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MANAS SHARIR (MIND-BODY AXIS): ROLE OF *SATVA*, *RAJAS*, AND *TAMAS* IN STRESS PHYSIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *Manas Sharir* in Ayurveda represents the intricate connection between the mind and body, emphasizing their interdependence in maintaining overall health. Central to this theory are the three *Gunas* — *Satva* (purity and balance), *Rajas* (activity and agitation), and *Tamas* (inertia and ignorance) — which govern mental states and influence physiological processes, particularly in stress response. Modern science corroborates the impact of these psychological states on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, autonomic nervous system, and inflammatory pathways. This article explores the physiological correlation between Ayurvedic principles of *Manas Sharir* and contemporary stress physiology, offering insights into holistic stress management.

KEYWORDS: *Manas Sharir*, *Satva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*, Mind-Body Axis, Stress Physiology, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes a holistic understanding of health through the balance of body, mind, and spirit. Manas Sharir, the Ayurvedic concept of the mind-body axis, integrates mental and physical dimensions of health. Stress, a ubiquitous phenomenon, disrupts this harmony, triggering a cascade of physiological changes. The triad of Gunas — Satva, Rajas, and Tamas — provides a framework to comprehend mental states and their influence on stress physiology. This article delves into the interplay between the Gunas and modern scientific understanding of stress response, highlighting the relevance of Ayurvedic wisdom in contemporary medicine.

The Concept of Manas Sharir

In Ayurveda, Manas (mind) is considered a subtle yet potent force influencing both health and disease. It interacts with the Sharir (body) through the mind-body axis, mediating physiological and psychological responses. The Manas is governed by three Gunas, each contributing distinct qualities.

Satva: Characterized by clarity, knowledge, and balance. It promotes mental stability and resilience against stress.

Rajas: Associated with dynamism, ambition, and restlessness. Excessive Rajas leads to hyperactivity and stress.

Tamas: Denotes inertia, ignorance, and lethargy. Predominance of Tamas results in apathy and mental dullness. The equilibrium of these Gunas determines an individual's mental and emotional health, influencing their response to stressors.

Stress Physiology: A Modern Perspective

Stress activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the autonomic nervous system, resulting in the release of cortisol and catecholamines. Chronic activation of these pathways leads to.

Neuroendocrine Dysregulation: Persistent HPA activation disrupts hormonal balance, contributing to anxiety and depression.

Inflammatory Pathways: Stress-induced pro-inflammatory cytokines impact immune function and metabolic health.

Autonomic Imbalance: Overactivation of the sympathetic nervous system causes cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disturbances.

Role of Satva, Rajas, and Tamas in Stress Physiology

Satva and Stress Resilience: Satva fosters emotional stability and adaptive coping mechanisms. Enhances parasympathetic activity, reducing cortisol levels and inflammatory markers. Practices such as meditation and mindfulness strengthen Satva, mitigating stress response.

Rajas and Hyperactivity: Excess Rajas drives overreaction to stress, increasing sympathetic tone and cortisol secretion. Associated with anxiety, insomnia, and heightened inflammatory responses. Ayurvedic

interventions aim to moderate Rajas through calming therapies like Shirodhara and herbal remedies.

Tamas and Mental Fatigue: Predominance of Tamas leads to poor coping, withdrawal, and depressive states. Impairs cognitive function and exacerbates HPA axis dysregulation. Ayurvedic strategies to reduce Tamas include detoxification (Panchakarma) and revitalizing herbs like Ashwagandha and Brahmi.

Ayurvedic Strategies for Stress Management

Sattvic Lifestyle: Emphasis on a balanced diet, regular sleep, and mindful practices enhances Satva. Daily routines (Dinacharya) and seasonal regimens (Ritucharya) align the body with natural rhythms.

Herbal Interventions: Adaptogens such as Ashwagandha, Shatavari, and Brahmi modulate stress response by balancing Rajas and Tamas.

Mind-Body Practices: Yoga, Pranayama, and meditation promote mental clarity and physiological homeostasis. These practices improve heart rate variability (HRV) and reduce HPA axis hyperactivity.

Integrative Approach: Bridging Ayurveda and Modern Science: The convergence of Ayurvedic principles and contemporary stress physiology offers a holistic framework for stress management. Interventions targeting the Gunas complement modern therapies by addressing the root causes of mental and physical imbalances. Personalized approaches, based on an individual's Prakriti (constitution), further enhance therapeutic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The interplay between Satva, Rajas, and Tamas provides a profound understanding of the mind-body axis and its role in stress physiology. Integrating Ayurvedic insights with modern scientific advancements can revolutionize stress management, fostering resilience and holistic well-being.

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