A REVIEW ON PHYSIOLOGY OF MANASA (PSYCHE) IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is given equal importance at various places in Ayurvedic texts. Ayurveda emphasizes that Sharira (body) and Sattva (mind) both interact with one another in all spheres of life. The Ayurvedic approach towards health and disease is entirely psychosomatic in its nature. Ayurveda greatly emphasizes on the phenomena of mind than that of the body. This can be expounded by the definition of health, the causes of disease, the approach to the examination of the patient, the concept of the psychosomatic constitution i.e. Prakruti, the regimen of mental and physical hygiene. Therefore it is imperative to understand about the physiology, functions and enactments of Mind i.e. Manasa in Ayurveda. This review article is based upon the fundamentals describing Manasa and its functions and physiology. It is very important to understand each and every aspect of Manas for an Ayurvedic scholar or physician for complete knowledge of human body and behavior.

KEYWORDS: Manasa, Sattva, Triguna, Physiology.

INTRODUCTION

Acarya Caraka conceives Ayu i.e. life as a combined state of Sharira (body), Indriya (senses), Sattva (psyche) and Atma (soul)¹. The first two are grosser entities and are very easy to understand while the later two are subtler and difficult to understand as they are beyond the sensory experience. ‘Manasa’ is the important connecting link between Sharira and Atma. The concept of Ayu is based upon the state of ‘Manasa’, as it is chiefly responsible for Sukha, Dukha, Hita, Ahita. Human beings are the most intelligent species on earth till date. To be born human is a privilege because only humans have the capability and responsibility of living a conscious and controlled life but this may not happen without Manasa and Atma. The fundamental definition of ‘Health’ by Acarya Sushruta has explained that – “A ‘Swastha Purusha’ comprises of balanced ‘Dosha’, ‘Agni’, ‘Dhatu’, ‘Mala’ and ‘Kriya’, as well as Prasanna (sound/happy) ‘Atma’, ‘Indriya’ and ‘Manasa’.” Therefore sound ‘Manasa’ is highly responsible for attaining complete health.

Materials & Methods

The classical texts of Ayurveda with their commentaries, other Ayurvedic texts and journals, relevant websites, articles and presentation were referred.

Definition of ‘Manasa’

- An entity which is responsible for the presence or absence of the knowledge or cognition.³
- An entity which establishes the contact between the soul and body and also regulates the functions of the Indriyas.⁴

Synonyms of ‘Manasa’

- Sattva, Cetaḥ, Cittam, Cetaḥ, Hrudayam, Svantam, Hrut, Manasam, Manah.

Seat of ‘Manasa’

In Ayurvedic classics seat of ‘Manasa’ has been described at various places with different views which are given as under:

1. Indefinite

Mind is continuously active i.e. Cañcala;⁵ so it cannot stay at one particular place. Hence it is very difficult to say about the seat of ‘Manasa’.

2. Hrudaya

Many references are available in Caraka and Sushruta Samhitas regarding the seat of ‘Manasa’. Both Acaryas have mentioned that only

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Hrudaya is the seat of Cetana in the body. It indicates that Hrudaya is the actual seat of 'Manasa'.

3. Shira

Caraka has explained that Prana and all Indriyas are situated in Uttamanga i.e. among all Indriyas, 'Manasa' is situated in Uttamanga i.e. Shira.

4. Sarva Sharira

Acarya Caraka states that Sarva Sharira is Adhishtana of Atindriya i.e. mind. All the above said references regarding the seat of 'Manasa' suggest various places but majority of Acaryas confirm that the actual seat of 'Manasa' is Hrudaya and its transportation channel is Sarva Sharira.

Characteristics of 'Manasa'

Anutvam (Atomic dimension) and Ekatvam (Oneness) are considered to be the two characteristics of 'Manasa'. These are very basic characteristics of mind. If it was not so all kind of perceptions would have occurred at same time.

Physiology of 'Manasa'

The physiology of 'Manasa' is a vast topic. The objects, functions, mode of actions, Manovaha Strotas and Vyapar are included in the study of physiology of 'Manasa'.

Objects of 'Manasa'

Cintyam (Things requiring thought), Vicaryam (Consideration), Uhyam (Hypothesis), Dhyeyam (Emotional thinking), Samkalpyam (Determination) or whatever that can be known by mind is regarded as its objects.

Functions of 'Manasa'

Indriyabhigraha (control of sense organs), Svasya nigraha (self restraint), Uha (hypothesis) and Vicara (consideration) represent the functions of mind.

Indriyabhigraha - 'Manasa' is called the controller of Indriyas because it indicates to send and receive impulses and inspirations to the cognitive senses; so as to facilitate them for the perception of objects.

Svasya Nigraha - 'Manasa' has got a specialty that is of Svasya nigraha i.e. self control. It is necessary to have right orientation towards desired objects and restraining from those after the purpose is fulfilled.

