

## CHAPTER X

### AN INTEGRATED THEORY

#### (DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND LIMITATIONS)

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#### 10.1. INTRODUCTORY

'A full conception of the science will never be attained by the knowledge of only part of it.'<sup>1</sup>

- CHARAKA

Charaka has proved his dictum to be true in his own case and it stands justified in the case of the whole of Ayurveda. Both Charaka and Sushruta have to deal with the Science of Life but they have covered as many subjects as possible to do justice to the Science of Life. Reviewing

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<sup>1</sup>Charakasamhita: Vol. II, V.A. 7, S1(1), p. 835.

life, it touches all the main subjects. It has mainly to deal with the body and mind and their health and prevention of diseases and their cure. So arose and developed the eightfold Ayurveda, i.e. general medicine, surgery, psychiatry etc. as enumerated before. This comprehensive approach of Ayurveda naturally brought in the subject of psychology in its purview. Moreover, as is already seen, it considers the self, the mind, the body and the senses to be the components of the human organism. So Ayurveda has dealt with all the relevant aspects pertaining to those primary factors of human life. Ayurveda has propounded its own philosophy of life, though certainly it is influenced by the Nyaya Vaisheshika and Sankhya Systems of Philosophy. But the integration of ideas and concepts is Charaka's own and it enunciates his philosophy to suit the science of life. The period of Charaka and Sushruta was the golden and scientific period in the history of Ayurveda. It was mainly due to all these factors that Ayurveda could cover a number of subjects with ease and authority.

#### 10.2. A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE

Ayurveda could cover a number of psycho-physiological fields can be seen by a retrospective glance on the previous

chapters. Ayurveda gives a prominent place to the concept of the self and the mind. It has definite ideas about the concept of the self and the mind and their mutual relations and their actions and counteractions with world at large. The mental faculties, sensations and the functions of the mind are well described in Ayurveda in its own style and manner.

But Ayurveda's original ideas are contained in its psychosomatic approach to all the diseases. It gives prominence to psychic factor not only in psychic disorders but in physical ailments too. Nowhere does Ayurveda miss to refer to this topic in its description of the psychosomatic thesis.

Ayurveda has its own say on physiology and physiological aspects related to mind. Its theory of the triumvirate is unique and it is so propounded that it well explains the psychosomatic concept and shows the relation of mind and body rationally.

Ayurveda has to deal with sex and mental disorders. It has its own typical ideas on the subject and they do seem to be no less scientific even from the strict standards of modern science.

Ayurveda being a comprehensive science covers the difficult field of the normal and the abnormal and states its ideas on normality and abnormality. It also prescribes

ways and means to sustain normalcy and to deal with abnormalities by various methods.

Ayurveda has psychological points of view in diagnosis and therapy is seen by the therapeutic measures it suggests.

Thus Ayurveda covers a fairly large field of psychology and psychological branches like psychosomatics, abnormal-psychology etc. In short, it covers all the main aspects of psychology which would be useful in those times. It encompasses the philosophical background, states its theory of mind, clarifies its psychosomatic approach at all relevant places, specifies the normal and abnormal, explains its concepts on sex and gives its psychological points of view in diagnosis and therapy.

After this retrospective glance at what has been expounded in Ayurveda on the subject of psychological theories in the foregoing pages, it is now necessary to present the psychological theory of the mind in Ayurveda in an integrated form with its special features and its limitations.

### 10.3. ANALYSIS

Before this task of stating the theory of the mind is attempted, it is useful to see the analysis of the same here in a nutshell.

(1) It is desirable to understand the theory in a coherent manner and examine its possibilities for an integrated theory. It is necessary now to review the contributions it can make to psychology today.

(2) It is also necessary to specify now the special features of the Ayurvedic theory of the mind. They are comprehensiveness, integrative approach, goal direction, self-dependency, psychosomatic thesis, emphasis on right conduct, its spiritual nature and freedom from reductionism.

