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# Role of Diet in Mental Disorder

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## ABSTRACT

Diet is said to be basic of life, strength, complexion, *Ojas*, growth and development, perspicuity of *Indriyas*, happiness, clarity of voice, lustre, pleasure, increase of *Dhatus*, Intellect, health etc. According to *Chhandogya* Upanishad, the food inside is divided into three parts *Sthoola*, *Madhyama* and *Anu bhaga* which nourish *Purisha*, *Mamsa* and *Mana* respectively which means the subtle and abstract part of the *Anna* is *Mana* " *Annamayam hi Soumya Manah*" is a popular quote from *Chandogyopanishad* which means the mind is the essence of food we take. Just as when curd is churned up, the butter which is the finest part gather up, the finest part of food rises up and nourishes *Manas*.

**Key words:** Mental Disorder, Mental Health, Manas, Ahara, Vihara, Diet.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental wellbeing is a cardinal integrant of *Ayurvedic* definition of *Swasthya* along with physical and spiritual wellbeing. WHO defines mental health as state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope up with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to her or his community. Mental health is the foundation for effective communication, learning, emotion, thinking and self-esteem in an individual. Mental health is integral in all sphere of human life like interpersonal relationships, personal and emotional wellbeing and contributing effectively to society. Studies estimate that at least 10% of the world's population is affected by mental illness and

that 20% of children and adolescents suffers from depression and 3.8 million suffers from anxiety disorders. A report of WHO on depression reveals that almost 7.5% of Indian population suffers from major or minor mental disorders that require medical intervention. National health survey of India reveals that very 6<sup>th</sup> Indian needs mental health help. Ayurveda has documented the 'Body-Mind' relationship years ago. Attempts to study mind in a scientific prospective was evident from the beginning of *Vedic* period itself *Yajurveda* has tried to describe mind as a media for perception and memory. *Unmada* has been recorded for the first time in *Atharvaveda* with its various stages and treatments.

There exist a two way relationship between mental disorders and unhealthy behaviors, such as unwholesome diet and unwholesome regimen, which in turn acts as contributing factors to diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes and a range of other life threatening diseases condition. Improvement in a population mental health will lead to improvement in its physical health and will help enhance overall social and economic welfare. The roll of *Ahara-Vihara* in the nation's mental health is yet to be fully understood and brought to the preview of health sector.

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### Concept of health in Ayurveda

Life according to Ayurveda is a conglomeration of the four interdependent components namely.

- The body (*Shareera*)
- The sensory and motor faculties (*Indriya*)
- The mind (*Satva*)
- The soul (*Atama*)

A person with *Swastha Mana* (Healthy mental state) *Prasanna Aatmendriya* (Delighted soul with proper functioning of sense organ) along with *Sama Dosha* (well balanced state of *Dosha*) *Sama Agni* (Proper metabolism) *Sama Dhatu* (proportionate body organs and tissues) and *Samakriya* (proper physiology) is perfectly healthy.

### Physical health

Physical health is the attainment of;

- Desire for timely intake of food followed by proper digestion of consumed food.
- Timely evacuation of excretory products.
- Lightness to the body.
- Proper and satisfactory sleep and timely awakening without any distress.
- Absence of lethargy, heaviness and laziness.

### Mental health

- A well balanced and pleasant state of mind.
- Being cheerful and gracious.
- Proper satisfactory sleep.
- Steady and well-balanced mental faculties.
- Pleasant and active state of sensory attributes.
- Control over *Dharaniya Vega*, *Kama* (Lust), *Krodh* (Anger), *Bhaya* (Fear), *Irshya* (Spite), *Shoka* (Grief), *Lobha* (Greed) and *Moha* (Infatuation).
- Might not getting excessively afflicted with adverse events and ability to adjust with such other things.

### Relationship between Body and Mind in disease

It is known from earlier times itself that mind and body influence each other. Psychological suffering is often expressed through somatic problems. Physical manifestations are often seen in the form of loss of sleep, decreased / increased appetite, loss of libido, vague aches and pains in the body, fatigue, anger issues, eating disorders etc. Some physical diseases such as eczema, psoriasis, auto immune diseases, blood pressure etc. are thought to be prone to worsen by mental factors such as anxiety and stress.

