**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**Body-mind-libido complex: an Indian approach**

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**ABSTRACT**

India as a Nation had done more research in the concept of mind and body-mind than any other in the world. The basis of her philosophy is both spiritual and scientific. Her concept of Kundalini is broadly analogous to the west concept of libido. The concepts of the structure of mind, body, soul and libido have spread far and wide through her religious literature. This was responsible for its fast spread and sustained survival despite repeated onslaughts; but this is precisely the same reason why the present day mental health professionals entertain biased reservations against such vast treasure of knowledge. Nevertheless, an unbiased approach to the subject would bring out many scientific facts that if discretely incorporated into the scientific literature of behavioral sciences, would certainly enrich the subject.

A point of interest which is highlighted in this article is... while the West searches for abnormality in the human mind, India searches for the absolute Ideal in the same. Both are apparently contradictory indeed; but if brought together, the understanding, of human mind and behavior, would take a healthier turn and become more meaningful.

The article refers to the Pancha kosa theory, the Chakra theory, and the structural concept of the mind as per Indian philosophy.

**Key words** body; mind; libido; Indian approach

**INTRODUCTION**

The concept of mind, the body-mind, and the libido is important not only to philosophy, but to behavioral sciences as well. While western scientists and philosophers tried to explain the concept, in the beginning of this century, Indian thinkers have from thousands of years been working with the same. In fact, the whole of Indian philosophical thought can be said to be based on this concept of the mind, body-mind as well as the libido.

A sincere unbiased approach will allow us to appreciate the depth and the value of these concepts. We would find them more organized and meaningful than what the western thinkers and philosophers have to offer. And we would enrich our knowledge and modify our approaches to patient care, in a more practical and eclectic way that would help fulfill the criteria to standardize our clinical approaches to the cultural needs of our (Indian) patient population.

But, as is natural, due to political and historical reasons, we Indian psychiatrists have been overly influenced by our own traditional approaches to philosophy and science. It is for this reason that the Indian concepts, which hitherto had enjoyed the pride of place in the text books of psychiatry, are being conveniently ignored by the western authors and publishers. Our complacency has helped them discredit us. There is a need to rectify the situation through education.

**Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara and Chitta**

The word mind is perhaps beyond any satisfactory definition. But, to understand what is mind, the approach would be more comfortable through trying to learn its functions. Mind is called Manas in Sanskrit. The Manas is divided into Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara and Chitta.

**Manas**

Adi Shankaracharya had written his famous song ‘Atma Shatakam/ Nirvana Shatakam’ called the song of Self, beginning with the words

‘Mano- Buddhi-Ahamkara- Chittani Na Hum...
meaning.... I'm not the mind, the intellect, the ego nor the awareness

Na cha Shrotra Jhive, Na cha Ghana Netre......
I'm neither the touch nor the taste nor the sight

Na cha vyoma bhoomir, na tejo, na vayuh ......
Neither am I the ether, nor the earth nor am I the light nor the wind

Chidananda roopa Shivoham Shivoham’......
I'm existence knowledge bliss called Shiva

Therefore tend to suffer from a bias towards our own traditional approaches to philosophy and science. It is for this reason that the Indian concepts, which hitherto had enjoyed the pride of place in the text books of psychiatry, are being conveniently ignored by the western authors and publishers. Our complacency has helped them discredit us. There is a need to rectify the situation through education.
This song affirms that a personage like Adi Shankaracharya, one of the greatest of ascetic philosophers that the world had ever produced, approved the division of the mind into four distinct entities called manas, buddhi, ahamkara and chitta.

In addition, Patanjali Yoga sutras mention that the vrittis or activities of the manas are five fold, both painful as well as pleasurable. They are:

(i) **Experience** experience comes from perception, inference and evidence.
(ii) **Perversion** perversion is an idea of an object not conforming to its nature.
(iii) **Delusion** delusion is an idea conveyed by words without any reality.
(iv) **Sleep** sleep is a condition which depends on the cessation of perception.
(v) **Recollection** recollection is the calling up of past experience.

Since sleep has been mentioned as one of the functions of the mind, it would naturally include the various sleep states such as waking, dreaming and deep dreamless sleep.

After the subdivision of Manas, it is followed by the next....

**Buddhi** is that part of the mind whose main function is intellectual. It is the Intellect and it has the power of analysis, reasoning, calculation, judgment, discretion and discrimination.

**Ahamkara** is the Ego. The mind's first preference is usually itself/ or the individual who possesses it. It is the 'I'ness of one's identity, or self perception. This part of the mind is necessary, in the external world of the mundane, for self protection and self preservation.

**Chitta** is the conditioned consciousness. It is called conditioned because it differs from the original concept of the Consciousness which is analogous to the Supreme or Cosmic all pervading Consciousness. But Chitta is limited to the human perception, and therefore it could be termed as awareness.

The **Panchakosa theory of the body mind complex** (Figure 1)

![Panchakosa theory of the body mind complex](image)

Figure 1: The Panchakosa theory of the body mind complex

The **Taittiriya Upanishad** mentions the Vedic concept of the body-mind complex. It speaks of the five kosas or sheaths popularly called the **Pancha Kosas**.

