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## **Exploring the Intersection of Indian Philosophy and Psychology through Levels of Mind in Yoga, Ayurveda, and Modern Philosophical Thought**

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**Abstract:** The convergence of Indian philosophy and psychology offers a profound and intricate comprehension of the human mind, incorporating concepts from ancient traditions such as Yoga and Ayurveda while actively involving contemporary philosophical and psychological ideas. The Indian philosophical systems, including Yoga, provide a systematic perspective on the mind, categorizing it into several strata that regulate cognition, emotion, and perception. To illustrate, manas pertains to the sensory mind that is accountable for the processing of external stimuli, buddhi signifies the intellect or faculty of decision-making, and ahamkara symbolises the ego, or the perception of individuality. The many levels of the mind in Yoga are designed to attain elevated states of consciousness, surpassing typical mental functioning by use of meditation and mindfulness techniques. In Ayurveda, the mind is intricately connected to the physiological composition of the body, where mental states are comprehended in connection to the doshas vata, pitta, and kapha. Mental health in Ayurveda is approached holistically, focusing on achieving equilibrium among the mind, body, and environment. In the context of doshas, mental diseases or imbalances are perceived as disturbances that establish a connection between psychological moods and physical well-being.

**Key words:** Indian Philosophy, Psychology, Levels of Mind, Yoga, Ayurveda, Modern Philosophical Thought, Consciousness, Manas

### **1. Introduction**

The intricate workings of the human mind, including our feelings, actions, and consciousness itself, have long been best understood through the interdisciplinary field of philosophy and psychology. Indian philosophical traditions provide a deep and multi-faceted perspective on these questions because their origins go back thousands of years. When it comes to understanding how the mind functions, two systems that have made a significant impact are Ayurveda and Yoga. Indian philosophy takes a more comprehensive view of the self and consciousness by integrating spiritual, psychological, and physical aspects, in contrast to Western philosophy and psychology which have traditionally sought answers through cognitive theories and empirical methods. As a discipline of philosophy and psychology, yoga provides a deep understanding of the mind and its operations that extends beyond physical postures. According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and other ancient writings, the mind is multi-faceted and multi-functioning. The processing of sensory information and reactions to external stimuli are responsibilities of the manas, also known as the sensory mind. Intellect, or buddhi, allows for higher-level cognitive processes like judgement and decision-making. Having a distinct sense of self and how one differs from other people is shaped by the ahamkara (ego), which controls self-identity. Achieving self-mastery and heightened consciousness via meditation and mental discipline is the goal of each of these stages, which are more than just

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theoretical. Reaching samadhi, also known as enlightenment or union with the divine, is the pinnacle of yoga; it is at this point that one's mind unites with global consciousness.

The ancient Indian medical practice of Ayurveda takes a similar stance, viewing the mind as intrinsically linked to the physical and natural worlds. The three doshas (vata, pitta, and kapha) are considered to control both physical and mental health in Ayurveda. Different mental qualities are associated with each dosha. Vata governs creativity and quick thinking, but an imbalance of vata can cause anxiety. Pitta is associated with intelligence and focus, but an imbalance of pitta can make you irritable. Kapha is associated with calmness and stability, but an excess of it can make you lethargy. According to Ayurveda, one must take a holistic approach to health care that takes into account one's mental and physical well-being simultaneously. Discordances in one area might have a negative impact on the other. Modern psychology, particularly in the West, tends to center on mental health issues treatment, behavioral analysis, and cognitive processes, in contrast to Indian philosophy's emphasis on interconnection and spiritual progress. An empirical, scientific method to comprehending brain processes emerged with the 20th-century emergence of psychological ideas including behaviourism, cognitive psychology, and psychoanalysis. But modern psychological thought is becoming more receptive to holistic and non-traditional approaches. A newfound appreciation for the merits of wisdom traditions such as Yoga and Ayurveda is reflected in the rising popularity of holistic therapies, meditation, and mindfulness. This study aims to explore the ways in which ancient Indian philosophy and current psychological thought see the mind and mental health in an effort to bring these two spheres closer together. Gaining a deeper and more holistic understanding of human consciousness can be achieved by delving into Yoga's multi-layered model of the mind, Ayurveda's integration of mental and physical health, and modern psychology's focus on cognition and behavior.

### **1.1 The Concept of Consciousness in Indian Philosophy and Western Psychology**

Among the most deep and hotly contested topics in Western psychology and Indian philosophical traditions is the nature of consciousness. Although they come at the question of consciousness from various angles, their distinct perspectives allow them to provide complimentary and oftentimes groundbreaking explanations for its origins, operations, and breadth. In this discussion, we will look at the points of agreement and disagreement between Indian philosophy and Western psychology about the nature of consciousness, as well as the consequences of these divergences for our knowledge of the mind.

