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Depression in children: Ayurveda perspective

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Abstract-

Depression is found in Children and adolescent as in adults. It is important to keep watch on their changed behavior and diagnose depression in them. Knowledge of child's psychology and keen observation towards them helps in diagnosis and prevention of depression. According to Ayurveda when vitiation of Tama guna, Kapha dosha, alleviation of Vata occurs in a person then they will be affected by mental disorders like depression. Nidana Parivarjana (eliminating causative factors) is the first step towards treating depression. Bringing indriya Prasadana state (clarity of mind and all senses) by several methods like Purification of body by Panchakarma therapy, consolation, counseling, yielding desirable subjects to children, giving medicines (sanskham dravya) as curative and prophylactic measure is to be done for treating depression. Medhya Rasayana dravya are

to be advised to avoid recurrence of depression.

Key words- Depression, children, Vishada, Manovasada

Introduction-

DEPRESSION is a common mental illness, characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that anybody normally enjoyed earlier, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities, for at least two weeksⁱ. Depression is so common that nearly 10% of the population is suffering from a depressive disorder.

Depression is also found in children and adolescents. Nearly 0.4% to 2.5% in children and 0.4% to 8.3% in adolescents were affected by depressionⁱⁱ. In children Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) occur at approximately the same rate in girls and in boys, but in adolescents the female: male ratio is 2:1,

again similar to that in adults. Suicide is the ultimate and most serious result of neglecting and non-treating of major depression. Almost 1 million lives are lost yearly due to suicide, which translates to 3000 suicide deaths every day (WHO 2012). Incidences of complete suicide in children under 10 year are rare but they do occur. To avoid these things it is very important to identify primary symptoms for whether child is suffering from depression.

Depression is not clearly mentioned in Ayurveda but some diseases mentioned in Ayurveda found to have similarity to symptoms of depression as in Modern science. Depression in Ayurveda is very well correlated with other diseases mentioned in Ayurveda like Vishadaⁱⁱⁱ, Manovsada^{iv}, Shokaj unmad^v/Manodukkhaj unmad and Kaphaj unmad^{vi} by earlier scholars. This article is one more attempt towards correlating, identifying and treating depression in children with the help of Ayurveda.

Materials and methods-

Thorough review of literature was taken regarding depression in children and its treatment from modern as well as Ayurveda point of view.

Etiology of depression as per Ayurveda-

Our mind controls our body. The mind is responsible for perception, thinking, understanding, and taking the right decision at right time.^{vii} Depression and its associated diseases are found in Ayurveda literature. Vishada which is

categorized as Nanatmaj manasavikar (endogenous mental disorders humors), Kaphajunmad which is categorized as Sharir mano adhisthatit manasroga, Shokaj unmaad and shokaj shosha are also related with depression and can be categorized as Mano sharer adhishtit manasaroga. All these diseases come under Depression. The term Vishada is more applicable to illustrate depression in Ayurveda.

According to Ayurveda three types of guna are present in human body Satva, Raja and Tama constituting manasikprakruti (psychological status) of the person. Among these three, Raja(attributes activity) and Tama(attributes inactivity) are considered as ManasDosha^{viii} because when they are not in state of equilibrium, spoil the Mana. In depression predominant dosha is tama as it is characterized by inactivity, ignorance and apathy.

In Ayurveda, imbalances in manasikdosha/guna (sattva, rajas, tamas) supported by imbalance of sharirdoshas (vata, pitta, kapha) are believed to cause various mental disorders. Depression usually indicates reduced sattvik and rajasikguna; aggravation of tamasikguna at Manasik (psychotic) level and vitiation of Kaphadosha and depletion of Vatadosha at physical level.^{ix} Ojadhatu depletion (Oja is the essence of all dhatu/elements of body) often contributes to this problem. Pranavayu is responsible for proper functioning of the mind. Ojodhatukshaya leads to vitiation of the pranavayu, which then fails to stimulate the mind. Continuous negative thinking, emotions like hatred, anger, fear etc.

causes imbalance of manasikdoshas which in turn leads to diseases like depression. Involvement of sharirikadosa is more prominent in Ubhayatmaka vikara like unmaad apasmara etc., than in manasavikara viz., kama, krodha, abhyasuya etc. similarly manadosa will be more vitiated in the latter group than in the former.

