



Review Article

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A REVIEW ON NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL INTERVENTION OF AYURVEDA IN MANAGEMENT OF MENTAL WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

The harsh pace of modern life with plethora of obligations, rushes and pressures has led to abundance of anxiety, stress and psychological issues. In India, abundance of the population struggles with mental health issues and barely half of people with mental illnesses receive treatment which is whistleblowing. Ayurveda imparts a significant contribution as pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions for promoting mental health. Rasayana refers to the means of attaining excellent qualities of rasa etc. dhatus (body cells and tissues) and delays ageing, prevent diseases and thus maintain the mental well-being. Achara Rasayana is a non-pharmacological intervention consisting of a list of codes and conducts, such code and conducts provide a potent panacea for psychogenic illnesses and mental health issues. Achara Rasayana emphasizes on the significance of ethical living, kindness, self-discipline in achieving emotional equilibrium, underscoring the profound link between moral behaviour and mental wellness. Unfortunately, the exorbitant costs of contemporary psychotherapy, treatment, and counselling is unaffordable by all. This paper delves into the significance of non-pharmacological intervention like Achara Rasayana of Ayurveda in fostering mental well-being, highlighting its significance in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Achara Rasayana, Ayurveda, Rejuvenation, Mental wellbeing, non-pharmacological wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

The unforgiving pace and complexity of modern life has greatly challenged our ability to live healthier with the constant rush and pressure to keep up with numerous responsibilities and commitments is leading to abundance of stress and anxiety. Nearly 15% of the Indian population grapples with some form of mental health issue. Prevalence rates for psychiatric disorders varying from 9.5 to 370 per 1000 people in India¹. The WHO stresses that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community². American Psychiatric association defined mental hygiene as “the art of pressurizing the mind against all incidents and influences calculated to deteriorate its qualities, impair its energies, or derange its movements”³.

Ayurveda, the ancient system of healthy living offers the holistic approach to mental health care with the integration of mind, body and soul. The rich heritage of Ayurveda is depicted by the fact that even WHO reformed their definition of health in 20th century by introducing the mental health as the important aspect of health, which states “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”⁴.

Ayurveda has defined when Vatadi tridoshas (body humour), Agni (enzymes etc), Rasadi sapta-dhatus (bodily tissues), vinn-mutraadi mala (waste material) are in a homeostatic state and the

soul, mind and all senses are in a condition of complete wellbeing, the person is considered as healthy⁵.

Ayurveda emphasises on balancing the equilibrium of bodily dosha, mind, and spirit, individualized treatments, lifestyle and dietary modifications through daily routines (Dinacharya), seasonal routines (Ritucharya), and detoxification practices (Panchakarma). Ayurveda offers a holistic, preventive and natural approach to mental health over modern psychotherapy and counselling for mental well-being and emphasize on long-term health, making it a compelling alternate to conventional medicine⁶. For FY 2023-24, the budget estimate for T-MANAS is ₹134 crore, 11% more than the BE (₹121 crore) for FY 2022-23 with budgetary allocation for T-MANAS is three-times higher than the BE (₹40 crore) for the National Mental Health Programme in the past three years⁷.

Scientific research depict non-pharmacological interventions like Mandala Art promotes physical health and emotional well-being in patients and might benefit patients concerning negative symptoms such as anxiety^{8,9} depression¹⁰ stress¹¹ and fear, reduces artificially induced anxiety or negative mood symptoms¹² in students and had a positive effect on hope in psychiatric inpatients¹³.

RASAYANA CHIKITSA

Rasayana chikitsa is a distinctive aspect of Ayurveda. Rasayana refers to the means of attaining excellent qualities of rasa etc. dhatus i.e. body cells and tissues¹⁴. Rasayana is a measure which delays ageing, prevent diseases and thus maintain the positive health¹⁵. There are two types of therapeutics: one that

strengthens and revitalizes the healthy and other which alleviates ailments¹⁶. Rasayana therapy can be administered in two ways: Kutipraveshika and Vatatapika¹⁷. Those individuals who are healthy, disease free, self-controlled, wise, leisurely and affluent are prescribed the indoor regimen of Rasayana therapy otherwise the outdoor method of vatatapika rasayana therapy is advisable. The former kind of regimen is undoubtedly better, but it is more challenging to follow¹⁸. It promotes longevity of life, improves mental and intellectual competence, provides immunity against diseases, delays ageing process, improves complexion and lustre of the skin, enriches swara (voice), optimises of strength of body and Indriyas (motor and sense organs)¹⁹. Various pharmacological interventions with numerous rasayanas and some non-pharmacological interventions are widely classified under four sub-chapter of Charaka Samhita 5000 years ago.

