

## REVIEW ARTICLE

## Tackling stress the holistic way ...

Dr. Aparna. K\*<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Abhishek Joshi<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Mahesh Vyas<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Basic Principles, Institute for Post Graduate Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar - 361 008, Gujarat, India

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Kaumara Bhritya, Institute for Post Graduate Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar - 361 008, Gujarat, India

<sup>3</sup>Asso. Professor, Department of Basic Principles, Institute for Post Graduate Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar - 361 008, Gujarat, India

Received 04 May 2013; Revised 24 Jul 2013; Accepted 03 Aug 2013

**ABSTRACT**

Modern man is the victim of stress and stress related disorders which threaten to disrupt his life totally. The emotional garbage like fear, hatred, jealousy etc. which gets accumulated in the subconscious mind cause a disruptive explosion in favourable circumstances. The previous unpleasant experiences and complexes are the major cause of tension. *Ayurveda* advocates the inter-relationship between the mind, body and spirit as a whole. It deals with qualitative and quantitative aspects of man not only in individual perspective but also in relation to social environment. The normalcy and coordinated function of these factors will result in the wellbeing, whereas abnormality and in-coordination results in disease. The body and mind constitute the substrata of disease and happiness. *Ayurveda* explains that the three principal causes of all illnesses either psychiatric or somatic are basic errors of ecological, intellectual and sensorial inputs. These three categories of erroneous informational inputs continue bombarding the organism leading to an unwholesome stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. *Ayurveda* advocates magico-religious practices, psychological methods and physiopharmacological methods in the management of psychological disorders.

**Key words:** Stress, *Ayurveda*, Holistic approach.

**INTRODUCTION**

Modern mechanized era has given man a greatest bane -the stress. The octopus hands of stress have strangulated man disturbing his harmony with himself and surroundings. Stressful environment results in faulty thinking which adversely results in conflicts in internal and external environment. Like a fish out of water continuously struggling for life, man fights with surroundings instead of accepting and merging with the flow of life. The emotional garbage like fear, hatred, jealousy etc. which gets accumulated in the subconscious mind cause a disruptive explosion in favourable circumstances. The previous unpleasant experiences and complexes are the major cause of tension.

Modern man is the victim of stress and stress related disorders which threaten to disrupt his life totally. If an individual is ready to accept surroundings and make some alterations in his

attitude, it can bring harmony. When one peacefully coexist with surroundings and self, nothing can shake the equilibrium. Being a health science with holistic approach, *Ayurveda* looks at the mind as an integral part of life and health, thus recommends certain practices to control mind in view of achieving health. It advocates the inter-relationship between the mind, body and spirit as a whole. It deals with qualitative and quantitative aspects of man not only in individual perspective but also in relation to social environment. The body and mind constitute the substrata of disease and happiness. Balanced utilization (of time, mental faculties and object of sense organs) is the cause of happiness (C.su.1/55) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Stress is described as the outcome of psychosocial and environmental factors on physical or mental wellbeing. Stress implies a challenge (stimulus) that requires behavioural, psychological and

\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Aparna K, Email: [dr.aparna13@gmail.com](mailto:dr.aparna13@gmail.com)

physiological changes (adaptations) to be successfully met which triggers hyper-arousal of counteracting reactions. (Esch T *et al* 2003)<sup>2</sup> These reactions involves physiological mechanisms that are known as stress / emergency/ fight or flight response. This response prepares the stressed organism to fight or to flee. (Cannon B)<sup>3</sup> Stress can either exert ameliorating or deleterious effects, depending on various factors (eg. Individual, endogenous or exogenous elements). But clinically negative effects of stress upon health dominates (Esch T, 2003) <sup>[2]</sup>.

According to *Ayurveda* three principal causes of all illnesses either psychiatric or somatic are basic errors of ecological, intellectual and sensorial inputs. These three categories of erroneous informational inputs continue bombarding the organism leading to an unwholesome stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. *Ayurveda* advocates magico-religious practices, psychological methods and physiopharmacological methods in the management of psychological disorders (c.su.11/54) <sup>[1]</sup>.

## MATERIALS

The data from various texts of *Ayurveda* i.e. *Brihatrayee* mainly and internet sources has been collected, compiled and analysed and dealt in detail.

