



## Case Study

### AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF *CHITTODVEGA* W.S.R. TO ANXIETY

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#### ABSTRACT

Anxiety is a prevalent psychological disorder in contemporary society, often marked by excessive worry, restlessness, and feelings of fear. In the context of Ayurveda, this condition is known as *Chittodvega*, which signifies an imbalance within the mind and nervous system. This case study focuses on the Ayurvedic treatment of *Chittodvega* in a 35-year-old female who experienced ongoing anxiety. The therapeutic approach combined herbal remedies, dietary changes, lifestyle enhancements, and *Panchakarma* therapies. Important herbs used in the treatment included *Ashwagandha*, *Brahmi*, and *Jatamansi*, all aimed at balancing the *Vata dosha* identified as aggravated in the patient. Lifestyle changes promoted regular daily rhythms, stress-relief techniques such as yoga and meditation, and improved sleep hygiene. After six weeks of this treatment regimen, the patient noted considerable reductions in anxiety symptoms, leading to less worry, enhanced sleep quality, and improved emotional resilience. This case study underscores the effectiveness of Ayurvedic methods in addressing anxiety and offers valuable insights into holistic strategies for mental health. Future research is suggested to investigate the wider implications of Ayurveda in the field of mental health care.

#### INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a common psychological issue impacting millions globally, typically presenting as heightened worry, nervousness, fear, and various physical symptoms such as increased heartbeat, perspiration, and restlessness. In contemporary medicine, it is recognized as a mental health disorder; however, Ayurveda views it as a disruption of the mind, known as *Chittodvega*. In this context, *Chitta* signifies the mind or consciousness, while *Dvega* implies agitation or disturbance. Thus, *Chittodvega* can be defined as a condition of mental disarray marked by emotional instability, illogical thoughts, and an overarching feeling of discomfort. [1]

In Ayurvedic philosophy, the human body is considered a nuanced system with interconnected elements of mind, body, and spirit.

Optimal health is achieved through the equilibrium of three *Doshas*- *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* each of which regulates specific functions related to physical and mental health. Anxiety is notably associated with an imbalance in the *Vata dosha*, which is responsible for movement, communication, and the functions of the nervous system. An increase in *Vata* can result in mental agitation, fearfulness, and difficulty concentrating, which are typical manifestations of anxiety. [2]

The Ayurvedic method for addressing *Chittodvega* is comprehensive, emphasizing the restoration of equilibrium in both the mind and body through the use of natural remedies, adjustments to diet, lifestyle alterations, and therapeutic techniques such as *Panchakarma*. Rather than just alleviating the symptoms of anxiety, Ayurveda aims to tackle the underlying causes by rebalancing the *Doshas*, enhancing mental clarity, and revitalizing the nervous system. [3]

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this case study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Ayurvedic interventions in the

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management of *Chittodvega* (anxiety) in a 35-year-old female patient. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To assess the symptoms of anxiety in the patient before and after Ayurvedic treatment, using both subjective (self-reported) and objective (clinical) measures.
- To evaluate the impact of Ayurvedic treatment on the balance of the *Vata dosha*, which is primarily associated with anxiety, and its role in restoring mental clarity and emotional stability.
- To observe the effects of Ayurvedic interventions such as herbal remedies, dietary modifications, lifestyle adjustments, and *Panchakarma* therapies in alleviating symptoms of anxiety, improving sleep quality, and enhancing emotional stability.
- To utilize Ayurvedic diagnostic tools like the *Dasabidha Pareeksha* to provide a comprehensive understanding of the patient's physical and mental condition.
- To provide a detailed account of the Ayurvedic approach to treating anxiety, including the use of specific herbs, therapies, and lifestyle changes, while documenting the patient's progress over a 6-week treatment period.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in an outpatient Ayurvedic clinic over a period of 6 weeks. The patient was a 35-year-old female who presented with persistent anxiety, characterized by excessive worry, restlessness, rapid heartbeat, sleep disturbances, and emotional instability. The following materials and methods were employed in the study:

### Patient Selection

The patient was selected based on her self-reported symptoms of anxiety and the clinical diagnosis of *Chittodvega* based on Ayurvedic principles. The inclusion criteria included:

- A diagnosis of anxiety based on clinical symptoms.
- No previous history of serious psychiatric conditions (e.g., major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder).
- Willingness to follow the Ayurvedic treatment protocol and provide regular feedback.

