

# AYURVEDA AND MENTAL HEALTH: AN INSIGHT

Gaurav Phull<sup>1</sup> Rekha Phull<sup>2</sup> Dimple Aggarwal<sup>3</sup>

1. Clinical Registrar, Chaudhry Brahma Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, New Delhi- 110073.

2. Associate Professor, KC, SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana- 122506.

3. MD Scholar- Sharir kriya department, first year at CBPACS, New Delhi-110073.

## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science which is regaining its worth in 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are number of psychotic & somatic diseases which were widely explained in samhitas many centuries ago and the role of manas is also explained thoroughly. In Brihtrayi, Charaksamhita explained the manas, its types, Mansika gunas, mano-vikara as well as chikitsa in a very descriptive way. The combination of body, senses, mind and soul, results in existence of living being. Manas has been labeled to play an important role in causing physical diseases like grahni, ardhavbhedaka, atisara, chhardi etc. The definition of health given in Ayurveda is comprehensive which included mental wellness as an important component. In modern science, the mental health and psycho-somatic diseases were introduced in 1908. The rich heritage of Ayurveda is depicted by the fact that even WHO reformed their definition of health few decades ago by introducing the mental health as the important aspect of health. Charaksamhita advocates many preventive measures to save from various mental disorders- Sadvritta, Achararasyana, Ritucharya and Dincharya are some of them. Simultaneously, various aushadhis are also recommended. Thus it is clearly evident that mental health and disorders related to it were well addressed in Ayurveda and if principles explained in ancient texts are followed properly, many diseases of present time can be prevented. This can help in achieving health in real sense.

**Keywords:** mansikagunas, mano-vikara, sadvritta, achararasyana.

## INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is exclusive science which not only has described physical but mental health as well, elaborately during 3<sup>rd</sup> B.C. (Charaka Kala). In Sushrutasamhita, the complete definition of 'swasth' (healthy being) is given as<sup>[1]</sup>

समदोषः समान्निश्च समधातु मलः क्रियाः।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनः स्वस्थ इति अभिधीयते॥

Su. Su. 15/48

It means that vata, pitta, kapha; fire; rasa-raktadi 7 dhatus; vinn-mutraadi mala; all of them should be in perfect balance in the body. Health can be achieved, if all these physiological parameters are in equal balance with

healthy mind, intellect and all senses. The term 'Health' is very much comprehensive and inclusive in Ayurveda.

Centuries ago, Ayurvedic acharyas defined health inclusive of mental health which was also recognized by WHO resulting in inclusion of "mental health" in their definition of health in 20th century, which states that "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"<sup>[2]</sup>.

The WHO stresses that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder.<sup>[3]</sup>

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and

fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.<sup>[4]</sup>

## DESCRIPTION

Mana develops in 5<sup>th</sup> month in intra-uterine life<sup>[5]</sup>. Mana is responsible for origin of life in combination with body, senses and soul<sup>[6]</sup>. Mana makes soul conscious, aware of surroundings and is responsible for perception of feelings<sup>[7]</sup>. Satva (Mana), Atma (soul) and Sharir (body) are labeled as 3 main pillars of life (Tridanda). They combine to form Purusha (living being)<sup>[8]</sup>. Ayurvedic management is aimed at treating this Purusha. To attain knowledge of something or to perceive the sensations, it is mandatory for Soul, Senses, Mana and Objects to come together simultaneously, only then we can perceive something<sup>[9]</sup>. Thus, Mana plays an indispensable role in making sensory organs capable of perceiving their objects/sensations. Mana plays the role of charioteer like Lord Shri Krishna and controls the sensory organs like horses. Its also quoted that *sukh* (freedom from diseases) is achieved through *mana*<sup>[10]</sup>. सुखाद्युपलब्धिःसाधनंइन्द्रियमनः!(*tarka sangraha*)

This vast literature enlightens the existence and importance of *mana* in life.

### The actions of Mana:-

Themana controls all the senses (*indriyabhograha*) and keeps a check on itself<sup>[11]</sup>. (*swasyanigraha*)

इन्द्रियाभिग्रहः कर्म मनसः स्वस्य निग्रहः

उद्दो विचारश्च ततःपरं बुद्धिं प्रवर्तते!!

