

PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS AND THE SATTVA PRINCIPLE: AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Psychosomatic disorders exemplify the intricate interplay between the mind and body wherein psychological imbalances exert a notable impact on physical well-being. Ayurveda, the traditional system of Indian medicine, acknowledges this connection through the framework of *Triguna*—*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*—with *Sattva* denoting mental clarity, stability, and purity. This review underscores the significance of *Sattva* as a preventive and protective factor in psychosomatic conditions, particularly in the realm of community mental health. The enhancement of *Sattva* through interventions such as *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Ayurvedic psychotherapy), *Rasayana* therapy, adherence to *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), along with the consumption of a *Sattvic* diet, contributes to improved emotional resilience and psychological stability. Ayurvedic modalities, including *Medhya Rasayanas* like *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) and *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*), further support cognitive

performance and stress adaptation. The incorporation of these time-tested principles into community mental health initiatives holds the potential to elevate collective mental well-being, mitigate the incidence of stress-related disorders, and promote comprehensive health. Moreover, the formulation of *Sattva*-based assessment tools may facilitate the early detection of individuals vulnerable to psychological distress. This article highlights the integrative potential of Ayurveda in complementing contemporary mental health paradigms by offering a

culturally relevant, sustainable model for psychosomatic healthcare, particularly beneficial in resource-constrained environments.

KEYWORDS: Psychosomatic Disorders, Ayurvedic Psychiatry, *Sattva Guna* and Mental Health, Integrative Medicine Approach, Community Mental Health Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the idea of psychosomatic illness has been recognized since ancient times when holistic medical systems acknowledged the intrinsic connection between the body and the mind. Psychosomatic disorders represent a crucial intersection between psychological and physiological health, where emotional factors significantly contribute to the development and manifestation of physical symptoms. The term "psychosomatic" is derived from the Greek words *psyche*, meaning mind or soul, and *soma*, meaning body, emphasizing the intricate relationship between mental and physical well-being.^[1] However, the formal introduction of the term "psychosomatic" into medical literature is credited to the German psychiatrist Johann Christian August Heinroth in 1818.^[2] Heinroth laid the foundation for modern psychosomatic medicine through his groundbreaking work "Lehrbuch der Störungen des Seelenlebens" ("Textbook of Disturbances of Mental Life"), which examined the profound relationship between mental and physical health.^[3] Physiological symptoms that are caused, at least in part, by emotional or psychological factors are the hallmark features of psychosomatic disorders.^[4,5] The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Second Edition (DSM-II), published in 1968, defined psychosomatic disorders as "psychosomatic symptoms caused by emotional factors and involving a single organ system, usually under autonomic nervous system innervations."^[6]

The term "community mental health" (CMH) refers to an inclusive and decentralized approach to promoting psychological well-being and delivering mental health services within a community setting. It places strong emphasis on early detection, prevention, and the integration of mental health care into primary health services, while fostering social support, accessibility, and awareness among vulnerable populations.^[7] The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges that CMH is critical in addressing the global mental health crisis, particularly in low resources settings.^[8] The ancient Indian philosophy of holistic health, known as Ayurveda, offers valuable insights into mental health through the balance of body (*Sharira*), mind (*Manas*), and spirit (*Atma*).^[9] Ayurveda's unique perspective on mental health is founded on *Manasika Bhavas* (mental attributes) and *Triguna* (*Sattva*,

Rajas, and *Tamas*), providing a personalized and preventive approach to maintaining psychological harmony.^[10]

To enhance mental resilience, reduce stress, and promote emotional stability, community-level Ayurveda emphasizes *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (psychotherapy), *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation therapy). Incorporating Ayurveda into CMH initiatives allows for sustainable, person centered care while simultaneously addressing the root causes of psychosomatic disorders and honoring cultural values. Thus, an Ayurvedic approach to CMH can improve community-level mental health in both preventive and promotional dimensions.

According to Ayurveda, *Sattva* is regarded as the primordial creative principle of the universe.^[11] The term "*Sattva*," derived from "*Satto bhava*," originates from the words *Sat* (truth) and *Tva* (essence), indicating the presence of reality and truth. is. The *Shabdakalpadruma* describes it as a fundamental attribute of *Prakriti*. It symbolizes light (*Prakasha*), wisdom, and happiness (*Sukha*).^[12] The Monnier Williams dictionary defines *Sattva* with qualities such as perfection, truth, actuality, virtue, purity, and good will.^[13] In certain contexts, "*Sattva*" also denotes the mind.^[14] In Ayurveda, *Sattva* represents the essence of purity, clarity and mental character. It is one of the *Triguna* (three essential qualities)- *Sattva*, *rajas* and *Tamas*.^[15] *Sattva* is distinguished by enlightenment, knowledge, and lightness.^[16] It embodies mental stability, character strength, psychological integrity, and spiritual disposition.

