument of Kakar (2009). His question was: were there some Eastern meditative practices having demonstrable effects on enhancing empathic capability of therapists? Reference to Eastern (meditative) practices in this question has an answer in Cornelissen's (2011) plea for intuitive knowledge, which will be discussed in the latter

section of this paper. In this part we introduce issues related to pro-social behavior in evolutionary context, wherein lies Kakar's dilemma. However, a radical hypothesis is the consideration of religion as a factor in functional approach to the exploration of Eastern traditions.

There are reasons to believe that the relationship between client and therapist is cooperative and requires interventions to strengthen a humanitarian desire among aspiring psychotherapists to attain a common goal, the effective change in client. This is clear from multiplicity of components in empathic relationship between client and therapist as revealed by current studies. Earlier conception of empathy confined to cognitive, affective and behavioral domains appears insufficient to understand the complexity of interpersonal relationship between therapist and client. In monitoring this process, assessment of therapist that she is accurate in perception of client's feelings is coupled with perception of client that his/her feelings have been adequately understood by therapist. This information may well have significance in developing effective intervention to enhance empathic ability in an aspiring psychotherapist. In this context investigators think that the concept of empathy requires more clarity. In other words, the focus has to be on a broad based humanitarian desire to serve others where empathy is a central theme and cooperation, help, altruism and attachment forming essential components around it.

Empathy is a subjective phenomenon not easily amenable to objective inquiry, therefore in a positivistic approach the essence of empathy may remain elusive, but on the other hand, intuitive-humanistic approach is likely to make vision about empathy wider and open. In this context two concepts, *prati-bha* and *vyutpatti*, from the Indian tradition assume special significance. Intuition (*prati-bha*), which is basic to cultivate proficiency in any art, has not attracted sufficient attention from psychotherapists. In addition it is reasonable to assume that empathy uses affective mode of mind which is implicit, fast, automatic and intuitive in decision making. Therefore, psychotherapy being an art, the cultivation of intuition with empathy may have facilitative effect on therapeutic process. For this purpose holistic learning or *vyutpatti* (proficiency through culture and constant practice) is important. This has potential to enlarge the scope of humanitarian desire to serve others where sensitivity of psychotherapist extends beyond clinical setting, encompassing family, community and even larger vulnerable populations.

In a review of studies in psychotherapy in India, Manickam (2010) has underlined some of these points, in particular, his observation to explore the Indian thought tradition. This paper focuses mainly on those practices in the Indian tradition that have potential to make therapist–client relationship a little more warmer and at the same time an intuitive one. Assuming that psyche of an average Indian takes shape in

her rich cultural tradition, consequently at the time of mental crisis a person has to make a wise choice. On the one side is a psychotherapist trained in Western model whereas on the other side is a familiar traditional healer. A lot of complexities surround this issue as there are segments of Indian population where threats of caste dominance, gender discrimination, usurpation for developmental projects, and environmental degradation for various reasons looms large in minds of people. The question therefore is where should these people look for help? In addition to working inside clinic, perhaps psychotherapists would like to share the responsibility of addressing the problems of these suffering populations at a primary level. Therefore, considering inculcation of empathy as a part of larger humanitarian desire among aspiring psychotherapists, the present paper aims to address the issue in two parts.

The **first objective** is to take a finer look on empirical studies on Eastern meditational techniques as plausible ways of inculcating empathy among psychotherapists. There are three aspects of this enquiry, examining the evolutionary basis of pro-social behaviors where religion is a facilitating factor, defining the nature of social bond keeping in view psychotherapist and client, and exploring the Eastern meditative practices as interventions to enhance empathy among psychotherapists.

The **second objective** of this paper is to suggest some additional ways from Indian tradition to inculcate humanitarian desire to serve others having implications for client-therapist relationship and also useful at community level. In this context, two ways have been suggested, intuition (*pratibha*) and holistic learning (*vyutpatti*).

Learning from Indian Tradition

The desire to serve others has several components which social psychologists identify under pro-social behavior, of particular significance in a therapist and client relationship is empathy, a *feeling of* others. It brings the client mentally closer to therapist. But in this process a therapist incurs some cost to empathize with the client, and furthermore, a therapist has to excel in empathic capability as it has special significance in a therapeutic process. The other components of humanitarian desire to serve communities include help, altruism, cooperation, sympathy, and attachment. In fact, Western models of psychotherapy have all these ingredients in training modules; this article explores Indian tradition to find some additional ways of inculcating humanitarian desire to serve others among young psychologists. In this exploration, at the initial stage, one has to scrutinize claims that often appear in commentaries on Indian

schools of thought that they have developed ways and practices of enhancing tendencies to serve others without selfish interest.

