

AYURVEDIC INTERVENTIONS FOR LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

Last few decades have witnessed tremendous increase in prevalence of lifestyle disorders worldwide. And it is inferred that this trend will augment in future. Modern medicine has gained triumph over the infectious diseases simply by targeting the offending organism but the management of lifestyle disorders is not that simple and requires a broad acumen. In fact lifestyle disorders are multifactorial in origin and are outcome of violation of rules of healthy living, materialistic approach towards life, negative thought process, mental emotional conflicts and unresolved stress of day to day life. The cumulative effects of these factors disturb homoeostasis and results in dosha vaishmya, vitiation of agni, ama production, srotovaigunya and depletion of sattva component of man (mind). Concepts and practices of Ayurveda which are effective in lifestyle disorders viz. nidan parivarjan, deepan-pachan, srotoshodhan, shirodhara, mantra chanting, meditation and specific yogasan will be discussed at the time of paper presentation.

Key Words: Agni, Ama, Srotovaigunya, Deepan-Pachan, Srotoshodhan, Meditation

INTRODUCTION

World, Today has achieved great economic and technical development. In the field of science and medicine has attained outstanding achievement. In such a developed world logically it may be inferred that people would be healthier than before. But ironically the graph of unhealthy population is going on increasing worldwide. Earlier infectious diseases were prime threat to mankind. Scientist and doctors with their researches and efforts have gained effective control over them. But soon emerged a new set of diseases and these diseases are named ‘lifestyle disorders’. Lifestyle disorders are not easily amenable as infectious diseases. Sincere effort of Scientists and doctors of modern medicine yet seems ineffective in control and management of these disorders. Some of the most common lifestyle disorders include^[1]: Atherosclerosis, Alzheimer’s disease, Some types of cancer, Asthma, Liver cirrhosis, Type 2 diabetes, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Heart disease, Metabolic syndrome, Chronic renal failure, Stroke, Osteoporosis, Obesity, Depression etc.

Onset lifestyle disorder is insidious takes many years to manifest. In view of Ayurveda the root cause of lifestyle disorders are multiple. Apart from dietetic and lifestyle indiscretion, stress, interpersonal conflict, declined moral values, ethical values, as well as mechanistic and materialistic approach toward life are major contributory factors for ever increasing prevalence of lifestyle disorders.

From *Ayurvedic* perspective besides drug therapy, effective management of lifestyle disorders needs inculcation of such measures which impart mental peace, balance emotions, enrich the inner core and enhance sattva attribute of mind. Principles of *Ayurveda* indicates that habit of not holding of physiological urges^[2], control over vicious mental urges^[3], Practice of *sadvritt*^[4], *achar rasayan*^[5], *pranayam*^[6], meditation^[7], *yogic asan*^[8] along with appropriate drug therapy is the right approach for effective control and management of these disorders.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Aim and Objective

Holistic approach is essential in prevention and management of lifestyle disorders. *Ayurved* is a holistic science and should be practiced in these ailments. This paper is written to ascertain the usefulness of *Ayurved* in disorders where modern medicine is helpless. The main aim and objective of this paper are as follows:

- Find the root cause of emerging epidemic of lifestyle disorders
- Establish the relevance of *Ayurvedic* approach in lifestyle disorders
- Find a safe and effective treatment approach in management of lifestyle disorders

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Exploration of Ayurvedic literature reveals that in pathogenesis of lifestyle disorders somatic factors as well as involvement of psyche is important. *Dosh vaishmy*, *agni* vitiation, *ama* production, *srovaiguny*, depletion of *sattv* component are the main events which contribute in overt manifestation of these disorders. Adoption of faulty dietary habits, physical inactivity, erratic schedule of sleep and wake, regular and excessive ingestion of unwholesome and uncongenial food articles, high sugar product, dairy products, alcohol, smoking, drug abuse, as well as stress, negative emotions, unresolved personal conflicts are some of the potential factors which participate in manifestation of these disorders. AYURVEDIC Measures which are effective in control and management of lifestyle disorders are being described below:

NIDAN PARIVARJAN

Nidan Parivarjan, the foremost principle of *Ayurveda* is applicable in all sorts of diseases⁹. Following measures should be used to prevent lifestyle disorders:

- As a dietary measure restriction of salt, sugar, pickles, refined carbohydrates, fried food, precooked food, junk food, dairy products, and non vegetarian food articles is essential.
- *Adhyashan*, *samashan*, *vishamashan* should not be practiced.
- As far as the lifestyle is concern under active i.e. sedentary lifestyle as well as over active turbulent lifestyle both may become conducive to manifest lifestyle disorders. Hence, it is advisable to adopt a moderately active lifestyle.
- One should avoid late night awakening and late rising and should tune sleep-wake cycle with nature.

