

Back to Science of Consciousness: Science of Raja Yoga and the need for reversal of Psychological Paradigm

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Abstract

Psychology is originally called Science of Consciousness as the Greek word 'Psychology' means 'Science of Soul'. Raja Yoga explores Consciousness and its role in real life applications which could develop interest in Consciousness amongst Psychologists and Psychiatrists. Consciousness plays an important role in intention, attention, thoughts, feelings, emotions, behavior and health. Raja Yoga teaches how to use Consciousness as a King to control his State, consisting of ministers, subjects who are known as mind, intellect and five senses. Raja Yoga explains that mind and intellect do not have separate existence but they are just different functions of Consciousness itself. Raja Yoga helps to manage the psychological, biological, social and spiritual factors of human beings effectively. If Counselors understand Consciousness and apply them in therapeutic techniques, there will be better results than what is obtained now. This article of an individual Case-study is written based on 21 years of self-observation on Raja Yoga practice (Dana, 2020) and its application on Counseling interventions.

Keywords: Consciousness; Raja Yoga; Indian Psychology; Rajyoga; Self Consciousness; Indic Science; Spirituality

Raja Yoga is a Science of Consciousness or Psyche or Soul. Raja Yoga is the technique to detach from external situations, 5 senses, thinking mind or thoughts and get back to "Consciousness" from all distraction or diversion of being "Mindfulness" (Spirituality Health and Inner Values Academy [SHIVA], 2020). "Raja Yoga is the easiest and most elevated, that it is the king of all yogas, and that you attain self-sovereignty through it" (Shiva, 2017, p.3). And he is to be deemed courageous whose spirit retains in pleasure and in pain the commands of reason about what he ought or ought not to fear (Plato, 1968/1991, p.122). The complete process of Raja Yoga is explained in Shrimat Bhagawad Gita of God Shiva (2017) taught by Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Godly University and some of its techniques have also been discussed in ancient scriptures Bhagawad Gita of Sage Vyasa (1785), Yoga Sutras of Sage Patanjali (1896) and Ayurveda (Charaka, 2020). In every man, there is an eye of the soul which, when by other pursuits lost and dimmed, is by these purified and re-illuminated; and is more precious far than ten thousand bodily eyes, for by it alone is truth seen (Plato, 1968/1991, p.207). The soul is unchangeable and superior to all. It is the cause of Consciousness

when in conjunction with mind, properties, bhutas (fundamental elements) and sense organs. It is eternal and the seer who witnesses all actions (Charaka).

Consciousness in Raja Yoga

In Raja Yoga, consciousness is caused by a self-aware being known as 'Psyche' in Greek. So Psyche is the Self-Aware Consciousness. When there is attention to itself, it is self-aware. Self-awareness becomes object consciousness or thought consciousness when the focus is on external objects or memories. Consciousness taking in information and being aware of objects is called conscious mind. Irrational inertia is impossible; cognition itself upsets it. Inertia is important for consciousness to find satisfaction, identity, existence, and life (Zantvoort, 2020). Consciousness is silence or peace by its nature. When we are absorbed in silence, we are self-aware. The more a person is self-aware, he/she becomes pleasant within himself/herself experiencing a tranquil nature expressed as deep joy from within. Whatever or wherever the attention of Consciousness is, it tries to experience them overlapping the self-awareness of its own silence or tranquil or blissful nature. These experiences could be of happiness, sorrow, anger,

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hatred etc. "It holds, in full harmony with modern research on CBT that an individual who becomes aware that his nature is dominated by the band of Consciousness pertaining to negative thoughts and emotions, can consciously move his locus of being in a systematic manner and become a more positive, optimistic, calm, realistic, energetic and joyful person" (Banavathy, Choudry, 2015).

