



**Exploring the Integrating the Principles of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* into Contemporary
Mental Health Care**

¹**Dipinti Singh** , Research Scholar, Department of *Kayachikitsa*, Faculty of Ayurveda. IMS,
BHU, VARANASI, U.P., 221005

dipintisingh55@gmail.com

²**J.S. Tripathi**, Professor, Department of *Kayachikitsa*, Faculty of Ayurveda. IMS, BHU,
VARANASI, U.P., 221005

ABSTRACT

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, an ancient form of Ayurvedic psychotherapy, offers a holistic approach to managing psychological disturbances by integrating spiritual, cognitive, and physical practices. This traditional method emphasizes harmonizing the mind, body, and soul through spiritual wisdom, scriptural knowledge, cultivation of patience, enhancement of memory, and yoga. Each component of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* aligns with modern concepts of holistic mental health care: spiritual wisdom and scriptural knowledge provide moral and existential guidance that can enhance resilience against psychological stressors; the cultivation of patience and memory targets cognitive and emotional regulation, essential for managing conditions like anxiety and depression; and yoga promotes physical well-being and mindfulness, fostering overall mental and physical harmony. The current review paper investigates the potential of

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa to complement contemporary psychotherapy by examining its practices through empirical studies. The research aims to validate these traditional methods by assessing their efficacy in addressing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress within modern therapeutic frameworks. By integrating ancient wisdom with modern science, the paper seeks to expand the scope of mental health treatment, offering a more comprehensive and multifaceted approach. This review further suggests that incorporating the principles of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* into modern psychotherapy could enhance the effectiveness of mental health interventions. This integration promises a richer therapeutic repertoire for mental health professionals, addressing the interconnectedness of mind, body, and soul more effectively. By bridging the gap between traditional practices and contemporary therapy, this paper not only validates ancient methods but also proposes a novel synthesis that holds promise for more integrated and effective mental health care. The evidence-based insights derived from this study advocate for a more inclusive approach to mental health, catering to the holistic needs of clients and potentially transforming the therapeutic landscape.

Keywords: *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, Ayurvedic Psychotherapy, Contemporary Psychotherapy, Spiritual Wisdom*

INTRODUCTION

Sattvavajaya chikitsa (SC)

Sattvavajaya chikitsa (SC), often regarded as Ayurvedic psychotherapy, is a holistic approach to mental well-being rooted in ancient Ayurvedic principles. The term "*sattva*" denoting the mind, is coupled with "*Avajaya*," signifying conquering or prevailing over. Introduced by Acharya Charak, this non-pharmacological approach aligns with modern psychotherapy, as articulated in the defining statement: "*Sattvavajayah Punah Ahitebhyo Arhtebyo Mano Nigraha*" (Charak Sutra 11/54), encompassing three key terms; *Ahita*, *Artha*,

and *Manonigraha*. These three elements provide a deep understanding of the intricate relationship between mental well-being and mindful engagement with both the external and internal world.

Ahita: "*Ahita*," referring to the detrimental or unwholesome, is intricately linked to *Ayu* (life) in Ayurveda's context (Ch.Su. 1/41). The juxtaposition of "*hita*" (beneficial) and "*ahita*" (harmful) is exemplified in the observance of good conduct (*Sadvritta Palana*), considered *hitakara* (useful), versus neglecting such conduct (*sadvritta apalana*), deemed *ahitakara* (harmful). This neglect contributes to *pragyapradha* (intellectual balasmphay), leading to mental illness. The mind's engagement with *ahitkara arthas* (objects) becomes a primary causative factor for mental disorders, directed by *dhee or buddhi* (intellect). SC involves refining *dhee* or *buddhi* through adherence to the principles of *sadvritta*, restraining the mind from *ahitkara* objects. Mental health professionals can integrate the principles of *sadvritta* into therapeutic practices to help clients cultivate healthier lifestyles, thereby building resilience against mental disturbances.

