

Ayurvedic Psychiatry: Progression from Ghosts to Consciousness

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Abstract

The term “Supernatural” connotes act of God, re-animating the dead with positive results, elements of ghosts, zombies, and vampires. The essence of the supernatural is that it is something beyond our understanding, though we may sneak glimpses of its truth. The basic understanding of the Supernatural is therefore “*something which does not belong to the natural world and cannot exist in reality*”. The idea of the Supernatural began to mean different things in different cultures. Different academic disciplines view it and make use of it with varying emphasis and meaning.

Bhuta Vidya is the branch of Ayurveda which deals with the mental effects caused by the Supernatural such as *Deva* (God), *Daitya* (Monster), *Gandharva* (skilled singers from the heaven), *Yaksha* (demigods, spirits usually benevolent but sometimes mischievous and sexually aggressive, caretakers of natural treasures hidden in Earth and tree roots, protectors of forests, wealth and virility), *Rakshasa* (Demon or Evil Spirit), *Pitru* (Ancestral or Forefathers), *Pisashi* (Flesh Eating Demons and Devils), *Naga* (semi divine beings, half-man half-snake, dragons) and so on. This paper is an attempt to position the mental effects of the Supernatural and the methods to manage them in the realms of healing with due respect to the associated cultural and academic aspects. Consciousness is the generic term that accords a holistic perspective to the cultural, academic and the associated aspects of healing.

Keywords: Ayurveda; Psychiatry; Ghost; Consciousness; Bhuta Vidya.

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INTRODUCTION

There are vast sources of traditional knowledge in science and medicine in India which have not been established through accepted processes of scientific testing nor are they shared openly. “Faith Healing” is clearly one practice from the past that derives from the Supernatural to produce a desired physiological psychology effect.

Bhuta Vidya is the sixth branch of Ashtanga Ayurveda. Bhuta Vidya deals with physiological

psychology effects and diseases acquired from unknown cause. It also deals with the effects of the supernatural on the human. It may also be bacterial or viral infections which is due to an invisible entity.

Ayurveda originated from Atharvaveda. Even though, Atharvaveda being the fourth Veda is eschewed for achieving the focus on the Spiritual by transcending the Material, Ayurveda is a household practice. The Astanga Ayurveda i.e 8 branches of Ayurveda areas follows.

1. Shalya (Surgery)
2. Shalakya / Urdhvaanga Chikitsa (ENT and Ophthalmology; Above the Collar Bone)
3. Kaya Chikitsa (General / Internal Medicine; Kaya is Full Body or Agni as Internal Fire. eAntaragni)
4. Bhuta Vidya / Graha Chikitsa (Psychiatry)
5. Koumarbhritya / Bala Chikitsa (Pediatrics)
6. Agadatantra/ Damstra Chikitsa (Forensics or Toxicology; Animal Bites)
7. Rasayantantra / Jara Chikitsa (Geriatrics / Rejuvenation)
8. Vajikarantantra / Vrsha Chikitsa (Aphrodisiacs)

Tradition advocates a holistic methodology that transcends this classification and also several related tantric texts. However, it is unfortunate but true that more often than not one runs into quacks who do not know any more than a jumbling of terms.

This paper is a study of Ayurvedic Psychiatry related to neuroscience, which examines multiple areas, including the brain, nervous system, and genetic factors, all of which may have the capacity to affect behaviour. Cultures all over the world believe mental illness is due to possession of demonic, evil or bad spirits or Satan. An individual losing control of his faculties is thus not only because of what he or she has done but because of somebody else's influence. In psychological terms, it is called projection. Bhuta is one such dominant projection.²

Bhuta Vidya is the branch of Ayurveda which deals with the mental effects caused by the Supernatural such as **Deva** (God), **Daitya** (Monster), **Gandharva** (skilled singers from the heaven), **Yaksha** (demigods, spirits usually benevolent but sometimes mischievous and sexually aggressive, caretakers of natural treasures hidden in Earth and tree roots, protectors of forests, wealth and virility), **Rakshasa** (Demon or Evil Spirit), **Pitru** (Ancestral

or Forefathers), **Pisashi** (Flesh Eating Demons and Devils), **Naga** (semi divine beings, half-man half-snake, dragons) and so on.

