

# **Yoga and Psychology : A few Comparative Features**



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# **Scheme of Presentation**

- **Introduction**
- **Major Schools of Modern Psychology at a Glance**
- **Yoga Psychology in the light of Patanjali**
- **A few comparative features of Yoga & Modern Psychology**
- **Deductions**
- **Possible areas of Integration**
- **Conclusion**

# Introduction

- Keeping the psycho-physiological problems of mankind, the potentialities of yoga have been actualized in the light of scientific studies all over the world.
- *Sage Patanjali*, whose work in the field of Human Psychology is well recognized in the West, provides a systematic approach not only to understand the root causes of psycho-physiological problems of mankind but also provides systematic techniques/practices to overcome such conditions.
- Modern Psychology, an off shoot of Western philosophy, is scientific however, has its limited scope and premise of understanding human behaviour through empirical approach and its ultimate goal is nothing but the 'Social adjustment'.
- Modern **psychology** is divided into several sub-disciplines, each based on differing models of behavior and mental processes.

# Major Schools of Modern Psychology at a Glance

## 1. Structuralism

Edward B. Titchner - Consciousness can be analyzed into sensation, perception and feeling



## 2. Functionalism

William James – argued that psychologists should study function of mind and not its structure



## 3. Freud and Psycho Analysis

Freud – divided the personality into Id, Ego, Superego



## 4. Alfred Adler and Individual Psychology

Adler – emphasis on social factors, concept of superiority & inferiority complex added to psychology



## 5. Jung and Analytical Psychology

Jung – concept of unconscious beyond individual, brought concept of collective unconscious besides individual unconscious



## 6. Behaviorism

John B. Watson – psychologists should study observable human nature and not concepts like mind, consciousness



## 7. Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt – behaviour should be understood in a holistic way



## 8. Humanistic Psychology

Man is a subjective animal, human experience is more important. They brought back the dignity of man that Freud and others undignified.

# Humanistic Psychology

- Gestalt psychology,
- **Indian Psychology,**
- Psychology of consciousness
- Environmental Psychology,
- Para Psychology

These are the schools of psychology that are included in Humanistic psychology.

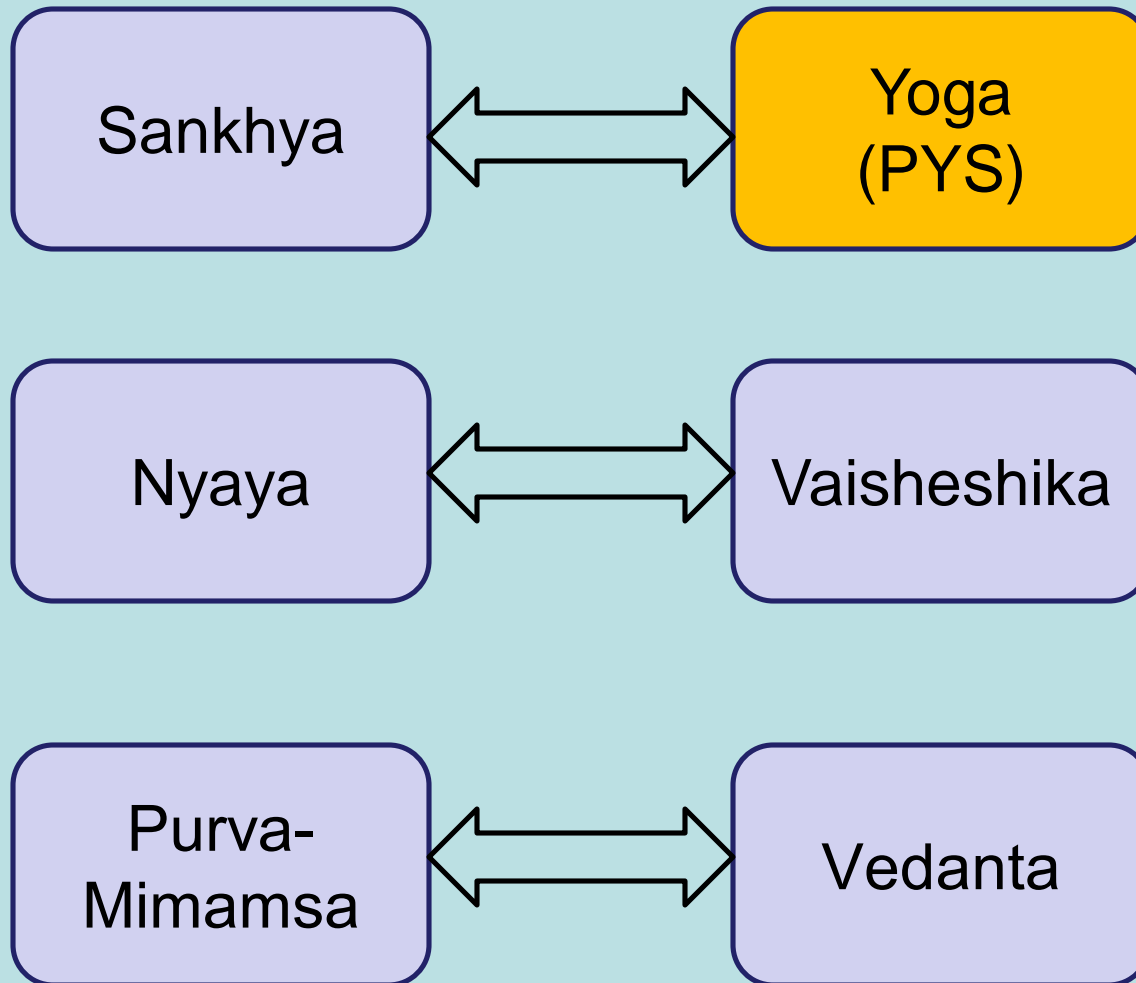
- Gordon W Allport, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow are some of the early proponents of humanistic psychology.

