



Review Article

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AHAR AND VIHAR: AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH FOR THE PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, the modern way of living raises the incidence of lifestyle disorders such as Obesity, Diabetes, Cardiovascular disease, and Hypertension, among others. These disorders are neither environmental nor interpersonally transmitted, but rather are typically brought on by unhealthy habits like poor diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption. According to the estimate, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for almost 56.4% of India's overall disease burden. For management of lifestyle disorders, the treatment in Ayurveda is based on an individual's body constitution (Prakriti) depending upon their medical history, both past and present, to get a satisfactory outcome. The outcome can be attained through Aahar (an Ayurvedic dietary approach) and Vihar (an Ayurvedic lifestyle approach) guided by the principles of balanced diet and daily routine in accordance with one's constitution, seasonal variation and environment that emphasizes mindful nutrition and the holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit. It also offers extensive physical, mental, and social well-being that can help gain better control over lifestyle disorders and reduce a substantial proportion of diseases, all of which contribute significantly in enhancing the quality of life. Ayurveda, with its Aahar and Vihar discipline aims to fulfil a critical gap by offering a comprehensive perspective on lifestyle disorders and supporting a preventive health-care regimen.

Key words: Lifestyle Disorders, Aahar, Vihar.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, Aahar and Vihar are two fundamental concepts which play a very significant role in a healthy life. Among these two, Aahar has been enumerated first, which shows its importance for the healthy life of an individual. Aahar is considered as Mahabhaishajya (the superior medicine). Aahar is derived from a Sanskrit word, which means diet. It is a concept rooted in Ayurveda that emphasizes the importance of balanced nutrition for overall well-being. The main objective of Ayurveda is

“Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam

Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam cha!”

Which means to maintain the health of a healthy individual and to cure the diseased person, as Ayurveda is not only medical science but also a complete science of life that deals with health improvement, prevention, and handling of diseases.

According to Sushruta Samhita, food is the foundation of health. It should be taken in moderation at the right time and in the right quantity.

Proper diet taken in a proper manner can lead to better health, whereas improper diet can lead to disease. Dinacharya, Ritucharya and Sadvritta is responsible for various lifestyle disorders. Therefore, Aahar and Vihar are helpful in maintaining health and preventing lifestyle disorders. Lifestyle disorders characterize those disorders whose occurrence is primarily based on the daily habits of people and are the result of an inappropriate relationship of people with their environment. Lifestyle disorders cause diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, which are becoming increasingly prevalent today with factors such as poor diet and lack of exercise.

According to Ashtanga Hridayam, the quality of food determines the quality of health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literary study was performed in classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha, Ashtanga Hridaya, etc. Then for further literature study has been gone through various modern textbooks, research journal and an electronic database.

ETIOLOGY OF LIFESTYLE DISORDER

- **Lifestyle Disorder**

The diseases that are associated with an unhealthy and inappropriate lifestyle are called lifestyle disorders. The Dincharya, Ritucharya, and Sadvritta are considered parts of lifestyle measures mentioned in Ayurveda classics for a healthy and long life, getting rid of pain and disease.

- **Etiology**

Lifestyle disorders are mainly caused by unhealthy dietary habits and behaviors followed by us. Mandagni is the root cause of all diseases. Mandagni affects Aahar Pachankriya, leading to Rasadhatwagni Mandya and Uttarottar Dhatu malnourishment.

Different Aaharaj Nidan that cause lifestyle disorders are:

Aaharaj Nidan: Atiruksh, Atisnigdha, Ajeernasan, Astmyabhojan, Gurubhojan, and Vishamasan, etc.

Viharaj Nidan : Vegavidharan, Diwasapan, Langhan, Ratrijagran etc

Mansik Nidan: Dvesh, Krodh, Bhaya, Shok, etc.

MANAGEMENT FOR THE PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

I. THROUGH AAHAR

- **Principles of a balanced diet**

According to Ayurveda, the diet that nourishes both mental and physical health is called a balanced diet.

Aahar Matra (dosage of diet)

According to Acharya Charak, we should consume the food in Aahar Matra. Aahar Matra depends on digestive power. Amount of food that gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time without disturbing the equilibrium of Doshas and Dhatu of the body is known as Aahar Matra.

Shaddarasa Yuqt Aahar

In accordance with Acharya Charak, utilizing all six Rasa appropriately helps the body to maintain the equilibrium of Dosa, Dhatu, and Mala. These six Rasas, when used in the right amount, are useful for all human beings; otherwise, they become harmful. Hence the wise should use these properly in proper quantity to get benefit from them.

Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshayatana

Ashta Aahar Vidhi Visheshayatana is the element responsible for wholesome and unwholesome effects of the Aahar and method of Aahar sevana (special rule for diet intake). These 8 dynamics must be measured before taking food.