(3) These features can be explained one by one under separate headings.

(4) A critical study of its historical values is also necessary.

(5) The limitations of the theory of mind in Ayurveda like the lack of full details, limitations of those times etc., need also to be examined.

(6) It is a vast field in psychological and para-psychological investigation and research with new methods.

(7) Revival of Ayurveda in Gujarat and India is an auspicious sign. It is no less important.

#### 10.4 INTEGRATED THEORY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION

Retrospective glance at the above review brings out the fact that the theory of mind in Ayurveda is an integrated

one. It is desirable, therefore, to present the theory here in order to understand it at a glance.

As Charaka and Sushruta belonged to the scientific period of Ayurvedic development, the logical and rational impression is clearly seen not only on their whole compositions but also on their psychological theory which is well entwined in Science of Life. It can be seen now that the main bulk of the psychological material is available in Charaka, though Sushruta contributes only important glimpses.

The Ayurvedic psychological theory has a philosophical background which provides Ayurveda with a comprehensive and integrative view-point and makes its task of integral approach easy. It gives Ayurveda a spiritualistic attitude in reviewing life and provides it with methods which can be useful in dealing with mind, matter and spirit of the self. Though the approach of Ayurveda is spiritualistic, it is very pragmatic and deals with the questions of mind and body on practical grounds. Accordingly Ayurveda states that life is composed of the self, mind and proto-elements and the senses. The self is universal as well as individual. The Universal self is all powerful and omnipresent. The individual self though limited is in essence one with the absolute self and resides in the body. It is consciousness

or Chetana dhatu. It is born of the universal self and ultimately returns to Him again. But he has not to wait till the whole cycle completes its round. Individual self by spiritual efforts can liberate before the end of an age. Such a philosophical background to Ayurvedic psychology can even now be an important illustration and can serve as a model in this respect.

The individual self has its psychic instrument and it is the mind. It is the mind which does the psychic activities for the self and does it through the senses. When there is a conjunction of the self, the mind and the object of senses through the senses, cognition takes place. Mind has three main functions and they are cognition, perceptions and emotions. Ego, intellect, intuitive faculty (Prajna), recollection etc., are the faculties of the mind with which mind acts and reacts and carries on its functions in the world. Right conduct and character formation are considered essential for the cultivation of the mind and its faculties and their right functioning. Character requires self-control and it is extolled fully in Ayurveda. Topics like dreams, sleep, swooning are also referred to by Charaka. The concepts of soul and mind shown as well linked together is useful today in advancement of modern psychology in as much as they are well integrated.

This shows that the theory of mind is essentially

spiritualistic and is at the same time pragmatic. That is why it can be seen that it could take a psychosomatic approach in questions of health and disease. Its psychosomatic approach is not narrow but covers etiology, diagnosis and all other medical aspects. It states emphatically that the root causes of disorders - both mental and physical - are psychosomatic and Ayurveda calls it prajnapaṇḍha. It also states that gunas like Rajas and Tamas also affect not only the body but also the mind and thus their effect on man is psychosomatic. There are other reasons for such disorders and they are incompatible co-relation of the senses and the objects, imbalance etc. The abode of diseases is the body as well as the mind and so herein too the approach is fully psychosomatic. The concept of health and happiness is also psychosomatic in as much as Ayurveda describes them to be related to both mind and body. The psychosomatic approach, thus, is a naturally corollary of the philosophic background which provides an important view-point to Ayurveda. The concept of psychosomatics is full-fledged in Ayurveda and it is original too. If well pursued with right attitude, it can show right direction to modern psychosomatic medicine.

It is easy to understand the integrative influence of the philosophical approach as far as the mind and the self



are concerned. But it has the same integrative influence on subject of physiology and that is mainly due to its novel theory of the Tridhatu principle. This principle relates the three Doshas with the five proto-elements on its physical side and to three gunas on the psychic side. That is why this principle acts as the bridge between the mind and body and it well explains the psychosomatic approach in Ayurveda. It is due to this linking work of the principle of the triumvirate that psychological and physiological aspects have become closely related in Ayurveda. It really makes the psychological theory integrated.