Causes of depression-

Genetic, environmental, cognitive and personality factors are usually known for causing mood disorders such as depression. Stress many times precipitates this problem. Recent studies in modern science have revealed that depression results from an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain.

In children causes of depression can be negligence of parents, poor school performance, pressure of getting good marks, failure in school, scolding and fear shown by surrounding peoples, non-availability of favorite things (like toys/chocolates), lack of sports activity, nutrition deficiency, hormonal changes, sexual harassment, sudden loss of close persons, unpleasant environment at home and surrounding, misbehavior of parents and many more things which disturbs child's mental health and leads to depression in children. As children are not psychologically strong many little things may have large impact on their mental health. Sadness, anger and cry are normal among children but when this type of behavior persists for longer time, then there is need to take consultation from pediatrician and psychiatrist.

Symptoms of Depression in Children:

Following are symptoms of depression are seen in children^{xi} -

- Mood can be either depressed or irritable. Children with immature cognitive-linguistic development may not be able to describe inner psychological state and therefore may present with vague physical complaints, looking always sad, or poor eye contact.
- Angry interactions. Adult-like mood disturbance may occur in older adolescents
- Loss of interest can be in peer play or school activities. Children may fail to make expected weight gain rather than losing weight
- Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day may be observed.
- Concomitant with mood change, hyperactive behavior may be observed
- Loss of interest in playing, school refusal, or frequent school absences, may be symptoms of fatigue
- Child may present with self-depreciation (e.g., "I'm stupid," "I'm a retard"). Delusional guilt usually is not present
- Problems with attention and concentration may be apparent as behavioral difficulties or poor performance in school
- There may be additional nonverbal cues for potentially suicidal behavior, such as giving away a favorite collection of music or stamps
- Clinically significant impairment of social or school functioning is present. Adolescents also may have occupational dysfunction

Treatment-

For the treatment of depression it is important to identify underlying causes

(Nidaan). Nidanparivarjan (elimination of causative factor) is the most important principle in treatment of any disease as per Ayurveda^{xiii} including Depression. For children special counseling is required as they will tell the things in their mind only when free from fear and as per their mood. Parents have to play important role in identifying changed behavior, symptoms of depression and finding and eliminating reasons behind depression.

Depending upon the severity of disease line of treatment should be decided. In initial stage of and less severe kind of depression proper counseling and finding solutions for the causes of depression, engaging child in different activities which will help to divert their mind, Keeping healthy atmosphere in home and surrounding of child can easily help in overcoming depression. The type of counselling will depend on the age of the child. For young children, play therapy may be best. Older children and teens may benefit from cognitive-behavioral therapy. This type of counselling can help them change negative thoughts that make them feel happy.

Ayurveda has considered both physical and psychological consideration in every disease. Disturbed mind affects body also, stressful conditions, depressed moods, over thinking will affect jatharagni (digestive fire) and dhatvagni which are responsible for metabolism and formation of new tissue. Due to these disturbed psychological condition initial rasa Dhatu (first out of seven body constituents) formation is hampered and which again worsen the psychological disorder as Rasa dhatu has direct effect

on Mana(psych). Undigested aharrasa is also known as Aama which blocks the body channel (strotasa) and is responsible for physical and psychological disorders.

So in treatment of depression treatment should be done from Physical and Psychological aspects. Following three ways are line of treatment to be done in different conditions of depression as per Ayurveda-

1. **Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa** (Spiritual healing)-
Daivavyapashrayachikitsa is described specially for manasikaroga. This is the spiritual way of treating diseases and Ayurveda give lots of importance to Daivavyapashrayachikitsa in psychological disorders. It includes Mantra, Manimangala, Bali, Upadhan, Homa, Niyama, Prayaschitta, Upavasa, Pranipata, Yatragaman. Considering the faith, religion, culture, educational levels of the patient, Mantradichikitsa is administered to attain better results. Mantra is a powerful tool to change the energy level of the mind. All sounds, thoughts and words have their own vibratory power that affects the mind on the subconscious level. By repeating a mantra, it is embedded into one's consciousness. The use of mantra helps the mind develop its power of concentration and memory. Homa is the method of burning specific materials along with chanting of mantras, which creates medicated fumes which has good effects on mind and body and helps to reduce disease. Dharan of specific ratna(gems) as per astrology will also help in maintaining

balanced state of mind and overcoming psychological diseases like depression.

2. **Yukativyapashraya Chikitsa** following methods is done as per the condition of patient.