1. The outer most sheath is the...
   **Annamaya kosa** In Sanskrit, Annam means food. The gross physical body survives on food. Therefore it may be referred to as the gross anatomical sheath of the body-mind complex.

2. The second sheath is the...
   **Pranamaya kosa** Prana is the life force, analogous to the 'Chi' in Chinese. It also refers to the breath. This is the physiological sheath. It helps in the nourishment of the anatomical sheath.

3. The third is the...
   **Manomaya kosa** Manah or manas is the mind. This is the emotional sheath. This sheath is nurtured by healthy and positive emotions like love, kindness, altruism, or is disturbed by unhealthy emotions such as anger, hatred, jealousy etc.

4. Deeper than the mind and emotions is the fourth sheath called the...
   **Gnyanamaya kosa** Gnyana is knowledge (read... true or spiritual Knowledge). This sheath is the Intellectual sheath of the body-mind complex. The pursuit of knowledge and intellectual exercises nurtures this sheath.

5. Deepest to all these sheaths is the core called the...
   **Anandamaya kosa** Ananda is Bliss. This is the true self of all beings whose nature is unadulterated absolute bliss. This core is analogous to the concept of the Ideal.

This core is the Atman / soul which is a spark of the Paramatman/Cosmic Soul. Realizing the Atman amounts to realizing the Paramatman because both are qualitatively same.

The concept of 'sarira' or 'body' under the Pancha Kosa theory

While the Taittiriya Upanishad explains the five sheaths or the Pancha kosas, the same have been dealt with in a modified way in the Mandukya Upanishad. This Upanishad incorporates consciousness into the five kosas and thus divides them into three types of bodies. They are the Sthoola, the Sooksha and the Karana sariras i.e., the Gross, the Subtle and the Causal bodies.

1. **Sthoola sarira**: The first sheath of **Annamaya kosa** constitutes the gross physical body called the **Sthoola sarira**.

2. **Sookshma sarira**: The next three namely the Pranamaya, the Manomaya and the Gnyanamaya...
together constitute the *Sookshma sarira* or the subtle body.

After mastering the gross and the subtle bodies one needs to look deeper inwards to see his true nature which is *Ananda*.

**Kaarana sarira:** This is the innermost core, the Ananda. This is the Causal body.

The concept of the *Jagrata* (waking state), the *Swapna* (dreaming state), the *Susupti* (deep dreamless sleep state) and the *Turiya* (unconscious consciousness).

Interestingly, the Mandukya Upanishad further draws an analogy between the Gross, Subtle, Causal bodies to Waking state, Sleep state and Deep dreamless sleep state.

1. The *Sthoola sarira* or gross physical body corresponds to the waking state called Jagrata. When a man is wide awake he is conscious of his body and most of its functions.

2. The *Sookshma sarira* or Subtle body corresponds to the dream state called Swapna. During dream state a person is not conscious of his gross body, but is conscious of his mental activities.

3. The *Karana sarira* or the Causal body corresponds to deep sleep called Susupti. In deep sleep, one is not conscious of his gross physical body or his mind.

After the state of deep sleep, comes the substratum of all these states called *Turiya*. Turiya is not a state because unlike the preceding states, it is not changeable. It is called the *pure consciousness*; it may be termed the *unconscious consciousness*. Perhaps we can draw an analogy to Freud's concept of the Unconscious.

According to every aspect of Indian philosophy viz., Hindu or sister religions such as Buddhism, and Jainism, the core of human personality is of the nature of Absolute Bliss. Hence man need not go out in search of an external source of peace, up above in the heavens far beyond his normal reach. His sincere search within his heart will give him a glimpse of this Bliss. One who successfully conquers the limitations of the physical, physiological, emotional and the intellectual sheaths of the body-mind complex would ultimately realize his true inner self whose essential nature is Bliss Absolute, which, in religious terminology is referred to as God.

**Body-Mind-Libido complex.... the Chakra (Energy centre) theory**

**Mooladhara chakra** It is grounded with the basic issues of survival. As long as an individual's psychic energy is focused on the Mooladhara chakra, he concentrates only on issues of survival, such as food, shelter and self protection. *The functioning of this chakra is mediated through the adrenal glands.*

**Svadhisthana chakra** A little higher from the Mooladhara, at the level of a point midway between the umbilicus and the pubis is the next centre called the *Svadhisthana chakra*. Here, the energies are focused on matters of sex, emotions and relationships. Too much focus on this chakra, to the exclusion of the higher ones, can make a person preoccupied or even obsessed with carnal desires. Such a person cannot be at peace with himself; nor can he be at peace with the outside world. *The functioning of this chakra is mediated through the sex hormones.*

**Manipura chakra** The next higher chakra is the *Manipura*. It is located at the level of the epigastrium. It corresponds to the level of a point midway between the lower border of the sternum and the umbilicus. This chakra focuses on self esteem, pride, ambition etc. If an individual's energies are stagnant at this level, he may become overly ambitious and aggressive. *Spleen and Pancreas are attributed with the functioning of this chakra.*

**Anahata chakra** Above the Manipura, at the level of the heart, is the *Anahata chakra*. It represents love, trust, compassion, altruism etc. *The Thymus gland gets the credit for the functioning of this chakra.*

**Visuddha chakra** Next, situated at the level of the throat is the *Vishuddha chakra*. This represents inspiration, expression and faith. *Thyroid is the main endocrine gland responsible for the functioning of this chakra.*
Agneya chakra Above the Vishuddha is the Agneya chakra. It is situated at the level of a point between the two eyebrows, in the region of the optic chiasma and the pituitary gland. This represents psychic energy, intuition, mental energy etc.

