

Exploring Eastern and Western Perspectives of Mind, Body, and Soul Relationship: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

The Atharva Veda, an ancient Indian scripture, presents a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing abnormal behaviors and mental health concerns. Through its exploration of the interconnectedness of the body, mind, and soul, the Atharva Veda offers practical guidance for everyday challenges while emphasizing spiritual enlightenment as the ultimate goal. It categorizes diseases into those arising from physical causes and those attributed to curses or ill-will, prescribing remedies that encompass mental peace and relaxation. The text also delves into medical treatments, rituals, and spiritual knowledge, highlighting the integration of physical well-being with spiritual growth. Moreover, the Atharva Veda recognizes the active nature of the mind and the importance of self-development and meditation in maintaining mental balance. Through its insights into dreams, the text addresses recurring negative dreams, emphasizing the cultivation of harmony within oneself to promote overall well-being. This paper explores the Atharva Veda's holistic perspective on mental health and abnormal behaviors, offering valuable insights for contemporary approaches to mental well-being and psychological understanding.

Keywords: *Abnormal Behaviour, Gunas, Mental health, Carl Jung, Atharva Veda*

The Atharva Veda, one of the oldest scriptures in the Indian tradition, presents a profound exploration of the human experience, encompassing the realms of physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual enlightenment. Unlike its counterparts, the Rigveda, Samaveda, and Yajurveda, which primarily focus on rituals, hymns, and sacrificial practices, the Atharva Veda uniquely emphasizes the integration of the body, mind, and soul. Within its verses lie practical wisdom and profound insights into addressing everyday challenges, including physical ailments and mental disturbances.

Central to the Atharva Veda's teachings is the recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of human existence. It views the body, mind, and soul as inseparable components of life, each influencing and being influenced by the others. This holistic perspective forms the foundation of the Veda's approach to health and well-being, which extends beyond mere physical healing to encompass mental and spiritual growth.

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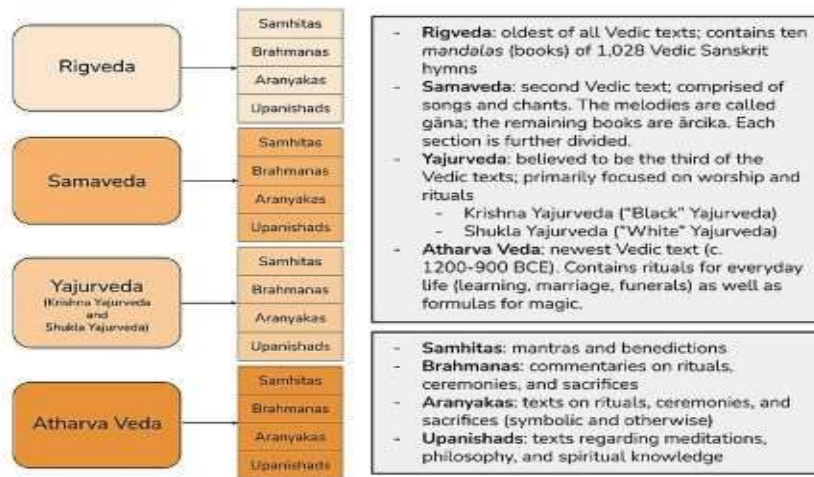
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In this paper, we delve into the Atharva Veda's treatment of abnormal behaviors and mental health concerns, examining its categorization of diseases, therapeutic remedies, and spiritual insights. We explore the Veda's unique blend of practical advice, ritualistic practices, and philosophical teachings, shedding light on its relevance to contemporary approaches to mental health and psychology. By studying the Atharva Veda's holistic perspective, we aim to glean valuable insights that can inform modern understandings and treatments of mental well-being and abnormal behaviors.

