

Review Article

Volume 14 Issue 06

June 2025

IMPACT OF SADVRITTA AND MORAL CONDUCT ON MENTAL HEALTH: A CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Sadvritta*, or ethical code of conduct, forms a cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* preventive psychiatry. Classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* emphasize moral behavior, truthfulness, compassion, and discipline as essential for maintaining mental harmony (*Manasika Swasthya*). In modern psychiatry, similar attributes align with concepts like emotional intelligence, behavioral therapy, and resilience-building strategies. Exploring this alignment provides critical insight into preventive mental health strategies. **Aim and Objectives** **Aim:** To critically review and analyze the role of *Sadvritta* and moral conduct in the promotion of mental health from both *Ayurvedic* and contemporary perspectives. **Objectives:** To study the concept of *Sadvritta* as mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics. To explore the psychological implications of moral conduct on *Manasika Doshas* and *Sattva*. To evaluate contemporary psychological literature that supports similar ethical behavior for mental well-being. To establish conceptual and functional correlations between classical ethics and modern mental health models. **Materials and Methods:** A descriptive and analytical review of *Ayurvedic* literature including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* was conducted. Parallely, modern psychological and psychiatric

journals, WHO mental health guidelines, and behavioral science research were reviewed. The data was synthesized thematically to identify commonalities and divergences. **Results:** *Sadvritta* practices significantly correlate with modern therapeutic principles such as mindfulness, cognitive behavior modification, emotional regulation, and stress resilience. The classical emphasis on non-violence, truth, compassion, and discipline showed parallels with modern psycho-social and cognitive interventions, supporting mental well-being and reducing susceptibility to anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic illness. **Conclusion:** Classical *Ayurvedic* principles of *Sadvritta* offer a timeless and holistic framework for mental health preservation. Integrating these moral and ethical conduct principles with contemporary mental health practices could offer synergistic benefits in preventive and therapeutic domains of psychiatry.

Keywords: *Sadvritta*, *Manasika Swasthya*, Moral Conduct, Mental Health, *Ayurveda*, Preventive Psychiatry

INTRODUCTION

Mental health, defined as a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being, plays a crucial role in an individual's overall quality of life. In recent years, mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders have become increasingly prevalent due to rapid lifestyle changes, social disintegration, and emotional dis-balance.¹ While modern science explores neurobiological, cognitive, and social factors behind these conditions, ancient Indian systems of medicine like *Ayurveda* offer an equally profound but holistic approach to understanding and preserving mental well-being.²

In *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Sadvritta*—which means righteous or ethical conduct—is regarded as a powerful instrument for maintaining both physical and mental health. The classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* provide extensive guidelines on personal, social, and moral behavior under the heading of *Sadvritta*.³ These behavioral codes are designed not just for societal harmony but also to stabilize the mind by promoting *Sattva Guna* and restraining the fluctuations of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which are considered responsible for emotional disturbances and psychological disorders.⁴

The observance of *Sadvritta* includes personal hygiene, disciplined routine, truthfulness, non-violence, forgiveness, compassion, and mental restraint. These principles collectively

create a balanced lifestyle that supports mental clarity, emotional resilience, and spiritual growth.⁵ From an *Ayurvedic* perspective, a person's conduct has a direct impact on their mental doshas and consciousness, ultimately influencing their susceptibility to *Manasika Roga* (mental diseases). Hence, *Sadvritta* is seen as both a preventive and therapeutic strategy for achieving *Manasika Swasthya*.⁶

Contemporary psychology and psychiatry, though rooted in empirical methodologies, increasingly recognize the importance of ethical living, mindfulness, and value-based behavior in mental health. Concepts such as emotional intelligence, cognitive-behavioral consistency, resilience, and positive psychology align closely with the values propagated through *Sadvritta*.⁷ Research shows that individuals with strong moral grounding tend to have reduced levels of stress, better interpersonal relationships, and stronger coping mechanisms in the face of psychological adversity.⁸

This review aims to explore the convergence between classical *Ayurvedic* concepts of *Sadvritta* and modern psychological models of moral conduct, highlighting their significance in the promotion and maintenance of mental health. By comparing ancient principles with contemporary evidence-based practices, this study attempts to build an integrated framework for mental well-being that is holistic, culturally rooted, and universally applicable.⁹

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To evaluate the impact of *Sadvritta* and moral conduct on mental health through classical *Ayurvedic* principles and contemporary psychological insights.

