

# Holistic Psychotherapy in Patanjali Yoga Darshan

Rakesh Kumar Ranjan\*

\*Research scholar, Dept. of Philosophy and Religion,  
Banarash Hindu University, Varanashi U P

## Abstract

Modern age is the age of psychological disorders. Now a day's modern generation due to modern life style each and every one child, young, old, men-women all are suffering from the psychological disorders. This is the reason modern psychology is trying to understand the human psychological nature its constitution and disorders.

Modern psychology is steel far away from the holistic understanding of human psychological nature its constitution and disorders. That is why its therapeutic approach towards the psychological disorders is only at surface level. This is the reason modern psychology is unable to provide the holistic approach for psychotherapy of psychological disorders.

Patanjali yoga darshan is one of the ancient yoga philosophy book written by sage Patanjali in which the philosophy of yoga in the form of holistic approach towards the cessation of mental waves and its disorders has been given for the attainment of holistic mental & spiritual health. For this purpose sage Patanjali has discussed various mental therapy principles like Abhyas- Vairagya, Kriya Yoga, Ishwarpranidhan etc. which can be applied as the holistic psychotherapy principles for the therapy of various mental disorders.

**Key words- Holistic psychotherapy, Mind, Chitta, Abhyas-Vairagya, Kriya-Yoga.**

## Introduction

As the modern age is the age of psychological disorders. Hence the holistic approach towards the study of human mind, its nature and disorders is the crucial need of the day. Efforts for this are going on in eastern as well as western countries. In western countries modern psychology developed as the branch of natural sciences is also trying to find out the solution for the problem at its own level. However due to its materialistic prejudices and single sided vision towards the human mind and nature it is unable to reach at the root cause of the problem and adopt the holistic approach for its therapy. In the word of Dr. Madhusudan Reedy "Modern psychology with its scientific and materialistic basis deals with surface mind and surface values"<sup>1</sup>

## The concept

Mind is the root of mental health.<sup>2</sup> With comparison to mind and body, mind is thousand times more valuable than body.<sup>3</sup> Even the constitution of mind is subtle still the mind has a significant role in the regulation and control of all our physical and psychological activities. This is the reason the mental disorders are more harmful and dangerous than any physical disorders<sup>4</sup>

That is why the efforts have been made both in western and eastern world to understand the nature of mind, but the first attempt has been made in India in Vedic age.<sup>5</sup> Riga Veda is the most ancient world famous literature of Vedic age which enlightens the nature of mind.<sup>6</sup> In this way we find the nature and secretes of mind in the thoughts of Indian Vedic sages.

Yoga philosophy is one of the six Indian Vedic philosophies, given by sage Patanjali which adopt the holistic approach towards the study of human mind and its disorders. In Patanjali yoga darshan the nature of mind has been clarified psychologically in the form of chitta.<sup>7</sup> It remains active in various forms/stages due to three gunas satva, rajas and tamas of the nature.

## The five stages of mental health

Patanjali Yoga darshan discuss the mental health not only at surface level but also at very subtle level and classify it into five stage- Mudha, Kshipta, Vikshipta, Akagra and Niruddha. These five stages of mental health are called the five stages of chitta.<sup>8</sup> These five stages of chitta can be listed as follow-

1. **Mudhavastha (Neurotic Stage)** - This is the lower stage of chitta (mental health) in which

tamoguna is dominant. In this stage it is full of laziness, attachment, fear, illusion, inferiority etc. it is the undesirable stage of chitta and highly fertile for all negative actions.

2. **Kshiptavastha (Psychic Stage)** - This is the second lower stage of chitta in which rajoguna is dominant. This is the stage in which mind always runs behinds the materialistic pleasure. It is the complete extrovert and unstable stage of mind. Pleasure-sorrow, stress-anxiety etc. are the common symptoms of this stage. This is the stage of common man.
3. **Vikshiptavastha (Mild Neurotic Stage)** - This is the third stage of chitta in which satavaguna is slightly dominant. That is why it is the state of chitta in which mind move towards the stability. So this is the mental stage of the entire spiritual seeker moving on spiritual path.
4. **Akagravastha (Mently Healthy Stage)** - This is the complete satvaguna dominant stage in which rajas-tamas are very light. This is the concentrate and stable stage of chitta. This is the reason this is the ideal stage for the attainment of smadhi. This is the mind stage of yogis.
5. **Nirudhavastha (Perfect Mental Health Stage)**-It is the stage of complete cessation of mental waves, so complete stable stage of mind and ultimate stage of Samadhi, in which ignorance is completely destroyed and seer becomes stable in his state. That is why it is the stage of perfect mental & spiritual health.

### The nine types of mental disorders

In Patanjali yoga darshan for the holistic psychotherapy apart from the five stage of chitta (Mental health) the various chittavikshepa (mental disorders) has been also discussed in detail so that we can have the complete understanding of mental disorders and can adopt the holistic approach towards its therapy. These mental disorders/chittavikshepa are known as Yoga Antraya.<sup>9</sup> There are nine major yoga Antraya which are as follows-

1. Vyadhi (Disease)
2. Styana (Dullness)
3. Sansya (Doubt)
4. Pramada (Procrastinating nature )
5. Alasya (Laziness)
6. Avirati (Lack of dispassion)
7. Bhranti darshana (False knowledge)

