



Review Article

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ROLE OF NASYA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

There is significant increase in the incidence of mental diseases in the present era throughout the world and anxiety being one of them. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) the most prevalent psychiatric illness in the general community, is characterized by persistent, excessive and unrealistic worry associated with muscle tension and impaired concentration, insomnia etc. It is most frequent disorder in primary care and associated with a significant economic burden owing to decreased work productivity and substantial reduction in quality of life. In *Ayurveda*, various psychological disorders are mentioned which shows some similarity with anxiety disorder. *Chittodvega* seems to be nearest correlation for this disease entity. It is listed under *Manas Dosh Vikara* along with emotional disturbance. Being an alarming disease, GAD requires effective management. The other treatments available for GAD are limited to anti-anxiety and sedative agents and gives only symptomatic relief with lots of side effects. *Ayurveda*, with its holistic approach, can be helpful in such situation. *Ayurveda* has mental health promoting and brain nutrients like *Medhya* drugs which are highly effective in various mental disorders. Among the five *Shodhanas*, *Nasya* is the one capable of expelling the *Doshas* from the *Urdhvanga* or the head. As mentioned in *Charaka Samhita*, nose is the gateway of the head. The therapy is highly effective in curing a number of diseases pertaining to the head and *manas*.

KEYWORDS: Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), *Chittodvega*, *Medhya*, *Shodhanas*, *Nasya*

INTRODUCTION

Today due to sedentary life style and tough competition in every aspect of life present society has made life extremely stressful. Stressors can be innumerable e.g. psychological, emotional, occupational, environmental, physical, chemical, social and so on, all these leads to unstable mental state. In present era mental disorders are common in medical practice and may present as a primary or comorbid condition¹. Study demonstrated that mental disorders, especially depression and anxiety disorders, made a substantial contribution to the global burden². Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is a chronic anxiety disorder which is associated with Substantial reduction in quality of life and impairment of proper mental functioning. It is characterized by persistent, excessive and/or unrealistic worry associated with muscle tension, impaired concentration, autonomic arousal, and feeling “on edge” or restless, headache and insomnia³. Most community based studies place the prevalence in the range of 2 to 5 %, with a life time prevalence as 8%⁴. Women more susceptible for GAD as compare to men. People with GAD have been found to be at higher risk of coronary heart disease, while anxiety has also been linked to increased incidence of gastrointestinal problems, arthritis, migraines, allergies, and thyroid disease.

DISEASE REVIEW (MODERN)

“Anxiety is a subjective sense of unease, dread, or foreboding, can indicate a primary psychiatric condition or can be a component of, or reaction to, a primary medical disease”⁵. Anxiety is normal reaction but it becomes a disorder and a problem when the anxiety and worry become excessive,

exaggerated and uncontrollable in normal everyday situations and start hampering daily routine of the person. Everything that comes across in life is seen with fear, worry and apprehension. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is much more than the normal anxiety people experience day to day. It is chronic and sufferers experience excessive worries and tension, often without definite provocation also. Their worries are accompanied by physical symptoms such as trembling, twitching, muscle tension, headaches, irritability, sweating, hot flashes, and feeling lightheaded or out of breath. Across the anxiety disorders, GAD may be the most profound and have the most deleterious effect on functioning and health-related quality of life.

Symptoms and behaviour’s associated with generalized anxiety disorder:

In addition to the DSM-IV framework, the symptoms of GAD can be conceptualized as being contained in three categories as⁶:

- 1)Excessive physiologic arousal:** It includes Muscle Tension, Irritability, Fatigue, Restlessness, and Insomnia.
- 2)Distorted Cognitive Processes:** It includes Poor concentration, Unrealistic assessment of Problems, Worries.
- 3)Poor Coping Strategies:** It includes Avoidance, Procrastination, and Poor Problem-Solving skills

Besides all these following symptoms are also associated with GAD are-

- Aching In Back And Shoulder, Tension Headache, Chest Tightness, Exaggerated Startle, Dry Mouth, Sweating, Difficulty In Swallowing, Nausea, Diarrhea, Sweating and Increased Urinary Frequency.

- GAD may be accompanied by other condition typically associated with stress such as irritable bowel syndrome or a typical chest pain.

AYURVEDIC REVIEW

There are number of closely resembling terms in Ayurveda for anxiety. *Chittodvega* is considered as a perfect word for highlighting the state of anxiety.

CHITTODVEGA

Chittodvega is mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* in the *Vimana Sthana*, in the context of *Manas Dosha Vikara*⁷. But the detailed description of the disease is not available in the classics. Vitiating of *Raja & Tama* is considered as prime factor in causation of *Chittodvega*. The common etiological factors of all *Sharirika & Manasika Rogas* can be taken as the *Nidana* aspect of *Chittodvega* i.e.