Objectives:

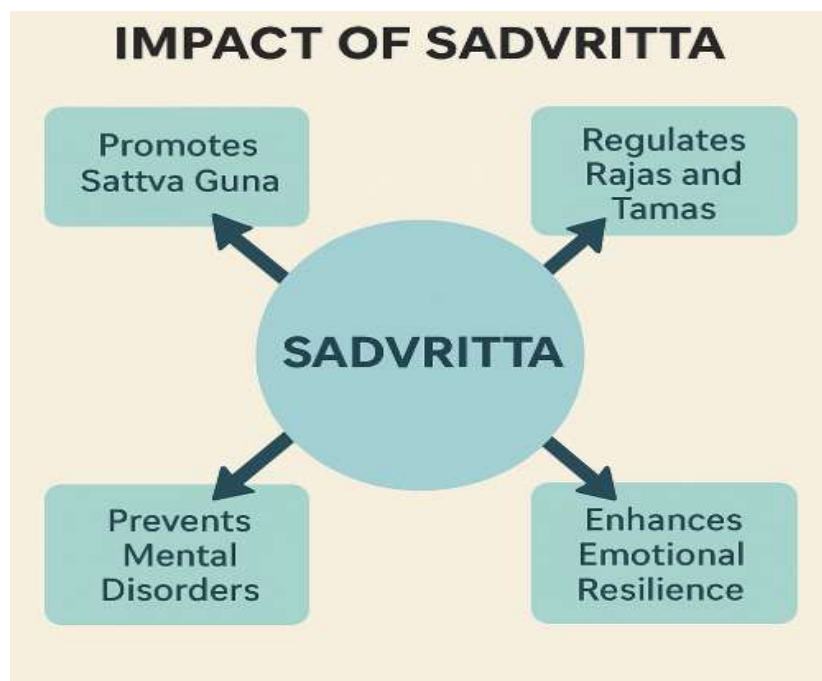
1. To study the concept of *Sadvritta* as described in classical *Ayurvedic* texts.
2. To explore the role of moral conduct in maintaining *Manasika Swasthya*.
3. To analyze the effects of *Sadvritta* on *Rajas*, *Tamas*, and enhancement of *Sattva*.
4. To correlate *Sadvritta* with modern psychological and behavioral health models.
5. To propose an integrative framework for mental health promotion based on ethical conduct

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

This study is based on a descriptive and analytical review of classical Ayurvedic texts and modern psychological literature. Primary sources include *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, focusing on chapters related to *Sadvritta*, *Manasika Dosha*, and mental health. Secondary sources such as commentaries, published research articles, and academic reviews were also analyzed to extract traditional concepts. For the contemporary aspect, data was gathered from peer-reviewed journals, WHO mental health frameworks, and modern texts on psychology, psychiatry, and behavioral science. Thematic analysis was used to identify core principles, concepts, and therapeutic relevance. Comparative synthesis was performed to draw parallels between classical Ayurvedic recommendations and modern psychological models of ethical living and mental well-being.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON SADVRITTA

The term *Sadvritta* is derived from two *Sanskrit* words: *Sat*, meaning good or virtuous, and *Vritta*, meaning conduct or behavior.¹⁰ Thus, *Sadvritta* refers to a righteous way of living or an ideal code of conduct. In *Ayurveda*, it is considered an essential part of preventive medicine, aimed not only at maintaining physical health but also preserving mental and social well-being. The ancient *Acharyas* have emphasized that without adhering to moral values and ethical lifestyle practices, no amount of medicine or treatment can ensure complete health.¹¹



The classical *Ayurvedic* texts provide detailed descriptions of *Sadvritta*. *Charaka Samhita* (Sutrasthana 8), *Sushruta Samhita* (Sutrasthana 35), and *Ashtanga Hridaya* (Sutrasthana 2) all emphasize ethical behavior, personal hygiene, mental discipline, and social responsibilities.¹² These guidelines are applicable to all aspects of daily life, including diet, speech, sexual conduct, interpersonal relationships, and control over emotions and senses. These are not just philosophical suggestions but are prescribed as practical measures for disease prevention and health promotion.¹³

