

NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENTS IN AYURVEDA

Dr. Hirdesh Kumari* & Dr. Murlidhar Paliwal**

*JR-3rd, Department of Samhita and Sanskrit, Faculty of Ayurveda, I.M.S., BHU, Varanasi.

**Associate Professor, Department of Samhita and Sanskrit, Faculty of Ayurveda, I.M.S., BHU, Varanasi.

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ABSTRACT

Any type of measure applied to maintain or bring back the dhatus (body tissues) in 'Samyavastha (equilibrium state)' comes under the purview of chikitsa karma (treatment procedure). Ayurveda has explained every aspect and method of treatment through aushadha (drug), ahara (food) and vihara (conduct/bodily activities). Treatment is of two types- Dravyabhuta (drug therapy) and Adravyabhuta (non-drug or non-pharmacological therapy). Both the types have their importance in different degrees at different places. Synonyms of Bheshaja (medicine) like Pathya, Prayashchitta and Hita also indicates the significance of Adravyabhuta chikitsa. Adravyabhuta chikitsa is advocated for both sharirika rogas (somatic diseases) and mansika rogas (psychological diseases). There is a need to flourish Adravyabhuta chikitsa along with Dravyabhuta chikitsa to get desired and optimum results in different pathological conditions and in maintenance of normal physiological condition. Therefore, various measures of Adravyabhuta chikitsa which have been described in scattered manner in Ayurveda are collected, compiled and discussed in this research paper. Along with this, some other measures which are equally important like Meditation, Yoga and Marma therapy are also briefly mentioned in this paper.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Adravyabhuta, Dravyabhuta, Chikitsa, Non-drug therapy, Non-pharmacological therapy.

Introduction:

Life has always been given much importance from the very beginning i.e. Vedic period, when lot of praises of Sun, Water and Air and other Gods were done due to their healing capacities. Also, various types of ritual activities like yagya etc. were performed for demanding health directly from God. However, as the time passed from vedic period to Samhita period, emphasis of human being shifted from praising God to treating diseases through worldly matters i.e. medicines.

Treatment in *Ayurveda* is none other than establishing/maintaining the tissues of body in *Samyavastha* (equilibrium state). Therefore, any type of activity done for maintaining or bringing the body tissues in 'Samyavastha' comes under the *chikitsa karma*ⁱ (treatment procedure). It is of two types- *Dravyabhuta* (drug therapy) and *Adravyabhuta* (non-drug/ non-pharmacological therapy)ⁱⁱ. Both types of treatment have their importance in different degrees at different places. *Adravyabhuta chikitsa* is based on different parameters like *karana dravya* (*mana, disha, kala*), status of *mansika doshas* (mental humors), interaction between *sharirika* and *mansika doshas*. Non-drug therapy is as much important as drug therapy and this has been justified by the synonyms given for *Bheshaja* (drug) in *Caraka Samhita*, which are- *Pathya, Prayashchitta & Hita*ⁱⁱⁱ. Non-drug therapy for somatic diseases is advised in both the *Daivavyapashraya* (religious rites) and *yuktivyapashraya chikitsa* (rational therapy). In psychological diseases, *Gyana* (spiritual knowledge), *Vigyana* (scriptural knowledge), *Dhairya* (patience), *Smriti* (memory) and *Samadhi* (meditation)^{iv} are advised by *acharya Caraka* which are related to *Adravyabhuta chikitsa*. Looking towards the significance, there is a need to flourish and apply the *Adravyabhuta chikitsa* along with *Dravyabhuta chikitsa* to get better results in different pathological conditions and maintaining normal physiological conditions. This is so because in many diseases, *adravyabhuta chikitsa* plays more significant and major role than *dravyabhuta chikitsa*. For example, in *atisthalya* (obesity) and *prahema roga* (diabetes), ancient scholars have laid more emphasis on increasing physical activity besides indicating drug and diet regimes. However, these non-pharmacological treatments are in different forms like psychological activities, spiritual activities, physical activities or religious activities etc. and have been discussed in this article.