Thinking, Judgement, logical analysis/interpretation, goal and aims, resolution, etc are the subjects of *mana*<sup>[12]</sup>. Healthy mind is responsible for analytic, logical thinking and its improper functioning invites illogical thoughts, decreases the analytical power and is very harmful for body. *Charaka* also suggests that treatment for mental illnesses should be sought through an expert. This shows the insight of Acharyas, who elaborately explained the indispensable role of *mana* in life. Modern science acknowledged this concept in late 20<sup>th</sup> century only. The concept of emotional

intelligence (EI) came into existence in 1960's and became popular after popularization of Daniel Goleman's book titled- "Emotional Intelligence, why it can matter more than IQ". Goleman identified 5 components of EI<sup>[13]</sup>:

1. Self awareness
2. Internal motivation
3. Self regulation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

*Charaka* has defined all of them individually way back in historical period. *Chintyam, vicharyam, uhyam, dhyeyam, sankalpam* are called as 'arth' in *charak sharir sthana*<sup>[12]</sup>.

चिन्त्यंविचार्यमूह्यं च ध्येयंसंकल्पमेव च

यत् किञ्चित् मनसो ज्ञेयं तत् सर्वं हि अर्थं संज्ञकम्!! च. शा. १/२०

1. Chintyam- thinking (thoughtfulness), speculation.
2. Vicharyam –discretion, judgement, discussion, intention, observation
3. Uhyam – logical interpretation
4. Dhyeyam – goal, aim
5. Sankalpam-Resolution, determination

Ayurveda explains 3 *mansik gunas*- *Satva, Raja* and *Tama*<sup>[14]</sup>. Last two are also known as *mansika doshas*, because they are responsible for causing diseases.

*Sushruta* broadly categorized diseases into types:- *Adhyatmika, Adhibhautika and Aadbhidaivik*<sup>[15]</sup>. The 3<sup>rd</sup> category includes many mental disorders or psychiatric illnesses. In another classification, disease are categorized as *Sharirik, Mansik and Aguntaja*<sup>[16]</sup> (pertaining to body, mind and due to trauma respectively). Various psychiatric or mental diseases are mentioned in Ayurveda, among them few are well elaborated like *Apsmara, Unmada, Atavabhinivesh, grahabadha* etc. *Mansik dosh* predominance creates disharmony in mental health. Ayurvedic texts widely explained the interdependence of *manas* and *sharir* in causing various diseases<sup>[17]</sup>. Few examples are *Grahani,*

*Ardhavbhedaka, Atisara, Chhardi* etc. where psyche plays an important role.

#### **Preventive Aspect:-**

According to Ayurveda, *nidana parivarjana* is the foremost treatment<sup>[18]</sup>. Therefore, there are ample references in *brihat trayi* regarding preventive measures:- e.g. *Ritucharya, Dincharya, Sadvritta, Achara rasyana*, etc. *Charak* explained the rules and regulations to consume food in proper form and with proper concentration<sup>[19]</sup>. Otherwise, it can lead to various digestive problems. The wide sphere of preventive measures is a revolutionary and exclusive contribution of Ayurveda and is a real gift to world. Modern lifestyle is full of stress, haste and improper dietary habits which invites ever-growing illnesses. Ayurveda can play a pivotal role in prevention of psychiatric/ mental illnesses and thus save many lives.

It is described in *samhitas* that before the mental illness inflicts the body, people should practice *ritucharya* and *dincharya* to protect themselves.

#### **Factors causing mental illness:-**

Mental health depends upon many factors. Similarly, origin of mental illness is also multifactorial. The major factors to cause any disease are:- *Asatmyaindriyarth samyog, pragyapradh and parinam*<sup>[20]</sup>. *Pragyapradh* means doing inappropriate things knowingly which in turn vitiates all the doshas<sup>[21]</sup>. Dominance of *raja and tama doshas* and people, who have low self esteem, low tolerance power and lower threshold (i.e. *awara satva* people) are prone to psychiatric disease. People who don't follow guidelines of "Sadvritta" means the guidelines which shall be followed in personal, social, religious and practical dealings<sup>[22]</sup>. *Manas Sadvritta* is also explained in texts<sup>[23]</sup>. Ayurveda has beautifully explained them as Ayurveda is a science of life, not merely a treatment giver. *Pragyapradh* (knowingly doing inappropriate things) is referred as biggest cause of *mansik disorders* like *Irshya* (jealousy), *Shoka* (grief), *bhaya* (fear), *Krodha* (anger), *amhakara* (pride)

and *dwesh* (rivalry)<sup>[24]</sup>. Dominance of *Raja* and *tamsa doshas* results in many harmful emotions which leads to psychiatric disorders. These emotions are-*Karma, Krodha, Lobh, Moh, Irshiya, Maan, Mad, Shok, Chinta, Udvega*, etc.

