

Charaka's View on Manas and Its Role in Satvavajaya Chikitsa

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Abstract—Manas (mind) is a central determinant of health in Ayurveda, governing cognition, perception, emotional processing, and behavioral responses. Classical texts, particularly the Charaka Samhita, describe Manas as Ubhayendriya, functioning as an interface between sensory and motor faculties, and attribute to it qualities such as Anutva (subtlety) and Ekatva (singularity). The psychological equilibrium of an individual is maintained through the balanced state of the three Gunas—Satva, Rajas, and Tamas—while their disequilibrium leads to Manasika Roga (mental disorders). Among the three principal treatment modalities of Ayurveda, Satvavajaya Chikitsa uniquely focuses on the regulation and strengthening of Manas. Defined as Ahitebhyo Arthebhyah Manonigraha (withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome objects), it emphasizes cognitive control, emotional restraint, and behavioral correction as therapeutic strategies. The present study critically analyzes the classical concept of Manas and explores its foundational role in Satvavajaya Chikitsa through a narrative review of primary Ayurvedic sources and scholarly interpretations. The analysis indicates that Satvavajaya operates through systematic methods aimed at enhancing Satva while reducing the pathological influence of Rajas and Tamas, thereby restoring psychological harmony. These principles reveal conceptual parallels with contemporary psychotherapeutic frameworks that employ cognitive restructuring and behavioral modification techniques. Understanding the theoretical construct of Manas thus provides a comprehensive basis for interpreting Satvavajaya Chikitsa as an indigenous psychotherapeutic modality and offers valuable insights for integrative approaches in modern mental health care.

Index Terms—1) Manas 2) Satvavajaya Chikitsa, 3) Manonigraha 4) Ubhayendriya, 5) Charakasamhita

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, one of the most ancient and comprehensive traditional systems of medicine, is regarded as an Upaveda of the Atharvaveda and provides a holistic framework for understanding health and disease.

Among the extant Ayurvedic treatises, the Charaka Samhita holds a preeminent position due to its systematic exposition of fundamental principles and the availability of authoritative commentaries. The text presents a detailed conceptualization of both physiological and psychological dimensions of human existence. Within this framework, the concept of Manas (mind) occupies a central role, as it is considered a fundamental determinant of health and well-being. Ayurveda recognizes the inseparable relationship between body (Sharira) and mind (Manas), emphasizing their mutual influence in the manifestation of both disease and happiness. Acharya Charaka explicitly identifies the body and mind as the two primary loci for the expression of pathological as well as positive states of life. While modern biomedical sciences have increasingly acknowledged the significance of psychosomatic interactions and the role of mental factors in disease causation over the past century, these principles were systematically articulated in classical Ayurvedic literature millennia ago. Therefore, a critical exploration of the conceptual foundations of Manas in Charaka Samhita becomes essential for understanding the theoretical basis of Satvavajaya Chikitsa as an indigenous psychotherapeutic modality.

In the classical Ayurvedic framework, Manas is recognized as one of the essential components of Ayu (life), along with Sharira, Indriya, and Atma. It is also enumerated among the Nava Karana Dravyas (nine causative substances) and forms an integral element of the Tridanda, the tripod that sustains life. This ontological

positioning underscores its indispensable role in maintaining both physiological and psychological equilibrium. The Charaka Samhita describes Manas as an extremely subtle (Anu) and minute entity, the presence and functioning of which are inferred primarily through its activities, such as cognition, contemplation, determination, and emotional response.

Manas is characterized as Trigunatmakam, constituted by three fundamental qualities—Satva, Rajas, and Tamas. Among these, Satva represents clarity, harmony, and psychological balance, whereas Rajas denotes activity, stimulation, and dynamism, and Tamas signifies inertia, obscurity, and resistance. Classical literature identifies Rajas and Tamas as Manasika Doshas, as their excessive predominance leads to psychological disequilibrium. The vitiation of these Gunas is attributed to indulgence in unwholesome diet (Ahara), improper lifestyle practices (Vihara), and erroneous intellectual conduct (Prajnaparadha). Such factors disturb the qualitative balance of Manas, ultimately manifesting as Manasa Roga (mental disorders). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of Manas necessitates an exploration of its defining characteristics (Mano Lakshana) and its functional domains or objects of interaction (Mano Vishaya). Thus, these sequential processes illustrate the dynamic and progressive functioning of Manas—from mere thought initiation to determination—highlighting the cognitive depth recognized in Ayurvedic psychology.

In Ayurvedic philosophy, particularly as described in the Charaka Samhita, the objects (viśayas) of Manas are explained through distinct functional stages of mental activity. Chintyam refers to the initial stage of thinking or contemplation, where a thought arises in the mind. Vicharyam denotes analytical consideration, in which the mind examines the thought from different perspectives. Uhya represents logical reasoning or inferential processing, where conclusions are drawn through rational evaluation. Dhyeyam is the stage of focused concentration, where the mind fixes its attention steadily upon a chosen object or idea. Finally, Sankalpam signifies determination or resolution, wherein the mind makes a definitive decision or commitment toward a particular course of action.