Altruism, an Insurmountable Paradox Since Darwin

Although Sen (1961a, b, 1962) following the line of Pavlov, was in favour of objective study of neurosis which he carried out at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, however, as a therapist later his interest did not lay only in helping the client to get rid of the infirmity (Sen 1974, 1975). And to underline processes crucial for positive aspects of mental health, initiation of research on cooperative life of monkeys (Pirta 1986) under the guidance of Sen is but one such indication.

Researches on the evolutionary basis of cooperation and altruism (Pirta 2009) have significance for understanding Kakar's (2009) question, where altruism is doing something for others by incurring a cost to self, and empathy is a feeling of concern for others. For long, aggressive (or competitive or individualistic) mode has attracted attention of scientists (see Haldane 1964), its influence on social thinkers was so pervasive that psychology and even psychoanalysis got swamped by this current. On the other hand, the contribution of affectionate mode in making copies of genes, because of paucity of evidence, slowly became superfluous, irrespective of its prevalence in human social life. But now there are several models of evolution which indirectly support the affectionate mode: *kin selection*, *reciprocal altruism*, *group selection*, *reputation building*, *network reciprocity*, and *advertising* (Dawkins 2006; Nowak 2006).

The most significant development in recent years, however, was a renewed interest to understand whether supernatural factors mediate in the process of curtailing selfishness, and whether religious beliefs were factors in enhancing empathic altruism. Undoubtedly, religion and culture enrich internal and external environment of individual through extremely intricate mechanisms occurring with the mediation of infinite supernatural elements. Thus it is imperative to consider evolutionary models that take into consideration religion and culture as factors in pro-sociality (Norenzayan and Shariff 2008).

Whether there was God, or not, the real issue was human belief in supernatural agents. Investigators from various disciplines were looking into the functional—Darwinian and non-Darwinian—aspects of supernatural agents (Bering 2006; Boyer 2003; Dawkins 2006; Norenzayan and Hansen 2006). In addition, an important aspect being explored was the role of institution of deity to keep cohesion in a group (Boyd et al. 2003; Nowak 2006; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007). Irrespective of the origin of belief in

supernatural agents at some particular time in history, once these cognitions originated in mind, they affected feeling, thinking and behaviour of individual, and his interactions and relationships in a social network began to change and had consequences on well-being (Broota 1997; Horan 2009; Purzycki and Sosis 2011; Sax 2009; Travis and Shear 2010). Field observations and experimental studies have suggested that supernatural beliefs that were commonsensical and mildly counterintuitive have compelling qualities of grabbing attention, activating intuition and mobilizing inference (Atran and Henrich 2010). These cognitions may have undergone replication, selection and retention and evolved culturally in a group (Schloss and Murray 2011).

A psychotherapist must take cognizance of this interesting research in the area of evolution. Then only, he would come to know why Kakar (2009, 2011) has denied many sober facets of human nature with a considerable dash for sex. Simply because this was sufficient explanation for selfishness as it enhanced survival of individual through procreation. However, there was no explanation for altruism (or 'altruistic empathy') as these pro-social behaviors decreased survival (genetic fitness) of individual. The above research clearly suggests that in human beings problem of altruism is not insurmountable as cultural factors interact with biological factors to curtail selfishness. In other words, the principles of learning are as much important as are principle of genetics, since both provide mechanisms of inheritance from one generation to the other. While scientists are trying to develop models for altruism, there is already enough material for exploration in our cultural heritage on co-operation, help and altruism (see Krishnan 2005) for developing modules to inculcate these values among aspiring psychotherapists.

From the preceding analysis it is clear that cultural factors have significance for the development of social bond between therapist and client. Next section discusses that social bonding is not necessarily powered by sex drive but involves generalization of early attachments. In this context there is need to grasp the Jungian concept of archetype and the role of affectional systems in social bonding and social cognition.

Form of a Priori for Affection

An archetype (Jung 1969) is handy to make sense of supernatural elements in the human psyche. In ethology, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, one may find various terms such as 'engram', 'gene', or 'schema' which seem complementary to archetype. But most significantly, Jung's archetype allows comprehension of a priori psychic elements in mind, and, secondly makes sense of supernatural elements in the guise of mental imagery and symbols (phenotypes of *a priori*).