Sadvritta can be broadly divided into three dimensions: *Sharirika Sadvritta* (physical discipline), *Vachika Sadvritta* (verbal discipline), and *Manasika Sadvritta* (mental discipline). *Sharirika Sadvritta* includes practices like regular bathing, maintaining cleanliness, proper sleep, balanced diet, and observance of *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya*.¹⁴ *Vachika Sadvritta* includes speaking truthfully, avoiding harsh or unkind words, and maintaining respectful speech. *Manasika Sadvritta* includes cultivating virtues such as patience, compassion, forgiveness, and contentment, while avoiding jealousy, anger, and pride.¹⁵

From a psychological point of view, *Sadvritta* plays a crucial role in preserving *Manasika Swasthya* (mental health). It helps in the regulation of *Rajas* and *Tamas* — the mental doshas responsible for emotional instability and mental disorders.¹⁶ by promoting *Sattva Guna*, which is associated with clarity, calmness, and balance, *Sadvritta* enhances mental resilience, emotional intelligence, and psychological stability. Modern psychology shares this view, recognizing the importance of moral conduct, positive behavior, and ethical living in the development of healthy coping mechanisms and social adjustment.¹⁷

In conclusion, *Sadvritta* provides a timeless and comprehensive framework for achieving holistic health. It forms the ethical and behavioral foundation of *Ayurvedic* preventive psychiatry and mental health care. The parallels between classical principles of *Sadvritta* and contemporary concepts of positive psychology, mindfulness, and behavioral therapy are striking. By adopting the values embedded in *Sadvritta*, individuals can lead a life that is not only physically healthy but also emotionally stable and socially harmonious.¹⁸

MORAL CONDUCT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Moral conduct refers to the adherence to universally accepted principles of right and wrong behavior such as honesty, compassion, non-violence, self-control, and integrity.¹⁹ These principles guide personal actions and interpersonal relationships, promoting inner peace

and social harmony. In the context of mental health, moral conduct acts as a stabilizing force, cultivating psychological resilience, self-discipline, and a sense of meaning. Both *Ayurvedic* and contemporary psychological systems acknowledge the profound influence of ethical living on emotional and cognitive well-being.²⁰



In *Ayurveda*, moral conduct is intrinsically linked to the concept of *Sadvritta*, which is not only a lifestyle code but also a mental health strategy. A person who lives ethically is believed to promote *Sattva Guna*—the mental quality associated with clarity, wisdom, and stability.²¹ This dominance of *Sattva* naturally suppresses the destabilizing forces of *Rajas* (passion, restlessness) and *Tamas* (ignorance, inertia), which are considered responsible for various mental disorders like *Unmada* (psychosis), *Chittodvega* (anxiety), and *Manasika Roga* in general. Thus, moral conduct is not merely ethical decorum but a preventive and promotive mental health measure.²²

From a psychological perspective, individuals who consistently engage in morally upright behavior exhibit reduced stress, fewer mood disorders, and greater emotional regulation.²³ This is because moral conduct fosters cognitive harmony; it prevents guilt, internal conflict, and dissonance between beliefs and actions. Such individuals are more likely to maintain high self-esteem, experience greater interpersonal satisfaction, and possess a stronger sense of purpose and life satisfaction. These qualities are protective against mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and emotional instability.²⁴

Furthermore, modern therapies often integrate moral reflection and value-based action as part of psychological healing. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) incorporate ethical introspection and encourage clients to live in alignment with their core values. This approach fosters psychological flexibility, reduces neuroticism, and strengthens coping strategies. Thus, modern science reaffirms the timeless truth that ethical living enhances mental health.²⁵

In conclusion, moral conduct plays a vital role in maintaining mental equilibrium and emotional stability. The convergence of *Ayurvedic* teachings and modern psychiatry underscores the therapeutic potential of moral living. Ethics is not only a societal necessity but a personal healing tool. A life rooted in morality leads to mental clarity, emotional resilience, and holistic health, making moral conduct an essential foundation for mental well-being.²⁶

A CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY REVIEW ON MORAL CONDUCT AND MENTAL HEALTH

In classical *Ayurvedic* literature, moral conduct is deeply embedded in the concept of *Sadvritta*, which encompasses a holistic lifestyle guided by ethical, mental, and physical disciplines. The ancient *Acharyas* such as Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata highlighted that righteous behavior—characterized by *Satya* (truth), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Daya* (compassion), *Kshama* (forgiveness), and *Indriya Nigraha* (sensory control)—is fundamental to achieving *Swasthya*, which includes both physical and mental well-being.²⁷ These values, when practiced consistently, enhance *Sattva Guna* and suppress the mental disturbances caused by *Rajas* and *Tamas*. This classical understanding presents moral conduct not merely as a social duty but as a powerful preventive and promotive tool for mental health.²⁸

