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Review Article

THE CONCEPT OF SATMYA IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the unique system of medicine covering all the aspects of life. Its holistic approach provides the positive health. It is specific in the sense of its valid and age old fundamental doctrines. It is not only concentrated on the treatment of diseases but has laid proper emphasis on the care of diseased one also. It advocates to examine the Prakriti (constitution), Vikriti (morbidity), Sar (constitution of the dhatus), Samhanan (compactness), Praman (measurement), Satmya (suitability), Sattwa (psyche), Ahar-shakti (power of intake and digestion of food), Vyayam-shakti (power of exercise) and Vaya (age) of the patient before application of medicine. It is because the strong, moderate or mild medicines are advised according to the superior, medium and inferior strength of the patient as well as disease respectively. Satmya is one of the important considerable issues during application of medicine or diet. One of the significant causes behind different preparations of medicines and diet is Satmya. Diet or medicine which is not Satmya to a person should not be given reason being the substance which is not Satmya (suitable or accustomed) to one's body may cause Asatmyaja-rogas (allergic diseases) to him. Satmya is that which being used constantly has wholesome effects. It is the synonym of the term 'upashaya'. Asatmya or Anupashaya is opposite to the Satmya. It is of many types such as Okasatmya, Desha-Satmya, Ritu-Satmya, Vyadhi-Satmya, Dosha-Satmya, Prakriti-Satmya, Vaya-Satmya etc. A physician has to advise the diet or medicine considering all the Satmyas for the rational use. Out of all the Satmyas, Okasatmya is that which is suitable to the person because of regular use either it is diet or regimen. It may be sometime wholesome entity while sometime unwholesome also. If unwholesome entity is accustomed due to habitual use, it should be gradually withdrawn and wholesome at its place should be followed. All types of Satmyas should always be followed for the maintenance of health.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Satmya, upashaya, Asatmya, Anupashaya.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, our cultural heritage and unique system of medicine deals with holistic principles of treatment and believe in complete health. The definition of health in Ayurveda is not limited up to physical well being only but it includes the mental, spiritual and social well being also. It is known for its valid and age old fundamental doctrines. It is not only concentrated on the treatment of diseases but has laid proper emphasis on the care of diseased person also. It advocates to examine the Prakriti (constitution), Vikriti (morbidity), Sar (constitution of the dhatus), Samhanan (compactness), Praman (measurement), Satmya (suitability), Sattwa (psyche), Ahar-shakti (power of intake and digestion of food), Vyayam-shakti (power of exercise) and Vaya (age) of the patient¹ before application of medicine. It is because the strong, moderate or mild medicines are advised according to the superior, medium and inferior strength of the patient as

well as disease respectively. Satmya is one of the important considerable issues during application of medicine or diet. Efficacy of medicine depends upon the Satmya as the diet or medicine which is not Satmya to the person does not act properly and sometime it may cause reactions also. One of the significant causes behind number of preparations of medicines and dietary substances is Satmya. Satmya is that which being used constantly has wholesome effects². It is the synonym of the term 'upashaya'³. Asatmya or Anupashaya is opposite to the Satmya⁴. It is of many types such as Ritu-Satmya, Okasatmya, Desha-Satmya, Vyadhi-Satmya⁵, Dosha-Satmya, Prakriti-Satmya, Vaya-Satmya⁶ etc. A physician has to advise the diet or medicine considering all the Satmyas for the rational use. Out of all the Satmyas, Okasatmya is that which is suitable to the person because of regular use either it is diet or regimen. It may be sometime wholesome entity while sometime unwholesome also. If unwholesome entity is accustomed due to habitual use, it should be gradually

withdrawn and wholesome at its place should be used. All types of Satmyas are considerable for the maintenance of health.