Some students of animal behavior in Europe, who later founded ethology, shared with the school of psychoanalysis the idea that elements of human psyche were biologically given, and that mind was not *tabula rasa* as American behaviorists believed at that time. Whereas psychoanalysts confined themselves to unconscious psyche, ethologists showed little or no interest in it and focused on overt behavior. The major achievement of ethologists was that in order to ascertain innateness of behavior, the focus has to be on the finer units of behavior, rather than global instincts and second, for this they revived the method of observation of behavior under natural condition. It has significance for psychotherapists as well and is essential part of holistic learning, *vyutpatti*, discussed in last section of this article. These ideas of ethology were a challenge for American behaviorism. John Bowlby, a psychoanalyst was quick to initiate interactions with ethologists in England, and developed theory of attachment (Bowlby 1958) in close association with them; the most prominent being R. A. Hinde (Van der Horst et al. 2007). Harlow's work on affectional systems in monkey infants at Wisconsin in United States also supported Bowlby's theory. In India, S. D. Singh initiated work on monkey infants in the 1970s at the Primate Research Laboratory, Meerut to test hypotheses based on Bowlby's theory of attachment (Pirta 2009). In recent years, Bowlby's theory has been generalized to study attachment to God in the area of personality and social psychology (Cicirelli 2004), and two aspects being explored were God as safe haven and God as secure base (Pirta 2011a). Most significantly, Bowlby's theory of attachment has initiated a review of Freudian 'sensual current' as a mechanism for social bonding. It was being replaced by 'affectional current' as a more enduring mechanism for the formation of social ties from cradle to death.

One may well use molecular methods for exploring the a priori or archetype while performing experiments in learning, memory and affectional systems (Kandel 1999). For example, Kandel discovered the Kantian '*a priori*' to unconsciously relate two external events inside the mind, and thus laid the foundation of the formation of associations in molecular terms. However, in Jung (1969) one finds an elaborate description of how as investigators of human psyche, we can grasp the 'image' or '*form*' of an element in mind through the concept of 'archetype'. It may first appear as an aggregate of molecules and ions, but the archetype as an element of psyche was indeed an 'empty' form or, for example, a possibility for an infant's tie with mother. The actual manifestation of an archetype might take infinite variety. Archetype relates humans to evolutionary past, and in this lies its functional value.

More important for a therapist is the relationship of archetype with mythology (or supernatural factors), as both denotes a link with some original form ('*religio*'- linking back). A therapist, through archetype, is likely to develop

insight into the psychological nuances of the ‘*a priori*’ elements (acquired through learning and heredity) that constitute our psyche, particularly the supernatural elements. In this way the internal working models (Bowlby’s attachment theory) and supernatural symbolism (Jungian psychoanalysis) would not only help in looking social bonding in a different way, a therapist may find cognitive tools for going deeper in the psyche of client. Meditation, learned in teacher-disciple paradigm, exemplifies such social bonding and the next section explores the generalization of this paradigm to client-therapist relationship. The aim is to look at Eastern meditative practices for enhancing empathic concern among aspiring psychotherapists.

Meditation to Enhance Empathic Concern

Since ancient time people have participated in religious and spiritual practices in various ways and to various degrees, however, one significant aspect of these pursuits was to achieve connectedness with others through transcendence. Current reviews on the role of religion and spirituality in mental health in India (Hussain and Bhushan 2010; Sharma et al. 2009) have some important lacunae as far as the Eastern traditions are concerned. None of the reviews refer explicitly to supernatural (transcendental) elements, their nature and varieties, the *emic* properties in the Indian landscape. Even more glaring omission is that these reviews do not refer to another core issue, the contribution of religion and spirituality in enhancing a vision of connectedness in a person.

Rao (2010) has highlighted meditation as an important psychological intervention in mental health, but she did not visualize the primary role of meditation in enhancing empathic concern. Even Chattopadhyay (2010), Kumar (2011) and, Sharma and Misra (2010) entirely missed the theoretical and applied significance of meditation in the enhancement of empathic concern. The concepts of empathy and altruism do not surface in these commentaries. If Eastern meditational techniques were responsible for transcending experiences (Moss 2001), empathy must be at its base. While evaluating the contribution of some Indian psychoanalysts, Vahali (2011) has reiterated Kakar’s idea that there was scope for enhancement of empathic concern among therapists through Eastern meditation techniques, yet she entirely left open the issue how meditation facilitated this process.

Recent studies at the Centre of Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences, Allahabad have explored some Eastern meditational practices (Raffone and Srinivasan 2010; Srinivasan 2011), but empathy was not the focus. The efforts of SVYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Sansthana) at Bangalore, were equally discouraging about research on enhancement of pro-social behavior through meditation (Subramanya and Telles 2009). In general the focus of research on meditation

was not on exploring the traditional aspect, meditation as a way of transcending connective imagination, but study minor changes in physiology and behavior after meditation (Adrade and Radhakrishnan 2009; Hussain and Bhushan 2010). However, some research on the Eastern meditative practices in the Western laboratories has significance to foster pro-social behavior (Davidson and Lutz 2008; Kristeller and Johnson 2005; Loizzo 2009; Shapiro and Izett 2008; Travis and Shear 2010; Wallace 2009).

