

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

Dipinti Singh<sup>1\*</sup>, Jyoti Shankar Tripathi<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In present times human beings are living in a very unsettled world. People have to deal with unforeseen and unpredictable events and personal losses most of the time. Any unpredictable event or period that has a negative physical and psychological impact is perceived as a crisis. In modern times, we need a different approach to help us maintain inner peace and develop strong emotional resilience, preventing disease states when individuals deal with a crisis. This review article outlines the specific role of spiritual principles and spiritual living as a component of Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic psychotherapy) for crisis management. Sattvavajava Chikitsa (SC), which also has a psycho-spiritual dimension is commonly used as a psychotherapeutic measure for curative and preventive management of psychological and psychosomatic illnesses. SC works on five principles: development of spiritual knowledge, scriptural/scientific knowledge/skilled knowledge, patience, positive memory, and promotion of mental peace and meditation. In this article, we have focused on only one dimension of SC: the promotion of spiritual knowledge reviewed the concept of spirituality mentioned in Ayurvedic & allied literature, and also developed practical psychological aspects of spirituality that will be useful as a technique for crisis management.

**Keywords:** *Crisis Management, Sattvavajava Chikitsa, Ayurvedic Psychotherapy, Spirituality*

**C**risis-In present times human beings are living in a very unsettled world. People have to deal with unforeseen and unpredictable events and personal losses most of the time. Any unpredictable event or period that has a negative physical and psychological impact is perceived as a crisis. James and Gilliland (2005) defined it as the “perception or experience of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms”. In the context of mental health, the crisis is often linked with psychological stress, which means that the crisis is not only associated with a traumatic event or period but also refers to a person's response physical, emotional, and behavioral responses to events that are appraised as threatening. In their

<sup>1</sup>Senior Research Fellowship, Pursuing Ph.D. Department of Kayachikitsa, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Kayachikitsa, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: October 28, 2022; Revision Received: December 05, 2022; Accepted: December 12, 2022

## **Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)**

definition of Organizational Crisis, Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (1988) have noted four defining characteristics of crisis i.e. 1. specific which means limited to a particular event or conditions 2. Unexpected/unexpected 3. Uncertainty 4. perceived as a threat. Roberts (2005) refers to the crisis as an upset in the steady state. Roberts mentioned three causes of the crisis that is 1. Stressful or traumatic events 2. Person perceived event as a disturbance or derangement 3. The individual's inability to resolve the disruption through coping mechanisms previously used. Roberts also described five components of the crisis that would help create a framework or blueprint for crisis intervention. These components are 1. dangerous or traumatic event 2. Vulnerable or unbalanced state 3. Precipitating factor 4. An active crisis state depends on the individual's perception 5. Resolution of the crisis. In the crisis or traumatic stage, a person feels denial, numbness, avoidance of places or things that remind of the trauma, withdrawal from social interaction, depression, inability to focus, and difficulty communicating with others. A person after an acute trauma period also experiences fear, irritability, obsessive images, insomnia nightmares, increased sensitivity to external stimuli, and traumatic events (Doepel, D. G.,1991). Research study proved that nearly 7.5 percent of people living in the area near the attacks reported symptoms of PTSD related and 9.7 percent reported symptoms of depression even as late as 2 months after the attack (Galea et al 2002). Research studies have also proven psychological stressors like major life changes (eg. job loss, persistent failure, relationship conflicts, death of spouse, and physical as well as mental illness extra) daily hassles (eg. minor disagreements, delays) also affect a person's physical, mental health, well-being and lead psychosomatic disorders (Pelletier and Lutz, 1988, Salama et al., 2004 Sapolsky et al., 2004, Jeronimus et al 2014, Cohen, 2007) In modern times, we need a different approach to help us maintain inner peace and develop strong emotional resilience which prevents from disease states when individual deal with the crisis.

