

Culture, Mental Health, and Systems of Healing in India

Introduction:

India, with its rich cultural diversity and longstanding traditions, offers a unique landscape for exploring the intersection of culture, mental health, and systems of healing. While mental health is gaining increased attention globally, in India, it remains deeply influenced by a variety of cultural, religious, and societal beliefs. A confluence of traditional systems and contemporary practices marks India's mental health landscape. This panel seeks to explore how cultural beliefs and values shape mental health practices and treatment systems in India, examining both the challenges and opportunities in integrating traditional healing with modern mental health care.

This panel will bring together experts in psychiatry, anthropology, traditional healing, and public health to critically analyze the intersection of culture, mental health, and healing systems in India. It will discuss how cultural conceptions of mental illness influence mental health care-seeking behaviour, the role of traditional healing systems in treating mental health conditions, and the ways in which modern psychiatry can adapt to become more culturally competent. In particular, the panel will explore the challenges faced by India's mental health systems in addressing the needs of a culturally diverse population and will discuss the integration of Indigenous healing practices into the mental health care framework. Some of the key questions to be discussed in this panel are :

- o How do Indian cultural values, including religious and social norms, shape perceptions of mental health and mental illness?
- o What is the impact of stigma and societal pressures in Indian communities on mental health care-seeking behaviour?
- o What is the role of family, community, and social support networks in mental health care in Indian society?
- o What are the challenges and benefits of integrating traditional systems with contemporary mental health services
- o How mental health stigma is compounded by cultural and religious beliefs in India, and its impact on mental health treatment and recovery?
- o What are the community-led initiatives to reduce mental health stigma, particularly in rural and underserved regions?
- o What is the current state of mental health care in India, including the prevalence of mental health disorders, mental health infrastructure, and accessibility?
- o What is the role of psychiatrists and mental health professionals in advocating for culturally competent mental health services in India.
- o What are the possibilities and challenges in combining Western psychiatric practices with traditional healing methods in India.
- o Case studies or examples of effective integration of mental health care and traditional systems, and their impact on patient outcomes.
- o What are the collaborative initiatives between mental health professionals and traditional healers in improving mental health outcomes in India?.
- o How are mental health, notions of well-being abnormality and stigmatization portrayed in popular media and literature?

In brief, this panel will provide an opportunity to explore how traditional healing practices can be harmonized with modern psychiatric care to create more inclusive, accessible, and culturally competent mental health systems. It will also address the critical issue of mental health stigma, proposing strategies for increasing awareness and improving care for those affected by mental illness in India. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a platform for deliberation on creating a more holistic approach to mental health that recognizes and integrates cultural diversity.

Key Thematic to be covered in the panel:

2. Cultural Perspectives on Mental Health in India:
3. Traditional Indian Systems of Healing and Their Role in Mental Health:
4. The Stigma of Mental Illness in Indian Culture:
5. Modern Psychiatry and Mental Health Systems in India:
6. Collaborative Approaches to Integrating Healing Systems
7. Construction and portrayal of mental health, notions of well-being abnormality and stigmatization portrayed in popular media and literature

Panellists/ paper presenters:

The panel will include a diverse group of experts, including:

- Anthropologists with specialization in Indian health practices and indigenous healing systems.
- Psychiatrist with expertise in mental health systems and policy in India.
- Traditional healers or yoga practitioners who incorporate mental health care into traditional practices.
- Public health experts who focus on mental health advocacy and stigma reduction in India.\
- Researchers, faculty members and young scholars working in the intersection of health, culture, mental health and systems of healing

Panel Convenors:

Dr. Urfat Anjem Mir Associate Professor, School Liberal Studies Dean, School of Undergraduate Studies and Director, Centre for Development Practice Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi email: urfat@aud.ac.in

Prof. P. C. Joshi, former Head of the Department of Anthropology University of Delhi, former Vice Chancellor I/C and Pro- Vice Chancellor University of Delhi