In Charaka Samhita, Charaka incorporates the views of earlier scholars while explaining the nature and function of Manas (mind). He describes that the mind, endowed with its intrinsic qualities, has the capacity to regulate and withdraw itself from unwholesome sensory objects through the faculty of Dhṛti (steadfast restraint and determination). It is due to the strength of Dhṛti that an

individual is able to control the mind and prevent it from engaging in harmful or undesirable pursuits. However, when Dhṛti-bhramśa (impairment or loss of restraint) occurs, the mind loses its regulatory capacity and becomes incapable of withdrawing from unwholesome objects, thereby predisposing the individual to improper actions and mental disturbances.

According to Gangadhara, the commentator of Charaka Samhita, "Ahibe bhyo nigrahaḥ satvavajaya ucyaṭe" signifies that restraining the mind from unwholesome or harmful objects is termed Satvavajaya. Further, the statement "Satvajayena apathya varjanam" emphasizes that through Satvavajaya, one consciously avoids apathya—unwholesome thoughts, behaviors, and activities. Thus, Satvavajaya Chikitsa refers to the therapeutic process of self-control and mental discipline by which an individual refrains from engaging in unhealthy or detrimental actions, thereby promoting psychological balance and well-being.

This foundational knowledge is essential not only for preventing mental disturbances but also for establishing the theoretical basis of Satvavajaya Chikitsa as a method of restoring psychological equilibrium.

In Charaka Samhita, Satvavajaya Chikitsa is described as a primary therapeutic approach for mental disorders and can be conceptually correlated with modern psychotherapy. According to Ayurveda, the Manasa Doshas are Rajas and Tamas, whose vitiation leads to psychological disturbances such as emotional instability, impaired judgment, and behavioral imbalance. The term Satvavajaya is composed of "Satva," denoting Manas (mind), and "Avajaya," meaning regulation or mastery. However, since the mind is inherently dynamic and difficult to restrain directly, Charaka proposes indirect regulatory measures rather than forceful suppression.

To achieve mental stabilization, classical texts emphasize the cultivation of Adhyatma Jnana (spiritual self-awareness), Shastra Jnana (scriptural or theoretical knowledge), Dhairya (emotional resilience and patience), Smṛiti (restoration of proper memory and cognitive recall), and Samadhi (withdrawal of the mind from external sensory stimuli and establishment in inner equilibrium). Samadhi, in this context, reflects the intentional redirection of attention from external objects toward self-awareness, facilitating cognitive clarity and emotional balance.

From a modern perspective, these measures parallel psychotherapeutic strategies such as cognitive restructuring, psychoeducation, emotional regulation training, mindfulness-based interventions, and attentional

control techniques. Thus, Satvavajaya Chikitsa represents a structured psychological intervention aimed at restoring balance in Rajas and Tamas through enhancement of Satva, ultimately promoting mental stability and adaptive functioning.

The Ayurvedic framework of Indriyabhinigraha, Mano-Nigraha, Ūhya, Vichāra, and Buddhi represents a structured cognitive hierarchy analogous to modern neurocognitive models. Sensory restraint corresponds to stimulus filtering mechanisms, while mental regulation parallels attentional control processes mediated by the prefrontal cortex. Logical reasoning (Ūhya) and evaluative discrimination (Vichāra) resemble higher-order executive functions, culminating in Buddhi, which functions similarly to contemporary models of decision-making and behavioral execution. Thus, the classical description anticipates modern cognitive neuroscience by outlining a layered system of perception, cognition, evaluation, and action.

Ayurvedic Term	Functional Meaning
Indriyabhinigraha	Control over sensory objects Regulation of mind
Ūhya (Logical reasoning)	Hypothesis formation
Vichāra	Moral/analytical discrimination
Buddhi	Decision & execution

Another important therapeutic approach described by Charaka in the Charaka Samhita emphasizes ethical, intellectual, and self-reactive disciplines as part of holistic healing.

Trivargasya Avekshana refers to the proper pursuit and critical reflection upon the Trivarga—Dharma (righteous conduct), Artha (rightful livelihood and resources), and Kama (regulated fulfilment of desires). It implies living a balanced life aligned with moral and social responsibilities.

Tadvidya Seva denotes serving and associating with learned teachers and experienced scholars in the same field. Through humility, observation, and guidance, one gains right knowledge and corrects faulty understanding.

Ā tmādi Vijñāna (Ātmaādi Sarvāśā Vijñānam) signifies comprehensive self-understanding—knowing oneself in all dimensions, including physical, psychological, ethical, and spiritual aspects.

Together, these modalities highlight that true treatment extends beyond medicines; it involves righteous living, guidance from the wise, and deep self-awareness, thereby strengthening mental discipline and promoting overall well-being.

II. AIM

To Analyze Manas and evaluate satvavajaya chikitsa as an Ayurvedic psychotherapeutic modality

III. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To describe the nature and function of Manas
- 2) To explain the therapeutic principles of satvavajaya chikitsa

IV. DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic principles that emphasize ethical living, self-control, and behavioral patterns for achieving mental and physical health.