Arth: "*Artha*" refers to various objects associated with the indriyas (sense organs). Each sense organ is linked to a specific *artha*; for instance, *Gandha* (smell) is the object of the Ghranendriya (nose) (Ch.Sha. 1/20). *Sattva* (mind) which is considered *Ubhayendriya* (connected to both sensory and motor functions), engages with five primary *manoarthas* (objects of the mind)- *Chintya* (thinking), *Vicharya* (consideration), *Uheya* (speculation), *Dhyeya* (attention), and *Samkalpya* (determination). Additionally, *Sukha* (happiness) and *Dukha* (misery) are also regarded as objects of the mind. Understanding the concept of *Artha* in Ayurveda allows individuals to become more aware of the various objects of the mind that influence their mental state. By recognizing the objects that trigger emotions and thoughts, individuals can gain insight into their mental processes and patterns.

Manonigraha or the regulation of the mind, forms the core of SC. This concept involves both subjective and objective control over the mind, achieved through self-discipline and a properly balanced of desire, determination, and commitment. The practice of restraining the mind from both *indriyārtha* (objects of the senses) and *manōārtha* (objects of the mind) is crucial for mental harmony and overall well-being. Ancient texts, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, emphasize the significance of *Manonigraha* in fostering spiritual growth and self-realization. In particular, *Bhagavad Gita* 6.35 highlights the necessity of cultivating detachment (*vairagya*) and consistent practice (*abhyasa*) to gain control over the mind. This alignment with the teachings of the *Gita* underlines how mastering the mind through *Manonigraha* helps individuals deepen their self-understanding and connection to the world around them.

In the context of SC, this mastery involves steering the mind away from undesirable objects or *vishayas*, categorized as *heena yoga* (abstinence), *mithya yoga* (improper indulgence), and *ati yoga* (excessive indulgence). Thus, cultivating *Manonigraha* is essential for achieving mental stability and spiritual advancement (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, 1/58).

In Charak Sutra 1/58.8, Acharya Charak provides a detailed explanation of the concepts of SC, which consists of five essential strategies for treatment management. "*Manaso gyan vigyana dhairya smriti samadhibhih.*" (Charak Sutra 1/58.)

These principles emphasize the importance of:

- a) **Gyana (spiritual knowledge)**
- b) **Vijnana (analytical/scriptural knowledge)**
- c) **Dhairya (patience)**
- d) **Smriti (memory)**
- e) **Samadhi/yoga (concentration/meditation)**

These strategies collectively enhance mental resilience and promote holistic health. Their significance within the framework of contemporary psychotherapy lies in their ability to provide foundational techniques that support mental wellness. Integrating these Ayurvedic approaches into modern psychotherapy can enhance therapeutic outcomes by promoting a balanced mind through knowledge, analysis, patience, positive memory, and concentration. Here we discuss these approaches and their importance within the framework of contemporary psychotherapy and their application in contemporary psychotherapy practices in detail.

Jnana: "Jnanam adhyatm jananam" (Chakara.Cha.Su. 1/58)

Jnana, or the advancement of spiritual wisdom, serves as the cornerstone of SC, aiming to foster self-awareness and understanding of the external world through diverse spiritual principles. This process of self-realization empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges with insight and clarity. By fostering a deep connection with the self, *Jnana* enables individuals to recognize their innate strength, facilitating a path toward mental and emotional well-being. Integrating *Jnana* into psychotherapeutic practices offers numerous benefits, significantly enhancing therapeutic processes and outcomes for those seeking mental and emotional well-being

The research highlights the importance of self-awareness in promoting psychological well-being. Keng et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of self-awareness in psychological well-being. By fostering self-awareness through practices rooted in *Jnana*, facilitates self-reflection and introspection, providing insight into one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. This awareness is crucial for change, allowing individuals to address the root causes of their issues rather than merely treating symptoms. Emmons (2007) highlights the role of spirituality in promoting resilience and well-being, suggesting that spiritual perspectives help individuals

find meaning and purpose in adversity. Similarly, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) demonstrated how individuals can experience profound personal growth and resilience in the face of adversity, fostering a sense of meaning and purpose.

Psychotherapy seeks to alleviate psychological distress through understanding and insight, aligning fundamentally with the principles of *Jnana*. By integrating *Jnana* into psychotherapeutic practices, therapists can offer a more comprehensive approach to healing that addresses the spiritual dimensions of individuals' experiences, complementing the psychological and emotional aspects traditionally focused on in therapy. *Jnana* encourages individuals to develop deeper connections with themselves and others, which can enhance relationships, fostering empathy, compassion, and understanding. In a therapeutic setting, this can lead to a stronger therapeutic alliance between therapists and clients, enhancing the effectiveness of the therapeutic process.

