

## Psychology of the Concept of Chitta in Yoga

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### Abstract

The article titled “Psychology of the Concept of *Chitta* (Mind Stuff) in Yoga” initially attempts to interpret and describe key terms relevant to it. Here the concept of Psychology means Modern Psychology, the concept *Chitta* as *Mind, Consciousness, Antahakaran* (mind, intellect and ego) and product of *trigunas* (*Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*), etc. is taken as it mentioned Indian Yogic literature and philosophies as well as Modern Psychology so that the concept of *Chitta* in the Yoga could also be understood in terms of modern psychology. Hence, to interpret and describe the concept of *Chitta* as *aforsaid*, modern psychological perspectives viz., biological psychology, behavioural psychology, psychoanalytical psychology, humanistic and cognitive psychological are taken into account. From discussion, it was concluded that psychologically, *Chitta* means dynamic organization of mental process that remain static from birth till death yet determines one’s unique personality.

**Keywords:** Chitta; Consciousness; Mind; Ego; Intellect; Psychology.

## INTRODUCTION

The present article attempts to interpret and describe main terms relevant to ‘title’ i.e., Psychology of the as Modern Psychology, *Chitta* as per Indian literature and philosophies as well as Modern Psychology so that the concept of *Chitta* in the Yoga could be understood in terms of modern psychological perspectives.

**Psychology:** The word psychology here means modern psychology. Hence, a standardised interpretation of modern Psychology is presented for the reference.

Psychology is the scientific study of human and animal behaviour and **mental processes**. (**Advanced General Psychology**).<sup>1</sup> In modern psychology, behaviour and mental processes are comprehended as under:

**Behaviour:** Behaviour (Morgan, King, Weisz and Schopler)<sup>2</sup>, in modern psychology, refers to any activity which can be observed, measured, and recorded. The observable, measurable, and recordable activities can also be called as ‘verb or action words’ for convenience and understanding. For the same purpose the activities are categorized as per the examples.

1. Activities related to actions of the five

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senses (i.e., hearing, seeing, blinking, smelling, tasting, touching, experiencing pain, temperature, sense of balance, and movements).

2. Activities related to actions of five conative organs (motor activities) (holding, catching, gripping, throwing, pushing, pulling; kicking, skiing; tilting, turning, twisting, passing urine, masturbation, intercourse, passing stool, and speaking).
3. **Communication activities:** Speaking, whispering, singing, writing, reading, posture, gesture, eye contact, and voice tone.
4. **Micro-activities:** Breathing rate, heart rate, pulse rate, blood pressure, and blood chemistry values.
5. **Mental Processes:** Mental Processes are our internal world experiences which include sensation, perception, cognition, thinking (intelligence, creativity, problem-solving), memory, learning, motivation, emotions, etc.

**Psychological Perspectives:** The psychological perspectives here mean most common psychological perspectives i.e., biological, behavioural psycho-analytical humanistic and cognitive perspectives. Hence, the psychological perspective of the Yogic concept of *Chitta* means interpretation and the description of the word *Chitta* in the views of modern psychology, viz., biological, behavioural, psycho-analytical, humanistic, etc.

### Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives of *Chitta*

***Chitta as the Mind:*** *Yoga Vasishtha*<sup>3</sup>, one of the key ancient Yoga texts, refers to *Chitta* as the mind. In Samkhya philosophy<sup>4</sup>, the mind is a subtle entity that has functions such as desires (*Sankalp*), imaginations (*Kalpana*), memories (*Smritis*), etc. However, in **analytical psychology**, the mind is understood as the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind. The conscious mind operates in a wakeful state through sense organs attending and responding to events/stimuli in the external and internal environment. The subconscious mind works automatically with the conscious mind using memories and experiences stored since birth. The unconscious mind also functions automatically in unconscious activities such as doodling, nail biting, itching, etc. It is also comprised of suppressed desires which reflect in the form of in the forms of dreams. "In the modern psychology<sup>5</sup> the mind is also referred to as the aspects of intellect and consciousness manifested as combinations of

thought, perception, memory, emotion, will, and imagination, including all of the brain's conscious and unconscious cognitive processes."

In the line of modern psychology (the scientific study of two behaviour and mental processes), it can be stated that the mind means mental processes or subtle entity of internal world that is reflected and manifested in forms of 'mental processes' Hence, psychologically, *Chitta* means mental processes or cover behaviour.