There are only tentative suggestions from this scientific research on fostering pro-social behaviour through the Eastern meditative practices.

Summary Preceding sections focused on three aspects of humanitarian desire to serve others. First aspect involved understanding of basic human nature (selfish/altruistic) and evolution of pro-social behavior. Since the tendency to behave altruistically (including empathy) incurred some cost therefore the care giver would expect some return or benefit for his/her actions as argued in various socio-biological models. Now it was becoming clear that in human evolution religious beliefs (in supernatural elements) facilitated pro-social behavior without much cost to a care-giver. Second aspect was that attachment theory has important implications for affectionate social bond between therapist and client. Archetypes for these affectionate tendencies most likely use religious symbolism. Third aspect included effects of Eastern meditative interventions for inculcating empathic concern for others among psychotherapists but studies made it clear that evidence was weak.

The second part of this paper focuses on two ways of inculcating concern for others among aspiring psychotherapists: *direct experience of the client’s mental states*, and *observation of the client*. The former is vividly described in the biography on Sri Ramakrishna (Nikhilananda 1928/2008) and the latter is depicted in the holistic model of human-nature relationships emphasizing the harmony of *gyan*, *bhakti*, and *karma*.

Case Studies of Humanistic Desire to Serve Community

The pioneer of logotherapy (a branch of psychotherapy) Victor Frankl (1959/2008) observed that search for meaning involved two different approaches, biological and biographical. In the first part of this article emphasis was on biological approach, whereas, this part has a biographical orientation. My focus is on two ways of Indian tradition, *pratibha* and *vyutpatti*, as methods to cultivate humanitarian desire to serve others among aspiring psychotherapists. *Pratibha* or intuition allows direct experience of client’s mental states. *Vyutpatti* or holistic learning takes into account all aspects of knowledge acquisition

which psychotherapist has to master through culture and practice (*abhayasa*) so that she has deeper understanding of client.

In the Indian tradition, inculcation of *pratibha* and *vyutpatti* go side by side with the refinement of inner psychic apparatus (Cornelissen 2011). Knowledge is believed as natural outcome of spiritual askesis, especially during states of trance (Obeyesekere 2004). According to Obeyesekere, enlightenment of Buddha was an example of this process, the intuitive mode accompanied by trance. Masson (1976), a scholar of Sanskrit and one who went through an arduous training in psychoanalysis, was perhaps the first psychotherapist to suggest that *pratibha* (intuition) and *vyutpatti* (learning) were important ways of learning in the Indian tradition. He also suggested that trance or ecstasy has some relation with intuition. In a recent review Lieberman (2000) has proposed that intuition was ‘a phenomenological and behavioral correlate of implicit learning’. In academic psychology intuition was therefore getting credence as a subjective experience resulting from implicit learning, besides a central process for acquisition of knowledge in the Indian tradition (e.g., Cornelissen 2011; Misra 2011).

Intuition is basic for the cultivation of proficiency in any art, but has not attracted attention from psychotherapists in India. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that empathy uses affective mode of mind which is fast, automatic and intuitive in decision making. Psychotherapy being an art, the cultivation of intuition with empathy may have facilitative effect on the therapeutic process. For this purpose, holistic way of learning (*vyutpatti*) has always been prescribed in the Indian tradition. Furthermore, there is scope for a humanitarian desire where sensitivity of a psychotherapist extends beyond clinical setting encompassing family, community and even larger vulnerable populations.

My focus here is on the two types of knowledge acquisition in the Indian tradition, *vyutpatti* knowing intellectually, and inspiration or *pratibha* (Masson 1976; Misra 2011). These processes are part of askesis in the Indian spiritual tradition (Obeyesekere 2004) and come under intuition or knowledge by identity (Cornelissen 2011). Classical psychoanalysis overlooked such practices innovated by Indian ascetics to explore inner experiences, particularly *pratibha* which may have facilitated search into unconscious processes. These processes became part of the day to day life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, once he mastered them through arduous training under the strict supervision of gurus and through self enquiry. His case is briefly discussed in the following section. Second case study refers to a holistic model of human-nature relationship that derives from ethos of Indian culture through direct observation or *vyutpatti* and has significance to broaden the scope of psychotherapist beyond clinic.

