

PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS IN PATANJALIAN APPROACH

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Maharshi Patanjali has rightly been as the Father of Yoga. It is strongly believed that Maharshi Patanjali systematized yoga on the basis of the foundational metaphysics of Samkhya. Yoga sutras of Maharshi Patanjali are considered as a key work on yoga during classical era. According to Dr. Radhakishnan, Maharshi Patanjali codified the nebulous tradition evolved under the pressure of life and experience.

Yoga sutra of Maharshi Patanjali which has also been termed as Yoga Philosophy or Raja Yoga is considered as the first coherent philosophical system. It is believed to have been compiled between 200 BCE- 200 CE. As yoga darshana of Maharshi Patanjali adopted the concepts of Prakruti and Purusha, metaphysical rationalism and methods of acquiring knowledge, yoga philosophy of Maharshi Patanjali is also called Ishwar Samkhya, owing to the presence of concept of Ishwara or God which is missing in the Samkhya philosophy of Kapila.

Maharshi Patanjali has not only described the philosophical concepts like evolution, Prakruti, Purusha, Karma siddhanta etc. but also has laid down a systematic system of reaching the ultimate aim of liberation from wheel of birth and death (Kaivalya) through physical and mental practices. The systematic step by step arrangement of these practices has been termed as Ashtanga yoga or eight limbs of yoga. According to Dr. P.V. Karambelkar, Maharishi Patanjali presented the ancient knowledge of yoga in such a scientific and rational way that every theory, hypothesis and principle put forth by him can be tested through most rigorous modern scientific methodology. Thus, he presented science of yoga in most scientific manner both from ancient as well as modern scientific outlook.

Ashtanga yoga comprises Bahiranga yoga (Yamas, Niyamas, Asanas, Pranayama, Pratyahara) and Antaranga yoga (Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi) which indicate journey from outer world into inner world towards self realization. This self realization ultimately makes way for liberation or Kaivalya. Thus, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are widely regarded as the first formal compilation of the formal yoga philosophy. But at the same time, Patanjali's Yoga Philosophy can be considered as the most ancient form of Psychology. Maharshi Patanjali's view about mind and effects that it can exert on whole psychophysiological personality stand relevant even today. Maharshi Patanjali has elaborately and logically described different states of mind and its influence on different aspects of personality. Although there is no direct description of stress, the states of mind or fluctuations it encounters from time to time can be regarded as stressful situations.

According to Maharshi Patanjali, the cause for stress is certain states of mental fluctuations called Kleshas. These Kleshas are five and have been described in Sadhana Pada of Yoga Sutras.

अविद्याऽस्मिताऽगद्वेषाभिवेशाः त्लेशाः ॥

“Lack of real knowledge is the imbalance at subtlest level, and then because of ego, stress starts building up leading to fragmentation. Attachments, hatred and fear of death further aggravate the stress and send the person to the kingdom of misery and limitless.”

Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras has indicated that Kleshas are due to lack of knowledge (*Avidya*) about reality of our true nature, strong identification sense (*Asmita*), ever increasing desires (*Kaam*), attachment (*Raga*) to the material objects of enjoyment and excessive fear of death (*Abhinivesha*). If the person cannot fulfill his desires, then stress is created which is the root cause of all miseries. Thus, stress leads to generation of kleshas. Even if he can fulfill his present desires, new desires arise and the person again starts having stress. Thus, this becomes a vicious circle which never ends. This also leads to fluctuations in mind (*Chitta Vrittis*) and give rise to an agitated state of mind.

Avidya is the root cause of all other kleshas.

अविद्याक्षेत्रमुत्तरेषां प्रसुप्ततनुविच्छिन्नोदासनां ॥

Avidya serves as the field for growth of the latter (four) ones, which exist in four states of development) of deeply dormant (ness), weakened (condition), interrupted (state) and generally abundant (always vigourously active).

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या ॥

Avidya is seeing (understanding) permanent, pure, pleasure (and) (of the purpose of) self in (respectively) the impertinent, impure, pain (and) not (of the purpose of) self.

Even after knowing that all the worldly things are perishable and impermanent, we keep aspiring for these ephemeral objects and phenomenon as we wrongly consider them as sources of happiness. These types of false perceptions disturb the original tranquil state of mind and bring misery to our life. This misery is the root cause of stress which consciously or unconsciously transforms into psychosomatic disorders.

