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A scientific evaluation of Mental Health through Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is an important aspect of overall wellbeing, as it allows individuals to recognize their own capabilities, manage everyday stress, be productive, and contribute to their community. According to *Ayurveda*, life consists of four interconnected elements: the body (*Sarira*), the sensory and motor faculties (*Indriya*), and the mind (*Sattva*), and the soul (*Atma*). Achieving a healthy life requires a harmonious balance of these components, encompassing physical, mental, sensory and spiritual aspects. *Ayurveda* also emphasizes the significance of mental health, including qualities such as a balanced and pleasant state of mind, cheerfulness, satisfactory sleep, stable mental faculties, active senses, and control over negative emotions, resilience in the face of adversity, and the ability to adapt. *Ayurveda* has various methods to evaluate mental health, including the assessment through *Manasika Prakriti* (*Sattvika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika*), *Nadi Pariksha*, *Prajnaparadha*, *Ashta Vibhrama* as mentioned in *Unmada Nidana* of *Charaka Samhitha*, and *Sattva Pariksha* as described in *Dasavidha Pariksha*. The main purpose of this evaluation is for establishing a proper diagnosis as well as prognosis of a disease. This review articles elaborates the scientific tools mentioned in *Ayurveda* to evaluate mental health.

Key words: *Manasika Prakriti*, *Nadi Pariksha*, *Ashta Vibhrama*, *Sattva Pariksha*, *Prajnaparadha*, *Dasvidha Pariksha*

INTRODUCTION

Mana, as the ultimate analysing facility, serves as the residence of the soul or *Atma*, governing the entirety of the body. It enables the superior senses to function and can be referred to as the centre of understanding.

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According to *Ayurveda*, the existence of mind is proven by the presence of knowledge (लक्षणं मनसो ज्ञानं).^[1] The mind is told as '*Ubhayatmaka*' (उभयात्मकं मनः)^[2] i.e., it has both sensory and motor functions and hence considered as superior faculty because it controls and co-ordinates all other faculties connecting them.

In contemporary psychology, the mind is a comprehensive term that encompasses the joint functioning of the brain and body, along with memory, world view, personality, soul, and other intangible aspects of human life and psychology. It includes how individuals interact with others and the world, their learning and self-expression, as well as their relationship with abstract concepts like religion, spirituality, and metaphysics. The mind encompasses the tangible manifestations of thought, perception, emotion, determination, memory, knowledge,

conscience and imagination that occur within the brain.

Synonyms

Sattva, *Chitha*, *Chetho*, *Hridaya*, *Chethana* are the commonly used terms for *Manas*.

Location/Seat of *Manas*

आत्मा च सगुणश्चेतश्चिन्त्यं च हृदि संश्रितम्। (Cha.Sa. Su -30/4)^[3]

हृदयमिति कृतवीर्यो, बुद्धेर्मनसश्च स्थानत्वात्। (Su.Sa. Sa -3/32)^[4]

सत्त्वादिधाम हृदयम् स्तनोरः कोष्ठमध्यगम्। (A.H. Sa -4/13)^[5]

शिरस्ताल्वन्तर्गतं सर्वेन्द्रियपरं मनः। (Bhe. Sa. Chi -8/4)^[6]

Acharya Vagbhata says that the *Hrudaya* is the seat of *Manas*, likewise *Acharya Charaka* and *Susrutha* also explains the *Hrudaya* as seat of *Manas* as it is said to be the *Chetanasthana*. *Acharya Bhela* in context of *Unmada*, says Head (*Shira*) as the seat of *Manas*.

It can be determined that the brain is responsible for the sensory and motor functions of the mind, while the heart is attributed to the psychological functions, particularly the emotions. The brain serves as the physical foundation for the characteristics of the mind, creating a close and intricate connection between the two.

