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THE CONCEPT OF SATTVIK DIET IN PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract: Ayurveda lays emphasis on holistic approach always considering Mana, Atma and Shariras three pillar of life. The mind-body connection play very important role resulting into psychosomatic disorders. Food is a dynamic force which interacts with human on physical, mental and spiritual level having major effect in body as well as mind. Food which causes the body to gain health and keep mind to be calm and peaceful constitute the Sattvik food. Food has a major effect on body and mind both, a Sattvik diet should be adhered to in order to enhance both the health of body as well as purity and strength of the mind. In Bhagwat Gita it has been noted that different food like Sattvik, Rajasik, Tamsik have different effects on human beings. Sattvik foods are foods that are abundant in Prana- the universal life-force that gives life to all sentient beings in both plant and animal kingdom. Foods such as cow milk, ghee etc. pure and convert easily to ojas Medhya. In property they are supporting and enhancing the co-ordination of mental functions such as Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti (learning, retention, recall). The present paper aims at putting forward the importance of Sattvik food in promotion of mental health from Ayurvedic and contemporary perspective.

Keywords: Sattvika, Diet, Ayurveda, Medhya

Introduction: Ayurveda is the ancient art of healing that deals with all aspects of a person's life as an entity. Aim of Ayurved is to create emotional or physical health and to cure disease. It provides guidance regarding food and life style so that healthy people can stay healthy and person with health challenges can improve their health. Tristambha of life are Manas (mind), Atma (soul) and Shareer (body) ^[1]. Body mind connection is very important in Ayurveda. Physical imbalance between these can disturb mental state while mental illness leads to disruption of body functions. Food is a dynamic force which interacts with human on physical, mental & spiritual level. Consumption of pure food ie Sattvika Ahara makes the mind clear. When mind is devoid of blemishes memory power enhances ^[2].

Materials and Methods: Review of literature regarding concept of Sattvika diet in promotion of mental health has been collected from Shrimadbhagwat Gita, Ayurvedic text books, different web sites. All compiled matter is reorganized and critically analyzed for the

discussion and attempt has been made to draw some fruitful conclusions.

Mental Health in Ayurveda

"समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रिया।

प्रसन्नआत्मइन्द्रिय मनाः स्वस्थइत्यभिधीयते ॥" (सु. सू. 15/41) ^[3]

"According to Susruta, man is said to be Svastha whose dosas, Agnis, Dhathus and malas are in the state of equilibrium along with mental, sensory and spiritual pleasantness and happiness. This important quotation defining health according to Ayurveda, has been written thousands of years ago, the first half of quotation elaborates about physical fitness while second half defines state of healthy mind which is also an inevitable part of healthy individual. According to WHO health is defined as "the complete state of physical, mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity

Ahara:

"त्रयः उपस्तम्भाः इत्याहारः स्वप्नोब्रम्हचर्यमिति ॥" (च. सू. 11/13) ^[4]

Food is among the three sub pillar supporting life. It helps is sustenance of the life of living beings. All living beings in the world require food. Complexion clarity, good voice, longevity, intelligence, happiness are all present in food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world. Vedic procedures leading to heaven or observance of truth abstinence leading to liberation are all dependent on food. The body as well as disease is formed by food, wholesome or unwholesome food are responsible for happiness or misery respectively. Food increase enthusiasm, memory, life span, lustre or *ojas* consumption of pure food i.e. *Sattvik* a food make the mind clear.

Food and Mind: In *Vedantic* philosophy Mind (*Manomayskosha*) is considered to be the essence of food. In *Chandogya upnishad* “The food that is eaten is divided three fold. The gross part becomes excrement, the middle part become flesh, the subtle part become the mind”. In *chandogya Upanishad* 6/4.1. [5] “We are what we eat”, what we eat affects our emotions and can create a predisposition for both psychological and physical disorder .Just as wrong emotion can upset digestion , so improper digestion can upset our emotion .

आहारशुद्धौसत्वशुद्धिः, सत्वशुद्धौ ध्रुवोस्मृतिः ॥
Chandogyaupnishad 3-7/25 [2]

Consumption of pure food i.e. *Sattvikahar* make the mind clear, when mind is devoid of blemish memory power enhance.

Triple Qualities of Food: Knowledge in born from *Sattvik*, from *Rajas* greed from *Tamas* is confusion, delusion and ignorance (*Bhagwatgeeta* 17) [6]. Individual choose their food according to his taste and nature those endowed with *Sattvik* nature choose the *Sattvik* food , those with *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* nature choose the *Rajasik* and *Tamsik* food. Respectively, the type of food liked by person ultimately determines and forms his nature, so according to human nature food are three type-

a. Sattvik

आयुः सत्व बल आरोग्य सुख प्रीति विवर्धनाः ।
रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिराहृद्याआहाराः सात्विकप्रियाः ॥ (श्री.
मा.गीता 17/8) [7]

Food which promote life, vitality, health, happiness and satisfaction which are succulent juicy, nourishing and pleasing to the heart are dear to one in goodness.

b. Rajasik

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्ण तीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहाराराजसचेष्टादुःखशोकमयप्रदः ॥

(श्री.मा.गीता 17/9) [8]

Food which are bitter, salty, sour, hot pungent, dry, burning, unhappiness, misery and disease are palatable by one in passion.

c. Tamasik

यातयामंगतरसपूतिपर्युषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि च अमेध्यं भोजनंतामसप्रियम् ॥ (श्री.मा.
गीता. 17/10) [9]

The food that is stale, tasteless, putrid& decomposed, foul and impure as well as leaving of other is dear to one in nascence.