Shodhana- It is the purification of body by elimination of vitiated Doshas with the help of Panchakarma. Purification of body is important to achieve indriyaprasadan (clarity in all senses) state of body. After indriyaprasadan sanshaman dravya will act properly on mind.^{xiii} Internal and external oleation as well as fomentation are methods of liquefying ama and purifying the channels(strotas) of the body. In Panchakarma Vamana (Therapeutic emesis) removes excess kapha and can alleviate symptoms of depression, grief and attachment. Virechan (Therapeutic purgation) alleviates anger and irritability (pitta), and Basti (enema therapy) alleviates Vata and treats fear, anxiety, insomnia and many other symptoms of vata mental disturbance. Nasya is the route of administration of drug through nasal route it is said that drug given by this route has direct effect on brain.^{xiv} Doses and selection of shodhandravayas should be decided as per vaya(age), Bala(power), rogavastha(stage of disease) of children. Acharya Vagbhat states that purification of the body directly imparts clarity of mind in mental diseases.^{xv} Procedures like shirodhara, shirobasti, shiropichu help to keep mind stable, relieves stress and maintains balanced state of mind. These procedure can be done in all ages with specific medicated oils, Kashaya(decoction), dugdha(milk), takra(buttermilk) and are found to be

very effective in conditions like depression.

Sanshaman(alleviation) - It include different type of drugs, diet activities used to alleviate the vitiated doshas. Ayurveda mentioned many drugs as single herbs and as compound formulations, which are known to have action on psychological disorders. Bramhi, Jatamansi, Shankhapushpi, Vacha, Guduchi, mandukparni etc are the drugs which are known to have medhya action and can be used to treat depression.

- 3) **Sattvavajaya Chikitsa:**^[L SEP] It aimed at control of mind i.e. one should keep himself established in his oneself after knowing real nature of soul & attaining height of spiritual wisdom.^{xvi} Satvavajaya literally means to increase satwaguna. As depression is a tamaguna predominant disease, the psychotherapy can be preferred. Satvavajaya chikitsa viz, jnana (knowledge of self), vijnana (analytic knowledge), dhairya (confidence), smriti (scriptural wisdom), and samadhi(concentration) corrects the negative cognition^{xvii}. Emotional support can be given in the form of ashwasana, santwana (consoling), harshana (motivating) to balance manasikadosha.

Diet :-

Ayurveda believes in the effect of food we take on our mind. Properties of ahara affect the triguna i.e., Satava, Raja and Tama. Ayurveda has mentioned these satvik rajasik and tamasik types of ahara. To treat depression ahara should be mainly of Satvik properties like having Gruta, madhura rasa Pradhan, vegetarian,

fresh and hot type of food, which will help to cure depression. Timely eating habits, intake of proportionate (yogyamatra) of ahara helps to maintain physical as well as psychological condition of the body. Ingredients of food and style of food intake, over eating, excessive fasting etc are related to the style of food intake. Excessive intake of pungent, spicy, sour, hot, dry items (Rajasikahara), and cold, tasteless, foul smelling, stale and leftover (tamasikaharaa) items are to be strictly avoided.

Preventive and Palliative measures-

During the pregnancy month wise regimen is described in Ayurveda in order to achieve normal delivery and excellent healthy progeny. Use of alcohol and fish is absolutely contraindicated and it is proved that maternal alcohol ingestion in pregnancy may have deleterious effects on the CNS and other organs of the developing embryo and fetus, depending on the dose, duration and developmental stage of the embryo at exposure.^{xviii} Some large long lived fish contain high levels of methyl mercury that may harm an unborn baby's developing nervous system.^{xix}

Giving proper attention towards child is necessary. Parents, caretakers and teachers should keep watch on child's behavior. Also there is need to educate them regarding changes happening in them during puberty. Sexual education is equally important for adolescents of both genders. Maintaining happy and healthy atmosphere in home and surrounding of child helps to keep healthy mind of children. Involvement of child in sport

activities is also necessary as per as physical and mental health of child is considered. Timely and proper nutritional diet for children is equally important. Educating children for chanting of few mantras like Hanuman chalisa, Ganesh stotra, Gayatri mantra etc. will also helps to keep good mental health of children. Use of medhyarasayana as told in Ayurveda like Guduchi, Mandukparni, Bramhi, Yashtimadhu and many other Ayurveda formulations like Mahapaishachika ghruta, panchagavya ghruta, saraswat churna, saraswatarishta etc. helps to improve psychological as well as physical health of children.