Bhuta (Ghost), **Preta** (Spirit stuck and suffering in earthly realm), **Vetal** (Spirits that can inhabit corpses) and **Pishachi** (Shape Shifting malevolent Spirits) are perceived to certainly cause abnormal psychological conditions. Bhuta Vidya deals with the cause of these diseases which are directly not visible and have no direct explanation in terms of **Tridosha** i.e Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Mental health in Ayurveda is defined in terms of the **Triguna** i.e Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. These are equivalent to various parasympathetic and sympathetic states of mind. The clear distinction between **Tridosha** and **Triguna** results in the need for including methods of healing such as Mantra Chanting, Worshipping Holy Plants, Use of Some Herbs, Havan (For Pitru and Preta), Charms and Talisman, Gem Stones, Homa, Ahara (Diet), Pranayama, Yoga and Meditation that aim at ensuring the harmony of Body, Mind and Spirit.

Much of Bhuta Vidya both as symptoms and treatments remains unrevealed⁷ and intriguingly mystical. This branch of Ayurveda has many complex societal ramifications even if one case is healed.

SUSHRUTA SAMHITHA^{4,5}

Sushruta Samhitha has become synonymous with Surgery. This is only one of the eight branches of Ayurveda. However, the Bhuta Vidya related topics are all scattered in the 27 chapters of Sushruta Samhitha **Sutra Sthan** contains 9 chapters, **Sharir Sthan** contains 1 chapter, **Chikitsa Sthan** contains 2 chapters and **Uttara Tantra** contains 15 chapters with topics related to Bhuta Vidya. These chapters containing the symptoms and treatments of the specified aspects of Bhuta Vidya are mentioned below.

Chapters from Sutra Sthan

1. Chapter 1 – Vedotpatti
2. Chapter 5 – Agropaharaniya
3. Chapter 6 – Ritucharya
4. Chapter 19 – Vranitopasaniya
5. Chapter 24 – Vyadhisamuddesiya
6. Chapter 28 – Viharitaaviparita Vrana Vijnaniya
7. Chapter 29 – Viharitaviparita Swapna Nidarshaniyam`

8. Chapter 31 – Chayavipratipattim
9. Chapter 45 - Dravadravya Bhidhim

Chapter from Sharir Sthan

1. Chapter 10 - Garbhiniyakaran Sharir

Chapters from Chikitsa Sthan

1. Chapter 1 - Divraniya Chikitsitam
2. Chapter 24 - Anagatavadhapratishedham

Chapters from Uttara Tantra

1. Chapter 28 - Skandhagraha Pratishedham
2. Chapter 29-Skandaapasmargraha Pratishedham
3. Chapter 30 – Shakunipratishedham
4. Chapter 31 – Revatipratishedham
5. Chapter 32 – Putanapratishedham
6. Chapter 33 - Andhaputana Pratishedham
7. Chapter 34 - Shitaputana Pratishedham
8. Chapter 35 - Mukhamandika Pratishedham
9. Chapter 36 - Naigamesh Pratishedham
10. Chapter 37 – Grahotpattim
11. Chapter 39 - Jwara Pratishedham
12. Chapter 40 - Atisara Pratishedham
13. Chapter 60 – Amanushopasrga
14. Chapter 61 - Apasmar Pratishedham
15. Chapter 62 - Unmad Pratishedham

The last three chapters dealing with Demonology, Epilepsy and Insanity have been of specific interest to the modern medicine. However, focus only on these chapters invariably results in losing sight of a holistic context that may heal better and is also inexpensive. More importantly, the Bhutas including the Panchabhutas (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ethereal Space) provide ample context for the healer to provide long term or even everlasting cures that manifest as social reality.

CONSCIOUSNESS^{6,8}

There are three types of treatment which is mentioned in Ayurveda for healing. They are:

1. Daivyapasrayam Chikitsa the god oriented treatment
2. Yuktivyapasrayam Chikitsa the science oriented treatment

3. Satvavjayah Chikitsa the soul oriented treatment

Modern medical treatments draw more from the seventh branch of Ayurveda i.e Rasayana. The term "Rasayana" is derived from the Sanskrit words "Rasa," which means "essence" or "juice," and "Ayana," which means "path" or "way." Rasayana therapies are aimed at promoting overall health, longevity, and vitality by nourishing and revitalizing the body and mind. Rasayana treatments and practices involve various approaches, including dietary modifications, herbal formulations, lifestyle changes, physical exercises, meditation, and spiritual practices. The primary goal is to optimize the body's metabolic processes, enhance cellular rejuvenation, strengthen the immune system, and improve mental clarity. Modern medicine has a few chemicals and drugs that produce these effects though limited in scope.