Scientifically, continuously increasing desires, attachment and rat race to achieve beyond capabilities leads to disturbances in mind. The causes of these disturbances are Vrittis. These fluctuations distort the normal way of living and through a number of psychological and emotional mechanisms disturb homeostasis in physiological functions. These disturbances ultimately manifest in the form of dysfunction of organs and systems in the body and are now being termed as *Psychosomatic disorders*. Therefore, *Avidya* has been considered the fundamental klesha.

हृद्दर्शनशक्त्योरेकात्मतेवारिमता ॥

Asmita is the (erroneous) identification of the two potentialities of the seeing (seer) and of being seen.

The distinction between the seer and the seen is always superimposed in common persons which leads to the identification of the self with the body which are in reality distinct from each other. This wrong superimposition or identification leads to all the troubles in our life. In this way, this *Asmita* or I-consciousness is the cause of trouble and misery.

सुखानुशयी रागः ॥

दुःखानुशयी द्वेषः ॥

*Raag (Attachment) is a result of pleasure.
Dvesha (Repulsion) is a result of misery.*

It is a common experience that we develop attachment for things which give us pleasure and persons who make us happy. On the other hand, we cultivate a feeling of repulsion or hatred for things or persons who give us pain and misery. These two kleshas namely raga and dvesha are emotions which we experience in our day to day life and are sources of misery in life.

स्वस्ववाही विदुषोऽपि तथारूढोऽभिनिवेशः ॥

Abhinivesha (great urge for clinging to life) is (the klesha) which functions on its own force (and) is riding (dominative active) even in the learned, in the same way as (in the ignorant ones i.e. in unlearned)

Abhinivesha or strong urge to cling to life is a very powerful force or a basic instinct fundamentally required to survive. This is the basic supporting power for life-continuance. In other words, this description means fear for death even when one understands the impermanence of life and inevitableness of death. Therefore, Maharshi Patanjali considers Abhinivesha as one of the five kleshas.

These five kleshas initiate the *Karmic Cycle* i.e. the person starts acting in various ways. Maharshi Patanjali states that Kleshas are the root cause of all actions and their consequences which are experienced in our life.

वतेशमूलः कर्माशयो दृष्टादृष्टजन्मवेदनीयः ॥

Kleshas are the root cause of Karmashaya and its consequences are to be experienced in the lives, which is being experienced at present and also which are not being experienced at present.

The Law of Karma postulated by Yoga Philosophy of Maharshi Patanjali explains that Kleshas give rise to Karmashaya i.e. the repository of the past karmas or actions, which are stored in it as Samskaras i.e. the residual impressions or effects of Karmas. The consequences of these actions done in past or present birth are to be experienced in present or future birth.

These actions done by a person can be positive or negative depending on the discrimination ability of the person. Each action in turn initiates a ripple of *Samskaras* which are imprinted and stored in the subconscious mind. Thus positive actions result in

Samskaras that are positive resulting in peace and tranquility of mind. On the other hand, negative actions result in generation of stress through negative thoughts. These negative thoughts originate in an agitated mental state acquired as a result of negative Samskaras.

Maharshi Patanjali further explains that:

परिणामतापसंस्कारदुःखैर्गुणवृत्तिविरोधाच्च दुःखमेव सर्वं विवेकिनः ॥

On account of the misery caused through change, anguish and samskaras (latent impression on chitta left by actions) and also on account of the conflict between the guna (the guna, which is dominating in the nature of an individual) and the vritti (the functional modification of chitta at particular moment), all is pain and misery for an analytical and discriminatory person.

Dukha or miseries are produced in life due to a number of factors working through channels. These channels initiate the etiological mechanism for production of miseries in life.