An individual cannot attain the benefits of Rasayana if he hasn't undergone grossly the process of samsodhana of his physical and mental ailments. This treatment is meant for providing longevity and for relieving senility and disease succeed in persons having purified mind and body-controlled self. Such a treatment should not be prescribed to those who have degenerate self, are disease free, does not perform good deeds and who are reluctant towards their service²⁰. The persons who are intemperate, lazy, indigent, careless, immoral, sinful and those who disregard the medicines should not use Rasayana and the seven causes which act adversely against them are ignorance, inactivity, instability of mind, poverty, dependence, impiety and inability to secure genuine drug which acts as hindrance to the effect of Rasayana²¹.

Unlike conventional medicine, which often targets specific ailments, Rasayana Chikitsa aims at overall well-being by enhancing the body's resilience, immune system, and mental clarity. It involves the use of various, dietary regulations and lifestyle practices designed to nourish and rejuvenate body tissues at the cellular level as explained extensively in Rasayana chatushpadas of Charaka Samhita²².

The expense of modern psychotherapy, treatment and counselling is very high which is unaffordable by all. This article emphasises on the non-pharmacological interventions like Achara Rasayana as mentioned in Rasayana chikitsa²³ which can be accessed by all strata of people.

Non-pharmacological intervention of Rasayan chikitsa (Achara Rasayana ethical transformation)

Acharya Rasayana is a unique contribution of Acharya Charaka for attaining the physical, mental and social health and a strong moral sense.

In this era, the hectic lifestyle of people is full of commotion and clamour which barely leaves time for their personal healthcare and abide by daily and seasonal regimes. Not everyone can adhere to classical interventional Rasayana therapy due to its long therapy nature. The new and challenging idea of Achara Rasayana imparted by Acharya Charaka stands as an answer for that. Achara Rasayana is the set of some code of conducts which everyone should apply in their daily life and most important thing is that Achara Rasayana is as beneficial as whole Rasayana therapy. On the basis of intervention chikitsa is classified into Adravya Bhooth and Dravya Bhooth. The Achara Rasayana comes under Adravya Bhooth chikitsa. Achara" alludes to a person's mental and physical behaviour and Rasayana denotes a life-sustaining vitalizing agent for the entire span of life.

Acharya Rasayana

An individual who is truthful (Satyavadinam), free from anger (Akrodham), abstaining from wine and women (Nivrttam Madyamaithunat), non-violent (Ahimsakam), relaxed (Anayasam), calm (Prashantam), soft spoken (Priyavadinam), engaged in meditation and cleanliness (Japashauchaparam), perseverance (Dhiram), observing charity (Dananityam), penance (Tapasvinam), worshiping gods, cow, brahmanas, gurus, preceptors and elders (Deva-gau-brahmana-acharya-guru-viddha archane ratam), loving and compassionate (Anrishshanshyaparam nityam karunavadinam),

Proper following of sleep-awake cycle (Samajagranaswapnam), consumption of ghrita and milk on daily basis (Nityam khseeraghrita ashinam), those who know the place and time better (Deshakalapramanajam), those who have good ideas, non-arrogant, having good morals, not narrow-minded, well concentrated to spirituality, keeping company of positivist, elders, self-restrained and devoted to holy books should be regarded as using the Rasayana for ever. Those, who are equipped with all such qualities mentioned above can consume rasayana and get the benefits of Rasayana treatment²⁴. The Achara Rasayana is classified into the following five canons:

- a. Good Mental Conduct
- b. Good Social Conduct
- c. Good Personal Conduct
- d. Good Moral Conduct
- e. Good Religious Conduct

Good Mental Conduct

Satyavadinam (Speak the sweet truth): Usually one must speak truth irrespective of whether its sweet or bitter. Vaidika literature manusmriti states "Satyam brooyat priyam brooyat, na brooyat satyam apriyam, priyam cha nanrutam brooyat, esha dharmah sanatanah" which means speak the sweet truth. A person who speaks truth is free from fear. Satyavadinam is a Nitya Rasayana, according to Acharya Vagbhatta²⁵. Speaking truth requires courage, empathy and tact. Speaking truth is a powerful way to communicate your needs and values to others while maintaining openness and grace which not only develops trust, respect and credibility but also brings accountability and personal integrity.

