

## AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH: ADDRESSING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

\*<sup>1</sup>Dr. Rishabh Sikarwal and <sup>2</sup>Prof. Gulab Chand Bairwa

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, PG Dept. of Shalakya Tantra, Madan Mohan Malviya Govt. Ayurved College  
Udaipur (Raj.).

<sup>2</sup>Prof. & HOD, PG Dept. of Shalakya Tantra, Madan Mohan Malviya Govt. Ayurved College  
Udaipur (Raj.).

Article Received on  
25 January 2025,

Revised on 14 Feb. 2025,  
Accepted on 06 March 2025

DOI:10.20959/wjpr20256-35911



\*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Rishabh Sikarwal**

PG Scholar, PG Dept. of  
Shalakya Tantra, Madan  
Mohan Malviya Govt.  
Ayurved College Udaipur  
(Raj.).

### ABSTRACT

In the fast-paced modern world, anxiety and depression are rampant, affecting millions globally. While allopathic medicine offers treatment options, many patients seek natural, holistic solutions with fewer side effects. There is a growing recognition of the limitations of conventional treatments and the need for more integrative and personalized approaches. *Ayurveda*, offers a multifaceted approach to address the root causes of mental disease. Drawing upon classical texts, modern research, and clinical insights, this paper unravel the nuanced understanding of the *doshas* (bio-energies), *gunas* (qualities), and *dhatus* (tissues) as they relate to mental health. *Ayurvedic* understanding of anxiety and depression, linking them to imbalances in the subtle energies of *prana*, *tejas*, and *ojas*, helps us develop strategies for managing these conditions, including dietary modifications, herbal remedies, stress-management techniques (*yoga*, *pranayama*, meditation), and lifestyle adjustments. *Ayurveda* also provides a unique

perspective on mental health, emphasizing the mind-body connection and the importance of individualized treatment plans tailored to one's unique constitution (*prakriti*) and current imbalances (*vikriti*), emphasizing the role of self-awareness, self-care, and mindfulness in cultivating mental well-being. By integrating traditional *Ayurvedic* principles with modern psychological insights, we pave the way for a more inclusive and effective model of mental health care. By bridging the wisdom of *Ayurveda* with contemporary scientific understanding, we can offer patients a holistic and effective approach to achieving mental well-being.

Through the *Ayurvedic* approach to mental health, we can empower individuals to cultivate inner peace and emotional resilience in the face of life's challenges.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, mental health, anxiety, depression, holistic approach, personalized medicine, mind-body connection, self-care, integrative therapies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced, stress-laden society, mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression, have become increasingly prevalent. Conventional treatments often focus on symptom relief rather than addressing the root causes, which may lead to partial or temporary remission. This has fueled the search for alternative and complementary therapies that focus on holistic well-being. *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian medical system, offers an integrative and personalized approach that considers the interconnectedness of the body, mind, and spirit. It views mental disorders as arising from imbalances in the subtle energies and emphasizes treatments aimed at restoring balance.

## 2. Ayurvedic Perspective on Mental Health

*Ayurveda* classifies mental disorders under "*Manas Rogas*" (mental diseases) and sees the mind and body as inherently connected. The concept of mental health in *Ayurveda* revolves around the balance of the *tridoshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. The mind is influenced by *gunas* (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*) and the balance of three subtle energies: *prana* (vital life force), *tejas* (subtle fire), and *ojas* (vitality and strength).

**Anxiety** in *Ayurveda* is primarily seen as a disorder of *Vata dosha*. *Vata*, characterized by movement and instability, can cause restlessness, excessive worry, fear, and insomnia when aggravated.

**Depression**, on the other hand, often results from an imbalance in *Kapha* and *Tamas* (the quality of inertia). This manifests as sluggishness, lethargy, hopelessness, and feelings of heaviness both in the mind and body.

The *Ayurvedic* approach to addressing mental health focuses on correcting these imbalances through individualized treatment plans based on a person's unique constitution (*prakriti*) and current state of imbalance (*vikriti*).

