

# ‘Pratyahaar’ (A Dialogue with Mind and its Withdrawal) for Mental Health Care in writing of Marathi Spiritual Leaders

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**Abstract.** Practice of keeping mind peaceful is done with the yoga, an ancient practice, where mind can be trained more focused. Ashtang Yoga by Pantajali follows Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahaar, Dharna, Dhyana, Samadhi. Here would like to connect Pratyahaar with mind. Pratyahaar is withdrawal of the senses. Mind can be satisfied with explanations. Psychologists discuss with any aspirant who is starving for peace. Brain is important organ of human body at the same time mind resides somewhere near by it. Human mind is creating main six emotions. Happiness, sadness, fear, humiliation, amaze and anger. These six emotions are responsible to create memories and even experiences. They are direct or indirect reason behind one’s behaviour. It is a natural process when such emotions develop with the response of human body. Many a times because of the nature or tendency and circumstances one suppresses those emotions. When this suppression happens repeatedly one can feel it’s adverse effects on physical and mental health. For that one need to control and manage such emotions. Maharashtra is a rich state for sages or saint Parampara. Spirituality and philosophy explained mainly by Panchratna (five gems) saint Gyaneshwar, saint Namdev, saint Eknath, saint Tukaram and Samarth Ramdas. It is a regular practice in Maharashtrian culture and homes to chant creation of these saints. Mind where emotions and thoughts arise. Verses and teachings by Panchratnas are ways by which one can directly talk and motivate mind. It is just hammering mind to do withdrawal of thoughts and reaching to a state of peace of mind. Where emotions can be managed and controlled without suppressing them. This can turn as an alternative therapy which is walking together with spirituality.

**Keywords.** Pratyahaar, Mind, Ego, Intellect, Mantra, Mental Health, Panchrantas, Marathi Spiritual Leaders

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## Introduction

The mind continuously processes and experiences thoughts consciously and unconsciously. The human mind is creating mainly six emotions. Happiness, sadness, fear, humiliation, amazement and anger. These six emotions are responsible for creating memories and even experiences. They are the direct or indirect reasons behind one's behaviour. It is a natural process when such emotions are developed with the responses of the human body, many a time because of the nature or tendency and circumstances one suppresses those emotions. When this suppression happens repeatedly one can feel its adverse effects on physical and mental health [1]. For that one needs to control and manage such emotions, to make the mind peaceful, it is a practice. Practice is done with yoga, an ancient exercise, where the mind can be trained to be at peace and more focused. Many times, Yoga is considered a physical exercise or making the body free from physical illness or diseases. Though it is doing that as a byproduct. Yoga has the power to manage one's psychology and directly the mind.

## Relationship between Mind, Psychology and Yoga

A person who thinks, reasons, perceives, wills, has ideas and feels is moving with his mind. There are many definitions, like workings of the brain, memory is part of the mind etc. So, the brain can be physical but the mind is something internal. It is not made up of cells and is considered hypothetical. As it cannot be seen or touched though, it is a process. The mind is the primary domain of psychology. From rectifying problematic thought patterns to, uncovering the workings of memory, mental illness and emotions psychology is heavily involved in the analysis of the mind. For ages, philosophers and spiritual Gurus were the primary people studying the mind, but the philosophy of mind has now become the domain of psychology. Cognitive psychologists and neuropsychologists in particular are interested in how brain state affects the state of mind.

Psychology is the study of the mind and behaviour. It encompasses the biological influ-

ences, social pressures and environmental factors that affect how people think, act and feel. The mind has been a subject of debate for ages. Philosopher Rene Descartes first developed the concept of dualism—a dichotomy between the mind and body or mind and matter—that has posed challenges to philosophers, physiologists and psychologists [2].

