

Concept of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Ayurveda Psychotherapy) In *Vataj Unmada* w.s.r. to Attention Deficit /Hyperactivity Disorder

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurveda* physical and mental well-being is important for healthy life. Currently, numerous children are dealing with a range of Psychosomatic disorder (*Manas Vikar*). Psychosomatic disorder affected children are increased in paediatric clinics out of that attention deficit /Hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] is one of them. ADHD is the most common neurobehavioral disorder and it is among the most prevalent chronic health condition affecting school-aged children. Characterized by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. The clinical features and patterns it can be correlated with *Vataj Unmada*. *Vataj Unmada* considered under the *Manas Vikar* and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Ayurveda Psychotherapy) is very advantageous for this condition. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is one among the brainchild concepts of *Acharya Charaka* (father of Indian medicine). In *Ayurveda*, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is considered to be having the psychospiritual approach with a nonpharmacological treatment modality which solely deals on the mind and its related attributes. This psychotherapy helps in controlling *Manas* (mind) away from *Ahita Artha* (distractible, unwholesome objects/thoughts/perceptions). Withdrawal of the bothered mind from unwholesome objects is the prime focus of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*.

Key Words *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*, *Vataj Unmada*, ADHD, Psychotherapy

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INTRODUCTION

ADHD is the commonest neurobehavioral disorder of childhood characterized by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity¹. It is the one most extensively studied neurodevelopment disorder of childhood. It is 3 times more common in boys and cause problems in at least two settings (such as school, home, or recreational activities)². Inattention means a

person wanders off task, lacks persistence, has difficulty sustaining focus and is disorganized and these problems are not due to defiance or lack of comprehension. Hyperactivity means a person seems to move about constantly, including in situations in which it is not appropriate or excessively fidgets, taps or talks. In adults, it may be extreme restlessness or wearing others out with constant activity. Impulsivity means a

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person makes hasty actions that occur in the moment without first thinking about them and that may have high potential for harm or a desire for immediate rewards or inability to delay gratification. An impulsive person may be socially intrusive and excessively interrupt others or make important decisions without considering the long-term consequences.

In *Ayurveda* there is no direct reference for ADHD but looking into the clinical features and patterns it can be correlated with *Vataj Unmada (Mansik Vikara)*, where *Unmada* is disease featured-

"उन्मादंपुनर्मनोबुद्धिसंज्ञाज्ञानस्मृतिभक्तिशीलचेष्टाचारविभ्रमं विद्यात् ॥ (च.नि. 7/5)³

In *Ayurveda* neither this disease nor the symptoms of ADHD are described but some references about abnormal behaviour are discussed under features of *Vataprakriti anavasthita chittatva Mano vibhrama, Buddhivibhrama, Smriti vibhrama, Sheela vibhrama, Cheshta vibhrama and Achara vibhrama* can be correlated with ADHD. According to *Ayurveda*, the main reason for ADHD is vitiation of *Dhee* (rational thinking), *Dhriti* (retaining power of the mind), *Smriti* (memory) which causes abnormality and abnormal conduct resulting into improper contact of the senses with their objectives and give rise to inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity.

Vataj Unmada have symptoms such as-अस्थानहास (Laughs without reason), अस्थानस्मितनृत्यगीतवाग (shouts and sing and dance without at inappropriate times), अंगविक्षेपण (Fidget with hand

or feet), रोदन (cry without any reason)⁴. Symptoms of ADHD like inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity may be considered as due to pathology in *Manas* and vitiation of *Vata dosha* (Table 01).

Table 1 *Samprapti Ghatak*

The treatment of ADHD are stimulants

दोष	शारिरिक त्रिदोष ;वात प्रधान मानसिक रज, तम
दूष्य	मानस अष्टमानोभाव
अधिष्ठान	हृदय ;मस्तिष्क
स्रोतस	मनोवह ;संज्ञावह
अग्निस्थिति	विषम अग्नि
व्याधिस्वभाव	दारुण
साध्यासाध्यता	कृच्छसाध्य

(methylphenidate and amphetamines) & nonstimulants medication (atomoxetine and bupropion). Common side effects of atomoxetine include nausea, headache, abdominal pain, insomnia, somnolence, erectile dysfunction, irritability, fatigue, decreased appetite, weight loss, and dizziness, along with nonclinical increases in heart rate and BP⁵.

