

Effect of Covid 19 on Mental Health and their Ayurvedic Management – A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) is a global public health emergency and has affected every country in the world. It was announced as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the end of January 2020 and a pandemic in March 2020. With the public health challenges, this pandemic has created another parallel pandemic of mental health problems. It also exaggerated the existing mental health problem. There would be deterioration of mental health of front line workers as well as general public. Due to lockdown effect and increase in covid patients disastrously there would be vast increase in frightening of getting infected, feeling of fear of getting quarantined, fear of loss of profession, fear of losing jobs, fear of poverty, fear of hunger etc. Due to various psychological impact of covid19 on individuals there is increased tendencies of suicidal attempt. Here in this descriptive study the efforts are being made to put together the different perspectives of Ayurveda which can be implemented in the management of different psychological conditions. With concepts like *Sadvrutta*, *AcharaRasyana*, *Adharma*, *Prajnaparadha* Ayurveda proved to be beneficial for management of psychological impact of Covid 19 on individuals.

Key Words *Achara Rasayana, Adharma, Prajnaaparadha, Sadvrutta, COVID-19, Pandemic, Psychological impact, Ayurvedic perspective*

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 is an global health crisis of current time and the greatest global humanitarian challenge the world has to face. In March 2020, WHO made the evaluation that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic. The Global Physical-mental health and economic impact have been disturbed. India took steps instantly, for a proactive, nationwide, lockdown, with the aim of flattening the curve and using the time to

plan and resource responses adequately. And to deal with the situation of COVID-19, Indian Government extending the days of lockdown as required. With whole country lockdown the citizens are going through a range of psychological and emotion stress, fear and uncertainty being one of them. It can be difficult times for all of us as we are hearing about spread of COVID-19 from all over the world, through television, social media, newspapers, family and

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friends and other sources. The most repeatedly faced emotion by all is Fear. It makes us anxious, panicky, fearful, and worried about the situation. Lockdown aimed to stop the spread of infection from one person to person. This means, not stepping out of the house except for necessary or emergency needs and staying at home can be quite nice for some time but can also be boring and to keep within boundaries which can be results in the effecting the mental health of common human being. Ayurveda tells about health as a state of equilibrium of tridosha, trimala, sapatadhatu and homoeostasis of mind as well as sense organs. As Acharyas demonstrated that the Manas (Mind) is considered three dimensional in terms of three Gunas viz. Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Out of these three, Sattva is the principle gunas of pure mind with absolute balance when other two extreme qualities of mind viz. Rajas and Tamas. If Satva is in quality state, it generates positive feelings but if not, then the body-mind relationship is being disturbed leading to prajnnaparadha¹. It is believed that mainly mentally disturbed persons are because of the disturbance of rajas and tamas, which can be cause due to continue restrictions, anxious and panicky situations. Mental illness is a broad term which includes all the mood disturbances including all the disorders of mood behaviour

which is caused by faulty perception, emotion, thinking and attitude. Such behaviors range from mild annoyance to severe forms of anxiety and depression. In spite of lots of progress in the science of psychiatry for decades the problems with the management of a certain mental problems have remained unsolved. In addition to this, there are various adverse effects of anti-psychotic, anxiolytic medications which will create discomfort in the patient's mind. A recent study conducted in India among 662 subjects through an online survey reveals that 80% of them were preoccupied with the thoughts of COVID-19, 72% of subjects realized the importance of wearing gloves and use of sanitizers. In addition, the study also found that 12.5%, 37.8%, and 36.4% of the respondents reported sleep difficulties, paranoia about acquiring COVID-19 infection, and distress related to social media, respectively². Many countries have reported suicide cases during COVID-19 pandemics including India³, Bangladesh⁴ Pakistan⁵ and other countries as well. In addition to the respective individuals, the health-care workers are also developing mental health problems throughout the globe. Ayurvedic science, Yoga, and meditation help us in handling such type of mental disorders very effectively without any side effects.

