



DINACHARYA AS A PSYCHO REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR MENTAL HEALTH – AN INTEGRATIVE AYURVEDIC AND MODERN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Background

Ayurveda emphasizes the inseparable relationship between the body (Sharira), mind (Manas), and soul (Atma) in maintaining health. Dinacharya (daily regimen) is a key preventive and promotive measure described for sustaining this harmony. Contemporary psychiatry increasingly recognizes the importance of structured routines, circadian rhythm regulation, and lifestyle hygiene in mental well-being – principles that closely parallel Ayurvedic concepts of Dinacharya.

Objective

To explore the psycho regulatory role of Dinacharya in maintaining and promoting mental health, integrating classical Ayurvedic principles with modern psychiatric and neurobiological insights.

Materials and Methods

A textual and conceptual review was undertaken from Ayurvedic classical sources such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, along with modern literature from PubMed, Scopus, and standard psychiatric texts on lifestyle and circadian health. Correlative analysis was made between Ayurvedic explanations of dosha, guna, and manas balance with neurophysiological mechanisms influencing mood and cognition.

Results

The study revealed that Dinacharya acts through multidimensional regulation – biological, psychological, and spiritual. Practices like Brahma Muhurta Jagrana, Abhyanga, Dhyana, Vyayama, Aharakala Palana, and Nidra were found to stabilize Tridosha, enhance Sattva guna, and synchronize biological rhythms. Modern studies support that regular routines, mindful activities, exercise, and adequate sleep improve serotonin balance, vagal tone, and emotional resilience.

Conclusion

Dinacharya provides a holistic, time-tested behavioral framework for maintaining mental health. It bridges ancient Ayurvedic wisdom with modern lifestyle psychiatry by aligning the individual's routine with natural rhythms, promoting Sattva guna, and enhancing psychophysiological stability. Integration of Dinacharya into preventive psychiatry and therapeutic interventions may serve as an effective, low-cost, and sustainable strategy for mental health promotion.

KEYWORDS: Dinacharya, Ayurveda, Mental Health, Sattva, Circadian Rhythm, Lifestyle Psychiatry, Sattvaavajaya Chikitsa

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a dynamic state of well-being wherein an individual realizes their potential, copes with normal stresses, and contributes productively to society. Ayurveda, as the science of life, emphasizes that Sharira, Manas, and Atma collectively constitute health (Swasthya). Disturbance in any one of these dimensions leads to disease (Vyadhi)¹.

Dinacharya, or the observance of a daily routine, is described in Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana and Charaka Samhita as an essential measure to maintain equilibrium between Doshas and Manas. The rationale is that a stable daily rhythm aligns individual physiology with the cosmic rhythm (Kaala kriya), ensuring balance and homeostasis.

In the modern context, irregular lifestyle habits — disturbed sleep, erratic meals, sedentary behavior, and excessive digital exposure — contribute significantly to anxiety, depression, and

stress-related disorders. The concept of Dinacharya offers a timeless solution by reinstating order, mindfulness, and synchronization within one's daily life, thereby regulating both body and mind.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

1. Sources of Literature

Classical Ayurvedic texts: Charaka Samhita (Sutrasthana 5, 6), Sushruta Samhita (Chikitsa Sthana 24), Ashtanga Hridaya (Sutrasthana 2 – Dinacharya Adhyaya).

Commentaries: Sarvangasundara and Ayurveda Deepika on the above texts.

Modern literature: Peer-reviewed articles from PubMed and Scopus on chronobiology, behavioral therapy, and lifestyle psychiatry.



2. Method of Review

Relevant textual concepts related to Dinacharya were identified and correlated with neurobiological and psychophysiological mechanisms. The practices were categorized based on their direct or indirect influence on mental health, emotional regulation, and circadian alignment.

