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## Understanding The Trance State In Patanjali Yoga Sutras And Its Similarities With The Trance State In Hypnosis.

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### Abstract:

*Consciousness in yoga can be understood as William James' concept of consciousness being a stream. The altered states of consciousness in yoga and hypnosis are associated with similar phenomena like relaxation, disinclination to talk, unreality, misrepresentation, alterations in perception, increased concentration, suspension of normal reality testing, and the temporary nature of the phenomena. While some researchers consider yoga to be a form of hypnosis, others note that there are many similarities between the trance in yoga and the hypnotic trance. The present study aimed to investigate the phenomena of trance in yoga and to investigate its similarities if any, with the trance state of hypnosis. An understanding of the concept of trance in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras was gained through a thematic analysis of the book Four Chapters on Freedom by Swami Satyananda Saraswati. This led to an understanding of the concept of trance in the yoga sutras. The obtained concepts were compared to the concepts of trance in hypnosis (obtained through the literature on hypnosis) to investigate whether or not there exist parallels. The findings of the study show that there are similarities between the trance in hypnosis and the trance in Patanjali's yoga sutras in the induction and deepening of the trance states in hypnosis and that of Samadhi, the phenomena present in hypnosis and the kinds of siddhis that are obtained through Samadhi, and the therapeutic techniques and the therapeutic process in Patanjali's yoga sutra and hypnosis.*

### KEYWORD:

Altered States Of Consciousness, Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Hypnosis, Trance.

### INTRODUCTION:

The study of consciousness has traditionally been the domain of philosophy. Rene Descartes proposed a Cartesian dualism model of consciousness in which a mind-body duality was conceptualised. According to Descartes the immaterial mind and the material body are distinct substances which causally interact with one another. According to the Cartesian dualism model, mental events cause physical events and physical events cause mental events. The phenomenon of consciousness has also been explained by the dual aspect theory and psychological parallelism. The study of consciousness thus was the domain of philosophy.

It was only in the 19th century, after the work of William James, The Principles of Psychology I and II that the field of psychology expanded to include in its domain the study of consciousness. The notion of a stream of consciousness was coined by William James. It was James who recognised the power of attention to give focus and a margin to consciousness. He also recognised the importance of the unconscious process. With all these advancements, it was only a matter of time that neural correlates of consciousness received, and continues to receive renewed attention even today.

In the past fifty years the major development for consciousness research has been the cognitive

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unconscious (Kihlstrom, 1987). This refers to the unconscious, automatic psychological processes in perception, memory, and action. Such unconscious psychological processes were observed in a more inflated form in patients with brain damage. Patients with lesions in the visual cortex were able to state visual properties of an object that they could not “see”. A phenomenon termed as blindsight (Weiskrantz & Warrington, 1975).

The demonstration of unconscious processes raises new problems for the conceptualization and the study of not only consciousness, but of altered states of consciousness too.

#### **DEFINING CONSCIOUSNESS AND ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Consciousness can be thus, be defined as the subjective awareness of the momentary experience interpreted in the context of personal memory and present state (John, 2003). The presence of qualia is the most subjective part of consciousness. It refers to how sensations, thoughts, beliefs, pains etc occur to one. It is an epiphenomenon and has no discernable physical effects. Similarly an altered state of consciousness is also defined in terms of a change to the subjective experience. One popular definition is the one given by Tart in 1990. He defines the altered state of consciousness as one in which the individual feels a qualitative shift in his pattern of mental functioning; there is a change in the qualities of mental processes. It is not just defined as a quantitative shift, in terms of more or less alert, more or less visual imagery etc (in Revonsuo, Kallio & Sikka, 2009).

This definition highlights that primary phenomenal consciousness; which is awareness of a changed pattern of subjective experience; and reflective consciousness, in which a cognitive judgement must be passed so as to recognise that the experience is different from normal; are both involved in the altered state of consciousness.

Altered states of consciousness or trance state have also been understood as a deviation from the normal states of consciousness. It has been understood as a state in which the world or the self tend to be misrepresented. This is caused by an internal or external change in the organism's biological makeup and it alters the representational relations and hence in not a functional, original or permanent state of the organisms' consciousness. An altered state of consciousness is thus, due to a change in the representational state of consciousness and is not restricted to any specific cognitive, affective or sensory modality, but is a combination of them, and it is a temporary phenomenon (Revonsuo, Kallio, & Sikka, 2009).