The author opines that Bhuta Vidya needs to draw more from the Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas which are the classical Indic texts on healing.

Sharirendriya satva atma samyogo dhari jeevitam nityagashchanu-bandhshchparyayaer ayu ruchchayte Meaning:

Ayu or life is the conjunction of the body, senses (indriya), organs, mind (satva) and soul (the self, the atman). Several synonyms of Ayu exist as indicated in this shloka which are dhari (what we sustain and achieve), jivita (who is alive, the organism), nityaga (which is with us always) and anubandha (continuous flow)

Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana, Chapter 1, Verse 42

Modern medicine opines that the life span of any person, plant, or animal, is called Ayu. Ayurveda differs with a definition of Ayu that means a collective of the body (sharira) which is made up of the five elements (earth, water, air, fire, sky), along with the Indriya i.e sense organs and working organs, the mind and soul.

Charaka Samhita advocates "Achara Rasayana"^{1,3} as one of the methodologies to rejuvenate tissues of body, develops mental health and other aspects of human life. Achara Rasayana is of the type "adravyabhoota" in which there is no consideration of any pharmaceutical measure. It increases immunity of the body and mind which is an essential factor for healthy life. It is also described in Achara Rasayana that gaining the

knowledge of scriptures that sharpens our intellect results in holistic well-being. With the knowledge of literature, one will restrain from pragyaparadha (errors, mistakes or crimes due to lack of intellect) which is a factor for ill-health. It teaches about virtuous behaviours which are necessary to develop healthy society. It also works in the way to calmness of mind which is necessary to develop spiritual aspect. Achara Rasayana is strongly related to Consciousness i.e the individual awareness of your unique thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations, and environments.

Clinical psychology has questioned the impact of "consciousness" on the determination of human responsibility across psychiatric disorders. In recent years, specific clinical approaches have focused on "consciousness" that could play a key role in psychotherapy. There are five levels of Consciousness They are:

- **Conscious:** Everything you are aware of
- **Preconscious:** Information you are not currently aware of that you can pull into awareness if needed
- **Unconscious:** Memories that are outside of awareness and inaccessible
- **Non-conscious:** Automatically bodily functions that occur without awareness and sensation
- **Subconscious:** Information that is out of consciousness and not immediately available to consciousness

Psychedelic drugs are a group of substances that change or enhance sensory perceptions, thought processes, and energy levels. They are also known as hallucinogenic drugs or simply hallucinogens. Hallucinogens were used in psychotherapy in the 1960s. They are slowly reappearing in psychology and psychiatry as a viable way to treat anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and more. These drugs are categorized as follows.

- **Stimulants:** Heightened awareness can create feelings of euphoria.
- **Depressants:** Lowered awareness can create feelings of relaxation.
- **Hallucinogens:** Altered perception of reality can create feelings of paranoia.

Consciousness is an alternative to the usage of these substances. Higher states of consciousness are often associated with spiritual or mystical experiences. Consciousness is assessed as a combination of verbal behaviour, arousal, brain

activity and purposeful movement. Mantra Chanting, Worshiping Holy Plants, Pranayama, Yoga and Meditation are all consciousness-based therapies in Ayurvedic Psychiatry aligned to Achara Rasayana.

A study of Ayurvedic Psychiatry is a progression from Ghosts, Witch Craft, Sorcery to austere living and consciousness It is a positive thrust from mental disorders to the faith based orderliness.

CONCLUSIONS

Mental health specialists say at least one in every 10 Indians is in need of psychiatric care to deal with issues ranging from anxiety disorders, phobia, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, learning disorders, bipolar disorder, autism, conduct disorders and dementia. In the year 2017, World Health Organization (WHO) suggested that one in every five Indians might suffer from depression at some point in their lives. But there is a dearth of trained psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses and social workers. 70% of Indians of different faiths believe in God as described in their holy scriptures. Among global citizens 61% said they believe in the existence of God or higher power.

Believing in the existence of God or higher power is seen as a solution for life's rigors. Believing in the Supernatural helps many people in overcoming crises, giving meaning to their lives and infuses their life with happiness.

Ayurvedic Psychiatry and its associated methodologies that range from Ghost to Consciousness are outlined in this paper. It is important to provide a perspective for alternative medicine including faith healing that border on Physiological Psychology.

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