



AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO ADHD - A REVIEW

Dr. Vikrant Kumar Rattan^{1*} and Dr. Aboli Patil^{2*}

¹PG Scholar, Department of Kaumarbhritya,

²Associate Prof. In Kaumarbhritya Department,
Parul Institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Vadodra, Gujrat.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Vikrant Kumar Rattan

PG Scholar, Department of Kaumarbhritya, Parul Institute of Ayurveda, Parul University, Vadodra, Gujrat.

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ABSTRACT

The behavioural disorder, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common neurological disorder of childhood. With growing era of competition in education fields children suffering with ADHD find it difficult to cope up. And even for parents and teachers to exactly determine the distinguishing factor for the children. Ayurveda is found to be the world's oldest and most complete holistic healing modality. So this article deals with the general knowledge about ADHD and an *ayurvedic* approach towards its causes, pathophysiology and treatment which include the basic treatment of *manas rog chikitsa* i.e *daiviparvshary chikitsa*, *satvajay chiktisha* and *Aushad chikitsa*.

KEY WORDS: Hyperactivity, Behavioural, Neurological disorder, *Manas Rog Chikitsa*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda appears in the *Rig Veda*, dating back over 3000 years, it is widely believed to be thousands of years older. Rooted deep in timeless wisdom, and regardless of time *Ayurveda* is ageless. It has been continuously practiced for millennium, passed down from generation to generation, *Ayurvedic* medicine remains alive, enlightening and healing.

According to *Ayurvedic* theory, there are three main constitutions make up the body. These constitutions are often termed as *doshas*. Every person has a unique predominance of *Dosha*, with relation to the *PanchMahabhoota*; those are *aakash*, *vayu*, *agni*, *jala*, and *pruthvi*. These *panchmahabhoota* combine to make up *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. *Vata dosha* having more *vayu* and *Pruthvi*, with *pitta* being more so *agani*. *Pruthvi* and *jala* make up *Kapha dosha*. *Ayurveda* believes that the equilibrium of these bring out the health of an individual while the disequilibrium brings out the disease.^[1]

One such ailment that widely affects people today is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a behavioural disorder that typically begins in childhood and is characterized by a short attention span (inattention), an inability to be calm and stay still (hyperactivity), and poor impulse control (impulsivity).^[2]

Some people with ADHD have problems with only inattention or with hyperactivity and impulsivity, but most have problems related to all three features. In people with ADHD, the characteristic behaviours are frequent and severe enough to interfere with the activities of daily living such as school, work, and relationships with others. Because of an inability to stay focused on tasks, people with inattention may be easily distracted, forgetful, avoid tasks that require sustained attention, have difficulty organizing tasks, or frequently lose items. Hyperactivity is usually shown by frequent movement. Individuals with this feature often fidget or tap their foot when seated, leave their seat when it is inappropriate to do so; such as in the classroom, or talk a lot and interrupt others. Impulsivity can result in hasty actions without thought for the consequences. Individuals with poor impulse control may have difficulty waiting for their turn, deferring to others, or considering their actions before acting.^[3]

Causes

There are several factors believed to contribute to ADHD:

• Genetics:

Research shows that a person's genetics may cause a high risk of developing ADHD which often runs in families and some trends in specific brain areas that contribute to attention.^[4]

- Environmental factors

Studies show a link between a mother's cigarette smoking and alcohol use during pregnancy and children who have ADHD. Exposure to lead as a child has also been shown to increase the likelihood of ADHD in children.

ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA

1) *Doshic imbalance*

The human body sustains mainly three *sharirik dosha*. i.e *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. The balanced states of these *doshas* make health and the imbalance of these causes disease. Looking for references in the *Charaka Samhita* in regards to ADHD. The inability to keep a steady thought stream or focus, is described in the *Charaka Samhita* as one of twenty main blocks of *Vata* in the body. In chapter 28 verse 198,^[5] The *Charaka Samhita* states, "If *vyana-vayu* is occluded by *prana-vayu*, then there will be loss of all the senses, and there will be loss of memory as well as strength.

