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## Exploring the Role of Ayurveda in Mental Health: A Comprehensive Review

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### ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda*, the ancient system of medicine originating in India, offers a holistic approach to health and well-being by emphasizing the balance between body, mind, and spirit. This comprehensive review explores the role of *Ayurveda* in promoting mental health, examining classical texts, therapeutic practices, and recent scientific research. Central to Ayurvedic mental health care is the concept of *Sattva* (mental clarity), and the balance of the *Tridoshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* - which are believed to influence psychological states. The review highlights key *Ayurvedic* interventions including *Medhya Rasayanas* (nootropic herbs), *Panchakarma* therapies, lifestyle modifications, and dietary practices tailored to individual constitution (*Prakriti*). It also discusses the integration of yoga and meditation as complementary tools for emotional regulation and stress management. Emerging evidence supports the efficacy of *Ayurvedic* approaches in managing anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions, although further rigorous clinical trials are necessary. This review underscores the potential of *Ayurveda* as a valuable adjunct in contemporary mental health care, advocating for an integrative model that bridges traditional wisdom with modern psychiatric practices.

**Key words:** *Ayurveda, Mental Health, Rasayana, Sadvrutta*

### INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian medical system, provides a holistic approach to mental health by integrating the mind, body, and spirit. Mental health is discussed in the *Atharva Veda* and further elaborated in the works of *Charak*, *Sushrut*, and *Vagbhatt*, detailing the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of various human

and animal ailments. *Ayurveda* addresses mental health from mild emotions to severe disorders through the interplay of *Gunas*, *Tridosha*, and *Panchabhuta*. A person's *Prakriti*, shaped by these elements at birth, influences mental well-being, requiring balance for optimal health. Treatments include *Daivavyaprashraya*, *Yuktivyapashraya*, *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*, *Aachara Rasayana*, *Dinacharya*, and *Yoga* therapy for comprehensive care.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To critically evaluate the role of *Ayurveda* in the prevention and management of mental health disorders.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Relevant articles on *Ayurveda* and mental health were searched in PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar using keywords like *Ayurveda*, *Mental health*, etc. Only English studies focusing on *Ayurvedic* treatments for

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mental health were included. Data were extracted and reviewed qualitatively.

### Definition of Mental Health

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to *Ayurveda* - *Swastha* is achieved when the body's three *Doshas* are balanced, digestion is efficient, tissues function normally, waste elimination is regular, and the senses, mind, and spirit are in harmony.<sup>[2]</sup>

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः । प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥ (सु.सू.15/41)

### Aetiopathogenesis of Mental Disorders

1. According to *Ayurveda*, the primary causes of imbalance are:

- The disturbance of rational thinking (*~Dhi*), the intellect or self-control (*~Dhrti*), and memory (*~Smrti*).
- Seasonal irregularities and improper conduct (*~Ayoga of Kāla, Karma*).
- Inappropriate contact of the senses with their objects (*~Asatmendriyarth Samyoga*).<sup>[3]</sup>

धीधृतिस्मृतिविभ्रंशः सम्प्राप्तिः कालकर्मणाम् । असात्म्यार्थगमश्चेति ज्ञातव्या दुःखहेतवः ॥ (च.शा.1/98)

Engaging in harmful or negative actions (*Asubhakarma*), after the loss of *Dhi*, *Dhrti*, and *Smrti*, leads to the aggravation of all the *Doshas*. This is referred to as volitional transgression (*Pragyaaparadha*).<sup>[4]</sup>

धीधृतिस्मृतिविभ्रष्टः कर्म यत् कुरुतेऽशुभम् । प्रज्ञापराधं तं विद्यात् सर्वदोषप्रकोपणम् ॥ (च.शा.1/102)

2. **Vishada** - Acharya Charaka states that *Vishado Rogavardhananam* - is the primary factor aggravating disease conditions. This is considered the fundamental principle concerning mental health in *Ayurveda*.<sup>[5]</sup>

