

## UNDERSTANDING OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF AYURVEDA

<sup>1</sup>Dr Prayaga Prasad U R <sup>2</sup>Dr Prashanth A S

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Head & Professor, Department of Kayachikitsa, Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Hubli, Karnataka,

### ABSTRACT

Life is a conglomerate of body (*Shareera*), faculties (*Indriya*), mind (*Satva*), and soul (*Aatma*). Any of these cannot be isolated and studied separately. So seers of Ayurveda express that the term '*Shareera*' refers body including five senses and mind. *Chittodvega* is one of the *Manasika Vikara* mentioned in *Ayurvedic* literature in which affliction of mind by anxiety, fear and agitation are seen. *Anavasthita Chittatva* has been mentioned as one of the *Vataja Nanatmaja Vikara*, which is the main feature of *Chittodvega*. Overwhelming stress can produce psychological problems in anyone. Even stable, Well-adjusted person may breakdown if forced to face extensive psychological, physical, environmental or social stressors. In present conditions, human beings are living in the perpetual state of ever increasing stressful situations arising from the current lifestyle, environmental pollution highly ambitious and competitive lifestyle, over population, monotony and boredom of complex interpersonal relationships, job responsibilities and many other associated mental and emotional causes. The western medicine has not been able to crystalize its approach in the prevention and treatment of such disorders. Therefore, attempts are being made to explore the herbal resources of Ayurvedic medicine to develop suitable remedies for the management of occupational stress. In the present study occupational stress has been considered as the *Manovikara*, *Chittodvega*, stated by Acharya Charaka. Though a lot of exploration is needed in understanding and in treatment of *chittodvega*, very few studies were conducted on this topic till now.

**KEYWORDS:** Occupational Stress, Stressors, *Chittodvega*, Lifestyle.

### INTRODUCTION

In present conditions, human beings are living in the perpetual state of ever increasing stressful situations arising from the current lifestyle, environmental pollution, highly ambitious and competitive lifestyle, over population, monotony and boredom of complex interpersonal relationships, job responsibilities and many other associated mental and emotional causes. The ever growing stress and strain in life lead to deterioration in various mental and physiological functions of body, causing psychological disorders like anxiety

neurosis. The present society gives importance to achieve good financial status and to fulfilling all the physical desires, therefore today's metaphysical society facing unsteady, unhealthy and hard life style. The 'gift' of this life style is stress and psychological problems, which can lead to various mental health problems like social and family issues. Stress is a universal experience, which has an important protective function towards harmful psychological stimuli. Normal feeling of stress is an advantageous response to a

threatening situation. It becomes morbid when symptoms are out of proportion to external circumstances or if they prolong, after a threatening situation has been averted. However, there is no clear distinction between the features of normal and pathological stress, but in pathological condition, the stress is the chief symptom and acting through the autonomic nervous system, produces some physical symptoms such as headache, insomnia, perspiration, breathing difficulty, palpitation, etc<sup>[1]</sup>.

"Occupational stress" is the harmful physical and emotional response that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. In general, the combination of high demands in a job and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to stress. Employees who start to feel the "pressure to perform" can get caught in a downward spiral of increasing effort to meet rising expectations with no increase in job satisfaction. The persistent requirement to work at optimum performance takes its toll in job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency, illness and even death. Absenteeism, illness, alcoholism, bad or snap decisions, indifference and apathy, lack of motivation or creativity are all by-products of an over stressed workplace<sup>[2]</sup>.

Incidence of stress is increasing day by day due to the present life styles. Employees especially professionals are subjected to continuous physical and mental stress. Occupational stress occurs when there is discrepancy between demand of work place environment and individuals' ability to carry out or complete the demand. It is expressed

as dissatisfaction, fatigue, tension, headache, agitation, insomnia, sexual problems etc. Sometimes the symptoms are not taken seriously and go unnoticed. The continuous exposure and improper management may lead to severe psychiatric or psychosomatic diseases. *Chittodvega*<sup>[3]</sup> is not explained as a separate disease anywhere in the ancient authentic text books of Ayurveda. The term is mentioned by Acharya Charaka. It can be considered as the Udvega state of mind. Ayurveda scholars in different research works correlated it to generalized anxiety disorder and occupational stress. A survey on workers shown that 40% of them are extremely stressful with their job, 25% viewed it as the number one stressor in their life. Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death- heart disease, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of liver, and suicide. Research<sup>[4]</sup> in the field of work and family has well established the spill over and cross over effects of stress affecting co-workers, spouse, children, and the community at large.

