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Manasa Prakriti (Mental Personality) in Ayurveda: A Conceptual and Psychophysiological Analysis

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ABSTRACT: Manasa Prakriti is one of the most important concepts in Ayurveda. The concept of Prakriti holds a fundamental place in Ayurvedic thought and is deeply rooted in classical Indian Philosophical traditions, including the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and Darshanas. In these sources, Prakriti is described as "Abyakta Tattva," the unmanifest and subtle principle that underlies the entire cosmos. It represents the primordial state of existence, characterized by a perfect equilibrium among the three gunas: Sattva (purity and harmony), Rajas (activity and dynamism), and Tamas (inertia and stability). This balanced state of gunas is considered the source from which all creation emerges, making Prakriti the foundational matrix of both the material and living world. While these philosophical texts emphasize the universal and metaphysical dimensions of Prakriti, Ayurveda adapts and applies the concept in a more clinical and individual-centered manner. In Ayurvedic science, prakriti refers to the inherent constitution or Svabhava of an individual, which is determined at the time of conception. This constitution is shaped by various factors, including parental characteristics and intrauterine influences, and remains constant throughout life. It governs an individual's physical structure, physiological functions, and psychological tendencies. Importantly, Ayurveda maintains that prakriti is stable and unalterable to any profound disturbance or deviation from one's inherent constitution is viewed as incompatible with life. Thus, the concept serves as a critical basis for diagnosis, prognosis, and personalized therapeutic approaches in Ayurvedic practice.

INTRODUCTION-

According to Ayurvedic wisdom, just as each person has a unique physical constitution (Deha Prakriti), they also possess a distinct mental (psychological) constitution called Manasa Prakriti. The psychological constitution of an individual, termed 'Manasa Prakriti' in Ayurveda, encompasses the inherent mental traits and tendencies that shape one's thoughts, motivations, emotional responses, intellect, and logic. This constitution is influenced by the interplay of three fundamental qualities: Sattva

(balance and clarity), Rajas (activity and desire), and Tamas (inertia and ignorance). These gunas manifest in varying degrees, resulting in distinct psychological profiles that guide personal behavior and social interactions.

In Ayurvedic practice, understanding an individual's Manasika Prakriti is crucial for tailoring treatments, as it directly impacts the approach to therapy. The mental constitution not only reflects one's psychological makeup but also plays a significant role in determining susceptibility to mental health conditions and the overall effectiveness of interventions. By assessing and addressing each person's unique mental constitution, Ayurveda aims to promote holistic well-being and harmonious living.

Prakriti-

The word prakriti is a feminine term that mainly represents the nature of an individual. The term prakriti is derived from the Sanskrit root "KRI" with the prefix "PRA," which indicates "Prakroti-iti-Prakriti," which means that it produces others but is never produced by anyone.

Etymological and conceptual foundation of Prakriti:

The term "*Prakriti*" (Prakriti) has three syllables: "***Pra***" (Prakash), signifying light; "***Kri***" (Karma), denoting action; and "***Ti***" (Tama or Aavaran), representing covering or veil. This constitution has two components: the "mental body" and the "physical body." The term "prakriti" denotes an individual's "nature" or "innate constitution." Both "Pra" and "Kriti" refer to the "beginning" or "source of origin." The term "Prakriti" collectively signifies the "natural form." "Prakriti" derives from the root "Prakarotiiti." [1] The constitution (prakriti) associated with the fetus (garbha) is determined by the constitution of sperm and ovum, the time (of conception), and the status of health of the uterus, diet, and lifestyle of the mother (during pregnancy), and the interaction of Mahabhuta.[2]

Prakriti is prime importance in both healthy and diseased persons; the anatomical and physiological components of Prakriti can be considered as Deha or Dosha Prakriti, whereas the psychological component can be regarded as Manasa Prakriti. It can be considered as a mental personality as it almost simulates the concepts of personality. Acharya Charaka mentioned three types of Manasa Prakriti: Satvika Prakriti, Rajasika Prakriti, and Tamasika Prakriti, again, sub-classified into 16 varieties.[3]

Formulation of Prakriti- Life begins as a fertilized ovum. For the growth of a plant, four invariable factors are necessary: *Bija-* having the potency to germinate, *Ksetra-* to hold bija, *Ambu-* to provide nourishment, and *Rtu-* to provide a congenial environment for the germination and growth of the plant.