Sri Ramakrishna, an Embodiment of Vernacular Tradition

The word vernacular has connotations of universal, innate, popular and folk. Some intellectuals (e.g., Chatterjee 1993)

have preferred to perceive Mahendranath's description of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa in *Kathamrita* (a biography of the saint) appropriation of ‘popular’ by the Bangali middle class. On the one hand, Chatterjee interpreted Ramakrishna's return from adulthood to innocence (e.g., behaving like a child in front of mother goddess) with psychoanalytic reductionism, but on the other hand, he attributed it ‘wisdom far richer and more resilient’. This is apparently a transition from rationalistic stance to romantic (popular) stance (see Kakar 2009). From this transition, it is not clear if Chatterjee was suggesting that Ramakrishna's innocence was a journey towards a natural state, and the saint had used meditative askesis as a tool for easing this transition? The effect of this transition from rationalism to romanticism, the ‘popular’ mode, was visible in positive emotions such as empathy, love, compassion, and happiness in Sri Ramakrishna. The suggestion therefore appears to be that the superstitious, ignorant, unthinking and uncontrollable ‘popular’ needed mediation of enlightened leadership so that the romantic vision flowered. I want to underline that the transition from rational to romantic is not retrogressive, rather it involves greater proficiency in rational and romantic, on one hand, and replacing individual selfishness by enlarging the sphere of connectedness through askesis, on the other (Friedman 2005). The following discussion focuses on this important issue, whether knowledge acquisition through askesis, which is largely intuitive, has significance for connective imagination, or not.

Sri Ramakrishna's moments of ecstasy or trance (see Nikhilananda 1928/2008; English version of Ramakrishna's biography *Kathamrita*) for Chatterjee were result of conflict between rational and romantic mind. According to Indian tradition, they were states of consciousness where knowledge comes naturally or intuitively to people undergoing askesis (e.g., Obeyesekere 2004). Considering from a current view on creativity by Andreasen (2011), Chatterjee's observation may also not hold true. The new ideas were not hidden in books, for Ramakrishna it was indeed a flight of imagination away from books. Leaving mind in its ‘resting’ state, where it has freedom from thoughts, and one dives deep in unconscious, and then rises up from the deep layers with revelations (Andreasen 2011). The premise is that through meditative askesis, a seeker achieves a state of mind (or a level of consciousness) where one is likely to have a flash of imagination which yields new knowledge. Most significant part of this askesis is to achieve a state of non-attachment in mind. It is here that sensual assumes significance. Perhaps an all out effort is made to overpower sensual and then proceed further with the help of affectional, which is eventually dropped off or becomes irrelevant when union with the ultimate or the deity materializes. For Chatterjee, the transcendence of sexuality takes place by ‘mystical (magical) transposition.’ However, for psychology these mental transitions are a matter of scientific inquiry, and part of intuitive process.

A hangover still creeping in psychoanalytic circles was that sensuality was a latent power for social bonding, and switching this power off is perilous for an individual. Biologically sexual instinct has only one function—procreation. It has little or no contribution in creating warm relationships among members of same sex or across age levels. Though such relationships are made but they do not have contribution in procreation. The affectionate relationships, on the other hand, have much greater scope of generalization and particularly in enhancing survival of members through cohesion in group (Bowlby 1977). Therefore it is imperative to question the role of sensual beyond procreation, both biologically and psychologically. Eastern spiritual traditions consider sensual as well as affectional a major hindrance for achieving a state of mind where it is free from distractions. This state of mind has significance in revealing knowledge (which is experiential in nature). In order to achieve this goal the seeker has to undergo askesis, where besides other things, one has to overcome sensual attachment (Rawson 1978). In this struggle the seeker is helped by the affectionate in him, which is slowly generalized to some supreme power. In the final assault, even the affectionate is dropped, in turn the state of mind thus achieved is full of compassion for all, and the knowledge thus attained is creative, for the welfare of humanity. This has significance for understanding the evolution of pro-social behaviors where religion acts as facilitator (see first section of this paper).

Even though such creative people have lower chances of procreation and individual survival, they in turn yield knowledge through askesis that has tremendous benefit for society over space and time. In the terminology of evolutionary psychology, these seekers of knowledge increase the survival value of other individuals in a group to which they belong. The individual or avatar is no more, but the group proliferates, and altruistic practices are transmitted to later generations. This harmonious interaction of biological and cultural mechanisms is a key to understand the uniqueness of human species, and its transition from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo religious*. The reason for cynicism of rationalists about these pursuits of knowledge through Eastern askesis may be that there are various shades of askesis and goals attached with them. In Sri Ramakrishna's words '*jato mat tato path*' ('there are as many ways as there are creeds') (see Raychaudhuri 1999). For him the Vedic philosophy of Advaita or nonduality was a supreme goal. His disciple, Vivekananda spread this message with 'one sentiment—universality' (Raychaudhuri 1999). Yet it is a matter of perception, when Sarkar (1997) saw in this transformation of '*Vedantic jnana (knowledge) and karma (redefined now as social service rather than ritual)*', Vivekananda's '*argument for the essential superiority of an aggressive and muscular Hinduism.*' (p. 291). This historian used psychoanalytic imagination of Ashish Nandy to peep 'beneath' the bold surface of Vivekananda. It is not an objective way of psychoanalysis, as one does not have direct

