

UTILITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF DESHA – A CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda advises to examine the person as a whole, treat as a whole & use the drug as a whole. So to diagnose a disease physician should comprehend the nature of *dosha*, *ashraya*(~site of manifestation), *nidanas* (~etiology) & should further initiate the treatment. Examination of a person is one of the important diagnostic criteria, *desha* is one among them. *Desha* includes the examination of the external environment i.e.*bhumi desha* and also the physical examination of patient i.e. the *dehadasha*. Application of the concept of *desha* is important in both *swasthyaraskshana* of *swastha* and *vikaraprashamana* of *vyadhitapurusha* but in present scenario the importance of which is not considered during treatment aspect. Thus *desha* has to be analysed in a diseased individual in order to determine *nidana* of a disease & to decide the further management which is opposite to qualities of *dosha* & in healthy individual it helps to determine the wholesome in terms of *aahara* & other factors. The paper intends to explain the clinical perspective & application of concept of *desha*.

Keywords: *Aahara, Nidana, Desha.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science that has been evolved for the well-being of all individuals. *Chikitsakritapurusha* is the substrata on which *Ayurveda* has its action. One should examine the variations in each individuals & then plan for treatment. Hence individualistic approach has a unique role. Both *Sushruta* & *Charakaacharya* elaborated the importance of individual examination in *parikshabhavas*. While examining a patient only from the symptoms of his disease the physician may commit mistakes in deciding the seriousness & mildness of disease. So each individual should be analysed considering the *desha*.

Desha is the important factor for diagnosing as well as treating a disease, so *desha* is one among the least considered factor in

day to day practise which at times the efforts of therapy may get futile.

TYPES OF DESHA:

Desha has been classified into two types –

1. *Bhumidesha*
2. *Aaturadesha*

Again *bhumidesha* is classified into 3 categories i.e.

- a) *Jangaladesha* (~Dry forest land)
- b) *Anupadesha* (~Marshy land)
- c) *Sadharanadesha* (~Normal land)

CHARACTERISTICS OF BHUMI DESHA:

Knowledge of *bhumidesha* plays a vital role in a clinical prospectus, because to initiate a particular treatment as well as to know an individual body composition it is very much important to have a thorough insight of a particular *desha*.

a) *Jangaladesha*:

- It abounds in open sky.

- It has deep forests of trees like *Kadara*, *Khadira*, *Asana*, *Sallaki*, *Asvattha* etc.
- It is surrounded by trees of *Sami*, *Kakubha*, and *Simsapa* in large number.
- The tender branches of these trees being swayed by continuous dry wind.
- It is largely covered by dry and rough sands as well as gravels which give rise to mirages.
- This area is inhabited by the birds like *Lava*, *Tittiri* and *Cakora*.
- The people inhabiting this type of land are dominated by *Vayu* and *Pitta* and most of them are sturdy and hard¹.

According to Vangasena- *jangaladesha* will provoke *raktha* and *pitthadisorders*².

b) *Anupadesha*:

- It contains deep forests of trees like *Hintala*, *Tamala*, *Narikela* and *Kadali*.
- It is located generally at the banks of rivers and sea and banks were beautified by plants like *Vanjula* and *Vanira*.
- It has mountains covered with beautiful creepers.
- The trees in this thick forest wave with the gentle breeze.
- The area is surrounded by thick forest with beautiful and blossoming trees.
- The branches of trees located here are echoed with the sound produced by birds like *Hamsa*, *Cakravaka*, *Balaka*, *Nandi-mukha*, *Madgu* & inebriated by *Kokila*.
- People inhabiting this type of land are of tender body and generally they are dominated by *vayu* & *kapha*³.

c) *Sadharanadesha*:

- It has creepers, *Vanaspati* (~trees having fruits without apparent flowers), *Vanaspatya* (~trees having both fruits & flowers), birds and beasts described above in respect of *jangala* and *anupadesha*.

- Persons inhabiting this land are sturdy, tender, endowed with strength, complexion and compactness, as well as other attributes of people inhabiting in the land of general nature⁴.

DESHA – A FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED FOR AN EXAMINATION OF A PATIENT:

The physician before commencing treatment of the patient, should first of all examine his *Ayush* (~life span); if he has long span then his *Vyadhi*(~disease), *Rtu*(~season), *Agni* (~digestive power), *Vayah* (~age), *Deha* (~body build), *Bala*(~strength), *Satva* (~mind), *Satmya* (~habituation), *Prakriti* (~constitution), *Bheshaja*(~drug) & *Desha*(~habitat) should be examined⁵.