Similarly, for the fertilization and growth of the fetus. There are four invariable factors: **Suddha Sukra and Sonoita, Garbhasaya, Ahara Rasa,** and **Rtukala**. Among these, *Bija* is the main factor.[4] Sperm and ovum carry with them the Prakriti of both parents.[5]

Shukrashonitasamyoge yo bhavveddosha utkatah,

Prakrtirjayate tena tasya me lakshanam shrnu ||Su.Sa.6/63|| [6]

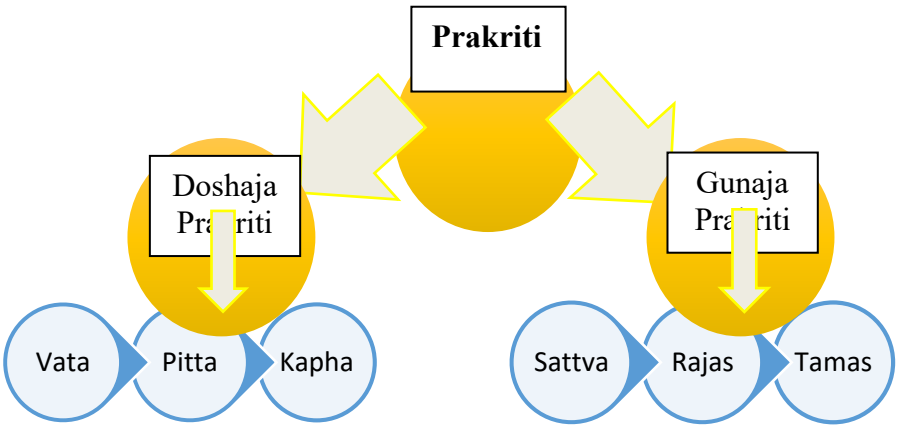
According to Ayurvedic principles, an individual's psychological constitution, known as Manasika Prakriti, is formed at the moment of conception. This formation results from the union of the paternal semen (Shukra) and the maternal ovum (Shonita), infused with the consciousness element (Atmavikara). Simultaneously, the three fundamental Mental attributes, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, combine to shape the psychological constitution, determining inherent mental tendencies and behaviors.

While the foundational aspects of Manasika Prakriti are set during conception, its expression and development are influenced by various factors throughout life. Hereditary elements, including family lineage and genetic predispositions, play a significant role. Additionally, environmental influences such as social interactions, cultural background, dietary habits, and personal experiences further refine and manifest an individual's psychological characteristics.

Classification of prakriti-

Ayurvedic science recognizes two main body types. So, Prakriti can be divided into two main categories.

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1. Doshaja Prakriti: Refers to the physical constitution, determined by the dominance of one or more of the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha.

2. Gunaja (Manasika) Prakriti: Refers to the mental constitution, based on the balance of three mental qualities: Satva (balance), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia).[7]

Manasa Prakriti (Personality in Ayurveda)-

The term 'Manasa Prakriti' is composed of two distinct words: 'Manasa' and 'Prakriti'. Manasa refers to the mind or psyche, while Prakriti signifies nature, from, or source. Therefore, Manasa prakriti conveys the concept of the natural or original form, or the source of an individual's psychological qualities. It constitutes the psychological constitution of an individual.

In Ayurveda, the mental constitution is categorized based on three fundamental attributes known as Triguna: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. These three qualities define different types of mental personalities. Each of these personality types is influenced by specific determining factors (Bhaga or Ansha), which make the mental constitution dynamic.[8] These factors are:

- **Sattva: Kalyanansha –** the tendency towards welfare or auspiciousness
- **Rajas: Roshansha –** the tendency toward anger or passion
- **Tamas: Mohansha –** the tendency toward confusion or bewilderment

These influences shape an individual's behavior, emotional tendencies, and decision-making style.[9]

Types of Manas Prakriti-

Based on broader psychological attributes, Manasa Prakriti is further classified into sixteen distinct types, collectively referred to as the *Shodasha Manasa Prakriti (16Type)*. These categories are symbolically designated according to characteristic traits that resemble or are idealized in various deities, demonic entities, and other living beings. Such symbolic analogies serve as descriptive tools to illustrate specific psychological tendencies and behavioural patterns. The three Gunas: Satva, Rajas, and Tamas, underlying these classifications, play a crucial role in maintaining equilibrium between the internal and external environments, thereby contributing to a form of psychological homeostasis that enables individuals to adapt to situational demands.

