

AYURVEDA AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN SERVING MENTAL HEALTH

Dr. Ambika^{1*} and Dr. Chandni Gupta²

³rd Year PG Scholar^{1*}, Senior Lecturer², Department of *Dravyaguna*, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, Himachal Pradesh, India.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Ambika**

³rd Year PG Scholar, Department of *Dravyaguna*, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Article Received on 19/12/2024

Article Revised on 08/01/2025

Article Accepted on 29/01/2025

ABSTRACT

The treasure of the *Ayurveda* is vast and multidisciplinary. It addresses not only physical health but also places significant importance on mental and spiritual well-being. It integrates practical efficiency with a broad focus on the overall wellbeing of an individual. Due to longstanding neglect of mental health, depression has become a significant issue globally. It impacts the overall wellbeing of individuals across all age groups. An unhealthy mind advances to the development of the disorders in once a healthy body which manifests as various diseases. Current treatment protocols primarily consider physical signs and symptoms, while often neglecting the underlying cause of the imbalance, namely, the mind. *Ayurveda* highlights the importance of mental and spiritual well-being, in addition to physical health, as indicators of overall health. The secrets of a healthy mind are encoded deep within the sutras of the ancient texts. This information on promoting mental well-being is thoroughly reviewed to prevent and address lifestyle disorders, which are often linked to mental health. The principles of *Ayurveda* are intended to benefit humanity, particularly given the current global concerns about mental health. Before diagnosing clinical conditions, especially those related to metabolic issues like obesity, diabetes, and cardiac diseases, it is important to consider the mental well-being of the patient, as the underlying cause may be related to mental health.

KEYWORDS: Mental health, Mind, *Ayurveda*, Lifestyle, *Manas*.**INTRODUCTION**

Physical and mental health are interconnected and interdependent. Mental health can be influenced by physical ailments and vice versa. The impact on the mind cannot be disregarded simply due to the absence of physical signs and symptoms. Similarly, physical symptoms that are often categorized as metabolic disorders may sometimes result from poor mental health. The full state of health as explained in the verse of the *Sushruta Samhita* consists of all *doshas* and *dhatu*s in harmony, unimpaired metabolism, regulated expulsion of metabolic wastes and physiological activities, a happy state of mind, and proper coordination between the *Atma*, *indriya*, and *Manas*.^[1] Mind is more like a functional entity which is not confined by physical boundaries within the body. This is a complex and intricate subject, acknowledged through the observation of various bodily functions influenced by the power of consciousness. These functions include motor or sensory activities, experiencing emotions, making decisions, and perceiving external stimuli to respond appropriately. The body isn't the conscious one itself, it is the *atma* which is the ultimate life within the body while there is *Manas* which is the intermediate between the *indriyas* and *atma*. According to *Ayurveda*, the *tridoshas* are the fundamental physiological entities that play crucial roles

at every level of living systems. *Tridoshas* - *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are distributed in the whole body and play major roles as per their inherent qualities and functions. Beyond the nutritional, behavioural factors, there are the *manasika* i.e. psychological elements which regulate *tridoshas*; for instance, *pitta* is elated by spicy food, spending a long while in excessive heat and angry mental state. The problematic mental states emerge due to the influence of *mansika doshas* - *rajas* and *tamas*, which are attributes primarily associated with the mind, akin to how *tridoshas* are primarily related to the body. The mental health in terms of these attributes is defined by the dominance of *sattva guna* over *rajas* and *tamas doshas*. Hence, mental health is to be achieved by the attaining the dominance of *sattva* over mind.