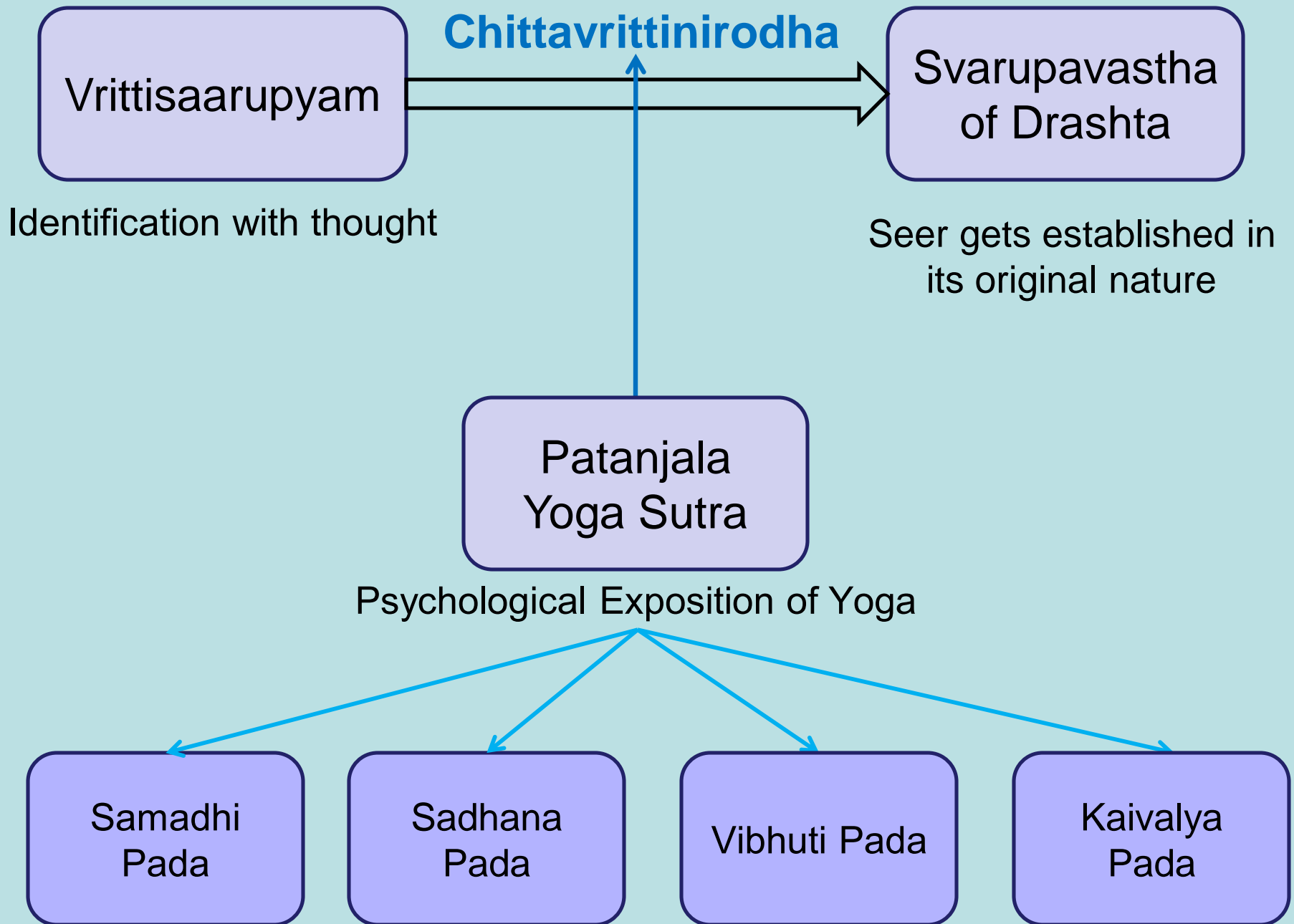
## **Yoga Psychology in the light of Patanjali**

Yoga (one of the six systems of Indian darshanas) has particular concern with psychology, often called as Indian psychology, as its field of action is to understand and refine the activities of Chitta and thereby getting absolute mastery over it which in turn, leads the drasta (the seer principle) to svarupavastha i.e. the seer gets established in its original nature.

