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"Ayurveda And Mental Health: Achieving Harmony Of Mind, Body, And Soul"

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ABSTRACT :

Ayurveda's definition of health is holistic, encompassing mental well-being as a vital component. While modern science only began addressing mental health and psychosomatic diseases in 1908, Ayurveda had acknowledged and integrated this aspect into its understanding of wellness centuries ago. The acknowledgment of mental health as essential in the WHO's health definition underscores Ayurveda's timeless wisdom.

Charaka Samhita advocates for preventive practices like Saduritta (ethical conduct), Achar Rasayana (behavioural rejuvenation), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), and Dinacharya (daily regimen), along with the use of medicinal herbs to protect against mental disorders. Evidently, the principles detailed in ancient texts offer preventive and curative insights for modern-day health challenges, guiding individuals towards true health.

Keywords: Mental qualities (mansika gunas), mental disorders (mano-vikara), ethical conduct (sadvritta), behavioural rejuvenation (achara rasayana), Depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, Satvavjay, Psychology Rajas, tama, Sarwa

Introduction:

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलः क्रियाः।
प्रसन्नान्तेग्ररियमनः स्वस्थइति अभिधीयते ॥ Su. Su.15/48

The perfect balance of mind, body and soul is called complete health. The body, particularly the three doshas:

Vata, Pitta, Kapha. Mental well-being in Ayurveda is believed to be achieved when there is harmony among these doshas, as well as a proper balance between the Sattva (clarity and goodness), Rajas (activity and passion), and Tamas (inertia and ignorance) qualities of the mind.

The mind is a sensory as well as a motor organ in the body. So disease of the mind affects both mind and body. Psychiatric illnesses are fundamentally not different from medical illnesses. Historically, illnesses in which there was a prominent disturbance of psychological function or behaviour and no obvious pathology came to be regarded as psychiatric. However, the modern world now knows that there is demonstrably altered brain function in many psychiatric disorders; also psychiatric illness is no less real or less deserving of care than are medical conditions.

Ayurveda is the foremost life science of the universe which explains hitaayu, ahitaayu, sukhayu and dukhayu. These components have a direct impact on health. The explanation of swasthya gives importance to manasika swasthya in terms of Prasanna manas. This prasanna manas is responsible for the maintenance of health and the aprasannata of manas will lead to illness, with the help of rajasika and tamasika doshas. Almost all diseases are psychosomatic in origin. Many diseases manifest due to the effect of manas, like unmada, apasmara, sannayasa roga, atarwabhinivesha, etc. These all manifest due to rajasika and tamasika guna dosha, where the main cause is asatmendriyarthasamyoga and prajnaparadha. This leads to kama, krodhadi vikaras, and later the diseases manifest.

इन्द्रियाभिग्रहः कर्म मनसः स्वस्य निग्रहः
उद्दो विचारश्च ततः परं बुद्धिं प्रवर्तते ॥

Thinking, judgement, logical analysis, and goal-setting are essential functions of the mana (mind) in Ayurveda. A healthy mind fosters rational thinking, while disturbances can lead to irrationality and negatively impact physical health. Charaka emphasised seeking expert treatment for mental illnesses, showcasing the ancient Acharyas' understanding of mana's critical role in life.

The modern concept of emotional intelligence (EI) gained traction in the 1960s, particularly through Daniel Goleman's book, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. Goleman identified key components of EI:

- Self-awareness

- Internal motivation
- Self-regulation
- Empathy
- Social skills

These concepts reflect qualities acknowledged in Ayurvedic literature long ago.

Manasika Doshas:

- **Sattva** is the state of mental clarity, peace, and purity. A Sattvic mind is considered healthy.
- **Rajas** are responsible for ambition, restlessness, and desires. Excess Rajas can lead to stress, anxiety, and hyperactivity.
- **Tamas** leads to inertia, ignorance, and confusion. Excess Tamas causes lethargy, depression, and negative thinking.

