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Occupational stress: As in Ayurveda a systematic review

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Abstract

Introduction: Stress has been those primitive diseases that man has been suffering with. Though stress seems relatively new disease, but traces of stress information has been found in classical text of Ayurveda. *Charka* and *Sushruta samhithas* has elaborated the information about stress in different contexts.

Materials and methods: A systematic review was done in texts of Ayurveda and contemporary books, and National and International Journals were done. Key words like Sahasa, Stress, Occupational stress, Occupational Health were reviewed.

Results and Discussion: The role of stress in the aetiology of several diseases is well recognized in *Ayurvedic* science. The stress can be understood with the term *sahasa* in Ayurveda. *Sahasa* by causing *ojahksaya* (loss of immunity) increases the susceptibility of the body to various diseases. *Caraka* advises to avoid *sahasa* as it adversely affects the body, Different types of stressors physical, psychological and environmental as they vitiate *doshas* are implicated in the aetiology of several diseases.

Conclusion: Occupational stress can be understood under the concepts of *Pragnaparadha*, *Sahasa*, *Manasikaroga*. The treatment approach being stress avoidance is the ideal.

Keywords: *Sahasa*, Stress, *Manasika vikaara*, occupational stress, occupational health

Introduction

Stress been a burning issue in the recent past because of its direct relation with human productivity and Psychology. Man's marathon towards urbanisation and modernisation made him victim of the stress. As majority of the population in the current world are involved in one or the other occupation. Hence occupational health becomes a major determinant of their quality of life. The contemporary sciences defines occupational stress as, Occupational stress or workplace stress is the change in one physical or mental state in response to workplace that pose an appraised challenge or threat to that employee ^[1]. Occupational stress is not explained directly in any of *Ayurvedic* texts, looking into causative factors, signs and symptoms, management it can be understood under many dimensions. Stress is derived from the Latin word "strictus" that translates into taut, meaning stiffly strung". Stress comes from any situation or circumstances that require behavioural adjustment. Any change, either good or bad, is stressful, and whether it is a positive or negative change, psychological response is the same. The sensation and perception of stress requires the use of our body's energy and defensive resources. Three levels of stress are acute stress, episodic stress, and chronic stress. Each level of stress is associated emotional and physiological symptoms. General features of stress include headache insomnia, fatigue, constipation, depression, anxiety, shortness of breath, premenopausal syndrome musculoskeletal disorder cardiovascular disease and many more. All these symptoms if not addressed at time, may lead to multi system disorders, it will also reduce efficiency of the person in personal and professional life. This in turn leads to decrease in productivity of the family and then subsequently the nation can be affected too. In consideration of the above fact, it can be stated that reducing stress in working population is need of the hour. In this article an effort is made to uncover those information. As explained by acharyas that, there is no need to get ashamed for not knowing disease name but should make attempt to treat disease as per *Dosa Dhathu* involvement of disease and *Dashavidha pareeksha* of patients as explained in classics ^[2].

Material and methods

A systematic review was done in texts of Ayurveda and contemporary books, and National and International Journals were done. Key words like Sahasa, Stress, Occupational stress, Occupational Health were reviewed.

Results

A systematic review could reveal the following results.