Uha - Acarya Cakrapani has explained that the knowledge of perceived objects obtained by complete examination by mind is called Uha or simply it means the Jnana of Indriyas.

Vicara - Cakrapani has stated that thinking upon perceived objects for its reception (Upadeya) or rejection (Heya) is Vicara.

Mode of Action

The Manasa acts in three stages-
1. Perception (Cognitive or Sensory)
2. Discussion and Determination.
3. Stimulation or Initiation (Conation or Motor Reflex).

1. Perception (Cognitive or Sensory)- In this stage Indriya (sense organs) receives Artha (objects of sense organs) if it is stimulated by 'Manasa'. Caraka also explains that 'Manasa' is a key factor to Indriya for the reception of Arthas. For the occurrence of perception the connection among Atma, Indriya, 'Manasa' and Arthas is very essential.

2. Discussion and Determination- After the perception the procedure of the actual analysis starts. These processes i.e. Cintyam, Vicaryam, Uhyam, Dhyeya, Samkalpyam etc. highlight the various objects of mind according to its capacity. It gives the determination to the perception.

3. Stimulation or Initiation (Conation or Motor Reflex) - This part of the physiology of 'Manasa' is related to Karmendriyas. 'Manasa' is called Ubhayendriya because it connects Jnanendriyas and Karmendriyas. After the determination of knowledge perceived by Jnanendriyas; further necessary and desired actions are to be done by Karmendriyas. In this way beginning from the cognitive and sensory perception up to the stimulation of motor reflexes 'Manasa' performs whole process of knowledge.

Mano – Vyapara

This term is coined by philosophy. It describes the various mental activities.

There are two types of Mano Vyapara –
1. Paridrushta (perceivable)
2. Aparidrushta (inferable)

Paridrushta karmas are those which are visible, perceivable and cognitional. Under this five types of mental operations (Citta Vrutti) are incorporated which are – Pramana (real cognition), Viparyaya (persasive cognition), Vikalpa (imagination), Nidra (sleep), Smruti (memory). Out of these ‘Viparyaya’ is of special significance in psychology.

Aparidrushta (inferable) mental transactions are: Nirodha (restraint), Dharma (peculiarity), Samskara (habit), Parinama (change), Jivana (life
force), Ceshta (activity), Shakti (power). These can be understood only by means of Anumana or Aptopadesha. ‘Manasa’ acts in such a speed that the sequence of transactions cannot be traced out.

Manovaha Srotasas

Acarya Caraka has mentioned that the channels of the whole body transport the Tridoshas; similarly ‘Manasa’ is transported through same channels to provide Cetana to all the living cells of the body.14 These are called Manovaha Srotasas in Ayurvedic texts but separate description regarding this topic is unavailable in any ancient text. The most renowned commentator of Caraka Samhita, Acarya Cakrapani stated that Manovaha Srotasas are spread all over the body but Hrudaya and Dasha Dhamanis can be considered as the main srotas. They can also be called ‘Manovahi Srotamsh’15,16, ‘Cetanavahi Srotas’ or ‘Samjnavahi Srotas’17 etc particularly with reference to the context of Unmada, Apasmara, Mada, Murccha and Samnyasa.

Manasa Doshas

Ayurveda defines Doshas as “Dushyantiti Doshah” i.e. which vitiate or get vitiated are known as Doshas. In case of Manasika Vyadhi the factors responsible are ‘Manasa’ Doshash. Three psychic factors Shudha amsha or Sattvika amsha, Rajastika amsha and Tamasika amsha have been recognized in Ayurveda but Shudha amsha has not been admitted as Manasika Dosa because it has been considered without any taint and represents Kalyanamsha i.e. beneficial aspect of mental state. Ayurveda considers the rest of two Manasa amsahas as Manasika Doshas. Acarya Caraka considers them as morbid factors affecting the mind. Rajasa and Tamasa Dosha produces all kind of mental fluctuations through which the pathogenesis of various diseases can develop. Among disorders caused by Rajasa and Tamasa Doshas are Kama (desire), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (delusion), Irsha (jealousy), Mana (pride), Shoka (grief), Cittodvega (anxiety), Bhaya (fear), and Harsha (exhilaration). Rajasa and Tamasa are two psycho-pathogenic factors causing mental diseases. These are emotional instincts but when disturbed, result in mental diseases.

CONCLUSION

Manasa is most important entity in human beings. Now a day’s psychosomatic and psychiatric diseases are prevalent. For understanding psychosomatic and psychiatric aspect it is necessary to understand human psyche. Human psyche is all about Manasa, its behavior, actions, reactions etc. Sound and thorough knowledge of Manasa, its functions and physiology is mandatory for any physician who is willing to treat the psychological aspect of his patients along with physical one. Therefore an attempt to elaborate the physiology and mode of action of Manasa is made in this article to facilitate the better understanding of human psychology. This in turn will help the Ayurvedic scholars as well as physicians to treat psychosomatic and psychiatric diseases.

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