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EFFECT OF RASAYANA ON MENTAL HEALTH - A REVIEW STUDY

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EFFECT OF RASAYANA ON MENTAL HEALTH - A REVIEW STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Since the creation of mankind, human beings are affected by various types of diseases such as *sharirikvyadhi* (Jwar, *Raktapitta*, *Rajyaksma*, etc.) and *manshikvyadhi* (*Unmada*, *Apasmara* etc.). For their remedy, *Ayurveda* has advocated various types of medicines and therapies. *Rasayanain Ayurveda*, is one of the most highly recommended rejuvenating, promoting and preventive therapies which can cure the above diseases. The mental diseases (anxiety disorders, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia etc) are increasing very rapidly nowadays. The major causes must be unhealthy life style, foods and drinks. The World Health Organization reported in 2001 that about 450 million people worldwide suffer from some form of mental disorder or brain condition. In India, epidemiological studies based on the data published from 1960 to 2009, report that prevalence rates for psychiatric disorders are varying from 9.5 to 370/1000 population in India. Under such circumstances, *rasayana* drugs such as *bhramhi*, *sankhapuspi*, *guduchi*, *yastimadhu*, *mandukaparni* and their preparations as well as *achararasayana* can prove effective in curing these mental diseases. Moreover, *rasayana* drugs can work on the hypothalamus – pituitary -adrenal axis and normalize the secretion of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, acetylcholine and thus can improve the mental function.

Key Words: *Manshikvyadhi*, *Nidanaofmanshikvyadhi*, *Rasayanadrugs*, *Medhyarasayanadrugs*, *AcharaRasayana*, *Karmukata* (mode of action) of *rasayana* drugs

INTRODUCTION:

Like other somatic diseases such as Cancer, AIDS, Tuberculosis etc, mental diseases are increasing rapidly in India and other countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2001 that about 450 million people worldwide suffer from some form of mental disorder or brain condition. One in four people (25%) suffers from mental illness at some time in life according to a report from the WHO(2008)^[1]. In India, epidemiological studies based on the data published from 1960 to 2009, report that prevalence rates for psychiatric disorders are varying from 9.5 to 370/1000 population in India^[2]. The common psychiatric disorders which are prevalent in the world are Anxiety disorders, Depression, Obsessive compulsive disorder, Schizophrenia etc. The causes of mental disorders are multi-factorial and are complex, and interact and vary according to the particular disorder and individual. Many factors such as poverty, unemployment, life style, marital disharmony, family disputes, hereditary causes, injuries, society and culture, drugs and various types of chronic ailments such as Rheumatism, Diabetes mellitus, Asthma, Obesity, Hypertension, Alzheimer's disease etc. Influence mind in many ways. According to Pan American Health Organization Report (2007)^[3], 4.8-31%

people suffer from anxiety disorders, 3.3-21.4% from mood disorders and 1.3-15% from substance use disorders.

Ayurveda has described various kinds of mental disorders such as *Unmada* (Insanity), *Apasmara* (Epilepsy), *Atattvaabhinivesha* (Obsessive Disorders), *Bhaya* (Fear), *Harsha* (Excitation), *Shoka* (Grief), *Udvega* (Anxiety), *Avasada* (Depression)^[4] etc. and has also mentioned many mental and personality disorders according to *rajashik* and *tamashik prakriti* in vivid way.

Mind is an inseparable entity of *jiva* (Soul).^[5] so every mental disease may affect body and vice versa. Ayurveda has stated many psychosomatic disorders such as *bhayaja* and *shokaja atisara*, *shokaja jvara*, *tamaka svasa* etc. These all mental disorders may take place either due to vitiation of *vata*, *pitta*, *kaphadoshas* and/or *raja*, *tama manashik doshas*.

