



## AYURVEDA: THE SOUND OF HEALING FOR LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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### ABSTRACT

Life style disorders are the toll we are paying for our lifestyle now a day. Once, communicable diseases were the prime killers in human society. But, now the studies shows that 17 million people die prematurely every year as a result of the global epidemic of largely preventable diseases or life style diseases. This means we are the killers of ourselves. A lifestyle typically reflects the way a person lives. It also includes an individual's attitude, values or worldview. In simple language lifestyle is a characteristic bundle of behaviors.

In this article, I am mainly concerned with the various regimen of diet and dietetics principle, daily routine and other preventive measures of Ayurveda mentioned in the Ayurveda texts for the prevention of lifestyle disorders. The science of Ayurveda is designed to help us live in harmony with our environment. Part of living in harmony with one's environment includes balanced use of the senses. So it is mandatory to develop a health oriented life style than to give deep concern about our works. According to Ayurvedic text, the three pillars of healthy and long life are: *Aahara* (proper diet), *Nidra* (proper sleep) and *Bramhacharya* (controlled sexuality).

In the management of these lifestyle diseases, *Ayurveda* offers various regimens such as *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (ideal routines), and *Acharya Rasayana* (code of conduct). In short, Ayurvedic lifestyle promotes physical, mental as well as social health and ultimately leads to symptomatic improvement and improvement in the quality of life and thus help in the prevention and management of lifestyle disorders.

**Keywords:** Diet, health, lifestyle disorders, Ayurveda, *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Achar Rasayana*.

### INTRODUCTION:

Lifestyle disease is an umbrella term given to all the diseases which arise because of unhealthy lifestyle. Life style diseases are also called as the diseases of longevity or diseases of civilization. "Lifestyle diseases" known, internationally, as 'non-communicable diseases' (NCD's) or 'chronic diseases of lifestyle' (CDL) emerge from inappropriate relationship of people with their environment. These are a group of diseases that share similar risk factors, which may be due to exposure over many decades, unhealthy diets, smoking, and lack of exercise, late night culture and stress. With rapid economic development and increasing westernization of lifestyle in the past few decades,

prevalence of these diseases has reached alarming proportions among Indians in the recent years<sup>1</sup>. Certain diseases appear at greater rates in young populations living in the "western" way; their increased incidence is not related to age, so the terms cannot accurately be used interchangeably for all diseases<sup>2</sup>. In India, rapid urbanization and globalization mainly contribute towards increased number of people suffering from life-style disorders<sup>3</sup>.

Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life<sup>4</sup>, proved and practiced in India for thousands of years based on its own unique fundamental principles such as promotion of health, prevention of diseases, promotion of longevity etc. The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the

health of the healthy person and to cure the diseases of the diseased person<sup>5</sup>. On the basis of fundamentals of Ayurveda which are available in classical literature, a concept of lifestyle which should be adopted for present era. The description of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Sadvirtta* (ethical routine/ appropriate behavior), *vegan a dharayet* (not to suppress the natural urges, suppress the suppressible urges) *aahar* (proper diet), personal hygiene is primarily its preventive aspect, increasing local immunity leading to disease free life.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is:

1. To explain the concept of life style in Ayurvedic Perspective w. s. r to *Swasthavritta*.
2. To highlight on inverse relationship between Ayurvedic life style and stress related life style disorders.
3. To educate the people regarding the preventive aspect of Ayurvedic life style on health.
4. To explain the benefits of Ayurvedic life style and its good effects on health for promotion of health.

### Major Lifestyle Oriented Disease

Nowadays, not only are lifestyle disorders becoming more common, but they are also affecting younger populations. In past era, communicable diseases were the prime killers, but now a day we human beings are proving biggest killers for ourselves by changing our life style and culture. Among lifestyle disorders following are most endangering to human beings now a day. Obesity, Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, arthritis, spinal problems, carcinomas of different body parts dementia, depression, Arteriosclerosis, Essential hypertension, Stroke, nutritional deficiency, recurrent illnesses.