8. Alabdhabhumikatva (Inability to find any stage of yoga)
9. Anavasthitatva (Inability to maintain any stage of yoga)

In this way these nine chittavikshepas are the main mental disorders which are called as yoga Antraya & yoga obstacles.<sup>10</sup> These nine chittavikshepas manifest in the form of various psychological disorders which accompany Pain, Despire, Trembling, Irregular inhale and exhale five other mental distraction.<sup>11</sup>

### The five major root causes

Apart from the detail discussion of five stages of chitta (mental health), nine yoga Antraya (major mental disorders) Yoga darshan has also enlightened the five root cause of mental disorders. Ignorance, Egoism, Attachment, Hatred and fear of death are the five root cause of mental disorders, which are known as Panchklesha.<sup>12</sup> these five afflictions (Panchklesha) are as follow-

1. **Ignorance**- It is the consideration of non eternal to be eternal, the impure to be the pure, the painful to be the pleasant and the not self to be the self.<sup>13</sup>
2. **Egoism** –It consists of the apparent oneness between the power of seer (the self or Purusha) and the power of seen (Prakriti in the form of chitta).<sup>14</sup>
3. **Attachment**- It is that which follows the happiness.<sup>15</sup>
4. **Hatered**- It is what which follows the pain.<sup>16</sup>
5. **Abhinivesha**-It is the affliction of clinging to life, which exist equally in the learned as well as dull-witted, since it flows with spontaneity from past lives.<sup>17</sup>

### The major techniques of psychotherapy

From the above it is obvious that Patanjali yoga darshan not only discuss the stages of mental health, mental disorders and its root cause only at its surface level but also at subtle level. In this way it adopts the holistic approach for the diagnosis and therapy of mental disorders. For this purpose sage Patanjli has given various yogic principles which not only purify the conscious, subconscious and unconscious level but also super conscious state for complete mental and spiritual health. These yogic techniques of chitta-shudhi ( mental purification) are as follows-

1. **Abhyas-Vairagya**-These chittavrities (mental waves) are controlled & purified by the practice and dispassion.<sup>18</sup> Practice is the repeated efforts to secure the steadiness of the modification of mind.<sup>19</sup> When the aforementioned Abhyas (repeated practice) when practiced well without break, for a long time, and with a perfect faith and devotion becomes firmly established.<sup>20</sup> Those who don't have the hankering for the objects seen in the world and the objects heard have attained the lower Vairagya named Vashikara or control.<sup>21</sup> So in the form of Abhyas and Vairagya sage Patanjli has given the principles of behavioral therapy through which all the unwanted mental waves (mental disorders) can be controlled and eliminated.<sup>22</sup>
2. **Kriya Yoga**- Austerity, study of scripture and surrender to God constitute the Kriya Yoga.<sup>23</sup> The Kriya yoga is helpful in attaining the success in Samadhi and destroying the kleshas (afflictions).<sup>24</sup> So Kriyayoga is highly effective yogic psychotherapy principles given by sage Patanjli to attain complete mental and spiritual health stage i.e. the stage of Samadhi and destroy punch Kleshas (five afflictions) the root cause of all the mental disorders.
3. **Ishwarpranidhana**- It is complete surrender to God and working just as an instrument in the hand of God<sup>25</sup> It helps in refinement of emotions and attainment of complete mental and spiritual health i.e Samadhi.<sup>26</sup>
4. **Concentration and Meditation**- Concentration is the process of binding the chitta to a place or object.<sup>27</sup> When during the concentration Chittavrities (thought waves) flows continuously it is known as meditation.<sup>28</sup> Concentration and meditation ultimately leads towards the Samadhi (the state of complete mental and spiritual health) because meditation itself becomes Samadhi (super consciousness) when the object alone shines and the mind loses itself, as it were, in the object of meditation.<sup>29</sup>

### The yogic principles of psychotherapy

Sage Patanjli has not only given these major principles of mental purification and mental health

but also the yogic principles to remove mental disorders i.e yoga antraya. These principles can be listed as follow-

1. **Meditation on a point**- One can remove the mental obstacles/disorders just by practicing meditation on point or god.<sup>30</sup>
2. **Practice of Matri, Karuna, Mudita and Upeksha**- one can also purify his mind & emotion by being friendly with joyous personalities, compassionate towards the afflicted, cheerful with the virtuous and indifferent towards the evils.<sup>31</sup>
3. **Exhale and hold of prana**- mental purification can also be attained through controlling one's prana by exhalation and retention of breath.<sup>32</sup>
4. **Function of mind pertaining to divine objects**- Mental obstacle can also be removed and the state of meditation can be acquired by the function of mind pertaining to divine objects because it binds the mind up to the state of meditation.<sup>33</sup>
5. **Luminous function of chitta**- One can also control his mind by pursuing that luminous function of chitta and ahankara.<sup>34</sup>
6. **Meditating upon the mind of yogi**- one can also remove the mental obstacles by meditating upon the minds of yogis that are devoid of attachments.<sup>35</sup>
7. **Knowledge of sleep and dream**-one can also remove the mental disorders and lead his mind to Samadhi by the utilizing the support of yogic knowledge of dream and sleep.<sup>36</sup>
8. **Meditating as per own wish**- mental stability and health can also be attained by meditation of one's own God as per one's own wish.<sup>37</sup>

**Conclusion**- from the above it is obvious that Patanjali yoga darshan not only enlighten the mind, its nature, stage of mental health, mental disorders and its root cause at surface level but also at subtle level. In this way it not only diagnoses the mental disorders but also gives the various techniques for cure of mental disorders and attainment of complete mental health up to super conscious level. So it can be said that Patanjali yoga adopts the holistic approach towards mental purification, mental therapy and mental health.

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