### Stress an ayurvedic overview

*Ayurveda* defines Ayu (life) as the combined state of *Sarira* (body), *Indriya* (senses), *Sattva* (mind) and *Atma* (Soul) (C.su.1/42) <sup>[1]</sup> According to *Ayurveda*, health *Is* not merely freedom from disease. It is essential that body, mind and soul are in an excellent state so that the individual can perform his functions and fulfil his role in life. Definition of *Swastha* also emphasize equal importance to the mental states along with physical health (Su. su. 15/48) <sup>[4]</sup> *ayurveda* never limits a person just to his physical body, it elaborately explains about the soul, mind, intellect, senses and objects complex which constitute a man. The normalcy and coordinated function of these factors will result in the wellbeing, whereas abnormality and in-coordination results in disease.

*Acharya Charaka* names the core factors of life viz. *Atma* , *Mana* , *Bhuddi* and *Manoartha* as '*Adhyatma Dravya Guna Sangraha*' (Ch.su.8/13) <sup>[1]</sup> These factors constitute the foundation on which all our inclination and declination in respect

of both good and bad acts depends for their manifestation and occurrence. The Knowledge is perceived by the proper combination of *Atma*, *Manas*, *Indriya* and *Artha*. Without the completion of that channel, knowledge will not be perceived. Here *Manas* is the bridge in between materialistic and spiritual world. *Sharira* and *Manas* both are considered as *Rogadhithanas* (Ca.su.1 ) <sup>[1]</sup>. An imbalance at mental level is usually reflected and re-enforced at physical level and vice versa. When allowed to persist for long time, the psychic and somatic disorders get combined with each other.

According to *Ayurveda* three principal causes of all illnesses either psychiatric or somatic are basic errors of ecological, intellectual and sensorial inputs. These three categories of erroneous informational inputs continue bombarding the organism leading to an unwholesome stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. (C.su1/54) <sup>[1]</sup>. Every discordant thought, feeling or emotion must pay the penalty in the physical manifestation of some discord. It is now well established that vicious mental states, violent emotions, explosive passions make chemical changes in the brain and poisons the cell life through the whole body.

### Etiopathogenesis of stress

*Manas* (Mind) is that which establishes the contact between the soul and body and which regulates the functions of the *Indriyas* (Ca. Sa. 3/13) <sup>[1]</sup>. The subjects of mind are *Cintya* (things requiring thought), *Vicharya* (consideration), *Uhya* (hypothesis), *Dhyeya* (emotional thinking), *Sankalpya* (determination) (Ca. Sa. 1/20) <sup>[1]</sup>. *Indriabhigraha* (control of sense organs), *Svasyanigraha* (self restraint), *Uha* (hypothesis) and *Vichara* (consideration) represent the action of mind. When any of these faculties of mind gets affected it results in the 'abnormal status of mind', i.e. psychopathology in various contexts. *Caraka* states that *Raja* and *Tama* are chief pathogenic factors of the mind and due to them many *Manasa Vikaras* are produced (Ca.Vi. 6/5) <sup>[1]</sup>, which are as follows: *Kama* (excessive desire / feverishness) , *Soka* (sorrow) and *Bhaya*(fear) vitiate *Vata* and *Krodha* (anger) vitiate *Pitta* (Ca. Ci. 3/115 & 19/12) <sup>[1]</sup>, resulting in psychosomatic symptoms. *Susruta* also explains that (Su. su. 1/33)<sup>4</sup> The main *Dosas* of the *Manas*, *Raja* and *Tama* are the causative factors of mental disorders, which are vitiated as a result of various types of desires and hatred (Ca. su. 1/57) <sup>[1]</sup>. Following three factors

are responsible for the all physical and mental diseases (Ca. su. 1/54 & 11/37) [1].

1. *Prajnaparadha* 2. *Parinama* 3. *Asatmendriyarthasamyoga*

### **Prajnaparadha:**

*Caraka* mentions that *Dhivibramsa* (impairment of intellect), *Dhrativibramsa* (impairment of will) and *Smrtivibramsa* (impairment of memory) are the main causative factors of the mental disorders, which lead to evil *Karmas*, this stage is defined as a *Prajnaparadha*. It causes various types of physical and mental disorders i.e. *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Bhaya*, *Moha*, *Soka*, *Udvega*, etc. (Ca. Sa. 1/102 & 108) [1].

### **Parinama:**

Time factor has an important role to play as the cause of mental disorder. *Ayurveda* explains that result of all improper deeds (*Asatkarma*) will mature in time and when matures, the person will be afflicted with particular disorder. It is seen in some physical disorders and all mental disorders.

### **Asatmendriyarthasamyoga:**

Unwholesome contacts with senses are the third causative factor of mental disorder. They may be in the form of *Atiyoga* (excessive utilization), *Ayoga* (nonutilization) and *Mithyayoga* (wrong utilization) of sense faculties. (Ca. Sha. 1/128) [1].