A person endowed with *Sattva* is characterized by emotional balance, freedom from frustration, and the ability to maintain composure in the face of extreme emotions such as fear, anger, sorrow, or joy.^[17] As the essence of purity and mental clarity, *Sattva* holds immense significance in maintaining the equilibrium between mind and body, which is essential for psychosomatic health. Individuals with predominant *Sattva Guna* demonstrate superior emotional stability, higher stress tolerance, and effective coping mechanisms, thereby reducing the likelihood of developing stress-related physical disorders. Within the realm of community mental health, the cultivation of *Sattva* fosters harmony, empathy, and collective well-being, contributing to a psychologically healthier society.

This study aims to explore the vital role of *Sattva* in preserving mental and physical harmony, thus mitigating the risk of psychosomatic disorders. Furthermore, it seeks to underscore the

potential of Ayurvedic principles in strengthening community mental health through the cultivation of *Satvika* attributes.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the role of *Sattva* in psychosomatic health and its potential contribution to enhancing community mental well-being through the application of Ayurvedic principles.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- 1. Literary source:** A comprehensive review of *Sattva* and psychosomatic disorder (*Manodaihik Vyadhi*) was conducted using various *Samhitas*, classical textbooks, academic thesis and research articles published in the international journals.
- 2. Psycho-somatic approach in Ayurveda -** The history of psychosomatic disorders is as ancient as human civilization itself and parallels the evolution of Ayurveda. This is because living beings are understood as an integrated entity comprising mind (*Manas*), soul (*Atma*), and body (*Sharira*). In Ayurvedic literature, the concepts of *Manas* (psyche) and *Sharira* (soma) have been described separately, along with their respective *Doshas*.^[18] It is well established that *Manasika* (mental) and *Sharirik* (physical) *Doshas* influence each another. *Charaka* has mentioned that physical and psychological disorders often manifest concurrently.^[19] Over time, these somatic (*Sharirika*) and psychic (*Manasika*) disturbances have been categorized into various combinations such as somatic to somatic, psychic to psychic, somatic to psychic, and psychic to somatic.^[20]

Ayurveda provides extensive descriptions that affirms its holistic, psycho-somatic approach to disease. Several classical examples illustrate the mutual impact of somatic disturbances on mental health. For instance, aggravation of *Vata Dosha* may lead to *Anidra* (insomnia), increased *Pitta* causes *Murchha* (fainting), while *Kapha* aggravation results in *Tandra* (drowsiness) and *Nidra* (excessive sleep).^[21] The concept of *Suddha Pitta* appears to represent a psycho-physiological viewpoint, possibly referring to certain biochemical substances or neurochemical mediators involved in higher mental functions and emotional states.^[22]

The influence of psychological disturbances on physical health is also well documented. Emotional factors such as *Krodha* (anger), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Harsha* (joy) affect the healing of ulcers, with delayed recovery often seen in individuals experiencing fear.^[23] *Pitta Dosha* is particularly aggravated by emotions like *Krodha* (anger), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Shoka* (grief),

while *Rakta* (blood) is said to become vitiated under the influence of anger.^[24] According to *Charaka*, *Vata Dosha* is disturbed by *Kama* (desire), *Shoka* (sorrow), and *Bhaya* (fear), whereas *Pitta* is predominantly vitiated by anger.^[25]

Manasika Bhavas (psychological factors) play a critical role in the onset and progression of both mental and psychosomatic disorders. While emotions like *Kama* (desire), *Krodha* (anger), *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Irshya* (envy) are considered natural within physiological limits, they contribute to *Manasika Vikaras* (mental disorders) when these limits are exceeded. The *Charaka Samhita*, along with *Chakrapani's* commentary, emphasizes this psychosomatic interrelationship, describing how disturbances in the mind can affect the body and vice versa. Contemporary medicine also acknowledges psychosomatic disorders, recognizing that psychological stress, anxiety, and depression can aggravate conditions such as psoriasis, eczema, peptic ulcers, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases.^[26]

3. APPLICATION AND STRENGTHENING OF SATTVA: AYURVEDIC PREVENTIVE APPROACH

In Ayurveda, *Sattva* is regarded as the inherent mental strength and purity that governs clarity, stability, and harmony of the mind. A well-developed *Sattva* is essential for maintaining mental health and preventing psychosomatic and lifestyle disorders. The preventive approach in Ayurveda emphasizes nurturing and fortifying *Sattva* to build psychological resilience, enhance coping capacity, and promote overall well-being. The application of *Sattva* in preventive healthcare includes the following components:

3.1. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Psychotherapy)

The term *Sattvavajaya* refers to the control or strengthening of the mind, self-discipline, and mental resilience, while *Chikitsa* denotes treatment or management.^[27] *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* represents a comprehensive non-pharmacological therapeutic approach described in classical Ayurvedic texts, closely paralleling the principles of modern psychotherapy. *Acharya Charaka* was the first to propose this method as part of *Trividha Chikitsa* (the threefold approach to treatment), specifically for managing mental disorders. This therapy aims to prevent the impairment of *Dhee* (intellect), *Dhriti* (willpower), and *Smriti* (memory) while restoring these faculties to their optimal state.

