

Trans-personal & Psychology of the Vedic System: Healing the Split between Psychology & Spirituality

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“The way through the world is more difficult to find than the way beyond it.”
Wallace Stevens, “Reply to Papini” (American poet, 1879 – 1955)

In the modern world, religion, psychology, spiritual practice and therapy are separated. There are important differences between the transpersonal psychology of the West and the Yoga psychology of the Vedas in the East. The historical emergence of transpersonal psychology is briefly outlined. Some of the inherent limitations of current transpersonal psychology are then considered. In the East, Brahma Vidya means the knowledge that leads one to realize Brahman. The Bhagavad Gita conveys that wisdom in its entirety, and teaches the practical methods for the study and transformation of one's inner being and the means to Self-realization. Psychology and spirituality need to be seen as one. In the West, however, the former is essentially modern, secular and ego-centred. The split between traditional psychology and spirituality cannot be healed while the former views human beings in separate parts and fails to identify with the ultimate source. A new idea, a new language and new traditions must be developed on which to base theory and practice.

Keywords: *Bhagavad Gita*, spirituality, transpersonal psychology, Vedas, Yoga psychology.

Introduction

Wallace wrote that: “Perhaps / The truth depends on a walk around a lake” (Stevens, 1942). We can turn that idea around and note that it is when we are most human that we have greatest access to our spiritual nature. Yet, modern psychology is often seen as a way to be saved from the very messes that most deeply mark human life as human. By trying to avoid human mistakes and failures, we move further from our spiritual nature.

There is a major difference between spirituality and psychotherapy in the usual sense: psychology is a secular science, while spirituality is a sacred art. Although I am borrowing the terminology of Vedic traditions, what I am implying is not of a religious nature. It does, however, imply a spiritual sensibility and recognition of our absolute need for a spiritual life. This paper considers important differences between the transpersonal psychology of the West and the Yoga psychology of the Vedas. I explore some common issues in everyday life that offer the opportunity to stop thinking of them as problems to be solved, so that we can then imagine spiritual life from a different perspective. Finally, I explore how psychology is incomplete if it does not include spirituality in a fully integrated way, including Western understanding of psychological processes, and how Eastern spirituality influences and enhances our psychological journey.

In the Western world of psychology, the transpersonal developed from earlier schools of psychology, including psychoanalysis, behaviourism and humanistic psychology. Transpersonal psychology is often regarded as the “fourth force” of psychology, which (according to Maslow) even transcends the self-actualization of humanistic psychology. Gradually, during the 1960s, the term “transpersonal” was associated with a distinct school of psychology within the humanistic psychology movement. In 1969, Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof and Anthony Sutich were among the initiators behind the publication of the first issue of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, the leading academic journal in the field.

There is also believed to be a strong connection between the transpersonal and the humanistic approaches to psychology. Although transpersonal psychology is considered to have developed from humanistic psychology, many of its interests – such as spirituality and modes of consciousness – extend beyond the areas of interest discussed by humanistic theory. According to writers in the field of transpersonal psychology, this suggests an expanded spiritual view of physical and mental health that is not necessarily addressed by humanistic psychology. An important figure in the

establishment of transpersonal psychology was Abraham Maslow. Maslow had already published work regarding human peak experiences and was one of the people, together with Stanislav Grof and Viktor Frankl, who suggested the term “transpersonal” for the emerging field. Transpersonal is supposed to include the psychological study of religion, parapsychology, and an interest in Eastern spiritual systems and practices. While the word “Eastern” refers to all spiritual traditions of the East, the transpersonal approach is mainly focused on Vedic or Indian spiritual philosophy. There is, however, a kind denial about it by not fully committing to it, and this may be the cause for confusion within transpersonal psychology and its loss of direction, and why it is not able to bring the desired transformation to traditional psychology. In this context, acknowledgement of confusion would be a step forward, for it shows that people are ready to learn.