In the physiology of Ayurveda, though the principle of the triumvirate occupies the central place, the seven Dhātu theory, constitution, nerves and nerve force, are also important factors and are given due treatment in Ayurveda. Though the nervous system in Ayurveda is not so well defined as it is done today but Vayu was equated with nervous force and that is why it reflects well on the practical concept of nervous action in the body.

The place and purpose of sex is well accepted and it is given proper place in the scheme of life. On one side, it is considered in its widest sense of desire (Kama) to be one of the four principle Purusharthas (efforts) in life and on the other hand it is considered desirable for the sake of progeny; Ayurveda is definitely against the suppression of the natural urges but at the same time commends self-control in matters of unwholesome desires

which are injurious to oneself and the society. It considers over-indulgence in sex as the main cause of mental disorders. It lays down healthy rules of eugenics and shows ways and means of removing impotence by virilification and by vitalization. In Ayurveda there is no idea of frigidity though the question of impotence is dealt with at large. This may be due to the current ideas of those times.

The concept of sublimation stands high in its estimation and it is well appreciated because it is thought that by sublimation of sex-energy man can rise to the highest ideal.

In the problem of sex, Ayurveda has two useful concepts to contribute. Over-indulgence in sex is a great factor in mental and physical disorders and is a great contribution of Ayurveda today. Similarly the concept of sublimation and ojas is no less important and it can work as a great check on over indulgence in sex.

It is the only course for man to go higher and progress. So this concept is certainly a contribution.

The origin of man is spiritual and Ayurveda accepts the theory of the transmigration of the soul along with the mind and such a soul comes to reside in the fetus. This does not mean that Ayurveda does not accept other factors in the making of man. It accepts the hereditary factors

working through the mother and the father and accepts also the use and importance of nourishment and the environmental factors.

Similarly Ayurveda takes a psychic view in diagnosis and therapy. It advises the therapist to take into account the psychical factors in diagnosis. In therapy, it puts utmost stress on right conduct. It advises prevention first and prescribes a strict regimen in cure also. The regimen is daily as well seasonal. This idea of regimen is also a part of right conduct. It considers right conduct to be the best method of vitalization. Only a man with self-control should utilize the other methods of vitalization, otherwise they would be misused. Habit plays an important part in man's life and so Charaka advises to change bad habits gradually and to form good habits intelligently. Right balanced behaviour is advocated by Ayurveda and it is shown, as the key to health of both mind and body. This concept can be very useful now-a-days.

Prayaschitta(atonement) is a psychic measure prescribed by Ayurveda for atonement of sins. This method has a manifold psychical effect on the man who thereby not only makes confession of the guilt and brings it to the conscious level the unwholesome impressions and desires but also makes expiation and determination never to repeat it again in

future. This measure rightly adopted and implemented would lead to psychical benefit because there is a sort of talking cure doing the work of Catharsis without the least chance of the fear of transference because the confession is before an elderly pious man or before worthy and holy persons doing the work of a witness of the whole process of Catharsis through expiatory ceremonies or penance. It is mainly a self-corrective remedy full of psychological importance. The concept of Prayaschitta is an integrated whole and if rightly understood can be a permanent asset to psychiatry today.

Ayurveda tends to cover several aspects of mental life. It encompasses one more important subject - the subject of the normal and the abnormal; Ayurveda here points out the psychical factors in mental disorders and states its main varieties and suggests psychosomatic cures and remedies. Herein too Ayurveda has something original to say. Its concept of the normal is excellent and equally useful.

This is in short the integrated psychological theory in Ayurveda covering and synthesizing its concept of the normal and the abnormal, of the senses, of the psyche and the soul, of psychosomatics, of the sex and psychical views on diagnosis and therapy and provides a link

between the body and the mind. This theory has certain distinctive characteristics and features which attract attention. It can be useful in many ways today as it can certainly contribute something concrete to modern psychology.