Gunas/Properties of Manas

अणुत्वमथचैकत्वम् द्वौ गुणौ मनसः स्मृतौ। (Cha. Sa. Sa-1/19)^[7]

The qualities of *Manas* are '*Anutwa*' (subtlety) and '*Ekatwa*' (singleness or oneness), meaning that it can only hold one thought at a time and can only engage with one sense organ. However, its subtlety allows it to move quickly from one object to another, giving the impression of simultaneous perception.

The inability to focus on one thing or withdraw from perception of a particular object can be seen as abnormal. This can lead to obsessions and compulsions if one thought lingers for too long, it can be a symptom

of disorders like ADHD, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder etc.

Karma/Functions of Manas

इन्द्रियाभिग्रहः कर्म मनसः स्वस्यनिग्रहः।

ऊहो विचारश्च, ततः परं बुद्धिः प्रवर्तते ॥ (Cha. Sa. Sa-1/21)^[8]

Manas is said to have various functions, such as controlling the sense organs (*Indriyabhigraha*), restraining oneself (*Svasyanigraha*), making hypothesis (*Uhya*), and considering things (*Vichara*). *Indriyabhigraha* involves activating, directing, coordinating the cognitive and action organs. *Svasyanigraha* entails restraining oneself from temptations and being influenced by emotions.

Arthas/Objects of Manas

चिन्त्यं विचार्यमूह्यं च ध्येयं संकल्प्यमेव च।

यत्किञ्चिन्मनसो ज्ञेयं तत् सर्वं ह्यर्थसंज्ञकम् ॥ (Cha. Sa. Sa-1/20)^[9]

Artha refers to the objects that are perceived through the sensory organs. *Manas* is capable of perceiving and processing various types of objects such as,

- *Chintya* - Act of contemplating do's' and don'ts.
- *Vicharya* - Engaging in reasoning and logical thinking.
- *Uhya* - Judgements or educated guesses.
- *Dhyeya* - Constantly thinking about desired things.
- *Sankalpa* - Utilizing imagination to evaluate the value or consequences of actions.

Modern science acknowledged this concept late 20th century only. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) came into existence in 1960's and became popular after popularization of Daniel Goleman's book titled "Emotional Intelligence, why it can matter more than IQ". Goleman identified 5 components of EI-

1. Self-awareness
2. Internal motivation
3. Self-regulation
4. Empathy

5. Social skills^[10]**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. To evaluate mental health using Ayurvedic scientific tools.
2. To gain insights into mental well-being, through the concept of *Manasika Prakriti*, *Nadi Pariksha*, *Prajnaparadha*, *Ashta Vibhrama*, and *Sattva Pariksha*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To fulfil the aims and objectives relevant Ayurveda literature like *Charaka Samhitha*, *Susrutha Samhitha* etc, modern texts as well as the databases Google Scholar, Pub Med, AYUSH Research Portal, studies available on Research Gate web-based search engines, journal, and other websites were used. The gathered information was subsequently arranged in a systematic way.

Assessment of Manasika Prakriti

The predominance of three *Gunas* is crucial in shaping a person's mental constitution. *Sattva Guna* encompasses qualities such as essence, light or heat, kindness, truth, faith and good memory. On the other hand, *Rajas* signify motion and *Tamas* stands for inertia. Out of these three, *Sattva* is not a dosha because it is *Nirvikara* (immutable) while *Rajas* and *Tamas* are seen as mental imbalances in an individual. It is based on these characteristics that the *Manasa Prakriti* of an individual is determined. According to *Acharya Charaka* in *Sareerasthana* these three primary constitutions, *Sattvic*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika*, further differentiated into seven, six and three subtypes.

