

Therapeutic Approaches Involving Modification of the Unconscious Mind and Related Mental Processes

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ABSTRACT

Therapeutic interventions for modifying the unconscious mind and related mental processes commonly include psychodynamic therapy, hypnosis, hypnotherapy, certain deep relaxation & meditative practices like Yoga Nidra, Preksha Meditation etc. These approaches aim to identify and alter unconscious thought patterns and beliefs leading to modification of behaviour that contribute to various mental health issues. Techniques used may include free association, dream analysis, guided relaxation, awareness and imagery. The present chapter throws light on the mind and its processes. By describing about conscious, subconscious and unconscious aspects of the mind, it has been tried to clarify about how the unconscious mind affects our conscious pattern of thinking, belief, behaviors and lives. It also discusses how hypnosis, dream analysis, yoga Nidra, Preksha Meditation and antarmaun could influence the unconscious mind to get positive outcome & results and help in curing mental illnesses.

Keywords: Yogic Therapy, Mental Problem, Hypnosis, Yoganidra, Preksha Meditation, Antarmaun.

Today's modern era, people are becoming victims of mental illness due to their faulty lifestyle, their desire to achieve more and more, material comforts, desire to move ahead of all others, competition to earn money and acquire disproportionate physical amenities along with many other social, mental and behavioral causes leading to common psychological issues like stress, anxiety, frustration, depression etc.

Mental disorder has been recognized as a significant public health concern and one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, particularly with the loss of productive years of the life^{1,9}. The Global Burden of Disease Report (2019) highlights an increase, from around 80 million to over 125 million, in the worldwide number of Disability-Adjusted Life Years attributable to mental disorders. With this surge, mental disorders have moved into the top 10 significant causes of Disability-Adjusted Life Years worldwide over the last three

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Received: October 30, 2023; Revision Received: November 23, 2023; Accepted: November 25, 2023

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decades^{2,9}. Furthermore, this data does not include substance use disorders, which, if included, would increase the estimated burden manifolds. Moreover, if the caregiver-related burden is accounted for, this figure would be much higher. Individual, social, cultural, political, and economic issues are critical mental well-being determinants. An increasing burden of mental diseases can, in turn, contribute to deterioration in physical health and poorer social and economic growth of a country^{3,9}. In developed countries, the mental health expenditure is roughly 3–4% of their Gross Domestic Product(GDP). Untreated mental health and behavioral problems in childhood and adolescence have profound long-term social and economic adverse consequences, including increased contact with the criminal justice system, lower employment rate and lesser wages among those employed, and interpersonal difficulties⁴.

For the appropriate management of these mental problems, many ancient and modern methods can be used. One of the prominent and effective approach is psychotherapeutic approach of management through the modulation of unconscious mind and related mental processes⁵⁻⁹.

Topographical Divisions of Mind³⁰

(A) The Conscious Mind

The conscious mind refers to the conglomeration of all the thoughts, memories, perceptions, feelings, and wishes of which one is aware at any given moment. This is only aspect of mental processing that one can rationally think and talk about¹⁰.

(B) The subconscious/Preconscious mind

The subconscious mind refers to the middle aspect between the conscious and unconscious mind. This part of the mind is related to habits, beliefs, emotions, reactions, intuition etc. According to Freud, the subconscious mind consists of such contents that a person makes efforts to accomplish his/her wish. The materials of the subconscious mind can be remembered anytime¹¹.

(C) Unconscious mind

This is the largest part of the mind and estimated to account for 85- 90 percent of the entire mind, it contains the collection of thoughts, desires, emotions, rituals, cravings etc., which remain unfulfilled and thus are repressed at the level of the conscious mind. According to Freud, the unconscious mind consists of subject matter which a person cannot bring into consciousness even if he tries to do so. However, It can be known through dreamy states like hypnosis, dreams, slip of pens etc. Though unconscious, it affects the conscious behavior of a person through a process called unconscious motivation. It may take a positive turn in long run making a person become a great writer, poet, philosopher etc or may take a negative turn producing mental problems displaying common mental discomfort, unexplained restlessness, frustration to hysterical conversion reaction/ fits etc¹².

Yogic Perspective of functional aspects of Mind^{13,14}:

The description of the functional aspect of the mind is found in the yoga literature of India thousands of years ago. According to the Mandukya Upanishad, there are four types of states of awareness of the mind in the individual form - waking, dream, deep sleep, turiya state.

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1. Waking state (Jagrat state)

When a person has direct knowledge of any external subject through the senses, then that state is called awakened state. In this state of a person, the person himself is knowledgeable and he remains aware of the knowledge of the subject. From psychological point of view this state is called conscious plane of mind.

