

Psychotherapy and yoga: Paths to holistic health

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ABSTRACT

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity¹. Health is not static but a dynamic state that is continually changing as a person adapts himself to the variations in the external and internal environment to maintain a state of physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual well being. And to consider in broader perspective health is not merely 'a state'; it is 'a process of continuous equilibrium of body-form and function, which results from successful dynamic adjustment to forces tending to disturb it'. The sanskrit word for health is swasthya, which means etymologically, to be established in one's natural state. Traditionally, health is defined as absence of disease, and disease is deviation from biological norm². This approach is holistic and it focuses on integrated well being in all dimensions. Holistic health is a programme for activating the body's own self renewal processes. It may take months or years for the body to learn new patterns response and renew itself. And the holistic health programme succeeds only when certain conditions are fulfilled³. Yoga postures (asanas) are excellent means of physical and mental relaxation. Vivekananda and buddhism philosophies are methods of psychotherapy.

Keywords : ayurveda, holistic health, psychotherapy, stress, yoga

INTRODUCTION

Today mental illness has become far more widespread than physical illness. Social psychologist erich fromm says that in his book titled the sane society, we are living not in a mentally healthy society or sane society but in an insane society. His observation is very true. The unfortunate thing is that this fact is not generally recognized. Even if others think that a particular person is mentally unhealthy, in most cases the individual concerned would not accept it. We can define mental health as ' a balanced and undisturbed state of mind, not

only during favourable conditions but even during mentally stressful condition. Mental stresses could be of two types – acute and chronic or sustained. Seeing the two armies arrayed for war, with relatives on both sides, is an example of acute psychological stress for arjuna, under whose weight he succumbed and showed signs of neurosis like trembling of limbs, perspiration, reeling of head, etc. Geetopadesha by the lord krishna in such context is a form of psychotherapy. Banishment into forest for fourteen years is an example of chronic psychological stress for rama, who bore it commendably without breaking down. This particular stress pacified by himself through the rishi way of living with practicing various yogic methods⁴.

Just as a chariot with disciplined and controlled horses, with tight reins in the hands of an expert driver reaches the goal safely without meeting with accidents, so also a disciplined body with disciplined senses, mind and intellect conduces to the overall well being of the individual⁵. Satwavajaya line of therapy enables one to have control over his senses.

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EMOTIONS AS CAUSES OF DISEASES⁶

Charaka, the great seer of ayurveda gives a beautiful analysis of the origin of the emotions as starting in a slight desire to eat a little more than what is needed by an individual and ending in wars due to individual and group jealousy and hatred towards each other.

The process is as follows:- in the satya yuga i.e., at a period when there was all righteousness, when there was no competition for food, everyone ate just what he wanted and everyone was happy. But, as time passed, some people ate a little too much, simply because it was available. The result was that body became heavier (sareera gouravam). On the account of body becoming heavier, they became tired after performing their usual work (srama). On account of tiresomeness they became lazy (alasya). On account of laziness, they developed a desire to accumulate food and articles for future use (sanchaya). On account of the desire to accumulate arose mineness (mamata). On account of mineness arose greed (lobha).

In the second stage, on account of greed a desire was produced in order to accumulate more by deceiving others (abhidroha). On account of this desire, to deceive others, arose falsehood (asatya) and this falsehood gave rise to many fashions, such as lust (kama), anger (krodha), vanity (mana), hatred (dwesha), haughtiness (parushya), injury (abhighata), fear (bhaya), excitement (tapa), grief (soka) and perturbation of mind (chittodwega). These successive stages of the development of emotions from one into another were studied carefully in yoga and nyayasatras.

STRESS

The frenetic pace of modern life exposes many people to continuous, unrelieved stress. Canadian endocrinologist Hans Selye in his classic work *The Stress of Life*, mentioned that stress is unavoidable in life and is even necessary for healthy growth (eustress). But when it goes beyond a certain tolerance level

(varies from person to person) the system breaks down resulting in illness. He showed that mental stress is the root cause of several types of common illness such as hypertension, peptic ulcer etc although stress itself may have a purely psychological cause such as a mental conflict or emotional upsurge or the accumulation of life's little hassles⁷.

