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Effect of Ahara & Vihar on Health w.s.r. to Anorectal Diseases: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has beautiful concept on *Trayopstambha* (three pillars) which includes *Aahar*(food), *Nidra*(sleep)& *Bramhacharya*(maintaining celibacy). Among these three, food is placed in first position as life cannot be sustained without food. Food is responsible for maintaining our health. If used properly and following the rules, it will be responsible for our good health whereas if code and conduct regarding food is not followed it can lead to disease also. Sedentary lifestyle and non-communicable disease are directly related to each other. Sedentary lifestyle leads to lifestyle disorders. Therefore, proper dietary management is required to avoid any types of diseases. Similarly, our food habit and day to day activities is responsible for Anorectal disease also. In this article, we can know in detail about the type of food and our daily habits which should be accepted and declined after knowing the problem and to avoid the problem.

Keywords- lifestyle disorders, Anorectal disease, *Aahara*, *Vihara*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda being science of life explains different treatment modalities by which all types of diseases can be prevented and cured. Anorectal diseases are also lifestyle disease. Anorectal disorders are a group of disorders that occur at the junction of the anal canal and the rectum.¹ Different types of problems comes under Anorectal disease (ARD) like external & internal haemorrhoids, fistula in ano, anal fissure, rectal prolapse, anal abscess and even rectal cancer. Anorectal diseases may be structural or functional abnormalities of the anorectum or pelvic floor and with symptoms such as difficulty defecation, fecal incontinence, rectal bleeding, anorectal pain and rectal prolapse.²

Just as enemy tortures, sprouts of muscles distress the person by obstructing the passage of the anal canal, hence called as *Arsa*.^[3] Acharya Sushruta mentions it as one of the eight *Mahagadas*⁴ (group of disease which are incurable due to their complication)

The digestive system begins at the mouth and ends at the rectum and anus. This is the site where solid waste is expelled from the

body after absorption of water and nutrients in small and large intestine. The inner lumen of the anus is lined with glands and four to six crypts. Several muscles are present in anal canal in the form of ring and these all together helps to control bowel movements. The inner muscle, just beneath the lining of the anal canal is called the internal involuntary anal sphincter and this muscle is usually contracted to close the anal canal. When a bowel movement occurs, the muscle relaxes to allow the stool to pass.⁵

A study done by Sharma et.al showed that Hemorrhoids (49%) and Fistula-in-ano (27%) were the commonest ano-rectal conditions, mostly affecting the age group 18-45 years.⁶

Cause of anorectal disease are improper dietary habits, lifestyle, body structure and bacteria present in waste product which are to be excreted by body. According to Acharya Sushruta, a person who has been weak or debilitated with *Mridukoshta*(low digestion), the ingestion of *Atirooksha*(excess dry food), *Atiteekshna*(excess pungent food), *Atiushna*(too hot food), *Atilavana Ahara*(too salty food), causes *Dushana* (Vitiation) of *Pitta* and *Anila* and further produces

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Parikartika.⁷ There symptoms can vary from mild to severe which may even restrict daily activities. Anal pain can occur before defecation, during defecation and after defecation. Anal pain can be caused due to any of the Anorectal Disease.⁸ The main cause of all the Anorectal disease is constipation which is mainly caused due to less dietary fiber intake, regular consumption of packaged food, red meat, caffeine, baked foods, oily and spicy foods, *Maida*(white wheat flour). Red meat is heavy for digestion which causes indigestion when consumed in large amount or *Mandagni*(low digestive fire) person. Other food items (packaged & baked) are processed where MUFA & PUFA are converted to trans fat & hydrogenated for their long term preservation. Therefore they have low fibre which leads to constipation. Deep fried foods too are heavy for digestion as they contain too much of oil & are hard for digestion. It moves slowly from the colon which leads to more water absorption and causing dry & hard stool formation. Similarly dairy products are also high in sugar and fats and low in fiber which causes constipation.⁹

Therefore, lifestyle diseases are causes, that are primarily based on the day to day habits of people. Habits that reduce physical activities and push people towards a sedentary daily routine can cause a number of health issues which further leads to chronic non-communicable diseases. Decrease in physical activity may cause *Mandagni*(decreased digestive fire), which may lead to Anorectal Disease. Hence, it can be simply prevented by changing *Aahar* (food) and *Vihar*(lifestyle).¹⁰