How Sattvik Food Affects in Promotion of Mental Health :

Sattvik diet enhance *sattvik* qualities implying essence, reality clarity of perception in people whose *Sattva* predominate and loving compassionate and pure minded they tend to have positive behaviour and love for all beings. *Sattvik* diet was originally devised for the practical yoga and the development of the mind .It is good for those, who use their minds a lot, as it improves in the treatment of mental disorder, as it helps to restore harmony and balance. *Sattvik* diet aids in rebuilding of a higher quality tissue in the body .particularly for those who wish to improve their state of consciousness. It is often combined with rejuvenation (*Rasayana*) or nervous system [10]. However as *Sattvik* diet is for improving the mind may be of greater sense of sympathy and compassion. In *Bhagwat Geeta* the type of food people eat depends on whether they are *Sattvik*, *Rajasik* and *Tamasik*. Different qualities of *Sattvik* food have been mentioned in *Shrimad Bhagwat Gita* /17- [6] as quoted above-

- “*Ayu*” i.e. *Sattvik* food promote long life, invigorating the body and elevating the mind in its functions like intelligence [7].
- “*Sattva*” guna facilitates spiritual knowledge and likewise food that in *Sattva* also facilitates spiritual intelligence as well as good health, strength, happiness and relish [7]
- “*Sukh*” means happiness refers the pleasure experienced while ingesting the food and afterwords when it is digesting and assimilating within the body [7].
- “*Priti*” means satisfaction that is derived interest in spirituality [7].
- “*Sthirah*” means nourishing sustaining [7].
- “*Hrydha*” means agreeable, pleasing [7].

These are the qualities of *Sattvaik* foods which are very much appreciated by those in *Sattvaguna*.

Sattvik Food

Fruits: Fruit are *sattvik* (pure) in nature, they are sweet, light and promote contentment. They have

large amounts of the element ether, which controls and balances all the other elements. All fruits are generally good for a improving the mental health ^[11].

Vegetables: Most vegetables are good for a *Sattvik* diet though not as much as fruits. Mushrooms are said to be *Tamasik* as they are allied with decay. (However the Chinese buddhists include many mushrooms as good for a promoting meditation). Pungent vegetables garlic, onion, radishes and chillies are *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* and tend to over stimulate the sexual desire. Excess of cabbage family plants-cabbage, broccoli, Brussels, sprouts, mustard and cauliflower to a lesser extent are *Rajasik* or gas forming. Potatoes and sweet potatoes can be a little heavy or mucus forming in excess. Otherwise fresh or steamed vegetable or vegetable juice is generally good. Celery is particularly good for the brain ^[11].

Grains: Like fruits, grains are generally *Sattvik* in nature especially rice (basmati or long grain, Brown rice), wheat and oats are also good ^[11].

Beans: Beans are usually *Rajasik* in nature. They are irritation, gas forming and heavy. Exception is Mungbeans, Aduki beans and tofu. Equal part split Mung beans and basmati rice (Kichadi) is the basic *yogic* staple diet ^[11].

Nuts: Seeds and nuts are *Sattvik* in nature, they should be taken fresh or lightly roasted and salted, which renders them *Tamasik*. Almonds pine nuts and walnuts are particularly good .As nut large quantities at a time nuts and seeds go rancid (become *Tamsik*) easily ^[11].

Dairy: Dairy products are *Sattvik* in nature. Pasteurized however they can become *Tamasik*. Milk is produced by the love of cow for its calf. Milk or buttermilk is an important part of a yogic diet. Yoghurt is also good but a little heavy and should not be taken in excess, as it can clog the channels. Mostly cheese is very heavy and so not recommended on a regular basis ^[11].

Oils: Most oil are heavy and not recommended in large amounts ghee i.e. clarified butter, is *sattvik*, promotes intelligence and perception and can be freely used. It can be taken with rice or vegetables. Sesame oil is *sattvik*, as is coconut oil a also good but not with garlic (which make it *Rajasik*) ^[11].

Sweeteners: Sweet taste in moderation is *sattvik*, but refined sugars are *Tamasik*. *Yogic* diet takes raw sugars in small amount, including Honey (not heated) and raw sugars particularly jiggery. Honey when heated said to become toxic (*Tamasik*) ^[11].

Spices: Most spices or *rajasik* but a number of exceptions exist. *Sattvik* spices include ginger,, cinnamon, cardamom, fennel and coriander, as well as turmeric they help balance the effect of too much fruit dairy or other dampness forming foods. Some yogis also use black Piper or long piper to help dry mucus and keep the channels open. Such strategic variations should be kept in mind salt is to be avoided except in the summer or in hot climate, then it is best combined with lime ^[11].

Beverage: Pure spring water can be taken or *sattvik*. Tea or milk, coffee and other stimulants should be avoided. Green or black tea however sometimes takes and is thought to improve mental health ^[11].

Results: *Sattvik* diet is adiet based on foods with the *Sattva* quqlity. *Sattvik* diet is supposed to increase the energy of the mind and produce cheerfulness, serenity and mental clarity.

Discussion: *Sattvik* diet provides ideal nourishment to promotes vitality along with high physical endurance and longevity. It is the purest diet.It maintains the body and mind in a peaceful state. For these reasons *Sattvika* diet favorable for mental health.

Conclusion: According to *Ayurveda* harmony between these three *guna* means modifying the mind form *Tamasik* or *Rajasik* to *Sattvik* state. Choosing those foods that are *sattvik* in nature improve mental health.

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