Pragyapradham refers to the avoidance of intellectual blasphemy or impairment affecting Dhee (intellect), Dhriti (restraint), and Smriti (memory). Individuals suffering from this condition perceive wholesome things as unwholesome and unwholesome things as wholesome, leading to distorted judgment and poor decision-making. This concept highlights the importance of maintaining clarity of thought and avoiding patterns that corrupt one's intellectual and cognitive faculties.

Dharniya vega is a concept that should be integrated into our behavioral patterns. It involves controlling impulses such as:

- Greed
- Fear
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Excessive attachment
- Malice

By managing these emotional and psychological impulses, one can prevent the onset of mental illness and maintain psychological equilibrium

Achara Rasayana describes a person's behavior characterized by ethical and disciplined living. Key elements include:

- Speaking only the truth
- Being free from anger
- Abstaining from alcoholic drinks and sexual indulgence
- Avoiding violent activities
- Showing respect and deference to teachers and elders
- Cultivating compassion
- Consuming milk and ghee regularly
- Maintaining good conduct and avoiding meanness
- Being inclined toward studying books with spiritual knowledge
- Exercising control over the senses
- Respecting elders consistently
- Regularly studying scriptures
- Practicing self-control

Both the code of conduct and Achara Rasayana provide straightforward and accessible methodologies for achieving a peaceful and balanced mindset

In Ayurveda, good conduct is termed Sadvritam, which means leading a virtuous and ethical life. Acharya Charaka has established guidelines to be followed for attaining good health and controlling the sense faculties, thereby preventing mental illness

Sadvritta encompasses daily routines, dietary practices, social behavior, and spiritual practices that collectively promote holistic well-being. By adhering to these principles, individuals can maintain mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall health.

These Ayurvedic concepts—Pragyapradham, Dharniya vega, Achara Rasayana, and Sadvritta a comprehensive framework for mental health and well-being. They emphasize the integration of ethical behavior, emotional regulation, and disciplined living into daily life, providing practical pathways to achieve mental peace and prevent psychological disorders.

Satvajaya Chikitsa, as described in Charaka Samhita, represents a structured non-pharmacological approach for the management of mental disorders, particularly those of mild to moderate severity. Unlike purely symptomatic treatment, this modality focuses on restoring the equilibrium of Manas by regulating the Manasa Doshas

Rajas and Tamas through enhancement of Satva. The fundamental principle involves withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome sensory engagement and redirecting it toward constructive cognition and disciplined behavior.

The concept of proper utilization of sensory objects

(Indriyartha Upayoga) suggests that mental disturbances may arise from excessive, deficit, or perverted sensory interaction. This closely parallels modern psychological understanding, where maladaptive stimulus exposure and cognitive distortions contribute to emotional dysregulation. By encouraging activities only after careful discrimination between wholesome (Hita) and unwholesome (Ahita), Satvavajaya promotes higher-order cognitive appraisal similar to executive functioning and rational decision-making described in contemporary psychotherapy.

Furthermore, the recommendation to adopt regimens according to Desa (environmental context), Kala (temporal factors), and Atma Guna (individual psychological constitution) reflects an early biopsychosocial model of mental health. This individualized approach aligns with modern person-centered therapy and lifestyle-based behavioral interventions. Thus, Satvavajaya Chikitsa can be understood as a comprehensive psychoregulatory framework emphasizing attentional control, cognitive restructuring, emotional resilience, and contextual adaptation. Its principles demonstrate remarkable conceptual similarity to present-day psychotherapeutic strategies, reinforcing its relevance in integrative mental health care.

V. CONCLUSION

In Ayurvedic thought, as elaborated in the Charaka Samhita, Manas is regarded as a subtle, dynamic, and indispensable entity that bridges the body and the self. It functions as the coordinator of sensory perception, cognition, emotion, and volition. Through its objects—Chintya, Vicharya, Uhya, Dhyeya, and Sankalpa—the mind demonstrates a structured cognitive process that moves from thought initiation to determination. When guided by Dhi (intellect), Dhriti (self-restraint), and Smriti (memory), Manas maintains psychological equilibrium; however, impairment of these faculties leads to mental and behavioral disturbances.

Satvavajaya Chikitsa emerges from this conceptual understanding of Manas. It is founded upon the principle of restraining the mind from unwholesome objects (ahita vishayas) and redirecting it toward wholesome cognition and conduct. Rather than relying solely on pharmacological measures, it emphasizes mental discipline, ethical living, rational thinking, self-awareness, and guidance from the wise. By strengthening Sattva and restoring the regulatory functions of intellect and restraint,

Satvavajaya aims to correct maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors at their root.

Thus, the conceptual foundation of Satvavajaya Chikitsa lies in the profound psychological insights of ayurveda that true healing begins with mastery of the mind. When Manas is purified, regulated, and directed toward righteousness and self-knowledge, both mental and physical health are harmoniously sustained.

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