Management of Anorectal Disease: Lifestyle diseases are a threat to the socio-economic aspects of nations globally and appropriate actions for their management are the need of the moment. Management of lifestyle diseases includes proper diagnosis, screening and treatment in addition to providing palliative care for people who require it. Quality lifestyle disease intervention needs to be delivered through a primary healthcare approach where early detection and proper treatment are prioritised.¹¹

In Ayurveda, number of treatments modalities are described by Acharyas which reduce pain of anorectal diseases. As pain and discomfort are most annoying experience which troubles patient like enemy. *Guda* (Anal Canal) is described as *Pranahar Marma*, hence pain at *Guda* (anal region) region can be one of the cause to restrict daily activity. Therapies like *Lepa*(application of medicated paste), *Awagaha Sweda* (sitz bath), *Jalauka*(Leech therapy), and *Varti* (Suppositories) insertion. These treatment modalities are still relevant, important and effective in today's era.¹²

One of the study shows that, the seated position and squatting positions is more consistent with the human physiological bowel condition as compared to left lateral position test.¹³

Relaxation of the internal anal sphincter muscle is mediated through sensory perianal skin receptors getting stimulated by warm water. Hence decrease in spasm, pain relief due to

'thermosphincteric reflex'.¹⁴ *Sneha basti* (oil enema) is also indicated depending upon the conditions.¹⁵

Palliative management should have antibacterial, anti-inflammatory properties, Local application drugs have anti-haematochezia and antiseptic properties which reduce production of pile mass, controls rectal bleeding and provides relief from pain. Further soothing effect of natural drugs help to relieve itching and burning sensation, enhances process of healing and regeneration.¹⁶

Other simple, cost effective, less time taking and most effective treatment in anorectal problems like haemorrhoids and fistula in ano is *Ksharasutra*(medicated thread). *Kshara* (ash) has an action of *Chedana*(Excision), *Bhedana*(Incision), *Shodhana*(purification), *Lekhana*(scraping) and *Ropana*(healing) properties. Because of this, it helps to cut and heal the condition.¹⁷

One of the research also have shown that micronized purified flavonoid fraction (MPFF) which is one of the treatment for Acute Hemorrhoid disease, is much helpful in decreasing the symptoms like bleeding, pain, pruritis, tenesmus, anal discharge and edema.¹⁸

Therefore, Anorectal disease requires a comprehensive therapy, retraining the physiology of defecation, education of physiological defecation, establishing an effective balanced diet (such as increasing dietary fiber consumption, fruits and drinking water), and regular exercise.¹⁹

This review was carried out to know and learn about *Pathya Aahar Vihara* & *Apathya Aahar Vihara* in Anorectal diseases explained in ancient texts, and to study the effect of *Aahar* & *Vihar* in Anorectal diseases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Information was collected from *Bhrihatrayee* & *Laghutrayee* books, review articles, various research papers and related journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Aahara (Proper diet and Dietary habits), *Nidra* (Proper sleep) and *Bramhacharya* (Abstinence), these three are called the *Upastambhas*(supporting pillars). The human body endowed with the wise use of these *upastambhas* attain *Bala* (Strength), *Varna* (Complexion) and *Upachaya* (Metabolism).²⁰

As *Ahara* (food) is enumerated first, it shows that food holds the most important place.

Ahara (food) nourishes. It is a means to provide *Sadhya Bala* (instant strength) and it with-holds the body. It also promotes *Ayu* (Longevity), *Teja* (Luster), *Smriti* (Memory), *Ojas* (Vital essence), and the *Agni* (Digestive fire).²¹

Ahara (food) can also be classified as *Pathya* & *Apathya*. The ones which are not harmful to *Patha* or *Srotas* (Channels

of body) and are loved by mind are called *Pathyas* (good for health). And the other which is opposite ones are *Apathya* (not good for health).²² i.e. The diet and dietary habits that are beneficial for both body and mind are called *Pathyas* and the ones that are harmful are called *Apathyas*.

