

Empathy and Yoga Philosophy: Both Eastern and Western Concepts

Authors : Jacqueline Jasmine Kumar

Abstract : This paper seeks to challenge the predominate Western-centric paradigm concerning empathy by conducting an exploration of its presence within both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. The primary focus of this inquiry is the examination of the Indian yogic tradition, encompassing the four yogas: bhakti (love/devotion), karma (action), jñāna (knowledge), and rāja (psychic control). Through this examination, it is demonstrated that empathy does not exclusively originate from Western philosophical thought. Rather than superimposing the Western conceptualization of empathy onto the tenets of Indian philosophy, this study endeavours to unearth a distinct array of ideas and concepts within the four yogas, which significantly contribute to our comprehension of empathy as a universally relevant phenomenon. To achieve this objective, an innovative approach is adopted, delving into various facets of empathy, including the propositional, affective/intuitive, perspective-taking, and actionable dimensions. This approach intentionally deviates from conventional Western frameworks, shifting the emphasis towards lived morally as opposed to engagement in abstract theoretical discourse. While it is acknowledged that the explicit term “empathy” may not be overly articulated within the yogic tradition, a scrupulous examination reveals the underlying substance and significance of this phenomenon. Throughout this comparative analysis, the paper aims to lay a robust foundation for the discourse of empathy within the contexts of the human experience. By assimilating insights gleaned from the Indian yogic tradition, it contributes to the expansion of our comprehension of empathy, enabling an exploration of its multifaceted dimensions. Ultimately, this scholarly endeavour facilitates the development of a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective on empathy, transcending cultural boundaries and enriching our collective repository of knowledge.

Keywords : Bhakti, Yogic, Jnana, Karma

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