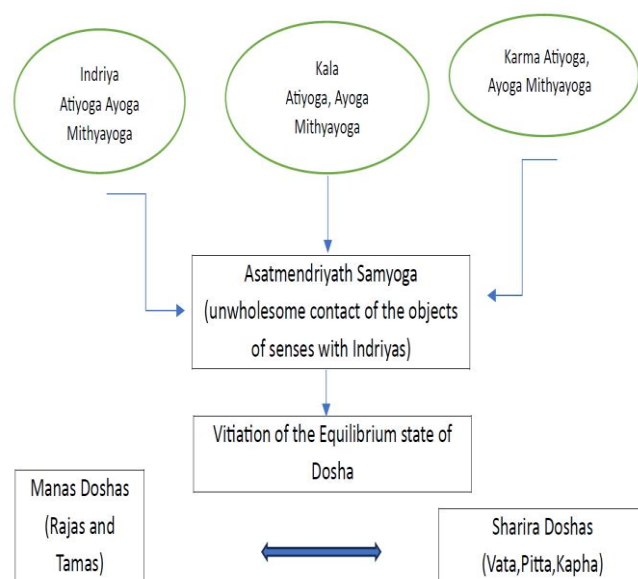
3. **Role of Suppressible urges** - To attain happiness in this life and the next, one must practice self-control over the mind and the five senses. It is also

important to curb desires such as greed, envy, hatred, jealousy, and attachment, as these emotions can lead to mental distress.<sup>[6]</sup>

धारयेत्तु सदा वेगान् हितैषी प्रेत्य चेह च । लोभेष्वद्विषमात्सर्यरागादीनां जितेन्द्रियः ॥ (अ.ह.सू.4/24)

4. **Manasika Dosas** - When the three states of mind - *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* - are in balance, they help preserve both the mind and body, promoting overall health. However, an imbalance in these mental states, known as "*Manasik Doshas*," can lead to the development of various mental disorders.

### Samprapti of Manas Roga



### Examination of Manas<sup>[7]</sup>

आकारैः इङ्गितैः गत्या चेष्टया भाषणेन च । नेत्रवक्त्र विकारैः च लक्ष्यते अन्तर्गतं मनः ॥ (पञ्चतंत्र, वैद्यकीय सुभाषित 2/45)

*Manas* can be analysed or examined on the basis of following parameters:

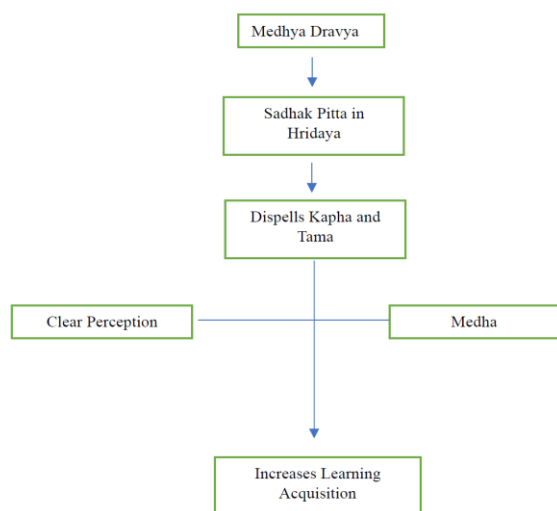
|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| आकार              | Body structure             |
| इङ्गित            | Ambitions and desires      |
| गति               | Body movements             |
| चेष्टा            | Activities                 |
| भाषण              | Talking style              |
| नेत्रवक्त्र विकार | Movements of eyes and face |

### Management of Mental Illness through Ayurveda

In *Ayurveda*, there are 3 types of *Chikitsa-Daivavyapashraya*, *Yuktivyapashraya*, and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*

**Daivavyapashraya** - These strategies instill assurance and negativity inclinations. It involves the recitation of *Mantras*, use of sacred herbs, offering of auspicious items, ritualistic sacrifices, rules and regulations, acts of atonement, fasting, pilgrimage, chanting of hymns, spiritual and healing practices, and religious ceremonies.

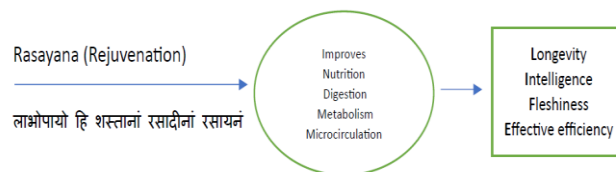
**Yuktivyapashraya** - These methods investigate how Medicines are utilized based on two principles, namely *Shodhana* and *Shamana*. *Ghratas* like *Panchgavya*, *Brahmee*, and *Maha Kalyanaka*. Herbomineral preparations include *Brahmee Vati*, *Vata Kulantaka Rasa*, *Smriti Sagar Rasa*, *Yogendra Rasa*, and *Manasamitra Vatakam*. Single herbs (*Medhya Drugs*) are medicinal preparations.



