

THE CONCEPT OF PSYCHOTHERAPY IN AYURVEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SATVAVAJAYA

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ABSTRACT: *Ayurveda conceives in Life (Ayu) as a four dimensional entity i.e. Sarirendriya Satvatma Samyoga. Accordingly it adopts a comprehensive psychosomatic-spiritual approach to preservation of health and cure of diseases. Satvavajaya (psychotherapy) is described as a major non-pharmacological approach to treatment. This paper presents a critical study on the concept of Psychotherapy in Ayurveda with special reference to Satvavajaya.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life has been serving the mankind since antiquity. It has a very special approach towards the disease, the patient and the science of medicine itself. One of the most important and highly interesting topic of discussion in Ayurveda, as its approach to psychopathology and psychotherapy. Psychiatry as whole, can be said to have been given due importance in Ayurveda albeit the description is brief and concise. Caraka Samhita the most complete Ayurvedic text available today, shows that it was Ayurvedists who just systematized the science of mental health and disease after combating the Atharvan notion that mental disorders were induced by demonical influences. They proved that mental diseases, more often than not, originate from definite causes and there exist definite measures to combat them. The literature available in the texts regarding the aetiology, pathogenesis and therapeutics of the mental diseases is enough proof of the importance that this branch of medicine

enjoys in the system. Though it is not counted among the Astanga of Ayurveda, Psychiatry is almost deemed to be a subject of specialized studies. Dealing with all aspects of Ayurvedic psychiatry is beyond the scope of this article. So the discussion will be restricted to Ayurvedic psychotherapy with a special emphasis being laid on *Satvavajaya*.

The meaning of the word “Ayurveda” is self explanatory (*Ayu* = Life, *Veda* = Science). Life has been described as the complex combination of Body (*Sarira*), Senses (*Indriyas*), Mind (*Sattva*) and Soul (*Atma*)¹. Anything that interferes with life (*Ayu*) can have an access to any one of these four and hence the treatment differs accordingly. Treatment of the disorders of Mind (*Sattva*) is known as psychotherapy and that is what this article is all about. The term “mental disease” (*Manasika Roga*) is not restricted to mean insanity and allied conditions of specific mental derangement, but also includes to some extent the emotional

disorders. The emotional factors, when cross the state of normalcy and get deranged, become the syndromes or mental disorders.

Mind is one of the substratum of the diseases² having its own *Dosas*. Mental disease have been described separately and they have been further classified into *Rajas* and *Tamas* groups³. The importance of examination of *Sattva* is stressed as the determination of psychic personality (*Manas Prakrti*) is essential to the treatment of the patient. The examination of emotional factors (*Manasika Bhavas*) and the importance of mental characteristics for determining the prognosis of the diseases have been vividly described in Ayurveda. The description of all these factors related to mind and psychiatry clearly indicates that in general the method of treatment of psychiatric disorders in Ayurveda is based on some firm fundamental postulates.

The method of treatment in Ayurveda as a whole has been classified into three categories by Caraka⁴.

1. Daivavyapasrya – Faith therapy
2. Yukti Vyapasrya – Rational therapy
3. Sattvavajaya – Psycho therapy

Daivavyapasraya Cikitsa⁵

It is a sort of faith treatment, derived mainly from Ayurveda. Faith is a part and parcel of human psychology and this treatment is a play of faith wherein the patient should have full faith in the treatment of incur some positive results, e.g. chanting hymns (*Mantra*) etc. 'Daiva' essentially refers to the acts of past life. *Daiva Vyapasraya Cikitsa* is designed to exhaust evil acts of

past and thus to combat that Daivakrt diseases.

Yuktivyapasraya Cikitsa⁶

Here the treatment is based on reasoning and necessary planning and hence is scientific / rational. Causes of the diseases are reasoned out and suitable ways and means are devised to effect the cure, based on fundamental principles of Ayurveda viz. *Panca Mahabhuta, Tridosa, Samanya Visesa* etc. Pathogenesis is eliminated by the administration of appropriate medicines and by prescribing suitable diets. This treatment is further subdivided into three groups viz.,

1. Antahparimarjana (Int. treatment)
2. Bahihparimarjana (Ext. treatment)
3. Sastrapranidhaana (Operative treatment)

Antahparimarjana includes both *Samsamana* and *Samsodhan*.

