

MENTAL WELLNESS THROUGH AYURVEDA**HemRaj^{1*}, Balbir Singh² and Manju Saini³**

¹Phd Scholar Sri Krishna Ayush University Kurukshetra Haryana/Professor Kayachikitsa,
Mai Bhago Ayurvedic Medical College Muktsar.

²Professor and Head, Department of Kayachikitsa, Sri Krishna Ayush University Kurukshetra
Haryana.

³Associate Professor Govt. Ayurvedic College Patiala Punjab.

Article Received on
09 Dec. 2021,

Revised on 29 Dec. 2021,
Accepted on 19 January 2022

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20222-23017

Corresponding Author*Dr. HemRaj**

Phd Scholar Sri Krishna
Ayush University
Kurukshetra
Haryana/Professor
Kayachikitsa, Mai Bhago
Ayurvedic Medical College
Muktsar.

ABSTRACT

Mental health is important at every stage of life. Mental health is an integral part of life. Mental wellbeing is not the absence of negative thoughts and feelings. We all face difficult and challenging situations that cause us to feel angry, sad and overwhelmed. It is about being able to understand and manage those feelings, so that generally able to feel confident and maintain positive mindset. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is very important component of health. According to WHO: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."^[1] An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental

diseases. In Ayurveda, perfect health is defined as "a balance between body, mind, spirit, and social wellbeing. In Ayurveda it is mentioned that the doshas must be in equilibrium, the digestive fire or *Agni* must be in a balanced state and the tissues */Dhatus* and wastes or *Malas* must work in a normal state. The sensory and motor organs and mind, *atma* must be in a happy state. This is a definition of *Swastha* /healthy person."^[2] Mental health is essential to our overall well-being. It is equally important as physical health. When we are mentally well, it increases our productivity, we become more focused and energetic. There are 3 types of treatment in *Ayurveda*; *Daivyapashray Chikitsa*, *Yuktivyapashray Chikitsa* and *Satwawajay Chikitsa*. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is a method of withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome

objects.^[3] Aim of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is control of mind. *Satwavajaya Chikitsa* is useful in emotional disorders, psycho-somatic disorders and Chronic disorders. Some more traditional mental health promoting practices are correct behavior (*sadvrtt*), *Aachar Rasayana* and yoga.

KEYWORD: Mental health, *Swastha*, *Sadvritta*, *Aachar Rasayana*, *Yoga*.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is very important component of health. Mental health means keeping our mind positive and healthy. Most of the people focus only on physical health, but mental health is also equally important. People tend to ignore the wellness of their mind. Both physical and mental health is equally important.

Studies estimate that at least 10% of the world's population is affected by mental illness and that 20% of children suffer from mental disorders. A study reveals that 56 million of Indian population suffers from depression and 38 million suffers from anxiety disorders. Cases are growing significantly every day.

Mental wellness implies a state of psychological well-being. It denotes having a positive sense of how we feel, thinks, and act, which improves one's ability to enjoy life and to remain happy. Mental wellness term is being used by psychologists to denote logical-positive thinking, clear comprehension and reasoning ability.

A combined approach that includes both mental and physical health can improve overall health. Now it is proved that treating mental disorder and chronic illness together can help people better manage both anxiety, depression and chronic disease.

Mental sickness is becoming a growing issue in present time. Mental illness is common these days and can affect anyone in society. People are still reluctant to accept the illness of mind because of stigma related to mental disorders. They feel inferior to talk about mental disorders. Mental health cannot be separated from physical health. They both are equally important for a person. Our society needs to change its perception of mental disorder. If the mental illness is not treated at the correct time, then the consequences can be grave.^[5]

Concepts of mental health in ayurveda

Concept of mana

Mana is the entity through which the knowledge is obtained. The entity which makes a person knowledgeable is *mana*. *Mana* is the superior analyzing faculty and controls the whole body. *Mana* is an *ubhayendriya*, which perceives the signals and relays them to *budhi* and further *buddhi* guides *Karmendriya* to act accordingly.^[6]

3 Faculties of mana

According to Chakrapani the knowledge, which is having three faculties as *Dhee*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti*. *Dhee*, *Dhriti*, and *Smriti* are the three main faculties, which are closely related to *Manas*. *Dhee* (Perception), *Dhriti* (Retention) and (Memory) are the entities which are responsible for attaining, holding and recalling of the knowledge. *Dhee* is the intellectual and discriminating power of mind that identifies the right and wrong. *Dhriti* is the ability of holding knowledge which was perceived in past and to utilize that knowledge against the subjects. *Smriti* means remembrance, memory or recalling power of mind. It is the ability to recall the past experiences.^[7]

