



Case Study

AN AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL ON SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

Social Anxiety Disorder is a disorder characterized by significant amount of fear in one or more social situations. This condition becomes clinically relevant when the fear last for 6 months or more. This clinical presentation has similarities with the description given in *Arjuna Vishada Yoga* mentioned in *Bhagavat Gita* and *Vishadhata lakshana* mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Based on these symptoms, it could be considered a *Shareerika Manasika Vyadhi* where there is an *Udvega Avastha* of *Manas* (excited state of mind) along with the predominance of *Vata* and *Pitta dosha*. The present-day management of Social Anxiety Disorder involves the usage of anxiolytics, and their use is limited owing to the risk of drug abuse and dependence. This is a case of a 22- year- old man who presented with severe anxiety, moist hands, and excessive sweating when confronting social situations. Based on the signs and symptoms, he was diagnosed with a case of Social Anxiety Disorder according to DSM-V diagnostic criteria. The treatment plan included *Pacana Deepana* with *Gandharvahastadi Kashayam* and *Vaishwanara Choorna* for 7 days at the OP level, followed by *Shirodhara* (pouring medicated oil on the forehead), *Kalyanaka Ghrta* (medicated ghee) as a *Samanoushadhi* (internal medicine) and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* (counselling) for 7 days at the IP level, followed by *Kalyanaka Ghrta* as *Samanoushadhi* for 23 days at the OP level. Assessment of the patient's condition before and after treatment was done using DSM-V assessment criteria to evaluate the efficacy of the treatment. After completion of treatment - 7 days at the OP level, 7 days at the IP level, and followed by 23 days of OP level administration of the medicine a significant reduction in the score, from 20 to 7 on the DSM-V assessment criteria, and improvement in symptoms were observed.

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of things that contribute to our overall health, including our relationships with other people. Social health is defined as our ability to form meaningful relationships with other people and interact in healthy, positive ways. The main cause of social anxiety is stress. It will affect the overall health of the patient. This clinical presentation has a similarity with the description given in *Arjuna Vishada Yoga* mentioned in *Bhagavat Gita*^[1] and *Vishadhata Lakshana* mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya*^[2]. Based on these symptoms, it could be considered a *Shareerika Manasika Vyadhi* where there is the *Udvega Avastha* of

Manas (excited state of mind) which is caused by vitiated *Rajas* along with the predominance of *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*. The present-day management of Social Anxiety Disorder involves anxiolytics and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Dependency and the requirement of prolonged treatment are the biggest limitations in anxiety disorders. This article aims to explore safe, effective, economical management of SAD following the therapeutic principles of Ayurveda.

Case Report

A 22-year-old male, patient visited the Out Patient Department (OPD) of *Kayachikitsa*, with complaints of severe anxiety, moist hands, and excessive sweating when confronting social situations for 1 year.

Clinical Findings

Patient complaints of severe stress due to work and also experiences fear, along with sweating and moist hands, when confronting social situations

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(having a conversation with unfamiliar people) in the past 1 year. He usually avoids or attends minimally to such situations, and he has a constant fear of being rejected or humiliated by others. He even diverts his mind when thinking about it. His quality of sleep is also poor due to constant worrying. He has no family history of social anxiety. He has no history of alcohol or drug abuse and no suicidal or homicidal tendencies.

Personal history revealed his bowel habits are normal with a good appetite. No difficulty in micturition was reported. He had disturbed sleep. No allergies or addictions were reported.

Dashavidha Pareeksha (10-fold Ayurvedic examination) revealed that the patient has a *Pitta Kapha Prakriti* (built and temperament), *Madyama Sara* (constitutional essence), *Madyama Samhanana* (compactness), *Madyama Pramana* (measurements), *Madyama Aharashakti* (power of assimilation), and *Vyayama Shakti* (power of exercise). He possessed *Avara Satva* (inferior psyche), which was evident from his fear when confronting social situations.

