

'Jeevani' is primarily a book for women and about their reproductive health. It attempts to introduce some of the basic tenets of Ayurveda to Indian women. Only by improving the health of women can we hope to improve the health of our society. Once women grasp the basic tenets of Ayurveda, it will no doubt help improve the state of their health and that of their offspring. Relying on Ayurveda, we can actively take charge of our health and not passively hand over our health to so-called 'experts'.

In this book the role of food in creating health as well as disease, is emphasized throughout. The book tries to illustrate how Ayurveda, the Indian system of healthcare and medicine, gives a complete understanding of human beings, nature and the relationship between them; and how this understanding leads to a healthy way of life. Jeevani is a book which the whole family can benefit from.



Dr. PLT Girija, after completing an M.Phil. in Sociology from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, obtained a BAMS degree in Ayurveda from Venkataramana Ayurveda College, Chennai. She has a deep conviction that the Indian tradition of Ayurveda, which has taken care of our people for millennia, offers safe cure for all diseases, and is capable of effectively meeting all the health care needs of India.

To give a concrete shape to this conviction and contribute to the effort of strengthening the Indian systems of health care and medicine, Sanjeevani Ayurveda and Yoga Centre (SAYC) was started in 1990. Since its inception, a large number of patients with a wide variety of diseases have been successfully treated at this centre, using purely traditional Ayurvedic approach. Ayurveda and Yoga are being used to treat both acute and chronic ailments.

Dr. Girija had been a consultant to Health Systems Development Project of the Government of Tamilnadu; consultant and trainer to Reproductive and Child Health programmes (RCH) of Indian systems of medicine, Government of Tamilnadu; and consultant to Government of Tamilnadu for mainstreaming of Ayurveda. She is a member of Governing Council of Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research, Bengaluru and a member of the executive council of Lakshmi Seva Sangh, Gandhigram, Dindigul. Dr. Girija has also contributed numerous articles in newspapers and journals / magazines in both Tamil and English. She is the author of 'Ayulai Valarkkum Ayurveda', a book in Tamil on Ayurveda. In December 2012, the Tamilnadu MGR Medical University, conferred the Best Doctor award on Dr. Girija.



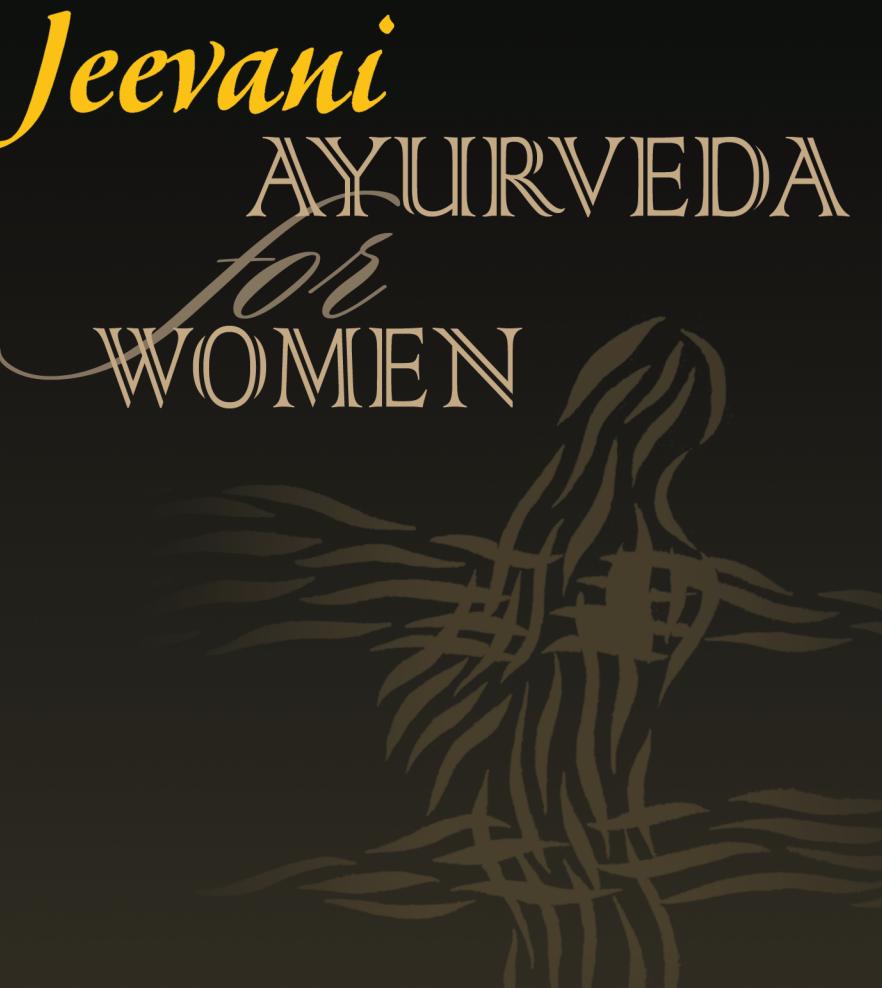
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Jeevani
AYURVEDA
FOR WOMEN



Dr P L T Girija



Sanjeevani Ayurveda Foundation (SAF) was started as an extension of the work of the Sanjeevani Ayurveda and Yoga Centre. SAF disseminates information about Ayurveda through publications, conducts research on various aspects of health care, trains a new generation of Ayurveda doctors, supports rural health initiatives and subsidized treatment for the poor. Sanjeevani, with the help of a team of dedicated young Ayurveda doctors, hopes to initiate a change in the health care policy of the Government of India so that Ayurveda regains its rightful place in our society as the principal medical system.

The inside cover is a photograph of a 11th century CE inscription from the Venkatesa Perumal temple, in Thirumukkodal, Kanchipuram District, Tamilnadu. The inscriptions of this temple describe in detail the functioning of an Ayurvedic hospital attached to it. Photograph by Sri C.P. Satyajit



Jeevani
AYURVEDA FOR WOMEN





Jeevani

Ayurveda for Women

Dr PLT Girija



Sanjeevani Ayurveda Foundation
Chennai





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AUTHOR'S NOTE

स्त्री हि मूलमपत्यानां स्त्री हि रक्षति रक्षिता ।

*Woman indeed is the source of human progeny.
When protected, she indeed protects the progeny.*¹

Women undoubtedly are the ultimate source of human progeny. The continuity and health of the family is dependent on them. Women therefore need to have a basic knowledge of healthy living to help themselves and their family.

Women of India, till a few generations ago, had a working knowledge of Ayurveda ('Knowledge of Life') and incorporated its principles into daily living. This medical knowledge was passed on from generation to generation. With the introduction of the Western medical system (allopathy) as the state-sponsored system of medicine and with modern education, this transmission of traditional medical knowledge was discouraged and disrupted. Consequently women of modern India have only a fragmentary knowledge of Ayurveda. They are left with random information on health from a variety of sources which may or may not be correct.

This book is an attempt to reacquaint Indian women with the principles and practices of Ayurveda, to provide a reliable reference, and to critically view, from an Ayurvedic perspective, the vast amount of information on health now available.

The book begins with a brief introduction to the basic principles of Ayurveda. Diseases specific to women (gynaecological diseases),

¹ *Ashtanga Samgraha*, translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy, 3 Volumes, Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 1995: *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verse 40.

pregnancy, childbirth, care of mother and child, food and nutrition are dealt with in the subsequent chapters. Anaemia, a major public health issue concerning women in India, and the Ayurvedic approach to it are highlighted. Problems of modern obstetric practice in India, and the ways to improve it by incorporating Ayurvedic principles and practices, are described. If these recommendations are adopted and followed universally, they will no doubt improve the health of women. The last part of the book explains the theory of Ayurveda in some detail. The appendix contains names of drugs /herbs and medicines mentioned in the book, as well as a glossary and an index. Names of herbs in Sanskrit with their corresponding Hindi, Tamil and Latin names are mentioned.