Sage Patanjali said yoga is witnessing the modification of the mind. That is a mindful practice. Mindfulness is not concentration it can be said of a meditation. Meditation is also a practice. That means the mind is something which needs to be stopped to enter the world of Yoga. Steps of Ashtang Yoga given by Sage Pantajali which we follow are *Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahaar, Dharna, Dhyana, Samadhi*. Here would like to connect Pratyahaar with the mind. The literal meaning of Pratyahaar is withdrawal. Withdrawal from worldly desires and thoughts. It is necessary to practice withdrawal and regulation of the processing of thoughts to make the mind at peace. And this will be ultimately an upliftment of psychology. These three tools go hand in hand like the peace of mind indicates healthy psychology. Attaining peace of mind with Yoga. So, these three are interrelated and they do processing inside.

### *Pratyahaar and Mind*

*Pratyahaar* is the gateway to meditation or yoga. Once the seeker enters the stage of *Pratyahaar*, the rest of the components of yoga - *Asana, Pranayam, Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi* - are unfolded automatically in due course. That is why *Pratyahaar* is considered to be the point of entry into meditation or yoga. Of course, the practice of *Pratyahaar* of *Indriya Nigraha* (control of the sense organs) is not easy and does not come quickly. One has to strive hard for many years to master that stage and attain complete control over the senses. It is only after achieving mastery over the sense organs that one can hope to practice *manonigraha* (control of the mind), which is achieved through *Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi*. These three are also known as *Sayama* (restraint). *Pratyahaar's* primary importance lies in withdrawal from or control of sensory im-

pressions, which frees the mind to move within [3].

Swami Kripalvanand Ji said in his book Science of meditation the mind is not so simple and sane as to be easily absorbed into any single object or thought that is desired by the seeker. It remains involved in sense objects through the sense organs. So, until it is weaned away from these, it can never be brought under control and made steady. Therefore, experienced yogis found out that practice *indriya nigraha* and *manonigraha*. During the process of *Pratyahaar*, the introversion of the mind is generated because the perceptive senses have become introverted. When a particular perceptive sense becomes an introvert, the opening of the sense organ corresponding to it closes automatically.

During the *Pratyahaar* of *Sabda* (hearing), the openings of the ears are closed automatically. Similarly, during the *Pratyahaar* of *sparsa* (touch or feeling), *rupa* (sight), *rasa* (taste) and *gandha* (smell) the openings of the skin, eyes, tongue and nose, respectively are closed. During spontaneous meditation, *Pratyahaar* of the different senses may occur separately or in combination. The process of *Pratyahaar* sets in automatically and the mind, having become introverted, begins to withdraw from the senses and thoughts [4].

## Approach of the study

It is also said: "The mind is the master of the senses and the vital air Prana is the master of the mind. The vital air, in turn, is controlled by Laya (absorption), which is dependent on *nada* (subtle spontaneous sound)."

Many mental health professionals acknowledge that there are layers of consciousness to the mind and are interested in accessing the deeper workings of the mind. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, for example, focused heavily on the unconscious mind and how it influences the conscious ego.

Mantra yoga is one of the techniques to practice *Pratyahaar*. Mantra Yoga can help in restraint or *Sanyam* of mind and indirectly thoughts. Practising Mantra chanting can be helpful in the withdrawal of thoughts. It can ease

the processing of thoughts. Our spiritual guide or Gurus asks us to focus on words of *Mantra* which distract towards the thought process to achieve a zero-thought state [5].

There are many Mantras which can be chanted for the same. Here, discussed by Marathi Saints for social upliftment. Withdrawal of ill thoughts creates an impact on the body and mind. These verses are with very simple language and great philosophy. These saints explained every phase of life in verses. May it be the state of the foetus, ill thoughts, worries about the physical body, jealousy, ego, universe, ignorance, ultimate happiness, Guru and God. Withdrawal of thoughts indicates that one has to solve problems on his own. As problems are illusions, we create them from the processing of thoughts and the mind. Psychologists and spiritual Gurus explained the mind as a creature that is working continuously and an intelligent device of the body that will channel psychology. Deviate that processing of thoughts with *Viveka* (discrimination) and *vairagya* (non-attachment) will be helpful in one's psychological upliftment.

With Mantra Chanting one can achieve success in psychology and in addition to its withdrawal of ill-conceived thoughts will enhance yogic powers too [6].

