



A REVIEW ARTICLE ON DEPRESSION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAPHA-JA UNMADA

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ABSTRACT

Depression, a prevalent mental disorder, is characterised by symptoms such as a persistent feeling of sadness, diminished interest or enjoyment, self-perceived guilt or low self-esteem, disrupted sleep patterns or appetite, decreased energy levels, and difficulties with concentration. Despite advances in diagnostics and therapeutics, depression is quickly becoming a public health crisis. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence of depression shows a sharp rise. Mind encroaches on physical health through our behaviour and body chemistry. *Manasa Vikara* is considered an abnormal mental condition characterized by impairment of cognitive functions. The most elaborately dealt *Mano Vyadhi* in Ayurveda is *Unmada*. The symptoms caused by the aggravated dosas that spread to the higher channels of the body resemble intoxication and are classified as "*Unmada*." A broad spectrum of diseases is included under *Unmada* by various *Acharyas*. In the Ayurvedic perspective, Depression can be explained under *Kaphaja Unmada*.

Keywords: Depression, *Kaphaja Unmada*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the science of life, defines health as being free from diseases and including an individual's physical, mental, spiritual, and social welfare. Even the WHO suggest mental well-being along with social

well-being in the definition of health. Health depends on mind, body and soul. Ayurveda considers mind and body as the two pathways for manifesting diseases¹. Mind has three constituents: *Satva*, *Rajas*, and

Tamas. The latter two are reactive tendencies, which vitiate the mind, leading to an emotional imbalance. A healthy body needs a healthy mind.

Depression, a prevalent and significant medical illness, exerts a detrimental impact on one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. It can give rise to various emotional and physical complications, impairing one's ability to function effectively at work and home². Without proper treatment, depressive symptoms can persist for extended periods, spanning weeks, months, or even years. Insufficient treatment of depression can result in substantial impairment, exacerbate other health-related concerns, and, in severe cases, pose a risk of suicide.

UNMADA

Unmada is a disease of the mind. It is a *Manovikara* in which *Sareera* is involved first, and later, *Manas* is engaged. *Madhava Nidana* mentions that affection of the mind due to sudden emotions like fear, joy and physical activities cause *Unmada*³. The vitiated dosas travel upwards through the channels of the mind, get localised in the mind, and cause an abnormality called *Unmada*⁴. *Unmada* is the *Vibhrama Avastha* of

eight factors: *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Sangya*, *Gyana*, *Smriti*, *Bhakti*, *Sheela*, *Chesta*, and *Achara*. In the classics of Ayurveda, Psychiatric disorders are described under the title of *Unmada* and *Apasmara*, in which depressive disorders cover the symptoms of *Kaphaja* and *Aadhija Unmada*. The object of the mind is thinking. Due to perversion of mind, the person does not think about things that are worth thinking; instead feels about things that are not to be believed, then it is considered a deranged state of mind.

UNDERSTANDING NIDANA

Acharyas mention various Nidanas types, but all can be categorised into four groups.

- *Viruddha Dushta Ashuchi Bhojana*
- *Pradharshanam Deva Guru Diwijanam*
- *Bhaya Harsha Purvo Mano Abighata*
- *Vishama Cesta*

These all are considered factors which lead to the disturbances in *Shaareerika* followed by *Manasika Doshas*, too.



IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR DIAGNOSING UNMADA⁶

Acharya Charaka gives a crystal-clear definition for unmada, i.e. disrupted mind and its actions measured through.

- *Manas* (Mind),
- *Budhi* (intellect),
- *Samjnajnana* (consciousness),
- *Smriti* (memory),

- *Bhakti* (desire),
- *Sheela* (manner),
- *Chesta* (behavior) and
- *Achara* (conduct)

SAMANYA LAKSANAS OF UNMADA⁷

According to *Acharya Charaka*,

- *Dhi Vibrama* (intellectual confusion),
- *Satwa Pariplava* (fickleness of mind),

- *Pariyakula Dristi Adhiratha* (unsteadiness of vision),
- *Abaddha Vakyatwam* (incoherent speech),
- *Hridayam Cha Sunyam* (vacant mind),
- *Sa Muda Na Sukham Na Dhukam Na Achara Dharmo* (such a person becomes incapable of experiencing pleasure and sorrow)

CONCEPTS OF KAPHAJA UNMADA

Kaphaja Unmada is among the five types of *Unmada* caused due to aggravation of *Kapha Dosa*⁸. *Kapha* being aggravated along with the body's heat due to the filling of the belly because of intake of heavy food and lack of regular physical exercise reaches *Marma* (heart) and impairing intellect and memory causes confusion in the mind, giving rise to *Kaphaja Unmada*.

NIDANA AND SAMPRAPTI OF KAPHAJA UNMADA

Incompatible, contaminated and unclean food, disregard for gods, elders and Brahmanas, mental trauma due to fear or happiness and undesirable activities are the etiological factors for *Kaphaja Unmada*. Excessive consumption of heavy foods, coupled with a lack of regular physical exercise, leads to the aggravation of *Kapha* and increased body heat. This combination affects the *Marma* (brain), resulting in impaired intellect, memory, and confusion in the mind, ultimately leading to the onset of this particular disease⁹.

