

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFESTYLE FACTORS AND ANORECTAL DISORDERS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is science of life that aims to maintain an individual's normal health and treat various disorders. Appropriate *Aahara* (Dietary habits) and *Vihara* (Lifestyle) plays a vital role in maintaining normal health and also in treatment of various disorders along with the use of medication. In today's era with rapid economic development there is an increase in irregular and inappropriate dietary habits and lifestyle, which are major reason for increase in a sedentary lifestyle and disturbed digestion (Due to *Mandagni*) leading to occurrence of *Gudagata Rogas* (Anorectal disorders) like *Bhagandara* (Fistula-in-ano), *Arsha* (Haemorrhoids), *Parikartika* (fissure-in-ano), *Guda Kandu* (Pruritis ani) etc. There disorders reoccur after sometime even after

surgical intervention due to inappropriate *Aahara* (dietary habits) and *Vihara* (Daily routine) of patients, so it's very important to educate patients regarding *Aahara* and *Vihara*. In this article an effort is made to highlight a disciplined protocol in view of ancient *Acharyas* regarding appropriate *Aahara* and *Vihara* for a disease- free society.

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned by Acharya Charka, the first and foremost aim of Ayurveda is to maintain overall well- being of a healthy person (preventive approach), and also treatment of diseases (curative approach).^[1] It is greatly emphasized that “prevention is better than cure”, which is relevant even in current times. *Aahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya* are three basic pillars of life^[2] as described by *Acharyas*, so they should be followed by everyone, but in this modern era, there is lot of competition in each and every field. People are very conscious about

securing their future and in achieving this people are becoming very less conscious towards their health, which is a main reason for deterioration of their health. Due to lack of time and increased westernization of food habits, people prefer to consume easy to made and easily available food i.e., junk food, which is very low in nutritive value and contain high amount of calories and moreover, it is also very spicy and oily. Along with this, long-time sitting work, day and night shift leading to indecorous and unsatisfied sleep, stressful working environment are the common situation of most of the individuals. So, due to aforesaid reasons people are following irregular and inappropriate *Aahara* (dietary habits) and *Vihara* i.e., improper sleep cycle (*Nidra*) and *Brahmacharya*. According to Ayurveda the root cause for all the diseases is directly or indirectly related to *Agni* (digestion) only.^[3,4] *Aahara*, we eat either has *Dosha Prakopaka* or *Dosha Shamaka* action on the human body, so all these unhealthy habits cause vitiation of *Doshas* causing *Mandagni* and vitiation of *Apana Vayu* leading to accumulation of *Mala* and vitiated *Dosha* (*Sthana Sanshrya*) in *Gudavali*,^[5] which leads to the manifestation of *Gudagata Rogas* (Anorectal disorders). Moreover, as *Guda* itself is a part of *Annavaha Srotas* (gastrointestinal tract) so it will be affected more by pathologies occurring due to *Annavaha Srotas Dushti*. Some Common *Gudagata Rogas* are *Bhagandara* (fistula-in-ano), *Arsha* (haemorrhoids), *Parikartika* (fissure-in-ano), *Guda Vidradhi* (perianal abscess), *Guda Kandu* (pruritus ani), etc. The prevalence of these disorders is increasing nowadays. Their prevalence rate is still higher than seen in clinical practice, as people seems to avoid seeking medical attention until it become chronic or complicated. The prevalence rate of anorectal diseases varies, with haemorrhoids being commonest (34-62%) and Fissure-in-ano (14-36%), followed by Fistula-in- Ano, Perianal abscess and Pruritus ani, mostly affecting the age group 18-45 years.^[6] Moreover, among these two main diseases i.e., *Arsha* and *Bhagandara* are included in *Ashta Mahagada Vyadhi*.^[7] described by Acharyas indicating the importance of *Aahara* and *Vihara* in their prevention and as well as in their treatment. Along with prevention, appropriate *Aahara* and *Vihara* will play a crucial role in early recovery in postoperative patients also. Common Anorectal disorders are as follows:

