Online ISSN 2581-785X

Review Article

International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga
Vol. 9, No. 6, November–December 2026

Unmada in Ayurveda and Contemporary Mental Health: A Systematic Review of Classical Pathogenesis and Therapeutic Approaches

Dipankar Saha[1*], Kunj Bihari Saini[2] and Bijit Das[3]

[1] *Asst Professor,Dept of Samhita,Sanskrit and siddhanta ,North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homeopathy*
[2] *Asst Professor ,Dept of Rachana Sarir,North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homeopathy*
[3] *Dept of Shalya Tantra , Asst Professor ,North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homeopathy.*

* Corresponding author. E-mail: drdipankarsaha1991@gmail.com

https://doi.org/10.48165/irjay.2026.9.06.05

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 12.08.2026
Revised: 01.09.2026
Accepted: 30.09.2026

Keywords
Ayurveda
psychiatry
smriti
nidra
sattvavajaya
sleep
memory

ABSTRACT

Psychiatry in modern medicine mainly focuses on neurochemical imbalances — mainly dopamine and serotonin — whereas Ayurveda offers a holistic approach for mental health rooted in the concepts of mind, atma, sattwa, rajas and tamas. In this modern era, there is a rising prevalence of anxiety, depression, insomnia and memory disorders, highlighting the need for an integrative approach to these conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda psychiatry ,known as Manasa Roga or Bhutavidya ,integrates ancient Indian medicine with modern mental healthcare to treat psychological disorders through mind body balance .

Today's modern lifestyle is defined by competition where people work like machines, facing heavy workloads, stress and anxiety. In this era of technology, people increasingly feel lonely.

The suicide rate is increasing. Many talented students of reputed institutions have died by suicide; even elderly people above 70 — retired teachers, businessmen or those from other professions — have been found to die by suicide, unable to cope with difficult situations.

This raises the question of how Ayurveda can help in this modern era and what it offers regarding mental health.

Aim -

This article aims to explore the the Ayurvedic understanding of psychiatry and unmada with special reference to the mind, the three gunas of the mind, memory and sleep.

Insanity is mentioned as Unmada in Ayurveda, characterised by the perversion of mind, intellect, consciousness, knowledge, memory, desire, manners, behaviour and conduct.

Punarvasu Atreya considers prajnaparadha as the causative factor of unmada.

Due to prajnaparadh the patient disregards the gods

,ancestors ,elders ,teachers and other respectable ones .

He also resorts to undesirable and such other inauspicious activities .

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Caraka Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya along with their commentaries were reviewed.

Table 1

Purbarupa or premonitory features of unmada according to caraka	Purbarupa or premonitory features of ayurveda according to susruta
शिरसःशून्यता-emptiness in head. Congestion in eyes. Noise in ears. Hard breathing in excess. Anorexia. Frequent horripilation . Manifestation of symptoms of facial paralysis in dreams .	Mental confusion ,emotional bouts ,noise in the ears ,debility of the body ,over enthusiasm would get insanity in a short time .

NIDANA or causative factors OF UNMADA

Table 2

According to caraka- Viruddha Bhojana. Asuchi bhojana or consumption of viruddha ahara ,impure or unclean food ,disrespectful to gods ,preceptors and brahmanas . Psychological trauma . Psychological trauma due to fear ,exhilaration and abnormal or irregular activities .	According to Susruta When mind is wounded deeply by terror of thieves ,enemies and others or by loss of wealth or kith and kin or futile longing for sex with favourite women ,derangement of mind takes place .

Laksana or symptoms according to caraka -

According to susruta also ,unmada is of 5 types — one due to each dosa separately, another due to a combination of all dosas, and the fifth due to manasa dukha or misery of the mind.

The perfect balance of mind,body and soul is considered as complete health in Ayurveda .

Ayurveda classifies its treatment modalities into three parts, viz., Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, Yuktivyapasraya Cikitsa and Daivavyapasraya Cikitsa.

Sattvavajaya therapy is mentioned in Ayurveda and is used as a concept of psychotherapy. It can also be correlated with counselling.

It can also be referred to as mental restraint or mind control; as referred to by Caraka, it is achieved through spiritual knowledge, philosophy and concentration.

According to Ayurveda, prajnaparadha is the main etiological factor in unmada, which can be corrected through sattvavajaya.

