



CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME – AN INSIGHT THROUGH ĀYURVĒDA

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ABSTRACT

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is one among the thriving issue worldwide. It results mainly due to stressful & deranged food & life style habits. There is no as-such mentioning of disease details in ĀyurvĒda saṁhitā granthās. To fill this gap, based on the guidelines mentioned in saṁhitās for understanding Anukta vyādhi, one can understand the CFS too. Nidāna pañcaka is one among the mandatory criteria for any vyādhi. Here also same methodology followed to understand CFS in terms of ĀyurvĒda. It is proposed that CFS is to be understood as Vāta pradhāna Tridōṣa duṣṭi condition which mainly follows Vātavyādhi & Ōjō duṣṭi nidāna & Lakṣaṇas. Based on the involvement of nidāna, dōṣa, dushya, lakṣaṇa etc diagnose CFS in Initial stages as Rasa or Rakta pradōṣaja vikāra. / Type of sannipātaja Kṣaya / Anukta Vāta vyādhi. In later stages: Majja Pradōṣaja vikāra. / Ōjō duṣṭi.

KEYWORDS: Chronic fatigue syndrome, Anukta vyādhi, Vātavyādhi, Ōjō duṣṭi.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is one among the evolving disease among today's world population because of Stressful & Deranged life style habits. It is characterized by persistent and unexplained fatigue resulting in severe impairment in daily functioning. Besides intense fatigue, most patients with CFS report concomitant symptoms such as pain, cognitive dysfunction, and unrefreshing sleep. Additional symptoms can include headache, sore throat, tender lymph nodes, muscle aches, joint aches, feverishness, difficulty sleeping, psychiatric problems, allergies, and abdominal cramps. According to recent publication, based on most commonly used case definition CDC-1994, 0.89% subjects were suffering from CFS, with women approximately 1.5 to 2 folds higher than men in all categories.

In ĀyurvĒda saṁhitā granthās, direct mentioning of chronic fatigue syndrome was not found. But through the guidelines mentioned in saṁhitās for understanding Anukta vyādhi, one can understand the condition. To understand and appreciate the concept of anukta vyādhi, it is essential to consider basic concepts of ĀyurvĒda like dōṣa, dhātu, agni, srōtas, and so on. Though anukta vyādhi are not interpreted in terms of their names, the cluster of signs and symptoms and underlying pathology can be understood by the basic principles stated above which not only helpful in understanding the pathogenesis but also gives a direction to think in terms of treatment for the same.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

To understand disease chronic Fatigue Syndrome in terms of ĀyurvĒda.

MATERIAL & METHODS

Literary study of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome was done from contemporary medical texts, various ĀyurvĒda texts, related journals & Works.

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME FROM ĀYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

Etiological Factors / Nidāna

In contemporary science, there are numerous hypotheses about the aetiology of CFS; there is no definitively identified cause. Distinguishing between predisposing, precipitating, and perpetuating factors in CFS helps to provide a framework for understanding this complex condition¹.

- **Predisposing Factors:** Childhood trauma, Physical inactivity during childhood, Pre-morbid psychiatric illness or psychopathology, Pre-morbid hyperactivity etc. tend to increase the risk of CFS in adults.
- **Precipitating Factors:** Physical or psychological stress may elicit the onset of CFS, Infection (usually a flulike illness or infectious mononucleosis) as the triggering factor of fatigue, precipitating somatic events such as serious injury, surgery, pregnancy, or childbirth.
- **Perpetuating Factors:** Negative self-efficacy, Strong physical attributions, Strong focus on bodily symptoms, Fear of fatigue, Lack of social support, Low physical activity pattern



Probable inference of etiology in Āyurvēda

As per contemporary review, Nidāna of CFS are mainly due to Physical / Psychological Stress / physical inactivity & other components. These nidānas are observed in **Vātavyādhi nidāna², Sāmānya Kṣaya nidāna³ & Ōjō kṣaya nidāna⁴**.

i.e.

- Alpalaghvanna, Viṣamādupacārācca, Cintā-Śōka, Bhayādāpi, Vēgasandhāraṇāt, Āmāt & Abhighātā Nidānas of Vātavyādhi are seen in CFS.
- Cintā, Rūkṣa-Alpa-Pramitāśanam, Bhaya & Śōka are the Sāmānya Nidānas of Kṣaya Relatable to CFS.
- Abhighātāt, Kṣayāt, Kōpāt, Shōkāt & Shramāt are the Nidānas of Ōjōkṣaya appreciated in CFS.

