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A Positive Approach to Mental Health in Greeshma Ritucharya

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ABSTRACT: Introduction: Ayurveda is an ancient science, contributing its unique wisdom of way of living to maintain a healthy lifestyle. In Ayurveda depending upon the direction of movement of sun year is divided into Uttarayana (Northern solstice) and Dakishnayana (Southern solstice). Greeshmaritu (summer season) comes under uttrayana kala. Here sunrays become more powerful that dries up the snehamsha of bhoomi as well as sareera leading to various physical and mental issues like irratibility, anger, stress and emotional imbalances. A positive approach in Greeshma ritucharya emphasizes the adaptation of lifestyle and dietary practices to mitigate the adverse effect of summer on mind and emotion by illuminating special preparation like panchsara which act as a coolant to the body. Incorporating hita ahara and to avoid ahita ahara like patu-katu-amla ahara. This regimen promotes dosha balance and calmness of mind.

Materials and methods: Ayurvedic classical text like Caraka samhita and Sushruta samhita and various research journals and websites have been thoroughly searched and analysed.

Results: Adherence to the principles of Greeshma ritucharya including dietary modification rich in seeta virya ahara like shali anna, jangla mamsa and relaxation practices such as meditation and yoga (swasthchitta) significantly reduce the mental stress during summer.

Conclusion: Integrating the principles of Greeshma ritucharya into daily life is a practical and effective strategy for maintaining seasonal mental health challenges, contributing to overall psychological resilience and stability.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Greeshma ritucharya, Mental health

I. INTRODUCTION

The mind plays a central role in shaping our mental health, acting as the hub of our thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. It processes experiences, influences our responses to stress, and determines how we interact with the world. Mental health, in turn, reflects the state of the mind, encompassing our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. A healthy mind is essential for coping with life's challenges, building relationships, and achieving personal growth. Conversely, when the mind is burdened by stress, anxiety, or negative thinking, it can lead to mental health struggles. Maintaining a healthy mind through practices like mindfulness, self-reflection, and stress management is key to sustaining overall mental well-being.

A positive approach to mental health emphasizes the importance of resilience, self-awareness, and proactive care. It involves recognizing mental health as an integral part of overall well-being and not merely the absence of illness. "Prasannatmendriyamanaa: swastha: ityabhidheeyate"- ayurveda also illuminate the perception that a person with a peaceful soul, proper functioning of Indriya and mind is said to be healthier person.^[1] By cultivating practices like mindfulness, regular physical activity, and healthy social connections, individuals can strengthen their mental resilience. According to WHO, mental health is defined as this-"A state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realize their abilities, to learn well and work well, and to contribute to their communities".^[2] Embracing a positive mindset, seeking support when needed, and prioritizing self-care are crucial steps in nurturing mental health. This approach empowers individuals to navigate challenges with optimism, fostering a balanced and fulfilling life.

As seasons change, noticeable transformations occur in the environment around us. These seasonal shifts influence the external surroundings we inhabit, which in turn impact both our body and mind. The transition from one season to another brings various changes that can disrupt the natural equilibrium of our body and mind. To maintain this balance, it is essential for our body to adapt to the evolving environment without compromising its homeostasis.

Greeshma Ritu, the summer season is characterized by intense heat and dryness, which can have profound effects on both physical and mental well-being. This imbalance in external environment can lead to a range of physical and psychological disturbances, including irritability, anger, and restlessness.