Currently, we address ADHD in children without the use of medication, as it can potentially have negative effects on their overall health and well-being. Instead, we are exploring alternative approaches such as behavioural therapy, which have proven to be effective in managing this condition.

In *Ayurveda Accahrya Charak* provided three types of *Chikitsa* in *Charak Samhita*, which are *Daiva Vyapasrya, Yukti Vyapasrya, Sattvavajaya*⁶. The greatest treatment for *Manas Roga* is *Sattvavajya Chikitsa*. It means

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Sattvavajaya Chikitsa is Ayurveda's version of psychotherapy or mental wellness counselling, aiming at mental discipline, emotional regulation, and self-awareness without using pharmaceutical drugs.

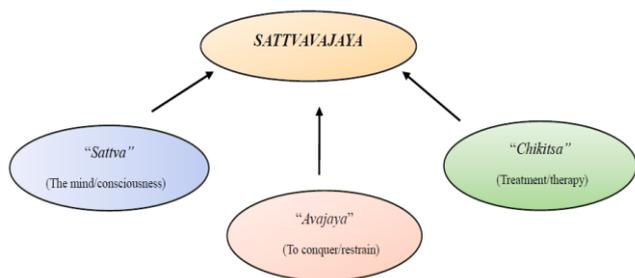


Figure 1 Meaning of *Sattvavajaya*

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A comprehensive review was conducted using classical texts of Ayurveda, which included their various commentaries. Additionally other relevant Ayurvedic literature, scholarly journals, pertinent websites, informative articles, and presentations were also consulted to gather a wide range of insights and information.

Samprapti of Unmad -

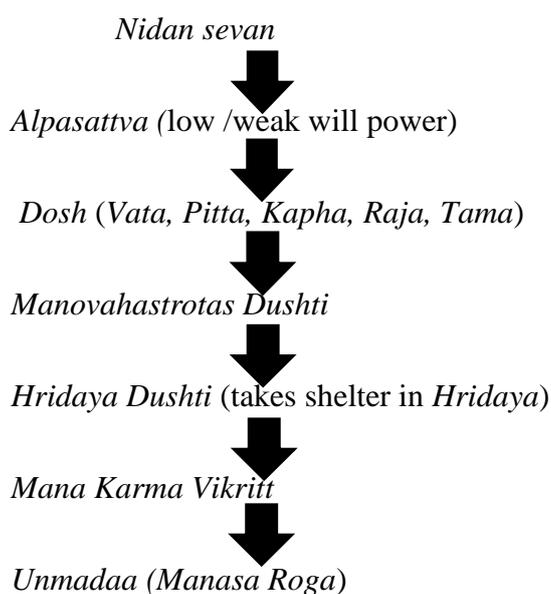
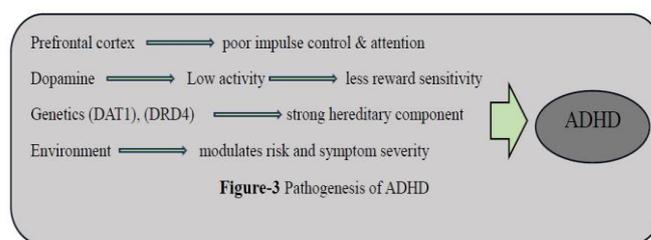


Figure 2 Samprapti of Unmada

Pathogenesis of ADHD (Figure 03)

Brain MRI studies in children with ADHD indicate a reduction or even loss of the normal hemispheric asymmetry in the brain, as well as smaller brain volumes of specific structures, such as the prefrontal cortex and basal ganglia. MRI findings suggest low blood flow to the striatum. Functional MRI data suggest deficits in dispersed functional networks for selective and sustained attention in ADHD that include the striatum, prefrontal regions, parietal lobe, and temporal lobe. The prefrontal cortex and basal ganglia are rich in dopamine receptors. ADHD may be a final common pathway for a variety of complex brain developmental processes. There is a strong genetic component to ADHD. Genetic studies have primarily implicated 2 candidate genes, the dopamine transporter gene (DAT1) and a particular form of the dopamine 4 receptor gene (DRD4), in the development of ADHD⁸.