glimpse of the person, and secondly one seems to 'react' (not analyze) to the valorization of saints in society.

Intellectual entrapment is more conspicuous in the psychoanalysis of the same book *Kathamrita* (as we saw above in case of Chatterjee 1993), when the object of analysis is a familiar psychoanalytic theme—the sensual relationship—between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda by Kripal (1998). A fellow psychoanalyst Roland (2007) has expressed doubt about this methodology, analyzing secondary sources to dissect the unconscious conflicts of a person.

Tyagananda (2002) has raised even more fundamental question, did Kripal (an American psychoanalyst) correctly understand the meaning of Bengali words, a major challenge for any ethnographic work. If the words of alien language are misunderstood by the analysts, the result is likely to be catastrophic for the client (a warning given by psychiatrist Hoch in 1977). Fancy of psychoanalysts about sex as social bonding mechanism has been discussed and challenged in the first part of this paper (section '*form of a priori for affection*') and in the preceding paragraph. However, sexual aberrations among ascetics cannot be denied and need remedial measures like other medical problems (Roland 2007).

Irrespective of these questions, the Sri Ramakrishna-Swami Vivekananda relationship resonate the ancient *guru-chela* relationship having paradigmatic implications for the therapist and the client (Neki 1973), besides the issue of intuition. Abraham Maslow (see Daniels 2002) and Sen (1969) visualized much earlier seeds of humanistic psychology in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. This quest is much closer to transpersonal psychology which has its roots in Indian tradition. An important aspect that has significance at community level is, that these teachings are part of folk psychology in India and mediate everyday human-nature interactions. They also have linkages with the global environmental issues affecting large segments of human population by making them vulnerable to mental health problems (Bandura 2001; Kazdin 2009). These populations have become suspicious about the developmental processes which create dissonance in their minds. Finally, the resolutions of these conflicts take place through holistic learning at community level, and a case study in the next section is one such example.

Harmony of Gyan, Bhakti, and Karma

In the introduction to this paper, I have referred to developmental issues in India which make segments of population vulnerable to psychological problems, especially due to lack of empowerment (Pirta 2011b). A big challenge for planners is to make provision of mental health for the mammoth population living in far flung areas (Srinivasa Murthy 1998, 2004). One way of meeting this challenge is to utilize traditional community mental health resources (Pirta 2005,

2006). This idea has origins in author's direct observations during participation in people's frantic efforts to save the forests of the Himalaya from the onslaught of human greed. In addition there was fear in the minds of Gandhian social workers that these developmental processes had increased the miseries of native people.

It occurred to me that cultural, religious and spiritual components were intricately woven with the life of people in these traditional societies. These experiences articulated in a holistic model (see Pirta 2003), essentially included wisdom of native people where *gyan* (head), *bhakti* (heart) and *karma* (hands) were conceived as working in harmony, in contrast to modern society where head had grown larger, for hands there was little scope, and heart was almost silent. Coincidentally, Anandarajah (2008) has also conceptualized a 3H (head, heart and hand) model for spirituality. It has multicultural base including Hinduism, and has been tested in medical setting. Independent origins of similar ideas from social (environmental movement; Pirta 2003) and medical (healing; Anandarajah 2008) setting, only emphasizes the premise that for normal functioning there should be harmony in our thoughts, feelings and actions, and dissociation between them impairs societal and individual functioning. Earlier to this, investigators of a project, the GLOBE, have observed that the harmony of *gyan*, *bhakti*, and *karma*, signaling head, heart and hands respectively, was a characteristic of cultures forming a southern Asian cluster (Gupta et al. 2002).