Apathya Ahara in Anorectal disease: While explaining the *Samprapti* (Pathogenesis) of *Arsa* (pile mass), *Acharya Charaka* has explained that in the absence of *Samsodhana* (No purificatory Procedures), *Avyayama* (No exercise), *Diwaswopna* (Day sleeping) and *Sukha shayana aasana sthana* (Sedentary lifestyle) may lead to unhealthy diet and dietary habits which further hampers the *Agni* (Digestive fire) and is responsible for accumulation of *Mala* (waste products) in the *Udara* (abdomen).²³⁻²⁴ Similar references are mentioned for *bhagandara* (fistula-in-ano).²⁵

Gunas: *Guru* (Heavy) & *Vidahi* (corrosive) *Dravyas* like *Masha* (black gram) are digested very lately hence can cause *Agnimandhya*. *Abhisyandi dravyas* like *Takrapinda* (cream of curd) creates blockages in the body channels and are mostly *guru* in nature. *Sheeta dravyas* (Cold) like *Atisheetal jala* (Refrigerated water) cause *Sthambhana* (stasis) of urine, faeces and sweat, thus responsible for accumulation of *Mala* (feces) in *Udara* (abdomen). *Vistambhi dravyas* (foods which causes constipation) like unripe jackfruit accumulate *Vata* in *Kostha* (stomach) thereby causing *Adhmana* (distension) and pain. **Rasa:** *Madhura rasa* (Sweet) foods are *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Sheeta* (cold) and *Guru* (heavy) in nature and thus digested very lately and can lead to accumulation of *mala* (feces) further causing constipation.

Dietary habits: Practicing *Viruddha-ashana* (Incompatible foods), *Asatmya-ashana* (Unsuitable foods) and consuming *Puti* (Smelly foods), *Paryusita* (Stale foods), *Sankirna* (Decayed foods) and *Sheeta* (Refrigerated foods) causes accumulation of *malas* (feces) in *udara* (abdomen). Similarly, *Ajirna-ashana* (Eating prior to digestion), *Pramita-ashana* (taking food in deficit quantities, against the quantity needed or eating other than normal schedule) are responsible for *Agnimandya* (decreased digestive fire). As this type of food causes diminished digestive fire, can further form improper *Mala* (feces). Improper feces may cause strain during defecation which can lead to internal or external hemorrhoid formation. **Cereals and Pulses:** The cereals/pulses such as *Maas Yusa* (Black gram soup), *Viruda-dhanya* (Sprouted corns and pulses), *Nava samidhanya* (Newly harvested pulses) are *guru* in nature & heavy for digestion.²⁶

Vegetables: Similarly, vegetables like *Pindaluka* (Tubers), *Suska Saaka* (Dried vegetables), *Aama-mulaka* (Young radish) are also *guru*. *Tumbi* (Bottle guard) is *Vistambhi* and *Guru* in nature. **Meat items:** The meat of *Gavya* (Cow), *Varaha* (Boar), *Mahisha* (Buffalo), *Aja* (Goat), *Abi* (Sheep) and *Matsya* (Fish) are *gurupaki*. *Siraspada* (Meat of head and legs) and *Vasa* (Animal Fats) are also *guru* in nature. *Krishna prani mamsa* (Meat of emaciated animals), *Suska mamsa* (Dried meat) Consuming *Puti mamsa* (Putrified

meat) & *Matsya* (fish) also causes *ARD* as they hamper digestive fire. **Milk products:** *Kshira* (Milk), *Dadhimanda* (Whey), *Takrapinda* (Cream of curd), *Kilat* (Cream of milk), *Mandaka* (Immature curd), *Paramanna* (Preparation of milk, rice and sugar) are *guru* (heavy). *Dadhi* (Curd) is *Abhisyandi* (Causes obstruction in channels). **Drinkables:** *Atikranta madhya* (wrongly or excessively fermented wines) increases *Mala* (feces) in *Udara* (abdomen) and are *Tridosha Prakopi* (increases all three doshas). *Guru Salila* (Refrigerated or excessively cold water and juices) is *Gurupaki* (heavy for digestion) while *Atisneha pana* (Intake of excess oils, ghee etc) causes *Agnimandhya* (decrease digestion). **Fruits:** *Pakwa Bilwa* (Aegle marmelos) and *Pakwa amra* (Ripe mango) is *tridosha kopaka* (vitiate all three doshas), *guru* (heavy), *vistambhi* and causes *agnimandhya*. **Others:** *Ikshu rasa* (Sugarcane juice), *Guda vikriti* (Preparations from jaggery), *Tila vikriti* (Preparations from sesame seeds), *Pindyaka* (Oil cake), *Bisa* (Thick lotus stalk), *Naktamala* (Thin lotus stalk) all these are *gurupaki*. *Pistaka* (Refined wheat flour preparations) is *guru* (heavy). **Pathyas in ARD; Anna :** *Raktashali*, *Mahashali*, *Kalama*, *Jangala*, *Sita*, *Shasthik* types of rice, *Yava* (Barley), *Godhuma* (Wheat) are *laghu* (light) and *supachya* (easily digested).²⁷ As these are easily digested and high in fiber, they avoid constipation.