SAMANYA LAKSANAS OF KAPHAJA UNMADA¹⁰

- Dullness of speech and activities
- Anorexia
- Longing for women
- Excessive sleep
- Vomiting
- Excessive salivation
- Aggravation of the disease after meals
- Whitish colour of nails

MANAGEMENT

The treatment approach for *Kaphaja Unmada* involves various therapies such as emesis, purgation, and enema, preceded by oleation and sudation treatments.¹¹ In addition, purgation therapy specifically targeting the head may be administered. After purifying the body through oleation and fomentation, the patient is advised to gradually transition from lighter

to heavier diets as part of the *Samsarjana Krama Puranaghrita*, which is cold and smooth in property, is particularly beneficial in treating *Unmada*.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a pervasive mental health disorder and is estimated to affect over 300 million people worldwide¹². Depression is significantly more common among females than males, with a prevalence of 5.1% among females as compared to 3.6% among males and the mean age of onset is around 40 years¹³. Depression is also responsible for maximum DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) among all psychiatric disorders¹⁴. It is also the most common cause of suicide. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and home. The clinical features of depression are so varied and individualistic that there may not be uniformity of symptoms between two patients. If untreated, symptoms can last for weeks, months or years. If inadequately treated, Depression can lead to significant impairment and other health-related issues, and in severe cases, it can end up in suicide.

CORE SYMPTOMS¹⁵

- A depressed mood presents all day, commonly unresponsive to changes in circumstances.
- A notable decrease in interest or pleasure in activities most of the day.
- Unexplained weight gain or loss, a change of 5% or more within one month, accompanied by appetite changes.
- Insomnia, early morning awakenings 2-3 hours before usual time, or hypersomnia (typically found in atypical depression).
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation that others can observe.
- Exhaustion and lack of energy.
- Reduced libido.
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (may be delusional).
- Difficulty thinking or making decisions.
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

Mild, Moderate and Severe depression

ICD-10 and DSM-5 distinguish depression into mild, moderate, and severe episodes based on symptomatology.

Table: severity criteria¹⁶

	ICD-10	DSM-5
Mild	2 typical symptoms + 2 other core symptoms	5 core symptoms + manageable distress + minor social/occupational impairment
Moderate	2 typical symptoms + 3 other core symptoms	5+ core symptoms + variable degree of social/occupational impairment
Severe	3 typical symptoms + 4 other core symptoms	5+ core symptoms + significant social/occupational impairment

KAPHAJA UNMADA AND DEPRESSION

The symptoms and underlying aetiology of *Kaphaja Unmada* bear striking similarities to those of depression. The following factors highlight the connection between the two:

Overlapping Symptoms

The physical, mental and emotional symptoms of *Kaphaja Unmada* closely resemble the clinical presentation of depression. Both disorders are characterised by feelings of sadness, lethargy and social withdrawal, as well as cognitive impairment and lack of motivation.

Shared Etiology

The factors that contribute to *Kaphaja Unmada*, such as an imbalanced diet, sedentary lifestyle and high levels of stress, are also implicated in the development of depression. In both disorders, these factors lead to a disruption of the delicate balance between the body and mind, resulting in a range of physical and psychological symptoms.

Common Treatment Approaches

The treatment strategies employed in Ayurveda for *Kaphaja Unmada*, such as dietary and lifestyle modifications, stress management techniques, and the use of adaptogenic herbs, are also being recognised as effective interventions for depression in modern mental health practices.

Holistic approach

The Ayurvedic approach to *Kaphaja Unmada* emphasises the importance of addressing the root cause of the disorder and restoring the balance between the body and mind. This comprehensive viewpoint corresponds with the increasing acknowledgement of the interdependence between physical and mental well-being in contemporary medicine.

PREVENTIVE ASPECTS

Ayurveda strongly emphasises the prevention of *Kaphaja Unmada* through the maintenance of a balanced diet, an active lifestyle, and effective stress management techniques. This proactive approach is increasingly being embraced in modern mental health care to reduce the incidence and severity of depression and other mental health disorders.

DISCUSSION

Kaphaja Unmada, an ancient Ayurvedic concept, offers valuable insights into the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of depression and other mental health disorders. *Acharya Charaka* has given a thorough description of the etiopathology of *Kaphaja Unmada*. When *Sampoorna* and *Mandacheshtha* upset the equilibrium of *Kapha*, they combine with *Pitta* to negatively affect the vital organs (heart). This imbalance disturbs *Buddhi* and *Smriti*, tainting *Manas* and eventually leading to *Kaphaja Unmada*. People with prominent *Kaphaja* constitutions are more prone to getting *Kaphaja Unmada* along with the above-mentioned etiological factors. Different Acharyas have mentioned the *Lakshanas* (signs and symptoms) of *Kaphaja Unmada* in more or less the same manner. By examining the similarities between *Kaphaja Unmada* and modern depression, we can gain a deeper appreciation of the holistic and preventative approach that Ayurveda offers for the management of mental health issues. The integration of Ayurvedic principles and practices into modern mental health care has the potential to enhance treatment outcomes for individuals suffering from depression and other mental health disorders.

CONCLUSION

Depression is a complex mental health condition that requires a comprehensive approach for effective management. While conventional treatments like psychotherapy and medication play a significant role, Ayurveda's concept of *Unmada* can offer valuable insights. The growing interest in *Kaphaja Unmada* and its connection to depression suggests a potential for the integration of Ayurvedic principles and practices into modern mental health care. This integration can lead to the development of more effective and individualised treatment strategies for patients suffering from depression and other mental health disorders.

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