

MANASIKA HETU: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN DISEASE CAUSATION – A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW BASED ON AYURVEDIC CLASSICS

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines health as a state of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being, going beyond the mere absence of disease. Among the causative factors of disease described in Ayurvedic classics, Manasika Hetu (psychological/mental causative factors) occupy a distinct and important place. Manas, governed by the Guna Satwa and the Doshas Raja and Tama, interacts intimately with the Sharirika Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), Dhatu, Agni and Strotas. When Raja and Tama become dominant, they vitiate the Tridosha and impair Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti, leading to Pragyaparadha a fundamental root cause of disease. Emotional states such as Krodha (anger), Bhaya (fear), Shoka (grief), Chinta (anxiety), Irshya (jealousy), Harsha (excessive joy), Sukha and Dukha are repeatedly cited across Brihatrayi as Nidana for a wide spectrum of somatic and psychosomatic disorders, ranging from Agnimandya, Atisara

and Jwara to Unmada, Apasmara, Rajyakshma and Vatavyadhi. This article compiles and reviews classical references pertaining to Manasika Hetu from Charaka Samhita and allied texts, examines their relationship with Tridosha, Dhatu, Agni and Strotas, and discusses their applied clinical relevance, including the scope of Manochikitsa (Ashwasana, Harshana, Santwana and Satwavajaya Chikitsa) in the management of psychosomatic disease. The

review underscores that a comprehensive understanding of Manasika Hetu is essential for holistic diagnosis and treatment in Ayurvedic clinical practice.

KEYWORDS: Manas, Manasika Hetu, Tridosha, Pragyaparadha, Krodha, Bhaya, Shoka, Psychosomatic disease, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.^[1] Ayurveda, the oldest continuously practiced science of life, was perhaps the earliest medical system to recognise this multidimensional view of health through its detailed conceptualisation of Manas (mind). Acharya Charaka, in Sutrasthana, describes Manas as the substance responsible for cognition (Chintya) and states that its seat (Adhishtana) is the Hridaya.^[2]

Manas is said to possess one Guna, Satwa, and two Doshas, Raja and Tama. When Raja and Tama become dominant over Satwa, they vitiate the Sharirika Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and may precipitate a wide range of mental and physical disorders. Manasika Hetu refers to the broad spectrum of mental states that influence mood and behaviour Kama (desire), Krodha (anger), Bhaya (fear), Shoka (grief), Chinta (anxiety), Irshya (jealousy), Udwega (agitation), Kshobha (perturbation), Lajja (shame), Klesha (affliction) and Ghrana (aversion). Excessive or prolonged expression of these Bhavas vitiates Raja and Tama, and consequently produces Pragyaparadha described as the primary root cause (Mula Hetu) of disease in Ayurveda.^[3]

Acharya Charaka has described Unmada, Apasmara and Attatvabhinivesha as Manasika Vikara in Nidanasthana and Chikitsasthana, where in Kama, Krodha, Bhaya, Moha, Ayasa, Trasa, Shoka, Chinta and Udwega are enumerated as the responsible factors. Beyond these primarily psychiatric conditions, Manasika Hetu is repeatedly cited across the Brihatrayi as a Nidana or an associated/aggravating factor (Sahayaka Hetu) in numerous somatic diseases as well, reflecting the psychosomatic orientation of classical Ayurveda. Unfortunately, most treatises on Padartha Vijnana emphasise only the philosophical dimension of Manas, with comparatively little compilation of its applied, clinical dimension. The present article attempts to bridge this gap by compiling and reviewing the classical references on Manasika Hetu in the form of Hetu (cause), Linga (features) and applied clinical relevance.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To compile and review the concept of Manas and its relationship with Tridosha, Dhatu, Agni and Strotas as described in classical Ayurvedic texts.
2. To enumerate the Manasika Hetu (Krodha, Bhaya, Shoka, Sukha, Dukha, Harsha and others) responsible for disease causation with their classical references.
3. To discuss the applied clinical relevance of Manasika Hetu in the diagnosis and management of disease.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a compilation based conceptual review. Classical Ayurvedic texts principally Charaka Samhita (Sutrasthana, Nidanasthana, Vimanasthana, Sharirasthana and Chikitsasthana) along with relevant commentaries were reviewed, and references pertaining to Manas and Manasika Hetu were extracted, tabulated and analysed under thematic headings.

