



Clinical Psychoanalysis - The Practice of Couchiatry

Dr MANU KOTHARI

Dr LOPA MEHTA

Dept of Anatomy, Seth G S Medical College, Parel, Mumbai - 400 012. Tel: 24131763 Extn: 2025

Psychoanalysis has aroused a great deal of controversy. To the uninitiated it may seem more like a cult than a science; it even has its own semi-mystical vocabulary, and tends to dismiss its critics as merely ignorant. The schisms within psychoanalysis make it still harder for unbelievers; unless analysts can agree among themselves, they are not likely to persuade the skeptics. Yet nobody doubts that psychoanalysis has theoretical and practical merits. Perhaps so much depends on the analyst himself that what is true for one may be untrue for another, and no general rules are valid.

Peter Wingate

Medical Encyclopedia

There is an interesting canine scene – where else but in America? Where an irate Doberman gets patiently psychoanalyzed but the Vet-psychiatrist who then most ponderously concludes: “I think he has been mistreated by his grandmother.” Pet comes the question from the owner: “Which grandma – maternal, paternal, or both?” Walter Alvarez, eminent gastroenterologist at the Mayo Clinic, in his no-hold-barred autobiography *The Incurable Physician* has a special chapter titled ‘My Dislike of Psychoanalysis’. The dislike sprang from him being told that road-diggers went on strike in UK, because, in the learned opinion of British psychoanalysis, to them the picks and axes represented the male (read, penile) symbol, and the road the female (read, female pudendum) symbol. Jenny aged 7 refuses to sit in the dental chair for, to her the cavity in the tooth is akin to the space between her thighs, and the dentist’s drill to, what else, but the male symbol. Like *Karma* philosophy, psychiatry/psychoanalysis and modern medicine enjoy EASE – Explain Away Sans Explaining. The one great gift FREUD and his descendants gave to ailing mankind was the idea that no matter how stupid/wicked/cruel you are, IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. The misuse of your monstrous mind and muscles to ravage another human or a lot of them, can always be traced to the cliché-worn abuse that you suffered at

the hands of father/mother/brother/neighbor (Tick your choice). Once your stupidity/ wickedness gets such a shelter, you start rationalizing your state of mind, nay, justifying it. Once that’s done, where on earth is the need for you to improve at all? No wonder, for the small population that Americans are, they have the largest numbers of prisons and prisoners.

From the Monstrous to the Mundane, the story remains the same. The whole game refuses to inspire the patient to just shift the mindset to work for the better – for oneself and for the humanity at large. You could quote here the irrepressible old man of India, who is now threatening to be universal: Become the change you want to bring about.

The biggest snag is etymological and epistemological. Psyche means the human soul, an entity fit for the flights of *Vedanta*, *Gita*, *Shankaracharya*, Spinoza or the Bible. It is *Anima mundi*, the global soul which is too lofty to be trapped in the human, canine or feline mind to wreak havoc on itself or others. What the so-called modern medicine practices should be called mindiatry or meneniatry or maniatry (Skt. *Man* or *Menen* = Mind) that tackles the ups and downs, frailities and foibles of that elusive but dangerous entity called the mind. The treatment of the soma or body is somiatry. A good physician practices a balanced combination of psychiatry, maniatry and somiatry.

Clinical psychoanalysis is a non-medical offshoot of psychiatry – a discipline that someone with no MBBS degree can practice. It involves too many assumptions on the part of the psychoanalyst, and too many limitations on the part of the narrator. Like much in psychiatry, psychoanalysis has a tremendous utility as a placebo, unburdened by drugs. To that extent it is innocent. A recent large tome *Controversies in Psychiatry*, has its very first chapter title ‘Has psychiatry any future?’ The very first line by FULLER TORREY is: Bleak, if any. May be you could sum up Clinical Psychoanalysis, or Couchiatry the same way.