According to *Ayurveda*, the chief causative factors of all *sharirik* (somatic) and *manasik* (mental) disorders are three viz, *prajnaparadha*, *asatmyaindriyarthasamyoga*, and *parinama*.^[6] In *prajnaparadha*^[7] *dhi*, *dhriti*, *smriti* are affected. In *asatmyaindriyarthasamyoga*, improper association between *jnanendriya*, *indriyarthas*, *atma*, and *mana*

takes place [8]. In *parinama*,^[9] *ayoga*, *atiyoga*, *mithyayoga* of *kala* takes place. All these factors cause many types of somatic and mental diseases. Except that, suppression of *adharaniyavega* [10] and inability to suppress *dharaniyavegas* [11] as well as non-compliance of *sadvritta* [12] may also lead to many somatic and mental disorders.

Modern medicine has described vividly the causes of psychological diseases such as head injury, meningitis, encephalitis, CVA, renal disease, liver disease, senile arteriosclerosis, epilepsy, endocrinal disease, genetic cause, derangement in dopamine secretion, stress, etc. and have advocated many psychological treatments such as psycho-analysis, behaviour therapy, cognitive therapy, hypnosis, psychotropic drugs (antipsychotic, antidepressants, anxiolytic etc). But some psychotropic drugs such as chlorpromazine, trifluoperazine, haloperidol, imipramine, amitriptyline etc. show various types of complications, so it needs careful approach to treat the patient.

Ayurveda has kept the treatment schedule of almost all *manasika* (psychiatric disease), and *sharirika* (somatic) diseases under the three main categories viz, *Daivavyapashreya chikitsa*, *Yuktivyapashreya chikitsa*, and *Satvavajayachikitsa* [13]. In *Daivavyapashreya chikitsa*, hymns, holding of pearls, drugs, rituals, sacrifice of animals, *prayachhitya* etc. are included which cure many psychological and somatic diseases. Proper application of diets and medicines are included in *Yuktivyapashreya chikitsa* which are used to cure both psychiatric disease and somatic diseases. In *Satvavajaya chikitsa*, mind is protected from the effects of various harmful and non-conductive substances and activities.

Though *Satvavajaya chikitsa* is mentioned as special therapy in psychiatric diseases in *Ayurveda* yet *Rasayana* therapy which comes under *Yuktivyapashreya chikitsa* mainly, is very useful in psychiatric disorders specially in the patients who are anxious, restless, agitated and suffering from insomnia. In these cases, *Medhyarasayana* drugs (*sankhapuspi*, *guduchi*, *yastimadhu*, *mandukaparni*) and other *rasayana* drugs (*Bala*, *Nagbala*, *Shilajit* etc.) may be very much effective. *Rasayana* is the seventh branch out of the eight branches in *Ayurveda*. It differs from the other divisions in that, it not only shows curative effects but also has in addition, the promoting, preventive and rejuvenating effects for even healthy persons. It retards ageing process and keeps up youthfulness even after advancing age and increases life span.

CONCEPT OF HEALTH & RASAYANA

In *Ayurveda* as per *Acharya Susruta*, when *doshas*, *agni*, *dhatu* remain in equilibrium state, *malas* are properly formed, nourished and excreted without impediment and *atma*, *mana* and *indriyas* properly function and remain contented, then this condition is stated as *swasthya*^[14]. Modern Science also defines "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely absence of disease or infirmity".

Considering the effects of drugs on body and how to maintain proper health, *acharya Charaka* [15] has classified all the drugs into the following three groups viz,

1. *DoshaPrashamana*- which pacifies the vitiated *doshas*.
2. *DhatuPradushana*- which vitiates *Dhatu*s
3. *Svasthavrittakara* - which maintains the proper health.

Rasayana and *Vajikarana* may be classified under *Svasthavritta* and *Rasayana* is particularly concerned with the promotion of physical and mental health.

Description of *Mana* (mind):

Mana (mind) is stated as *dravya* [16] in *Ayurveda*.

Nirukti of *Mana*: By which, thought, consideration, hypothesis, attention, determination etc. are performed is called *mana* (mind).