2. Dream state (Swapna State)

When the person is not fully awake and nor is he in deep sleep, then that state is called dream state, here the expression of consciousness is related to mental activities. As long as the person is in the dream state, the knowledge obtained mentally through consciousness appears like the real knowledge to the concerned person. What happens is that after waking up the person comes to know that in reality the knowledge was obtained from the dream state and was unreal.

Psychologically, the dream state is called the subconscious plane of mind.

3. Sleep state (Sushupta State)

Deep sleep or dreamless sleep is called the state of sushupta. In this state the person lacks the outside knowledge and the consciousness remains both the knowledge and the knower. Consciousness is expressed on three levels – external expression, internal expression and non-expression. That is, that which cannot be expressed, in deep sleep the expression of consciousness takes place on this plane but in a negative way. Psychologically, sleep is called the unconscious plane.

4. Turia state (Super- Conscious state)

Turiya state is the state in which the soul knows its true nature in the living body itself, acquires all the knowledge about the reality of this world and its objects and what is its relation with the soul, and in this state, the consciousness is beyond conflict. Happiness-sorrow, victory-loss, profit-loss, etc. have no effect on a person who has attained the Turiya state. He remains satisfied with himself, such a person attains wisdom and this state becomes the state of Samadhi consciousness. In this state, the person attains the experience of "AhamBrahmasmi".

In this state, the sense of ego remains still present in the person, but in the state of Turiyateeta, the sense of ego also disappears in the person.

Yogic techniques / Processes modulating unconscious Mind

(A) Hypnosis (Sammohan)

Hypnosis is a state in which the unconscious mind of a person is activated by deactivating his conscious mind¹⁵. It is a human condition in which attention is focused, peripheral awareness is reduced, and the ability to respond to suggestion is increased. During this state, a person is asked to focus and increase concentration. Hypnotized subjects are said to respond to suggestions. Since we know that 9/10th part of our mind is unconscious mind, it is the biggest part of our mind and it influences our thoughts, feelings and activities. Any instruction given to the unconscious mind in hypnotic state is followed by the person even after the state of hypnosis ends¹⁶.

Thus, if a person has any mental illness, then it can be taken care through hypnosis. For example, if a person lacks self-confidence and the hypnotist takes him into a state of hypnosis and gives positive instructions to him related to increase of his self-confidence,

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then even after the state of hypnosis, the person feels that his self-confidence has increased¹⁷.

(B) Dream analysis (Swapna Vishleshana)

Dream analysis is a therapeutic technique used by psychologists as part of therapeutic frameworks such as Jungian, Gestalt, cognitive behavioral, and art therapy. Sigmund Freud first argued that the motivation for all dream content is wish-fulfillment¹⁸. Those who discuss dreams that do not appear to be wish-fulfillment, and that an example of a dream is often found in the events preceding the dream. "In the case of very young children, Freud claimed, this can be easily seen, since young children dream directly as fulfillments of wishes that had occurred the previous day ("Dream Day"). In the dream, there are both expressed and latent dreams, with the dreamer sharing information with his or her therapist during therapy, while the latent dream represents repressed, symbolic meaning within the individual.

The primary goal of dream analysis is to help people solve problems they are currently facing; it is also used to address many mental health issues.

Image rehearsal therapy is a similar technique developed to address concerns such as posttraumatic stress and chronic nightmares. In Image Rehearsal Therapy, to get rid of a person's nightmares, the therapist may write down the dreams in therapy, and turn them into positivity, allowing the person to spend 20 minutes a day reducing their frequency¹⁹. Image rehearsal therapy has been recommended as a best practice standard for treating nightmares according to the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine²⁰.

(C)Yoganidra (Yogic Relaxation /Yogic Hypnosis)

In the modern era, the concept of Yoga Nidra has been given by Swami Satyanand Saraswati. He studied Tantric scriptures and developed the technique based on the classical description. Yoga Nidra is a method in which a person remains in a dream-like state while remaining alert. This state is between sleep and wakefulness, in this state the person establishes connection with the conscious, subconscious and higher consciousness²¹. Yoga Nidra is very beneficial for mental patients, it calms both the mind and body, and the person relaxes & becomes stress free.

Stress is an important factor in mental illness. It has been observed in mental patients that they lack self-confidence, the introspection of mental patients can be increased through determination in Yoga Nidra²².

Yoga Nidra frees a person from all the suppressed desires and thoughts of the unconscious mind, this is a major factor for suppressed mental illness²³.