EXAMINATION OF DESHA TO ASCERTAIN PARTICULARS ABOUT THE PATIENT:

Individuals included in the category of *aturadesha* because they are also susceptible to the attacks of diseases. They are required to be examined with a view to administering such regimens as would keep them healthy.

The following points are to be examined with reference to the patient:

- Place of birth, growth and affliction with the diseases;
- Specific features concerning food, exercise, customs, strength, mental condition, homologation by habit, dominance of one or other type of *dosha*, likings, manifestation of diseases and things which are useful and harmful⁶.

IMPORTANCE OF EXAMINATION OF A PATIENT:

The place of action is verily the patient himself. He should be examined so as to obtain knowledge regarding the span of life, strength and the intensity of morbidity. The knowledge of the measure of his strength & intensity of morbidity are es-

essential for the preparation of the medicine which should be in proportion to the degree of morbidity and also to the strength of the patient.

If strong medicaments are immediately administered without proper examination, to a weak patient, this might result in his death. Weak patients are incapable of resisting strong therapies like medicaments dominating in *Agni* and *Vayumahabhutas*, application of alkali's and heat (~cautery) and surgical procedures. As such remedies are unendurable, very severe and powerful; they act as immediate destroyers of life. It is owing to this reason that in emergency, a weak patient should be first treated with non-distressing, mild and generally delicate remedies and later on, gradually, by heavy remedies which do not upset him or give rise to complications. Such therapies are specially needed for ladies because they are by nature unsteady, light and of sensitive or weak temperament and also because they are mostly tender & subordinate to others. Similarly, if weak therapies are administered to a strong individual having a serious disease without proper examination, the disease does not get cured.

Therefore, the patient should be examined with reference to his *Prakriti* (~physical constitution), *Vikriti* (~morbidity), *Sara* (~excellence of tissue elements), *Samhanana* (~compactness of organs), *Pramana* (~measurements of the body), *Satmya* (~homologation), *Satva* (~psychic condition), *Ahara-shakthi* (~power of intake & digestion of food), *Vyayama-shakthi* (~power of performing exercise) and *Vayas*(~age) specially with a view to ascertain the degree of his strength & the intensity of the malady⁷.

IMPLICATION OF *DESHA* FOR THE DETERMINATION OF SEVERITY IN DISEASES:

Disease produced in the marshy land are not strong (or severe) if brought to arid region by the patient changing his habitat & vice versa. Similarly the *doshas* which have increased slightly in their own region are not powerful if becomes aggravated in another region; there will be no fear of diseases due to *Desha*(~land region), of people remain indulging in food, sleep, activities etc. which are similar in qualities with the qualities of that *Desha* (~land region)⁸.

SUITABLE & UNSUITABLE *DESHA*:

- Himalaya Mountains best in habitat of medicinal plants.
- Desert among all healthy lands.
- Marshy land among all unhealthy lands⁹.

DESHA – A FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED IN AETIOLOGY:

- Salt is associated with hot and sharp properties. People of villages, towns, cities & countries, where it is continuously used in large quantity, are mostly languid and of loose flesh and blood, also unable to stand hardships. People of *Bahlka*, *Saurastra*, *Sind* & *Sauvira*, belong to this category. They take salt even with milk. So these people will suffer from disorders even though such conditions should not normally occur because of the specificity of that locality¹⁰.
- ***Desha* to be considered in *jana-padadvamsa* (~epidemics):**
One cannot keep himself away from the land which is affected with epidemics while living there because the very existence of human beings depends upon the land. One could somehow get away from the particular area to another part of the country in order to avoid the polluted land, but here the particular part of that land serves as an important aetiology for a disorder¹¹.
- **In *Shlipada* (~filaria):**

Shlipada is generally prevalent in such place where water stagnates for long time and which is cold in all the seasons of the year¹².

In Karnataka around Raichur is the best example for relevance of *shlipada* even today.

▪ **In Incompatibles-**

DeshaViruddha (~incompatibles) is consuming foods having *ruksha* (~dry), *tikshna* (~sharp) properties in desert regions and of unctuous and cold food in marshy lands said to be a factor for a disorder¹³.

DESHA - IN UTILITY OF FOOD:

Desha is one of the eight factors which determine the utility of various types of food. Here *desha* relates to the habitat. It determines attributes due to procreation or movement of substance in a particular locality or their acclimatisation to that region¹⁴.

EFFECT OF DESHA ON AAHARA (~FOOD):

Meat of those animals which are born or which moves in water and marshy land and eats heavy food is heavy for the digestion. Similarly those who take light food and born or move in desert are light¹⁵.

