

MAUNA CHIKITSA IN COVID-19 INDUCED MANAS ROGA**Shilpa Shankarrao Walkikar**

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Article Received: 16/12/2023 - **Peer Reviewed:** 30/12/2023 - **Accepted for Publication:** 15/01/2024.**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda, the holistic science of life, views health as a harmonious balance between the body, mind, and spirit. In this pursuit of balance, *Mauna Chikitsa*, or *silence therapy*, stands as a powerful tool, inviting individuals to explore the transformative potential that lies in the quiet spaces between thoughts and words. This therapeutic practice extends beyond the mere absence of sound, reaching into the depths of mental, emotional, and spiritual realms to unveil a tapestry of benefits. As we delve into the profound significance of silence therapy within the Ayurvedic tradition, this article will unravel the multifaceted layers of its impact on mental clarity, emotional well-being, and physical health. We will explore the therapeutic effects of vocal rest, the stress-alleviating properties of silence, and the spiritual connections forged in the stillness. Moreover, this exploration will shed light on the practical integration of silence therapy into daily life, whether through dedicated retreats, moments of mindfulness, or as an integral part of *Ayurvedic Dinacharya* - the daily routine.

Keywords: Concentration, Mind, Silence, Sattvavajaya Chikitsa**INTRODUCTION**

Mental disorders are widespread globally, year by year.^[1] Common mental disorders include depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia,

etc.^[2] Mental disorders contribute significantly to the global burden of disease.^[3] According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health condi-

tions are prevalent in every country and across all age groups.^[4] Depression and anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health conditions.^[5] They affect millions worldwide and can significantly impact individuals' daily functioning and quality of life.^[6] Recognizing the importance of mental health, there has been increased global attention and initiatives to address mental health issues. Organizations like the WHO have been working to raise awareness and improve access to mental health services globally.^[7] Prevalence rates can vary by region and country. Factors such as cultural attitudes, socio-economic conditions, and access to mental health care can influence the prevalence of mental disorders.^[8] The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to the mental health challenges faced by individuals worldwide. The pandemic's stressors, including social isolation, economic uncertainty, and health concerns, have contributed to an increased focus on mental well-being.^[9]

Mental disease now forms a national colossal problem, adding to a plethora of socioeconomic burdens on healthcare systems.^[10] Silence therapy can greatly be supported if integrated into the management modules of such diseases in various hospitals. 'Silence is golden' is an old proverb. Approaching silence therapeutically or elective silence can bear dynamic profound changes in an individual.^[11] Nowadays, many spiritual organizations are highlighting the significance of 'Silence' in the upliftment of individuals in varied dimensions of life. In a world that constantly bombards us with noise, stimuli, and the demands of modern life, the ancient practice of silence therapy emerges as a profound remedy for restoring balance and well-being.^[12] Rooted in the timeless wisdom of Ayurveda, silence therapy, or "*Mauna Chikitsa*," beckons individuals to embark on a journey of self-discovery, healing, and inner tranquillity.

Silence therapy

Mere forceful abstinence from speaking is not a synonym for Silence therapy. If practiced therapeutically, it should be clearly defined in terms of period, place, and individual and practiced under the supervision of expertise. Its word fasting, i.e. periodic absti-

nence from superfluous speech, is as essential for the mind as occasional food fasting benefits the body. Silence can be practiced like:

1. As a part of the daily routine, from half an hour to two hours in the morning or evening.
2. Weekly- for a day, once a week. e.g. Mahatma Gandhi used to observe complete silence on Mondays.
3. Monthly- for a day in a month.
4. Annually, on 'Mauni Amavasya' falling in 'Magha masa' (as per the Indian Calendar), one can observe silence for which day is meant.

Many spiritual organizations like Art of Living, Esha Foundation, etc., advocate silence in their meditation modules to disciples starting from three days initially^[13]. Still, such prolonged silence should be practiced under the supervision of trained experts because sudden emotional outbursts are frequently observed while undergoing lengthy silence. However, the incidence of profuse crying is much greater. Sometimes, people shout in ecstasy and sometimes laugh^[14] due to the cleansing of *Manovaha Strotas* at a very subtle level.

Silences are supposed to mainly work on traumatic memories, draining all sorrows and giving unfathomable peace.^[15] During Silence, self-analysis can be done effectively as the wild dance of tempting senses is shut down momentarily.^[16] Periodic abstinence from speaking can help in alleviating day-to-day stress.^[17] Silence therapy forms an essential place in the world's great religions. In Buddhism, it is practiced as '*Vipashyana*' and '*Sthamath*'. Silence forms an integral part of the Christian examination of conscience.

Ayurvedic review:

Ayurveda is a traditional system of medicine that has its roots in ancient India. It promotes holistic health and well-being by balancing the three doshas -*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. "*Mauna*" typically refers to silence or a state of being quiet in Sanskrit.^[18]

In Ayurvedic texts at various places, Vachika Karma is given due importance, and untimely and redundant talk is said to be avoided.

