

ROLE OF AYURVEDIC DIETETICS IN PRESERVING MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Mental disorders presently represent the greatest global burden of diseases. It has recently been estimated that the prevalence of mental disorders account for 13 % of the global burden of disease placing mental illness as the greatest burden.^[1] Nutrition has been implicated in the underlying pathology and treatment of mental illness. Accumulated data suggests that this may indeed be the case that diet and nutrition are not only critical for human physiology and body composition, but also have significant role in mental wellbeing.^[2] Although there is a very limited data available providing role of nutrition in mental health. Increasing evidence indicates an association between a poor diet and the aggravation of mood disorders, including anxiety and depression, as well as other mental disorders. In *ayurveda* classics also *viruddha*

aaraha (incompatible foods) and *asuchi bhojan* (contaminated food) are mentioned under the causes of *unmaada*.^[3] Nutrition has a role in the prevention and the treatment of mental health disorders. Current studies suggest that healthy eating patterns that meet food-based dietary recommendations and nutrient requirements may assist in the prevention and treatment of mental disorders. In *ayurveda* also role of *hitaahara* is mentioned in the *unmaada chikitsa adhyaya*.^[4] In this concern, a thorough review of the current available literature will be done to identify the scope of *ayurveda* dietetics in mental health and in the prevention and management of Mental diseases.

KEYWORDS: Mental disorders, nutrition, *viruddha aahara*, *asuchi bhojan*, *hitaahara*, *unmaada*.

INTRODUCTION

Mental disorders are indicated as a global problem by the World Health Organization (WHO).^[5] WHO has given equal importance to physical as well as mental health. According to WHO, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of diseases.”^[6] One in four individuals suffers from a mental disorder during some period of life^[7] and hence, the WHO has recognized mental disorders as a health burden that should be no longer neglected.^[8] Diet and nutrition impacts not only the physical health but also the mental health. Available data on diet and mental health suggests that poor diet is associated with the aggravation of mood disorders like anxiety, depression and other mental disorders. Nutritional psychiatry is a new, rapidly emerging field of nutrition and mental health and is one such avenue of prevention.^[9] Over the past decade, there has been a steady increase in epidemiological studies which concluded that following a balanced diet maintains mental well-being and lowers the risk of mental disorders.

Ayurveda is the science of life which has defined specific principles for the prevention and treatment of the physical (sharirika) as well as mental (mansika) diseases. Ayurveda has given equal importance to nutrition when it comes to mental health. In Ayurveda classics, aahara is mentioned under triopstambha i.e. aahara, nidra and bhrancharya. Aahara plays a major role in maintaining physical as well as mental health. Ayurveda has coined the term ‘Manasika rogas’ for the description of mental disorders. Manasika rogas such as Unmaada^[10] and Apasmara^[11] mentioned in Ayurveda can be correlated with mental disorders. In Unmaada and Apasmara adhyayas acharyas have mentioned about the nidana (causes), lakshanas (symptoms), chikitsa (treatment), pathahara and apathyahara of the mental disorders. So, there is a need to know the nidana, pathyahara (wholesome food) and apathyahara (unwholesome food) of the mental disorders. In this concern, a thorough review of the current available data on scope of Ayurvedic dietetics in mental disorders will be done in this paper.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A thorough review of peer-reviewed articles published was performed in PubMed, google scholar and scopus and review of ayurveda classical textbooks was done in Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya and Bhava Prakasha Nighantu.

Nidana (Causes) of Mental Disorders: In ayurveda classics viruddha aaraha (incompatible foods) and asuchi bhojana (contaminated food) are mentioned under the causes of unmaada.

These viruddha aahara and asuchi bhojana vitiates the tridoshas (vata, pitta and kapha) and these vitiated doshas obstructs the manovaha strotas and causes manasika rogas like unmaada and apasmara. In Ayurveda, ndana parivarjana (removing the cause) is considered as the first line of treatment. So, intake of viruddha aahara and asuchi bhojana should be avoided for the prevention of mental ailments.

Pathyahara (Wholesome food) in Mental Disorders: Pathyahara is the food which is wholesome and promotes health. In the sushruta samhita uttar tantra, yavagu, manda, hridya and agni deepaka aahara is indicated for the treatment of unmaada roga. In ayurveda it is mentioned that hridya (heart) is the sthana of mana,^[12] so aahara which is hridya in nature has a correlation with mental health and mental disorders. Some of the hridya dravyas which are mentioned in ayurveda classics are amra, dadima, badara, bijora nimbu, vrukshamla. Amla rasa (sour taste) is said to be hridya in nature, so all amla rasa pradhana dravyas i.e. food items which are sour in taste can be used for the preservation of mental health and prevention and management of mental disorders.