***Arsha* (Haemorrhoids)**

According to Acharya Vagbhata when *Mansa Ankura* occur at the opening of *Guda Marga* (anus) leading to obstruction in *Gudamarga* (anal canal) and troubles the life of a person like an enemy is called as *Arsha*.^[8] In contemporary science, it can be correlated with haemorrhoids, which are defined as a distension of the normal vascular haemorrhoidal cushions, which occurs due to back pressure on the anal venule consequent upon straining at

stool, prolonged sitting in washroom, lifting heavy weight, etc. Further over purgation and diarrhoea of colitis, dysentery, enteritis, etc. can also aggravate latent haemorrhoids as with each bowel movement it would stretch the mucosal suspensory ligament.^[9] According to Acharya Charaka, due to the *Nidana Sevana* as described below, there occurs *Mandagni* and *Malas* get accumulated in *Guda*, which leads to vitiation of *Doshas* especially *Apana Vayu* which is responsible for physiological function of *Guda* when present in balanced state. So, its vitiation will cause improper functioning of *Apana Vayu* leading to manifestation of disease.^[4] Acharyas have described its *Nidana*.^[10,11] (causative factors) in details as follows- they can be grouped as

- **Aahara related:** Eating of excessive *Guru* (heavy to digest), *Madhura* (sweet), *Sheeta* (cold), *Abhishyandi* (which causes obstruction in the *Srotas*), *Vidahi* (which causes burning sensation) and eating again before previous meal is digested, *Pramitaashana* (intake of small quantity of food and intake of unwholesome food), excess intake of *Masha* (black gram), *Ekshurasa* (sugarcane juice), *Kilata* (cheese), *Sankeerna Anna* (food prepared by the mixture of different items, like rice and meat), intake of *Mandaka* (immature, thick curd), drinking less water throughout day, etc.
- **Vihara related:** *Ati Vyayamata* (doing excessive exercise), *Ati Vyavaya* (excess of sexual activity), *Divaswapana* (sleeping during day time), *Utkatasana* (sitting in improper posture), *Vishama* and *Kathina Aasana* (sitting on irregular and hard surfaces), *Sukha Aasana* (habitually resorting of seating). Frequent application of cold water, *Trunadi Gharshanata* (use of rags, clods of grass, etc. for rubbing the anus), *Ati Pravahana* (excessive straining during defecation), forcible attempts for passing flatus, urine and stool, *Vega Vinighrahata* (suppression of natural urges), etc.
- **Others:** Excess intake of *Sneha*, *Asanshodhanata* (persons not undergoing *Shodhana karma*), *Basti Vibhramata* (wrong application of *Basti Karma*), etc

Bhagandara (Fistula-in-ano): The disease in which *Bhaga*, *Guda* and *Basti Pradesha* becomes *Vidaarita* is known as *Bhagandara*.^[12] *Pidaka* (boil) occurring in perianal region, when in *Apakvaavastha* is called *Pidaka* only but in *Pakvaavastha* it causes *Bhagandara*.^[13] In contemporary science it can be correlated with *Fistula-in-ano*, which is defined as an inflammatory track which has an external opening (Secondary opening) in the perianal skin

and an internal opening (primary opening) in the anal canal or rectum.^[14] Acharyas have described its *Nidana*.^[13,15] as follows -

Kṛimi (which can be correlated with any infection caused by micro-organism or Crypto glandular infection due to poor hygiene), *Asthishalya* or ingestion of foreign bodies, *Ativyavaya*, *Pravahaṇa* (straining during act of defecation), *Utkatasana* (sitting in improper posture), *Ashvapṛshtagamana* (horse riding /vehicle driving for long period), *Hastipṛshtagamana* (riding on elephant for long period), *Kathina Aasana* (sitting on hard surfaces) and all the causative factors (*Nidana*) of *Arsha* are also responsible for causing *Bhagandara*. Among these many can be correlated with prolonged sitting as now days people spend most of time in doing their office works in continued sitting position and then travelling again in sitting position.

