

Nature of Mind According to Yoga Vasistha and Modern Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Mind is called the king of our ten senses; it is called ubhyendriya according to yogic texts. According to Maharshi Vasistha in Yoga Vasistha, mind is present in all the senses of this entire visible universe. Maharshi Vasistha says that mind creates bondage and liberation in this world. Meanwhile the concepts and nature of mind are same in ancient yogic texts and modern times. In modern concepts or according to psychology there are three states of mind such as conscious mind, super-conscious/subconscious mind and unconscious mind. Unconscious mind is a very dynamic state of mind and has a wide space to store unfulfilled desires. Unfulfilled desires cause anxiety, stress, depression and other mental abnormalities. If a person controls/changes the desires, he can become a perfect personality. A person can easily control unbalanced environment and situations. Hence, in this study the researcher wants to show the hidden facts of mind in present times. The only way to balance the ups and downs (growth) of mind is through Yoga and Shastra.

Keywords: Maharshi Vasistha, Yoga Vasistha, Ubhyendriya, Conscious Mind, Subconscious Mind and Unconscious Mind.

Introduction

According to Yogavashsasti, the Nature of Mind

This momentary thought is born from the mind. Just as water and air are not filled with vibrations from the form of the universe, similarly the mind is not filled with vibrations from the resolution. The resolution is the mind (**Yogavashsasti, Utpat Prakarana, Sagga-96**). Just as the actors in a drama take various forms, similarly the mind also takes various names by taking shelter of various kinds of activities. Just as the tree with its fruit, flower, creeper, leaves, branches, twigs and root is present in the seed of a tree in an unbroken form; similarly it is present in Brahma in its complete form. When the same mind adopts the state of contemplation then it is called mind (**Yoga Vashishtha, Utpat Prakarana, Sag-96**). This mind itself is the human being, it does not have a physical body, the body is inert, but the mind residing within it is neither considered inert nor lifeless. All this is only the mind (**Yoga Vashishtha, Utpat Prakarana, Sag-96**).

Nature of Mind according to Western System

Simund Freud (1856-1939), the father of Psychoanalysis, introduced revolutionary theories for understanding the human mind. He proposed a dynamic and multi-layered model of the mind, emphasizing the interaction between subconscious desires and conscious awareness. Freud's structural theory of the mind is divided into three main components: the conscious, the preconscious, and the preconscious beneath the subconscious. Furthermore, Freud described the mind functionally divided into three parts: Id, Ego, and Superego, which together they represent the functions of the human mind (**Freud, 1923/1961**).

Three-Tier Model of the Mind

- **Conscious Mind**

The conscious mind refers to the mental processes of which a person is aware at any given moment, such as thoughts, experiences, and emotions. It is the most limited and accessible part of the mind, where rational thinking and decision-making processes take place (**Freud, 1915**).

- **Preconscious**

The subconscious contains memories and information that are not currently in the individual's awareness, but can be brought into the conscious mind when needed. Freud described it as a buffer zone between the conscious and subconscious (**Freud, 1915**). For example, a forgotten experience or learned information can easily be brought into the conscious mind.

- **Subconscious**

The subconscious mind is the largest and most influential part of the mind, containing repressed desires, thoughts and memories that the individual is not directly aware of. Freud believed that the subconscious controls much of human behavior, and the material stored in it often includes socially unacceptable tendencies, childhood traumas and unresolved conflicts (**Freud, 1915**). These subconscious elements may emerge in the form of dreams or unexpected reactions.

Research Methodology

As described in the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, Ādhi (psychological disturbances) and Vyādhī (somatic diseases) are both rooted in mental imbalances and are identified as fundamental sources of human suffering. Their elimination by medicine leads to happiness and their total destruction by knowledge. That is called salvation. Within the body, Ādhi and Vyādhī arise as the causes of each other, i.e. sometimes disease is caused by Ādhi and sometimes Vyādhī is caused by disease, sometimes fire and disease both occur together and sometimes these Ādhi and Vyādhī arise together in the form of suffering along with happiness (**Yogavashisht, Nivagan Prakarana, Sangg-81**). Physical pain is called 'vyagadha' and mental pain due to desires is called 'aagadha'. Ignorance is the cause of both. When one has the right knowledge, both of these are destroyed. Due to lack of true knowledge of God and sense-control, getting entangled in the web of night and duality and thinking that this has been attained, this is yet to be attained – by such activities day and night, due to inertia, and great mental afflictions arise. Due to repeated arousal of desires, due to insanity, due to not being able to control one's mind, due to eating evil food and due to living in inauspicious places like the cave etc., Vyādhī (physical ailments) arise in the body (**Yoga Vashishtha, Nivagan Prakarana, Sagga-81**). Disease arises in the body due to eating food at midnight and during the Pradoshdhara period, and due to the defect of the proximity of animals, and due to fear of poison, snake, tiger and thief in the mind. Disease arises due to weakening of the nerves due to lack of entry of food juice in the holes of the nerves or due to excessive entry of urine juice and air etc. in these holes, due to the nerves getting filled up, due to the outbreak of phlegm, phlegm etc., due to the body becoming disturbed and due to many such defects (**Yoga Vashishtha, Nivagan Prakarana, Sagga-81**).