Supporting material was drawn from Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Asthang Sangraha, standard Ayurvedic dictionaries (Amarakosha) and published peer-reviewed articles on Manas Siddhanta available through open-access repositories (National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage e-books) and indexed journals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Manas

As per Amarakosha, Manas is the instrument (Karana) through which Jnana (knowledge) is acquired, and it is intimately associated with Atma. Acharya Charaka considers Hridaya to be the seat of Chetas (Manas), while Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata similarly place the seat of Satwa in the Hridaya.^[2,4]

Manas and Tridosha

Vata: Among the five sub-types of Vata, Prana and Udana exercise the greatest influence over Manas, governing cognition, sensation and memory respectively, while Vyana Vayu shares the seat of Manas. Vata is the stimulator and controller of Manas, propelling all conative and cognitive activity; individuals of Vata Prakriti characteristically show quick, fluctuating psychological responses. Certain Manasika Bhava such as Bhaya and Shoka are themselves altered by vitiation of Vata, illustrating a bidirectional relationship.^[5]

Pitta: Sadhaka Pitta situated in the Hridaya is chiefly responsible for accomplishment of

desires (Sadhana), while Alochaka Pitta contributes to Buddhi Vishayaka functions such as thinking, remembering and desiring. Manah Prasada (mental clarity), Shaurya (courage), Dhi (determination) and Medha (intellect) are attributed to normal Pitta function; individuals of Pitta Prakriti are typically sharp, ambitious and prone to anger and pride.^[5]

Kapha: Avalambaka Kapha (seated in Hridaya), Tarpaka Kapha (seated in Sirah) and Bodhaka Kapha jointly influence the conative, cognitive and emotional faculties of Manas, and are correlated with Tama in Manasika Dosha terms. Kapha governs firmness (Dhairya), enthusiasm, forgiveness and non-greed; Kapha Prakriti individuals are characteristically calm, steady, faithful and non-greedy though relatively slow to act.^[5]

Manas and Dhatusarata

Classical texts correlate the excellence (Sarata) of each Dhatu with distinct psychological attributes for instance, Rasa Sarata with happiness and good fortune, Rakta Sarata with intellect and forgiveness, and Shukra Sarata with courage, wisdom and health indicating that the qualitative status of the bodily tissues is reflected in, and reflective of, the state of Manas.

Manasika Hetu and Agni

Acharya Charaka, in the Trividhakukshiya Adhyaya of Vimanasthana, states that food consumed while in a state of Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya, Krodha, Dukha, Shayya or Prajagara (nocturnal wakefulness) fails to be properly digested. Such Manasika Hetu vitiate the Dosha and Agni, precipitating Agnimandya and the formation of Ama (Annavisha), which in turn may progress to overt disease (Roga). Conversely, Mano-anukula Ahara Sevana (consumption of psychologically agreeable food) supports efficient Agni function.^[6]

Relation of Manasika Bhava with Dhatu

Although Dhatu are grosser structures than Dosha, their physiological integrity indirectly influences Manas. Worry (Chinta) is cited as a cause of Rasa Dhatu vitiation; Rakta Dhatu governs Indriyabhigraha (perception and stimulation of action); and Twak (skin) mediates Sparshanendriya, the sole means by which Manas experiences touch. Ojas the essence of all seven Dhatu functions as the bridge between Sharira and Manas: its increase (Ojovridhhi) produces Tushti (contentment) and Pushti (well-being), while its depletion (Ojakshaya), caused by Krodha and Shoka, manifests as Bhaya, Chinta and diminished immunity.^[7]

Manasika Hetu and Strotas**Table 1: Manasika Hetu implicated in Strotodushti as per Vimanasthana of Charaka Samhita.^[8]**

Strotas	Manasika Hetu (Dushti Karana)
Udakavaha Strotas	Bhaya
Rasavaha Strotas	Atichinta
Swedavaha Strotas	Krodha

Mahagada and Manasika Hetu**Table 2: Manasika Hetu associated with Ashtamahagada.^[9]**

Ashtamahagada	Manasika Hetu	Acharya
Vatavyadhi	Atisantapa, Chinta, Shoka, Dukha	Sushruta, Charaka
Kushtha	Atisantapa, Bhaya	Charaka
Udara	Papakarma, Pragyaparadha	Charaka
Apasmara	Bhaya, Trasa, Shoka	Charaka
Rajyakshma	Krodha, Dukha	Charaka

Manas as a Causative Factor of Disease (Pragyaparadha)

According to Ayurveda, disease manifests at both the Sharirika and Manasika levels, with three fundamental causes: Asatmyendriyarth Samyoga, Pragyaparadha and Parinama.^[10]

Pragyaparadha intellectual error leading to misconduct arises when Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti are deranged: Dhi-Vibhramsha causes confusion between Nitya-Anitya and Hita-Ahita; Dhriti Vibhramsha renders the mind incapable of restraining itself from undesirable objects; and Smriti Vibhramsha, produced when Manas is overwhelmed by Raga and Moha, destroys retention of correct knowledge.

