

Review Article

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A REVIEW ON MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS IN CHILDREN THROUGH SADVRITTA AND ACHARA RASAYANA

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ABSTRACT

A spectrum of mental issues in the form of behavioural and emotional disorders prevail in society. Not only the adult population but also children are not spared from it. Timely diagnosis and intervention in the form of behavioural modification can control the increasing prevalence of these emotional and behavioural disorders. Ayurveda has its way of prevention and cure; it implements a holistic approach to the management of physical as well as mental disorders. By following Sadvritta (good conduct), the mind and senses of a person gets controlled gradually, making him capable of avoiding indulgence in causative factors. Achara rasayana (rejuvenation through the right code of conduct) is the etiquette for a healthy social life. It is an art of inner reformation or building character, which, when practised, can build a calm and peaceful mind. It is the need of the hour to inculcate the practice of Sadvritta and Achara rasayana in children for proper social adjustment and good mental health.

Keywords: Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, Sadvritta, Achara Rasayana, Behavioural Modification

INTRODUCTION

Children are the nation's future and comprise fifty percent of the population. It is essential to focus not only on physical but also mental well-being to prevent physical as well as mental disorders in children. The group of mental disorders are anxiety, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, conduct disorder, depression, disruptive oppositional defiance disorder, developmental disorders like speech delay, emotional obsessive-compulsive disorder, intellectual disability, language delay, and pervasive disorders like autistic spectrum disorders 1. Emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) have been classified as internalising emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression, and externalising disruptive behaviours, such as Conduct Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD). Behavioural disorders consist of a broad spectrum of conditions, including disorder of attention, disorder of communication, low self-esteem, low social competence, etc. ². Studies suggest that children having behavioural disorders experience peer rejection, leading to involvement in antisocial behaviours in early adolescence at age ³. In the United States, the prevalence of mental disorders in children aged 3-17 years is ADHD 9.8%, anxiety 9.4%, behaviour problems 8.9%, depression 4.4% ⁴. In a cross-sectional study, 5.7 % of children between 6 and 8 years of age are found to be battling with anxiety disorders 5. An observational study among the preschool children of Iran shows a relatively high rate of prevalence of behavioural disorders ⁶. About 12 % of school-going children have an emotional or behavioural disorder (EBD), and at least a third of all school children will probably have had an EBD at some point before reaching graduation 7. In the progression of development of a

child, emotion comes before thought or language, and hence, it is this early affect that forms the basis of future behavioural and emotional health ⁸. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recommended the steps to ensure the emotional health of infants and advocated that "It is essential that the nation find ways to support the emotional health of our youngest children and their families through a continuum of comprehensive, individualised, culturally competent services that focus on promotion, prevention and intervention" 9. The aetiology of various childhood EBDs is still unknown. Genetic predisposition and adverse environmental factors are recognised and highlighted in several studies to increase the risk of developing these disorders. These include perinatal, maternal, family, parenting, socio-economic and personal risk factors ¹⁰. Various research has supported breastfeeding 11, avoidance of passive smoking 12 and intensive parenting interventions as preventive measures for controlling the risk of childhood emotional and behavioural problems.

As per Ayurveda, the preventive measures for the diseases start even before conception. A holistic approach towards balancing of tridosha (three regulatory functional factors of the body, i.e., Vata, Pitta and Kapha) of parents through shodhana (purifying process) for detoxifying body and immuno-modulation by rasayana ensures the birth of healthy progeny ¹³. Thus, the health of the parents and the foetus will also be maintained. Avoidable regimes during pregnancy and delivery may seriously affect the development of the child. Stress in pregnant women is detrimental and affects the foetus, which may later develop a behavioural problem in child ¹⁴. The pregnant woman is considered to have two hearts and desires, one of self and another

of the foetus. Ignorance of the mother's wishes during this dauhridavastha (state of desire found in a pregnant lady) may result in a deficiency of essential requirements of the foetus, which may cause malformation of the central nervous system, and the child may have various psychological problems later on ¹⁵. Mana (mind) gets vitiated with sharirika dosha and mansika dosha, obstructing the manovaha srotasa and creating different behavioural problems 16. The three basic aetiology of any disorder are asatmyendriyartha samyoga (improper use of sense organs), pragyaparadha (intellectual blasphemy), and parinama (transformation attributed to time). These three, alone or in combination, vitiates sharirika and manasa bhava ¹⁷. Ayurveda emphasises Sadvritta to balance raja (quality characterised by activity, initiation, action and attachment) and tama (ignorance) and boost sattva (purity or goodness) to remain away from mental ailments. Purusharthachatustya (four goals of life) is the broad aims of life, and life is wrapped in doing it, i.e., dharma (social and religious ethics), artha (prosperity), kama (desire), and moksha (salvation). Dharma is righteousness, virtue or morality. Kama is the fulfilment of biological needs or sensory desires. Artha is the fulfilment of social needs and social recognition. Moksha is union with ultimate truth. Here, dharma is the act of achieving the other three with a good cause.