***Parikartika* (Fissure-in-ano)**

The word *Pari* means 'all over' and *Kartika* is derived from '*Krita*', which means to cut, so *Parikartika* means "to cut circumferentially" or "to cut all around".^[16] It has been described as a complication of *Virechana* and *Basti* by Acharyas.^[17,18] having symptoms i.e., severe (sharp cutting) pain and burning sensation in *Guda*. In contemporary science it can be correlated with fissure-in-ano, which is defined as a longitudinal split in the anoderm of the anal canal starting just below the dentate line extending to the anal verge.^[19] It is caused by constipation (most common), persistent diarrhoea and due to other diseases like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Aforesaid diseases occur as a result *Mandagni* caused due to inappropriate and irregular *Aahara* and *vihara*. Moreover, it is noticed in Shalya OPD that symptoms in these diseases reoccur even after giving best treatment (conservative and surgical) due to continued inappropriate and irregular food habits and lifestyle by patients. So, it's important to make them aware about *Aahara* and *Vihara* as described by Acharyas.

Aahara is not just limited to just eating food, instead, it includes various other aspects also, which are described by Acharya Charaka under *Ashta Aahara Vidhi Visheshayana*. These are ignored by people now days leading to manifestation of various disorders.

Ashta aahara vidhi visheshayana^[20]

These includes *Prakriti* (natural qualities of food), *Karan* (processing of food), *Samyoga* (combination of food), *Rashi* (quantity of food), *Desha* (habitat), *Kala* (time and seasonal variation), *Upayoga Samstha* (rules for eating), *Upayokta* (consumer).

- 1) ***Prakriti***^[21] means natural properties of various food materials like *Laghu*, *Guru* etc. Healthy individuals and patients should consume food keeping in mind these properties of food like food materials having *Guru* properties can be consumed by persons having *Tikshana Agni* (good digestion) and can be eaten in morning as people remain active throughout day, which further aids in digestion but now days people don't think of whatever they are eating will be heavy or light to digest leading to disturbed digestion.
- 2) ***Karana***^[22] means the processing/refining of food materials leading to changes in their inherent properties. It can be done via various processes like washing, cleaning, application of heat, Cooking, etc. It is important as by processing, e.g., *Vrihi* which is *Guru* (heavy to digest) becomes *Laghu* (light) after boiling.^[23] Similarly, other food items should be used after going through any of these procedures as per requirement like fruits or vegetables consumed nowadays should be used after washing them properly and can be taken after they are little steamed as it will aid in digestion process making them easy to digest.
- 3) ***Samyoga***^[24] means mixing/adding of two or more substances. In today's era people are more focused on trying new combinations of different food items and in doing that they overlook that whether the ingredients are compatible with each other and beneficial to health or not. Acharyas have described the concept of *Viruddha Aahara*^[25] very well, which tells about the incompatible food items and their harmful effect on the body. So, people should consume different combinations of food substances after making sure that those ingredients are compatible with each other or not and will have some add on effect rather than having opposite effect.
- 4) ***Rashi***^[26] means quantity of food to be consumed. It can be determined/decided on basis of *Agni* of any person, on the basis of *Prakriti* of food to be consumed. On the basis of *Prakriti*, *Aahara* can be grossly divided into two types i.e., *Guru Aahara* and *Laghu Aahara*. *Guru Aahara Dravyas* have dominance of *Prithvi* and *Jala Mahabhoota*; that's why they pacify the *Agni* if taken in large amounts^[27] so they should be taken one third or half of the *Kukshi*^[28] (total quantity of food required). On the other hand, *Laghu*

Aahara Dravyas have dominance of *Vayu* and *Agni Mahabhoota*, which intensify the *Agni*,^[27] so they are least harmful and can be eaten up to satiety,^[28] but they should also be taken in appropriate quantity and appropriate way. It is important as *Aahara* consumed in proper quantity doesn't vitiate *Dosha* and helps in increasing one's life-span, passes down the bowels easily, does not disturb the *Agni* (digestion), and gets digested without discomfort.^[29]

