

REVIEW ARTICLE

Sadvritta as a Behavioral Framework for Mental Health: An Ayurvedic Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received on: 03-04-2026

Accepted on: 19-05-2026

Published on: 31-05-2026

Key words:

Manasika Bhava,
Mental health,
Mindfulness,
Pragyaparadha,
Sadvritta,
Triguna

ABSTRACT

Mental health is an essential part of overall well-being and is shaped by a combination of biological, psychological, behavioral, and lifestyle factors. Although modern psychiatry has made significant progress, most approaches still focus more on treatment than on prevention and health promotion. In this context, Ayurveda offers a broader and more holistic understanding of health, emphasizing the balance between body, mind, senses, and consciousness. Among its principles, *Sadvritta* – described in classical texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita – provides a detailed code of conduct that includes ethical living, personal discipline, and control over mental activities. The present review explores the role of *Sadvritta* in promoting mental health and attempts to relate its principles with concepts from modern psychology and neuroscience. The review suggests that *Sadvritta* influences mental health through multiple pathways. It supports better thinking and decision-making by strengthening higher mental functions, encourages healthy behavioral patterns through disciplined living, and promotes emotional balance by regulating the *Triguna* – enhancing *Satva* while reducing *Rajas* and *Tamas*. These effects are comparable to modern ideas such as executive function, emotional regulation, and mindfulness. *Sadvritta* also plays an important preventive role by reducing *Pragyaparadha* (~errors in judgment), which are considered a root cause of many mental and psychosomatic disorders. In addition, its emphasis on ethical conduct and positive social behavior contributes to improved psychological well-being. Overall, *Sadvritta* can be understood as a practical and holistic framework for maintaining and promoting mental health. Its similarities with modern scientific concepts highlight its relevance in today's context. However, more focused research is needed to support its integration into modern mental health care.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a fundamental component of overall well-being and is increasingly recognized as a major global public health concern. Contemporary science defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, effectively copes with the normal stresses of life, works productively, and contributes to society.^[1] Current research acknowledges that mental health is influenced not only by neurobiological factors but also by behavioral, cognitive, and lifestyle determinants.^[2] Consequently, modern approaches have begun to incorporate psychological and behavioral interventions alongside pharmacological management.

Despite these advancements, the rising prevalence of stress, anxiety disorders, depression, and behavioral disturbances suggests that existing approaches remain largely treatment-oriented and may not adequately address preventive and promotive aspects of mental health. While concepts such as self-regulation, mindfulness, and lifestyle modification are increasingly explored, there remains a lack of a unified and structured behavioral framework that integrates ethical, cognitive, and social dimensions of mental well-being.

Ayurveda offers a holistic perspective on health by emphasizing the integration of *Sharira* (~body), *Mana* (~mind), *Indriya* (~Senses), and *Atma* (~consciousness).^[3] Within this framework, *Sadvritta*, described as a code of righteous conduct, encompasses ethical behavior, personal hygiene, social discipline, and regulation of mental and sensory activities. It helps in preserving health and preventing disease through disciplined living and control over the senses (~*Indriyavijaya*).^[4]

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However, despite its conceptual importance, the role of *Sadvritta* in the promotion of mental health there is no integrative model mapping *Sadvritta* to neurocognitive and behavioral constructs such as executive function, emotional regulation, and decision-making. The ways through which *Sadvritta* influences mental processes – such as emotional regulation, cognitive control, and behavioral stability – remain insufficiently explored in the context of modern scientific understanding.

Therefore, a significant research gap exists in bridging classical Ayurvedic principles of *Sadvritta* with current evidence in mental health sciences. Addressing this gap is essential to establish its relevance as a preventive and promotive strategy in contemporary mental health care.

1.1. Aims and Objective

- To analyze the concept of *Sadvritta* from classical Ayurvedic literature
- To explore role of *Sadvritta* in the promotion of mental health
- To understand the relationship between classical Ayurvedic concepts and modern views in psychology and neuroscience, particularly in the context of mental health and self-regulation.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Ayurvedic texts were carefully studied, with major references taken from *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*. Concepts such as *Sadvritta*, *Triguna* (*Satva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*), *Manasika Bhava*, and *Pragyaparadha* were identified and examined in detail. Their relevance was interpreted considering behavioral patterns, cognitive processes, and emotional regulation.