Above explanation has been elaborated as drugs growing in Himalayas are very efficacious and those in desert are light. Animals which graze light food or those inhabiting deserts or those who are active are light; otherwise, they are heavy. One gets acclimatised to different types of localities by using substances having opposite qualities e.g. use of hot & dry substances in marshy land or cold & unctuous substances in deserts¹⁶.

DESHA AND CONCEPT OF VYADHI-KSHAMATVA:

Vyadhi-kshamatva means capacity to oppose the strength of the disease and also preventing the onset of the diseases. For

the better understanding an example of *Vrihi* (~rice) grown in different *desha* has been considered. *Vrihi* becomes unsuitable when grown in *Anupa-Desha* (~marshy), since it aggravates pitta, whereas it becomes more unsuitable while that grown in *Dhanva-desha* (~arid region) and yields poor strength¹⁷.

DESHA – A FACTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTION OF STRENGTH:

Getting birth in a place where people are naturally strong like, Inhabitants of certain places like *Sindh* are strong by nature. This is because of the specific characteristics of those places. Birth in such place makes the man strong¹⁸.

PROMOTING THERAPEUTIC EFFICACY OF DRUGS:

The drugs used for emesis & purgation become capable of producing maximum therapeutic effects when their potency is augmented by *Desha-Sampat* i.e. collecting the plants from the appropriate habitat¹⁹.

ESTIMATION OF POTENCY OF THE DRUG BASED ON DESHA OF AVAILABILITY:

Generally herbs grown in *Vindhya* region will have hot potency whereas drugs grown in Himalayan region will have cold in potency and in other forest according to ecological factors²⁰.

PROPERTIES OF JALA (~WATER) ACCORDING TO DESHA:

- Generally, water of rivers of desert regions will be slightly bitter mixed with salt in taste, light, slightly sweet, aphrodisiac and good for strength²¹.
- *Anupa* water (~marshy region) contains many blemishes, increases moistness inside and not suitable for health²².
- *Sadharana* (~temperate) region water does not cause burning sensation after digestion, quenches thirst, suitable for

drinking, promotes happiness, kindles digestion, sweet in taste, cold in potency and is light²³.

Table: 01 Showing the Place of River Origin In Relation To Diseases Affected²⁴

Sl. No	Places of river origin	Diseases affected
1	<i>Prachya, Avanti, Aparanta</i>	Piles
2	<i>Mahendra</i> mountains	Enlargement of abdomen and filariasis
3	<i>Sahya & Vindhya</i> mountains	<i>Kushta, pandu</i> and <i>shiroroga</i> (diseases of head)
4	<i>Sagara</i> (~sea)	Increases all the <i>dosha</i>

Note:

- *Prachyadesha* comprises of Central Bengal and parts of Orissa.
- *Avanti desha* comprises round about the modern city of Ujjain.
- *Aparanta* comprises of *Konkan* belt which includes Goa, Karwar and Northern canara of Karnataka.
- *Mahendra* mountain is the northern part of Eastern Ghats
- *Sahya* is the Southern range of the Western Ghats
- *Vindhya* are the mountain ranges of Central India.

PROPERTIES OF VRIHI (~PADDY) ACCORDING TO DESHA:

- Paddy which is grown in *Jangala* (~arid land) mitigates *kapha & pitta*, is astringent and pungent after digestion and slightly bitter and sweet in primary taste and cause mild increase in *vata* and *pitta*.
- Paddy which is grown in *Kedara* (~marshy land) are sweet, aphrodisiac, strengthening, mitigate *pitta*, slightly astringent in taste, produces less faeces, hard for digestion and increase *kapha* and semen²⁵.

DESHA SATMAYA:

Satmya(~conductive) is defined as that which makes for the well-being of the body even though used/indulged in for long periods of time; the body becomes habituated/accustomed to anything whether good or bad if used for a long duration.

To explain the concept of *deshasatmya* again it is divided into *aturadesha* and *bhumidesha*.

For the easy understanding *aturadesha* is divided into –

- *AvayavaSatmya* (~ conducive to one part) e.g.: Using the substance which is conducive to eyes, ears etc.
- *SamudayaSatmya* (~collective) e.g.: Sweet substance increases all the tissues.

Again *bhumidesha* can be divided into same 2 types-

- AvayavaSatmya* (~ conducive to one part) e.g.:
 - Residents of *Bahalikadesha* were accustomed to *Masha*.
 - Residents of *Pallavadesha* were accustomed to *Godhuma*.
 - Residents of *Cinadesha* were accustomed to *Madvika*.
- SamudayaSatmya* (~collective) e.g.: food which is followed in *jangaladeshawill* be opposite to one who resides in *anupa desha*²⁶.

