

Concept of Manas (Psyche) in Ayurveda

Volume: 05 Issue: 02 July 1987 Page: 125-131

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Abstract

According to Indian thoughts, manas (mind) is one of the major operational concepts in the process of learning and the cause of bandha (entanglement/attachement). Manas has dimension which is anu (beyond atom in its minutest aspect), and is capable of remaining atindriya (beyond sensory perception).

An attempt has been made to focus on various aspects like concept of atma, evolution and constituents of man, location of manas, dimension and qualities of manas and process of Jnanotpatti etc.

Key words -

**Manas,
Atma,
Evolution,
Constituents of man,
Jnanotpatti,
Psyche**

Sitting amidst a mountain of wealth and prosperity man lives a life of worry, anxiety and discontentment, which is a sad paradox. This state can be overcome by understanding manas which is mainly responsible for pleasure-pain perceptions. Therefore, ayurveda, the ancient wisdom of life, which aims at the blissful state of man, lays emphasis on the need of overcoming the impediments like, Kama (desire) and Krodha (anger) which are reflected in the form of psychological, social and physical illnesses, and prescribes methods to ward them off effectively.

Charaka defines ayu (life) as the combined state of shareea (body), indriya (senses), satwa (psyche) and atma (soul) [1]. The first two are grosser entities and easy to understand. The latter two are subtler and beyond sensory experience, hence difficult to understand. The need for understanding manas assumes greater importance for it is the yoking principle between shareera and atma.

Atma in Ayurveda

Being an evolute of Vedas, it is natural that ayurveda has accepted some of the important philosophical postulates like the theory of punarjanma (rebirth), karmaphala (results of actions from one birth to another), karanashareera (body of causality), sookshma shareera (subtle or ethereal body), to mention a few, in order to solve the problems of chikitsapurusha (treatable man) and bestow him the blissful state. It is said that after one's death the results of the right or wrong acts of the individual are carried along with sookshma shareera, causing birth in the womb of different species [2]. Atma (jeevatma) is given greater importance while explaining punarjanma since all the other concepts are ultimately linked with it.

Atma is called 'karta' (doer) and 'bhokta' (experiencer) [3]. Icha, dwesha, sukha (pleasure), dukkha (pain), prayatna (initiation), dhriti (control), chetana (life), buddhi (decision), smriti (memory) ahankara (ego) are some of the attributes of atma [4]. Among these, icha (desire), dwesha (hatred), prayatna (effort) and budhi (decision) denote 'kartrtwa' and sukha and dukkha denote 'bhoktrtwa' of atma. But the fact is that manas is always associated with atma [5] and only during this association atma will be either karta or bhokta or both. In other words, atma will be the 'knower' and manas will be the 'doer' representing atma.

Atma is said to exert its influence in the emergence of ayu (life span), manas (psyche), indriya (senses), prana (inspiration), apana (expiration), prerana (induction), akarta (shape), swara (voice), varna (complexion), sukha (pleasure), dukkha (pain), icha (desire) dwesha (hatred), chetana (consciousness), dhriti, budhi, smriti (memory), ahankara (ego) etc., of the foetus in embryonic state itself [6].

Thus the knowledge about atma is essential for a better understanding of chikitsapurusha.

Evolution and constituents of man

The theory of creation of universe described in ayurveda is a postulate based on the sankhya, vaisheshika and other ancient philosophical schools. As it appears, the evolutionary scheme is not necessarily chronological in the stricter sense and the order put forth is mainly for transactional convenience, since the evolutionary process transcends time limitations. It is also said that each of the evolutes will possess the basic characteristics of the principles from which it originates [7].