As a study of 'Self', Yoga transcends both general and abnormal psychology and leads one to supernormal level of life.

# The Six Systems of Indian Darshanas



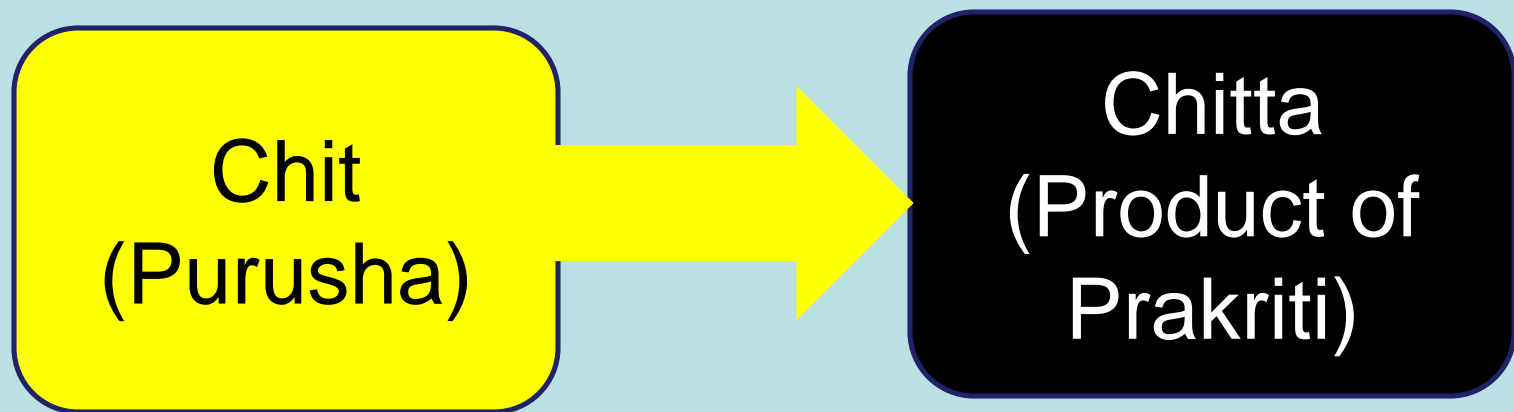




# How does Chitta Operate?

**In Modern Psychology**  
this concept has not  
been accepted Yet

The Chitta is insentient (Jada)  
but it appears as Chaitanya by  
borrowing the light from the  
Purusha



**In Modern Psychology**  
'Phenomenal' in nature.

Consciousness is 'Intentional' and

# Chitta

Sattva – Rajas – Tamas

## Causal Body

Unconscious Part (Karmashaya) - Storehouse of Subliminal Impressions (Samskaras), Traits (Vasanas) because of Pancha Klesha

## Subtle Body

Intellect (Buddhi)

Individuating Principle (Ahamkara)

Mind (Manas)

Antahkarana

Suble Elements (Tanmatra)

Sound

Touch

Form

Taste

Odour

## Gross Body

Gross Elements (Mahabhuta)

Ether

Air

Fire

Water

Earth

## Bahyakarana

Sense Organs (Jnanendriya)

Ear

Skin

Eye

Tongue

Nose

Organs of Action (Karmendriya)