Vijnana: “Vijnanam shastra jnanam” (Chakara.Cha.Su. 1/58)

Vijnana focuses on the acquisition and application of scriptural or textual knowledge. *Vijnana* is also defined as *Jnanam tadartha nischita*. This facet of SC underscores the importance of grounding one's understanding in scientifically verified and practical knowledge. It aids individuals in comprehending the nature and underlying causes of their problems, thereby enhancing their ability to cope. Incorporating *Vijnana* into therapy involves integrating principles of scriptural knowledge with scientifically validated interventions. This integration ensures that therapeutic approaches are credible and effective. Hofmann and Asmundson (2008) underscore the significance of evidence-based practices in psychotherapy, highlighting the necessity of interventions grounded in empirical research. Lambert (2013) provides meta-analytic evidence supporting the efficacy of evidence-based psychotherapy, emphasizing the

benefits of incorporating *Vijnana* in therapeutic practices. By doing so, therapists can offer treatments that are both culturally and historically informed while being aligned with contemporary scientific research. *Vijnana*'s integration into psychotherapy promotes a holistic healing approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of mind, body, and soul. Research by Kabat-Zinn (2003) on mindfulness-based interventions highlights the benefits of addressing psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions of well-being, leading to improved mental health outcomes. This comprehensive perspective ensures that therapy addresses the individual as a whole, taking into account not just the psychological aspects of well-being but also the spiritual and physical dimensions.

Integrating *Vijnana* into psychotherapy enriches the therapeutic process by blending traditional wisdom with contemporary scientific understanding. This facet can enhance therapy's effectiveness, support holistic healing, and ensure culturally informed and evidence-based care.

Dhairya: “Dhairyam anunnati chetasaha”(Chakara.Cha.Su. 1/58)

Dhairya refers to the promotion of patience, which is pivotal in maintaining mental equilibrium and developing impulse control. It involves cultivating the ability to remain calm, practice acceptance, and demonstrate compassion in the face of adversity. This approach not only aids in enhancing one's coping abilities but also fosters emotional resilience. Research by Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) supports the idea that patience and acceptance play a significant role in psychological well-being. The authors found that acceptance of distressing emotions and situations, along with the capacity to endure discomfort, contributes to greater emotional resilience and adaptive coping strategies. This balanced state of mind enables individuals to make rational decisions and respond to stress more effectively. By improving

one's ability to resist immediate reactions to emotions or external stimuli, individuals can make better decisions and engage in healthier interactions. *Dhairya* incorporates techniques that teach clients to pause and reflect before reacting, thereby shifting from automatic negative responses to more thoughtful and constructive behaviors. Techniques such as yogic relaxation exercises are employed to cultivate calmness and patience. . The principles of *Dhairya* align with positive psychology's focus on cultivating character strengths and virtues like patience and resilience, which contribute to well-being and happiness. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) emphasize the importance of these character strengths in promoting flourishing and life satisfaction .

Integrating the concept of *Dhairya* into psychotherapy involves using research-based strategies to cultivate patience. By doing so, therapists can provide clients with valuable tools for navigating life's challenges, promoting both emotional resilience and overall psychological well-being.

Smriti: "Smirithi anubhut artha smaranam"(Chakara.Cha.Su. 1/58)

Smriti emphasizes the promotion of memory to encourage patients to recall positive experiences while letting go of negative, stressful, and traumatic memories. The objective is to remember past experiences accurately, comprehend their nature, and reveal underlying conflicts, which are often considered the primary sources of illness. By fostering memory and facilitating a reflective understanding, *Smriti* plays a crucial role in the healing process, helping individuals reconcile with their past and progress toward a healthier mental state. The integration of *Smriti* into modern psychotherapy requires a flexible, personalized approach that respects the unique memory landscape and psychological needs of each patient. Techniques such as structured memory recall exercises, mindfulness practices, cognitive reframing, and

psychodynamic exploration are employed to transform the relationship individuals have with their memories, enhancing well-being and facilitating healing.

