

Embracing Sadvritta: Ayurveda Holistic Approach to Mental Well - Being and Resilience

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Abstract: *Sadvritta, a fundamental concept in Ayurveda, encompasses lifestyle practices aimed at promoting physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. In the context of Manasroga, or mental health, Sadvritta assumes paramount importance as it addresses the holistic nature of human existence. This conceptual article explores the significance of Sadvritta in Manasroga, highlighting its role in maintaining psychological equilibrium and preventing mental disorders. Drawing upon ancient Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research, the article elucidates the principles of Sadvritta and their relevance to mental health promotion. It discusses various Sadvritta practices, including dietary habits, daily routines, social conduct, and spiritual pursuits, and their impact on mental well-being. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the need for integrating Sadvritta principles into modern mental health interventions to foster holistic healing and enhance resilience against psychological stressors. Through a comprehensive review and synthesis of the literature, this article underscores the imperative of incorporating Sadvritta into the discourse and practice of Manasroga for promoting optimal mental health outcomes.*

Keywords: Sadvritta, Manasroga, Ayurveda, Mental health, Psychological Prevention

1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (1948), "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity" (1). Ayurveda, the ancient science of life explains attributes of 'Arogya' or good health in different topics. When the functions of Tridoshas, Trayodasha agni, Sapta dhatus and Dehamalas are in equilibrium along with sound Soul, Sense organs and Mind, the individual is said to be in a state of Swasthya (Su. Su 15/41). Timely onset of hunger and proper digestion of food consumed; effortless initiation/evacuation of natural urges; overall lightness of body; pleasant and well-functioning sensory organs; timely onset of sleep and awakening cycle; satisfactory muscular strength/immune power, colour and complexion, life span; sound mental state, satisfactory metabolic activities are the indicators of good health (Ka. sa. Khila sthana 5/6 - 8).

Ayurveda has explained social health under Preventive, Curative and Promotive aspects. The prevention of diseases is equally or more important than cure. The preventive benefits of Ayurveda are well popular today as the globe experiences unexpected health hazards in one or many ways. The main preventive measures for both endogenous (Nija) and exogenous (Agantu) diseases and manifested ailments include - avoidance of intellectual errors (Prajnaparadha), control over senses (indriyopashama), retrospective cognizance (Smrti), awareness/orientation of surroundings (Desha), seasons/time (kala), self (atma), following good practices (Sadvritta) (A. H Su 4/32 - 33). For attaining the 'objects of human pursuit' (purushartha chatushtayam - Dharma, artha, kama & moksha) a healthy body is an essential factor (Cha. Su 1). Sadvritta helps one to achieve good virtues and thereby prosperity. These two lead to the fulfilment of his desires/passions and finally, he will achieve salvation. This is the working principle behind it.

The psychical, emotional, social and behavioural changes are also responsible for producing psychosomatic diseases. Ayurveda has explained codes of good conduct under

Sadvritta which are related to social, emotional, psychological and ethical aspects of life. By following them individuals can maintain physical, mental and social health and also be able to socialize with society. Contemporary science also puts forward some ethical principles regarding self-discipline, social, cultural, biomedical etc. Kant's self-legislation is one among them (2)

The concept of Sadvritta can well be understood in the light of social learning or the social cognitive theory. The theory has made an important contribution to understanding behaviour related to health care. One of the primary components of social cognitive theory, or social learning theory, is the idea that many of the thoughts and beliefs are rooted in the observational learning experiences that have occurred in our environment. These experiences, in turn, are related to our attribution of our abilities and our sources of motivation. This theory is a work of Albert Bandura (1986) who believes that people learn by watching what others do and what happens to them when they do the same. This is nothing but the concept of Sadvritta itself.

Social epidemiology plays a major role in the preventive aspect of today's health problems. Many of the current and emerging health problems such as HIV/AIDS, road traffic accidents, communicable diseases, alcoholism, and cigarette smoking can be addressed by Sadvritta, Acharara Rasayana, and Dharaniya vega as per Ayurvedic principles (3).