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/atharvaveda-overview-significance.html>)

Athar Veda and Abnormal behavior



The Atharva Veda primarily adopts a psychological or mental approach. It offers a wealth of practical advice aimed at addressing the everyday needs and problems faced by ordinary individuals, such as snakebites, joint pain, or fevers. However, the underlying goal of this advice is the attainment of Brahma or spiritual enlightenment. The Atharva Veda takes an integrative approach by considering the body, mind, and soul as a unified entity, emphasizing their interconnectedness. It recognizes that the well-being of these aspects of human existence is intertwined and provides guidance that encompasses all three dimensions.

- Mind (The mind is seen as an emergent entity composed of five basic components: manas, ahamkara, Citta, buddhi, and Atma)
- Body (The body is described as having eight wheels and nine doors in the Atharva Veda)
- Soul (The soul, on the other hand, is depicted as a particle of God and is often compared to the size of a thumb in various scriptures like the Katha Upanishad and Garuda Puran. It is emphasized that the soul has no physical or mental dimensions beyond being a reflection or an idea in the mind)

सत्त्वमात्माशरीरं च त्रयमेतन्निदण्डम्।
लोकस्तिष्ठतिसंयोगात्तत्र सर्वप्रतिष्ठितम्॥
सपुमांश्चेतनंतच्च तच्चाधिकरणं स्मृतम्।
वेदस्यास्य, तदर्थं हि वेदो अयं सम्प्रकाशितः॥

Meaning:

मन, आत्मा और शरीर जीवन के तिपाई हैं। इनके संयोग से ही संसार कायम है

Mind, soul and body are the Tripods of life. The world is sustained by their combination.

Exploring Eastern and Western Perspectives of Mind, Body, and Soul Relationship: A Critical Review

The means which strengthen the body and mind. For example, the Paushtikani sutras pray for ‘the showering of blessing for a robust healthy body and mind’ so that one may live up to a hundred years free of diseases death.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF ATHARVEDA

The Atharva Veda's core principle lies in the belief in the efficacy of spells, incantations, and rituals to influence outcomes in life, alongside its contributions to Ayurvedic medicine and Indian philosophical systems, notably impacting Buddhism, as a late addition to the Vedic scriptures with 20 books containing around 6,000 mantras, showcasing a distinct language from Rigvedic Sanskrit, and preserving pre-Vedic Indo-European archaisms.

1. Holistic Approach
2. Natural Healing
3. Individualized Treatment
4. Prevention and Maintenance
5. Mind-Body Balance
6. Harmony with Nature

Gunas and Personality

Material nature constitutes of three *gunas* (modes)—*sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). Since the body, mind, and intellect are material in nature, they too possess these three modes, and a combination of these *gunas* forms the basis of one's character. Peacefulness, morality, well-being, serenity, etc. are the virtues of those in the mode of goodness. Those driven by passion have endless desires and ambitions; they strive to satiate them and work towards worldly enhancement. However, those in the mode of ignorance; are gripped by laziness, excessive sleep, delusion, intoxication, and other vices. A spiritual seeker needs to deal with all these three immensely powerful forces of material nature. (“Chapter 14: Guna Traya Vibhāg Yog – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God ...”) (“Chapter 14: Guna Traya Vibhāg Yog – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God ...”)

Once the soul transcends above these three modes, it attains illumination.

These three guans are considered essential for maintaining balance and overall health in the body

- Vata: Vata is associated with the qualities of movement, dryness, and lightness. It governs functions related to the nervous system, circulation, and elimination. An imbalance in vata can cause issues like anxiety, sleeplessness, and digestive problems. These conditions may arise when the vata dosha is out of equilibrium.
- Pitta: Pitta is associated with qualities of heat, sharpness, and intensity. (“Anupama: What Is It, Types and Understanding the Significance Of ...”) It governs functions related to digestion, metabolism, and transformation. An imbalance in pitta can manifest as excessive heat, inflammation, and digestive disorders.
- Kapha: Kapha is associated with qualities of stability, heaviness, and moisture. It governs functions related to strength, immunity, and lubrication. An imbalance in kapha can result in sluggishness, congestion, and weight gain.