**Sattvavajaya** - Psychotherapy focuses on maintaining mental control by staying grounded in oneself, understanding the true nature of the soul, and reaching spiritual enlightenment. The methods include *Gyan* - Divine Knowledge, *Vignana* - Teaching the Patient, *Dhairya* - Encouraging Morality, *Smruti* - Restoring the Memory, and *Samadhi* - Avoiding Excessive Materialism.

**Rasayana** - By taking the *Rasayana* one will get longevity, intelligence, freshness effectiveness and

efficiency, youth devoid of disease, best voice, complexion etc.



**Aachara Rasayana** - It is a drug-free treatment that supports the overall life process. A person who tells the truth, remains calm, and avoids drinking alcohol, and excessive consumption. He upholds cleanliness, gets adequate rest, and follows a nutritious diet. It regulates sensory organs for overall physical, mental, and spiritual health.

**Sadvritta** - Adhering to ethical principles fosters mental well-being. Respecting all beings and regulating actions, thoughts, and words align with *Achara Rasayana*, promoting happiness. Avoiding transgressions like theft, negative speech, and harm supports mental balance.

### DISCUSSION

Ayurveda, a time-honored holistic system, views mental health through body-mind-spirit integration. Unlike psychiatry's pharmacological focus, it takes a personalized approach, addressing lifestyle, diet, emotions, and spirituality. This review explores key insights into Ayurveda's role in mental health management.

#### 1. Conceptual Framework and Diagnostic Paradigm:

Ayurveda links mental disorders to imbalances in *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, affecting physiological and psychological functions. Disruptions in *Prana* and *Manas* cause illness, guiding holistic treatments that target root causes rather than symptoms.

#### 2. Herbal Therapeutics and Neuroprotective Effects:

Multiple Ayurvedic herbs such as *Bacopa monnieri* (*Brahmi*), *Withania somnifera* (*Ashwagandha*), *Centella asiatica*, and *Convolvulus pluricaulis* have demonstrated anxiolytic, antidepressant, and cognitive-enhancing properties in preclinical and clinical studies. These herbs are rich in bioactive

phytochemicals like withanolides, bacosides, and asiaticosides that exhibit antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective effects, modulating neurotransmitter systems (e.g., GABAergic, serotonergic) and neuroendocrine axes implicated in mood regulation.

### 3. Mind-Body Interventions:

*Ayurveda* strongly emphasizes mind-body practices such as meditation, *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), *Yoga*, and detoxification techniques (*Panchakarma*). These interventions have shown beneficial effects on stress reduction, autonomic nervous system regulation, and neuroplasticity, contributing to improved mental resilience. Studies correlating these therapies with changes in biomarkers of stress (e.g., cortisol levels) and functional brain imaging suggest a scientific basis for their efficacy in anxiety, depression, and cognitive disorders.

### 4. Lifestyle and Dietary Modifications:

*Ayurveda* prescribes tailored lifestyle adjustments based on individual constitution (*Prakriti*) and current *Doshic* imbalance. These include dietary recommendations, daily routines (*Dinacharya*), and seasonal regimens (*Ritucharya*) that support mental equilibrium. Nutritional psychiatry is gaining recognition in modern science, and *Ayurveda's* integrative dietary approaches contribute significantly to maintaining neurotransmitter precursors and gut-brain axis health, influencing mood and cognitive functions.

### 5. Limitations and Integration with Modern Psychiatry:

Despite promising evidence, *Ayurveda's* acceptance in mental health care faces challenges like inconsistent protocols, variable herbal quality, and limited large-scale trials. Rigorous clinical validation, phytochemical standardization, and mechanistic studies are crucial. Integrating *Ayurveda* with psychiatric treatments may provide complementary benefits, especially for chronic and resistant cases, fostering a holistic mental health model.

## CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, *Ayurveda* provides a holistic approach to mental health, integrating mind, body, and spirit. Understanding *Doshas* and *Gunas* helps maintain balance for well-being. Treatments like *Daivavyapashraya*, *Yuktivyapashraya*, and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* support mental health, while *Rasayana* and *Aachara Rasayana* enhance rejuvenation. Embracing *Ayurvedic* principles fosters resilience, clarity, and fulfilment.

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