Paribhasha of *Mana*: The sense by which feeling of happiness, sorrow etc. is perceived is called *mana* (mind) (*Tarkasamgraha*).

Lakshana of *Mana* [17]: Understanding of a thing and no understanding of a thing are the *lakshana* (symptoms) of *mana* (mind).

Location of *Mana*: As per different acharyas, the locations of *mana* are *Hridaya* [18, 19], *Shira* [20] in between *shira* (head) and *talv* (palate).^[21] *Chetanavatsharir* [22] (Sentient portion of the body), *Tvak* (skin).^[23]

Guna of *Mana*: Atomicity and oneness are the two attributes of *mana*^[24].

Artha (objects) of *Mana*: Things requiring thought, consideration, hypothesis, attention, determination or whatever can be known by means of the *mana* are regarded as its objects.^[25]

Functions of *Mana*: Control of sense organs, self restraint, hypothesis and consideration are the actions of *mana* (mind).^[26]

Nidanas of manas rogas:

Samanyanidanas: Prajnaparadha ^[27] (defects in one's own mental faculty), excessive *Brahmyacharya* ^[28] (Excessive control of sense faculties without well regulated practice). *Durbala Satva, Durbala Sharira*, imbalanced *Sharira Doshas* (e.g. *vata* *avridhila* *lakshanas* such as *nidranasha*, *vata* *kshaya* *lakshana* such as *apraharsha*).

Agantujanidanas: Evil spirit, poison, wind, fire, stale and dirty foods and drinks etc.

Samanya purvarupa of manasa rogas: Perversion of mind, intellect, consciousness, knowledge, memory, desire, manners, behaviour and conduct. Moreover, our *acharyas* have also described *vishista purvarupas* of *manashik rogas* (e.g. *Unmada, Apasmara, Murcha*, etc.). According to *acharya Charak*, the *purvarupa of Apasmara* ^[29] is contraction of eye-brows, excessive discharge of saliva and nasal excreta, cardiac spasm, unconsciousness, fainting, giddiness.

Samanya Lakshana of Apasmara: Occasional unconsciousness with abnormal activities due to perversion of memory, intellect and other psychic faculties. ^[30]

Samanya Lakshana of Unmada:

As per *Acharya Charak* ^[31], perversion of intellect, unsteadiness of mind, vacant outlook, impatience, irrelevant talk, fainting are commonly found in *unmade roga*. All the *purvarupas* and *samanyarupas* are more or less derived in many types of *manasa rogas*.

Etymological derivation of the term 'Rasayana':

The meaning of the composite term '*Rasayana*' is derived from the two separate entities i.e. '*Rasa*' and '*Ayana*' which are having special meaning. *Ayurvedic classics* have stated '*Rasayana*' as responsible for tissue nourishment and increase of somatic and mental strength caused by nutrient essence which is always nourishing the tissues. From this viewpoint the most appropriate meaning of '*Rasa*' is here the 'nutrient essence' and '*Ayana*' implies for *marga* (path) or circumambulation.

Definition of Rasayana:

As per *Acharya Charak* ^[32], *Rasayana* is defined as the means of achieving the finest quality of *rasadidhatus* (body tissues) where it increases life span, improves *medha* (intelligence), cures disease, stabilizes youthfulness, improves luster, complexion, voice and makes body and senses strong and healthy etc.

Acharya Susruta ^[33] has more specifically stated that *rasayana* therapy improves *medha* (intelligence), *bala* (strength), brings *vyadhi-kshamatva* (immunity), and it is *ayuskam* (life promotion) and *vayasthapan* (stabilising age).

According to *Acharya Dalhana* ^[34], *Rasayana* drugs may increase the body tissues, both qualitatively and quantitatively through its pharmacological properties (i.e. *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka* etc).