Yuktivyapasraya cikitsa

Deepana and Pachana .

Snehapana – Kalyanaka Ghrita etc. to nourish nervous tissues and pacify aggravated doshas.

Samshodhana – Vamana, Virechana, Basti.

External Therapies – Abhyanga, Shirodhara, etc.

Common Herbal Formulations

Brahmi .

Shankhapuspi .

Aswagandha.

Therapies and lifestyle Practices

1.Yoga and Pranayama-Gentle postures and breathing exercises regulate the nervous system .

2.Dinacarya –Consistent sleep schedules,meditation and balanced meals stabilize circadian rhythms .

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa or mind-control therapy has a special status, incorporating sadvritta or the moral code.

The person abstaining from meat and wine ,taking wholesome diet ,sincere and clean or pure ,having preponderance of sattva is not afflicted either by endogenous or exogenous psychosis .

4.According to Caraka ,the exogenous psychosis or agantuja type of unmada is pacified by sacrifice ,auspicious acts ,oblations ,amulets of drugs ,truthfulness ,good conduct ,knowledge of vedas ,religion ,observation of religious duties ,successful use of drugs .

5.Person should get adequate sleep .

6.Person should not have too much fear /anxiety of any issues .

According to Susruta, in all varieties of unmada, all methods that purify the mind and make it calm and free from disturbing emotions should be employed.

In the manasika kind of unmada ,the physician should remove the cause of grief .

According to Susruta, the patient should be administered oleation and sudation therapies first, followed by emesis and purgation using strong drugs.

Table 3

VATAJA UNMADA LAKSANA	PITTAJA UNMADA LAKSANA	KAPHAJA UNMADA LAKSANA	SANNIPATAJA UNMADA LAKSANA	AGANTUJA UNMADA LAKSANA
Laughing ,smiling ,dancing At improper place.	Becoming naked. Terrorising others and running all around . Desire for shade ,cold water and food .	Slow speech and movement . Dislike for food . Longing for women . Excessive sleep .	All features of vata ,pitta and kapha .	Speech ,activity Similar to that of superhumans.

Other Methods to treat unmada

If the mind has got injured or is afflicted due to loss of desired or longed thing or person,then assurance and consolation to provide similar thing or person pacifies the agitation of mind.

Psychosis caused by passion,grief,fear,anger,envy and greed should be pacified by mutually contradictory factors and patient will get pacified.

In Vataja unmada,intake of unctous articles should be prescribed.

In case of psychosis caused by kapha and pitta after initial unction and sudation ,emetics then purgatives should be given.

After that asthapana and anuvasana basti and head evacuation should be given.

These procedures to be done according to the strength of dosas.

Some formulations

Hingvadi Ghrita -It is a successful eliminator of psychosis.

Kalyanaka Ghrita etc

Features of recovery from unmada

Perspicuity or clearness of sense organs ,intellect ,self and mind ,normalcy or equilibrium of dhatus are features of relief or after cure of psychosis .

Concept of smriti or memory in Ayurveda

Eight factors are mentioned in Ayurveda for a good memory.

1. निमित्त -knowledge of cause.
2. रूप ग्रहण से -knowledge of form.
3. सादृश्य -Knowledge of similarity.
4. सविपर्यया -knowledge of contrast.
5. सत्व अनुबंधादाद-concentration of mind
6. अभ्यास -Repetition
7. पुनः श्रुतात -To hear the things previously heard.
8. स्मरणात -To remember the things or objects previously seen ,heard or felt.

Types of mind

त्रिविधं खलू सत्व -शुद्ध, राजसम , तमासमिति।

1.Sattwik-It is free from defects.

2.Rajasik-It is defective because of anger.

3.Tamasik-It is defective because of ignorance.

Sattwik type is again of 7 categories.

1. ब्रह्म सत्व – Characteristics are:

Purity, freedom from anger,ego,passion,dejection, intolerance.

Power of discrimination, material and spiritual knowledge.

2.Rishi sattva -

यज्ञ करना, अध्ययन करना, व्रत का पालन करना, ब्रह्मचर्य etc.

3.Aindra sattva-

Far sightedness,devotion to virtuous acts, earning of wealth and proper satisfaction of desires.

4. Yamya sattva – Initiation of actions in time; freedom from hatred, envy and ignorance.

5.Varuna sattva-

Exhibition of anger and pleasure in proper place.