Express

Grasp

Move

Excrete

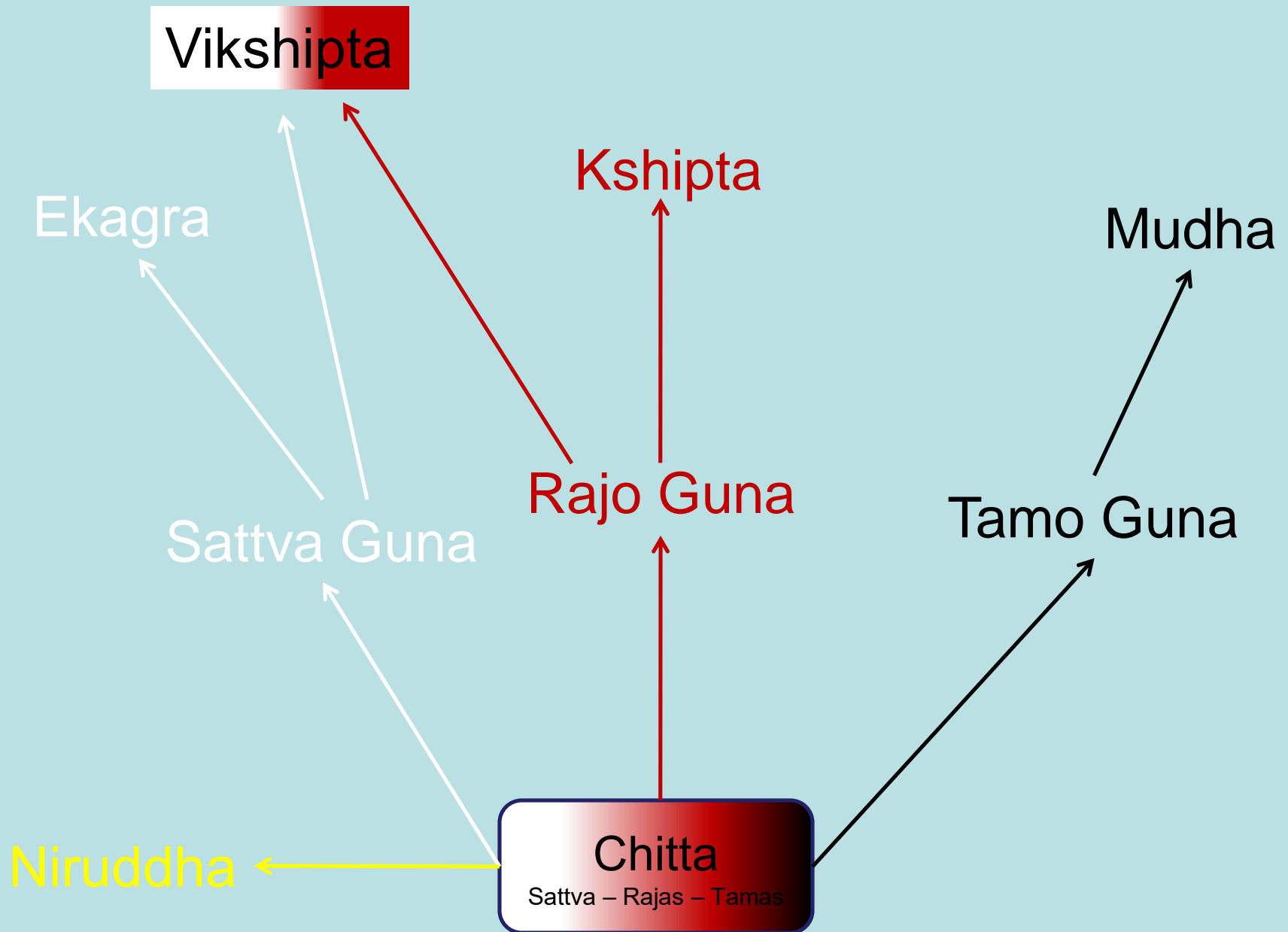
Procreate

# Mind in Modern Psychology

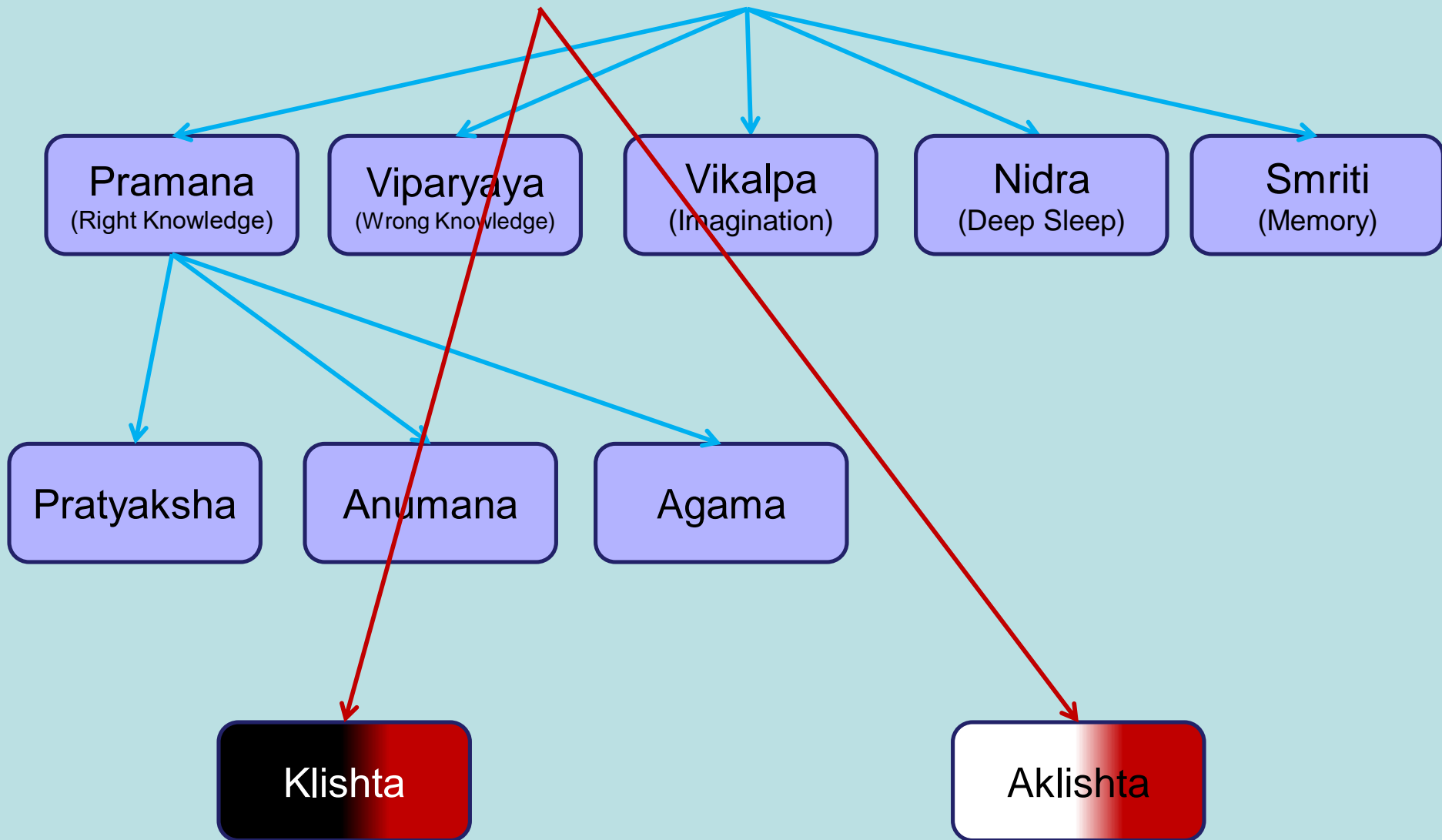
- In Modern psychology Mind has not been clearly defined. Mind is often considered as the software and the brain its hardware.
- Consciousness is often considered another term for the mind and its functions.
- The definitions given often are more descriptions of its functioning aspects and do not describe what it actually means. Brain is considered the seat of mind
- The neurobiological approach tries to explain the mind as a byproduct of physicochemical processes involving the billions of neurons in the human brain and its various components are the thought process, emotions, intelligence and awareness