Sattvavajaya⁷

Ayurvedists just as they found a rational therapy for the treatment of somatic diseases in *Yuktivyapasrya Cikitsa* also found it essential to have a line of treatment that is specific to mental diseases. Naturally, it was to be based on normalizing *Manas Dosas*, similar to the 'Tridosa' theory related to bodily disorders. It was also essential that the treatment be difference from *Daivavyapasraya* treatment, which also to some extent includes the treatment of psychiatric disorders. All these factors were considered before finally introducing a special method of treatment called *Sattvavajaya*.

Sattvavajaya is aimed at the control of mind. Caraka was the first person to use the word *Sattvavajaya* (unfortunately was also the last one). He defines it as a method of

restraining mind from unwholesome *Arthas*. Quite distressingly no further description of *Sattvavajaya* is available in Caraka Samhita. It is also surprising that this word has never been mentioned anywhere else in the ancient literature. It seems that Caraka used the word to name the treatment of the diseases where *Sattva*'s balance is interfered with.

Though Caraka has not mentioned the applied aspect of *Sattvavajaya* his views regarding this method of treatment are crystal clear. His definition gives lot of scope for expansion "*Sattvavajayah Punah Ahitebhyo Mano Nigrah*". A look at the above definition shows three words viz. (*Ahita*, *Artha* and *Manonigrah*).

The word *Ahita* does not carry any special meaning. It just conveys that something is unwholesome to the other. Caraka uses this word in reference to *Ayu* (Life) (*Sukhaya* and *Asukhayu* & *Hitay Ahitayu*) while defining Ayurveda as a Tantra.

'*Artha*' is a typical Ayurvedic usage which covers a wide variety of objects. "Object" is not the correct equivalent but is the only word available. Each *Indriya* (sense apparatus) has its own *Artha* or the object that only it can perceive, viz., *Gandha* (smell) is the object of *Ghranendriya* (nose) which can only be perceived by Nose and by none of the other *Indriyas*. *Rupa* (light), *Rasa* (taste), *Sparsa* (touch) and *Sabda* (sound) are the *Arthas* of Eye, Tongue, Skin and Ear respectively⁹. Similarly *Sattva* which is considered as *Ubhayendriya* has been referred to as having at least five *Arthas*¹⁰.

Apart from these Five, any thing that can be perceived by *Sattva* can also be included in this category. From the aforesaid it can be inferred that *Arthas* can be inferred that *Arthas* can be either *Pancendriyarthas* or

Mano Arthas. But in *Sattvavajaya*, it is quite logical to consider *Mano Arthas* though it may not be objectionable to include. *Pancendriyarthas*, because ultimately it is *Sattva* that materializes the perception of the objects, not *indriyas*¹¹. Caraka is also of the same opinion¹².

Asatmyendriyatha Samyoga (Incompatible contact of *Indriyarthas*) is regarded as one of the principal causes of disease (physical or mental). So avoidance of excessive, deficient and or erroneous (*Hina Mithyatiyoga*) usage of *Clintya*, *Vicarya* *Uhya Dhyeya* and *Samkalpa* should serve to cure the psychiatric disorders.

The word *Mano Nigrahai* means control of mind. This mind control can both be subjective and objective.

'Self control of mind' is one of the most difficult of the tasks and warrants a perfect combination of desire, determination and dedication. It can be achieved as Lord Krishna in Bhagavadgeeta concludes by practice and detachment¹³. "*Abhyasena tu Kaunteya Vairagyena Ca Griyate*". This sort of mind control can be included in Yoga and hence seems different from *Sattvavajaya* that Caraka has described. The objective type of *Mano Nigraha* is the actual *Sattvavajaya* and warrants physician's interference with patient's mind control. This can be achieved by various ways.

1. By regulating the thought process (*Cintya*)
2. By replacing the ideas (*Vicarya*)
3. By channeling the presumptions (*Uhya*)
4. By polishing the objectives (*Dhyeya*)
5. By proper guidance and advice (*Samkalpa*) for taking right decisions.