So far, there is no set definition for the term transpersonal psychology. If by “transpersonal” is meant a psychology concerned with experiences and aspirations that lead people to seek transcendence, as well as the healing potential of self-transcendence, then it is rooted in Higher Self. It remains as an experience, distinct from what is experienced, and to reach that understanding one needs to develop a discriminating mind (*Buddhi*). The word *boddh* is rooted in knowledge of Self, but to acquire this knowledge demands highly developed self-discipline and ethical and moral values. There is no room for shortcuts, like in transpersonal psychology, which sticks to modern Yoga and meditation that is mechanical and without understanding of the True Nature of the Self. Searching outside of oneself cannot lead to Self-knowledge. The value of inner searching is affirmed both in depth psychology and in every major spiritual tradition.

Transpersonal psychology appears to be taking a short route, which is in line with Western reductionist policy; that is, when High ideas or luminous experiences (that are beyond the understanding of the normal mind) are reduced to fit in a box to feel safe, thus lessening the risk of expanding your mind. But in doing so, your mind controls you instead of you as ‘I’ controlling the mind, which is the essence of spiritual teachings. It is worth acknowledging that the transpersonal has served humanity well, in the sense that it has

challenged traditional psychology to face its shadow side and push its boundaries to go beyond the limitations of mind. But it is like the blind leading the blind and getting nowhere. Transpersonal psychology will remain just another psychology unless it acknowledges that it needs to commit to a spiritual system that is universally accepted and selflessly dedicated to the evolution of humanity.

According to the *Bhagavad Gita* (Radice, 1962), confusion can lead to serious conflict and, if the conflict seems unresolvable, one can lose all incentive and become desolate. The purpose of such a person’s life will then remain unfulfilled. Psychology, as the study of the psyche (Soul), originally meant a study of the soul, but this original meaning has been lost in most Western psychotherapy. The word “therapy”, derived from the Greek word meaning healing, has also lost most of its original meaning. James Hillman, a Jungian analyst, has argued that psychotherapy should, indeed, serve the soul. If psychotherapy is consciously directed to serving the soul, it could conceivably transcend its exclusive focus on physical, emotional and mental healing to include a transpersonal perspective. He who feels for the patient heals his heart, but existing psychotherapy frequently fails to do so.

It seems that the totally unfamiliar nature of Vedic philosophy could be quite perplexing for a Western scholar who is trying to study this different orientation. This is understandable because only a few Western philosophers (such as Plato, Augustine and Berkeley) have come close to such idealistic frameworks as found in Vedic philosophy. Perhaps it is the immense depth and hard discipline of Vedantic knowledge that is feared by the Western mind. It appears that most Westerners are more interested in Buddhism, as they find it approachable because of their attraction to its richness in the realms of logical reasoning and meditation. They find Buddhism safe due to its logical structure, which is very much in line with Western ways of thinking and their extrovert attitude. Western thought is very linear and logical. Eastern thought comes from the centre and unfolds. The highest part of spirituality in the Vedas is *Sunyam*. God in His infinite Nature is “without attributes”, so He is the Void. It is not humanly possible to describe this word *Sunyam*, because it is not a word, sound or even a metaphor. It is represented as a ‘dot’, but it is not

even a dot: it is not any part of existence; rather it is the cause of existence. This is not the “non-existence” of the Buddhists. This is Pure Existence without the object-emotions-thought world – The Self. It cannot be captured by words created by the ego mind. It is all pervading Consciousness, which can only be experienced but cannot be explained or understood by the ego mind. The Western logical mind would like to make sense of it, which is an experience of beyond human senses, thus beyond the understanding of the underdeveloped normal mind. That is how the whole process and approach towards transpersonal psychology has been: to start from a point with a view and to arrive at another point, instead of surrendering to “what is”.

Each system of world philosophy and spirituality claims that there is an eternal Centre of consciousness in human beings, and that realization of this centre, or Self, is the goal of life. All imperfections are the projections of ignorance and exist merely on the surface of the personality (appearance). The experience of pain is due to humanity’s failure to realize true nature or Self, for deeper within lies the perfect state of bliss, beauty and consciousness. The goal of each system is to transcend suffering and to establish oneself in the state of perfection. All the sciences related to life are included in its scope. It integrates into a single whole all the discoveries that have been made in the physical, psychological and spiritual realms.