Role of *Sattvavajaya*

ADHD is neurodevelopmental and neuropsychiatric disorder of unknown etiology but with strong genetic basis. ADHD involves dysregulation of attention, hyperactivity, and impulse control, linked to brain chemicals (like dopamine) and *Manas Gunas* (*Rajas-Tamas* predominance). *Unmada* is a disease featured as unstable intellect, mind, knowledge, memory, consciousness and bad manners. according to its

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symptoms, to some extent it can be correlated with *Vataj Unmada*. Once the diagnosis of ADHD has been established, the parents and child should be educated with regard to the ways ADHD can affect learning, behaviour, self-esteem, social skills, and family function. Behaviourally Oriented treatments are the management of ADHD. *Vataj Unmada* and ADHD is a *Manodoshaja Vikara* (mental disorders). *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Psychotherapy) works at the mind-body interface. This approach helps restore mental balance, self-control, and focus.

त्रिविधमौषधमिति दैवव्यपाश्रयं, युक्तिव्यपाश्रयं, सत्त्वावजयश्च।

सत्त्वावजयः- पुनरहितेभ्योऽर्थेभ्यो मनोनिग्रहः॥(च.सू.11/54)⁹

Sattvavajaya means “winning the mind”. It is defined as the withdrawal of the mind from harmful or unwholesome elements. It is a practical approach to introduce methods for self-control that helps individuals differentiate between thoughts and actions, and addressing phobias. *Chakrapani* in *Vimanasthana* commented that *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* can be included in both *Yukti Vyapashraya* and *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* depending on its *Dravya Bhutatva* or *Adravya Bhutatva*.¹⁰ If *Sattvavajaya* is done by using *Dravya* (material), then it is *Yuktivyapashraya* and if it is done by *Adravya* (nonmaterial) means then it is *Daiva vyapashraya*. The methods of *Adravyabhuta Chikitsa* like *Bhaya Darshana* (terrorising), *Vismaya* (surprising), *Vismarana* (De memorising), *Kshobhana* (shocking), *Harshana*

(exciting), *Bhartsana* (chideing), *Vadha* (threatening), *Bandhana* (binding), *Svapna* (inducing sleep), *Samvaahana* (massage), etc be useful in mental disorders¹¹. According to *Acharya Charak* common treatment of *Unmada* are – *Ashvasana*¹²- (assurance), *Santvana*¹³- (consoling the patient), *Paraspara Pravidwandwa*¹⁴- (Replacement by opposite emotions)- *Kamaja Unmadaa* – *Krodh, Shokaja Unmadaa* – *Harsha, Ershya Unmadaa- Lobha*. All treatments are also administered in the condition of *Vtaja Unamd* and ADHD. *Sattvavajaya* is a holistic approach, integrating psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions to maintain or restore mental well-being. *Sattvavajaya* (Behavioural or psychotherapy therapy) doesn't inject neurotransmitters, but teaches the brain to use its own chemical systems better, over time, these structured patterns reshape neural networks in regions critical for ADHD, leading to more effective dopamine, norepinephrine function.

DISCUSSION

Acharya Charak elaborated on *Sattvavajaya*, which is utilized in the treatment of *Manas Vikar*. In *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* Avoid overstimulation, Spiritual reading which Promotes *Sattva guna* (mental clarity), Controls restlessness and helps reduce hyperactivity, improves attention and patience. Daily routine (*Dinacharya*) Reduces unpredictability (helps with attention and