According to this understanding of altered states of consciousness or trance state, hypnosis can be considered as one, because it changes the background mechanisms of consciousness, as strong and multiple changes in conscious experiences are experienced to hypnotic suggestions.

#### **HYPNOSIS**

Hypnosis is derived from the Greek root hypnos, which means to sleep. Even the origins of the word means to sleep, hypnosis is not a state of sleeping. The trance in hypnosis resembles sleep but this trance is different from the other states of consciousness (awake, sleep, and dream states).

Although it is Anton Mesmer who is credited for the origin of hypnosis, it is not true (Cunningham, 1998). 2000 years before Mesmer, techniques of induction were being used by ancient Egyptian and Greek priests. There is evidence of Egyptian priests performing death and rebirth rituals in what they called as “Temples of Sleep”. Drugs and psychedelics were used to assist the process. Those who lived through the experience were said to “have experienced other levels of reality while being out of the physical body” (Cunningham, 98). This is believed to be the first account of hypnosis being reported.

In Greece, sleep temples were created and dedicated to the God of healing, Asclepius. These temples were created in the fourth and fifth century B.C. They were considered as sacred places where a sick person would enter a state of sleep. There were 420 sleep temples spread across the ancient Greece empire at the height of their popularity. Healing would take place while the person being cured was in a trance like deep sleep. Chanting and “magical spells” were used by the priests to put the patient into a trance, also known as incubation. A person would be kept in this state for up to three days. During this time the priests would use suggestions that would help the person, through their dreams, make contact with Asclepius, thus helping in the cure of their illness.

Erickson, Hershman, and Selter (2005) believe in the antiquity of hypnosis. They believe that hypnosis is as old as time and has been employed in all parts of the world in some form or the other. Even though hypnosis has been around since the beginning of time, the modern history of hypnosis can be traced to Franz Mesmer in 1773. Mesmer observed father Gassner cure people by laying hands and making passes over the patients' body. Mesmer believed that the father was using animal magnetism. Mesmer worked upon Gassner's technique and theorised that a fluid circulating in the body was influenced by the magnetic

forces originating from the astral bodies. Later however, Mesmer believed that this force was within him and that patients could be cured when the magnetic rays flowed from his fingers.

In 1778, Mesmer moved to France and there he developed a large following due to his high percentage of cures. A committee formed to investigate Mesmer however, deemed him as a fraud as they found that the results attributed to animal magnetism were the result of imagination. The scientists failed to recognise on the other hand, that suggestion was the reason for the cures. Even though Mesmer was discredited, it was him who laid the foundation, which led to the understanding of the power of suggestion in psychotherapy (Erickson, Hershman, and Sectar, 2005).

It was James Braid, in 1841 who stated that it was not animal magnetism that was involved in the cure, but suggestion. He developed the eye fixation technique of inducing relaxation and called it hypnosis. He used the term hypnosis, from the Greek word hypnos, since he thought that hypnosis was similar to sleep. He recognised though, that hypnosis is similar to meditation in both, the psychological and physiological aspects. He defined hypnotism as a state of focussed attention upon a single idea or mental image. In his view, since hypnosis was the state of focused attention, it was fundamentally the opposite of normal sleep. After he recognised his error (of believing that hypnosis was similar to sleep), he tried to change the name to *monoedisimo*, which means concentration on one side. The term hypnosis, even though a misnomer, still persists (Robertson, 2009).

In 1854, James Esdaile, a Scottish surgeon, was working in India with the East India Company. While here, he performed hundreds of minor and major surgical procedures on Indians under Mesmeric anaesthesia. His book describes hundreds of operations that he performed under this technique including amputations of the legs, removal of tumours, and other comparable surgeries. He even noted the dwindling of surgical shock in his patients. In his book, *Hypnosis in Medicine and Surgery*, 1957, he describes that he or his assistants would induce hypnosis (mesmerised) the patients in the morning, and would leave them in a cataleptic state. He would then return later and operate. When Esdaile returned to England and shared his experiences, he was, unfortunately ridiculed and ostracised by his colleagues (Vyas & Vyas, 2009).

The first scientific text on hypnosis, *Suggestive Therapeutics* was published in 1886 by Bernheim. Bernheim observed the work of Dr. Ambroise-Auguste Liebau, a French physician. Liebau became interested in hypnosis after reading Braid's work, but in order to avoid being discredited, he worked pro bono. Bernheim and Liebau then began to work together, treating patients.