However, Ayurveda offers a unique perspective on maintaining mental health during this season through the principles of Greeshma Ritucharya. This seasonal regimen is designed to align one's lifestyle and diet with the natural rhythms of the environment, thereby promoting mental resilience and emotional stability. By adopting practices that cool the body, soothe the mind, and balance the doshas, individuals can cultivate a positive approach to mental health even in the face of the harsh summer conditions. This positive approach is not merely about managing stress or avoiding discomfort; it emphasizes the proactive cultivation of mental clarity, emotional balance, and inner peace. The integration of cooling foods, proper hydration, restorative activities, and mindfulness practices during Greeshma Ritu helps mitigate the mental and emotional challenges posed by the season. Moreover, the Ayurvedic emphasis on routine, self-care, and connection with nature during this period supports a holistic sense of well-being, enabling individuals to thrive mentally and emotionally throughout the summer months. Thus a comprehensive and positive approach to mental health in Greeshma Ritucharya grounded in the timeless wisdom of Ayurveda, which encourages harmony with nature and the self.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

All these concepts of Ritucharya explained in the Brihatrayees along with their commentaries are analyzed. A thorough review of all relevant articles concerning Greeshma Ritu and the summer season has been done.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Classification of season

According to Ayurveda, the year is divided into two Ayanas based on the Sun's movement: Uttarayana and Dakshinayana. Each Ayana comprises three Ritus (seasons). Uttarayana, also known as Adanakala, includes the Ritus of Shishira, Vasanta, and Greeshma. During this period, the Sun and wind become particularly strong and dry, depleting the earth's Soumya Guna and significantly reducing a person's strength. On the other hand, Dakshinayana, referred to as Visargakala, consists of the Ritus Varsha, Sharad, and Hemanta. During Dakshinayana, the moon's influence surpasses that of the Sun, cooling the Earth and gradually increasing a person's strength.^[3]

GREESHMA RITU: (SUMMER – MAY 15 TO JULY 15)

Ritu Lakshana: Greeshma Ritu is the final season of Adanakala, during which the sun's rays become extremely intense, and the wind turns very dry.^[4] The Sun takes on a reddish hue, resembling the Atasi flower, and depletes water reservoirs. Trees lose their leaves, and the surroundings become barren, with all living creatures searching for water to quench their thirst.

Shareera Lakshana: The excessive heat from the Sun dries up the moisture in the environment, depleting the Jaleeya Tatva (water element) in the body. This leads to a decrease in Kapha and an increase in Vata.^[5] Since Shleshma (Kapha) is associated with Bala (strength), its depletion results in a decrease in physical strength. The digestive fire (Agni) remains in a subdued state during this time.

Hitakara Ahara and vihara: It is beneficial to consume foods that are predominantly sweet (Madhura rasa) as they pacify Vata and help normalize Kapha. Light (Laghu) and easily digestible foods, as well as cool (Sheethala) foods, are recommended. Consuming oily (Snigda) foods further pacifies Vata and enhances Kapha. The body's Snigda Guna (unctuous quality) is lost due to the season, so consuming Snigda Ahara can help restore it.

Due to the loss of Jaleeya Amsha (the water element) in the body during this season, it is recommended to consume foods rich in moisture. After bathing in cool, refreshing water, it is recommended to consume saktu (parched paddy

flour) mixed with sugar. Alcoholic beverages should be avoided; if their consumption is necessary, they should be taken in minimal amounts and diluted with plenty of water. Failing to do so may result in conditions such as swelling (sopha), body slackness (saithilya), burning sensations (daha), and fainting (moha).

During Greeshma Ritu (summer season), Vagbhata insists to take polished śāli rice, as white as jasmine or the moon, is consumed alongside the meat of jāigala animals (those inhabiting arid regions). A light meat soup (rasa), rasāla, rāga, khāndava, or the refreshing drink known as pañcasāram, prepared using thin slices of banana and jackfruit, fermented slightly in a fresh clay pot, can be served in an earthenware mug. Additionally, cool water infused with trumpet flower and camphor powder makes for an excellent summer beverage.^[6] Carakacarya also suggests the same with snigdha annapana and sasharkara mantha.^[7]

One fatigued by the scorching rays of the sun should rest on a bed arranged in a shaded woodland, where towering palms and pines, seemingly touching the clouds, filter the sunlight. The area is adorned with blooming jasmines entwined with clusters of grapevines. The bed is placed in an arbor with walls made of cloth dripping with cool, scented water, decorated with mango sprouts and bunches of mangoes. It is crafted from plantain leaves, Saugandhika (believed to be white water lilies or blue lotuses), lotus filaments, lotus leaves, and water lily leaves, enhanced with fresh, radiant flowers and sprouts.