According to Sushruta who closely follows the sankhya view of '25 principles of evolution,' avyakta (unmanifest) is the first principle in the process of chetanasrsti (animate creation). Mahan (magnum) is the second evolute generated from avyakta. From mahana, ahankara (I-ness) is evolved. This ahankara is of three types viz., satwika (neutral or pure) or vaikarika ahankara, rajasa (passionate) or tajasa ahankara and tamasa (inert) or bhootadi ahankara. Vaikarika ahankara with the aid of tajasa ahankara produces the five buddhendriyas, five karmendriyas and manas. Similarly, bhootadi ahankara with aid of tajasa ahankara gives rise to the five tanmatras which in turn produce the five bhootas [8]. When purusha, the 25th principle joins them, chetana srsti takes place [9]. These 25 principles have been categorised into 4 categories viz., prakrty, praktivikrti, vikrty and naprakriti navikrti. Avyakta is termed as moola prakrti (primordial principle). Mahan, ahankara and the panchatanmatras are called as sapta praktivikrtis. The five jnanendriyas, five karmendriyas and manas are known as shodashavikrtis. The twentyfifth principle viz., purusha is termed as naprakrti-navikrti [10]. Among them, moolaprakrti

and the seven praktivikrtis are collectively termed as astaprakrtis [11].

Charaka considered only 24 of the above 25 principles of evolution by merging purusha (the 25th principle according to Sushruta) with avyakta. He also calls purusha as kshetragna, the remaining 23 principles as kshetra, mahat as buddhi and the astaprakrtis as dhatuprakrtis [12].

According to Charaka avyakta or purusha is the first principle. From avyakta, mahat (buddhi) is evolved and from mahat, ahankara is evolved. From ahankara the 5 khadeeni, 5 arthas and ekadashendriyas viz., 5 -jnanendriyas, 5 karmendriyas and manas are evolved [13]. However, Charaka does not consider the 3 types of ahankara put forth by Sushruta. Although he considers first Khadeeni and then the arthas in the chronology of evolution Chakrapani the commentator opines that the 5 Khadeeni should be understood as the 5 sookshmbhootas or tanmatras [11]. Thus both Sushruta and Charaka consider the astaprakrtis and the evolutes of ahankara, alike. Further, commenting on the 5 arthas Chakrapani suggests that the five arthas should be understood as 5 bhootas [11] since the subtler gunas (arthas) viz., shabda, sparsha, roopa, rasa and gandha can not be understood without the grosser gunas or principles viz, akasha, vayu, agni, jala and prithwi. This also appears logical since it is natural for grosser principles to evolve from the subtler ones and not the vice-versa and our process of understanding is also from grosser to subtler aspects.

Even in the process of pralaya (dissolution) of the srsti it is said that the vyakta (grosser) principles will convulge into the avyakta (subtle) state. Chakrapani also clarifies that this view by stating that the panchabhootas, punchatanmatras, ahankara, mahat and atma merge into one another in an ascending sequence in the process of dissolution. Further, it would also be logical to consider that both tanmatras and ekadashendriyas coalesce with ahankara together since both are derived from it is simultaneously. Charaka terms the state of conglomeration of the 24 principles as 'chaturvimshatika purusha'. Man is also said to be the product of the six elements viz, atma, and the Panchabhootas (elements) and hence termed 'shatdhatu purusha'. Some opine that man is constituted of atma alone and they call man, 'ekadhatu' or 'chetana dhatupurusha'.

Thus, 3 kinds of Purusha are explained in the ayurvedic works. However, the concept of shatdhatu purusha is the one which is ultimately accepted by Charaka. The concepts of Chaturvimshatika purusha and ekadhatu purusha could also be explained under shatadhatu purusha concept as follows:

- (a) Avyakta, buddhi, mahat, ahankara and manas are included under chetana (atma). The remaining aspects viz, the 10 indriyas, 5 tanmatras, and panchabhootas are included under khadayah. Thus the concept of chaturvimshatika purusha is explained under shatadhatu purusha.
- (b) Since chetana is already considered in explaining the concept of shatdhatu purusha the concept of chetana purusha can as well be understood under shatadhatu purusha. Thus, these three views though appear divergent from one another, are synonymous with each other when critically examined.