In the context of mental pathology, *Ayurveda* describes that imbalance in *Manasika Doshas* due to lack of moral restraint leads to conditions like *Unmada* (psychosis), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), and other psychosomatic disorders.²⁹ Hence, the practice of *Sadvritta* is seen as a therapeutic lifestyle approach that strengthens the mind's stability and prevents disease onset. Classical regimens recommend a disciplined lifestyle, ethical communication, moderation in desires, and compassion toward all beings as foundational tools to maintain inner harmony and mental clarity.³⁰

On the other hand, contemporary psychology and psychiatry offer a converging viewpoint. Modern studies show that ethical living positively correlates with emotional regulation, higher self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and greater psychological resilience.³¹ Moral conduct reduces internal conflict and cognitive dissonance, helping individuals align their thoughts, emotions, and actions, which is a key element in emotional stability. The field of positive psychology emphasizes the importance of virtues such as honesty, forgiveness, and kindness in promoting well-being and life satisfaction, echoing *Ayurveda's* ancient emphasis on *Sadvritta*.³²

Moreover, modern therapeutic frameworks such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) emphasize value-based living,³³ ethical reflection, and mindfulness. These methods encourage individuals to live in accordance with their inner values, much like the *Ayurvedic* prescription of moral restraint and awareness of one's conduct. Research has also shown that individuals who practice moral behavior tend to have better interpersonal relationships and reduced incidence of stress-related disorders, including depression and anxiety.³⁴

In conclusion, both classical *Ayurvedic* philosophy and modern psychological science affirm that moral conduct is crucial for mental health. While *Ayurveda* frames it within the concept of *Sadvritta*, guiding lifestyle, speech, and thought, modern psychology reinforces it through empirical findings and therapeutic models.³⁵ The convergence of these systems provides a comprehensive and timeless framework for promoting psychological well-being and preventing mental disorders, advocating that ethical living is central to a balanced, meaningful, and healthy life.³⁶

TABLE NO. COMPARISON BETWEEN A CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY REVIEW ON MORAL CONDUCT AND MENTAL HEALTH

Aspect	Classical (Ayurvedic Perspective)	Contemporary (Modern Psychological Perspective)
Source Texts / Systems	<i>Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya</i>	Positive Psychology, CBT, ACT, Psychiatry Guidelines, WHO Mental Health Framework

Terminology Used	<i>Sadvritta, Manasika Swasthya, Rajas, Tamas, Sattva</i>	Moral Conduct, Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Resilience, Ethical Behavior
Core Principles	Truth (<i>Satya</i>), Non-violence (<i>Ahimsa</i>), Compassion (<i>Daya</i>), Self-control (<i>Indriya Nigraha</i>), Forgiveness (<i>Kshama</i>)	Empathy, Integrity, Self-regulation, Emotional Regulation, Cognitive Harmony
Role in Mental Health	Promotes <i>Sattva</i> , suppresses <i>Rajas</i> and <i>Tamas</i> , prevents <i>Manasika Roga</i>	Enhances emotional stability, reduces stress and depression, improves cognitive-emotional alignment
Approach Type	Preventive and promotive; lifestyle-based	Preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative; behaviorally and cognitively oriented
Psychological Mechanism	Mental purity, <i>Guna</i> balance, harmony with self and society	Reduction of cognitive dissonance, increased self-efficacy, value-based decision-making
Outcome of Ethical Practice	<i>Chittaprasadana</i> (mental clarity), improved interpersonal harmony, prevention of <i>Unmada, Apsmara</i>	Reduced anxiety and depression, improved well-being and life satisfaction
Therapeutic Value	Acts as a behavioral medicine and preventive psychiatry tool	Used in therapies like CBT, ACT, DBT, mindfulness interventions
Social and Interpersonal Impact	Harmonious living, community peace, fulfillment of <i>Purushartha</i>	Strong social bonds, conflict resolution, improved social functioning
Cultural Relevance	Deeply rooted in Indian philosophical and medical systems	Universally accepted, adaptable across therapeutic settings globally

RESULT AND FINIDINS

- *Sadvritta*, as described in Ayurvedic texts, serves as a preventive and promotive measure for maintaining *Manasika Swasthya* (mental health).
- Practicing moral conduct enhances *Sattva Guna* and helps regulate *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which are considered major contributors to mental disorders.
- Ayurvedic recommendations on moral behavior—such as *Satya* (truth), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Daya* (compassion), and *Indriya Nigraha* (self-restraint)—were found to be aligned with modern concepts of emotional regulation and psychological well-being.