These three types of unwholesome contact of senses are aggravate the physical and mental disorders.

*Ayurveda* regards that diseases occur due to controlling the non-suppressible urges (*Adharaneeya Vegas*) or due to discharging the suppressible urges (*Dharaneeya Vegas*). The suppressible urges include: psychic impulses, speech impulses and physical impulses. The psychic impulses are; greediness, sorrow, fear, anger, pride, over attachment and envy. When these urges are not controlled or discharged properly, mental tension and conflict may arise and various psychological and psychiatric illnesses may originate.

At the biological level *Vayu* is the *Niyanta* i.e. controller and *Praneta* i.e.

motivator of the mind (Ca. Sa. 12/8) [1]. So that any derangement in *Vata* will afflict mental activities. Vitiated *Vata* is responsible for derangement of *Indriyas* and *Manas*. Among the five subtype of *Vata*; *Prana*, *Vyana* and *Udana* are directly involved with mental activities. *Caraka* states that grief, fear, anger, sorrow, excessive sleep and excessive awakening at night vitiate *Agni* (Ca. Vi. 2/9) [1], which leads to many

somatic disorders related to *Ama*. In *Chandogya Upanishads* states that nutrition of mind is depending upon diet. The one-third part of food is utilized by the mind. The bad quality food may also vitiate mind, which may lead to the various types of mental disorders.

### **Tackling stress- the ayurvedic way**

*Ayurvedic* psychiatry is a very well developed and vast stream. Contemporary treatment protocols and methods can trace its origin in the science of *Ayurveda*. *Acharya Vagbhata* says that '*Dhi Dairya Aatmadi Vigyanam Mano Dosha Aushadam Param*' (A.H.su.1) which means discrimination (discrimination between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal) courage (courage to adhere to the good and avoid bad), strong will (to withstand difficulties with strong will) and knowledge of the self (possessing or obtaining correct knowledge of the self, of the aims and pursuits of present life) are the ideal therapies for the mind.

*Charaka* quotes '*Manaso Gyana Vigyana Dhairya Smriti Samadibhi*' (c.su. 1/58) pathology of mind can be corrected by recourse to spiritual and scriptural knowledge, patience, memory and meditation. *Acharya Caraka* (C.Su.11) [1] further explains three types of therapies of physical and mental disorders, *Daivavyapasraya* (magico religious practices), *Yuktivyapasrya* (Physiopharmacological therapy), *Sattvavajaya* (Psychological therapy)

### **(1) DAIVAVYAPASRAYA :**

It comprises of *Mantra* (incantation), *Ausadhi* (talisman), *Mani* (gems), *Mangala* (auspicious offerings), *Bali* (religious sacrification), *Upahara* (gift), *Homa* (oblation), *Niyama* (religious rules), *Prayascitta* (atonement), *Upavasa* (fasting), *Svastyayana* (chanting of auspicious hymns), *Pranipata* (paying obeisance), *Gamana* (pilgrimage) etc. It has empirical powers to eradicate diseases. All the items enumerated under this therapy are effective in the eradication of disease only due to the divine or super natural influence.

### **(2) YUKTIVYAPASRYA :**

It is divided into three types of therapies, which are internal cleansing, external cleansing and surgical therapy. Diet and medicaments come under these categories. *Samshodhana* (elimination), therapies are also useful for this disease.

*Acharya Caraka* has explained *Medhya Rasayana* therapy, which is of special significance in the

management of mental disorders. *Medhya Rasayana* drugs are considered to promote *Medha*, in addition to their general rejuvenative effects (C.ci.1) [1].

### (3) *Sattvavajaya* :

*Acarya Caraka* states that *Sattvavajaya* is nothing but withdrawal of mind from unwholesome objects. It also includes mind controlling, replacement of emotions, reconciliatory methods, Psychophysical Shocks, Moral- Behavioural codes, mental equanimity, moral behavioural codes and those mentioned under *Adravyabhuta Cikitsa* such as *Bhayadarsana* (terrorizing), *Vismaphana* (surprising), *Vismarana* (dememorizing), *Ksobhana* (shocking), *Harsa* (exciting), *Bhatsana* (chiding), etc. (Ca. Vi. 8/87) [1].

The management of psychic disorders also includes *Acara Rasayana*, a set of social and mental conduct, which can acquire the *Rasayana* effect on body and mind. It is also suggested as a '*Nitya Rasayana*' (Ca. Ci. 1/4-34) [1].