According to Wilhelm Wundt and Edward B. Titchner, Consciousness is known as the cognition of those things that we become aware through the five senses and it can be either internal or external. When an observer pays attention to an object, he or she becomes conscious of its various attributes; when attention shifts away, the object seems to fade from Consciousness. Because of this tight relationship many scholars posit that these two processes are inextricably entangled, if not identical (Posner, 1994; Jackendoff, 1996; Velmans, 1996; Merikle & Joordens, 1997; Mack & Rock, 1998; Chun & Wolfe, 2000; O'Regan & Noe, 2001; Mole, 2008; De Brigard & Prinz, 2010; Prinz, 2010 as cited in Van Boxtel et.al., 2010). Silence, sweetness, and happiness are not included in modern psychology as experiences of Consciousness without external stimulation from the five senses. One sits in Super Conscience's sleep, content and enjoying Bliss. This is the omnipotent, this is the omniscient, this is the inner control, this is the source of all (Mandukya Upanishad as cited by Aurobind, (2005, p.141). The Mandukya Upanishad mentions four states of Consciousness: 1) Waking, 2) Dreaming 3) Deep Sleep and 4) Self Consciousness. Tirumandiram of Tirumoolar divides Self Consciousness into a) Turiya and b) Turiyateet. Turiya is the self consciousness with ego of self and Turiyateet is the self consciousness without ego of self but completely engrossed in love or love of God which is nothing but becoming an embodiment of peace, love and bliss. The combined state of Consciousness of self and love of God is the ultimate state of Self Awareness explained in Bhagawad Gita (Vyasa, 2000) and Rajyoga (Shiva, 2020).

According to Raja Yoga, becoming conscious of Consciousness and choosing every thought and action without losing the nature of peace, love and bliss is what makes a man remain free from confusion, neurosis, psychosis and even lead them to healthy lifestyle preventing non communicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, hypertension, stroke, addiction because 75 to 90% of the diseases are psychosomatic - the mind plays the major role. The Centre for Disease

Control and Prevention of the United States estimates that stress accounts for about 75% of all doctors visit. This includes, but is not limited to, headaches, back pain, heart problems, upset stomach, stomach ulcer, sleep problems, fatigue, and accidents. An estimated 90% of primary care visits are for stress-related issues, according to Occupational Health and Safety News and the National Council on Compensation Insurance (Salleh, 2008). When a person loses self-awareness, their consciousness lacks logic and judgement, and starts processing memories from the past or future, causing stress, rage, depression, and worry. In that serene, silent stillness illumination falls upon the mind, error begins to slip away, and so long as desire does not stir, clarity establishes itself in the higher stratum of consciousness compelling serenity and joy in the lower (Aurobindo, 1998, p.58).

Mind in Raja Yoga

In Raja Yoga, Mind is not a separate reality as it is generally assumed to be. Mind is a combination of Consciousness and thoughts. It is Consciousness, when focused upon objects through the senses, it is known as conscious mind (Patanjali, 2015, p.19). When Consciousness focuses on past information or memory, it is known as Freud's pre-conscious or unconscious, known as subconscious mind (Dana, 2021). In fact, there is nothing called mind but Consciousness. The information in reality is not stored in mind. It is in fact stored in memory of Consciousness. The process of recalling the past observed information by the Consciousness, is carried out by the Consciousness itself and not by anything else called mind. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis focuses on people with mental disorders where word-images develop through faulty connections. Freud used self-observation and literary study to find associations in his own writings, his patients' dream diaries, and famous writers' associative prose. Freud saw psychoanalysis as a way of externalising unconscious speech (Tkaczyk, 2020). Mind is often considered as the software and the brain its hardware. Consciousness and mind are often considered synonymous (Prabhu & Bhat, 2013). When I am self-aware, I can easily shift my focus from one item or thought to another. I gain control over how long I can focus on one thing or thought, depending on whether it makes me, Consciousness, feel good or bad. Have such strong dharna (practise) that you can stabilise yourself anywhere you desire. You should be able to stabilise your intellect's foot (Shiva, 2017, p.81). Negative emotions produce stress and disease-causing

hormones (Sapolsky, 2010).

Requirements to practice Raja Yoga

Prerequisites for Raja Yoga include maintaining a balance of psychological, biological, and social elements. Like physical health and illness, mental health is determined by various interrelated social, psychological, and biological factors. The strongest evidence is linked to mental illness, which is linked to markers of poverty such as low education, poor housing, and low income in both developed and developing countries. The increased vulnerability of underprivileged people to mental diseases can be explained by variables including insecurity, pessimism, rapid social change, violence, and physical illness (World Health Organization [WHO], 2005, p.19). Along with the three other components, the Spiritual factor is crucial. The eight steps are: Yam, Niyam, Asanas, Pranayam, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi (Patanjali, 2015, p.19). Raja Yoga's holistic approach is as follows:

A. Psychological

1. Gaining knowledge of Psychological, Biological and Social factors (Shiva, 2017, p.342) and revising the gained information regularly (Shiva, p.139).

