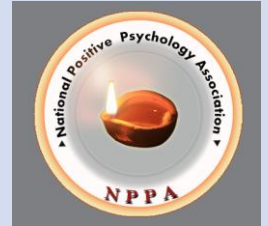


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The Scholarly Nook

The Scholarly Nook brings to you articles written by scholars either on some of their own research or regarding the latest ongoing research in the field of Positive Psychology. In this edition we present an article on Positive Aging. Read ahead to know more!

Aging: From Pathology to Flourishing

“Of all the self-fulfilling prophecies in our culture the assumption that aging means decline and poor health is probably the deadliest.” ~ Marilyn Ferguson

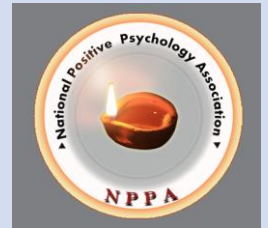
The shift from the 4 Ds (Disease, Disability, Dementia and Death) of old age to health promotion and disease prevention in the later phases of life has not been linear. Even today international debate looms around whether or not to promote ‘aging as a disease.’ Initially, philosophers such as Seneca, Aristotle and the writers of the Hippocratic corpus, equated aging with disease and as Aristotle said ‘it is a pathological

affliction of the body’ (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). But how far does the international community of Gerontologists adhere to this view today? Surprisingly, even today this school of thought has some takers, and as one would normally assume, they seem to have an inherently ageist outlook. They, however, justify their claim on the grounds that the inclusion and promotion of aging within the framework of pathology would garner more funding for aging research.



But how far does this view resonate with the scientific community and the general public, especially those who are demographically defined as older people? Does it not sound ageist? Does it not stigmatize the older population and relegate them to the fringes of society? And does it not promote the societal rejection of older people like the Disengagement Theory did some 58 years ago? Interestingly enough, the Disengagement Theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) posited that an older

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person can experience life satisfaction once he withdraws from society. This prepares him for his upcoming demise and the earlier he accepts this disengagement the easier it becomes for him to experience contentment. This theory was eventually rejected by the scientific community for its ageist nature. However, its value lies in the theoretical controversy it generated, that in turn led to the development of the subsequent theories of aging.

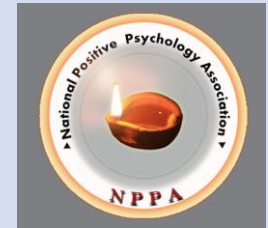
Currently, the extension of the Positive Psychology movement to aging has stimulated work on 'Positive Aging'. The chief concern of Positive Psychologists is to help older people maintain their subjective well-being using their latent psychological resources, such as forgiveness, gratitude and optimism (Hill, 2005). Another task facing Positive Psychologists is to promote flourishing in old age despite the age-related losses and declines. The present worldwide demographic trend of 'population aging' necessitates an inquiry into these aspects to ensure that we 'add more life to the years and not just more years to life'.



As per the estimates of the UN, older persons (those aged 60 years and above) constituted 12.7% of the global population in 2017. This figure is projected to rise to 16.5% in 2030 (United Nations, 2015) and 21.3% in 2050 (United Nations, 2017). In India, those aged 60 years and above constituted 9.4 % of our total population in 2017 (United Nations, 2017), while by the end of the century they are projected to comprise nearly 34 percent of our total population (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Under such circumstances, it is critical for us to facilitate the Positive Aging of our growing older population.

By encouraging the development and spread of positive elder-care practices we can contribute to a smoother transition into the later phases of life. Positive elder-care practices include resources and interventions that have the potential to sustain and improve the well-being of the older population. They include but are not limited to opportunities for volunteering and late age employment, the establishment of elder-friendly communities and public spaces, provision of gerontechnology, and infrastructural facilities which cater to the special needs of the older individuals. Such facilities include ease in availing the services of public transportation, banks, and other financial institutions, access to affordable health services, financial and technological literacy of the older persons, and the presence of

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social security schemes and supportive government policy for its senior citizens.



