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## Behavior Disorders in Paediatrics through Ayurveda

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### Abstract:

In India, the prevalence of behavioral problems is estimated to be around 33.4%. If left untreated, these problems can increase the risk of children suffering from various psychiatric illnesses. Globally, approximately 6 million children are affected by behavioral problems. This review aims to provide Ayurvedic guidelines, including Sadvritta (Code of conduct), Achara Rasayan-AR (ethical principles), and Ayurveda interventions that correlate with recently developed interventions in Psychology. These guidelines may prove helpful in preventing and managing behavioural problems in children. The information for this review was collected from classical Ayurvedic literature, published research works, and counselling experiences. Behavioural problems usually have multiple factors contributing to their origin, such as conflicts between the child's personality and the attitudes of parents, teachers, or peers. Counseling with the family and adopting Ayurvedic principles can help manage and prevent the further progression of behavioral problems in children. Satvavjay Chikitsa-SC (non-drug psychotherapy), Achar-Rasayana, Sadvritta, and Yoga are Ayurvedic approaches that aim to balance Satva (good qualities of mind), Rajas (passionate, agitated), and Tamas (laziness, lack of concentration). These approaches are applicable in the prevention of behavioral problems. Knowledge education and proper expressions of code, conduct, and etiquettes, along with Ayurveda interventions such as the use of Medhya (nervine tonic/nootropic) drugs and Panchkarma pre-procedures, can be significant therapeutic methods to combat behavioural disorders. Ayurvedic principles such as AR, Sadvritta, and SC are non-pharmacological modalities that are essential for early detection and prevention of behavioural problems.

**Keywords:** Behaviour Disorder, Medhya, Mansrog, Satva, Psychotherapy, Sadvritta.

## Introduction:

This review focuses on the Ayurvedic understanding and management of **behavioral problems** in children, which have become increasingly prevalent. Approximately **33.4%** of children in India are affected by these issues, and around **6 million children** globally suffer from behavioral disorders. If left untreated, these problems can significantly increase the risk of psychiatric illnesses later in life. Ayurvedic interventions, including **Sadvritta** (ethical conduct), **Achara Rasayana** (ethical principles), and **Satvavajaya Chikitsa** (non-drug psychotherapy), are proposed as effective approaches for preventing and managing these disorders. These guidelines are aligned with modern psychological methods and provide a holistic, non-pharmacological means of dealing with behavioral issues.

## Causes of Behavioral Problems in Children:

Behavioral problems in children are often influenced by various factors, including familial dynamics, environmental conditions, and individual temperament. **Parenting styles**, particularly inadequate or inconsistent parenting, are often linked to the development of these disorders. Children may struggle with behavioral challenges when there is a conflict between their natural personality and the expectations or attitudes of their parents, teachers, or peers. Other significant contributing factors include stress, trauma, poor communication within the family, and a lack of emotional support.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has noted that **mental health disorders** are among the leading causes of disability worldwide, underscoring the importance of addressing these problems early in life. If behavioral problems are not identified and managed at a young age, they can manifest into more severe psychiatric conditions, such as **anxiety, depression, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**.

## Ayurvedic Perspective on Behavioral Problems

In Ayurveda, behavioral disorders are believed to result from an imbalance of the **doshas** (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) that govern the body and mind. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of balancing these doshas through proper diet, lifestyle, and therapeutic practices to maintain mental and physical well-being. Behavioral problems are often linked to an excess of **Rajas** (passion, agitation) and **Tamas** (inertia, laziness) in the mind, which can disrupt the harmony of **Satva** (purity, clarity), the mind's highest quality.

To prevent and manage behavioral problems, Ayurveda recommends non-pharmacological interventions, such as:

- **Sadvritta**: Adhering to ethical codes of conduct in daily life.
- **Achara Rasayana**: Practicing ethical and moral principles to rejuvenate the mind and body.
- **Satvavajaya Chikitsa**: A form of psychotherapy focused on enhancing **Satva** and

minimizing the influence of Rajas and Tamas.

These practices help in developing emotional resilience, improving focus, and fostering positive qualities like compassion, patience, and self-discipline in children.

### **Ayurvedic Interventions-**

#### **1. Sadvritta (Code of Conduct):**

Sadvritta refers to the ethical guidelines laid out in Ayurveda for maintaining mental and physical well-being. These codes of conduct include truthfulness, non-violence, respect for others, and self-control. By following Sadvritta, children can develop positive social behaviors and maintain mental clarity, which can prevent the onset of behavioral problems. Parents and teachers can encourage children to follow these ethical principles from an early age, which can help in shaping their personality and improving their mental health.

#### **2. Achara Rasayana (Ethical Rejuvenation):**

Achara Rasayana emphasizes the rejuvenating effect of ethical living on both the mind and body. By practicing compassion, humility, and self-discipline, children can develop emotional balance and resilience against stressors that may lead to behavioral issues. This form of Rasayana (rejuvenation therapy) enhances **Satva**, the clarity of mind, and supports the development of healthy coping mechanisms.

#### **3. Satvavajaya Chikitsa (Non-drug Psychotherapy):**

Satvavajaya Chikitsa is a psychotherapy technique in Ayurveda that focuses on mind control through positive thinking, emotional regulation, and ethical living. The goal of this therapy is to strengthen **Satva** while reducing the influence of **Rajas** and **Tamas**. By doing so, children can gain better control over their emotions, thoughts, and actions, which can significantly reduce the occurrence of behavioral problems. Techniques used in Satvavajaya Chikitsa include:

- **Counseling:** Helping children develop problem-solving skills and emotional resilience.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** Aligning Ayurvedic counseling with modern psychological practices to enhance emotional regulation.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Teaching children how to manage stress and anxiety through meditation and mindfulness techniques.