Ayurveda deals with disease-prevention as well as treatment for acute and chronic conditions.² Ayurveda is a system which teaches us to actively participate in taking charge of our own health, and not passively hand over healthcare to 'experts'. One of the objectives of this book is to explain this point of view to our readers and in particular to women.

Several persons contributed to this book and I owe my sincere thanks to all of them. T.M. Mukundan contributed conceptually to the content of the book and also critically edited it. Dr. Devi, head of the obstetrics team of Sanjeevani, helped with valuable comments and inputs. My sincere thanks to Dr. Geetha and Dr. Charles V Wetli, both allopathic doctors, for their critical comments. I am grateful to Prof. M.D. Srinivas and

² Some of the diseases treated at our Sanjeevani Ayurveda Centre include both acute and chronic conditions, such as stroke, heart attacks, slipped disc, fevers, rheumatoid arthritis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), hormonal maladies (such as thyroid disorders), haemorrhoids, diabetes, hypertension, respiratory ailments, digestive disorders, anaemia and jaundice. All these and many other conditions have been effectively treated at Sanjeevani for over twenty years.

The names of the diseases mentioned in the book are not always the Ayurvedic names. Modern medical names are used for the convenience of the readers.

Prof. T.M. Srinivasan for painstakingly reading and correcting the manuscript. The insights on which this book is based are derived from the experience at Sanjeevani of having provided over 20 years of Ayurvedic care to people. I am grateful to the community of *dais* (traditional midwives) from whom I have learnt a great deal.

PLT Girija
13-01-2013



FOREWORD

Among the great traditions of India, Ayurveda occupies a unique place. It is the medical science of India. At one time, Ayurvedic concepts of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* were known to every household. There was a continuum of knowledge in the society – with the medical texts at one end and the home remedies practised every day in every home ('grandmother's medicine') at the other. There was a whole range of medical practitioners – physicians formally trained in the treatment of diseases by gurus who were both great scholars of the medical texts as well as expert practitioners; bone-setters who could handle all kinds of fractures and dislocations; experts who treated poisonous bites of snakes, scorpions, dogs etc.; and the *dais*, the traditional midwives (*maruttuvacci* in Tamil) who possessed the most extraordinary obstetric skills. Many of these experts are still practising their skills all over the country and providing healthcare to a large number of people, often without any formal recognition or patronage.

Surgery, an integral part of the Ayurvedic medical system, was practised by skilled surgeons till the nineteenth century. *Susrutha Samhita* (dating back to at least 300 BCE), one of the foundational texts of Ayurveda, is perhaps the first medical text of the world to deal with surgery. It contains detailed descriptions of several surgical procedures like rhinoplasty (taking a flap of skin from the face for the repair of a damaged nose) and removal of cataract in the eye, urinary stones and haemorrhoids.³ Ayurvedic surgeons adopted procedures described in ancient texts like the *Susrutha Samhita*.

³ *Susruta Samhita*, translated by P.V. Sharma, 4 Volumes, Chaukhamba Viswabharati, Varanasi, 2004: *Sutrasthana*, Chapter 16, Rhinoplasty; *Uttarasthana*, Chapter 27, removal of cataract in the eye; *Chikitsasthana*, Chapter 7, removal of urinary stones; *Chikitsasthana*, Chapter 6, removal of haemorrhoids.

Early European surgeons acknowledged that plastic surgery, particularly rhinoplasty originated in India.⁴

When the British came to India, they observed Indian surgeons performing complicated surgical procedures which were unknown in Europe. The first British observers sent descriptions of these procedures to Europe. Surgical techniques like rhinoplasty were learnt by British surgeons and incorporated into their medical system. This seems to have created a major impact on the development of European medical sciences.⁵ Carl Linnaeus (18th century), considered the father of modern botanical taxonomy, is said to have been influenced considerably by the publication of the botanical encyclopaedia *Hortus Malabaricus* based on botanical knowledge from India. This massive compendium was published in the last quarter of the 17th Century by the then Dutch governor of Cochin, with the help of native *vaidyas* and their botanical knowledge. Ayurvedic traditions ‘exerted an important and lasting influence on the development of botanical science in Europe’.⁶ Inoculation against smallpox was widely prevalent in India long before Edward Jenner made his discovery of smallpox vaccination in Europe⁷.

India is a land known for an outstanding healthcare system. Ours may have been the first country to have had an organized public healthcare system. *Charaka Samhita*, the most important text of Ayurveda, (dated prior to 500 BCE), describes the construction and functioning of a hospital in great detail, starting

⁴ Dharampal, “Indigenous Indian technological talent and the need for its mobilization”, PPST Bulletin, December 1986, pp. 5–21.

⁵ Dharampal, cited above.

⁶ Dominik Wujastyk, “The transmission of Indian medicine to other cultures”, December 2004 (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/histmed/PDFS/Teaching/BSc/C123/C123-Lecture10b.pdf>)

⁷ Dharampal, *Indian Science and Technology in the 18th Century*, Impex India, 1971; Other India Press, Goa, India, 2000.

from the selection of an expert architect and type of land on which the hospital is to be constructed. Some of the important features mentioned are: a good and strong building with open spaces and proper ventilation, free from dust, smoke, noise, and undesirable sights and smells; bathrooms and toilets; water reservoir/storage; diverse equipment and medicines; bedding, seats and linen; attendants of an appropriate character and attitude; etc.⁸ Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien (5th Century CE) had observed a well-organized hospital system in Pataliputra (now Patna in Bihar). Fa-Hsien noted: 'The heads of *Vaisya* (merchant) families ...establish in the cities houses for dispensing charity and medicine. All the poor and destitute in the country, orphans, widowers, and childless men, maimed people and cripples, and all who are diseased, go to those houses, and are provided with every kind of help, and doctors examine their diseases. They get the food and medicines which their cases require, and are made to feel at ease; and when they are better, they go away of themselves'⁹.

Such institutions seem to have existed all over India until the early 19th century, when they were uprooted by the British. Historians describe the functioning of various *chatrams* (institutions of hospitality) in the Thanjavur region of Tamilnadu in the late 18th century. In these *chatrams* all were fed. Skilful doctors took care of travellers who fell sick. According to a historical account, these travellers 'receive medicines and the diet proper for them, and are attended with respect and kindness until their recovery... Milk is provided for infants, pregnant women are entertained with kindness; and if they happen to be delivered

⁸ *Charaka Sambita*, translated by K. K. Sharma and Bhagwan Dash, 5 Volumes, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1977: *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 15, Verses 6, 7.

⁹ Fa-Hsien's account, cited from J. Legge, *A Record of Buddhist kingdoms*, Dover Reprints, New York 1965, p.79.

at the *Chetrum*, their expenses are defrayed, medicines are given to them and they are permitted to remain in the *Chetrum* three months after their delivery...’¹⁰

These traditional institutions and the entire medical system were supported by the society. Each village allocated a certain proportion of the grain production for the maintenance of the *vaidyas* and the medical system. Late 18th Century accounts of 1430 villages in the Chengalpattu District of Tamilnadu, show that a share of the total produce of grain was allocated to medical professionals.¹¹ Tax-free lands, called *manyam*, were also allocated to individual *vaidyas*.¹²

Under the British rule, the village economy was systematically destroyed. The widely prevalent medical system collapsed without support from the society or the state. To add to the economic collapse, the State under British rule, was openly hostile to all the Indian systems of knowledge, particularly that of medicine and public health. This great wealth of knowledge, from which European medical science benefited immensely, was labelled ‘superstitious’ and ‘unscientific’. An educational system based on the British model was introduced all over the country. The content of this education was entirely Western. The purpose of this educational system was to create a class of Indians who were Indian only in appearance but European in mind and attitude. One of the creators of this system wrote: ‘We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class

¹⁰ J. K. Bajaj and M. D. Srinivas, *Annam Bahu Kurvita, Recollecting the Indian Discipline of Growing and Sharing Food in Plenty*, Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai, 1996, pp.181-184.