# Mind in Modern Psychology

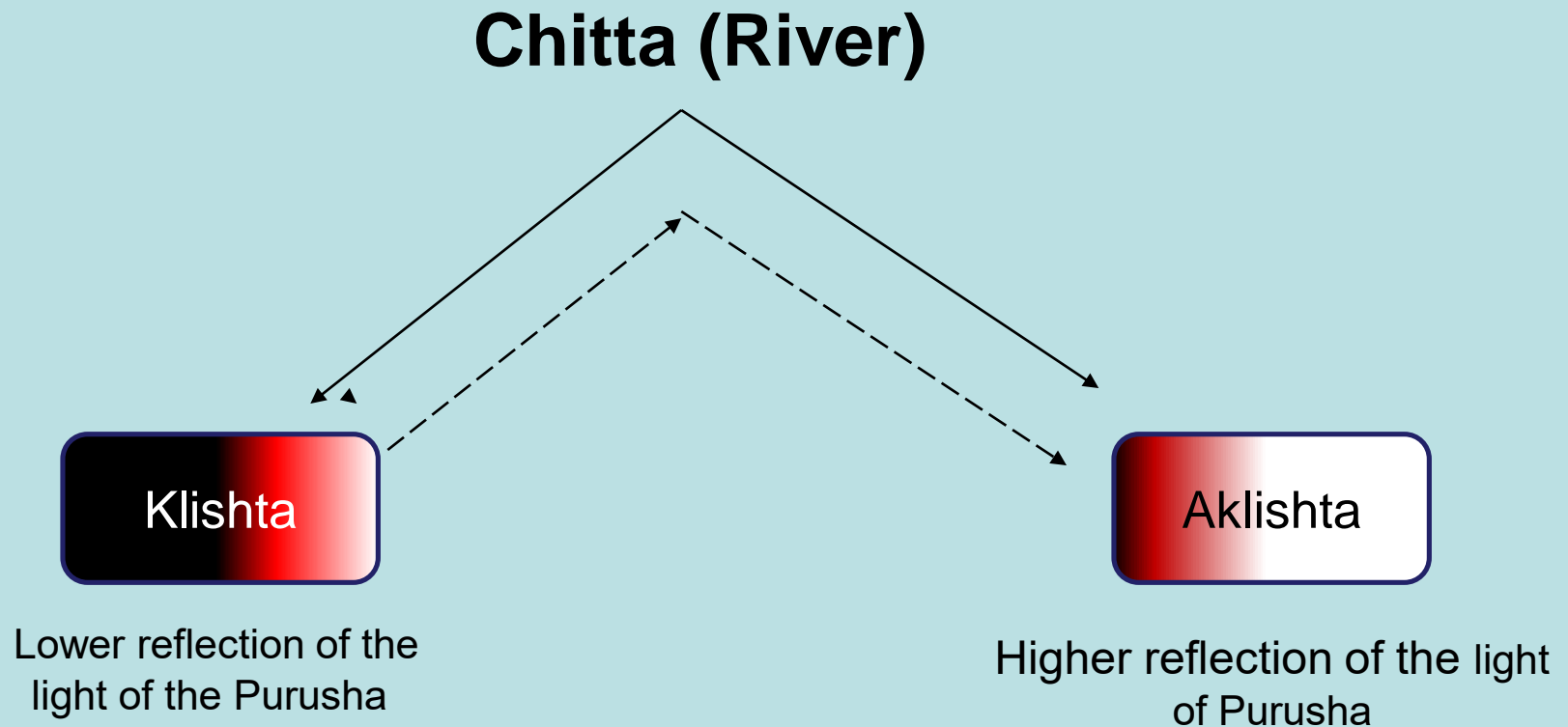
- According to Western medical science, light vibrations from outside strike the retina and inverted image is formed there. These vibrations are carried through optic tract and optic thalamus to the center of vision in the occipital lobe of the brain in the back part of the head. Therein, a positive image is formed. Only then does one see the object in front .
- All the sense-faculties are blended in the mind. One can see and hear directly, through the mind by Yogic practices (clairvoyance and clairauidience). This blows out the Western psychological theory of perception.