Self-realization is the goal of human life. The purpose of Eastern philosophy and psychology is to fulfil that goal. Philosophy, as it is understood in the East, is neither a mere speculative exercise nor an intellectual adventure. The word “philosophy” is a compound of two words, *philo* and *sophia*, which together mean “love for knowledge”. This term, however, is not applicable in the East, for those who consider the prime questions of life, such as: “Who am I?”, “From where have I come?”, “Why have I come?” or “Where will I go?” We are not only interested in the intellectual answers to these questions. The subject matter of Eastern philosophy leads the student through a systematic way of direct experiencing the truths of existence and the height of Self-realization. After realizing one’s real Self, one knows that this Self is the Self of all.

In the Vedantic tradition, the term *Brahma Vidya* is used instead of the term “philosophy”. It has a different connotation and a deeper meaning than the word philosophy conveys, and it is unique in its approach to knowledge. *Brahma Vidya* means the knowledge that leads one to realize Brahman. The *Bhagavad Gita* conveys that wisdom in its entirety, and teaches the practical methods for the study and transformation of one’s inner being. Philosophy and psychology are thus intermingled. Without the help of psychology – knowing, analyzing and learning to use our inner potentials – we cannot fulfil the goal of human life: Self-realization.

In contrast, Western philosophy is intellectual and deals with man’s relationship with the universe. With the knowledge gained, he tries to understand his status in the universe. In *Brahma Vidya*, however, one comes to know all the levels of his being and finally to realize his true Self. According to the Eastern system, knowing the real Self is the first and foremost purpose of life. After Self-realization, all the mysteries of the universe and one’s relationship with the universe are revealed. Because of their contrasting approaches, there is a wide gulf between philosophy and *Brahma Vidya*. One is only theoretical, but the other is practical as well.

The *Bhagavad Gita* contains all the principles of the philosophy and psychology of the East. There are 18 lessons in the *Bhagavad Gita*, each describing a different aspect of the process of self-transformation. The *sadhana* (spiritual practice) described in each section is explained, so that aspirants can help themselves progress in the inward journey and attain the highest state of bliss. The aim of the *Bhagavad Gita* is to teach the aspirant how to establish equanimity both in his internal life and in his activities in the external world; to help him develop tranquillity within, and to explain the art and science of doing actions skilfully and selflessly.

The teaching of the *Brahma Vidya* helps one to understand the distinction between the real Self and the mere self. The mere self is subject to change and destruction; the real Self is not. The aspirant should understand both and should finally establish himself in his essential nature: Atman. Then he can live in the world without being affected by it. In the domain between the real Self and the mere self lies our *antahkarana* (internal

instrument), which plays a most important part in both our internal and external life. If not understood, both goals of life – living in the world and Self-realization – are defeated. Our psychological life needs profound and deep study if we are here to free ourselves from the quagmire of emotionality, egotistical preoccupations and self-delusion, and if we are to realize our fullest potentials for the enfoldment of consciousness.

The perennial psychology of the *Bhagavad Gita* deals with analyzing and training the internal processes of the human being, so that one becomes creative in the external world and attains a state of tranquillity at the same time. That which needs detailed analysis, understanding and enfoldment, is the mental life, which is vast in its characteristics. The outside world can be mastered only when the inner potential is systematically explored and organized. Without understanding one's inner potential, it is not possible to function effectively and harmoniously in the external world, for all things happen within before they are experienced externally.

