

## ROLE OF PARENTS IN CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

C. J. Akshatha<sup>1</sup>, Thatikunta Raghu<sup>2</sup>, Anil Kumar Rai<sup>3</sup>, Ravi Prasad Hegde<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Final year PG Scholar, <sup>3</sup>HOD; <sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor;

Dept of Manovijnana Evam Manasa roga, Alva's Ayurveda Medical College, Moodbidri, Karnataka, India

Email: [akshatacj92@gmail.com](mailto:akshatacj92@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda* is an ancient Indian science which emphasises on importance of parents to raise a healthy child and care of a child even before the intrauterine life. *Manusmriti* explains that hundred *acharyas* are equal to one *pithaa* (father) and thousand *pithaas* are equal to one *maatha* (mother). Parents play a major role in moulding the *satwa* of little lives. According to *Sushruta*, when a child is taken good care, child will accomplish *nityamudagrasatwa* (stable mind), *niroga* (healthy), *suprasanna mana* (mental wellbeing). Due to modern lifestyle, parents become stressed out and they are not able to support the child mentally, physically and emotionally. In this article an attempt is made to understand the importance of parenting and its effect on one's life have been elaborated in depth.

**Keywords:** Parenting, *Satwa* of Child, Stable and healthy mind.

### INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood<sup>1</sup>. *Ayurveda* regards child care as it must start from the care of women from the first day of menstrual period to the period during and after gestation<sup>2</sup>. As *Kashyapa* says "*Garbhe api prabhruthi baleshu*" one has to take care of child since fetal life<sup>3</sup>. According to *Chakrapani*, the *achara* followed by *Garbhini sthree* (pregnant lady) is one of the contributing factors in *garbhavruddi* (development of a child)<sup>4</sup>. There are many disorders caused as a consequence of bad parenting like battered child syndrome, conduct disorders or according to *ayurveda* diseases like *jada* or *mandabuddi* etc.<sup>5</sup> Treatments like *Satwava-*

*jaya* can help the parents to bring out the best in their child's life.

#### Importance of parenting

Parenting is the labour of love. Parents are usually the first person a child learns to trust. Behind every young child who believes in himself is the parent who believed first. Approximately 68% of women and 57% of men who are parents are reported as having mental health problems<sup>6</sup>. Poor maternal and paternal mental health can cause poor mental health in a child.

According to *Manusmriti*, one who does the *Garbhadanadikarma* and protects the child by giving *annadi* is called *Guru*. In this context parents are referred as *Guru*<sup>7</sup>.

**Parenting**

Parenting refers to the intricacies of raising a child from the biological relationship. The most common caretaker in parenting is the biological parents of the child in question, although others may be an older sibling, aunt, uncle, grandparent, a legal guardian, or other family member or family friend. In many cases, orphaned or abandoned children receive parental care from non biological parents.<sup>8</sup>

**Types of parenting**

**There are 4 types of parenting:-**

- 1) Authoritative
- 2) Permissive
- 3) Neglectful
- 4) Authoritarian<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1:** Authoritative parenting and its outcome

Authoritative Parenting	Outcome in Children
A balance of freedom and responsibility	Learn to accept responsibilities.
High love(responsiveness) and High limits(demandingness)	Make wiser choices
Help children learn the necessary skills for self regulation, self- directedness	Cope with change
It relies on the principle of equality and trust.	Better equipped to succeed in work-force which relies on cooperative problem solving.

**Table 2:** Permissive parenting and its outcome in children

Permissive Parenting	Outcome in Children
They are extremely committed to their children that they lack demandingness.	Problem with responsibility
High Love and Low Limits	Problem with relationship, Rebellious and defiant when desires are challenged.
They worry that children will not like them if they set too many rules.	Problem in understanding the rights of others , Difficulty accepting failures

**Table 3:** Neglectful parenting and its outcome in children

Neglectful Parenting	Outcome in children
They do not set standard for proper behaviour and do not monitor it.	Indifferent
Low love and low limits	Distant
These seem so preoccupied with their problems that they appear to be disengaged from their children.	Non communicative
Inadequate to reach to needs of the children.	Self absorbed
Their attempts to do what they think needs to be done to raise their children end up being neglectful.	Immature
Lack of emotional involvement and supervision.	At risk for drug, alcohol, suicide.