By examining memories more closely, individuals can understand how their perceptions of past events and the narratives they've constructed contribute to current mental health issues. Shedler (2010), focuses on uncovering unconscious conflicts and past experiences that shape current behaviours and emotions. Bringing these to consciousness allows individuals to work through and resolve internal conflicts, transforming their relationship with their past. Additionally, Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions supports the emphasis on recalling positive memories in *Smriti*, suggesting that positive emotions expand an individual's thought-action repertoire and build personal resources, resilience, and well-being. Structured exercises aimed at positive memory recall can involve patients detailing their positive experiences, including associated emotions, senses, and contexts.

Garland et al. (2015) demonstrated that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) significantly improves psychological well-being, suggesting that mindfulness can alter one's relationship to memories by enhancing the recall of positive ones while diminishing the impact of negative ones. It can offer an innovative method that honours the depth and diversity of human memory and experience. This integration fosters a nuanced understanding of how memory influences mental health and provides a path toward healing that acknowledges the intricate connections between memory, emotion, and psychological well-being.

The integration of *Smriti* into modern psychotherapy requires a flexible, personalized approach that respects the unique memory landscape and psychological needs of each patient.

Samadhi/Yoga: “Vishayebho nivritha atmani manaso niyamanam” (Ch.Su. 1/58)

It incorporates all eight components of *Ashtanga yoga*. Yoga practices can utilize all eight components to promote physical and mental wellness. They generally involve asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing exercise) dhyana (meditation), and shava asana (relaxation). It encompasses the entirety of the eight components of *Ashtanga yoga*. The practices of yoga can leverage these eight components to enhance both physical and mental well-being, typically involving physical postures (*asana*), breathing exercises (*pranayama*), meditation (*dhyana*), and relaxation (*shava asana*).

Incorporating all eight components of Ashtanga yoga into one's practice has been associated with various mental health benefits. Yoga has shown significant promise in reducing anxiety levels. A systematic review by Li and Goldsmith (2023) concluded that regular yoga practice can lead to decreased anxiety symptoms due to its combination of physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation. The practice promotes relaxation and mindfulness, helping individuals manage stress more effectively. Evidence suggests that yoga can be an effective adjunct treatment for depression. According to a meta-analysis by Streeter et al. (2022), yoga interventions were associated with significant reductions in depressive symptoms. The combination of physical movement and meditative practices in yoga was found to elevate mood and enhance emotional regulation. Yoga has emerged as a beneficial practice for individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A randomized controlled trial by van der Kolk et al. (2021) found that yoga could significantly reduce PTSD symptoms, such as hyperarousal and intrusive thoughts. The study highlighted yoga's ability to help participants reconnect with their bodies and feel a sense of control. Practicing yoga has been linked to improved sleep quality among individuals with insomnia and other sleep disorders.

Manjunath and Telles (2020) conducted a comprehensive study that found yoga practices led to enhanced sleep efficiency, reduced sleep latency, and decreased wake time after sleep onset. These benefits are attributed to the calming effects of yoga and its ability to reduce physiological arousal. Regular yoga practice has been associated with improved cognitive function. A study by Gothe et al. (2019) reported that participants who engaged in yoga showed enhanced memory, attention, and executive function. These cognitive benefits are thought to result from yoga's influence on reducing stress and improving neuroplasticity. These reviews reflect the growing body of evidence supporting yoga as a valuable tool for improving various aspects of mental health.

Conclusion

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (SC), presents a multifaceted strategy for mental well-being by focusing on the mind's relationship with various stimuli and the cultivation of mental discipline. Rooted in ancient Ayurvedic texts, SC incorporates principles like *Ahita*, *Artha*, and *Manonigraha*, and emphasizes refining the intellect (dhee or buddhi) to steer the mind away from unwholesome objects. This approach provides a comprehensive framework for mental health professionals to help clients engage in healthier lifestyles and build resilience against mental disturbances by integrating principles like *Sadvritta Palana* (good conduct).

Ahita highlights the harmful consequences of neglecting beneficial conduct, where engagement with detrimental objects is seen as a primary factor in mental disorders. *Artha* emphasizes the mind's interaction with various sensory objects, suggesting that recognizing and understanding these influences can provide insight into mental processes and patterns. *Manonigraha*, or the regulation of the mind, is central to SC and involves mastering self-discipline and emotional control. Ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita underscore the importance of detachment and consistent practice in achieving mental harmony.