This article is focused on collection and compilation of various non-pharmacological treatment measures from different classics of *Ayurveda* and their related published research articles and other relevant internet data; as well as to interpret and explore its clinical importance in fulfilling both the aims of *Ayurveda* i.e. *Swasthyarakshana* (maintaining health of healthy person) and *Vikaraprashamana* (curing the disease of ill-patient).

Adravyabhuta chikitsa: definition & meaning-

Adravyabhuta chikitsa i.e. non-drug therapy, is defined as the procedure of treatment which is done through *Upayas* (measures) which are *Amurta-bhava* (formless entities). This includes *Bhaya darshana* (creating terror), *Vismapana* (surprising), *Vismarana* (forgetfulness), *Kshobhana* (agitation), *Harshana* (exhilaration),

Vadha (threatening for murder), *Bandhana* (binding), *Swapna* (inducing sleep), *Samvahana* (gentle massage) etc^v.

Adravabhuta chikitsa in Ayurveda:

Three types of treatment procedures discussed in *Ayurveda* are- *Daivavyapashraya*, *Yuktivyapashraya* and *Sattvavajaya*. Out of these three measures, *Sattvavajaya* and *daivavyapashraya chikitsa* includes *adravyabhuta* measures abundantly. Sage *Sushruta* while describing the 4 *Nigraha Hetu* i.e. four factors which should be duly employed in order to successfully cope up with a disease, which are *sanshodhana* (purification), *sanshamana* (pacification), *ahara* and *achara* (regimes of diet & conduct), included *adravyabhuta chikitsa* in the form of *Achara*. Two procedures of *Langhana* (lightening therapy) are given by *Vagbhata* i.e. *shodhana* and *shamana*. In this, out of 7 types, 5 types of *shamana* procedures, i.e. *kshuda* (hunger), *trit* (thirst), *vyayama* (exercise), *atapa* (exposure to sunshine) and *maruta* (wind) are *adravyabhuta* forms of treatment. Similarly, while describing 18 types of *Upshayas* (homologatory sign), sage *Chakrapani* considered the importance of *adravyabhuta chikitsa* and mentioned it under all *Viharaja upshayas*.

The measures related to non-pharmacological treatment for both health maintenance and curing of diseases are being discussed here.

1. For *Swasthya-rakshana* i.e. maintenance and promotion of health-
 - a) For maintaining normalcy of *sharirika doshas* (body humors):
 - Observance of non-suppressible urges^{vi}.
 - Observance of *Brahmacharya*- Celibacy is considered as best regime causing longevity^{vii}.
 - *Sankalpo Vrishyanam*- Determination as a best aphrodisiac^{viii}.
 - *Nivratti pushtikaranam*- Freedom from liabilities is considered best among those producing nourishment of body^{ix}.
 - *Vayu Pranasangyapradanahetunam*- Fresh air for giving vital strength^x.
 - *Vyayama Sthairyakaranam*- Exercise in bringing firmness in body^{xi}.
 - Wholesome bodily activities described for each seasonal regime.
 - *Indriyajayo Nandanam*- Self control among the promoters of delightfulness^{xii}.
 - *Vidya Brimhanam*- knowledge among the promoters of both physical and mental nourishment^{xiii}.
 - b) For maintaining *manasika doshas* (psychological humors):
 - *Prashamo Pathyanam*- Tranquility is considered the best as a wholesome regime^{xiv}.
 - *Harsha Prinananam*- Cheerful mind best in bringing delightfulness^{xv}.
 - *Saumanasya Garbhadharnanam*- pleasant mind in helping retention of conception^{xvi}.
 - *Achara Rasayana*- If a person possess qualities like truthfulness, free from anger, regularly offering prayers to God, cows, priests, teachers, elders; etc, practice *Rasayana* therapy, then he acquire all the benefits of *rasayana* therapy^{xvii}.
 - *Indriyajayo Nandanam*- Self control among the promoters of delightfulness.
 - *Tatva-avabodho Harshananam*- understanding of truth among the promoters of happiness^{xviii}.
 - *Brahmacharya Ayananam*- Abstinence from the sexual act among those leading to salvation^{xix}.
 - To suppress urges like *manasika* and *vachika vega* (mental and verbal urges)^{xx}.
 - *Sadvritta*- observance of good conducts/noble deeds^{xxi}.
2. For *Vikara-prashamana* i.e. cure of ill patients-
 1. In treatment of *sharirika rogas* (somatic diseases):
 - 8 *Niragni sweda* (fomentation without fire) out of 10 types^{xxii}.
 - *Harsha* (exhilaration), *Pravahana* (evacuation), *Kala* (time) and *Bhaya* (fear) are considered as *Upayantra* (accessory instruments)^{xxiii}.
 - Wholesome activities mentioned for the treatment of *Atisthula* and *Atikrisha* (obese & emaciated person)^{xxiv} i.e. more indulging in vigil, sexual act, physical and mental exercises; and sleep, joy, comfortable bed, abstinence from anxiety etc., respectively.
 - *Nidra* (sleep) in treatment of obese and emaciated person^{xxv}.