- 5) *Desha*^[30] means place relating to growth as well as distribution of the substances. It is important as food substances differ in quality due to differences in soil and climate in which they grow. *Aahara* should be taken according to *Desha* i.e., a person should take diet grown in his area of livelihood as it will be more beneficial to him because his *Deha Prakriti* and *Agni* are made such by nature that food substance grown in the same *Bhoomi Desha* which is native *Desha* for the person suits him more as compared to others. But nowadays in search of new taste people are more focused on eating outside food materials leading to improper digestion.
- 6) *Kala*^[31] means suitable timing for taking meal i.e., one should consume meal after previously taken meal is digested. It is of great importance as food eaten at an appropriate time increases taste, satisfaction and its nutrition value increases, gets digested easily and doesn't vitiate *Doshas* present in balanced state. In addition to this, one should take *Aahara* according to the condition of the disease also.
- 7) *Upayoga samstha*^[32] means the rules of eating like one should eat *Ushana* (warm), *Snigdha* (unctuous) food in appropriate quantity, one should eat after the previously consumed food is digested, one should eat food which is suitable to one's constitution or habit and should be consumed in a favourable place, one should not eat too fast, too slow and while talking or laughing, and should eat with full concentration. These factors have many benefits like *Ushana* (warm) and freshly cooked food increases tastes, stimulates the *Agni* (digestive process), gets digested easily, normalizes functions of *Vata Dosha* and reduces *Kapha Dosha* (which causes *Mandagni* leading to improper digestion).^[33] *Snigdha Aahara* in addition to aforesaid benefits, provides firmness to sense organs, increases strength, and enhances complexion.^[34] If food is eaten after the previous meal is well digested, then it doesn't vitiate *Doshas*, stimulate *Agni*, increases appetite, eructation is pure, and enhances one's life without afflicting any *Dhatu*.^[35] On the other hand if one eats before earlier meal is digested, there occurs mixing of food with

undigested food leading to *Mandagni* and vitiation of all the *Doshas*. One should not eat too quickly as it may lead to passage of food into the wrong passage i.e., into trachea leading to choking of respiratory tract, person will not be able to ascertain the qualities and taste of the food or any defects in the food.^[36] One should not eat too slow, because by eating too slow one doesn't get satisfaction, eats much, and the food becomes cold leading to irregular digestion.^[37] One should eat with utmost concentration on the food, without talking or laughing as by taking food while talking, laughing or with mind elsewhere, he will have same effects as occurring by eating too fast.^[38] These are very common nowadays as people prefer consuming food along with using phone, TV or while doing other works

Upayokta^[39] means user who consumes food, *Satmya* (habituation) depends on him. One should eat with due consideration to self, i.e., knowing one's own constitution and tastes. One should take food that is suitable to him.

The characteristic of the eight factors mentioned above is that they are inter-dependent. So, one should consume food after gaining a thorough understanding of the food substances from these eight aspects for it to be wholesome. Food that is liked by person but is unwholesome and likely to result in unpleasant consequences should not be used by ignorance or carelessness. Along with these factors, Acharya have also described that a person should divide the total capacity of his stomach into three parts i.e., one third of the portion should be allocated to solid food substances, one third to liquid food substances and the remaining one third should be left for the (movement of) *Doshas*.^[40] Acharyas have also told that even when food is taken in the right quantity, does not get digested if the mental state of the *Upayokta* is riddled with anxiety, grief, fear, anger, or restlessness and irritability due to lack of sleep, so one should avoid these.^[41,42] Like *Aahara*, *Vihara* is equally important in prevention and treatment of these anorectal disorders.

It can be understood in aspects of *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Nidra* (sleeping habit) etc. In *Dincharya* one should wake up in *Bhrama Muhurat*^[43] (around 90 minutes before sunrise) and drink *Ushana Jala* (luke warm water) after waking up in the morning^[44] as it will aid in act of defecation by increasing peristaltic movement and increasing softness of faeces. One should practice *Vyayama* (exercise) daily as per their physical constitution as if done in appropriate time and appropriate amount, it enhances the strength of the body, increases digestive fire and balances *Doshas*^[45] one should do walking after taking meal specially

during night. One should never suppress natural urges like micturition, defecation, etc., unless it is emergency. Along with proper daily routine proper sleep cycle is equally important for maintaining *Doshas* in balanced state and for good digestion. Acharyas have told that one should avoid sleeping in day time and should not remain awake in night^[46] as sleeping in day time increases *Kapha Dosh*^[45] which causes *Mandagni* and causes obstruction in *Srotas*. On the other hand, remaining awake in night cause *Vata Dushti*,^[47] which can cause dysfunction in its normal functions and it is also told that *Dushita Vata Dosh* causes *Vata, Mutra* and *Purisha Sanga*^[47] (one of the major causes for anorectal disorders). One can sleep half the time of his normal night sleep duration, if he was not able to sleep in night due to any reason.^[48] However, in *Grishma Ritu* one can sleep in day time.^[49] (if required). In the end it is of great importance that one should do above mentioned activities like eating food, doing *Vyayama*, Sleeping, etc., according to various seasons as described by Acharyas i.e., one should follow *Ritucharya*.