#### **Management :-**

Major treatment modalities explained for different diseases in Ayurveda are:- *Daivavyapshrya, Yuktivyapshrya and Satvavajya*<sup>[25]</sup>. *Daivavyapshrya* is recommended in mental disorders induced by *Agantuja* factors (external). *Yuktivyapshrya* includes *aushadha* and *ahara* (medicines and diet). In this regard, recently cuckoo meat is found to be useful. *Satvavajya- chikitsa* means to refrain the mind from desires from the objects which disturbs the state of mind. Here, it is told that, how mind plays an important role in causing the diseases. (Ch.Su.11/54). In 19<sup>th</sup> century, William Sweester was the 1<sup>st</sup> to coin the term 'Mental Hygiene'. Further, American Psychiatric association defined mental hygiene as the "the art of pressurizing the mind against all incidents and influences calculated to deteriorate its qualities, impair its energies, or derange its movements"<sup>[26]</sup>. These all aspects were broadly covered under *Satvavajya chikitsa* told in Ayurveda.

Not only this, there are number of *aushadha, rasayana* and *upkrama* that are being used in to treat various mental disorders and most important of them is *Achara rasayana*<sup>[27]</sup>. Ch.Ch.1/4/30-35. Various *Panchkarma* procedures and especially *Nasya* has been advocated to treat mental illnesses. Nasal route is said to be a door to head and brain<sup>[28]</sup>. Recent studies have shown that drugs instilled from nasal route are capable of reaching the CNS and thus are potent to treat the disorders<sup>[29]</sup>.

The urine of jennet and mare are specifically known to treat mental disorders.<sup>[30]</sup>

Ayurvedic management has a special approach to treat the diseases from the root of its origin. *Acharya Charaka* advocated that the physician

should reach the sub-conscious mind of patient, only then he can give proper treatment<sup>[31]</sup>.

*ज्ञानबुद्धिप्रदीपेनयोनाविशतितत्त्ववित्!*

*आतुरस्यान्तरात्मानं न सरोगाश्चिकित्सति!*

*च.वि.४/१२*

Ayurveda reckons that a good clinician should try to reach the soul or subtle body of the patient so as to treat him thoroughly. The empathetic and positive gestures and affectionate touch by a compassionate clinician can bring out positive changes in physiological processes and trigger the healing mechanisms of the body. This helps in self-defence from the ailments and negative energies. This aspect is grossly overlooked by the doctor's now-a-days and patients keep on changing treatments frequently as they don't get proper relief.

## CONCLUSION

According to world health report, mental disorders affect 1 in 4 people at some points in their lives. ([https://www.who.int/whr/2001/media\\_centre/press\\_releases/en/](https://www.who.int/whr/2001/media_centre/press_releases/en/))

Around 450 million people currently suffer from various mental conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill health and disability worldwide. Treatments are available but only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of people with known mental disorder seek help of health professionals. Ayurvedic principles and treatment guidelines can be a strong answer to ever increasing problem of stress related disorders and psychogenic illnesses. The real prominent solution is to treat the cause and cure the patient from sub conscious level along with physical treatment. In broader view, it can be said that the concept of mana, manovigyana, jnanaotpati, manasroga samprapti, manas vikara classification, all of them are given in Charaka and other treatise of Ayurveda, centuries back. Though the detailed mental examination is not explained but the brief description is found. It is clearly evident that Ayurvedic literature has a detailed description about mana, mansika guna, karma, manas roga and then treatment. The central body has recognized

this potential field of management of psychiatric disorders and recently started a separate post graduate course in Manas rog. Still a lot needs to be done. This can be a strong area for future prospects and hopefully new researches will be encouraged in this field to make full use of strong potential of Ayurveda. It will reduce the fast emerging cases of psychiatric illness and help in maintaining the mental harmony of people.

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