

ROLE OF AYURVEDA IN PREVENTION OF LIFE STYLE DISORDERS W. S. R. TO AHARA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the world's ancient health care system. Ayurveda has always emphasized to maintain the health and prevention of the diseases by following proper diet and lifestyle regimen rather than treatment and cure of the diseases. Life style disorders are due to Poor life-style which includes; poor diet, poor eating habits, lack of exercise, Smoking, excess alcohol, poor sleep, stress due to heavy workload and increased consumption of unhealthy food. Many of the life style disorders occur to faulty dietary habits. So, nowadays the lifestyle diseases like Heart disease, Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension and Cancer are the primary cause of death. Diseases of infective origin can be easily treated as compared to lifestyle disorders. It is the need of time to review the ancient systems of medicine in order to apply measures prevalent in these systems in preventing the upcoming epidemic of lifestyle disorders which are preventable with changes in diet, lifestyle and environment. For the prevention and treatment of disease with lifestyle modification and by following proper dietary rules according to Ayurveda (*Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana* and Dietetic rules) should be done as early as possible because "*Prevention is always better than cure*".

Keywords: Ayurveda, Health, *Ahara*, *Visheshayatana*, Life style disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the world's ancient health care system. Ayurveda has always emphasized to maintain the health and prevention of the diseases by following proper diet and lifestyle regimen rather than treatment and cure of the diseases. The main aim of Ayurveda is "*Swas-*

thya Swatha Rakshnam Aturasya Vikara Prashmnam Cha" Which means to maintain the health of healthy individual and to cure the disease of diseased person.¹

Ahara (Diet), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (Celibacy) are *Traya-upastambhah* (like as

pillars which support a building) mentioned in Ayurveda, which support the life.² Among *Traya-upastambha*, *Ahara* (diet) has been considered as the first one which shows its prime importance for healthy life of individual.

Life style disorders are due to Poor life-style which includes; poor diet, poor eating habits, lack of exercise, Smoking, excess alcohol, poor sleep, stress due to heavy workload and increased consumption of unhealthy food. Many of the life style disorders occur to faulty dietary habits. In India, rapid urbanization and globalization mainly contribute towards increased number of people suffering from life-style disorders. The urban people are having less physically active life-style, more exposure to products and technologies that could be unhealthy for them.

So, nowadays the lifestyle diseases like Heart disease, Obesity, Type-2 Diabetes, Hypertension, Arteriosclerosis, Cirrhosis, Alzheimer's disease and Cancer are the primary cause of death. Too many people are dying relatively younger population from lifestyle diseases in these days.

Junk food is the main cause of all these disorders which ultimately results in improper digestion and becomes the primary cause of these life style disorders. Diseases of infective origin can be easily treated as compared to life style disorders. It is the need of time to review the ancient systems of medicine in order to apply measures prevalent in these systems in preventing the upcoming epidemic of lifestyle disorders which are preventable with changes in diet, lifestyle and environment.

IMPORTANCE OF AHARA:

Health as well as diseases is dependent on various factors. Among these, *Ahara* is the most important one.³ *Ahara* is not only needed for the continuity of life, but for *Bala*, *Varna*, *Upachaya* etc. also.⁴ The proper diet, taken in proper manner can lead to better health. On the contrary, proper diet if not taken in proper manner can lead to various Life style disorders. It is also said that *Bhava* which are responsible for the development or anabolism of individual also responsible for the destruction or catabolism of individual depending on their (*Bhava*) characteristics.⁵

According to Ayurveda; *Ahara*, as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. According to one quotation of *Sushruta* “*Sankshepta Kriya Yogo Nidaan Parivarjanam*”⁶

i.e. treatment in short is to avoid the causative factors. As explained above, *Ahara* and the dietetic rules are basic factors considered important. It can be readily agreed on the point of *Swasthyraksana* i.e. promotion of health, but how it can be justified that by following these dietetic rules, it is possible to achieve *Vikaraprasamana* also.

According to *Charaka*, all the *Dravyas* are *Aushadhis* (*Nanausadhibhutam*)⁷ and these are of two types depending on the nature of composition.

➤ *Dravyabhuta Aushadhi*

➤ *Adravyabhuta Aushadhi*

Ahara Dravyas can be considered under the category *Dravyabhuta Aushadhi*. So, the dietetic rules can be considered as *Upaya* or *Adravyabhuta Aushadhi* for *Vikaraprasamana*. The eight factors of diet responsible for health and diseases are described as “*Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatanani*.”

Ahara Vidhi: A system, method, manner, way, arrangement, rule, law, command, conduct, condition or statement for diet intake (V.S. Apte).

Vishesha: Speciality, special property, distinguished effect (of *Ahara Vidhi*).

Ayatana: Cause, support, *Hetu* etc.