Alternatively, a nap in a shower-house is recommended, where water infused with boiled cuscus grass cascades from statues. This water fountain flowing from statues provides a refreshing effect, cooling both the mind and the surroundings. These can serve as a natural alternative to air conditioners, which is harmful to both the environment and our health.

At night, one should rest on the open terrace of a white house bathed in moonlight, maintaining a state of relaxation and abstaining from all sexual activities. The body should be anointed with moist sandalwood paste, and light garments along with floral garlands should be worn.

To alleviate extreme fatigue caused by intense heat, one can enjoy gentle and soothing fanning with wet palm leaves or decorative fans made of peacock feathers and lotus leaves. A cool breeze sprinkled with water droplets provides additional relief. Wearing garlands of fragrant jasmine and other flowers, necklaces of pearls combined with sandalwood beads, and listening to the sweet chatter of children, parrots, and parakeets also bring comfort. The presence of beloved companions adorned with lotus bangles and radiant lotus blooms, resembling walking lotuses, further enhances the cooling and refreshing atmosphere.

Dhanya varga	Shali Dhanya (rice), Godhuma (wheat), Mudga (green gram)
Saaka varga	Patola (snake gourd), Kooshmanda (pumpkin), Bottle Gourd
Dugdha varga	Milk, Ghee
Madya varga	Cool drinks like Sheethala Panaka, Panchasara Panaka, Saktu preparations, tender coconut water, and fresh (non-sour) buttermilk.
Mantha (Herbal Drink)	Kharjuradi Mantha
Fruits	Seasonal fruits such as watermelon, sweet mangoes, and grapes.

Ahitakara Ahara and vihara: The appropriateness of food varies according to the season, with references provided for both Pathya (beneficial) and Apathya (harmful) foods. Foods with Katu (spicy), Lavana (salty), and Amla (sour) tastes should generally be avoided. Although Ayurveda recommends a diet that includes all six tastes (Shadrasayukta), it's important to adjust the intake of these tastes according to the season. For example, sour curd should be avoided as it is heavy (Guru) and obstructive (Abhishyandi), which can slow down digestion and block the Rasavaha Strotas (channels that carry nutrients). During the summer (Greeshma ritu), limited consumption of alcohol (Madhya) is advised. If it must be consumed, it should be in small quantities or diluted with water.

IV. CONCLUSION

“A sound mind in a sound body” emphasizes the importance of maintaining a physical health to be mentally well-being. Ayurveda recommends specific regimens for both diet (ahara) and lifestyle (vihara), the adherence to which promotes a healthy and balanced life. A positive approach to mental health during Greeshma Ritu involves a combination of dietary adjustments, lifestyle modifications, and mindful practices that collectively cool and calm the body and mind. By aligning our habits with the natural rhythms of the season, we can mitigate the adverse effects of the summer heat on our mental well-being, fostering a state of balance, tranquility, and resilience.

Charaka Acharya in Tasyasheetiya Adhyaya of Sutrasthana clearly mentions that if we follow Pathya Aharas and Pathya Viharas considering the Ritus is the best way to attain Swasthya Avastha (Healthy state) and to prevent Ajathanam Vikaranaam (those diseases that can occur in future. As changes that are occurring within the atmosphere have an effect on our body conjointly successively resulting in diseases, it is vital for our body to urge accustomed to these changes. If we have a tendency to be modifying consequently, it will have an effect on our body and mind resulting in lifestyle disorders in the future. By correct beneath standing and following these regimens mentioned under Ritucharya and diet, we are able to simply attain our primary and most significant goal “Swasthasya Rakshanam.” It conjointly brings regarding strength, complexion, and longevity while not distressful the equilibrium of the body and mind.

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