



## Review Article

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### HEALING TOUCH OF AYURVEDA IN PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS

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**ABSTRACT**

Over the last couple of decades, the radii of psychosomatic disorders have expanded immensely due to altered life style and stressful working environment. The scenario of medical practice these days has changed so much that to treat psychosomatic disorders psychotropic drugs, psychotherapy, behaviour therapy, bio feedback and treatment for organic dysfunctions are taken into considerations. When modern science realized and included it under its treatment radar much later, Ayurveda has always maintained a holistic approach in treating psychosomatic disorders by not only treating sharirikdosha but manashikdosha too. Impact of Ayurvedic medicines and Acharrasayana in combating psychosomatic disorders have been kept in purview.

**Keywords:** Sharirika dosha, Manasik dosha, Sadvritta, Medhya Rasayanaa, Murdhataila, psycho-somatic disorders.

**INTRODUCTION**

There are certain conditions when abnormal human psychology fails to explain its characteristics within its psychological sphere alone and manifests its behaviour involving the physical sphere as well then the whole outcome or the phenomena can be termed as psychosomatic disorder <sup>1</sup>. When for the modern science it took so many years to coin a terminology for psychosomatic disorders Ayurveda has its fixed principle of treatment based on psycho and soma. The definition of health in Ayurveda itself exhibits so. The LifeAyu (The Life) will be complete only when the inter relation of sharir (body), indriya (sensory faculties), satwa (mind)and atma (soul) will be in unison <sup>2</sup>. Ayurveda emphasises on maintaining equilibrium of dosha, dhatu and mala along withatma, indriya and mana <sup>3</sup>.

**Concept of psychosomatic disorder**

In modern science psychosomatic disorders have been classified in several types yet most of the times the root cause remains

inexplicable. Franz Alexander the Father of Psychosomatic disorders listed them as follows <sup>4</sup>:

- Bronchial asthma
- Ulcerative colitis
- Peptic ulcer
- Neurodermatitis
- Thyrotoxicosis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Essential hypertension

George Engel in 1977 gave a bio psychosocial model to explain the interaction between biological, psychological and social sphere resulting in a psychosomaticillness<sup>5</sup>.Initially only 7 such diseases were listed but with passing times the number of such illness has continued to increase and virtually the list is now endless.

**Table 1: System wise clinical conditions having psychosomatic relations<sup>6</sup>**

System	Clinical condition
Cardiovascular System	Coronary artery disease, Essential hyper tension, Cardiac arrhythmias
Respiratory system	Bronchial asthma, Hyper ventilation syndrome
Gastrointestinal system	Peptic ulcer, Ulcerative colitis, IBD,IBS, Habitual constipation, Functional Gastro Intestinal Disorders (FGID)
Endocrine system	Diabetes mellitus, Hyper thyroidism
Musculoskeletal system	Rheumatoid arthritis, Low back pain, Chronic fatigue syndrome, Fibromyalgia
Neurological system	Migraine, Tension headache
Integumentary system	Acne, Neuro dermatitis, Psoriasis, Puritisani, Urticaria
Reproductive (psycho sexual) system	Dysmenorrhoea, Premature ejaculation, Erectile dysfunction, Dhat syndrome
Immune system	Allergic reactions

### Psychosomatic approach according to Ayurveda

It is worthwhile mentioning that though there is no such classification of psychosomatic disorders available in any of the Ayurvedic texts like modern science but various references are available for psychosomatic disorders. As the treatment principle involves treating both mentally and physically for any diseases irrespective of psychotic and somatic condition as the definition of health lies in maintaining balance of both mind and body.

### Some examples for psychosomatic approach towards disease as per Ayurveda

1. Nidranash due to vata vriddhi<sup>7</sup>
2. Murcha due to pitta vriddhi<sup>8</sup>
3. Tandra and Nidra due to Kapha vriddhi<sup>9</sup>
4. Krodha aggravates Pitta<sup>10</sup>
5. Kama and Shoka aggravates vata<sup>11</sup>
6. Kustha is due to disrespect to Guru and Brahmana, Manasikabhighata, Papa karma<sup>12</sup>
7. Bhaya leading to atisara<sup>13</sup>
8. Vatavriddhi due to chinta, krodha, shoka<sup>14</sup>

As per Ayurveda for any disease to occur three causative factors are responsible and they are<sup>15</sup>:

- Prajnaparadh (Intellectual blasphemy)
- Asatmyaindriyaarthasamyoga (Unwholesome conjunction of sense organs)
- Parinam (transformation).

