

A CRITICAL VIEW ON MENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE CURRENT SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda states that human mind possess three qualities – *satwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Among these three, *rajas* and *tamas* are considered as *mano doshas* because their disequilibrium alone impairs the mental health of an individual. The quality of life of the mentally ill has been a matter of concern for centuries. But in the current scenario, the mental health and equilibrium of the so called ‘normal society’ itself is a matter of concern. The increased number of counselling centres, the prevalence of attempt of suicides in college students, high divorce rates among married couples all point out that there is some impairment in the quality of life (QOL) in the society. This negotiating quality of life is the outcome of disturbance of *mano doshas* in individuals. Moreover the exponential rate of incidence of autism disorders, aggressive natures and hyperactivity disorders in the budding new generation is alarming us to take notice and plan actions before our society itself succumb to severe mental disasters. Role of Ayurveda in this regard is highly recommendable as it has proven to have tools that can directly influence the functioning of mind.

Keywords: Mental health, *mano doshas*, QOL

INTRODUCTION: ‘Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also harder to bear’ – C.S. Lewis. The quality of life of the mentally challenged was a concern for centuries. But the quality of life of the society in respect to the mental health does not pertain to the status of mentally challenged individuals alone. It has to be viewed from some other planes also.

AIM: To study the various aspects of mental health and quality of life in the current scenario.

OBJECTIVES: To study the unexplored aspects of mental health and quality of life.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: For the study, Ayurvedic and modern literatures concerned with the topic was referred.

REVIEW:

BRIDGE FROM MENTAL HEALTH

TO ILLNESS: The status of mental health is not a constant factor like the

status of physical health even within a given short time span. It is much more prone to vitiation as it gets influenced with day today emotions and circumstances. So in this respect, we can classify the society into:

- i. Mentally healthy society
- ii. So called ‘Normal society’ with hidden or shadowed mental issues
- iii. Mentally challenged society

The quality of life in these three categories has a wide range of difference. The quality of life of the mentally challenged has always been addressed by the society. But the quality of life of the normal society with hidden mental issues was always overlooked and has become a grave issue for concern.

QUALITY OF LIFE: QOL is a tangible phenomenon. WHO defines Quality of life as an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of culture and

value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment.¹ Ayurveda being a holistic science has explained methodologies to improve an individual's quality of life.

MENTAL HEALTH IN AYURVEDA:

The Ayurveda philosophy explained health as just not an absence of disease. It is achieved when there is perfect balance of all three *doshas*, *satva*, *atma* and *sharira*. If one is disturbed, the whole life is in turmoil.² Indian philosophies have stated that human mind is under the influence of three factors – *satwam*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Ayurveda which has its foundation in Indian philosophies has also accepted this doctrine. Acharya Charaka has stated that an individual having the influence of *satwa* has truth, clarity and purity in nature. Those having *rajas* has passion and those having *tamas* has inertia like nature³ Charaka also explained that among these three, only *rajas* and *tamas* are considered as *mano doshas* as these two alone can cause any imbalance in the status of mental health⁴ This imbalance occurs at the level of processing done through the objects of mind.

OBJECTS OF MIND: Acharya Charaka has identified the following factors as the objects of mind.

- *Uham* – Knowledge of happenings
- *Vicharam* – Application of judgement and discretions
- *Chinta* – Selection between to do or not to do
- *Dhyanam* – Imagination of after effects of dos and don'ts
- *Sankalpam* – Recognition between right and wrong⁵

After the processing done through the objects of mind, *manas* transfer the information to *buddhi* where final decision will be taken. So the most crucial stage which decides the outcome of the response to a stimulus is by the processing of *manas*. When *manas* get influenced by *rajas* and *tamas*, this processing will be altered or inhibited as follows.

	Rajas	Tamas
<i>Uham</i>	Understand the knowledge	May not understand it
<i>Vi-charam</i>	Egoistical judgements	Negative or pessimistic judgements
<i>Chinta</i>	Over enthusiastic and improper selection of dos and don'ts	Inertia or lack of interest in selection of dos and don'ts
<i>Dhy-anam</i>	Won't spend ample time in thinking the after effects of dos and don'ts	Spend more than required time in thinking the after effects of dos and don'ts
<i>Sankalpam</i>	Jump into conclusions and actions	Recognize right for wrong and wrong for right

DISCUSSION: In the current scenario, the impact of influence of *mano dosha* in altering the QOL of the society can be seen through the following examples.

- a. Increased RTA – dominance of *rajo dosham*
- b. Increased suicide rates – dominance of *tamo dosham*
- c. Increased domestic violence – dominance of *rajo dosham*
- d. Increased divorce rates – dominance of *rajo dosham*
- e. High prevalence of undiagnosed depression cases – dominance of *tamo dosham*

- f. Increased reports of molestations and rapes - dominance of *rajo dosham*
- g. Reports of bribery – dominance of *rajo dosham* and *tamo dosham*
- h. Reports of child trafficking and so on

Another scenario where the role of mental health is neglected is in the incidence and prognosis of life style diseases. Physicians always find it difficult to completely cure life style diseases. The prognosis of life style diseases is in the intake of lifelong medicaments. This is due to improper understanding and *vighatana* of *samprapti* in such diseases. In general physicians consider only *sharirika doshas* and *dushyas* as the *nidanam* of life style diseases. This results in sudden tapering of symptoms of life style diseases but prolonged management fails to produce results. The action of body – mind axis in life style diseases is a proven but not clinically considered in practise. The role of *rajas* and *tamas* as *nidanas* in such diseases should be considered to increase the quality of life in life style diseases.

CONCLUSION: In short, the increased number of counselling centres, the prevalence of attempt of suicides in college students, high divorce rates among married couples all point out that there is some impairment in the quality of life in the society. This negotiating quality of life is the outcome of disturbance of *mano doshas* in individuals. Moreover the exponential rate of incidence of autism disorders, aggressive natures and hyperactivity disorders in the budding new generation is alarming us to take notice and plan actions before our society itself succumb to severe mental disasters. Role of Ayurveda in this regard is highly recommendable as Ayurveda has proven to have tools that can directly influence the functioning of mind.

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