- Superfluous speech (*Vachalata*) is described as one of the manifestations of vitiated *Vata Dosha* in the body. *Vata* is considered the master dosha regulating other *Sharira (Pitta & Kapha)* and *Manas Dosha (Raja & Tama)*,^[19] So the therapeutic relevance of Silence can be seen in *Vatika* disorders like in *Chittodvega* (anxiety neurosis). In mental disorders, there is the active involvement of *Raja, Tama,* and *Vata Dosha* in varying proportions. The work of silence therapy is focused on generating an increase in *Sattva Guna* and sublimating *Rajas* and *Tamoguna*.
- ‘*Satyavadinam*’ is given prime importance while describing the code of conduct, i.e. *Aachara Rasayana*, to elucidate the power of spoken words in an individual life.^[20] Silence in this context does not mean behaving like a mute. According to Mr. Korth, a renowned psychologist, Silence strengthens the will, engenders more profound thoughts, and increases the power of penetration of spoken words when they are devoid of superfluities. This has the effect of enhancing an individual’s personality.
- हितमितमधुरार्थवादी। (Ch. Su. 8/18)

The above quotation is seen from the perspective of the rules of *Sadavritta Palana* (good conduct) in *Charaka Samhita*.^[21] Here, the word ‘*Mita*’ essentially points to fewer talks or indirectly points to observance of Silence. कायवाक्चेतसां दमः। ...सद्वृत्तं॥ (A. Hr. Su. 2/46)

Also, sage Vagbhata illustrates that one should control body, speech, and mind to follow the concept of *Sadavritta*.^[22]

- While describing ‘*Ashtavidhaaharvisheshayana*’, there comes a reference:
अजल्पन अहसन तन्मना भुञ्जित। (Ch.Vi.1/24)

Here, ‘*Ajalpa*’ points to observing complete silence while taking food, to meditate on every morsel of food so that it can nourish every cell of the body.^[23] *Aahara* is considered the root of *Ayu* (promoting life span), *Bala* (promoting strength and vigour), *Varna* (glow), and *Sukha* (happiness) in *Ayurveda*. So, one can imagine the great importance given to silence while eating food that promotes mental health and

works for physical health, thus giving way to gaining perfect health if practiced correctly.

- One way of *Rasayana* consumption is ‘*Kutipravesika Vidhi*’, i.e. in a secluded hermitage away from all worldly contacts where a person is kept on *Rasayana* therapy.^[24] It means that silence can potentiate the effects of the *Rasayana* effect of *Dravyas* in the body.
- There are certain spoken urges which should be avoided socially:

परुषस्यातिमात्रस्य सूचकस्यानृतस्य च।
वाक्यस्याकालयुक्तस्य धारयेद वेगमुथितम्॥ (Ch. Su. 7/28) i.e. harsh words, hard to speak, bitter, excessive & untimely talk, telling lies, and pinning to others must be avoided.^[25]

In day-to-day life, superfluous speech is associated with unwanted conflicts and a waste of individual time and energy. One should avoid unnecessary chatter. Silence develops an insight that is an inherent quality of human beings, the quality that differentiates between man and animals.

- Silence can also work by controlling certain mental urges as seen in the following verse:
- लोभशोकभयक्रोधवेगन्विरोध्येत...बुद्धिमान। (Ch. Su. 7/27)

Lobha (greed), *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodha* (anger), *Ahankara* (superego), *Irshya* (jealousy), *Atiraga* (lust), *Abhidhya* (having the desire for other’s possessions, etc. are the *Dharaniya Vegas*.^[26] These negative emotions and inclinations of mind should be suppressed. It is proposed that practising silence can help in conquering such negative emotions. These emotions affect our attitudes, behaviour, and relationships every moment in day-to-day life. A negative emotion may assume such power to dominate a personality. Worry e.g. can destroy peace of mind and undermine health; despair can destroy all joy of life. All these factors are associated with various psychosomatic illnesses.^[27]

- It is considered that Silence therapy can form an integral part of *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*, the foremost treatment modality offered by *Ayurveda* in the management of *Manas Roga* (psychiatric dis-

eases).^[28] सत्वावजय पुनर्हितभ्यो अर्थभ्य मनोनिग्रह।
(Ch. Su. 11/54)

It means that in the treatment of Manas Roga, the mind is distracted from those things that are the ultimate cause of mental fluctuations. It is supposed that silence can work in it.

DISCUSSION

Silence therapy, or "*Mauna Chikitsa*," is significant in Ayurveda as a holistic approach to well-being.^[29] Silence therapy in Ayurveda is a multifaceted approach encompassing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions^[30] as follows:

- **Mental Clarity:** Silence is believed to calm the mind and reduce mental chatter. It allows individuals to go inward, fostering mental clarity and a deeper understanding of oneself.
- **Rest for the Vocal Organs:** Resting the vocal cords can benefit the throat and respiratory system. It is thought to promote healing and rejuvenation of the vocal organs.
- **Reduced Stress:** Silence therapy can be a powerful tool for stress reduction. The absence of external stimuli and verbal communication relaxes the nervous system.
- **Enhanced Awareness:** Observing silence heightens sensory awareness. Individuals may become more attuned to their surroundings, the nuances of their thoughts and emotions, and the impact of various stimuli on their well-being.
- **Spiritual Connection:** Silence is often considered a pathway to spiritual growth. It provides an opportunity for introspection, self-discovery, and a deeper connection with one's inner self.

While silence therapy can be beneficial, it's essential to approach it with mindfulness and in a way that suits individual preferences and needs. It may be integrated into Ayurvedic retreats, wellness programs, or personal daily practices.

CONCLUSION

Silence Therapy can be regarded as one form of meditation, where the individual can make auto suggestions for concentrating on healing aspects of the disease. It has been rightly remarked that 'The word that

escapes one lips is one's master, but the word that is retained behind the lips is one's slave.'

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