2. Literature Review

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential of Sadvritta practices to promote mental well-being and prevent mental disorders. Studies have investigated various aspects of Sadvritta, including diet, physical activity, sleep hygiene, stress management, and social engagement, and their impact on psychological health outcomes. For example, research suggests that adherence to a Sadvritta-based diet, rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and herbs, is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety.

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Moreover, mindfulness - based practices rooted in Ayurvedic principles, such as meditation, yoga, and pranayama (breath control), have gained recognition for their effectiveness in reducing stress, improving mood, and enhancing resilience to psychological challenges. Integrative approaches that combine Ayurveda with Western psychological techniques, such as cognitive - behavioral therapy (CBT) and positive psychology interventions, have shown promising results in addressing a wide range of mental health issues.

Efforts are underway to integrate Sadvritta principles into mainstream mental health care, recognizing the complementary nature of Ayurveda and conventional approaches. Integrative wellness programs incorporating Sadvritta practices alongside psychotherapy, nutritional counselling, and lifestyle modifications are being developed to address the complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors influencing mental health.

Despite the growing interest in Sadvritta, several challenges hinder its widespread adoption in mental health care. These include limited research evidence, cultural barriers, and the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between Ayurvedic practitioners and mental health professionals. Future research should focus on elucidating the mechanisms underlying the therapeutic effects of Sadvritta, conducting rigorous clinical trials, and exploring innovative strategies for integrating Ayurveda into mainstream mental health services.

Conceptual Framework and Findings

Physical Health

Prevention from Communicable Diseases

Codes of conduct are wisely planned preventive measures of communicable diseases. Ayurveda consider them under Daivabala pravrutta vyadhi. Acharyas were well aware about the modes of transmission too. We can see the glimpses of knowledge regarding this at various contexts -

- Prasanga (Close contact for a prolonged time)
- Gaatra samsparsa (Skin - skin/ mucosal contact)
- Nishwasa (Droplet infection)
- Sahabhajana (Food borne)
- Saha shayyasana (Sit or lie with)
- Malyanulepana (Sharing the belongings) - (Su. Ni)

Various terms were also used for addressing communicable diseases.

- Janapadodhwamsa – Charaka (cha. vi 3)
- Aupasargika roga - Susrutha (su. ni 5)
- Maaraka - Susrutha (su. su 6)
- Kuprasangaja vyadhi - (Bha. pra. utt)
- Janmaar - Bhela (bhe. su 13)
- Sanchari roga - Vagbhata (A. H Ni 14 sarvangasundari)

In ayurveda, there is a unique concept of Rtu, Kshetra, Ambu and beeja. Even though this is concerned with embryological development of foetus, it can be considered in the context of communicable/ infectious diseases too. Here Rtu can be correlated with the favourable season/ conditions of disease transmission, Kshetra as the host body, Ambu as the nutritional and other factors contributing to the transmission of pathogen and Beeja is the Pathogenic organism itself.

कालार्थकर्मणां योगो हीनमिथ्यातिमात्रकः ।
सम्यग्योगश्च विज्ञेयो रोगारोग्यैक कारणम् ॥ (A. H Su 1/19)

Among the basic causes of diseases, we can consider the Mithyayoga of Kala, Indriyarth and Karma as the main reasons for infectious diseases. Even though the effects of kala are unpreventable, we can control the bad effects of seasons like adopting special measures in rainy season. Sadvritta regarding kala are contributory to this.

- Don't wander in rain
- Don't go outside without wearing shoes etc

Mithyayoga of indriyarth are elaborately explained in the context of sadvritta.

- Don't over use your senses. (Avoidance of close contact with others, don't enjoy sexual pleasure abundantly with immoral people, etc)

Mithyayoga of karma is Prajnaparadha itself, which is major cause of Janapadodhwamsa. Intellectual error leads to adharma. The essence of Sadvritta is avoiding prajnaparadha itself. It is considered as the golden rule for preventing all types of ailments.