Classical Ayurvedic authorities present slight variations in this classification. According to **Acharya Charaka** and **Acharya Sushuruta**, Manasa Prakriti comprises seven Sattivika, six Rajasa, and three Tamasa types. In contrast, **Acharya Kashyapa** describes eight Sattivika, six Rajasa, and three Tamasa types. These classifications are often explained through similes drawn from gods, celestial beings, animals, and even plant life, providing a rich metaphorical framework for understanding diverse human psychological profiles.[10]

Sattva Prakriti:

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i. **Brahma kaya-** Features of brahma kaya are great belief in God, Cleanliness, worshipping, good quality to do sacrifices, purity, love for truth and scriptures. People of brahma kaya are fond of reading the Vedas and religious books. Away from desires, anger, lust, pride, affliction, envy, and pleasure.

ii. **Arsa kaya-** Features of Arsa kaya are committed to studying, penance, oblation, control over his sense organ, Hospitability, away from pride, attachment, affliction, hate, lust, Brilliant in skills & knowledge, Endowed with exposition power, skills & retention power.

iii. **Aindra kaya-** Features of Aindra kaya are Having prosperity, good advisor, continuously performing rituals, Brave, Good strength, Energetic, Not easily felt fatigued, Farsightedness in terms of acts, Delighting in religious acts & wealth creation, and Having the satisfaction of desires.

iv. **Yamya kaya-** Features of Yamya kaya are understanding good & bad acts, Initiation of action in time, Non-aggressive, Progressive, Good memory, Prosperity and freedom from attachment, envy, hate, affliction.

v. **Varuna kaya-** Features of Varuna kaya are Brave, Patience, Loves cleanliness & dislike impurity, Performer of rituals, Loves water related activities, Not easily fatigued, Having anger at proper time & place, Having pleasure in proper time & place.

vi. **Kaubera kaya-** Features of Kaubera kaya are Having many properties & pride, Possesses well established family & luxuries, Devoted to religion/rituals/pleasures & wealth, Love Purity, Express feelings like anger & pleasure in wrong places.

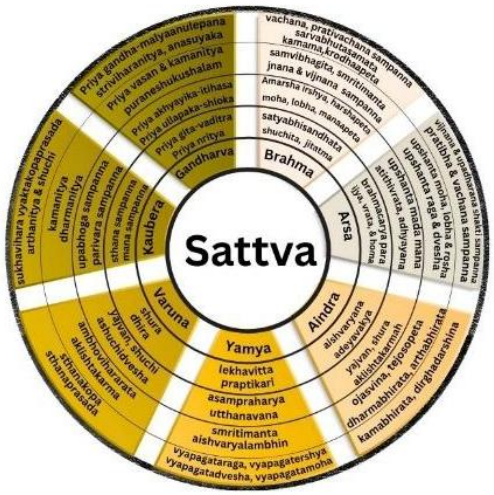


Image 1: Classification of Sattva Kaya according to Ayurveda .

vii. **Gandharva kaya-** Features of Gandharva kaya are Love dance/music/musical instruments/poetry/stories/history, Fond of pleasant smell/garlands/perfumes/goof clothes, Loves presence of women, Not jealous of others.

Rajas Prakriti:

i. **Asura kaya-** Features of Asura kaya are Brave, Cruel, Jealous of others, Having prosperity, Deceitful, Having terrifying personality, Merciless and Selfishness.

ii. **Rakshasa kaya-** Features of Rakshasa kaya are Intolerant, Having anger all the time, Violent, Cruel, Fond of food, Loves eating meat, Excessive desire for sleep, Hard worker, Jealous.

iii. **Paishacha kaya-** Features of Paishacha kaya are Excessive food intake, Fond of women, Loves female company, Unclean habits, Coward in nature, Makes others frightful, Abnormal diet and lifestyle in comparison to others.

iv. **Sarpa kaya-** Features of Sarpa kaya are Brave when excessively angry-Coward in normal conditions, Hard workers, Sharp in actions, Always in fear, Loves food and pleasure activities.

v. **Praita kaya-** Features of Praita kaya are Loves food a lot, Always in pain, Jealous of others, Having no discrimination in behavior, Excessively greedy and Does not like to work.

vi. **Shakuna kaya-** Features of Shakuna kaya are Attachment for passion, Excessive indulgence in food & activities, Unsteady behavior, Intolerant and Not interested to acquire anything.

