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Concept of stress by ayurvedic and modern aspect

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ABSTRACT:

Stress plays a role in the etiology of various diseases, according to both *Ayurvedic* and modern medicine. Especially in *Ayurved*, stress is known as *sahas* and its impact on the body is seen as the aggravation of *vata dosha* and *ojakshaya*, leading to lower immunity and resulting in numerous diseases. Stress also leads to degeneration in body tissue. Stress is increasing due to increased physical and mental workload, which develops into anxiety and stress. This stressful life leads to behavioral disorders (like anxiety and depression) and systemic disorders (like hypertension, diabetes mellitus, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, etc.). Therefore, it is important to understand the concept of stress by gaining knowledge of its types, pathways, effects on the body, common internal causes of stress, and factors influencing stress intolerance from both *Ayurvedic* and modern perspectives. *Ayurved* also focuses on preventing the effects of stress and increasing the body's coping capacity through lifestyle modification. This includes

the application of *yoga, asana, pranayama, ahar, panchkarmachikitsa, vata* balancing *ahar, basti* therapy, and *rasayana* therapy.

KEYWORD: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, *Ojakshaya, Sahas*

INTRODUCTION In *Ayurved*, stress is known as *Sahas*, and its effects are seen on the body because of the vitiation of *vata dosha* and *ojakshaya* (low immunity). Therefore, management of stress is helpful in daily stressful life. Adequate sleep, a *vata* balancing diet, exercise, *yoga, pranayama*, and *rasayan* therapy are useful for avoiding *Sahas* (stress). Stressors can be physical, psychological, and environmental. *Sahas* and *ojakshaya* lead to various infectious diseases. *Sahas* should be avoided, and the body is protected by taking daily care of the three sub-pillars of life—diet, sleep, and celibacy—*traya Upastambhatee*. These pillars are *ahar, swapna*, and *bhramcharya*. Adequate sleep and the regular intake of *rasayana* help to increase the body's coping capacity.

Stress-inducing factors (stressors) are classified by the *Ayurvedic* perspective.

Physical stress includes uneven body posture, fasting, injury, and physical exercise. Psychological stress includes high altitude and prolonged exposure to sun heat and fire, which vitiate the *pitta* and lead to various diseases. Unhealthy food, improper daily routine, and mental perturbations like **bhay** (fear), **lobha** (greed), **shok** (grief), **moha** (attachment), and **krodha** (anger) are also causes of stress. As a result, degenerative changes are seen in all **dhatus** (tissues) and **ojas** (low immunity). **Vata** is the main **dosha** implicated in excessive physical stress.

The following verse describes how the *vayu* becomes aggravated by overuse or improper behavior: *Atiyoga –vyayam- vegsandharan – anasana –abhighat –vyavaya –udwega – soka –sonitaltiseka –jagarana –visama sariranyaebhya –atisevitebhyo –vayu prokopam apadyate.*

Various diseases seen due to vitiated *vata* include **jwar**, **gulma**, **Madhumeha**, and **Shosha**. Psychological stress such as **udwega** (excitement) and **shoka** (anxiety) also leads to disequilibrium due to *vata*, whereas *pitta doshas* are vitiated by **krodha**. *Tikshra tapa agni santapa, shrama, krodha vishama aaharebhyasca pittama propokopan apadyate.*

Sahasam sada vjrjayet. Acharya Sushruta mentioned **Rasayanatantra**, which is a branch of **ashtang ayurved** focused on the improvement of longevity along with physical and mental strength and immunity. *Rasayana tantram nana vayahsthapanam ayur –medha –balakaram roga pharana smartham.*

Quality of Vata *Vata* is a **dosha** and possesses **pancha mahabhoutikva**,

characterized by the predominance of air and other elements. **Vata** is situated in the intestine, waist, thighs, ears, bones, and organs of touch. The large intestine is considered the special seat of *vata*. *Vata* is stated to be **rajoguna Pradhan** because the action of **rajoguna** is to bring everything into action.

Function of Vata The functions of *vata* include expiration, inspiration, sense perception, initiation of natural urges, and enthusiasm. It is responsible for every action in the body. It also controls the mind and regulates the circulation of blood, digestion, and excretion. When *vata* is in excess, it can also cause restlessness, hyperactivity, difficulty in focusing, loss of muscle tissue, blackish discoloration, loss of consciousness, fear, grief, and decreased capacity of sense organs, which can contribute to mental health problems. Stress, anxiety, and depression develop. Stress factors vitiate the *doshas*, especially *vata*, leading to several diseases. When **sahas** increases the *vata*, it directly leads to **ojakshaya** (loss of immunity), increasing the body's susceptibility to various diseases like anxiety, depression, ulcerative colitis, hypertension, and diabetes mellitus.

