



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda includes both the preventive and curative aspects of human disease being it is a holistic science. Under normal circumstances, the immune system will not destroy self-antigens. Autoimmunity can be defined as the breakdown of mechanisms responsible for self-tolerance and induction of an immune response against components of the self^[1]. In developed countries, the overall prevalence of Autoimmune disorders has increased from 3% to 9%. Similarly, certain factors which can be easily accustomed by the human body without causing any harm or difficulty are considered to be *Satmya*. The human body will be well functioning until the *Satmya* is maintained. But once it is disturbed by the Ahara, Vihara which are *satmya viruddha*^[2] i.e., not suitable for the individual's inherent constitution leads to *Atma Satmya Viruddha Nimittaja Vyadhis*. The Ayurvedic line of treatment for autoimmune disorders focuses on restoring balance and strengthening natural immunity. In addition to that, a customized combination of remedies, medicines, diet, and lifestyle recommendations work on the overall problem.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials:

A) Ayurvedic Grantha

- Charaka Samhita
 - Ashtanga Sangraha
 - Vaidyaka shabda sindhu
 - Vachaspatyam
- B) Internet – Wikipedia
C) Modern Medical Literature

Method-

All the references of Satmya, Viruddha, Atma Satmya Viruddha Nimittaja Vyadhis from Ayurvedic Samhita are considered and compared to evaluate and enlighten the concept of Autoimmune disorders and their management.

Keywords: Autoimmune disorders, *Satmya*, *Atma satmya viruddha nimittaja vyadhis*, Natural immunity

INTRODUCTION

Immunity is considered to be one of the basic concepts of Health science in explaining the occurrence of the disease and to prevent the same. A person is said to be immune when he possesses “ specific protective antibodies or cellular immunity as a result of previous infection or immunization or is so conditioned by such previous experience as to respond adequately to prevent infection and/or clinical illness following exposure to a specific infectious agent”^[3].

This happens at two levels-

- a) Cellular immunity- Cell-mediated immunity is the activation of phagocytes, antigen-specific cytotoxic T- lymphocytes, and the release of various cytokines in response to an antigen.
- b) Humoral immunity- Humoral immunity comes from B cells (bone marrow-derived lymphocytes) which proliferate and manufacture specific antibodies after antigen presentation by macrophages. The antibodies are localized in the immunoglobulin fraction of the serum. The same has been categorized into two- Innate and Adaptive^[4]
 - a) Innate Immunity
 - b) Adaptive Immunity

The former is the immunity that is developed from birth itself and prevents the individual from most Infantile diseases^[5]. The later, specific to the damage occurring in the tissues at various levels, and as an outcome acquired immunity is developed. 'Acquired Immunity' depends upon various factors such as – Food, Drinks, Regimes, and the Environment in which the person resides. When a person follows most of the above said factors to maintain health can be equated to ' Optimum

Immunity'. Contrary to this can cause a lowered immune response and pave a wave for the occurrence. The same will be understood as ' *Satmya* ' in Ayurveda and can also be understood under the heading of ' *Vyadhikshamatva* '. The understanding behind considering the *Satmya* with immunity is that majority of the diseases explained do have ' *Asatmya Ahara Vihara* ' as Nidana. Further, the same contributes to *Vyadhikshamatva*.

UNDERSTANDING OF SATMYA AS IMMUNITY

Ayurveda believes that wholesome Ahara and Vihara are the epitomai of health. *Satmya* is a condition that exists along with the body and gives comfort. The word *Satmya* has been derived from the word ' *saat* ' *saatayati te* ^[6] which means – to give pleasure. Also, the one which gives happiness or the substance which provides pleasure is *Satmya* i.e, *saatayati sukhopadane saatyaki sukhebharaatah* ^[7]

Satmya is all the factors that are wholesome to a person or a population after exposure to a variety of external factors^[8]. Contrary to this, the response of the body which acts as unwholesome when exposed to external factors is called *Asatmya*. The four factors which are mentioned before as- Food, Drinks, Regimes, and Environment may vary from person to person. Thus, *Satmya* can be broadly classified into two-