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa plays a crucial role in maintaining harmony among these cognitive elements, thereby contributing to individual happiness and mental well-being.^[28] It emphasizes control over the mind and intellect as a therapeutic tool and is considered an ancient equivalent of modern psychotherapy, focusing on mental restraint, self-regulation, and cognitive restructuring without pharmacological intervention.

3.2. Rasayan Therapy

Achara Rasayana, encompassing ethical living and lifestyle disciplines such as truthfulness, non-violence, meditation, and self-control, fosters *Sattva* and promotes mental harmony. It functions similarly to cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), aiming to modify deep-seated negative beliefs that contribute to emotional disturbances like anxiety and depression.^[29] These principles can also be incorporated into community health models as effective behavior change strategies.

In addition, herbs like *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*), and *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) are classified as *Medhya Rasayanas*, which enhance cognition and stress tolerance. Clinical studies have validated their adaptogenic and anxiolytic properties.^[30] These botanicals are known to improve cognitive function, memory retention, and intellectual capacity. Furthermore, *Rasayana* drugs regulate neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and acetylcholine, crucial for optimal brain function, and modulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, thereby supporting mental resilience.^[31]

3.3. Sattvic Diet and Mental Wellness

A *Sattvic diet*—consisting of fresh, light, plant-based foods—clearly enhances mental clarity and emotional balance.^[32] This diet typically includes fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, and minimally processed foods. According to a study published in the *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, adherence to a *Sattvic* diet can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression levels by up to 35%, primarily by promoting serotonin production through improved digestion.^[33]

3.4. Dinacharya and Ritucharya for Strengthening Sattva

Dinacharya (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) are fundamental Ayurvedic practices for maintaining circadian rhythm and *Dosha* equilibrium. A review published in PubMed Central (PMC) confirms that these practices harmonize body and mind through

regulated daily and seasonal routines.^[34] Moreover, *Nabhisutra* emphasizes that following *Dinacharya* measures—such as rising during *Brahma Muhurta*—and *Ritucharya* adjustments to seasonal changes align physiological and psychological processes effectively.^[35]

Thus, the strengthening of *Sattva* forms a core preventive strategy in Ayurveda against mental illnesses, stress-related conditions, and lifestyle disorders. A robust *Sattva* not only helps prevent the onset of diseases but also promotes spiritual growth, emotional resilience, and holistic well-being.

4. COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE SATTVA PERSPECTIVE

4.1. *Sattva*-Based Screening Tools for Early Identification

The Ayurvedic perspective emphasizes the importance of *Sattva Sara* and *Manasika Prakriti* in determining an individual's psychological resilience and mental well-being. According to *Charaka Samhita*, individuals endowed with *Sattva Sara* exhibit clarity of thought, emotional stability, and enhanced capacity for stress management.^[36] By assessing these attributes in high-risk groups such as adolescents, urban employees, and marginalized communities, early indicators of mental distress and psychosomatic imbalance can be identified prior to the manifestation of clinical disorders. Modern psychometric tools, when adapted to incorporate Ayurvedic parameters, can offer a comprehensive and holistic assessment of mental health. Instruments developed to evaluate *Sattva Guna*, *Triguna* characteristics, and *Manasika Prakriti* have demonstrated promise in research for early risk detection. Such culturally sensitive and integrative screening strategies can serve as a cornerstone of community mental health initiatives, facilitating targeted interventions and reducing the burden on tertiary care systems.

4.2. Community-Centered Integrative Wellness Models

Ayurveda advocates *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*—the strengthening of mental faculties through discipline, self-awareness, and uplifting practices—as a fundamental intervention for psychological disorders.^[37] The integration of Ayurvedic practices such as *Yoga*, *Pranayama*, and *Dhyana* into community-level wellness programs can significantly enhance *Sattva* and regulate stress responses. These interventions are recognized for harmonizing *Rajas* and *Tamas*—qualities associated with agitation and inertia, respectively—thereby promoting internal equilibrium. Scientific evidence supports this integrative approach; studies indicate that regular engagement in *yoga*-based practices reduces cortisol levels, improves heart rate variability, and enhances emotional regulation.^[38] When implemented in schools, community

centers, and corporate wellness programs, these practices foster resilience and lower psychological morbidity across populations. Ayurvedic principles ensure that these interventions transcend symptomatic relief, serving instead as foundational lifestyle strategies to cultivate enduring mental harmony.