It advises ethical behaviour and love for God. Emphasising the manuscript's power that it works on the mind or psychology to streamline the processing of thoughts. These Panchratnas are emphasizing on mind with *Pratyahaar*. It is like hammering the same thing again and again into the mind to manage psychology.

Talking with the mind is *Mano Bodh* or A dialogue with the Mind. Emphasizing the mind about the righteous path every time will surely turn it into the same must be the mission of our Gurus. It is the tendency and behavioural aspect of humans to forget what has been taught. That is why practising, again and again, is necessary. It is just like cleaning a workplace every day to make it hygienic to live. The whole day one will make the house so shabby and clumsy but at the end of the day, one needs to make it clean and clear. The job mantra chanting is doing cleaning and clearing the unwanted from

the thought channel. For this, our Gurus decided to directly target the mind and ask to do *Pratyahaar* which is withdrawal. These verses are direct help to mind for learning restraint. Restraint of thoughts will be affecting psychology. These all-spiritual masters or Gurus were philosophers, poets, writers and saints so with the conservative way of verses they played with mind and thoughts for the elevation of one's psychology.

## 'Pratyahaar' in writings of Panchrantras – Five Marathi Spiritual Leaders saint Gyaneshwar Maharaj

Our minds are normally so agitated with different kinds of thoughts but when we chant Lord's name incessantly all our thoughts concentrate on one subject God and His attributes! We find great peace and love. The quality of our thoughts improves due to constant awareness of God. God is one by knowing whom everything is known.

Gyaneshwari is a commentary on Geeta by saint Gyaneshwar for people to understand easily. Gyaneshwar Maharaj made it so easy with beautiful words to understand the saying of Geeta. So, it is Gyaneshwari Geeta. Gyaneshwar Maharaj says about anger and desires a little poison can spread in the whole body and destroy life. A little desire for the objects of the senses in the mind is also ruinous because it unsettles discrimination (Viveka). Even an ascetic will have the feeling of affection if he remembers objects of senses in his mind. The essential characteristic of intelligence purity, then, is that the mind is directed toward the true form (of Self), and intelligence serves no other purpose.

ए-हवीं विरक्ति जयांसि नाही । जे अभ्यासीं न रिघती कहीं । तयां नाकळे हें आम्हीही । न मनुं कायी ॥ ४२१ ॥ परि यम-नियमांचिया वाटा न वचिजे । कहीं वैराग्याची से न करिजे । केवळ विषयजळीं ठाकिजे । बुडी देउनी ॥ ४२२ ॥ यया जालिया मानसा कहीं । युक्तीची कांबी लागली नाही । तरी निश्चळ होईल काई । कैसेनि सांगें ? ॥ ४२३ ॥ म्हणौनि मनाचा निग्रहो होये । ऐसा उपाय जो आहे । तो आरंभीं मग नोहे । कैसा पाहों ॥ ४२४ ॥ तरी योगसाधन जितुके । कें अवघेचि काय लटिकें ? । परि आपण्यां अभ्यासूं न ठाके । हेंचि म्हण ॥

४२५ ॥ आंगीं योगाचें होय बळ । तरी मन केतुलें चपळ ? । काय महदादि हें सकळ । आपु नोहे ? ॥ ४२६ ॥ [7].

In chapter 6 (Atmasyanam yog) of Gyaneshwari Maharaj is explaining in verses 421 to 426 everyone knows it is difficult to turn mind and thoughts to the direction of learning. Turning mind to *Yam* and *Niyam* bringing it out of comfort is necessary. *Manonigrah* restraint or withdrawal has to be started. Yoga has the power to transform one's thought process. Thoughts and mind are so restless they move in all direction. Practicing yoga will be tool to control on mind. Once a man understands the sweetness of *Pratyahara*, will be thirsty for it again and again. The mind moves in hundred directions when needed to be focused on one thing. Gyaneshwar Maharaj is explaining mind and thoughts when diffuses in all direction, one needs to fight against self to gather it at one place. Which is difficult but not impossible. It needs practice of yoga and the taste of happiness only once. Human is so greedy to get things again and again. So *manonigrah* restraint of mind and thoughts will be a habit to acquire supreme happiness.