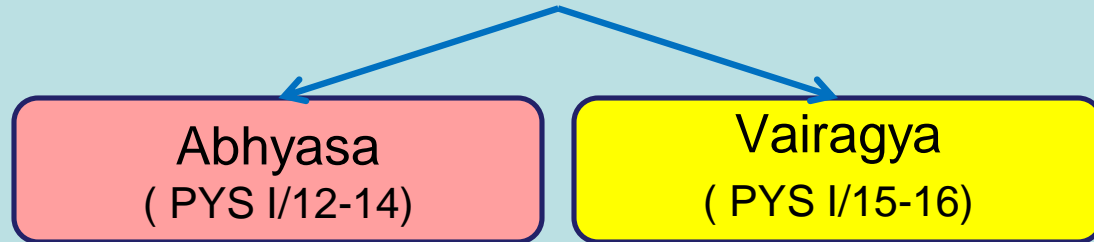
# Chittavrittis (Mode of Functioning of Chitta)



# Refining / Rechannelization of Functioning of Chitta



# Means for Refining / Rechannelizing the Functioning of Chitta



1. **Kriya Yoga** (Tapas, Svadhyaya, Isvarapranidhana) ( PYS II/1-2)
2. **Cittaprasadana** ( PYS I/33-39)
3. **Pratipaksabhavna** ( PYS II/33-34)
4. **Ashtangayoga** (PYS II/28-55 & III/1-3)
  - a. **Bahiranga** - Yama,Niyama,Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara
  - b. **Antaranga** - Dharna - Dhyana - Samadhi



# **A few comparative features of Yoga & Modern Psychology**

## **Yoga**

- Consciousness is Transcendental Experiential, Intuitive
- Man is essentially divine in nature.
- Constitution of an individual- Gross, subtle and causal body all are interdependent.

## **Modern Psychology**

- Intentional and phenomenal Psychological research studying the human behaviour
- Man is considered as merely a psycho-sometic entity.
- No unifying theory regarding constitution of personality is accepted unanimously.

# **A few comparative features of Yoga & Modern Psychology**

## **Yoga**

- Due to the interplay of and dominance of Guna and a particular nature of Karmashya (storehouse of subliminal impressions) determines the individual difference.
- Existential problems are internal known as Keshas (inborn afflictions) which not only can be weakened but also can be rooted out .

## **Modern Psychology**

- Primarily the hereditary, and secondarily environmental influences determines the individuality. Individual having no control on his hereditary.
- Stressors are subjective and cognitive, operating with environmental conditions.

# A few comparative features of Yoga & Modern Psychology

## Yoga

- Yoga study man as a part of the cosmos. It tries to establish a relationship between Microcosm and macrocosm.
- It recommends way to transcend human behaviour and personality in the journey of Self realization

## Modern Psychology

- Psychology study i) Individual's behavioural development from birth to death ii) Individual's behaviour in the context of society / social group.
- It studies, controls and directs both **covert** (thinking, memory, problem solving etc.) and **overt** (gestures, face language, body language) human behaviour but the scope is limited to social adjustment.

# **A few comparative features of Yoga & Modern Psychology**

## **Yoga**

- Aim of Yoga is to dissolve the ego rather than strengthen it.
- Yoga takes the ego itself as the disease; the whole psyche is the disease. There is no choice about it — conscious and unconscious both have to go for Self realization