### 3. Understanding Anxiety and Depression through *Doshas*

#### Anxiety and the *Vata* Imbalance

*Vata* is the *dosha* governing movement and the nervous system. When imbalanced, it leads to mental symptoms such as excessive fear, nervousness, and an inability to relax. The predominant qualities of *Vata*—dryness, lightness, coldness, and mobility—create instability in the mind.

#### Depression and the *Kapha* and *Tamas* Imbalance

*Kapha* and *Tamas* are associated with stability, groundedness, and inertia. When excessive, they result in feelings of lethargy, sadness, and withdrawal. The qualities of *Kapha*—heaviness, coldness, and stability—when imbalanced, can dull the mental faculties and lead to a depressive state.

### 4. Subtle Energies in Mental Health

In *Ayurveda*, the mind is seen as an extension of the subtle energies *prana*, *tejas*, and *ojas*.

***Prana*:** Governs breath, life energy, and sensory perception. Imbalance can lead to anxiety, lack of focus, and disconnection from reality.

***Tejas*:** Represents clarity and intellect. When in excess, it can burn out mental faculties, leading to frustration and irritability.

***Ojas*:** Provides vitality and sustains mental stability. Its depletion often results in depression, fatigue, and a lack of joy in life.

### 5. *Ayurvedic* Strategies for Managing Anxiety and Depression

The *Ayurvedic* approach to treating mental health disorders emphasizes restoring balance to the *doshas* and nurturing the mind through holistic therapies. These include dietary recommendations, herbal remedies, and lifestyle modifications tailored to individual needs.

#### 1. Dietary Modifications

- Diet is critical in balancing the *doshas* and supporting mental health. *Ayurveda* recommends specific foods and dietary practices for mental clarity and emotional stability:
- For anxiety, calming and grounding foods are suggested to pacify *Vata* such as warm, moist, and mildly spiced foods, including cooked grains, root vegetables, and healthy fats like ghee.

- For depression, foods that stimulate and uplift *Kapha* are advised, including light, spicy, and bitter foods like ginger, turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), and mustard greens.

## 2. Herbal Remedies

Ayurvedic herbs have been used for centuries to support mental well-being. Some of the key herbs include for example.

- *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*): Renowned for reducing stress, enhancing vitality, and balancing *Vata* and *Kapha*.
- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*): Known for improving cognitive function and reducing anxiety and depression.
- *Jatamansi* (*Nardostachys jatamansi*): Used to calm the mind and promote restful sleep.

## 3. Stress Management Techniques

Stress management in *Ayurveda* involves practices such as *yoga*, meditation, and *pranayama* (breathing exercises) to calm the mind and restore balance.

- *Yoga*: Specific postures like *Shavasana* (Corpse Pose) and *Balasana* (Child's Pose) help calm the nervous system and reduce anxiety.
- *Pranayama*: Techniques like *Nadi Shodhana* (alternate nostril breathing) and *Bhramari* (humming bee breath) balance *Vata* and promote mental clarity.