Ernst Simmel, a German psychoanalyst began using hypnosis for the treatment of war neurosis or shell shock. He called his technique hypnoanalysis. In hypnoanalysis, hypnosis was combined with the psychodynamic techniques. During world war II Grinker and Spiegel used barbiturate to induce a state of drug hypnosis in order to bring traumatic material to the surface. Hypnosis has since been playing an important part in the treatment of combat fatigue and other neuroses. The most important development to come out of the world wars was the merger of hypnotic techniques with psychoanalysis. This development revived a great deal of interest in hypnosis and led to the publication of various books with hypnosis and suggestibility as the subject matter (Erickson, Hershman and Sectar, 2005).

Hypnosis has since been recognised as a treatment method by the American Medical Association (in 1958). There are now several journals devoted exclusively to the experimental and clinical applications of hypnosis. This include, but are not limited to *The American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, *The British Journal of Medical Hypnotism*, *The Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*.

### **The Trance in Hypnosis**

It is difficult to define a hypnotic trance state, but it can be inferred from hypersuggestibility, passivity, disinclination to talk, and fixed facial expressions, feelings of relaxation, unreality, automaticity and compulsion, alterations in body image, and unusual sensations have been reported to accompany hypnotic trance (Erickson, Hershman, and Sectar, 1961). The hypnotic state has been described as one in which there is focused attention, concentration in which learning is maximised, alterations in self awareness, a state of internally focussed absorption and the suspension of normal reality testing, alterations in perceptions (Gruzelier, 2005; Dalal & Barber, 1970; Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976; Kihlstrom, 2005; Yapko, 1984).

Vyas and Vyas (2009) describe that the trance state is hypnosis is characterised by a quiet, calm and peaceful mind. There exists a general sense of well being. They describe it as a state of alert restfulness as the person is awake but the state is more like sleep than awake. The subjective time moves slowly, and the distinction between the present, past and future is lost. There is a shift of space location and one can experience oneself at several different locations in space. The depth of trance may be mild, moderate, or intense in depth.

In trance, initially the pulse rate and blood pressure rise, but they soon go below the resting levels.

The respiratory rate also first rises and then falls below the resting level. The metabolic rate falls steeply and it may fall below the level of sleep. The body and face seem flushed as the peripheral flow of blood increases. There is also a decline in the plasma cortisol levels and there is increased functioning in both the hemispheres of the brain.

Lethargy is present in a light hypnosis state. It is characteristic in this state that muscles contract at the slightest touch, friction, pressure or massage. This contraction can be restricted by the repetition of the stimuli that caused it. In this state of light trance, the subject appears to be in deep sleep, the eyes are closed or half closed and the face is expressionless. The body appears to be in a state of complete collapse with the head thrown back, and the arms and legs hang loose, dropping heavily down.

Catalepsy characterises a deeper level of trance and in this the subject becomes rigidly fixed in the position in which they were in while they were entering catalepsy. Whether it is standing, or sitting, or kneeling. Arms or legs can be raised and will remain that position.

Since a trance state is also described as one in which there is a "heightened focus of attention or concentration on internal or external cues" (p 401, Carich, 1990) one can say that hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness or a trance state.

In this trance state perception is clarified. What an individual perceives is coloured by various projections of the mind. The subject refuses to accept perceptual clarity and the perception of reality is through these projections, in the hypnotic trance state however, reality is perceived free of the projections

### **Yoga, Consciousness and Trance**

#### **History of yoga.**

Yoga is an ancient spiritual discipline that originated in India, reportedly more than 5000 years ago (De Michelis, 2005). The word yoga originates from the Sanskrit word yuj, which means to join. Yoga thus, is defined by the Iyengar School as the joining and integrating of all aspects of the individual, the body with mind, the mind with the soul, to achieve a happy balanced and useful life. Yoga has been viewed as joining and disjoining at the same time by Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1976).

There is no written record of who invented yoga as it was practiced by yogis long before people knew how to read or write. The knowledge of yoga was passed down orally by the guru to the shishya. The earliest written record of yoga is believed to be written by Patanjali, a yogic sage. Although there are various different schools of yoga present, they all follow the same fundamental principles as described by Patanjali.