Alongside this, contemporary literature was explored using electronic databases like *PubMed* and *Google Scholar*. The search was carried out using keywords including self-regulation, mental health, executive function, emotional regulation, mindfulness, cognitive control, lifestyle psychiatry, and psychological well-being. Preference was given to studies that discussed behavioral and cognitive aspects of mental health, as well as those focusing on mindfulness, self-control, and lifestyle-based approaches.

3. CONCEPT OF SADVRITTA

Sadvritta, described in Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, refers to a code of ideal or righteous conduct that governs an individual's behavior at physical, mental, and social levels.^[4,5] It encompasses a set of ethical, moral, and lifestyle guidelines aimed at maintaining harmony between the individual and their internal as well as external environment.

According to *Charaka Samhita*, adherence to *Sadvritta* is essential for preserving health, enhancing longevity, and preventing disorders arising from *Pragyaparadha*, improper conduct (~improper conduct).^[6] It emphasizes the importance of appropriate behavior, controlled sensory engagement, and moral discipline in maintaining equilibrium of body and mind. Thus, *Sadvritta* serves not only as a preventive measure but also as a foundation for psychological and social well-being.

The principles of *Sadvritta* can be broadly categorized into three interrelated domains:

3.1. Personal Conduct

This includes practices related to personal hygiene, daily routine, cleanliness, and a disciplined lifestyle. It emphasizes proper habits in

eating, sleeping, and physical activity, which contribute to both physical health and mental stability. Regularity and discipline in daily activities help in reducing stress and promoting a sense of order and control.

3.2. Social Conduct

Sadvritta highlights the importance of harmonious social interactions through values such as truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, respect, and empathy. Ethical behavior in social relationships fosters trust, reduces interpersonal conflicts, and enhances emotional well-being. Healthy social conduct plays a crucial role in maintaining psychological balance and preventing stress-related disturbances.

3.3. Mental Discipline

Mental regulation is a central aspect of *Sadvritta*, which includes *Manonigraha* and *Indriyavijaya* (~control over thoughts, emotions, and sensory inputs). It encourages the cultivation of positive mental states such as calmness, clarity, and contentment, while restraining negative emotions such as anger, greed, and fear. This aspect directly contributes to the promotion of *Satva guna*, which is essential for mental stability and cognitive clarity.

In essence, *Sadvritta* provides a holistic behavioral framework that integrates personal discipline, social ethics, and mental regulation. By guiding appropriate conduct at multiple levels, it plays a fundamental role in maintaining both physical and mental health, thereby forming an important basis for preventive and promotive healthcare in Ayurveda.

4. MECHANISM OF ACTION OF SADVRITTA

The mechanism of action of *Sadvritta* can be understood through neurocognitive, behavioral, and emotional pathways, which together explain its comprehensive influence on mental health.

4.1. Neurocognitive Mechanism

From a neurocognitive perspective, the effects of *Sadvritta* can be correlated with the functioning of higher brain centers involved in cognition and emotional regulation.^[7-9] The prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive functions such as decision-making, impulse control, and judgment, plays a central role in behavioral regulation.^[10,11] Adherence to *Sadvritta*, through practices such as *Manonigraha* (~control of mind), enhances cognitive control and promotes rational decision-making, thereby reducing impulsive and maladaptive behaviors.^[12,13]

Simultaneously, the limbic system, which governs emotional responses such as fear, anger, and pleasure, is modulated through disciplined behavior and sensory regulation.^[14] By reducing excessive stimulation and promoting awareness, *Sadvritta* helps in balancing emotional reactivity. This neurocognitive regulation results in improved impulse control, emotional stability, and adaptive coping mechanisms, which are essential components of mental health.

4.2. Behavioral Mechanism

At the behavioral level, *Sadvritta* promotes the development of healthy habits and disciplined living. Regular adherence to ethical and structured conduct leads to the formation of positive behavioral patterns, which reduce the likelihood of maladaptive coping strategies such as impulsivity, avoidance, or harmful habits.^[15,16]

Discipline in daily activities, social interactions, and personal conduct fosters consistency and predictability, which are important

for psychological stability. Over time, these structured behaviors contribute to improved self-regulation and resilience, enabling individuals to respond effectively to stressors. Thus, *Sadvritta* functions as a behavioral conditioning framework that reinforces adaptive responses and minimizes dysfunctional patterns.

