



AYURVEDA : A CURE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

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KEYWORDS :

Mental illness can be defined as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." (WHO) And it stresses that mental health "is not just the absence of mental disorder."

According to Acharya Shushruta :

Ayurveda defines health as a state of equilibrium of tridosha, trimala, sapatadhatu and homoeostasis of mind as well as sense organs. The one whose 'doshas' are balanced, whose metabolism is balanced, whose tissues and eliminations are normal, and whose senses and mind are centered in the Self, is considered healthy and remains full of bliss." Shushruta Sutrasthanam 15,41.

Ayurveda views mental disease as the result of a lack of clarity (sattva) within the mind. As the quality of sattva becomes diminished within the mind, it is only a matter of time before imbalances appear within the three biological humors: vata, pitta and kapha.

In his book, *Ayurveda and the Mind: The Healing of Consciousness*, Dr. David Frawley states:

"Health problems, whether physical or mental, are not merely personal problems, but energetic problems in the mind-body complex. They are not so much personal or moral failings as an inability to harmonize the forces within us."

The common psychiatric diseases described in Ayurveda are different kinds of unmada (psychosis), apasmara (convulsive disorders), chittodvega (anxiety disorders), chittavasada (depressive illness), mada (alcoholism and drug abuse), murcchha, smanyasa (unconsciousness)

According to Ayurveda, Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water) and Kapha (water and earth) are the three main psychobiological expressions of Nature, individually and cosmically. Vata dosha is more light, dry, dispersing, subtle, cold, mobile, minute and changeable, and therefore is associated with conditions such as worries, anxieties, fears, phobias, terrors, delusions, compulsions, irrelevant talk, monologue or dialogue with self, attention deficit, bipolar disease, social anxiety and auditory hallucinations.

Vata governs all nervous system functions. Pitta dosha, being hot, sharp, penetrating, sour, intense and spreading is responsible for comparison, control, criticism, jealousy, frustration, obsession, territorialism, anger, rage, violence, suicide, murder and visual hallucinations. Pitta is more associated with digestive and hormonal functions.

Kapha dosha is more cool, slow, heavy, static, inert, smooth, gross, soft and immobile, and is therefore more associated with sadness, melancholia, prolonged crying, stubbornness, dark depression, hiding, hoarding, catatonia, overeating and kinaesthetic hallucinations. Kapha mainly governs adipose, blood sugar and cardiac circulation.

To be blessed with both proper mental and physical health we have to begin the daily habits with awareness that is rising with the sun, eliminating toxins, cleaning the body and beginning our personal practice of worship—helps recognize our place in the family, community and cosmos. The rising sun is a special time of illumination, to help us activate our gifts in the world. Cumulative benefits help purify the mind, emotions and body day to day. Choosing right foods for our appetite and metabolic needs is a fundamental alignment to show respect of our body and life.

Anti-depressant drugs disturb the natural chemical balance of the brain functions and often cause terrible 'side' effects, sometimes death. Study and work are the main arenas of improving our lives by helping others, thus maintaining our responsibilities as citizens to remain healthy, happy and prosperous. In olden days, the patient suffering from psychosis was assigned service tasks to generate 'merit', to help displace the 'demerit' of repetitive negative or 'untrue' thinking. 'Right use of time' means to eat when hungry, rest when fatigued and make time to play for nurturing creativity. If any of these important psychobiological needs is unfulfilled or over fulfilled, imbalance occurs.

Circadian rhythms become disturbed by sleeping late, eating stale foods, having sex at a wrong time such as during the menses, with an inappropriate partner or for inappropriate reasons such as self-indulgence. Misuse of any of the senses leads to imbalance, as does the misuse of the mind, such as wishing another ill. Psychosis is termed 'unmad' from Sanskrit, implying 'forgetfulness of God'

Yoga and meditation which are the integral components of Ayurveda, are being practiced for the prevention and treatment of mental problems and for keeping the mental well being.

Yoga as a daily routine plays a greater role in mental disorders as it is primarily meant for the removal of chittavriti, a major factor responsible for mental disorders. It also means equilibrium of mind.

Yogic practice includes Yogic exercises (yogasanas), breathing practices (pranayama) and meditation (dhyana). Meditation is to rise above the mind's actions and reactions to the inner stillness of the 'all knowing' Meditation has been scientifically and statistically proved to be immensely helpful in Mental Health Care. It is very safe, simple and effective method.

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In spite of great advancement in the science of psychiatry for decades the problems with the management of a certain mental problems like anxiety, stress, mental retardation etc. have remained unsolved.

In addition to this, adverse effects of anti-psychotic, anxiolytic medications are creating considerable amount of discomfort to the

patient. At this juncture, there is a need for exposition and adaptation of such therapies that could effectively tackle such conditions without any adverse events. The entire Ayurvedic management is more health-oriented than disease-oriented. And as such there is a big scope of acquiring AYURVEDIC APPROACH and treatment as adjunct to disease oriented therapy of modern medicine.

Thus for overall health and blissful life the rules of Ayurveda has to be maintained Sattvic mind (pure thoughts), forgiveness, self actualisation, confidence, correct daily regimen, meditation and yoga. These steps are undertaken in any treatment program of mental illness to help restore the mind to its natural state of happiness.