DISCUSSION

A growing child always remains influenced by social, cultural and parental persuasion. Therefore, continuous efforts should be made gradually to increase the sattva attribute and withdraw from immoral conduct. Counselling for adopting good habits will make the child suitable and acceptable among peers. Patience, calmness and strength will work as a parasol to overcome psychological triggers. Undesired and unbalanced acts in less, excess or unusual ways are called pragyaparadha, and it is the main trigger for behavioural and emotional disturbances 18. To control it, conquering the psyche, i.e., the mind, is necessary, preventing the mind from desiring unwholesome objects with the right understanding and proper functioning of all sense organs ¹⁹. In Ayurveda's text, Achara rasayana is described as the mental attitude to be followed to maintain good mental health. Conduct and work to be done and avoided are mentioned in Achara rasayana. This can be utilised beautifully to guide parents about the good conduct to be inculcated in their child from the very beginning and to control any faults in behaviour as soon as possible to avoid the development of emotional and behavioural

To build the inner character of a child, the adoptable components of Achara rasayana are as follows: 20

Satyavadita (Truthfulness): When children learn to be truthful, they build trust with others and foster positive relationships. Honesty promotes a sense of integrity, responsibility, and accountability. On the other hand, the habit of lying can negatively affect a child's mental well-being. Constantly lying can create mental pressure and lead to feelings of guilt, anxiety, and stress. Truth is responsible for forming relationships with the inner self and the outer world. Reality orientation is utilised nowadays to improve mental well-being, which means making a person accustomed to accepting things as they are. Satyavadita means speaking the truth; it is about understanding it and behaving accordingly. Children need to be trained to adhere to the truth without fear. Teenagers who live in fantasy without the realisation of reality may encounter a high level of frustration even when facing minor stress. The art of accepting the truth must be included in the child's life from the very beginning.

Akrodham (Free from anger): Anger is an emotion arising from distress or hurt, ranging from mild irritation to an attempt to take revenge. The children's temper tantrums must be handled with care. Children should be taught to recognise and express their anger appropriately. Here, Akrodham doesn't mean suppressing anger. Due to rigid conformism and suppression of aggressive impulses, sudden outbursts in the form of acute psychosis are common 21. A suppressed emotion can disrupt a child's behaviour and thinking pattern and cause various physical problems. Anger disturbs the metabolic system at the cellular level, altering the blood pressure as well as the heart rate. Managing anger and its proper disposal is the key to health and healing. Grievances, complaints and deceit of children should be listened to patiently. Patiently listening to the child gives him a chance to express himself, and at the same time, the listener will be able to understand the child's perception of the incidents responsible for anger. Patiently listening to the child and guiding them with affirmative instructions form the basis of behavioural modification.

Ahinsa (Non-violence): Violence is defined as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation" (WHO). Violent minds create violent bodies and a violent environment. Biologic-environmental interaction is found to be responsible for violence and aggression. Careful attention must be paid to psychosocial factors that contribute to the development of such behaviours. Aggression or violence develops a false cognitive framework of social perceptions, where the individual sees others as responsible for all their problems ²². If such a framework is set in the child, he would never be normal, as the environment always persists with the individual, and so will his miseries, according to him. During the rest or sleep of the child, the body goes through a constant process of healing, developing new cells to replace the old ones. Natural detoxification of the body needs a stable, non-violent body and mind. The non-violent approach of parents in their routine behaviour lays a foundation step that the child follows. Parents should try to modify bad habits by using soft words instead of scolding the child; they should sometimes avoid and excuse them for their mistakes. By doing so, the child will learn and enjoy following non-violence, and the healing will start by itself.

Prashantata (Calm and peaceful mind): A flexible and calm approach towards adverse situations helps the child to face them without getting any emotional letdown. Over-pampering should be avoided, and genuine demands of the child should be fulfilled. Parents must communicate openly with their children and explain why particular needs are being refused. This helps children understand the rationale behind decisions and teaches them valuable life skills. Parents can raise emotionally healthy and resilient individuals by setting boundaries and fulfilling genuine needs while guiding them through understanding their wants and needs.