The history of yoga can be divided into 4 major periods, the Vedic period, the pre classical, classical, and post classical periods.

The Vedic period of yoga or Vedic yoga is the yoga that is derived from the Vedic texts. The yoga in this period was intimately connected with the ritual life of ancient Indians and revolved around the idea of sacrifice as a means of joining the material world with the spiritual world. The people who performed these sacrifices had to perform various rituals which needed them to focus their mind for a prolonged period of time. This inner focussing for the sake of transcending the ordinary mind and its limitations is the root of yoga. When, and if the yogi was successful in this focussing, the yogi experienced a vision, which was the experience of this transcendental reality.

Pre Classical yoga comes from the Upanishads, which are texts that talk about the ultimate unity of all things, and the Bhagvad Gita. Preclassical yoga comprises of many schools which have developed all kinds of techniques for achieving deep meditation through which the body and mind can be transcended and their true nature can be discovered.

The classical period of yoga is marked by Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. This text is written by Patanjali around the second century. This text standardises yoga, and it consists of 196 sutras.

These sutras explain the eight fold path of yoga. These are:

1. Yama: social restraint or ethical values
2. Niyama: personal observance of purity, tolerance and study
3. Asanas: postures or physical exercise
4. Pranayama: breath control or regulation
5. Pratyahara: or sense withdrawal in preparation of meditation
6. Dharana: concentration
7. Dhyana: meditation
8. Samadhi: superconsciousness

(Saraswati, 1976)

The five yamas are truthfulness, satya; feeling of nonviolence to all things, ahimsa; honesty, asteya; sexual abstinence, bhramacharya; non possessiveness, aparigraha. The niyamas are also five in number and include cleanliness, shaucha; contentment, santosha; austerity, tapah; self study, swadhyaya; and surrender to cosmic will, ishwara pranidhana. The yamas are designed to harmonize one's social interactions and the niyamas are intended to harmonize one's inner feelings. They ( yama and niyama) are intended to reduce friction between one's outer actions and inner attitudes.

Asanas, are defined by Patanjali as a steady and comfortable sitting position. The purpose of the asana in Patanjali yoga is to balance the different nerve impulses, feelings of pain and pleasure, heat and cold and all other opposite impulses.

Pranayama is practiced to concentrate all the forces of the human structure. This leads to control and one-pointedness.

Pratyahara means "to gather inwards" and is the practice concerned with the checking and curbing of the outgoing tendencies of the mind so that awareness can be directed inwards.

Dharana means the concentration of the mind. It is a step before meditation and is concerned with fixing awareness on one object to the exclusion of all others. If the state of pratyahara has been achieved then all outer disturbances should have been eliminated. Various methods can be used to attain this mental one pointedness. These include rituals, chanting, kirtan, prayer and so forth. Patanjali yoga utilizes a psychic symbol as a focal point for internal concentration. It can be the image of one's guru, a deity, a mantra etc. It must however be something that attracts the attention of the individual and must be chosen to suit the inherent nature of the mind and personality. It must be so overwhelming that one's whole being is consumed and absorbed by it. Dharana needs regular and persistent practice and it will spontaneously flow into dhyana.

Dhyana is merely an extension of dharana. It arises when one is able to maintain a smooth, unfluctuating flow of concentration towards the inner symbol for a period of time. This eventually leads to an elimination of duality, the seer, seen and the seeing merge into unity and one's being fuses into the state of Samadhi. Samadhi is the state where there is complete absence of external and internal mental modification; all that remains is awareness. It leads to self realization.

Patanjali believed in philosophical dualism. He conceptualised yoga as a process that brings about the separation of matter (prakriti) and spirit (purusha), thereby restoring the spirit in its absolute purity.

Postclassical yoga refers to all the schools of yoga that have been established after Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Post classical yoga returns to the idea of ultimate unity of everything. The dualism of classical yoga can thus be seen as a brief diversion in the non dualist idea of yoga. It was during the post classical period of yoga that attention was paid to the body. The body was regarded as a temple of the immortal spirit and not just its container. This led to the creation of Hatha yoga, which gives importance to postures in combination with controlled breathing.

The Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 is considered to have brought in the modern age of yoga. It was at this congress that Swami Vivekananda made a lasting impression on the American public. After Swami Vivekananda, the most popular teacher in the Western yoga movement was Pramahansa Yogananda. He established the Self Realization Fellowship. It was during the modern period that Hatha yoga entered the mainstream. Following this, in recent years, yoga has gained immense popularity and has become a health movement and is being used as a therapeutic technique too (De Michiles, 2005).