#### **Consciousness in Indian Philosophy**

The core tenet of many Indian philosophies, including Vedanta, Yoga, and Buddhism, is the idea that consciousness is essential to being. In these models, awareness is not an afterthought but rather the ground of all things. Many people use the Sanskrit word chit, meaning "consciousness," to refer to the state of mind and body that is apart from all other aspects of being. The non-dualistic Indian philosophical tradition known as Advaita Vedanta holds that beyond the material and immaterial worlds exists the ultimate reality, or Brahman. That one's sense of self (Atman) is inseparable from Brahman, the consciousness of all beings, is a delusion of the mind and ego, is central to this philosophy. Thus, self-realization—the understanding that one's actual identity does not consist of

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the physical body or the intellect but of pure awareness—is the ultimate purpose of human existence. The Yoga Sutras by Patanjali describe a multi-leveled consciousness that is central to Yoga. To reach a more profound and stable level of consciousness, yoga seeks to calm the mind's fluctuations, or chittavrittinirodha. In this view, consciousness is considered as both a personal, subjective experience bound up with the mind and ego and a universal, objective truth. When a yoga practitioner reaches samadhi, the greatest level of awareness, they have achieved spiritual freedom through merging with global consciousness.

### **Consciousness in Western Psychology**

Conversely, Western psychology has long employed a more scientific method for studying consciousness, zeroing emphasis on the perceptual, cognitive, and behavioral components. Because behaviourism placed a premium on outward actions rather than introspective feelings, it pushed the study of consciousness to the periphery of psychology for the better part of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the study of consciousness re-emerged as an important field of investigation with the advent of cognitive psychology in the late 20th century. A common definition of consciousness in contemporary psychology is the ability to perceive and make sense of one's immediate physical and mental surroundings. The field of cognitive psychology has investigated the mental operations of seeing, paying attention, and remembering in order to deduce the ways in which awareness permits one to move around in the environment. By correlating mental operations with electrical activity in the brain, the development of neuroscience has greatly expanded our comprehension of consciousness. Scientists have been trying to pin down the exact brain processes that give birth to conscious experience by identifying the neural correlates of consciousness (NCC). Since its introduction by philosopher David Chalmers, the "hard problem of consciousness" has been a central concern in Western psychology. The origin of subjective sensations, or "qualia," from the brain's physical processes is the central topic this challenge seeks to answer. Although there have been remarkable advancements in brain activity mapping, it is still a big mystery why specific brain states are associated by conscious experience. This has sparked continuous discussions on whether awareness is nothing more than a result of mental processes or if it alludes to a reality beyond the material.

### **1.2 Comparison of Mental Purification in Yoga and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

Two distinct but complimentary methods for mind management and emotional stability are cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and yoga's purification of the mind. Chitta vrittinirodha (the end of mental fluctuations) is the Yoga term for mental cleansing. A person's actual nature is obscured by continual diversions, ideas, and emotional disturbances, as stated in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Meditation, breath control, and moral observance are all components of yoga that work together to cleanse the mind. The mind becomes clear and at one with a higher reality in samadhi and other higher levels of awareness as a result of these activities. Conversely, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) aims to help people recognize and change unhelpful ways of thinking that lead to emotional pain and behavioral issues. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is based on the idea that one can lessen emotional pain by modifying illogical or distorted ideas and the subsequent changes in behavior. Patients can learn to recognize negative beliefs and replace them with more balanced



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and reasonable ones through cognitive restructuring. A person's emotional and psychological health are enhanced as a result. Behavioral activation, exposure treatment, and thought monitoring are all components of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that aim to strengthen mental resilience through changing one's way of thinking and behaving.

Mindfulness and self-awareness are essential tenets of both Yoga and cognitive behavioral therapy. Mindfulness and meditation are essential tenets of yoga because they teach practitioners to tune into their internal experiences and observe their thoughts and feelings objectively. Similarly, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) promotes increased self-awareness and emotional regulation by having people keep track of their thoughts and question cognitive distortions. Although both Yoga and CBT aim to alleviate mental disturbances, Yoga sees them as impediments to enlightenment and CBT sees them as causes of emotional and psychological suffering. There is a marked difference between the two systems' aims. The ultimate goal of yoga, as a spiritual practice, is to achieve enlightenment and to transcend the ego. As a means to enlightenment and oneness with all consciousness, Yoga advocates cleansing the mind. Comparatively, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a psychologically-based therapeutic method that seeks to alleviate mental disease symptoms and enhance daily functioning. Unlike Yoga, which aims for enlightenment, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) focusses on concrete, evidence-based ways to improve mental health. Yoga and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) have different philosophical bases, yet their scientifically based approaches to mental cleansing and their holistic approaches can compliment each other. Yoga and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) complement each other effectively because of their shared tenets of mindfulness, integrity in daily life, and self-control. When combined, these methods can provide a holistic strategy for mental health by addressing both the psychological and spiritual dimensions.