Eastern concepts *prasaradhi* and *adhisiksha* have counterparts in modern psychology as plasticity and learning, respectively, for the acquisition and storage of experiences. In academic psychology plasticity and learning have origins in Hebb's (1959) neural cell assembly, on the one hand, and mediation of brain in experiencing complexity through environmental enrichment, on the other hand. From these developments in cognitive science, the psychoanalyst Bowlby (1977) argued that environment has facilitated evolution of certain biological processes essential for the survival of individual. The relationship with mother as an object in the environment and the complexity of her behavior was crucial for the survival of newborn infant. And in this lies the foundation of Bowlby's attachment theory. He said that the theory of attachment incorporated much psychoanalytic thinking but it differed from traditional psychoanalysis in adopting ideas from ethology and cognitive science. In this new conceptualization the primacy of 'sensual current' was replaced by the 'affectionate current'. And now with the Bowlby's theory, attachment could be studied in the entire mammalian class with a vast spectrum of behaviors—from the rodent colonies to the institution of deities. There is yet another way of looking at the Freudian 'affectionate current', a view developed by another psychoanalyst Young-Bruehl (2003). Her argument is to separate the 'affectionate current' from the 'sensual current',

on the one hand, and to emphasize the ego's role in developing relatedness which is conducive to reciprocity in love, on the other hand. Neki (1977, 2002) has also introduced important insights into this issue from religious and cultural ethos that prevails in India and has significance in therapy.

This reiteration of affectionate relationship in this article deserves an explanation. The author assumes attachment as a base for all kinds of pro-social behaviors, including empathy, in real life. Psychotherapists Bowlby, Young-Bruehl, and Neki independently suggested that the 'affectionate current' was more elemental than the 'sensual current', which supported Freud's initial proposal, affectionate sprang from infancy (see Young-Bruehl 2003). These voices have yet to gain enough credence from fellow psychotherapists, perhaps the sensual predominates latter's unconscious. Female spirit possession, for example, in the psychoanalytic accounts only valorized the phallus, while phenomenological analysis supported a premise that spirit possession allowed "*more than one voice to emanate from the body*" of a woman (Ram 2001; p. 181). Despite the indifference shown by psychotherapists, there is generalization of postulates of attachment theory to study intimate relationships including attachment to God (Cicirelli 2004), and there is concerted effort in personality and social psychology to study religious and spiritual elements as factors facilitating affectionate relationships (Norenzayan and Hansen 2006).

These theoretical developments necessitated a revision in the holistic model articulated by Pirta (2003) contextualized in the long struggle of Himalayan people to protect their forests where displacement from native areas was perceived as a threat to survival. The rise in discontentment among the tribal living in the forests of the middle belt of India also has similar contextual factors, however the leadership is in the hands of people who prefer violent means of struggle, rather than the non-violent struggle of Gandhians in the Himalayan region in the 1970s and 1980s (Pirta 2011b).

In the modified version of holistic model (Pirta 2011a), which has significance for mental health, the focus is on the psychological dimension of resilience-vulnerability and the concept of allostasis. Perceptual processes play important role in understanding dynamic interactions occurring at individual and group levels that determine the allostatic load felt by a person, which is in turn associated with affective and memory processes. Whereas the affective part is broadly related to sensual and affectionate domains, and memory refers to implicit and explicit experiences (conscious and unconscious). Three groups of studies have supported this revision: attachment to native area, traumatic memories of displacement, and trance states. Studies in the third group have significance here as they involved interaction of attachment, memory and religious factors (Pirta 2005, 2006, 2007, 2011a). Loizzo (2009) conceptualized similar psychological processes through a shift in allostatic drag to allostatic shift mediated by Indo-Tibetan

models of meditation. It is essentially a change from egocentric mode of life to altruistic mode of life through self-regulation and learning.

A significant contribution of the holistic model is to conceptualize the integration of Eastern and Western psychological (therapeutic) traditions, and to suggest mechanisms for individual and group modes of functioning among common people. Once there is enough information on the traditional institutions in India providing healing services, it may be possible to develop them as institutions of community mental health at village level. Furthermore, psychotherapists are likely to find them as additional sources to enlarge the scope of mental health services among masses.

Summary Our second objective in this paper was to explore additional ways from the Indian tradition for facilitating psychotherapeutic process at community level by inculcating humanitarian desire to serve others. To achieve this objective two ways were explored—intuition and holistic learning. Intuition has been discussed by taking a case study in *guru-chela* paradigm, Sri Ramakrishna and the spiritual tradition expounded by him. Second case study involved holistic learning which helped natives of western Himalayas to develop insights to resolve human-nature conflicts. They were articulated as a native (holistic) model of human development having three components cognitive (head), affective (heart) and behavioral (hands). It is important to mention that these two case studies depict the views of social scientists from various disciplines, including psychology, and have implications for mental health.