Table 1 Different causes of Depression in COVID-19 Pandemic Situation and its Ayurveda perspective⁶

Sr. No.	Causes of Depresssion	Ayurveda Perspective
1.	Diet Related – <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of availability of nutritious food• Unable to get desired food• Snack food• Uncalculated diet	Aaharaj– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• TamasikAahar• Inappropriate dietary habits like Samashana, Adhvasana, Vishamashana that leads to Vishada due toPragya-paradha.• Overeating

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2. Lifestyle Related –

- Lack of physical and mental exercise.
- Disturbed routine work
- Excessive use of cell phones & electronic, internet etc.
- Over sleeping
- Seeking to virtual lifestyle

Viharaj –

- Avyayam, Ekasan,
- Absence of physical and mental exertion

3. Psychological –

- livelihoods, not being feel stressed and worried because all being afraid of
 - Falling ill and dying
 - Avoiding to approach health facilities due to fear of becoming infected
 - workless during isolation, and dismissed from work.
 - Being socially excluded in quarantine.
 - Feelings of mental stress, boredom, loneliness and depression.
 - Being challenged as an outcaste or responsible for spreading the disease
- Rumours give wrong information and spread the fear
 - More watching, reading or listening to news about COVID-19 feels anxious and stressed.
 - Unable to share feeling of fear and sadness by children.

Manasik –

- Bhaya (Fear)
- Shoka (Grief)
- Kama
- Chinta (Stress)

The Ayurvedic Approach

Ayurveda, the ancient medical doctrine of human civilization, has principles of social and behavioral health that are of contemporary relevance⁷. These tenets can be contemplated to provide support to reduce mental health issues along with the modern tenets of psychotherapy and psychiatry. The classical treatises of Ayurveda describe some of the principle that can be very much useful in the context of the current COVID-19.

The concept of Sadvrutta

Acharya Charak, in Charak Samhita described about Sadvrutta consist of two words “Sat” meaning good and “Vrutta” meaning regimen. The detailed description about Sadvrutta suggest to mingle with good friends and peer, acquire happiness and aloofness from bad impacts, and avoid an atheist and greed⁸. This principle is of contemporary importance and can be understood in the view of modern-day social learning theory

or the social cognitive theory proposed by Albert Bandura in 1986. The primary principle of social learning or analytical theory is the idea of observational learning experiences that occur in the proximal environment⁹. Let us now consider this concept in the context of COVID-19, in which it is evident from various studies that people mostly tried to stick to activities that they observed from their nearest environment. In this context, the nearest environment could be the e-environment such as social media, Internet, News channel as people were mostly locked down in their houses and could only connect to their near and dear ones virtually. The emotional manifestation, frightens, anxiety, depression, unhappiness and panic state is the result of such access. People having the above-mentioned mental health problems could get rid off from the same if they follow the principles of Sadvrutta meaning following the good regimen. Stick to good regimen could also help them avoiding

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exhibition of stigmatizing behavior in the community. People should follow the right information from right sources and should also get in touch with people who are the health counsellor who could advise them and allay their anxiety through psychosocial support and counselling. This is all about Sadvrutta, the good rules of conduct, linking with “good” helps develop good behavior. This concept has been applied as an intervention measure to ward off mental health problems originating from COVID-19.

The concept of AcharaRasayana

Acharya Charak has described about the theory of AcharaRasayana which means codes of conduct and importance of individual behavior in social settings¹⁰. It reiterates the individual behavior and conduct in a social network. The social network is the relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, and sometimes, the entire society. Social networks can determine health outcomes both in direct and indirect ways through social influence, social engagement and participation, prevalence of disease and network member mixing, access to material goods and informational resources and social support¹¹. It is very significant in the context of social networks as the disease has the greatest potential to spread through social networks and gatherings. There are various such examples in which COVID-19 has spread through social networks. The most prominent example among these is the religious gathering of TablighiJamaat in New Delhi, whereby April 6,

2020, 1445 of 4067 tested positive representing 17 Indian states and union territories. Throughout 22,000 people including Tablighi Jamaat members and their correspondence have been quarantined across the country¹².