Akrodham (Stay free of anger): As described by Acharya Chakrapani, the ailment which is by product of jealousy, and which burns the inner soul in the flames of fire is known as krodha. Akrodha enhances release of good hormones and neurotransmitters like endorphins, oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine etc. However, sudden anger or grief results in immediate release of toxic hormones and disappearance of good hormones. Acharya Vagbhatta stated Akrodham is a Nitya Rasayana²⁶. Staying free from anger improves relationships, productivity, self-esteem, physical and mental health.

Good Social Conduct

Anahamkrtam (Get devoid of egoism): Egoism is a doctrine that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action, state of mind in which one feels that he is everything, thinking that you are better or more important than anyone else. It reflects the diseased mind cover up with moha. By avoiding this, one can get the blessings of God and other wise persons. Getting devoid of egoism is vital for personal well-being, healthy relationships, effective teamwork, continuous learning, and fostering a compassionate and authentic community.

Upasitaram Vriddhanam (Keep the company of wise): Workshop elderly, spiritual, and saintly persons as they impart valuable knowledge and wisdom to us by sharing their knowledge and experience, they support you in hard times and help you thrive and prosper. Adi Sankarācārya says through good company arises non-attachment; from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion; when there is freedom from delusion, the mind becomes steady and unwavering, from a steady mind comes liberation.

Deva, Gau, Brahmana, Acharya, Guru, Vriddha Archane Ratam (Be reverencing to elders and teachers): Respect Gods, Cows, Brahmana (knowledgeable person). Acharya (teacher), Guru (mentor) and Vriddha (elderly persons). The Taittiriya Upanishad states “Matrudevo bhava, pitrudevo bhava, acharyadevo bhava” — meaning “Revere your mother as God, your father as God, and your teacher as God.” Elders, gurus, acharyas often serve as living repositories of cultural knowledge, traditions, and practices. Respecting and learning from them helps maintain our cultural continuity as they are the wealth of knowledge, wisdom, experience and moral development. Reverencing elders and teachers are crucial for personal growth, cultural preservation, social cohesion, and the fostering of a respectful and educated society.

Good Personal Conduct

Dheeram (Practice self-control): It eliminates all desires and encourages contentment with what comes via divine intervention and bestows tranquillity, as one pointed mindfulness and contentment. A person who lacks self-control becomes unstable, results in impulsive behaviour and emotions and is prone to fits of anger and unethical decisions. Developing and exercising self-control is a key component of personal development and a cornerstone of a disciplined, purposeful, and rewarding life. It enables effective time management, enhances productivity, performance, fosters virtues such as patience, perseverance, and discipline

Nityam Ksheeragritashinam (Take sattvika food regularly like milk and ghee): Habitual use of milk and ghee (kshiraghitabhyasa) causes rejuvenation (rasayanam)²⁷ Ghee alleviates vata and pitta (vata pitta prashamana)²⁸ and relieves burning sensations, softens tissues, and enhances complexion and voice²⁹. Ghrita is regarded as the best sneha as it possesses the qualities of samskara i.e. blending with other substances having different properties without losing its own properties³⁰. Milk is invigorating/vitalizers (jivaniya)³¹. Milk is sweet, unctuous, cooling, galactagogue, pleasing, aphrodisiac, brain tonic (medhya i.e. enhances intelligence), strengthening, exhilarating, vitalizing, refreshing; curative to dyspnoea, cough, bleeding, synthesizer in injuries/fracture; wholesome to all living creatures, pacifies and evacuates the dosha, quenches the thirst, stimulates the digestion and very useful in emaciation due to pulmonary diseased condition³². Thus regular use of milk and ghrita contribute to overall health and well-being and prevents the abovesaid disorders.

Shasta Acharam and Samajagan-Svapnam Nityam

(Virtuous conduct and maintenance of equilibrium between sleep and wakefulness): Samajagan Svapnam is the dodging of Divasvapna and Ratrijagan. One should follow well-timed sleep-wake cycle. It is regulated by homeostatic mechanism and provide sufficient rest to the brain and body³³. Ratrijagan causes Kopa (increase) of Vata and Pitta Doshas which causes the roughness in body, inability to commence work, decrease productivity, burning sensation, redness of eyes, tiredness, headache, constipation, acidity and psychobiological disturbances. It has been informed to Acharya Charka that Nidra

is one of the three Upastambha. For maintenance of good Bala (strength), Varna (complexion), and Upachaya (development) requires possessing Trayo-Upastambha in the right way. Practicing meditation and a balanced sleep-wake cycle enhance physical health, mental clarity, holistic and cognitive health, mental and psychological health and spiritual growth, contributing to a more balanced, productive, and fulfilling life.

