

MANAGEMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS THROUGH AYURVEDA AND YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is an integral part of the complete health and is regarded as one of the basic factor for effective physical health and social well-being. Mental illness is a vast subject, broad in its limits and difficult to define precisely. There are major and minor illnesses. The major illnesses are called *psychoses*. Here, the person is "insane" and out of touch with reality. Mental and behavioural disorders are understood as clinically significant conditions characterized by alteration in thinking, mood (emotions) or behaviour associated with personal distress and/or impaired functioning. Mental health is not exclusively a matter of relation between persons; it is also a matter of relation of the individual towards the community he lives in. Generally it is observed that in society most of the people, family members as well as friends ignore the mentally ill persons knowingly and unknowingly which leads to a deep state of illness of mind consequently. Lifestyle changes and medicine described in Ayurveda and practice of yoga offer a holistic approach to mental health and promote emotional wellbeing and balance.

KEYWORDS: Mental illness, Ayurveda, Yoga.

INTRODUCTION

Mental Health in an integral part of the complete health and is regarded as one of the basic factors that contributes to the effective physical health and social wellbeing. According to

WHO, Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.^[1]

Definition of *Swasthya* (health) as given by *Acharya Susruta*, Man is said to be *Swastha* (healthy) whose *Dosa* (bodily humours), *Agni* (metabolism), *Dhatu* (body constitution elements), and *Malas* (excreta) are in the state of equilibrium along with mental, sensory and spiritual pleasantness and happiness.^[2]

MENTAL HEALTH STATUS IN INDIA

According to National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) in 2015, nearly 150 million aged 13 and above are suffered from one or more mental health problem, which is comparatively more in urban areas.^[1]

MENTAL HEALTH

By definition, “mental health is state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.^[1]

Characteristics of a mentally healthy person^[1]

Mental Health is not mere absence of mental illness. A mentally healthy person has three main characteristics:

- (1) He feels comfortable about himself, that is, he feels reasonably secure and adequate. He neither underestimates nor overestimates his own ability. He accepts his shortcomings. He has self-respect.
- (2) The mentally healthy person feels right towards others. This means that he is able to be interested in others and to love them. He has friendships that are satisfying and lasting. He is able to feel a part of a group without being submerged by it. He is able to like and trust others. He takes responsibility for his neighbours and his fellow-men.
- (3) The mentally healthy person is able to meet the demands of life. He does something about the problems as they arise. He is able to think for himself and to take his own decisions. He sets reasonable goals for himself. He shoulders his daily responsibilities. He is not bowled over by his own emotions of fear, anger, love or guilt.

Types of mental illness^[3]

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) classifies the mental and behavioural disorders as

- Organic, including symptomatic, mental disorders - e.g., dementia in Alzheimer's disease, delirium.
- Mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use e.g., harmful use of alcohol, opioid dependence syndrome.
- Schizophrenia, schizotypal and delusional disorders e.g., paranoid schizophrenia, delusional disorders, acute and transient psychotic disorders. Mood (affective) disorders - e.g., bipolar affective disorder, depressive episode.
- Neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders - e.g., generalized anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders.
- Behavioural syndromes associated with physiological disturbances and physical factors e.g., eating disorders, non-organic sleep disorders.
- Disorders of adult personality and behaviour - e.g., paranoid personality disorder, transsexualism.
- Mental retardation. Disorders of psychological development - e.g., specific reading disorders, childhood autism.
- Behavioural and emotional disorders with onset usually occurring in childhood and adolescence - e.g., hyperkinetic disorders, conduct disorders, tic disorders.
- Unspecified mental disorder.

AYURVEDIC APPROACH***Sadvritta* (Good Conduct)^[4]**

Sad means good and *Vritta* means regimen. *Sadvritta* is the conduct for keeping good or balanced condition of body and mind. According to *Ayurveda*, the life must be based upon the rules of right conduct. These are the natural law or rules, which should be followed to maintain appropriate social and personal relationships. There is a large list of the conducts and behaviours which provides a guideline for what is appropriate for us as an individual, our role in the society. These are Worship god, cow, preceptors, elders, sages and teachers. Do *vedic* rituals in morning and evening. Perform religious ceremonies, donate, Control the senses, desirous of work, fearless, enthusiasm, forgive, Have faith in god, devoted to teachers, elder and sages, Treat all beings equally, care for the suffering person, always speak truth, Be peaceful, avoid the factors leading to anger, greed etc. They promote adjustment

with our environment and help in maintaining a proper equilibrium between the emotional and physical aspects, thereby promoting the mental health.

Acara Rasayan (Methods of Behavioural rejuvenation)^[5]

Rasayana chikitsa (Rejuvenation therapy) is one among eight branches of *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* has mentioned hundreds of single and compound medications for retardation of ageing and modification of the physical and psychological consequences of ageing and also for rejuvenation of the old body and mind. *Achara* means behaviour. Under the heading of *Achara Rasayana* special mental health promoting behaviours are described. These are, speak truth. Retain from anger, alcohol, sexual act and violence. Be peaceful, avoid exertion, speak sweetly, practice *japa* (chanting names of god). Maintain cleanliness of body and mind. Be courageous, generous, perform penance. Respect god, elders and preceptors. Sleep and get up at proper time. Have knowledge about place, time, should have proper planning with intelligence, not egoistic, have good conduct, devoid of wrong thoughts, have belief in god, read religious books etc.