Some stress<sup>[5]</sup> is normal. In fact, it is often what provides us with the energy and motivation to meet our daily challenges both at home and at the workplace. Stress in these situations is the kind that helps you "rise" to a challenge and meet your goals such as deadlines, sales or production targets, or finding new clients. Some people would not consider this challenge a type of stress because, having met the challenge, we are satisfied and happy. However, as with most things, too frustration or dissatisfaction, or when the challenges at work become too demanding, we begin to see negative signs

of stress. In the workplace, stress can be the result of any number of situations.

### Concept of *Manas*

*Manas*, a Sanskrit word is derived from the root , “*Mana Jnane*” and “*Asun*” suffix which means “to think”, “to analyse”. In Sanskrit glossary “*Shabda- Kalpadruma*” the word *Manas* has been derived etymologically as an instrument of thinking and analysing<sup>[6]</sup>. “*Manyate budhyate aneneti Manah*”. (*Shabdakalpadruma*). According to Acharya Charaka, the entity which is responsible for contemplation and thinking is known as *Manas* or mind. “*Manasastu chintyamarthah*”.<sup>[7]</sup>

The term *Chittodvega* comprises of two words i.e. *Chitta* and *Udvega*.

**Udvega:** It is derived from root “*Ud*” which has following meanings<sup>[8]</sup> superiority in place, rank or power, up, upwards, upon, on, over, above.

### Nidana – Etiology of *Chittodvega*

*Raja* and *Tama* are considered as the two dosha of *manas*<sup>[9]</sup>, hence the *Nidanas* which vitiate etiology of all the diseases are classified under three main categories.<sup>[10]</sup>

1. *Prajnaparadha*

2. *Parinama*

3. *Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga*

#### 1. *Prajnaparadha*:

*Charaka* mentions that *Dhivibhramsha* (impairment of intellect), *Dhritivibramsha* (impairment of will) and *Smrtivibhramsha* (impairment of memory) are the main causative factors for the prakopa of all the dosha and is defined as a *Prajnaparadha*. It causes various types of psychological disorders i.e. *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Bhaya*, *Moha*, *Shoka*, *Udvega* etc.<sup>[11]</sup>

→ Forcible stimulation of natural urges and suppression of the manifested ones.

→ Exhibition of undue strength.

→ Negligence of the time of treatment.

→ Initiation of action in improper time.

→ Loss of modesty and good conduct.

→ Enjoyment of harmful objects.

→ Resorting to the factors, which are responsible for the causation of *Unmada*.

→ Friendship with persons indulged in evil actions.

→ Avoidance of the healthy activities i.e. *Sadvrita*.

Any of the above activities can be a *Viprakrishta* nidana for *Chittodvega* Eg: People are working overtime knowingly that it is going to harm the health. People are making money by sacrificing health and later they are sacrificing money for regaining the health. Even though professionals know, there is a need of recreational activities to relieve from the stressful life; they are not finding time for it. They get depended on psychoactive substances to get rid of stress with the knowledge that, they are not healthy. These all can be taken as *prajnaparadha* in the context of Occupational stress.

#### 2. *Parinama*:

*Parinama* denote the time (that can be chronicity of disease, chronicity of exposure to the stressor or season) Exposing to stress for a short period may not harm the individual, physically or mentally, because body will maintain its equilibrium back to normal. But if he expose continuously for long period of time it may lead to any kind of physical or psychological disease and as the time progress, prognosis will be bad. Seasonal variations are also reported in case

of psychiatric diseases which are called as seasonal affective disorders.