Prakriti (Individual Constitution): Each person has a unique prakriti or constitution, which influences mental traits and susceptibility to mental illnesses. Imbalances in

- Vata can lead to anxiety, nervousness, and insomnia.
- Pitta imbalance may cause anger, irritability, and frustration, mood swings.
- Kapha imbalance can lead to depression, lethargy, and attachment, lack of motivation.

Common Psychiatric Disorders in Ayurveda:

- Unmada: General psychiatric disorders like psychosis, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.
- Apasmara: Seizures and epilepsy, though can also extend to include conditions like dissociative disorders.
- Chittodvega: Anxiety and stress-related disorders.
- Manasika Roga: Mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc.

The common psychological disorders :

The wide range of mental health conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behaviour. Some common psychological disorders include:

- ❖ **Anxiety Disorders are characterised by excessive fear, worry, or panic.**

Examples: Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Panic Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Phobias.

- ❖ **Mood Disorders Involve disturbances in a person's mood.**

Examples: Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Cyclothymic Disorder.

- ❖ **Personality Disorders Long-term patterns of behaviour and inner experiences that deviate significantly from cultural expectations.**

Examples: Borderline Personality Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

- ❖ **Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders Marked by repetitive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or behaviours (compulsions).**

Examples: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Hoarding Disorder, Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

- ❖ **Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders are characterised by abnormalities in thinking, perception, and behaviour.**

Examples: Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, Delusional Disorder.

- ❖ **Trauma- and Stress-Related Disorders Result from exposure to a traumatic or stressful event.**

Examples: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Acute Stress Disorder, Adjustment Disorders.

- ❖ **Eating Disorders Involve preoccupation with food, body weight, and shape, leading to dangerous behaviours.**

Examples: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge-Eating Disorder.

- ❖ **Neuro developmental Disorders Usually diagnosed during childhood, impact learning, communication, and behaviour.**

Examples: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-deficit -Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Intellectual Disabilities.

- ❖ **Somatic Symptoms and Related Disorders Involve excessive focus on physical symptoms, such as pain or fatigue, causing major emotional distress and problems functioning.**

Examples: Somatic Symptom Disorder, Illness Anxiety Disorder, Conversion Disorder.

- ❖ **Dissociative Disorders Involve disruptions or breakdowns of memory, consciousness, identity, or perception.**

Examples: Dissociative Identity Disorder, Depersonalisation / Derealisation Disorder, and Dissociative Amnesia.

- ❖ **Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders Involve the misuse of substances like alcohol, and drugs, or behaviours like gambling that affect mental health.**

Examples: Alcohol Use Disorder, Drug Addiction, Gambling Disorder.

Manas Concept And Sattvavajaya:

Manas is the means of attainment of the sukha (happiness) and dukha (sorrow). Unmada (psychosis), Apsmara (Convulsive disorder), Atattvabhinivesa (Obsessive Disorder), Aptantrak (hysteria), Manoavsad (depression) Mada (Alcoholism and drug abuse) are common mental diseases described in Ayurveda. Acharya Charaka describes in nidan sthana that Mana, (emotion, mood) Buddhi (thought and decision), Sangya (orientation), Smriti (memory learning), Bhakti (Desire), Sheel (habits), Chesta (psychomotor function), Achar (conduct and behaviour) are the eight psychological factor affected in Mental disorder.

Out of these eight psychological factors, manas is the factor which gets affected predominantly Mind is amalgamated to touch sense. Sparshendriya (skin), Sparsh (touch) and manas sparsh (mental contact) are two types of contact that bring pleasurable and painful sensations to the body

Causes of Mental Imbalance:

Ahara (Diet): Improper diet, particularly foods that disturb the balance of the doshas, can negatively affect mental health.

Vihara (Lifestyle): A sedentary lifestyle, irregular sleep, lack of exercise, and stressful living contribute to mental imbalance.

Emotional Disturbances: Unresolved emotions like anger, fear, and sadness can imbalance the mind.