#### 10.5. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Viewing the integrated theory in its right perceptive, it can be stated that some of its features are distinctive. They are : (1) Spiritualistic in nature though fully pragmatic and scientific, (2) comprehensive, (3) integrative (4) goal-directed, (5) self-sufficient, (6) psychosomatic, (7) non-reductionist. These features require fuller treatment in order to understand these characteristics clearly with their full import. The picture above presented of the integrated theory brings out these distinctive features to the forefront. These features are inter-related and so they are to be dealt with in groups of two or three at a time.

#### Integrative Because Spiritualistic :

This theory of psychology in Ayurveda is comprehensive to a large extent and covers as many subjects as possible which are related to the science of life. This characteristic is apparent now and needs no further elucidation. But its integral nature requires more explanation. Its integrative nature is also apparent no doubt but the

question why it is integrative is a rightful poser. It covers many branches of science. It explains the whole psychological process by one single approach. It has not to strain for integration of different concepts but it comes naturally that different psychological concepts are integrated round its basic concept of the self and the mind and their relations to body, senses and the world. Spiritual approach has an integrative influence on this theory. The very concept of spirituality is integrative. For this is a fact and is accepted by even moderners. Swami Akhilanand quotes Professor Edgar S. Brightman and says, 'Spirituality is a life of harmony, unity and integration.'<sup>2</sup> Ayurveda has adopted an integral approach to life in general because it views life philosophically which is essentially spiritualistic. Though the ancient Indians knew well the art of analysis and used it to understand life and problems, they used the analysed facts for integration of life because to them analysis is only a means and they used it to find and refine the facts to be utilised for final integration.

Attempts at integration in modern sciences and psychology are thought to be desirable in some quarters now. Some scientists and philosophers express the need

<sup>2</sup>Swami Akhilanand: Mental Health and Hindu Psychology, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1952, p.169.

of spiritual basis of life and Alexis Carrel goes to the extent of saying that life's success can only be spiritual, whatever it may be: 'The success of life implies the full, accomplishment of our spiritual density, whatever it may be... the religious sense like the aesthetic is a fundamental physiological activity, it is in no sense the consequence of an unsatisfactory economic state.'<sup>3</sup> Ayurveda could cover physiology along with the mind and spirit. The modern man is still in the search of soul and Ayurvedic psychological theory may be and can be useful to him to a certain extent in finding the soul.

Goal Direction:

Psychological theory in Ayurveda has another distinctive feature in its goal-direction. It sets a definite goal of health before man. Right living is to be directed for happiness and healthy happy life has a goal of ultimate salvation. If salvation is a distant goal, happiness in this world by good actions is a goal achievable by all. Ayurveda shows not only the goal but shows the means to achieve it. It prescribes a way of right conduct, way of right living day in and day out and shows the rules to be observed to be healthy and happy in all seasons and climes and even under natural

<sup>3</sup>Dr.Alexas Carrel: Reflections on Life. A Wilco Book Co.,1961,p.182.

calamities.

Self Sufficiency :

Another characteristics of this theory that strikes one is its self-sufficiency in all the matters and subjects it deals with. It accepts the debt for the ideas and notions it owes to other sciences but these ideas are so well digested and incorporated in Ayurveda that they take a new form and seem novel as a part of the integrated whole. The theory of Karma, is one of the finest example of this. Charaka so construes the theory of Karma that it gives impetus to man so that he can put forth more and more efforts to increase his life-span by right and virtuous living. The science of Ayurveda is self-contained and so is its theory of psychology. It has not to depend on proofs outside its own to prove its validity.