LAKṢAṆA (SYMPTOMS) OF CFS

In contemporary texts, symptoms of CFS are mentioned as follows: Fatigue >6 Months, Disturbed Sleep, Multiple Joint Pain, Head Ache, Sore Throat, Confusion, Inability to

concentrate, Inability to plan or organize thoughts, Physical / Mental exertion makes symptom Worse, Orthostatic Intolerance, Palpitation.

In terms of Āyurvēda, lakṣaṇas of CFS can be considered under Sāmānya & Viśēṣa lakṣaṇa.

- ✓ **Sāmānya** Lakṣaṇas are commonly appreciated in **Sāmānya vātavyādhi lakṣaṇa⁵**. i.e.,

Saṅkōcaḥ Parvaṇām, Stambha, Bhēda Asthnām Parvaṇāmapi, Pāṇi-Pṛṣṭha-Śirōgrahaḥ, Śōṣō Aṅgānām, Anidratā, Spandanām Gātrasuptatā, Bhēda-Stōda-Arti-Ākṣēpa-Mōha-Āyāsa.

- ✓ **Viśēṣa lakṣaṇas** of CFS can be inferred in terms of **Ōjō Dōṣa⁶**.

Ōjō Dōṣa is mainly of 3 types i.e., visraṁsa, vyāpat & kṣaya. Based on intensity of dūṣṭi, lakṣaṇa's were get manifested in subsequent stages.

Table No. 1: Lakṣaṇa were get manifested in subsequent stages of Ōjō Dōṣa	
Type Of Ōjaḥ Dōṣaḥ	Lakṣaṇa that can be correlated
Visraṁsa	Gātrānām Sadanam
Vyāpat	Stabdhaḡurugātratā, Glāni, Tandra, Anidrā
Kṣaya	Mūrcchā, Māmsakṣaya, Mōhaḡ

Apart from Ōjō dūṣṭi, Lakṣaṇas of CFS also seen in types of **Sannipata kṣaya⁷**. i.e.

- When there is **Vāta- Pitta vṛddhi & Kapha kṣaya**, Lakṣaṇas like Bhēda, Ānavastita, Śrama & Daurbalya.
- When there is **vāta vṛddhi, pitta sama & Kapha Kṣaya**, then lakṣaṇas like Brama, Udvēṣṭana, Tōda, Dāha & Aṅgamarda are seen.

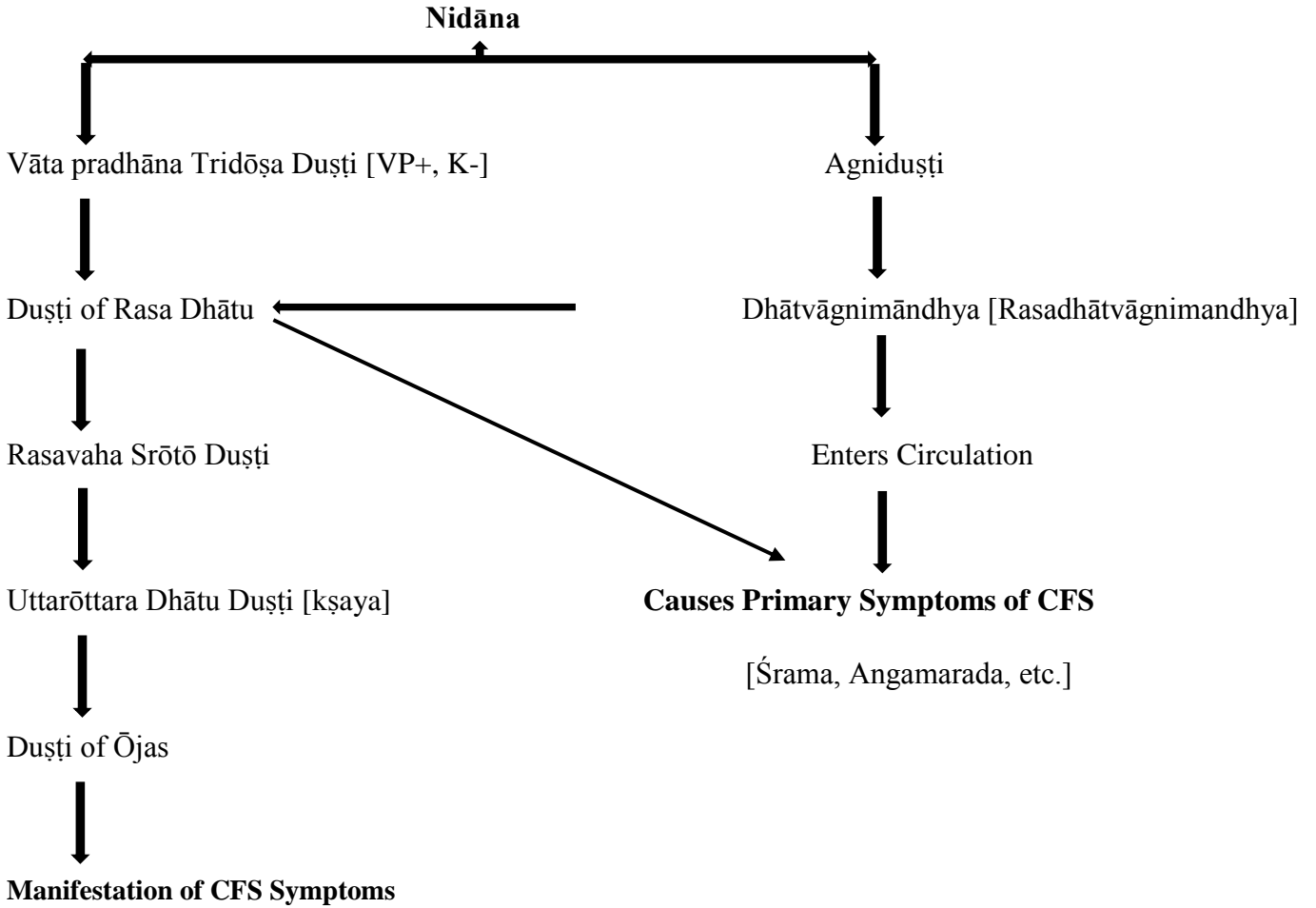
This lakṣaṇas highlights the dōṣic involvement in manifestation of vyādhi.

