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Review Article

DEEPER INSIGHT OF SUBTLE MIND IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract

Mind is an inseparable entity in the living body. It is the basic factor responsible for acquiring knowledge and for performing actions. The three Guna (Qualities) of Mana (mind) viz. Satva, Rajas and Tamas have been considered as the ultimate causative factors for the whole universe. They are the basic building blocks of any formation. The Trigunatmaka description of the constitution of Panchamahabhuta is the most applied application of the philosophical concept of Guna in the field of science and medicine. The Trigunatmaka theory of Manas (mind) has been utilized in Ayurveda in framing its philosophical concepts as well as in formulating the applied aspects of human constitution, psyche, personality, and in the treatment of psychological disorders. Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychodynamics tries to study the transformations and exchanges of psychic energy within the personality. The basic psychodynamic model focuses on the dynamic interactions between the id, ego, and superego. Psychodynamics attempts to explain or interpret behavior or mental states in terms of innate emotional forces or processes. Even the Trigunatmaka theory explains the basic pattern of behavior and temperament of an individual based on the dominance of Satva, Rajas or Tamas. On thorough analysis of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis theory, it can be inferred that the explanation regarding Id, Ego and Super-Ego can be very well correlated to Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Keywords: Satva, Rajas, Tamas, Id, Ego, Super-Ego, Manas

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda (Ayu-life; Veda-science) considers Ayu (life) as the combination of Shareera (body), Indriya (senses), Mana (mind), Atma (soul). Dosha (humor), Dhatu (tissues) and Mala (metabolic wastes) form the basis of Shareera. Just as Vata, Pitta and Kapha are the 3 basic humors of the body; similarly Satva, Rajas and Tamas are considered to be the mental humors¹⁻⁵. Dosha is a health maintaining entity but is capable to vitiate and produce instability on loosing equilibrium⁶. Similarly the three minute entities comprising the mind viz. Satva, Rajas and Tamas are capable of getting vitiated and any disturbance in their equilibrium leads to disturbance in the functioning of mind. Mana is the basic factor in acquiring knowledge. It is known as Atindriya as it is the tool for both acquiring knowledge and performing action⁷. The psychological role of Triguna (Satva, Rajas and Tamas combined) is clearly accepted when it is observed that Satva is of the nature of pleasure, Rajas is of pain and Tamas is related with the ignorance. The psychological role of Triguna (Satva, Rajas and Tamas combined) is clearly accepted when it is observed that Satva is of the nature of

pleasure in various forms such as purity, transparency, lightness, love, joy, renunciation, contentment and is free from diseases. Satva guna are Laghu (lightness) and Prakashaka. Here Prakashaka describes the nature of Satva as which enlightens and glitters. Other features are Anrishamsya (mercy), Samvibhaagaruchita (proper distribution), Titiksha (endurance), Satya (truthfulness), Dharma (proper behavior in actions, words and thought), Aastikya (faith in god), Gyaana (knowledge), Buddhi (intellect), Medha (retention power), Smriti (memory), Dhriti (controlling power) and Anabhisanga (performing good deeds)⁸. Rajas is of the nature of pain in various forms as grief and likewise. It is a functional entity as being the initiator characteristic of an individual. The qualities of Rajas have been mentioned as Dukha Bahulata (miseries), Atanasheelata (roaming), Adhriti (impatience), Ahamkara (egoism), Anrutikritva (telling lie), Akarunya (cruelty), Dambha (pride), Maana (over confidence), Harsha (pleasure), Kama (desire) and Krodha (anger)⁹. Hence it becomes easy to conclude that these characteristics are basic emotional drives and are universally distributed in all human beings. The resultant characteristic

feature of Tamas is Vishada. It results in Moha (delusion), Agyana (ignorance), Mithyagyana (false conception), Avidya (lack of awareness) etc. Other features are Nastikya (no belief in god), Adharmasheelata (non religiousness), Buddhinirodha (lack of understanding), Durmedhastva (perverted intellect), Akarmasheelata (laziness), Nidralutva (excessive sleep)¹⁰. Buddhinirodha and Agyana represent the locking up of understanding, intellect and judgment. This philosophical principle of Triguna has been found suitable for understanding all the applied aspects of science of mind. These Triguna are responsible for each psychological event in an individual. These can be translated as cognition, action and inertia respectively. A positive concept regarding substantial nature of Guna (quality), which is evident from Trigunatmaka constitution of Panchamahabhuta states that Akasha (space) is predominant with Satva, Vayu (air) with Rajas, Agni (fire) with Satva Rajas, Jala (water) with Satva Tamas and Prithvi (earth) with Tamas¹¹. The Trigunatmaka description of the constitution of Panchamahabhuta is the most applied application of the philosophical concept of Guna in the field of science and medicine. Ayurveda has emphasized on the significance of Triguna by observing that Rajas and Tamas having taken the possession of Purusha make him revolve from birth to death like a wheel¹². The Triguna control every activity and behavior of human mind. Also it is stated that body follows the mind. Thus every action of body is manipulated and controlled by the very presence of these guna in various degrees of their dominance. Human is born with the basic instinctual drive. This instinctual drive can be explained by both, Triguna theory of Manas and Freud's theory of psychoanalysis¹³. There seems a possibility of comparing Freud's theory and Charaka's concept of Satva, Rajas and Tamas.