¹¹ M. D. Srinivas, T. G. Paramasivam and T. Pushkala, *Thirupporur and Vadakkuppattu – Eighteenth Century Locality Accounts*, Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai, 2001.

¹² *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol.XXI, pp.221-225. [Inscriptions from the Venkatesa Perumal Temple in Thirumukkoodal, Kanchipuram District of Tamilnadu.]

of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.'¹³ As a result, any Indian trained in the modern educational system began to feel that all Indian knowledge was superstition and inferior to European knowledge which alone, by definition, was 'scientific'.

Even after six decades of independence, we continue to harbour such prejudices. Indian systems of medicine remain totally neglected. The real losers have been our people. They have been impoverished not only economically, but also deprived of their time-tested medical practices. Needless to say, the neglect of Indian systems of medicine has been one of the main factors responsible for the current healthcare crisis of India.

Today in India, we have the Western medical system as the mainstream medicine, garnering most of the state patronage. In this system, solutions to new problems are sought by introducing newer and unaffordable technologies and preventive vaccines. Risky medical interventions are common practice. The sick are bombarded with a huge number of pharmaceutical preparations – drugs that can have drastic and debilitating side effects. It is therefore no small wonder that deaths due to medical interventions, drug interactions and side effects, known as iatrogenic deaths, are alarmingly high the world over.¹⁴ The major beneficiary of this form of healthcare seems to be the pharmaceutical industry which has a stranglehold on the entire allopathic medical profession.

However, we are fortunate that in spite of two centuries of enslavement, neglect and destruction, much of our traditional medical knowledge is still alive. There are still a very large number

¹³ T. B. Macaulay, "Minute of Education in India", 2-2-1835, cited from Dharampal, *Despoliation and Defaming of India*, Bharat Peetham, Wardha and Other India Press, Goa, 1999.

¹⁴ Gary Null et al., *Death by Medicine*, Nutrition Institute of America, 2010. This book points out that iatro-genesis is the leading cause of death in the USA.

of *vaidyas* serving people all over the country employing the techniques and procedures described in our medical texts, and sometimes even making extraordinary innovations. Given proper attention and encouragement all this can be revived.

Ayurveda is based on a large body of observational data and it has an elaborate theoretical framework that explains health and disease. Ayurveda has time-tested drugs and therapeutics which are effective in curing diseases. It can treat effectively even new and unknown diseases based on its sound theoretical understanding of the disease-causing factors in the body.

Ayurveda is associated closely with our daily lives even today. Our people understand the Ayurvedic concepts of 'hot' and 'cold', and the concept of '*pathyam*' (regulation of diet). Given the opportunity, our traditional medical systems can deliver the medicalcare required by our society, effectively and economically.

Our country possesses a wealth of medical knowledge, in the form of texts and manuscripts in Sanskrit as well as in all other Indian languages, which is waiting to be catalogued, explored and made use of for the good of our people. Such an effort will put our country in the forefront of medical science, and this knowledge can be used for the benefit of the entire human race.

TM Mukundan
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PART I

Introduction to Ayurveda

CHAPTER 1

The Road to Health

आयुः कामयमानेन धर्मार्थसुखसाधनम्।
आयुर्वेदोपदेशेषु विधेयः परमादरः ॥

A person desirous of long life should place the utmost faith in the teachings of Ayurveda; long life is the means for achieving virtue, wealth, and happiness.¹⁵

Everyone wants to enjoy good health. For this we need to know what causes health and what causes ill health in the body. Without this basic knowledge it is difficult to ensure good health.

Some are born with good health. Others acquire it. Those born with good health need to know how to maintain it while others need to learn to acquire it. Both these are possible by following the teachings of Ayurveda.

Promoting good health is a sure way of preventing ill health. But how does one acquire good health? By consuming good food can we be healthy? What is meant by good food? There are so many health tips and recipes one finds in the print and other media. Some of these tell you to drink huge quantities of water since it is supposed to ‘flush out toxins’. Many people follow this advice and are busy gulping down litres of the liquid. Others tell you that consuming ghee is bad for health and this message has travelled far

¹⁵ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy, 3 Volumes, Krishnadas Academy, Varanasi, 1995: *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 2.

and wide. Some advise you not to cook food but eat everything raw. There seems to be no basis for any of these statements. Let us therefore look at health through the teachings of Ayurveda.

Good Health through Ayurveda

A disease is a specific disturbance of the internal balance and harmony of the body.¹⁶

Ayurveda has a complete theory which tells us what causes health and ill health. Once the causative factors for health and ill health are known, the road to good health can be charted. This section provides a brief summary of the basic principles of Ayurveda.

The most significant aspect of Ayurveda is its theory. It is based on the laws of nature which govern the functioning of the universe. In nature, there are three vital forces, wind, heat and cold, which sustain life when they are in balance and cause upheavals when their equilibrium is disturbed. The human body is a mini-universe governed by these same forces. In the human body also wind, heat and cold are the three factors responsible for both normal and abnormal functions. In the context of the human body, these factors are called *Vata* or *Vayu* (wind), *Pitta* (fire / heat) and *Kapha* (water / cold). The word *Vata* implies movement and *Vata* is responsible for all movements in and of the body. The word *Pitta* implies heat which maintains body heat / temperature and is responsible for digestion. The word *Kapha* implies binding (of joints etc.) and stability of the body. These three then are the factors which maintain health when they are in balance and cause disease when their balance is disturbed.

Vata, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are called *doshas* of the human body. They are called *doshas* because they have the capacity to cause

¹⁶ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited above, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 20.

disease. For any disease to attack or take root in the body, one or more of the three disease-causing factors (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) have to deviate from their normal state. Under normal conditions, when the *doshas* are in balance, the body functions smoothly without any impediments. The three *doshas* are found everywhere in the body and are responsible for all functions in the body, both mental and physical. The balance of the *doshas* can be disturbed by internal causes such as improper diet and external causes such as injury and weather, resulting in ill health.

Imbalance

Imbalance here means that one or more of the *doshas* have increased considerably from their state of equilibrium. This equilibrium is not a static state. It is a dynamic equilibrium where there is a constant movement of the three *doshas*. Depending on the age of the person, the time of the day, the season, and the food taken, one or the other of the three *doshas* is in a dominant position. So, a slight disturbance from the equilibrium position does not cause disease. Only when any *dosha* exceeds a certain limit does it cause disease. A *dosha* which exceeds its limits is said to be vitiated or aggravated. **An aggravated *dosha* can be brought back to equilibrium by diet, medicine and regimen whose qualities are opposed to the qualities of the *dosha*.**

When there is a disease in the body, the vitiated *dosha* exhibits some of its characteristic symptoms. The *dosha(s)* responsible for the disease can be inferred from these symptoms. The three *doshas* individually or in combination can cause diseases in the body. Each disease is a specific imbalance of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. The precise nature of the disease can be understood by understanding the corresponding imbalance of *doshas* correctly. Thus a disease is a specific disturbance of the internal balance or harmony of the body. There is no disease without the involvement of *doshas*.