त्रैगुण्यविषयावेदानिस्वैगुण्योभवार्जुनानिर्द्वन्द्वोनित्यसत्त्वस्थोनिर्योगक्षेमआत्मवान्॥२-४५॥

(<https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/2/verse/45>)

tralgunyavisayāvedānistraiguṇyobhavarjunanirdvandvonityasattvasthonoriyogakṣemaatmavān

Exploring Eastern and Western Perspectives of Mind, Body, and Soul Relationship: A Critical Review

Translation

The Vedas deal with the three modes of material nature, O Arjun. Rise above the three modes to a state of pure spiritual consciousness. Freeing yourself from dualities, eternally fixed in Truth, and without concern for material gain and safety, be situated in the self. (“Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2, Verse 45”) (Chapter 2: Sāṅkhya Yog – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God – Swami ...) (Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2, Verse 45)

The aim of Ayurveda is to maintain a state of balance among the three gunas or doshas, as an imbalance can cause abnormal condition or disease.

Eastern Perspective and Mental Health

presence of three elements or guans that contribute to the mental structure of an individual. These guans are referred to as sattva, rajas, and tamas. They are considered to influence one's mental qualities, behaviors, and overall mental well-being. Here is a brief explanation of these three gunas in relation to mental health:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः |

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् || 5||

Meaning-

O mighty-armed Arjun, the material energy consists of three *guans* (modes)—*sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). These modes bind the eternal soul to the perishable body.

- Sattva: Sattva is associated with qualities of purity, truth, clarity, and harmony. It represents a state of balanced and tranquil mental attributes. When sattva is dominant, it leads to a calm and peaceful mind, clarity of thought, and positive emotions. It is considered desirable for mental well-being and spiritual growth.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् |

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ || 6||

Meaning-

Amongst these, *sattva Guna*, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating and full of well-being. O sinless one, it binds the soul by creating attachment for a sense of happiness and knowledge. (“Chapter 14 – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God – Swami Mukundananda”)

- Rajas: Rajas are associated with qualities of passion, activity, and restlessness. It represents an active and dynamic state of mind. When rajas are dominant, it can manifest as ambition, desire, and competitiveness. While a certain level of rajas is necessary for motivation and action, an excessive amount can lead to mental agitation, stress, and impulsivity.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् |

तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् || 7||

Meaning-

O Arjun, *Rajo Guna* is of the nature of passion. It arises from worldly desires and affections and binds the soul through attachment to fruitive actions. (“BG 14.7: Chapter 14, Verse 7 - Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God”)

Exploring Eastern and Western Perspectives of Mind, Body, and Soul Relationship: A Critical Review

- Tamas: Tamas is associated with qualities of darkness, inertia, and ignorance. It represents a state of dullness or lethargy. When tamas are dominant, it can lead to feelings of laziness, confusion, and negativity. It is considered an undesirable state for mental well-being and spiritual growth.

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् |

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत || 8||

Meaning-

O Arjun, *Tamo Guna*, which is born of ignorance, is the cause of illusion for the embodied souls. It deludes all living beings through negligence, laziness, and sleep. (“Chapter 14 – Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God – Swami Mukundananda”)

The Atharva Veda's Holistic Path: Aligning Mind, Body, and Soul through Ancient Wisdom. Atharva Veda treats mental behaviors in overly broad terms. Many behaviors abnormalities are given in detail.

CATEGORY- 1

(The first Kanda)

The Atharva Veda categorizes diseases into two types.

- one, Adhi

Caused by an unhealthy diet and other related issues in the body.

- Second, Vadhi

Diseases that arise due to curses or ill-will, referring to them as Vadhi. The remedy for Vadhi is described as attaining mental peace and relaxation. This approach can be compared to modern techniques of relaxation aimed at reducing tension and promoting well-being.