The timeless *Ayurveda*, a science that has been practiced for ages and have no beginning or end, is an eternal fount of vast knowledge. It is like a spiritual master which teaches to live life in the best way. What people are really looking for nowadays is a treasure trove of information that contains the secrets to making the most out of life. Because of unsustainable pace and expectations of the modern lifestyle, it is harder for people to preserve a positive mindset in many situations. The most prevalent problem nowadays is depression,

which affects people of practically all ages. Depression is the outcome of the poison like lifestyle habits, the altered societal standards of doing several things. People back then had a wholesome schedule for the entire day, from a certain time for rising early to going to bed. Contrarily, the regimens for the maintenance of good health are underestimated and hence neglected in the modern time. The present world is so immersed in the digital addiction that a new challenge to tackle has emerged as virtual world of social media. *Ayurveda* has the solution to rearrange many factors associated with the causes of troubled mental health and also the curative approach to it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The *Ayurvedic* compendiums were searched for their invaluable knowledge pertaining to mental wellness. Also, a thorough search was conducted for related research publications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both *sharira* and *manas*, or the physical body and mind, are disease-carrying entities. As elaborated by *Acharya*

Dalhana, the mind is the domain of issues like anger, hate, envy etc. The regulators of the bodily functions are *doshas*, the balance of which is important for health. The elating and lowering levels of individual *doshas* are dependent on the foods, behaviours and various emotions of the mind. The three fundamental causes of diseases- *Pragyaparadha* (intellectual blasphemy), *asatmyendriartha samyoga* (improper contact of the senses with their objects) and *parinaam* (disturbances related to age/seasons) as in Fig.1, lead to vitiation of attributes *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* in physical diseases and *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in mental diseases.^[2] However, the physical and mental diseases with course affect each other. The mental imbalance shows as different negative emotions such as anger, hate, hostility, sadness, nervousness, complacency, possessiveness and agitation etc. which manifest or aggravates as various physical ailments in meantime. The main aim is to cure these *mansika nidanas* in such cases with aid of *Dhi* (using intellect to choose the best for own's health), *Dhairya* (patience) and *atmadi* (pertaining to knowledge of own's good or bad) application.

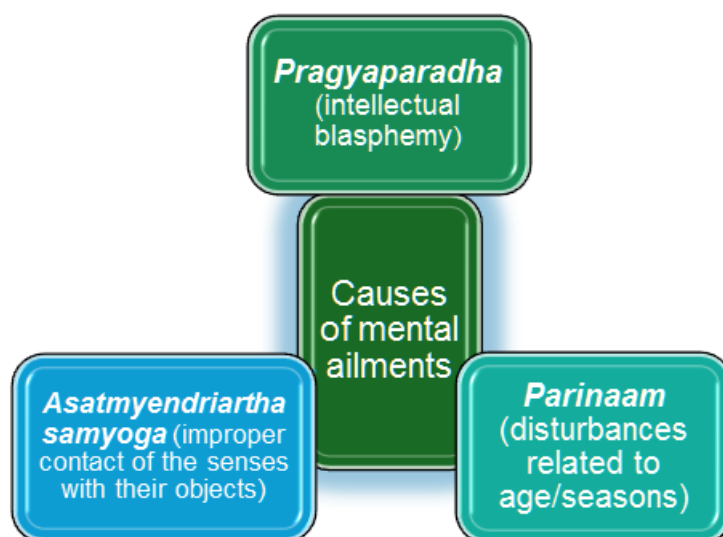


Figure 1: Causes of mental imbalance as per Ayurveda.

Manas, *indriya* are said being situated in the heart by the *acharyas*. Also, in many other references, head is said as the place of *manas*, *indriya*. *Acharya Bhela* has described the place of *manas* in between head and palate. In *Charaka Samhita*, the *doshas* are said to affect *manovaha strotas* (channels for the activity of mind) present in the heart. Thus, the mind and its functions apparently rely dominantly on *sharira* and *hridaya*.

The main seat for the neurological functions is head region along with the spinal cord. The cardiovascular system is also influenced by autonomic nervous system and the neuroendocrine system, predominantly via the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA)-axis. Parasympathetic output to the heart is primarily mediated

by the vagus nerve that originates from nuclei within the medulla. The parasympathetic flow slows down the heartbeat, lowers the BP while sympathetic system does the opposite. The HPA axis is responsible for creating the heightened "stress-response" mediated by the adrenal glands via its production and release of cortisol and catecholamines. Catecholamines, specifically, have direct impact on cardiovascular function via their interactions with adrenergic receptors resulting in the elevation of heart rate, increased force of cardiac contraction, and changes in blood pressure.^[3]

There have been several studies which lead to finding the link between consistent negative mental tendencies with onset of chronic as well acute onset of diseases in heart.