AYURVEDA - HOLISTIC HEALTH

// sharendriya satwatma samyoga dhari jeevitam /

// nityaga anubandhascha paryayai ayur uchyaitein // (ch.sa.su. 1/42)

Ayurveda conceives life as a four dimensional entity. Ayu, the living entity is the sum total of sarira (body), indriya (senses), satwa (psyche) and atma (soul). It is the constant and continuous union and conjunction of sharir, indriya, satwa, and atma. The synonyms of ayu are nityaga, dhari, jeevitam and anubandha. Nityaga signifies continuation of consciousness. Dhari means that factor prevents the body from the decay. Jeevitam represents the act of keeping alive. Anubandha means which transmigrates from one body to another. These four components of ayu interplay the human body. Out of which atma is supreme entity, immune to cycle of birth, disease and death (nirvikara parastu atma)⁸. The same was also shown in figure No.1

Ayurveda acknowledges this as "daivavyapasraya chikitsa" (harmonising the soul) along with yuktivyapasraya chikitsa (harmonising the body) and satwavajaya chikitsa (harmonising the mind and senses).

// sama dosha samagnischa samadhatu malakriya /

// prassannathmendriya manah swasthya iti abhidheeyatein // (su.su.15)

This means one whose physiological functions (doshas), metabolism (agni), body tissues (dhatu) and excretory functions (malas) are in a state of equilibrium with cheerful mind, clarity of intellect and contented senses is said to be established in oneself (svastha). Prasannata denotes

happiness and equipoise. Health or swasthya is therefore defined by ayurveda as a state of equilibrium, of body & mind. It is state of equilibrium of normal anatomical, biological, physiological, mental and spiritual well being⁹. Hence sama(balanced) state of dhatu, dosha, agni, and mala is the reflection of homeostasis in ayurveda. In holistic approach of ayurveda, the body, mind and soul are the subjects for the consideration. Holistic view is a view in medical practice upholding that all aspects of people's needs, psychological, physical and social, should be taken into account and seen as a whole.

Psychotherapy and yoga are integral parts of ayurveda with special emphasis in certain conditions. Psychotherapy is a direct solution for the problems of adjustment and personality disorders and where as yoga therapy is a solution to control the emotions and the combination of both will work in conditions of stress.

PSYCHOTHERAPY (SATWAVAJAYA CHIKITSA)

It is defined as the relief of distress or disability in a one person by another, using an approach based on a particular theory or paradigm, and that the agent performing the therapy has had some form of training in delivering this¹⁰.

the term 'satwavajaya' implies therapeutics for mental and emotional disturbances. It means that restrain mind from desire for unwholesome objects. This is achieved by increasing satwa to subdue the exaggerated rajas and tamas. The best approach to achieve this goal of satwavajaya chikitsa is through propagation of jnana (knowledge of self), vignana (professional / analytical knowledge), dhairya (confidence), smriti (scriptural wisdom) and samadhi (concentration)¹¹.

Satwavajaya chikitsa can be directed¹¹

1. To help the individuals to discriminate between thoughts and actions to accept his forbidden as common to most people and integrate them into self structure.

2. To help the individual to discriminate between objective and imagined dangers and to respond selectively to each.

3. To reward the person when he departs from or abandons the use of such neurotic behavior and encounters the person, who involved in such acts.

4. To divert the mind and make the person to involve with commitment in other activity so that he can forget the rituals in ocd.

5. To initiate bhakthi or regard / strengthen his believes in ishta daivam and advice him to leave upon the god to look after things for the benefit of him by which he doesn't rethink frequently.