Psychosomatic Approach :

This approach cannot be credited solely to be novel as it was quite known to the Greek medicine. The novelty of this approach in Ayurveda does not lie in its concept but in the way in which it is worked out and explained in all its contexts. It is the theory of the triumvirate that explains the psychosomatic concept as it is related both to the mind by three gunas, and to the body through the proto-elements. Moreover, this approach is not restricted



to mere diseases of the body but to the mental disorders, to diagnosis, to therapy and to sex. The universality of this psychosomatic approach is a specific contribution in the field of ancient Indian psychology and even to medicine. It can be useful even today though the psychosomatics has already begun its march of development in the recent times. How it can be useful now is a matter for further research and application but that it is a distinctive feature of Ayurvedic psychology is a matter beyond doubt.

Non-Reductionistic:-

An important feature that draws our attention is the theory of psychology in Ayurveda; it is non-reductionistic in character. It does not reduce everything to a pet idea or a theory and that is why it is non-dogmatic. Ayurveda is against all dogmas and it supports free-thinking even though it pays due homage to authorities of the olden times and sciences. It gives due place to each idea and does not ignore any subject. Its comprehensive and integral character owes much to this non-reductionistic feature also. Psychology and as a matter of fact, any science cannot afford to be reductionistic in this age of sputniks and inter-planetary efforts of communication and research. But even today, there are certain mechanistic schools of psychology like behaviourism etc. which are to a greater or lesser

extent reductionistic. The great need today in psychological field is getting rid of such reductionism. This psychological theory in Ayurveda may not help the present psychological concepts directly but sets a good example of a non-reductionistic theory for now and for ever.

#### 10.6. RESURGENCE AND HISTORICAL VALUES

These distinctive features of the psychological theory in Ayurveda are important in themselves no doubt. They have their own values. But they are to be seen from two other points of view also. They have historical values because they show how psychological concepts developed in the olden times in India during a scientific period. They also show how far they were scientific and how far they are far-reaching. Historical value also gives a comparative idea of the theories then and now show also the permanent features of the two.

Along with the historical values of such a theory, there is a value of resurgence of some of its concepts. In history as well as in a science, concepts and events repeat themselves. Concepts are like events. They repeat themselves. The concept of 'instinct' was once very much in vogue, then its popularity declined and now again it is coming into vogue in the name of 'drives.' The swing again is on the other side. 'With the passage of the intense

wave of anti-McDougall and in general anti-vitalist feeling, instinctive mechanisms came slowly back into place... The swing of the pendulum appears to be necessary, indeed, an obvious phase in history.'<sup>4</sup> So there is all possibility of revival of some of the ancient concepts of psychology including even the concept of the self. There are signs of such revival of the concept of the self in modern psychology. In the case of such revival, the concept of the self and the theory of psychology woven round the self as in Ayurveda can be useful.

#### 10.7. LIMITATIONS

Appreciation of the psychological theory in Ayurveda only brings out its distinctive features and its historical and other values but it also points out its limitations. The first of its limitations is its lack of detailed descriptions. Nowhere can be seen a detailed analysis of the components of this theory. It describes no doubt the main features, characteristics and functions but there cannot be seen either a detailed description of the mind or its faculties or the senses. This is so even in the case of physiological topics like the nerves or the nerve-force. The theory seems impressive at making

<sup>4</sup>Gardner Murphy: An Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1956, p. 443.

generalizations but lacks in detailed data which is copiously found in modern psychology. Modern psychology is superb in this field of detailed analysis and finding and gathering of data and their classification and theorization.

There can be two reasons for this lack of detailed analysis - (1) the field of Ayurveda is, too vast and a detailed analysis of concepts may have been difficult and (2) there were no means to find further facts already given.

The second limitation of the psychological theory in Ayurveda is that it is not given in a coherent manner at a place but it lies scattered all over the texts. This makes it difficult for a lay reader to get a clear concept of Ayurveda's psychological approach. This is due to the fact that the primary purpose of Ayurveda is to describe the science of life and it has stated its psychological concepts at places convenient for dealing with the respective topics.