[subsection\*Saint Naamdev saint Naamdev says mind is as we direct it. It only listens to owner. One himself leads, mind to the directions. That means controlling mind, thoughts and emotions is possible. For mental stability one has to work with it. अमृताहुनि गोड नाम तुझे देवा । मन माझे केशवा कां बा नेघे ॥१॥

saint Naamdev is explaining in this verse that worshipping God is sweet than nectar then why human is not chanting me. Chanting God name will make him stable and calm.

सांग पंढरिराया काय करुं यासी । कां रूप ध्यानासि नये तुझे ॥२॥ किरतीं बैसतां निद्रे नागविलें । मन माझे गुंतलें विषयसुखा ॥३॥

One is sitting at holy place but thinking of sense gratifications and worldly desires. Focus of mind is not with God. God is not elsewhere he is inside. So, finding and accompanying with God must be one's desire of life [8].

## Saint Eknath

अवघे गडी एकवटोनी जाऊं दे या रे । बहु कष्टे फेरे फिर-तां मन तेथें लावा रे ॥२॥ मोकळें तें मन ठेविलें बांधोनी ।

जनार्दनचरणीं सर्वभावे ॥१॥ विठोबा विठोबा नामाचा हा छंद । मन तें उद्धबोध जडी पार्यी ॥२॥ saint Eknath also discussing mind and thoughts to be engrossed not in sorrows but happiness. Mind and emotions are running in all directions to tie it and keeping it in Guru or God's feet is the real karma and knowledge. This will be true happiness which everyone needs. Mind should chant Vithoba (Krishna) for the supreme happiness. saint Eknath also saying mind should play this as a game of chanting. Mind will be surely relaxing at God's feet. That is a process of surrender [9].

### Saint Tukaraam

As we discussed brain is important organ of human body and with brain mind is also one of the most discussed subjects for psychologist. In seventeenth century, saint Tukaraam also commented on mind. A little continuation with this thread will be like he says

सुख पाहता जवापाडे । दुःख पर्वता एवढे ॥ He is explaining in this verse as human always feel sorrows like a huge mountain but at the same time when happiness is around it feels like a very small flaxseed. In the current context it is like one need to understand the journey of sorrows and happiness. These will go and come in a cycle. So, one need to just overcome it with the flow. Human can survive in both situations once the approach and attitude towards it and move on.

आनंदाचे डोही आनंद तरंग । आनंदचि अंग आनंदाचे ॥ Here also Saint Tukaraam is giving a deep thought to manage emotions. He is describing as human is himself is happiness. So, search happiness inside instead of outside. Things which are happening according to one's wish then that happiness to be carried out by human for long time. To stay in that is true happiness. If a man is in true happiness with himself then difficult times or sorrows will not even touch and distract him. So, journey from outside to inside is eternal happiness.

निंदा द्वेष घात विश्वासीं व्यभिचार । आणिक सांगो किती काय ॥ saint Tukaraam is saying if anger or jealousy stays for long in human mind will not only affects physical health but mental health. Anger is like a volcano which can destroy one and others at the same time. So, when this situation

arises one need to focus on the good things in life.

मेघ पडो भीती । पिकें सांडियेली क्षिती ॥ Mental health deteriorates with one major factor that is fear. Thing which is not having surety of its time of happening or it will never happen humans are frightened of it. With such fear one will miss the living in present. One will carry that fear with him for long. Human life is precious and doing karmas with assertion. One who is born will end someday this understanding will vanishes fear.

ज्याचा संग चिर्ती । तुका म्हणे तो त्या याती ॥ One who is always engrossed in jealousy or humiliation will become selfish and narrow in thoughts. This negativity of jealousy becomes hurdle for productivity. At the same time, one will be unable to judge self-potential. World is so big that one cannot achieve all in single life.

In this journey one need to working on self continuously is needed. One who is worshipping God or Guru when behaves immoral it is amazed feeling. While watching immoral people around creates a stress or unbelievable feelings. saint Tukaraam is explaining emotion surprise or amaze here. Which may create stress for mental health. Having a safe distance with such people will subside that feeling [10].