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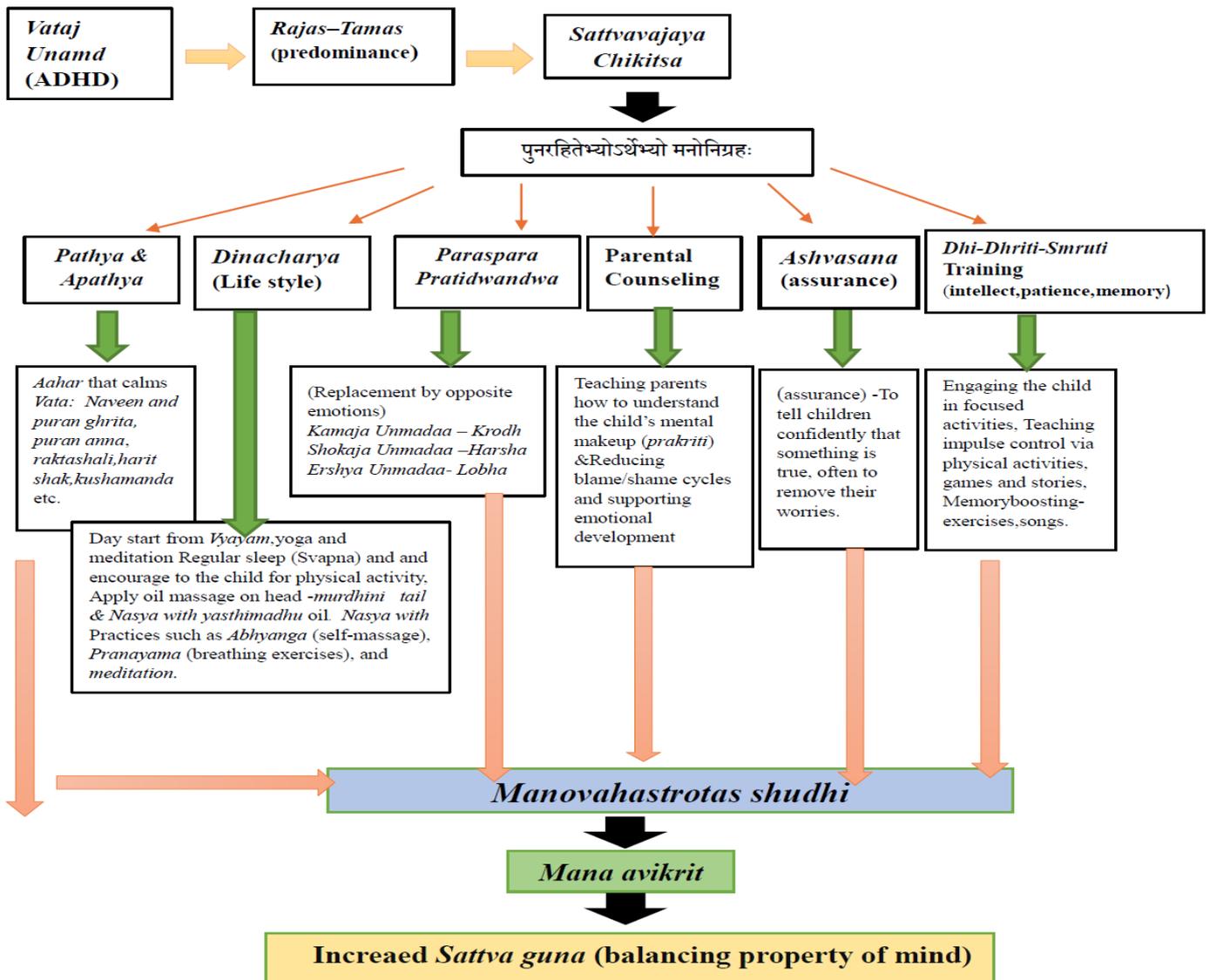


Figure 4 Probable mode of action of Sattvavajaya Chikitsa

impulsivity). *Dinacharya* emphasizes a lifestyle in tune with natural elements- less screen time, more exposure to sunlight, eating fresh foods - which helps manage sensory overload, a common ADHD challenge. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* requires commitment and external support, which can be hard for someone with ADHD to maintain without help (Figure 4). *Sattvavajaya* helps restore mental balance, self-control, and focus, behavioural modification such as Reducing sensory overload (too many distractions, screens, etc.). The meaning of

Sattvavajaya according to *Acharya Charak* is isolating oneself from unpleasant or unhealthy habits, control *mana* and enhance *mana* for good pleasant things. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is *Ayurveda's* version of psychotherapy or mental wellness counselling, aiming at mental discipline, emotional regulation, and self-awareness— without using pharmaceutical drugs. The therapy's revolutionary nature stems from its ability to create lasting changes in brain function through repeated training sessions.