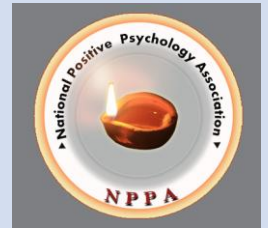
If we want to facilitate the positive aging of the older citizens living in the community, for example, we must aim at establishing an elder-friendly community – an inclusive barrier-free community where “people can live their entire lives, if they so desire, rather than having to relocate and lose their social capital” (Scharlach, 2009, p.6). An elder-friendly community must address the holistic needs of all the older residents – those who are capable of independent functioning as well as those with age-related declines or disabilities. While for those older persons living in the various types of elder-care institutions (assisted living facilities, senior living, retirement communities, charitable old-age homes, government run old-age homes, non-government run old-age homes), Appreciative Inquiry initiatives could be conducted on various affirmative topics. These

could include: empowerment of the older residents, happiness in the care home, and promoting autonomy. Besides, we could work towards developing culturally-tailored interventions for promoting the well-being of institutionalized older Indians.

In the past few years, India has also seen a proliferation of governmental, not-for-profit, CSR-based, and entrepreneurial initiatives providing a varied range of positive elder-care services. A few of these include:

- *The Nightingale Empowerment Foundation* based in Bengaluru that has been organizing a job fair for senior citizens since 2013. Those between 60-70 years of age, physically fit and in need of financial security are the target group for this job fair. They also provide a one-month computer and soft-skills training program and run a job portal for senior citizens.
- *Maya CARE* (<http://mayacare.com/>) assists senior citizens with activities such as accompanying them to the doctor, to social or cultural events, to the railway station or airport, reading to them, writing letters or articles for them, assisting them with computer-related work, bank work, or in paying bills, accompanying them to the grocery store or pharmacy. Maya CARE offers these services for free through its network of volunteers. It operates in Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru.

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- Uber India has launched Uber Assist and Uber Access for senior citizens and the physically disabled, in Bengaluru. The vehicles under Uber Access have hydraulic wheelchairs, walkers and collapsible scooters. Uber Assist, on the other hand, promises to help those with mobility issues while entering or exiting the vehicles.
- *Hey Zindagi* (<https://www.heyzindagi.in/>) is an online shopping website for senior citizens. Their novelty lies in acknowledging the importance of the psychological well-being of the senior citizens by selling products which make it easier for them to continue enjoying their leisure time activities. These include reading aids (example: pens for those with rheumatoid arthritis), puzzles and games (playing card holder), gardening tools (easy grip scissors), sewing and craft aids (easy thread nipper), audios for yoga , meditation and music therapy for migraine, arthritis, insomnia and high blood pressure.
- The Social Justice Department of the State Government of Kerala has implemented a scheme entitled 'Vayo Amrutham' for the residents of the government-run old-age care homes in the state. This scheme has been launched with the support of Indian System of Medicine Department. The objective is to provide *ayurvedic* treatment to the residents suffering from ailments such as diabetes, asthma, skin diseases, arthritis, hearing loss, and

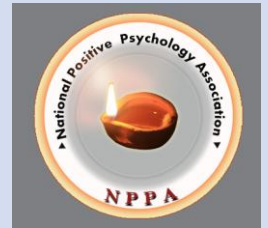
vision problems among others. This scheme also covers palliative care for the bedridden and counseling services for the residents.

- In 2017, *Panasonic India* felicitated 70 senior citizens (with no political background) of the Gharaunda Block of Haryana for their work and effort in the fields of education, infrastructure, public health, and gender equality. This was done with an effort to promote a culture of participation among older persons, create a community support mechanism for them and facilitate meaningful engagement between the older and younger generation.

These serve as exemplars for the development of more such services in India, albeit at a more affordable cost, and for all segments of our older population. In addition to the myriad range of services tailor-made for senior citizens, there also exist a number of evidence-based interventions for their well-being promotion. Some of these include:

- *Reminiscence Interventions* where the participants are required to recall and share their positive memories and life experiences. These interventions promote interpersonal bonding and help in uplifting ones mood (Haber, 2006).
- *Life Review Interventions* involve a more organized evaluation of one's positive as well as negative memories from different periods of their life. It provides an opportunity to the participant to

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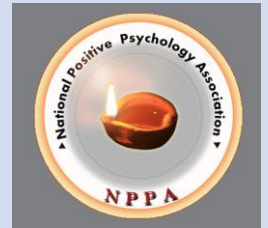
make sense of and integrate his/her experiences (Westerhof & Bohlmeijer, 2014).