6. To take out phobic nucleus by making awareness of the subject knowledge or true facts of all principles.

The treatment of mental and emotional disorders through the use of psychological techniques designed to encourage communication of conflicts and insight into problems, with the goal being relief of symptoms, changes in behavior leading to improved social and vocational functioning, and personality growth. different modalities of psychotherapy and their current applications are given in table no.1

Achara rasayana is a modification of satwavajaya chikitsa for prevention and maintenance of positive health. Positive health implies perfect functioning of body and mind in a given social milieu. Achara rasayana in modern sense we can say it as behavioral modification. This is a major factor contributing greatly to holistic health. To elaborate, it is the influence of good character or righteous conduct or value based life. This rests on the four important values¹²-

1. Truth - which includes honesty, simplicity etc.,

2. Purity - which includes a controlled sex life and the sublimation of sexual energies through spiritual channels of philanthropy, self less service, perfection in all activities etc.,

3. Faith in one's own divine self - the repository of infinite knowledge, bliss and life

4. Fearlessness

Achara rasayana in stress management¹³

We can't eliminate stress in our lives, but we can change our attitude towards stress

S - self control; stop - anger, egoism, untimely food and sleep & alcohol

T - trust in yourself, try & try truthfully

R - remember that you can do it & remember finer things.

E - exercise everyday (till perspiration appears on forehead & axilla)

S - spirituality, sincerity of purpose & love towards fellow beings.

S - state of sound mind in a sound body.

ADJUSTMENT AND PERSONALITY DISORDERS

it refers to a type of psychological disturbance where in the persons behaviour is a social or dissocial or anti social. It is an inflexible pattern of inner experience and outward behaviour. These are common psychological problems due to varied reasons and were given in table no.2 and 3. Psychotherapy (satwavajaya chikitsa) gives sustained relief in these problems of adjustment and personality disorders.

YOGA THERAPY

Yoga is skill in action (bhagavad gita). Skill by definition is the ability to do something well. It is a way of life. It is science of holistic living. Sri aurobindo regarded yoga as a methodical effort toward self perfection through developing our latent potential at the physical, vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual levels¹⁴. From yogic perspective holistic health is in the basis of panchakosa - five sheaths i.e., annamaya kosa (physical body), pranamaya kosa (vital movements), manomaya kosa (mental thoughts), vignanamaya kosa (intellectual convictions), and anandamaya kosa (emotional feelings) which cover, as it were, each individual soul¹⁵.

PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PANCHAKOSA

the five sheaths (koshas) are the layers that veil the true self. All these panchakoshas shown in figure no.2

PANCHA KOSHA¹⁶

Ananda-maya kosha Sanskrit	Bliss-full Translation	Transcendental body Western understanding
Anna-maya kosha	Food-full	Gross physical body
Prana-maya kosha	Energy-full	Subtle body
Mana-maya kosha	Instinctive-mind-full	Perceptual body
Vigyana-maya kosha	Understanding-full	Consciousness body
Ananda-maya kosha	Bliss-full	Transcendental body

ANNAMAYA KOSHA (FOOD SHEATH)

it includes the five organs of perception (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch), and the five organs of action (prehension, locomotion, articulation, excretion, procreation). It is called food sheath because food or anna enabled it to come into being, it is maintained by food, and it ultimately ends up as food or the

constituents of food. It is related with physical existence and this becomes possible through the sustenance on the food. Therefore, the basic layer of the existence built on the basis of ahara. Physiologically, annamaya kosa is related with the digestive system of the body. The proper functioning of the digestive system is the basis of not only the good health but longevity also.

PRANAMAYA KOSHA (PRANIC OR ENERGY SHEATH)

is related with prana which is the vital force of the body or existence. The vital energies (i.e. Prana) provided by the harmonious functioning of the different component 'pranas' - breathing, circulation, nervous systems, digestive and inner organs like the liver and the glands that endows the body with life. Without prana, the body is dead and not alive.

MANOMAYA KOSHA (MENTAL OR PSYCHO EMOTIONAL SHEATH)

or capacities like reflex, emotion, and similar functions of the mind and the system that sustains the instincts for self-preservation, perpetuation and related expressions. With manomaya, the being responds to stimuli - both of the external world and of the instinctive or emotional world .