- a) *Sarva satmya*
- b) *Atma satmya*- *Sarva satmya*- This includes all the factors explained earlier which are wholesome to most people such as- Consumption of Milk, tak-

ing bath every day, adequate sleep, timely food, etc.,

Atma satmya – Though the above said *sarva satmya* can also be considered as *Atma satmya* to some extent some specific factors among the above may act as unfavourable to a particular individual like- the consumption of milk to a lactose intolerant person is *asatmya*. This concept defines the general principle of *satmya* and *asatmya* concepts. It differs for each individual^[9]. This *Satmya* and *Asatmya* is developed since birth or gained later thus categorising it into innate and adaptive(acquired). Both *Satmya* and *Asatmya* vary depending on various factors like- *Pra-kriti, Vaya, Rutu, Desha, Kala, and Vyadhi*^[10]. In a broader sense, with respect to the fast life, most of the factors that we consume may act as *asatmya* but may not produce any disease in the shorter run. They may alter the immunity over a long period of time and cause some of the diseases which are termed - *Atma Satmya Viruddha Nimittaja Vyadhis*^[11].

UNDERSTANDING AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS SUCH AS SATMYA VIRUDDHA

Asatmya is the one that is unwholesome and opposite to *Satmya*. It can be understood as *Satmya Viruddha*. On one hand, autoimmune diseases are produced due to the failure of the immunological tolerance mechanisms, causing reactions against their cells and tissues^[12]. Further understanding, Th-1 type of cytokines tend to produce pro-inflammatory responses. Excess of these responses can lead to uncontrolled tissue damage and autoimmune responses. On the other hand, certain conditions are characterized by excessive and undesirable reactions produced by the immune system termed Hypersensitivity. The Th-2 mechanism is associated with the promotion of IgE and eosinophilic responses. The optimal scenario would therefore seem to be that humans should pro-

duce a well-balanced Th-1 and Th-2 response, suited to the immune challenge^[13]. Both these conditions are due to *Satmya Viruddha* and the condition of autoimmune disorders is taken into consideration as the immune system is responsible for both the biological effects – pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory.

The condition of exposure to the factors which are *viruddha* to one's *satmya* is termed *Atma Satmya Viruddha*. *Viruddha* literally means contrast or opposition in particular. Acharya Charaka has defined *viruddha ahara* as a certain food product or it's combination, which interrupts the metabolism of *sharira dhatus*.

Viruddha can vitiate dosha and constant exposure to *viruddha ahara* and *vihara* leads to *prakopa* of *doshas* to such a level that it produces different diseases which are-

- Indriyopaghatakara – Diseases which hamper the normal functions of Indriyas. Ex- Andhya, Shandya. Bhagandara, Jwara, Pinasa
- Dhatu Parinamakara- Diseases which hamper Rasadi sapta dhatus. Ex- Dakodara, Visarpa, Pandu, Amavisha, Kushta, Visphota, Moorcha, Galagraha, Kilasa, Grahani, Amlapitta.
- Manasa Vyadhis – *Viruddha* also contributes to the disease manifestation of the psychological aspect.

Ex- Unmada, Mada. Hence, the concept of Autoimmune disorders can be understood as *Atma Satmya Viruddha Nimittaja Vyadhis* as per Ayurvedic context, as they seldom manifest when the immune system of the person is optimum but provoked by some unfavourable conditions and start deteriorating one's own body conditions.

SAMPRAPTI

Nidana Sevana (getting exposed to *atma asatmya* factors)



Etiological factors disturb the equilibrium state of the

doshas and cause their vitiation.



Lodging of Doshas in Dhatus and the beginning of the disease process (*dosha dushya sammurchana*)



Vyadhi utpatti at the *sthana* of *Khavaigunyata*

shamana is best administered before the episode of *Atma Asatmya Vyadhi*.^[15]

Furthermore,

Rasayana can be adapted to enhance the *vyadhikshamatva* and *vyadhibala virodhikatwa*.