Treatment of Mental Disorders:

To treat mental disorders Acharya Charaka explains Satva-Avajay chikitsa. Satva is the mind. Avajey is to bring the mind under control As Raja and Tama dosha accumulate in the mind produce negative feelings and act as emotional toxins Satvavajaya is the treatment through which the physician tries to win the mind of the patient, and maintain equilibrium in intellect (dhi), fortitude (dhrti) memory (Smriti), etc

चिन्त्यविचार्यमूहा च ध्येयसंकल्पमेव च
यत् किञ्चित् मनसो जेयं तत् सर्वं हि अर्थं संजकम् ॥ च. शा. १/२०

1. by regulating the thought process, (Chintya),
2. by replacing the idea (Vicharya),
3. by channelling the presumption (Uhya)
4. by polishing the objective(Dheya)
5. by proper guidance and advice (Samkalp).

Acharya Charaka explains that Manas Sansparsh is one of the major factors for various Vedana (pain). Eliminating particular thoughts (causative agent of vedana) can cure disease.

Modern science tells us that pain is commonly found in depression and anxiety patients. Focusing towards pain increases it Cognitive Behaviour therapy is useful in patients of psychological illness which works on the principle that negative, inappropriate catastrophic thoughts are present in patients of depression As thought intensity increases pain also rises Replacing negative cognitive schema and automatic thought is an important technique to treat pain and depression. Modern psychotherapy involves treatment with the help of psychological means. A trained person deliberately establishes a professional relationship with a patient with the motto of removing and modifying symptoms, mediating disturbing patterns of behaviour and promoting positive development.

Ayurvedic Approaches to Mental Health:

To treat these manasika vikaraas one has to follow the dharma, artha, and kama properly and should follow life accordingly, also satvavajaya chikitsa should be taken. To avoid these diseases, one must follow preventive principles like achara rasayana, sadvritta, medhya rasayana, and nitya sevaneeya ahara along with dinacharya, ritucharya, and ratricharya.

-Diet :

Consumer Food prepared with the purest intention and positive mindset.

Emphasising a Sattvic diet Sattvic foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, and whole grains are recommended to nourish both the mind and body which helps to enhance mental clarity.

Avoidance of excessive stimulants, processed foods, such as street food, junk food, food prepared with negative emotions and negative environments that aggravate Rajas and Tamas

-Satavajaya :

is the Ayurvedic psychotherapy to decrease mental as well as somatic pain. It is described in Ayurveda classics as more efficient than modern psychotherapy. It has been used in India since ancient times As Guru Chela manner.

sarwajaya chikitsa, obtaining the adhyatmic jnana (spiritual knowledge), vignana (scientific knowledge), dhairya courage, smriti recollection of the actions, and Samadhi keeping the mind away from all the vishayas or actions, which cures the mano vikaaras.

follow achara rasayana, like, ahimsa, prashantam, tapas, etc., and sadvritta palana that is 'na krodha, na harsha' etc., also has to follow medhya rasayana, like, satata adhyayana, vaada, paratantralokanam, achara sevnam, etc, and all these help to avoid the manasika dosha avastha.

-Meditation and Yoga :

Regular practice of meditation, [Practising Pranayama](#) (breathing techniques) and [Dhyana](#) (meditation) are important adjuncts in managing mental health in Ayurveda. These practices help calm and balance the mind, reduce mental stress, and promote emotional stability.

-Dinacharya :

Following a structured daily routine helps maintain mental peace and balance.

-Panchakarma

Detoxification therapies like Panchakarma are often recommended to cleanse the body and mind of accumulated toxins, thereby restoring balance.

- **Shirodhara:** A therapy where warm herbal oil is poured over the forehead to relax the mind and alleviate mental stress.
- **Abhyanga:** Full body oil massage to calm the nervous system.
- **Nasya:** Administration of medicated oils through the nasal passages to nourish and clear the mind.

-Rasayana Therapy :

These rejuvenating therapies work at a deep level to enhance mental strength, memory, and overall resilience. They involve herbal supplements, a nourishing diet, and lifestyle adjustments.

- **Medhya Rasayana:** These are specific formulations aimed at rejuvenating the brain and enhancing mental function. Examples include formulations of Brahmi, Ashwagandha, Shankhapushpi, and Mandukaparni.

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