Overcoming stress and living happily and satisfied in all spheres can be possible through unified practise of *Yoga*. Among the different streams of *Yoga*, *Astanga Yoga* stands tall. It includes almost all the disciples right from the code of conduct to the path to absolute bliss.

## DISCUSSION

Modern mechanized era has given man a greatest bane the stress. The octopus hands of stress have strangulated man disturbing his harmony with himself and surroundings. According to *Ayurveda*, health is not merely freedom from disease. It is essential that body, mind and soul are in an excellent state so that the individual can perform his functions and fulfil his role in life. The three principal causes of all illnesses either psychiatric or somatic are basic errors of ecological, intellectual and sensorial inputs. These three categories of erroneous informational inputs continue bombarding the organism leading to an unwholesome stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. *Acarya Caraka* states that *Ichha* i.e. desire and *Dvesa* i.e. hate are common factors of happiness and sorrow (Ca. Sa. 1/134) [1], so that all mental disorders may be produced from these two factors. According to *Indu*, mind is vitiated by *Ragadi* i.e. desire etc. *Vikaras* of all human beings and give rise to anxiety, delusion etc. (A.H. Sha. 1/1 & its *Indu comm.*) [1]. A person having *Sattvika Prakriti*

never suffers from *Cittodvega* or other mental disorders. Quality opposite to the *Sattvika Prakriti* i.e. *Hina Sattva* or *Rajasa Prakriti* and *Tamasa Prakriti* are more prone to mental disorders. When *Alpa Sattva* (inadequate mental makeup or personality) person indulges in or is afflicted by *Manobhigata* and *Pragnaparadh*, it results in the imbalance of *Manas Dosha Rajah* and *Tama* leading to the vitiation at bodily level by affecting *Prana*, *Udana Vyana Vayu*, *Sadhaka Pitta* and *Tarpak Kapha*, along with the vitiation of *Agni* & depletion of *Ojas* which present the psychosomatic presentation of disease.

*Vata* is the controller and motivator of mind, any derangement in *Vata* will afflict mental activities. Vitiating *Vata* is responsible for derangement of *Indriyas* and *Manas*. The function of *Prana Vayu* is to control of *Buddhi*, *Citta*, *Indriyas* and *Hridaya*. *Udana Vayu* is responsible for memory, *Vyana Vayu* is responsible for different movements etc. Hence, the etiological factors of vitiation of *Prana*, *Udana* and *Vyana Vayu* may also affect the mental activities adversely. Vitiation of *Pitta* and *Kapha* can also be seen in some psychiatric disorders, *Pittakara Nidana* i.e. *Vidahi Dravyas*, *Krodha* etc. leads to provocation of *Sadhaka Pitta*, which is responsible for proper function of *Buddhi*, *Medha*, etc. *Kaphakara Nidana* i.e. heavy, sweet, cool food intake, excessive sleep etc. may cause vitiation of *Tarpaka Kapha*, which acts as a nourishment of *Indriyas*.

Being alarming disease, mental disorders requires effective management. In recent years several synthetic drugs have been introduced for the treatment of psychological disorders. Although these drugs are having better results, one cannot avoid major side effects such as drug dependence, drug resistance, sedation etc.

*Ayurvedic* psychiatry is a very well developed and vast stream. Contemporary treatment protocols and methods can trace its origin in the science of *Ayurveda*. Being a health science with holistic approach, *Ayurveda* looks at the mind as an integral part of life and health, thus recommends certain practices to control mind in view of achieving health. It advocates the inter-relationship between the mind, body and spirit as a whole. It deals with qualitative and quantitative aspects of man not only in individual perspective but also in relation to social environment. The threefold therapies *Daivavyapasraya*, *Yuktivyapasraya* and *Sattvavajaya* represents three categories of approaches adopted by

Ayurveda physicians for the care and cure of pathological conditions. *Daivavyapasraya* is more or less empirical in as much it revolves around faith and 'unseen' influences. *Yuktivyapasraya* involves reasoning and use of rational faculties. *Sattvavajaya* includes both rational and empirical methods and is the most significant among the three offering wide spectrum of opportunity to physician in treatment. *Acara Rasayana*, social and moral conduct has direct effect on the potentiation of *Sattva Guna* of mind. The some of the practices described by *Charaka* are – to be truthful, abstinence from anger, practicing charity, practicing penance, good conduct, imparting spiritual knowledge, Regularly studying scriptures, having respect for elders and persons having self control etc. All these conducts are very necessary for the prevention and treatment of psychological conditions.