- Stress play major role in genesis of lifestyle disorders, therefore it is essential to minimize stress and practice of measures such as *yoga*, meditation, relaxation etc. and improvement of interpersonal relationships is an integral part in management of lifestyle disorders.

Deepan Pachan

- *Deepan, pachan* measures should be applied when *ama lakshan* like *srotorodha, balabhraansh, anila mudhta*¹⁰ are seen along with hypertension.
- *Deepan* are the drugs which kindle fire i.e. activate the process of digestion, and assimilation whereas *pachan* are drugs which digest or nullify the *ama*; a by product of faulty agni having property of clogging the channels.
- It is evident that *Agnimandya* is a prime factor in production of lifestyle disorders; hence use of *deepan-pachan* drugs like *chitraka, mustaka* is advisable.
- For *srotoshodhan, ama pachan* is must. *Ama* at different tissue level requires different drugs that will augment the particular *agni*. For purpose of *ama pachan Panchakol, Saddharan Yoga, Guggulu, Shilajeet, Chitrak* are useful.

Srotoshodhan

Ayurveda asserts that the clean and competent state of the channels i.e. the *srotas* is an essential prerequisite for health. In every disease state the blockade of channels is the most important diathesis. Unless the channels get blocked, the biosphere of the body and the milieu interior remains intact and *dhatu samya* prevails. The moment the body channels lose their competence, the disease process initiates. *Panchakarm* therapy, medicated preparation like *aasav, arisht, and drugs like guggulu, shilajeet, vacha, haritaki* etc. are useful for this purpose. *Haritaki* is considered best among the drugs which perform this function and is known as *pathya* owing to excellent quality of *srotoshodhan*.

Rasayan

Rasayan is a specialized type of treatment that works by influencing *dhatus* (body tissues), *agni* (the metabolic activity), and *srotansi* (micro channels). Visualizing the pathogenesis of lifestyle disorders it becomes evident that drugs which act at the level of srotas and agni as well as are capable of warding off the ill effect of ageing and stress should be selected in lifestyle disorders. Drugs like *Rason, Bala, Rasana, Sarpagandha, Guggulu, Vaca, Jatamansi, Ashwagandha, Shankhapushpi, Brahmi, Triphala, haridra, Yeshtimadhu, Shilajeet, Abhaya, Amalaki, Mandukaparni, Pippali, Citrak, Chwanaprash, Brahma rasayan, and Abhyamalaki* are useful in lifestyle disorders.

Yogasan

Asanas aid in development of good health by stretching, massaging, and stimulating the *pranic* channels and internal organs. *Yogasanas* are not simple exercises, but techniques which place the physical body in position that cultivate awareness, relaxation, concentration,

and meditation¹¹. In addition, *asanas* are designed to have specific effects on the glands and internal organs, and to alter electrochemical activity in the nervous system¹².

Asans for Cardiovascular Diseases and Hypertension:

- *Yogic Sukshm Vyayam, Tadasanaasan, Katichakraasan, Konasan, Uttanapadasan, Pavanmuktasan, Shashanksan, Dhanurasan, Vakrasan, Bhujangasan, Gomukhasan, Ardhamatsyendrasan, Shavasan*

Asans for Diabetes:

- *Tadasanaasan, Katichakrasan, sarvanganasan, Matsyasan, Pavanmuktasan, Bhujangasan, Dhanurasan, Shalabhasan, Dhururasan, Paschimottanasan, Gomukh Asan, Ardhamatsyendrasan, Mandukasan, Shavasan*

Asans for Arthritis:

