



# “Understanding *Chittodvega*: An Ayurvedic Perspective on Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Its Therapeutic Approaches”

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## Abstract-

The WHO estimates that 280 million people suffer from mental health disorders. Mental illness is a broad term for conditions that affect a person’s mood, thinking, and behavior. These include anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, convulsions, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, ADHD, and many more. In *Ayurveda*, many psychological disorders are mentioned in the *Samhitas*. Terms like *Asvasthachitta*, *Chittavimbhramsa*, and *Chittodvega* seem similar to generalized anxiety disorder, with *Chittodvega* being the closest match. *Acharya Charaka* listed *Chittodvega* as a *Manas Dosha Vikara* (mental disorder).

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) causes fear, worry, and a constant feeling of being overwhelmed. This ongoing worry and tension can come with physical symptoms such as restlessness, feeling on edge, easy fatigue, difficulty concentrating, muscle tension, or sleep problems. Since it is a serious condition, effective management is important. Clinical trials show that anxiolytic drugs alone have limited long-term effectiveness and can cause major side effects like drug dependence, resistance, and sedation.

*Ayurveda* takes a psychosomatic approach to health. It offers several prevention strategies for both physical and mental problems, believing that preventing disease is better than treating it. By following advice from the classics, mental disorders (*Manovikara*) can be prevented through *Sadvritta* (good conduct), *Acharya Rasayana* (behavioral rejuvenation), and *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana* (control of impulses). This study presents a systematic review of *Chittodvega* from various *Ayurvedic* classics and its management.

**Keywords-***Chittodvega*, *Sadvritta*, *Manovikara*, *Rajas*, *Acharya Rasayana*, *Ayurveda*

## INTRODUCTION-

In *Ayurveda*, three mental qualities called *Gunas* are described: *Satva*, *Raja*, and *Tama*. An imbalance of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in the mind, which are reactive tendencies that disturb the mind, can lead to emotional imbalances and psychological disorders, and may cause sickness. *Rajas*

and Tamas are therefore known as the "*Doshas* of the Mind." The toxins produced by these *Doshas* cause unhealthy conditions. Negative emotions build up in the mind like toxins, leading to various chronic mental health problems, including anxiety.

Anxiety can be described as a strong feeling of tension, nervousness, worry, and apprehension experienced at a given moment, along with increased activity of the autonomic nervous system. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is marked by persistent and excessive anxiety and worry lasting at least six months. This makes daily life a constant struggle. GAD is the most common anxiety disorder seen in primary care, affecting about 22% of patients who report anxiety. Women are more likely to develop GAD than men. GAD can lead to insomnia, social isolation, poor quality of life, gastrointestinal issues, and problems with drug or alcohol use.

*Chittodvega* is a term that fits well with anxiety disorders. Its causes clearly show a state of mental anxiety. In today's competitive world, people often turn to *Raja* and *Tama* provoking foods and lifestyles, living very stressful lives. This leads to disturbances in *Vatadi Doshas*, which in turn cause abnormal states in both body and mind.

#### **Etymology and definition of *Chittodvega*:**

The word *Chittodvega* is made up of two parts: *Chitta* and *Udvega*.

- *Chitta* comes from the root "Chit" and means to perceive, focus the mind, be attentive, observe, intend, be anxious about, care for, understand, or remind.

- *Udvega* means trembling, shaking, agitation, regret, fear, distress, or astonishment.

Putting these together, *Chittodvega* means an agitated or anxious state of mind.

#### ***Vyutpatti***

*Chittam Manah* <sup>[8]</sup> i.e. *Chitta* is mind.

#### ***Nidana***

Specific *Nidana* for *Chittodvega* are not separately mentioned. But in general for all mental disorders basic pathogenic factors are *Rajas* & *Tamasa*. Vitiating of *Raja* & *Tama* is considered as prime factor in causation of *Chittodvega*. In *Ayurvedic* classics many factors are stated to be the cause of *Manas Roga* in various contexts, which can be correlated to the *Nidana* aspect of *Chittodvega*.

*Acharya Charaka* has explained certain *Unmada Prakaran* factors, like *Alpasattva* (inadequate personality), *Hridaya Pradushya* (As heart is the seat of *Buddhi*, alteration of *Buddhi*), and *Deva Guru Dwijanam* (condemning of God, teacher and brahmins or elders), which can cause derangement of *Raja* and *Tama Doshas* affecting *Manovaha Srotas* and act as etiological factors for the development of *Manasik Vyadhi*.

## MODERN REVIEW-

According to Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine, anxiety disorder is described as a feeling of unease, dread, or fear. It can appear as a primary psychiatric condition or due to an underlying medical problem. The DSM-V defines Generalized Anxiety Disorder as persistent and excessive worry or fear that happens most days for at least six months, usually related to events like work or school performance.

### Diagnostic criteria<sup>[11]</sup>-

Patients will be diagnosed on the basis of signs and symptoms of General anxiety disorder (DSM-V criteria)

**A.** Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectations) occurring more days than not for atleast 6 months , about a no. of events or activities (such as work or school performance).

**B.** The individual finds it difficult to control the worry.

**C.** The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (with atleast some symptoms having been present for more days than not for the past 6 months) :-

1. Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge.
2. Being easily Fatigued
3. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank.
4. Irritability
5. Muscle tension
6. Sleep disturbance (difficulty in falling or staying sleep or restless, unsatisfying)

**D.** The anxiety worry or physical symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

**E.** The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or another medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism).