When the mind becomes disturbed due to mental pain, the body becomes restless; therefore, an angry person is not able to see the right meaning of his life, due to which he runs towards the well. When the morning air flows in an abnormal manner, the arteries get filled with phlegm, mucus, etc. and the veins get in an abnormal state, just like when the king is disturbed, the air in the room gets in an abnormal state. When the circulation of morning air gets disrupted, the food eaten gets the defect of being uncool, lazy, or impatient. In this way, disease is generated from fire and disease is destroyed due to absence of fire (**Yoga Vashishtha, Tanavagan Prakarana, Sagga-81**).

The mind gets humbled by the virtuous act of serving the saints. The mind gets humbled by the virtuous act of serving the saints. When the saints get purified, the body gets blissful. The pure smell of the soul makes the air flow through its own way and purifies the air properly. This destroys all diseases (**Yoga Vashishtha, Nivagan Prakarana, Sagga-81**).

Treatment of Mental Disorders According to Yoga Vashishtha

According to Yogavashisht, by giving up the external objects of the mind, one can quickly win over the demon of greed by one's own manly efforts in the form of God's worship. The only thing that can be achieved by one's own manly efforts is the desire of detaching oneself from the desired object (external object of enjoyment).

Cause of Destruction of Mind

By destruction of mind, all the sorrows are destroyed and by the mere thought of mind, one gets the ultimate sorrow. This restlessness of mind is called 'Avidya' because it is born out of Avidya. By having the vision of God, this 'Avidya' is destroyed. The mere desire of external senses is called 'Avidya' (because desire is born out of Avidya). Destruction of mere desire is called 'Moksha'. The Supreme God who is free from the association of senses, that extraordinary and incomprehensible conscious element is called 'Atma' or 'Paramatma'. **(Yoga Vasistha, Utpat Prakarana, Sagga-112)** This soul, which is covered with the covering, runs by imagining itself as the material object. That soul, which is mixed with the covering of the senses, is called 'mind' because it is transformed into the mind. This sense, which has attained the form of enjoyer, is destroyed by the effort of the male in the form of an unplanned way. The desire for enjoyment should be uprooted from its roots by the wise, taking shelter of the supreme male and by pure effort. **(Yoga Vasistha, Utpat Prakarana, Sagga-112)**. Great delusion (ignorance) is the cause of old age and death. In reality, neither "I" nor "mine" exists. This ignorance exists only in the eyes of the ignorant. In the eyes of the wise, everything is Brahman. People have forgotten the Brahman which is the truth and the thing called knowledge which is untrue is definitely remembered continuously. How surprising is this **(Yoga Vashishtha, Utpat Prakarana, Sagg-112)**.

The Nature of the Mind According to Modern Psychology

According to **Edwards (1998)**, Homer named the soul the "soul," which he thought was located in the head. But he distinguished it of two types. Three entities - Thymos, Nous, and Menos—represented the first type, which was a type of bodily soul. It was believed that Thymos was the driving force behind the body's will, which included feelings like joy, grief, fear, compassion, and so forth. Nous comprised of the intellectual and logical part that is in charge of thinking. And, menos stood for the internal fierce feeling during intense combat. Menos, which may be the linguistic origin of the English word "mind," was believed to be situated somewhere in the chest **(Santoro, Tomasello, Germano, Wood, Merlo, and Anastasi, 2009)**. An impersonal immortal spirit with etheric travel abilities was the second kind of soul. This was referred to as the "psyche," a term that is still widely used today and serves as the origin of numerous terms pertaining to the mind **(Robinson, 1995)**.

