



Review Article

A REVIEW ON ROLE OF AYURVEDA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, life is full of desires, demands, workloads, deadlines, frustrations, irritations, squabbles etc. which lead into production of stress. Stress may be physical, physiological or psychological. Out of these stresses, psychological stress require specific concern as it may be dangerous to someone's physical & mental health, personal safety or well being. Incompatibility with others, marital discord, quarrel, torture, abuse, self doubt are various situations related with emotions, anxieties, interpersonal, social or behavioural events and thus producing psychic stress. Small amount of stress is useful as it helps us to perform better under pressure, motivate us to do our best. But beyond a certain limit stress start causing severe destruction to health, mood, productivity, relationship & quality of life. *Ayurveda* is a science and art of appropriate living which helps us to achieve longevity with a better quality. It has proven to be definitely effective in the management of stress related problems of life caused by several reasons. It includes knowledge of complete balance of body, mind and spirit including emotions and psychology on all levels. It treat stress by various life style modifications e.g. *Dincharya*, *Sadvrit* etc. and by use of *Medhyadravya*, *Satvavajaychikitsa*, *Panchkarma*, *Shirodhara* etc. *Ayurvedic* methods of treating stress not only maintain the balance in body & mind but also progressively raise the level of inner happiness & satisfaction. This paper focuses review on role of Ayurveda in the management of stress.

KEYWORDS: *Dincharya*, *Sadvrit*, *Medhyadravya*, *Satvavajaychikitsa*.

INTRODUCTION

In modern era, there are lots of desires, shortage of time due to busy life schedules, increase workloads, unrealistic expectations etc. When such situations are related with emotions, difficult personal or interpersonal relationships, social events, financial problems etc. there is generation of stress & other mental disorders. According to *Ayurveda*, few persons are having low mental state known as *Heensatva*^[1]. Such persons are unable to tolerate small difficulties of life as produced by above etiological factors and thus easily get affected with anger, lust, grief, fear, greed, pride etc. mental impulses known as *Dhaarnayavega*^[2] which lead into stress & other mental diseases generation.

Signs & Symptoms of stress

If any person having above problems is feeling exhausted and overwhelmed, it is necessary to recognise whether he is having any stress or not. Inability to concentrate, sleep disturbances, irritability, agitation, feeling loneliness, negative thoughts, hopelessness, unnecessary worrying, poor judgment, impaired memory, change in eating habits, nail biting are common signs and symptoms of stress. Chronic stress can affect various systems of body. It can raise blood pressure, decrease immune system,

stimulate aging process, increase the risk of various diseases like heart attack, stroke etc. Prolonged and continuous stress can produce anxiety followed by depression.

Management of stress in Ayurveda

Ayurveda is based on the idea that a life and life style of harmony is the basis for optimum physical & mental health. It has proven already that the stress is one of the greatest trouble to human well being. It slowly creeps on the affected person and produces other mental illnesses. Here *Ayurveda* comes into concern for relieving stress. *Ayurvedic* methods of treating stress not only maintain the balance in body & mind but also progressively raise the level of inner happiness & satisfaction. *Ayurveda* plays an important role in treating stress. It helps to attain optimum health and peace of mind by acting on stress through natural way. *Ayurveda* treats stress by following ways-

1. Life style modifications according to Ayurveda

Ayurvedic treatment basically has two aims- maintenance of health of a healthy person & to cure the disease of an ill person. Life style modifications as given in *Ayurveda*, accomplish both the above aims in management of stress. It can be used to prevent

stress & to cure stress. It consists of various methods as given below-

Dincharya

Dincharya means to follow daily routine activity as described in Ayurveda for better physical & mental health. *Dincharya* includes various steps that should be followed to relieve stress e.g.

• **Oil application on head**

By applying oil on head regularly sense organ becomes cheerful, face has pleasant glow, sound sleep and happiness also develops^[3]. Refined *Tila* (sesame) oil can be used alone or as a base oil in which *Brahmi* (*Centella asiatica*), *Jatamansi* (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) etc. medicines are cooked, for application over head to relieve stress and anxiety.

• **Vyayam (Physical Exercise)**

Vyayam or physical exercise is an important mode for curing and preventing many diseases. By physical exercise one gets lightness and tolerance of difficulties^[4]. But *Vyayam* should be performed daily only upto the half of the strength i.e. one should utilise about 50% of his capacity daily because the purpose of *Vyayam* is not to drain all energy but to utilise most of it. Perspiration, enhanced respiration, lightness of body, inhibition of heart and other organs of the body are indicative of the exercise being performed correctly.