The Building Material - *Dhatu*

The body is made up of seven *dhatu*s, which are the basic building blocks. Diseases manifest in these *dhatu*s. *Dhatu*s are the following:

- *Rasa* is a liquid which is formed immediately after the food is digested and it carries nutrition to all parts of the body
- *Rakta* or blood, which is essential for life
- *Mamsa* or flesh, which provides the covering to the body
- *Medas* or fat, which provides oiliness to the body
- *Asthi* or bone, which holds up the body structure
- *Majja* or bone marrow, which is the filling inside the bones
- *Sukra* or the reproductive *dhatu*

Aggravated *doshas* can vitiate the above *dhatu*s and create diseases in different parts of the body. The exact manner in which the *doshas* vitiate the *dhatu*s determines the exact nature of the disease, as well as its treatment. Hitherto unknown diseases can also be treated successfully by identifying the vitiated *doshas* and affected *dhatu*s correctly.

A new Disease being Treated by Ayurveda

One and the same vitiated dosha, depending on the causative factors, moves to different locations and causes many diseases.¹⁷

The Chikunguniya fever, which occurred in an epidemic form a few years ago, was said to be a new disease. Since it was supposedly caused by a new virus, it did not have any treatment under the allopathic system. Suffering people were told to wait until a new

¹⁷ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 12, Verse 65.

vaccine was discovered. The physicians of the Indian systems of medicine were able to diagnose this fever, from its symptoms, as one caused predominantly by the vitiation of *Vata*. Thus they provided a successful treatment protocol for this fever. At our Sanjeevani clinic in Chennai, hundreds of patients with Chikunguniya were treated successfully during the epidemic. Joint pains and fever disappeared in just three to four days. Other *vaidyas* too had similar experiences. Patients who underwent allopathic treatment, largely consisting of antibiotics, pain-killers and steroids, either had to seek Ayurvedic treatment subsequently or suffered the pains for several months and were seriously incapacitated.

MIND AND BODY

Ayurveda treats body and mind together as a composite entity. The definition of health includes a healthy body together with a healthy and calm mind.

'A healthy person is one whose *doshas*, power of digestion, *dhatus* and excreta are in a state of equilibrium; and whose consciousness, sense organs and mind are in a clear, calm state.'¹⁸

'Discrimination, courage / will and knowledge of the self are the best medicines for the mind.'¹⁹

¹⁸ *Susruta Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 15, Verse 41.

¹⁹ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 26.

Because of this ability of Ayurveda to understand and treat any new disease in this manner, Ayurvedic texts declare that the science of Ayurveda is not only valid for the past, it is valid now and will be valid for all time to come. These fundamental principles of Ayurveda do not change from time to time.

To treat any new disease the following three factors need to be known:

- The precise imbalance of the *doshas*
- The location in the body where the disease has occurred
- The *dhatu(s)* involved in the disease

In this manner any new disease, which has not been seen before, can be understood and treated successfully.

Diagnosis without Instruments

We often encounter the question: ‘How can Ayurveda diagnose a disease without the aid of instruments?’ The answer is: by applying the sound principles of Ayurvedic theory while diagnosing diseases. The following case illustrates this point.

An elderly woman came with her 38 year old son Raman, fearing that he had some dreadful disease. His stomach always felt bloated and his urine did not get expelled fully. He urinated in small quantities and woke up many times in the night to pass urine. He moved his bowels once in three or four days. There was always a severe discomfort or pain in his lower abdomen. He underwent all sorts of investigations in the allopathic system. His stomach,

large intestines and bladder were examined with endoscopes, colonoscopes, X-rays, etc. The cause of his discomfort could not be identified. One specialist suggested his troubles could be related to an enlarged prostate and a surgery may be tried. However Raman was unwilling. He was treated successively by a gastroenterologist, an urologist and also by his general physician whom he was consulting. He was medicated independently for each of his complaints and he had no relief from any of these. None of the specialists was able to enlighten him about the root cause of his troubles.

In our Ayurvedic clinic, Raman's condition was diagnosed as one which resulted from a malfunctioning of *Apana Vayu*. *Apana* being the region below the navel, *Vayu* in this region is known by this name. *Apana Vayu* is responsible for the elimination of urine, motion and wind (flatus). To regulate the functions of *Apana Vayu*, Raman was administered Ayurvedic medicines, one of which was *Sukumara Rasayanam*, an excellent medicine which helps in the proper flow of this *Vayu*. He was administered oil treatments and medicated enemas (*vasti*) to reduce the aggravation of *Vayu*. Being young he made a speedy recovery. By bringing about the normalcy of *Apana Vayu* the patient was relieved of pain and other discomfort. Once the root cause of a disease is identified, it is easy to follow a line of treatment for any disease.

CHAPTER 2

Food

इष्टवर्णगन्धस्स्पर्शं विधिविहितमन्नपानं प्राणिनां ।
प्राणिसंज्ञकानां प्राणमाचक्षते कुशलाः प्रत्यक्षफलदर्शनात् ॥

*Food and drink whose colour, smell, taste and touch
are pleasing to the senses and conducive to health,
if consumed in accordance with instructions (of Ayurveda),
is the very life of living beings.²⁰*

An Ayurvedic book for women ought to highlight the basic properties and qualities of food. Traditional Indian cooking is based on the principles of Ayurveda. Sophisticated cooking with fine flavour and taste, specific to regions, has been our strength. It is only recently that we seem to have lost some of these highly developed skills in cooking. Today there is tremendous confusion over every aspect of food. An ignorant obstetrician chides and discourages her patient who tries to follow a regulated diet (*pathyam*) after delivery. Nor is a paediatrician of much help when the mother finds her infant purging after drinking her milk. The fact is, in both these conditions, the mother's food plays a vital role.

The way to good health is through adopting proper food habits. For this we need to know the properties of food substances and how they affect our body.

²⁰ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 27, Verse 3.

Understanding Food by the Tastes

One way of knowing the nutritional value of food substances is by identifying their tastes (*rasa*). Food can be classified according to tastes. Taste is the most important characteristic of any food substance. The nutritional and medicinal value of food is indicated by its taste.

Taste is what we feel as soon as a substance comes into contact with the tongue. There are six tastes in nature: sweet, sour, salt, bitter, pungent and astringent. Tastes of all food substances are contained within these six. Among the six tastes, sweet taste is the one which nourishes the body the most, followed by others in the order sour, salt, bitter, pungent and astringent.

The following are some examples of foods with different tastes:

- Milk and ghee are sweet
- Curd is sour
- All varieties of salts are salty
- Bitter gourd is bitter
- Pepper is pungent (spicy/hot)
- Betel nut is astringent
- Water has an imperceptible taste (*avyakta rasa*).

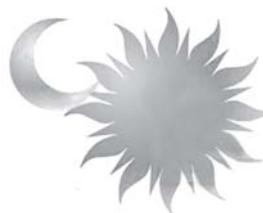
As can be seen from the above examples, the first three tastes, namely sweet, sour and salt are found abundantly in food substances and they nourish the body. Bitter, pungent and astringent tastes are important in medicinal substances as they have greater therapeutic value. Each of the six tastes has a definite relationship to the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.

Each of the six tastes either increases or decreases one of the *doshas*

<i>Dosha</i>	Increased by	Decreased by
<i>Vata</i>	Pungent, Bitter, Astringent	Sweet, Sour, Salt
<i>Pitta</i>	Pungent, Sour, Salt	Sweet, Bitter, Astringent
<i>Kapha</i>	Sweet, Sour, Salt	Pungent, Bitter, Astringent

Therefore, if we know the taste of a substance, we can understand its effect /action on our body. Along with taste if we also know the efficacy (hot or cold) of a substance, it helps in understanding its effect /action better.