2. Knowledge of Consciousness and its role as mind and intellect (Patanjali, 2015, p.76).

B. Biological

1. Application of healthy lifestyle by physical yoga asanas - stretching exercises (Patanjali, p.92) and practice of Pranayam for more pranic cosmic energy and oxygen intake. (Patanjali, p.95).

C. Social

1. Protecting physical body from external climate and situations as mentioned in Ayurveda (Charaka, 2020)

2. Imbibing virtues to think, speak, act, communicate with others in a healthy way (Shiva, 2017, p.173).

D. Spiritual

1. Knowledge of God (Patanjali, 2015, p.29) and the method to communicate with God. (Shiva, 2017, p.9).

2. Knowledge of World Cycle (Shiva, 2017, p.5), Actions and its results (Shiva, p.112).

Psychological Factors

Psychological knowledge of psycho-bio-social-spiritual factors and practice of being Self Conscious helps in having a clear intellect (Consciousness). Intellectual error is the main cause of all diseases as explained in Ayurveda (Charaka, 2020). Mind and Intellect are the roles played by the Only Consciousness (Patanjali, 2015, p.9). When Consciousness creates

intention with clarity, it is known as Intellect (Patanjali, p.10). Without understanding Consciousness and its role as intellect and mind, the psychotherapies never give a better result although therapies offer a temporary result without this knowledge of different roles of Consciousness. Cognitive schools which came in later primarily emphasized on mental processes like memory, perception, imagery and thinking, which were also influenced by factors like culture, education, state of health of the individual. But, they too failed to explain the nature of the 'cognizer' behind the process of cognition, the 'man behind the machine'. The 'Humanistic Existential theories' 'or' 'Third force psychologies' revolutionized western thinking in recent years and accepted the concept of free will and its importance as a motivator of change. They gave importance to abstract concepts like empathy, love, altruism, truth and beauty. The theories of Carl Rogers, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Eric Fromm and Roberto Assagioli, particularly the last, were closer to the theories of the Oriental philosophies (Prabhu, & Bhat, 2013)

Biological Factors

A clear Consciousness is important even to acquire knowledge of physical health and carry out actions, to keep the physical body and mind healthy. When we have a clear consciousness, we have focused intellect to understand and gain knowledge of how to maintain a healthy brain (mind) and body. We understand information like Circadian rhythm - biological clock of our body, the right food with proper nutrition, minerals, vitamins, water, proteins, carbohydrates that are required for proper function of our body which includes all organs including brain which could be called as the real hardware to make the Consciousness perform its roles of self-awareness, mind and intellect effectively. As per Ayurveda, there is also the need to understand the process of human development, the basic needs of the body that has to be carried out for its effective functioning and practice of healthy lifestyle like doing regular exercise. The three main causes of diseases mentioned in Ayurveda are unwholesome contact with the object of senses, intellectual errors and seasonal vagaries. Similarly, the remedy of all disorders lies in the balanced use of intellect, senses and time (Charaka, 2020).

Social Factors

With a Clear Consciousness playing the role of mind and intellect, it needs to understand the Social factors like how our physical body and mind interact with

external situations. We need to imbibe values which in the long run become virtues to develop better communication and social skills. In the opinion of the bereaved, reasons for the dissembling, conscious and/or unconscious, were due to: 1) Inability to adjust/impairment; 2) Relational problems; and 3) Weakened resilience (Leenars, Dieserud, & Wenckstern, 2020). And even for the body, we need to understand how it could be protected from various climate conditions as mentioned in Ayurveda (Charaka, 2020).

Spiritual Factors

In Spiritual knowledge, we need to understand the importance of God in our life (Pope, Drew, Lazarus, & Ellis, 1962/1982, p.2) along with His role. By remembrance of God, it becomes easy for the Consciousness to become focused and concentrated to play a better role in the form of Intellect and Mind (Patanjali, 2015, p.54). And there is the knowledge of the world cycle connected with Consciousness (Shiva, 2017, p.107), how the world and individual Consciousness undergoes various phases of golden, silver, copper and iron age repeatedly, explaining the purpose and meaning of living a golden aged life with values and virtues. There is knowledge of results of action, neutral action, sinful action and positive action caused by the Consciousness playing the role of mind and intellect by attaching its consciousness to the five senses and external objects (Patanjali, p.21). Raja Yoga gives practical methods to regain the values and virtues of Consciousness (Shiva, p.219). Then virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, and vice the disease and weakness and deformity of the same (Plato, 1968/199, p.124).