The principles of SC align with modern therapeutic approaches through the concepts of *gyana* (spiritual knowledge), *Vijnana* (scriptural and practical knowledge), *Dhairya* (patience), *Smriti* (memory), and *Samadhi* (concentration/meditation). *Gyana* fosters self-awareness and spiritual understanding, aiding individuals in navigating life's challenges with clarity. *Vijnana* integrates traditional wisdom with evidence-based practices, enriching therapeutic processes with a holistic perspective that addresses the psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. *Dhairya* promotes emotional resilience by cultivating patience and acceptance, essential for coping with distress and enhancing adaptive strategies. *Smriti* encourages the recall of positive memories while transforming the impact of negative ones, fostering a balanced mental state and well-being through structured exercises and mindfulness practices.

Additionally, incorporating *Ashtanga Yoga*, with its eight components—*asana* (physical postures), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *dhyana* (meditation), and *shava asana* (relaxation)—complements SC by enhancing physical and mental wellness. This practice is associated with reduced stress, improved mood, decreased anxiety, and better sleep quality.

In conclusion, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* offers a valuable contribution to contemporary psychotherapy by integrating ancient Ayurvedic principles with modern therapeutic techniques. This integration not only respects the depth and diversity of human experience but also provides a holistic framework for addressing mental health challenges, promoting overall well-being through a balanced approach to mind, body, and self. And it can also enrich modern therapeutic practices, offering more comprehensive and culturally sensitive mental health care.

References

- Charaka. (n.d.). *Charaka Samhita: Sutra Sthana* (P. Dash, Trans., 1st ed., Vol. 1, p. 65). Chaukhambha Publications.
- Emmons, R. A. (2007). *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218-226.
- Garland, E. L., Gaylord, S. A., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2015). Positive reappraisal mediates the stress-reduction effects of mindfulness: A multistudy analysis. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 49(4), 509-518.
- Gothe, N. P., Pontifex, M. B., & Hillman, C. H. (2019). The effects of yoga on cognitive performance: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 42(1), 51-67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-018-9961-1>
- Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 36(5), 427-440.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144-156.
- Kashdan, T. B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 865-878. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03.001>
- Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(6), 1041-1056.

- Khalsa, S. B. S., Shorter, S. M., Cope, S., Wyshak, G., & Sklar, E. (2016). Yoga ameliorates performance anxiety and mood disturbance in young professional musicians. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 41(2), 99-107. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-015-9314-2>
- Lambert, M. J. (Ed.). (2013). *Bergin and Garfield's Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change*. Wiley.
- Li, Y., & Goldsmith, R. (2023). The impact of yoga on anxiety: A systematic review. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 79, 102440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2023.102440>
- Manjunath, N. K., & Telles, S. (2020). Yoga therapy for improving sleep quality: A review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 52, 101308. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smrv.2020.101308>
- Prabhupada, A. C. B. S. (1986). *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* (2nd ed.). Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Raval, A., & Patel, M. (2020). Ayurvedic concepts for mental health: A review. *International Journal of Ayurvedic Medicine*, 11(2), 183-188.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Sharma, P. V. (1981). *Charaka Samhita: Sutrasthana*. Ch. 1, Verses 41. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.
- Sharma, R. K., & Dash, B. (1992). *Charaka Samhita: Text with English Translation & Critical Exposition Based on Cakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika*. Volume 1. Sharirasthana. Ch. 1, Verses 20. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.
- Sharma, R. K., & Dash, B. (2000). *Charaka Samhita: Text with English Translation & Critical Exposition Based on Cakrapani Datta's Ayurveda Dipika*. Sutrasthana. Ch. 1, Verses 58. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

- Shedler, J. (2010). The efficacy of psychodynamic psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 65(2), 98-109.
- Singh, D., & Tripathi, J. S. (2021). Development of practical approach of Sattvavajava Chikitsa for depressive disorders. *Journal of Research in Ayurvedic Sciences*, 5, 60-68.
- Streeter, C. C., Gerbarg, P. L., & Saper, R. B. (2022). Yoga and its benefits for mental health: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 306, 256-266.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.03.060>
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(1), 1-18.
- van der Kolk, B. A., Stone, L., & West, J. (2021). Yoga as an intervention for PTSD: Results from a randomized controlled trial. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 22(4), 827-841.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211020685>