



Review Article

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A REVIEW OF AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND: CONCEPTUAL CORRELATION OF AVCHETAN MANA AND MANAS

Arvind Kumar ^{1*}, Shyoram Sharma ²

¹ PG Scholar, PG Department of Rachana Sharir, Post Graduate Institute of Ayurved Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

² Associate Professor, PG Department of Rachana Sharir, Post Graduate Institute of Ayurved Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

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***Corresponding author**

E-mail: indliaarvind@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

“Avchetan Mana” (subconscious mind) refers to mental processes that operate below conscious awareness, influencing thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Though popularized in modern psychology and self-help literature, its conceptual parallels with the concept of Manas (mind) invite scholarly correlation. In Ayurveda, Manas is integral to holistic health, bridging Atma (soul) and Sharir (body). A narrative theoretical review was conducted, surveying classical Ayurvedic texts (Charaka, Sushruta, and commentaries) and modern scholarly articles on Manas and subconscious psychology. The study mapped overlapping properties, functions, and therapeutic models. Emphasis was placed on how subconscious processes may be framed within Ayurvedic doctrine of Satva, Rajas, and Tamas, and how Manasika Vikaras (mental derangements) emerge. Ayurvedic doctrine portrays Manas as an Atindriya faculty (beyond direct senses) of Anutva (atomicity) and Ekatva (oneness). It mediates between sensory inputs (Jnanendriya), motor outputs (Karmendriya), and inner cognitive states via functions like Vichara, Uhya, and Indriyabhigraha. The subconscious domain of modern thought corresponds to the latent potential within Manas shaped by the three Gunas (especially Tamas and Rajas). Imbalance in Gunas predisposes to Manasika Vikaras, which then manifest physiologically. Ayurvedic therapies—especially Sattvavajaya Chikitsa—aim to regulate Manas by strengthening Satva and restraining harmful impulses. The concept of Avchetan Mana can be reconciled with Ayurvedic Manas by viewing subconscious contents as embedded in the Guna-conditioned structure of mind. Ayurvedic frameworks offer a rich, time-tested model to interpret how latent mental tendencies influence health and disease. Integrating modern psychological insight with Ayurvedic mental theory may enrich psychotherapeutic strategies and holistic mental-health care.

Keywords: Avchetan Mana, Mana, Ayurveda, Subconscious Mind, Mind.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Avchetan Mana or the Subconscious mind refers to those mental processes, memories, emotions, and predispositions that reside beneath the level of ordinary conscious awareness, yet influence that awareness, cognition, behavior, and health. In modern psychology (psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, cognitive approaches), subconscious processes are recognized as key in shaping personality, emotional responses, and psychosomatic disease.¹ The question arises: can this modern notion be meaningfully correlated with classical Ayurvedic theory of Manas (mind) and Manasika (mental) dynamics? In Ayurveda, Manas is a fundamental component in the integrative schema of body–mind–spirit. It is regarded as an Atindriya (beyond the direct senses) faculty mediating between sensory inputs (Jnanendriya), motor outputs (Karmendriya), and inner mental states, and it is influenced by the three Gunas (Satva, Rajas, Tamas) and by the Doshas and Srotas of the body. Imbalances in Manas lead to Manasika Vikaras (mental derangements) which then manifest both in psychological distress and physical disease.² The Ayurvedic toolkit—comprising Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, Vuktivyaprasraya, and Daivavyaprasraya modalities—includes a psychotherapeutic dimension aimed at regulating and healing the mind.³ This article aims to explore how the Ayurvedic conception of Manas can host a substrate equivalent to the modern subconscious; identify the correspondences and divergences between Avchetan Mana and Ayurvedic mental theory (Triguṇa,⁴ Manasika Vikaras,⁵ Manas-Prakṛti⁶); and outline how classical Ayurvedic therapies (especially

Sattvavajaya-Chikitsa) may address subconscious imprints, thereby contributing to holistic mental health.

