

AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TOWARDS DEPRESSION, A LIFESTYLE DISORDER

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ABSTRACT:

Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors. WHO states that more than 350 million people are suffering from depression. The problem is increasing day by day and may lead to serious consequences like suicide. On observing various articles regarding depression it is observed that the major contributing factors for depression are poor diet, improper habits of eating, abusing drugs and alcohol, overworking, lack of exercise, poor sleep, lack of leisure time etc. In short, improper lifestyle is the main causative factor for depression. In Ayurvedic perspective, diseases like Unmada, Apasmara and Atattvabhinivesha are considered as Manasika vyadhi. Acharya Sushruta considers health of mind utmost important while defining a healthy individual. The term depression can be considered nearer to 'Vishada'. It can be observed as symptom in various Manas (psychological) Vyadhis. Acharya Charaka considers it responsible for increasing any disease (Vishado rogavardhananam). Medhya Dravyas can be useful in management of the disease. Modification of lifestyle according to Sadvritta i.e. Achara Rasayana along with use of Nitya Rasayana Dravyas in Ahara can be useful for treating depression. The present work reviews management of depression by modification in lifestyle according to Ayurveda texts and modern articles.

Key words: Depression, lifestyle disorders, Manas, Sadvritta, Vishada, Achara Rasayana

INTRODUCTION:

Lifestyle is a major reason behind keeping one healthy both physically as well as mentally. Since long human being is seeking for health and for that he is using various medicines. These medicines are either plant origin, animal origin, minerals or chemical origin. For maintaining health it is needed that one should live upto the expectations of nature. Health here includes both physical, mental and spiritual. But in today's era human lifestyle is day by day becoming farther from nature and more and more artificial which is causing upsurge many diseases. These diseases include disorders like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, hyper or hypothyroidism and many more. These lifestyle disorders include mental disorders also. Depression is one such disease. World Health Organization states that depression affects about 350 million people all over the world. It leads to many complications in the life and may turn into serious consequences like suicide. Many of the cases of depression are due to faulty habits i.e. lifestyle. In Ayurveda the term Vishada, Mano Avasada can be compared with depression. It is a disease of Mana (mind). Acharya Charaka has stated as 'Vishado

Rogavardhananam Agryam' i.e he considers Vishada as the most important factor to increase any disease. That means Ayurveda has given very much importance to Vishada.

DEPRESSION:

Modern lifestyle has given rise to many diseases of body and mind. Depression is one and major among them. Modern lifestyle includes fast life, increased competition, crave for money, materialism, stress and many other factors. A review is done regarding the risk factors for depression on the internet which led to following observations.

Major depression is defined as depressed mood on a daily basis for a minimum duration of 2 weeks. An episode may consist of sadness, indifference, apathy, or irritability. Sleep patterns can get changed, appetite and weight may get altered. Motor agitation or retardation; fatigue; impaired concentration and decision making; feelings of shame or guilt; and thoughts of death or dying are some of the consequences. Patients loose pleasure in all sorts of enjoyable activities, may get awake early in the morning, is always in unhappy mood which is qualitatively different from sadness, and patient often notices variation in mood which is worse in morning hours¹.

OBSERVATION:

A review was done regarding the type of lifestyle which should be followed to get out of the symptoms of depression. Various studies have been done on the aspect related to lifestyle of the depressed individual which are in favour of changing the lifestyle. Some reviews are also observed which are not concluding about the effectiveness of lifestyle modification for treating depression. But these studies too state the need of further study in drawing definite conclusion regarding the relation between lifestyle – which includes diet, exercise, sleep – and depression.

MODERN PERSPECTIVE:

A systematic review done by Gary Cooney et al concludes that Exercise is moderately more effective than no therapy for reducing symptoms of depression. The authors further conclude that exercise is not found more effective than antidepressants for reducing symptoms of depression, however they accept that the conclusion is based on smaller number of studies. Hence larger systematic study is needed². Anand Godse et al concluded that Suryanamaskara is effective in leading to R-dispositions like mental quiet, at ease/peace, rested and refreshed, strength and awareness and joy. Stress, worry, and negative emotion were found lower in the group performing Suryanamaskara compared to the control group³. Michal Artal et al in their article in The Physician and Sportsmedicine Journal state that physical activity is a useful tool for preventing and easing depression symptoms. However while prescribing exercise as a supplement to medication and psychotherapy it was advised that the complexity and the individual circumstances of each patient must be considered. During treatment it