Observations and Results

Ayurvedic texts portray Dinacharya as a preventive and promotive regimen for both Sharira and Manas. The present review identifies the following key daily practices with their classical relevance and modern mental health correlations:

Practice Ayurvedic Rationale Mental Health Correlation
Brahma Muhurta Jagrana (waking before sunrise) Enhances Sattva guna, aligns with Surya udaya, promotes clarity and vitality. Early rising synchronizes circadian rhythm, enhances serotonin and dopamine, improves mood and alertness².

Dhyana and Pranayama Balances Prana Vayu, stabilizes Manovaha Srotas. Reduces cortisol, increases parasympathetic tone, improves attention and emotional regulation.

Abhyanga (oil massage) Pacifies Vata dosha, strengthens nervous system, promotes calmness. Reduces anxiety, enhances vagal tone, and induces relaxation via tactile stimulation.

Snana (bathing) Purifies body and mind, removes Mala. Enhances endorphin release and refreshes the central nervous system.

Vyayama (exercise) Reduces Kapha and Tamas, improves metabolism and self-esteem. Releases endorphins, reduces depression, improves sleep quality.

Aharakala Palana (timely and mindful eating) Balances Agni and Dosha; promotes Sattva. Regulates gut-brain axis; stabilizes glucose and mood; encourages mindfulness.

Sadvrta and Achara Rasayana Promotes ethical conduct, compassion, emotional discipline. Encourages prosocial behavior, empathy, and emotional stability.

Nidra (timely sleep) Restores Vata and supports Manas shanti. Improves memory, attention, and emotion regulation; poor sleep linked to psychiatric disorders.

DISCUSSION

1. Ayurvedic Perspective

According to Charaka Samhita, health depends upon the balanced state of Doshas, Agni, Dhatus, and Manas. Mental equilibrium (Manas Samyavastha) is maintained when Sattva guna predominates over Rajas and Tamas. Dinacharya helps sustain this dominance by promoting discipline, purity, and awareness.

Regulation of Vata: Avoids hyperactivity of the nervous system, preventing anxiety and insomnia³.

Regulation of Pitta: Controls irritability, anger, and burnout tendencies⁴.

Regulation of Kapha: Prevents inertia, dullness, and depressive tendencies⁵.

Daily practices like meditation and self-massage promote Sattva guna, leading to clarity, self-control, and mental steadiness⁶.

2. Modern Correlation

Modern psychiatry and neuroscience validate the psychoregulatory effects of structured routines:

Chronobiology: Regular daily cycles synchronize the suprachiasmatic nucleus, ensuring hormonal rhythm of cortisol and melatonin, vital for mood and cognition⁷.

Neurochemical Regulation: Sunlight exposure and exercise increase serotonin and dopamine; mindfulness and yoga enhance GABA and oxytocin levels⁸.

Neuroplasticity: Meditation and Pranayama increase gray matter density in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex.

Parasympathetic Activation: Practices like Abhyanga and deep breathing promote vagal activity, reducing anxiety and stress⁹.

Dinacharya thus represents an ancient form of behavioral chronotherapy and self-regulation therapy.

3. Psychotherapeutic Integration

In the context of Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (Ayurvedic psychotherapy), Dinacharya acts as a stabilizing routine that promotes autonomy, self-discipline, and mindfulness.

In anxiety disorders, oil massage, Pranayama, and structured sleep restore calmness.

In depression, morning awakening, exercise, and exposure to light elevate mood and motivation.

In OCD and stress disorders, structured routines and mindful activities reduce rumination and compulsivity.

Integrating Dinacharya principles with CBT and lifestyle psychiatry interventions offers a comprehensive, low-cost model for modern mental health care¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

Dinacharya, as delineated in Ayurvedic classics, is a holistic psychoregulatory regimen harmonizing body, mind, and environment. By stabilizing Tridosha, enhancing Sattva guna, and synchronizing circadian rhythms, it cultivates psychological balance, resilience, and well-being.

Incorporating Dinacharya principles into daily life and clinical psychiatry offers a promising integrative approach to mental health promotion — bridging Ayurveda's timeless wisdom with evidence-based modern science.

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