Besides these assurance and replacement of opposite emotions (viz., *Kama* for *Krodha* etc.) are also deemed a part of *Sattvavajaya* as they come very much within the limits of the definitions. One more important method of treatment which can be included in *Sattvavajaya* is the fear or psycho shock therapy. This therapy is prescribed particularly in cases of insanity. It is based on the ancient presumption that if the patient is put to shock by the fear of death he regains his past memory and is thus cured. This is in principles very much similar to the Shock therapy as practiced in Modern Medicine by ECT etc.

If the cause of a mental disorder is the separation from a close friend or a relative or loss of a very dear object, then he has to be treated either by providing him the object or by assurance¹⁴ for the same.

In case the diseases is caused by the emotional disturbances, like lust, anger, greed etc. These emotions should be replaced by the opposite one¹⁵. The same principle has been made use of in treating fevers caused by lust, and anger, where in fever arising out of anger is being treated by lust and vice versa¹⁶.

Hathayoga pradipika compared the mind with mercury and says that if these two can be controlled, impossible becomes possible¹⁷. Only mind can control the mind¹⁸ and for this lot of patience and practice are required.

As already said the word *Sattvavajayai* as such is not found anywhere else in the literature. Neither did Caraka excepting of this definition has dealt with it fully and sufficiently. Caraka mentions this word only once in his illustrious text. No where in the text, we find the applied aspects of this method of treatment.

All these facts reflect one thing psychotherapy including *Sattvavajaya* was done by some specialists at the time of Caraka. We have references to prove the above presumptions while describing the treatment of mental diseases, Caraka advises that such persons should go to the service of those who have specialized in the treatment of mental diseases. Caraka has used the word '*Tadvaidyaseva*'¹⁹ which clearly confirms that there were separate specialists of psychotherapy, in those days. Caraka or Atreya School of thought chiefly belongs to Kayachikitsa (Somatic treatment). Most of the texts available why *Sattvavajaya* and other ways of psychotherapy are dealt very briefly in these texts. However, whatever is available is very concrete and fundamental on the basis of which the whole concept of psychotherapy as prevailed in those days can be pictured very easily.

Scope of *sattvavajaya* therapy

Ayurveda considers three important factors in the causation of the diseases-both physical and mental

1. Prajnaparadha (Intellectual Blasphemy)
2. Asatmyendriyarthasamasyoga (Incompatible contact of sense organs with objects)
3. Parinama (Time factor including chronobiological errors)

Caraka, while describing the causative factors for miseries, gives a fair amount of importance to intellectual blasphemy. He says a person whose intellect, patience and memory are impaired subjects himself to intellectual blasphemy, by virtue of his evil acitons²⁰. Intellectual pseudo – conception and improper conduct represent intellectual blasphemy. All this comes under the preview of the mind²¹ as the intellect is the

direct product of mind and the conduct originates from the former.

Intellectual blasphemy aggravates all the *Dosas*. Caraka enumerates various ailments which manifests as a direct consequence of impairment of intellect, patience, and memory (i.e intellectual blasphemy).

Forcible stimulation of natural urges and suppression of manifested ones exhibition of undue strength, over indulgence in sexual act, loss of modesty and good conducts, disrespect for the respectable ones, enjoyment of harmful objects, avoidance of healthy activities, malice, vanity, fear, anger, greed, ignorance, or bad actions arising out of any one of them or other physical evil acts arising out of *Rajas* and *Tamas* constitute intellectual blasphemy leading to the causation of various ailments²².

Besides this, other two major causative factors namely *Astmyendriyatha Samyoga* and *Parinama*, may also come under the preview of *Prajanaparadha* because it is ultimately the *Prajnaparadha* that leads to these two causative factors.

Thus intellectual blasphemy is the main causative factor of all the mental and most of the physical derangements.

Sattvavajaya is that typical Ayurvedic approach which is not only prevents the impairment of intellect, patience of memory, but also brings them back to a normal state, whenever they are impaired. Thus *Sattvavajaya* plays a significant role in the maintenance of a harmonious state between these three important factors – intellect, memory and patience, ultimately leading to a happy healthy state of the individual.

It is quite logical here to state that patience (*Dhrti*) has a very important role to play for

the successful management through *Sattvavajaya*.

Caraka says that it is the patience that restrains the mind from its harmful objects²³. It is a known fact that *Sattvavajaya* is nothing but restraining the mind from the harmful objects. A good clue is, control the patience and control the mind.