VIJNANAMAYA KOSHA (INTELLECTUAL SHEATH)

is related with the consciousness. Awareness, alertness, activity and proper growth and integrated development are all the proper and nourishing aspects of the manifestation of the human consciousness. This human consciousness is here referred in terms of the vijnanamaya kosha. Vijnana is also related with the knowledge or more accurately knowledge of the reality. Or the discriminative faculty that helps in undertaking action according to what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' in the course of thinking and action. It is said that this faculty is dominant among human beings and weak among animals. It is also said that if humans do not use this faculty with wisdom and compassion, they may be worse than animals!

ANANADAMAYA KOSHA (BLISS SHEATH)

This corresponds to the state of bliss one attains when one is in total harmony with the internal and external environment even as one is engaged in action as necessitated by our state of living in the world. At this level, the person who works, the object of his work and the process of work itself constitute one holistic entity¹⁷.

The five sheaths above may also be classified in another way¹⁸:

1. Gross body = the food sheath and a portion of the vital air sheath; actions and perceptions here are due to thoughts and feelings coming from the subtle body

2. Subtle body = the subtle portion of the vital air sheath, and the mind and intellect sheaths; feelings and thoughts here are due to vasanas coming from the causal body

3. Causal body = the bliss sheath

The aim of yoga therapy is to operate these koshas in a coordinated manner. The different techniques of yoga will make these koshas to function at its optimum level. According to yoga, the disturbance starts at annamaya kosha or manomaya kosha in the form of strong likes or dislikes. These disturbed mental activities, when becomes uncontrolled percolated to pranamaya kosha, in pranamaya kosha this results in haphazard flow of prana and nadis, this further acts on the annamaya kosha resulting in ajeernatvam (faulty digestion) and atijeertvam (over digestion). This ultimately results in some form of disease symptoms. Likewise various disorders of respective sheaths and corresponding yogic practices were given in table no. 4

The techniques of yoga can very well play in controlling the mental disturbance. As mentioned above, the very definition of yoga given by patañjali itself states that *yogasyachittavritti nirodhah* and *yogavashishatha* the as *manaprashamanopaya yogah* (yoga is a tool to calm down the mental modifications)

Science of yoga defined as i.e., suppression of the modifications or states (chitta vrittis) of the mind. It means not only the stoppage of

the flow of presentation but also eradication of the latent tendencies that generate new streams of thought and new lines of action.(yoga sutra 1-50)

Basically these chitta vrittis are of two types

1. Paridrishti dharma – pramana, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidra and smriti are pratyaksha dharmas, 2. Aparidrishti dharma – nirodha, dharma, samskara, parinama, jivana, cheshta and shakti are the paroksha dharmas. Both are given tabular form at table no. 5

CONCLUSION

In the present day modern life style, concern of holistic health is somewhat tough task because most of the factors which disturb the physical and mental status are becoming the part of everyday life. So we have to learn to live with those circumstances. In such situations we are supposed to increase our mental competence, there the role of psychotherapy and yoga. Both psychotherapy and yoga are like two sides of a coin in mind – body medicine. First one works for mind and second one influences body. By the practice of both, people develop strong coordination of mind and body in tune with nature.

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Personality and the koshas¹⁹

Kosha	Personality	Original nature	Disturbance	Technique
Annamaya	Physical personality	Relaxation	Tension	Asana
Pranamaya	Life-force "	Calmness	Speed	Pranayama
Manomaya	Mental personality	Wisdom	Agitation	Meditation
Vigyanamaya	Intellectual "	Balance	Confusion	Mind sound resonance technique
Anandamaya	Bliss personality	Harmony	Disharmony	Mastering emotional mind technique