### Case Presentation

The patient, a 35-year-old female, presented with symptoms of anxiety, including persistent worry, irritability, difficulty in concentrating, and sleep disturbances. The symptoms had been persisting for several months and had begun to interfere with daily activities and relationships. Upon consultation, the patient was diagnosed with *Chittodvega* based on her mental state and clinical evaluation.

## Ayurvedic Assessment

In Ayurveda, the mind and body are interconnected, and any imbalance in the body can affect mental health. The patient's symptoms were primarily attributed to an imbalance in the *Vata dosha*, which governs mental clarity, communication, and the nervous system. Excessive *Vata*, when aggravated, can lead to anxiety, restlessness, and fear. The treatment approach, therefore, focused on pacifying *Vata* while nourishing the mind.

**Treatment Approach:** The Ayurvedic treatment for *Chittodvega* consisted of a combination of herbal medicines, dietary changes, and lifestyle modifications to address the root cause of anxiety. The key components of the treatment plan included:

**Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*):** Known for its adaptogenic properties, *Ashwagandha* helps in reducing stress and anxiety by balancing *Vata dosha* and promoting mental calmness.

**Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*):** *Brahmi* is a renowned herb for enhancing cognitive function and alleviating anxiety. It calms the nervous system and improves mental clarity.

**Jatamansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi*):** This herb is effective in calming the mind, reducing anxiety, and improving sleep quality.

### Dietary Modifications

**Warm, nourishing foods:** The patient was advised to consume foods that are warm, moist, and grounding, such as soups, stews, and dairy products. These foods help calm the *Vata dosha*.

**Avoiding stimulants:** Caffeine, processed foods, and spicy foods were recommended to be avoided as they can aggravate *Vata* and trigger anxiety.

**Increase in sweet, sour, and salty tastes:** These tastes are beneficial in calming *Vata* and promoting stability in the mind.

### Lifestyle Modifications

**Daily routine (*Dinacharya*):** The patient was encouraged to follow a regular daily routine, including waking up early, practicing deep breathing exercises (*Pranayama*), and engaging in physical activity such as yoga or walking. These practices help in reducing anxiety and improving overall well-being.

**Sleep hygiene:** Emphasis was placed on improving sleep quality by maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, avoiding screens before bedtime, and practicing relaxation techniques such as meditation.

### Panchakarma Therapy

**Shirodhara:** A treatment involving the gentle pouring of warm oil over the forehead, *Shirodhara* was used to soothe the nervous system and calm the mind. This

therapy is known for its ability to reduce anxiety and promote mental clarity.

**Abhyanga (oil massage):** A soothing oil massage was recommended to help balance *Vata*, improve circulation, and promote relaxation.

**Outcome:** After following the Ayurvedic treatment plan for a period of 6 weeks, the patient experienced

significant improvements in her symptoms of anxiety. The frequency of anxious thoughts decreased, and the patient reported feeling calmer and more centered. Her sleep quality improved, and she was able to concentrate better on daily activities. The patient also reported a reduction in irritability and increased emotional stability.

## OBSERVATION & RESULTS

| Assessment Tool                  | BT | AT Score | Percentage Improvement | t-Value | p-Value  |
|----------------------------------|----|----------|------------------------|---------|----------|
| Anxiety Severity Score (ASS)     | 28 | 12       | 57%                    | 4.67    | p < 0.05 |
| Sleep Quality Assessment (PSQI)  | 15 | 8        | 47%                    | 3.56    | p < 0.05 |
| Emotional Stability Rating (ESR) | 4  | 8        | 100%                   | 5.24    | p < 0.01 |