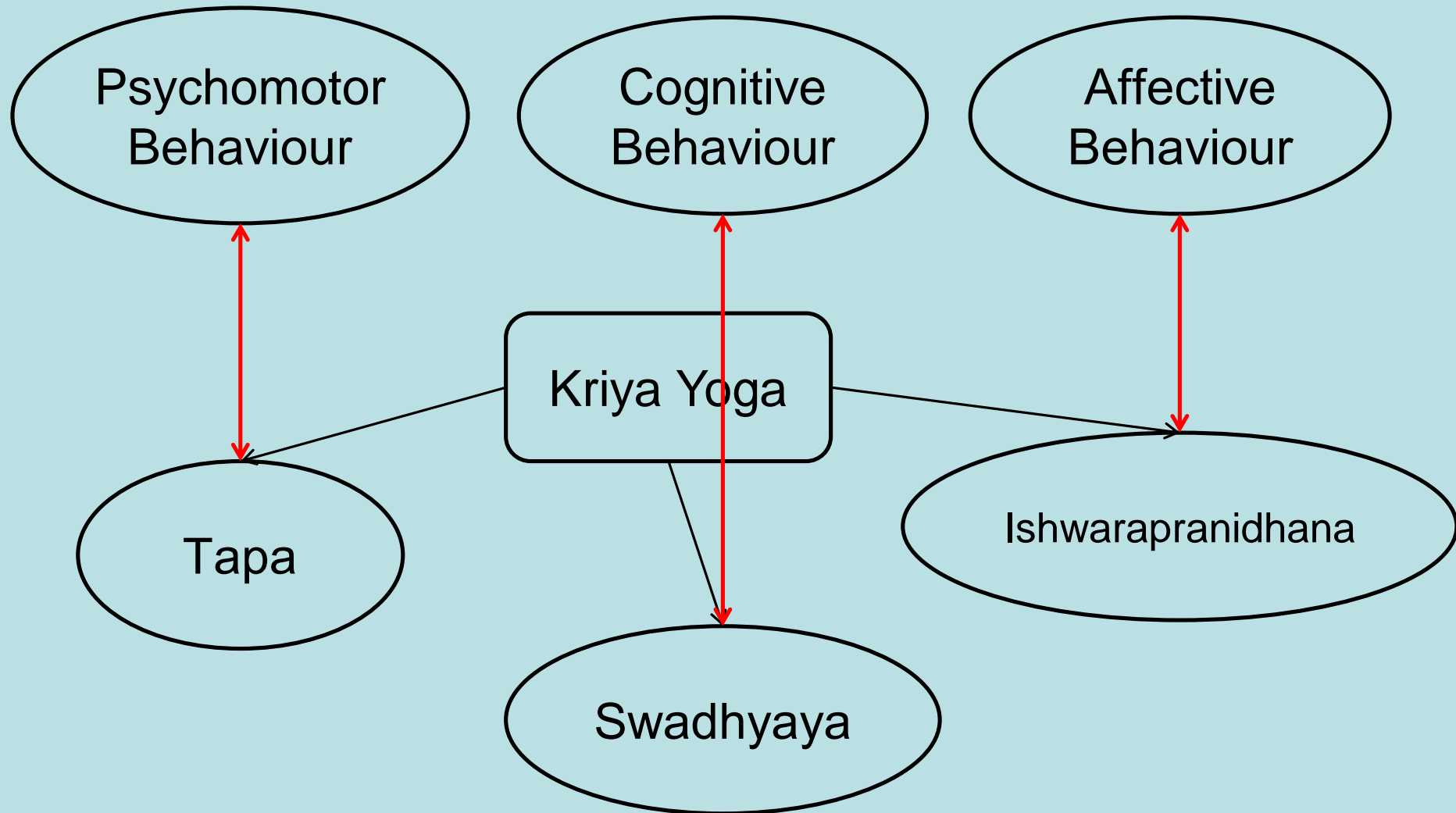
## **Modern Psychology**

- Aim of Western psychology is to fortify the individual's ego so that one may become slightly happier and ultimately function 'better' in society.
- Unconscious and conscious both are in a constant quarrel within for ego realization.

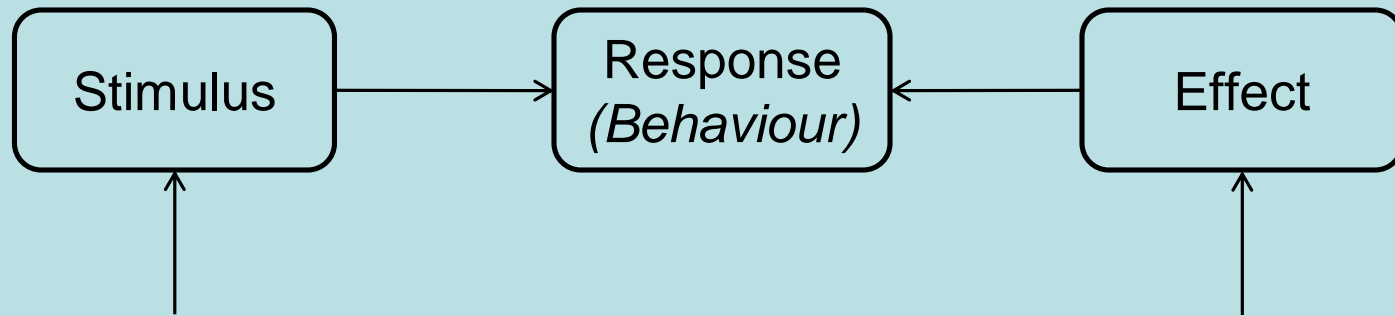
# Deductions

- Yoga and Modern Psychology differ from each other to such an extent one wonders if they are any point of agreement with each other.
- However, keeping some common points of interest in understanding human behavior, as well as, their recent understanding of mind body relationship for **development of personality** as well as in **therapeutic aspects** make them worthy for comparison.

