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Model of manifestation of impulsive behavior according to classical yoga texts

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Abstract

The Upaninads are a culmination of Vedic knowledge. The Taittiriya Upaninad discusses five levels of existence in the human condition. The grossest and the outermost, the physical frame, is called the annamaya koça, followed by the praeamaya koça, manomaya koça, vijñanamaya koça and the subtlest, the anandamaya koça. The annamaya koça refers to the gross physical body which is a sheath sustained by food.

Keywords: Yoga, Upaninad, annamaya

Introduction

The second subtler sheath is the praeamaya koça the sheath of the energy body, featured by the predominance of praea, the life principle, which flows through invisible channels called nadis. The next sheath in order of subtlety is manomaya koça - the sheath of sensory capacities (emotions dominate and start governing our actions); next is the vijñanamaya koça - the sheath of cognitive function (power of discrimination is predominant); and finally, the anandamaya koça - the sheath of blissfulness. Further, the five koças can be classified into three groups - the physical (annamaya koça), the subtle (praeamaya koça, manomaya koça, vijñanamaya koça), and the causal (anandamaya koça).

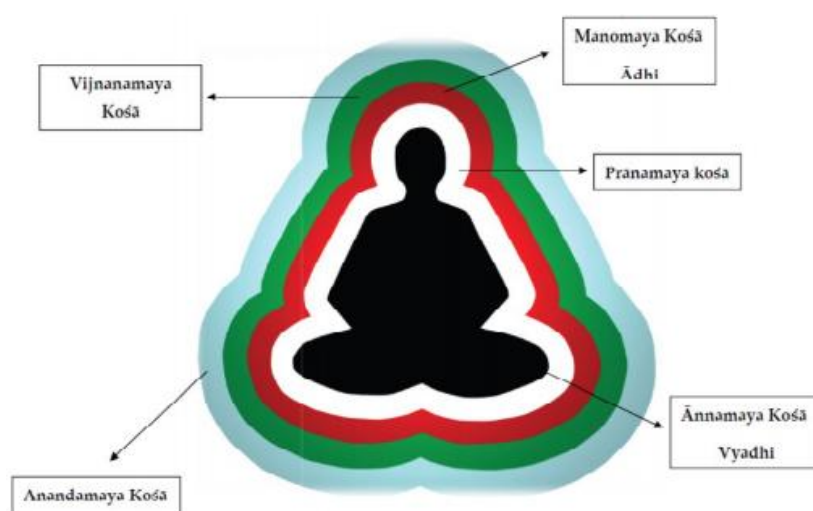


Figure 1: Five sheaths (pañca koças)

In the classical Yoga texts model of impulsive behavior is explained as imbalance in different koças. In waking state, occurrence of an event or demanding situation results in repeated thinking and further leads to attachment (sangah). Intense attachment matures into a burning desire (kāma). The desire is born of the yogic temperament Rajas. When desires arise, it

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generates Rajas and urges the man to work in order to possess the object. This in turn, leads to an avalanche of thoughts (strong likes and dislikes). When this avalanche of thoughts is unfulfilled, it transforms into intense anger (krodhah).

ध्यायतो विषयानुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥२॥६२॥

Dhyāyato vinayān puṣāṣaṁ saṅgastēnūpajāyate | Saṅgāt saījāyate kāmāṁ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate |Bhagavad Gīeā|2|62||

When a man thinks of the objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. Intense Kāma and Krodha set out an involuntary impulse in the vijānanmaya koṣa.

शक्नोतीहिव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।

कामक्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥ ५-२३ ॥

ṣaknotéhaiva yaṁ soḍhūā prakṣaréravimoknaeat | kamakrodhodbhavaà vegaà sa yuktaṁ sa sukhé naraṁ ||Bhagavad Gēta|5|23||

He who is able, while still here (in this world) to withstand, before the liberation from the body, the impulse born out of desire and anger – he is a Yogi, he is a happy man.

Research Study

For a person who is able to withstand the impulses born out of desire and anger, all the actions will be governed by total knowledge based at the vijānanmaya koṣa. Hence there will not be any impulsive behavior and the person achieves a state of perfect mental equanimity. Those who do not have mastery over involuntary impulses due to desire and anger, continue towards infatuation, lack of awareness and discrimination at vijānanmaya koṣa.

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥२॥६३॥

Krodhādbhavati sammohaṁ sammohāt smātibhbhramaṁ | Smātibhramāṁ buddhināṣo buddhināṣāt praṇaṣyati || Bhagavad Gīeā |2|63||

From anger comes delusion; from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination he perishes. Further, vijānanmaya koṣa endows manomaya koṣa with unending thought processes and wrong cognition which leads to and manifests as impulsive behavior. When the manomaya koṣa is afflicted, the body follows the disturbance completely. Due to these disturbances, flow of prāṇa in nadis gets vitiated. These imbalances in the flow of prāṇa at the praeamaya koṣa finally culminate in impulsive behavior at the annamaya koṣa or physical body as rapid, unplanned reactions to internal or external stimuli without regard to the negative consequences of these reactions to themselves or to others.

चित्ते विधुरिते देहः संक्षोभं उपयाति हि ।

संक्षोभात् साम्यं उत्सृज्य वहन्ति प्राणवायवः ॥२५॥३५॥

Citte vidhurite dehaṁ saiknobham upayati hi | Saiknobhat samyam utsrājya vahanti praeavayavaṁ || Yogavāsinōha

[25|3.35||

When the mind is agitated, the body indeed goes to the state of agitation. On account of agitation, the vital airs (or currents of Bioenergy) flow, giving up evenness.

