

Viruddhabhisamskriti - An Ayurvedic Approach to Disease Prevention

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Abstract

The concept of immunization or enhancing the immune functions of the body was well known to Ayurveda since ages, rasayana chikitsa being given a place among ashtangas of Ayurveda. Viruddhabhisamskriti is one such method of immunizing the body against the diseases caused by viruddha dravyas. All references related to this table available in Brihatrayee and Ashtanga Samgraha are compiled and analyzed in detail under the light of the commentaries. Concept of viruddhabhisamskriti according to these classics, its present-day interpretations and misconceptions is the focus of this paper.

Introduction

Ayurveda being the science of life talks about the righteous path of life that ensures health to every individual. It lays down the principles for prevention and cure of diseases, former one is given the priority. The Ayurvedic approach to prevention of diseases is unique, safe and effective. Viruddhabhisamskriti is a unique approach to the prevention of diseases made by the ancient practitioners of Ayurveda. Among the three lines of treatment mentioned for these diseases caused by Viruddha dravya, the first two are curative measures and the third method is a preventive method that needs to be adopted well in advance before the exposure of the body to viruddha dravya. This preventive method is known as Viruddhabhisamskriti. Abhisamskara means refining or processing the body with something by its regular use¹. Viruddhabhisamskriti is seasoning the body with hita dravyas

(Wholesome substances) by their regular and continuous usage well before the exposure of the body to the viruddha dravyas rightly pointed out by Sushruta as Hitasevanam (indulgence in wholesome habits)².

There are many factors which influence the immunity of an individual namely the Balavridhikara Bhavas (factors which enhance the strength). They influence the sahaja and Kalaja Bala (Innate and seasonal immunity). Yuktrikrita Bala (Induced immunity) includes measures such as Rasayana (Rejuvenative) and Vajeeekarana (Aphrodisiac). There are several drugs with rasayana properties which are used as immune boosting agents, in children most of them being given in the form of avaleha (electuaries).

Materials and Methods

The Sutrasthana of Charaka samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Samgraha; Sutrasthana and Chikitsasthana of Sushruta Samhita were studied along with commentaries and relevant information about Viruddhabhisamskriti was collected. Source of data about Viruddhabhisamskriti is summarized in table 1:

Table 1: References of Viruddhabhisamskriti in Samhitas

Sl No.	Name of Samhita	Name of Sthana	Name of Adhyaya
1	Charaka Samhita	Sutrasthana	Matrashiteeya Adhyaya Atreyabhadrakapeeya Adhyaya
2	Sushruta Samhita	Sutrasthana Chikitsasthana	Hitahiteeya adhyayopakramaha Sarvopaghatashamaneeya adhyaopakramaha
3	Ashtanga Hridaya	Sutrasthana	Annarakshavidhi Adhyaya
4	Ashtanga Samgraha	Sutrasthana	Viruddhanna vinyaneeya Adhyaya

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All information pertaining to ahara (food), vihara (regimen) and aushadha (medicine) in the context of disease prevention were collected from other sthanas of all samhitas and categorized. This information was critically analyzed to arrive at relevant conclusion.

Result

Around 10 Shlokas (verses) were available pertaining to viruddhabhisamskriti. It is evident from the review of all the Samhitas that authors of Brihatrayee, Ashtanga Samgraha and their commentators have consistent opinion and there lies no controversies between them on the concept of viruddhabhisamskriti. The word viruddhabhisamskriti has been explained by the commentators Chakrapani, Arunadatta and Hemadri and highlighted that viruddhabhisamskriti is achieved by the use of rasayana dravyas citing relevant examples. Strategies adopted for the prevention of nija and agantujarogas (diseases caused by endogenous and exogenous agents), concepts of satmya (congenial) and okasatmya (congenial due to prolonged use) are also reviewed and cited here which are complementary to the concept of Viruddhabhisamskriti.

Discussion

Viruddha dravya

Anything that; brings about the derangement of doshas (humors), vitiates the dhatus (tissues) but does not eliminate the deranged doshas from the body and stays as antagonist inside; constantly causing damage is a viruddha dravya³. Viruddha dravya (Incompatible substance) may be in the form of food or medicine⁴ and it causes various diseases like shandhata (Infertility), unmada (Insanity), amavisha (toxic substances due to ill metabolism), kilasa (Vitiligo), kushta (skin diseases) etc⁵. Thus viruddha dravya is a disease causing agent- a diet or a drug, which produces diseases of the body as well as the mind.