### **1.3 Meditative Practices and Mindfulness: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Psychology**

Modern psychology has widely acknowledged the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation, which have their origins in ancient traditions, as strategies for improving mental health and well-being. Indian traditions like Yoga and Buddhism, which date back thousands of years, provide a wealth of knowledge about the mind and ways to develop one's spirituality, self-awareness, and inner calm. These strategies have been embraced by modern psychology to treat mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, and stress, particularly through programs like Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This investigation delves into the parallels and differences between mindfulness and meditation, two ancient practices that have developed into a modern psychological method supported by science. Meditation and other forms of contemplative practice are considered as means to enlightenment and self-actualization in many ancient religions and philosophies. Yoga teaches that meditation can help one achieve samadhi, or profound awareness, by calming the mind (chittavrittinirodha). In addition to achieving mental clarity, the aim is to attain better spiritual insight by transcending the ego and worldly distractions. A key component of Buddhist meditation, known as mindfulness (sati), is training one's attention to remain in the here and now in order to gain understanding of the transient



and interdependent character of all things. Meditating on one's internal experiences without judgement or bias can help one achieve enlightenment and freedom from suffering, according to Yoga and Buddhism.

Recognizing the potential for these traditional methods to improve mental health, modern psychology has embraced them. Many modern therapeutic modalities, like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), centre on the Buddhist technique of mindfulness. According to these schools of thought, mindfulness is about being fully present in the here and now, without attaching any value judgements to what you're experiencing. By cultivating this state of consciousness, people are able to more objectively observe their internal experiences, including feelings, physiological sensations, and ideas, without letting themselves be consumed by them. Mindfulness training helps people overcome the vicious cycle of emotional reactivity, negative thinking, and ruminating that underpins many mental health problems. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help with stress reduction, emotional regulation, and mental health in general. The development of introspection and emotional stability are essential tenets of both traditional meditation methods and the more contemporary practice of mindfulness. But in the end, they have different goals. Meditation is mostly seen as a spiritual activity in ancient wisdom traditions, with the primary goals being reaching enlightenment and transcending one's own limitations. In addition to reducing material misery, the ultimate aim is to rise beyond it all by being one with one's true nature. The current mindfulness practice, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with enhancing mental health and functioning in the context of everyday life through psychological therapies. Its stated goals do not include dealing with spiritual aspects, but rather alleviating mental illness symptoms, building emotional resilience, and improving overall quality of life. In spite of these distinctions, contemporary psychology and ancient contemplative practices have greatly benefited one another. Traditional wisdom from many eras can teach us how to calm our minds and find inner peace, and contemporary psychology can back these claims up with evidence and show us how to incorporate these practices into our daily lives. Collaboratively, they provide a holistic perspective on mental health that integrates traditional knowledge with modern scientific findings, equipping people to handle mental and contemporary life's complexity.

## **2. Literature Review**

A wealth of information about the meeting point of traditional knowledge and modern science may be found in the literature on the subject of Indian psychology and its relationship to current psychological methods. The edited collection by Sathiyaseelan and Balasundaram (2024) offers a holistic perspective on how contemporary therapeutic settings might benefit from utilizing Indian psychological ideas, especially those derived from ancient scriptures, to foster mindfulness and wellness. By showcasing its integrative methods that combine ancient and modern procedures, this work demonstrates how Indian psychology may be applied to solve modern mental health issues.

By charting the development of Indian psychological ideas from traditional knowledge to their contemporary application, Vijayabanu, Midha, and Ram (2024) provide a helpful viewpoint. Indian psychological notions are being altered to satisfy modern psychological demands, as highlighted in their chapter, which focusses on the transfer from ancient principles to contemporary therapeutic methods. To improve the effectiveness of therapy, the authors propose combining classical



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knowledge with modern psychological approaches, drawing on both historical and contemporary viewpoints.

In his critical analysis of the colonial imprint on Indian psychology (2024), Sharma highlights the historical and contemporary ways in which Western perspectives have shaped Indian psychological traditions. In his call for a decolonization of psychology, Sharma stresses the importance of acknowledging and incorporating Indian psychological viewpoints into international discussions of the field. In order to address historical prejudices and enhance the discipline of psychology, this work highlights the importance of returning to and incorporating indigenous perspectives.

