

The Journey from Vyutthana to Ekagra: A Psychological Conceptual Study from the Lens of Patanjali Yogasutra and Bhagwatgeeta

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ABSTRACT

Modern cognitive landscapes are structurally defined by hyper-stimulation and unprecedented attentional fragmentation, rendering the human psyche perpetually vulnerable to chronic cognitive distraction. This white paper establishes an integrative psychological paradigm by synthesizing classical Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Specifically, Maharshi Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the existential framework of the Bhagavad Gita with contemporary Western psychological frameworks, primarily the Five-Factor Model (OCEAN) and the Cognitive-Affective Processing Systems (CAPS) approach. The conceptual baseline investigates the systematic behavioral and cognitive transformation from Vyutthana (the emergent, un-restrained, and scattered mode of consciousness) to Ekagra (the integrated, one-pointed state of sustained mental focus). By utilizing structural models like the Body-Mind-Intellect (BMI) matrix and mapping the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga in Bloom's educational domains, this paper delineates the neuro-psychological underpinnings of mental mastery. Additionally, empirical survey data from 57 respondents provides a statistical foundation for cross-framework mapping, confirming that high Conscientiousness acts as the functional engine for sustained yogic effort (Abhyasa), while High neuroticism serves as the primary modern manifestation of Vyutthana. This synthesis delivers an actionable, evidence-supported framework for therapeutic interventions targeting modern attentional impairments, anxiety, and self-regulatory deficits, demonstrating that Ancient meditative technologies are highly relevant, systematic methodologies for cognitive optimization and emotional resilience.

Keywords: cognitive; landscapes; structurally; hyper-stimulation; unprecedented

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary global society, the proliferation of digital platforms and the expansion of the "attention economy" have induced chronic cognitive fragmentation. While modern operational paradigms reward multitasking, this practice frequently leaves individuals internally fractured, emotionally volatile, and caught in a cycle of persistent discontent. Within classical Indian

psychology, this uncultivated, highly reactive state of mind is termed Vyutthana—a fragmented condition characterized by turbulent fluctuations in thought, external sensory dependency, and an absence of voluntary cognitive control. Conversely, the pinnacle of cognitive integration is defined as Ekagra, a state of stable, one-pointed focus and unified consciousness.

The journey from Vyutthana to Ekagra forms the core operational objective of classical yogic psychology, transforming the mind from an uncontrolled, outward-facing mechanism of reaction into an optimized, inward-facing instrument of self-mastery.

This white paper explores this transition through a conceptual framework that positions classical yogic text as sophisticated systems of Applied Psychology rather than merely spiritual or physical frameworks. By evaluating the structural mechanics of the mind-field (Chitta), its inherent modifications (Vrittis), and its primary afflictions (Kleshas), we bridge ancient metaphysical models with modern clinical theories. Specifically, this analysis highlights structural parallels between Yogic thought, the Cognitive-Affective Processing Systems (CAPS) approach,

and the Five-Factor (OCEAN) personality spectrum. To provide clinical validation, this paper addresses how these interventions apply to modern pathologies such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and generalized anxiety, transforming internal distress into stable psychological functioning.

The Classical Architecture of Mind: Patanjali's Chitta Bhumis and Guna Dynamics Maharshi Patanjali provides a systematic categorization of mental states through the concept of the Chitta Bhumis (planes or fields of the mind). The mind-field (Chitta) is not a static entity but an ever-flowing energy complex fundamentally composed of the three primordial qualities of nature (Gunas): Sattva (clarity, balance, and peace), Rajas (hyperactivity, passion, and agitation), and Tamas (inertia, delusion, and mental fog).

The relative dominance of these Gunas dictates which of the five distinct Chitta Bhumis is active at any given moment. The first three states collectively define the Vyutthana condition: Mudha, where Tamas reigns supreme, manifesting as lethargy, poor judgment, and impaired discrimination; Kshipta, where Rajas drives relentless restlessness, pulling the senses chaotically from one sensory object to the next; and Vikshipta, where Sattva begins to emerge spontaneously, yielding sporadic flashes of concentration that remain unstable and easily disrupted by returning loops of Rajas or Tamas.