The pituitary gland influences its functioning.

Sahasrara chakra The last and the most important is the Sahasrara chakra, situated at the crown of the head. This chakra is analogous to the ecstasy of realization. It represents spiritual knowledge and experience of the highest order.

The pituitary, the pineal gland and the prefrontal cortex are associated with this chakra.

Each chakra is allotted a color (Figure 3). For example the base Mooladhara is Red and the topmost Sahasrara is White; the other chakras are also represented by different colours.

Figure 3 : Representation of chakras by different colors

Similarly, each chakra is represented by a particular frequency of sound waves. Hence, it is believed that particular sound waves stimulate the targeted chakras. The Vedic mantras are nothing but sounds with specific frequencies.

Each chakra is also assigned a deity. This should be understood as the symbolic and qualitative description of the individual chakra in question. It is meant only for a deeper understanding of the subject from a religious point of view; and hence may be considered as outside the perview of psychiatrists.

But, taking into consideration the attribution of particular sound and light frequencies to individual chakras, it may be inferred that light and sound have specific effects on these energy centers, and consequently on human mind and personality. Whether color, music and mantra therapies have a scientific basis is a subject that needs deep study.

As long as an individual’s focus is on the base mundane matters he would not rise above the level of the Mooladhara and the Svadhisthana chakras. As he practices yoga, meditation or any other spiritual discipline, his energies would rise higher. The hypothetical coiled up serpentine energy called Kundalini would wake up and try to reach the higher chakras. Progressively it would go higher as the individual concerned becomes altruistic and self controlled/self absorbed. It would finally culminate in reaching the topmost Sahasrara chakra which would result in the individual’s self realization.

Above the Sahasrara Chakra is the Akasa or Space. When an individual’s energy is focused on the Sahasrara Chakra, he is in tune with the vibrations of the Space or Akasa, which is analogous to the cosmic energy. In this state the individual has deep spiritual knowledge and is in direct communion with the Cosmos. For such a person there is no such thing as past or present or future. Everything is! And it is said that such deeply spiritual persons survive only for twenty one days in that state, after which they attain the ultimate state of Samadhi.

But not to worry, the state of Samadhi is almost unattainable by the average human being; it is for great ascetics who have renounced everything that is mundane. The average person would find satisfaction in the fact that his overall personality improves for the better(from where he had begun); his sense of physical, emotional and spiritual well being will be more fulfilling, as the Kundalini shakti reaches higher and higher and awakens the dormant chakras.

Apart from the above, the Indian thought attaches utmost significance to the concept of the body mind complex in relation to the individual as the controller of the said complex.

The body is compared to a chariot which is driven by the intellect. The mind is analogous to the reigns, and the Sense organs are the horses that pull the chariot; the soul is the Rider. Unless the Intellect (driver) has the mind (reigns) in his firm grip and gives a direction to the senses (horses), they will lead the Chariot (body) astray, and the soul with its body-mind complex would meet with disaster.

CONCLUSIONS

Inference

The concept of Kundalini shakti is broadly analogous to the Libido. When Kundalini rises, the base human/animal like qualities get refined further and further until the Kundalini shakti merges with the Cosmic shakti. The rising of the Kundalini shakti and the subsequent awakening of the individual chakras, in an ascending order, is comparable to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Figure 4).
A similar comparison can be made between the *pancha kosas* and the hierarchy of needs; here, instead of the hierarchy going from below upwards, it is represented as going from outside to inwards... from Annamaya kosa towards the deepest Anandamaya kosa.

The subject of influence of light and sound on the chakras and consequently on the human mind and personality needs to be systematically evaluated; so that the findings gained from such studies could be incorporated into therapies based on sound (music/mantra) and light.

While there are similarities between the Occidental and the Oriental thoughts, the difference too is interesting. While the West searches for abnormality in the human mind, the East searches for the Ideal in the same; while the Occident is bent upon proving that there is sex in 'God', the Orient tries its best to prove that there is 'God' even in 'sex'. The attitudes too differ; while the West talks of individual rights, the East talks of individual duties.

The incorporation of Indian thought into psychiatric text books and clinical practice would benefit the patient and the therapists. The art of Psychoanalytical diagnosis and psychotherapies would be enriched, because there is meaning and substance in these concepts; psychoanalysis would benefit by adopting the otherwise absent paradigm of the Ideal or the Normal in its approach.

Lastly, the west oriented psychoanalysts would be able to probe deeper into the psychodynamics of the human mind with a more positive attitude; and the east oriented philosopher/psychologist would appreciate the importance of focusing on psychopathology.

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REFERENCES