Thus, *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatana* means, the causative factors responsible for the wholesome and unwholesome effect of the methods for diet intake. They are as follows:

*Prakriti, Karna, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upayogasamstha, Upyokta.*⁸

These factors explore each and every aspect of *Ahara*. Among these, the seventh factor is *Upayogasamstha*. These are the dietetic rules, i.e., *Ahara - Vidhi - Vidhana*. Thus, it can be said that these rules are specified for “How to eat?” This is *Swasthya* aspect.

Secondly, there are many diseases in which *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* is mentioned as *Hetu*. So the advice of *Pathyasevana* and *Nidana Parivarjana*, in the form of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*, can also help for *Vikarasamana* or for the prevention of Life style disorders.

There are some dietetic regulations and procedure for those, who are healthy as well as for certain types of patients. One should eat food; which is hot, unctuous, in due measure, after the digestion of previous food and non-antagonistic in potency. It should be eaten in a congenial place, provided with all accessories, neither too hurriedly, nor too leisurely, without talking or laughing with full concentration and having proper regard to oneself.⁹ *Sushruta Samhita* gives very descriptive view regarding this subject. It is explained as “*Aharavidhi*”.¹⁰ Under this heading, the following topics are included;

➤ *Paaka Sthana Vichara* (Kitchen regimen)

- *Bhojana Sthana Vichara* (Dining place)
- *KaalaBhedenaAharaVidhi* (Dining time)
- *Akaala Bhojne Dosha Kathnama* (Disadvantages of improper dining time)
- *Heya Anna Kathnam* (Inedible food)
- *Swadishta Anna Guna Lakashana* (Considerations with tasteful food)
- *Bhojanouttar Seveayani Varjnani* (Post meal regimen)
- *Bhojane Krama Vichara* (Sequence of eating food articles)

DIETETICS PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS:

PRINCIPLE OF BALANCED DIET:

According to Ayurveda, the diet which nourishes both the mental and physical built is called balanced diet.

- **Use of *Shadarasa Yukta Ahara*:** *Charaka* while describing the types of *Rasa*, said that the appropriate use of all the six *Rasa* maintains the equilibrium of (*Dosa, Dhatu* and *Mala*) body.¹¹
- ***Ahara Matra*:** *Acharya Charaka* defines *Matra* of *Ahara* as;¹² the amount of food which gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time without disturbing the equilibrium (of *Dhatus* and *Doshas* of the body) is to be regarded as the proper quantity. Further *Acharya Charaka* specifies the quantity of food according to its quality.
- ✓ If the food article is *Guru* (heavy), only three-fourth or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up.
- ✓ In the case of *Laghu* food (light) articles excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion and metabolism.

In this regard *Charaka* further says in that for the purpose of taking food the stomach capacity should be divided into three parts: one part of it should be filled up with solid food, the second part with liquids and the third part should left empty for *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.¹³

ASHTAVIDHA AHARA VISHESHAYATANA:¹⁴

According to *Acharya Charaka*, the eight factors which determine the utility of the various types of food are as follows:

1. **Prakriti (Natural form):** It indicates the nature of substances i.e. inherent attributes (heaviness etc.) of diets and drugs. For e.g. *Moonga* (black gram) is heavy and *Mudga* is light by its nature.
2. **Karan (Processing of Food):** Processing results in the transformation of attributes or properties which is done by various *Samskara*. Transformation of the attributes is effected by *Toya Sannikarsha* (Treatment with liquid), *Agni Sannikarsha* (Heat application), *Shaucha* (Cleaning), *Manthana* (Churning), *Desha* (Place), *Kala* (Season / Atmospheric condition), *Bhajana* (Vessel of preparation or storage) etc. *Samskara* that results into development of some new characteristics which are not present naturally in substances.
3. **Samyoga (Combination):** It is the combination of two or more substances. This results in the manifestation of specific attributes which cannot be manifested by individual substances e.g. combination of honey and ghee in equal amount acts like a poison etc.
4. **Rashi (Quantity):** *Rashi* is the quantum of total (*Sarvagraha*) or individual (*Parigraha*) substances which determines the results of their administration in proper and

improper dosage. The quantity of food in its entirety is "*Sarvagraha*" and the quantity of each of its ingredients is "*Parigraha*"

5. **Desha (Habitat):** *Desha* relates to the habitat. It determines attributes due to procreation (growth) or movement of substances in particular locality or their acclimatization to that region.
6. **Kala (Time):** *Kala* stands for both the time in the form of day and night and states of individual (viz. condition of health and age). The latter is relevant to the diseases e.g. manifestation of diseases due to *Kapha* during childhood and fever etc. due to dietetics error, whereas the former for the determination of the wholesome to different types of seasons.
7. **Upayogasamstha (Direction of use or Dietetic rules):** Symptoms of proper and improper digestion totally depends upon *Upayogasamstha*. Chances of Life style disorders are more if the Dietetic rules are not properly followed.
8. **Upayokta (User):** *Upayokta* is that who takes food. He is the main responsible for the wholesomeness by the habitual intake of things.