## Example – Development of Integrated Personality



## Example - Behaviour Therapy



Classical Conditioning  
*(behaviour is modified by  
association of stimuli)*

**Means to Chittaprasadana,  
Pratipakshabhavanam etc**

Operant Conditioning  
*(behaviour is modified by  
the effect it produces)*

**Pranava Japa, Kriya Yoga,  
Yama, Niyama etc.**

# Possible areas of Integration

- Yoga with its methodical procedures can tap/control/redirect the dynamics of chitta and can enrich the studies on mind-body interactions.
- The yogic concepts like triguna, chittabhumi etc. not only indicate deeper implications of mento-spiritual dynamics in one's personality make-up but also show the way in moulding one's personality.
- Experts in Psychoanalysis, Gestalt and Cognitive-behavioural therapy approaches may work hand in hand with Yoga experts for better results in therapy as yoga has philosophical as well as psycho-neuro-endocrinal approach to therapy and therefore, can influence one's value system and the psycho-physiology on the other hand.



## Possible areas of Integration

- As we have seen that the Yogic view-point subscribes more to the transcendental nature of the Consciousness while the Western approach views the Consciousness as phenomenal.

The synthesis of the yogic and the Western approaches may present to us an unbiased and a comprehensive view of the Consciousness.

# Possible areas of Integration

## 1) As Psychoanalysis and Yoga:

Both the sciences attempt to free the individual from the nervous and defensive automatism that renders him slave of impulses and emotions, as in the case of compulsive criminal, a drug addict etc.

Both of them have theses that the ills of the humanity are due to the ignorance and the way to its healing is through exploring and knowing one's inner being.

However, unlike psychoanalysis, yoga alone proposes both Transcendental Consciousness (Atma) and Phenomenal Consciousness (mind, brain and their dynamics). Moreover, yoga provides various practices, to correct, preserve and strengthen one's psychosomatic assets apart from the practicably sound metaphysical reasoning pertaining to the meaning and the purpose of human life and living.

## Possible areas of Integration

- 2) In any therapy, the patient's participation in his own treatment is known to enhance his self-esteem, self-confidence, feeling of self-worth and his capacity of adjustment at all levels. Yoga, also defined as "Conscious Evolution" provides abundantly such an opportunity. Even the patients of cancer and AIDS, who are "broken internally" may be helped with individualized meditational techniques.
- 3) According to Indrasen (1960) the self-existent and objectless inner joy of yoga may prove to be of supreme therapeutic value in psychiatry. Hence the Modern Psychiatry should take a receptive stance in trying the same through Yoga experts.

## Possible areas of Integration

- 4) Attitude change technology of Modern Psychology can help form a favourable attitude towards yoga in case of beginners in their yogic pursuit.
- 5) With its sound philosophical and psycho-physiological approach, the yoga science is well equipped to correct almost any abnormality in human behaviour. It seems to possess all the elements of Modern Psychotherapy that we find in Psychoanalysis, Cognitive-behavioural therapy and Gestalt therapy.

## **Possible areas of Integration**

- 6) Yoga Darshana provides means and ways for developing Intuition and Will as evidenced in the description of paranormal phenomenon in 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of PYS. Therefore, further exploration in these areas will give an impetus to the research in the inner realm of human personality
- 7) In Modern Psychological studies, self-expression and self-identity and self-actualization have been found to be contributive to the development of creativity and intelligence. Therefore, the research into yogic practices of Samyama giving an expression to the power of Will, may reveal multifarious possibilities to man for his personality development.

## **Possible areas of Integration**

- 8) Yoga respects the uniqueness of each and every individual and hence is individualized whereas Modern psychology is socially oriented. Yogic practices of Yamas and Niyamas have been largely found to prepare man to be individually strong, flexible so as to enable him to remain almost unaffected in any kind of social malady. The practice of social reforms which is the area of Modern Psychology can help yoga incorporate certain social elements in to its system.

## Possible areas of Integration

- 9) Nature and constitution of mind and personality are the areas where the co-operation between the two sciences is earnestly called for. It may enable Modern Psychology to discover new paradigms to study human personality.

Modern Psychology should make itself receptive in trying yogic paradigms, involving theories like Triguna as Jung has tried to prove his conception of Libido or Psychic Energy wherein he differs from Freud. In 1939.

During one of his lectures, Jung analyzes the Samkhya Yoga theory of Chitta, wherein he found confirmation and support for the concept of Libido or psychic energy is Yogic idea of Rajas. Although the way in which Jung subdivides psyche does not completely parallel the various stages in the evolution of Chitta of Patanjali. However descriptions of such concepts can show a surprising agreement.

## Possible areas of Integration

- 10) Today's world of co-operation and accommodation solicits a free exchange of ideas, concepts and practices between these two sciences. Extremes, whether in yogic values or psychological objectivity, are obviously not tenable.

Barbara Brown (1974) has stated that the union between the Western medical models and the Eastern spiritual approaches to health has not been easy one, as until about forty years ago the potential of yogic practices, for ensuring well-being, was disdained by American Authority; yet today, symposia, conferences and courses on the usefulness of yoga, for mental and physical health can be found in the curricula of many a leading health institution of America.



# Conclusion

To conclude -

The **socially oriented objectivity** of Modern Psychology should take the cognizance of the **Self-oriented subjectivity of yoga** to arrive at a man-oriented synthetic approach so that man prevails truly as man with all his existential possibilities.

THANK YOU