

EXPLORING THE APPLICABILITY OF MIND-BODY INTERACTION IN HEALING W.S.R. TO HYPOTHYROIDISM

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has always given utmost importance to the influence that mind has on body and how the *Manasika vikaras* (diseases of mind) cause many corporal ailments. It is truly amazing how much your emotion and thoughts sway your physical health. A strong mind-body connection is a powerful healing force you can harness for better health. The contemporary science has recently put forward studies stating that stress has to be considered a core reason for many physical symptoms; where material remedies show little effect. Attempt has been made to compile trenchant views and observations in both *Ayurvedic* and contemporary science, supporting the same. The article aims to provide better understanding of the effect of mind empowerment through Yogic science in the control of physical ailments. For easy conveyance of the applicability of this great principle in healing, cases treated successfully following the schedule are described here.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, Yoga, Adrenal fatigue, Hypothyroidism, *Manas* (mind), *Sharira* (body)

INTRODUCTION

People all over the world are acquainted with the word perfect health or healthy. But what is perfect health or who can be called healthy. The most apt definition for health is found in *Ayurvedic* literature, which strongly pronounce the state of mind as a criteria and says that only a person with blissful mind can be called healthy.¹ *Manas* (mind) along with *sharira* (body) are the substratum for diseases.² When people are under stress they feel much discomfort, they live with a general sense of uneasiness, tiredness or 'gray' feelings like getting tired for no reason or feeling dis-

eased. With better understanding of the effect of mind on body, the role of mind in healing diseases becomes more clear and convincing. Modern science has recently put many studies forward which toes the same line, describing that stress can induce all diseases including endocrine disorders and even cancer. Adrenal fatigue is one of the most recent developments in this path, which is said to be probably the most common problem encountered at present.

The guiding principle behind this article is that the mind exerts the deepest influence on the body, and freedom from sickness depends upon contacting our own

awareness, bringing it into balance, and then extending that balance to the body. Yogic science is one of the most dependable tools in the path to attain a peaceful mind. The poet and grammarian *Bhartrihari* has written a *shloka* (verse) where he states that Yogic science formed by *Maharshi Patanjali* helps to get rid of the sins of mind, like how *vyakarana* (grammar) corrects speech. The whole concept of self healing through mind empowerment is detailed through the article. To have a clear picture details of few cases of hypothyroidism are cited, wherein wonderful results were obtained adopting the Yogic practices.

Mind-body relation - Ayurvedic and modern outlook

Ayurveda, the knowledge of life tells us how our lives can be influenced, shaped, extended, and flourished without interference from sickness or even old age itself. *Charaka* says, "The human body is not merely the physical body, but a combination of body, mind and soul. The world stands in their union; in them abides everything".³ When *Ayurveda* address the human being and its needs, they are referring to this greater human being of the three bodies. While detailing *dinacharya* (daily conduct), *Ayurveda* guides to stay away from *kaya* (physical), *vaak* (verbal) and *mana* sins for a happy and disease free life.⁴ This holistic science aims at relieving the diseases of body and mind. It includes all aspects of healing from lifestyle regimens, diet, herbs and exercise to yogic practices, *pranayama* and meditation.

What vitiates the mind to cause a disease? Mind acts as the seat of diseases when overpowered by *rajas* and *tamas*, the *Doshas* of mind.⁵ *Acharya* gives detailed

explanation on the qualities of mind dominating in both the *doshas* and the *guna*⁶; where we get to see that when envired by *rajas* and *tamas*, men suffer from despondency, lethargy, sleepiness, anger, frustration etc, whereas the *satvic* mind is free from all this menace. Many references are available in *Ayurvedic* texts which highlight the significance of mind-body interrelation and its advantage in disease management.

