

## Positive Youth Development and Spiritual Well-being in Bharatiya Philosophy: A Social Work Perspective

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### Abstract

The conceptualisation of positive youth development and spiritual well-being is deeply rooted in several concepts and theories of Bharatiya philosophy. Several schools of Bharatiya philosophy put emphasis on the overall development and well-being of every human being. Theories such as Purusharthas and Triguna can be utilised in the framework of Positive Youth Development to aid in the holistic growth and well-being of youth. Principles and values of these theories can be utilised for the positive youth development and spiritual well-being in social work profession to assist youth in achieving a meaningful and satisfying life. Inculcating conceptual framework incorporated in Bharatiya philosophy such as ethical living, monetary prosperity, enjoyment, and spiritual emancipation can be utilised in the field of social work. Therefore, the present study highlights the concept of positive youth development and spiritual well-being inculcated in Bharatiya philosophy which can be used in the field of social work profession for the development of youth. Thus, the study utilises the descriptive research design based on secondary data. The results of the study indicates that positive youth development and spiritual well-being can be helpful for social workers dealing with the youth and their problems. The study also highlights the importance of Bharatiya philosophy and its role in the development of youth.

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### Introduction

The term Positive youth development refers to a strategy that emphasises helping young people develop in ways that improve their health and well-being and their ability to contribute to their families and communities as adults (Lerner *et al.*, 2008) <sup>[13]</sup>. The objective of positive youth development (PYD) is to help young people reach their full potential by helping them develop their competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Lerner, *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[11]</sup>. The fundamental principle of PYD is that young people who have more developmental assets are more likely to succeed academically, have better long-term health outcomes, have better economic opportunities, and are more involved in the development of community. Similarly, Bharatiya philosophy incorporates the idea of Positive Youth Development (PYD) by placing a strong emphasis on principles like harmony, sustainability, and holistic well-being among youths (Lerner, 2012) <sup>[12]</sup>. In traditional Bharatiya Philosophy, the idea of

Positive Youth Development (PYD) focuses on the development of youth by creating empowerment and supportive conditions for the youth to make them realise their full-potential therefore Bharatiya philosophy put emphasis on the role of spirituality as the component of enhancing overall well-being.

Bharatiya philosophy holds that spirituality is necessary for inner peace and personal development. It tackles important issues like as existence, the meaning of life, and the afterlife, promoting introspection and firsthand knowledge to foster a greater comprehension of oneself and the cosmos. Spiritual well-being can be helpful in the development of youth as studies shows that spiritual well-being has positive relationship with social, emotional, cognitive and moral competence and resilience (Shek, 2012) <sup>[19]</sup>. Ancient writings like the Vedas and Upanishads offer fundamental insights into a moral and spiritual life and are considered as the cornerstone of spiritual tradition in Bharat (Mohanty, 2024).

The Bhagavad Gita and other ancient Bharatiya spiritual writings provide insightful guidance on how to improve mental health and wellbeing by embracing ideas like self-awareness, mindfulness, and unattached actions (Keshavan *et al.*, 2021) [9]. Bharatiya philosophy places a high value on spirituality, which includes a thorough knowledge of human existence, the proper way to live, and the proper way to think (Goswami, 2017) [6]. In terms of spirituality many experiences of human existence have been classified as spiritual such as a feeling of identity with nature, ecstasies, contentment with accomplishments, self-respect and human dignity, acclimatisation to oneself or others, happiness, empathy and sympathy, morale, mental health, optimism are some of these experiences (Moberg, 1971) [15]. Spiritual well-being is referred to the feeling of contentment an individual get when he/she dedicates his/her lives to find ultimate meaning of life. Thus, it can be stated that, spiritual well-being brings about a personality of harmonious and peaceful nature through integrating emotions with strengthening stress coping strategy and helping individual to understand reality (Rupan, 2020) [17]. Moreover, spirituality in Youth is linked to a feeling of self, community, and connection, which promotes healthy growth and deters bad behaviour (Cheon & Canda, 2010) [2]. There is a lot of research on the connection between spiritual health and constructive youth development. Studies show that spirituality and religion are positively correlated with the health, happiness and well-being of young people (Scales, *et al.*, 2014) [18]. In Bharatiya philosophy significance of spirituality is also conceptualised by helping people live purposeful and happy lives and in fostering values like morality, humanism and philanthropy and similarly these values can also be linked to the concept of positive youth development as several research highlights that spirituality can help youth in their development (Shek *et al.*, 2019) [20].