### Samarth Ramdas Swami

Samarth Ramdas Swami teaches us how our mind is our friend, our enemy, and how it can be our Guru. 'Manache Shlok' or A dialogue with mind is focused on our own internal dialogue, with ourselves, with our mind, so wherever there are references of God, it will still apply to every human being, irrespective of religions and beliefs about God.

1st verse of 'Manache Shlok' is गणाधीश जो ईश सर्वा गुणांचा । मुळारंभ आरंभ तो निर्गुणाचा । नमूं शारदा मूळ चत्वार वाचा । गमू पंथ आनंत या राघवाचा ॥ १ ॥ Here Ramdas Swami is worshipping Lord Ganesha of all good qualities and innate tendencies. Ganesha is origin of all of the universe and the divine energy. Swami Ramdas praying Saraswati who is goddess of knowledge, language, music, art, wisdom and learning. In very first verse Ramdaas Swami wrote word चत्वार वाचा. Sanskrit writer Sage Bharthari explained the four types

of speech in *Vākyapadīya*. They are *Vaikhari*, *Madhyamā*, *Pashyanti* and *Parā*. *Vaikhari* is external speech or language, *Madhyama* represents thinking level of mind, *Pashyanti* is the finest relative level where there is no distinction between the word and the meaning. *Parā* is the fully unmanifest level of language beyond *Pashyanti*. Ramdas swami is explaining while worshipping God Para state can be acquired where mind will be thoughtless. During the process of *Pratyahaar* sublimation starts and path goes towards from *Sabij Samadhi* to *Nirbij Samadhi* where processing of thoughts zero. This is the complete path of Yoga where one visualizes different colours of meditation on the divine light. This is one's equilibrium of psychology.

प्रभाते मनी राम चिंतीत जावा | पुढे वैखरी राम आधी वदावा | सदाचार हा थोर सांडू नये तो जर्नी तोची तो मानवी धन्य होतो ||३|| One more pearl from the treasure of Samarth Ramdaas. Verse Number 3 which is also explaining that utter word Rama from mouth. *Vaikhari* with the external speech take name of Lord Rama and inside also worship him. When this internal and external speech matches there a human can be human with righteous behaviour. And that must be goal of each one in life. Once internal *Jaap* or chanting is done outer behavioural traits automatically gets streamlined. Though again this is a task which reaches to perfection with practice and perseverance.

मना वासना दुष्ट कामा न ये रे | मना सर्वथा पापबुद्धी नको रे | मना सर्वथा नीती सोडू नको हो मना अंतरी सार वीचार राहो ||४||

Here in fourth verse also Swami Ramdas explaining to mind that stay away from desires, ill thoughts and stay with ethics which should have given a thought. Behaving with observance of actions comes out with the thinking right and with balance [11].

## Interpretations

Padma Bhushan David Frawley explained *Pratyahaar* as it strengthens the mind's powers of immunity. There are four main forms of *Pratyahaar*: *indriya-Pratyahaar* control of the senses; *karma-Pratyahaar*—control of action;

*prana-Pratyahaar*—control of *prana*; and *mano-Pratyahaar*—withdrawal of mind from the senses [12].

Struggle enters in life and create unfavourable circumstances. These verses are finding way in unfavourable conditions. It is a regular practice in Maharashtrian culture and homes to chant creation of reading Gyaneshwari, verses of saint Tukaram, saint Eknath and saint Naamdev. 'Manache Shlok' by Samarth Ramdas which teaches withdrawal of mind. There are verses which tells us about handling mind who is full of thoughts and emotions. It has a rhythm which makes it more interesting. It has solutions for challenges in life. It is necessary to keep mind in peace to move ahead in life. Struggles of life seems cruel but at the same time they teach us. They provide opportunity to access our potential. Loving self is the first task and taking care of necessary thoughts instead of unnecessary thoughts. These verses are motivational that it turns into self-motivation. To strike repeatedly efforts of verses will deviate one's mind from irresolution to resolutions.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Psychology says the mind is the sixth sense organ. Wherever we place our attention on one action, we naturally overlook other actions. The mind coordinates the actions of the body, for example, whatever the eyes see movements of the hand do actions. In a way, we are always practising *Pratyahaar*. The mind's attention is limited and we give attention to one action by withdrawing the mind from other action.