The *Vata dosha* is a combination of *aakash* and *vayu*. The qualities of *Vata* are *laghu*, *sheeta*, *ruksha*, and *sukshma*. Because of these qualities, it is the most changeable and moveable. Being that it is the most moveable, it can easily become imbalanced, and cause imbalances in the other *doshas*, *Kapha*, and *Pitta*. *Vata* plays many roles within our bodies and minds. *Vata* dosha being in balance is vital to the health of our bodies and mind. *Vata*, although one *dosha*, is divided up into five sub-categories, classifying the different actions and movements of *Vata* into and out of our body.^[6]

Vyana Vayu carries out the function of circulation in the body; hence circulation and movement of the *Prana vayu* once it is in the body and mind.^[7] Because of the world around us, the *Prana vayu* we take in may in a sense become toxic. These sensory impressions may be considered toxic for the following reasons: they may not be in *samaavastha*, they may be in *ati yoga*, and over load or overwhelm the neurological system. *Prana* can obstruct *Vyana*, and because of this, *Vata dosha* in the mind and body may become disturbed. This disturbance is an over stimulation of *Prana Vata*. According to *Ayurveda* too much stimulation can increase the *prana* of the mind. This excessive movement of the mind due to an over stimulation of the neurological system deranges the mind, and upsets the balance of our bodily system as a whole. The high *Vata* in the mind will not only cause emotional and behavioural symptoms but will also manifest as bodily distress as well. *Vata* can cause numerous symptoms that include weight loss, weight gain, constipation, hyperactivity, insomnia, disorientation, confused speech, light headed, confusion and depression.^[8]

2 *Pragnapradha*

An exogenous factor causing ADHD may be the vast amount of information we are exposed to through our eyes and ears. With the inventions of modern

transportation, film, TV, internet, cell phones, video games, and so forth. These images may be too much for some brains to process. They may disturb the flow of *Vata*, and damage the nervous system. Not only is the mind subjected to fast moving images and sounds, but it has to deal with the consequence of their qualities.^[9] Many images are in fact negative, and can also cause disturbances in *Vata*. Mass media may be considered to be harmful because of its over stimulation. This over stimulation is also often accompanied by negative subtle forms of advertising, that among many things: subjugates women, propagandizes violence, war, and greed. This is *mithya yoga* of all the *indriyas*, hence forth leading to an imbalanced state of mind with co- relation to increase in *rajas* and *tamas* which are the *mansik doshas*.^[10]

We may examine the description of mental illness in the *Charaka Samhita*, Ch IX, verse [6-7], it describes that "*unmada* (mental illness) is a wandering mind, intellect, consciousness, knowledge, memory, inclination, manners, activities and conduct." Describing the possible causes for imbalances, it says that any one or all of the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Kapha*, *Pitta*, may cause mental illness, or mental illness may be due to outside factors.

Symptoms

While some behaviour associated with ADHD are normal, someone with ADHD will have trouble controlling these behaviours and will show them much more frequently.

Signs of inattention

- Becoming easily distracted and jumping from activity to activity.
- Becoming bored with a task quickly.
- Difficulty focusing attention or completing a single task or activity.
- Trouble completing or turning in homework assignments.
- Losing things such as school supplies or toys.
- Daydreaming or wandering with lack of motivation.
- Difficulty processing information quickly.
- Struggling to follow directions.

Signs of hyperactivity

- Fidgeting and squirming, having trouble sitting still
- Non-stop talking
- Touching or playing with everything
- Difficulty doing quiet tasks or activities

Signs of impulsivity

- Impatience
- Acting without regard for consequences, blurting things out
- Difficulty taking turns, waiting or sharing
- Interrupting others

Treatment

The treatment for ADHD consists of medication, counselling, and cognitive behavioural therapies^[11], with the main focus being pharmaceutical medications. The most commonly prescribed medications are central nervous system stimulants like Ritalin and Adderal. Both these medication speeds up the release of dopamine and nor epinephrine, increasing brain function. Anti-depressant drugs and other non-stimulant drugs are also used. It is thought that anti-depressant medications will increase up take and absorption of neurotransmitters in the brain, thus increasing brain activity. Both types of medication are prescribed to children and adults.^[12] These medications do not cure ADHD. The symptoms associated with ADHD cease only for the time the medication is active within the body. When the medication wears off, the symptoms return. A patient taking these medications are to continue taking them throughout their life.