This is a narrative-theoretical synthesis. Primary sources from classical Ayurveda (Charaka Saṃhita, Susruta Saṃhita, Bhavaprakasa, commentaries) were reviewed for sections on Manas, Manovikara, Sattvavajaya, and related doctrines (e.g. Prakṛti, Guṇa, Srotas). Secondary literature in Ayurvedic psychiatry, Ayurvedic psychotherapy, and integrative psychology was surveyed, as well as recent critical appraisals of Sattvavajaya Chikitsa and its potential integration with modern therapy (e.g. REBT). Philosophical works on Mana’s structure were used to explore layered analogues of subconscious and transpersonal mind. Comparative reviews on mind in Ayurveda and conceptual essays on Manas and Manovikara were used to triangulate definitions and interpretations. Through thematic coding, three focal domains were developed: (1) structural and ontological correspondence (how Manas theory can accommodate latent layers akin to subconscious); (2) etiological dynamics (how subconscious content emerges and contributes to Manasika Vikaras); (3) therapeutic implications (how Ayurvedic interventions target this latent substrate).⁷

Theoretical Elaboration

Structural Correspondence: Manas, Layers, and Latent Mind

In classical Ayurveda, Manas is described as an Atindriya (non-sensory) faculty that is atomic (Anutva) and unified (Ekatva) in its nature, yet functionally multifold in its operations (e.g.

Manovṛttis, Vichara, Uhya, Indriyabhigraha).⁸ It mediates between sensory impressions and internal cognition. The mind is not gross, but subtle, residing within the domain of Srotas (especially Mano-vaha Srotoḥ or the “channel of mind”) through which mental impressions travel and influence bodily organs. While classical texts do not explicitly use the term “subconscious,” some later interpretive and philosophical works conceptualize layered forms: for example, Chauhan & Kumar delineate an “outer subconscious” (Manomaya-Sarira) and “inner subconscious” (Karana-Sarira), mapping to latent impression stores and deeper dispositional tendencies beyond ordinary awareness. These strata echo the idea of subconscious memory, latent conditioning, and the repressed.⁹ The Antahkarana (inner instrument) schema in Indian philosophy—comprising Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara, and Chitta—also situates Manas in relationship to deeper stores (Chitta) of impressions and memories.¹⁰ Thus, a layered model emerges: Manas handles active processing; Chitta (or deeper layers) holds latent seeds and impressions; Ahamkara gives ego identity. From a comparative perspective, the subconscious (in modern psychology) can be mapped onto these latent layers in Chitta, Karana-Sarira or inner mind structures, while conscious Manas corresponds to the dynamic interface. This structural bridging allows Avchetan Mana to be reinterpreted within Ayurvedic terms.

Etiological Dynamics: How Subconscious Content Arises and Acts

In Ayurveda, mental disturbance arises when Guṇa balance is disturbed (especially excess Rajas or Tamas) and when Srotas channels (especially Mano-Vaha Srotas) are obstructed or polluted.¹¹ These disturbances lead to Manasika Vikara (e.g. Krodha, Moha, Mada, Aviveka) which then cascade into bodily disorders through psychosomatic pathways (How do latent traces (i.e. subconscious patterned tendencies) arise? A plausible Ayurvedic model is: Repeated sensory experiences, emotional responses, and cognitive patterns leave Vasana (habitual impressions) in Manas / Chitta. These latent seeds lie dormant in deeper layers (akin to Chitta, Karana-Sarira), outside the immediate awareness of Manas. Under triggers (stress, environmental stimuli, Doshic imbalance), these seeds germinate, influencing Manas functioning and precipitating disturbances (e.g. mood swings, anxiety, compulsions). The trespass of Rajas or Tamas can magnify these latent seeds, pushing them into conscious disturbance: Sattva is diminished, weakening the mind’s ability to regulate or inhibit them. In modern terms, this is analogous to the activation of subconscious schemas or implicit memory under stress, which then distort perception and reaction. The Ayurvedic perspective adds a metaphysical and therapeutic dimension: the balance or imbalance of Guṇas conditions not only manifest cognition but deep predispositions.