Acharya Sarangdhar ^[35] has described *Rasayana* as *Jaravyadhi Nashanam* i.e. it prevents senility and stabilizes youthfulness and cures diseases

Acharya Bhavaprakash ^[36] has defined *Rasayana* as the therapy which prevents ageing and alleviates disease, and which is also *Vayastambhakara, Chakshushya, Brimhana and Vrishya*.

Though the definition by different authors varies metaphorically yet the meaning remains the same.

Classification of Rasayana drugs:

Rasayana ^[37] according to mode application is of two types viz, *Kutipraveshik* (complex indoor therapy under direct supervision), and *Vatatapik* or *Sauryamarutik* (simple outdoor therapy). According to the objectives of *Rasayan* therapy, *Acharya Dalhana* ^[38] has rationally classified *Rasayana* in three types i.e. *Kamyarasayana* (Health promoter), *Naimittikrasayana* (immunity booster) such as *shilajatu, bhallataka, triphala* etc, and *Ajashrikrasayana* (Diet like milk, ghee, for regular consumption) or *Samsodhana* (purificatory) and *Samshaman* (pacifying) *Rasayana*. Here, *Kamyarasayana* is subdivided in *Pranakamya* (Physical health promoter), *Medhakamya* (mental health promoter) and *Shri kamya* (social status promoter).

Descriptions of Rasayana available in Ayurveda:

The description of *Rasayana* is given in first chapter of *Chikitsasthana* in *Charaka Samhita*. Four *Rasayanapadas* viz, *Abhayamalaki, pranakamiya, Karaprachitiya* and *Ayurveda Samuthaniya*, are included in this chapter. *Rasayana* has been discussed in *Susruta Samhita* separately in four chapters namely *Sarvopaghatshamaniya, Medhayuskamiya, Svabhavavydhipratishedhaniya* and *Nivrittasantapiya in Chikitsasthana*. In *Astanga Hridaya*, *Rasayana* is described in *Uttarsthana*.

Properties of Rasayana: As the action of *Rasayana* takes place in the whole body, so changes occurs at both physical and mental level. That is why, these two changes should be considered separately.

1. Improvement in mental qualities:

Acharya Charaka has stated that *Rasayana* drugs improves intelligence, power of recollection, power of sense organs and perfection in speech. Moreover, Acharya Charaka^[39] has described *Medhya Rasayana* such as *Guduchi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Yastimadhu*, *Sankhapuspi* which can specially act on *Medha* and thus can improve mental faculty.

2. Improvement in physical qualities:

Rasayana can also help to regain youthfulness, longevity, complexion, voice, strength, etc, and cure fatigue, Intolerance and excess sleep.

Rasayana^[40] is *Tridosha Shamaka*, *Agni Deepana* and helps in the formation of bodily tissues

Special Qualities & Mode of Action of Rasayana:

Rasayana is meant to improve health and *ojas* that produces the best quality of body tissues, checks and prevents the natural process of degeneration and decay and other diseases of old age, enhances life span, memory, intelligence, maintains youth, luster, increases strength of body and sense and beauty.

Rasayana remedy which may be a drug, dietary elements of positive life styles, and activities (*Achara Rasayana*), promotes and improves bio-nutrition of body. It can remove the impurities (*Malas*) located in the tissue elements (*Dhatus*) causing the enhancement of *Agni* in each *dhatu*. This enhanced *Agni* can cause restoration of quality of respective *dhatus* and their improved qualities can lead to perfect health and longevity in the human being.

Fundamentally, *rasayana* drugs produce their effect by influencing *rasa* system or nutritional system, the *agni* or digestive system and metabolic mechanism as well as the *srotamsi* or the microcirculation and thus providing nutrition all over the body.

Therefore, mode of action of *Rasayana* on body can be considered in two ways viz, by controlling the formation of tissue elements (*Dhatupaka*) and removing the vitiated *doshas* from different *srotas*.