The Concept of Satmya

Satmya substance or regimen is that which by virtue of daily use is suitable to the body. The knowers of suitability define behavior and diet which are opposite to place, disorder, Prakriti, Dosha and season as Satmya. Satmya is of three types, viz. superior, inferior and mediocre. According to another mode of classification, it is of seven types, depending upon the administration of individual rasas or tastes (six types) and use of rasas jointly (seventh type). Use of all the rasas is of the superior type of Satmya (Pravara-Satmya); use of only one rasa is of an inferior type (Avara-Satmya) and in between the superior and the inferior types is the mediocre type of Satmya⁷. A person having Pravara-Satmya is easier to treat than Avara-Satmya because in Avara-Satmya persons; physician has limited options to prescribe the diets and medicines. All the above mentioned types of Satmya come under okasatmya. The term 'Okasatmya' has been used in the sense of 'Abhyas-Satmya' (suitability due to regular use)⁸. The habitual use of tobacco, cannabis etc. is not immediately harmful because of being Okasatmya but withdrawal of such harmful things should be done gradually. Okasatmya may be of wholesome things also such as milk, ghee, green gram, rice, rock salt, Amalak (*Emblica officinalis*), barley etc. which is never harmful. In this regard physician should observe whether his patient has the Okasatmya of wholesome or unwholesome things and accordingly manage.

Ritusatmya includes diets and regimens which are wholesome in different seasons. Ritusatmya can be followed by observance of Ritucharya. Ritucharya is nothing but our reaction against shita (cold), ushna (hot) and varsha (rain). So the seasonal regimens of Hemanta (early winter season) and Shishira (late winter season) is indicated the same⁹. Ushna, guru, snigdha diet and residing in hot and underground chamber of the house, use of heavy and warm clothes and sexual intercourse considering the body strength is advised in winter season, light, liquid and cold dietary substances, residing in cold places and less physical exercise in summer season and laghu, snigdha, ushna, amla (sour) and lavan (salty) diet is advised in rainy season¹⁰ considering the Ritusatmya which is crucial in maintenance of health. Bhallataka (*Semicarpus anacardium* Linn.) is not used in summer due to its hot property. Chandan (*Santalum album*) is not used in winter due to its cold property. All these considerations are based on Ritusatmya.

Desha-Satmya and Amaya-Satmya is explained in terms of viparita guna diets, drugs and regimens of particular habitat and disease. The experts in the subject advise habitual use of such diets (including drugs) and regimen having opposite qualities of the habitat of the individuals and the disease they are suffering from¹¹. If a place is excessively cool, the body would constantly need some additional extraneous heat to maintain itself against the excessive cold of the place. Similarly, marshy lands are by nature dominated by the qualities of unctuousness and heaviness. Individuals residing in such places would naturally require the meat of the animals of arid climate, honey etc. which are dominated by qualities

like roughness and lightness. Arid lands are by nature dominated by the qualities of rukshata (dryness). Individuals residing there would naturally require the diets which are dominated by the qualities of snigdha (unctuousness). All these instructions are to be followed considering the Desha-Satmya to maintain the equilibrium of Dhatus.

Amaya-Satmya refers to diets, drugs and regimens which are wholesome in particular disease. For example, if a disease has occurred due to vitiation of vata, then the diets, drugs and regimen are to be habituated in such a manner that they counteract the effect of the former. Laghu, ruksha, ushna diet and drugs in Amadosha and Kaphaja disorders¹², guru and atarpana diet in obesity and laghu and santarpana in excessive emaciation¹³, shita diets and regimen in Raktapitta¹⁴, ushna and vatanuloman diet and medicine in Hikka and Shwas roga¹⁵ are few of the examples of Amaya-Satmya or Roga-Satmya.

Dosha-Satmya means the medicine, diet and regimen which keep on or bring Doshas in the state of normalcy. Generally the substances possessing opposite qualities to Doshas are considered as Satmya or wholesome¹⁶ but in clinical practices the stage of Doshas should be assessed sincerely and accordingly management be decided. For instance if Doshas are vitiated in mild or moderate condition, Shaman (alleviation therapy) type of treatment will be wholesome but if these are vitiated in excess, Shodhan (purification therapy) will be essential and beneficial¹⁷. Again Dosha-Satmya should be decided considering the attributes of Doshas involved in the manifestation of disease e.g. if ruksha property of Vata-dosha is increased than snigdha therapy will be the appropriate choice but when shita property of Vata is increased, the hot diet and medicines will be the choice and all these things are on the base of Dosha-Satmya.

