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*Positive Vistas on Health and Well-being*

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the restoration of mental health through traditional healing practices. Mental health here has been conceptualised as a rubric that covers diverse perspectives such as absence of debilitating symptoms, integration of psychological functioning, effective individual and social functioning and feelings of well-being. India is undergoing rapid change and modernisation, even the remotest villages have access to modern medicine. Yet, the traditional healing practices have remained integral to the life of people. The history of Indian civilisation is several millennia old and so are the traditional therapeutic practices. Healers have long been formulating explanations for psychological distress and developing techniques for its mitigation. These traditional healers include faith and folk practitioners like the sadhus, matas, ojhas, tantriks, shamans and scholarly healers like the vaidas, hakims, palmists and horoscope specialists. Both kind of healers deal with an array of illnesses and troubles that may beleaguer individuals, families or the community. It is believed by many that these practitioners are important human agents in the context of illness and health. It is assumed that they have the capacity to control the ambivalent forces of the universe by mediating between the unseen and seen, darkness and light. This paper attempts to examine the traditional healing systems with special reference to ritual practices carried out by sanctified healers that are conducive to well-being. Indian and Western views of self and nature of psychotherapy.

## INTRODUCTION

*Sarvé bhavantu sukhinah, sarvé santu nirāmayāḥ*

*Sarvé bhadraṇi pashyantu, mā kashchid duḥkha-bhāg-bhavēt*

Since ancient times, well-being has remained a pervasive theme in philosophical and psychological literature. The above mentioned mantra summarises the essence of human life, meaning- May all be happy, may all be healthy, may all see what is good, and may no one suffer in any way. The Indian Culture is replete with examples for its quest for human welfare. Whether one talks about *Charak Samhita*, the foundational work on the Indian traditional system of medicine that mentions the concept of *sukhswarup* (happy life), the verses of renowned poet Kabir, *hasya rasa* of the *Natya Shastra*, or the folk wisdom expressed in mythologies, proverbs, folklores, and rituals. Kleinman (1988) describes that in its struggle to maintain harmony and order, every society attempts to develop ecologically valid understanding of human nature; its own theories of suffering and remedial measures. India is undergoing rapid change and modernisation, even the remotest villages have access to modern medicine. Yet, the traditional healing practices have remained integral to the life of people. The history of Indian civilisation is several millennia old and so are the traditional therapeutic practices. Healers have long been formulating explanations for psychological distress and developing techniques for its