Ayurvedic Management in Stress The root cause of stress and related disorders is vitiated *vata*. Therefore, consuming a *vata* balancing diet is crucial. Such a diet includes **Madhur**, **lavana**, **Amla** foods for balancing *vata* and providing nutrition to the body. Food should be warm and have some added ghee to alleviate the dry and cold nature of *vata*. Adding ginger powder and black pepper assists digestion, thereby decreasing digestive problems. Nuts like almonds and

dates, along with dairy products, nourish the mind and body. Activities such as *yoga* (with more *Asanas* or static postures) and meditation alleviate both *vata* and stress. Practicing *pranayama* and using *panchkarma* in daily life are helpful in reversing the stress-related pathology in the body.

Concept of Stress by Modern Aspects

Stress is defined as a state of strain, whether physical or psychological. It is a conscious or unconscious psychological feeling or physical situation resulting from physical, mental, positive, or negative pressure that overwhelms adaptive capacity. Pressure turns into stress when one feels unable to cope. Stress can affect feelings, work, thinking, bodily functions, may cause sleeping problems, loss of appetite, and difficulty in concentrating. In the pathway of stress flow, stress is perceived by the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and adrenal cortex. These organs release corticotrophin-releasing hormone, adrenocorticotrophic hormone, and corticosteroid, respectively. Stress is a central concept in biology and is widely used in psychology and environmental sciences. The term is cross-utilized to refer to different elements of the stress system, including the stressful stimulus, stressor, stress response, and stress effect. Stress is defined as a state where homeostasis is being challenged, encompassing both systematic stress and local stress. A specific stressor may potentially bring about local stress, while intensity of stress beyond a threshold may commonly activate the Hypothalamic–Pituitary–Adrenal (HPA) axis and result in a systematic stress response. The framework

of the stress system indicates that stress includes three types: *sustress* (inadequate stress), *Eustress* (good stress), and *Distress* (bad stress). Both *sustress* and *distress* might impair normal physiological functions and even lead to pathological conditions, while *eustress* might benefit health through hormesis-induced optimization of homeostasis.

Stress-Related Concepts

Concept	Definition
Stress	A state of homeostasis being challenged.
Stressor	A factor with the potential to directly challenge homeostasis.
Stressor Stimulus	An agent that can induce the formation of a stressor and transfer it to the stressor.
Stressor Response	A compensatory process aimed at restoring homeostasis.
Stressor Effect	Biological consequences resulting from the struggle with a stressor, including the re-establishment of homeostasis or damage to the body, and even disease.
<i>Eustress</i>	A type of stress representing "good stress". It is a state of homeostasis being mildly challenged by moderate levels of stressors.
<i>Distress</i>	A type of stress representing "bad stress". It is a state of homeostasis not challenged owing to no or inadequate stressor, which might shrink

	the buffering capacity of homeostasis and threaten health.
<i>stress</i>	A type of stress representing "inadequate stress".

When we perceive a threat, our nervous system responds by releasing stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones arouse the body for emergency action. This action includes an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, physical strength, and stamina. The action reaction time also increases, enhancing focus and preparing the individual for either "fight or flight" from the danger at hand.

It is assumed that stressors cause the body to adapt, leading to tension on the body and increasing the risk of illness. Under stress, the adrenal medulla secretes epinephrine and norepinephrine in response to sympathetic stimulation. These hormones increase cardiac and respiratory function, blood sugar levels, and blood volume. Other organs of the endocrine system, including the adrenal cortex and thyroid gland, release corticosteroid and thyroid hormones that can inhibit inflammation and immune functioning. Major life events also develop stress, like a variety of physical, mental, and social dysfunctions of interferon which may lead to an increased risk of cancer.

Ayurved mentioned the stress as *sahas*, and its impact on the body occurs when the aggravation of *vata dosha* and *rasakshaya*, *ojakshaya* leading to alteration in digestion, lowers the immunity and resulting in numerous diseases. Stress is also related to degeneration in the body tissue.

CONCLUSION This article presented the concept of stress from both modern and *Ayurvedic* perspectives. It explained the pathway of stress flow, the framework of the stress system, and how stress vitiates *vata dosha*, *ojakshaya*, and *rasakshaya*. These effects lead to lower immunity and increased susceptibility to various diseases such as anxiety, depression, diabetes mellitus, and hypertension. Consequently, stress can be easily treated using both modern and *Ayurvedic* approaches.

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