Table No.1: Modalities of psychotherapy & current applications

s/no	Basic modalities of Psychotherapy	Current applications
1	Psychoanalysis	Self psychology Interpersonal psychoanalysis Interobjective psychoanalysis Group and play therapy Gestalt therapy
2	Cognitive – Behavioral	Acceptance and commitment therapy Systematic desensitization (Graduated exposure therapy) Prolonged exposure therapy Stress inoculation training Reality therapy
3	Psychodynamic	Individual therapy Group psychotherapy Family therapy
4	Existential	Psychotherapy based on individual beliefs related four dimensions – physical / social / psychological / spiritual Logo therapy
5	Humanistic	Psychophysical dimension
6	Brief therapy	Hypnotherapy Neuro linguistic programme Strategic therapy Focused therapy
7	Systemic therapy	Cybernetics
8	Transpersonal therapy	Spiritual understanding of consciousness
9	Body psychotherapy	Orgonomy Somatic psychology Character analytic vegetotherapy

Table No.2: Problems of adjustment

Childhood problems	Fears , Nightmares, Learning difficulties etc.,
Adolescence	Depression, Aggressive ways, Delinquency
Adults	Marital adjustments, Occupational adjustments
Old age	Economic insecurity, Retirement, Dependence etc.,

Table No.3: Personality disorders

Odd personality disorders	Paranoid personality, Schizoid personality,
Dramatic personality disorders	Anti social, Hysterical, Narcissitic etc.,
Anxious personality disorders	Avoidant personality, Obsessive personality etc.,

Table No. 4: Depicting disorders regarding the kosha and effective yoga practices

S.No.	Kosha regarding	Related disorder	Efficacious yoga practices
1	Annamaya kosha	Digestive, disorder	Padmasana, bhujangasana, vajrasana and its modifications based on the practice Nadishodhana, anuloma and viloma Om chanting
2	Pranamaya kosha	Respiratory, cardiac disorder,	Simhasana, vajrasana, paschimottanasana, nadishodhana, ujjayi, surya namaskar, meditation.
3	Manomaya kosha	Psychological or mental disorder, endocrinal, disorder	Relaxative and cultural asanas Nadishodhana pranayama Meditation
4	Vijnanamaya kosha	---- do ----	Dharana and pratyahara yogic practices, deep breathing and retention (kumbhaka) and meditation
		Various disorders	The rectification of the disorders related with annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya leads to proper channelizing of blissful existence
5	Ananadamaya kosha	Which hinders overall expansion of life energy, happiness and realization of blissful existence.	Above and group of multiple practices as per the identification of the case.

Table No.5: Fluctuations of mind

Paridrishti / pratyaksh dharma	Aparidrishti / paroksha dharma
1.pramana (means of knowledge)	1. Nirodha (suppression)
2. Viparyaya (mithyagnana) - delusions	2.dharma (truthfulness)
3. Vikalpa (mental construction) - hallucinations	3.samskara (obedient)
4. Nidra (sleep)	4.parinama (frequent change in state of mind)
5. Smriti (memory)	5. Jeevana (art of breathing)
	6. Chesta (psychomotor activity)
	7. Shakti (psychic energy)

Figure No.1: Four dimensional entity of life

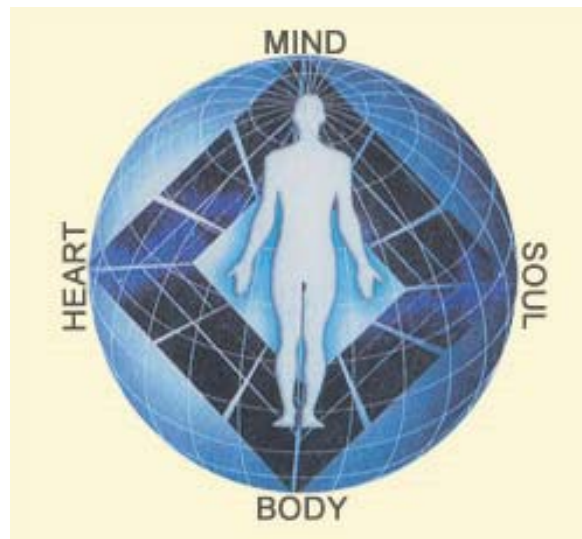


Figure No. 2: Panchakosha of yoga