Charaka further classifies Sattva into Pravara, Madhyama and Avara, correlating psychological resilience with susceptibility to disease (Vimanasthana, Ch. 8). Manasika factors can also precipitate specific somatic pathology for instance, Jwara arising from the fire of Krodha, and Atisara from the Rajasika Bhava of Krodha and Irshya.

MANASIKA HETU AND DISEASES: CLASSICAL REFERENCES

The following section compiles representative classical references (Charaka Samhita) documenting individual Manasika Bhava as Nidana for specific diseases. Owing to space constraints, a selected set of representative citations is presented for each Bhava; an exhaustive compilation is available with the corresponding author on request.

Krodha (Anger)

Krodha is an intensified state of anger that harms the self or others, and is associated with vitiation of Raja, Vata and Pitta. Vidroha, Udweha, Atisantapa and Dwesha represent its aggravated states. Representative references are enlisted in Table 3.

Table 3: Representative references of Krodha as Manasika Hetu.^[11]

Reference	Disease/Condition	Explanation (summary)
Cha. Chi. 26/104	Pratishyaya Nidana	Even wholesome food fails to digest when taken during Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya, Krodha or after an uncomfortable, sleepless night.
Cha. Vi. 2/9	Manovikarajanya Ajirna	Suppression of natural urges together with Krodha, fear or grief weakens Agni and vitiates Sadhaka Pitta with Vata, producing indigestion.
Cha. Ni. 6/8	Dhatukshayajanya Rajyakshma	Overwhelming grief, jealousy, longing and fear deplete Rasa Dhatu, predisposing to Rajyakshma if untreated.
Cha. Chi. 29/7	Vataraktha Nidana	Anger together with dietary incompatibility aggravates Vata and Rakta, precipitating Vatarakta.
Cha. Chi. 28/17	Vatavyadhi Nidana	Anger, daytime sleep, fear and urge-suppression are enumerated among the causes of Vata aggravation.
Cha. Su. 17/22, 17/32	Pittaja Shiroroga / Hridroga	Intense anger with excessive heat exposure aggravates Pitta, producing headache or cardiac disease.
Cha. Sha. 1/107	Pragyaparadha	Anger, fear, greed and similar Rajasika/Tamasika states leading to inauspicious conduct constitute Pragyaparadha, a root cause of disease.
Cha. Chi. 26/124	Arochaka Nidana	Anorexia arises from Vata-Pitta-Kapha vitiation caused by grief, fear, excessive greed and anger.

Bhaya (Fear)

Bhaya denotes dread or apprehension arising on confronting an undesirable situation, and is the antonym of Abhaya (fearlessness). It is documented as a Nidana across a very wide range of conditions.

Table 4: Representative references of Bhaya as Manasika Hetu.^[11]

Reference	Disease/Condition	Explanation (summary)
Cha. Ni. 8/4	Apasmara Nidana	Predominance of Raja-Tama overpowering Satwa, together with Bhaya, Kama, Krodha and Shoka disturbing Hridaya, produces Apasmara.
Cha. Chi. 9/4	Unmada Nidana	Excessive fear or excessive joy, along with unnatural postural strain, are enumerated as causes of Unmada.
Cha. Su. 17/76	Ojakshaya	Fear, grief and excessive alcohol intake among other factors deplete Ojas.
Cha. Chi. 8/62	Bhayaja Chardi	Fear precipitates vomiting or sneezing.

Cha. Chi. 22/4	Trishna Hetu	Mental agitation and fear, along with exertion and heat exposure, aggravate Pitta-Vata producing excessive thirst.
Cha. Su. 17/17	Vataja Shiroroga	Grief, fear and physical strain aggravate Vata in the cranial vessels, producing headache.
Cha. Chi. 19/8	Sannipataja Atisara	Fear, grief, anger and agitation weaken Agni and aggravate Tridosha, precipitating diarrhoea.
Cha. Vi. 6/5	Manasa Roga	Jealousy, grief, fear, anger, pride and hatred arising from Pragyaparadha manifest as mental disorders.

Shoka (Grief)

Shoka results from bereavement, loss of wealth or valued possessions, and encounters with distress; it vitiates Vata and Pitta. Prolonged Shoka in a person of Heena Satwa may progress to Murchha or even death.