In Eastern psychology, the whole being is treated – the focus is not merely on the obvious problem. The Eastern method leads one to become a therapist for himself. The path of *sadhana* is perfect and profound. *Sadhana* is for the inner level that creates delusion or mirage; it is not Atman or the external world that creates confusion, but one's mental life. The internal and the external are two inseparable aspects of one single life. Practice or *sadhana* should be modelled in such a way that it does not lead the aspirant from one extreme to another. Some aspirants think that retiring from the world will help them attain the purpose of life. Others believe that doing actions and performing their duties in the world will fulfil the purpose of life. It is the moderate path, however, that creates a bridge between these two extremes and that is the most useful for the general wellbeing. If one is to live life happily, a person needs to be aware that others are also striving to attain happiness. Consideration for others is a primary requisite for finding happiness and building a good society.

The great Vedantic sage Shankara explained, "People practised *Vedic dharma* for a long time. Then lust arose among them; discrimination and wisdom declined. Unrighteousness began to outweigh righteousness" (Chetanananda, 2010:

150). Speaking about wisdom is not the same as wisdom in speech. Nowadays, we only speak about wisdom as if it was a thing of the past and there is hardly anyone imparting wisdom in speech. The Vedas are the source of all streams of Indian philosophy and psychology, and the Upanishads are the later parts of the Vedas. With the decline of discrimination and wisdom, it became difficult for those who were not scholars to understand the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads. So, it became necessary to restate these teachings in a way that could be appreciated and assimilated by all.

The *Bhagavad Gita* contains in condensed form all the philosophical and psychological wisdom of the Upanishads. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna bestows his nurturing wisdom to his dear friend and disciple, Arjuna. Sri Krishna imparts all the wisdom of the Vedic and Upanishadic literature through the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Rather than imparting a new trend of thought or expounding a new philosophy, Sri Krishna modified and simplified the Vedic and Upanishadic knowledge. He speaks to humanity through his dialogue with Arjuna. The word Arjuna means "one who makes sincere efforts", and the word Krishna means "the centre of consciousness". A person who makes sincere efforts inevitably obtains the knowledge that directly flows from the centre of consciousness.

The unique dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna deals with all aspects of life. It is useful for modern therapists, psychologists and philosophers to study the *Bhagavad Gita* in order to understand the way Sri Krishna counsels Arjuna. Like many patients who seek therapy, Arjuna is in a state of despair and feels unable to cope with the situation before him, so he seeks Sri Krishna's advice and guidance. But there are major differences in the way Sri Krishna treats Arjuna and the approaches used by psychotherapists today. Like many clients in psychotherapy, Arjuna is not at first receptive to the guidance of his preceptor, Sri Krishna. But, after his initial arguments with Sri Krishna, Arjuna finally begins to listen to the teachings imparted to him. It is important to stress here that modern therapists and teachers need to establish rapport with their clients and students, who will be more receptive to advice when a sincere and friendly atmosphere is created.

Modern psychotherapists attempt to help the client modify his conscious attitudes and unconscious processes and behaviours, but the analysis lacks the depth and profundity found in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Most modern therapists do not explore the purpose and meaning of life. They are loath to discuss and give advice on basic philosophical issues, such as activism versus pacifism, one's duty in life, and the nature of life and death. They limit the depth and range of counselling and focus primarily on bringing out the patient's complex. Most modern psychologists do not go to the root of the problem by analyzing and understanding the fundamental cause. They deal with specific problems and symptoms, and the untouched cause then expresses its agony in different ways. They work in this way because of lack of time and fear of becoming involved with the unknown.

By contrast, Sri Krishna presents a philosophical foundation for understanding the purpose of life and the way to live harmoniously, and he offers Arjuna practical advice on living and on coping with the world. In Eastern psychology, the teacher helps the student plan a self-training programme and observes all the possible hindrances that may rise to the surface. These selfless and dedicated teachers do not need to use status symbols before their names because they personify these qualities through their presence. As David Frawley recalls, Ramana Maharshi argued that: "around a great teacher the first thing you will feel is a certain quality of peace that will put your doubts to rest" (American Institute of Vedic Studies, 2012).