- All types of *Langhana* (lightening therapy) except *shodhana* (purification procedures) and *deepana-pachana* (digestive measures)^{xxvi}.
 - Various regimes described for the alleviation of *vata, pitta & kapha doshas*^{xxvii}.
 - *Vajikarana vihara* (aphrodisiac conducts/ regimes)^{xxviii}.
 - *Langhana* (fasting) in *Jwara chikitsa* (fever)^{xxix}.
 - Use of cold environment in patients of *Raktapitta* (bleeding from different parts of body)^{xxx}.
 - Exercise and abolition of causative factors for diabetic persons^{xxxi}.
 - Swimming frequently against river current, indulging in physical exercise and walking over ground covered with gravels, in order to alleviate *kapha dosha*, is advised in patients of *Urustambha* (spasticity of thighs)^{xxxii}.
 - In case of epidemics, it is advised to change the place^{xxxiii}.
 - Activities to be avoided by *kushtha* patient (skin diseases) like discarding unwanted hairs and nails, performing physical exercise, avoiding meat, wine and woman^{xxxiv}.
 - Special regimes for patients of *prameha* (diabetes) who have no money such as long journey by foot, plough fields^{xxxv}.
2. For treating *manasika rogas* (psychological diseases):
- *Vishnu Sahasra nama patha* in *Jwara chikitsa* (chanting name of Lord *Vishnu* 1000 times in fever)^{xxxvi}.
 - *Bandha* (arresting), *aveshana* (driving out), *pujana* (worship) in the patients suffering from *Bhutabhisanga Jwara* (fever due to invasion of evil spirits)^{xxxvii}.
 - Ritual activities like *Yagya* (sacrifice) in *Rajayakshma*^{xxxviii}.
 - *Mantra* chanting and other religious activities in treatment of *Agantuja Unmada* (exogenous insanity)^{xxxix}.
 - *Ashwasana* (consoling), *bhaya* (terror), *Trasana* (sudden terror), *Paraspara pratidwandwa chikitsa* (treatment by mutually contradictory psychic factors) and *Rudra pooja* (lord Shiva worship) helps in curing the ailment in the patients of *Nija Unmada* (endogenous insanity)^{xl}.
 - Understandings, patience, memory and the power of concentration are instilled by friends in the patient of *Atattvabhinivesha* (psychic perversion)^{xli}.
 - Exhilarating and consoling the patients of *Bhayaja* and *Shokaja Atisara* (psychological diarrhea), respectively, for their cure^{xlii}.
 - *Mantra* chanting for curing poisonous cases and consoling patients in case of suspicious poison (*Shanka visha*)^{xliii}.
 - Indulging in factors like music, pleasing and delightful companions and psycho-therapy to overcome alcoholism^{xliv}.

