

## Chapter 28

# Hinduism and Counseling: Karma, Women Empowerment, Grief and Death, Anger Management, Bhagavad Gita, and Psychotherapies

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### ABSTRACT

*Indian psychology lays enormous importance on the research of religious experiences and the expansion of approaches by which to accomplish them. In addition to that, it also provides understanding of the different states of consciousness. Hence, it is undeniable that Indian psychology will be able to make a definite therapeutic contribution to many psychological problems. For mental health practitioners dealing with Hinduism, there are teachings within various texts that directly strengthen counseling and mental services. Some of the examples include perceiving the conscious and the unconsciousness aspects of the mind, utilizing meditation to support people with mental health issues, yoga exercises to curb anxiety and stress, and many others. Therefore, this chapter intends to elucidate the application of Hinduism in therapy.*

### INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is one of the five largest practiced religions in the World. There are so many books and beliefs that are part of Hindu practices that some see Hinduism as more a way of life rather than a dogmatic religion. While Hinduism is seen as pantheistic religion, that are practitioners of Hinduism that are monotheistic and even atheist believing in the concepts rather than the ritualistic practices of the religion. Conceptually however there are concepts that guide Hindu, this article looks at the beliefs of Hindus that has an impact on counselling and therapeutic practices.

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*Our basic philosophy is trinity. Trinity means we believe there are three basic things: matter, soul and God. God to us is all pervading. It is not something that is static and sitting on one place. It is matter through which this world came out of. And the third thing is soul. Regarding soul we believe in transmigration: the circle of life and death. And that circle is according to our Karma. Our deeds become our destiny.*

*(Quoted from a Hindu participant for Research Karma, reincarnation, and medicine: Hindu perspectives on biomedical research, Sharp & Hutchinson, 2008).*

## **What Is Karma?**

Many Indian religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism share karma as their core concept (Berkeley, 2017). Despite that, their specific views on karma vary. Before talking about Karma, I think it's crucial to talk about the atman, (the real self). In Hinduism, the atman (the soul/ real self) is distinct from both the body and the mind. The atman refers to the self beyond gender, race, species, religion, and nationality.

Karma is a concept in Hinduism which dominantly elucidates causality in which good actions, words, thoughts, and commands directs to favorable repercussion for a person or vice versa (Berkeley, 2017). Hindus more often than not believe that good or bad fortune encountered in life may be the consequence of good or bad actions carried out in a past life. These effects may not necessarily be instantaneous as it can be visited upon a soul in future lives through reincarnation. Unfortunately the misconception here is Karma dictates what to do. As a matter of practice Karma creates situations, how one chose to behave is based on their freewill. One's choice of action determines either they will be accumulating positive karma or negative karma. For instance if you had been wrong by an individual in the past, Karma will put you in a situation where you can continue the negative relationship, forgive and cut the karmic ties or simply just walk away. The choice of what to do is that individuals.

## **Transmission of a Soul**

Transmission of soul is believed to be facilitated by one's karma. One's accumulation of good and bad karma unfolds to determine one's destiny. The family you are born in is Karmic, you have the choice to rise above or sink in the situation that you are born in. Since Hindus believe in transmission of the soul, the focus of Hindu philosophy is on the development of the soul in relation to the body. The driver in the vehicle analogy can be used in further comprehending the soul or atman concept. A body will never function without a soul just like how a car can never move without the driver. Just like how many drivers form attachment with their cars and get concerned about the car's needs, most people without the proper enlightenment may begin identifying with the body and it's needs without finding and acknowledging the soul within it. Failure in acknowledging the soul within may lead to one being trapped, a broken and ignored car however will not be able to move the driver effectively. Therefore the individual while focusing on the soul must ensure the health and safety of the car, which has led to the development of Ayurveda, Yoga and breathing practices which are strongly rooted in Hinduism.

In the nutshell, Karma entails the notion that we are all responsible for our own lives. As such, all therapies that address freedom of choice can utilize the concept of Karma in empowering their client. Karma entails the notion that karma creates circumstances yet how we choose to react depends on our choice. Therapist can utilize this understanding in empowering clients to make up the right choices.

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