The formal practice of authentic Yoga begins exclusively when the mind transitions into the final two states: Ekagra and Niruddha. In the Ekagra plane, pure Sattva subdues the agitations of Rajas and the inertia of Tamas, enabling the mind to withdraw completely from external multiplicity and focus intensely on a single point of reference. This one-pointed state activates truth-bearing wisdom (Ritambhara Pragna), which systematically burns away latent impressions and weakens psychological afflictions. The final plane, Niruddha, represents the complete, conscious restraint of all mental modifications (Nirodha). Here, the mind transcends the three Gunas entirely, entering a state of absolute stillness where the true consciousness rests in its pristine, unconditioned nature.

The Subconscious Underpinnings: Samskaras, Vasanas, and the Cycle of Habituation To understand the mechanics of the transition to focus, one must analyze the subconscious framework of Samskaras (subliminal activators or latent impressions). Yogic psychology models the psyche as a cyclical, self-reinforcing loop: every active thought or mental modification (Vritti) generates an energetic residue or Samskara within the deep storehouse of the mind (Karmashaya). When triggered by internal or

external stimuli, these stored impressions bubble back up to the surface, manifesting as recurring thoughts and compulsive behaviors. When multiple identical Samskaras cluster together over time, they form a Vasana, an entrenched subconscious disposition or behavioral "fragrance" that shapes an individual's fundamental character and dictates how they interpret reality.

The uncultivated mind is dominated by Vyutthana-Samskaras, which are driven by the five core psychological afflictions (Kleshas): basic misconception (Avidya), egoistic over-identification (Asmita), compulsive attachment to pleasure (Raga), instinctual aversion to pain (Dvesha), and the primal fear of survival or death (Abhinivesha). These afflictions lock the mind into outward-facing patterns of craving and resistance. Moving toward Ekagra requires the deliberate cultivation of opposing Nirodha-Samskaras through consistent effort (Abhyasa) and conscious non-attachment (Vairagya). This process introduces a psychological counterweight that gradually weakens, interrupts, and neutralizes the deeply etched behavioral grooves of the old, distracting impressions.

The Existential Crisis and Refinement: The Lens of the Bhagavad Gita

While Patanjali provides the technical blueprint for concentration, the Bhagavad Gita models the experiential and existential application of this journey through the psychological transformation of Arjuna. In the opening chapter, Arjuna exhibits a classic acute manifestation of the Vyutthana state, experiencing a total collapse of cognitive clarity, sensory stability, and physical willpower when confronted with duty.

Arjuna's symptoms map directly across multiple diagnostic levels:

Physical trembling, a parched throat representing an extreme sympathetic stress response, a reeling mind unable to stand, and cognitive dissonance born of over-identifying with personal relationships rather than ethical duty (Dharma). Arjuna's mind oscillates between the delusion of Tamas and the frantic, catastrophic projections of Rajas.

Across its eighteen chapters, the Gita serves as a progressive psychological intervention. Lord Krishna guides Arjuna through a linear route of refinement: moving from the paralyzed inertia of Tamas into active, desire-driven engagement (Rajas), and subsequently redirecting that active energy toward selfless, unattached action (Karma Yoga), which anchors the mind in Sattva. The text highlights that equanimity (Samatvam) is not a rigid state but a dynamic balance achieved by finding a middle path in lifestyle, diet, and rest. This path is supported by steady determination (Sattvic Dhriti), which

regulates the mind and life force to stay focused on the goal.

Ultimately, Arjuna reaches the state of resolved confusion (Nasto Mohah), where his cognitive conflict is resolved, his awareness is restored, and his intellect is ready to act as a focused instrument of higher purpose.