Table 5: Representative references of Shoka as Manasika Hetu.^[11]

Reference	Disease/Condition	Explanation (summary)
Cha. Su. 19/4; Cha. Chi. 19/12	Atisara (Aagantuja)	Vata is rapidly aggravated by fear and grief, precipitating diarrhoea; Vata-pacifying therapy is indicated.
Cha. Ni. 8/4	Apasmara Hetu	Grief, along with fear, anger and agitation, disturbs Manas and precipitates Apasmara.
Cha. Chi. 26/124	Arochaka Nidana	Grief along with fear, greed and anger aggravates Tridosha, producing loss of appetite.
Cha. Chi. 14/13	Vataja Arsha	Grief is enumerated as a causative factor of Vata-predominant haemorrhoids.

Sukha, Dukha and Harsha

Sukha (contentment) represents the positive psychological factors that sustain a healthy mind; its disturbance is cited among the Nidana of Prameha, Nidra disorders, Kaphaja Madatyaya and Arsha, and among the Manasika Sadvritta principles (Cha. Su. 8/26, Cha. Chi. 6/4, 24/96, 14/9).

Dukha (mental suffering, grief and stress) is described as a significant Manasika Hetu capable of aggravating all three Dosha Vata through anxiety and worry, Pitta through anger and frustration, and Kapha through lethargy and excessive attachment thereby predisposing to conditions ranging from nervous and digestive disorders to inflammatory and metabolic disease (Cha. Su. 8/26, Cha. Chi. 28/17, Cha. Sha. 1/130, 4/134).

Harsha (excessive joy), though a positive emotion in moderation, is documented as a Nidana for Apasmara, Unmada, Jwara, Manasa Roga and several Gulma, Kushtha and Visha-related conditions when experienced in excess (Cha. Ni. 8/4; Cha. Chi. 9/83; Cha. Vi. 6/5, 7/11; among others), illustrating that even Satwika/pleasurable emotional states can become pathogenic if unregulated.

Other Manasika Hetu

Kama (unfulfilled sexual desire) produces Mana-Kshobha and is cited as a Nidana for Kamaja Jwara, Pandu, Kamala, Hikka and Shwasa. Irshya, Udweaga, Kshobha, Lajja, Klesha and Ghruna are documented as contributory Hetu in the vitiation of Dosha underlying several Vega-Sandharana-janya and Dhatukshaya-janya presentations of Rajyakshma, as well as in Unmada, Chhardi, Medoroga, Vatarakta and Aalasya.

DISCUSSION

The equilibrium of Sharira and Manas is central to Ayurvedic health. Manas comprises the Guna Satwa and the Dosha Raja and Tama; vitiation of Raja-Tama produces Pragyaparadha and Smriti-Bhramsha, the seed of most disease processes. Manasika Bhava such as Kama, Krodha, Bhaya, Shoka, Chinta and Irshya are consistently implicated in disease manifestation across the Brihatrayi.

Strotas serve as the internal transport system nourishing Dhātu and sustaining Tridosha function; several Acharyas cite Manasika Vikara as etiological factors for Strotodushti. The category of Mahagada — diseases of severe prognostic significance owing to extensive Dosha-Dushya involvement — likewise demonstrates Manasika Hetu as a major contributor to pathogenesis, as seen in Vatavyadhi, Kushtha, Udara, Grahani and Rajyakshma.

Agni, central to metabolic homeostasis, is consistently disturbed by Manasika Hetu, resulting in Agnimandya and Ama formation. Several diseases are classically sub-classified by their Manasika origin — Kamaja, Krodhaja, Shokaja and Bhayaja Jwara; Shoka-Shosha; Shoka-Atisara and Bhaya-Atisara — reinforcing the direct nosological role of Manasika Hetu rather than a merely contributory one. On the therapeutic side, classical Acharyas describe Manochikitsa modalities — Harshana, Santwana, Aashwasana and Trasana — alongside Satwavajaya Chikitsa as one of the three principal forms of treatment, underscoring that management of psychosomatic disease in Ayurveda is incomplete without addressing the Manasika dimension.

CONCLUSION

Manas occupies a pivotal role in maintaining Sharirika-Manasika equilibrium. Imbalance of Raja and Tama produces negative Manasika states — Krodha, Bhaya, Shoka, Chinta and others — that, when prolonged, weaken the body's natural resilience and disturb Tridosha, ultimately manifesting as disease. Even positive emotional states such as Harsha and Sukha, when experienced in excess, can become pathogenic. Since Manasika Hetu are extensively documented across classical Ayurvedic literature as Nidana for a wide spectrum of somatic, psychosomatic and psychiatric disorders, their systematic evaluation is essential for holistic Ayurvedic diagnosis (Nidana Panchaka) and for comprehensive management incorporating both Sharirika and Manasika Chikitsa, including Satwavajaya Chikitsa.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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