The third limitation that strikes a reader of Ayurveda is the lack of proper classification of facts and ideas. Though there is a coherent chain of arguments throughout the chapters but there seems sometimes irrelevant and

quite different ideas put together without rhyme or reason. There can be found a number of such cases but to cite an example it can be said that in the very first chapter of Charaka the topics of Vata etc. are described and then suddenly the text describes the properties of various medicinal herbs and fruits.

#### 10.8. SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

As far as the subject of psychology in Ayurveda is concerned, an attempt has been made here to present the psychological material therein in a coherent manner after duly analysing, classifying and synthesising the collected data. The fruit of the attempt is this presentation of the psychological concepts in Ayurveda. Ayurveda is a small part of the vast ocean of ancient Indian literature. Therein is embodied plenty of material for psychological and other research studies. It offers a vast field for research investigations which would last for years to come.

But such a research should not be mechanistic. It should be carried on by minds free from dogmas and by those who are not wedded to mere specialization. They should be open to see truth wherever it lies in a garb which may be unusual in appearance. The guiding spirit must have comprehensive intelligence. Alexis Carrel well

describes such an approach: 'Only men of very comprehensive intelligence, free from all doctrine or prejudice are capable of envisaging physiological and mental problems from truly human point of view. Undoubtedly specialists will be needed to work in conjunction with these men.

Happily there are plenty of excellent specialists, it is only the non-specialist minds with synthetic outlook which are rare.'<sup>5</sup> Such non-specialized minds with the aid of specialized minds can only do justice to research work in Indian psychology or in other subjects of Ayurveda. This is one such humble attempt.

#### 10.9. REVIVAL OF AYURVEDA

It is an auspicious sign of the present times that Ayurvedic studies are being revived not only in Gujarat but to a certain extent in the whole of India. The revival would no doubt be welcome but it would not be with the pride of the past but with sense of equilibrium to understand the past and to grasp its wisdom without forgetting the rule that the old is not all gold. If with such discriminate and synthetic approach and with a spirit of the search for truth, research is carried on in the vast field of Ayurveda, more and newer gems would be found out and those gems can be polished and made more shining with scientific knowledge of the present times.

<sup>5</sup>.Alexis Carrel:Reflections on Life.Wilco Publication, 1961,p.15-16.

Present research work is an humble attempt in this direction. It presents psychological material in Ayurveda in a coherent form. It presents the psychological theories in Ayurveda in an integrated formation.

#### 10.10. CONTRIBUTION AND SUMMARY

This integral approach and theory of psychology in Ayurveda can contribute something in the advancement of research in modern psychology, especially in giving fillip to the configurational trends today. It can shed some light in the formation of the concept of the human self; it can be useful in the progressive formulation of modern psychosomatic theory and practice; it can contribute to the psychology of sex: its thesis that lust is also equally responsible for abnormalities, can well be utilized to the best of our advantage. Its concept of prayaschitta is no less important and it can be certainly useful in psychiatric cures to a certain extent. Last but not the least, its main features like its configurational approach, non-reductionistic attitude and its goal-direction are no less useful at this juncture in modern psychology.

#### SUMMARY

A retrospective glance at the foregoing chapters brings out the fact that Ayurveda has an integrated psychological theory. It covers many important fields. Besides giving a clear concept of mind, it covers psychosomatics, physio-psychological aspects, sex problem,

the normal and the abnormal, diagnosis and therapy. This Ayurvedic psychological theory is integral because it is spiritualistic by nature. As such it reveals certain characteristics which are outstanding: (1) Comprehensiveness (2) Goal-direction (3) Self-sufficiency (4) psychosomatic (5) Non-reductionistic etc. These features enhances its historical value. There is other important value and that is the value of resurgence or revival of certain important concepts like that of soul and the psychosomatics. This theory has its limitations too. There is a lack of details and proper classification. Still, there is a scope of further research in Ayurveda in other aspects. It is a happy augury that revival of Ayurveda is taking place in India and Gujarat.