Purushavichaya ie., Eco-self or universe- individual theory of ayurveda presented by Charaka illustrates the inseparable relationship between man and his environment and their mutual interactions. A knowledge of this universe-individual relationship is essential in understanding the true nature of man [15].

Manas and Panchabhootas

There are two divergent views about the nature of manas in relation to the panchabhootas (five

elements). Some scholars opine that manas is panchabhautika while some argue that it is non panchabhautika or non physical. Both quote textual references in favour of their views. But if the texts are critically examined it would be possible to conclude that there are no strong points to claim that 'manas is panchabhautika'. However, it is a fact that oushadha, ahara and vihara, influence manas in its well being, creativity, causation of its imbalance and finally in the treatment of manas vikaras. Therefore, consideration of panchabhootas would be essential at the stage of preservation and promotion as well as prevention and cure of manasika vikaras from the viewpoint of an ayurvedic physician.

Concept of life and health in relation to manas

Ayu (life) is defined as the combined state of shareera, indriya, satwa and atma [16]. Here satwa refers to manas. It is classified as hitayu (good life) as well as ahitayu (bad life) and sukhayu (happy life) and asukhayu (unhappy life) [17].

The life of such a man is called sukhayu who is not afflicted with either bodily or mental ailments, who is endowed with youth, strength, virility, reputation, enterprise and boldness, who is wealthy and prosperous, and who can plan as he likes. A life contrary to this is deemed asukhayu [18].

The life of that man is said to be hitayu, who is a well wisher of all creatures, who does not covet other's goods, who is honest and peace loving, who acts with deliberation, is not negligent, is devoted to the 3 ends namely dharma (righteousness) artha (wealth) and kama (desires) without letting anyone come into conflict with the other two, who reveres elders, who is scholarly, scientific and of retiring disposition, of well curbed passion, desires, anger, envy, pride and conceit, constantly given to charitable acts, devoted always to austerity, knowledge and quietitude, endowed with spiritual insight, contemplative of the good in this world and the next, and endowed with memory and understanding. That life which is of the opposite nature to this, is said to be ahitayu [19].

Manas is considered as the factor responsible for yoking atma with shareera and indriya [20]. The concept of ayu is based on the state of manas for, manas is chiefly responsible for perceiving sukha, dukha, hita, ahita etc., in relation to life. Briefly speaking, sukhayu and asukhayu refer to the individual's physical well or ill being while hitayu and ahitayu refer to the social and spiritual well or ill being of an individual. In other words, sukhayu and asukhayu refer to mind body relationship while hitayu and ahitayu refer to the psychosocial and psychospiritual relationship as ayurveda gives equal importance to the welfare of manas here and hereafter.

Thus the importance of manas is understood in relation to life.

Let us now examine the relationship of manas with health. A person is said to be healthy when the doshas and bodily elements are balanced and harmonious, when the digestion is normal, when the excretion of waste products is unimpaired and when he is endowed with tranquility and clarity of soul, mind and senses [21]. Lucid descriptions are available in the texts to illustrate that the 3 doshas, the 7 bodily elements digestive activities, the excretory function and the indriyas are liable to be impaired by manas even when they are normal. This demonstrates the importance of manas in calling a person swastha or healthy.

Therefore, an accurate knowledge of manas will be the base in order to understand even the fundamentals like what is life, and health. In other words, without the knowledge of manas, nothing

can be rightly perceived of pursued. This makes the study of manas all the more important.

Definition and synonyms of manas

According to Charaka, that entity by which contemplation and understanding are made possible is known as manas. Citta, cetus, cetana, hrdaya, hrit, swanta, manasam, mana, satwa are its synonyms. Citta, cetus and cetana denote the origin of perception, hrit and hrdaya indicate the sensory attraction and sensory control.