- Classical texts propose that adherence to *Sadvritta* leads to improved emotional resilience, reduced mental conflict, and balanced cognitive functioning.
- Modern psychological research supports that individuals with strong moral values tend to have better stress management, fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhanced self-esteem.
- Therapeutic approaches like CBT and ACT incorporate principles similar to *Sadvritta*, such as value-based action, ethical introspection, and behavioral regulation.
- Individuals practicing ethical living are observed to have healthier interpersonal relationships, stronger coping skills, and a greater sense of life satisfaction.
- The integration of classical and contemporary models reveals that moral conduct is not only spiritually and socially valuable but also medically and psychologically beneficial.
- Moral conduct can serve as a non-pharmacological intervention in preventive psychiatry and mental health counseling, especially in lifestyle-based therapies.
- Overall, the review concludes that *Sadvritta* and moral conduct significantly contribute to a stable, harmonious, and mentally healthy life when implemented consciously.

DISCUSSION

The role of *Sadvritta* and moral conduct in mental health is a profound area where classical *Ayurvedic* wisdom and contemporary psychological sciences converge. *Ayurveda* emphasizes that the foundation of mental well-being lies in the equilibrium of *Manasika Doshas*—*Rajas* and *Tamas*—and the dominance of *Sattva*. Practicing *Sadvritta* strengthens *Sattva* and thus contributes to inner peace, emotional stability, and psychological clarity.³⁷ This is supported by classical descriptions in *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, where righteous living is considered not only essential for disease prevention but also for sustaining mental clarity and contentment.³⁸

In modern mental health frameworks, similar values are observed in the form of ethical living, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and cognitive-behavioral alignment.³⁹ Research in behavioral sciences consistently shows that individuals who engage in value-based behavior, such as honesty, compassion, and restraint, are more likely to exhibit resilience, adaptability, and stable emotional responses. These findings resonate deeply with the *Ayurvedic* understanding that self-control and virtuous conduct protect the mind from external and internal stressors.⁴⁰

Therapeutically, *Sadvritta* aligns with preventive psychiatry, offering non-pharmacological interventions through behavioral correction and ethical guidance. Modern therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) promote conscious awareness, responsibility, and ethical behavior, which mirror *Ayurvedic* principles.⁴¹ Furthermore, psychological disturbances such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral dysregulation have been observed to reduce in individuals who actively practice moral restraint and lead a disciplined life.⁴²

The interdisciplinary understanding reinforces that mental health is not solely a biochemical or neurophysiological issue but deeply rooted in behavioral ethics and lifestyle. Hence, incorporating *Sadvritta* into contemporary mental health protocols could enhance therapeutic efficacy, especially in culturally rooted populations where spiritual and ethical dimensions hold significant influence.⁴³

In summary, the discussion reveals a strong conceptual and practical link between *Sadvritta*, moral conduct, and mental health. This integrative approach can serve as a model for holistic psychiatry, promoting a balanced lifestyle rooted in ethics, consciousness, and well-being. Future clinical studies on the implementation of *Sadvritta*-based counseling could further validate its effectiveness in preventing and managing psychological disorders.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

The review highlights that *Sadvritta* and moral conduct are not merely ethical ideals but foundational pillars for achieving and maintaining mental health. Classical *Ayurvedic* literature envisions moral behavior as a powerful preventive and promotive tool that enhances *Sattva*, regulates *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and ensures psychological balance. Modern psychology, through evidence-based studies, validates these ancient insights by demonstrating that ethical living promotes emotional resilience, reduces mental stress, and fosters overall well-being. The integration of classical *Ayurvedic* ethics with contemporary psychological practices offers a holistic, culturally relevant, and sustainable model for mental health care. Therefore, re-establishing *Sadvritta* as a lifestyle practice holds great promise in both preventive psychiatry and therapeutic frameworks for mental wellness.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST –NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT –NONE

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