The first channel is the triad of **Parinama-Tapa-Samskara**. **Parinama** which means ever changing nature of the manifested world, **Tapa** which means anguish or acute anxiety and **Samskara** which means impressions of past actions are the components of this first channel. **Parinama** which means Change, which is fundamental characteristics of everything natural or out of the empirical world, will always lead to sense of loss and pain at some stage or other. This change is only felt and perceived when it has advanced and definite up to a certain extent. Therefore, Maharshi Patanjali has considered **Parinama** or Change an intrinsic factor in the production of **Dukha** or gives rise to miseries. **Tapa** or anguish or acute anxiety is a result of fear of the loss of something to which we are attached. This anguish or anxiety brings distress and pain in our life. **Samskara** on the other hand is the residue in the form of some kind of impression left in the karmasaya portion of chitta by a karma or action. In the course of time, Samskaras or impressions on chitta lead to a kind of habitualisation or conditioning which make us acclimatized to certain situations and pose difficulty in adjusting to any variations. Depending on the difficulty or inconvenience caused, the person experiences pain and misery in such varied conditions. This makes Samskara an important etiological factor for production of **Dukha**. Therefore, it can be said that Parinama (Change), Tapa (Anguish) and Samskara (Impressions), which are different aspects of chain of birth and death form a channel through which **dukha** enters into our lives in this manifested world and affects the body and mind-chitta mechanism.

The second channel for the arising of **Dukha** in our life works more internally and is the conflict between the diad formed by Guna and Vritti (**Guna-Vritti Virodha**). Guna is predominant in the nature of an individual and is his basic character. It is not easily changeable. On the other hand, Vrittis are constant fluctuations arising in individual due to continuous input of stimuli from external environment. There is always a difference in the guna patterns or proportion of the three gunas in the chitta of the person and in that of the vritti arising in it. Thus, in life, there is always a disharmony between the pattern of guna distribution in the chitta of an individual and the vrittis that arise in his chitta at different moments. This will lead to a loss of peace in his chitta causing misery or pain.

Dukha or Misery can be elaborated as the causative agents for certain signs and symptoms experienced at physical or mental aspects. These are the indications of disharmony at the subtler levels and manifest as certain disturbances called **Antarayas**.

व्याधिस्त्यानसंशयप्रमादालस्याविरतिर्भ्रान्तिदर्शनालब्धभूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानि चित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरयाः ॥

Disease, languor, doubt, heedlessness, laziness, highly stubborn attachment, delusory perception, inability to attain a stage, instability are the disturbances of chitta.

These **Antarayas** which are nine in number have been considered as the disturbances of chitta. They produce undesirable effects on body and mind.

Even a physical disease or sickness (**Vyadhi**) is the manifestation of some psychological disturbance. The changes taking place in body are symptoms and secondary results of the real cause, which is psychological or an inner disturbance. Modern Medical Science is gradually reaching at the same conclusion that every disease has its deep root in the mind.

Styana (Languour) and **Alasya** (Laziness) both imply unreadiness for active work, which is always a combination of the physical as well as the mental factors. In **Styana**, the mental factor is more prominent, while in **Alasya**, the bodily inability to work is the predominant factor. These factors are important and relevant even today. The present era is the era of lifestyle related disorders. Sedentary lifestyle is considered one of the causative factors for development of diseases. **Styana** (Languour) and **Alasya** (Laziness) are main causes for sedentary lifestyle which is the reason for a number of lifestyle related disorders including Dysmenorrhoea.

Other Antarayas include *Samshaya* (doubt), *Pramada* (heedlessness), *Avirati* (attachment), *Bhranti-darshana* (delusion), *Alabdhabhumikatva* (inability to attain a particular stage), *Anavastitvatva* (instability) are other disturbances to which Chitta is continuously exposed.

These nine antarayas are accompanied with some associated factors. Maharshi Patanjali has termed these factors as *Vikshep-Sahabhava* (co-existants).

दुःखदोर्मनस्यांगमेजयत्ववासप्रश्वासा विक्षेपसहभुवः ॥

Pain and misery, mental depression, trembling of the body parts (and disturbances of) inhalation and exhalation are the accompaniments (sahabhuvah) of disturbances (of chitta).

The factors causing disturbances in chitta are not easily perceptible from outside but their presence can be inferred from accompanying external symptoms like misery, mental depression, physical disturbances in the form of tremors and haphazard breathing.

Dukha means both physical pain and mental misery which are manifested in the form of frequent readjustment of posture by a person.

Daurmanasya is the term used for mental depression visible in the form of certain physical signs and symptoms.

Angamejayatva refers to the involuntary movements and tremors in the body whereas Shwasa-Prashwasa refers to disturbances in respiration. Any disturbance of chitta and mind leads to a trembling of the body and alterations in normal breathing pattern. The tremors and respiratory disturbances are so intimately related with mental disturbances that they occur every time there is a mental disturbance.