1. Formation of tissue elements:

Through our life, body is subjected to continuous destruction of old elements and formation of new elements. This process mainly depends on the amount of food taken and the condition of *Agni* of each tissue element (*Dhatu*). But *Agni* if increased excessively beyond normal level, it destroys *dhatus* and if it is extinguished, life is destroyed. So, *Agni* plays an important role in life and it is *Rasayana* which can keep *Agni* in normal level by its action. In old age, destructive process is very rapid, even if

the subject takes enough food, which leads to weakness of the body. At such stage, if *Rasayana* drug is used, it controls *Dhatupaka*. Thus *Rasayana* maintains the *Dhatupaka* and brings back the lost vitality of the body.

2. Removing the vitiated doshas from different srotas:

In Ayurveda, much importance is given on *srotas*. They play an important role in maintaining the proper health of the body when they are not affected by vitiated *doshas*^[41]. They carry the absorbed food materials to the site of metabolism and remove the waste products formed due to the process of metabolism. But in the process of *samprapti* when the aggravated *doshas* get obstructed by vitiated *srotas* (*Vigunasrotas*) then such obstruction produces disease and leads to the improper formation of tissue elements and weakens the body. This obstruction is also responsible for lowering the immunity power of the body. Therefore, in any disease *Srotovaigunya* is common and under this condition treatment should be given to remove this *Srotovaigunya*. This can be attained by administering *Rasayana* therapy which can lead to the regaining of lost immunity power of the body.

Acharya Charak has stated that equilibrium of *Agni* of *Dhatu*, *Vayu*, and *Srotas* are essential factors for maintaining normal strength, color and longevity of the body which are lost through the catabolic activities of the body^[42]. These strength, color etc. can be achieved by *Rasayana*. In Ayurveda, *Medha* is described in broad way. *Medha* may be considered to be consisted of all the three mental faculties such as *Dhee*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* which are again interrelated with each other. *Medha* can also be subdivided into the following faculties : 1. *Grahanshakti* (Power of Grasping); 2. *Dharana shakti* (Power of Retention); 3. *Vivekshakti* (Power of Discrimination); 4. *Smriti* (Power of recollection).

Medhyarasayana drugs have a definite role in the treatment of psychiatric and psychosomatic diseases. The chief aim of this treatment is to attain sedation, calmness, tranquility or a stimulation of activities of brain. Modern researches conducted so far on *Medhya Rasayana* drugs have established that these drugs have varying degree of psychotropic action. Many drugs have shown antidepressant, sedative and tranquilizing effects both experimentally and clinically with encouraging results.

Modern concept of immuno-modulation can be correlated with *Rasayana* which enhances *Vyadhi-kshamatva* (i.e. *Vyadhi-balavirodhitvam*-

Vyadhiutpadapratibandhakatvam) described in *ayurvedic* classic and clearly denotes immunity in modern science.

Rasayana drugs such as *Amalaki*, *Haridra*, *Guduchi* etc. may act antioxidant agents and can cure various kinds of *manashik rogas* caused by senility. There are some neurotransmitters such as noradrenaline, dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline etc, which are found directly involved in many psychological disorders (e.g. depression, schizophrenia). *Rasayana* drugs may normalize the above neurotransmitters and cure the concerned diseases.

Hypothalamus, Limbic system are responsible for mood, behaviour, memory, emotion. In *manasikvikaras*, these *bhavas* can become altered. In these conditions, *rasayana* drugs may prove effective but before *rasayana* therapy, *panchakarma* therapy may be administered according to disease type and patient condition otherwise *rasayana* drugs can prove ineffective.

CONCLUSION:

From the descriptions of *rasayana* available in *Ayurveda*, it can be concluded that *rasayana* acts at both mental level as well as at physical level. It replenishes all *dhatus* and increases life span, improves *medha* (intelligence), increases longevity, stabilizes youthfulness, improves lustre, complexion and voice and increases *vyadhiksamatwa* in the body and cures many diseases and thus makes mind and body strong and health.

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