Diagnosis

Based on the signs, symptoms, and examination, he was diagnosed with social anxiety

disorder as per DSM- V diagnostic criteria^[3], and treatments were started. Assessment of the patient before and after the intervention was done using DSM-V assessment criteria^[4].

The symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder, including fear, anxious, nervous, trouble breathing, fainting, restlessness, shakiness etc., can be correlated to *Vata Prakopa Lakshanas* and palpitations and excessive sweating, etc., can be correlated to *Pitta Prakopa Lakshanas*. Considering the *Dhatus* involved in social anxiety disorder, stress and *Bhaya* (fear) are the causative factors for *Rasa Dushti*, which manifests as bodily and mental symptoms. While considering the location of the mind, it is explained that the *Hridaya*⁵ is the seat of the mind. According to Acharya Charaka, the *Tvak* (skin) and the mind have a *Samavayi Sambandha* (inseparable relation)^[6]. Thus, the *Vata Prakopa* occurring due to *Rasa Dushti*, along with *Pitta*, takes its abode in *Shiras* and *Hridaya*, where there exists *Khavaigunya* (vitiated body channels), and manifests the symptoms. This *Khavaigunya* occurs due to the stress and worry about social situations, leading to Social Anxiety Disorder.

Table 1: Therapeutic Intervention

Interventional Schedule	Duration	Drug	Dose
<i>Pachana Deepana</i>	7	1) <i>Gandharvahastadi Kashaya</i>	48ml-0-48ml before food with a pinch of rock salt and jaggery.
		2) <i>Vaiswanara churnam</i>	6gm-0-6gm with hot water
<i>Shirodhara</i>	7	<i>Balaguluchyadi Taila</i>	-
<i>Samanoushadha</i>	23	<i>Kalyanaka Ghrta</i>	24ml-0-24ml Before food with Hot water
<i>Satvavajaya Chikitsa</i> (Counselling)	7	-	-

RESULTS

After the 30-day treatment schedule, the patient had considerable relief from symptoms of fear or fright, anxiety, worry, nervousness in social situations, a racing heart, sweating and trouble breathing in social situations. The assessment is given in the table below.

Table 2: Assessment of symptoms

SNo	Symptoms	Before Treatment	After Treatment
1.	I feel moments of sudden fear or fright on social situations.	3	0
2.	I feel anxious, worried or nervous about social situations.	2	1
3.	I have thoughts of being rejected, humiliated, embarrassed, ridiculed or offending others.	3	2
4.	I feel racing of heart, sweaty, trouble breathing, faint or shaky in social situations.	1	0
5.	I feel tense muscles, feel on edge or restless or had trouble relaxing in social situations.	2	1
6.	I usually avoid, or do not approach or enter social situations.	1	0
7.	I usually leave social situations early or participated only minimally.	2	1
8.	I spend a lot of time preparing what to say or how to act in social situations.	3	1

9.	I distract myself to avoid thinking about social situations.	1	0
10.	I need help to cope with social situations (e.g.: Medications or alcohol, superstitious objects).	2	1
	Total Score	20	7

No adverse and unanticipated events were observed.

DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda, the patient was diagnosed as a case of social anxiety disorder. The main *Dosha* was *Vata Pitta*, and *Bhaya* (fear) was the main symptom. Hence, we adopted *Pacana Deepana* medications like *Gandharvahastadi Kashaya*^[7] and *Vaiswanara Churna*^[8] for correcting the *Agni* (digestive fire). After *Nirama lakshanas* were attained, *Shirodhara* (pouring oil on the forehead) helped in relieving stress, *Vata Vrddhi* symptoms and those of Social Anxiety Disorder. The oil taken for *Shirodhara* was *Balaguluchyadi Taila*^[9] (to pacify *Vata* and *Pitta dosha*). The *Dhara* therapy is traditionally used in treating conditions like anxiety, sleep, and stress. Prolonged and intermittent dripping of oil leads to a state of calmness similar to a relaxation response observed in meditation, which causes a psychosomatic balance^[10].