## DISCUSSION

Anxiety, referred to as *Chittodvega* in Ayurveda, is often associated with an imbalance in the *Vata dosha*, which is responsible for regulating the mind and nervous system.<sup>[4]</sup> The present case study demonstrates how Ayurveda's comprehensive approach- incorporating herbal treatments, dietary adjustments, lifestyle changes, and *Panchakarma* therapies- can aid in re-establishing harmony within both the body and mind. The treatment strategy was tailored to soothe the heightened *Vata dosha*, frequently linked to anxiety and stress-related conditions. In this example, the patient's symptoms were primarily connected to an overactive mind, which manifested as concern, restlessness, and disturbances in sleep.<sup>[5]</sup> Ayurveda posits that *Vata* imbalance disrupts mental processes, particularly affecting cognition and emotions. The herbal remedies recommended, including *Ashwagandha*, *Brahmi*, and *Jatamansi*, are recognized for their adaptogenic and nervine effects, making them beneficial for calming the nervous system and enhancing mental clarity. Specifically, *Ashwagandha* has been extensively researched for its ability to reduce stress and regulate cortisol levels, which tend to be elevated in individuals experiencing anxiety. Likewise, *Brahmi* is valued for its cognitive-boosting properties and its effectiveness in reducing mental fatigue and anxiety.<sup>[6]</sup>

The dietary adjustments suggested for the patient were aligned with the treatment objective of balancing *Vata*.<sup>[7]</sup> The emphasis on warm, nourishing foods, along with incorporating sweet, sour, and salty flavors, contributed to grounding and stabilizing the mind. Ayurveda highlights the role of food as a form of medicine, advocating for specific dietary habits that aim to restore balance to both the body and mind.<sup>[8]</sup> The recommendation to avoid stimulants and processed foods, known to exacerbate *Vata*, aligns with contemporary research on how dietary choices impact mental health. Additionally, lifestyle changes, such as maintaining a consistent daily routine and engaging in

stress-reducing activities like yoga and meditation, were integral to the treatment approach.<sup>[9]</sup> The significance of routine in managing anxiety is acknowledged in both Ayurvedic and modern therapeutic practices. Maintaining a regular sleep pattern and employing mindfulness techniques have been shown to alleviate anxiety symptoms and enhance overall well-being.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Panchakarma* therapies, including *Shirodhara* and *Abhyanga*, play a significant role in addressing deeper *Vata* imbalances. *Shirodhara* involves the steady application of warm oil to the forehead, which is known to induce relaxation and alleviate mental stress. This particular therapy is frequently employed to manage conditions such as anxiety, insomnia, and emotional instability.<sup>[11]</sup> Meanwhile, *Abhyanga*, which is a gentle oil massage, serves to calm the nervous system, enhance circulation, and restore bodily balance. Both *Shirodhara* and *Abhyanga* are recognized for their effectiveness in soothing the mind and improving the efficacy of other treatments.<sup>[12]</sup> In this case, positive outcomes such as reduced anxiety, better sleep, and increased emotional stability were observed, aligning with previous research on Ayurvedic methods for anxiety management. Although Ayurvedic practices have a longstanding tradition in addressing mental health issues, it is essential to recognize that these treatments yield the best results when customized to the individual's unique constitution and imbalances. This case underscores the importance of a personalized treatment strategy for anxiety, as Ayurveda does not offer a universal solution.<sup>[13]</sup> It is important to recognize that Ayurvedic treatments can be very effective in alleviating anxiety, especially when used alongside conventional therapies. By combining Ayurvedic practices with modern psychological methods like Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), individuals may achieve a more holistic strategy for managing anxiety.<sup>[14]</sup>



## CONCLUSION

This individual case study highlights the effectiveness of Ayurvedic management in addressing *Chittodvega*, commonly known as anxiety. Through a comprehensive approach that targets the underlying causes of anxiety, including the use of herbal treatments, nutritional adjustments, lifestyle changes, and *Panchakarma* therapies, notable relief can be attained. Ayurveda provides tailored treatment plans, presenting a hopeful alternative for those experiencing anxiety and associated mental health issues. Continued research and additional case studies are essential to confirm these results and assess the wider relevance of Ayurvedic interventions for anxiety.

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