#### **Role of Yoga in Managing Behavioral Problems:**

**Yoga** plays a crucial role in Ayurveda's approach to managing behavioral disorders in children. It includes various postures (**asanas**), breathing exercises (**pranayama**), and meditation techniques that help in balancing the mind and body. Regular practice of yoga has been shown to improve mental stability, concentration, and emotional regulation, which are essential for preventing and managing behavioral problems.

## 1. Pranayama (Breathing Exercises):

Pranayama is an important practice in yoga that focuses on regulating the breath to calm the mind and improve mental focus. For children with anxiety or ADHD, pranayama helps to reduce hyperactivity, improve concentration, and enhance mental clarity. Techniques like **Anulom Vilom** (alternate nostril breathing) and **Bhramari** (humming bee breath) can be easily practiced by children and have been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and stress.

## 2. Asanas (Postures):

Various yoga postures can help in improving physical and mental well-being. For example:

- **Padmasana** (Lotus Pose) and **Siddhasana** (Perfect Pose) help in calming the mind and improving focus, making them ideal for children with attention-related issues.
- **Bhujangasana** (Cobra Pose) and **Dhanurasana** (Bow Pose) improve self-confidence and strengthen the body, which can help children with depression or low self-esteem.
- **Vrikshasana** (Tree Pose) and **Trikonasana** (Triangle Pose) enhance balance and concentration, making them effective for children with ADHD or learning difficulties.

## 3. Dhyana (Meditation):

Meditation is an integral part of yoga and Ayurveda. It is particularly beneficial for children with behavioral disorders as it helps in reducing stress, improving focus, and promoting emotional balance. Techniques like **Trataka** (focused gazing) or **Bhrumadhya Dhyana** (focusing between the eyebrows) are simple yet effective meditation practices that can be introduced to children.

## Specific Behavioral Disorders and Ayurvedic Management:

### 1. Anxiety:

Anxiety in children can arise from various stressors such as parental conflicts, academic pressure, or social isolation. Symptoms include difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, irritability, and constant worry. Ayurvedic interventions like **Padmasana**, **Siddhasana**, and **Pranayama** help regulate breathing and improve mental stability. Regular practice of yoga and meditation enhances a child's ability to manage stress and anxiety, preventing the progression of anxiety into more severe conditions like depression.

### 2. Depression:

Depression, once thought to primarily affect adults, is increasingly being diagnosed in children. Symptoms include low self-esteem, loss of interest in activities, sleep disturbances, and feelings of guilt or hopelessness. In Ayurveda, depression is referred to as **Vishada** and is treated using **Satvavajaya Chikitsa**, which focuses on boosting mental resilience through positive reinforcement and mindfulness practices. Yoga postures like **Bhujangasana** and **Dhanurasana** are recommended for improving self-confidence and reducing feelings of lethargy associated with depression.

### 3. ADHD (Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder):

ADHD is a common neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties with attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. Children with ADHD often face academic and social challenges, and Ayurvedic interventions like **yoga therapy** have been shown to significantly improve attention span and impulse control. Studies suggest that regular yoga practice can enhance cognitive function and improve the long-term outcomes of children with ADHD.

### 4. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects social interaction, communication, and behavior. Children with autism often engage in repetitive activities and have difficulty with social cues. Ayurvedic management of autism includes an integrated approach of **yoga therapy** and Ayurvedic herbs to improve cognitive function and social skills. Yoga postures like **Trikonasana** and **Vrikshasana** help improve balance and coordination, while asanas like **Bhujangasana** and **Ardha Ustrasana** (Half Camel Pose) enhance self-confidence and body awareness.

### Nutritional Support in Ayurveda for Behavioral Problems:

In addition to lifestyle modifications, Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on nutrition as a critical factor in preventing and managing behavioral disorders. Proper nutrition is essential for maintaining the balance of the doshas and supporting mental and physical growth. For children, the right combination of nutrients, particularly **Medhya Rasayana** (nervine tonics), can enhance cognitive function and emotional resilience. Key herbs used in Medhya Rasayana include:

- **Brahmi (Bacopa monnieri)**: Known for its cognitive-enhancing properties, Brahmi helps improve memory, focus, and mental clarity.
- **Shankhapushpi (Convolvulus pluricaulis)**: A potent nervine tonic, Shankhapushpi is used to reduce stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue.
- **Ashwagandha (Withaniasomnifera)**: An adaptogen that helps the body cope with stress, Ashwagandha also promotes mental clarity and emotional balance.

### Panchakarma for Behavioral Disorders:

In more severe cases of behavioral problems, Ayurveda recommends **Panchakarma** therapies to detoxify the body and restore balance to the doshas. These treatments help eliminate toxins and support the rejuvenation of both the mind and body. Key Panchakarma treatments for behavioral issues include:

- **Shirodhara**: A continuous flow of medicated oil poured onto the forehead to calm the mind and reduce stress.
- **Nasya**: The administration of medicated oils or powders through the nasal passages to clear the mind and improve mental focus.
- **Abhyanga**: A full-body oil massage that helps in balancing the doshas and promoting

relaxation.

### Conclusion:

Behavioral disorders in children are becoming increasingly common due to a combination of environmental, social, and genetic factors. Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to the prevention and management of these issues through ethical conduct, dietary modifications, herbal supplements, and non-drug therapies like yoga and meditation. By addressing the root causes of behavioral problems and promoting mental clarity through Satvavajaya Chikitsa, Sadvritta, and Achara Rasayana, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive framework for improving children's mental health and well-being. Integrating Ayurvedic principles with modern psychological practices can offer an effective solution to the growing problem of behavioral disorders in children.

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