### Risk Factors

A risk factor is defined as anything that increases the probability of injury, disease, or other health problems. During determining if a person might develop a

disease, one should firstly looks at a person's risk factors. Risk factor is classified under Controllable and uncontrollable factors. Controllable factor include habits, behaviors, and practices that can be change. Examples are diet, body weight daily levels of physical activity, level of sun exposure, smoking and alcohol abuse etc. Some risk factors that contribute to chances of developing a lifestyle disease are out of our control these include age, gender and heredity<sup>6</sup>. Integrating the regimens of Ayurveda in the prevention and management of these disorders may prove to be beneficial.

### Ayurvedic perspective for Lifestyle Diseases

When it comes to Lifestyle diseases, there is a certain need to look at human body with a different approach. This is where the ancient Ayurvedic system has a major role to offer. Ayurveda believes that the lifestyle diseases are not restricted to particular organ or organ system and this makes it challenging for the modern medical system as it understands human body structurally e.g. Cells-Tissues-Organ-Organ System. Until a few decades, there were no such specific groups of diseases called lifestyle diseases. Almost 6 in 10 people are suffering from one or other kind of lifestyle diseases. They are called so because these diseases are the outcome of sedentary and inactive lifestyle. Modern medicine or the Allopathic medicine can only alleviate the symptoms of diseases and many of these lifestyle diseases require the patient to rely on medicines to manage the health. While many of these lifestyle diseases have no remedial treatment in modern medicines, fortunately many people could get find the cure with Ayurvedic medicine.

### How lifestyle diseases are formed as per Ayurvedic perspective?

A lifestyle of an individual is the outcome or composed of physical traits, capacity, habits, dietary style, living condition, psychological functions, likes and dislikes,

etc. Many of these traits are observed / nurtured from the parent, siblings and the surroundings. So, the physical activities are influenced by psychological feeling. The psychology controls all bodily activities. When the psychological initiation and control is disturbed, it results with lifestyle diseases and disorders. It is referred as *Prajnaparadha* (intellectual blasphemy) in Ayurveda, one of the three major causes of diseases.

Many of lifestyle diseases are cured easily and effortlessly with Ayurvedic diet and lifestyle recommendations. Also, a few alarming diseases like osteoporosis (loss of bone density), type I diabetes – an insulin dependent condition, cardiac / cardio vascular diseases, neurological disorders, etc can be improved to a great extent. Many of the lifestyle diseases are the outcome of poor immunity. The unwholesome conjunction of the sense organs with their objects (*Asatmendriyarthasanyoga*), intellectual blasphemy (*Pragyapradha*) and transformation (*Parinama*) – these are three fold causes of diseases (psychic, somatic and psychosomatic). Proper utilization of the objects, action and time is beneficial to the maintenance of normal health<sup>7</sup>.

### **The Body Matrix**

Life in Ayurveda is conceived as the union of body, senses, mind and soul. The living man is a conglomeration of three humours (*Vata, Pitta & Kapha*), seven basic tissues (*Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Majja & Shukra*) and the waste products (*Mala*) of the body such as faeces, urine and sweat. Thus the total body matrix comprises of the humors, the tissues and the waste products of the body. The growth and decay of this body matrix and its constituents revolve around food which gets processed into humors, tissues and wastes. Ingestion, digestion, absorption, assimilation and metabolism of food have interplay in health and disease which are significantly affected by psychological mechanisms as well as by bio- fire (*Agni*).

### **Diet and Health**

According to Ayurveda, the three pillars of healthy and long life are: *Aahara* (proper diet), *Nidra* (proper sleep) and *Bramhacharya* (controlled sexuality)<sup>8</sup>. Undigested, junk food and accumulated wastes are mostly toxic to the body as they produce changes in blood, lymph and other body fluids resulting in imbalance of elements<sup>9</sup>.