The probable mode of action of *Shirodhara* has shown its anti-anxiety, antihypertensive, and sleep-inducing effects in a few studies. *Shirodhara* helps to heal the body at the root level of diseases by calming the mind and controlling emotions, leaving you feeling in a heavenly state. The prolonged and continuous pressure due to the trickling of medicated oil over the forehead causes tranquility of mind and reduces stress by modulating nerve stimulation^[11].

The three major neurotransmitters associated with anxiety are norepinephrine, serotonin, and GABA. GABA (Gamma-aminobutyric acid) is the most prevalent inhibitory neurotransmitter in the central nervous system. An alteration in GABA levels may lead to production of social anxiety. Serotonin (5-HT) plays a vital role in the development and persistence of anxiety disorders. Different studies have shown that increased 5-HT concentration in the brain can also increase anxiety, and a reduction of 5-HT levels reduces anxiety. The general theory about the role of norepinephrine in anxiety disorders is that affected patients may have a poorly regulated noradrenergic system with occasional outbursts of activity^[12]. Therefore, in *Shirodhara*, the vibration along with a slight temperature may activate the functions of the thalamus and the basal forebrain, which then brings the neurotransmitters to a normal stage.

The main causative factor of Social Anxiety Disorder is stress. Therefore, *Shirodhara* with *Balaguluchyadi Taila*, along with *Samanoushadhi* and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* (counselling), will help reduce symptoms like fear or fright in social situations, anxiety, nervousness, trouble breathing, fainting,

restlessness and Shakiness especially when *Vata Dosha* is predominant. Palpitations and excessive sweating indicate *Pitta Dosha* predominance. The likely reason for reducing anxious mood is *Shirodhara* with *Balaguluchyadi Taila's* ability to reduce anxiety, which could be attributed to the somatic autonomic reflex through thermos-sensors or pressure sensors in the skin or hair follicles.^[13] This reduction in stress lowers cortisol levels, a major contributor to anxiety.

Kalyanaka Ghritha,^[14] which improves memory and concentration and also pacifies *Vata* and *Pitta dosha*. *Kalyanaka Ghritha* contains various drugs like *Haritaki* (*Terminalia Chebula*), *Vibhitaki* (*Terminalia Billerica*), *Amalaki* (*Emblica officinalis*), *Visala* (*Citrullus colocynthis* Scharad.), *Devadaru* (*Cedrus deodara* Roxb.), *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*), *Manjishta* (*Rubia cordifolia*), etc. Majority of drugs are having *Tridoshasamaka*, *Dipana-Pacana*, *Vrsya*, *Rasayana* properties. *Haritaki* is *Deepani* (improves appetite), *Medhya* (promoting intellect), *Rasayana* (increases quality of *Dhatu*s), and *Brimhana* (nourishing). *Amalaki* is *Rasayana*, *Shalaparni* is *Rasayana* and *Brimhana*, *Sariba*, *Krishna Sariba*, and *Bhadraila* are *Deepana*. *Dadima* is *Brimhana* and *Medhya*. The probable reason for reducing the symptoms is due to the anti-anxiety property of *Dadima* (*Punica granatum*) and *Ela* (*Elettaria cardamomum*), and the anti-oxidant property of the majority of drugs.^[15]

Satvavajaya Chikitsa (counselling) is *Ahitebhyoarthebhyo Manonigraha* (withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome objects). *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* may target the inhibition of the functions of impaired mental attributes (*Rajas*) and also correct imbalanced emotions of *Dhee*, *Dhriti*, *Smriti*, and *Prajnaparadha*. While at the same time, it rectifies the disturbed *Sattva guna* (balancing property of mind) and motivates it through *Dhairya* and *Samadhi*. Finally, this process results in controlling *Manas* from *Ahita Artha*.^[16]

Social Anxiety Disorder is present with symptoms affecting both *Shareera* (body) and *Manas* (mind). Both these aspects can be covered using this protocol.

CONCLUSION

This treatment protocol can be a good addition to the management of social anxiety disorder, with reduced dependency and fewer adverse effects, and enhanced efficacy from the integrated protocol.

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