Agnideepana dravyas are the food items which enhance the digestive fire of the body and improves the digestion. According to Ayurveda agni (digestive fire) is hampered in all the diseases which impacts the digestion. So, preservation of agni is necessary to prevent and manage all the diseases. Some of the agnideepana dravyas mentioned in classics are pippali, pippali moola, maricha, ajmoda, hingu, shringvera, chitrak. Pathya kalpanas (wholesome food preparations) like Manda, peya, vilepi and yusha preparations are indicated in the treatment of manasika rogas. These preparations are agni deepaka in nature and are easy to digest so can be used for mental ailments. Ghrita (ghee) and ksheera (milk) are also agnideepana in nature and are mentioned under the medhya dravyas. Medhya dravyas are the food items which are wholesome and enhances the mental health. In classics, ghrita is said to be smriti and budhi vardhaka and also indicated for the treatment of unmaada. In Nighantus also it is mentioned that goghrita (cow's ghee) is medhya in nature. In Bhavaprakasha Nighantu, Avi ksheera (Sheep's milk) is mentioned as medhya.

Pathyahara in Unmaada^[13] and Apasmara^[14]

Shooka dhanya varga (cereals)	Godhuma (wheat), raktashaali (red rice)
Shimbi dhanya varga (pulses)	Mudga (green gram)
Shaka varga (vegetables)	Kushmanda (ash gourd), patola (pointed gourd), vastuka shaka (Chenopodium album), tanduliya shaka (amaranthus)

Phala varga (fruits)	Amra phala (mango), munakka (raisins), panasam (jack fruit), dadima (pomegranate), amalaka (goose berry), shobhanjan fruit (drum sticks)
Aushadhi varga (herbs)	Haritaki (terminalia chebula), brahmi (bacopa monneri), vacha (acorus calamus)
Gorasa varga (milk products)	Purana ghrita (one year old ghee), naveena ghrita (fresh ghee), shatadhauta ghrita (100 times washed ghee), godugdha (cow's milk)
Ambu varga (water)	Nariketa jala (coconut water), gaganambu (rain water)

Apathyahara (Unwholesome food) in Mental Disorders: Apathyahara is the food which is unwholesome and impacts the health. Apathyahara vitiates the sharirika (vata, pitta and kapha) and manasika doshas (satva, raja and tama). In manasika rogas viruddha ahara and asuchi bhojana are said to be apathya. Ahara which is guru (heavy), ushna (hot in potency), abhishyandi and tikta rasa (bitter taste) are apathya for mental health. Viruddha ahara are the food items which are incompatible with some food items or incompatible at a particular time or place. Viruddha ahara impacts the body by causing the effects similar to visha (poison) and causes vitiation of doshas. In Ayurveda there are 18 types of viruddha aahara explained such as samyoga viruddha, krama virudha, matra virudha, kala virudha, samskara viruddha, rasa viruddha, virya viruddha etc. Some of the viruddha aaharas are mentioned in table below.

Viruddha aahara^[15]

Samyoga viruddha	Combination of incompatible foods. Eg: Milk with salt, milk with fish, milk with fruits, milk with eggs
Rasa viruddha	Intake of two or three incompatible rasas (tastes) together. Eg: Madhura rasa (sweet taste) with katu rasa (spicy taste), Madhura rasa with lavana rasa (salt taste), Madhura rasa with amla rasa (sour taste)
Virya viruddha	Intake of ushna virya (hot in potency) and sheeta virya (cold in potency) aahara together
Krama viruddha	Intake of sweets after meals, intake of guru aahara at end of meals
Matra viruddha	Combination of food items becomes incompatible in a specific quantity. Eg: Honey with ghee in equal quantity
Kala viruddha	Food becomes incompatible if taken at wrong time. Eg: Eating curd at night
Samskara viruddha	Processing of particular food items makes them incompatible. Eg: Heating of honey, heating of curd

DISCUSSION

The thorough review of the currently available literature indicates the association between the intake of pathyahara (wholesome food) and mental wellbeing. A balanced nutritional diet and wholesome food helps in the prevention of mental disorders by maintaining sharirika doshas

(vata, pitta and kapha) and manasika doshas (satva, raja and tama) at their normal state and by preventing the dosha vitiation. Pathyahara also plays an important role in management of mental ailments by pacifying the aggravated doshas. This shows that practising apathyahara (unwholesome food) can be a risk factor for the occurrence of mental disorders and can worsen the symptoms of mental disorders like anxiety and depression. Unwholesome foods cause the vitiation of sharirika and manasiak doshas. Currently available literature only highlights the correlation between ayurveda dietetics and mental health but it does not focus on mechanism and how aahara works on manovaha strotasa and mental health. There is a lack of clinical studies supporting role of ayurveda dietetics in preserving mental health. So, there is a need of conducting clinical studies elucidating the relation between ayurveda dietetics and mental health. And future studies need to focus on illuminating mechanism of aahara in preserving mental health. Improved mechanistic understanding of how aahra affects mental health and cognition will guide the development of new diet-based intervention that will preserve and maintain mental health.

CONCLUSION

Accumulated data provides support for the existence of direct relationships between ayurveda dietetics, mental health and mental function throughout the lifespan. Hence, ayurveda dietetics has a role in preserving mental health.

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