

Psychiatric Examination in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Scientific Review

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Abstract

Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine, offers a holistic framework for understanding mental health through the integration of body, mind (Manas), and consciousness (Atma). Psychiatric evaluation in Ayurveda—rooted in concepts such as Manasika Doshas, Triguna, Indriya functioning, and behavioral markers—provides an alternative and complementary approach to modern psychiatric assessment. This paper presents a detailed scientific review of Ayurvedic principles relevant to psychiatric examination, assessment methodologies, classical textual references, diagnostic constructs, and clinical applicability. By correlating ancient Ayurvedic paradigms with contemporary psychiatric understanding, the paper highlights the potential for integrative mental healthcare models.

1. Introduction

Mental health disorders contribute significantly to global morbidity and disability. While modern psychiatry offers structured diagnostic criteria, Ayurveda provides a multidimensional understanding of mental well-being. Classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, describe mental disorders (Manovikaras) and structured methods for mental examination. The psychiatric assessment in Ayurveda emphasizes psychological constitution (Prakriti), mental strength (Satva), emotional regulation, sensory-motor coordination, and behavioral patterns.

This paper synthesizes Ayurvedic concepts and modern interpretations to outline a standardized Ayurvedic psychiatric examination model.

2. Conceptual Framework of Mind in Ayurveda

2.1 Manas (Mind)

Ayurveda views the mind as a subtle organ responsible for perception, cognition, and response. Key attributes:

Ekatva Anutva: Singular but extremely minute

Ubhaya Indriya Adhishthana: Interfaces with both sensory and motor systems

Laghutva: Extremely mobile nature

2.2 Manasika Dosha

Mental functions are governed by three doshic forces:

Rajas– Initiates activity, promotes desire, restlessness

Tamas– Produces inertia, confusion, delusion

Sattva – Generates clarity, stability, purity

Imbalances in Rajas and Tamas lead to psychiatric disturbances.

2.3 Triguna and Personality

Each individual has a unique combination of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas influencing behavior, temperament, and coping ability.

.Ayurvedic Understanding of Mental Illness (Manovikara)

Ayurveda describes mental disorders resulting from:

- * Imbalance of Rajas and Tamas
- * Improper sensory processing (Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga)
- * Prajnaparadha (intellectual blasphemy)
- * Unwholesome diet and lifestyle

* Genetic and environmental influences

Classic mental disorders include Unmada, Apasmara, Mada, Murchha, Vishada, and Chittodvega.

4. Components of Psychiatric Examination in Ayurveda

Ayurvedic psychiatric evaluation includes a combination of observation, interrogation, and physical assessment.

4.1 Darshana (Inspection)

Evaluation through observation:

Facial expressions, eye movements

Body language and posture

Hygiene, grooming

Psychomotor activity

Emotional reactivity

4.2 Sparshana (Examination by touch)

Includes tactile assessment of pulse (Nadi), temperature, and signs of systemic involvement.

4.3 Prashna (Interrogation)

Systematic questioning about:

Thought content and clarity

Memory and cognitive functions

Emotional stability

Sleep pattern

Appetite changes

Social behavior

5. Key Diagnostic Parameters in Ayurvedic Psychiatric Assessment

5.1 Satva Pariksha (Assessment of Mental Strength)

Classified into:

Pravara Satva – High resilience

Madhyama Satva – Moderate

Avara Satva– Low resilience, prone to distress

5.2 Sara Pariksha (Examination of Tissue Excellence)

Prana, Majja, and Ojas assessment influences mental stability.

5.3 Aharaja, Viharaja, and Manasika Nidana

Dietary, behavioral, and psychological causative factors.

5.4 Indriya Pariksha

Assessment of sensory perception and integration.

5.5 Manovaha Srotas Examination

Symptoms such as anxiety, confusion, lack of concentration, and mood fluctuations indicate Srotodushti.

6. Correlation with Modern Psychiatric Examination

6.1 Mental Status Examination (MSE) Components and Ayurvedic Parallels

Appearance & Behavior ↔ Darshana Pariksha

Mood & Affect ↔ Satva assessment and Guna predominance

Thought Process ↔ Manasika Dosha functioning

Cognition ↔ Buddhi, Smriti, Dhi, Dhriti assessment

Insight/Judgment ↔ Prajnaparadha evaluation

6.2 Strengths of Ayurvedic Model

Holistic mind–body approach

Inclusion of diet, lifestyle, and ethics

Greater emphasis on personality and resilience

6.3 Limitation

Lack of quantitative metrics

Need for standardized tools and validation

7. Treatment Inferences Derived from Assessment

Based on evaluation, treatment may include:

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa – Counseling, cognitive reframing, behavioral training

Daivavyapasraya Chikitsa– Mantra, Yajna, spiritual therapies

Aushadha Chikitsa– Medhya Rasayana, anxiolytics, adaptogens

Ahara & Vihara – Diet and lifestyle modification

8. Discussion

Ayurvedic psychiatric evaluation offers a structured but flexible system emphasizing individual constitution, psychological resilience, behavior, and sensory functioning. Integrating Ayurvedic principles with modern psychiatric tools may enhance personalized mental healthcare. Future research should prioritize:

Development of validated Ayurvedic mental health scales

Clinical trials on Ayurvedic therapeutic protocols

Cross-disciplinary integrative approaches

9. Conclusion

The Ayurvedic psychiatric examination is a comprehensive, multidimensional approach focusing on mental doshas, Triguna, Satva, sensory-motor integration, and behavioral observation. When correlated with modern MSE principles, it presents powerful scope for integrative psychiatry. Ayurveda's emphasis on preventive psychology, resilience building, and holistic well-being provides valuable insights for modern mental health sciences.

References

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