Priyavadinam (Pleasant speech): Intentional behaviours can be defined as choosing how to do things. It includes the ways chosen to act and to interact with others, the ways chosen to think and interpret events, and the things chosen to say to ourselves and others. Training the child to speak pleasantly and to strictly follow a 'no harm' policy in any situation will build appropriate self-control in the child. Any type of abuse, whether physical, emotional, or verbal, should be avoided.

Japa para (Remember God): Believing in God and following any religion provides guidelines that help individuals plan a course for their existence. The uncertainties of life can be tolerated more easily by believers. Religious orientation can be intrinsic or extrinsic ²³. Extrinsic individuals use religion for security, to maintain sociability, distraction, or self-justification, whereas inherent individuals find their main motive in religion and are usually associated with a healthier mental state. Make the child believe in the unseen universal power (devoid of superstitious beliefs) that watches over their good and bad deeds. Atheistic minds are more prone to developing emotional and behavioural disorders. Emotional breakdown and criminal-mindedness are more common in non-believers.

Dheera (Patience): Patience is a person's ability to remain peaceful during frustration, adversity, or suffering. Patience can be interpersonal during daily hardships and daily hassles. Patience eases goal pursuit and satisfaction, especially in the face of obstacles. Studies have shown that patience can be modified, and increased patience leads to decreased depression and increased positive affect relative to a control condition ²⁴. Long-term patience is more important for depression and general health, whereas short-term patience is more beneficial for hedonic well-being ²⁵. Instil the habit in the child to be patient and stay calm for any work or demands. Explanation of the fulfilment of genuine needs and the denial of useless demands to the child in a positive and relaxed way.

Dana (Charity): Positive relations with others are one among multiple aspects responsible for psychological well-being ²⁶. It is the individual's strong empathy, friendship, affection and perception that they have warm, trusting interpersonal relationships with others. Helping others grants lives a sense of mission, purpose, and meaning. The moral of 'selfless service is selfless loving' and 'non-accumulation of things we do not need' creates inner peace. The feeling of sharing and caring develops in the child if he, with his parents, is engaged in charity. Small losses in his life will not shatter him if he is a believer and practitioner of selfless contributions. Both volunteering and charitable donations are positively associated with psychological well-being ²⁷.

Samadara (Respectful): Respect is a mode of behaviour, a form of treatment, a valuing, a type of attention, a motive, an attitude, a tribute, a principle, a moral virtue, or an epistemic virtue towards others ²⁸. The respectful approach of parents towards family members and the child will help him create his vision towards his elders and peers. Knowledge is acquired from the surroundings only, from parents, teachers, elders and friends. In the process of growth and development, training or teaching plays a vital role. Giving respect is a common decency of a healthy society. It is essential for both personal and social well-being. When one is respected, hormones such as oxytocin and serotonin are released to create bonding 29,30; when disrespected, adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine are removed 31. Dopamine is responsible for positive feelings, optimism, and sociability 32. When people feel valued and respected, they become motivated to continue performing well to gain recognition and pursue connections ³³.

Anrishansya (Mercifulness): Brutality brings abhorrence and disconcerts hearts and minds. Living in harmony with nature with unconditional compassion brings the joy of being kind and generous. Children should be taught that 'What we give comes back to us'; hence, if we want to be loved, we can achieve it by being kind to others.

Yuktigya (Goal setting): Goal planning is a process of discussion and negotiation through which priorities are identified to achieve desired plans. It is recognised as an integral component of psychiatric rehabilitation ³⁴ and suggests that goal planning enables behavioural change ³⁵. Setting and achieving small goals brings a sense of satisfaction and accelerates passion. The child should be taught to make plans and set goals. Goal setting and planning can be practised in his daily routine with the provision of small rewards.

Achara rasayana could be a part of motivational therapy and must be practised parallelly to the child's capability. Along with the measures mentioned above, things that must be avoided are punishment in front of others, scolding the child for their silly mistakes, rude or over-excited behaviour, very strict or over-disciplined attitude of parents, setting and forcing to follow generalised principles, engaging in achieving too many tasks at a time, comparing the child to another child or even with siblings, fulfilling all desires and over pampering.

CONCLUSION

Childhood is the best time to develop and establish lifelong dominance of the three attributes: sattva, raja, and tama. Increasing sattva by practising various daily behavioural measures given in Sadvritta and Achara rasayana according to age is a solid tactic to prevent the development of emotional and behavioural disorders in small kids. Holistic management strategies may include Sadvritta and Achara rasayana and combinations of several interventions such as child and family-focused psychological counselling, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), skills training for parents, nootropic oral medication, etc. These strategies can play significant roles in the prevention and management of a wide range of emotional and behavioural disorders in children.

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