All these disturbances occurring repeatedly over a span of time manifest in permanent physical and mental impairments which we call diseases. Dysmenorrhoea is also one such condition. It is more common in females with excessive stress and experience of certain traumatic incidences leading to negativity towards life, attention seeking behavior and depressive state of mind.

But like other diseases, these psychosomatic diseases can also be cured through a holistic approach of Yoga. The philosophy of Yoga has laid down certain principles and practices which can change the outlook of the person towards the world and miseries associated with it.

Maharshi Patanjali has stressed that all the miseries, pains and instabilities can be avoided through the knowledge of real nature of world and of self through discriminative thinking. Miseries in the form of *Kleshas*, *Antarayas* and *Chitta- Vikshepas* can be remedied and a tranquil state of chitta (*Chitta-Prasadan*) can be achieved through measures which involve cultivation of a positive attitude repeatedly.

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां भावनातश्चितप्रसादनं ॥

By cultivating the attitude of friendship, compassion, participation in joy, and indifference (aloofness), respectively towards the subjects of pleasure, misery, virtue and viciousness through repeated treatment, is produced a state of blissful and peaceful state of chitta (Chitta-Prasadan).

Mind in this empirical world is usually disturbed by negative emotions and undesirable tendencies. A tranquil state of chitta can be achieved only if these undesirable emotions can be counter-balanced by repeated practice of cultivating positive emotions. A person should acquire an attitude of friendliness (*Maitri*) towards others in happier circumstances. He further advises to adopt an attitude of compassion (*Karuna*) on coming across a person who is in miserable conditions. One should remain happy in all circumstances even if one has to share his or her praise with someone else (*Mudita*) and the person should remain neutral or indifferent (*Upeksha*) on seeing justified distress of others. In such circumstances, he should acquire an attitude of not being affected adversely by emotional disturbances caused by such circumstances.

This technique of tranquillizing the mind is considered best but is actually very difficult to bring in practice as the negative emotions like jealousy etc. cannot be easily curbed and uprooted. Therefore, Maharshi Patanjali has recommended some other techniques like controlling the breath, by diverting it from distractions caused by various subjects, by contemplation and by attaining knowledge etc.

Ashtanga Yoga is the most well formulated therapeutic system which applies to psychological and physiological promotion of health, prevention of diseases and their integrated treatment also. This unique system has been explained by Maharshi Patanjali in the *Sadhana Pada* of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. This systematic practical path includes practice of eight limbs (*Ashta* means eight and *Anga* means limbs) of Yoga for the gradual diminution and ultimate disappearance of the impurities related to any part of the human **body-mind-spirit** complex. As the impurities go on reducing, the inner light of knowledge is gained through the awakening of *rtambhara prajna* and as a by-product; psycho-physiological health is secured.

यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाधयोऽष्टावंगानि ॥

Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the eight members of the systematic discipline of Yoga.

1. यम (Yamas):

अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ॥

Ahimsa (not injuring anything), Satya (truthfulness in every way of life), Asteya (not having anything which rightly does not belong to one), Brahmacharya (disciplined life of self-restraint) and Aparigraha (non-possessing attitude) are the yamas.

जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सार्वभौमा महाव्रतं ॥

The observances of yama are to be practiced as the supreme. They are applicable and obligatory in all circumstances without a single exception as vows, not conditioned by either birth or region or the times or occasion.

The word Yama is derived from the verb root 'yam' which means to control or restrain. The practice of yamas not only aims to produce a well disciplined society but also a peaceful state of mind. The observance of yamas should be on all the three levels, *Kayika* (physical), *Vaachika* (Vocal) and *Maanasika* (mental).

2. नियम (Niyama)

शौचसंतोषतपस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ॥

Niyamas (rules of behavior) are shaucha (cleanliness), Santosha (contentment), Tapa (austerities), Svadhyaya (one's own study) and Isvara-pranidhana (complete surrender to God).

Niyamas are personal observances or means of regulating one's behavior through the practice of physical and mental cleanliness, by maintaining a mental environment of satisfaction in all circumstances, through sustained and sincere efforts in order to achieve a goal, by practice of self analysis in everyday activities and finally by surrendering all the actions and their fruits in the feet of lord which is vital for achieving and maintaining the progress made towards the ultimate aim.