Soups: *Sushka mulaka yusa* (Vegetable soup form dried radish) and *Kulattha yusa* (*Dolichous biflorus*) are *Vata* and *Kapha saamak*. (i.e. they pacify *vata* and *kapha* which are main dosha involved in *suskarsha* especially). *Kulattha sa makustha yusa* (Adding *Vigna acontifolia*) or mixing these soups with *Kshagala rasa* (Goat meat soup) and adding *Amla* (like sour juice) or *Takra* (Butter milk), these soups on adding *amla* becomes more *laghu* (therefore easy to digest).²⁸ Soups from *Masura* (*Lens culinaris*), *Mudga* (*Vigna radiata*), *Aadhaki* (*Cajanus cajan*), *Makustha* (*Vigna acontifolia*) added with *Amla* (like lemon juice).²⁹

Meat: The meat (soup specially) of *Bahir* (Peacock), *Tittar* (Partridge), *Lava* (Grey Quail), *Bartak* (Bustard quail), cock are *laghu* by nature and adding *Amla* (like sour juice, lemon juice) aids further to *pachana* (digestion).³⁰ The meat of *Sasa* (Rabbit), *Harina* (deer), *Lava* (Grey Quail), *Daksha* (Fowl), *Shikhi* (Peacock), *Tittar* (Partridge) are also *laghu* by nature and adding with *Amla* or *Madhura* or powder of *Maricha* (Black pepper) acts as *Sthambana* (stasis specially for bleeding types of *ARD*).³¹

Vegetables: Leaves of *Changeri* (*Oxalis corniculata* 'Chari amilo') are *Agnideepak* (enhances digestive fire) & *kaphavata saamak* (alleviates *kapha vata*). Leaves of *Upodika* (Malabar spinach), *Kakamachi* (*Solanum nigrum*) and *Vastuka* (*Chenopodium* sps. 'Bethe') are *bhedani* (relieves constipation). *Vira* i.e. *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*) and *Jivanti* (*Leptadenia reticulata*) are *vata* and *pitta hara* (pacifies *vata* thus aiding to relieve *malabibanda*).

Grinjaka (*Abrus precatorius* 'Carrot') also relieves constipation due to high fiber content. Frying in ghee and

adding *Dhanyaka* (Coriander), *Nagara* (Dried ginger) and *Dadhi* (Curd) to these makes it further *Supachya* (easy to digest).³² *Palandu* (Onion leaves or bulb) is helpful in *raktarsha*. It improves digestion and relieves constipation.³³ *Patola* (*Trichosanthes dioica*), *Punarnava* (*Boerhaavia diffusa* leaves), *Rasona* (Garlic leaves) are also helpful in relieving the condition.³⁴

Milk: Milk of *Ustra* (Camel) is *laghu*(light), *vatakapha samaka*(alleviates kapha & vata) and *relieves arsa*.³⁵

Anupana: *Madira* (Wine), *Tushodaka* (Vinegar prepared from barley), *Takra* (Butter milk), *Srita jala* (Boiled and cooled water), *Nagara dhanyaka srita* (decoction from coriander seeds and dried ginger) all these are *Vata* and *Varcha anulomaka* (promotes natural passage of flatus and faeces).³⁶

Additives: *Maricha* (Black pepper) is *Agnideepana*(increases digestion) and *kapha and vata dosha shamaka* (useful in non bleeding type *ARD* mostly). *Ruchaka* (Black salt) is *bibandha* and *Aannaha Nashaka* (relieves constipation), *Vata Shamaka*(alleviates vata) and *laghu*(light).³⁷

Fruits: *Bhallataka* (*Semecarpus anacardium*) is *vatakaphashamaka*(alleviates vata & kapha), *aanaha nashaka* (relieves constipation) and *arshogna* (useful in haemorrhoids non bleeding type mostly and other *ARDs*). *Dhatri* (Amala) is also helpful in alleviating three *Doshas*.³⁸