ते तु खल्विमे भावाः सामान्या जनपदेषु भवन्ति; तद्यथा - वायुः, उदकं, देशः, काल इति॥६॥ (ch vim 3/6)

SADVRITTA CONCERNED WITH PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES ARE

a) Prevention of disease transmission by direct contact

- Don't go to crowded place, squares etc
- Always use umbrella and footwear while going out.
- Don't twist your nose
- Don't cohabit with immoral person (prevention of STDs) etc

b) Prevention of droplet infection

- Never sneeze, cough or laugh without covering the face
- Avoid athibhashana etc

c) Transmission through soil

- Do not unnecessarily scratch on earth
- Do not climb over heaps of metal/ gravel etc
- Don't defecate/ urinate in open spaces
- Always wear shoes while going out
- Always make sure to clean your orifices especially legs after coming from outside. etc

d) Vehicle borne diseases

- Take food in a clean isolate place
- Don't swim in over flowing river
- Never receive food offered by immoral people, harlots, in crowd etc

e) Vector borne diseases

- Trim your hair, beard etc thrice in a fort - night
- Bath twice daily
- Don't spend time with sick animals etc

f) Air - borne diseases

- Don't live in place where infectious diseases are spreading
- Do fire rituals (homa, japa etc)
- Avoid direct exposure to wind

g) Fomite transmission

- Change the dress after bathing.
- Don't use others belongings.
- Don't unnecessarily touch anywhere.
- Fumigate your belongings periodically.
- Don't cover the upper body with clothing of lower body.

h) Uncleansed hands/ fingers

- Do not eat food without cleaning hands.
- Don't bite the nails.

These are some preventive measures for infectious diseases. Releasing natural urges in public and crowded places may lead to occurrence of various diseases depending on the bio - substance released. Sneezing in public and crowded places may lead to the spread of influenza, SARS, PTB etc. Similarly releasing human excreta in public places may lead to development of Acute Diarrheal Diseases. It is needless to mention that the open air defecation practiced in rural areas is the leading cause of diarrheal disease.

It has been found that the sexual behaviors, attraction, and identity vary by age, marital or cohabiting status, education, and race and Hispanic origin. These behaviors and characteristics are relevant to birth and pregnancy rates, as well as to the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). About one - half of all STIs occur among persons aged 15–24, and the direct medical cost of these diseases for that age group alone was estimated at \$ 6.5 billion in the year 2000. In 2008, CDC estimated that rates of Chlamydia increased, and the largest numbers of reported cases of Chlamydia and gonorrhoea were among teenagers aged ⁽⁴⁾.

Prevention from Non - Communicable Diseases

As the diseases are caused by prajnaparadha, the sadvritta help us to stay healthy. Non - communicable diseases come under Nija vyadhi. Charaka says that for the prevention of both nija and aganthu vyadhis, follow the rule - avoid prajnaparadha, control over sense organs, smriti, proper orientation and awareness and obey the codes of conduct.

Mental Health

Just like the body, the mind also constructed by special Gunas – Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. When these 3 gunas are in a balanced state it contributes to the equilibrium of mind. Both the body and mind are inter - connected, and so the imbalance of one affects the other. Most of the sadvritta and achara rasayana addresses the good behaviours that contribute to balanced psych.

Charakacharya says that, the mind will absorb what we are seeing/ doing/ hearing daily (Cha. Su 8). This reveals the importance of code of conducts for attaining a sound mind. The principles of Satvavajaya chikilsa are similar to Sadvritta and achara rasayana.

Sattavajaya chikitsa is aimed at the control or restrain of the mind. Charaka defines it as a method of restraining the mind from unwholesome arthas. This permits occupational, behavioral therapies as well. The goal of Satvavajaya chikilsa is attained through jnanam (knowledge), vijnanam (analytical

thinking), dhairya, (courage), smrti (memory), and samadhi (concentration)

Mental disorders are mainly caused by kama (excessive desire) soka (grief), bhaya (fear) krodha (anger), harsa (delight), irsya (jealousy), moha (agreed) should be countered by inducing the opposite passion in order to neutralize the causative ones. And the principles of Psychotherapy are (a) Assurance. (b) Replacement of emotion (c) Regulation of thought process (d) Retraining of Ideas (e) Channelization of presumptions (f) Correlation of objective and ideals (g) Proper guidance and advice for making decisions (h) Proper control of patience (i) Fear therapy or psycho shock therapy. Another mechanism is Lifestyle modification therapy. It includes the following components:

- Self - monitoring
- Self - monitoring records
- Problem - solving
- Contingency management
- Stimulus control
- Stress management
- Social support
- Cognitive restructuring ⁽⁵⁾

As satvaguna is increased in mental constitution, intellectual power is increased in any individual. Also, the capability of thinking and reaction in different circumstances and in different parts of society is also improved and always ends with positive results. It is the ultimate aim and basic principle behind sadvritta. The principle of sadvritta is more significant in current era as ranking of corruption, crime, terrorism, tendency of suicide, violent behaviour, friction in families, decreased human values, etc. have increased, as well as, there seems no chance for improvement in its current situation ⁽⁶⁾. A sample survey conducted on a rural population near Banaras Hindu University Campus in Varanasi has indicated a considerably poor status of mental health. A randomized action of this population was induced to the practice of a selected simple schedule of Sadvritta. A longitudinal follow - up repeat survey of mental health population conducted after six months indicated a trend of improvement of mental health of the population practicing Sadvritta ⁽⁷⁾.

Table 1: Showing the pattern of Mental Health of a Rural population in Varanasi and the rate of its promotion with the practice of sadvritta [MHI=Mental Health Inventory, Mishra and Singh (1980)]

Mental Health	MHI Score	% Population	
		Initial sample survey	Follow up survey
Good	<25	05.0	10
Satisfactory	25 - 50	40.0	50
Unsatisfactory	>50	55.0	40

It is also found that, the emotions like hostility, aggressiveness etc worsen the functioning of Heart. As per ayurveda, these emotions increase the production of Pitta dosha which is seated in Hridaya and eventually it leads to several heart problems like CHD. It shows the importance of inter - personal tradition in the prevention of Psycho - somatic disorders ⁽⁸⁾. A cohort study conducted among old men with high socio - economic status and relatively low to moderate levels of anger expression seemed to be protective against cardiovascular diseases ⁽⁹⁾.

Social Health

- Behaviour in public
- Good body language
- Behaviour towards women, senior citizen, preceptors, socio - economically poor etc
- Codes of conduct in work place

3. Conclusion

We cohabit in a community where different type of people living. The behaviors of each person differ from other even though they are same family members or siblings. According to Ayurveda these are all due to unique Prakruthi (both shareerika and manasika). The prakruthi cannot be changed according to will as it is inherent from fetal life. The behavioural pattern of an individual is influenced by different factors - training from childhood, experiences, acquired from knowledge etc. Charakacharya says that the world itself is a school for us to imbibe certain values. We can either adopt the good qualities of world around or neglect the bad by thoroughly checking them as the world itself is the best ethical preceptor (Cha. Su 8). As the ancient science of life Ayurveda deals with the basic principles of life in a better way. Sadvritta and Achara rasayana well explains how should an individual live in a society. These principles are beneficial to both self and others - "swarthabudhi parartheshu paryapthamithi sadvrtam".

नित्यं हिताहारविहारसेवी समीक्ष्यकारी विषयेष्वसक्तः। दाता समः सत्यपरः क्षमावानाप्तोपसेवी च भवत्यरोगः॥ (A H Su 4/36) The one who consume wholesome food, engaged in good activities, acts only after properly observing the situation, devoid of attachments, giving in nature, stable in extreme circumstances, honest and forgiving will surely stay healthy if he follows the Codes of conduct.

Ancient scholars have mentioned the various principles of code of conduct known as sadvritta which helps in maintain a healthy body and a peaceful mind. ⁽¹⁰⁾ The path of ethical, social, mental, moral and physical conduct induces a positive influence on the mind and body. It helps to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. ⁽¹¹⁾ It helps in enhancing the satvika guna of mind ⁽¹²⁾.

These conducts that were told years back in the ancient science of ayurveds gives world a new dimension to approach the science with wider believe that whatever told is times tested and true to core, if the implementation of science had occur as a form of day today practice than the spread of new disease like novel corona virus could have been prevented and disease would have been nipped in bud ⁽¹³⁾.

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