Along with these, some other measures of non-drug therapy which are also the part of *Ayurveda* are Meditation, *Yoga*, *Marma chikitsa* and psychological counseling. They play important and equivalent role as a *Dravyabhuta chikitsa* in both maintaining health and curing various ailments.

Discussion:

Adravyabhuta chikitsa or measures are non-pharmacological approaches of treatment being practiced in various forms. Though they do not comprise any substance, yet they have their impact on the body and its functions.

Measures described for maintenance of physical health indirectly maintain the *doshas* of body in equilibrium state which results in *dhatu-samyak*. Clearance of Non suppressible urges prevents aggravation of *doshas* in body. *Suramy Suresh et al*, have highlighted the complications in females due to *vegadharana* (suppression of natural urges) and has emphasized on their preventive aspects revealing the significance of *adravyabhuta chikitsa*.^{xlv} *Bramhacharya* (celibacy) leads for preservation of *shukra dhatu* (semen). For the maintenance of *Sama mansa*...etc (physical health) *shukra* conservation is required because *dhatu-kshaya* occurs in two ways-*anuloma kshaya* and *pratiloma kshaya*. This *pratiloma kshaya* can only be prevented by proper and controlled sexual activity which will finally result in healthy body and long life.^{xlvi} *Nivritti* (avoidance of unnecessary labour and indulgence) may cause nourishment of body tissues due to decreased catabolic processes in body. Exercise makes the body components healthy through the proper metabolism because by practicing *vyayama, agni* (digestive fire) of body become good and strength and compactness of muscles increases so much that even enemies will not be able to defeat him.^{xlvii} *Rasayana dravyas*

(rejuvenating substances) make the *dhatu* and *dhatuvaha srotas* (channels) of body healthy predominantly. These *dhatu*s are correlated with the body tissues on which our body sustains. Different types of dosha accumulation and dosha aggravation takes place in different seasons. According to this phenomenon, different types of regimen are described in different seasons so that the aggravation of *dosha* can be prevented.

Measures described for maintenance of mental health promotes the *sattva guna* among the mental attributes. It helps in prevention of various psychological problems and diseases. These measures also prevent various physical problems because derangement of mental humors also may cause derangement in bodily humors i.e. *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.^{xlviii} Suppression of suppressible urges results in predominance of *sattva* and normal stage of *raja* and *tama guna* in mind. *Indriyavijaya* (self control) and *prashama* (tranquility) means, performing only wholesome functions i.e. *samyakyoga* of *indriya* (balanced association of senses with their objects). It results in equilibrium state of bodily humors and promotion of *sattva guna*. *Prinana karma* (nourishing action) is stated as a function of *rasa dhatu* and *harsha* (pleasure) is a character of *rasa/twaksara purusha* (person having excellence of *rasa-dhatu*).^{xlix} It indicates that the pleasure is the result of healthy *rasa dhatu* and vice-verse. *Saumanasya* (pleasant state of mind) is an important factor for *Garbhadharana* (conceiving). Because, as described in *samhitas*, psychological factors also acts as *Vajikarana* (aphrodisiac factors). It indicates that positive psychological factors may influence the formation of healthy sperm and ova resulting in conception. All the measures described in *Achara Rasayana* (rejuvenation effect of good conducts) are advocated to increase *sattva guna* and also to improve the *daivakarma*.