Efficacy (Hot/Cold)



We often hear people say that certain foods cause heat in the body while others are cooling. These are concepts from Ayurveda. All substances, food and medicine, are classified as either heating or cooling depending on their action. For example milk, ghee and butter are cooling in action. Curd and buttermilk are hot in action. This property (heating or cooling) is called the efficacy or *veeryam* of the substance. (*Veeryam* is sometimes also translated as potency). It is common sense that we consume food which is cold in efficacy in summer. In the cold climate of winter, food which is hot in efficacy and hot in temperature is consumed.

Consuming substances which are cold in efficacy increases *Vata* and *Kapha* as these two are cold by nature; whereas they decrease *Pitta* as *Pitta* is hot by nature. Conversely, substances which are hot in efficacy increase *Pitta* but decrease *Vata* and *Kapha*. Usually, sweet substances are cold in their efficacy whereas sour, salt and pungent are hot in efficacy.

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Increased by</i>	<i>Decreased by</i>
<i>VATA</i>	Cold (efficacy)	Hot (efficacy)
<i>PITTA</i>	Hot (efficacy)	Cold (efficacy)
<i>KAPHA</i>	Cold (efficacy)	Hot (efficacy)

An understanding of the tastes and efficacy of commonly used substances and how they affect the *doshas* helps us to select food according to our requirement. For example, in the case of a pregnant woman the food should be cooling in nature. Excessive intake of food which is hot in efficacy like chillies, curd, etc., can cause bleeding during pregnancy.

While treating different diseases, depending on the aggravated *doshas*, the appropriate food is recommended. For example, if we are affected by a disease caused by vitiated *Vata*, the food recommended would include substances which are sweet, sour and salty in taste, and hot in efficacy as these help reduce the vitiated *Vata*. Similarly for reducing aggravated *Pitta*, the food would be sweet, bitter and astringent in taste and cold in efficacy. And in the case of aggravated *Kapha* the choice is bitter, pungent and astringent tasting food with hot efficacy. This is the reason behind recommending different diets in different diseases. This is the concept of *pathyam* in Ayurveda.

Some of the basic principles of Ayurveda have been outlined in this chapter. We have tried to capture in brief the theory of health and disease. Some aspects of diet and nutrition have also been briefly described. Later on, in part III, we will also explain the characteristics of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, the importance of a daily regimen, the need to adapt diet and regimen to changing seasons, digestion and factors which interfere with digestion, different food substances and their properties, rules of dietetics and the concept of incompatible foods. An understanding of all these is essential for maintaining health. In the next few chapters, we look more specifically at women's health, in particular their reproductive health.



PART II

Ayurveda and Women's health

CHAPTER 3

Women and Health

सुखसंज्ञकमारोग्यं विकारो दुःखमेव च ।

Health is happiness and disease is sorrow.²¹

The health of women determines and reflects the health of the society. If the reproductive health of a woman is impaired at a very young age, it leads to unhealthy progeny.

The reproductive life of a woman begins with puberty. It usually starts around the age of twelve when the girl begins to menstruate. Some may menstruate a little earlier or later. Usually bleeding lasts for three to five days; in some, bleeding may be noticed even upto seven days. Healthy and normal menstrual bleeding, which appears regularly every month, is not associated with pain or burning. It is neither excessive nor scanty. Pure menstrual blood does not stain a cloth. Initially at the onset of puberty, menstrual bleeding may seem irregular, which however gets corrected on its own. At times administration of Ayurvedic uterine tonics are useful to regulate the cycle.

There are several diseases related to the female reproductive system. They arise as a result of aggravation of one or more of the three *doshas*. They may be caused by unhealthy regimen, wrong eating habits, congenital defects and so on.

²¹ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 9, Verse 4.

Tenderness, swelling, pain and numbness of the genital tract, itching of the genitals, excessive bleeding, discharge of pale fluid with piercing pain, menstrual discharge which is rough, frothy, difficult and painful, inflammation and burning sensation, discharge of white mucus, discolouration of menstrual flow, prolapse of the uterus, destruction of the foetus in the uterus, exceedingly painful intercourse or intolerance to intercourse, painful retention of urine and stool and dryness of vagina, inability to retain the semen, growth of flesh and pain in the back, waist, thighs and groin, are some of the problems of the female reproductive system caused by the aggravation of one or more of the three *doshas*. Below, we look at some of these problems in some detail.

Pre-menstrual Syndrome

A very common problem many women face is discomfort before menstruation. This is known as 'Pre-Menstrual Syndrome' (PMS). Some experience pain and discomfort even during the menstrual cycle. Let us look at the causes, symptoms and remedial measures for this disorder of the reproductive system.

What is pre-menstrual syndrome? What causes it? Is it preventable? Is it curable? These are the questions frequently asked by menstruating women. The symptoms of PMS include severe pain in the lower abdomen, back, thigh and legs; tenderness and pain in the breasts; fluid retention in the body; headache, nausea, fatigue and irritability. Occasionally women also suffer from depression. This discomfort can be so acute that their work, daily life and social relationships are seriously disrupted.

Pain and discomfort during menstruation have become so widespread that every woman accepts this suffering as a normal physiological event. In many families the entire household participates in the monthly suffering of the woman. Symptoms may start days before the onset of the cycle. Severe pain, cramps and discomfort prompt many women to swallow pain-killer pills month

after month. A young woman who was suffering from severe pain and vomiting during each menstrual cycle once confessed that she was even willing to undergo hysterectomy (surgical removal of the uterus) to escape the suffering.

A normal, healthy menstrual cycle is not usually associated with any of this trauma. Pain and discomfort associated with menstruation are symptoms of an unhealthy reproductive system. Pain and discomfort indicate that the function of *Apama Vayu*, which is situated below the navel (the *Apama* region) – in the lower abdomen, hip, back, groin and thighs – is impaired.

Apama Vayu is responsible for the proper and comfortable flow of menstrual blood. Normal, healthy flow of menstrual blood can be disturbed due to unhealthy food, work and habits, which aggravate *Vayu*. By adopting a proper diet and regimen, the suffering can be eliminated. Natural flow of menstrual blood takes place when the doshas (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) are in a balanced and normal state.

FOOD: Eating habits contribute significantly to problems associated with menstruation. There are many *Vayu*-aggravating food substances in our daily diet. If women indulge in pungent, astringent, spicy (hot) food, spicy curries and pickles in excess, *Vayu* is aggravated. Food and drinks which are cold in temperature, for example, ice-cream, chilled drinks and iced water also aggravate *Vayu*. So do pulses, sprouts and dry (non-oily) foods. Indiscriminate fasting and dieting can cause *Vayu*-aggravation. A person who suffers from *Vayu* disorders should therefore refrain from diet and regimen which aggravate *Vayu*.

A change of diet which helps the proper flow of *Vayu* is the first step in correcting pre-menstrual syndrome. To control aggravated *Vayu*, oil, ghee, milk, wheat, rice and meat soup are useful foods. Generally sweet and fatty foods possess properties opposed to the qualities of *Vayu*. Therefore, consuming these helps in reducing the aggravation of *Vayu*.

Nowadays women have entirely given up the use of ghee, oil and butter in their diet. A diet which is totally dry, without any fat, leads to dryness in the body which in turn aggravates *Vayu* and causes problems like pain in different parts of the body. For example, many people suffer from pain or pressure in the chest region. Pain keeps shifting around and at times they find relief when they burp the air out. Often they rush to doctors fearing it to be some serious condition and undergo various examinations. All these are cases of *Vayu* not in a normal state due to a *Vayu*-aggravating diet. Normal flow of *Vayu* in the body is absolutely essential for maintaining health.