- *Geriatric Art Therapy* has also been found to be an effective form of intervention. Zeiger (1976) proposed that the theme of artwork should be based on specific life events such as one's wedding, this stimulates the recall many pleasant and unpleasant past events and enabled the participants to attribute meaning to those significant events.
- *Existentially-based interventions* promote spiritual growth, and foster the development of hope, optimism, and meaning of life (Fry, 2000). These existential constructs help in coping with the challenges and stressors of old age.
- *Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* - a form of action research that aims at organizational change and/development, is also recently being used in community settings and various elder-care facilities. It involves valuing and searching for the key strengths of an organization or community, its existing best practices and the root causes of their success, and eventually building and implementing the collective vision of the organizational or community members about their organization's/community's future.



Considering the trend of population aging, we need to focus on healthy and positive aging as a major research theme. Such research needs to have an interdisciplinary orientation – with topics ranging from biological to psychological and social science–related aging issues. Psychology, sociology and social gerontology, geriatric psychiatry, cognitive and medical sciences, epidemiological studies, demography or population studies, and developmental economics, have all been contributing to the aging literature worldwide. Research findings from each of these fields are crucial for helping policy makers in defining, preparing and assessing goals, programs, schemes for the older population and in raising awareness and support of the public for the much-needed policy changes.

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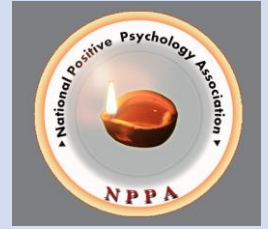
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The Oracle: Interview Series with Esteemed Professors

In our second issue we introduce all NPPA Members to **Professor S.S. Nathawat** – Emeritus Professor & Advisory Committee Member of NPPA.

Professor Nathawat has been teaching Psychology and has been involved in research for over four decades in India. He has taught at several Universities including Jodhpur University, King George's Medical College (Lucknow), Kurukshetra University, University of Rajasthan (Jaipur) and he is presently serving as Professor Emeritus and **Director at Amity Centre for Positivism & Happiness** at Amity University (Jaipur), Rajasthan since 2009.

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He has edited the prestigious Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology (IJCP) for over 6 years and has published over 100 research papers in various National and International journals. Among the various books published by him, the book entitled “New facets of Positivism” in collaboration with A.K. Chauhan (2012) is highly valued.

Professor Nathawat has received the Honor of Eminent Psychologist from Prachi Association (India) in 2016 and has been the Honorary General Secretary and Past President of the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP). Besides, he is also on the panel of experts of the Public Service Commission’s Selection Committee of Professors in Universities.

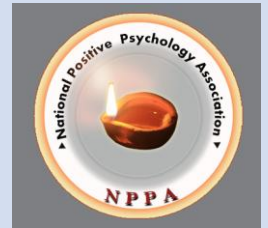
- **What had stimulated your interest in Psychology?**

I was initially a graduate student of Maharaja’s College University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. I used to write in newspapers about general topics of public interest. I was curious about Para-psychological experiences, faith healing practices and mysterious events. I was told psychology could quench my curiosity. Unfortunately, there existed no department of psychology during that time (1961-1964) in Rajasthan. The subject of psychology started at the University of Jodhpur in 1962, so I shifted from Rajasthan University Jaipur to University of Jodhpur in 1964 and did my post-graduation in Psychology from there in 1966 and joined as Assistant Professor in Psychology. Yet I was not satisfied and left the place and joined NIMHANS Bangalore in January 1967 for a professional course in Clinical Psychology to understand the different facets of Clinical Psychology. As a graduate student, I was much impressed with Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung – my teacher’s teacher (Dr. A.U Vasavada, Jodhpur).