We can understand that almost all the diseases are caused by the *mithya ahara's & vihara's* which we follow. According to research, human bodies on an average are made up of 63% of water, 22% protein, 13% fat, vitamins and minerals. Ideally our diet should include about 65% carbohydrate, 15% protein and 20% fat. Over 50 years the food pattern changed considerably which changed our diet by the use of lots of processed foods, foods with saturated fats, foods with sugar content less and less fruits and vegetables. The result is drastic change which shows 28% carbohydrates, 12% protein, 40% fats and 20% sugar, though the requirement remains almost the same. This can be understood as the *mithya ahara* practices in Ayurveda.

Though everyone knows that how much we have to pay if we are not giving importance to our health, in this mechanic century all are treating the body too as a machine. And they are leading a mechanical life without considering their physical, mental, spiritual, social well being. So are suffering later with chronic and incurable disease which is nothing but a product of their ignorance.

### **Panchamahabhutas: The Five Basic Elements**

According to Ayurveda all objects in the universe including human body are composed of five basic elements

(*Panchamahabhutas*) namely, *Akash* (Ether), *Vayu* (Air), *Agni* (Fire), *Jala* (Water) and *Prithvi* (Earth). There is a balanced condensation of these elements in different proportions to suit the needs and requirements of different structures and functions of the body matrix and its parts. The growth and development of the body matrix depends on its nutrition, i.e. on food. The food, in turn, is composed of the above five elements, which replenish or nourish the like elements of the body after the action of bio-fire (*Agni*).

### Health and Sickness

Health or sickness depends on the presence or absence of a balanced state of the total body matrix including the balance between its different constituents. Both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors can cause disturbance in the natural equilibrium giving rise to disease. This loss of equilibrium can happen by dietary indiscrimination, undesirable habits and non-observance of rules of healthy living. Seasonal abnormalities, improper exercise or erratic application of sense organs and incompatible actions of the body and mind can also result in creating disturbance of the existing normal balance. The treatment consists of restoring the balance of disturbed body-mind matrix through regulating diet, correcting life-routine and behavior.

### *Pradynaparadha'* (intellectual blasphemy)

Basically, a particular lifestyle of person is a cumulative product of his/her physical capacity co-ordinated with psychological functioning, displayed in the form of habits, behavior, dietary and living pattern based on his own training sought from childhood, and mimics he gained from his immediate companions including parents, siblings, peers, etc. Thus, it involves a pure psychological and innate control over the physical and sensory activities. When this initiation, control, and co-ordination are disturbed, it leads to the derangement of lifestyle and results in any lifestyle disorder. Ayurveda narrated

this phenomenon as '*Pradynaparadha*' (intellectual blasphemy)<sup>10</sup> which is one of the three basic causes of any disease. There are ample improper actions as an impact of *Pradynaparadha* which are root causes of various diseases, e.g., habit of suppression of any natural urge is a result of *Pradynaparadha* and enlisted as a cause of nearly 50% of the diseases. Reversal of any neurotransmission or improper removal of the waste products formed during metabolism leading to accumulation of toxins is the basic cause of a disease. Therefore, the habit of suppression of urge in improper lifestyle can be considered as one of the root causes of lifestyle diseases.

### Ayurveda: An ideal lifestyle

Ayurveda has mentioned two main aims, first is to maintain the health of healthy individual and second is to cure of disease of patients<sup>11</sup>. By following first aim we can prevent various life style disorders. We should give importance to our body as a king who protects his kingdom and also like a driver of the chariot who gives conscious concern about his chariot<sup>12</sup>. We can maintain ideal life style and prevent various life style disorders through the following principles:

1. *Dinacharya* (Daily regimen)
2. *Sadvritta* ( Proper following right of code of conducts)
3. *Aahar* (Proper diet )
4. *Vega n dharayet* (Not to suppress the natural urges)

### 1. *Dinacharya* (Daily regimen)

It includes,

- *Brahma muhurtha utthana*
- *Dantadhavana*
- *Nasya*
- *Gandusha and kavala*
- *Abhyanga*
- *Vyayama*

### *Brahma muhurtha*

It is considered as the ideal time for waking up<sup>13</sup>. It is approximately two muhurtas means 96 minutes (almost 1.5 hrs) before sunrise. It is the right time for *adhyayana* (study) and the time when melatonin synthesis in the body is at optimum level. Mind is stable during this time.

