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), nidana (~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 dehadesha. Application of the concept of desha is important in both swasthayaskshana of swastha and vikaraprashaman 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 hard.

According to Vangasena- jangaladesha will provoke raktha and pittha disorders.

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.

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 nature.

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 Vyadhik (~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 examined.

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 harmful.

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-
sential 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 malady.

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).

SUITEABLE & UNSUITABLE DESHA:
- Himalaya Mountains best in habitat of medicinal plants.
- Desert among all healthy lands.
- Marshy land among all unhealthy lands.

DESHE – 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 locality.

- Desha to be considered in janapadodvamsa (~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 disorder.

- 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 year\(^{12}\).

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 disorder\(^{13}\).

**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 region\(^{14}\).

**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 light\(^{15}\).

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 deserts\(^{16}\).

**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 strength\(^{17}\).

**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 strong\(^{18}\).

**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 habitat\(^{19}\).

**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 factors\(^{20}\).

**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 strength\(^{21}\).
- Anupa water (~marshy region) contains many blemishes, increases moistness inside and not suitable for health\(^{22}\).
- 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 light\(^{23}\).

### Table: 01 Showing the Place of River Origin In Relation To Diseases Affected\(^{24}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Places of river origin</th>
<th>Diseases affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prachya, Avanti, Aparanta</td>
<td>Piles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mahendra mountains</td>
<td>Enlargement of abdomen and filariasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sahya &amp; Vindhya mountains</td>
<td>Kashta, pandu and shiroroga (diseases of head)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sagara (~sea)</td>
<td>Increases all the dosha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 semen\(^{25}\).

### Desha Satmya:

*Satmya* (~conducive) 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-

i. *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*.

ii. *SamudayaSatmya* (~collective) e.g.: food which is followed in *janagaladesha* will 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
People of the outskirts of Kambhojadesha constantly consume masura, yava, godhuma, tila & koddala; complaints of Arshas (~piles) are very prevalent over there.

People 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 Abhisyannah (~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 useful.³⁰

- 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 lives.³¹

- 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 bhumi desha 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, Bhashaja & 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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