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, Ashta Vibhrama, 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 article elaborates the scientific tools mentioned in Ayurveda to evaluate mental health.

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

**INTRODUCTION**

Manā, 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 ज्ञातं).\(^[1]\) The mind is told as ‘Ubhayatmaka’ (उभयात्मकं मनं)\(^[2]\) 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 समुण्डेऽतत्सन्न्यः च हृदि संशितम्। (Cha.Sa. Su -30/4)$^9$

हृदयमिति कृत्वीया, बुद्धेमनसंध स्थानत्वात्। (Su.Sa. Sa -3/32)$^{44}$

सत्तवादिधाम हृदयम् स्तनोरः कोष्ठमध्यगम्। (A.H. Sa – 4/13)$^{51}$

शिरस्तल्ख्यत्तर्गतं सप्तन्त्रिद्यपरं 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 Bheila in context of Unmada, says Head (Shira) as the seat of Mana.

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**

अणुत्वमचैकत्तम् दौ गुणों मनसः स्मृतो। (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**

इन्द्रियाभिध्राय: करं मनसः स्वस्यतनग्र:।

उस्हो विचार्षच्च, तत: परं बुद्ध: 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**

चिन्तन्त्विचारायमुद्र च ध्येयं संकल्प्यमेव च।

यत्किंचिन्नमनसो ज्येष्ठं तत् सवर्यस्मर्यंजकम्॥ (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
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 Sareerasthanas as these three primary constitutions, Sattvic, Rajasika and Tamasika, further differentiated into seven, six and three subtypes.

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

Tamas 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

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<th>Sattvic Prakriti</th>
<th>Rajasika Prakriti</th>
<th>Tamasika Prakriti</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indra Sattva</td>
<td>Yaksha Sattva</td>
<td>Vanaspatya Sattva</td>
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<td>Yamya Sattva</td>
<td>Sarpa Sattva</td>
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<td>Varuna Sattva</td>
<td>Pretha Sattva</td>
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<td>Kubera Sattva</td>
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<td>Gandharva Sattva</td>
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<td>Brhma Sattva</td>
<td>Daitya Sattva</td>
<td>Pashava Sattva</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rishi Sattva</td>
<td>Rakshasa Sattva</td>
<td>Matsya Sattva</td>
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5. Social skills[10]

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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**

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.

**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.

**Pravara Sattva**

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 (Suvyavasthittha Gati), depth of wisdom (Gambhira Budhi), proper connation (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 Gunas allows them to tolerate any difficult situation.
Ashta Vibhrama

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.

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

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

8. **Achara Vibhrama** - Distortion of traditional laws and illicit sexual acts.\(^{[17]}\)

**Prajnaparadha**

- **Drishthi-mrityushthvishash**: कम्य यत् कुस्तेश्वृभम् ।
- **Pranagaantham** तं विकात् स्वेद्धृप्रक्रोपणम्। । (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 humour, 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 **Praja**. 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 disorders seek help from 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 Prajinaparadha, concepts such as Mana, Manovigyan, Jnanotpati, 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 if 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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