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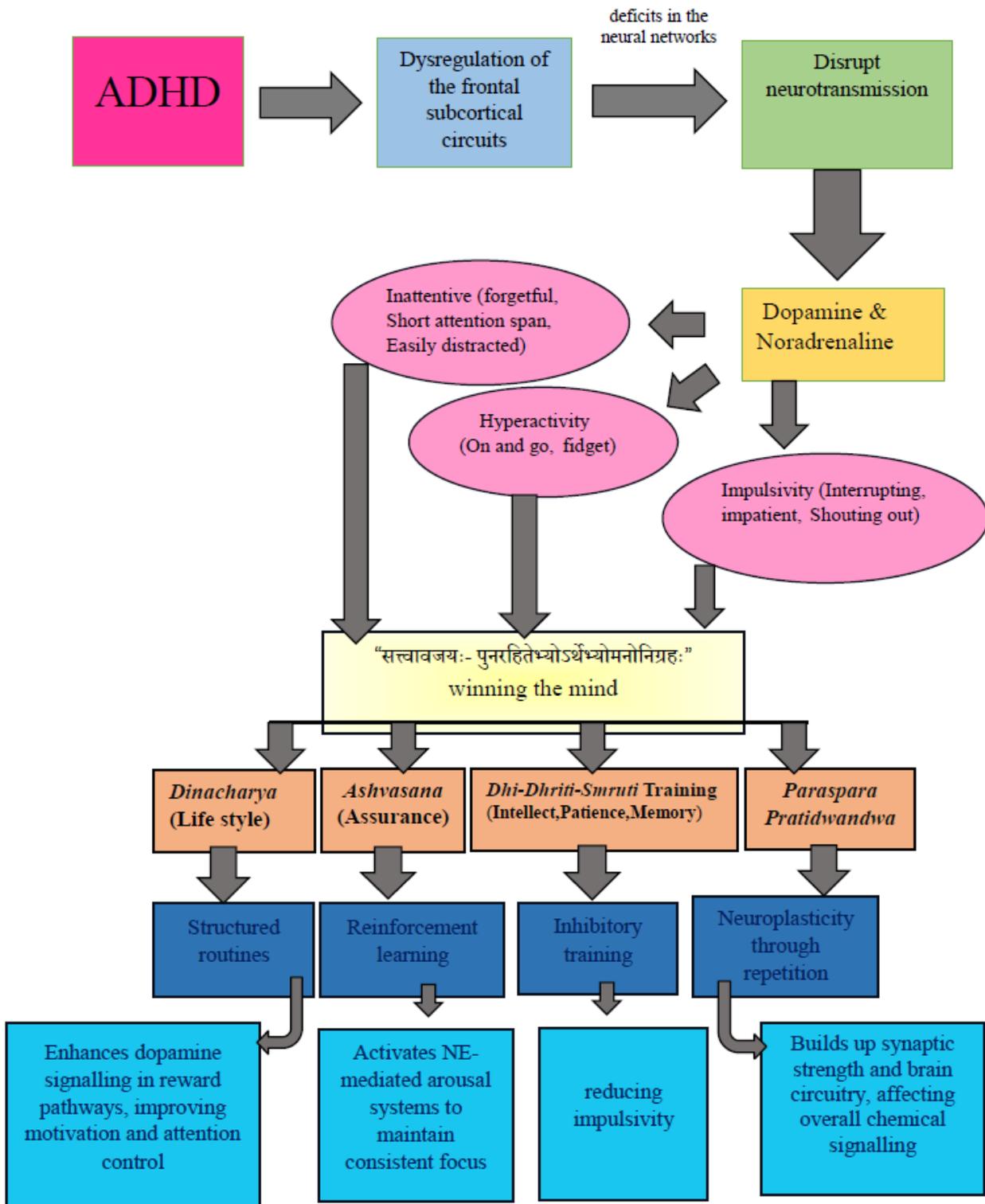