#### **CONSCIOUSNESS IN YOGA.**

Consciousness in yoga can be conceptualised as William James' idea of consciousness. William James compared consciousness to a stream that was unbroken and continuous. This stream however, goes through constant changes and shifts and Patanjali's yoga sutra states that there are seven states of consciousness or Saptadha prantabhumih pragyana

These seven states are as follows:

1. Awake
2. Sleep
3. Dream
4. Turya:

5. The fifth state is defined as “abiding in mere nonduality, with all distinctin and division extinguished, he is seen as one asleep.”
6. The 6th state is described as where he dwells “without knot”, liberated while living and without conception or ideation.
7. The 7th state is the state of enlightenment, which is the state of liberation without the body

The turya state has been described as a tranquil settlement in the state of liberation and the state of witness in action (Vyas and Vyas, 2009). Vyas and Vyas (2009) note that the state of turya has been explained in the Mandukya Upanishad as

...that which has no parts, soundless, the incomprehensible, beyond all senses, the cessation of all phenomena, all blissful and non dual AUM, is the Fourth, and verily it is the same as Atman. He who knows this, merges his self in the Supreme Self- the individual in the total.

Since there is a distorted sense of self in this state, which is a misrepresentation, this state can be considered as an altered state of consciousness.

The altered state of consciousness or trance state of yoga is that of Samadhi. It is described by the phrase sat-chit-ananda, which translates to truth-consciousness-bliss. This relates to a different realm of experience which is possible to describe only by metaphors and paradoxes (Dalal & Barber, 1970).

According to Patanjali's yoga sutras, Samadhi is the goal of yoga. It can be defined as the pointless point of consciousness beyond which nothing else remains. It is the deepest level of consciousness where even the sense of individuality does not remain. Samadhi has been classified into two different categories namely the sabeeja Samadhi, which means with seed, and the nirbeeja Samadhi which means without seed. Sabeerja is lower state while nirbeeja is a finer state. Sabeerja Samadhi is also characterised by the presence of a symbol in the mind, while in nirbeeja Samadhi the symbol is not present.

Samadhi can also be classified as samprajanta Samadhi and asamprajanta Samadhi. Samprajanta Samadhi is conscious Samadhi. In this the mind remains concentrated on the object of meditation, and consciousness of the object of meditation persists. Mental modifications arise only in the context of this object of meditation. This state of samprjanta Samadhi is of four kinds:

1. Savitarka: the chitta (which refers to individual consciousness, and includes the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind) is concentrated upon a gross object of meditation such as a flame of a lamp, or the tip of the nose, or the image of a deity.
  2. Savichara: the chitta is concentrated upon a subtle object of meditation, such as the tanmantras which is a verse or a word that is repeated in the mind.
  3. Sananda: the chitta is concentrated upon a still subtler object of meditation like the senses.
  4. Sasmita: the chitta is concentrated upon the ego substance with which the self is generally identified.
- These are all a part of sabeeja Samadhi. In Asamprajanta Samadhi the chitta and the object of meditation are fused together and the consciousness of the object of meditation is transcended.

Apart from these there exist other samadhis like nirvitarka Samadhi and dharma megha Samadhi. Nirvitarka Samadhi is a state of Samadhi that is attained when perception is so clear that the subjective projections of the mind are dropped. There is no presence of thought modification. In dharma megha Samadhi the state of meditation is an end in itself and not a means to fulfil some motive. There is pure and holistic awareness. There is infinity of wisdom and the consciousness regains its pure originality.

Trance in both the states is associated with relaxation, disinclination to talk, unreality, misrepresentation, alterations in perception, increased concentration, suspension of normal reality testing, and the temporary nature of the phenomena. Erickson, Hershman & Secter (1961) consider yoga to be a form of hypnosis, while Dalal and Barber (1970), note that there are many similarities between the trance of the hypnotic state and that of yoga. While yogis are credited with performing difficult tasks like walking over burning coal, or being able to lie on nails, individuals under the hypnotic trance are reported to have “heavy weights on their abdomen while lying stretched in midair with supports only at his heads or ankles”.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions:

Broad Research Question: To investigate the phenomenon of trance in yoga.