4.3. Emotional Mechanism

Emotionally, *Sadvritta* plays a significant role in modulating the *Triguna*, particularly by promoting *Satva* and reducing *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* is associated with agitation, anger, and excessive desire, while *Tamas* is linked with inertia, ignorance, and emotional dullness. Uncontrolled dominance of these *Gunas* leads to emotional instability and *mansika vikara*.

By encouraging ethical conduct, self-control, and mental discipline, *Sadvritta* reduces the influence of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, thereby minimizing emotions such as anger, fear, greed, and frustration. Simultaneously, it enhances *Satva guna*, which is characterized by calmness, clarity, contentment, and emotional balance.^[17] This shift in *Guna* predominance leads to a stable and harmonious mental state, which is essential for psychological well-being.

5. DISCUSSION

Sadvritta can be understood as a comprehensive behavioral and cognitive framework that plays a crucial role in the promotion of mental health. Unlike purely descriptive ethical codes, it provides practical guidelines that regulate behavior, cognition, and emotional responses, thereby contributing to psychological stability.

By promoting disciplined behavior, it enhances *Manonigraha* (~control over the mind) and *Indriyavijaya* (~control over the senses), which leads to the predominance of *Satva guna*. This results in mental clarity, emotional balance, and stability. Simultaneously, it reduces the influence of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which are associated with agitation, impulsivity, and inertia. Thus, *Sadvritta* acts at the level of behavioral regulation, cognitive processing, and emotional regulation.

From a modern scientific perspective, these mechanisms can be correlated with the concept of self-regulation and executive function, which are primarily governed by the prefrontal cortex. Studies have shown that improved self-regulation is associated with better emotional control, reduced stress, and enhanced psychological well-being. This supports the concept of *Manonigraha* described in Ayurveda.^[18-20]

Similarly, *Indriyavijaya* can be correlated with sensory regulation and mindfulness-based practices. Mindfulness has been defined as attention or awareness to present-moment experiences with acceptance.^[21] Research indicates that mindfulness improves attention, reduces emotional reactivity, and enhances cognitive flexibility.^[22,23] This aligns with the role of *Sadvritta* in regulating sensory and behavioral responses.

Furthermore, ethical conduct and prosocial behavior described under *Sadvritta* have been shown to positively influence mental health. Studies suggest that individuals engaging in compassionate and ethical behavior experience lower levels of stress and higher levels of psychological well-being. This reflects the importance of moral discipline in maintaining mental health.^[24]

Another important aspect is the prevention of *Pragyaparadha*, the root cause of disease, which can be understood in modern terms as cognitive errors or maladaptive decision-making.^[25] By promoting

awareness and appropriate judgment, *Sadvritta* helps in reducing such errors, thereby preventing mental disturbances.^[26]

Sadvritta addresses mental health through a comprehensive set of guidelines encompassing personal hygiene, mental discipline, speech and communication, social and ethical conduct, spiritual practices, dietary habits, behavioral restraint, and overall lifestyle regulation, thereby functioning as a holistic and sustainable intervention, as summarized in [Table 1].

Overall, the integration of Ayurvedic principles with contemporary scientific evidence suggests that *Sadvritta* can be effectively conceptualized as a behavioral and cognitive regulatory framework that supports mental health, as illustrated in [Table 2], which outlines its practical application in outpatient department (OPD) and community settings.

The available literature on *Sadvritta* is largely descriptive, and there is a clear lack of direct empirical studies evaluating its specific impact on mental health outcomes. The parallels drawn with modern concepts such as self-regulation and mindfulness are primarily conceptual in nature. These limitations highlight the need for well-designed clinical and observational studies to further validate the role of *Sadvritta* in mental health.

6. CONCLUSION

Sadvritta represents a structured code of conduct that integrates ethical behavior, personal discipline, and mental regulation. It plays a significant role in mental health promotion by enhancing self-control, stabilizing emotions, and promoting *Satva* while reducing *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Its principles closely align with modern concepts such as self-regulation, mindfulness, and executive function. *Sadvritta* emphasizes the prevention of mental and psychosomatic disorders. Thus, it serves as a holistic and preventive framework for mental well-being, with relevance to contemporary mental health care. However, the lack of direct empirical studies on *Sadvritta* highlights the need for further research to validate its clinical applicability in modern settings.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nil.

8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors give equal contribution in making of this manuscript.

9. FUNDING

Nil.