Practice of Raja Yoga

To experience Consciousness as it is, the Consciousness has to experience detachment (Patanjali, 2015, p.18), relaxation from body, 5 senses and thoughts but intention (Spirituality Health and Inner Values Academy [SHIVA], 2019). This detachment becomes easy when it is practiced during dawn and dusk - early morning hours say anytime between 3 am to 5 am or late evening hours from 6 pm to 8pm. It has to be practiced at least for 45 minutes morning and evening. During dawn and dusk, the body, senses and mind naturally remain calm and relaxed (Shiva, 2017, p.481). Then this practice needs to be continued in day-to-day actions by experiencing positive feelings and emotions along with the awareness of Consciousness while performing actions. There needs to be constant attention without any types of tension

knowing self as Consciousness (Shiva, p.525). This becomes easy when we focus on God who is beyond the physical world and who remains neutral, tranquil and blissful. Focusing on God puts an end to all mental distractions and allows one to return to self-consciousness. God is our life, our very life. "The major primary event in human life is conscious vital realisation of oneness with Infinite Life and full opening to divine inflow. That degree of oneness with the Infinite-Superior Spirit means that anguish and pain will be replaced by abundance of health and strength." (R. W. Trine, 26th thousand, NY 1899. I've gathered fragments) (James, 2009, p.79).

Stages of Raja Yoga

There are 3 stages of Raja Yoga.

1. Consciousness plays the role of detached observer. I just observe but neither use my thoughts to think nor allow my senses to act.

2. Consciousness remains a detached observer but keeps experiencing the inner sense of joy, silence, smile, tranquility known as bliss which is experienced beyond the 5 senses, where there is a natural remembrance of self and God, the pure Being who constantly remains beyond thoughts of the physical world and senses.

3. Consciousness experiences itself as an unlimited awareness (of peace, silence and love) like the sun which is although located at one place, its rays are unlimited.

I am detached and relaxed from the process of constant thinking or repetition of thoughts which is the main cause of stress and stress related mental and physical problems when I experience the above 3 stages (Vajrala & Debora, 2018).

Consciousness in Counseling

In Counseling practice, by the present author, it is noticed that Concentration of Consciousness is more focused by being detached from physical body and senses which would help in Counseling sessions for better understanding of thoughts, venting out feelings, modifying behaviour, getting rid of fear, phobia, improving handwriting, overcoming suicidal thoughts, anxiety and managing depression (Dana, 2014, p.123). It gives better result in Hypnotherapy of Josef Breur, PsychoAnalysis of Sigmund Freud (Freud, & Breur, 1895/1955), Suggestive Therapies (Bernheim, 1884/1888), Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) and Eclectic Psychotherapies. Humanistic Counseling techniques and Positive psychology mainly focus on individual values and virtues which are natural for the Pure Consciousness. "Man can learn to

transcend these limitations [of finite thought] and draw power and wisdom at will. The divine presence is known through experience. The turning to a higher plane is a distinct act of consciousness. It is not a vague, twilight or semi-conscious experience. It is not an ecstasy; it is not a trance. It is not super-consciousness in the Vedantic sense. It is not due to self-hypnotization. It is a perfectly calm, sane, sound, rational, common-sense shifting of consciousness from the phenomena of sense-perception to the phenomena of seership, from the thought of self to a distinctively higher realm. For example, if the lower self is nervous, anxious, tense, one can in a few moments compel it to be calm. This is not done by a word simply. Again, I say, it is not hypnotism. It is by the exercise of power. One feels the spirit of peace as definitely as heat is perceived on a hot summer day. The power can be as surely used as the sun, rays can be focused and made to do work, to set fire to wood.” The Higher Law, vol. iv. pp. 4, 6, Boston, August, 1901 (James, 2009, p.391).