### ***Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic psychotherapy)***

This review article outlines the specific role of spiritual principles and spiritual living as a component of *Sattvavajava Chikitsa* (Ayurvedic psychotherapy) for crisis management. Ayurveda considers life as a complete psycho-physical-spiritual entity that is comprising the body, senses, mind, and soul or self are the basis of life and the balance between these dimensional entities is considered perfect health, and anything that disturbs this balance leads to disease (Ch.Su. 1/42, p. 13). Ayurveda presents a holistic approach to health that offers pharmacological as well as various non-pharmacological approaches and the basic purpose of these approaches is the maintenance of health, the prevention, and the alleviation of diseases. *Sattvavajava Chikitsa* (SC) is one of the non-pharmacological approaches used especially in the case of psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders. The word *Sattva* refers to mind and *Avajaya* refers to conquer. Acharya Charak was the first person who defines it. SC refers to developing control over the mind from unwholesome objects (*vishayas*) (Ch.Su.11/54 p.238). The unwholesome objects (*vishayas*) may be present in the form of *heena yoga* (non indulgence), *mithya yoga* (improper indulgence), and *ati yoga* (excessive indulgence). SC consists of five fundamental principles/approaches of management which are mentioned by Acharya Charak (Ch.Su. 1/58 p.35).

*Gyan:-Gyan* refers to the promotion of spiritual knowledge. It is intended to provide support to develop a vision of oneself and knowledge of the external world using various spiritual principles. Therefore, the patient develops inner skills to control his/her problems.

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

*Vijnana*:-*Vijnana* refers to the promotion of scriptural knowledge. Therefore, it also includes all presently available scientific knowledge which have been practically applicable & useful and has been proven. Its objective is to educate the person to develop an understanding of the nature of the problem and the illness and to help them improve their coping skills.

*Dhairya*:-*Dhairya* refers to the promotion of patience. Its goal is to maintain mental balance, develop impulse control, and coping skills (i.e. calm, acceptance, compassion, or tolerance) in the face of negative circumstances and internal conflicts.

*Smriti*:-*Smriti* refers to the promotion of memory, it helps the patient to remember positive memories and helps him to forget all negative stressful and painful memories. The objective is to recall the object of past experience, understand the object's exact nature, and uncover the hidden Conflict, which is the primary source of disease.

*Samadhi*:-*Samadhi* refers to the promotion of meditation, i.e., all techniques that improve attention, concentration, etc. It incorporates all eight components of *Ashatanga Yoga*. It also includes the withdrawal of the mind from worldly objects, meditation on the spiritual dimensions of the personality and the attainment of a higher level of awareness.

Firstly here we will briefly explain the concept of spirituality and discuss why spirituality can become more valuable in crisis management. Zohar (2004) explains spirituality as the intelligence of the soul or the intelligence of the deep self that makes us whole, a person with integrity, and it is the intelligence with which we ask fundamental questions and with which we reframe our answers. Spirituality exists in the heart and minds of men and women everywhere, within religious traditions and independently of tradition. The more this system is developed in someone, the better he/she responds to adversity and difficulties of life ability to transcend pain and being spiritually intelligent about death (Jain and Purohit 2006). Spiritual intelligence is a learned behavior and can be enhanced. The tools of spiritual intelligence include prayer, meditation, contemplation, conscious awareness of one's tendencies towards fear or anger, shifting one's emotional state away from fear, and the ongoing daily practice of staying conscious of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Biswajit Satpathy 2010). In this article, we have focused on only one dimension of SC which is the promotion of spiritual knowledge, reviewed the concept of spirituality mentioned in Ayurvedic & allied literature and try to understand the root causes of stress/crisis, and developed practical psychological aspects of spirituality which will be useful as a technique for crisis management.

**Root cause crisis or stress**- According to the Indian classical text Bhagavad Gita, there is a hierarchical organization of the main constituents of life: physical body, sensory organ, mind, intellect, and soul or me. The physical body is the lowest level, and the soul or spiritual knowledge is the highest level. (Chapter 3, Verse 42, p.185) and reason for feeling stress or crisis is over-indulge in sensory objects/desires and disconnection or ignorance of self / spiritual knowledge, which creates a state of confusion and over-thinking, and the intellect who makes decisions and analyses the accuracy of thought that becomes distorted and does not respond properly in adverse conditions, which leads to psychological and emotional discomfort (Chapter 2, verse 67, p. 138). Acharya charaka also described the causal factors of mental disorders, emphasizing incompatible contact of the senses with their objects (*Aasatmendriyartham Samyoga*) and intellectual blasphemy (Prgaypradha). A person whose intellect (*Dhee*), patience (*Dhriti*), and memory (*smriti*) are disturbed has subjected