- *Yogic Sukshm Vyayam, Tadasanaasan, Katichakrasan, Hastottanasan, Uttanapadasan, Pavanmuktasan, Vakrasan, Bhujangasan, Bhadrasan, Marjari Asan, ushrasan, Makarasan, Shavasan*

Asans for Obesity:

- *Suryanamaskar, Shalabhasan, Dhanurasan, Paschimottanasan, Ardhamatsyendrasan, Ushtrasan, Mandukasan, Makarasan, Shavasan*

Pranayam

Lifestyle has a profound impact on the *pranmaya kosh* and its *pran*. Physical activities such as exercise, work, sleep, intake of food and sexual relations all affect the distribution and flow of *pran* in the body. Faculties of the mind such as emotion, thought, and imagination affect the *pranic* body even more. Irregularities in lifestyle, dietary indiscretions, and stress deplete and obstruct the *pranic* flow. Depletion of energy in particular *pran* leads to devitalisation of the organs and limbs it governs and ultimately to disease or metabolic dysfunction. The techniques of *pranayam* reverses this process, energizes and balances the different *pran* within *pranmayakosh*¹³

Mantra Chanting

Mantra is direct method for dealing with the mind¹⁴. It is the main method of treating consciousness (*chitt*) and is helpful for healing all levels of the mind, inner and outer. It can alter or eradicate deep seated latencies and impressions. For this reason it is the main *Ayurvedic* therapy for treating psychological imbalance and thus beneficial in lifestyle disorders.

All *Mantras* are hidden in *OM*, which is the abstract, highest *Mantra* of the cosmos. *OM* is the manifest symbol of the *Sabda brahman* vibration, or God. Japa meditation on *OM* has a tremendous influence on the mind. Another important *mantra* is *Gayatri Mantra* which can be practiced by all.

Meditation

Meditation is a tool for conquering the mind. Meditation is liberation from the clutches of the sense and lower mind¹⁵. By definition it is transcendental, in which all fears, desires, longings, and negative emotions are transcended. Meditation is a state of intense, pure awareness; it brings profound changes in the psyche. It operates on super-conscious level rather than subconscious as in hypnotic state.

Observance of *yama* and *niyama* is prerequisite for meditation. During meditation there is generally a tremendous acceleration of energy to the individual cells. Just as negative thoughts can pollute them, positive thoughts rejuvenate them and retard decay. Penetrating all the cells, its vibrations can prevent and cure diseases. The soothing waves that arise also exercise a favourable effect on mind and nerves, resulting in a prolonged, positive state of mind. Thus interior world takes direction from the mind and promotes physical health, mental acuity, and tranquillity.

DISCUSSION

Lifestyle diseases are outcome of our wrong choices. Hence, the idea that one can manage these diseases with modern chemical drugs is ridiculous. Modern drugs are synthetic chemicals and only targeted to block some ongoing offending mechanism e.g. Hypertension or replenish the depleted amount of some endogenous substance e.g. Diabetes, Hypothyroidism. Besides Modern medicine totally ignore the existence of subtle component whereas *Ayurveda* not only give importance to the subtle component but also provide tools for its correction. *Ayurveda* preaches and teaches the way of right living. In this context this system encourages everyone to practice *sadvritt*, *sadachar*, *achar rasayan* in day to day life. Such practices minimize the interpersonal conflicts and enhance *sattv* component of mind and make one physically, mentally strong and emotionally well balanced and thus, help in uplifting the total health of an individual as well as the society. As a result these practices when practiced along with righteous eating and living minimize the occurrence of lifestyle disorders.

CONCLUSION

- Lifestyle disorders are outcome of our wrong choices and adoption uncongenial way of eating and living
- Treatment of lifestyle disorders through modern medicine is not a wise decision.
- *Ayurvedic* drugs are *panchbhautik* hence congenial to human. Hence, whenever necessary intervention in terms of *Ayurvedic* drugs is far better approach.
- Bio-purification according to season, habit of not to hold physiological urges, and hold vicious mental urges, as well as practice of *sadvritta*, *sadachar*, *achar rasayan*, mantra chanting in day to day life and surrender to God make a person's life *sukha ayu* as well as *hita ayu*. Such practices along with right way of eating and living leave no room for lifestyle disorders.

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