HABITS: The incidence of pain, cramps and discomfort associated with the menstrual cycle do not trouble women who regularly use oil on the body (*abhyanga*). Oil is the best substance for controlling *Vayu*. Application of oil on the body is an important daily practice which helps pacify *Vayu* and regulates its flow. When the flow of *Vayu* is regulated, it also regulates its functions such as the proper flow of menstrual blood.

There are three simple steps a woman with menstrual pain can follow to overcome her problems:

- **CHANGE OF DIET:** Avoid *Vayu*-aggravating foods such as hot and spicy foods, ice-cold food/drinks, pulses, sprouts, potatoes, dry (non-oily) food and excessive use of vegetables. Instead, include milk, ghee, butter, oil, rice, wheat, and warm food and drinks in the diet.

- **APPLICATION OF OIL:** Practice application of oil on the body daily. Applying oil, especially around the hip, groin, thigh and below the navel, followed by bathing in warm water is very beneficial. *Dhanvantara Tailam* is an excellent medicated oil which can be used by women regularly. When there is no physical discomfort, sesame (*til*) oil can be used for application on the body. [for details, see Oil-bath (*abhyanga*) below].

- **LIFE-STYLE CHANGES:** Avoid keeping awake at nights, sleeping during day and excessive and strenuous physical exercises.

In place of tiring exercises, milder exercises – preferably *yogasana* and *pranayama* – which help in the proper flow of *Vayu*, can be practised.

Following these simple steps can surely help in reducing the pain and discomfort of menstruation. If the problems do not disappear entirely with these simple changes, intake of medicines will help overcome them. If the aggravation of *doshas* is very severe, purificatory therapies (*panchakarma*) under the supervision of an Ayurvedic physician are necessary. (for *panchakarma* see page 203).

Menstrual Disorders

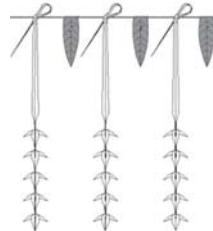
Women may suffer from different kinds of discomfort during menstruation. Some experience pain caused by *Vata* which has been described above. Others experience a burning sensation in the genital tract. There may be a feeling of heat, fever and inflammation. The menstrual blood may be yellowish, bluish or blackish. There may be excessive bleeding which is hot and foul-smelling. These problems arise due to the aggravation of *Pitta*. Women who suffer from any of these *Pitta* problems should stay away from *Pitta*-aggravating diet. All food substances which are pungent or spicy (hot), sour and salty in taste, aggravate *Pitta*. Women who suffer from aggravation of *Pitta* can switch to a diet which is predominantly sweet, bitter and astringent in taste. Milk, ghee, rice, dal, wheat, bitter gourd etc. are the food substances appropriate in this condition. Drinking water boiled with *usheera* and external application of sandal wood paste, provide relief from burning sensation in the body.

In some women, the genital tract becomes very slimy and cold. There is itching along with mild pain. Menstrual blood is very pale and slimy. This condition is due to the aggravation of *Kapha*. Generally *Kapha* increases due to indulging in foods which are fatty, predominantly sweet or sour in taste and cold in temperature. A woman who regularly consumes sweets, chocolates, halwas,

ice-creams and pastries will surely find an increase of *Kapha* in her body. *Kapha* is also aggravated by the use of fish, curd and heavy meats. Women who indulge in day-sleep also tend to suffer from *Kapha* diseases. To avoid diseases caused by aggravation of *Kapha*, one should give up these foods and habits. Regular physical exercise is also necessary to overcome problems caused by *Kapha*.

THE SACRED BATH

In Tamilnadu when a girl first starts to menstruate, she is given a certain type of diet and a certain regimen is followed for 10 to 14 days. During this period the girl, menstruating for the first time, is fed sesame oil – about 150ml – along with a raw egg (of a country chicken) every day, early in the morning. The girl digests this food in about six hours and after that she is fed a preparation of *urad dal* and sesame oil, known as *kali*. During these days she is protected from household work, exercise, sun, rain, wind, cold, smoke, dust, anger, grief, walking long distances, travelling in vehicles, day sleep or loud speech. After four to seven days of this oil intake, she stays in a sheltered room for an equal number of days – as many days as she took the oil. The ritual comes to an end with a grand ceremony known as *punita* (or *manjal*) *neerattu vizha* (sacred bath ceremony).



This is a perfect example of a traditional health practice of our people based on Ayurvedic concepts. Consuming large quantities of a fat, in this case oil, is called *sneha pana*. This is an important treatment procedure which is practised in Ayurvedic hospitals for treating various diseases. During this treatment the patients are protected in the manner described above. The reason behind this practice is to regulate the flow of *Vayu* (in this case *Apana Vayu*) which is responsible for menstrual flow. Oil is the best substance for regulating *Vayu*. Consuming oil also gives strength and sturdiness to the body. Oil is hot in efficacy; and egg which gives strength and nourishment, is also hot in efficacy. *Urad dal* is hot in efficacy, fatty, good for improving the reproductive *dhatu*, increases strength, fat, controls *Vayu*, nourishes, and reduces pain in the abdomen. All these together ensure a proper and pain-free menstrual cycle which lays the foundation for a healthy reproductive life. This ritual is practised and preserved by the poor of this country who still hold on to our traditions.

Oil-Bath (*Abhyanga*)²²

Oil-bath is an important daily practice essential for maintaining good health. What is the basis for this practice, and how does the body benefit by this? Let us learn more about the effects of oil on our body.



²² *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verses 8, 9.

Applying oil over the body and bathing, generally known as oil-bath or *abhyanga*, has major therapeutic benefits. Regular oil-bath not only contributes towards maintaining good health, it also helps ward off many diseases. The most important benefit of oil-bath is that it prevents diseases of *Vayu*. An important location of *Vayu* in the body is the skin. As the inherent properties of oil are opposed to those of *Vayu*, oil applied on the skin protects us from the aggravation of *Vayu*.

Oil-application promotes strength of the body and develops the ability to withstand exertion. Oiling the head and body slows down ageing by maintaining a good physique, by keeping the sense organs sharp, the skin wrinkle-free and lustrous, and the hair roots strong. One who applies oil on the body regularly does not suffer from muscle cramps, aches and pains. Oil improves eyesight and enables one to sleep soundly. Those who suffer from sleeplessness can apply oil over the head, body and especially the feet to ensure good sleep. Oil-bath eliminates bad body odour, dirt, itching and the unpleasant feeling due to sweating. It prevents heaviness of the body and tiredness. Putting oil in the ears prevents hearing defects as well as pain in the jaw, neck, head and ears. Application of oil on the feet makes them steady and strong, cures numbness, roughness, stiffness and cracking of feet and improves eyesight. It also prevents constriction of blood vessels and ligaments of feet.

One who regularly applies oil on the body is not affected much even when subjected to injuries or strenuous work. Sports people can benefit immensely by following a daily regimen of oil-bath. Oil is beneficial in burns, fractures, wounds and pains. Thus oiling the body has major therapeutic value. Women, when they use oil regularly, can enjoy a regular and painless menstrual cycle. The incidence of pain and discomfort is found to be more among women who have given up this useful and important practice. After learning about the immense benefits of oil-bath, no one would want to stay away from it.

WHO SHOULD AVOID OIL-BATH? There are specific medical conditions in which oil-bath is to be avoided. Use of oil should be avoided by those who suffer from diseases of *Kapha* origin. Persons who suffer from phlegm, cold, cough and respiratory disorders should not apply oil on the body. In the case of chronic complaints of phlegm affecting the head region, use of medicated oils (which counter *Kapha*) on the head is extremely beneficial. A person who suffers from excessive salivation or indigestion should also stay away from applying oil on the body. Oil-bath is not recommended for persons who are very obese.