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

himself to intellectual blasphemy because of his improper actions (Ch.Sha 5/108 p.825). This means that when a person's intellect connects to the uppermost layer (spiritual / self-knowledge), it allows them to better understand themselves, which will help solve life problems and emotional difficulties with wisdom such as stress, frustration, anger, disappointments, and conflicts, etc. It is assumed that as much as we practice strive to grow spiritually, we can develop strong emotional resistance to adverse life situations. Spirituality is an innate ability and can be improved by learning or practice. Here we have mainly focused on three principles and derived techniques for managing the crisis: 1. **Reassurance (*ashvasana*)**-the aim of reassurance is to feel the patient's calmness; 2. **Promotion of spiritual knowledge (*Gyan*)** - its goal is to develop insight of oneself, 3. **Promotion of behavior in a wholesome way (*Trivarg Anvekshn*)** aims to encourage the patient to perform life activities/duties/work with righteousness and sincerity. This will optimize the person's negative emotional response and prevent stress-related disorders in the future.

**Reassurance (*Ashvasana*)**- When a person feels a crisis, it creates uncertainty, anxiety, and apprehension, therefore, first of all, it is the need to calm and relax him. When the mind is in a calm and relaxed state, it will help to realistically understand the crisis state and provide better choices for responding to adverse conditions, instead of being emotionally captured by the effect. R. H. Singh (1987) and J.S. Tripathi (2012) have also mentioned reassurance is important supportive therapy to relieve fears, and boost self-confidence and hope. There is general agreement among researchers and clinicians that having a supportive environment is necessary for a positive outcome (Van der Kolk, 1987). The environment must be communicative to feel psychologically safe to talk about their feelings and reactions. In fact, a person may suffer further trauma if this support is absent (Doepel, D. G.,1991). A mental health practitioner can comfort patients by understanding their feelings, developing empathic relationships using affirmative and motivating attitudes, give them appropriate advice and suggestions.

**Promotion of spiritual/self-knowledge (*Gyan*)** - A person with true knowledge (*satyabuddhi*) which dispels the darkness caused by ignorance (Ch.Sha. 5/16 p.728) true knowledge known as *Gyana* and the opposite of it is *Agyan* (ignorance) that is the causes of all miseries (Ch.Sha. 5/7 p. 734) so it is important to attain the knowledge of self, place, family, time factor, mental strength and capacity in the treatment of the mental disorder (J.S.Tripathi 2010). The problem begins when a person wanders into desires and looks at the outside world comparatively and narrowly. For example- Person 'A' made a dream house from his hard pay and he thought that by this house his status and power in that community will enhance and people will recognize him on the basis of that. Suddenly a neighbor built a new house that was more attractive in looks, then person 'A' starts thinking that they have less power and status than his neighbor, it creates stress or a psychological crisis and decrements his self-esteem. A balance internal state is possible when a person realizes who he is, what is her strength, value, and beliefs, and what is the nature of his consciousness. When a person develops belief within oneself and does not associate his status, or power with materialistic things, it makes him self-confident and gives him the direction to establish a better relationship with all the dimensions of life (family, work, health, etc). Fear, insecurity, frustration, anger, etc. can be diminished by discovering and understanding the real nature of oneself through self-introspection because life is a combination of happiness and sorrow. Indian classical thought says that one should elevate oneself with the method of self-introspection and solve the problem by own mind. Do not devalue or develop an inferiority complex in oneself by excessive involvement in worldly

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

life and being overly emotional, because a person's conscience is his best friend and if not handled properly it becomes enemy (Bhagwat Gita Chapter 6 / 5, p.273). Spiritual knowledge gives clarity in thought, makes proper control on sense organs, it gives strength to move forward through suffering and painful times. In this stage, a counselor, social worker, community mental health worker, or psychologist who manages the crisis role is to develop awareness to understand the root causes of their feelings of crisis and educate the functioning of mind because the integration of body-mind and self is important to relieve stress. According to Ayurvedic literature, the need to understand the mind (*Manas*) becomes more important as it acts as a bridge between body (*Sharira*) and soul or self (*Atma*). When the mind is fixed in the soul, the person becomes self-controlled, and the improper actions of the mind are resolved due to the connection with the soul (Ch. Sha. 1/138 p. 826). Self-introspection work as a tool for revealing negative assumption and strengthens belief and help to establish a better connection within oneself (J.S.Tripathi et al 2010 and Singh D. et al 2021). Through self-introspection it will be possible to motivate and educate a person and develop a basic understanding of oneself because it allows the mind to explore and evaluate the inner self. This will help to uncover the negative perceptions and beliefs generated by negative circumstances, which have created turmoil or disturbance in the present, and helps the individual to connect with oneself and understand their strengths, values, and abilities.