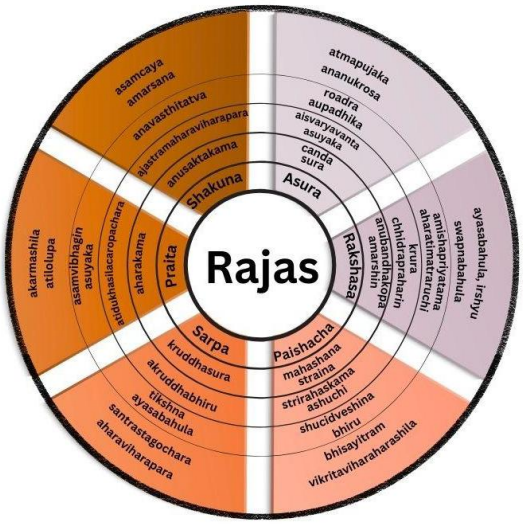


Image 2: Classification of Rajas Kaya according to Ayurveda .

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Tamas Prakriti:

i. **Pashava kaya-** Features of Pashava kaya are coward, Not intelligent, Disgusting eating habits, Indulge in excessive sexual acts, Excessive sleep taker.
ii. **Matsya kaya-** Features of Matsya kaya are Fearful nature, Less intelligent, Fond to food, Unsteady mind & activities, Always angry & busy at work, Fond of travel and Loves water.
iii. **Vanaspatva kaya-** Features of Vanasapatva kaya are Lazy in nature, Excessive indulgence in food, Deficient mental faculites.[2]

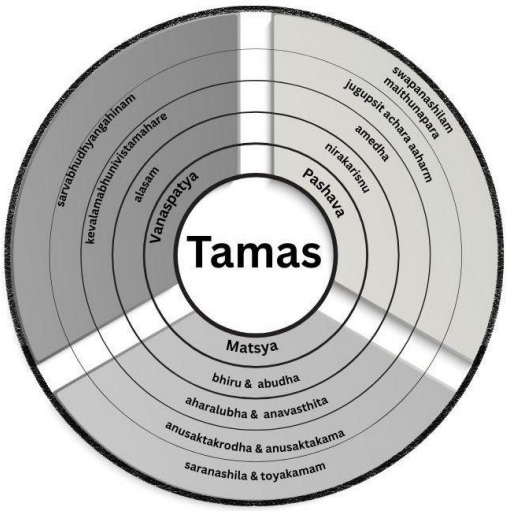


Image 3: Classification of Tamas Kaya according to Ayurveda .

The Importance of Manasika Prakriti-

Manasika Prakriti, or mental constitution in Ayurveda, is crucial for determining an individual's psychological traits, behavioral patterns, and susceptibility to diseases. Based on the predominance of Trigunas - Sattva (harmony), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia), it shapes personality and guides personalized mental health care, therapeutics, and disease prognosis.[12]

Manasa Prakriti is essential for tailoring personalized interventions that promote mental well-being. For instance, Sattvik individuals may benefit from practices that enhance clarity and balance, such as meditation and mindfulness. Conversely, Rajasik and Tamasik individuals might require approaches that address their specific tendencies, such as structured routines or therapies aimed at reducing inertia.

Prakriti Parikshan enables personalized healthcare by assessing an individual's unique constitution—defined by the balance of the Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas and their mental and emotional traits. This personalized understanding allows Ayurvedic practitioners to design treatments, diets, and lifestyle recommendations specifically tailored to the individual's inherent nature and health needs, ensuring more precise and effective care compared to generalized approaches.[13]

Manasa Prakriti recognizes the essential balance between the physical body and mental faculties, which together form the basis of holistic well-being. Classical Ayurvedic authorities emphasize that mental health is equally vital as physical health in maintaining systemic harmony. In this regard, Acharya Sushruta highlights the significance of psychological stability, noting that disturbances in the mind can directly influence bodily function and overall health. The interrelationship between mind and body is further elaborated by Acharya Charaka, who emphasizes their intimate and reciprocal association. According to him, mental disturbances can precipitate somatic disorders, while physical ailments may likewise affect mental states, reflecting a bidirectional psychosomatic continuum. This classical understanding is increasingly supported by contemporary scientific research, which demonstrates that stress, emotional states, and physical fitness are closely interconnected, influencing neurophysiological processes and overall well-being.

In a similar vein, western philosophical and scientific perspectives acknowledge that fluctuations in stress levels & meditative states can directly impact neural centers, thereby affecting both psychological and physiological functioning. Ayurvedic literature provides concrete clinical illustrations of this mind-body interaction through conditions such as ***Bhayaja Atishara*** (diarrhea arising from fear, anxiety, or nervousness) and ***Shokaja Atishara*** (diarrhea associated with grief and emotional distress), as described by the Acharyas. These examples clearly demonstrate how emotional disturbances manifest as physical symptoms, reinforcing the inseparable link between *Deha* (body) and *Manas* (mind).