These eight factors are especially associated with useful and harmful effects and they are related to one another. Neither due to ignorance nor intentionally one should resort to such food articles or other things (drugs, regimens etc.) as are instantaneously pleasing but harmful in the long term leads to unhappy consequences in the form of lifestyle disorders etc.

RULES OF TAKING AHARA (FOOD):

Food taken only two times daily is the ideal for an average person. But the students, like

the hard worked bulls may take food, however more than twice, provided they feel hungry. They should not take food within three hours after the last meal, nor starve for more than six hours. Also due to urbanization and busy schedule, people don't take much pain towards their food like either it is healthy or not or their timing to take food is also not proper. Younger generation is mainly fond of taking junk food. These all factors ultimately lead to Life style disorders in form of Obesity, Cardiac Disorders, Hypertension and Diabetes etc. *Acharya Charaka* said some rules for taking food for both healthy individuals as well as (some of the) for patients which should be followed. Even while using such of the food articles that are most wholesome by nature: one should eat only that food in proper quantity which is hot, unctuous and not contradictory in potency and that too, after the digestion of the previous meal. Food should be taken in proper place equipped with all the accessories, without talking and laughing, with concentration of mind and paying due regard to oneself. These rules are as follows:¹⁵

1. ***Ushnamasniyata***: *Ushna* means temperature of food. One should take warm food. When taken warm, it is delicious; after intake *Jathragni* (metabolism) gets activated and it provokes the factors (enzymes) in the abdomen responsible for digestion; it gets digested quickly and helps in the *Anulomana* (downward passage) of *Vata* and detachment of *Kapha*. Therefore, one should take warm food. Nowadays, fast food can be considered as *Ushnikrtam Punah Punah*. It becomes *Vidahi* and causes various Life style disorders. Even the people, who carry Tiffin for convenience

at their working place, lack the *Ushna* food.

2. ***Snigdhamasniyata***: One should take unctuous food; unctuous food is delicious, after intake, it provokes the power of digestion; it gets digested quickly; it helps in the alleviation of *Vata*; it strengthens the sense faculties, promotes strength and brings out the brightness of complexion. Due to *Snigdha Dravya* properties, it increase *Bala*, *Varna*, *Sharira* and power of sense organs etc., also rejuvenate the body by decreasing the speed of aging process (*Jara*).
3. ***Matravatasniyata***: Food taken in optimum quantity needed is termed as *Matratvat*. It is not possible to decide a specific quantity of food, which will be applicable to all. A principle for the *Matratvat Ahara* given by *Acharya Charaka* is "*Ahara Matra Tu Agni Bala Apeksini*" means always to have the food as per the power of digestion or power of the bio-fire of every individual. The symptoms of appropriate *Matra* are given as: There should be no undue pressure on the stomach due to the food taken; No interference in the proper functioning of heart; No excessive heaviness in the abdomen; Proper nourishment of the senses; Relief from hunger and thirst; Feel of comfort in all functions like standing, sleeping, walking, talking etc. Food taken in the morning should get digested by the evening and food taken in evening should get digested by the next morning.
4. ***Jirneamasniyata***: One should take food only when previous meal is digested. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, the digestive product of the previous food, i.e. immature *Rasa* gets

mixed up with the product of food taken afterwards, resulting in the provocation of all the *Doshas* instantaneously. If food is taken after the digestion of the previous food when *Doshas* are in their proper places and *Agni* (digestive enzymes) is provoked, there is appetite, the entrances of the *Srotasa* (channels of circulation) are open, eructation is purified, there is unimpaired cardiac function, *Vata* is normal and proper manifestation of the urges for voiding flatus, urine and stool then the product of food does not vitiate the *Dhatus* of the body, but on the other hand it promotes longevity in its entirety. So one should take food only after digestion of the previous meal.

5. ***Viryaavirudhamasniyata:*** Articles of diet that are opposite to the body elements tend to disagree with the system and they are termed as “*ViruddhaAhara*”. Also the substances having opposite *Viryas* when used in combination, it is known as *Virya - Viruddham*. For e.g. Drinking water before or after tea, coffee, etc. One should take food having no contradictory potencies. The diseases that are caused by *Viruddha Ahara* are as;*Adhmana, Aamavisha, Grahani, Amlapitta* etc.¹⁶ various GIT disorders which ultimately lead to Life style disorders.
6. ***Istedeshe, Istasarvopkaranam Asniyata:*** One should take food in proper place equipped with all the accessories. By doing so he does not get afflicted with such of the factors as would result in emotional strain which (normally) occurs when one takes his food in improper place without the required accessories. It also has a psychological aspect. In normal condition

of *Mana* and *Buddhi*, the proper quantity of food is consumed, but in the psychologically disturbed conditions, always over-eating or less eating tendency is observed or even normal eating causes improper digestion.