KNOWLEDGE OF DISEASES IN ACCORDANCE WITH DIFFERENT DESHA:

- Persons belonging to *Prachya* (~eastern) region are habitual eaters of fish and rice. They are likely to be troubled with *kapha-pittha* related complaints involving diseases like *shlipada, galaganda*.
- People belonging to *Dakshina* (~southern) habitually consumes fish

of the river water and of the sea, they are mostly troubled with *Kusthadis-eases*.

- People of the outskirts of *Kambhrojadesha* constantly consume *masura, yava, godhuma, tila&koddala*; complaints of *Arshas* (~piles) are very prevalent over there.
- Peoples of the *Prathichi* (~west) highly desire in meat, wine & women; also likes adventure, they are seen to be excessively troubled by *Rajyakshma*.
- Peoples of *Bahlika* mostly consume food that is very hot and also meat that is trickling with juices as well as *panakas* (~syrup) and watery drinks and afflicted with the disease *Balasaka*.
- Peoples of *Parvata*(~mountain region) and of neighbouring places are by nature itself prone to catch *Abhisyanah* (~catarrh)²⁷.

DESHA & CURABILITY OF THE DISEASES:

Sukha sadhya²⁸: Non conducive geographical condition with respect to disease is said to be *sukhasadhya* (~easy to cure).

For example-

- a) If a patient is suffering from *Vathavyadhi* & staying in *Marudesha* (~desert) being similar in nature to *Vatavyadhi* is unsuitable for the treatment likewise *Anupadesha* similar in respect to *Kaphavyadhi*.
- b) Similarly if vitiation of *Vata* occurs in the *Pakvashaya* which is the site of *Vata* or disease occurs in *Marmapradesha* treatment will be difficult.

REGIMENS TO STAY HEALTHY:

To lead healthy and comfortable life many regimens were mentioned in our classics one among them is *AcharaRasayana* which points out the codes & conduct of life. It is mentioned that one should aware of place and time and act accordingly²⁹.

DESHA & THERAPEUTIC MEASURES:

- It is mentioned that therapeutic measures should be appropriately used keeping in view of the following- *Desha, Kala, Pramana, Satmya, Asatmya*, other-wise even a useful therapy may turn out to be harmful.
- *Desha-* administration of drugs through particular channel:
- If a drug is administered through mouth, it works quickly on diseases located in stomach.
- Administration of a drug by inhalation quickly cures diseases of the head.
- Administration of a therapy through the anus quickly cures diseases located in the colon.
- For the cure of diseases located in various parts of the body like *Visarpa, Pidaka* etc., application of therapies externally like *pradeha* (~application of poultice) in that particular part affected by diseases are useful³⁰.
- *Desha&Amla-pitthachikitsa*:
To the human beings, this disease is oftenly develops in *Anupa* (~marshy) *desha*, that is why it should be treated with the medicines growing in *Jangaladesha*, but also it is not pacified means person should change the *desha* or place where he lives³¹.
- Similarly in many treatment protocols foods of animals selected in particular to *anupa, jangala* etc. and the same will act as aetiology for many disorders.

DISCUSSION

Desha is a unique term applied to both habitat and individual body. To have fruitful results in the treatment aspects one should have keen knowledge on the data, which is provided by our acharya's. One among them is knowledge pertaining to *Desha*.

Acharya's divided *bhumidesha* into 3 categories to have a better insight on habitat, constitution & other factors of an individual. *Atura* is a key role in 4 factors i.e. *Bhishak, Rogi, Bheshaja&Upastha*. So knowledge regarding *atura's* (~patient) personal habits, his constitution, living habitat etc. is utmost important to plan any type of treatment. *Acharya's* illustrated the importance of *desha* in each and every aspects of routine habits right from collection of drugs, nature of food substance like cereals, meat origin, water etc. to food habits. Disease and relation to its curability has been explained in respect to habitat. If the patient didn't get cured from the disorder then it is explained that he should change his *desha*. These are minutest things which are not adopted or ignored by the *Ayurvedic* community, if applied definitely it will help the human society to get a better health.

CONCLUSION:

The division of areas depending upon climatic conditions appears to be more scientific. We often come across tropical diseases which are challenging the medical science today. Most of the areas produce different type of disorder, therefore understanding the climatic conditions will be essential in their management. It is said in our classics that one who have the knowledge of drugs & knows to use them properly in accordance to *Desha, kala* and examines individually, he is to be considered as a best physician.

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