त्रयाणामपि सत्त्वानां भेदैकदशो व्याख्यातः, शुद्धस्य सत्त्वस्य सप्तविधो ब्रह्मर्षिशक्रयमवरुणकुबेरगन्धर्व सत्त्वानुकारेण, राजसस्य षड्विधो दैत्यपैशाचराक्षस सर्पप्रेतशकुनिसत्त्वानुकारेण, तामसस्य त्रिविधः पशुमत्स्य वनस्पतिसत्त्वानुकारेण (Cha. Sa. Sa-4/40)^[11]

<i>Sattvic Prakriti</i> ^[7]	<i>Rajasika Prakriti</i> ^[6]	<i>Tamasika Prakriti</i> ^[3]
<i>Brahma Sattva</i>	<i>Daitya Sattva</i>	<i>Pashava Sattva</i>
<i>Rishi Sattva</i>	<i>Rakshasa Sattva</i>	<i>Matsya Sattva</i>

<i>Indra Sattva</i>	<i>Paisacha Sattva</i>	<i>Vanaspatya Sattva</i>
<i>Yama Sattva</i>	<i>Sarpa Sattva</i>	
<i>Varuna Sattva</i>	<i>Pretha Sattva</i>	
<i>Kubera Sattva</i>	<i>Sakuni Sattva</i>	
<i>Gandharva Sattva</i>		

तत्र शुद्धदोषमाख्यातं कल्याणांशत्वात्, राजसं सदोषमाख्यातं रोषांशत्वात्, तामसमपि सदोषमाख्यातं मोहांशत्वात्। (Cha. Sa. Sa-4/36)^[12]

Sattvic Prakriti

A *Sattvic* mind is characterized by the dominance of the *Sattva Guna*. It represents kindness, truthfulness, faith and a good memory. Individuals with a *Sattvic* mind are not attached to material possessions and do not cause harm to others. They express the truth with calm demeanour and are deeply religious, holding strong faith in God. They possess sharp intelligence and are diligent in their work. Their actions are not driven by the desire for rewards or outcomes, they focus solely on their actions themselves.

Rajasika Prakriti

Rajasa Sattva represents a state of change, movement and commotion, disrupting any previous equilibrium. It is driven by a desire for objective or outcome, empowering itself. It exhibits an outward drive and leads to individualistic actions, ultimately resulting in division and breakage. Although *Rajas* initially offers stimulation and enjoyment, its inherent imbalance leads to swift agony and distress. This passionate force causes anguish and turmoil in conflicts.

Tamasika Prakriti

Tamasa Sattva represents characteristics such as dullness, darkness, and inertia. These qualities have a heavy and obstructive effect, similar to the force of gravity, preventing things from progressing and limiting them to specific forms. *Tamas* also has the tendency to decay and cause disintegration through its downward motion. Furthermore, it is responsible for

promoting ignorance, delusion, insensitivity, sleep and loss of awareness in the mind. This principle of materiality or unconsciousness is responsible for veiling consciousness.

Sattva Pariksha

तस्मादातुरं परीक्षेत प्रकृतितश्च, विकृतितश्च, सारतश्च, संहननतश्च, प्रमाणतश्च, सात्म्यतश्च, सत्त्वतश्च, आहारशक्तितश्च, व्यायामशक्तितश्च, वयसस्तश्चेति, बलप्रमाणविशेषग्रहणहेतोः॥ (Cha. Sa. Vim-8/94)^[13]

The importance of conducting a *Sattva Pariksha* in the context of *Dasavidha pariksha* as told in *Charaka Samhitha Vimanasthana* is to evaluate the strength of an individual and their state of health. According to *Rogi Bala Pramana*, *Sattva* can be categorised into *Pravara*, *Madhyama* and *Avara*. These categories are determined based on the individual's strength.

तत्र त्रिविधं बलभेदेन - प्रवरं, मध्यम्, अवरं चेति । अत्र प्रवरसत्त्वाः सत्त्वसारास्ते सारेषूपदिष्टाः, स्वल्पसरीरा ह्यपि ते निजागन्तुनिमित्तासु महतीष्वपि पीडास्त्वव्यथा दृश्यन्ते सत्त्वगुणवैशेष्यात् मध्यासत्त्वासत्त्वपरानात्मन्युपनिधाय संस्तम्भायन्त्याः सत्त्वानं परैर्वाऽपि संस्तम्भ्यन्ते, हीनसत्त्वास्तु नात्मना नापि परैः सत्त्वबलं प्रति शक्यन्ते उपस्तम्भयितुं, महाशरीरा ह्यपि ते स्वल्पानामपि वेदनानामसहा दृश्यन्ते (Cha. Sa. Vim-8/119)^[14]