Just as negative emotions such as anxiety and depression are associated with adverse health behaviour implicated in cardiovascular disease risk, so is anger in its various forms. Diabetes tends to be more common in hostile persons.^[4] There were 25 studies investigating CHD outcomes in initially healthy populations and 19 studies of samples with existing CHD. Anger and hostility were associated with increased CHD events in the healthy population studies and with poor prognosis in the CHD population studies.^[5] Similarly, the connection among consistent feelings sadness, fear and IBS is frequently observed. IBS has been identified as *Grahani roga* in *Ayurveda*. In *Charaka Samhita*, it has been postulated that *shoka* and *krodha* are the causes of *krishata* and further lead to *Grahani roga* as a consequence.^[6] Also, in *Grahaniroga* chapter of *Chikitsa Sthana*, the effect of diseased *Grahani* is said to depress mind in the reference of *Vaatik Grahani Roga*. *Acharya Sushruta* has incorporated *Shokaj Atisaar*, which states that mental instability like fright and grief interferes with gut health

and leads to *atisaar*.^[7] The commentator *Acharya Dalhana* has elaborated that the mental unsoundness impairs the digestive fire residing in the *koshtha*.

Mental health is regarded with significance in *Ayurveda*, where treatment protocols are designed holistically. *Acharya Charaka* outlines five key strategies to address diseases of mental origin^[8]: *Gyana*, which involves understanding the true nature of the self and the universe; *Vigyana* (Skilled/Textual Knowledge), which includes applying knowledge and skills to manage and control the mind, involving cognitive restructuring and promoting positive thoughts; *Dhairya*, which refers to the ability to endure difficulties and maintain mental strength and resilience; *Smriti*, which means focusing on positive thoughts, values, and principles to guide one's actions and thoughts; and *Samadhi*, which is a state of deep concentration and meditation where the mind is completely focused and free from distractions (fig.2).^[9]

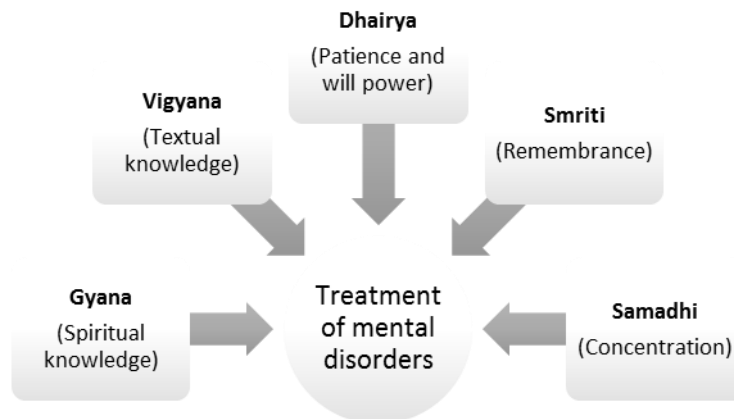


Figure 2: Treatment of mental disorders as per Ayurveda.

The basis of health is said as the balance of *Tri-Upstambhas*: *Ahara*, *nidra* and *brahmcharya*. These are postulated to encompass the health from all the ways possible especially in a lifestyle manner. The *Ashtavidh Aharavisheshayatana* (eight things to consider while eating for health) by *Acharya Charaka*, 12 *Ashana Vichar* (12 manners to pursue while eating) by *Acharya Sushruta* is specifically preached to reap the health benefits from eating. Rules for sleeping are mentioned beautifully in all compendiums where causes of sleep issues are enumerated along with treatment for *atinidra* (excessive sleepiness) and *anidra* (sleeplessness). During a weeklong residential *yoga* program in India, researchers assessed *dosha* values for a group of nearly 1,000 adults and also gathered information about their sleep. Researchers discovered that those with greater *vata dosha* scores had problems sleeping, such as insomnia and difficulty falling asleep, whereas those with higher *kapha dosha* scores had problems sleeping during the day and were generally more lethargic.^[10] The key is to empower the *kapha dosha* and *Tamasika bhava* for sleep (fig.3).