**Promotion of behavior in a wholesome way (*Triverg Anvekshan*)-** Often, people expect certain results from their work or expect forward certain kinds of behaviour from others, this can also limit their thinking in order to look for other possibilities or alternative solutions. For example, a person has been in a romantic relationship for the past few years and has planned everything for the wedding with his girlfriend, but a few days before the wedding, his partner suddenly refused to marry him. This was an unexpected event, the person never expected such behaviour from a partner. Such an unexpected and uncertain event can cause psychological and emotional stress. That is why it is necessary to modify a person's thinking patterns as well as the need to have a clear understanding of the importance of action and its principle. We cannot bother ourselves with being entangled in circumstances, if a person wants to move forward, then it is necessary to know one's capabilities as well as necessary to act in the right direction even in the hustle and bustle of life. Indian classical thought has already said that there is no one who can live without doing any work or action (Bhagawat Geeta 3/5 p. 148) and whatever action/activities one's do, do it selflessly and detachment with result (Bhagwat Gita Chapter 2/ 47 p.119 ). Acharya charak mentioned three fundamental goals of life that involve the person in worldly life, namely Dharma Artha Kama, when one engages in these three aspects of life in balance, it brings a sense of satisfaction and acts as a preventive and curative measure for mental illness (Ch.Su.11/46 p. 234-235)

**1. Dharma (Virtue) – Dharma** is the virtuous aspects of life that give direction to fulfill all duties, roles, and responsibilities with righteousness and sincerity and to make life's decisions wisely.

**2. Arth (Material Wealth)-** Arth gives a person a comfortable life and, by earning money, a person satisfies his basic needs and desires. Without money, no one can satisfy their daily needs or work for the good of society, so it needs to make money.

**3. Kama (desires/sensory pleasure)-Kama** motivate us to do work/actions to accomplish them. It can be sensory, physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual elevation, etc. desires motivate us to do work/action to fulfill them.

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

These three aspects of life complement each other and are part of everyone's life, so the goal is to balance these three aspects without overly or disproportionately indulging any of them. *Trivarg Anvekshan* plays a role in the maintenance of psychological homeostasis and leads a more productive and satisfying life by improving *Dhee* (intellect), *Dhriti* (patience), and *Smriti* (memory) which constitute *Pragyapradha* (intellectual blasphemy). When a person pursues his worldly life in a balanced way, it helps to establish a better connection with life and makes him more flexible about adversity and everyday life problems (Singh D. et al 2021). The mental health professional must educate the person about the principle of karma (selfless action) and dharma (virtue/righteousness) and motivate him to apply these principles to all aspects of life with the full awareness that will help a person direct towards a meaningful & balanced life and help to take personal responsibility to strive towards growth.

### DISCUSSION

Humans are currently living in a very turbulent, unpredictable, and unforeseen event. Any event or period with negative physical, psychological, and emotional impact and personal loss is perceived as a crisis. Several research studies have shown that stressors such as major life changes, daily hassles, and traumatic events cause physical and psychological disturbance and when a person faces prolonged stress, it can lead to physical as well as psychological disorders. This review article outlines the specific role of spiritual principles and living as a component of *Sattvavajava Chikitsa* [SC] for crisis management. *Sattvavajava Chikitsa* (Ayurvedic psychotherapy) is one of the non-pharmacological approaches used especially in the case of psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders. SC works on five principles: development of spiritual knowledge, scriptural/scientific knowledge/skilled knowledge, patience, positive memory, and promotion of mental peace and meditation. Here we have mainly focused on three principles and derived techniques for managing the crisis: 1. Reassurance (*savasana*)-reassurance aims to feel the patient's calmness; 2. Promotion of spiritual knowledge (*Gyan*) - its goal is to develop insight of oneself, 3. Promotion of behavior in a wholesome way (*Trivarg Anvekshn*) aims to encourage the patient to perform life activities/duties/work with righteousness and sincerity. All of these principles and derived techniques aim to provide the individual with a supportive, calming and positive environment that helps him to feel relaxed and develop insight about himself and the outside world by using various spiritual principles and motivating him to apply these principles to all aspects of life with the full awareness that will help a person direct towards a meaningful & balanced life. This will optimize the person's negative emotional response and prevent stress-related disorders in the future. The mind is filled with ever-changing thoughts, vivid images, and fantasies. Knowing yourself (spiritual knowledge) and practicing spiritual life calms the mind, removes emotional turmoil, keeps negative thoughts at bay, and helps to concentrate better. The integration of body, mind, and self is important to relieve stress and also create strong emotional resilience that protects against negative situations. Therefore, the person develops inner capabilities to control his problems and increase the capacity for consciousness, and inner peace & giving meaning and purpose to life, enhancing the sense of well-being and a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

### CONCLUSION

This reviewed three principles and derived techniques resulting from them after examining research articles, journals, and classical ayurvedic literature. All of these principles, as well

## Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)

as the techniques generated from them, will be helpful in the management of crises. It will also aid in a healthy and balanced lifestyle for the promotion of general mental health.