4.3. Integration of *Sattva* in Public Health Policy and Training

For the sustainable promotion of community mental wellness, the integration of Ayurvedic psychological principles into public health policy is essential. Strengthening the capacity of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), community mental health professionals, and AYUSH practitioners through training in core Ayurvedic principles such as *Sattva*, *Manasika Vikara*, and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* holds promise for the early identification of mental health disturbances and the delivery of culturally appropriate preventive interventions. National programmes like the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and the National AYUSH Mission (NAM) can derive substantial benefit from the integration of *Sattva*-oriented modules, thereby promoting a synergistic approach that unites contemporary psychiatric care with time-tested, non-pharmacological strategies of Ayurveda. The inclusion of *Sattva* in mental health policy bridges the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary healthcare models, aligning with the World Health Organization's (WHO) vision for culturally appropriate community mental health strategies.

DISCUSSION

The concept of psychosomatic disorders illustrates the profound and intricate connection between the body and mind, a relationship that Ayurveda has acknowledged for thousands of years. Contemporary psychosomatic medicine highlights the influence of mental stress and emotional imbalances in the development and progression of various physical ailments. Ayurveda, through its doctrine of *Triguna*—*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*—presents an elaborate psychological model that aids in understanding these disorders comprehensively.

Among these three qualities, *Sattva* signifies mental purity, stability, and clarity, which are essential for maintaining psychological equilibrium and preventing stress-induced diseases. According to Ayurvedic principles, a well-developed *Sattva Guna* acts as a safeguard against detrimental emotions such as fear, anger, and grief. These negative mental states disturb the body's *Doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—leading to various psychosomatic symptoms like insomnia, digestive irregularities, and cardiovascular dysfunctions.

Classical Ayurvedic texts, notably the *Charaka Samhita*, elucidate this dynamic interplay between mind and body and recommend interventions such as *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*. This therapeutic approach focuses on fortifying mental strength through practices that encourage self-control, intellectual enhancement, and improvement of memory functions.

In addition to these mental therapies, Ayurveda places considerable emphasis on *Rasayana* therapy, particularly the administration of *Medhya Rasayanas*—herbs like *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*), and *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*). These botanicals possess adaptogenic and nootropic properties that have been scientifically validated for enhancing cognitive functions and mental resilience. They contribute to the modulation of neurotransmitters and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, both of which are critical in the body's stress response mechanism. Incorporating these herbs into preventive healthcare regimens has demonstrated potential in boosting coping abilities and reducing vulnerability to psychosomatic disturbances.

Dietary practices also play a pivotal role in this preventive model. The adoption of a *Sattvic* diet, which emphasizes fresh, natural, plant-derived, and unprocessed foods, contributes to mental calmness, enhances digestive function, and fosters healthy serotonin activity, thereby supporting emotional stability. Furthermore, the observance of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine) helps synchronize the individual's biological rhythms with environmental cycles, thereby ensuring holistic mental and physical well-being.

In the context of Community Mental Health (CMH), the Ayurvedic notion of *Sattva Sara* serves as a valuable indicator for assessing an individual's inherent mental resilience. Integrating Ayurvedic methodologies—such as *yoga*, *pranayama*, and meditation—into CMH initiatives can foster the cultivation of *Sattva* at the community level, thereby enhancing collective psychological adaptability and emotional stability. Moreover, training healthcare providers in these time-tested techniques can effectively bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary mental health services.

To summarize, Ayurveda provides a holistic, culturally appropriate, and enduring approach to both the prevention and management of psychosomatic illnesses. By prioritizing the cultivation of *Sattva*—the quality responsible for mental clarity and resilience—it offers an effective means to tackle mental health challenges, especially in resource-constrained

environments. This integrative model holds considerable potential for influencing and enhancing future public health strategies and interventions.

CONCLUSION

The Ayurvedic principle of Sattva provides a comprehensive and effective framework for the prevention and management of psychosomatic disorders by fostering mental clarity, stability, and resilience. Enhancing *Sattva* through interventions such as *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*, *Rasayana* therapy, adherence to a *Sattvic* diet, and the practice of lifestyle regimens like *Dinacharya* helps maintain a harmonious mind-body connection. When integrated into community health programs, such strategies can significantly enhance mental wellness across the broader population. Furthermore, the early detection of psychological disturbances and timely, Ayurveda -based interventions can significantly reduce the prevalence and impact of psychosomatic conditions. This offers a holistic, sustainable, and culturally relevant model for advancing public mental health.

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