The choice of oil depends on the individual constitution. Young persons and those who do not have any ailment can apply sesame oil over the head and body. Women with pain and discomfort during menstruation can use *Dhanvantara Tailam* over the body. Applying a medicated oil such as this, especially over the hip, groin, back and thighs and using oil-soaked cotton tampons (*pichu*) are very beneficial for women with gynaecological problems. Different medicated oils are recommended for different diseases.

Ideally, oil should be applied every day, before bath. To begin with, oil is applied over the head. The oil for the head can be whatever oil the person is used to, e.g., coconut oil, sesame oil or any medicated oil. After that, oil is applied over the body. The body oil can be sesame or a medicated oil. The application of oil is in the downward direction, towards the feet. Oil is gently massaged into the body without applying too much pressure. After completing the oiling one should bathe in warm water. By following this regimen systematically, one can overcome pain and discomfort experienced due to the aggravation of *Vata*.

Absence of Menstruation

One of the commonly occurring problems of young women is delayed menstruation and absence of a regular menstrual cycle. Menstruation may occur once in several months. Absence of

menstrual cycle is known as *nashta artava*. *Nashta* means loss and *artava* denotes menstrual blood. In women when *doshas* obstruct the channels carrying menstrual blood, it results in loss of menstruation. However *nashtartava* should not remain untreated for a long time. A chronic case of *nashtartava* can become very difficult to cure.

Absence of menstruation and irregular menstruation often come pre-diagnosed as ‘Poly Cystic Ovarian Disease’ (PCOD), thyroid malfunction, obesity and so on. Some women take hormone-based medications to induce each cycle. Menstruation occurs regularly as long as they continue the medication; however if they discontinue the drugs, the cycle stops. Sometimes, despite medication, menstruation is either scanty or there is no flow at all. In some women, menstruation occurs regularly but flow is very little. This condition is known as *ksheena artava* (*ksheena* means weak) which also needs to be treated. These problems find effective cure in Ayurveda.

Loss of menstruation is due to aggravation of *Kapha* and *Vayu*, whereas scanty menstruation is caused by *Pitta* and *Vayu*. Both conditions are treated with medication along with a change in diet and regimen which pacify the *doshas*. In severe or chronic conditions women need to undergo cleansing treatments. After cleansing treatments, the woman is prescribed medicines which help in regularizing the cycle. There are several medicines that can help in regularizing the menstrual cycle. The choice of medicine depends on the condition of the patient.

Excessive Menstrual Bleeding

Excessive menstrual bleeding is known as *pradara*. This is a very common condition women suffer from. The alarming fact about excessive bleeding is that a large number of women undergo hysterectomy or removal of uterus to solve this problem.

Women with complaints of excessive bleeding who visit our clinic are mostly in their forties, nearing their menopause. Sometimes, young women too are affected by this complaint. Bleeding does not stop unless medicines are used. In many cases, women consume hormone pills, sometimes every month to stop the bleeding. Despite this, some women continue to suffer and experience anaemia, loss of strength, breathlessness, stomach pain, excessive thirst, anxiety, dizziness and fainting spells.

What is the cause for heavy menstrual bleeding? A wide range of factors such as food, lifestyle and emotional states are responsible for this condition. One or more of the following factors can lead to excessive bleeding: eating food in excess, consuming foods that are not compatible, for example, combination of milk and sour fruits (refer *viruddha ahara*, page 165), intake of alcohol, intake of heavy-to-digest very fatty foods, fatty meats, curd, salads and uncooked food and salty, sour and pungent foods. These factors tend to affect the blood by vitiating *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha doshas*. Along with this, excessive travelling and strenuous exercise, weight loss and sleeping during the day can also lead to excessive bleeding. Conditions like miscarriage, mental shock or depression are also important causative factors. When *Vata* is vitiated in these circumstances, it collects in the channels which carry blood from the uterus, increases the blood flow and pushes the blood out of the body.

Some women are particularly affected by increased blood flow. A 35 year old woman had continuous bleeding for 72 days. She took hormone tablets, but to no avail. Since she was said to have fibroids, doctors suggested that removing the uterus was the only option. In this case to think of surgery as the only option was entirely wrong. There are non-surgical treatments for this condition. There are many Ayurvedic medicines that effectively and quickly arrest bleeding. The patient was administered oral medication which controlled her bleeding. More than twelve years have passed and she is nearing her menopause. She has had no menstrual complaints since then.

There are Ayurvedic treatments for menstrual pain, irregular bleeding, painful and intermittent bleeding, white discharge, frequent miscarriages, etc. These treatments aim to cure such conditions, prevent them from recurring and restore vitality and fertility of the body. Medicines and special tonics are used in these treatments. For example, medicines made from the bark of *ashoka* and *lodhra* help in controlling bleeding. These are the important ingredients in most of the Ayurvedic medicines prescribed for heavy bleeding. They are also effective medicines for improving the health and functioning of the uterus. Besides oral medication, medicinal tampons are placed inside the vaginal passage to treat menstrual complaints. An important treatment is introducing medicated oils into the uterus; this procedure is known as *uttaravasti*. (refer *Uttara Vasti*, page 205).

Consuming allopathic drugs to postpone the menstrual cycle is a very common practice among urban women. Postponing the menstrual cycle is done for various reasons – to participate in family functions, rituals, travel etc. This is an unsound and unhealthy practice, and leads to further complications of the menstrual cycle.

PUSHYANUGA CHOORNAM²³

Pushyanuga Choornam is the drug of choice in the treatment of gynaecological disorders. In heavy menstrual bleeding in particular, this medicinal powder is the ideal medicine. In most cases of menstrual bleeding, it arrests even

²³ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Uttara Sthana*, Chapter 34, Verses 45–50.

heavy flow of blood within days, when taken along with proper diet. Many medicines with astringent qualities, which are effective in arresting bleeding, form a part of this *Choornam*. This powder is taken with honey followed by drinking rice-wash (water in which rice has been washed). Even though it is used widely in treating gynaecological disorders, it is an equally effective medicine in a whole range of other diseases. It cures piles, especially the bleeding type, diarrhoea associated with bleeding, diseases of infants and gynaecological and menstrual disorders associated with brown, black, white, pink and yellow coloured discharge from the vagina.

ASHOKA (SARACA INDICA)

All of us have heard of the Ashoka tree; in the *Ramayana*, Seetha is said to have resided in *Ashokavana*, in Lanka. It is a small evergreen tree (6 – 9 metres in height) with beautiful orange-red bunches of flowers. *Ashoka* is cold in efficacy, bitter and astringent in taste and bowel-binding. *Ashoka* bark helps in curing excessive and severe menstrual bleeding (*pradara*). Some of its other medicinal properties are – it cures thirst, burning sensation, worms, consumption, poisons and bleeding disorders in general.

The decoction of the bark of *Ashoka* processed with milk and consumed cold, cures even severe bleeding. As *Ashoka* is astringent and milk is sweet and cold in efficacy, this combination arrests bleeding.



Juice of the fruit of the fig tree (*udumbara*) mixed with honey and consumed while remaining on a diet of rice, milk and sugar also cures excessive menstrual bleeding.

Fruit of *udumbara* is astringent and when combined with milk and sugar, it helps arrest bleeding.

White Discharge

A widespread problem among women is what is known as white discharge from the vagina. In some women the discharge is profuse and the colour of discharge can be yellow, white or blue. The usual antibiotic treatments do not seem to be effective in tackling this condition. This problem can be addressed by a change of diet and using internal medicines. A very effective medicine for white discharge is *Pushyanuga Choornam*, taken with honey and rice-wash. A powder of *amalaki* mixed with honey and taken, stops white discharge. Washing the genitals with a decoction of *Triphala* is also beneficial for this condition. Depending on the nature of the complaint different medicines are prescribed to address this problem. Women with white discharge should stay away from sour, salty and pungent food.