*Yoga* practices are an ideal antidote to stress and are proving to be the basis of a powerful therapy for mental and physical diseases. Though word '*Astanga Yoga*' is not told in ancient classical *Ayurvedic* texts we can get indirect references. *Astanga Yoga*' can be included under *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*. *Yama* and *Niyama* control the *Yogi's* passion and emotion in harmony with his surroundings. *Asanas* helps to develop strength, flexibility, will power, good health, and stability it imparts 'stable and unified strong personality'. *Pranayamas* help us to control our emotions which are linked to breathing. *Pranayamas* also influence our *pranamaya kosha* i.e. the vital energy sheath. Slow, deep and rhythmic breathing is ideal for controlling stress and overcoming emotional hang-ups. The practice of *pranayams* helps us to regulate our emotions and stabilize the mind. *Dharana* and *dhyana* help us to focus our mind and dwell in it and thus help us to channel our creative energy in a holistic manner towards the right type of evolutionary activities. They help us to understand our self better and in the process become better humans in this social world. *Samadhi* is the ultimate realisation of the self (Light on yoga BKS Iyengar).

The yoga goals to keep the balance self organize and maintain autonomy under challenge to survive. In general relaxation techniques are able to inhibit/ reduce an acute (neurogenic, local) inflammation. (Lutgendorf S 2000)<sup>6</sup> meditation has been demonstrated to reduce harmful effect of stress (especially on the immune system) , since relaxation techniques counteract the stress

response and decrease sympathetic nervous system responsivity (Peters RK 1977)<sup>[7]</sup> , there by opposing stress related deleterious immunological processes (Esch T 2002)<sup>[8]</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The four dimensional approach of life *Shareera*, *Indriya*, *Satva* and *Atma* is an holistic approach of *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* evolved through ages incorporating many principles and concepts. *Ayurveda* never limits a person just to his physical body, it elaborately explains about the soul, mind, intellect, senses and objects complex which constitute a man. The normalcy and coordinated function of these factors will result in the well being where as abnormality and in-coordination results in disease. An imbalance at mental level is usually reflected and re-enforced at physical level and vice versa. When allowed to persist for long time, the psychic and somatic disorders get combined with each other.

Stress is described as the outcome of psychosocial and environmental factors on physical or mental wellbeing. Stress implies a challenge (stimulus) that requires behavioural, psychological and physiological changes ( adaptations) to be successfully met which triggers hyper-arousal of counteracting reactions, a stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. *Ayurvedic* psychiatry is a very well developed and vast stream. When three categories of erroneous informational inputs i.e.. ecological, intellectual and sensorial inputs continue bombarding the organism leading to an unwholesome stressful state which over rides a limit leading to stress disorder resulting in physical and psychological ailments. *Ayurveda* advocates magico-religious practices, psychological methods and physiopharmacological methods in the management of psychological disorders. Along with this, following ethical, moral and social conduct, resorting to spiritual knowledge and yoga also helps to keep the mind and body free from the external and internal stressors.

## REFERENCES

1. Acharya Charaka, Charaka Samhita, with Ayurveda- Dipika Commentary edited by Vaidya Yadavaji Trikamji Acharya, 7th edition, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, (2002).
2. The therapeutic use of the relaxation response in stress-related diseases, Tobias Esch<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Gregory L. Fricchione<sup>4</sup>,

- George B. Stefano<sup>1</sup>, *Med Sci Monit*, 2003; 9(2): RA23-34).
3. Cannon W: The emergency function of the adrenal medulla in pain and the major emotions. *Am J Physiol*, 1914; 33: 356-372.
  4. Acharya Susruta - Susruta Samhita, Nibandhasangraha Commentary of Shri Dalhanacarya, Nyayachandrika Commentary of Gaydas, Edited by Yadav Sharma; Chaukhamba Orientalia Varanasi, Third Edition (2003).
  5. Acharya Vagbhatta-Astanga Samgraha with commentary by Indu (Ram Sastri Kinjavadekar) Citrasala Press, Pune, 1940, Part-III.
  6. Lutgendorf S, Logan H, Kirchner HL et al: Effects of relaxation and stress on the capsaicin-induced local inflammatory response. *Psychosom Med*, 2000; 62: 524-534.
  7. Peters RK, Benson H, Peters JM: Daily relaxation response breaks in a working population: II. Effects on blood pressure. *Am J Public Health*, 1977; 67: 954-959.
  8. Esch T, Stefano GB, Fricchione GL, Benson H: An Overview of Stress and Its Impact in Immunological Diseases. *Mod Asp Immunobiol*, 2002; 2: 187-192.