CATEGORY-2

(The fourth Kanda)

The fourth Kanda of the Atharva Veda, the Chaturthi Kanda, indeed covers various subjects, including Bhishaj Chikita (medical treatments), Rit Yagya (rituals and sacrifices), and Atma-vidya (knowledge of the self or spirituality).

- Bhesaja Chikita: This aspect deals with the use of medicinal treatments and remedies for healing and maintaining physical well-being. The Chaturthi Kanda may contain hymns, spells, and rituals related to healing practices, including the use of herbs, plants, and other natural substances.
- Rit-Yagya: The fourth Kanda also includes rituals and sacrifices known as Rit Yagya. These rituals are performed to appease deities, seek blessings, and maintain cosmic order and harmony. They involve specific actions, prayers, and invocations.
- Atma-Vidya: Atma-vidya refers to knowledge of the self or spiritual knowledge. While the Atharva Veda provides insights into spiritual concepts and practices, the Chaturthi Kanda may include hymns, prayers, or wisdom teachings that touch upon aspects of self-realization, the nature of the soul, and the pursuit of higher states of consciousness.

Mana, the mind, is constantly active and functioning. The optimal utilization of this active state is achieved through self-development and the promotion of general welfare by engaging the mind in meditation. However, the mind can also be susceptible to imaginary fears and anxieties

CATEGORY 3

The sixth Kanda-

“May we be saved from Dushasana's, which arise from Arnit or untruthful behavior”

The dream is described as neither conscious nor unconscious

- Dushswapnas, or bad dreams, are believed to be immortal as they do not perish but instead recur in various forms.
- Soum Anasya, which involves keeping the mind at peace and cultivating well-wishing attitudes, is mentioned in various passages of the Atharva Veda. It signifies maintaining harmony in both the body and mind, as well as striving for a balanced state of mind.

Comparison Between Eastern and Western Perspective on Guiding Force of Behaviour

- TAMAS (THANTOS)

Tamas denotes blackness.

The lowest tendency associated with evil, and destruction can be understood as "Thanatos" in Freudian terms.

- RAJAS (EROS)

Rajas represents sexual, pleasure, enjoy fully etc.

In Freud's terms it denoted as 'Eros.'

The degrees of Rajas and Tamas can vary, with the potential for both to increase or decrease in intensity.

When the two Vritti's, Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia), are present in excess or deficiency, it leads to an individual becoming imbalanced or abnormal. However, a balanced state requires both Rajas and Tamas Vritti's to exist within a person's overall personality. For instance, anger (Krodh) is considered a tamasic Vritti, but a certain degree of anger is necessary for a normal person to combat injustice and assert their rights. The key is to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between these Vritti's, ensuring that they are balanced within the individual's total personality.

Relation Between Dushswapas and Carl Jung's Theory

- The mention of dushswapnas being immortal and recurring in some form or other aligns with Jung's notion that certain dream symbols and themes can reappear across different dreams or throughout an individual's lifetime. Jung referred to these recurring patterns as archetypes, universal symbols and themes that are deeply rooted in the collective unconscious and are shared across cultures and individuals.
- The sixth Kanda of Atharva Veda mentions Dushswapnas, which are bad or disturbing dreams. It suggests that these dreams arise from untruthful behavior or falsehood (Arnit). This resonates with Jung's concept that dreams often reflect unconscious conflicts, unresolved issues, or repressed aspects of the self. In both cases, there is an acknowledgment of the psychological significance of dreams and their connection to one's behavior and inner state.

CONCLUSION

The overarching objective of the Atharva Veda is the well-being and welfare of all human beings. It aspires for individuals to live a long and healthy life, exceeding a hundred years, and merge with the cosmic energy, symbolized by attaining Brahma. To accomplish this goal, the Atharva Veda aims to eliminate any obstacles that hinder a good and healthy life. It provides guidance for attaining perfect robust health and prevention and cure of diseases affecting the body and mind. By addressing these aspects, the Atharva Veda seeks to support individuals in achieving overall well-being and fulfilling their spiritual journey.

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Conflict of Interest

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