An extensive examination of the perspectives on consciousness and the mind offered by the ancient Samkhya school is presented in Swargiary's (2023) investigation of Samkhya philosophy. Swargiary examines the philosophical framework of Samkhya in order to shed light on how these ancient concepts might contribute to our modern understanding of psychology. The philosophical foundations of Indian psychology and their significance to contemporary psychological theories are better understood thanks to this book.

In his chapter from 2023, Pant examines the similarities and differences between Indian psychology and contemporary psychological methods. By providing a holistic viewpoint that incorporates the ideas of both traditions, Pant's work shows how modern psychological treatments can benefit from traditional Indian beliefs, allowing for a more complete understanding of mental health and wellbeing.

Yoga, dancing, health, and spirituality all work hand in hand to promote emotional and physical wellness, and Chakravorty (2023) delves into this interplay. This article showcases the significance of yoga and related practices in contemporary wellness settings by illustrating how their incorporation into other holistic approaches broadens our perception of health and spirituality.

Shaw and Kaytaz (2021) place contemporary postural yoga's health discourses and practices in the context of medical and anthropological theories. Insights into the modern uses of traditional practices and their implications for mental health are offered by their work, which offers a thorough investigation of the ways in which modern yoga practices intersect with health and psychological well-being.

In their discussion of Yoga and Ayurveda as they pertain to workplace wellness, Dagar and Pandey (2021) draw attention to the practical applications of these ancient traditions for the benefit of employees' emotional and physical well-being on the job. Integrating ancient wisdom into modern workplace health methods has tangible benefits, as their chapter shows.

Both Strauss (2020) and Foxen (2020) shed light on the cultural and historical backgrounds of yoga by analysing the ways in which various traditions have developed and been perceived in different societies. Two important works that shed light on the ways in which cross-cultural exchanges have influenced modern yoga practices are Strauss's yoga posture and Foxen's yoga's Western origins.

In his discussion of yoga's potential benefits to mental health services, Singh (2020) lays out concrete steps for bringing yoga's tenets into therapy. This study highlights the possibility that yoga

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can improve mental health outcomes and therapy processes.

Mukherjee (2020), who revisits the work of early Indian psychologists and its influence on contemporary psychology, provides the historical context of the development of psychological disciplines in India. The importance of early Indian psychological discoveries in influencing modern practices is emphasized in this study.

In her dissertation for her doctorate, Benker (2020) examines the cultural representations of yoga in the United States and its political implications. Different contexts perceive and appropriate culturally entrenched activities in different ways; this study offers a critical viewpoint on this.

In their in-depth examination of yoga therapy's potential benefits to health and wellness, Sullivan and Robertson (2020) draw on philosophical and scientific frameworks. The need of combining philosophical ideas with empirical data to better understand and implement yoga treatment is highlighted in this paper.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study uses a multi-method approach to investigate how Yoga, Ayurveda, and contemporary philosophical ideas all deal with the mind and how they relate to Indian philosophy and psychology. This necessitates a comprehensive analysis of both ancient and modern sources of literature. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and other ancient Ayurvedic texts, as well as key texts from Indian philosophy, will be studied in conjunction with contemporary psychological ideas including mindfulness, psychodynamic methods, and cognitive psychology. Our goal in compiling this extensive research is to identify shared and unique understandings of consciousness and the mind. The next step, after the literature evaluation, is to compare and contrast the theoretical frameworks of modern psychology with those of Indian traditions, drawing attention to the similarities and differences. To further illustrate the relevance and use of these ideas, we will incorporate case studies as well as interviews with prominent figures from the fields of contemporary psychology and Indian philosophy.

#### **Theoretical Analysis**

In order to construct a unified theory of consciousness and the mind, the theoretical investigation will combine ideas from contemporary psychology with those from Indian philosophy. Ayurvedic views on mental states and balance, as well as Yogic notions of samadhi and chittavrittinirodha, are among the important philosophical ideas from Indian traditions that will be studied in this study. We shall contrast these with current ideas in psychology regarding the nature of awareness, thought, and emotion control. Finding commonalities and dissimilarities in these cultures' understandings of the mind's levels and functions is the objective. The research intends to give a thorough picture of the ways in which modern psychology and traditional knowledge inform and overlap by developing a theoretical framework that connects these different viewpoints.