**Table 4:** Authoritarian parenting and outcome in children

Authoritarian Parenting	Outcome in children
They lack responsiveness to the child's need for warmth and validation.	Would not describe the relationship as loving, caring and warmth
Low Love and High limits	They are overly concerned about what their parents will do before making a conscious decision. <sup>10</sup>

**Consequences:-**

➤ Suicidal risk :- Family matters, bad parenting are the contributing factor for causing suicide risk.<sup>11</sup>

➤ Battered child syndrome: It's a syndrome refers to the non- accidental injuries sustained by a child as a result of physical abuse, usually inflicted by an adult caregiver. The child abuser

most often injures a child in the heat of anger or during the moments of stress. Usually if the parent is alcoholic, illiterate, single parent or who doesn't have the control over stressful situations.<sup>12</sup>

- Conduct disorder: - Divorce, Parental psychopathology, child abuse, negligence, chaotic home conditions can lead to conduct disorders<sup>13</sup>. Webster-Stratton originally developed a treatment intervention for young children with conduct disorder and their families. This intervention includes therapist-led group discussion that emphasises parent training.<sup>14</sup>
- Enuresis: - Birth of a sibling, the start of a school, the breakup of a family because of divorce or death etc can lead to enuresis<sup>15</sup>. Supportive environment and toilet training can be done<sup>16</sup>.
- Encopresis:- Harsh and punitive parenting, sexually abused and behavioural effected children, parental separation, loss of a best friend, an unexpected academic failure can cause encopresis.<sup>17</sup> Family tensions about the symptoms must be reduced and non punitive atmosphere is established<sup>18</sup>.

Maternal deprivation or single parenting: - In this case Robertson and Bowlby explains 3 progressive emotional variations in child's mental health because of maternal deprivation.

- 1) Protest: - Child cries and protests angrily when the parent leaves. They will try to cling on to the parent to stop them leaving.
- 2) Despair: - The child's protesting begins to stop and they appear to be calmer although still upset. The child refuses others attempts for comfort and often seems withdrawn and uninterested in anything.
- 3) Detachment: - If separation continues the child will start to engage with other people again. They will reject the caregiver on their return and show strong signs of anger. At the age of 3 these things causes negative effect on their under-

standing of the world and future interactions with others<sup>19</sup>.

*Ayurveda* Perspective:

*Satwa* of a child is just like the *satwa* of a *mathaa* and *pithaa*. Whatever the mother listens during her pregnancy period does have the effect over the *satwa* of a child.<sup>20</sup> According to *Kashyapa*, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of intrauterine life itself, *manas* forms<sup>21</sup>. So, one must take care of the *manas* of child since the intrauterine life. Rejecting or ignoring the wishes of *Dauhru* can lead to *vathakshobha* causing *Manovikruthi* in the child<sup>22</sup>. It can also produce *Bhaya* and *Jada* (*Mandabuddi*) in the child. Next in postnatal stage too, if the mother is having *krodha*, *avathsalya* or *shoka* it can lead to *Sthanyanasha* which may hinder the child development. So the mother needs to have a calm mind<sup>23</sup>.

In case of absence of parents, *Dhatri* (care taker) is given the utmost importance. According to *kashyapa*, Happiness and sorrow of child is rooted in *dhatri*<sup>24</sup>. There are many qualities explained for *dhatri* such as *Sheelavathi* (cultured), *Achapala* (Of quite natured), *Alohupa* (ungreedy), *Avyasani* (not having any bad habits), *vatsala* (Loving nature), *Akshudrakarmini* (not engaged in mean deeds)<sup>25</sup>. The *dhatri* if she has these qualities can raise a child having healthy mind and body. In the present era if the women tries her best to incorporate these qualities she can raise a well balanced civilized citizen to our country.

**How to take care of *Satwa* of a child according to *Ayurveda*:-**

**According to *Astanga Uttaratantra*:-**

*Abhiyukthaha Sadachara*: - One should be faithful with good conduct and healthy habits; should have an affinity towards child care. Parents must follow a *satwik* life style with good sense of hygiene, talks politely with respect. Child nurtured with such *Kumaradhara*, adopts a similar behaviour in life as it learns a lot by observation and mimicking others.

*Nalolupa*: - He / She should not be greedy. Greediness may be in terms of food, money, facility. They may be involved in child kidnapping.

*Baalachittavith*: - That is to read and understand the psychology of the child. While talking, playing one should behave in coordination to the mental status of the child and should respect the feeling of child.

Should not be having *Sthulavikatagamini* (fickleness of mind), *Durachara* (Bad conduct). The child learns the behaviour without differentiation of good or bad<sup>26</sup>.

**According to charaka:-**

*Nachaasyavitrasanam*:- Frightening the child, scolding, creating fear complex in the child is a bad practice. This leads to unexplained fear with consequences of future psychological disturbances like personality and behavioural problems.