Benefits of Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga has been tested and proven to deal very effectively with stress, stress related psychosomatic and non-communicable diseases (NCD) along with medication. It is also proven to improve the cognitive functions of individuals at all levels. It has been tested in improving the affective and Cognitive functions (Misra, Gupta, Alreja, & Prakash, 2013, p. 38; Ramesh, Sathian, Sinu, & Rai, 2013, p.67). There is an increase in HDL reducing the LDL, which is one of the main causes of psychosomatic illnesses, improving the cardiovascular functioning due to positive feelings and emotions generated by Raja Yoga practice (Maini, Kaur & Kohli, 2014). Raja Yoga practice helps in improving Heart Rate, Blood Pressure and ECG (Maini, Kaur & Maini, 2011). Relaxation through Raja Yoga has been used to get rid of symptoms like headache, muscle tension (Kiran, Behrai, Venugopal, Vivekanandhan, & Pandey, 2005). It is also used to get rid of stress factors that are common in substance abuse, addiction and are able to overcome addictions in thousands of cases (Sharma, Parab, Midha, Shah & Nair, 2015). Raja Yoga is able to control the hormonal secretions maintaining a balance as per the biological circadian rhythm (Vyas, Raval & Dikshit, 2008). It also enhances pulmonary functions (Manisha, Vinay, Agarwal & Sharad, 2014). Balkrishna and his associates studied the effect of Patanjali Yoga on ‘psycho neuroses’ and found it useful in stress induced psychological disorders. It showed better results than the drug treatment (Manickam, 2010).

Discussion

Psychotherapies need to use Raja Yoga meditation techniques for enhancing the speed of recovery from illness to wellness. Psycho Analysis, CBT and other therapies gives better results by understanding the importance of Self Consciousness. Consciousness is the attention. Consciousness is the creator of thoughts. Consciousness is the one who experiences good and bad feelings. Unless we know and understand the Consciousness- the real Controller (Intellect) and Creator of thoughts, habits, the One which recollects thoughts to enact, to behave,- it is not possible to bring a permanent change on the way of thinking and behavior. In Raja Yoga, it is said, a Yogi is the one who is able to concentrate (as well as detach) on any object or situation, whenever he wants and however long he wants. A Raja Yogi has complete control over his Consciousness to attach itself to an activity of playing a role of mind, intellect and performing action through the senses. With clear Consciousness we can get rid of emotional blockages (Dana, A., 2014, p.72). As per Sage Patanjali’s yoga sutras, Asanas or Physical Posture is meant for stabilizing the body so that there is no distraction in Consciousness (Patanjali, 2015, p.92). As per Raja Yoga, Asanas could be a posture where the Consciousness is able to remain detached from the physical senses and the body (Shiva, 2017, p.396). Pranayam is a balance of breathing patterns with normal inhale and exhale, so that Consciousness remains stabilized (Patanjali, 2015, p.94). When the Consciousness is detached from senses, body, thinking and intention process, when the whole organism is relaxed and calm, the breathing pattern becomes well balanced to experience natural Pranayam. “Kriya Yoga pranayama, the scientific method of neutralization of breath, has nothing in common with the practice of trying to control life current by forcible retention of breath in the lungs—an unscientific, unnatural, and harmful practice.” (Yogananda, n.d.). The raising of kundalini and having supernatural mystical experiences by different types of breathing practices are just a momentary experience caused by the movement of cerebrospinal fluid (Dispenza, 2017, p.149) or due to the hormone enabling release of Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) in brain (Strassman, 2001, p.75). Practice of Asanas and Pranayama, performed without proper guidance may have side-effects in the body and brain (Shiva, 2017, p.396). The secret of Raja Yoga practice is the balance (Shiva, p.438). Balance in psychological, biological, social and spiritual factors, so that

Consciousness never gets deluded by its own role of mind and intellect, and also never gets carried away by the role it performs through the senses and body.

Conclusion

By recognising the value of Consciousness, Raja Yoga can be used in Counseling to improve mental and physical performance by instilling virtues of tolerance, cooperation, differentiating right and wrong, establishing self-control, and having strong memory. Consciousness is both limitless in awareness and role-

limited. We must return to the basic paradigm of Psychology as a Science of Consciousness rather than the mind or behaviour.

a) Study of attention and performance with a clear Consciousness while performing actions b) Conscious Self-Awareness aids in mental and physical healing.

However, these case study observations are written based on subjective experiences which need not be the same for other individuals and it may be difficult to replicate the similar result.

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