- *Rasayana* is of utmost importance in the prevention of diseases, to restore health in Chronic conditions of several diseases. Here, the *Vyadhihara / Naimittika rasayana* has been utilized to avoid the recurrence of the diseases. This *Naimittika Rasayana* increases one's own tolerating capacity to the disease-causing factors. Thus, these *Rasayana* are beneficial in *Atma Satmya Viruddha Nimittaja Vyadhis*. Such as-

- a) *Pippali rasayana* in *shwasa*
- b) *Tuvaraka rasayana* in *Kushta*
- c) *Medhya rasayana* is *Unmada* and many more.

- Incorporating *Mano anukulakara bhavas-*

As the *viruddha* also leads to *Manovikaras*, one should inculcate the factors which are wholesome to his body and mind as well i.e, an adaptation of *atma satmya* factors.

MANAGEMENT

As *viruddha* is one of the main factors contributing to the disease manifestation, the line of management should be proper according to the condition. Acharya Charaka has described 3 different ways to treat the such condition-

- 1) ***Nidana Parivarjana***- avoiding the *atma asatmya* factor. Prevention is always better than cure. By consuming healthy, pathyakara ahara and avoiding the factors that are unfavourable to the individual one can actually keep a step further towards the treatment.

Adaptation of *Atma Asatmya* factor- If it is not possible to avoid the *atma asatmya* factor then the next principle would be to adapt it. Adaptation refers to making the *Atma Asatmya* into *Atma Asatmya* by different therapeutic measures. The adaptation technique is mainly elaborated in the management of *Viruddha*. The same can be followed in the management of Hypersensitivity and autoimmune disorders.

- 2) ***Shodhana Chikitsa***- to prevent *atma satmya viruddha* response.

As immunity is related to internal balance, *shodhana chikitsa* corrects improper metabolism and prevents the recurrence of the condition.

It is adapted in *Bahudoshavastha* where there is a long-term history of continuous exposure to *atma asatmya* factors.

- 3) ***Shamana Chikitsa***^[14]- to suppress the *atma satmya viruddha* response.

When a person is not a regular consumer of *viruddha ahara* and there is a condition of *Alpa doshavastha shamana chikitsa* is incorporated where the doshas are brought to their normalcy thus suppressing the manifestation of the disease. This

DISCUSSION

The autoimmune diseases and their progression vary per individual. Non-specific symptoms at the onset of the disease process make diagnosis a challenge from a western perspective. However, providing symptomatic relief is merely suppressing the cause and complicating the underlying condition. According to Ayurveda, autoimmune diseases are formed due to constant exposure to unfavourable factors in the long run termed *satmya viruddha* eventually leading to the formation of *ama*. This *Ama* penetrates certain body tissues that are responsible for autoimmune disorders. Ayurvedic *Rasayana* treatment along with panchakarma therapy yields better results in autoimmune diseases. Autoimmune disorder

ders are those which are difficult to manage. Proper functioning of the Immune system must be the goal of the treatment. Preventing complications of these diseases make the patient better feel. Ayurveda has given its best in the management of autoimmune disorders.

CONCLUSION

There are some concepts of modern-day medicine that are left unaddressed or understood from an Ayurvedic perspective. Immunosuppression is one such concept. Seeing any of the Ayurveda concepts in the treatment process cannot be said to be acting on the lines of immunosuppression. This is also because Ayurveda has a rich and proven concept of *Rasayana*. From the above discussion, it is clear that Immunity is one of the basic components of human health which is left unconsidered in its optimum state but affects the body's own tissues if not properly maintained. This unknowingly can lead to several hazardous diseases sometimes even death in some patients. Managing these conditions as per the principles explained in Ayurveda will be of great benefit. There are many treatment concepts that contribute towards immunity enhancement and modulation with respect to achieving dhatu *satmya* i.e., equilibrium of body components or towards establishing health in an individual.

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