Chronic condition and life-threatening condition such as cancer, renal diseases etc. also affect mind respectively in form anxiety, depression, worthlessness, feeling of rejection etc. Mind also can exert a positive or negative impact on the effect of treatment on body also. The positive impact of placebo on treatment is because of mind.

### Concept of Ahara (Diet in Ayurveda)

Every living and non-living beings in this universe is composed of five basic element, The *Pancha Mahabhootas* namely Earth (*Prithvi*), Water (*Ap*), Fire (*Teja*), air (*Vayu*), and Ether (*Akasha*) the *Panchabhuta* components of ingested food nourishes there respective tissue element in the body.

*Ahara* is the best is all medicines and is considered one among the three sub pillars of Ayurveda. *Ahara* (food) and *Vihara* (Lifestyle) which are congenital to the channels, constitution and strength of an individual is termed as *Pathya* (wholesome) and that which is non-congenital is termed as *Apathya* (unwholesome).

### Ayurvedic dietary guidelines include:

- Intake of food in time (*Kala Bhojana*).
- Food intake as per suitability (*Satmya Bhojana*)
- Food intake as per *Prakruthi* of individual (*Hita Bhojana*), Proper hygiene (*Suchi Bhojana*)
- Intake of food which is unctuous (*Snighda Bhojana*) Intake of food which is warm (*Ushna Bhojana*)

- Intake of food which is easy to digest (*Laghu Bhojana*)
- Eat while there is interest to food and while eating concentrate on food and the process of Eating (*Tanmana Bhojana*).
- Eat food with six taste components (*Shadrasa Yukta Ahara*) Food should be primarily sweet in nature (*Madhur Praya*)
- Food should be ingested calmly, neither too slow nor too fast (*Na Ati Drutam, Na Ati Vilambita*) After bathing (*Snatah*).
- Food intake only when there is sufficient hunger (*Kshudvan*).
- Proper washing of hand, feet, face should be done before food intake after offering food to guests, teachers and children.
- After offering prayers to God and forefathers without disgracing food.
- Silently (*Moun*).

#### Contemporary review of role of nutrition in psychiatric disorders

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen major shifts in dietary intake globally with a marked increase in the consumption of sugars, snake foods, at the same time, the consumption of nutrient and fibre dense foods is diminishing. Recent trends in diet and nutrition which might have played an important role in the causation of diseases are;

- Altered cooking and manufacturing practices.
- Increased access to fast food, food processed with unhealthy items High caloric diet, which gives fast nutrition, is being practiced increased use of alcohol, drugs etc.
- Practices of reheating refrigerated food using stale food etc.

#### DISCUSSION

Unhealthy dietary habits are well quoted by *Ayurveda* in the pathogenesis of mental disorders. Though there

is no direct classification of *Ahara* in classical text based on *Manasika Gunas* but this can be well understood with the relationship between *Sharirika* and *Manasika Dosha*. There are multiple social, psychological and biological factors, determine the level of mental health of a person at any point of time Faulty life style and poor diet are identified as one of the important risk factors for many mental illness.

#### CONCLUSION

World is witnessing a global paradigm shift in health care sector with lenience towards traditional systems of medicine and *Ayurveda* is reviving its vigour. Unlike other branches of *Ashtanga Ayurveda*, psychiatry or '*Bhoot Vidya*' has not developed into a mainstream system except in the certain regions of India. The main reason being ignorance and abscurance prevailing around the concept of being afflicted with a mental illness, which is still considered a social stigma. Exploring its utility and developing its possibilities into a complementary support system to modern psychiatry is the need. The *Ayurvedic* Psychiatry revolves around the concept of mutual inter relationship between the *Psyche* and *Soma*. The *Psychic* factors at large are influenced by the physical factors like food intake and activities of daily life. The structural and functional components of the body *Viz, Dosha, Dhatu, Mala* and *Ojas* are nourished, depleted or vitiated by the influence of the *Ahara* and *Vihara* which becomes the determinant of health and ill health. Reciprocally the status of *Satva* is also indispensable affected by these factors. Long term mental illness negatively affects the general health of the individual. The concepts of *Sadvritta* and *Achara Rasayanas* helps in the preventing derailment of mind. The concepts of *Satvavajaya* and *Daivavyapashraya* can be used suitably in the form of treatment modality and also in rehabilitation of the individual.

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