Discussion-

Child's psychology is more or less developmental psychology since it traces the changes in behavior and deals with the development of motor skills and mental skills and development of mental process like learning and cognition. It is study of behavior of children including physical, cognitive, motor, linguistic, social, perceptual and emotional characteristics from birth though adolescent. These factors of childhood lay foundation stone of the life of a person right from the beginning.

Children are more sensitive to external environment. Their psychology is more dependent on the way their parents and surrounding peoples treat them. Also this is their learning phase of life so surrounding atmosphere easily influences them. Anything wrong happened to child in this age will have a strong impact on their mind for lifetime. Parent's negligence, fear shown by somebody,

lack of physical activities and nutritional deficiency will make child psychologically weak. Mood swings are common in this age but consistent phase of sadness following symptoms of depression are to be observed otherwise it can be fatal for child.

As per Ayurveda the psychological status of the child is influenced by the psychological status of parents.^{xx} In Ayurveda guidelines are provided to avoid any bad effect of parent's behavior on child and also to have good progeny. Role of Parents starts much before the birth of the child and even the conception. The physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of the parents, proper nutrition of the mother during pregnancy and after birth of child, and practice of a wholesome regimen, play a prime role in achieving a healthy offspring. It is advised that both male and female partners need to be happy free from any mental and physical stress, having thoughts of future expected child in mind at the time of conception to get good and healthy child. For progeny to be good Ayurveda mentions beej sanskar, according to this both male and female partner are advised to do purification of body. It is told very clearly that whatever diet and regimen the parent adopts, the child will develop the same qualities^{xxi}.

According to different Acharyas balyavastha is considered upto 16 years of age. Acharya Charka has divided Balyavastha in 2 stages Vivardhaman dhatu avastha upto 16 years of age and paripakva dhatu avastha from 16 - 30 years of age. The above-mentioned Vivardhaman Dhatu avastha is

considered to be most important phase in the life as Brain development, overall development of body, development of secondary sexual characters are happening at this age. In this age children need to be observed and cared in proper way as psychological as well as physical development happened at this age will have impact for lifetime. At this age there is huge alteration in hormonal level of a child, which has, physical as well as psychological impact. Graha roga mentioned in Ayurveda also need to be considered as per as their psychological effect on child is considered.

The child should never be frightened by the name of demons, animals or such ugly frightening imaginary characters.^{xxii} This may have a long term negative impact even in later stages of life in the psychology of the person. The people who come to see the child should be close and well-wisher of the family. Child should never be in the company of wrong people. It is told that the proper care by the parents is essential from the stage of childhood up to the young age, till he/she becomes well versed in managing the life's need and indulges in fulfilment of Dharma, Artha etc. which are the fundamental aims of life.^{xxiii}

Ayurveda offers many tools in healing from depression, and as an ancient and evolving science are open to expansion and utilization of new technologies and methods. By bringing balance to the doshas, increasing satva, building ojas, and purifying ama, optimal health of mind and body can be achieved. Individualized treatment plans incorporate a diversity of modalities that address all aspects of the human being.

Ayurveda approaches to the treatment of depression can be combined with Western approaches to mental health care. The journey to perfect health is approached as a journey of spiritual development; a philosophy that heals not only the individual but also has positive repercussions throughout society.

Conclusion:-

Depression is stage of mind due to various reasons and it can be manageable with the help of Ayurveda treatment by avoiding side effects of allopathic medication. It is important to identify changed behavior of child and symptoms of depression in them. Nidanaparivarjan is primary treatment as per Ayurveda so it is necessary to identify and eliminate underlying causes of depression. As per

Ayurveda uses of Daivavyapashrya, Yuktivyapashraya and Satvavajayachikitsa to maintain equilibrium of Sharir and manasdosha of children is necessary to treat Depression. Bringing indriyaprasadan state (clarity of mind and all senses) by several methods like Purification of body by Panchakarma therapy, consolation, counseling, yielding desirable subjects to children is to be done. Increasing Satvabala (Mental strength) of patients, by educating him in desirable and non-desirable things and disciplining his mind to get self-control and giving medicines (samsamandraya) as curative and prophylactic measure helps to treat Depression. Rasayan chikitsa by medhya dravya helps in prevention and prophylaxis of depression.

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