***Chitta as Consciousness:*** Consciousness, in Indian philosophies<sup>6</sup>, is considered a subtle entity that manifests when the body and the soul unite. Its main functions are regarded as means of perception, cognition, intuition, etc., and the standard of the flow of energy in the body. Its nature is accepted as both static and dynamic. It is considered static because its thread of continuity maintains and does not break through various states of consciousness (wakefulness, dreams, sleep, meditation, etc.). It is also considered dynamic because its forms keep changing from normal consciousness states to altered states (dreams, sleep, meditation, etc.). *Swami Satyananda Saraswati* interpreted *Chitta* as consciousness in his book *Shore to Shore*.<sup>7</sup> He explained the meaning of *Yogashchittorittinirodhah* (P.Y.S: 1/2) as Yoga is a means to attain "complete control over various layers of consciousness." Modern psychology<sup>8</sup> interprets consciousness as an individualistic awareness of one's internal (thoughts, feelings, sensations, and memories) and external environment. In other words, consciousness means understanding oneself and the world around one. In the modern psychology, Consciousness is broadly categorized into two parts a normal state of consciousness i.e. a wakeful state in which the individual is aware and able to adjust to oneself and surrounding and altered states of consciousness, viz, sleep, dream, meditation, and drug-induced state. Hence, psychologically, *Chitta* means the sub-total of aspects of our internal world experiences that enable the individual to adjust to one's internal and external world, which although remain constant from birth to death, yet its states keep changing from moment to moment, day till night, birth till death, etc.

***Chitta as the total of Mind, Ego, and Intellect:*** Indian Vedic philosophies interpret the term *Chitta* as *Antah-karan* (Internal means) i.e., the sum of mind (*manas*), ego (*ahankara*) and intellect (*buddhi*) Whereas the concept of the mind is already discussed in philosophy and psychology, the idea of the ego and intellect are being interpreted and described from the same two perspectives.

From the Indian philosophical perspective, the ego is an entity within the individual that identifies itself as the doer of physical, vocal and mental activities. In other words, ego means the sense of "I 'ness" in the body, mind and intellect (desires, imaginations, memories, judgment, decision maker, etc.). The intellect is the decision-making faculty. Psychologically, ego means a conscious sense of self ("I", Latin). In analytical psychology, the ego and its constituents are considered personality factors viz. id, ego, and super-ego. As an id, it identifies the self with pleasure seeking activities, as the ego, it identifies the self either as trapped as a sandwich between the pleasure seeking activities and following the values and swayed by one of them or as the mediator of satisfying the needs of id and superego. As the superego, it identifies the self with the values, manifested by 'should' statements. The Intellect is considered a faculty of right or wrong based on logic, values, experiences, and intuition.

In the line of modern psychology, the word *Chitta* means sub-total of internal world that is experienced as mental processes of sensing, perceiving, desiring, memory, imagination, motivation, emotions, thinking, judging, problem solving-intelligence and creativity, sense of 'I' ness, etc.)

***Chitta as the product of the interplay of trigunas*** (trilogy of three qualities of nature viz., *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*): The pioneers of the Samkhya and Yoga philosophies consider *Chitta* as the product of three grades of nature<sup>9&10</sup> (Prakriti) viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, in imbalanced state. According to these philosophies, nature (body) is not manifested in the equilibrium state of the three *Gunas*.

*Sattva* refers to illumination or/actual knowledge, the state of harmony, balance, and joy. The qualities of *Sattva* include delight, happiness, peace, wellness, freedom, love, compassion, equanimity, empathy, friendliness, focus, self-control, satisfaction, trust, fulfillment, calmness, bliss, cheerfulness, gratitude, fearlessness, and selflessness. *Rajas* refers to activities resulting from energy, the state of dynamism, change, and movement. *Rajas'* qualities comprise anger, irritation, fear, anxiety, restlessness, euphoria, stress, courage, rumination, determination, and chaos. *Tamas* refers to the darkness or/ignorance, the state of inactivity or inertia. The qualities of the *tamas* encompass laziness, disgust, attachment, depression, helplessness, doubt, guilt, shame, boredom, addiction, hurt, sadness, apathy, confusion, grief, dependency, and ignorance.

The predominant of these three *Gunas* affects

the body and mind/consciousness. Even the *Gunas* also affect our perceptions and perspective of the world. In the predominant state of *Rajas*, the mind experiences world events as chaotic, confusing, and demanding, and it tends to continue to share events. Therefore, to continue their progress along the path of Yoga, the Yogis practice self-observation and then discernment to witness but not react to the activities of the *Gunas*. Hence, Yoga practitioners should attempt to consciously shift their attention and actions away from the influence of the *tamas* and *rajas* towards *sattvic* and balanced purposes.

Kumari, P. (2010)<sup>11</sup> concluded that individual with high *sattvaguna* were less stressed than low *sattvaguna* and adopted means emotional and spiritual oriented stress coping strategies. The individuals with high *rajas guna* found stressed than low *rajas guna* and adopted problem oriented coping strategies. And the individual with high *tamasguna* was less stressed than low *tamasguna* and adopted avoidance oriented coping strategies.

Here it is important to note that theory of *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) is considered as theory of personality in Yoga. Even there are reliable, valid and standardised questionnaire that measures the level of *gunas* in an individual.

Hence, psychologically, *chitta* means sub-total of internal world and/or mental processes which determines one's unique personality; and therefore varies from one individual to another individual.

## CONCLUSION

From aforesaid discussion, it can be concluded that psychologically, *Chitta* is sub-total of dynamic organization of internal world and/or mental process and/or covert behaviour that determine one's unique personality affecting one way of sensing, perceiving, thinking, learning, memorizing, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, emotions, etc. and even overt (observable) behaviour.

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