Empirical support exists for instance, a study on Manas Prakṛti (mental constitution) showed that certain constitutions may predispose to adjustment disorders, and that Sattvavajaya-Chikitsa may help in balancing emotional states in such individuals.

Therapeutic Implications: Sattvavajaya Chikitsa as an Approach to the Subconscious

Among the triad of Ayurvedic therapies, Sattvavajaya Chikitsa is the psychotherapeutic component. Literally “victory of Sattva,” it aims to withdraw the mind from unwholesome objects (Artha) and establish it in its own nature, thus restraining maladaptive mental flows. Classical Charaka states: Sattvavajaya Punah Ahitebhyo Arthebhyo Manognigraha — restraining the mind from adverse objects. Key techniques associated with Sattvavajaya include Jnana (wisdom, scriptural insight, self-knowledge) Dharana (concentration, meditative focus) Smṛti

(recollection, mindfulness of virtuous themes) Vichara (rational reflection, inquiry) Vyutthana (practical withdrawal). These methods facilitate cognitive restructuring, detachment from maladaptive thoughts, cultivation of Sattva, and reorientation of the mind away from harmful objects.¹¹ Modern critical appraisals suggest parallels with cognitive-behavioral therapies and REBT, noting that both aim to alter distorted cognitions and maladaptive interpretations, but that Sattvavajaya adds a spiritual, ethical, and holistic frame (emphasis on Sattva cultivation). Some propose integrative frameworks combining Sattvavajaya with REBT or CBT to leverage mutual strengths. The benefits claimed include balancing Rajas and Tamas, improving Dhi, Dhṛti, and Smṛti (intellect, perseverance, memory); addressing psychosomatic disorders arising from mental disturbances; reinforcing self-control and resilience; and preventing relapse via awareness of triggers. Modern proponents emphasize that Sattvavajaya is especially suited to handle subtle, deep mental currents (i.e. subconscious seeds) because it works not only on overt cognition but on the quality of mind (Guṇa) itself. In effect, Sattvavajaya can be seen as a therapeutic method to regulate and transform latent subconscious tendencies by strengthening Sattva and restraining Rajas/Tamas impulses—thus healing the mind from within.¹²

DISCUSSION

Reconciling Avchetan Mana and Ayurvedic Mind Theory

The notion of Avchetan Mana maps quite naturally onto the latent, impression-laden strata of Ayurvedic mind theory (e.g. Chitta, Karana-Sarira, deep Srotas). While classical Ayurveda did not explicitly use the term “subconscious,” its structural and functional scaffolding can host that notion. Manas as the dynamic processor, Chitta as the store of latent seeds, and Ahamkara as ego identity—together in Antahkarana—mirror the interplay of conscious, unconscious, and egoic functions in modern psychology. One difference, however, is that Ayurveda does not strictly dichotomize conscious vs. unconscious; rather, everything is permeated by Guṇa and subtle channels, and mental content can shift across levels fluidly. The Ayurvedic view is less mechanistic and more organic/metaphoric, seeing the mind as flowing through energetic channels (Srotas) and shaped by constitutional factors (Prakṛti), life events (Ahara-Dhatu-Samasraya), and karmic imprint (Vasana).

Strengths and Limitations of the Correspondence

Strengths of this integrative mapping include Providing a holistic model that situates subconscious influences within a broader body–mind–life framework (not just neural or computational). Offering therapeutic tools (e.g. Sattvavajaya) that aim to heal the deep, subtle currents, not only superficial symptoms. Enabling cross-disciplinary dialogue: e.g. using Ayurvedic insights to enrich psychotherapy or using psychological models to explicate Ayurvedic mind. Emphasizing preventive and integrative mental health, consistent with Ayurveda’s emphasis on balance and early correction. Limitations / challenges include:

The conceptual gap: classical texts did not articulate “subconscious” in the same language; mapping is interpretive and partly speculative. Lack of systematic empirical validation: though isolated studies exist (e.g. Manas Prakṛti and emotional adjustment), rigorous clinical trials on Sattvavajaya addressing “subconscious” seeds are sparse. Differences in epistemology: Ayurveda’s metaphysical elements (e.g. Guṇa, Srotas, Atma) may not map cleanly onto secular psychology. Integration risks: combining subtly different metaphors (energy channels, psychodynamic constructs) may lead to dilution or misfit unless done carefully.

