



Review Article

Recent approaches of Ayurveda for *karshya*: A review

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Abstract

Ayurveda believe that many health problems can be prevented through nutritious diet. Food is important as a nutritional source also having much therapeutic importance. Lack of sufficient food intake leads conditions like nutritional deficiency termed as Malnutrition (*Karshya*). In the developing country like India, malnutrition is the major cause of deaths during childhood period. *Karshya* is disease described in Ayurveda anciently and disease such as *Parigarbhika*, *Phakka*, *Balashosha*, and *Shuska Revati* describe by various author of Ayurveda can also be co-related to *Karshya*. It is the conditions responsible for many other health related problems thus a great consideration must be required to overcome this global health related crisis. This article highlights the Ayurvedic consideration of *Karshya*.

Key words

Malnutrition, *Karshya*, *Aahara*, *Balashosha*.

Introduction

Karshya is a condition which involves insufficient supply of nutrient in any stage of ages. Growing children are most vulnerable to its consequences. The nutritional requirements of growing children are more since their energy requirements is high due to the fast tissue growth in early age. Food (*Aahara*) is one of the

three sub-pillars of life as per Ayurveda. Indian traditional medicine has incorporated various explanations regarding this vital pillar of life. The *Aahara* converted into nutrition through process of *Agni* and these all makes building blocks of growing body. There are many nutritional requirements described in ancient text including supplements related to carbohydrates and protein. The supply of these nutrients when becomes less than their requirements then



malnutrition (*Karshya*) may occurs. Recently World Health Organization (W.H.O.) pays great attentions towards the problem since malnutrition may have some severe consequences like; mental and physical weakness, weight loss, retardation of tissue growth and fatigue as per **Chart - 1**. This article discusses some Ayurvedic consideration of *Karshya* towards the needful requirements of prevention rather than treatment [1, 2, 3, 4].

Approaches as per Ayurveda for *Karshya*

- Counseling
- Liver boosting
- Nutritional supplements through herbs

Counseling

The first line of treatment of *Karshya* involves educative counseling of peoples of area where the chances and incidents of malnutrition are common. Adequate and balance diet are suggested by various ayurvedic text for growing age children. In our classics, the properties of *Aahara* are described in the term of *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya* and *Vipaka* of the food material. It considers each and every food material (*Aahara*) enrich of these properties play an important role for proper development of body especially in early ages; simultaneously ayurveda also prescribed the therapeutics importance of various *Aahara* i.e. supply of nutritional diet to prevent malnutrition instead of treatment. Thus counseling is primary approach to overcome malnutrition.

Liver boosting

In many cases of malnutrition may occur due the poor absorption and digestion; this function mainly depends on liver activity thus poor liver functioning may cause conditions like malnutrition. Liver also incorporated with the

metabolism of carbohydrate, fat and protein. Excretion and detoxification of drugs and other toxins also proceed by liver. Thus liver boosting impacts normal human growth and retard chances of malnutrition which may occur due to the poor digestion.

Liver boosting can be done are as follows using Ayurvedic herbs:

- **Chicory Seed (*Cichorium intybus*):** Traditionally used for hepatic conditions and liver rejuvenation.
- **Spreading Hog Weed whole plant (*Boerhaavia diffusa*):** Traditionally used for hepatic disorders and for poor digestions of food.
- **Phyllanthus Aerial parts (*Phyllanthus niruri*):** The fresh root is traditionally given in jaundice and also used to boost liver for rejuvenating from *Karshya*.
- **Hellebore root (*Picrorhiza kurroa*):** Used traditionally in Ayurveda for centuries as a general liver tonic.
- **Trailing Eclipta leaf and root (*Eclipta alba*):** Traditionally used as a cholagogue (aids bile secretion) and deobstruent (removes functional obstructions in the body) in hepatic enlargement [5, 6, 7].

Nutritional supplements through herbs

Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

Seeds of lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) are edible, medicinally versatile and used as an important raw material in folk medicine. Tender rhizomes, stems and leaves of lotus are edible and its seeds are rich in protein as well as minerals. *Nelumbo nucifera* belongs to the family of *Nelumbonaceae*, which has several common names (e.g. Indian lotus, Chinese water lilly and sacred lotus) and synonyms (*Nelumbium nelumbo*, *N. speciosa*, *N. speciosum* and *Nymphaea nelumbo*). Rhizomes consist of 1.7% protein, 0.1% fat, 9.7% carbohydrate, seeds



possess saponins, phenolics and carbohydrates in appreciable quantities also contains protein, carbohydrate, 2.7% energy 348.45 cal/100 g, chromium (0.0042%), sodium (1%), potassium (28.5%), calcium (22.1%), magnesium (9.2%), copper (0.0463%), zinc, etc. Thus in the case of malnutrition lotus rhizomes and seeds can be used as remedy constituents to supply deficient nutrient especially protein [8].

Vidarikanda (*Pueraria tuberosa*)

It belongs to the family of *Papilionatae* and commonly known as *Swadukanda*, *Ikshugandha*, *Gajavajipriya*, *Kandapalash*, *Bhumikushmanda*, *Bilaikanda*, *Surala*, *Patalkohara*. Tuber of this plant contains carbohydrates 85.1%, crude fibres 28.4%, crude proteins 10.9%, isoflavone (glycoside-4', 6''- diacetyl- puerarin), polyphenol, gluconic acid, malic acid, pterocarpin, tuberosin. It poses *Brimhaniya*, *Balya*, *Rasayana*, *Jivaniya*, *Vatahara Karma* and hence commonly used in *Daurbalya*, *Kshaya*, *Shosha* [9, 10].

Bala (*Sida*)

The plant belongs to the genus known in Ayurved by the general name *Bala*. Five kinds of *Bala* are mentioned in our classics as *Bala*, *Nag bala*, *Mahabala*, *Atibala*, *Rajabala*. The root of the different species of *Sida* acts as cooling, astringent, tonic. It is placed under *Balya*, *Brimhana*, *Madhura skandha*, *Prajasthapana Vata Samshamana Gana*. The root of *Bala* contains cellulose 84.32%, lignin 14.70%, fat and wax 1.16%, nitrogen 0.227% & ash 1.37%. It poses *Balakrita*, *Kantitrita*, *Ojovardhaka*, *Vrishya*, *Rasayana karma* and hence commonly used in *Kshaya*, *Sarva- Vatavikara* etc. [11, 12].

Conclusion

Malnutrition (*Karshya*) is a major problem globally. This problem is mainly related with routine intake of nutritional supplements

through food. Ayurveda suggest balance intake of *Aahara* to fulfill the various nutritional requirements of body (like protein and carbohydrates) which are essential for proper growth & development of children in early age. There are many herbs described in traditional ayurvedic text as nutritional herbs to boost the nutritional deficiency. Counseling regarding nutritional diet & its proper intake is a primary line of treatment of malnutrition.

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Chart – 1: Consequences of *Karshya*.