Shaucha Param (Cleanliness): refers to the behavioral and ethical conduct recommended for maintaining health and promoting longevity. Shaucha refers to both internal and external purity. External purity is achieved through daily ablutions whereas removal of lust, anger, greed, jealousy etc. constitutes internal purity. Shaucha is the first of the niyamas (observances) in Patanjali's eight-limbed path of yoga, as outlined in the Yoga Sutra.

Anayasam (Avoid overstrain): As per Acharya chakrapani it refers to deeds done with overlooking one's own power. Exertion/straining on self is unwholesome or unhealthy regimen³⁴. As per classics it is advised to exercise fifty percent of your maximum capacity (Balaardh) otherwise it harms³⁵. The signs of reaching threshold to terminate the exercise are perspiration, increase in respiratory rate, feeling of lightness of body, and congestion in cardiac (heart) region³⁶. The signs of excessive exercise are exhaustion, fatigue, wasting (of body tissues), thirst, bleeding from different parts of the body (raktapitta), pratamaka (dyspnoea with fainting), cough, fever and vomiting. Overstrain causes diseases like rajayakshma³⁷ and also causes stress and strain to mind. To attain peace, calmness of mind avoids overstraining.

Prashantam and Adhyatmapravanendriyam (Be in tranquil of heart and spiritual in temperament) If one is tranquil of heart, then his temperament strengthens, and person develops himself with spiritual virtues. "The absence of mental stress or anxiety" refers to peace of mind, which is an internal state that is unaffected by circumstances or events outside of oneself.

A calm mind is unperturbed by circumstances or challenges and retains composure and sound judgment in all circumstances. Inner peace (or peace of mind) is a state in which one is mentally and spiritually at peace and has the knowledge and insights adequate to maintain one's strength amidst conflict or hardship.

Good Moral Conduct

Asankeenam, Jitatmanam and Tapasvinam (Be endowed with understanding, given to alms-giving and diligent in spiritual endeavour): Generosity creates harmony with family and friends, neighbours and co-workers. Giving is receiving; the more we give, the more we receive. Giving alms is essential to fostering a deep spiritual life because it allows us to step outside of ourselves and focus on the needs of others. According to Buddhist teachings, Diligence and Right Effort are vital on the path of spiritual cultivation. Diligence is the application of commitment and perseverance to turn a vision into reality.

Nityam Karunavedinam (Always be kind): Daya or compassion is defined as the feeling of empathy towards the sufferings of others. Matsya Purana describes daya as a value that makes all living beings like oneself, seeking the welfare and well-being of other living beings³⁸. Being kind, generous and compassionate not only reduces anxiety but also enhances our emotional and mental well-being by the release of 'feel-good hormones' like endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin. Kindness is an important interpersonal skill and is a sign of strength and courage. Even a small act of kindness helps to connect with other people,

builds meaningful relationships and makes the world an optimistic and happier place.

Madya, Maithunat Nivrttam (Abstinence from alcohol and sexual act): Brahmacharya refers to avoiding eight-fold of coitus in thought, words and action. Brahmacharya is one among three standing base pillars for body stability³⁹ Celibacy here does not mean “Brahmacharaya” or observing abstinence for life. Moderation or balance between sexual activity maintains physical and mental wellbeing whereas excessive sexual indulgence will result in debility, dryness of mouth, pallor, asthenia, fatigue, impotency and absence of ejaculation⁴⁰. As per Acharya Sushruta pain in the penis and scrotum, sexual impotency, infrequent ejaculation or if ejaculation occurs at all by the appearance of mild degree of haemospermia⁴¹. Abstaining from alcohol is crucial for overall health, enhances mental clarity, focus, social connections and relationships. The ten qualities of alcohol are opposite to that of ojas and directly affects satva⁴². Alcohol is like ambrosia; for the one who drinks as per the standard guidelines, in optimum quantity, at suitable time, with advisable diet, as per the capacity and with exhilaration. On the contrary, it will be like poison for the one who indulges in excessive drinking any kind of liquor, and who have excess dryness in body and follows excess exertion⁴³.