**Specific Research Question:** To investigate the phenomenon of trance in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and compare it to hypnosis in terms of the altered states of consciousness, and their therapeutic value.

**Sample:**

The sample consists of a text on Patanjali Yoga Sutra: Four Chapters on Freedom by Swami Satyananda. The book is published by the Bihar School of Yoga which is the world's first yoga university. The Bihar School of Yoga was founded by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in the year 1964. The book, Four Chapters on Freedom is a text used for the courses in the university, and is a widely accepted text on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. This is the reason this text is selected for analysis.

**Data Collection:**

The following serve as data for the study

1. The text on Patanjali Yoga Sutra. (Four Chapters on Freedom by Swami Satyananda)
2. Review of Literature: Literature on hypnosis is reviewed to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of hypnosis

The study is conducted in two phases. In the first phase, analysis of the book Four Chapters on Freedom by Swami Satyananda Saraswati is carried out. In the second phase, the concepts obtained through the analysis are compared to the concepts of hypnosis to uncover the parallels between the two.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis is the method of analysis for the first phase of the study.

Following the same process, in the first phase Four Chapters on Freedom by Satyananda Saraswati is read to become familiar with the text. This is followed by an initial coding which leads to the formation of themes. The themes are then reviewed and then defined and named. Through this process meaning units are created which describe and explain each of the phenomena under study. These are then used to form themes which illustrate each of the phenomena.

In the second phase of the study, the themes generated through the thematic analysis of the text are compared with the concepts in hypnosis (obtained through a review of literature) to investigate whether or not there are similarities between the phenomena in Patanjali's yoga sutras and phenomena in hypnosis.

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From the thematic analysis, it was found that there are parallels between the trance state in hypnosis and yoga. These parallels are found in terms of

The induction and deepening of the trance states in hypnosis and that of Samadhi  
The phenomena present in hypnosis and the kinds of siddhis that are obtained through Samadhi  
The therapeutic techniques and the therapeutic process in Patanjali's yoga sutra and hypnosis.

**Similarities in the Induction and Deepening of Trance in Hypnosis and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras**

The yoga sutras of Patanjali not only describe what is meant by Samadhi, they also explain the means of attaining a deeper level of consciousness or trance state, also known as the state of Samadhi.

In the early stages of meditation, or when the practitioner is a beginner then during the process of meditation or dhyana, there is a flight of the imagination. Even though this is delightful and gives pleasure and satisfaction to the meditating mind, Patanjali believes that this has to be set aside to eventually gain Samadhi. There is a branch of meditation called fanciful meditation which is helpful to the beginner as it can make the aspirant capable of going deeper in the state of concentration.

Another important concept in the path of attaining Samadhi is abhyasa, which means to be perfectly fixed in the spiritual effort (the effort here is the practice of chitta vritti nirodha, which refers to the blocking or stopping of the patterns of consciousness). It must be kept in mind though that just practicing something does not make it abhyasa. Abhyasa means continued practice, something that cannot be left at all. The practice has to become internalised. It becomes a part of the personality of the aspirant. The yoga sutras state that the abhyasa of yoga, any kind of yoga, which becomes natural, firmly rooted and complete, leads to Samadhi. It is continued practice that leads to the blocking of vrittis that then eventually leads to Samadhi.

Samadhi is attainable through faith, by courage, memory and a higher form of intelligence. These are the different methods through which an aspirant can attain Samadhi. The speed with which the aspirant will be able to attain Samadhi however depends on intensity of application and urge. It is also found that some people who have not practiced anything are able to reach Samadhi really quickly. This according to the sutras is because at the time of their birth they had traces of their past karma. According to Patanjali they can reach asamprajnata Samadhi without having to practice any preliminary stages of dharana, dhyana, etc.

To practice concentration, Patanjali states that one must concentrate on one object or mantra. The object could be the flame of a candle, or the image or idol of a deity. It could also just involve concentrating in the middle of the eyebrows or at the tip of the nose. If the object is changed too often then the aspirant would suffer from breaking of concentration or other obstacles in the path of concentration. Before the practice of meditation can commence, all the impurities of the mind have to be removed and the mind has to be purified. These impurities include jealousy, hate and the element of competition. These impurities have to be removed not only from the conscious level but also from the deepest parts of the subconscious.