Therefore, in this paper is an attempt is made to understand the concepts of positive youth development and spiritual well-being in Bharatiya philosophy from the perspective of social work. By attending to the special needs of young people, standing up for their rights, and creating settings that support development and well-being, social workers are at the forefront of encouraging positive outcomes for young people. Social workers can play an important role in determining the course of young lives by using a holistic approach that takes not only the social, emotional, educational, and environmental elements for the development of youth but also putting focus on their spiritual well-being. Thus, making an attempt to understand the several theories of Bharatiya philosophy from the perspective of social work profession have been prioritised in this study, because in addition to offering support, advocacy, and intervention services, social workers also play a vital role in resolving the complex difficulties that young people encounter by fostering inclusive settings that encourage academic success, social and emotional growth, and community involvement.

## Research Methodology

The present is descriptive in nature based on secondary data sources. A content analysis research approach has been used in this paper to describe the themes related to the study. The study related information is gathered from different sources such as journal articles, books, websites and other related data sources. Base on this a thematic approach has been utilised to fulfil the objective of the study. Following themes have been considered for this study:

- Spiritual Well-being and Positive Youth Development in Bharatiya Philosophy: A Concept
- Principles of Bharatiya Philosophy for Positive Youth Development: A Social Work Approach

## Spiritual Well-being and Positive Youth Development in Bharatiya Philosophy: A Concept

Spiritual well-being emphasises the role of spiritual health in influencing behaviour and lifestyle choices. It encompasses religious well-being (a relationship with God) and existential well-being (meaning and purpose in life). Human relationships with God, oneself, others, and environment are all part of spiritual health, which is dynamic in nature (Ghaderi *et al.*, 2018) [5]. In Bharatiya philosophy, spiritual well-being is essentially based on the notion that only pure individual awareness is real (Arka, 2018) [1]. Bharatiya transpersonal psychology and spirituality both take into account the whole personality of an individual while tackling difficult experience. According to Bharatiya philosophy, achieving the highest level of well-being requires undergoing transformative change that is impacted by events which includes the notion of inner mind, the external environment, attitudes, and values etc (Menon *et al.*, 2018) [14]. The fundamental ideas of Bharatiya philosophy include rebirth, ātman, dharma, and karma, all of which have a profound impact on how people view spirituality in the last stages of life. Obtaining freedom (moksha) by a disciplined life of morally upright deeds and social duties is the ultimate goal in Bharatiya philosophical systems. In Bharatiya way of thinking, the ultimate goal of existence is seen to be realising oneness with the Divine, which ultimately results in freedom and realisation (Hamilton, 2018) [7]. Therefore, Spiritual well-being, according to Bharatiya philosophy, is a condition attained by means of transformational change impacted by experiences involving the inner mind, external environment, attitudes, and values, situating the individual inside the spirit. The ancient books like the Upanishads put emphasis on recovery and spiritual development which is believed to stems from the philosophical concept that consciousness is the basis of the mind and body (Menon *et al.*, 2018) [14].

In the framework of Bharatiya philosophy, spiritual well-being is vital for overall development of youth. The study shows that spirituality is associated with positive youth developmental factors, such as forming personal beliefs and values, connecting with others, having purpose in life and having meaningful relationships with others (Lau, 2006). Positive Youth Development (PYD) focuses on identifying and maximising youth strengths, offering opportunities, cultivating good connections, and assisting youth in their progress. Thus, by highlighting transformational change through self-examination and taking consciousness as the basis for mental health, physical health, spiritual well-being and holistic well-being, Bharatiya philosophy may greatly help in positive youth development because, the idea of well-being in Bharatiya philosophy encompasses more than just treating deficiencies or illnesses but it also attempts to promote enhanced social participation, greater expression of inner potential, and a complete sense of well-being of an Individual (Menon *et al.*, 2018) [14]. The Bharatiya philosophy places a strong emphasis on processes such as consciousness, awakening, and the formation of a spiritual identity, meaning, and purpose and the formation of a spiritual identity and transcendence might result in positive youth development (Shek, 2012) [19].

In Bharat, the practice of social work is closely linked to the Bharatiya philosophy and spiritual well-being. With the goal of serving mankind in a professional, committed, and spiritual way, in which ideals of social work and tenets are grounded on ethical and spiritual practices (Dash, 2019) [4]. In social work education, the idea of Bharatiyakaran combines Indic, Afrocentric, and Sinocentric viewpoints, highlighting ideas such as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is our family) and 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' (let everyone be happy) (IGNOU, 2019) [8]. The foundational principles of social work are strongly aligned with the Bharatiya philosophy, which supports a large portion of Bharatiya thinking and encourages selfless service, compassion, mutual help, and unconditional love for disadvantaged people (Dash, 2017) [3]. Bharatiya spiritual literature have the ability to provide valuable insights into contemporary social work approaches. One such source is the Vedic Guna theory, which divides human behaviour into three categories: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas and incorporating qualities of sattva among individuals may lead to their overall well-being (Arka, 2018) [1]. Therefore,

Bharatiya philosophy and Hinduism serve as major sources of inspiration for the Indian social work profession, which incorporates moral values, spiritual beliefs, and a holistic approach to well-being into its practice with the ultimate goal of advancing social justice, harmony, and the welfare of all people.