### 3. *Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga*:

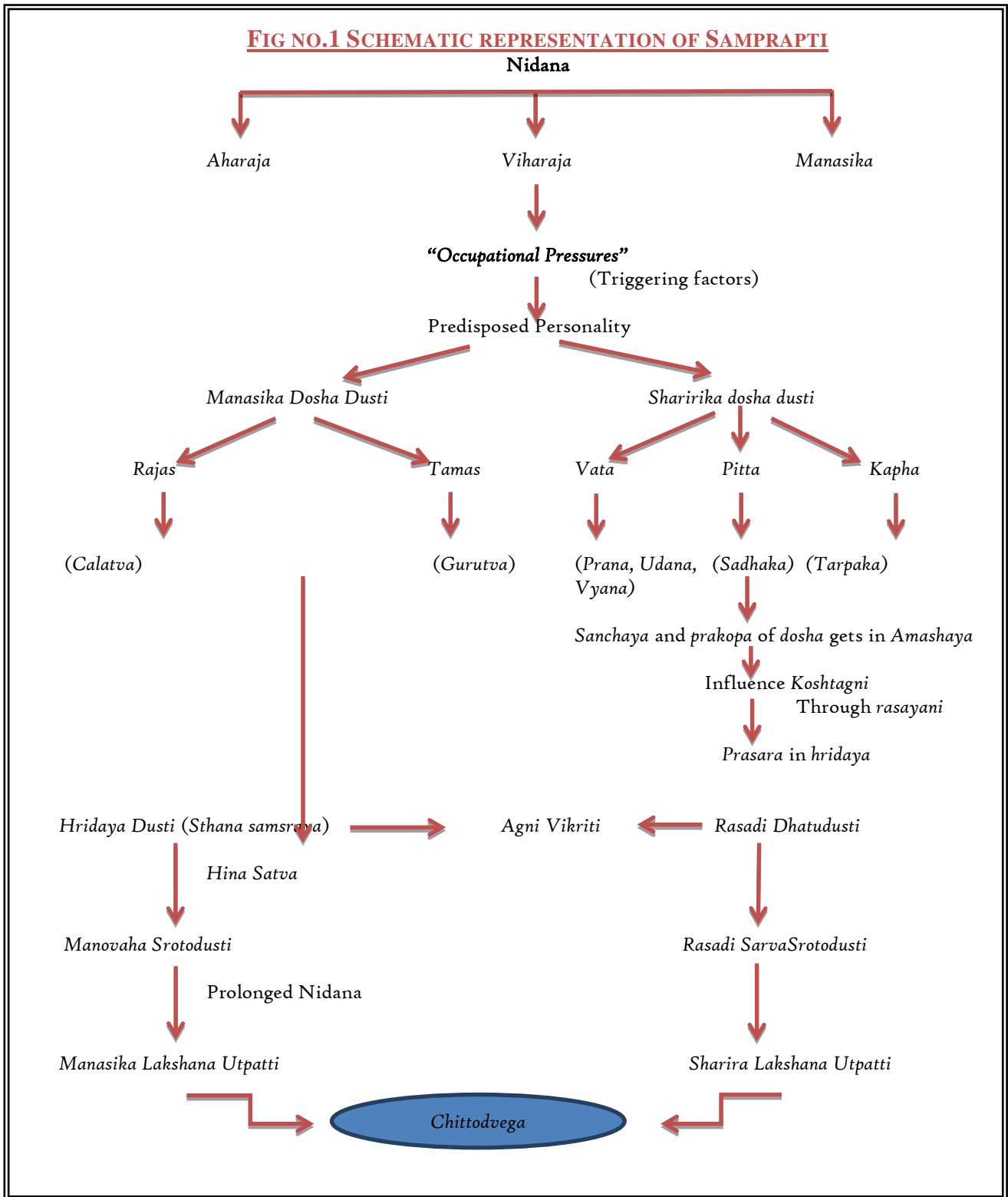
Unwholesome contacts with senses are the third causative factor of mental disorders. They may be in the form of *Atiyoga* (excessive utilization), *Ayoga* (no utilization) and *Mithyayoga* (wrong utilization) of sense faculties<sup>[12]</sup>. These three types of unwholesome contact of senses are aggravating factors for the physical and mental disorders. Usually related with occupational stress, eye is the sense organ which affects more in the form of *atiyoga* and *mithya yoga*. It is found especially in computer professionals, and bank employees. *Mithya yoga* of ear and nose is observed in teaching professionals in the form of noises and dust. In Advocates *mithya yoga* of ear and *atiyoga* of tongue (*karmendriya*) can be observed. Those who are working in air conditioned rooms will be exposing to *mithya yoga* of skin as well as nose. Those who are working in busy schedule of life are not at all caring about their food, and those people are prone to the *mithya yoga*, *atiyoga* and *Ayoga* of tongue by eating unhygienic, putrefied, artificially flavoured foods. Above all, in all the areas of life, mind is going through *mithya yoga*, *atiyoga* and *Ayoga* with or without the involvement of other *indriya*. Postponing things, indulging in activities without proper assessment, being addicted to the senses, letting drop the (fickle) mind, inflicting too much trouble for the senses, doing things with negative emotions, being extremely happy on achievement and excessively distressed in failure, becomes the cause for all the mental disorders<sup>[13]</sup>.