- In the context of Satvawajaya Chikitsa “Ahibebhyo Arthebhyo Manonigraha” is explained for the Manasa Roga. When an individual is afflicted with Udvega, indigestion happens which will lead to the formation of Ama.
- Also mentioned about Rajas and Tamas which are the two Manasika Doshas [2].
- Among tridosha, Vata is the main dosa vitiated by excessive physical stress. There are degenerative changes in all the dhatus (tissues) and the ojas (immunity) also deteriorates
- Vedas has emphasised on manasika swasthya. Manas is the key factor which gets affected in occupational stress. In Vedic literature there are evidences of mentioning of manasika rogas and its management. Bhagavad-Geetha clearly mentions about mental disorders and stress. Lord Krishna preaches Geetha to Arjuna who was filled with grief and frustration. It says Rajas and tamas are responsible for psychological disorders. Anger, Bhaya etc. are root cause for all disease. Satwika Guna predominance is necessary for the achievement of both mental and physical health.
- In the context of Satvawajaya Chikitsa “Ahibebhyo Arthebhyo Manonigraha” is explained for the Manasa Roga. When an individual is afflicted with Udvega the foested and lead to the formation of Ama. Satwa Pareeksha by Anumana Pramana Rajas and Tamas are the two Doshas of mind that can lead to stress [4].
- Sushruta Samhita: In Unmada Pratishedha Adhyaya, Udvega as one of the Purvarupa, lakshana of unmaada.
- Ashtanga Hrudaya: Diseases like Ragadi which are associated with the body give rise to Autsukya (anxiety) and other disorders. Mentioned about Rajas and Tamas which are the two Manasika Doshas.
- Dhi, Dhairyaya and Atmadi Vijnana are the ideal therapies for the mind [3].
- Mentioned about Sarvaroga Samanya Chikitsa like avoidance of improper activities of the body, mind and speech caused by Pragnaparadha. It is mentioned that ojus undergo decrease in the body by Krodha (anger), Shoka (grief) etc.
- Mentioned about with karma pertaining to body, speech and the mind. • Bhaya (fear) is derived from Rajasa Guna.
- Hina, Mithya and Ati Yoga of Kala, Artha and Karma are the chief causes of diseases.
- While explaining Garbhinicharya, the pregnant womam should avoid Shoka, Krodha, Bhaya, Udvega The person with Satva Guna predominance experience or enjoy Sukha and Dukha without agitation (getting upset emotionally) Considering above factors the occupational stress can be correlated to Maanasika vikaara associated with Sahasa mentioned in Ayurveda. Stressors like unhealthy food, irregular, and improper routine and mental perturbations can cause all types of morbidities [5].
- Psychological, features like, anger, fear, grief, anxiety and environmental, like, high altitudes and prolonged exposures to intense heat of sun and fire [3]. Unhealthy food, irregular and improper routine and mental perturbations like bhaya (fear), krodha (anger), Shoka (grief), Loba (greed), Moha (attachment), Ayasa (confusion) etc. cause all types of morbitiyy. The judgment capacity of a stressed person is generally compromised and the faulty decision (known as pragnaparadha) is another important aetiological factor for several diseases (ibid). Thus, a vicious cycle is formed caused lot of stressed to an already stressed person. Further excess of any normal stimulus is the cause of stress, and the limits of this excess is determined by the coping capacity of the individual. Suppression of natural urges also leads to stress and has been implicated in the aetiology of several disease. Stressors like unhealthy food, irregular Samprapti 26 Vata is the main dosa asociated with Sahasa. Prakupita vata along with other doshas will cause degenerative changes in all the dhatus (tissues) and the ojas (immunity) also deteriorate. Atiyoga-vyayama-vegasandharana-anasana-abhighata-vyavaya –udwega-soka-sonitatiseka-jagarana [3].
- Psychological stress, like udvega (excitement), soka (anxiety) also leads to disequilibrium of vata dosa, whereas, pitta is the main dosa vitiated by krodha (anger)” tiksna tapagni santapa srama krodha visama aaharebhyasca pittam prakopam apadyate...” (C.Ni. 1/22). i.e., anger, exhaustion and excessive exposure to intense sun and fire vitiate pitta, an important contributory factor in the causation of various diseases. Chikitsa 27
- Susruta defines Rasayana tantra as the branch that improves longevity along with physical and mental strength and immunity. Rasayana tantrum nama vayahsthanam ayur-medha-balakaram roghapharanasamartham ca. (S. Su. 1/7). Hence, avoidance of stress is the best strategy for treatment and where it is not possible, the body should be well protected by taking appropriate care of the diet and lifestyle. Further, regular intake of several rasayana herbs to increase the coping capacity of the body is advised several of these Rasayanas have demonstrated significant stress attenuating effects in animal experimentation and scientific efforts are ongoing to logically utilize rasayana herbal formulation in stress management. Therefore, Sahasa should be avoided as far as possible and body should be well protected by talking adequate care of the three sub pillars of life -diet, sleep, and celibacy – traya Upastambhaiti – Aharah, Swapnoh, Brahmacharyamiti [8].
- The fact that stress plays an important role in the aetiology of several diseases is well recognized in Ayurveda, whereas, stress is known as sahasa. Caraka advises to avoid sahasa as it adversely affects the body [5]. Different types of stressors physical, psychological and environmental as they vitiate dosas are implicated in the aetiology of several diseases. Sahasa as it causes ojahksaya- loss of immunity (C.Su. 17/76-77) increase the susceptibility of the body to various infectious diseases. Therefore, sahasa should be avoided as far as possible and body should be well protected by talking

adequate care of the three sub pillars of life -diet, sleep, and celibacy – *traya upastambhaiti* – *aharah, swapnoh, brahmacharyamiti*, (C. Su. 11/35), sleep here indicates adequate rest required by the body. Further, regular intake of *rasayanas* to increase the coping capacity of the body is Stressors (Stress inducing factors) recognized in Ayurveda can be classified as those causing physical stress, like excessive physical exercise, vigils, fasting, injury, exhaustion, uneven body postures, or psychological, like, anger, fear, grief, anxiety and environmental, like, high altitudes and prolonged exposures to intense heat of sun and fire.³ Unhealthy food, irregular and improper routine and mental perturbations like *bhaya* (fear), *krodha* (anger), *soka* (grief), *loba* (greed), *moha* (attachment), *ayasa* (confusion) etc. cause all types of morbidity

