

Yogic Management of Depression

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“Depression refers to sadness related to emotions in the field of psychology. This disease is called a syndrome. It is related to the same areas of the brain from where the sleep cycle and the state of wakefulness are controlled”¹

“When the brain does not get complete rest and there is always a pressure on it, then understand that stress has engulfed you. Stress is termed as a syndrome of the 20th century. Stress in medical language means disturbances in the homeostasis of the body. It is a condition that disturbs the physical, mental and psychological functioning of a person. Due to stress, the level of many hormones in the body increases, among which adrenaline and cortisol are prominent. The state of constant stress turns into depression”²

The focal point of Yoga Shastra is the mind or chitta. All its principles are dependent on the mind, such as "Yoga is to make the mind free from instincts."³ “The first three states of the Chitta are sorrow and the last two states of yoga”⁴ Dharana is the practice of binding the mind to an object and its focus on a single object without any disturbance is meditation⁵, etc. Depression is also a mental disease, and the strength and diagnosis of this disease is also based on the mind. Mind is also the central point of both its symptoms and treatment process.

According to yoga opinion, "disease is the name of anomalous state of dhatu, rasa and karana."⁶ There are 7 differences between the three types of dhatu (vata, pitta and kapha) and 13 types of karana. When there is disparity or imbalance in any of these, then disease arises. Although both physical and mental diseases affect each other, yet the relation of disparity of metals and rasas, disparity of physical and karanas is experienced with mental diseases. Hence, according to yoga, the meaning of mental illness or depression is disparity of karanas.

Here the discussion of mental business (action) in the body according to Sankhya-yoga is relevant to explain depression. According to Sankhya-yoga, this body is made up of 24 elements of Prakriti, in which the 10 senses, the mind, the ego and the intellect are the names of the group of these thirteen elements is Karana. Out of these 13 Karanas, the last three (mind, ego and intellect) are internal and the remaining 10 (five senses-five working organs) are external. According to yoga, the name of the community of mind, intellect, ego and mind is Chitta.⁷ In these, the externalization is only about the present, while the internalization is about the trikal⁸. Externalization takes its definite subject knowledge and makes it available to the mind, and the mind keeps storing that knowledge in the mind in the form of sacraments. The mind always receives knowledge from the externalities and sometimes from the instincts stored in the mind. Here it is necessary to clarify two characteristics of the mind:

1. To take up one subject at a time.
2. Don't live without subject⁹ (knowledge).

¹ <https://hi.wikipedia.org/s/2f6>

² <http://www.livehindustan.com/news/article1-Depression-world-health-organization>.

³ “Yogashyachittavritinirodha” Yogsutra 1/2

⁴ Swami Hariharanand Arany, Patanjala Yogadarshan, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1987, Page no. 4-5

⁵ Yogasutra 3.1 and 3.2

⁶ “Vyadhirdhatuaskaranavashmyas” Vyasbhasya 1.30

⁷ BKS IYENGAR, *The Illustrated Light on Yoga*, Harper Collins Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, Page-2.

⁸ Samkhyakarika 33

⁹ Pramanadilakshanvyaparai chittam jivati. Yogavartik 1.5

In this way, the daily behavior of every human being goes on only through the business that takes place between internal and external.

There are two main divisions of all the subjects of knowledge obtained from the senses: first - the feeling of happiness from them and second - the feeling of sorrow from them. From these pleasures and pains, attachment and aversion respectively arise¹⁰, the strength of which depends on the strength of the pain and pleasure experienced. When a person experiences strong pleasure or pain through any of the external organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin), that person gets attached to the impressions of that experience in the form of attachment or aversion in such a way that he gets entangled in them. Since the mind accepts only one subject at a time and it cannot be separated from those dominant thoughts of the mind, therefore, here the mind becomes unable to establish harmony in the businesses of the reasons and the name of this asymmetry of the reasons is depression.