1. Prakriti (nature/quality of food)
2. Karana (processing of food)
3. Samyoga (combination of food substances)
4. Rashi (quantity of food)
5. Desha (habitat of food)
6. Kala (time and season of consumption of food)
7. Upyogasamstha (rules for dieting)
8. Upabhokta/Upyokta (the person who consumes food).

Rule of Aahar Intake

1. Ushnamasniyata

Ushna Aahar consumption activates Jathragni and helps in anuloma of Vata and detachment of Kapha.

2. Snigdghamasniyata

It agitates the unagitated digestive fire to get digested quickly. It helps in decreasing Vata and increasing Bala, Sharir, Varna, and power of sense organs

3. Matravatashniyata

It means food, if taken in an adequate amount without disturbing Vata-Pitta-Kapha, promotes lifespan.

4. Jirneashniyata

One should eat after digestion of the previous meal. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, it aggravates all the Doshas.

5. Viryaavirudhamasniyata

Virya is the ability of substance by which action takes place. Eat those foods consisting of items non-antagonist in potency.

6. Istedeshe, Istasarovopkaranamashniyata

One should eat in a compatible place with compatible materials, while eating in a suitable place, one does not fall to psychic disturbances.

7. Naatidrutamashniyata

Do not eat fast because, by eating fast, the food may enter the wrong passage, which results in choking of the respiratory tract, causing **GERD** (GASTRO-OESOPHAGUS REFLUX DISEASE).

8. Naativilambitashniyata

One should not eat too slowly because the food becomes cold and there will be irregularities in digestion.

9. Ajalpana, Ahasana, Tanmanabhunjitam

Food should be taken with concentration, not while taking or laughing, as it can cause the same problem as the one who eats too hastily.

10. Aatanamabhisamikshyabhunjitam

Aahar must be taken in accordance with Satmya, Prakriti, and Agnibala. It should be taken according to self-requirement and energy.

II. THROUGH VIHAR

Different Acharyas have mentioned Dincharya, Ritucharya and Sadvritta as a lifestyle measure for long and healthy life.

1. **Dincharya** : The Ayurvedic Daily Routine

Dincharya is a basic idea in Ayurveda that emphasizes the value of following a regular daily schedule in order to support health and well-being of body's and mind's natural rhythms.

Key Components of Dincharya:

- **Brahma Muhurta:** Waking up before sunrise is considered optimal for physical and mental health.
- **Abhyanga:** Self-massage with warm oil to nourish the skin, improve circulation, and relax the body.
- **Bath:** A warm bath or shower to cleanse the body and stimulate circulation.

Dincharya:

- **Morning Rituals:**
 - **Meditation or Pranayama:** Practices to calm the mind and improve breathing.
 - **Yoga:** Gentle stretching and strengthening exercises.
 - **Sanskrit Mantras:** Chanting to promote positive energy and spiritual well-being.
- **Dietary Habits:**
 - **Balanced Diet:** Consuming fresh, seasonal, and locally sourced foods.
 - **Avoid Heavy Meals:** Opt for lighter meals, especially in the evening.
 - **Careful Eating:** Chewing food properly with awareness.
- **Afternoon Rest:** A short rest or nap to rejuvenate the body and mind.
- **Evening Rituals:**

- **Light Dinner:** Taking early dinner and little less than capacity for better digestion.
- **Bedtime Routine:** Engaging in calming activities like reading or listening to soothing music.
- **Sufficient and Sound Sleep:** 7-9 hours of effective and undisturbed sleep.

Benefits of Dincharya:

- **Balanced Doshas :** Help in maintaining balance between three doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha).
- **Increased Energy:** More vitality and stamina throughout the day.
- **Enhanced Immunity :** Stronger resistance to diseases.
- **Improved Digestion :** Better digestion and absorption of nutrients.
- **Reduced Stress :** Calmer mind and reduced anxiety.

According to Ayurvedic principles, integrating Dincharya into daily life can greatly enhance quality of life and encourage optimal health

2. Ritucharya: The Ayurvedic Seasonal Routine

Ritucharya, another fundamental component of Ayurveda, highlights the significance of coordinating the way of life with the seasonal cycles. Promoting optimal health and well-being can be achieved by comprehending and adjusting to the distinctive characteristics of each season.

Key Components of Ritucharya:

- **Seasonal Eating:** Consuming foods that are in season and aligned with the specific qualities of each season.
- **Seasonal Activities:** Engaging in activities that support your overall health and well-being during each season.

- **Seasonal Self-Care:** Incorporating seasonal self-care practices to address the unique challenges of each season.