3. आसन (Asana)

स्थिरसुखमासनं ॥

Asana is a comfortable posture as a consequence of which it can be maintained steadily for adequately long periods of time.

The word Asana is derived from Sanskrit root 'As' which means to sit.

प्रयत्नशैथिल्यानंतसमापत्तिभ्यां ॥

Asana should be performed with total relaxation of effort and merger with mind with something infinite.

These two factors, *Prayatnashaithilyam* and *Anantsamapattibhyam* are closely related as the perfection in both is interdependent. Though *Prayatnashaithilyam* is more concerned with the body, it has some relation to the mental relaxation. In the same way, *Anantsamapattibhyam* which is more concerned with the mind has a physical repercussion also. When both of these factors are perfected, the subsequent limbs of Ashtanga Yoga are facilitated through desirable physiological and psychological changes. Therefore, asana in Patanjali's system is much more than simple physical exercises. In reality, they are very useful psycho-spiritual techniques.

4. प्राणायाम (Pranayama)

तस्मिन्नसति श्वासप्रश्वासयोगतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥

While being in the state of asana, the break in the regular rhythmic movement of inhalation and exhalation is pranayama. When practiced in this way, it results in the removal of the shroud on the inner illuminating potentiality

ततः क्षीयते प्रकाशावरणं ॥

From it (Pranayama) disappears the covering on the (internal) illumination.

The potentiality for getting the ultimate realization is present in every individual. But the samskaras of innumerable lives lying in the karmasaya part of chitta distort this ability and serve as screens interfering in correctly perceiving and comprehending the reality behind the objects and phenomena.

The first effect of pranayama is the tranquillization of the mind leading to Chiitaprasadana, a pleasant peaceful condition of mind. This tranquillized state of mind imparts it an ability to penetrate into reality behind any subject chosen for meditation i.e. ability to practice *Dharana*, a pre-requisite for entering deep states of meditation.

धारणासु च योग्यता मनसः ॥

*And fitness of the mind (for entering) into dharana (also results from pranayamas).
The meditative states thus attained will lead the practitioner towards the ultimate aim of self realization.*

5. प्रत्याहार (Pratyahara)

स्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्वरूपानुकार इवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः ॥

Pratyahara is that condition of the body and its senses in which the senses, having no ability of contact with the subjects or objects of their specific enjoyment follow the nature of chitta.

Pratyahara can be defined as the “Withdrawal of the senses inward towards their source viz. the mind and ultimately the chitta.” The practitioner loses his ability to make contact to experience and enjoy the objects of sense organs and develops an ability to withdraw inwards towards his own inner recesses to reach a state of Chittaprasadanam through complete subjugation of the senses.

6. धारणा (Dharana)

देशबंधधित्तस्य धारणा ॥

Dharana is confining of chitta on a spot within a limited sphere.

7. ध्यान (Dhyana)

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानं ॥

There, on that spot, therein the process of dharana, to have a continuous attachment on the experience of one single subject is dhyana.

8. समाधि (Samadhi)

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ॥

That dhyana itself is transformed into Samadhi, when the subject is devoid of its original form and yet is clearly perceived experienced in its mere essence.

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are mental processes in succession in which the chitta or awareness go on becoming more and more concentrated and ultimately one- pointed and further even transcends this one-pointedness. Dharana or concentration on the object or subject chosen is the first step which is followed by more intense one pointed flow of thoughts towards that object with expansion of awareness due to less wandering of chitta. Thus dhyana or meditation is an unbroken continuously stretched awareness of a very precisely uniform experience of the subject. There is cessation of thinking activity. This state of thoughtlessness i.e. idealess consciousness of pure pleasure-giving existence of the subject of meditation in the chitta ultimately transforms into Samadhi.

In this way, Maharshi Patanjali has given the most suitable, time tested and relevant system of stress management applicable in all times and all places. When yogic principles and practices are incorporated in the daily life, strength and flexibility to withstand the challenges and hardships automatically develops. This not only promotes overall health but also prevents the occurrence of physical, psychological and psychosomatic disorders. Yoga brings about a balance in body, mind and whole psycho-somatic mechanism thereby yielding a contented, productive and tranquil life.

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