Conclusions

This paper has tried to examine the compatibility of intuitive - humanistic approach with systematic-positivistic approach in the context of psycho therapeutic training. The analysis showed that a major challenge is to make academic psychology a meeting ground for Western and Eastern traditions, which was matter of concern among the pioneers of positivistic and humanistic traditions in psychology, William James and Abraham Maslow respectively. Assimilation of these two traditions (East and West) and approaches (science and practice) is clearly visible in trans-personal psychology (Friedman 2002; Salagame 2011). But at the same time, in psychotherapy, where there is a proliferation of methods and approaches, the danger of conflict between scientist and practitioner is imminent, and the present paper indicates a way to avoid such disappointing development.

I find no reason to undermine the diversity of supernatural elements in Indian psyche. This is particularly evident in the little tradition of India (Kakar 1982; Nandy 1997). For psychologists, the dynamic of interaction between little and great tradition has great significance. It is a continuous process, occurring inside and outside the individual, affecting his/her thinking, feeling and behavior. The institutions of deities of little tradition have seldom attracted the attention of psychologists though they shape the psyche of average Indian in rural area where more than 80 % population of India thrives. In the Himalayan villages, for example, the institutions of deities (Pirta 2005), the *devis* and *devatas*, have a rich array of rituals in consonance with the mundane life of peasantry. Pirta (2007) has conjectured that the institution of deity may perhaps be developed into an institution of community mental health, lest it die as a relic of animistic belief. He has even suggested that the institution of deity engages the peasantry in activities that enhance cohesion in a group. This may have an answer to the query of Dreze and Sen (2002) as to why this Himalayan state (Himachal Pradesh) was comparatively peaceful and had shown better performance on various indicators of economic growth. Above all the complexity of rituals at the institution of deity provides enormous scope where personal self intermingles with social self. Incidentally these socio-psychological concepts have been integrated into identity fusion theory (Swann et al. 2012) by extending evolutionary kinship models to shared essence on the basis of ideology and context for explanation of pro-social behaviors at individual and group levels.

The diversity of little tradition of India lies in the infinite gods and goddesses originating from human minds, taking material form, evolving and sometimes dissolving in the great tradition, and those once extinct becomes alive in the trance or possession states. As long as the human mind has the a priori, biological and cultural, for shamanic archetypes, it would go on enriching the diversity of memes for supernatural elements in the mental universe. The important constituents of Indian psyche, as Misra (2011) has observed, must be seen as a dynamic of transcendent and empirical planes. If it turns out universal rather than contextual feature, a *new look* is imperative, with constraint on extremes, theism and atheism, and openness for spirituality and science. There is perhaps need to test the contention of some social scientists (e.g., Hoenig 2010; Nandy 2009) that secularism, as defined in the Indian tradition was faulty and presumably cause of dissenting voices in some parts of country.

Some indications of this *new look* are visible in the revision of the received paradigm of science. These developments have special significance for psychotherapists. First, because Eastern traditions have refined ways of taking inward journeys, and second psychiatrists (Grof), quantum

physicists (Sudarshan) and experimental psychologists (Sperry, Velmans) have advocated for a change in our perception of material reality based on classical physics. The visualization of the physical world in our experiences is perhaps the most important feature of all the spiritual traditions, and some chemicals (psychedelics) recapitulate spiritual phenomena in human experiences so vividly (Grof 1975/1996) that it has added a new transpersonal dimension. In this context, Grof (2008) has referred to information coming from the quantum-relativistic physics as a crucial factor in changing the notion of reality and in minds of people. In this context, ideas of E. C. G. Sudarshan have special significance. Sudarshan's pioneering research in the quantum nature of matter and his interest in the Eastern view (the Vedanta) of mind (Pirta 2012) have perhaps enriched one another. For, neuroscientist Sperry (1991, 1992) has emphasized the important role religious beliefs play as macro-mental variables. Therefore the research of psychologists on the association between supernatural beliefs and mental health in India, which presently indicate negative, exploratory and therapeutic stances, needs a new look in the light of revisions in paradigm of science, which are largely attitudinal rather than fundamental (Velmans 2007).

Looking from the dominant tradition of science, any search to enlarge the scope of Indian tradition to inculcate humanitarian spirit among aspiring psychotherapists would suffer from three handicaps, overwhelming role of supernatural elements in shaping psyche, lack of alignment of religious beliefs with positivistic thinking (or religion as a part of secularism), and, dependence on subjective (I-person) rather than objective (III-person) methods. Unless we address to these three issues, efforts to abridge chasm between Eastern and Western traditions in psychology is likely to remain superficial. These are not insurmountable problems, for some time we can keep aside the ontological question of supernatural entity, and assume that human beliefs about supernatural elements are mental having functional value. This alternative hypothesis has potential to reveal Nature's curious ways of directing the evolution of human mind, religion and culture.

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