Modern psychology is still in an evolving state; it is not a finished product as yet. Counsellors and therapists play an important role in society, but many of them lack the depth and insight to analyze and advise their patients adequately. They lack self-confidence and are insecure; hence the counsellor is unable to guide clients effectively toward the resolution of their problems. Such insecurity, and lack of morality, is manifest in various publications that consider the role of the "talking therapies". For example, Masson (1993) attacked many abuses of psychotherapy in his controversial book *Against Therapy*. Recently, Davies (2013) assaulted the medicalization of mental illness in *Cracked: Why Psychiatry is Doing More Harm than Good*. Similarly, a brief look at the *Counselling Psychology Review* will reveal a profession still deeply concerned about its role and future. Perhaps Hillman and Ventura

(1993) summed the situation up best in the title of their book: *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse*.

Counselling is a very noble profession, but it is taken too lightly. It is often practised by erratic and egotistical people who are not interested in developing themselves, but only interested in teaching. The same problem exists with those modern gurus who can theoretically explain, but do not ever practise. Therapists and gurus can be more dangerous than anyone else when they exploit the innocence of others. We must find a way to save this noble heritage and this wonderful profession from degeneration. It is through *sadhana* (spiritual practice) alone that one can come in touch with the inner Self. Without that, trying to help others is like building a castle in the sand: it will crumble in the first rain shower.

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, Atman (the real Self or centre of consciousness) is never changing, everlasting, eternal and infinite, whereas the body is constantly changing and prone to decay. Between the body and Atman is the mental life, which needs to be understood in totality. The *antahkarana* should be understood, analyzed and trained to allow the light of Atman to be expressed, and to enable one to live in the world while remaining undisturbed by worldly jitters. After explaining both the immortal and mortal aspects of existence, the *Bhagavad Gita* describes all aspects of Yoga psychology.

Yoga psychology is not a philosophy; it is a science for the welfare of humanity. It helps us to a better understanding of our body, mind and spirit, and leads us towards complete fulfilment of a meaningful life. Most of us are trying to live a deeper and meaningful life, but moving nowhere because of not applying proper principles for integration and transformation. Yoga psychology reveals how we can reach this by simple and easy steps.

The approach to Yoga psychology is grounded in the teaching of Samkhya philosophy, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the Upanishads and other sacred texts. This perspective takes into account that we are a meaning-making species. This philosophical approach enables us to find hope in the face of tragedy. The simple act of meaning making can turn a horrendous tragedy into an opportunity to learn how to tolerate difficult emotions, improve

relationships and begin to connect with the nourishing relationships that surround us. The difficulty in this approach is there may be the false sense that what we “do” does not matter, if only we think the right thoughts.

There is often a prescriptive approach in Yoga psychology for specific psychological effects. For example, if someone suffers from anxiety, the Yoga therapist may assign them a specific series of restorative Yoga poses and breathing practices. This approach is incredibly valuable as a way to begin the individual’s commitment to the important role of discipline in healing. This practical perspective is imperative to the success of Yoga psychology, but deifies the idea that we are solely our bodies; that if we manipulate the body in the “right way” we will find peace and happiness. We may find that despite years of Yoga practice, an excellent ability to self-soothe and the ability to access higher states of consciousness, we are still prone to habits that cause us to suffer. Perhaps our habitual feeling that the world is not a safe place leads us to unhealthy levels of isolation, or we may jump to anger or anxiety in predictable ways. We may find that psychotherapy is an extremely useful tool to help us understand our habits and how we orientate toward and away from the present moment.

Yoga and psychotherapy can work together to help us experience “what is”, and sometimes this includes profound grief, depth of longing, fear and desperation. For people who have experienced much trauma, childhood abuse or both, the internalized message is that we are unworthy, bad and deeply disturbed; we often do not go into the depth of our pain because we believe there is a bottomless pit of despair ... but there is not. Underneath all mental turmoil is something quite predictable: beauty, resilience, strength, joy and contentment. It helps to know we do not have to do this alone. It also helps to know that we are spiritual beings, with incredible capacity and strength. This strength can be harnessed to resist the temptation to avoid emotions through addictions, food, exercise and work. Instead, we allow ourselves to feel; we allow the emotions to emerge from their hiding places and we welcome them in. In my experience, the simple and difficult act of experiencing the intensity of our emotions allows them to pass. We emerge refreshed, fortified and surprised at the peace and contentment that are an integral part of our being.