SOME AYURVEDIC MEDICINE AND THERAPY TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

Medhya Rasayana^[6]

Medhya (wholesome for intellect) Rasayana described in Charaka Samhita are

- Juice of *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*)
- Powder of *Yastimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) with milk
- Juice of *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*)
- Paste of *Sankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) along with roots and flowers

Regular intake of these herbs lowers psychological consequences and also useful for rejuvenation of the body and mind.

SIRODHARA^[7]

Sirodhara or *Shiroseka* is one of the special type of treatment widely practiced in Kerala for psychic and psychosomatic diseases. In this therapy medicated oil, milk, butter milk and decoction are poured in a continuous stream of drip on the head especially on the forehead in a specific manner.

PRACTICE OF YOGA

Yoga is the science of life and the art of living. It is the common sense answer to overall physical and mental fitness. Basically *Yoga* is a system of physical and mental self improvement. Eight stages of *Patanjali Yoga* are^[8]

- i. *Yama* (Ethical Rules)
- ii. *Niyama* (Personal conducts)
- iii. *Asana* (Physical postures)
- iv. *Pranayama* (Control of breath)
- v. *Pratyahara* (The withdrawal of the senses from the outer environment)
- vi. *Dharana* (Concentration)
- vii. *Dhyana* (Meditation)
- viii. *Samadhi* (Enlightenment)

I. *Yama* - Yoga in this sense requires a high sense of social responsibility and ethical behaviour defined by five *yamas* or rules of social conduct

1. *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence)
2. *Satya* (Truthfulness)
3. *Brahmacarya* (Celibacy)
4. *Asteya* (Non stealing)
5. *Aparigraha* (non possessiveness)

Right social conduct is an important tool for treating the disease and promoting mental health.

II. *Niyama* - Rules of personal conduct included under second step of yoga- *Niyama*, refers to our daily lifestyle practices. The five *Niyamas* are –

1. *Saucha* (Cleanliness of body and mind)
2. *Santosha* (Contentment)
3. *Tapas* (Self discipline)
4. *Swadhyaya* (Self-study of spiritual texts)
5. *Iswara pranidhana* (Dedication to God)

The first two steps, *Yama* and *Niyama*, describe the rules of social conduct and personal conduct respectively and together constitute the ethical foundation of human life.

III. *Asanas* (Physical postures) consist of the performance of such postures which release physical stress and tension. The practice of postures described in yogic texts increase the vital

force and calms the mind, which is stressed by improper postures. It aids in releasing psychological stress.

IV. *Pranayama* (Control of the breath) calms down the disturbed patterns of breathing which agitates mind and senses. It provides the needed energy for both body and mind for promoting healing at all levels. There are various types of *Pranayama*, most of which consist of deepening and extending the breath until it leads to a condition of energized relaxation. *Nadisodhan* *Pranayama* and *Bhramari Pranayama* are specially useful for elderly individuals.

V. *Pratyahara* (Control of senses) refers to keeping our mind away from the senses and in control of their inputs. It is, not suppression of the senses but their right application, The technique of *Pratyahara* is primarily of two types-shutting off the senses like closing the eyes or ear or using the senses with attention rather than distraction. Closing the sensory openings is a practice like fasting for the body. *Pratyahara* is the main method for strengthening the mental immune system.

VI. *Dharana* (Control of attention) consist of different methods to make the mind one pointed, including concentration on particular objects.

VII. *Dhyana* is meditation in the true sense, which is the ability to sustain long term attention on the object of our examination. *Dharana* sets our attention on a particular object, *Dhyana* holds it there. Sustained *Dharana* in time becomes *Dhyana*.

VIII. *Samadhi* (Enlightenment) is the last and highest step of yoga. *Samadhi* is the capacity of consciousness to become one with its object of perception, through which the nature of ultimate reality is known. Hence, *Samadhi* helps to understand how the mind works and how to change it.

MODE OF ACTION OF YOGA IN MENTAL DISORDERS^[9]

An altered secretory pattern of melatonin has been reported in various psychiatric disorders. Yoga practice increases plasma melatonin levels

Yoga has been found to be effective in reducing stress and biomarkers of stress such as blood cortisol levels.

Yoga practice in young healthy people reduce plasma levels of adrenaline and increase plasma levels of serotonin.

Yoga improves psychopathology as well as social cognition by improving the oxytocin level, which is associated with the feeling of well-being and significant benefits in emotion.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic medicine, application of Sadvritta and practice of Yoga provide a comprehensive framework to solve Mental health issues by focusing on the balance of mind, body and spirit. Family members and friends can be an invaluable resource for individuals dealing with serious mental disease. Thus, people with psychological disorders should be diagnosed as an earliest and should be managed by proper care, Ayurvedic Medicine, Lifestyle and practice of Yoga. Also it is a formal responsibility of an individual to learn regarding the mental problems and mentally ill persons and support the person for improvement of mental health and quality of life.

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