- **How did your association with Positive Psychology begin?**

My association with a sort of Positive Psychology goes back to 1984, when I attended

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the 23rd International conference of Psychology at Acapulco, Mexico in 1984. Back then I was working on the concept of Psychological Well-Being based on the work of Peter Warr. Soon I started working on several projects in guiding students in the field of Psychological Well-being, EQ, SQ and guiding students on PhD on these topics at Rajasthan University, Jaipur and also writing editorials in Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology as Editor-in-Chief from the year 1996-2002. I also got major projects in the field of Positive Psychology from UGC, probably first time in Positive Psychology in 2007 in our country. Since then I am interested in working in this field up till now, I have also organized three International Conferences at Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur on Positive Psychology –“ A new approach to Mental Health and Positivism” consecutively in 2010, 2011 and 2012 on the same dates (6th, 7th and 8th of August). I have published several research papers in the field of Positive Psychology including a book on New Facets of Positivism (A.K. Chauhan & S.S.Nathawat, New Delhi Macmillan). Another book is in progress on Cultivating Positivism & Happiness (Asim Chauhan & S.S.Nathawat)

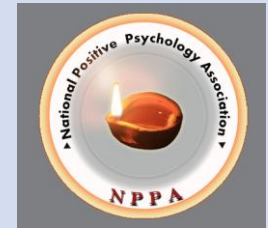
- **What do you feel about the way Positive Psychology has been developing in India, and**



where do you see Positive Psychology in India, in the next 5 years?

Positive Psychology appears to have developed in size, scope and is of wide spread public interest, since its origin - nearly two decades back. Its principles can be applied to a wide range of spheres including schools, relationships, the work place, and the family, emotional problems and even in the defense. In our country two associations – Indian Association of Positive Psychology and National Association of Positive Psychology have been founded and these associations have been working for its development and application. Researches in the field of Well- being, Happiness, PERMA Model of well- being, Character Strengths, Measures of

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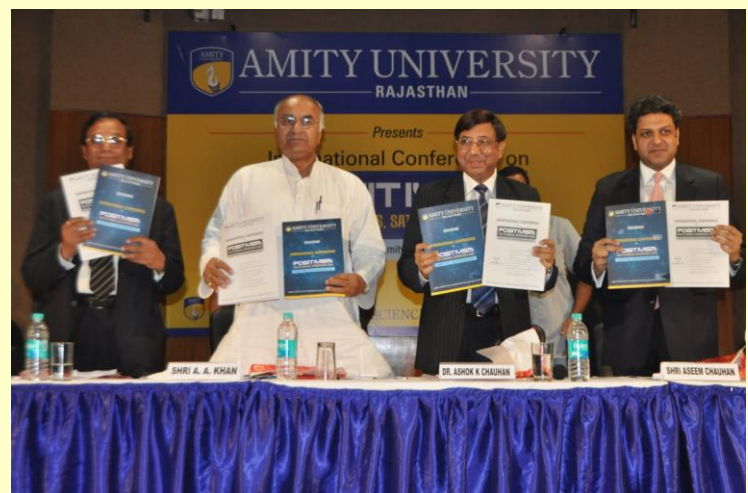
Positive Psychology have been carried out in different parts of the country. Indian psychologists working in the field of Positive Psychology have reported predictors of happiness in Indian studies like self efficacy, optimism, hardiness, meaning in life and resilience in adolescence. In some universities the Department of Psychology have also initiated Positive Psychology at the Graduate and Post-Graduate levels. We have also started Center of Positivism and Happiness at Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur.

I hope Positive Psychology in India in the next five years will be global in nature. It will evolve more in this era of globalization and several of its future studies will be multi-national, collaborative projects which will be a reflection of the existing accumulative knowledge of Positive Psychology - the collective wisdom of scholars from different cultures. Future developments in this field will depend on mutual exchange of views between scholars in different parts of the world. The establishment of a feedback chain and system in Asia is important from the perspective of Positive Psychology.