A person having *SatvikaPrakriti/PravaraSattva* is least susceptible to *Chittodvega* or other mental disorders. Quality opposite to the *Satvika Prakriti* i.e. *Hina Sattva* or *Rajasa Prakriti* and *Tamasa Prakriti* are more prone to mental disorders<sup>[14,15]</sup>. *Vata* is the *Niyanta* (controller) and *Praneta* (motivator) of the mind<sup>[16]</sup>; hence vitiation of *Vata* will afflict the psychological activities through dysfunction of *Indriya* and *Manas*. *Bhaya* (fear), *Moha* (infatuation), *Shoka* (grief), *Dainya* (poverty), *Atipralapa* (delirium) etc<sup>[17]</sup> are manifested due to vitiation of *Vata*. The above symptoms are commonly seen in stress and anxiety disorders. So it can be said the *Vata* has a important role in the manifestation of *Chittodvega*. *Prana*, *Vyana* and *Udana* are the divisions of *vata* involved with psychological functioning. The function of *Prana Vayu* is to control the *Buddhi*, *Chitta*, *Indriyas* and *Hridaya*<sup>[18]</sup>. The etiogenic factors of *Prana Vayu* are *Rukshata*, *Vyayama*, *Langhana*, *Atyahara*, *Abhigata*, *Adhva*, *Vegaudirana* and *Vegadharana*<sup>[19]</sup>. *Udana Vayu* is responsible for memory and it is vitiated through *Vegadharana*, lifting weight, *AtiRodana*, *Ati Hasana* etc. *Vyana Vayu* is responsible for motion etc and it is provoked by *Atigamana*, *Atidhyana*, *Atikrida*, *Vishamachesta*, *Virrudha* and *Ruksa Anna*, *Harsha*, *Vishada*<sup>[20]</sup> etc. Hence, the etiological factors of vitiation of *Prana*, *Udana* and *VyanaVayu* may also affect the mind and its functions. Role of *Pitta* and *Kapha* are also not negligible in *Chittodvega*. *PittakaraNidana* i.e. *Vidahi Dravyas*, *Krodha* etc. leads to provocation of *Sadhaka Pitta*, which is responsible for

proper function of *Buddhi* and *Medha*.<sup>[21]</sup>  
*KaphakaraNidana* i.e. *Guru Madhura*,  
*SheetaAharaSevana*, *Ati Nidra* etc. may

cause vitiation of *Tarpaka Kapha*, which  
nourishes the *Indriya*.

**FIG NO.1 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF SAMPRAPTI**



## **CHIKITSA<sup>[22]</sup>:**

Three modalities of treatment are

- 1) Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa
- 2) Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa
- 3) Satwavajaya Chikitsa

### **YUKTIVYAPASHRAYA CHIKITSA:**

Yukti means rational thinking. The therapeutic undertaken keeping in view the dosha dushya samurchana of a disease is called Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa. All the chikitsa types like Shamana, Shodhana & Nidana Tyaga come under the purview of Yuktivyapashraya line of treatment. This kind of treatment includes use of Ahara, Vihara & Aushadha

Aushadha: Medhya dravyas like Brahmi, Shankhapushpi, Yastimadhu, Ashvagandha etc

Rasayana Dravyas.