Location of manas

1. Although there are five sense organs with the corresponding objects of theirs, there is only one faculty [22].
2. The place between shiras (head) and talu (hard palate) is said to be the seat of manas according to Bh [23].
3. Like Charaka, Bhela also considers that citta which is the cause of all activities, feeling and judgement [24]. According to Sushruta when manas is tired and clouded with inaction, karmatma withdraws from vishayas (subjects) and this results in the man getting sleep [25]. According to Astangasangraha also, heart is the seat of satwa.
4. While describing the functions of some of the different moities of the tridoshas viz., pranavayu, udan [26].

It is interesting to note that even at the time of Charaka, head was considered as one of the three major marmas (vital spots) of the body where in the senses, and the vital centres of living being are situated [27]. Causation of mental dearrangement due to head injury was also known at the time [28].

By going through these textual descriptions, it is possible to crystallise the ayurvedic approach on the functions of manas vedic approach on the functions of manas into two categories viz.,

- (1) activities related to indriyas and
- (2) activities related to the emotions.

The activities of the indriyas are related with brain while the activities of the emotions are connected with heart.

Dimensions and qualities of manas

1. Manas is said to be constituted of 3 operational qualities viz., satwa or kalyanabhaga, rajas or roshabh [29]. These are understood by the role they play in the emergence of the three response patterns. Satwa is indicated by self control, knowledge, discriminative ability, power of exposition etc. Rajas is indicated by violence, despotic envy, authoritativeness, self adoration etc. Tamas is indicated by dullness, non-action, sleep etc. These three qualities act as the functional dimensions of manas.
2. Satwa rajas and tamas by virtue of their influence give rise to seven types of satwika, six types of raja [30].

3. Buddhi, smrti and dhrti are recognised as intrinsic dimensions of manas. The word manas when used in general sense, refers to the totality of 'knowing' or 'doing' and indicates buddhi, smrti and dhrti as well. Manas as a specific term refers only to its initial contact with the vishaya (object), in other words 'perception' in the process of doing or knowing. In a given kriya (act or process), manas (general) is called smrti at the level of recall, buddhi at the level of decision and dhrti in the moderation of the act throughout.

Manas has been attributed with two intrinsic qualities viz., anutwa and ekatwa meaning its dimension which is beyond atom in its manifest aspect and oneness [31]. These denote the asarvagata, asarvavyapaka and ekadesheeya nature of manas in contrast to those of atma. Manas and atma being eternally coexistent, participate in all acts of man. Manas is also said to possess the capacity to carry the psychic imprints of the previous birth to the present one [32].

Action of manas and jnanotpatti

Indriyabhigraha (controlling the senses), swanigraha (selfcontrol), ooha (guess), and vichara (discriminative ability) are the actions of manas [33].

Indriyabhigraha refers to the proper functioning of jnanedriya and karmendriya in the absence of any defects in the indriyas (cerebral organic factors-central) or Indriyadhistanas (sensory and motor organs-peripheral) which impeded the functions of indriyas apart from disordered manas.

Manonigraha refers to mental control which is the ability to concentrate on something and stick to the given task or chosen course of action without being unduly interrupted by the distracting stimuli from outside.

Ooha refers to the subject's ability to guess different possibilities when he comes across a familiar situation.

Vichara refers to the ability to discriminate between right and wrong, possible and impossible, acceptable and unacceptable etc.,

Following the actions of manas, buddhi decides which is good or right, what is to be done etc., in a given act.

The objects of manas are those which are chintya (thought about), vicharaya (discriminated from), oohya (speculated upon), dhyeya (aimed at) and sankalpaya (decided upon) [34].

Manas is indicated by the presence of cognition as well as the absence of cognition [35]. Knowledge occurs when the sequential relationship of indriyartha (sensory objects), indriya (senses), and manas including atma (soul) is established [36].

Thus, in the foregoing pages certain conceptual details pertaining to manas as described in ayurveda (keeping chikitsa-purusha in view) are presented.

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