UPAŚAYA & ANUPAŚAYA:

- Restraining from work showed mild benefits among observed subjects. Hence can be considered under **Upaśaya**.
- Continuous physical activity, stress etc. factors mentioned as Nidāna can be considered under **Anupaśaya**.

PATHOLOGENESIS / SAMPRĀPTI

Pathogenesis of CFS in terms of modern is varied because of varied etiological factors. But based on Nidāna & Lakṣaṇas observed in CFS, Samprāpti can be framed as follows.



SAMPRĀPTI GHATAKA

DŌṢA: Vāta Pradhāna Tridōṣa

DŪṢYA: Rasa, Rakta [Initially]

Majja, Ōjas [Later]

AGNI: Jātarāgni & Dhātvāgnimāndhyajanya

ĀMA: Jātarāgni & Dhātvāgnimāndhyajanya Āma

SRŌTAS: Rasa-Raktavaha Srōtas [Initially]

Majjavaha Srōtas [Later]

SRŌTŌDUṢṬI: Saṅga, Vimārgagamana

UDBHAVASTHĀNA: Kōṣṭha

VYAKTASTHĀNA: Sarvaśārīra

ADHISTĀNA: Śarīra & Manas

RŌGAMĀRGA: Ābhyantara, Madhyama

ŚADHYĀSĀDHYATA: Krichra Sādhyā [Initially]

Asādhyā [Later]



DISCUSSION

Chronic fatigue syndrome is one among debilitating disorder. Though exact term, its etio-pathogenesis is not described in Āyurvēda, the nidāna involved, signs & symptoms manifested due to CFS can be taken as criteria to understand involvement of dōṣa, duṣhya etc. things through which its basic pathogenesis involved can be drawn.

Discussion on Nidāna

- ❖ **Predisposing** Aetiologies like Childhood trauma to Abhighātā, Physical inactivity during childhood to Viṣamādupacārācca & Āma, Pre-morbid psychiatric

Discussion on Lakṣaṇa

Symptoms considered under CDC Criteria	Sāmānya vātavyādhi lakṣaṇa	Ōjō Dōṣa lakṣaṇa	Sannipata kṣaya lakṣaṇa
Fatigue	Āyāsa	Glāni, Tandra	Śrama, Daurbalya
Disturbed Sleep	Anidratā	Anidrā	-
Multiple Joint Pain	Bhēda Asthnām Parvaṇām, Saṅkōcaḥ Parvaṇām, Stamba, Gātrasuptatā	Gātrānām Sadanaṁ, Stabdhaḡurugātratā	Bhēda, Tōda, Aṅgamarda
Head Ache	Śirōgrahaḥ	-	-
Inability to concentrate	Mōha	Mōha	Anavastitvatva
Inability to plan or organize thoughts	Mōha	Mōha	
Physical / Mental exertion makes symptom Worse	Bhēda-Tōda	Glāni	-
Orthostatic Intolerance	-	Mūrcchā	Brama
Palpitation	-	-	-