10. ETHICAL STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it is a REVIEW STUDY.

11. CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

12. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible through databases.

13. DISCLAIMER/VIEW AND OPINIONS

The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the International Research Journal of Ayurveda and Yoga or its editorial board.

14. AI-USE DECLARATION

The authors declare that no generative AI tools were used to create scientific content, interpret data, or draft any sections of this manuscript. AI-based tools were used solely for minor language and grammar refinements to improve clarity and readability. All scientific content, analysis, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

15. PUBLISHERS NOTE

This journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published institutional affiliations

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How to cite this article:

Kajal, Prakash S, Dolai B. Sadvritta as a Behavioral Framework for Mental Health: An Ayurvedic Perspective. *IRJAY*. [online] 2026;9(5):55-59.
Available from: <https://irjay.in>
DOI link- <https://doi.org/10.48165/IRJAY.2026.90510>

Table 1: *Sadvritta* (~Code of conduct) for daily life

Domain	Do's (Recommended practices)	Don'ts (To be avoided)
Personal hygiene	Regular bathing, clean body, trimmed hair & nails, wear clean clothes, use fragrance, daily oil application	Uncleanliness, torn/dirty clothes, poor grooming
Mental discipline	Stay calm, fearless, patient, enthusiastic; control anger, jealousy, attachment; focus on effort	Anxiety, anger, jealousy, excessive attachment, emotional instability
Speech and communication	Speak truth, pleasant, meaningful, and measured words	Lying, harsh speech, gossip, excessive talking
Social conduct	Respect elders, teachers; help needy; be compassionate; maintain good company	Disrespect, cruelty, association with unethical people
Spiritual practices	Practice devotion, gratitude, auspicious activities, sattvic lifestyle	Neglect of values, inauspicious or unethical acts
Dietary conduct	Eat clean, fresh, wholesome food; eat at proper time; mindful eating	Stale, contaminated, incompatible food; overeating; irregular meals
Behavioral restraint	Practice self-control; follow ethical behavior	Stealing, lying, indulgence in harmful or risky activities
Natural urges	Attend natural urges timely; maintain elimination hygiene	Suppression of natural urges; improper elimination habits
Sexual conduct	Maintain moderation, discipline, appropriate timing and conditions	Indulgence in inappropriate partners, times, or conditions
Work discipline	Be diligent, avoid procrastination, act with judgment, maintain balance	Laziness, overexertion, impulsive actions, emotional reactions
Social behavior	Maintain harmony, balanced trust, and respectful relationships	Excessive trust/suspicion, insulting others, and conflict behavior
Mental well-being	Practice compassion, forgiveness, calmness, detachment	Anger, fear, grief, overexcitement, intolerance

Table 2: Application of *Sadvritta* in mental health promotion (outpatient department and community settings)

Component of <i>Sadvritta</i>	Key practices	Underlying mechanism	Modern correlate	Expected mental health outcome	Application in outpatient department/society
<i>Manonigraha</i> (Control of Mind)	Thought regulation, emotional restraint, awareness	Enhances prefrontal control over limbic system	Executive function, emotional regulation	Reduced impulsivity, improved coping	Counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy-based integration, stress management sessions
<i>Indriyavijaya</i> (Control of Senses)	Limiting excessive sensory input, mindful engagement	Reduces overstimulation and emotional reactivity	Mindfulness, attentional control	Reduced anxiety, improved focus	Mindfulness training, digital detox advice
<i>Sadachara</i> (Ethical Conduct)	Truthfulness, compassion, non-violence	Promotes prosocial neurobehavioral responses	Positive psychology, social cognition	Improved relationships, reduced stress	Community education, behavioral counseling
<i>Dinacharya</i> (Daily Discipline)	Regular sleep, diet, routine	Stabilizes circadian rhythm and behavior	Lifestyle psychiatry	Reduced stress, improved mood stability	Lifestyle modification programs
Control of <i>Triguna</i>	Increasing <i>Satva</i> , reducing <i>Rajas</i> and <i>Tamas</i>	Emotional modulation and balance	Affective regulation models	Emotional stability, clarity	Yoga, meditation, diet counseling
Prevention of <i>Pragyaparadha</i>	Avoiding wrong judgments/actions	Reduces cognitive distortions	Cognitive behavioral theory	Prevention of mental disorders	Psychoeducation, decision-making training