Others: *Navanita tila* (black sesame seeds with butter) & *Dadhisara mathita* (Cream of curd after churning) helps in relieving *Raktasrsha*(bleeding haemorrhoids).³⁹

Apathya Vihar in ARD: Intake of unwholesome food and taking food before the previous meal is digested. Use of rough, irregular, and hard seats or vehicles carried by improperly trained animals. Habits of pleasant beds and seats and even sleeping during daytime. Suppression of natural urges like flatus, stool, urine, and even by forcible attempts for passing them. Continued excessive strain during defecation and micturition. Insertion of hard items in the anus and improper insertion of enema nozzle causes frequent injury to the anal region. Frequent application of cold water and excessive rubbing of the anal region by toilet paper. Lack or excessive indulgence in physical exercise and sexual activities. In the case of pregnant women pressure by the gravid uterus and abnormal delivery. This causes aggravation of the *Apana Vayu* which brings down the accumulated waste products and so afflicts the anal sphincters and leads to different types of anorectal diseases.⁴⁰ Fasting, excessive grief, envy,^[41] and mental inactivity.⁴² Excessive exposure to wind, hot and too cold environment.⁴³ are also *Apathya*.

Pathya Vihar for Anorectal Disease: Specific daily activity is not clearly explained in classics. But it is important to prevent the disease. Therefore, it may be discussed in the

following three headings:

Dinacharya (day regimen), *Ratricharya* (night regimen) and *Sadvritta* (Codes of Good conduct)

Dicharya: Waking up in *Brahma Muhurta* (i.e., approx. 96 minutes before sunrise) after considering the condition of digestion of food taken in the previous night.⁴⁴ Drinking warm water in the morning.⁴⁵ Excrete urine and feces only after getting the urge without straining.⁴⁶ *Dantadhavana* (brushing of teeth), *Jihvanirlekhana*(tongue scraping) , *Gandusha* (moving water in mouth), and *Kavala Dharana* (fill mouth completely with water) should be done which maintain oral hygiene and also it provides a desire for food.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹ Certain physical exercises should be done which enhances strength, increase digestive fire, and balances *Dosha*.⁵⁰ Food should be taken only after the previous meal is digested. There are certain rules like *Aahar Vidhi Vidhana* and *Astha Aahar Vidhi Viseshayatan* (rules of taking food) which should be followed while in taking food.^{51,52} Walking for a short distance after intake of food increases lifespan, strength, digestive power, and perceptive power of sense organs. Apart from the above-mentioned practices, one should also follow other practices like *Abhyanga* (Massage), *Udvardhana*(application of herbal paste), *Nasya*(nasal drop instillation), *Anjana* (collyrium application), *Dhoompana* (gaseous fume inhalation), etc. depending upon their health condition.

Ratricharya:⁵³ Dinner should be consumed in the first part of the night and the quantity of food should be less for its proper digestion. One must habituate to sleeping at the right place and at the right time. The bed should be neither too soft nor too hard to sleep. Normally 7-9 hours of sleep is important for an adult for health and wellbeing. It nourishes the body, reduces the stress hormone, helps in proper digestion of food, and increases life span. For a married couple, a sexual regimen should be practiced only on auspicious days (should not be practiced in the daytime). It increases oxytocin levels in the body which reduces stress and induces good sleep.

Sadvritta (Codes of Good conduct):⁵⁴ Try to restrict the use of mobile phones while on the bed, limit watching the videos which give stress to the mind, avoid using mobile phones and prolong sitting on the toilet. Drink a minimum of 2 - 3 liters of water in a day and drink a glass of milk before going to bed. It promotes good sleep and will be easy while defecating early in the morning.

One should stop exercising before exertion. Avoid smoking, chewing tobacco, and drinking alcohol. Do not take excessive sleep or awake at night and should not attend to any work while under the pressure of natural urge.

CONCLUSION

Role of *Aahar & Vihar* has great impact on Anorectal Diseases. It can be prevented in all level by following proper diet and changing lifestyle. Though specific *Vihar* is not clearly mentioned in classics, general day to day activities may also help to prevent the diseases as well. The above mentioned food habits and general activities are helpful even after the person gets affected by anorectal diseases to avoid the further complications. These can be propagated through interventions like mass education, individual education, etc. Many lifestyle disorders can be avoided just by following proper diet & lifestyle.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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