Markandeyan Phenomenon

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Bhargava Markandeya is an ancient rishi (sage) born in the clan of Brigu Rishi (Bhargava Brahmins Community). The great sage Mrikandu Rishi and his wife Marudmati worshipped Shiva and sought from him the boon of begetting a son. As a result, they were blessed with Markandeya, an exemplary son, destined to die at the age of 16. The Markandeya Purana especially, comprises a dialogue between Markandeya and a sage called Jaimini, and a number of chapters in the Bagavata Purana are dedicated to his conversations and prayers. He is also mentioned in the Mahabharata.

Markandeyan Phenomenon

Bhaktha Markandeyan” was born with the life span of 16 years at birth (biological birth) but was changed to immortality by spiritual means because of his worth and spiritual practice i.e. (spiritual birth). This gives a symbolic message, and is basic evidence to the practice of Yoga and Spirituality. This indicates that biology can be changed by spiritual practice. He created a mantra and started worshipping Shiva. He prayed by enunciating his created mantra. Mrityunjaya mantra is the second greatest mantra from the Vedas. This shloka is useful in counselling, and psychotherapy, and has been successfully used in the treatment of mood disorders.

Bio - Psycho - Socio - Spiritual Dimension

In the latest approach of bio-psycho-socio-spiritual school of mental health, Spirituality takes the top place in the Bio-psycho-socio-spiritual triangle and is affecting the functioning of all other domains in a bidirectional way.

Comprehensive psychotherapy (CPT) is a holistic psychotherapy which I practice in my wellness clinic. This is my own approach and my own comfort based on bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach which includes Eastern/Western approaches and a broad view that has the quality/power of comprehending different schools of theories in an inclusive nature leading to a comprehensive and holistic approach. The hypothesis and basis of CPT is 1) Bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach is the basis for CPT. 2) Every individual is born with his unique neurobiology (a relative prarabda). 3) Every individual is born in a unique bio-psycho-socio-spiritual environment (a relative prarabda). 4) By birth it is relatively fixed or it can be changed by psychotherapy practice (‘abyasa’/psychic karma). 5) The disordered behaviour which was neurobiologically based is psycho-socio-spiritually learned. 6) The learned behaviour can be unlearned by these interventions, so the neurobiology can be changed. 7) Self-analysis- Silence (i.e., Mounam - Mouni - like Muni) active self-observation (i.e., right way of seeing like seers) is the procedure of therapeutic process in CPT instead of psychoanalysis.

In the current scenario the management of the mood disorders can be achieved with the help of therapies based on bio psyche socio spiritual approach. I presented and published a case series in which Comprehensive Psychotherapy (CPT) was applied for Bipolar Affective Disorder (BPAD) patients in the form of Mrityunjaya Mantra. All cases claimed improvement of symptoms and quality of life with CPT. I presented and published few case studies and observations by using Gayatri Mantra for psychotic disorders. Gayatri Mantra is going to give the awareness of dynamics of relatively narrow identities to broad global human iden-
ties, i.e., evolving from ‘I’ to ‘We’. CPT is a comprehensive approach useful in prevention of recurrence of psychiatric disorders. Integrating spiritual interventions into psychiatric practice may be more effective for some patients in certain conditions. CPT promotes fulfilment, happiness, joy, character growth and transformation.

Yoga and Psychiatric Disorders - Evidence for Markandeyan Phenomenon

There is lot of evidence on the clinical benefits of Mantra yoga and Hatha yoga in causing changes in certain biological markers. Lowered metabolism in depression is indicated by smaller amplitudes of an event-related potential (P300). This physiological marker is “normalized” to a higher value in depressed patients after treatment with yoga as the sole intervention over 3 months. Yoga also reduced cortisol levels in alcohol dependent subjects undergoing detoxification as well as in patients with depressive disorder. In depressed patients, who as a group, had lower levels of a brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), yoga therapy increased the levels of BDNF in serum. Interestingly, BDNF response has also been implicated in the therapeutic effects of antidepressant drugs and electroconvulsive therapy. Both these biological effects were correlated with the antidepressant effects of yoga. Cortisol-reducing effects of yoga suggests attenuation of the hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis that is otherwise overactive in depression and other stress-related states. In schizophrenia patients, Yogasana-based therapy increased the levels of oxytocin and improved social cognition as well. It is known that oxytocin is related to social cognition and it is now being tested as an intranasal spray to benefit such disorders with compromised social cognition.

Vasista Phenomenon - Markandeyan Phenomenon

Here I’m quoting one more phenomenon as Vasista phenomenon2 in support of this novel way of thinking and which is similar to “Markandeyan Phenomenon”. According to Indian mythology, an infertile couple approaches Vasista Mahamuni regarding their desire to have children. Vasista considered this request of the infertile couple and guided them to produce children. This couple was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and had earlier approached Him regarding infertility. Lord Vishnu had earlier expressed His inability to help this couple as the infertility was their prarabda (innate biological inability). When Narada was surprised about Vasista’s ability and raised this point before Lord Vishnu, the God said; “I am after all God, I may not do all the things directly”. He (Lord Vishnu) categorically gave the following conclusive statement “A Guru can do those things which God cannot do; even though the God wants to do the same thing, He has to do through Guru only”. This is the basis of CPT as the given biology can be changed by the therapist (Guru/Teacher/Doctor).

In conclusion, Yoga is emerging as a potential therapeutic intervention and has already reached the armamentarium of psychiatrists. “Markandeyan phenomenon” is the philosophical basis provided by our ancient Rishis. The researchers in India and the world should come up with more research protocols and should generate data on various aspects of mental health problems. I hope it will be useful for the young researchers as well as mental health planners in advancing the cause of better mental healthcare in the country.

End Note

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