Integrating Modern Psychological Frameworks: CAPS, OCEAN, and Neuro- Psychology

This ancient system resonates profoundly with contemporary cognitive and trait theories. The Cognitive-Affective Processing Systems (CAPS) model explains personality as a stable network of "Cognitive-Affective Units" (CAUs) that dictate "if... then..." behavioral profiles based on situational cues. In a high-distraction or high-rejection-sensitivity state, an individual's CAUs are organized around anxious expectations and reactive behavioral feedback loops functionally identical to the operations of Vyutthana-Samskaras. Yogic interventions restructure this processing network by strengthening cognitive self-regulation, ensuring that the internal system favors thoughtful observation over immediate, instinctual emotionality. Furthermore, mapping the Chitta Bhumis onto the Five-Factor Model (OCEAN) provides clear conceptual alignments. The distracted state of Vyutthana correlates directly with high Neuroticism (characterized by emotional volatility and anxious withdrawal), high Extraversion (seeking constant external stimulation), and low Conscientiousness (yielding deficient impulse control and disorganized focus).

Conversely, the Ekagra state maps to high Conscientiousness (exemplified by orderliness, dependability, and sustained effort), low Neuroticism (emotional stability), and high Openness to Experience, specifically the facet of deep experiential absorption. Modern neuroscience provides biological validation for this shift in attention networks. The uncultivated mind frequently over-activates the Default Mode Network (DMN), the neural pathway responsible for self-referential thought, mind-wandering, past rumination, and anxiety. The transition to Ekagra requires the deliberate deactivation of the DMN and the concurrent engagement of the Task Positive Network (TPN), the brain's mission control center for goal-directed tasks. This neural shift minimizes "mental noise" and mitigates the "attentional blink," the cognitive lag where processing a rapid sequence of stimuli causes subsequent targets to be missed. Yogic concentration trains the brain to allocate fewer resources to initial distractions, preserving cognitive bandwidth for ongoing tasks.

Empirical Evidence and Structural Domain Mapping: The dissertation incorporates an empirical survey of 57

adult participants evaluated via a standardized quantitative assessment based on the OCEAN model. The data analysis revealed significant cross-framework correlations that substantiate the theoretical integration of modern trait theory with yogic psychology. The cohort demonstrated a dominant average score in Conscientiousness (3.60 out of 5.00), which serves as the empirical foundation for yogic discipline. In the language of Patanjali, this elevated baseline represents a strong capacity for persistent effort (Abhyasa), the organized, reliable, and goal-directed temperament required to build structural neural pathways for concentration.

In contrast, the cohort's baseline for modern Vyutthana was represented by an overall Neuroticism score of 3.31, with distinct demographic variations, revealing that female Respondents scored higher on the anxiety and impulsivity facets (3.52), while male respondents demonstrated a lower, more emotionally stable baseline (2.81). This variance suggests that modern mental scattering is heavily fueled by emotional reactivity and volatile thought fluctuations rather than a simple lack of cognitive capacity. Additionally, high average scores in 3Agreeableness (3.52) reflect an enhanced capacity for interpersonal harmony. This aligns directly with Patanjali's core instruction on social purification (Sutra 1.33: Chittaprasadana), demonstrating that cultivating prosocial attitudes like friendliness and compassion significantly reduces social friction and lowers the external environmental noise that typically de-centers the mind.

This progressive transformation can be systematically mapped by evaluating how the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga align with the educational learning domains of Bloom's Taxonomy. The initial ethical disciplines (Yamas and Niyamas) map directly to the foundational levels of the Affective Domain, moving the individual from simply receiving values to fully internalizing them into a stable ethical character. The physical postures (Asana) and breath control (Pranayama) map to the Psychomotor Domain, coordinating neuromuscular pathways and establishing physiological regulation. The sensory withdrawal stage (Pratyahara) acts as a critical transitional phase, shifting focus from external sensory input to internal cognitive processing.

Finally, the internal meditative states of concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana), and absorption (Samadhi) ascend through the Cognitive Domain. This trajectory moves from the active application and analysis of a single chosen object, through metacognitive evaluation, and ultimately culminates in cognitive transcendence.³³³³³³ the complete structural transformation of consciousness.

Patanjali's Therapeutic Solutions and Clinical Applications:

In the Samadhi Pada, Patanjali delineates an explicit sequence of stabilization techniques (Sutras 1.32 to 1.39) that offer a sophisticated mixture of top-down cognitive and bottom-up sensory interventions.

तत्प्रतिषेधार्थमेकतत्त्वाभ्यासः ॥ ३२ ॥ Sutra 1.32 establishes the baseline remedy of focusing intently on a single entity (Eka-tattva-abhyasa) to train attentional control.