For the treatment of diseases occurring in body, various measures are followed to maintain the *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala* (humors, tissues and metabolic products) of body in equilibrium state. 8 types of fomentations without fire are described in *Samhitas* for just getting the effect of sweating without using any substance involved in *dravyabhuta swedana karma* and equivalent result is obtained. Exercise suggested in various diseases like obesity makes the *agni* and *dhatu*s of body healthy by which disease can be cured easily. Sleep, along with diet and celibacy, are the supporting factors for body called as *upastambha* (sub-pillers). Celibacy is very beneficial for body tissues and sleep is a body nourishing factor as proper sleep makes the tissues of body healthy due to increase in *prakrita shleshma* (natural *kapha*). All type of lightening therapies except *shodhana karma* and *deepana-pachana* are non-pharmacological measures which cause increase in *agni* and decrease *ama-dosha* in body. Various procedures like sleeping in cool place alleviates *pitta dosha*, *plavana* (swimming) alleviates *kapha dosha* etc. while performing these activities, properties opposite to properties of increased *dosha*, develop in body. But for different condition of aggravated *dosha*, different *karma* has to be done. In treatment of fever, fasting causes *ama-pachana* (digestion) and *agni-varhdhana* (increase in digestive fire). In *raktapitta*, use of cold environment increases *gunas* which are opposite to *gunas* of *pitta dosha*. Many researches have shown that exercise plays a crucial role in treatment of type 2 diabetes. Exercise not only improves the blood glucose control, but also improves the insulin sensitivity and restores the associated complications such as cardiovascular damage. *Srijit Das et al* in his research study have explored that various types of exercises viz. aerobic, resistance, *yoga*, endurance type etc. showed beneficial effect in type 2 diabetes mellitus.¹

Ayurvedic psychiatry is full of non-drug therapies which act through *Prabhava* (specific effect) and by enhancing the *sattva guna* of *mana*. Fever is also caused by *daivaprakopa* whose effect can be minimized by worship like *Vishnu pooja*. The effect of *yagya*, *pooja*, *bali*, *mantra* etc. is not directly observed but they act due to *Prabhava*. *Ashwasana*, *bhaya* and *trasana-chikitsa* are advised in different diseases due to *vata dosha* which ultimately effects *pitta* and *kapha dosha* and the person may becomes normal in psychological functions. In the case of insanity, these activities might be able to suppress the hyperactivity or stimulate the hypo-activity of *doshas* through the control of *vata dosha*. Some diseases like *Atisara* (diarrhea) may occur due to *bhaya* and *shoka*. It can be managed by such procedures which can alleviates mental status of patient and thereby *vatadi dosha* becomes normal as *mansika* and *sharirika bhavas* affect each other as quoted by *acharyas* (scholars of *Ayurveda*).

Apart from all these, *nidana parivarjana* (avoiding causative factors) is a very important *adravyabhuta* treatment procedure which helps in both maintenance & promotion of health along with cure of diseases. For example, different regimes have been mentioned for each season. If one doesn't consume aggravating factors of *dosha* of a particular season, his *doshas* remain in normal and balanced state and thus no disease occurs. While, during treatment of a disease, *nidana parivarjana* prevents further elevation of *doshas* and support in quick relief from disease.

Meditation i.e. *Dhyana*, described by all *acharyas* for *manasika bhavas*, is one of its important treatment measures. It brings about the tranquility in mind by increasing *sattva guna* and alleviates mental humors (*raja* and *tama*) along with bodily humors. *Yoga*, which has been explored in *Patanjali yoga sutra*, is also a part of *Ayurveda*. *Ashtanga Yoga* i.e. *Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi*; all are described in *Ayurveda*. *Yama, Niyama* and *Pratyahara* are described in the form of *Sadvritta*; *Asana* and *Pranayama* in the form of *Vyayama*; and *Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi* as the treatment measures of mental disorders.

Marma therapy which has not been described in detail in *Ayurveda*, but as an important therapy it has been explored in present era by many *Ayurvedic* physicians. It is based on the healing-touch concept of *Ayurvedic* science, which is mainly dependent on 107 sensitive points (*marma* points) in the human body for curing various ailments. All these points are connected with brain and are pressed to stimulate senses. Besides curing various ailments, this therapy is quite effective in preventive aspects too, making a person to live a healthy life and strengthening his immune system.

All these 107 *marma* points are categorized in 5 types of *marma* viz. *mansa marma, snayu marma, asthi marma, sandhi marma* and *sira marma*.^{li} These *marmas* are related to all body parts. Although specific *yogasana* and *pranayama* are indicated for their effect on specific organ or organ system, however the *marma* points related to these organs themselves get stimulated and results in desired effect. These *yogasana* and *pranayama* bring about stretch, pressure, vibration or rhythmic movement of the *marma* points resulting in their stimulation and leading to normalcy of physiological functions of their related organs. Thus influences the body and mind and their normal physiology through stimulation of these specific *marma* points.^{lii} However, in *marma* therapy, these *marma* points are manually stimulated to bring about the desired effect. This reveals that in *yoga* the *marma* points are stimulated indirectly through rhythmic body movements, while in *marma* therapy, they are directly stimulated by manual compression.