- The judgment capacity of a stressed person is generally compromised and the faulty decision (known as *pragnaparadha*)^[4] is another important aetiological factor for several diseases (ibid). Thus, a vicious cycle is formed caused lot of stressed to an already stressed person. Further excess of any normal stimulus is the cause of stress, and the limits of this excess is determined by the coping capacity of the individual. Suppression of natural urges also leads to stress and has been implicated in the aetiology of several disease. Stressors like unhealthy food, irregular, and improper routine and mental perturbations can cause all types of morbidities (C. Ci. 1/2/3). There are degenerative changes in all the *dhatu*s (tissues) and the *ojas* (immunity) also deteriorates. *Vata* is the main *dosa* Stressors like unhealthy food, irregular, and improper routine and mental perturbations can cause all types of morbidities (C. Ci. 1/2/3).
- There are degenerative changes in all the *dhatu*s (tissues) and the *ojas* (immunity) also deteriorates. *Vata* is the main *dosa* vitiated by excessive physical stress. *atiyoga* – *vyayama* – *vegasandharana* – *anasana* – *abhighata* – *udwega* – *soka* – *sonitaiseka* – *jagarana*. (C.Ni. 1/19). Psychological stress, like *udvega* (excitement), *soka* (anxiety) also leads to disequilibrium of *vata* *dosa*, whereas, *pitta* is the main *dosa* vitiated by *krodha* (anger)“ *tiksna tapagni santapa srama krodha visama aaharebhyasca pittam prakopam apadyate...*”^[7]. i.e., anger, exhaustion and excessive exposure to intense sun and fire vitiate *pitta*, an important contributory factor in the causation of various diseases^[10].

Discussion

Avoiding Stress *Sahasam sada varjayate*, rationally the best approach is to hit at the root cause, and this is particularly ideal strategy in the stress management. Stress avoidance has been best appreciated by Charaka who states that in order to protect one's life one should always avoid over-exerting himself. However, in today's world of bottle neck competition, stress is an inevitable^[11] companion of success. This stress is justified also because of the results it bring along, however, the stress induced diseases cannot be acceptable. Strategy and stress needs to be managed by strengthening the body's adapting capacity to the stress. The coping capacity of the body can be increased by life style modifications, dietary interventions and drug treatment, all these being well organized under the umbrella of *Rasayana* therapy, one of the eight branches of classical Ayurveda. In a

meta-analysis of over 30 years of research, Segerstrom & Miller (2004) found that intermediate stressors, such as academic examinations, could promote a Th2 shift (i.e., an increase in Th2 cytokines relative to Th1 cytokines). A Th2 shift has the effect of suppressing cellular immunity in favour of humoral immunity. In response to more chronic stressors (e.g. Long-term caregiving for a dementia patient), Segerstrom & Miller found that proinflammatory.Th1, and Th2 cytokines become deregulated and lead both to suppressed humoral and cellular immunity. Intermediate and chronic stressors are associated with slower wound healing and recovery from surgery, poorer antibody responses to vaccination, and antiviral deficits that are believed to contribute to increased vulnerability to viral infections (e.g., reductions in natural killer cell cytotoxicity; see.

The role of stress in the aetiology of several diseases is well recognized in *Ayurvedic* science. The stress can be understood with the term *sahasa* in Ayurveda. *Sahasa* by causing *ojahksaya* (loss of immunity) increases the susceptibility of the body to various diseases. Charaka advises to avoid *sahasa* as it adversely affects the body, Different types of stressors physical, psychological and environmental as they vitiate *doshas* are implicated in the aetiology of several diseases. *Sahasa* as it causes *ojahksaya*- loss of immunity increase the susceptibility of the body to various infectious diseases. Stressors (Stress inducing factors) recognized in Ayurveda can be classified as those causing Physical stress, like excessive physical exercise, vigils, fasting, injury, exhaustion, uneven body postures, or Psychological, like, anger, fear, grief, anxiety and environmental, like, high altitudes and prolonged exposures to intense heat of sun and fire^[3]. Unhealthy food, irregular and improper routine and mental perturbations like *bhaya* (fear), *krodha* (anger), *Shoka* Charaka Samhita: *Anavastitha Chittata* has been mentioned as one of the *Vataja Nanatmaja Vikara*^[12].

Conclusion

Occupational stress can be understood under the concepts of *pragnaparadha*, *sahasa*, *manasikaroga*. The treatment approach being stress avoidance is the ideal. But it is not the most appropriate strategy and stress needs to be managed by strengthening the body's adapting capacity to the stress. The coping capacity of the body can be increased by life style modifications, dietary interventions and / or drug treatment, all these being well organized under the umbrella of *rasayanaa* (Rejuvenation) therapy.

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