Trigunatwa of mana

The mind is endowed with the properties of Trigunatwa i.e., *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The *Akasha* is represented in *Satvaguna*, *Vayu* and *Teja* are represented in *Rajas* while *Prithvi* and *Jala* are represented in *Tamas*. *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are the three essential constituents of mind, of which last two are noted *Manas dosha*, which can potently cause *Mano vyadhi* (mental disorders). Out of these three, *Satva* is only pure in quality (Positive Elements) while, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are said to be impure (*Manas dosha*). Activities of Psyche are due to the dynamic interplay between the 3 *Gunas*. According to *Sushruta*, the predominance of either *Satva guna* or *Mano doshas* will show the following characteristics:

Sattvika - Truthfulness, sharing nature, Endurance, Good conducts, Belief in God, Knowledge, Intellect, Capacity to learn, Memory and Self-control, these are the characteristic features of *Satva Guna* predominant person

Rajasika - *Rajo Guna* predominant persons are always in grief, lack of self-control, inflated self-esteem, Lying nature, Cruelty, Wickedness, Pride, Excitation, Attachment and Anger.

Tamasika - *Tamo Guna* predominant persons are in depressed mood, lack of faith in God, lack of good conducts, intellectual deficits, ignorance, crookedness, laziness and sleepiness.

All the positive attributes of the mind are due to the Satva constituent, and unwholesome activities are results of *Rajas* and *Tamas* constituents.^[8]

Causes of mental diseases

Asatmendriyartha Samyoga (Misuse of senses) is regarded as one of the principal cause of diseases. *Astmaya* means "improper," *indriya* means "sense organs," *artha* is "The objects, which are perceived through the sensory organs." and *samyoga* means "to combine" or "to link." *Asatmendriyartha samyoga* refers to improper contact of the senses with their objects, and results in an over stimulation or deficiency of sensory activity. This harms the body-mind, which requires moderation and harmony internally and externally for healthy functioning.

Considering *Manas* as an independent *Indriya*, it must have its own objects, which are experienced by the mind. Thus, besides being capable of perceiving *Indriya Visaya* (sensory objects), *Manas* has the ability of experiencing its own objects like anything that is thinkable.^[9] Thus, the objects of *manas* are:

Chintya - Object of thinking about do's and don'ts

Vicharya – Object of Reasoning, logic and discrimination

Uhya – Object of Judgment or guessing

Dhyeya –Object of continuous thinking about desired things

Sankalpa – Object of imagination and evaluation as to merit and demerit.

So, avoidance of *ati*, *hina*, and *mithya yoga* of *Chintya*, *Vicharya*, *Uhya*, *Dhyeya* and *Sankalpa* cure the mental disorders.^[10]

3 types of treatments modalities

Treatment methods according to *Charaka* has been classified into 3 categories; *Daiva Vyapasrya* – divine therapy, *Yukti Vyapasrya* – Planned regimen of food and medicine, and *Satvavajaya* -psychotherapy. Mental wellbeing has been classified under *Satvavajaya swasthivitta* and *Sadvritta* and *yoga*. *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* is considered to be having the psychospiritual approach with a nonpharmacological treatment modality which deals with the mind and its related attributes. *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* helps in controlling *Mana* (mind) away from *Ahita Artha* (distractible, unwholesome objects/thoughts/perceptions). Withdrawal of the bothered mind from unwholesome objects is the prime focus of *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*.^[11]

Satvavajaya chikitsa

सत्वावजयः- पुनरहितेभ्योऽर्थेभ्यो मनोनिग्रहः।

It is defined as method of controlling or restraining mind from unwholesome artha. Arth or Objects of Mind are Chintyam, Vicharyam, Oohyam, Dhyeyam, Sankalpam. Arth or Objects of Senses are Vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste. It can be inferred that Artha can be either Panchedriyarth or Mano Artha. But in Satvavajaya, it is quite logical to consider Mano Artha. *Ahit* (unwholesome) includes *Heen yog* (non indulgence), *Mithya yoga* (improper indulgence), *Ati yoga* (Excessive indulgence). *Asatmendriyarth samyoga* is regarded as one of the principal causes of disease. So, avoidance of *Ati*, *Hina*, and *Mithya Yoga* of *Chintya*, *Vicharya*, *Uhya*, *Dhyeya* and *Sankalpa* are important factors to cure the Psychiatric disorders.^[12]

Dimensions of satvavajaya chikitsa

Acharya Charaka has mentioned the following line of treatment for management of Manasa Roga under Satvavajaya Chikitsa.