Implications for Psychotherapy and Holistic Mental Health

If we accept that subconscious processes find their home in the deeper strata of Ayurvedic mental theory, then psychotherapy grounded in Ayurveda can—and perhaps should—address them. Some possible implications:

Layered therapeutic sequencing: Therapies might be staged, addressing overt cognition first (via rational reflection, counseling), then deeper substrata via Sattvavajaya, meditation, mantra, yoga, and possibly Daivavyapasraya (spiritual therapy).

Guṇa-targeted therapy: Therapeutic focus shifts from purely cognitive reframing to altering the Guṇa composition of the mind (increasing Sattva, reducing Tamas / Rajas). This is distinct from typical CBT which works mainly at the level of thought content.

Self-awareness and insight: Emphasis on self-knowledge, scriptural reflection, mindfulness (Smṛti) as means to bring latent content into awareness and transform it.

Preventive and integrative approach: Because Ayurveda sees mental disturbance as intertwined with bodily Doshas and lifestyle, this integrative approach can prevent subconscious vulnerabilities from manifesting in full-blown disease.

Potential for cross-modal integration: Some scholars propose combining Sattvavajaya Chikitsa with REBT or CBT, using the structured belief-change strategies of modern psychotherapy within the holistic ethical/spiritual frame of Ayurveda. Such hybrid models could leverage the strengths of both systems.

Future Directions and Research Needs to solidify the conceptual and practical bridge between **Avchetaṇa Mana** and Ayurveda, several research directions are needed:

Qualitative and phenomenological studies probing whether clients' reports of subconscious influence (e.g. recurring dreams, deeper emotional blocks) align with Ayurvedic constructs of latent Vasana and Chitta.

Controlled clinical trials comparing Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (or integrative Ayurvedic psychotherapies) versus conventional psychotherapies for disorders believed to have deep substratal roots (e.g. trauma, personality disorders).

Neurophysiological correlates: imaging or psychophysiological studies to test whether shifts in Guṇa (pre- and post- Sattvavajaya) correspond to measurable brain or autonomic changes.

Conceptual mapping and model-building to produce integrative frameworks that respect both systems' epistemologies (e.g. hybrid maps of subconscious ↔ Chitta).

Cross-cultural validation to examine whether Ayurvedic psychotherapeutic models are generalizable across cultures beyond South Asia.

CONCLUSION

The classical Ayurvedic doctrine of Manas and Manasika Vikaras offers a rich, multi-dimensional conceptual space in which the modern idea of Avchetaṇa Mana (subconscious mind) can be meaningfully reinterpreted. While Ayurveda did not use the modern psychological term “subconscious,” its layered models—Manas, Chitta, Karana- Sarira, etc. serve as a compatible substrate for latent mental content, impression stores, and predispositions. The dynamics of Guṇa imbalance and Srotas obstruction provide plausible etiological mechanisms by which latent tendencies may

surface as mental disturbance, aligning with psychoanalytic or cognitive theories of unconscious activation. Therapeutically, Sattvavajaya Chikitsa emerges as the prime Ayurvedic instrument for addressing these latent layers—not merely by managing symptoms, but by directly regulating the quality of mind (Guṇa), withdrawing from unwholesome influences, and reorienting toward higher Sattva. When combined or integrated judiciously with modern psychotherapeutic methods (e.g. REBT, CBT), it holds promise for a more holistic, depth-oriented mental health paradigm.

However, much remains to be done. Empirical studies, integrative model-building, and respectful dialogues across Ayurveda and psychology are essential. In bridging Avchetaṇa Mana and Ayurvedic mind theory, we can enrich both traditions—offering therapy that addresses both the seen and unseen dimensions of mind and advancing holistic pathways for mental health.

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