Satva (shuddha) Guna vis-a-vis Super-ego factor

Superego, considered as the morality arm of the psyche, is responsible for the cultural, moral and social aspects of maturity in life. If minutely observed, even the characteristics of Satva guna is similar belonging definitely to a higher order of life, touching social and moral aspects of life. Besides this similarity, major difference between these two is that the Satva touches the spiritual plane also, while the psychodynamics has no thought of superego in this aspect. The characteristics of Satva Guna like Gyana, Buddhi and Dhriti belong to the intellectual aspects of conative and cognitive aspects of psychology respectively. A thorough review of Satva reveals that there is possibility of including intellectual, aesthetic and moral aspects of mind and will power of conation. Intellectual and fundamental functions including assimilation of knowledge, discrimination and association have been covered within the scope of Satva Guna.

Rajas Guna vis-a-vis ego factor

Ego is regarded as the executive part of the self in close contact with physical reality. Ego, working on the reality principle, directs the behavior towards a maximum satisfaction of the individual urges. Fear, anger, hope, envy, pride and hate etc are mentioned among the negative or egoistic emotions. These factors of egoistic emotions resemble Rajas qualities such as Dambha, Mana, Harsha, Kama etc. Thus ego part of the self and Rajas of Manas are related to the drives and urges underlying emotions. Rajas having characteristics like Chalutva (activity) and

Upashtambhaka or Pravartaka/Preraka (initiating or motivating) acts as a stimulant for bringing and maintaining activity in all animate and inanimate objects. Rajas Guna results in Dukha, Maana, Mada, Matsarya and Shoka, (basically the negative emotions) which are its different forms. Thus Rajas is predominantly responsible for the states of feelings and emotions of mind. All of these are produced due to motivation and there is great relationship between motivational and emotional states of mind.

Tamas Guna vis-a-vis Id factor

Id is the original system of personality consisting of everything psychological. It is the reservoir of psychic energy which works on pleasure principle. Buddhi Nirodha, Akarmasheelata, Agyana (locking up of the understanding i.e. intellect, judgment etc) are the chief characteristics of Tamas. This irrational aspect of Tamas resembles the biological aspects of Id factor of personality. The basic characteristics of Tamas are Gurutva (heaviness) and Avaranaka i.e. it has got the capacity to veil, cover or conceal. Due to these qualities, it suppresses and controls the Rajas and Satva Guna. It mainly leads to hampered intellectual and judgmental qualities of mind and also suppresses most of the initiation. Based on the predominance of the three Guna, there are Suddha or Satvika, Rajasa and Tamasa temperament. Suddha or Satvika Manas due to predominance of Kalyanamsha (purity or auspiciousness) is free from defects and is bestowed with welfare. It maintains the ethical and moral values of mind, thus can also be considered as the stable mind. Rajasa Manas is defective due to predominance of Roshamsha (wrath or misery) and promotes wrathful disposition. It is more related with the initiation and motivation of the mind and also with the negative or egoistic emotions. It can be correlated to Ego. Thus such a mind remains restless and may be more prone to anxiety and related disorders. Tamas Manas due to predominance of Mohamsha (ignorance) is also defective and suffers from delusions. It is more related with reduced intellectual capacity and suppression, thus making it prone to impulsive acts. Thus such a mind lacks any sort of motivation and may be prone for depression and related disorders. Each of these three types reveals an innumerable number of variations based on the differentiating factors of degree of Triguna. The individual differences in the temperament and personality are mainly due to relative predominance of Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Due to interplay of these three qualities of mind, individuals differ in their cognitive, affective and conative aspects. Thus the same man can be of Satvika or Rajasika or Tamasika temperament at different periods of time based on the predominance of the particular quality of mind at that particular moment¹⁴.

CONCLUSION

Satva, Rajas and Tamas are the dynamic and constitutional postulates on which the whole concept of mental typology in Ayurveda has been based. Due to their characteristics, it can be concluded that Rajas and Tamas are two psychopathogenic factors or emotional instincts, which when disturbed, result in psychological disturbances responsible for mental diseases. Thus it can be summarized that the Freudian theory of Psychoanalysis can be correlated to Charaka's Trigunatmaka theory of Manas. Satva, Rajas and Tamas reflect the basic tendencies of mind i.e. Well being, wrath or anger and ignorance. The individual differences in the

temperament and personality are due to relative predominance of Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Thus the knowledge of Satva, Rajas and Tamas will help an individual to effectively understand the present state of mind of the individual.

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