**F.** The disturbance is not better explained by another mental disorder (e.g., anxiety or worry about having panic attacks in panic disorder, negative evaluation in social anxiety disorder [social phobia], contamination or other obsessions in obsessive-compulsive disorder, separation from attachment figures in separation anxiety disorder, reminders of traumatic events in posttraumatic stress disorder, gaining weight in anorexia nervosa, physical complaints in somatic symptom disorder, perceived appearance flaws in body dysmorphic disorder, having a serious illness in illness anxiety disorder, or the content of delusional beliefs in schizophrenia or delusional disorder).

## MANAGEMENT

*Ayurveda* emphasizes prevention over cure and offers several strategies to avoid both physical and mental disorders. By following the guidance provided in classical texts, mental imbalances (*Manovikara*) can be prevented. The key preventive measures include:

i) *Sadvritta* (Right Conduct)

ii) *Acharya Rasayana* (Code of Conduct for Healthy Living)

iii) *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana* (Controlling Suppressible Urges)

**i. *Sadvritta* (Good Conduct):**

*Sadvritta* refers to living a life based on good moral and ethical behavior. According to *Ayurveda*, mental disturbances arise due to imbalances in the mental *Doshas*—*Rajas* and *Tamas*, which can cause emotions like fear, anger, jealousy, and sorrow. To maintain mental balance, the *Charaka Samhita* outlines a range of virtuous actions. These include respecting elders and teachers, behaving appropriately, avoiding extreme emotions or religious fanaticism, and practicing qualities like learning, generosity, friendship, compassion, joy, peace, and emotional detachment. Though these guidelines are largely ethical and social, they play a vital role in emotional and psychological well-being. Practicing *Sadvritta* helps promote *Sattva Guna* (mental clarity and stability), which in turn helps control *Rajas* and *Tamas*, leading to better mental health. *Acharya Charaka* emphasized these principles as a path to achieve overall well-being and mastery over the senses.

**ii. *Acharya Rasayana*:**

*Acharya Rasayana* plays a significant role in managing *Chittodvega* (mental distress). It refers to a set of guidelines for ideal mental and social behavior that benefit both mind and body. Considered a form of "*Nitya Rasayana*" (daily rejuvenation), it helps strengthen the *Sattva Guna*—the quality of clarity and balance in the mind.

*Acharya Charaka* listed several key behaviors under *Acharya Rasayana*, which include:

1. ***Satya Vadinam*** – Always speak the truth
2. ***Akrodha*** – Stay free from anger
3. ***Nivrutam Madhya Maithunat*** – Avoid alcohol and excessive sexual activity
4. ***Ahimsaka*** – Do not engage in violence
5. ***Anayasa*** – Avoid overexertion or strain
6. ***Prashantam Priya Vadinam*** – Be calm and speak pleasantly
7. ***Japa Sauchaparam*** – Practice chanting and maintain cleanliness
8. ***Dhiram*** – Be emotionally stable and composed

**iii. *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana* (Controlling Mental Urges):**

*Ayurvedic* texts mention several mental urges, known as *Dharaniya Vegas*, that should be controlled for the well-being of both the individual and society. These include:

- ***Lobha*** (greed)
- ***Shoka*** (grief)
- ***Bhaya*** (fear)
- ***Krodha*** (anger)
- ***Nirlajjata*** (shamelessness)
- ***Irshya*** (jealousy)
- ***Mana*** (pride/ego)
- ***Raga*** (excessive attachment)
- ***Abhidhya*** (desire to possess what belongs to others)

Uncontrolled expression of these urges can harm not only the individual's mental health but also disrupt family and social harmony. They are known to contribute to emotional disturbances and psychological disorders.

Thus, *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana* is considered a preventive approach in *Ayurveda*. By learning to manage these negative emotions and urges, one can maintain mental balance and promote overall psychological well-being.

## Discussion-

This association between *Chittodvega* and GAD helps in a comprehensive understanding of anxiety in *Ayurvedic* literature. The etiology of *Chittodvega* concerns the mental equilibrium by unhealthy living habits, emotional stress, immoral behaviour, and indulgence in *Raja-Tama* predominant activities. This understanding also dovetails with more recent research that has identified stress, social demands, and neurochemical imbalances as the key culprits in anxiety disorders.

Moreover, the significance of *Sadvritta* (right conduct), *Achara Rasayana* (daily mental rejuvenation through behavioral regimen), and *Dharaniya Vega Vidharana* (control of mental urges) as main preventive approaches in *Ayurveda* deserves special mention. These principles are intended to promote a value-based, ethical, and cognisant lifestyle that not only supports *Sattva Guna* (clarity, goodness, purity, stability) but also calms the overactivation of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Unlike conventional medicine, which often targets symptoms, these *Ayurvedic* methods aim at the root cause of mental suffering by promoting emotional regulation, social harmony, and spiritual well-being.

## CONCLUSION

*Ayurveda* has a Psychosomatic approach to health. The condition of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* components affects both the *Sharirika* and *Mansika Swasthya* condition of the body. The current scenario of *Manas Roga* also depicts the irregularities in diet and lifestyle. In this regard, *Ayurvedic diets and therapeutic regimens are of great relevance due to their high efficacy and minimal side effects*. It works in all three domains: preventive, curative, and rehabilitative aspects.

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