To attain Samadhi, the ways in which the mind can be made pure, controlled and steady have been given by Patanjali. According to the yoga sutras, for the dynamic person karma yoga is best suited, while Bhakti, is more suited for emotional people, raja yoga along with hatha yoga, swara yoga, kriya yoga, nada yoga and tarataka etc for mystic people and jnana yoga for rational people. The mind can also be made steady by partaking in sense perception. Here the mind is made to observe itself in sense, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Mental consciousness is merged into sense consciousness and the mind is brought to deeper levels of consciousness. Samadhi can also be attained through concentrating between the eyebrows and by concentrating on people who have renounced the world. One has to attain samapatti, which means complete acceptance before one can attain Samadhi.

Kriya yoga is a technique that can be practiced with the purpose of developing Samadhi and for thinning out the kleshas. An emotional state of Samadhi called trance is developed through the practice of kriya yoga. This state is completely different from other states as an emotional trance is developed, it is a state of fusion which helps in the removal of kleshas which can help one reach higher states of Samadhi.

Vivekakhyaati, the non fluctuating awareness of the real, takes consciousness through seven stages, each one higher than the previous one. During the process of vivekakhyaati the consciousness goes through different stages of experience. These include the Realisation of what is to be avoided, awareness of the means of the removal, awareness of spiritual evolution, awareness of fulfilment and accomplishment, awareness of the purpose of experience and liberation, awareness of the fulfilment of one's own self.

Samadhi can also be attained through samyama. The state of samayama can be described as one in which there is continued contemplation on any object and as the object becomes clear there is no personal awareness for the time being. This gives rise to higher consciousness of the object of concentration, this results in Samadhi.

The process of attaining the trance state in hypnosis is referred to as the induction process. One of them is the eye fixation method. In the eye fixation method is a type of hypnotic induction method that people associate most with hypnosis. In this method the client is instructed to maintain a fixed gaze on an object. This could be any object, a spot on the wall, the hand of the hypnotist, a finger held in front of the client's eyes, or even, the flame of a lamp (Hunter, 1996). This method is similar to the technique described in the yoga sutras, wherein the aspirant concentrates on an object, internal or external, which could be the image of a deity, a flame, the tip of the nose or even concentrating between the eyebrows to attain Samadhi.

#### **Similarities in the Phenomena of Trance in Hypnosis and Patanjali's Yoga sutras**

The chapter titled vibhooti pada in the yoga sutras is entirely dedicated to the various siddhis or powers that an aspirant is able to develop in his or her quest to attain Samadhi. These include knowledge of the past and future, speech of all beings, knowledge of previous births, knowledge of others' minds, invisibility, ability to disappear, knowledge of one's own death, the power of friendliness, attainment of strength, knowledge of subtle obscure or distant objects, knowledge of the solar system, knowledge of the stars, knowledge of the movement of stars, knowledge of the body, cessation of hunger and thirst, power of steadiness, spiritual vision, intuitive knowledge, intuitive perception, power to enter another's body, levitation, divine hearing, ability to move through space, the body is perceived to be as light as cotton, universal state of mind, perfection of the body, mastery of sense organs, omnipotence and omniscience, awareness of ultimate reality etc.

In the trance of hypnosis, there is a shift in the perception of the external world and the internal environment (Vyas & Vyas, 2009). Some of these changes can be compared to the siddhis described in the Patanjali yoga sutras. Subjective time appears to move slowly and an hour may appear to have been only a few minutes. Memories of remote events of the past are recalled with uncanny accuracy. During hypnosis

the power of selected groups of muscles can be increased which is the same as the attainment of strength. This increase in strength can be maintained after the trance state through the use of post hypnotic suggestion. The body temperature can be made to increase in the trance of hypnosis; this is found in the yoga sutras as well. The action of the organs can be changed, and this is a siddhi too. Hearing is said, can be made more acute in the trance of hypnosis, this is analogous to the siddhi of divine hearing (Vyas & Vyas, 2009). Thus we see that there are indeed similarities in the phenomena of hypnosis with the siddhis described in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras.

#### **Similarities in the Therapeutic Process and Techniques in Hypnosis and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras**

Patanjali yoga sutras try to enable an individual to explore all layers of the mind to bring about self realization. The therapeutic gain achieved by the yoga sutras is that of freedom. Freedom from pain which is due to the attachment that one has for various things, and also due to the differences in perception of neutral events depending on the schemas that one has. There are many techniques given in the yoga sutras that help accomplish the goal of freedom.