Furthermore, Acharya Sharangadhara establishes a psychophysiological correlation by associating the three *dosa*s with the *gunas*, linking *Vata* with *Rajo-guna, Piitta* with *Sattva-guna*, and *Kapha* with *Tamo-guna.* This framework suggests that the physiological constitution inherently reflects psychological tendencies, thereby reinforcing the integrative nature of Ayurvedic thought.

Moreover, the recognition of the interconnectedness between *manas* and *Sharira* is not confined to Ayurveda alone; it is also acknowledged in broader philosophical traditions, where the unity of mind and body is regarded as a fundamental aspect of human existence.[14]

Impact of Gunas on the mind & body in the Ayurvedic perspective:

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According to Acharya Charaka-

Svarthendriyartha sankalpa vyabhichareanaachchane,

ekamasmin puruse sattvam, Rajastamahsattvajunayogachcha,

Na cha anekatvam, na hyekam heekakalamanesesiu pravartate,

Tasmannaikakala sarvendriyapravrttih. **||ch.su.8/5||** [15]

Within a single individual, the mind can exhibit diverse characteristics. These variations can be attributed to the differing experiences of its objects, perceptions derived from sensory faculties, its inherent nature, and its interaction with the three *Gunas: Satva, Rajas, and Tamas.* For instance, a mind influenced predominantly by rajas may display anger. When overshadowed by Tamas, it may manifest signs of ignorance or fear. On the other hand, when Sattva prevails, qualities like truthfulness and reverence emerge. These gunas, thus, contribute to the multifaceted nature of the mind.

Yadgunam chabhikshnam purushamanuvartate,

Sattvam tatsattvamevopadishanti munayo bahulyanusayat. **||ch.su.8/6||** [16]

As per the teaching of Acharyas, an individual's predominant behavior or actions determine their inherent nature. The question arises, how does one classify an individual as *Sativika, Rajsaika,* or *Tamasika?* While the human mind is dynamic and ever-changing, oscillating among the three Gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. A particular guna often holds dominance based on its frequency of manifestation. Thus, if an individual frequently exudes Sattvic tendencies, even if they occasionally display Rajasic or Tamasic traits, they are classified as having a Satvika nature. In essence, the dominant Guna becomes their baseline character, while the other Gunas are occasional deviations. The human psyche can be categorized into three distinct types based on Ayurvedic principles: Sattvik, Rajasik, and Tamasik.

Development of Prakriti-

The psychological constitution is constantly influenced by the hereditary components, social surroundings, personal factors like diet, experiences, and cultural background to determine the development of psychological constitution. It may shift from tamas dominance to rajas' dominance or sattva dominance and vice versa. There is always a predominance of activity of one attribute over another. This dominance influences and determines the individual's personality. A person's mind appears different in different situations owing to differences in perception and connections with purity (satva), passion (rajas), and ignorance (tamas). The mental disposition is ultimately determined by the frequency of predominance. [17]

Changeable Nature of Manasa Prakriti-

The term Prakriti is derived from the Sanskrit word "Prakṛtistu svabhāvaḥ" which translate to "Prakriti is the inherent nature or character." The ancient text Chakrapani explains that Prakriti is a permanent, non-pathological state that is established during the fetal development phase, influenced by various factors such as the mother's health, environment, and diet during pregnancy. Another important definition is from Rasavaisheshika, which describes Prakriti as a characteristic that remains unaltered throughout the individual's life, from conception until death, emerging from the interplay of doshas during the prenatal phase. [18]

Process of Prakriti Assessment-

The assessment of Manasa Prakriti is an important component of Ayurvedic clinical examination because it helps understand an individual's inherent psychological disposition, emotional tendencies, cognitive characteristics, behavioral patterns, and mental strength. Some validated and standardized tools for Manasa Prakriti assessment are:

- **AYUSOFT-CDAC -** AYUSOFT (CDAC) is an Ayurvedic clinical Prakriti decision support software developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Pune, in collaboration with Ayurveda experts and academic institutions. [19] It digitizes classical Ayurvedic knowledge and provides tools for constitution assessment (Physiological & Psychological), clinical analysis and research.
- **Mysore Triguna Scale -** The Mysore Triguna Scale is a standardized psychological personality assessment instrument. It was designed to assess the three Gunas described in Indian philosophical traditions: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. [20]