- Yathaprakriti Aharavihara (living as per own prakriti)
- Abhyanga (massage therapy)
- Samvahana (gently caressing)
- Music and Aromatherapy
- Yoga
- Pranayama
- Tarpana
- Shalidhanya with dadhi

Figure 3: Measures to tackle sleeplessness.

CONCLUSION

Living a healthy lifestyle is the first step toward achieving both mental and physical wellness. The fundamental daily routines are undervalued. The *Sattva*

can be attained over *rajas* and *tamas* with consistent pursuit of such fundamentals stated by *Ayurveda*. The neurology can be altered as backed up by various research explained as concept neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity can be defined as the reorganization of the brain's structure and function in response to intrinsic or environmental challenges.^[11] In *Charaka Samhita*, it is clearly mentioned that the physiology of mind follows the state of pursuits one follows either *sattvik*, *rajasik* or *tamasik*. These can be achieved by eating, behavioural and emotional pursuits. Therefore, one must always follow the activities which empower *sattva guna* of the mind. There is now considerable evidence of the importance of nutrition for mental health, and an extensive review of over 160 studies suggests that dietary factors are so important that the mental health of nations may be linked to them.^[12] Similarly, a plethora of research has showed the positive impact of exercise on mental health. Some researchers have already concluded that the current explosion of digital technology not only is changing the way we live and communicate but also is rapidly and profoundly changing our brains. The *Ayurvedic* regimens are the wholesome routines which are intended for complete health and are to be followed everywhere.

REFERENCES

- Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji Acharya, Narayan Ram Acharya, The *Susrutasamhita* of Susruta, Satyabhamaji Pandurang Bombay, 1945; pg. 55.
- Kaviraj Shri Atridevji Gupt, Charak *Samhita*, Pratham Khand, Bhargav Pustakalaya, Banaras, 2nd edition, pg – 14.
- Arnold C, Hocker S. Chapter 16 - Effects of acute neurologic disease on the heart [Internet]. Biller J, editor. Vol. 177, Science Direct. Elsevier; 2021. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780128198148000275>
- Suls J. Anger and the Heart: Perspectives on Cardiac Risk, Mechanisms and Interventions. *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*, 2013 May; 55(6): 538–47.
- Chida Y, Steptoe A. The Association of Anger and Hostility With Future Coronary Heart Disease. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 2009 Mar; 53(11): 936–46.
- Kaviraj Shri Atridevji Gupt, Charak *Samhita*, Pratham Khand, Bhargav Pustakalaya, Banaras, 2000; 2nd edition, pg -248.
- www.wisdomlib.org (2015) Symptoms and treatment of Diarrhea (Atisara) [Chapter XL]. In: Wisdomlib.org. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/sushruta-samhita-volume-6-uttara-tantra/d/doc143053.html>.
- Kaviraj Shri Atridevji Gupt, Charak *Samhita*, Pratham Khand, Bhargav Pustakalaya, Banaras, 2nd edition, pg – 14.
- Pallavi Bharti, Vijay Shankar Pandey (2023) *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa: Need of Today's Era*. *AYUSHDHARA*, 10: 169–172.
- J. Breus M. The Science Behind Sleep and Ayurveda | Psychology Today [Internet]. www.psychologytoday.com. 2020 [cited 2023 Nov 30]. Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/202008/the-science-behind-sleep-and-ayurveda>
- Christiansen L, Siebner HR. Tools to explore neuroplasticity in humans: Combining interventional neurophysiology with functional and structural magnetic resonance imaging and spectroscopy. *Handbook of Clinical Neurology*, 2022; 105–19.
- Schuch FB, Vancampfort D. Physical activity, exercise and mental disorders: It is time to move on. *Trends in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy* [Internet], 2021; 43(3): 177–84. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8638711/>