1. *Ahitanam Anupsevana* and *Hitanam Upasevana*^[13] One should avoid *Ahitakara* (harmful) and adopting *Hitakara* (useful). In other words, it has been advised that mind should be restrained from unwholesome objects and engaged in wholesome.
2. *Trivarga Anvekshanam*. Trivarga comprises of *Dharma*-virtue, *Artha*-wealth and *Kaam*-desire. *Trivarga* is responsible for *Sukha* and *Dukha*. Therefore, consideration of Trivarga is must, which can be attained by proper knowledge. Anvekshana means to search or investigate So, the search for life or the above-mentioned *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kaam* real objectives of life is called as *trivarga-anvekshana*.
3. *Tadvidyaseva*; One who know the proper treatment of mental illness should treat the diseases.
4. *Atmadi Vigyanam*: One should attain the knowledge of Atma (self), Desha (place), Kula (family), Kala (time), Bala (mental strength), and Shakti (capacity).^[13]

Methods of the satvavajaya chikitsa

Acharya Charak while defining the *manas rog chikitsa*, says that the mano rog chikitsa also called the Sattvavajaya chikitsa comprises of the following entities:

मानसो ज्ञानविज्ञानैर्यस्मृतिसमाधिभिः।^[14]

1. **Gyana (Spiritual knowledge):** The word *Gyana* stands for *Atmagyana*; i.e., knowledge of self and soul, spiritual knowledge and true knowledge. *Atmagyan* also refers to the complete knowledge of the Sarira and the Mana.
2. **Vigyana:** Educating the patient: (Specific knowledge or scriptural knowledge) The spiritual and the textual knowledge which takes the person to the true and the valid knowledge is *Vigyana*. It gradually diminishes the *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* quality of the mind and increases the *Satwik* quality.
3. **Dhairya (Patience or controlling power or moral boosting):** Dhairya refers to the stability of mind. It is Dhairya, which restraints the mind from unwholesome objects and can control the mind. Mind can be restrained only after adopting Dhairya, which is an important tool of Satwavajaya chikitsa
4. **Samriti (Memory –Reviving the knowledge):** Trying to memorize the past incidences. Charaka explains that if one remembers the real nature of the thing, he gets rid of all the diseases. Tatwagyana can be attained by Smriti.
5. **Samadhi (Meditation, abstaining from over indulgence in materialistic world):** Samadhi is the condition where after gaining complete contact with the Atma, Mana loses its contact with the external objects and conjunctions with the Atma. It is a specialized concept of Yoga mostly regarded as either spiritual or psychological technique to develop the ideal human personality, leading to the state of character transformation and attainment of final goal of life towards salvation.

In brief Satwavajaya i.e., Ayurvedic Psychotherapy includes promotions of Jnana, Vigyana by improving Dhee, Dhriti and Smriti i.e., by avoiding Pragyapradha.^[14]

Sadvritta^[15]

Ayurveda describes health as a balance of body, mind, social and spiritual well-being. In order to achieve this, Ayurveda prescribes certain codes of conduct and this is known as Sadvritta. The root 'Sad' means good and 'vritta' means regimen. Sadvrittas are applicable to people of all age groups, at all times and at all places. Practicing the codes constantly brings inner peace and happiness, and violating them makes a person angry and agitated.