Discussion on Samprāpti

Samprāpti of CFS in Āyurvēda can be discussed under 2 headings:

1. Based on Agni duṣṭi
 2. Based on dōṣa duṣṭi [vāta pradhāna Tridōṣa duṣṭi].
1. Nidānas leads to agni duṣṭi (Jataragni duṣṭi), which inturn leads to formation of Ama along with rasavaha srōtōduṣṭi. As Rasavaha srōtas is having its adhistana in Hrudaya, with the help of Vyāna vāta this Dusta rasadhātu circulates all over the body, manifests primary symptoms like Śrama, Aṅgamarda & so on.
 2. Nidānas of CFS mainly does vāta pradhāna Tridōṣa duṣṭi. This doshic vitiation is having more tendency towards vitiation of Dhātus. Primarily there will be Rasavaha srōtōduṣṭi. As days prolonged, leading to uttarōttara dhātu duṣṭi. At the level of Majjadhātu duṣṭi lakṣaṇas like santata ruk, bhēda of asthi & parva, sandhi śula (continuous & severe pain of multiple joints, Sleep) were seen. As this duṣṭi prolongs it finally leads to ōjō duṣṭi with above mentioned symptoms.

Discussion on Components of Samprāpti Ghataka

1. **DŌṢA:** All Dōṣas are involved in the pathogenesis of CFS. Among that Vāta is pradhāna dōṣa involved. As aṅgamarda symptom is considered as one major symptom in CFS, it is observed when there is vāta-Pitta Vṛddhi &

illness or psychopathology to Cintā-Śōka, Bhaya of sāmānya vātavyādhi can be considered.

- ❖ **Perpetuating Factors like** Negative self-efficacy, Strong physical attributions, Strong focus on bodily symptoms, Fear of fatigue, Lack of social support, Low physical activity pattern etc can be considered under 2 form of etiologies. i.e.,
 - Cintā, Bhaya & Śōka of Sāmānya Nidānas of Kṣaya
 - Abhighātāt, Kṣaya, Kōpa, Shōka & Shrama under the Nidāna of Ōjōkṣaya appreciated in CFS.

Kapha Kṣaya & also when Vāta Vṛddhi, pitta sama & Kapha kṣaya lakṣaṇa. Along with aṅgamarda other symptoms related to CFS also observed. Hence with this, one can infer Vāta pradhāna tridōṣa dūṣṭi in CFS.

2. **DŪṢYA:** In CFS, Dūṣya involved is mainly, Rasa-Rakta dhātu[Initially], Majja Dhātu & Ōjas [Later]. As dūṣyas are those which gets vitiated by Dōṣa [ते च दूष्याः वातादिभिर्दोषैर्दूषणीयाः⁸]-A.S.Su.1/18]. Hence based Pradhānata of Dōṣa & Lakṣaṇa in vyādhi, dūṣyas can identified.
 - Aśraddhā, Hṛllāsa, Aṅgamarda, sāda etc. Lakṣaṇā's similar to CFS are seen in **Rasapradōṣajā vikāra**⁹.
 - Aṅgamarda Lakṣaṇa also observed in **Raktapradōṣajā vikāra**¹⁰.
 - Ruk Parvaṇām, Bhrama, Mūrcchā, Darśanaṁ Tamasastathā, etc. are the symptoms observed in **Majjapradōṣajā vikāra**¹¹.
 - Ōjō Dōṣa is mainly of 3 types i.e., visraṁsa, vyāpat & kṣaya. Based on intensity of dūṣṭi, Lakṣaṇa were get manifested in subsequent stages. Gātrānām Sadanaṁ Lakṣaṇa in **Visraṁsa**, Stabdhaḡurugātratā, Glāni, Tandra, Anidrā Lakṣaṇa in **Vyāpat & Mūrcchā**, Māmsakṣaya, Mōhaḥ Lakṣaṇa in **Kṣaya type of dūṣṭi**.



With the above mentioned lakṣaṇas, involvement of above mentioned Dhātus & Ōjaḥ dūṣṭi can be inferred.