Pravara Sattva

स्मृतिमन्तो भक्तिमन्तः कृतज्ञाः प्राज्ञाः शुचयो महोत्साहा दक्षा धीराः समरविक्रान्तयोधिनस्त्यक्तविषादाः सुव्यवस्थितगतिगम्भीरबुद्धिचेष्टाः कल्याणाभिनिवेशश्च सत्त्वसाराः॥ (Cha. Sa. Vim-8/110)^[15]

Pravara sattva individuals possess certain qualities that indicate the strength of their *Sattva*. These qualities include having a good memory (*Smritimanta*), believing in God (*Bhakitimanta*), being grateful (*Kritajna*), wise (*Prajna*), pure (*Daksha*), courage (*Dheera*), Bravery (*Samaravikranthayodhina*), devoid

of unnecessary tension and sorrow (*Tyaktavishada*), proper gait and movements (*Suvyavasthitha Gati*), depth of wisdom (*Gambhira Budhi*), proper conation (*Cheshta*), always indulged in welfare activities (*Kalyanabhinivesha*). They possess a proper way of thinking and act according and are well wishers with a helping nature. Despite having a weak physique, their majority of *Sattva Guna* allows them to tolerate any difficult situation.

Madhyama Sattva

Individuals who possess a moderate level of mental equilibrium have the ability to endure pain through the acknowledgement and support of others. When they receive recognition, motivation, inspiration and encouragement, they can confront their fears and persevere.

Avara Sattva

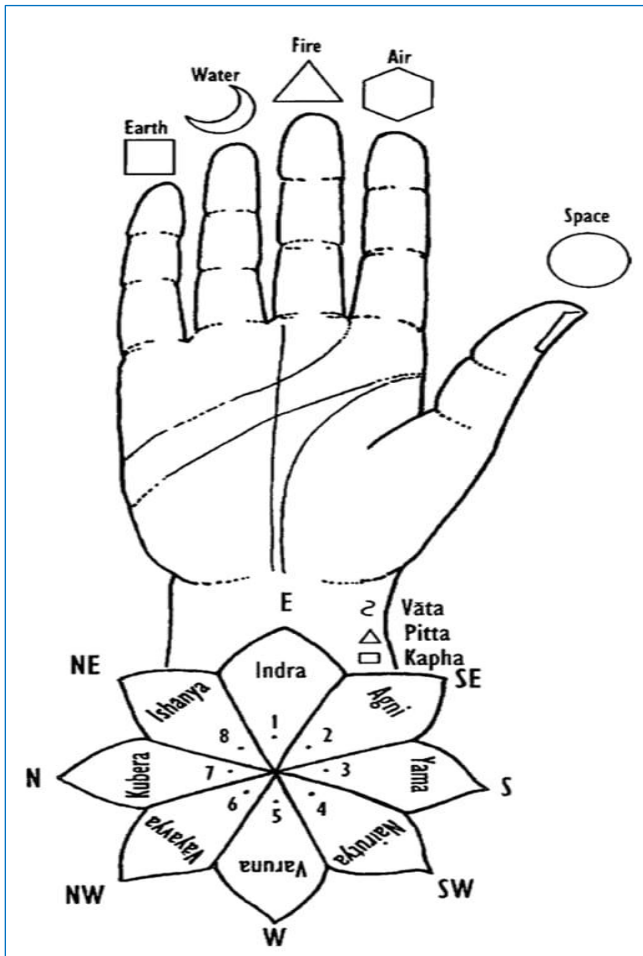
Individuals with weak *Sattva* are not easily consoled and are susceptible to fear, grief, greed, delusion and ego. They easily fall into depression, pallor, fainting, or even death when exposed to fearful or panic inducing situations or when they see blood.