Ritucharya for the Six Seasons:

- **Vasant (Spring):**
 - **Focus:** Cleansing, rejuvenation, and balancing.
 - **Diet:** Incorporate bitter, astringent, and pungent flavors.
 - **Activities:** Engage in gentle exercise, outdoor activities, and meditation.
- **Grishma (Summer):**
 - **Focus:** Cooling, hydrating, and balancing.
 - **Diet:** Consume sweet, sour, and salty flavors.
 - **Activities:** Avoid excessive exertion, stay hydrated, and seek shade.
- **Varsha (Monsoon):**
 - **Focus:** Protection, digestion, and immunity.
 - **Diet:** Consume pungent, astringent, and sweet flavours.
 - **Activities:** Avoid exposure to excessive moisture, maintain hygiene, and boost immunity.
- **Sharad (Autumn):**
 - **Focus:** Nourishment, rejuvenation, and balance.
 - **Diet:** Consume sweet, sour, and salty flavours.
 - **Activities:** Engage in moderate exercise, enjoy outdoor activities, and focus on self-care.
- **Hemant (Early Winter):**
 - **Focus:** Nourishment, grounding, and warmth.
 - **Diet:** Consume sweet, sour, and salty flavors.
 - **Activities:** Engage in indoor activities, stay warm, and focus on self-care.

- **Shishira (Late Winter):**
 - **Focus:** Nourishment, grounding, and warmth.
 - **Diet:** Consume sweet, sour, and salty flavors.
 - **Activities:** Engage in indoor activities, stay warm, and focus on self-care.

Benefits of Ritucharya:

- **Better Health:** Increased mental and physical health.
- **Balanced Doshas:** Maintaining equilibrium of the three doshas.
- **Increased Energy:** More vitality and stamina throughout the year.
- **Enhanced Immunity:** Stronger resistance to diseases.
- **Improved Digestion:** Better digestion and absorption of nutrients.
- **Reduced Stress:** Calmer mind and reduced anxiety.

3. Sadvritta : The Code of Conduct of Ayurveda

Sadvritta is a key aspect of Ayurveda that highlights the value of moral behaviour and ethical conduct . It comprises a number of principles for leading a peaceful and balanced existence.

Key Principles of Sadvritta:

- **Ahimsa:** Non-violence towards all beings.
- **Satya:** Truthfulness and honesty.
- **Asteya:** Non-stealing.
- **Brahmacharya:** Moderation and self-control in sexual desire.
- **Aparigraha:** Non-possessiveness and detachment from material possessions.

Sadvritta in Daily Life:

- **Ethical Relationships:** Cultivating harmonious relationships based on respect, compassion, and understanding.
- **Mindful Communication :** Speaking truthfully, kindly, and thoughtfully.
- **Ethical Consumption :** Choosing sustainable and ethical products and services.
- **Service to Others :** Engaging in acts of kindness and service to the community.
- **Self-Discipline :** Exercising self-control in all aspects of life.

Benefits of Sadvritta:

- **Improved Relationships :** Stronger bonds with others.
- **Inner Peace :** A sense of calm and contentment.
- **Living Ethically :** Following moral and ethical principles.
- **Individual Growth :** Spiritual and emotional maturation.
- **Positive Impact :** Helping to create a society that is more harmonious.

By implementing Sadvritta into daily activities, one can create a more ethical, caring and sympathetic existence.

DISCUSSION

Following the guidelines of Ayurveda on the proper way of eating food, along with focusing on quality, quantity, and taste, can lead to achieving good health with ease, as Aahar is an integral part of our daily routine. Incorrect eating habits result in the development of various metabolic disorders. It is also noted that several illnesses are emerging as a result of this incorrect eating pattern. In today's lifestyle, the concept of Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana is highly suitable in this situation. Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana discusses the elements that influence the positive and negative outcomes of diet as well as guidelines for dietary habits. All eight dynamics (Prakriti, Karan, Samyoga, Rashi, Desha, Kala, Upyoga-Samstha, and Upabhokta) should be evaluated before selecting food. Based on the points mentioned above, it can be inferred that Ahara should be consumed in accordance with the eight dietary guidelines outlined by Acharyas known as Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana, which have

been scientifically proven effective. Therefore, by adopting these routines, we can protect ourselves from a range of health issues and can also treat numerous lifestyle disorders.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the concept of Ahara-Vidhana, one can see the logic of Acharyas for taking food in a proper manner known as Ahara Vidhi Vidhan that how an individual can maintain itself in the condition of Swastha to prevent lifestyle disorders. It is essential to follow the Ahara Vidhana instead of following the wrong eating habits of the modern age. Thus, one can prevent lifestyle disorders and promote longevity and vitality by incorporating Ayurvedic holistic approach of Aahar and Vihar into our daily lives.

At last, the keys to good health, which we all know but often forget, are

सर्वमन्यम परित्यज्य शरीरमनुपालये।

तदभावे हि भावनाम सर्वाभावः शरीरिणाम॥

[One should take care of his/her body by ignoring all other things, because if the body is not healthy, nothing exists.]

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