### Schools of Bharatiya Philosophy and its Values for Positive Youth Development: A Social Work Approach

Integrating several principles of Bharatiya philosophy into the social work profession can result in significant advancements towards the holistic development and overall well-being of youth. As the Bharatiya philosophy is a rich in ideas that emphasise interconnectivity, balance, and harmony. The six major āstika schools of Vedic philosophy in the Bharatiya knowledge system include Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedanta. These schools have different perspectives on various aspects of life, including youth.

**Table 1:** Bharatiya Philosophical Schools and values incorporated in these schools for positive Youth Development.

S. No.	Bharatiya Philosophical School	Values Incorporated in the School	PYD
1	Nyaya	Importance of logical reasoning and inquiry	This school encourage youth to develop critical thinking skills and inspires them to seek knowledge through reliable sources
2	Vaisheshika	Focuses on the nature of reality and the existence of individual entities	This school encourages youth to understand the world around them and appreciate the uniqueness of each and every being
3	Samkhya	This school distinguishes between purusha (consciousness) and prakriti (matter)	This school encourage youth to understand the distinction between the self and the material world and to strive for spiritual growth
4	Yoga	Integration of body, mind, and spirit through physical and mental practices	This school encourage youth to develop discipline, self-awareness, and inner peace
5	Mīmāṃsā	The proper interpretation and application of the Vedas into every aspect of life	This school encourage to engage in ethical and moral actions and to fulfil their duties and responsibilities
6	Vedanta	This philosophical and spiritual tradition explores the nature of reality and the purpose of human existence	This school encourage self-inquiry, self-realization, and the pursuit of wisdom. Vedanta teaches that the ultimate truth lies within oneself and guides individuals on a path of spiritual growth and enlightenment.

These philosophical school and their values offer various principles and practices that can contribute to the spiritual well-being and personal growth of youth. Social worker dealing with youths can help them to incorporate these values. By fostering critical thinking abilities and encouraging the use of trustworthy sources for information acquisition are two ways that the social work profession may integrate these concepts with youngsters. Encouraging awareness and knowledge of the diversity and individuality of every person as well as the environment around them is another aspect of it. Through self-awareness and discipline, social workers can encourage young people on their path towards inner peace and spiritual progress by helping them to recognise the difference between the self and the material world. Youth can also be encouraged to accomplish their roles and responsibilities within their communities by emphasising moral and ethical acts. Social workers can accompany young people on a journey of spiritual development and enlightenment by assisting them in discovering the ultimate truth inside themselves by self-inquiry, self-realization, and the quest of knowledge. Therefore, by incorporating these principles and values into their lives, youth can develop a

deeper understanding of themselves, their place in the world, and their responsibilities towards others and society.

### Conceptualisation of Four Purushartha and Positive Youth Development from the Perspective of Social Work

The four Purushartha are Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. In Bharatiya philosophy, these are frequently referred to as the four aims of human existence. These objectives, which are closely related to one another, are meant to offer a balanced and happy existence. Therefore, inculcating the several qualities of these Purushartha can be helpful in the overall growth and development of youth. In terms of spiritual well-being and the field of social work, the Purusharthas offer a structure for comprehending how different facets of human existence are interrelated. They place a strong emphasis on the value of moral behaviour, financial success, enjoyment, and spiritual emancipation in leading a happy and purposeful life. Youth can work towards a peaceful existence that fosters their spiritual development and advances the welfare of their communities by striking a balance in the pursuit of these Purushartha.

**Table 2:** The Four Purushartha and Positive Youth Development

S. No.	Four Purushartha	Qualities	Positive Youth Development
1	Dharma	Righteousness, moral values	Prioritise Dharma: by maintaining moral principles and virtuous conduct as the cornerstones of actions youth can make sure that the choices they make and the things they do are morally righteous and beneficial to society.
2	Artha	Prosperity, economic values	Harmonise Artha: youth can pursue wealth and economic well-being while being satisfied and aware of the ethical considerations of using material resources sensibly by keeping moral principles in mind.
3	Kama	Pleasure, happiness, love, psychological values	Moderate Kama: youth can relish happiness-inducing events of joy and pleasures in proportion while refraining from overindulgence. Youth can maintain focus on their higher self, spiritual goals while fostering emotional well-being, mental clarity, and balanced relationships.
4	Moksha	Liberation, spiritual values	Strive for Moksha: youth can prioritise their spiritual development, self-realization, and freedom from material attachments. By engaging in spiritual activities like meditation, introspection, mindfulness, yoga etc. youth can achieve inner peace and inner qualities