In order for an *Ayurvedic* treatment of ADHD. The *Doshic* imbalances that cause the symptoms of ADHD must be recognized in order to balance them In treating ADHD, *Ayurveda* approaches the symptoms and the underlying causes by working with many treatments, including diet and **lifestyle changes**, *Daivipashray chikitsa*, *satvajaya chikitsa*, *aushadh chikitsa*^[13] that improve cognitive function. These treatments include cleansing possible toxins known in *Sanskrit* as *Ama*, that have built up in the body and even the mind. To treat ADHD, *Ayurveda* looks at each individual case, and does not prescribe one treatment, nor does it view any one protocol to be appropriate for any one person. Everyone has a unique make up of *doshic* qualities, with varying degrees of elemental make up. Each person has a different level of strength, or vital energy. Vital energy in *Ayurveda* is known as *Ojas*. Determining the level of the *ojas* is key in any treatment plan of ADHD. If the cause of the *doshic* imbalance is deemed that of exogenous factors, treatment may include cleansing toxins from the body and mind. However, if the *ojas* in the individual is low, cleansing is contraindicated, because cleansing may increase depletion of *Ojas*.^[14]

Lifestyle changes

A lifestyle that is first and foremost regular must be experienced. Regularity of sleep patterns, eating patterns, and avoiding anything that disrupts, or over stimulates the senses. Steady routines stabilize Vata and negate the ill effects that irregularity causes. Individuals with

ADHD also must limit activities like TV, internet, and travel. They must avoid stimulants like refined sugar and caffeine. The relief an individual may experience by using stimulates to see through the fog of inattention is momentary.

Daivipashray chikitsa (spiritual therapy)

This kind of chikitsa is a traditional procedure. The main source of this treatment is atharva Veda and kaishika sutra.

Life and according to charak the deeds of past life can be rectified by the deeds of present life. According to charak the deeds of purva janam causes 'deva' and the deeds of praduana janam are called 'purushkar' causes dependency of^[15]

The following are the methods of daivipashraya chikitsa.^[16]

1. Chanting mantras of god repeatedly.
2. Mani of vyadhi nashak dravya should be worn.
3. To perform auspicious rituals.
4. Offerings should be made to lord
5. One should follow the procedures of saucha, santosh, tapa, swadhyaya and ishwara providhana as per mentioned in patanjli yoga sutra
6. Pranipata

Satvavajaya Chikitsa

Satvavajaya Chikitsa^[17] is mainly used as an treatment of manas roga. In this treatment the manas is deviated from ahitkar subjects like (dvesh, krodha etc) and incorporating the mind in hitkar subjects.

1. Satvajay chikitsa through Dhi, Dhriti, Smruti, Gyana vigyana etc.
2. Follow astang yoga like yam, niyam, asana, pranayam, pryahar, dharna, dhyana, smadhi for manonigraha.
3. Do not insult any one and treat everyone as equal.
4. Follow astahara vidhi visheshya.
5. Following sata.

Aushadh chikitsa

There are numerous aushadhis described as to be medhya in the samhitas. All those aushadhis, if administered correctly may prove effective in improving condition of a person suffering from ADHD. Those drugs are termed as nootropics. There are several drugs termed as medhya, buddhivardhak, smritikarak^[18] which are appraised in the classic literature for enhancing memory.

Sr. no	Name of drug	Latin name	Specific terminology for Nootropic effect	Reference
1	Manduk parni	Centella asiatica	medhya	Bhavprakash Nighantu Charak samhita
2	Bhrami	Bacopa monnieira	Mehya	Dravya guna vigyana
3	Shankhpushpi	Convolvulus prostrates	Medhakrita medhya	Rajnighantu Charak samhita
4	Kushmandu	Brnincasa hispida	Chetorghrita	Bhav Prakash Nighantu

5	Vacha	Acorus calamus	Medhya	Dhanvantari nighantu
6	Jatamansi	Nardostachys jatamansi	Medhya	Bhavprakash nighantu
7	Palandu	Allium cepa	Medha	Shushruta samhita
8	Tila	Sesamum indicum	Medha Matiprada	Shushruta Samhita Bhavprakasha Nighantu
9	Pippali	Pipper longum	Medhya	Bhavprakash Nighantu
10	Satavari	Asparagus racemosus	Medhya	Shushruta Samhita Bhavprakash Nighantu
11	Haritaki	Terminelia chebulla	Medhya	Shushruta Samhita Bhavprakash Nighantu

CONCLUSION

ADHD, the behavioural disorder being caused by environmental factors, lifestyle habits, pragnaparadha^[19], the misuse of the indriyas and doshic imbalance, can be managed by lifestyle modalities and use of medhya aushadhis, Daivipashray chikitsa, satvajaya chikitsa, which might help stabilise vata and enhance stability of mind by increasing satwa guna. Thus, helping the child concentrating his/her energy in right place and puorps.

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