It is always kept in mind to educate the patient about do's and don'ts in that disease while prescribing him medicines. These do's and don'ts refer to wholesome and unwholesome food and conducts or activities which involves both physical and psychological factors. These are indicated according to the *doshas* vitiated in that disease and the *prakriti* of the patient. However, psychological counseling is the part of do's and don'ts in which patient is educated about the disease. In this, mental status of the patient i.e. *sattva* is focused and examined and he/she is educated to have positive attitude towards curing of disease and avoid negative attitude about its severity as it has been stated by *Caraka* that *vishadogavardhananam* and *harshah-prinananam*. Along with this, *Caraka* has also stated that the disease of a patient having *pravara-sattva* recovers quickly as compared to patients of *avara-sattva*. Also, body and mind follows and influences each other i.e. any kind of change in mental status results in both physiological as well as psychological variation from normalcy.

Mantra refers to instrument of thought, speech, sacred text or speech, a prayer or song of praise, a *vedic* hymn, a mystical verse, consultation, resolution, counsel, advice, etc.^{liii} These meanings of '*mantra*' again reveals that *mantra chikitsa* is not limited only to the chanting of *vedic* or sacred hymns, rather it also involves psychological counseling and convincing the patient towards a specific thought. Thus, *mantra chikitsa* involves both, chanting of mystical verses or name of God as mentioned in *jvara chikitsa* and *visha chikitsa*; and counseling of patient giving him a resolution to have positive attitude towards cure of disease or continuous reminding of positive thoughts by patient.

The meanings of *yagya* are worship, devotion, praise, offerings, oblation and sacrifice.^{liv} The 5 types of *yagya* viz. *bhuta-yagya, manushya-yagya, pitra-yagya, deva-yagya* and *brahma-yagya*^{lv}, reveals that *yagya karma* is not only related to God and religious activities but in broader sense other kind of sacrifices and devotional activities too. However, the religious activities are confined to praising God and oblations etc. These activities actually promote and increase the *sattva guna* i.e. the positive attitude of the person which helps in cure towards curing of disease. They act through *prabhava* or in scientific terminology, the cosmic rays of different planets (*graha*) are influenced by such kind of religious activities.

Conclusion:

1. Non-pharmacological treatment is one of the important measures in the field of treatment procedures. All ancient scholars have laid emphasis on both the *achara* and *vihara*, as causative factors as well as treatment measure too.
2. These measures influence body and mind; and both these body and mind are affected by each other. Thus, while treating bodily disease, psychological counseling is always done; and in psychological disorder, as body physiology is also disturbed so respective treatment is provided.

3. These non-pharmacological measures act through both *prabhava* and *abhava*. *Langhana karma*, sleep prohibition in obese, *nidana parivarjana* in all diseases are the methods which function through *Abhava* factor. All other methods like *Mantra* chanting, exercise, *sadvritta* (right conducts), *yagya*, worship of Gods, *ashwasana* (consolation) etc act through *Prabhava* factor.

4. It has been found that *nidana parivarjana* and psychological counseling are the most important which are needed to be introduced in every patient because in both kinds of diseases whether somatic or psychological, when the disease is chronic or severe, the patient's mental status deteriorates. So it becomes necessary to counsel the patient and bring positive attitude in him for quick recovery from disease. Also, *nidana parivarjana* is one of the important measures which hampers and stops the further progression of disease.

Therefore, if *adravyabhuta chikitsa* is introduced as and when needed along with *dravyabhuta chikitsa* in treatment procedure, then definitely *dhatu-samyak* is achieved which is the state of health.

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