Adrenal fatigue⁷, the 21st century stress syndrome is a recent development of modern science in this path. The term is coined to identify below optimal adrenal function resulting from excess and constant stress which should not be confused with recognized forms of adrenal dysfunction such as Addison's disease.⁸ In adrenal fatigue, the adrenal glands are over stimulated (by stress, dietary and environmental factors, etc) and are no longer working at the level needed for optimal body functioning. As the name suggests, its paramount symptom is fatigue that is not relieved by sleep. The most alluring fact about adrenal fatigue is that, apart from its common symptoms⁹ it can even trigger disease symptoms like chronic cough, asthma, muscle weakness, back pain, allergies, thyroid disorders etc.¹⁰ What is important to understand in these cases is that, for instance in thyroid conditions, the malfunctioning thyroid gland is not the actual cause of the problem; and if the healthcare professional aims their treatment directly at the thyroid gland, there's absolutely no chance of restoring the patient's health.

All these studies or statements lead us to a single conclusion. Mind and body are interlinked to such greater extent that any change in either of these will definitely alter

the other. Stress or poor mindset is the sole reason for most of our physical ailments. To put in more simple terms, all diseases have a psychosomatic nature which needs to be identified and corrected.

Effect of mind in healing: case study

Here the history of 3 cases of hypothyroidism¹¹ (both subclinical and overt) are noted down, which were cured by following the schedule described further.

Case 1- A 58 year old woman referred to as AJ, presented suffering from pain in bilateral knee joints, and nape of neck, associated with mild swelling and restriction of movement from 5 months. Initially as she developed the complaints, AJ had consulted Allopathic medicine and was diagnosed subclinical hypothyroid during her routine blood checkups (TSH:8.49 μ IU/L, T3:1.15ng/ml, T4:6.99 μ g/dl) and was put on thyroxin supplement 25mcg daily for 3 months. On further blood test, to her disappointment the TSH levels had only raised to 10.12 μ IU/L, with normal values of T3 and T4. AJ decided to discontinue the course and approached us for the same.

Case 2- A middle aged woman addressed as BG complaining of excess hair fall since 2 years presented to our facility. She was advised to go for a thyroid check up and her results showed raised TSH values with normal T3 and T4. (TSH: 8.66 μ IU/L, T3:1.15ng/ml, T4:9.31 μ g/dl)

Case 3- MK, a girl aged 22 years started with complaints of irregular menstruation (once in 4-5 months), excess weight gain and hair loss since 2 years, which she had neglected. Before 3 months she developed loss of appetite, nausea and lethargy for which she took the help of Allopathic science, where she underwent complete

blood checkup. She was suffering from severe hypothyroidism as per her reports (TSH: >100 μ IU/ml, T3:60ng/dl, T4:2.4 μ g/dl), and was prescribed thyroxin supplement 100mcg daily for next 3 months. Within one week of medication she could find relief from her recent symptoms, though her previous complaints remained same. After 3 months when she went for review checkup, her reports showed that TSH had fallen to 0.09 μ IU/ml. With this result she was advised to reduce the dose of thyroxin to 50mcg from 100mcg, and to review TSH after 6 weeks. Patient was not satisfied with her present treatment progress and decided to take help of Ayurveda.

Where the problem truly lies and how to nail it down?

All 3 cases were approached considering the psychosomatic nature of diseases and the course of treatment was planned under 3 headings.

- 1) Counseling
- 2) Practice of yoga
- 3) Diet (*Pathyaahara*)

Counseling

Counseling is given foremost importance here, for the patch up should commence at the mind level, before we do anything in physical body. The acceptance of the fact that the problem lies within your mind is the first step of healing and it would set you free of the hurdle quite easily. In *Chikitsapada* (four limbs of treatment), when describing the characters of an ideal patient, it's clearly written that for treatment success the patient should be *satvawan* (of good mind set) and *jnapaka* (with self-knowledge).¹² Mind is made of nothing but thoughts, which is its process, which needs to be fixed first.¹³ Take away the thoughts of

the mind and the mind disappears. As our thoughts, so we are; as you sow, so shall you reap.¹⁴ Through counseling patients are made to realize that, fear of the disease can do as much or even more harm than the disease itself. Patients are taught to project thoughts of intelligence, fortitude, realization and harmony to counter those of conflict, unhappiness and ignorance that weaken their mental and physical vitality. Having a positive attitude is not about being happy all the time; accepting that there will be times when you feel down is all part of being happy.