- **What would you say, is the value of Positive Psychology to the general population?**

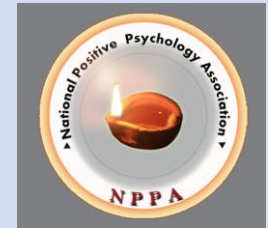
While many other branches of Psychology tend to focus on dysfunctional and abnormal

behavior, Positive Psychology concentrates on helping people become happier. It focuses on how human beings prosper even at the face of adversity. Its goals are to identify and enhance the human strengths and virtues that make life worth living and allow individuals and the general population to thrive. Thus, Positive Psychology helps general population to improve their quality of life by developing human virtues such as resilience, optimism, self-confidence, happiness and coping.



Prof. Nathawat during the Souvenir & Abstracts release session at the 3rd International Conference on “Positivism” (2012) at Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur {From left: Prof. Nathawat, A.A Khan(Health Minister, Rajasthan), Dr. Ashok Chauhan (Founder President, RBEF Amity Universities), Dr. Aseem Chauhan (Chancellor, AUR)}

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- **As someone who has been teaching, training, and guiding scholars in Psychology for several years, what kind of training would you suggest for students of Positive Psychology?**

Training is necessary for students of Positive Psychology. Students in the field of Positive Psychology may work at different places including Positive schooling, Positive organizations (corporate sectors), Counseling centers, NGO's etc. They need to be exposed with practical knowledge and training of Positive Psychological Capital (skills of self efficacy, optimism, hope & resilience), Appreciative Inquiry, training in Character Strength Development, skill of writing Good Day Diary, training to cultivate Positive Emotions etc. They should also be exposed to role playing, group conferences, case presentations to help them to share what skills they have acquired, and experimenting methods workable to them to improve quality of life.

- **How can the community of Positive Psychologists contribute in a better way to research in the Indian setting?**

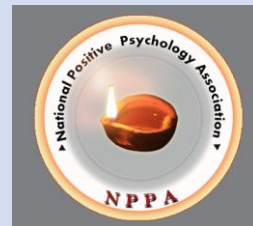
In India, research in Positive Psychology must be conducted with different groups of population including children, teenagers, adults and senior citizens both from urban and rural areas. It is

observed that character strengths enhance well-being and can be nurtured through systematic programs. The intellectual development of the child is important but we should also focus on developing future citizens who can interact with respect, kindness, integrity and honesty. Opportunities can be created to develop hope, assertiveness, humor, appreciation and other character strengths in educational setups. Researches in the field of positivity in life, spirituality, quality of life, positive emotions need to be outnumbered than the studies on negative emotions. We need to suggest methods based on researches to foster positive organizations, positive schooling and cultivating positive emotions to overcome negativity of our daily life.



Prof. S.S Nathawat with Prof. S.D. Sharma – Ex President, IPS, in one of the academic sessions of 3rd International Conference on Positivism (2012) at Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur.

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Latest Updates

Upcoming Conferences & Workshops:

- 14th Annual International Conference on Spirituality & Psychology, Bangkok, Thailand, 13th to 15th of March, 2019 (Accepting abstracts till 1st February)
- 6th World Congress on Positive Psychology, IPPA, Melbourne, Australia, July 18th to 21st, 2019
- Positive Psychology, Happiness, Mindfulness and Wellness Summit, Dubai, UAE, November 13th – 14th, 2019
- International Conference on Positive Psychology and Well-Being (ICPPW 2019), Paris, France, April 18th – 19th, 2019 (Accepting abstracts till 31st January)
- 30th World Summit on Positive Psychology, Mindfulness, Psychotherapy and Philosophy, Chicago, Illinois, USA, March 18th – 19th, 2019
- 1st Positive Psychology Summit 2019, Bedford, UK, April 27th – 28th, 2019

A short-term course on Positive Psychology:

Positive Psychology Perspective: Research, Education and Communication for Health: P3REACH (1 month), NIMHANS, Bangalore

(Notifications are usually released in March every year. Check the website to remain updated about the same).

Vox Pop

We would love to hear from you! You may send us your feedback, any self-written article, or news of latest events in Positive Psychology that you want us to publish in the NPPA Newsletter. Drop us a mail at admin@nppaassociation.org.

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