Prioritising Dharma in the context of youth social worker entails establishing moral values and virtue as cornerstones of their behaviour, guaranteeing that their decisions and acts are morally just and advantageous to society. Social workers can assist young people achieve economic and financial well-being in an ethical manner while taking into account the wider effects of their use of material resources by harmonising Artha. Social Workers can recommend youth that they moderate their Kama, encouraging them to experience happiness and pleasure in moderation while also focusing on their spiritual aspirations and higher selves, promoting mental clarity, emotional stability, and wholesome interpersonal interactions. Moreover, social workers can also prioritise the spiritual growth, inculcating the sense of self-realization, and freedom from material attachments among youth in order to help them in their quest for happiness and well-being. By integrating these values and principles into their practice, social workers may better comprehend and meet the needs of their clients, especially young people. Social workers may, for instance, support logical thinking and critical thinking skills

of youth by giving them access to trustworthy and quality information sources and encouraging them to pose questions and look for solutions. They can also use mindfulness exercises, yoga, and meditation to support young people in achieving inner calm and self-awareness. Furthermore, social workers can encourage moral and ethical behaviour by stressing the value of carrying out one's obligations to the environment and society. Finally, by promoting self-examination and the search for knowledge, social workers may assist young people on a road towards spiritual development, well-being and overall growth.

### Triguna and Positive Youth Development

In Bharatiya philosophy, the three basic characteristics or qualities that are said to exist in all creatures and matter are referred to as the Triguna Theory. The notion of the Tri-Gunas, comprising of Tamas, Rajas, and Sattva, may be utilised to include the concept of positive youth development into the field of social work by comprehending the significance of each guna in moulding an individual's emotional disposition and state of health

**Table 3:** Triguna, Qualities of Trigunas and its Values for Positive Youth Development

S. No	Triguna	Qualities	Positive Youth Development
1	Sattva (purity, goodness)	Wisdom, knowledge, light, calm, balanced, and exhibiting virtues like compassion and selflessness	By emphasising purity in thoughts and deeds, pursuing knowledge, cultivating awareness, and taking part in activities that advance wisdom and harmony, youth can achieve sattva.
2	Rajas (passion, activity)	Ambition, desire, attachment, desires, seeking success and achievement in various aspects of life	To manage Rajas, youth can focus on their enthusiasm and energy on positive activities, make thoughtful goal-oriented decisions, use self-control, and refrain from being overly attached to the results.
3	Tamas (inertia, darkness)	Laziness, delusion, ignorance, lethargy, confusion, and negativity.	Youth can control Tamas by engaging in physical exercise, learning to eliminate ignorance, and promoting optimism through associations and activities that elevate.

In the context of social work and positive youth development, inspiring young people to aspire to Sattva entails encouraging them to be pure in their thoughts and deeds, creating a hunger for knowledge, developing awareness, and taking part in activities that uphold peace and wisdom. Social workers help young people learn to manage Rajas by focusing their energy and excitement on positive activities, helping them make deliberate, goal-oriented decisions, exercising self-control, and avoiding an unhealthy addiction to results. Social workers can help young people regulate their Tamas by encouraging physical activity, providing learning and growth opportunities to eradicate ignorance, and cultivating optimism through uplifting activities and good associations. By using these

strategies, social workers can help young people develop a sense of balance and well-being, which helps them deal with obstacles of life in a resilient and optimistic manner.

### Conclusion

Bharatiya philosophy incorporates several principles of positive youth development and spiritual well-being which have a significant effect on the social work profession in India. It is believed that incorporating Bharatiya knowledge system into social work education and practice would help to advance a more inclusive and holistic approach to social work, which will ultimately be advantageous to social workers as well as their clients. As Bharatiya philosophy

takes a holistic approach to conceptualising Positive Youth Development (PYD) and spiritual well-being, integrating monetary wealth, enjoyment, ethical living, and spiritual emancipation. The theory of four Purusharthas i.e., Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha offer a framework for comprehending several facets of human existence are interrelated and emphasise the significance of moral behaviour, worldly success, pleasure, and spiritual emancipation in leading a happy and purposeful life. By realising how each guna shapes an emotional and mental health of an individual and also overall well-being, the Tri-Guna theory which consists of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas can be used to the development and spiritual well-being of youth. Social workers may assist young people in developing the abilities, proficiencies, and self-awareness required to thrive in both their personal and professional life by cultivating traits linked to Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Also, it is acknowledged that integrating spirituality into social work practice is essential, and social workers are urged to help youth to develop and deepen spirituality of youth along with their personal spirituality via exercises like prayer, meditation, and reading religious texts. This spiritual orientation can improve social workers' comprehension of clients' capacity for development and empowerment, resulting in a more thorough and efficient method of doing social work.

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