Discussion

Pratiprasavaḥ (involution) is the most significant technique for restraining impulsive behavior. Pratiprasavaḥ is the process of involution, where objects merge into their cause progressively, so that ultimately the gunas remain in an undisturbed condition. Every individual has a combination of three temperamental characteristics called the gunas: Unactivity (sattva), Activity (rajas) and Inactivity (tamas).

At any one time, one of these temperaments predominates in the person. When the person reaches the state of kaivalya (liberation), the temperaments revert back to their casual state having fulfilled their purpose. Thus process of pratiprasava or involution of the gunas ends in kaivalya (liberation). As the sheaths become subtler, there is a progressive influence of consciousness in one's being, the freedom of operation due to discrimination increases, bondage with the body decreases and the bliss and a feeling of happiness increases.

Sage Patāñjali makes two major recommendations: Anōāṅga yoga or the eight limbed yoga and pratipaknabhavana. The eightfold yoga includes: Five self restraints –yama (non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, sensual abstinence, non-acquisitiveness), five observances- niyama (cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self study, resignation to god), asana (seat or meditative posture), praeayama (regulation of breath), pratyahara (withdrawing mind from the objects of sense experiences), dharana (confinement of the mind to one point or one object or one area), dhyana (relaxed dwelling of the mind in a single thought with awareness that one is practicing unbroken concentration) and Samadhi (becoming one with the artha, that is, the object of concentration).

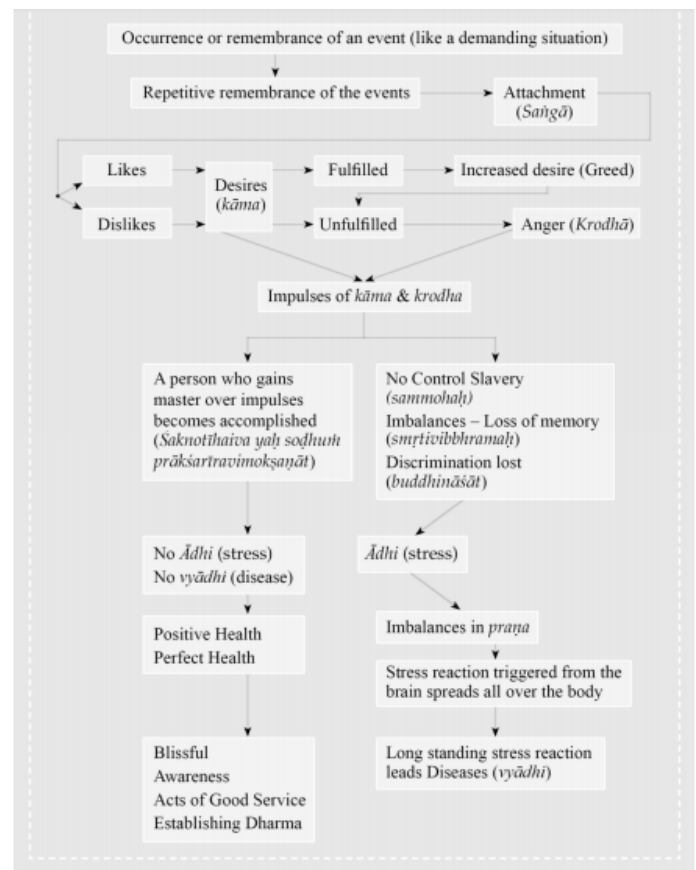


Figure 2: Manifestation of impulsive behavior according to ancient scripture

Further, Swami Vivekananda emphasizes four ways to go beyond the koças, namely, through Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Karma yoga is suitable for people of active temperament, Bhakti Yoga for the people of devotional temperament, Raja Yoga for men of mystic temperament and Jnana yoga for people of intellectual temperament with bold understanding and strong willpower.

Significance of the study

In modern times an Integrated Approach of Yoga Techniques may be a solution to reduce the heightened activity of impulsive behavior. Healthy yogic diet, Kriyas, loosening exercises and yogasanas can be used to operate on Annamaya Koça. Practicing proper breathing, Kriyas and praeayama helps at Praeamaya Koça. Culturing of Manomaya Koça can be accomplished by relaxed dwelling of the mind in the single thought (Dhyana) and emotion culture by devotional session containing prayers, Chants, Bhajans, Dhuns and Stotras.

At the Vijñanamaya Koça cognitive transformation can take place through lectures and individual counseling. The Anandamaya Koça techniques can come under the heading of karma yoga, the secret of action. The secret lies in maintaining a present moment awareness, inner silence and equipoise while we perform all our actions. By regular practice of yoga, one moves from gross state of awareness to the subtle.

Conclusion

Concepts of impulsivity, namely, its origin, manifestation, and management from the perspective of the ancient texts have been discussed. It is now very clear that for management of impulsive behavior and related response, focusing on physical and mental levels are not enough. An integrated approach with awareness to the five sheaths that constitute a person is required. With such an approach, it is possible to correct the imbalances in the mind-body complex. The ideas from the scriptures made use of in this presentation for reducing and possibly eliminating impulsivity is considered hereunder.

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