Figure5 Sattvavajaya Chikitsa in ADHD

There are following things which are include in Sattvavajaya Chikitsa for management of ADHD-

- पुनरहितेभ्योऽर्थेभ्यो मनोनिग्रहः: avoid unpleasant things (e.g. tv, mobiles, junk foods, carbohydrates & sugar rich foods etc) because screen time before bed disrupts melatonin production, leading

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to poor sleep¹⁵. Children with ADHD often have lower dopamine levels, which is a key brain chemical involved in pleasure, attention, and motivation. Fast-paced screen content (like games or videos) releases dopamine in bursts, which can feel rewarding but it can also train the brain to crave constant stimulation.

➤ *Maonigrah* (control of mind)- The term of *Manonigrah* is using for control over the mind. There are many techniques prevailing in medical science for control over mind. It can be achieved as per *Lord Krishna* in *Bhagavad-Gita* through *Abhyaasa*(practice) and *Vairagya*(detachment)¹⁶.

➤ **Behavioural Modification Techniques**

➤ Teaching the child discipline through **positive reinforcement**

➤ Creating a **structured routine**

➤ Reducing sensory overload (too many distractions, screens, etc)

➤ **Dhi-Dhriti-Smriti Training**

➤ **Dhi (intellect):** Engaging the child in focused activities.

➤ **Dhriti (patience):** Teaching impulse control via physical activities, games and stories.

➤ **Smriti (memory):** Memory-boosting exercises, storytelling, songs.

➤ **Parental Counselling**

➤ Teaching parents how to understand the child's mental makeup (*prakriti*)

➤ Reducing blame/shame cycles and supporting emotional development

➤ **Pathya and Apathya**

➤ *Aahar* that calms *Vata*: *naveen* and *puran ghritha*, *puran chawal*, *raktashali*, *harit-shak*, *kushamanda*, *narikel* etc¹⁷.

➤ According to modern science-Reduce Carbohydrates and sugar rich diet processed foods, stimulants etc¹⁸.

➤ **Dinacharya (Life style)**¹⁹

➤ Day start from *Vyayam*, *yoga* and meditation

➤ Regular sleep (*Svapna*) and encourage to the child for physical activity.

➤ Apply oil massage on head – *Aacharya Charak* given importance of *murdhni tail* -

इन्द्रियाणि प्रसीदन्ति सुत्वग्भवति चाननम्

निद्रालाभः सुखं च स्यान्मूर्ध्नि तैलनिषेवणात्|| (च.सू.5/83)²⁰

➤ Daily routine (*Dinacharya*) Reduces unpredictability (helps with attention and impulsivity)

➤ Therapies like meditation, yogic focus, storytelling, and reinforcement techniques.

➤ Practices such as *Abhyanga* (self-massage), *Pranayama* (breathing exercises), and *meditation* calm the nervous system, potentially reducing hyperactivity and impulsivity.

A consistent wake-sleep cycle, as advised in *Dinacharya* (e.g., waking up before sunrise), may help regulate circadian rhythms. Sleep disturbances are common in ADHD, and improved sleep can enhance attention and mood.

CONCLUSION

ADHD and *Vataj Unmada* exhibit notable similarities in their symptoms, especially in

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relation to the *Manas Vikar*. in individuals with ADHD, there is a notable imbalance in neurotransmitter levels, which contributes to the condition known as *Manovahstrotas Dushti*, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is a unique non-pharmacological approach for treating the mental disorders. “*Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*” is a concept from *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of medicine, Teaching the child discipline through positive reinforcement. It refers to psychotherapy or mind control therapy—essentially, the *Ayurvedic* approach to managing mental health and emotional well-being So, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* literally means "therapy that helps control or stabilize the mind." its kind and if developed can really prove much useful in *Vataj Unmada* or ADHD.

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