The applied aspects of *Sattvavajaya* can be summarized as under:

1. Assurance
2. Replacement of emotions
3. Regulation of thought process
4. Re-framing of Ideas
5. Channeling of Presumptions
6. Correction of objectives and ideals.
7. Proper guidance and advice for taking right decisions
8. Proper control of patience.

Other Forms of Psychotherapy

A bird's eye view of the psychotherapy in Ayurveda suggests that all the three general methods of treatment viz., (1) *Daivavyapasraya* (2) *Yuktivyapasraya* (3) *Sattvavajaya* have been utilized for the treatment of mental diseases. A careful observation of various mental diseases and their treatment only confirms this view.

While describing the principles of treatment of mental diseases Caraka prescribes the following methods of treatment.

- (1) *Jnana*, (2) *Vijnana*, (3) *Dhairya*, (4) *Smrti* (5) *Samadhi*²⁴.

In another reference Caraka mentions a few more methods of treatment²⁵.

1. Trivarga Anvesana
2. Tadvaidyaseva
3. Atma Desa Kala Bala Sakti Jnana

In Caraka Sutra chapter 8, Caraka describes a few more principles of treatment of mental diseases²⁶. In order that the man is kept away from the diseases of mind, he feels that one should make an effort to maintain the normal condition of mind and sense faculties. This can be achieved according to him by the performance of the duties after duly considering their pros and cons with the help of the intellect together with the sense faculties applied to their respective wholesome objects. Due performance of the acts includes avoidance of harmful acts as well as performance of beneficial ones. If the abnormal conditions have already been created they can be cured by acting in contradiction with the qualities of place, seasons and one's own constitution including temperament.

Besides the above methods of the treatment, stress has also been laid on the avoidance of intellectual blasphemy (volitional transgression i.e. Prajnaparadha) Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga (unwholesome contacts of the sense organs with their objects), observance of the code of right conduct (Sadvrta) and retention of natural urges related to mind (*Dharaniya manasika vegas*).

In Toto, the treatment of mental diseases in Ayurveda, can be broadly divided into three parts:

- (1) Occult practices
- (2) Physio – pharmacological methods

(3) Psychological methods.

Occult Practices:

All the measures described by Caraka under *Daivavyapasrya Cikitsa* can be included here. Many more measures of *Daivavyapasrya* have been described in Atharvaveda to deal with demons and demonical influences. Atharvans were the first to establish the relation between demons and diseases. Rgveda defines the physician as one who destroys demons.

Ayurveda, being associated with Atharvaveda, has also followed these popular methods of those days in treatment.

Physio-pharmacological Methods:

These methods include both internal and external application of medication. Some minor surgical procedures which are described in the ancient texts to combat the mental disease can also be considered with present context.

In internal treatment we have two categories of procedures viz., Samsodhana and Samsamana.

Samsodhana is mainly in Pancakarmas which received a very important place in the treatment of both mental as well as physical diseases.

“Purify, pacify and remove the cause” is the master formula for the treatment and the purifying procedures are collectively called *pancakarma*.

Samsamana procedures include internal medication to pacify the diseases. Caraka has mentioned a number of preparations which mainly include Ghrtas and Curnas.

Psychological Methods:

These mainly include – *Sattvavajaya* which was introduced to treat the mental disease and lay psychotherapy of mind control. *Sadvrta* (good conduct) and control of certain natural mental urges (*Dharaniya vegas*) leading to social and mental health which helps in the treatment of mental diseases, can be included in this group.

In Caraka Samhita (C. Chi. 9th Chap.) dealing with various non-pharmacological methods, which can be included under Ayurvedic psychotherapy, have been described. These methods have to be made use in the patients who do not respond to Sodhana and Samana, type of therapy. Measures, which produce excitement to body, mind and intellect, have to be adopted. Procedures to torture both body and the mind have been advocated in the form of Psychosock therapy to restore the abnormal flow of thought and mood to normalcy almost on the same principles on which ECT is used in modern psychiatric hospital.

To conclude, Ayurveda has considered the mental and physical diseases as two separate specialized subjects. However, no clear line of demarcation has been drawn between the mental and physical illness and a flexible psychosomatic approach has been worked out. The psychological diseases have now posed a serious challenge to the human existence particularly in the western countries where materialism has reached a saturation point. The attempts made so far in this direction by psychologists and psychiatrists have not so far borne the desirable effects.