7. ***Naatidrutam Asniyata:*** One should not take food too hurriedly; if food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong passage or sometimes in air passage; it gets depressed and it does not enter into the stomach properly. In this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and detect foreign bodies like hair etc., mixed with them. The food when eaten with hurry violates its normal route that can be understood by an example i.e. *Hikka* (Hiccough).
8. ***Naativilambitam Asniyata:*** One should not take food very slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual. In this situation he would take more than what is required; the food would become cold and there will be irregularity of digestion.
9. ***Ajalpana, Ahasana, Tanmanabhunjita:*** One should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food. One who taking food while talking, laughing or with detracted mind subjects him to the same trouble as the one eating too hurriedly.
10. ***Atmanamabhisamiksya:*** One should take food in a prescribed manner; with due regard to his own self. The knowledge of the usefulness or otherwise of food articles is the sine qua non for self-preservation.

DAILY REGIMENOF AHARA:

According to *Acharya Charaka* one should regularly take *Shali* rice, *Shastika* rice, *Mudga*,

Saindhava Lavana, Amalaki, Yava, Rain water collected before falling on the ground, Milk, *Ghrita, Jangala Mamsa* (meat of animals dwelling in arid climate) and honey.¹⁷

- *Shastika and Shali* varieties of rice are examples of the carbohydrate food.
- *Rakta Shali* (red rice) which is classified as glutinous rice is specially recommended. It possesses special nutrient properties.
- *Mudga* (green gram), which represents the protein content of food, is considered the best of all pulses. *Masha* (black gram) which is known to be more nutritious, was not preferred, because it was comparatively too hard to digest. Though both are rich in protein, light and digestible protein has been preferred to a heavy one.
- *Saindhav Lavana* balances *Tridosha* in body.
- *Amlaka* represents the vitamin content of a balanced diet in addition to milk and vegetable.

A scientific analysis of this above said ingredient of food stuff rightly justifies the entire requirements of the body in a better way.¹⁸ *Yava* (Barley) is an efficient food to prevent many life style disorders. Barley contains varying amount of total tocopherol, selenium, molybdenum, manganese dietary fiber and Vit. E content which are antioxidant so can act as *Balya* and *Rasayana* and beneficial in diseases like Diabetes, Cardiac Disorders, Cancer, Hypertension, Obesity.¹⁹

- Milk represents a complete food containing proteins, carbohydrates, fat, minerals, vitamins and all nutrients that are required for man from infancy to old age.
- *Ghrita* represents not merely the fat content but also the intellect building principle. It helps to promote memory, intelli-

gence, vital fire, semen vital essence. It is curative of *Vata, Pitta*, toxicities and insanity.

- *Madhu* (honey) is most refined glucose in a liquid form. It maintains the equilibrium of three *Doshas*.

DISCUSSION

Life style disorders mainly results from the factors like unhealthy diet, bad food habits, lack of physical activity etc. Taking food in irregular quantity and improper time and also taking more quantity of junk food disrupts normal digestion process.

About *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*, *Acharyas* have advised to take *Ushna* and *Snigdha* food in proper quantity and proper time and place with full concentration of *Manas* due to which the food gets easily digested. It has also been advised to take food as suitable to *Prakriti* (Constitution) of particular person, age, habitat etc. So, we have to adopt various regimens of diet and dietetics principles as mentioned in *Ayurveda* to prevent various Life style disorders.

CONCLUSION

Our lifestyle is indicative of the behavioral patterns we adopt to live our lives. This indicates to the way we eat, we drink; we adopt, exercise and are predisposed to taking care of our health. Urbanization and modern life style leads to poor eating habits, poor diet etc. ultimately body immunity gets weaken and various metabolic disorders came into existence which ultimately give rise to many Life style disorders like; Diabetes, Hypertension, Obesity, Cancer etc. Unhealthy habits will show up in the form of lifestyle diseases in the long run. Since these habits are acquired over a long period of time. Ideally, we should not

wait to fall sick before we make changes in these patterns.

For the prevention and treatment of disease with lifestyle modification and by following proper dietary rules according to Ayurveda (*Ashtavidha Ahara Visheshayatana* and Dietetic rules) should be done as early as possible because “*Prevention is always better than cure*”. We should live a healthy life, where we eat a balanced diet; exercise and stay fit, and avoid habits that are injurious to health, so that we do not have to bear the unnecessary consequences that develop in the form of lifestyle diseases.

In short; Pure diet in the form of balanced diet; Pure body with moderate exercise; Pure mind with stress management; Pure devotion in terms of Spiritual health that helps our body immunity to build up and prevent human beings from various consequences which comes in the form of Life style disorders.

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