6. Kauvera -

Constant liking for virtuous acts ,wealth satisfaction of desires ,purity ,liking for pleasures of recreation .

7. Gandharva -

Fondness for dancing ,singing ,music and praise .Expertness in poetry ,stories .

Types of Rajasa individual

1. Asura -(sharing the traits of asura .) Characteristic features are bravery ,envy ,terrifying appearance and ruthlessness and indulgence in self praise .

2. Raksasa -Intolerance ,constant anger ,fondness for non-vegetarian food ,excessive sleep .

3. Paisaca-fondness for women ,likely for staying with women in lonely place ,unclean habits ,disliking for cleanliness .

4. Sarpa -sharing the traits of snake .Characteristic features are bravery when in wrathful disposition and cowardice when not in wrathful disposition ,sharp reaction .

5. Praita -sharing the traits of praita .Characteristic features are excessive desire for food ,enviousness ,excessive greediness .

6. Sakuna -Sharing the traits of sakuni or bird .Characteristic features are attachment with passion ,excessive food and regimen ,unsteadiness ,ruthlessness .

Different types of tamasa individual

1. Pasava -Sharing the traits of animal .Characteristic features are lack of intelligence ,hateful conduct and food habit .

2. Matsya -Sharing the traits of fish .Characteristic features are cowardice ,lack of intelligence ,wrathful disposition .

3. Vanaspatya -Sharing the traits of vegetable life .Characteristic features are indolence ,deficiency of all the intellectual faculties .

NIDRA

Nidra is one of the trayopastambha, i.e., the three pillars of life.

Trayopastambha refers to the three supporting pillars of life.

Importance or effects of sleep -

Happiness (sukha), stoutness (pusti), strength (bala), knowledge (jnana) and long life (ayu) all result from good sleep.

Sleeping at inappropriate times, excessive sleep and night wakefulness deprive a person of both happiness and longevity.

DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, psychiatric disorders are mainly described as unmada, whose causes include intake of viruddha ahara, impure ahara and prajnaparadha. Various methods mentioned in Ayurveda have both preventive and curative aspects. One such method mentioned by Susruta is to always remain cheerful, i.e., to maintain enthusiasm for life — never becoming excessively elated in success nor excessively despondent in failure — and to have adequate sleep in order to gain the beneficial effects of nidra.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda considers prasanna atma, indriya and mana, alongside the equilibrium of dosha, dhatu and mala, as constituting swastha.

These encompass right food (preferably vegetarian), right routine and right thinking.

There is extensive discussion regarding Achara Rasayana, Sadvritta, Pranayama and Asanas in Ayurveda. All of these are helpful in maintaining proper mental health and tackling mental illness. Knowledge of causative factors and the treatment procedures described can be used in both a preventive and curative capacity.

REFERENCES

1. Agnivesha. (2014). Charaka Samhita (Y. T. Acharya, Ed.; Chakrapanidatta, Comm.). Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan. (Sharira Sthana 1/18–22, 3/13).
2. Dash, B. (2014). Charaka Samhita: Chikitsa Sthana, Chapter 9 (Unmada Chikitsa). Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series.
3. Sushruta. (2013). Sushruta Samhita (Y. T. Acharya, Ed.; Dalhana, Comm.). Chaukhambha Orientalia. (Sharira Sthana 4/33–38).
4. Vagbhata. (2012). Ashtanga Hridaya (with Sarvangasundara commentary of Arunadatta). Chaukhamba Surbharati. (Sutra Sthana 7/52–56).
5. Thakral, K. K. (2014). Sushruta Samhita: Uttara Sthana, Chapter 6. Chaukhamba Orientalia.
6. Dash, B. (2014). Charaka Samhita: Sharira Sthana, Chapter 4. Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series.
7. Sharma, P. V. (2014). Charaka Samhita: Chikitsa Sthana, Chapter 9. Chaukhamba Orientalia.
8. Dwivedi, L. D. (2014). Charaka Samhita: Nidana Sthana, Chapter 7. Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy.

How to Cite this Article: Saha D., Saini K.B., Das B.. (2026). Unmada in Ayurveda and Contemporary Mental Health: A Systematic Review of Classical Pathogenesis and Therapeutic Approaches. *International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga*, ***9***(6), 36-39. https://doi.org/10.48165/irjay.2026.9.06.05