*Thasminrudatyabhunjaane, avidheyatha*:- He/ she should not be frightened by taking the name of the nonexisting / invisible things like *bhutha, rakshasa, pishacha* etc. Child seeks love, security, affection etc from parents/ care taker. Instead of creating this, they create a fear complex which adversely affects the mental development of child by creating confusion and hampers creativity.<sup>27</sup>

**According to Sushruta:**

*Balampunargatrasukhamgruhneeyath*:- Child should be kept in a place which is comfortable to it or else while lifting from lying position it may get scared.

*Nachaenamtarjayeth*: - Do not do activities, that which causes irritation to the baby. Excessive talking, beating can cause irritation to child.

*Sahasnaprathibhodayetvitrashayaath*:- Child should not be awakened suddenly as it may induce fear and confusion in child.

*Nityamchaenaanuvarthethapriyashatairajidyamsu*: - Parents must communicate with love, affection, soft and sympathetic words.

Outcome:-

*Enamanabhihathamanaabhivardhathe, nityamudagrasatwasampanno, suprasannamanaascha.*

This type of parenting leads to uninterrupted growth, development of child. He will have good quality of mental status with more positive *satwa*; free from diseases and have pleasant mind<sup>28</sup>.

**Satwavajaya in parenting:**

*Jnana*: - *adhyatmajnanam*: knowledge about self or knowing self.

It's about helping the parents to self evaluate and handle their emotions in front of children. This also helps to connect with the children.

*Vijnana*: - *Shastrajnanam*

It's about educating the parents regarding parenting, various types of parenting and consequences of bad parenting.

*Dhairya*:- *Anunnatischethasaha*

In permissive type of parenting, helping the parents to overcome their fears in putting rules to their children is very important. It will built confidence in parents to discipline their child in a right way.

*Smriti*:- *Anubhutharthasadhanam*

It's about probing into the past of parents to know how they were brought up and help them to let go of negative inputs about parenting.

*Samadhi*:- *Vishayebhyonivarthanthemanoniyamana*

It's about advising the parents to read books to know more about spirituality; so that they become stress free in this modern life style. *Pranayama, Dhyana* etc help the parents to keep their mind stable and raise their child in a healthy way as mind of a child have a great influence by parents mentality<sup>29</sup>.

**Treatment:**

- Any identified psychiatric disorders; it needs to be treated in accord with recommended practice guidelines.
- There are parenting groups that are helpful for parents who have been maltreating their children. These focus on child development education, disciplinary styles, as well as technique for anger management<sup>30</sup>.
- It's important to provide emotional support, encouragement to parents in learning to plan for

upbringing the child and to resolve their own inner psychic conflicts.

### Transactional analysis

- It is based on two notions, first that there are 3 parts or 'ego states' to our 'personality and secondly that these converse with one another in 'transactions' (hence the name).
- Conflicts occur in crossed transactions, where each is talking to a different level.
- The goal of the therapy group was to identify transactional states among group members and to change childhood "life scripts" into more adaptive adult patterns<sup>31</sup>.

### Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

- Parents and therapist collaborate to maintain the variables in child's environment and family system, to develop plans to change parental behaviours when necessary and to rearrange contingencies in the immediate environment to foster the child's recovery.
- Reinforcing and praising the child's effort at copying, no matter how small, is essential for parents to learn in CBT<sup>32</sup>.

## DISCUSSION

As *thaitthariya Upanishad* says,

*Matrudevobhava* |

*Pitrudevobhava* | -<sup>33</sup>

Parents have a godly position in our life. Parenting is a skill that must be learnt by gaining knowledge and experiences. Child can be influenced by media, peers, school environment etc but good parenting can bring them back to track and prevent further damage to the child's mind. *Ayurveda* explains how to build a healthy harmonious family in this way. As a *Chanakya*, great philosopher; ancient teacher explains '*lalayeth panchavarshani, dasha varshani thadayeth, prapta shodasha varsham cha putram mitravadachareth*' i.e. raise a child with love and care till 5yrs, from 10-16yrs teach discipline with love and limits, be a friend after 16yrs. In the Modern life style, single parenting, divorce are increasing

enormously which can have a permanent emotional damage to the child's mind. So authoritative parenting has to be understood in a deeper way to avoid many problems to both parents and children.

## CONCLUSION

Parenting has a vital influence over the complete mental health of a person. *Ayurveda* gives different norms of behaviour like *sadvrutta, achararasayana* to take care of our *satwa* and also mentions how to behave with a child to take care of its *satwa*. Every human being has within him the potential of a new society. An ideal parenting can be the reason for a good generation, and in turn can create a healthy society.

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