Yogic practices

Yogasanas like *bhujangasana*, *noukasana*, *pavana muktasana*, *sarvangasana*, *halasana* and *surya namaskara* were mainly taught to the patients, along with mild neck exercises as neck extending, flexing and rotating. They were advised to practice neck exercise first followed by *Yogasana* for about 15-20 minutes daily, preferably early morning, in empty stomach, clearing their bowel. After completion of each posture instruction was given to relax in *shavasana*. Along with this basic *Pranayama* techniques like *nadishodhana* and meditation were included.

Diet (*Pathyaahara*)

Restrictions were put on food and lifestyle. Patients were advised to follow vegetarian diet, avoid using foods like curd, pickles, confectioneries etc. They were asked to take food in adequate quantities at proper time and to sleep and wake up at apposite and regular timings. They were told not to suppress their natural urges¹⁵ and to make sure that they had daily good bowel cleansing.

DISCUSSION

All the 3 steps included under the schedule were important beyond question and their combined results were incredible. Counseling the patient was given absolute importance, for educating a person and erasing the fear of disease from him is essential to get positive response in healing. He needs to know that the real culprit is he himself, both the problem and its answer lies within him. In those patients who had accepted the fact that the villain is their mind and thoughts, treatment response was quicker.

Yoga is an ancient healing science that has been accepted centuries before for its tremendous and simultaneous effect on both body and mind. The yogic postures are so well developed that they ensure the proper circulation to every part of the body. This circulation nourishes, stimulates and replenishes each and every cell of the body which leads to its proper functioning.

Last but not the least, *pathyahara* or diet restriction were given equal importance among the three steps. Food is the first and foremost important form of medicine, without which no mode of healing can prove effective. So following strict diet has aided for better results.

All the 3 patients were put through the course of treatment for 3 months, in which they had their blood checkups done twice, initially after 1 month and latter after 2 more months. Patients were advised not to discontinue practicing *Yoga* once they get normal test results and were asked to go for blood assay once in a while.

Case 1: After 1 month when AJ went for blood study, her TSH levels were 6.2 μ IU/ml. When she went for second round

of blood test, her reports showed that TSH was absolutely normal (TSH: 3.99 μ IU/ml). AJ had observed considerable relief from her other associated complaints also.

Case 2: In the case of BG, with one month practice only wonderful results were obtained. Her TSH levels showed normal value in her first round of test only. With further practice BG got relief from severe hair loss.

Case 3: MK had been advised to run a blood check up at the end of first month. But she had it done After 2 months and found that her thyroid readings, all three were perfectly normal. (TSH:2.5 μ IU/ml, T3: 97ng/dl, T4:6.8ug/dl). She gradually started losing her weight with no dieting or any vigorous exercise and her periods were more regular.

The most appealing fact was that in all these 3 cases the results were obtained without medication. On further follow ups it's been noticed that for those who continued the practice, TSH level along with T3, T4 remained normal. But for those who ceased doing *Yoga* the condition had recurred. Again for good, even they got relieved after resuming the practice. In patients who readily accepted the fact that their mind and thoughts was the real culprit, treatment was very easy.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is a complete science, where one gets answer for all questions. The article is not averring that something new is said, but of course attempt is put to shed more light on some ignored truths. Here the aim is to make the *Ayurvedic* men sit back and think if in the long run we have left behind the fundamental truths of this holistic science. It's not surprising that the modern science was always concerned about the

physical body and never gave much importance to the mind factor; because they never had the idea mind could cause pathological conditions other than in psychiatric cases. But our science has always given equal importance to the *manas* and *sharira*, and has always stated that in addition to our body's physical immunity, all have strong emotional resistance to sickness. Our mind constantly gives out and takes in thought forms which influence our mind and body either positively or negatively. Much of the healing consists of changing the thought forms that dominate our lives. The article will stimulate more research into the psychological side of *Ayurveda* and its interface with the science of *Yoga*.

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