

Shiva Sankalpa Suktam and the Psychology of Mind: A Cross-Traditional Analytical Study

By- Jiya Gurnani (MA Counselling Psychology)

Abstract

The *Shiva Sankalpa Suktam* from the *Yajurveda* is a profound set of six mantras that explore the nature, function, and potential of the human mind (*manas*). This paper examines these mantras through a psychological lens, drawing parallels between traditional Vedic insights and modern psychological theories, including cognitive psychology, consciousness studies, and positive psychology. The study highlights how the Suktam conceptualizes the mind as dynamic, intentional, and capable of self-regulation. By mapping these ancient ideas to constructs such as attention, cognition, executive functioning, and self-awareness, the paper demonstrates the relevance of Vedic wisdom in contemporary mental health discourse. The findings suggest that the Shiva Sankalpa framework can serve as a model for improving cognitive clarity, emotional regulation, and intentional living.

Keywords

Shiva Sankalpa Suktam, Vedic Psychology, Manas, Cognitive Psychology, Consciousness, Self-Regulation, Indian Psychology, Mindfulness

Introduction to the Topic

The *Shiva Sankalpa Suktam* is a collection of six mantras found in the *Yajurveda*, each ending with the phrase “*Tan me manah Shiva Sankalpam astu*”—“May my mind be filled with propitious determination.”

In Vedic thought, the **mind (manas)** is not merely a cognitive processor but a **central organizing principle of human experience**, linking perception, intention, memory, and consciousness.

Modern psychology, particularly **cognitive and neuropsychology**, similarly views the mind as a system responsible for:

- Information processing
- Decision-making
- Emotional regulation
- Behavioural output

This paper attempts to bridge:

- **Traditional Indian psychological constructs** (Manas, Buddhi, Chitta, Ahamkara) with
- **Modern constructs** (cognition, executive functions, consciousness, self-schema)

The Shiva Sankalpa Suktam uniquely emphasizes:

- The **intentionality of thought**
- The **moral-qualitative dimension of cognition**
- The **trainability of the mind**

Psychological Interpretation of the Six Mantras (Conceptual Overview)

Each mantra describes a different functional dimension of the mind:

1. **Mind as a source of thought and intention**

→ Corresponds to **cognitive processes & ideation**

Mantra

यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदैति दैवं
तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवेति ।
दूरंगमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

2. **Mind as connected to sensory and motor functions**

→ Aligns with **sensorimotor integration**

Mantra

येन कर्माण्यपसो मनीषिणो
यज्ञे कृण्वन्ति विदथेऽधिराः ।
यदपूर्वं यक्षन्तो देवाः
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

3. **Mind as the seat of consciousness and awareness**

→ Relates to **consciousness studies & meta-awareness**

Mantra

यत्प्रज्ञानमुत चेतो धृतिश्च
यज्ज्योतिरन्तरमृतं प्रजासु ।
यस्मान्न ऋते किंचन कर्म क्रियते
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

4. **Mind as the controller of past, present, and future**

→ Linked with **memory, temporal cognition, and planning**

Mantra

येन इदं भूतं भुवनं भविष्यत्
परिगृहीतं अमृतेन सर्वम् ।
येन यज्ञस्तायते सप्तहोता
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

5. **Mind as the guiding force of actions**

→ Equivalent to **executive functioning & decision-making**

Mantra

यस्मिन्नृचः साम यजूंषि यस्मिन्
प्रतिष्ठिता रथनाभाविवासाः ।
यस्मिन्श्रितं सर्वमोतं प्रजानां
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

6. **Mind as capable of refinement and auspicious direction**

→ Parallels **self-regulation, mindfulness, and positive psychology**

Mantra

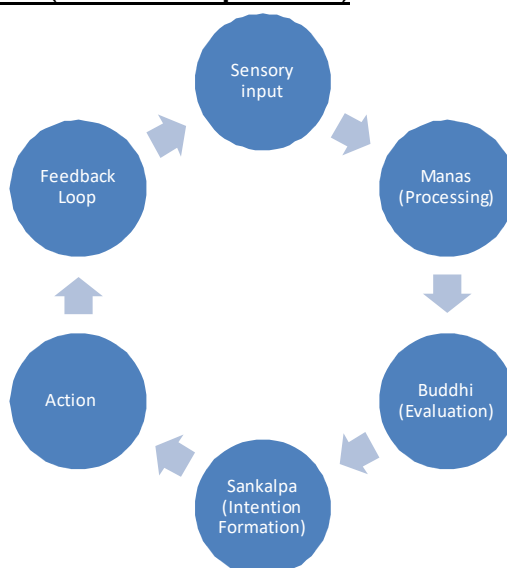
सुषारथिरश्वानिव यन्मनुष्यां
नेनीयतेऽभीशुभिर्वाजिन इव ।
हृत्प्रतिष्ठं यदजिरं जविष्ठं
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

Traditional vs Modern Psychological Mapping

Structure of Mind (Traditional vs Modern)

Vedic Psychology		Modern Psychology
Manas (Mind)	→	Cognition (Thinking, Attention)
Buddhi (Intellect)	→	Executive Function (Decision-making)
Chitta (Memory)	→	Memory Systems (Long-term/Working)
Ahamkara (Ego)	→	Self-Concept / Identity

Functional Flow of Mind (Shiva Sankalpa Model)



Modern Equivalent:



Shiva Sankalpa as Cognitive Regulation Model



This aligns with:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Model
- Mindfulness-based self-regulation frameworks

Temporal Mind (Mantra 4 Mapping)

Past (Memory) ← Mind → Future (Imagination)



Present Awareness

Equivalent to:

- Episodic Memory
- Prospection (future thinking)
- Present-centered awareness (Mindfulness)

Discussion: Integration with Modern Psychology

The Shiva Sankalpa Suktam anticipates several modern psychological principles:

1. Cognitive Structuring

The emphasis on *auspicious thoughts* resembles **cognitive restructuring** in CBT.

2. Mindfulness and Meta-awareness

The reflective nature of the mantras parallels **mindfulness practices**, where one observes and refines mental activity.

3. Executive Control

The idea of directing the mind toward *Shiva Sankalpa* reflects **top-down regulation** of cognition.

4. Positive Psychology

The focus on *auspicious intention* aligns with:

- Optimism
- Purpose
- Meaning-making

5. Neuropsychological Correlates

Functions described in the Suktam correspond to:

- Prefrontal cortex → decision-making
- Limbic system → emotional processing
- Default mode network → self-referential thinking

Conclusion

The Shiva Sankalpa Suktam offers a sophisticated model of the human mind that integrates cognition, intention, and ethical awareness. Its conceptualization of the mind as both **dynamic and trainable** aligns closely with contemporary psychological frameworks.

From a psychological perspective, the Suktam contributes:

- A **holistic model of cognition**
- A **value-oriented approach to mental functioning**
- A **practical framework for self-regulation and mental well-being**

In an era of increasing mental health challenges, integrating such traditional wisdom with modern science can enrich both **therapeutic practices** and **personal development models**.



APA References (Sample)

- Aurobindo, S. (1995). *The Upanishads*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Feuerstein, G. (2001). *The Yoga Tradition*. Hohm Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1953). *The Principal Upanishads*. HarperCollins.
- Rao, K. R. (2011). *Indian Psychology: Perception*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sharma, R. (2013). *Vedic Psychology and Mental Health*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Beck, A. T. (1979). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. Penguin.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156.
- Varenne, J. (1977). *Vedic Cosmology and Ethics*. SUNY Press.