♦ **Sushruta Child Personality Inventory-** Sushruta child personality inventory is an Ayurveda based psychological assessment tool. It is a 54-item self-rating scale designed to assess the Manasa Prakrit of children based on traditional ayurvedic principles. [21]

♦ **Manasika Prakriti Inventory –** The Manasa Prakriti Inventory is an Ayurveda based personality assessment tool. It was designed to evaluate an individual's psychological constitution through the three Gunas Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. [22]

Clinical Significance of Manasa Prakriti-

Ayurveda considers the mind and body as closely interconnected components of human existence. Consequently, understanding an individual's Manasa Prakrit is relevant not only to the assessment of psychological constitution but also to disease prevention, clinical diagnosis, prognosis and therapeutic planning.

♦ **Role in Disease Etiology-** Manasa prakriti may influence individual's susceptibility to psychological and psychosomatic disturbances. The predominance and functional expression of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas shape cognitive processes, emotional regulation, motivation, decision making, and behavioral responses. Ayurvedic perspective, an imbalance of the mental dosas, particularly Rajas and Tamas, contributes to the development of Manasika Vikaras (psychological disorders). Unwholesome sensory engagement, intellectual errors, and inappropriate adaptation to seasonal and daily rhythms are recognized as important causes of disease.

♦ **Role in Diagnosis and Prognosis-** Manasa Prakriti is clinically useful in understanding the patient's psychological disposition, coping mechanisms, emotional stability, mental strength, and response to illness. Ayurvedic examination does not restrict itself to physical symptoms; it also considers the patient's Sattva Bala (mental strength). Acharya Charak describes three levels of Sattva Bala: Pravara (superior), Madhyama (Moderate) and Avara (inferior).[23] This assessment provides insight into an individual's capacity to withstand pain, fear, grief, anxiety and other stressful experiences.

♦ **Therapeutic Application Sattvavajaya Chikitsa-** Acharya charaka mention three principal therapeutic approaches: Daivavyapasaraya, Yuktivyapasarya and Sattvavajaya.[24] Sattvavajaya chikitsa is one of the distinctive non-pharmacological therapeutic approaches described in Ayurveda for maintaining and restoring mental equilibrium.

Sattvāvajayaḥ punar ahitebhyo'rthebhyo manonigrahaḥ.

Sattvavajaya is the restraint or regulation of the mind from unwholesome objects or experiences. The primary objective of Sattvavajaya chikitsa is to strengthen mental control and promote the appropriate functioning of Dhi (intellect), Dhriti (willpower), and Smriti (memory). It aims to reduce the influence of unwholesome thoughts, emotions, and sensory experiences while encouraging positive psychological qualities.

♦ **Psychosomatic Medicine-** Ayurveda's recognition of mind-body interaction anticipates modern psychosomatic and behavioral medicine. It recognizes that psychological experiences can influence physiological functioning and that physical illness can, in turn, affect metal and emotional well-being.[25] Understanding the conceptual similarities with modern psychosomatic medicine and behavioral medicine.

Conclusion-

Manasa Prakriti is an important concept of Ayurvedic psychology that provides a comprehensive understanding of an individual's inherent mental constitution, personality characteristics, and behavioral tendencies. Basic mental constitution of an individual traditionally regards as relatively stable the expression and predominance of the three Gunas may vary according to environmental influences, personal experiences, lifestyle and behavioral practice. The reciprocal relationship between the mind and body recognizes that psychological and physiological processes are interdependent on the maintenance of health and the manifestation of disease. Its relevance extends to disease susceptibility, clinical assessment, prognosis, and individualized therapeutic planning. Mental attributes and emotional experiences are recognized as having an important bearing on physiological processes and overall health. This understanding is reflected in the classical descriptions of conditions associated with emotional factors, as well as in the emphasis placed on mental assessment and Sattvavajaya Chikitsa. Accordingly, Manasa Prakriti provides a useful conceptual perspective for understanding individual psychological differences and their possible relevance to health, disease manifestation, and therapeutic considerations. Overall, Manasa Prakriti offers a valuable framework for understanding the mental dimensions of individuals. Its significance lies not only in the classification of personality types but also in its broader recognition of psychological individuality and the interrelationship between mental and physical health.

Further critical and evidence-based research may help establish a clear understanding of this concept and determine its potential contribution to contemporary approaches to personality, health, and individualized care.

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