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## Ethical Considerations

Making sure that both contemporary psychological practices and Indian philosophical traditions are accurately and respectfully represented is an ethical consideration for this research. Subjects' identities will be hidden throughout the research process, and their permission will be sought before any interviews or case studies are conducted. The study will make an effort to present the views and practices from both sides with respect and nuance in order to prevent cultural insensitivity and misunderstanding. Academic integrity will also be upheld throughout the research, with an emphasis on giving credit where credit is due and being forthright about how the study was conducted and its results. By taking this tack, we can be certain that our investigation into the meeting point of Indian philosophy and contemporary psychology will be both thorough and ethical.

## 4. Finding & Discussion

### Findings

When looking at how Indian philosophy and psychology meet, one can see that there are some very similar ideas about the mind and awareness, but there are also some quite different ones. The mind is viewed as an intricate and diverse creature with different levels and states in Indian philosophy, especially in Yoga and Ayurveda. To overcome these obstacles to self-realization, yoga presents a model of the mind with many vrittis (fluctuations) and suggests techniques like meditation and ethical discipline to reach samadhi, a condition of deep mental clarity and oneness with one's true self. In Ayurveda, the three doshas—vata, pitta, and kapha—are described as influences on the mind that can impact mental health and balance. This all-encompassing perspective highlights the interdependence of mind and body by incorporating spiritual, psychological, and physiological elements. Understanding the mind through empirical research and clinical practice is the new focus in modern psychology, especially within behavioural and cognitive frameworks. Perception, memory, and problem-solving are some of the cognitive processes that cognitive psychologists study. Therapeutic treatments such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have integrated mindfulness-based approaches, which originate from Buddhist practices, to promote awareness of the present moment and the regulation of thought and emotion patterns. In an effort to promote emotional and mental wellness, these methods stress the significance of self-awareness and emotional regulation.

### Discussion

Understanding the mind and awareness better is possible through fusing contemporary psychology techniques with ideas from ancient Indian philosophy. The significance of being attentive and self-aware in attaining mental wellness is acknowledged by both contemporary psychology and Indian traditions. While contemporary psychology focusses on practical applications for emotional management and mental wellness, Indian philosophies frequently emphasise spiritual objectives and self-realization. For example, the psychological emphasis on developing self-awareness and cognitive flexibility is congruent with the ego-transcending practices of Yoga. By comparing and contrasting, we may see how different traditions deal with mental health issues and how they treat





them. Unlike contemporary psychology, which relies on empirical ways to treat cognitive distortions and emotional disorders, Indian philosophy frequently tackles mental disturbances through spiritual practices, ethical living, and holistic wellness. The fundamental aims of each tradition spiritual enlightenment vs. mental health are reflected in this disparity. In addition, the study highlights the possibility of combining various viewpoints. A more complete knowledge of the mind may be possible if contemporary psychological methods were combined with the spiritual and holistic ideas of Indian philosophy. Consider how the philosophical depth and empirical confirmation of both faiths' mindfulness practices could be combined to provide more comprehensive understandings of stress management and mental health improvement. Ultimately, a deep conversation between old knowledge and contemporary science emerges when one investigates the junction of Indian philosophy and psychology via the mind's levels. A more comprehensive approach to mental health care that takes into account the empirical and spiritual aspects of human experience can be achieved by recognizing and incorporating these different viewpoints.

## 5. Conclusion

A deep confluence of old knowledge and modern comprehension is revealed by investigating the meeting point of Indian philosophy and psychology, especially as it pertains to the levels of consciousness in Yoga, Ayurveda, and contemporary philosophical theory. The Indian philosophical canon offers a multi-faceted understanding of the mind that includes the metaphysical, physiological, and psychological. The combination of mental and bodily health through doshas in Ayurveda and the focus on transcending mental fluctuations and obtaining levels of heightened consciousness in Yoga provide a comprehensive framework for comprehending mental processes and well-being. These viewpoints shed light on the significance of self-awareness, the origins of consciousness, and the effects of mental disorders on general well-being. By centering on cognitive processes, emotion control, and interventions supported by research, modern psychology supplements these older viewpoints. Methods like cognitive restructuring and mindfulness-based therapies show how ideas from Indian traditions can be applied in a practical way, yet with a scientific twist. There appears to be a common understanding between modern psychology's emphasis on mindfulness and cognitive flexibility and Indian traditions' emphasis on self-regulation and mental clarity as means to attain mental health. A more holistic strategy for mental health may emerge from the integration of these varied perspectives. A more complex knowledge of the mind can be achieved by integrating the scientific and practical approaches of contemporary psychology with the philosophical and spiritual teachings of Indian traditions. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this integration improves mental health practices by facilitating greater introspection and better therapeutic treatments. In the end, we can better tackle mental health issues and promote general wellness through the interaction between traditional wisdom and modern science, which offers a more comprehensive view.



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