Viruddhabhisamskriti

Approach to diseases caused by Viruddha dravya is two fold – curative and preventive. Curative measures include shodhana (cleansing measures) and shamana (pacifying measures) which either eliminate the vitiated doshas or pacify them to establish the equilibrium. The preventive approach is called viruddhabhisamskriti. Abhisamskara means refining or processing the body with something by its regular use. Viruddhabhisamskriti is seasoning the body with a dravya which is opposite to the viruddha dravya⁶ or the disease caused by the viruddha dravya⁷. Viruddhabhisamskriti is abhisamskara with hita dravyas, by their regular and prolonged usage well before the exposure to viruddha dravya. Thus, viruddhabhisamskriti is increasing the endurance against the diseases that are produced by viruddha dravyas, by regular indulgence in congenial food and regimen along with consumption of rasayana drugs. There is no difference of opinion among the authors of Samhitas and their commentators with regard to the concept of viruddhabhisamskriti. Few misinterpretations of

the term viruddhabhisamskriti are observed in the books of the recent past advocating the seasoning of the body with viruddha dravya for inducing immunity.

Hitadravyas principally refer to rasayana drugs in the present context which provide enhanced nourishment to dhatus there by strengthen Ojus and Bala or immunity. Rasayana dravyas play a major role in achieving viruddhabhisamskriti and certainly not the viruddha dravya. The concept of Doshapachaya and Gunopachaya⁸ shall be recalled here to complement the above theory. The gradual withdrawal of apathya (non congenial) and insertion of pathya (congenial) by the padamshika karma (specific pattern of inculcating use of congenial substances) leads to gradual decrease in the accumulated doshas (doshapachaya) and increase in the beneficiary aspects (gunopachaya) and thus does not lead to recurrence of diseases. Thus indulgence in Apathya leads to dosha chaya and does not contribute to building of immunity. Here it is noteworthy that apathya/ahita/astamya has to be withdrawn compulsorily as its indulgence in any manner is bound to vitiate the doshas and the thus vitiated doshas have an inherent property of vitiating the dushyas which are in close contact with them resulting in diseases. Thus viruddha dravya is a disease causing agent like apathya/ahita dravya and employing it as a tool in disease prevention is contradictory to the basic concept of disease prevention mentioned in Ayurveda.

Viruddhabhisamskriti in prevention of Nijarogas

Nijarogas are pathological conditions resulting from endogenous causes basically the derangement of tridoshas. Prevention of nijarogas can be achieved by anagataabadha chikitsa or vikara anutpattikara chikitsa⁹ (Prophylactic measures) which imposes a double lock or renders two sided protection to the individual. In a nutshell, adopting healthy lifestyle practices and non-indulgence in the disease causing factors forms the vikara anutpattikara chikitsa. The two fold protection is achieved by

i) Indulgence in healthy practices - Proper nurturing of the body by congenial diet and regimen which is susceptible for deterioration

by viruddha ahara and vihara is the form of dinacharya (daily regimen), ritucharya (seasonal regimen), and rasayana etc. This is similar to the nurturing of a burning lamp by providing oil and wick.

ii) Avoidance of disease-causing factors - protecting the body from exposure to disease causing factors like ahitaravihara. This is similar to the protection of a burning lamp from being put off by the insects or breeze.

Viruddhabhisamskriti is very much identical to first step of vikara anutpattikara chikitsa. Thus viruddhabhisamskriti is primordial prevention which aims at inhibiting the emergence of risk factors in the form of environmental, social and behavioral conditions.

Childhood is a vulnerable period for diseases as the dhatus are in the phase of maturation and the Bala is less¹⁰. Thus, during this phase of growth and development, viruddhabhisamskriti plays the major role in disease prevention.

Nurturing the child with hita ahara and vihara right from birth nourishes the developing dhatus and thereby strengthen the developing immune system. This includes the feeding of shuddha stanya (pure breast milk without dosha vitiation, selection of a right dhatri (wet nurse), introduction of proper weaning foods at the right time, maintenance of agni (power of digestion), timely performance of samskaras (domestic rituals), introduction of prashana dravyas (medicine given in lickable form to newborns) right from birth etc. Thus viruddhabhisamskriti comprises of abhisamskara of the child right from birth with hitaahara i.e. shuddha stanya, hitaachara i.e. samskaras and hita oushadha i.e. prashana.

Keeping away the disease producing factors includes measures like proper performance of jatamatra paricharya (care of newborn), cultivating the habit of taking healthy food and avoiding erroneous eating habits, etc.

Viruddhabhisamskriti forms a part in the healthy child rearing practices and are effective in preventing nija rogas in children.