#### **Dantadhavana**

The importance of Oral hygiene is mentioned in the form of *Danta dhavana* (Brushing), *Jihwa nirlekhana* (tongue scraping). The logic behind indicating plants possessing *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter), *kashaya* (astringent) *rasas* (tastes) for the purpose of *danta dhavana* as it poses minimum risk of allergic reactions and mucosal irritation. It is a known fact that astringent drugs possess analgesic as well as antiseptic properties. Tongue scrapping is effective in eliminating the microbes that causes bad breath. It also stimulates taste perception and increases the salivation, which acts as bactericidal as saliva contains Ptyalin, lysosomal enzymes. It also results in an increased threshold level of taste perception. Tongue scrapping appears to be the most important hygienic procedure to reduce morning bad breath in healthy subjects<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Nasya**

*Nasya* is a method of delivering drug via nasal route. It promotes strength and prevents diseases of *urdhwajatru gata awayawa* (head, neck and brain). *Pratimarsha nasya* (only two drops daily) is indicated in *Ayurveda*<sup>15</sup>.

#### **Gandusha and kavala**

They are intended to tone up jaw and facial muscles along with maintaining oral hygiene, prevent teeth decay. They stimulate blood flow, improve overall appearance of the face, increase taste sensation<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Abhyanga**

It increases nerve stimulation, relaxes and softens muscles. It also increases blood circulation locally providing better transportation of oxygen and nutrients in body and carries nitrogenous waste for

excretion. It also nourishes hair roots and eyes, tones up muscles, increases skin complexion<sup>17</sup>.

#### **Vyayama**

Regular light exercises help the body to shape up, increase muscle strength, improve appetite and maintains health. It gives the body the ability to withstand exertion, fatigue, and changes in the climate such as fluctuations in temperature. It helps one relax mind and have sound sleep, and improves digestion and elimination. In Ayurveda, half of one's capacity (*Ardhya shakti*)<sup>18</sup> is considered as beneficial in as far as exercise is concerned.

#### **2. Sadvritta (Proper following right of code of conducts)**

One should not deviate from generally approved principles nor should break any code of conduct. One should not indulge in taking food, studies, sexual relation or sleep during the dawn or dusk. One should not insult anybody. One should not have any inclination toward wine, gambling or prostitutes. One should not exposed secret parts of the body. One should not tell a lie nor should take over other properties nor should long for other wives or properties, should not evolved in hatred or sinful activities; one should never we vice even to the vicious; one should not disclose others defects; one should not disclose other's secret; one should shun the company of the traitors, lunatics, fallen persons, abortionists, mean and cooked persons<sup>19</sup>. One should not do things in a fit of anger or rejoicing. One should not be under continued grief. One should not lose sprit nor should one remember his insults<sup>20</sup>. The unwholesome utilization of the sense organs with their objects (*Asatmendriyarthasanyoga*), intellectual blasphemy (*Pragyapradha*) and transformation or effect of these (*Parinama*) –these are three fold causes of diseases (psychic, somatic and psychosomatic). Proper utilization of the objects, action and time is beneficial to the maintenance of normal health<sup>21</sup>.

### 3. Aahar (Proper diet)

This can be considered under following heads,

#### Balanced Diet

*Ahara matra*-How much food to consume?

Rules of Taking *Ahara* (Food)

Regularly indicated and contraindicated *Ahara* (Food)

Time to take food

#### *Ahara matra*-How much food to consume?

In *Ayurveda*, the food has been given a godly status and is considered a subject of worship. According to *Ayurveda*, the diet which nourishes both the mental and physical built is called balanced diet. The quantity of food depends upon the power of digestion including metabolism<sup>22</sup>. The amount of food which without disturbing the equilibrium gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as the proper quantity<sup>23</sup>. The quantity of food should be taken according to its quality. If the food article is heavy (*guru*), only three-fourth or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled up. Even in the case of light food (*laghu*) articles excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion and metabolism. Ideally, the stomach can be divided into three parts<sup>24</sup>, one part of it is filled up with solid food, the second part with liquids and the third part is left for action of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.