3. AGNI: Mandāgni is the mula kāraṇa for all vyādhi's. In case of CFS, Jātarāgni & Dhātvāgni mandhya can be inferred.

Many of the lakṣaṇas related to CFS are even observed in sāmānya Ajīrṇa lakṣaṇa¹². When ajīrṇa gets associated with vāta, it gives rise to several vātika disorders & also when gets associated with rasādi dhātus it causes diseases of rasa etc. dhātus.

This ajīrṇa is mainly due to mandāgni. With the involvement of Dōṣas, Jātarāgni & with involvement of dhātu, Rasa, Rakta [Initially], Majja [Later] Dhātvāgnimandhya can be inferred.

4. ĀMA: Āma is also one of the Samavāyi Kāraṇa which is involved in the pathogenesis of every disease. The first Dhātu by the weakness of Agni remaining undigested and becoming vitiated accumulates in the āmāśaya is known as āma. Hence, there is no provision for separate consideration of āma other than Agni. Therefore, Rasa, Rakta [Initially], Majja [Later] janita dhātugata āma can be inferred.

5. SRŌTAS: In CFS, Rasa-Raktavaha Srōtas [Initially], Majjavaha Srōtas [Later] are involved. Acc. to gangadhara teeka, srōtases are those, through which transportation of rasaadi dhātu takes place. As dusta rasaadivaha dhātu circulated in srōtases causes dūṣṭi in respective srōtases & lakṣaṇas are observed. Many of these lakṣaṇas are related to CFS. Hence with this dūṣṭi of above mentioned srōtases can be inferred.

6. SRŌTŌDUṢṬI: Saṅga & Vimārga gamana kind of srōtōduṣṭi can be inferred in CFS. Here saṅga can be considered in terms of dhātu duṣṭi followed by ōjō duṣṭi & vimārgamana with dōṣas esp. with vāta. It is only dōṣa having gati & responsible for carrying other two dōṣas, dhātus etc. dusta dhātus & ōjas were carried by vāta all over the body & responsible for manifestation of sarvaśarīragata Lakṣaṇas.

7. UDBHAVASTHĀNA: As all three dōṣas are involved in manifestation of vyādhi, involvement of āmāśaya & Pakvāśaya in terms of kōṣṭha can be inferred.

8. VYAKTASTHĀNA: Vitiated vātadi Dōṣas travels throughout the body and finally settles in srōtas which are rikta i.e., srōtas which have become weak in quality resulting in the manifestation of vyādhi. In case of CFS, sārvaadaiḥika lakṣaṇas are seen. Hence Sarvaśarīra itself can be inferred as vyaktasthāna.

9. ADHIṢṬĀNA: In CFS, both Śārīrika & Mānasika nidānas & lakṣaṇas are seen. Hence both Śarīra & Manas can be inferred as adhiṣṭāna.

10. RŌGAMĀRGA: In CFS, Ābhyantara & Madhyama can be inferred.

- With involvement of Kōṣṭha as udbhavasthana, abhyantara rōga mārga can be inferred.
- As the disease progresses, there will be involvement of Marmā, Asthi & Sandhi. Hence Involvement of Madhyama rōga mārga can be inferred.

SADHYĀSĀDHYATA: CFS itself is a disease associated with Fatigue >6months, followed by many other symptoms. Depending on Kāla svabhāva, & Uttarōttara duṣṭi of dhātus one can infer kruchrasādhyata [initially] & asādhyata nature of vyādhi in later stages.

VYĀDHI VINISCHAYA

As CFS is a new disease to Āyurveda, complete comparison of Disease itself and drawing conclusion is always not possible. Hence based on involvement of dōṣa-dūṣya, manifestation of lakṣaṇa etc mentioned above one can draw probable diagnosis. i.e.

- **In Initial stages:** Rasa or Rakta pradōṣaja vikāra. / Type of sannipātaja Kṣaya / Anukta Vāta vyādhi.
- **In later stages:** Majja Pradōṣaja vikāra. / Ōjō duṣṭi.

CONCLUSION

There is no direct mentioning of CFS in Āyurvēda saṁhitā grantas. But, our acaryas were well aware of upcoming disease surge due to deranged food & life style patterns, environmental variations & so on. For the same reason guidelines were mentioned to understand such Anukta Vyādhi's. Nidāna, dōṣa, dushya, lakṣaṇa, and so on factors plays major role in understanding Vyādhi at primary level. Based on that one can consider / diagnose CFS in **Initial stages** as Rasa or Rakta pradōṣaja vikāra. / Type of sannipātaja Kṣaya / Anukta Vāta vyādhi. **In later stages:** Majja Pradōṣaja vikāra. / Ōjō duṣṭi.

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