Yogic techniques

It includes *Yogic* prayer, *Pranayama*, *Asana*, *Dhyana* (meditation) etc. It is not a technique but a way of life which includes cessation of all thought processes which distract mind. It describes a state of consciousness when mind is free from scattered thoughts & various pattern.

Sadvrit (Right conducts)

Few right conducts are given in *Ayurveda* text known as *Sadvrit*. They include ethics related with food, habitat, social, behavioural & psychological events in humans. So in order to prevent derangements in sense organs along with mind one should make effort to maintain the normalcy by these methods of *Sadvrit*^[5].

2. Ayurvedic drugs & procedures

Medhyadravya

Medhyadravya are the herbal medicines described in *Ayurveda* e.g. *Mandookparni* (*Centella asiatica*), *Shankhpushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), *Aindri* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Kushmaand* (*Benincasa hispida*), *Jyotismati* (*Celastrus panniculatus*) etc. These drugs play important role in managing stress. *Mandookparni* (*Centella asiatica*) contains valine. It is an essential amino acid which provide improvement

in nervousness^[6]. *Shankhpushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) has Antistress action. Reduction in exploratory behavioural pattern and suppression of aggressive behaviour, reduction in spontaneous motor activity, hypothermia, alterations in the general behaviour pattern and potentiation of pentobarbitone sleeping time was observed by methanolic extract of the whole plant^[7]. *Aindri* (*Bacopa monniera*) contains bacosides which is main active nootropic constituent.^[8]

Satvavajaychikitsa (Psychological therapy)

In this therapy, mind is restrained from unwholesome objects^[9]. It is a treatment by self control. It is a factual knowledge of psychological self control that helps to discriminate between thoughts and actions and to pull out phobic nucleus. It adopts a comprehensive psychosomatic-spiritual approach to maintain the normalcy of mental health as well as bringing back its healthy state if it is impaired^[10].

Panchkarma: In *Ayurveda*, for the balance state of mind, body & consciousness, few *Panchkarma* procedures are prescribed e.g.

• **Snehana (Purvakarma)-** In this procedure, medicated oil is applied to entire body with a particular type of massage which helps to move the toxins towards gastrointestinal tract. *Snehana* act as a vehicle to transport the drug. In *Snehana*, drug and oil are absorbed transdermally thus make the tissues soft and healthy. It is useful in person who continues worries as it inhibit *Vata*^[11]. As per indication it is given daily for 3 to 7 days.

• **Nasya-** The nose is the doorway to the brain and it is also the doorway to consciousness. It involves administration of medicated oil through the nose to cleanse accumulated toxins from head and neck region. It cleans the sensory organs, provide normal sleep, mental satisfaction and thus it act as a key factor in stress management.

Shirodhara

In it, Medicated decoction, oils, milk etc. are poured on forehead through special equipment for a period of 30 to 45 minutes. It relieves emotional & mental stress by giving deep feeling of relaxation. Total mind & body rejuvenation is achieved which improve memory & concentration.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda is probably the first system of medicine which has given the concept of mind, body & soul relationship. According to Ayurvedic text, life is the combination of mind, body & soul. This balance may be disturbed by modern life style which causes lots of stress and mental illness. To achieve the balance state of mind, body & consciousness, *Ayurveda* has prescribed life style modifications,

drugs and procedures. *Medhyadravya like Mandookparni (Centella asiatica)* contains valine which provide improvement in nervousness. *Shankhpushpi (Convolvulus pluricaulis)* has Antistress action. *Aindri (Bacopa monniera)* contains bacosides which is main active nootropic constituent. *Satvavajay chikitsa* is a psychological self control that helps to discriminate between thoughts and actions and to pull out phobic nucleus. *Snehana* removes stress by balancing *Vata*. *Nasya* give mental relaxation by cleanse toxins of head. *Shirodhara* relieves stress by giving deep feeling of relaxation.

CONCLUSION

From the above description, it is clear that life style modifications as prescribed in Ayurveda along with application of Ayurvedic drugs & procedures provide us the definite way to distress the stress. Ayurvedic methods of treating stress not only maintain the balance in body & mind but also progressively raise the level of inner happiness & satisfaction. These Ayurvedic treatments for managing the stress are gentle, natural & effective. Their effects are long lasting, free from side effects & chances of recurrence are also rare.

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