### **Principles of Treatment of Yuktivyapashraya**

#### **1. Antah Parimarjana Chikitsa**

#### **2. Bahi Parimarjana Chikitsa**

**Antah Parimarjana Chikitsa:** It can be further classified as

#### **a)Shodhana and b) Shamana**

#### **Bahi Parimarjana Chikitsa:**

Abhyanga

*Swedana Chikitsa : Nadisweda & Bashpasweda*

*Shirodhara :*

*a Kshiradhara*

*b Tailadhara :*

*i. Himasagara Taila*

*ii. Tungadrumadi Taila*

*iii. Brahmi Taila*

*iv. Ksheerabala Taila*

**Some of the Yogasanas advised in Anxiety are as follows**

Tadasana, Bhujangasana, Sarvangasana, Vajrasana, Pavanamuktasana, Pranayama etc.

*Thalam*<sup>23</sup> is one such treatment modality developed by the *Vridhha Vaidyas* of Kerala by constant observation and rational thinking, where in the medicine is applied on the shallow depression over the head.

### **DAIVAVYAPASHRAYA CHIKITSA<sup>24</sup>**

Daivavyapashraya is a divine therapy. This includes all “acts of God” and the “evils of the past life karmas” that cannot be cured by medicine because the disease is related to past deeds. This Chikitsa creates confidence in the patients by removing the fear and pessimistic attitude and the patient gains confidence. The treatment is in the shape of “good deeds” recommended by God.

### **SATWAVAJAYA CHIKITSA<sup>25</sup>**

Contains spiritual and scriptural knowledge, patience, memory and meditation is the chief remedy for mental diseases. Happiness of Manas is essential for positive health.

Satwavajaya Chikitsa are adopted to get back changed Manas. The aim of this therapy is to retain mind from disease of unwholesome objects. This is achieved by increasing Satwa and to subdue the exaggerated Rajas and Tamas. The best approach to achieve the goal of Satwavajaya Chikitsa is to restrain mind from desires for unwholesome objects is through Jnana (Knowledge), Vijnana (Professional analytical knowledge), Dhairya (confidence), Smriti (Scriptural wisdom), and Samadhi (concentration).

### **DISCUSSION**

With the advancement in modern science, human life has become very speedy and

stressful. So psychiatric disorders are broadening its sphere today, out of which stress disorders are most common wide spread psychiatric diseases affecting mankind all over the world and in all ethnic groups. With this view present study was undertaken to explain the description of occupational stress in *Ayurvedic* parlance and then to formulate proper management of the disease. The roots of concept of *Manas* and mental disorders can be traced out in history. But, most *Acharyas* believe that, *hridaya* is the actual seat of *manas*, while *sarvasharira* is its transportation channel. *Chittodvega*, has been considered as a perfect word for highlighting the status of stress. The etymology of *chittodvega* clearly indicates the anxious state of mind. *Ayurvedic* literature has described *chittodvega* and its Influences on body while describing other diseases.

### CONCLUSION

The exploration on occupational-stress/work-stress/Job-stress has been relatively a neglected area of research among industrial/organizational psychologists. Occupational stress (Job stress/Work stress) relates to one's job. Occupational stress often stems from unexpected responsibilities and pressures that do not align with a person's knowledge, skills, or expectations, inhibiting one's ability to cope. The literature review projects the idea that too much stress at work place has a toxic effect whereas too little stress may result in boredom and apathy and low performance. Job stress and job satisfaction are inversely (negatively) correlated. Occupational stress is a

manifestation of environmental, organizational and individual variables.

If once the harmony is violated, of course his health will be hampered and gradually start threatening health of an individual, personal and social behavior. Hence it has been considered as psychosomatic disorder aggravated by vitiated *Vata-Dosha*. Various measures provided in *Ayurveda* can certainly help to overcome this situation. Avoiding causative factors is a must to tackle the condition more precisely with administration of various kinds of therapies as mentioned above.

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**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Dr. Prayaga Prasad U R  
Department of Kayachikitsa,  
Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya,  
Hubli, Karnataka  
Email: prayagaprasad7@gmail.com

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