According to the Yoga Sutra, "When the senses do not conform with their objects but imitate the nature of the mind, that is *Pratyahaar*." More specifically, it is *mano-Pratyahaar*—withdrawing the senses from actions and directing them inward to the nature of the mind, which is formless and is a process. Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutra* notes that the mind is like the queen bee and the senses are like worker bees. Wherever the queen bee goes all the other bees must follow. Ayurveda says a subtle part of the food we take in becomes the mind, therefore, do have control over this intake as that which is ex-

ternal coming into the body becomes the mind. That external is not only food but also thoughts which are coming inside. A person has to withdraw from the unnecessary thoughts coming inside and tell the mind to reflect them externally not to absorb them internally.

Gyaneshwar Maharaj prepared his followers with rapturous appreciation and eloquence to renew minds do discover self-knowledge. Which automatically gives steadfastness of mind. Gyaneshwar Maharaj's words comfort the mind and the sweetness of confidence arises. These prayers shine like a beacon in one's mind. Gyaneshwar Maharaj says the true mark of teachings - the purity of intelligence is, that the mind is directed towards the true form (of Self) and the intelligence has no other purpose except this [13].

Saint Eknaath and Ssaint Naamdev explain that controlling emotions and the mind will be a smooth task with the help of surrender to God. Talking with the mind and continuing the process of living is another way toward the journey of *Pratyahaar*. Withdrawal from thoughts and putting them in supreme power will deviate one from thinking of pain and sorrows. The journey of living can be easy and smooth because of surrender and working for peace with mind and thoughts. Engrossing the mind with a way towards peace will lead one to peace surely.

Saint Tukaram discusses the mind with controlling emotions. Feeling which gives happiness to be stretched for a long. Sorrows should not stick to mental health. Anger is fire so stay away from it. So, he is also explaining *Pratyahaar* which is withdrawal from such emotions from incidences. Unnecessary fear and jealousy or humiliation should not have a place. The moment it comes should go immediately and keeping mind stress-free is the first responsibility. Management and control of emotions involve the process of ignorance or withdrawal from emotions. It will be fruitful for a better version of the life. It is the process of making precious life beautiful.

'*Manache Shlok*' is doing the same *Pratyahaar* or *Mano Pratyahaar*. *Mano-Pratyahaar* is less about controlling the senses than about

controlling the mind, for when the mind is controlled, the senses are automatically controlled. We can practice '*Manache Shlok*' by consciously withdrawing our attention from unnecessary thinking and actions. It is exactly like making the mind a friend. A friend who will not only guide help, and cares but hold one's hand and walk with towards the destination. This can be the highest form of *Pratyahaar* and the most difficult but at the same time will give proficiency in controlling the senses and ultimately Prana too. Chanting '*Manache Shlok*' may seem a more practical method of *Pratyahaar*. This practical method will easily overcome a weak mind and ultimately open toward healthy psychology.

Mind in Yoga and psychology plays a very important role. One can get beauty and brain from ancestors but handling the mind is one's process. We can say this as a fitness mantra. Physical exercises are attached to the Asana limb of Ashtang Yoga in the same way *Pratyahaar* is for mental health. *Pratyahaar* is a guard of the castle of *Rajyoga*. *Rajyoga is Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi*. Every human wishes not to be dependent on anyone physically. Here we are considering the same for mental health. One's mental health dependency is also not suggested. So, handling and taking care of mental health and upliftment from psychological hurdles is own responsibility. These chanting practices give closeness to God the supreme happiness. *Samipyra* means nearness to God. One living just by the side of the Ruler of the country. The mind will say 'I am so near the Palace of the King; He is here only!' This is *Samipyra*, closeness. Our scriptures and sacred writings by saints and spiritual Gurus teach us withdrawal of mind and attaching it to the supreme which will lead to ultimate happiness. The journey towards ultimate happiness is the upliftment of mental status. It implies to mental health and caring for mental health which is one's duty towards life.

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