

Art of living with *Amavata* (Rheumatoid Arthritis): therapeutic potential of psychotherapy in *Ayurveda* with special reference to *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa*.

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ABSTRACT:

Acharya Charaka was the first person who used the word '*Sattwavajaya*' but only once and was also the last one. He explains the *Ayurveda* in the form of *Trisutra* i.e. *Hetu*(causative factor), *Linga*(symptoms of the disease) and *Aushadha* (medicine).⁽¹⁾ *Chikitsa* means the process in which vitiated *Doshas* are brought to normal state and this equilibrium state of *Doshas* will be maintained.⁽²⁾ It is classified on different basis; as *Dwividha*, *Trividha* and *Chaturvidha* *Chikitsa*. *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* is one among the *Trividha Chikitsa*.⁽³⁾ The word *Satwa* refers to *Mana*(mind)⁽⁴⁾ and *Avajaya* refers to conquering or win over.⁽⁵⁾ Hence *Sattwavajaya* therapy aims at control of mind by restraining the mind from wholesome *Arthas*(objects).⁽⁶⁾ Self control of mind is one of the most difficult to the tasks and warrants a perfect combination of desire, determination and dedication. The word *Mano-Nigrahani* means control of

mind.⁽⁷⁾ This mind control can be both subjective and objective. The objective type of *Mano-Nigraha* is the actual *Sattwavajaya* and warrants physician's interference with patient's mind control. *Amavata* which is popularly correlated with Rheumatoid disease, is characterized by its eternal course, uncertain progression and unpredictable series of exacerbation and remissions. In *Ayurveda* the impact of the *Amavata* over psychological setup of the patient is well recognized. So *Sattwavajaya* plays major role to get rid of these problems.

Keywords:

Sattwavajaya, Psychotherapy, *Amavata*, Art of Living.

INTRODUCTION

A person is called healthy not only when *Doshas*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* and *Agni* are in equilibrium condition but also the *Manas* should be in normal condition in the presence of *Atma* for proper and healthy state of *Shareera* and *Indriya*.⁽⁸⁾ As per

WHO, health is defined as, a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity.⁽⁹⁾ Individual variability regarding the perception of pain is also discussed in *Ayurveda*. Three grades of *Satwa* (mental status) have been made according to the degree of relative tolerance of pain and these are named as *Pravara* (high tolerance), *Madhyam* (medium tolerance), and *Avara* (low tolerance). A patient of *Avara satwa* experiences lower degree of severity of disease, On the contrary *Pravara Satwa* person experiences lower degree of pain even in the presence of severe disease. *Manas* and *Satwa* plays an important role in keeping person healthy, even during the time of physical disorder, *Manas* helps in relieving it. So *Sattwavajaya* has major role in treatment.⁽¹⁰⁾ In *Ayurveda* the impact of the disease *Amavata* over Psychological setup of the patient is well recognized. *Alasya* (listlessness), *Utsahahani* (lack of pep), and *Anidra* (sleep disturbances), are main features found associated with it. *Aruchi* (lack of interest) is also been a presenting feature and along with lack of interest in food it may also be taken for lack of interest in the environment. It can be that all these characters represent the depressed mood of the patient which often emerges as a consequence of pain and disability associated with the disease.

Materials And Methods: The classical texts of *Ayurveda* with their commentaries, other *Ayurvedic* texts and journals, relevant websites, articles and presentations were referred.

Psychological Status of a Patient in AMAVATA

Once the patients are diagnosed with classical sign and symptoms of *Amavata* as having RA positive, they face a range of stress, including the adjustment to medical treatment and uncertainty about the course of the disease. The symptoms of pain and stiffness may well have been present before diagnosis but in the long run these may increase and lead to restricted movements and disfigurements. This in turn may limit the ability to fulfill work and social roles and therefore have an effect on other family members too. Studies have been shown that with RA, the combination of pain, stiffness, disability and social restrictions results in significantly increase level of depressed mood and probably this depression makes them more restricted and more sensitive to pain. The phenomena of individual variability in treatment responses and feeling of well being largely depends upon the individual psychological setup. Coping mechanism which is sometimes defined as the cognitive, behavioral and emotional efforts individual exerts to manage specific external demands, is responsible for individual response variability. Coping responses are considered to result from the patients' assessment of the stress that they face and resources available and thus an interaction of the patient psychological setup with that of personal environment results in the determination of intensity of symptoms perceived by the patient.

Pain and Depression:

Influence of *Sattwa* over degree of pain tolerance of an individual has definite

biochemical reasoning explored during recent years. Pain modulation pathways descending from thalamus to the spine influences the degree of pain intensity perceived by thalamus and transmitted through nociceptive afferent fibre. This pain modulation is serotonin dependent and interestingly reduction in serotonin levels in serotonergic neurons of brain is selected as the main pathology in endogenous depression. Hence a simple relationship between pain and depression can be established as Depression often causes increased sensitivity to pain in affected individual until same can be interpreted as the *Avara sattwa* individual often represents the depressed mood and thus experiences more pain and disability.⁽¹¹⁾