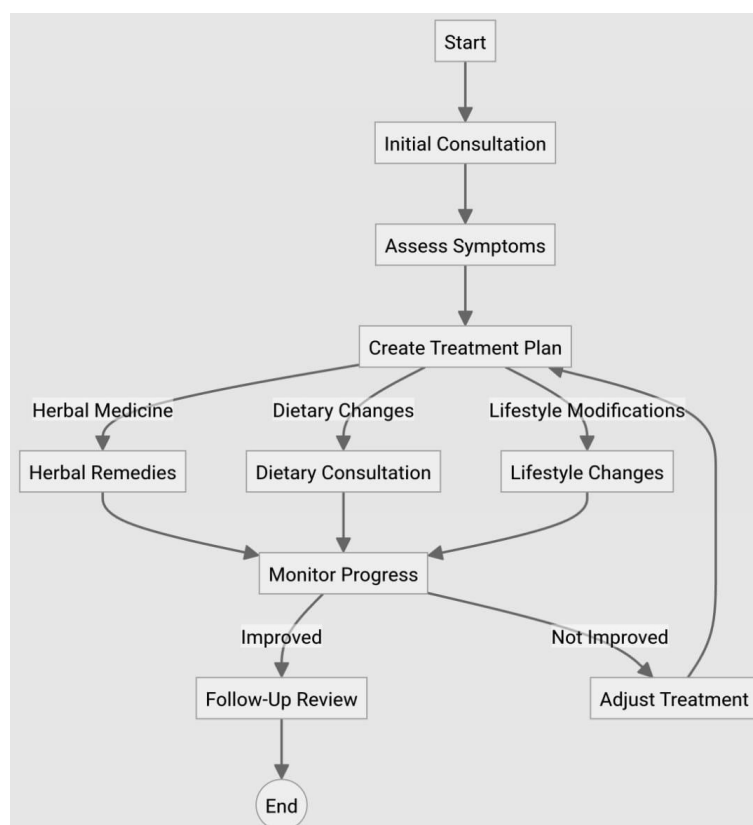
## 4. Lifestyle Adjustments

*Ayurveda* emphasizes a daily routine (*dinacharya*) and seasonal routines (*ritucharya*) to maintain harmony in the body and mind. Key lifestyle interventions include:

- Establishing a regular sleep cycle.
- Engaging in regular physical activity suited to one's constitution.
- Incorporating mindfulness practices and self-care rituals, such as oil massage (*abhyanga*).

## 6. The Role of *Prakriti* and *Vikriti* in Treatment

Ayurvedic treatments are highly personalized. Understanding an individual's *prakriti* (constitution) and *vikriti* (current imbalances) allows for a customized approach to treatment. For instance, a person with predominant *Vata* may require grounding therapies, while a person with *Kapha* excess may benefit from stimulating therapies.



**Figure 1**

Flow chart summarizing the treatment modalities of mental health care as per *ayurveda*.

## 7. DISCUSSION

*Ayurveda*'s holistic approach can complement modern psychological treatments for anxiety and depression. While modern medicine often focuses on neurotransmitter imbalances, *Ayurveda* considers a broader context, including lifestyle, diet, and emotional well-being. This integrative model provides a more comprehensive framework for mental health care, bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary science.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The *Ayurvedic* approach to mental health offers a holistic, personalized, and integrative method for addressing anxiety and depression. By balancing the *doshas*, nurturing the subtle energies, and incorporating mindfulness, *Ayurveda* empowers individuals to reclaim their mental well-being. Combining *Ayurvedic* principles with modern psychological insights opens new pathways for effective mental health care, fostering resilience, emotional balance, and inner peace.

**REFERENCES**

1. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Trans. P.V. Sharma, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, India, 2016.
2. Vagbhata, Ashtanga Hridaya, Trans. K.R. Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, India, 2012.
3. Kumar, S., Mishra, V., Mishra, S., "Ayurveda in Mental Health," Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 2007; 49(2): 275-278.
4. Patwardhan, B., Warude, D., Pushpangadan, P., Bhatt, N., "Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine: A Comparative Overview," eCAM, 2008; 5(4): 465-473.
5. Rao, V. S., Nammi, S., "Adaptogenic and Anti-Stress Activity of Traditional Ayurvedic Herbs," Journal of Ethnopharmacology, 2006; 108(3): 414-420.
6. Chopra, A., Doiphode, V. V., "Herbal Medicine for Depression, Anxiety, and Insomnia: A Review of Psychopharmacology and Clinical Evidence," Journal of Affective Disorders, 2011; 140(3): 403-412.
7. Gupta, S. K., Madaan, V., & Varghese, J., "Anxiety, Depression, and Ayurveda: Clinical Perspectives," AYU Journal, 2013; 34(3): 238-241.
8. Smith, C. A., & Douglass, S. J., "Yoga and Pranayama in Mental Health Care: A Review of Efficacy," The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 2014; 20(2): 102-109.
9. Singh, R. H., "Exploring the Holistic Benefits of Ayurvedic Medicine in Depression and Anxiety Management," Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, 2007; 2(4): 174-180.
10. Kumar, K., Sharma, A., Gupta, A., & Mishra, S., "Clinical Evaluation of Ayurvedic Interventions in Mental Health: A Randomized Controlled Trial," BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies, 2020; 20(1): 334-340.