#### Rules of Taking *Ahara* (Food)

According to Acharya Charak, the eight factors which determine the utility of the various types of food are called as *ashtau-aharavidhivisheshayatane*<sup>25</sup> (Eight rules of taking food). They are *Prakriti* (nature of food), *karan* (Process of preparation), *samyoga* (Compatibility), *Rashi* (quantity), *desh* (place), *kala* (time), *Upayogasamstha* (dietetic rules), *Upayokta* (person who take food).

There are different rules laid by Acharya Susruta<sup>26</sup>. They are called as *Dwadashashana pravichar* (Twelve rules of taking diet).

**1. Usnamasniyata** One should take warm food. When taken warm, it gets digested quickly and helps in the downward passage of *vata* (wind) and detachment of *kapha*.

**2. Snigdhamasniyata** One should take unctuous food; unctuous food is delicious. It increases the plumpness of the body, strengthens the sense faculties, promotes strength and brings out the brightness of complexion.

**3. Jirne asniyata** One should take food only when previous meal is digested. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous meal, *aama* is formed which may cause various diseases.

#### 4. Viryaavirudhamasniyata

One should take food having no contradictory potencies.

**5, 6. Istedese, Istasarvopkaranam asniyata** One should take food in proper place equipped with all the accessories.

**7. Naatidrutam asniyata** One should not take food too hurriedly or hastily; if food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong passage.

**8. Naativilambitam asniyata** One should not take food too slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual. He may take more than required; lead to indigestion.

**9, 10, 11. Ajalpan, Ahasan, 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.

**12. Atmanamabhisamiksya** One should take food in a prescribed manner; with due regard to his own self or it may lead to destruction.

#### Regularly indicated and contraindicated *Ahara* (Food)

According to Charak Samhita, one should regularly take *Sali* rice (rice ready to eat within 60 days), *Mudga* (Green gram), *Saindhava Lavana* (specific type of salt), *Amalaki* (Amla), *Yava* (Barley), Rain water collected before falling on the ground, Milk, *Gee*(cow derived), *Jangala Mamsa* (meat of animals in dry climate) and honey<sup>27</sup>.

According to Charak Samhita, one should not regularly take heavy food such as *Vallura* (dried meat), dry vegetables, lotus rhizomes, lotus stalk, meat of a diseased animal, *Kurchika* (paneer), *Kilat* (soured milk), meat of pig, cow, buffalo, fish, Curd<sup>28</sup>.

#### Time to take food

One simple rule is not to take food within three hours after the last meal and not to starve for more than six hours<sup>29</sup>. Food has to be taken only two times in a day. It should be taken, in the morning and in the evening. But the students, hard workers, people having good appetite may take food more than twice, provided they feel hungry.

#### 4. Vega n dharayet (Not to suppress the natural urges)

One should not suppress the natural urges relating to urine, feces, semen, flatus, vomiting, sneezing, eructation, yawning, hunger, thirst, tears, sleep and breathing caused by over exertion. They should be excreted or satisfied instantaneously. If not, they lead to various types of diseases<sup>30</sup>.

Simultaneously, one should suppress urges relating to rashness and evil deeds-mentally, orally and physically. Similarly a wise person should refrain from satisfying the urges relating to greed, grief, fear, anger, vanity, shamelessness, jealousy, too much of attachment and malice. One should also refrain from speaking extremely harsh words<sup>31</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION

Ayurveda offers effective and safe solution for various health problems like Life Style disorders. The holistic approach of Ayurveda, treating the patient as a whole, meaning intervention targeted toward complete physical, mental, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being makes this science a wonderful option in lifestyle disorders. The Ayurvedic physician concentrates on achieving the objective of Ayurveda for promotion of health, prevention and management of disease for a healthy and happy life in the society. Many of the lifestyle diseases have no remedial treatment in modern medicines, fortunately many people could get find the cure with Ayurvedic medicine. We can call it as Primordial prevention in Ayurvedic life science.

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