Ayurveda is known for its philosophical bases and hence its approach to this problem is quite different. Though there is not systematic account of its contribution to the subject of mental health of psychopathology and psychotherapeuticals, Ayurveda has a lot of contribution to the field. *Sattvavajaya*, the Ayurvedic approach is the first of its kind and if developed can really prove much useful.

Annotations and References

1. Sarirendriya Satvatma Samyoga dhari Jivita Nityagascanu bandhasca paryairayurucyate
(Ca. Su. 1 – 42)
- 2a. Sariram Satvasamjnam Ca Vyadhinam asryo Matah
(Ca. Su. 1 – 55)
- b. Manasah Punarudhisto rajasca tama eva ca
(Ca. Su. 1 – 57)
3. Prasamyasadhah Purvo daivayukti Vyapashayaih Manaso Jnanavijnana dhairya Smrti Samadhibhi.
(Ca. Su. 1 – 58)
- 4-8. Thrividhamousadhamiti-deva Vyapasryam, Yuktivyapasryam, Sattavajayasca. Tatra devavyapasryam-manthrusadha Manimangalyupahara homa niyama prayascittopavasa Svasthyayana Pranipata gamanadi,

Yukthivyapasryam – Punaraharau sadha dravyanam Yojana, Satvavajayah – Punarahite bhyorthebhyo Manonigrahah.

(Ca. Su. 1 – 54)

9. Pancendriarthah – Sabdasparsaruparasagandhah.

(Ca. Su. 8 – 11)

10. Cintyarn Vicaryarn Uhyarn Ca dhyeyam Sarnkalpyameva cayatkincitmanasojneyam tat Sarvam hyartha Samjnakam

(Ca. Sa. 1 – 20)

11. Caksuh Pasyati rupani manasana Caksusa Na Cendriyani Pasyanthi Mana evatra Pasyati

(Mahabharata)

12. Manah Purah Saranindriyaharthagrahana samarthani bhavanthi

(Ca. Su. 8 – 7)

13. Asamsayam Mahabaho manodurnigraham Calam Abhyasena tu Kovuteya Vairagyena Ca Griyate.

(Gita)

14. Istadravya Vinasattu Mano Yasyopahanyate Tasya tatsadrusa prapti Santvasvasaih Samanam nayet.

(Ca. Ci – 9 – 85)

15. Kamasokabhayakrodhaharsersyorlobha sarnbhavan Paraspara Pratidvanthairebhireva Samanam Nayet

(Ca. Ci – 9 – 86)

16. Kamat Krodha Jvaro nasarn Krodha t Kama Samutbhavah yati tabhya mubhabhyarn ca bhaya sokasa muthitah.

(Ca. Ci – 9 – 86) Tika

17. Rasaca manasascaiva carncalatvam Svabha vatah Rasobhadharn manobhadham Kimna Sidhyati bhutale

(Hatayogapradipika)

18. Mana eva Samartham Vo manaso drutanigrahe

(Hatayoga pradipika)

19. Manasam prati bhaisajyam trivargat yanvaveksanam Tatvidya seva Vijnanama t ma di narn Ca Sarvasah.

(Ca – Su 11 -47)

20. Dhi dhritismrti Vibrstah Karmayat Kurute Subham Prajnaparadharn tarn Vidyat Sarvadosuprakopanarn

(Ca. Sa – 1 – 102)

21. Bhudhya Visama Vijnanam Visamarn ca pravartanarn Prajnaparadharn Janiyanmanaso
gocararn hi tat

(Ca – Sa – 1 – 109)

22. Udirana gatimatamudirnanarn.....bruvate vyadhi karanam

(Ca. Sa 1 – 103 – 108)

23. Visayaprvanam Satvam dhruti bram sanna Sakya te Niyanthu mahita dartha dhrutirhi
niyamatmika.

(Ca. Sa – 1 – 100)

24. Tatra budhimata.....atmadesakula Kala bala Sakti Vijnane yathvasceti.

(Ca. Su. 11 – 46)

25. Manasarn prat.....Sarvasah.

(Ca. Su. 1 -47)

26. Tatrendriyanarn Samanaskanamanupa Ptanamanupatapaya.....Smrutimasthaya
sadhruitta manusteyam

(Ca. Su. 8 – 17)