Viruddhabhisamskriti in prevention of Agantuja Rogas

Agantuja Rogas include the diseases caused by external agents as well the diseases of mind. Causes include bhuta (macro & microorganisms), visha (poison), vayu (vitiating air), agni (fire), and eersha (jealousy), shoka (grief), bhaya (fear), krodha (anger), mana (self-esteem), dwesha (hatred). Diseases caused by bhootopasarga (attack of micro or macro organisms) i.e. infectious diseases form a major portion of agantuja rogas among children. Prevention of agantuja vikaras again includes primordial measures like tyaga of prajnyaparadha (non-indulgence in intellectual blasphemy), indriyopashama (restraint of sense organs), smriti (memory), desha kala atma vinyana (knowledge about place, time and one's own self), sadvritta anuvartana (good conduct). Furthermore hitasevana plays a significant role among all others in the prevention of agantuja rogas.¹¹ abhisamskara of deha and manas by hita ahara, vihara and achara creates an unfavorable environment within, preventing the entry and survival of bhootas in the body. abhisamskara of manas by hitaachara increases dhriti (mental endurance) protecting the

mind from falling prey to mental illnesses. Thus, viruddhabhisamskriti plays a pivotal role in prevention of agantuja rogas as well.

Performance of rakshakarma (protective measures) in neonates as well its continuation in childhood period helps in prevention of bhootopasargaja vyadhis. Sadvrittanuvartana or inculcating good code of conduct from early childhood nurtures the developing psyche of the child and ensures a normal transit at various phases of cognitive development.

Viruddhabhisamskriti – An Ayurvedic method of vaccination?

Vaccination is the process of introducing an antigen (viruddha dravya) into the body to induce an antibody response rendering specific immunity against a particular disease. Vaccination is effective only in the prevention of infectious diseases. Whereas the Ayurvedic method of disease prevention is unique and much different from the modern concept of vaccination, creating a stable environment inside the individual to avert the disease produced from various etiologies. The concept of using a viruddha dravya as an immunizing agent is not tangible in Ayurvedic classics. As against the modern concept of immunization, viruddhabhisamskriti is the use of hita dravyas and rasayana dravyas like suvarna (gold) and loha (Iron) to empower ojus to nullify the effect of disease producing agent¹². The introduction of suvarnaprashana (making the baby lick gold with honey and ghee) to infants at birth and its continuous use for a stipulated period of time undoubtedly supports the above idea. Abhisamskara with suvarna, right from the infancy boosts the innate immunity which in turn helps in regulating and directing the adaptive immunity. Viruddhabhisamskriti and vaccination are two different theories of immunomodulation.

Noteworthy concepts related to viruddhabhisamskriti.

If ahita ahara or vihara has become Okasatmya (homologation due to habitual use) due to its continuous usage, it should be compulsorily withdrawn as it is harmful in due course of time as it is harmful¹³. Viruddha dravya fails to produce the disease in certain circumstances like when it has become okasatmya, when it is less potent, agnibala

(digestive capacity) of the individual is good, is in youth, consumes snigdhaahara (oleaginous food) regularly and indulges in physical exercise regularly¹⁴. Viruddha dravyas can be administered as a medicine in certain disease conditions but its administration has to be withdrawn at the earliest as its long-term use is unsafe¹⁵.

Anything that is not congenial to the body and mind, though habituated should be withdrawn unconditionally as it is hazardous to health. The predisposing factors/ conditions which incapacitate the viruddha dravya, when viruddha dravyas are neither immunizing agents nor immune boosters useful in prevention of diseases; rather they are useful in exceptionally rare conditions for treatment of diseases.

Conclusion

Comprehensive information on viruddhabhisamskriti was obtained from classics based on which the following conclusions were drawn. Viruddhabhisamskriti is abhisamskara of the shareera (body) as well as the manas (mind) with hitaahara (congenial diet) and hitavihara (congenial regimen) to stay healthy physically and mentally. The principle of viruddhabhisamskriti mentioned in Ayurveda is primordial prevention of diseases, promoting a safe environment inside and preventing the possibly emerging risk factors of diseases.

Viruddha dravyas are always unsafe and have adverse effects and Ayurveda does not recommend their use as immune boosters. Approach to disease prevention in Ayurvedic is by hetuvarjana i.e. non indulgence in the cause and by Viruddhabhisamskriti. It aims at preventing Nija Rogas and agantuja rogas by processing the body with ahara, vihara, achara and oushadha which are hita and have rasayana properties. Viruddhabhisamskriti boosts the immune responses without interfering or initiating any pathologic immune responses. Principle of viruddhabhisamskriti cannot be equated to vaccination. Vaccine is an immunizing agent, viruddhabhisamskriti is an immune booster. Vaccination aims at preventing a specific infectious disease whereas viruddhabhisamskriti includes all prevention modalities for diseases of infectious, non-infection and psychological origin. Thus viruddhabhisamskriti is an ancient method of primordial diseases prevention- a comprehensive approach adopted by Ayurveda centuries ago.

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