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां भावनातः चित्तप्रसादनम् ॥ ३३ ॥ Sutra 1.33 introduces the Chittaprasadana protocol, an emotional reconditioning framework that targets social reactivity by prescribing four specific interpersonal attitudes: friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the suffering, delight in the virtuous, and non-judgmental equanimity toward the difficult. Together, these practices provide cognitive and affective stability, preparing the psychological soil for deep focus.

विषयवती वा प्रवृत्तिरुत्पन्ना मनसः स्थितिनिबन्धनी ॥ ३५ ॥ Sutra 1.35 introduces a bottom-up sensory anchoring technique, stating that focusing the attention on subtle internal sensations establishes mental stability. Traditional practices, such as concentrating on the olfactory centers or the palate, stimulate specific neural pathways, enhancing interoceptive awareness and shifting the nervous system toward parasympathetic dominance.

विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती ॥ ३६ ॥ Sutra 1.36 utilizes top-down affective regulation by directing the practitioner to visualize an inner, sorrowless, radiant light (Visoka va jyotismati) within the heart space. This technique creates an internal emotional safe space that counteracts depressive states and anxiety loops, mirroring modern imagery therapies.

वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम् ॥ ३७ ॥ Sutra 1.37 applies social learning theory by directing the mind to contemplate the consciousness of an unattached role model (Vitaraga visayam vacittam), providing a stable psychological template that helps reduce ego-centric anxiety.

Patanjali concludes this sequence with Sutra 1.39, यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा ॥ ३९ ॥ which permits meditation on any uplifting object or concept to which the practitioner has a natural predisposition (Yathabhimata dhyanaat va). This provides radical therapeutic autonomy, ensuring that focus is developed without internal conflict or resistance.

This classical sequence provides an integrative clinical protocol when systematically combined with contemporary Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). This integrated framework (Y-CBT) maps the yogic concept of discrimination (Viveka) to real-time cognitive monitoring,

allowing patients to catch automatic negative thoughts as they arise. The core afflictions (Kleshas) are utilized to categorize the root causes of psychological bias, while the classical practice of cultivating the opposite thought (Pratipaksha Bhavana) serves as a proactive method for cognitive restructuring. This cognitive work is supported by breath regulation (Pranayama) to down-regulate the autonomic nervous system stress, and consistent practice (Abhyasa) to strengthen adaptive neural pathways. Clinical studies substantiate that this multi-layered approach extends attention spans and enhances emotional regulation, providing an effective adjunctive treatment for complex anxiety, trauma-related disorders, and executive function deficits.

CONCLUSION

The transition from Vyutthana to Ekagra is a comprehensive psychological metamorphosis that restructures how an individual experiences reality. This white paper demonstrates that the chronic distraction and emotional reactivity characteristic of the modern Vyutthana mind are not fixed deficits, but conditioned behavioral patterns that can be systematically regulated. By synthesizing the rigorous methodology of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras with the existential insights of the Bhagavad Gita, this study delivers a sophisticated model of applied psychology. This framework proves that achieving emotional stability and sustaining high cognitive focus are deeply interdependent processes requiring simultaneous engagement at the ethical, physical, affective, and intellectual levels.

The integration of ancient Indian Knowledge Systems with contemporary Western traits and Neuroscience methodologies establish a rigorous, cross-disciplinary vocabulary that validates subjective mental states through objective empirical concepts. Survey results confirm that leveraging high Conscientiousness provides the necessary volitional effort for practice, while reducing Neuroticism provides the emotional stability required for deep absorption.

Future research must expand upon this conceptual foundation by utilizing advanced neuroimaging technologies, such as fMRI and EEG, to map the real-time biological signatures of the brain as it transitions between these states. Additionally, in an era defined by digital hyper-stimulation, developing specialized protocols that adapt classical sensory withdrawal practices into modern digital hygiene frameworks represents a vital avenue for therapeutic innovation. Ultimately, this unified framework offers a culturally sensitive, clinically robust roadmap for psychological resilience, empowering individuals to navigate a chaotic external world from a foundation of

stable internal clarity.

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