The experience of Yoga is quite different from understanding Yoga. Spiritual experiences are not ideas; they are quite literally experiences. They give us the felt and embodied sense of humility, empowerment, trust, order, the ability to stay grounded despite the natural flux and change of the world, and the skill to discern the complexities that exist behind simplistic categories of right and wrong. The spiritual component of Yoga is what will ultimately transform us in profound and unexpected ways. Through living the practices of Yoga we come into direct contact with joy, contentment, love and compassion. Our Western culture is slowly realizing that these are significant qualities, worth developing.

The *Aitareya* Upanishads say that we all have access to the Atman, or a state of consciousness that is unperturbed by our mental anguish. In this place we experience ourselves as *sat-chid-anand* (truth, knowledge and bliss). We all have access to this state of consciousness, regardless of any emotional problems we may have. In my experience, this state of consciousness does not “fix” mental illness, but it does open us to experience the totality of our being. We begin to see ourselves from a higher perspective. We may see, “Oh yes, my mind is prone to anxiety and has difficulty feeling safe”, but we also experience that we are so much more than the body and mind. We experience that our mental suffering is temporary, while our soul is eternal. We see quite clearly that our mental afflictions are a path that, if followed, will lead us to develop wisdom, compassion and love. In the spiritual view, a breakdown is a breakthrough.

According to certain statistical accounts, 80 per cent of the medical cases in America are psychogenic. Because the actual cause of the trouble is in the mind, it often cannot be reached purely by physical treatment. The cause has to be determined by psychological analysis, which need not be the same as psychoanalysis, probing in the lowest depths of the mind. Mind imbalance is caused by lack of moral courage. Mind does not get disturbed; on the contrary, it is the cause of disturbances. It is heart (*manus*) that is disturbed when we do something against it. This is the very reason that the treatment of psychological mental ailments depends on drugs to control it, as psychiatry and therapy is unable to cure it.

The Western world has been too engrossed in the material aspect of reality and its inhabitants are looking at the mind externally. But in the Western world, even with all of psychiatry and the use of drugs to deal with the mind, there is a phenomenal explosion of mental and psychological illness. The biggest epidemic in terms of illness going on today in the West is probably depression. It is estimated that half the people over the age of 50 years suffer from some sort of depression and at least half of these will end up taking various anti-depressant drugs. The medication may have a temporary effect, but it will not cure the problem. Unless the people taking these drugs recognize the need for a change in the quality of their thoughts and lifestyles, their mental condition will not change.

The mind is connected to the breath. Certain forms of *pranayama* are helpful for people who are depressed. Circulating the *prana* through all parts of the body-mind system also increases health and happiness. Of course, there is also meditation. If we can bring the mind to a silent and calm state, the mind will heal itself. To facilitate meditation, we may require certain mantras, like “Om”. Certain mantras will change the energetics of the mind. The mind has a sound pattern and, if we change the sound pattern behind the mind, this can change the inertia or any blockages that lead to depression or other types of reduced mental activity. The mind is a series of thoughts at one level and people who suffer from mental ailments are uncomfortable with the thoughts that come. Frequently, these are based on past experiences or childhood trauma. The Western approach is to try to retrain the mind and go back to the source of conflict and resolve it in some way. On the other hand, the Ayurvedic approach to mental health is much different. It adheres to an understanding that psychological disturbance has a physiological imbalance (called a *doshic* imbalance), and that there is much we can do in terms of diet and lifestyle that will put us in right relationship with our bodies. Right relationship to the body is seen as the beginning of mental health, for we often treat those around us in much the same way as we treat our bodies. Ayurveda holds Yoga and *Samkhya* as essential philosophical schools of thought that help us understand the world around us, and our place within it.