### Function of mind

Indriyaartha → indriyaadhisthan → indriyadravya → indriya → satwa → indriya buddhi<sup>16</sup>

When prajnaparadh and asatmyaindriyaarthasamyogam disturb the cognition involving it into unwholesome activities and allow his ego and emotion to dominate over his own buddhi (intellect). Satwa has two doshas and they are rajas and tama<sup>17</sup> when raja (vata, pitta) and tama (kapha)<sup>18</sup> interest in cognition and conation through pancapanchakathat results asatmya (unwholesome) perception.

Perceived information → fluctuate quality of mind → influence biology of gross body (vata, pitta and kapha) → asatmyaindriyaarthasamyoga → disease

### Role of Ayurveda in treating psychosomatic disorders

As it is known that behind all psychosomatic disorders the triggering factor is stress, precipitates in abnormal psyche which later manifests somatically. Ayurveda has always emphasised in maintaining balance between mind and body and has come out with various treatments and therapies in doing so.

It has been elaborately stated how one can prevent psychosomatic illness by practising righteous acts. A person suffering from mental disorder should strive for avoiding unwholesome regimens and adopt wholesome ones in regard to

virtue (dharma), wealth (artha), and desire (kama), for no happiness in this world can occur without the three elements<sup>19</sup>.

Thinking constitutes the object of mind, so proper utilization of mind is needed to maintain normal mental condition and this can be achieved by performing duties with the help of intellect together with the sense faculties applied to their respective objects of interest and of course which are wholesome and if the abnormal condition has already been created this can be cured by acting in contradicting to the place, seasons, one's own constitution<sup>20</sup>.

Sadvritta controls mind and sense faculties from unwholesome exposures (social and personal) which help in preventing or reduces recurring the episodes of stress further<sup>21</sup>.

Three types of therapies are mentioned viz, Daivavyapashraya achikitsa (spiritual therapy), Yukti Vyapashraya chikitsa (therapies based on reasoning i.e. physical properties) and Satvavajay chikitsa (psychotherapy treatment by self-control). Spiritual therapies include chanting of mantras, talisman, wearing gems, oblations, observance of scriptural rules, atonement, fast etc. administration of proper diet and medical drugs comes under Yukti vyapashraya chikitsa whereas with drawl of mind from harmful objects constitutes psychic therapy<sup>22</sup>.

Medhya rasayanas<sup>23, 24</sup> which are mentioned in samhitas showed tremendous affect while given to patient of psychosomatic disorders. After extensive research and clinical trial it is found that herbs such as:

Sankhapushpi (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*)  
Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*)  
Mandukaparni (*Hydrocotyle asiatica*)  
Yastimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*),  
Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*),  
Asvagandha (*Withania somnifera*),  
Vacha (*Acorus calamus*) etc.

Most of these drugs have shown significant anti-anxiety and adaptogenic i.e. anti-stress effect and thus appear to be the potential source for developing medicinal therapy for psychosomatic diseases.

Murdhataila<sup>25</sup> like Abhyanga, Seka, Pichu, Vasti all these therapies have soothing effect on the body. Abhyanga, Pichu, Seka, Vasti prevent all neurological psychosomatic disorders related to mind and body and keeps all the sensory activities in sync.<sup>26</sup>

On applying oil in scalp whether by massaging, seka, pichu or vasti Pacinian corpuscles which are mechano receptors having central nerve fibres, carry impulse through the dorsal column to medial lemnisci and terminates in brain stem, hypothalamus and amygdala<sup>27</sup>.

So stimulation of the area of head after application of Murdha taila can lower the hyper secretion of ACTH and cortisol consequently which then lowers the non-adrenergic activity.

## CONCLUSION

Adverse childhood experience /exposure to traumatic events activates HPA axis function which results excess release of nor epinephrine, increases non adrenergic activity by increasing sympathetic activity and increasing Cortisol level. Current stress decreases NA and 5 HT function and results depression. Ayurveda has always stressed in treating a disease for eliminating the root cause and not merely the symptoms. Psychosomatic disorders are such a kind whose triggering factors lie in the psyche first followed by physical illness. So it is more logical to control the mind first by practising righteous activities, medhya rasayan or murdha taila which ultimately benefits the bodily disequilibrium as well.

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