The concept of Adharma and Prajnaaparadha

The concept of Adharma and Prajnaaparadha has got an strong relevance to the current pandemic of COVID-19. Both these concepts have been depicted by Acharya Charaka in his classical treatise, CharakaSamhita. The concept of Adharma¹³ is related to the improper behavior and the concept of Prajnaaparadha¹⁴ refers to intellectual errors leading to improper action that results in bodily ailments. It is said that the source of improper decisions and actions is deeply entrenched in one’s own intellectual error; thus, intellectual error has been considered as one of the important causes of disease. Prajnaaparadha is the root cause of misconduct and wrong act described as intellectual error and is related to improper understanding of the object, absence of self-control despite knowing the facts, and incapability to assess the potential insecurity of planned actions¹⁵. Furthermore, Dhi (intellect) that refers to acquisition of information, Dhriti (retention) which refers to regulation and processing of fresh information, and Smriti (memory) that refers to retain and reproduce of memory are the three important constituents of Prajnaa. Hence, in the situation of COVID-19, the intellectual error may be primarily due to improper knowledge and inaccurate information. This leads to stigma and

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discrimination in the society which may lead to other social problems such as racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and ostracization in communities¹⁶. Thus, it becomes imperative to keep away from intellectual errors and be mindful in making choices which would put a stop to mental health problems at an individual level and social stigma at a community level.

Psychoneuroimmunology and Meaning Response in Relation to Coronavirus Disease-2019

Furthermore, the theory of “psychoneuroimmunology” and “meaning response” holds significant value in fighting the mental health problem due to COVID-19. Psychoneuroimmunology is the study of the interlinkage between psychological processes and the nervous system and immune system of the human body. It explains the procedure of an immune response to infection through stress and emotional disorders. Similarly, the concept of “meaning response” contrary to “placebo response” describes that an individual’s response does not only depend on the pharmacological properties of a drug but on the meaning they ascribe to this treatment¹⁷. Thus, the advisory that the Ayurvedic preparations for boosting immunity could be a combination effect of “meaning response” and the interactions of nervous, endocrine, and immune systems in human body.

Role of Pranayam and Meditation

Understanding of mind has different ways of explanation in Ayurveda and Yoga. The

principles of Yoga can help in mental well-being of Individuals. There are also some solutions for COVID-19 in Meditation and Pranayam. Studies revealed that regular Yoga practice can improve the pulmonary functions of individual¹⁸. In the context of acute conditions which requires intensive care or ventilatory care, this may not help however in case of very mild-to-mild cases which even does not requires any oxygen therapy in COVID-19 management, adherence to regular Yoga practice can improve pulmonary functions. Meditation is found to be useful in improving virus-specific immune response¹⁹.

CONCLUSION

Any pandemic and public health crises can have a severe impact on mental health. The example of current COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in several forms of impacts on mental health both at individual level and at the level of health-care providers who work vigorously to provide medical care at health-care settings. The classical text of Ayurveda have described concepts that are most important at the present day and such concepts are strongly helpful for mental health considerations of COVID-19 as well. Although the Adharaniyavegas should not be held as per the descriptions of Ayurveda while releasing the Vegas, proper precaution must be taken to avoid the transmission of the disease. Similarly, the concepts of Sadvrutta, AcharaRasayana, Adharma, and Prajnaaparadha hold significant importance to avoid mental health problems at

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the individual level and help to prevent social stigma at the community level. Pranayama and Yoga is very useful to eliminate stress by the health-care workers that are engaged in COVID care at health-care settings and the same can also help in improving normal lung function among COVID cases as well.

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