Unhappiness, according to Patanjali yoga sutras is the universal problem of mankind. It is explained that the basic tensions of the mind are ignorance of truth, egoism, attachment, aversion and fear of death. The sutras further state that it is the ignorance of reality which is the root cause of all tensions. Reality is never seen in its true form according to the yoga sutras. This is because an individual always projects his or her mental modifications on it. In other words, perception of reality is distorted due to the mental impressions or schemas one has. It are these schemas that make one perceive an event as positive or negative and bestow upon it the power to make one feel pleasure or pain. Once attachment towards things is given up, and one is detached from the external world, consciously and at a subconscious level, then one is able to view reality as it is, and is free from pain.

Hypnosis and hypnotherapy is a paradigmatic phenomenon. It challenges fundamental assumptions of self and reality. An individual's perceptions and beliefs can be overturned through hypnosis and hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy also believes that schemas or cognitive structures regulate psychological functioning or adaptation and give meaning to contextual relationships. Assignment of meaning at the conscious and unconscious level activates behavioural, emotional, and other strategies of adaptation. One of the essential axioms of hypnotherapy is that meanings do not always represent reality but are a construction of a given context or goal and are subject to cognitive distortions. Some individuals are vulnerable to cognitive distortions (Alladin, 2008); this is the same as the mental modifications that influence the perception of reality as explained by the yoga sutras; and the techniques of Patanjali yoga sutra and hypnosis allow access to processes below the threshold of awareness, which helps in the restricting of non conscious cognitions.

Like the techniques described in the yoga sutras for therapeutic benefits, hypnosis too induces relaxation which is effective in reducing anxiety. It also promotes ego strengthening through the repetition of positive suggestions to oneself that get embedded in the unconscious mind. These then exert an automatic influence on feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. This enhances one's self confidence and self worth.

Hypnosis and the techniques of yoga sutras facilitate divergent thinking, it maximises awareness among several levels of brain functioning. They both have a direct impact on focus of attention and concentration (Tosi & Baisden, 1984). They also help in directing attention to wider experiences such as feelings of warmth, feeling happy, feeling of contentment, and general feeling of well being (Alladin, 2008). They serve to expand these experiences in the present, past and future. These facilitate in the reconstruction of dysfunctional realities.

Thus we see that the therapeutic techniques, and the therapeutic gain obtained from hypnosis and Patanjali yoga sutras is similar.

The above discussion highlights there are indeed hypnotic parallels in yoga in regard to the conceptualisation of consciousness and altered state of consciousness, the phenomena in the altered states of consciousness and the therapeutic benefits and the therapy process.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The trance states in yoga and hypnosis are associated with relaxation, disinclination to talk, unreality, misrepresentation, alterations in perception, increased concentration, suspension of normal reality testing, and the temporary nature of the phenomena. Erickson, Hershman & Selter (1961) consider yoga to be a form of hypnosis, while Dalal and Barber (1970), note that there are many similarities between the trance of the hypnotic state and that of yoga. While yogis are credited with performing difficult tasks

like walking over burning coal, or being able to lie on nails, individuals under the hypnotic trance are reported to have “heavy weights on their abdomen while lying stretched in midair with supports only at his heads or ankles”.

This study aimed to find parallels between the trance states of hypnosis and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. The trance states were compared on the understanding of the phenomena of trance, the phenomena of trance, and the therapeutic techniques and benefits of both. The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the study dealt with gaining an understanding of the concept of trance in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, through a thematic analysis of the book *Four Chapters on Freedom* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati. The thematic analysis of the book led to an understanding of the concept of trance in the yoga sutras. In the second phase of the study, these concepts were compared to the concepts of trance in hypnosis (obtained through the literature on hypnosis) to investigate whether or not there exist parallels.

The findings of the study show that there are parallels between the trance in hypnosis and the trance in Patanjali's yoga sutras. These parallels are present in the following areas:

The induction and deepening of the trance states in hypnosis and that of Samadhi  
The phenomena present in hypnosis and the kinds of siddhis that are obtained through Samadhi  
The therapeutic techniques and the therapeutic process in Patanjali's yoga sutra and hypnosis.

These findings show that there are similarities in the two states and it needs to be explored further to incorporate the concepts of yoga in modern therapeutic domain. These concepts can be used not only as preventative measures but as alleviative measures too.

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