In Yoga Nidra, the state of the practitioner is similar to the state of hypnosis, in which the positive suggestions given by the instructor reaches the level of the unconscious mind, which relieves the person from many mental diseases, by removing fear or phobia, he attains the complete peace of mind. Self-confidence and fearlessness can be achieved²⁴. Thus, we can say that by creating a state like hypnosis in a person, Yoga Nidra can remove physical and mental diseases of the person and improve the life of the person by developing will power, self-power, thinking power, memory power, imagination power, intuition power, thinking power, sensations etc. helps in making life happy.

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(D) Antarmaun

Antarmaun is a scientific and systematic method which provides inner peace to a person by getting rid of all the desires, thoughts, desires etc. suppressed in the unconscious mind of a person. In Antarmaun, a person definitely achieves inner peace²⁵.

At the same time, one also becomes aware of that inner noise, which is a big obstacle in attaining peace. No person in this world is free from worries, the question arises that why do people remain so worried, sad and unhappy, if one asks this question to a person who has achieved everything in his life²⁶. That person is also not free from these problems, why?. Thus, a big reason for this is all those desires buried in their unconscious mind which have been repressed, now all those things which have become a seed in the unconscious mind and have become a culture and keep poisoning our lives secretly, and this is why because of this the person is unhappy despite getting everything, his mind is not at peace.

The practice of Antarmaun mainly takes place in five stages. In the first stage, one has to remain alert to the experiences of the senses; the purpose of this practice is to reduce the impact of the impressions of events in the external world on the individual's mind. In the second stage, one remains conscious of the spontaneous thought process. In this state, the gross distractions of the mind, fear, stress etc. go out. In the third stage, conscious creation of thoughts is practiced, in this stage the seeker has to create a thought or scene as per his wish and then ignore it. In the fourth stage, awareness of spontaneous thoughts and their dissolution is practiced. In the fifth stage, awareness is made towards the inner sky, in this stage emptiness of thought is practiced²⁷.

This yogic practice has a deep impact on the unconscious mind and deep impact on the functioning of mind.

(E) Preksha Meditation

Preksha Meditation is a type of meditative relaxation technique that aims at bringing about positive attitudinal and behavioural changes through overall transformation in the personality, which has been developed by Acharya Mahapragya (1976). Although, the technique of Preksha Meditation is derived from the wisdom of ancient philosophy, it is authentically based on current scientific principles. The main purpose of the Preksha Meditation is to purify the mental state²⁸.

It has eight main components viz. Kayotsarg (relaxation), SwasPreksha (perception of breathing), ShareerPreksha (perception of body), Antaryatra (internal trip), Chaitanya Kendra Preksha (perception of psychic centers), LeshyaDhyana (perception of psychic colors), Anupreksha (contemplation) & Bhavana (positive feelings), Which are used in different permutations and combinations.

To activate the subconscious mind, it is necessary that a person should become completely stress free. In the stress-free state, the person remains only at the superficial level of his consciousness. When he is free of stress or relaxed in his mind then the level of alfa level waves are activated and right hemisphere of the brain becomes more active.

In the state of Preksha Meditation (Kayotsarg), direct contact with the subconscious & unconscious mind happens, at that time attention is concentrated more clearly on one's goal, only that which is to be achieved should go inside, nothing else, hence attention is

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necessary. Repeated repetition of that vocabulary with concentration reaches the subconscious mind²⁹. After the message reaches the subconscious/ unconscious mind, it focusses its internal powers on achieving it. Thus, the person overcomes the obstacles of the conscious mind. After repetition of the same goal of life, the goal is linked with the power of imagination, and the goal is seen happening on the screen like a movie. It is felt that the goal that has been imagined repeatedly has been accomplished. Its consequences are clearly visualized on the mind. The person makes full use of right part of his brain to achieve the goal.

CONCLUSION

With the increasing burden of mental problems because of excessive urbanization, industrialization globalization, faulty lifestyle, and increased competitiveness, the search for effective, safe, cheaper non –non-pharmacological therapeutic measures have become the need of the hour. As many of the mental problems are rooted in the unconscious part of mind, the yoga based therapeutic techniques like Yoga Nidra, Preksha Meditation, Antarmaun, Sammohan (Hypnosis/Hypnotherapy) which have significant positive impact on Unconscious mind has been found clinically effective and safe in the management of mental disorders. They may be used singly, in combination or as a supportive therapy to the ongoing pharmacological treatment. However, more and number of research & and clinical studies are warranted in future to validate their effect and mechanism of action.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumari, P., Yadav, J.S., Dwivedi, S.K. & Tripathi, J.S. (2023). Therapeutic Approaches Involving Modification of the Unconscious Mind and Related Mental Processes. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 1588-1595. DIP:18.01.143.20231104, DOI:10.25215/1104.143