DISCUSSION

Aahara is a part of our daily routine so along with the quality, quantity, and taste of food, if we concentrate on the right way of taking food and the regimens related to *Aahara* described by Acharyas, good health can be achieved and maintained by preventing manifestation of diseases. Aforesaid *Mandagni* is root cause of all these diseases occurring due to faulty food habits and ignoring the various regimens described by Acharyas in context of diet. Now days people are more into habits of eating fast foods, spicy food, *Viruddha Aahara* (eating food items of contrary potency together, etc.), *Vishamashana* (taking food irregularly or without following a particular time), *Adhyashana* (eating before digestion of previous food), taking heavy meals in dinner and light meals in breakfast, contrary to what is described by Acharyas like one should not be habitual of eating dried meat, dried vegetables, *Kurchika* (coagulated milk), *Kilata* (cheese), *Dadhi* (curd), *Masha* (black- gram) and *Yavaka* (wild-barley) as these are heavy to digest but people prefer eating these things in night meal now a days, instead of preferring seasonal fruits and vegetables people are eating preserved fruits and vegetables of other seasons and takes pride in doing so as a status symbol, etc. So, it's important to educate healthy individuals as well as patients regarding proper dietary regimes and in this context, the concept of *Ashta Aahara Vidhi Visheshaytana* is most ideal now days. Moreover, people should focus on taking food substances as a whole based on their natural properties instead of taking them thinking of calories only which is very popular now a days. Acharyas have described some daily consumable food items like *Shashtika* (rice), *Shali*

(variety of rice), *Mudga* (green gram), rock-salt, *Aamalaki* (Indian-gooseberry), *Yava* (barley), milk, ghee, and honey. So, one should follow these in the daily food regimen, which maintains health as well as prevent onset of diseases. Along with healthy diet, healthy lifestyle is equally important. One should follow aforesaid *Vihara* and avoid above- described *Nidana* responsible for occurrence of anorectal disorders, which are very common in today's generation like one should avoid sleeping in day time, should avoid spending more time in washroom while defecation as prolonged sitting will increase distension of vascular haemorrhoidal cushions, one should not strain while defecation, one should avoid over exertion during *Vyayama* and should do regularly exercise as per his body constitution, one should not sleep just after consuming food, one should remain relaxed as discussed anxiety, anger, or restlessness etc. directly affect digestion, one should avoid prolonged sitting while doing daily routine work (avoid sedentary lifestyle). Along with avoiding these one should consume adequate amount of water in morning and day time, should do walking or some physical activity just after eating food, and should maintain good hygiene.

CONCLUSION

पथ्य सतः गदास्य तमौषध तनषेवणं । पथ्य असतः गदास्य तमौषध तनषेवणं ॥

Vaidya Lolimba Raja have also indicated the importance of *Pathya Aahara* by stating that if a person takes *Pathya Aahara*, then there is no need of medicine and if a person continuously consumes *Apathya Aahara* then also there is no need of medicine as continued intake of *Apathya* will keep manifesting disease. Acharya Charaka has also mentioned the importance of *Pathya Aahara* and *Vihara* by saying that wholesome regimen is the basis of life and contrary to that is of death. It is concluded that inappropriate and irregular *Aahara* and *Vihara* plays a crucial role in development of *Gudagata Rogas* and these are major reasons for rise in manifestation of these disorders nowadays, as people are not conscious about following good dietary habits and lifestyle. So, one should follow aforesaid *Aahara* and *Vihara* regimens, keeping in mind one's own *Prakriti* i.e., should follow *Ashta Aahara Vidhi Visheshayana*, should follow *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, should have good sleep cycle, etc.

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