should be considered that failure by the patient to carry out exercise regimen may lead to a sense of guilt and self blame in him/her. So a feasible, flexible and pleasurable program needs to be advised. Walking—alone or in a group—is often a good option⁴. Ergil Martinsen et al while comparing aerobic and nonaerobic exercise in the treatment of clinical depression found that Depression scores in both groups, which were measured by DMS-III-R criteria for major depression, were found to be significantly reduced during the study, but there was no significant difference between the groups. This indicates the importance of exercise in treating depression. However effects of aerobic and nonaerobic exercise were not found much different⁵. F Dimeo et al did a pilot study to find the benefits of aerobic exercise in the patients of major depression which found that depression scores were clinically and significantly reduced due to physical training. It concluded that aerobic exercise can improve mood in the patients suffering from major depression substantially⁶. Chanudda Nabkasorn et al conducted a study on 49 female volunteers with mild to moderate depressive symptoms measured by Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) scale. They were randomly assigned either an exercise or usual daily activities for 8 weeks. The study concludes that that a group jogging exercise may be effective in improving depressive state, hormonal response to stress and physiological fitness of adolescent females with depressive symptoms⁷.

A review of reviews on the relation between depression and exercise made by Amanda Daley has provided the information that there is much variation in the results of exercise in the management of depression. There are some concerns regarding the quality of methodology, overestimation of effects and lack of data regarding its long term benefits. But it has been stated that exercise should be recommended to the patients of depression in combination with the other treatments⁸. A review done by A Byrne and D G Byrne also supports the anti-depressant, anti-anxiety and mood enhancing effect of exercise programmes⁹.

A cross sectional analysis to find out the effect of Mediterranean diet on depression suggests that Mediterranean Dietary Pattern, which includes adequate intake of important nutrients in the form of fruits, nuts, vegetables, cereals, legumes or fish, gives protection against depression¹⁰. Almudena Sanchez-Villegas and Miguel A Martinez-Gonzalez reviewed the studies on the role of diet in preventing depression. They found that cardiovascular diseases and depression have many common physiopathological mechanisms. Lipids having anti-inflammatory properties such as omega 3 fatty acids or olive oil were found beneficial for depression while the intake of trans fatty acids and consumption of diet dominant in such fats like fast food and bakery products increase the risks of depression. Authors further highlight the need of observational studies with improved methodology¹¹. Shae Quirk et al studied the association between diet quality, dietary patterns and depression in adults by a systematic review. Their study found limited evidence to support the association between traditional Mediterranean diet, Japanese diet and healthy diet; and depression¹².

Adrian Lopresti et al reviewed the lifestyle factors viz. diet, sleep and exercise which contribute to important pathways associated with major depression. Authors have stated that research on major

depression has confirmed that it is caused by an array of biophysical and lifestyle factors. These three influence the development, progression and treatment of such condition. Pathways related to depression viz. neurotransmitter processes, immuno-inflammatory pathways, hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis disturbances, oxidative stress and antioxidant defence systems, neuroprogression, and mitochondrial disturbances are influenced by the diet, sleep and exercise¹³. François Berthezene et al reported that anxiety and depression are associated with unhealthy lifestyle in patients at risk of cardiovascular disease. Unhealthy lifestyle includes physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and smoking. Depression and anxiety are associated with global score reflecting unhealthy lifestyle¹⁴.

Jerome Sarris et al suggest that factors of modernity are contributing the manifestation of depression. There is now enough evidence to suggest the involvement of lifestyle factors in the pathogenesis of depression. The authors advocate judicious use of medication and psychological techniques, but also recommend more integrative approach. The further suggest inclusion of lifestyle modification as a routine part of treatment and preventive efforts¹⁵. Marit Skrove et al suggests that symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescents are associated with unhealthy lifestyle and low physical activity. Resilience characteristics were found to be protective against the symptoms and influence the association between lifestyle factors and symptoms of anxiety and depression¹⁶.

Berk M et al states that physical activity plays a role in the risk of depression and there also is a base for using exercise as a therapeutic modality. Smoking and alcohol are risk factors for depression and good quality diet is protective against depression and poor diet increases the risk¹⁷. Martinsen EW also supports the view that desirable changes in lifestyle such as physical exercise has great potential in prevention and treatment of depression. It is also evident that physically active people are at lesser risk of developing depression and exercise shows significant benefits for the patients with mild to moderate depression and also in the patients of anxiety¹⁸.

From the articles mentioned above it can be stated that older studies find little relation between lifestyle and depression probably because of lack of enough evidences and less access of information. But recent researches support a major role of lifestyle modification in the management of depression.

AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE:

On observing various Ayurvedic texts it was found that many words are can be correlated with the word depression such as Vishada (C.Su.25/) Manovikara (C.Su.25/40), Duhkham (C.Vi.8/119), Vakkayachittavasada (S.Ka.3/21-24), one among Ashitirvatavikaras (C.Su.20/11) and Chetaso anavasthiti, khedo va (C.Ni.1/21).