Later, Plato revolutionized the theory by his theory of only one soul for each individual. Plato called that "psyche". The psyche was composed of three parts, namely thymos, logos, and pathos **(Plato, 1992)**. Thymos was similar to Homer's thymos and was thought to be located somewhere in the chest **(Santoro G et al., 2009)**. Plato called the area that dealt with people's reasoning as the "mind." According to Plato, the head contains the logos or mind. The physical desire for food and drink was attributed to pathos, also known as the id, which was believed to reside in the liver. In other words, Plato believed that the immortal aspect of the soul (psyche) was the mind (or logos). Morality became associated with the soul because the soul was associated with the capacity for reason, which was believed to be immortal.

By proposing that the emotional soul (also known as thymos) and the nutritional soul (also known as id) were bodily functions rather than soul functions, René Descartes brought about a paradigm shift in the understanding of the mind in the 17th century **(Clarke, D. 2003)**. Descartes essentially transferred the soul's id and thymos to the body. As a result, the logos—a rational being or reasoning entity—became the only element of the soul, or psyche. This psyche, according to Descartes, is formless and immortal. Descartes also presented the idea of consciousness—or awareness of oneself—to the immortal psyche **(Descartes, R. 1989)**.

The current medical system and medical education are firmly based on Cartesian theory, which views the body—which is defined by a collection of physical characteristics like height, weight, movement, colour, heart rate, blood pressure, etc.—as an entity that is always interacting with the mind, which is defined by psychological characteristics like perceptions, emotions, and imagination, among others **(Mehta, N. 2011)**. The mind is regarded as an entity that interacts with the body and vice versa, rather than a component of the body like the heart or lungs. Numerous noteworthy medical advancements since Descartes' time have not only failed to challenge the Cartesian system but have instead been absorbed by it. Ivan Pavlov, for instance, showed in the 19th century that learning—which is frequently thought of as a "mental" ability—is an involuntary process, indicating the presence of brain machinery that facilitates learning **(Mazur, 2020)**. At about the same time, Charcot showed that pathological alterations in the central nervous system were linked to the clinical symptoms of multiple sclerosis patients **(Compston, A., & Coles, A. (2008))**. At about the same time, Alois Alzheimer

demonstrated that histological alterations in the brain were linked to a condition known as generalised palsy of the lobe (GPI), a tertiary cortex complication. This suggested that the so-called “palsy” might have something to do with brain development. The Cartesian system remained uncontested in spite of these developments, which implied that changes in mental state correspond with changes in brain state. Rather, it served as the foundation for the Cartesian system’s explanation of the mind-body issue, strengthening it. This contradiction became even more apparent when Alzheimer’s showed that the build-up of amyloid plaques and neuronal granules in the brain was linked to memory loss, which was thought to be a psychological ability. This was the first instance of neurological pathology being connected to a mental illness (Maurer, K., Volk, S., & Gerbaldo, H., 1997). By moving Alzheimer’s dementia from the field of psychiatry to neurology, the Cartesian system absorbed the paradox. This becomes the main problem: psychiatry and neurology are not distinct if mental disorders are thought to be caused by changes in the brain’s state. Since the Cartesian system holds that the mind and body are separate but interdependent entities, it still views neurology and psychiatry as separate fields. In his paper “Body as Object versus Body as Subject: The Case of Disability” (Edwards, 1998), Steven D. Edwards draws attention to this issue in the following ways: Since the mind is a medical concept, it can exist in either of two states: health or illness. As a result, it’s critical to distinguish between mental health—that is, a healthy mind—and mental illness. The idea of mental health is still relatively new in Western medicine. It has only been mentioned in scientific literature for the past century, and mainstream psychiatry has not yet fully acknowledged its importance (Thirunavukarasu, 2011).

Conclusion

Chinese, Indian and Western philosophy and psychology give high priority to the study of the nature of the mind and its many aspects. According to Yogamritha, man is the all-powerful principle through which the business of all the internal organs is carried out. The entire universe arises from the determination of the mind, which is the primary reason for the origin of the universe. Human suffering is caused by mental disorders due to ignorance, which can be resolved by self-awareness, self-control and pure detachment. One can attain salvation only by cleansing the mind and removing it from attachment and hatred. In contrast, Freud and other psychologists in the Western world divided the mind into conscious, preconscious and unconscious levels to investigate its structure and functioning. Freud used the concepts of id, ego and superego to understand the psychological and behavioral conflicts of the mind. Thus, attempts to understand the nature and depth of the mind have been made by both Indian and Western approaches. The Western approach emphasizes the structural and psychological components of the mind, while Yoga emphasizes the spiritual and conscious character of the mind. Both strategies acknowledge the importance of the mind in material existence and seek ways to manage it.

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