Sattwavajaya Chikitsa: The word *Sattwavajaya* comprises of 'Sattwa' and 'Avajaya'. The word *Sattwa* is derived from the Sankrit root 'sat' by adding suffix 'ktwa'. The word 'Avajaya' - 'Ava + ji' - 'Achaparajaye' 'yenendralokhavajaya' means overcoming, victory, conquer and the word *Sattwavajaya* refers to self command, strength of mind or character.⁽¹²⁾ In other words, *Sattwavajaya* is literally overcoming of mind or victory over mind or control of mind.⁽¹³⁾ *Sattwavajaya* is that typical *Ayurvedic* approach which is not only prevents the impairment of intellect, patience of memory, but also brings them back to a normal state, whenever they are impaired. *Sattwavajaya* plays a significant role in the maintenance of harmonious state between these three important factors- intellect, memory and patience, ultimately leading to a happy state of the individual.⁽¹⁴⁾

Methodology of Sattwavajaya Chikitsa⁽¹⁵⁾

The *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* permits the physician's interference with patient's mind control. This can be achieved by various ways. These ways are termed as "methodology" of *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa*. By following these methodologies, *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* not only negates the negative thoughts but also endeavors to replace them with positivity. Each methodology has the focus on the basic functions of *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa*.

1. By regulating the thought process (*Chintya*)
2. By replacing the ideas (*Vichara*)
3. By channelizing the presumptions (*Uhya*)
4. By polishing the objectives (*Dhyeya*)
5. By proper guidance and advice (*Sankalpa*) for taking right decisions.

Principle of Sattwavajaya Chikitsa⁽¹⁶⁾

Sattwavajaya Chikitsa has two main principles. Almost all techniques derived from *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* have its base in these following two principles. Both these principles undertake to diffuse the emotional imbalance by changing the attitude toward the whole situation.

1. Assurance to the patient of the return of lost objects or persons – Emphatically, emotional support is given to the patients who are in grief or sudden loss. It declares that when a person is stressed by the loss of some desired subject, he should be treated by supplementing the same, if not

at least through a minimal empathy or consolation.

2. Inducement of emotions opposite to those associated with patient's distress - Substitution or replacement of emotions with opposite ones is another novel method induced by *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa*. It is advised that if the patient has developed psychosis due to emotional disorders such as excessive *Kama* (lust or affection or desire), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodha* (anger or aversion), *Harsha* (happiness), *Irshya* (jealousy), and *Lobha* (greed), he/she should be treated by inducing the opposite nature of the respective attained emotions. For example, "*Kama*" (affection) toward alcohol may be alleviated by inducing "*Krodha*" (aversion) toward that affection and vice-verse.

Art of Living with AMAVATA

Sattwavajaya literally mean as to control the mind by means of restraining it from unwholesome *Arthas* or objects.⁽¹⁷⁾ *Charaka* defined it as "*Sattwavajaya-Punah ahitebhyo Arthebhyo Manonigraha*". This can be elucidated as development of negative attitude towards disease causing factors but essentially and simultaneously with a positive attitude towards the means of obtaining health. *Sattwavajaya*, by means of abstinence of *Ahita Panchendriyarthas* and *Manoarthas* can be helpful in re-harmonization of body. *Sattwa* is used synonymous for *Manas* in *Ayurveda* and to get control over various functions of *Manas* is the objective of *Sattwavajaya* therapy.⁽¹⁸⁾ Besides these assurance and replacement of opposite emotions are also deemed a part of *Sattwavajaya*. One should strive for

discarding *Ahitakara* (harmful) and adopting *Hitakara* (beneficial) after careful consideration i.e. to follow *Pathy-Apathya* mentioned in classical text for *Amavata*. One should attain the knowledge of *Atma* (self), *Desha* (place), *Kula* (family), *Kala* (time), *Bala* (mental strength) and *Shakti* (capacity). The knowledge as the 'who I am' and 'what is conducive to my health'. Similarly, the knowledge of the locality and propriety of regimen prescribed in the local conditions. In the same way knowledge with regards to the *Kula*, *Kala*, *Bala*, *Shakti* also play an important role in the management of *Amavata*.

DISCUSSION

Health is the state of equilibrium of *doshas*, normal functioning of tissues and waste products along with the cheerful soul, unimpaired senses and well being of mind. Healthy state is not only the physical well being but also well being of social and mental aspect of life.⁽¹⁹⁾ *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* as per mentioned in *Ayurveda* will help to gain long, happy, peaceful and healthy life. Psychological component of the *Amavata* is well identified in *Ayurvedic* texts. '*Utsahahani*' is the commonest symptom of *Amavata* after the '*Saruja Sandhishotha*' i.e. painful swelling of the joints. This has shown the invariable presence of depressed mood in majority of patients of *Amavata*. *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* has a wide range of contribution towards clinical applicability in *Amavata* disorders if used judiciously.

CONCLUSION: *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* provides better treatment modality in controlling/managing the growing stress

and strain of mental life when compared with other than existing sciences. *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* prevents the impairment of *Dhee* (intellect), *Dhriti* (determination/ patience), and *Smriti* (memory).⁽²⁰⁾ It also brings them back in to the normal state if impaired. It is psycho-behavioral therapy and it is mainly applied for mental or emotional stress and disturbances, it acts as spiritual therapy which helps in controlling mind with *Vichara* (right thinking). Thus, a sound and positive mental health is achieved by *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa*. It helps in restraining the mind from its harmful objects/ thoughts/perception of impaired intellect, patience, and memory. It attempts to know the state of emotions of a patient which are casually associated with his illnesses. Thus, the therapist develops the strategies to replace the negative emotions with opposite positive one. *Sattwavajaya Chikitsa* has a potential to redefine the art and science of ancient psychotherapy and provide a new dimension in treating *Amavata*.

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