No action can be performed without the help of the mind: all the actions and speech of a human being are governed by the mind. Therefore, that

which needs the most attention in developing a practical way of living is our mental life. Training the mind means making the mind free from all complexes, and in *sadhana* all the faculties of mind are trained in a unified way. This is important because one-sided progress is exactly like knowing half a truth, which is not a truth at all.

Vedantic psychotherapy aims to cure mental and functional disorders due to fear, anxiety, frustration, internal conflict, guilt, suppressed desire and so forth, by rectifying the patient’s inner attitude towards the object concerned – things, beings or events, as the case may be – and, thereby, transforming his reactions to them. He is taught how to adapt himself to the varying conditions of life, since the stress due to social maladjustment contributes to neurosis and to psychosis as well. To effect a permanent cure, however, Vedanta recommends changing one’s outlook on life, because the root cause of mental ailment is a wrong view of life. All the while the patient is to be treated with due consideration of his capacities.

Higher states of consciousness evoked by Yoga have the unique effect of settling the mind, because we are no longer wrestling with “mental illness”. We no longer push it aside as something unworthy of our attention or as a bother. We begin to accept the eating disorder, the traumas, the anxiety and the difficulties connecting with others as functional adaptations to extremely traumatic situations. We begin to see the limitations of these strategies, and can consciously choose to replace them with yogic tools that help to keep us safe in ways that are not harmful to us. We begin to accept that we have to engage in self-care, if we are truly to begin healing and recover our sense of self.

All the systematic efforts and practices described in the *Bhagavad Gita* are means to organize the internal life, so that human beings can attain a state of tranquillity and thus become useful to themselves and others. The psychology of the *Bhagavad Gita* leads the student first to awareness of the centre of consciousness, then to training that focuses on the understanding and mastery of one’s internal states and, lastly, to the skilful and selfless performance of actions in the external world. Comprehension and knowledge of Atman are essential to understand fully the internal state of

mental life. And without an understanding of the various aspects of one's mental life, coordination between mind, senses, breath and the body is impossible. So, knowledge of Atman in itself is not enough: application of this knowledge is paramount.

It is Atman alone that gives light to the prime faculty of our internal being called *buddhi* (intellect). *Buddhi* has three levels: discrimination, judgement and decision. In Western psychology, these three qualities of *buddhi* are considered to be aspects of the ego. In other words, they are intimately connected with one's limited subjective sense of I; it is "i" who discriminates, judges and decides. Eastern psychology, however, shows that these three functions of the intellect are distinct from the ego. That is, they are not necessarily connected with one's limited, subjective sense of I. In this view, the powers of discrimination, judgment and decision need not be expressed within the more circumscribed perspective of one's ego. As C G Jung said: "Healing comes only from that which leads the patient beyond himself and beyond his entanglements with ego".

In my practice, I believe my work contains both psychology and spirituality. I integrate these aspects of transpersonal psychology as well, as I draw from my Eastern background my understanding of philosophy and the cultural meaning of words and language. It is valuable to acknowledge the difference between Eastern and Western understanding of psyche, as it helps broaden my spectrum not only of psychotherapy, but also of the entire human race.

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In conclusion, psychology has failed to serve humanity in the true sense of meaning. It remains just an understudy of psyche, which is only a part of our true spiritual nature. What is required in this present time, when human consciousness is changing very fast, is guidance through complete knowledge, like *Brahma Vidya*. Instead of feeding our ego by creating separate branches of psychology and performing the selfish act of misguiding people, why not chose to take a selfless and humble step forward by choosing a spiritual approach that will guide us to heal on all three levels: body, mind and soul. Autonomy is simply the freedom to be truthful – free of fear. It is in the nature of ego, however, to reject the present reality and focus on its fear/resistance.

Psychology and spirituality need to be seen as one. In my view, this new paradigm suggests the end of psychology, as we have known it, altogether because it is essentially modern, secular and ego-centred. The split between traditional psychology and spirituality, therefore, cannot be healed while the former views human beings in separate parts and fails to identify with the source. I sincerely hope that this idea will give birth to a new language, and new traditions will develop to support this new theory and practices.

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