Mind (Manas) is Panchabhautika in nature, so the factors which vitiate the Sharira (body) also vitiates the Mana. Vishada, being one among Nanatmaja Vatavikara¹⁹, Ahara-Vihara which vitiates Vata

dosha vitiates Mana too and all types of Vata should be taken into consideration at first place. Following are the types of Vata, Pitta and Kapha which have relation with any of the Manasika Lakshanas.

Prana Vayu is responsible for Dharana of Buddhi-Hridaya-Indriya-Chitta; Udana Vayu is responsible for Vakpravritti, Prayatna, Urja, Bala and Smriti; Vyana Vayu is Kritsnadehachari and performs Prayah sarva Kriya i.e. almost all the activities of the body; Samana Vayu is working for Agnisandhukshana and helps various activities.

Pachaka Pitta is responsible for Shesha Pitta Anugraha, Baladana and Sadhaka Pitta is responsible for Buddhi-Medha-Abhimana-Abhipretartha sadhana. Avalambaka Kapha causes Hridaya avalambana and Tarpaka Kapha is doing Aksha (Indriya) tarpana²⁰.

The actions which are indicated above are the functions of Doshas in the normal state. So all these can contribute to Manasika Vyadhis and all of these should be taken into consideration while thinking of Vishada. Vitiated Pranavayu can lead to Vikruti in Indriya Dharana Karma, decreased stimulation (Prerana) which may lead to Vishada. Udanavayu after vitiation, can affect the cognition process (Manobodhana) and speech. Vyanavayu is travelling all over the body and controls almost all the function, hence its vitiation can hamper any function.

Vitiated Pachaka Pitta is responsible for improper nourishment of other Pittas and especially when it fails to nourish Sadhaka Pitta it may lead to decreased energy level (Utsaha hani) and decreased self esteem (Abhimana). Vitiation of Avalambaka Kapha causes vitiation of Hridaya which is the base of Mana and that of Tarpaka Kapha may lead to failure of nourishment to Mana and other Indriya²¹.

In this way vitiation of these Doshas can lead to various diseases of Mana. First and foremost important part for maintaining health is follow proper Dinacharya and Sadvritta. If it is followed then chances of vitiation of Doshas is minimum. Sadvritta is also termed as Achara Rasayana. Sadvritta is more important as far as mental health is concerned. Specific rules which should be followed can be described as follows.

Following the procedures in Dinacharya especially Nasya (which is generally ignored) by Anutaila and Shirobhyanga on daily basis helps in proper functioning of Indriya. Indriya includes Mana also. Hence it can be helpful in avoiding Manasik Vyadhis like depression.

Charaka has described in detail about Sadvritta. A whole Adhyaya is dedicated for that. It is also termed as Achara Rasayana. Acharya Charaka states that one who wants to maintain normal condition of body and mind should always perform the noble acts i.e. Sadvritta. He mentions how one should behave when he/she is alone and when in public. Some of the acts which affect psyche are denoted below. If those are followed then there are lesser chances of developing depression. It includes routine activities like how to take bath, how to perform daily rituals like Yajna, cutting hair-

beard-nails, oleation (abhyanga), how and when to take food, way of speech, how to talk to new people, how to behave with animals and how to behave with other human beings and much more. Sadvritta further includes the way of behaving with other's wife, how to behave with bad people, keeping one's secrets intact etc.²²

He further states that one should not waste his time without doing any work, should not bow to his Indriya, not to be overjoyed by success and not to get too depressed if work is not accomplished. There is a long list which can be mentioned.

While mentioning ultimate consequence of Sadvritta he states that the one who follows it lives for over hundred years without any disease (Avyadhi). He also gets prosperity and gets friendship of all the living beings. If practised, it fulfils two objectives simultaneously – health and control over sense organs²³.

Some studies have been carried out regarding the effect of some procedures on mental illness. A pilot study for investigating the effect of Abhyanga on subjective stress experience has concluded that the procedure is promising in reducing the subjective stress experience²⁴. A clinical study done by Sadananda concludes that sarvanga Abhyanga is significantly improving the overall quality of life²⁵. These studies also further state the importance of Abhyanga in treating mental conditions.

CONCLUSION:

Depression is becoming a major illness in today's era. It can be prevented by various techniques which are mentioned in various texts. Also a patient suffering with depression after following Dinacharya and Sadvritta mentioned in Ayurveda along with daily exercise, healthy diet, use of proper nutrients, daily walking in fresh air, mixing with friends etc. can get improved without using much medication from the symptoms of depression.

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