Depending on the individual's level of *Sattva*, a person suffering from a disease can be divided into 2 groups. One group includes those who have a severe disease but present it as a mild one due to their strong *Sattva*, body strength, and superiority excellence and are known as *Guru Vyadhitha*. The other group includes those who have a mild disease but present themselves as suffering from a severe one due to their inferior *Sattva* and are called *Laghu Vyadhitha*. Neglecting the *Sattva* can lead a physician to make poor decisions, which can then result in inadequate disease management and potentially increase the severity of the disease or lead to the end of life.

Nadi Pariksha

To determine someone's *Manasa Prakriti* through *Nadi Pariksha* according to Dr. Vasant Dattatray Lad in his book "Secrets of Pulse", have them sit facing east and use the lotus diagram to locate the spike under east spike under each finger when feeling their pulse.^[16]

Spike In	Personality	Characteristics
Petal 1	Indra	Royal, Religious
Petal 2	Agni	Knowledgeable, Judgemental
Petal 3	Yama	Introspective, Impartial, Withdrawn
Petal 4	Nairutya	Depressed, Sleepy, Sad, Grieving
Petal 5	Varuna	Compassionate
Petal 6	Vayavya	Emotional, With mood swings
Petal 7	Kubera	Wealthy, Long-lived
Petal 8	Ishanya	Spiritual, Fortunate



Ashta Vibhrama

In *Charaka Samhitha*, *Nidanasthana*, *Acharya* explained about *Ashtavibhrama* for the cause of the disease *Unmada*, for which *Chakrapani* has elaborated as follows:

अत्र मनोविभ्रमाच्चिन्त्यानर्थान्न चिन्तयते (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

1. **Mano Vibhrama** - In this scenario, individuals may experience thoughts that are unrelated, insignificant, or not worth, derangement, impairments in thinking, rapid flow of ideas, as observed in conditions like Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Schizophrenia, or Delusional Thinking.

बुद्धिविभ्रमात्तु नित्यमनित्यमिति, प्रियं चाप्रियमिति पश्यति (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

2. **Buddhi Vibhrama** - *Buddhi* serves a filter for the thoughts that enter our minds. However, certain conditions like alcohol use disorder and various delusions can impair our ability to distinguish between good and bad thoughts.

संज्ञां ज्ञानं, तद्विभ्रमादग्न्यादिदाहं न बुद्ध्यते; किंवा संज्ञा नामोल्लेखेन ज्ञानम् । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

3. **Samjna Vibhrama** - Disorientation towards time, place and person. *Acharya* presents this instance with an example of a patient unable to recognize burns caused by fire. Disorientation occurs due to Epilepsy, alcohol intoxication, delirium, split personality.

स्मृतिविभ्रमात्तु न स्मरति, अयथावद्वा स्मरति । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

4. **Smriti Vibhrama** - In *Smriti Vibhrama*, individuals suffering from this condition experience either complete memory loss or distorted recollections. Alzheimer's and Dementia lead to a strong retention of remote memory while immediate and recent memory is impaired or lost. Amnesia, on the other hand, involves the inability to recall past events. In cases of Schizophrenia, information is not properly registered and therefore unable to be retrieved from memory.

भक्तिरिच्छा, तद्विभ्रमाच्च यत्रेच्छा पूर्वमासीत्तत्रानिच्छा भवति । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

5. **Bhakti Vibhrama** - Here a lack of desire tends to emerge towards previously desired things. This is commonly seen in conditions such as mania, depression, bulimia nervosa.

शीलविभ्रमादक्रोधनः क्रोधनो भवति । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka- 7/5)

6. **Seela Vibhrama** - There is perversion of behaviour or attitude as seen in stress related disorders, behavioural disorders, anxiety.

चेष्टाविभ्रमादनुचितचेष्टो भवति । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka- 7/5)

7. **Ceshta Vibhrama** - Deviation in psychomotor activities, such as coordination, movement, speed etc.