Sadvritta are Ethical Regimen or rules of good conduct. Ayurveda prescribes certain rules for maintaining healthy mind. These are principles of right conduct that are applicable to all people at all times and places. Practicing them gives balance and harmony to the mind. these are always speak the truth, do not lose your temper under any circumstances, do not get

addicted to sensory pleasures, do not harm anyone, as far as possible, do not expose yourself to hardships, try to control your passions, endeavour to speak pleasant and sweet words, meditate every day for tranquillity of mind, observe cleanliness in all things, be patient, observe self-control, try to distribute knowledge, good advice and help to others, whenever possible, devote your services to god, to the wise and to respectable or elderly individuals, be straightforward and kind, avoid irregularity in daily activities, avoid over eating, over drinking, too much sexual activity, too much or too little sleep, behave according to the time and place where you are residing. The codes of conduct can be divided as - Ethical or *Vyavaharika sadvritta*, Social or *Samajika sadvritta*, Mental or *Manasika sadvritta*, Moral or *Dharmika sadvritta*, and Physical or *Sharirika sadvritta*. Practising Sadvritta will improve the overall health and mental well-being of individuals.^[15]

Acharya rasayana

It is considered as behavioral therapy. Which helps in optimistic thinking by relieving mental and physical stress. it increases the patience with high tolerance capacity leading to the maintenance of the better family and social relationships. It also helps in forming a better-qualified human with an enriched fascinating personality. Its major domains according to *Acharya Charaka* are:^[16]

- *Satya vadi*- Be truthful, being truthful boosts up our confidence and relieves all the anxiety
- *Akrodham*- Free from anger, being excessive furious or heated up dry the rasa dhatu and mental; disruption
- *Madya mathuna nirvrutam*- Avoid alcohol and maintain celibacy, brahmacharya improves the quality of mind and health naturally.
- *Ahinsa*- Avoid violence. Violence here includes mental violence i.e., hating someone or thinking of causing any sort of harm to someone.
- *Anaayasam*- Avoid exhaustion, avoid overstraining your mind by worrying or overthinking leading to unwanted stress
- *Prasanta*- Internal peace, being calm and keeping yourself happy and joyful internally,
- *Priyavadinam*- Purity in thoughts as well as in voice, talking with pleasing words.
- *Japa*- Always mesmerizing the almighty with whole heart and soul, following religious rites.
- *Shoucha param*- Maintaining hygiene, keeping your body and soul always clean and pure.

- *Dheeram*-Stability in thoughts and courage in actions,
- *Daan nityam*- Indulge in social service or charity.
- *Tapasvinum*- Regular practice of penance, regular meditation for healthy and peaceful living
- *Dev go brahmana acharya guru vridharchane ratam*- Respect God, cow, brahman, your teacher, elders. It helps in increasing sattva guna.
- *Nitya aanrishayaparam*- Avoid barbaric behavior.
- *Sam jagranaswapanam*- Regularity in the biological clock of your awakening and sleeping.
- *Nityasheeraghritaashinam*- Inculcate the habit of intake of milk and ghee. Increases the inner strength of the body.
- *Desha Kala prama gyanam*- Appropriate knowledge according to place and time
- *Yuktigya*- Possesses knowledge of rationality, wisdom to judge and differentiate between good and bad, to adapt the good and reject the bad.
- *Anahankretam*- Always have the habit of putting ego far away from you.
- *Shasthaachara* – Good conduct.
- *Asamkeernam*- Having broad aspects of thinking, which gives the power to feel the pain of others.
- *Adhyatmam* – Having spiritual knowledge.
- *Pravanendriya*- Optimum functioning sense organs.
- *Upasitharam vridhanama astikanam*- Respect for seniors and for those who worship God.
- *Jeet hastmanam*- Self-control, have control over your mind thoughts, and actions.

Yoga and Mental health

Ashtanga Yoga is a traditional form of yoga combining vigorous exercise and controlled breathing with the goal of inducing a meditative state through its physical practice. Yogic relaxation is the means of getting free from stress, which is supposed to be a major causative factor of mental illnesses, various types of relaxation procedures have been advised for the purpose. yogic practices enhance muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory and cardiovascular function, promote recovery from and treatment of addiction, reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improve sleep patterns, and enhance overall well-being and quality of life.^[17]

The eight limbs are comprised of ethical principles for living a meaningful and purposeful life; serving as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline, they direct attention towards one's health while acknowledging the spiritual aspects of one's nature. Any of the eight limbs may be used separately, but within yoga philosophy the physical postures and breathing exercises prepare the mind and body for meditation and spiritual development. Ashtanga Yoga include:^[18]

- Yama (Abstinences),
- Niyama (Observances),
- Asana (Yoga postures),
- Pranayama (Breath control),
- Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the senses),
- Dharana (Concentration),
- Dhyana (Meditation) and
- Samadhi (Absorption)