Symptoms:

1. **Physical Symptoms:-** Excessive tiredness, lack of energy, lack of sleep, increased or decreased appetite, indigestion, body pain and irregular menstrual cycle in women, etc. are found in patients with depression.
2. **Emotional Symptoms:** - Negative thinking, always suspecting some conspiracy against oneself, desire to be alone, speaking less, being lost in some event or thought, not having knowledge of current or real happenings. Suspicion of loved ones, lack of interest in entertainment etc. emotional symptoms are visible in the patient of depression.

Cause of disease:

1. **Chemical factors:** Depression is also sometimes caused by the lack of neurotransmitters in the brain. Neurotransmitters are chemicals found in the brain, which establish coherence in different parts of the brain and body, among which the major neurotransmitters are serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine. Lack of chemicals also reduces the communication system of the body and symptoms of depression appear in the person. This type of depression is genetic.
2. **Social Causes:** Various types of stress, family discord, repeated failure despite hard work, persistence of any disease or any unpleasant circumstances for a long time, emotional trauma due to betrayal by someone reliable or close, etc. Social situations are also the main causes of depression. There is a reason. Depression in women is mostly due to these reasons.
3. Various types of drugs and intoxicants or medicines can also be the cause of depression.

Apart from this, other more important factors can be responsible for this disease. But the main cause of this disease, as explained in the opinion of Yoga, is that any event whose strong impression makes the mind abnormal to such an extent that it remains trapped in the same thought group and cannot be used in external daily life. Can't establish harmony in businesses.

Yogic Management :

The three stages of the level of 'mind' are clear from the above description:

1. Normal state: In this state, internalization and externalization through the 'mind' continues to do normal business, and by the practice of yoga, gradually increasing the level of mental health, the abhyasi attains the state of complete mental health.
2. State of depression: In this state, the harmony between internal and external factors deteriorates. The patient gets affected in the affairs of conscience to such an extent that even his public normal behavior becomes abnormal. And he becomes unable to accept even the trades of externalities.
3. The state of perfect mental health: The Yoga Sutras call this the state of one-pointedness of the mind. In this state, due to the complete control of the Yogi's mind, he can focus it on any subject as per his wish. In this state the power of the mind is fully developed.

It is clear from the above discussion that in all these three stages, the first stage is the stage of the center. From this stage itself, complete health can be achieved by developing

¹⁰ Yogsutra 2.7 and 2.8

the abilities of the mind, as well as prevention from mental diseases can also be done. Second, which is the state of depression, it is necessary to bring the patient of this state to the first state.

Therefore, they should first of all do exercises that turn from introvert to extrovert, all the exercises that make such a patient extrovert to introvert will harm because through exercises of this nature, the patient will be attached to more related subjects. Therefore, there will be more possibility of harm to the patient of depression by meditation or practices of this nature.

Yogic Practice:

1. Purification Activities:

The exercises that are possible to be done by the patient should be done keeping in view the other diseases and ability of the patient.

2. Yogasan:

In the practice of asanas, the exercises of balancing nature such as Vrikshasana, Garudasana, Tadasana, Natarajasana etc. and the exercises of movement nature (Kladamuppaddha) such as Surya Namaskar, Prajnayogavyayam etc. are especially beneficial. Apart from this, the practice of Bhujangasan, Shalabhasan, Dhanurasan, Uttanpadasan, Sarvangasan, Setubandhasan, Pawanmuktasan, Ushtasan, Shashankasan etc. can also be done keeping in mind the need and ability.

3. Pranayama :

Rhythmic breathing, Anulom-Vilom, Bhatrika, Ujjayi, Bhramari.

Note:

1. If the patient is affected by depression along with any other disease, then the Yogic practice should be determined keeping those diseases in mind.
2. In my personal experience, I have found Bhastrika Pranayama especially beneficial in the state of depression, but it should not be practiced in diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, TB of lungs, epilepsy etc.
3. Similarly, the group of yogic practices should be selected keeping in mind the precautions of other practices.
4. Yoga practices cannot be decided on the basis of only one disease. In its determination, complete information about the patient is necessary – such as patient's age, sex, occupation, if any disease other than depression, physical capacity and other social, biological and emotional facts. Therefore, the determination of Yoga package and their practice should always be under the supervision of a qualified and experienced Yoga teacher.

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