आचारः शास्त्रशिक्षाकृतो व्यवहारः तद्विभ्रमादशौचायाचरति । (Cha. Sa. Nid. Chakrapani Teeka -7/5)

8. **Achara Vibhrama** - Distortion of traditional laws and illicit sexual acts.^[17]

Prajnaparadha

धीधृतिस्मृतिविभ्रष्टः कर्म यत् कुरुतेऽशुभम् ।

प्रज्ञापराधं तं विद्यात् सर्वदोषप्रकोपणम्॥ (Cha. Sa. Sa-1/102)^[18]

Prajnaparadha, also known as intellectual blasphemy, involves deliberately disregarding one's inner knowledge and defying societal norms, intuitions, and logical reasoning. It is the fundamental reason behind the emergence of all illnesses. Engaging in verbal, mental, or physical actions that are detrimental to oneself has adverse effects on both the body and mind. Actions resulting from *Prajnaparadha* intensify the imbalances in bodily humours, known as *Tridosha*, and trigger psychological attributes called *Rajas* and *Tamo Gunas*, which pave the way for manifestation of diseases. *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (retention) and *Smriti* (memory) are three components which constitute *Prajna*. A person whose intellect, retention and memory are impaired subjects himself to *Prajnaparadha* by virtue of his act.

When *Dhi* is degraded, it leads to the misinterpretation of knowledge and the misjudgment of what is beneficial and non-beneficial. This can result in psychological conditions such as delusions, obsessions, hallucinations, and other disorders related to thought and perception. Similarly, when *Dhriti* is degraded, it impairs the individual's ability to control their mind and sense organs, causing them to behave inappropriately and be attracted to harmful objects. *Dhriti Vibhrama* can also give rise to the use of psychoactive substances, behavioural disorders, and psychosexual disorders. On the other hand, *Smriti Vibhrama* can lead to psychological complications such as dementia, delirium, and other disturbances in memory.

DISCUSSION

The body and mind have a close connection with each other. Lifestyle choices and diet can affect both physical and mental health. Unhealthy choices can negatively impact the mind, causing mental disorders. A healthy, balanced diet (*Sattvic* diet) can promote good mental health and help treat mental disorders. Moral conduct (*Sadvritta*) and following regimens for rejuvenation (*Achara Rasayana*) also play a role in managing mental health. Nowadays, with the rise of technology, lifestyle changes have occurred that can cause behavioural abnormalities. Excessive exposure to media, alcohol and nicotine abuse, and disrespect towards elders can change behavioural patterns and can make a person emotionally unstable. *Ayurveda* suggests controlling psychological expressions (*Dharaneeya Vega*) to maintain a healthy state of mind. Modern science recognizes that chronic exposure to uncontrolled psychological expressions can cause chronic stress and lead to various mental illnesses.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda believes that in order to effectively treat a patient, a good clinician should aim to address not only the physical body but also the soul or subtle body. Currently there is a significant global burden of mental disorders, with around 450 million people suffering from various mental conditions. This makes mental disorders one of the leading causes of ill health and

disability worldwide while treatments are available; only one-third of the people with well-known mental disorders seek help from mental health professionals.

Ayurvedic principles and treatment guidelines can provide a strong solution to the increasing problem of stress-related disorders and psychogenic illnesses. The key to addressing these issues lies in treating the underlying causes and providing comprehensive treatment that considers both physical and subconscious levels of the patient. Although *Ayurveda* provides a brief description rather than a detailed examination of mental health through *Manasika Prakriti*, *Sattva Pariksha*, *Nadi Pariksha*, *Ashta Vibhrama* and *Prajnaparadha*, concepts such as *Mana*, *Manovigyana*, *Inanotpatti*, *Manasaroga Samprapti* and *Manasa Vikara* classification can be found in ancient Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka Samhitha*. This area holds strong potential for future prospects and it is hoped that new researches will be encouraged to fully utilize the power of Ayurveda. By doing so, the rising cases of psychiatric illnesses can be reduced and the mental well-being of individuals can be maintained.

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