Prakriti-Satmya means that which is conducive in the maintenance of health. Acharya Charak says that for those having predominance of Vata or Pitta or Kapha in his Prakriti, measures of health are prescribed which are opposite to the properties of that particular Dosha. For the person having Samadoshaj-Prakriti (equilibrium of all the three dosha), rational use of all the six rasas (tastes) is wholesome and is recommended¹⁸.

Vaya-Satmya means that which is wholesome according to different stages of age. The same type of therapeutic measures are not applied in the same way in all age groups such as Agnikarma, Ksharkarma, tikshna Vaman and Virechan, and other painful procedures are generally not advised in children and old¹⁹ while advisable in adult having good strength of body as per requirement. Generally children are treated by mridu-bheshaj (medicine of mild nature) and old persons are palliable²⁰. Again the substances suitable in adult or old age may not be suitable sometime in childhood and vice versa. Childhood is a state of growth that's why good amount of nutrition is needed while in adults requirement of nutrition vary from person to person depending upon physical and mental exercises. We have to see about the palatability of medicine while using for children as they cannot take the medicine having bitter or unpleasant taste, sharp or foul smell and which are not nice looking. While we are treating the person of different age group, we should think about the fact that Kapha dosha is predominant in childhood, Pitta dosha in

adult stage and Vata dosha in old age and considering this fact, diet and medicines should be advised²¹.

DISCUSSION

The term 'Satmya' and 'Pathya' are not always synonym. Because Satmya (suitability) is that which by regular use becomes suitable or accustomed to body while Pathya is wholesome irrespective of regular use. Another important thing to note in this regard is that Okasatmya vary from person to person but Pathya is considered as wholesome for all in general. Okasatmya may be of Pathya or Apathya substances. Satmya can be considered as Pathya when it is undoubtedly beneficial to the body. The area and scope of the concept of Satmya is very wide and essential to be considered in clinical practices. Physician must consider all types of Satmya in all the patients because if he consider only the Amaya-Satmya and Dosha-Satmya and ignores the Prakriti-Satmya, Ritu-Satmya, Okasatmya, Vaya-Satmya and Desha-Satmya, definite success will not be assured. One procedure suitable according to Dosha or Vyadhi-Satmya may not be equally applicable in all the age groups, climate and seasons. Here is the need of personalized medicine about which everybody talks and Ayurveda has already discussed and emphasized that treatment vary from person to person. In Kalpasthan of Charak-Samhita, it is well versed that different preparations of Vaman and Virechan-karma are discussed considering three main factors i.e. Bhakti (palatability/likings), Dosha and Amaya (diseases).

CONCLUSION

After thorough study of the concept and discussion, it is clear that the term 'Satmya' has been used in the sense of 'upashaya (therapeutic effect)' in Ayurveda which needs a very sincere attention while advising any dietary preparation or medicine. The area and scope of Satmya is very wide. Physicians have to consider the Desha (habitat), Prakriti (physical constitution of the body), Kala (time or season), Vaya (age), Okasatmya (acquired suitability), Dosha (Vata, Pitta and Kapha dosha) and Amaya (disease) of the person and then should advise the treatment which will be fruitful. One substance which is Satmya to a person may be Asatmya to another and vice versa as the physical and mental constitution, likings and suitability of all the persons are not same. For example, Dugdha (milk) is stated to be the best among Jivaniya-Dravyas (Vitality providing substances) and Satmya to most of the persons but may not suit to some persons. Mamsa (meat) is stated to be the best among Brimhaniya-dravyas (Weigh promoting substances) in Ayurveda but does not suit to everybody because of many reasons. In such cases physician should advise another substances for Jivaniya and Brimhaniya purpose. If anybody ignores here the Satmya of the person, will not get success in treatment and homoeostasis cannot be maintained.

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