### REFERENCES

- Acharya SN (1962), Agnivesha, Charaka Samhita, Elaborated videoing Hindi commentary, Varanasi: Choukhamba Vidya Bhawan Prakashan.
- Cohen, S., Janicki-Deverts, D., & Miller, G. E. (2007). Psychological stress and disease. *Jama*, 298(14), 1685-1687.
- Doepel, D. G. (1991). Crisis management: the psychological dimension. *Industrial Crisis Quarterly*, 5(3), 177-188.
- Galea, S., Ahern, J., Resnick, H., Kilpatrick, D., Bucuvalas, M., Gold, J., & Vlahov, D. (2002). Psychological sequelae of the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City. *New England journal of medicine*, 346(13), 982-987.
- Jain, M., & Purohit, P. (2006] James, R. K., & Gilliland, B. E. (2005). Crisis intervention strategies. Belmont, CA: Thomson.
- Jeronimus, B. F., Riese, H., Sanderman, R., & Ormel, J. (2014). Mutual reinforcement between neuroticism and life experiences: a five-wave, 16-year study to test reciprocal causation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 107(4), 751.
- Matthew W. Seeger, Timothy L. Sellnow & Robert R. Ulmer (1998) Communication, Organization, and Crisis, *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 21:1, 231-276, DOI: 10.1080/23808985.1998.11678952
- Murthy ARV, Singh RH. "The concept of psychiatry in Ayurveda with special reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa" *Ancient Science of Life* 1987;6:255-61.
- Pelletier, K. R., & Lutz, R. (1987). Healthy people—the healthy business: A critical review of stress management programs in the workplace. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 2(3), 5-19.
- Prabhupada S. Bhaktivedanta (1986), Bhagavad Gita as It Is, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, Mumbai: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Publishing
- Roberts, A. R. (2005). Bridging the past and present to the future of crisis intervention and crisis management. In A. R. Roberts (Ed.), *Crisis intervention handbook: Assessment, treatment, and research* (3rd ed., pp. 3–34). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, A. R., & Ottens, A. J. (2005). The seven-stage crisis intervention model: A road map to goal attainment, problem-solving, and crisis resolution. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*, 5(4), 329.
- Salama, P., Spiegel, P., Talley, L., & Waldman, R. (2004). Lessons learned from complex emergencies over the past decade. *The Lancet*, 364(9447), 1801-1813.
- Sapolsky, R. M. (2004). *Why zebras don't get ulcers: The acclaimed guide to stress, stress-related diseases, and coping*. Holt paperbacks.
- Satpathy, B. (2010). Spiritual intelligence from the Bhagavad-Gita for conflict resolution. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 3(4), 449-465.
- Singh D, Tripathi JS. Development of practical approach of Sattvavajava Chikitsa for depressive disorders. *J Res Ayurvedic Sci* 2021;5:60-8
- Tripathi, J. S. (2012). Dimensions of Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic psychotherapy) and their clinical applications. *Ann Ayurvedic Med*, 1, 31-8.
- Van der Kolk, B. A. (1987). The psychological consequences of overwhelming life experiences. *Psychological trauma*, 1-30.

**Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy)**

Verma V, Tripathi J S. Comparative Evaluation of the Effect of Ayurvedic Psychotherapy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in the Patients of Depression. *AYU* 2008;29:248-253

Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (2004). *Spiritual capital: Wealth we can live by*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

***Acknowledgement***

We are very grateful to the Central Council of Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (AYUSH Ph.D. Fellowships) for this important research work.

***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Dipinti, S. & Jyoti, S. T. (2022). Psychological Aspects of Spirituality in Crisis Management with Special Reference to Sattvavajava Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Psychotherapy). *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(4), 1255-1262. DIP:18.01.120.20221004, DOI:10.25215/1004.120