Ahimsakam and Nityam Anrushansyaparam (Hurt no one and stick to non-violence) As per ‘The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali’ the first Yama, is ‘Ahimsa’, which means ‘Non-violence’ or ‘non-harming’ which talks about non-violence in all aspects of life. Ahimsa not only means physically not harming others, ourselves, or nature but also not thinking negative thoughts about others or ourselves and making sure that what we do and how we do it is done in harmony, rather than harm. Kayika refers to non-violence in the physical realm, Vachika to non-violent speech or communication, and Mansika to non-violence in the mental realm. WHO has defined Violence 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, mal development, or deprivation’⁴⁴. A man of everlasting compassion shall be considered as nitya rasayana.

Good Religious Conduct

Japa Param (Devoted to repetition of holy chants): Mantra’s unique vibrations aid in triggering the hormones that relax and tranquil the body and mind which also acts as a tranquillizer by enhancing our ability to focus. The body's energy centres or Chakras, are stimulated in part by enchanting of specific mantra which results in emotional harmony, supports emotional healing, foster a deeper connection with oneself and the universe⁴⁵, builds physical resistance and balance in life and inflows positive energy in the body by stilling the brain⁴⁶.

Deshakalapramanajyam (Get conversant with the sciences of season knowledge): knowing the regimes of dinacharya and ritucharya i.e. the sciences of daily routine and season to preserve the equilibrium of dosha through the concept of samanya and vishesha. The vigor and complexion is promoted in a man who knows and follows seasonal dietary and lifestyle regimen⁴⁷. Understanding and implementing dincharya and ritucharya are essential for achieving and maintaining optimal health, preventing disease, and living in harmony with nature's cycles. These practices contribute to a balanced, fulfilling, and healthy life, aligning the body, mind, and spirit with the natural rhythms of the day and the seasons.

Dharmashastraparam (Gain vaidika knowledge): The Vedas are a storehouse of pure wisdom that teaches us how to live a life of enlightenment and to experience pure consciousness. Vedas preach us about morality and ethics. Understanding our Vedas is a multifaceted endeavour that not only develops critical thinking and philosophical depth but also enriches our spiritual growth, cultural preservation, ethical living and intellectual development.

Yuktigya (one who has reasoning): Yukti is one of the four-fold examination or pramana⁴⁸. The intellectual perception resulting from the analysis of multiple causative factors and represents the logical reasoning and interpretation constructed to gain knowledge regarding any phenomena, valid for past, present and future is termed as yukti (reasoning). This is helpful in fulfilling three basic objects of human life (dharma, i.e. duties, wealth, desire)⁴⁹. Yukti can also be understood as planning, applying, and executing knowledge using one's intellectual and reasoning abilities and the one who has yukti are more successful.

DISCUSSION

As per WHO, 970 million people suffering from various mental disorders globally, with anxiety and depression being the most common which becomes the leading causes of ill-mental health and psychiatric illness worldwide⁵⁰. As per National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) only half of people with mental illnesses receive treatment. Psychiatric approaches to diagnosis and treatment frequently necessitate prolonged training with complex jargon for psychotherapy or expensive medications and equipment for biological therapies which restricts the global availability of effective treatments. Therefore, the outlook needs to be integrative, combining biological, psychological, social, and spiritual approaches to mental health. Achara Rasayana as a non-pharmacological intervention highlights the profound impact of ethical living, balanced lifestyle, positive thinking, and mindfulness on mental well-being which is affordable by all. By integrating these principles into daily life, individuals can achieve a harmonious state of mental health, which is considered essential in Ayurveda for overall health and longevity.

CONCLUSION

India being the most populated country of the world with millions of people suffering from mental health issues but unfortunately not even half of the population access treatment. There is an imperative need of uplifting the physical, mental, social health in the current era with raising psychiatric issues.

Nonpharmacological intervention of Ayurveda in the form of Achara rasayana, is a strong answer to raising stress related disorders and psychogenic illnesses.

Achara Rasayana is a non-pharmacological therapy; it is a specialized procedure practiced by good moral and behavioural conduct that nurtures mental health. Thus, the holistic approach of Achara Rasayan of Ayurveda including its safe herbal remedies, if pooled to the mainstream of world medicine of today, it can bring a big positive revolution to the quality of health care for the suffering humanity world over.

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