A. *Asatmyendriarthasamyoga* (Deficient, excessive or perverted use of senses)

B. *Pragnaparadha* (Volitional transgression)

C. *Parinama*⁸ (Deficient, excessive or perverted incidence of seasons.)

When the person having *Alpa Satva* indulges in *Pragnaparadha* or *Asatmendriarthasamyoga* or in under stress, it initiates the disease process by resulting in imbalance of *Manodoshas-Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* plays an important role and it is the driving force behind all emotions. At this stage psychic symptoms like *Chinta* (anxiety), *Bhaya* (fear), *Krodha* (grief) and *Shoka* (anger) may develop. When these psychic responses continue for a longer period and override the limit they start influencing the *Sharirika Doshas*. In *Sharirika Dosha*, predominantly *Vata* gets vitiated. As *Vata* is controller of mind and all the *indriya*⁹. All of these perform their work properly when *Vata* remains in equilibrium state. *Vata* is having direct relationship with *Rajas*. The combined effect of vitiated *Manodosha* and *Sharirika Doshas* reach to *Hridaya* (heart) and vitiate it. *Manas* is to be found in *Hridaya* and due to *Ashraya-Ashrayi Bhava Manasa* also gets vitiated. When this vitiation persists for longer period it results in *Ojokshaya*. Vitiating *Vaatadi Doshas* vitiate *Jatharagni* (Digestive fire) also, *Acharya Charaka* stated that grief, fear, anger, sorrow, anxiety all these factors vitiate *Agni*¹⁰, which leads to many somatic disorders. When multiple *Dhatus* and their *Strotas* are involved and the disease is expressed clearly, the full blown phase of disease enters into the stage of *Vyaktavastha*. All psychosomatic symptoms like excessive thoughts, sleep disturbance, headache, abdominal upset, difficulties in concentration etc. occur in this stage. When the disease is not treated properly and the causative factors continue it becomes chronic and disabling. The *Manodosha* and *Sharirika Doshas* potentiate each other in a vitiated state resulting in a vicious cycle. The disease attains chronicity, becomes *Krichrasadhya* leading to psychiatric illness like *Chittodvega*.

MANAGEMENT

In modern science the treatment of GAD is confined to anti-anxiety and sedative agents that give only symptomatic relief with lots of adverse effects including dependency, drowsiness, impaired cognition and memory, and sexual dysfunction. Clinical trials have shown that anxiolytic drugs alone have limited long-term efficacy¹¹.

Ayurveda, with its holistic approach, can be helpful in such situation. *Ayurveda* believes that prevention of diseases is better than cure and hence has suggested a Series of measures of prevention of somatic and psychological diseases as well. *Manovikara* can be prevented by following measures described in classics.

i) *Sadvritta* ii) *AcharaRasayana* iii) *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana Acharya* Charaka explains three types of therapies¹² of physical and mental disorders

1) *Daivavyapasraya* – Divine therapy

2) *Yuktivyapasraya* – Rational therapy

3) *Sattvavajaya* – Mental therapy

General principles of management of *Manasa roga* give an idea about the treatment of *chittodvega*. *Sushrut* has mentioned special chapter for enhancement of intellect¹³. *Dalhana* has classified *Rasayana* and one of them is *Medha Kamyasayana* (drugs for enhancement of intellect)¹⁴. Among *Panchakarma Nasya* is the treatment of choice for this type of disease, by reaching actual site of pathogenesis. *Ayurveda* advised use of *Nasya* in *Urdhvajatrugataroga*¹⁵ and in some psychological disorders such as *Unmada* and *Apsmara* also. In GAD, functions of mind are disturbed; *Acharya Bhela* has stated that the brain is the seat of mind¹⁶. *Nasa* is mentioned as gateway of *Shira* (Head)¹⁷. As the *dravya* (ghrit and oil prepared with *Medhya* drugs) used is having *snehan* property when given through nasal route, it pacifies *Vata*. If *Vata* is controlled *Raja* is easily balanced and ultimately leads to balanced state of *manas*.

DISCUSSION

Probable mode of action of the *Nasya*

In *Ashtanga samgraha*, it is explained that *Nasa* being the portal to *Shira* (head), the drug administered through nostrils, reaches *Shringataka*¹⁸ which is a composite structure consisting of four *Sira* (Vessels) in connection with four sense organs i.e. nose, ear, eye and tongue and then spreads in the *Murdha* (Brain) and through *Sringataka Marma* and scratches the morbid *Doshas* only and eliminates them efficiently. Probably the drug conveyed through nose is absorbed rapidly due to the high density of the blood supply in the area that is Kiesselbach's area or plexus (is an anastomosis of five blood vessels in the anterior inferior quadrant of the nasal septum over the septal cartilage). The avoidance of first pass metabolism and due to large surface area the drug absorbed through porous endothelium membrane (due to its lipophilic nature). It probably passes through the olfactory transfer or along the perineural space surrounding the olfactory nerve cells into the CSF surrounding the olfactory bulbs of the brain crossing the BBB and finally reaches the destination. The adjacent nerves called terminal nerves that run along the olfactory are connected with limbic system of the brain including hypothalamus. Thus, certain drugs administered through nose may have an impact on immediate psychological functions by acting on limbic system through olfactory nerves. *Medhya* drugs used for *Nasya* like *Brahmi*, *Sankhpushi* etc. may give a synergistic action helping to correct the mental and intellectual functions. Hence, *Nasya* pacify the *Vata dosha* by virtue of its *Snehana Guna*. Moreover, *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned that, systemically performed *Nasya karma* can cause clarity of sense organs, sound sleep, cheerful appearance etc. and give mental and sensorial happiness¹⁹. So, *Nasya* with *Medhya* drugs may produce significant change in mental state. The various *Manasa Bhavas* like *Krodha*, *Bhaya*, *Chittodvega* etc also comes under control through the *Nasya* therapy.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can conclude that *Nasya* is an important *Samshodhana* procedure which plays a key role in removing morbid *Dosha* from the head and brings the *Doshas* to equilibrium state.

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