Yamas

1. **Ahimsa**: Nonviolence, non-harming other living beings
2. **Satya**: Truthfulness, non-falsehood
3. **Asteya**: Non-stealing
4. **Brahmcharya**: Marital fidelity or sexual restraint
5. **Aparigraha**: Non-avarice, non-possessiveness

Niyama

1. **Shaucha**: Purity, clearness of mind, speech and body
2. **Santosha**: Contentment, acceptance of others, acceptance of one's circumstances as they are in order to get past or change them, optimism for self
3. **Tapa**: Persistence, perseverance, austerity, asceticism, self-discipline
4. **Svadyaya**: Study of Vedas, study of self, self-reflection, introspection of self's thoughts, speech and actions
5. **Ishvarapranidhana**: Contemplation of the Ishvara /God

Asana

“**Sthirsukhmsanam**” Asana is a posture that one can hold for a period of time, staying relaxed, steady, comfortable and motionless.

Pranayama

Prāṇāyāma is the control of the breath, from the Sanskrit *Prana* (breath) and *Aayama*, restraint). After a desired posture has been achieved, verses through recommend *Pranayam*, the practice of consciously regulating the breath (inhalation, the full pause, exhalation, and the empty pause. This is done in several ways, such as by inhaling and then suspending exhalation for a period, exhaling and then suspending inhalation for a period, by slowing the inhalation and exhalation, or by consciously changing the timing and length of the breath

Pratyahara

Pratyahara is drawing within one's awareness. It is a process of retracting the sensory experience from external objects. It is a step of self-extraction and abstraction. Pratyahara is not consciously closing one's eyes to the sensory world, it is consciously closing one's mind processes to the sensory world. Pratyahara empowers one to stop being controlled by the external world, fetch one's attention to seek self-knowledge and experience the freedom innate in one's inner world.

Dharana

Dharana means concentration, introspective focus and one-pointedness of mind.

Dharana, as the sixth limb of yoga, is holding one's mind onto a particular inner state, subject or topic of one's mind. The mind is fixed on a mantra, or one's breath/navel/tip of tongue/any place, or an object one wants to observe, or a concept/idea in one's mind. Fixing the mind means one-pointed focus, without drifting of mind, and without jumping from one topic to another.

Dhyana

Dhyana (Sanskrit: literally means "contemplation, reflection" and "profound, abstract meditation"

Dhyana is contemplating, reflecting on whatever *Dharana* has focused on. If in the sixth limb of yoga one focused on a personal deity, Dhyana is its contemplation. If the concentration was on one object, Dhyana is non-judgmental, non-presumptuous observation of that object. If the focus was on a concept/idea, Dhyana is contemplating that concept/idea in all its aspects, forms and consequences. Dhyana is uninterrupted train of thought, current of cognition, flow of awareness.

Samadhi

Samadhi literally means "putting together, joining, combining with, union, harmonious whole, trance". Samadhi is that spiritual state when one's mind is so absorbed in whatever it is contemplating on, that the mind loses the sense of its own identity. The thinker, the thought process and the thought fuse with the subject of thought. There is only oneness, *Samadhi*.

DISCUSSION

Mental well-being is an important part of Health along with Physical and Spiritual well-being. Mental health is the foundation for effective communication, learning, emotions, thinking and self-esteem in an individual. Mental health is integral in all spheres of human life like inter-personal relationships, personal and emotional well-being and contributing effectively to society.

Sadvritta deals about the positive codes & conducts and morals & values which when followed transform the person belief system, cognitive framework and perceptive ability strengthening his state of positive mental health/ Satva. Following this, helps the person in preventing Pragyapradha and thereby preventing disease.

Achara Rasayana emphasizes the conduct of an individual in social settings. Since, human beings are social animals; definitely their social image and social reputation have an enormous effect on their mental status.

CONCLUSION

Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Emotional and mental health is important because it's a vital part of life and impacts thoughts, behaviours and emotions. Being healthy emotionally can promote productivity and effectiveness in activities. Principles of Sadvritta and Achara Rasayana laid down in Ayurveda highlights the importance of socio-cultural factors in the maintenance of mental and social health. A stable and harmonious equilibrium between man and his environment is needed to reduce man's vulnerability to mental diseases and to permit him to lead a more productive and satisfying life. By Ayurvedic line of treatment with psychotherapy and spiritual therapy one can able to treat mental diseases effectively. Better mental health can be achieved by Satwavajaya Chikitsa, adopting Sadvritta, Achar Rasayana and practising Yoga.

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