Menopause

Around the age of fifty, women stop menstruating. This phenomenon is known as menopause. Usually after the age of forty five, women may experience irregular menstrual cycles and menstruation gradually comes to a stop. In a healthy individual,

menopause is not accompanied by any discomfort. However some women experience heavy bleeding while some others complain of hot flushes and excessive sweating. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the woman needs to be treated with appropriate medication to relieve her of her discomfort.

Hysterectomy (Surgical removal of uterus)

In a meeting with a group of women in the town of Kadalur in Tamilnadu, one of them commented that in that town, most women of her age had undergone hysterectomy – surgical removal of the uterus. Even though this was an exaggerated statement, it reflects the prevailing situation in our towns and cities. Under some pretext or the other, a large number of women are subjected to hysterectomy. One major reason cited for surgical removal of the uterus is the presence of uterine fibroids. Most women who come to our clinic give fibroids as the reason for hysterectomy. Women are made to believe that the very presence of fibroids in the uterus is reason enough to undergo a surgery. The fear of fibroids stems from the wrong understanding that at any moment they can turn cancerous and so it is better to remove the organ altogether! Some unscrupulous hospitals and gynaecologists only strengthen the worst fears of women.

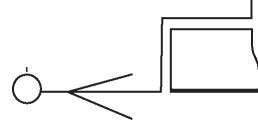
Fibroids are non-cancerous benign growths which appear on the uterus. In most cases they do not give rise to any bleeding or any other discomfort. After menopause, these fibroids shrink along with the uterus.

Heavy bleeding is another reason for women undergoing hysterectomy. This condition can be treated effectively with various Ayurvedic medicines as we have already seen.

Another reason for performing hysterectomy is prolapse of the uterus. Displacement or prolapse of uterus takes place as a result of aggravation of *Vayu* which results in the uterus moving out of its

seat. The treatment measures are usually *Vayu*-alleviating medicines as well as local application of medicines that help set right the problem. This treatment is very effective when it is provided as soon as the problem occurs.

An elderly lady, nearly 80 years of age, developed uterine prolapse. The family after careful consideration approached us for Ayurvedic treatment. She was instructed to apply medicated ghee over the uterus and insert it in place with a medicated tampon. With the medicinal tampon in place she was advised to rest with her legs raised using pillows as seen in the picture. She was prescribed medicines and diet suited to her condition. This treatment helped her overcome her problem and avoid a surgery. The uterine prolapse has not troubled her since then.



At Sanjeevani, women with uterine prolapse (who did not want to undergo surgery) have been treated effectively. Local application of the paste of the bark of the fig tree with honey, *Dhanvantara Tailam* for external application and medicated tampons, along with internal medication, have worked very effectively to set right this condition.

CONTRACEPTION

Some Ayurvedic texts mention the use of contraceptives. Long term contraceptives and contraceptives that offer protection for each cycle as well as local application during intercourse, find mention in these texts. Many *vaidyas* have effectively used some of these contraceptives in their practice.

CHAPTER 4

Conception

शुक्रशोणितजीवसंयोगे तु खलु कृक्षिगते गर्भसंज्ञा भवति ।

Union of sperm (sukra), ovum (sonitha) and consciousness (jeeva) in the womb is called foetus (garbha).²⁴

In the Ayurvedic texts, conception is compared to the sprouting of a plant from a seed. At the right time (season), in the right kind of soil, with good nourishment, a healthy seed grows into a healthy plant. These factors are just as important for a healthy conception.

Season/Time (*Rtu*)

The time has to be right for conception. In the monthly menstrual cycle, a woman is able to conceive during a specific period – normally from the 4th day upto the 16th day of the menstrual cycle.

Field (*Kshetra*)

For the sprouting of a plant from a seed, the field – land or soil – has to be healthy. Here field refers to the woman's reproductive system. The woman's reproductive organs need to be fertile (free from disorder) to bring forth conception. If the uterus is afflicted by aggravated *doshas*, conception cannot take place.



²⁴ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 4, Verse 5.

Water/Nourishment (*Ambu*)

For the seed to sprout and grow, water is essential. Likewise, to ensure a healthy conception, the woman needs to be properly nourished. Improper diet or a lack of proper nourishment leads to difficulty in conception. Proper nourishment sustains the woman and the foetus.

Seed (*Beeja*)

In this context seed refers to semen. Just as only a healthy seed can bring forth a healthy plant, only healthy semen can ensure conception. Semen should be free from defects.

When all the above factors come together, it results in conception. Even if one of the above is missing or is vitiated, conception does not take place. Ideally the man and the woman should undergo cleansing treatments before planning a child. By cleansing, the body is rid of aggravated *doshas* and all the factors required for conception become healthy. This ensures conception and birth of healthy offspring.

Treating Infertility

Infertility is increasingly becoming a common problem, among men as well as women. For those who are anxious to have children but suffer from infertility, Ayurveda has an answer. Since having healthy children is considered one of the important objectives of marital life, Ayurveda devotes an entire branch (*anga*) of medicine to problems of infertility. *Vajeekarana* is the name given to the branch of medicine that deals with male fertility. *Streeroga* (gynaecology) deals with the various disorders connected with the female reproductive system.

Infertility can occur as a result of vitiation of the three *doshas* *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. One or more of the vitiated *doshas* afflict the reproductive *dhatu* of male or female (*sukra* or *artava*), causing

infertility. When afflicted by *doshas*, reproductive *dhatus* cannot be effective in conception. When the reproductive *dhatu* of male or female is afflicted by all three *doshas* simultaneously, it leads to sterility.

In males, various factors lead to defective semen and to infertility. Excessive indulgence in physical exercise and sex, abstinence from sex, excessive intake of dry, bitter, astringent, salty, sour, and pungent food, morbidity of the body *dhatus* and old age – all these can result in the diminishing and weakening of semen. Defective semen may be frothy, thread-like, thin, rough, of abnormal colour, foul-smelling and exceedingly slimy. Ejaculation may occur with difficulty and semen may be in small quantity. There may be burning sensation while ejaculating and at times even blood may be expelled. From our experience, it appears that male infertility is more prevalent than female infertility and many male patients benefit from the treatments and medicines of Ayurveda.

In females, several diseases of the reproductive system may lead to infertility. Normally the reproductive *dhatu* of the woman is dominated by heat (*agni*). The male reproductive *dhatu* is dominated by cold (*soma*). If this heat and cold balance of the reproductive *dhatus* of male and female is altered, it prevents conception from taking place. The following case illustrates this point.

Heat and Cold balance for Conception

A couple, both in their thirties, were anxious to have a child. Over the years, they had undergone various tests and allopathic treatments. The man was diagnosed as having a ‘low sperm count’. But he suffered from other complaints too. Even mildly spicy food would cause frequent bloody motions. Clearly there was excessive heat in the body which, besides impairing his digestion, led to the defect in the semen. The wife suffered from constipation and vaginal itch.



Usually treatment for infertility starts with cleansing the body through *panchakarma* treatments. The husband was prescribed purgation. This treatment was essential for removing the excess *Pitta*, which was responsible for the increased heat in his body. After that he was prescribed medicines to improve fertility. The wife too was prescribed medicines to correct her complaints, as well as uterine tonics for conception. Within three months of starting the treatment, she conceived. There are a large number of drugs and remedies in Ayurveda which are recommended for treatment of male and female infertility. They have to be appropriately used depending on the condition and requirement of the patient.

Cleansing for Conception

The following is the case of a young woman who had to undergo cleansing procedures before she could conceive.

Aruna, aged 25, was married for over three years and was not able to conceive. Her weight had increased from 55 to 62 kgs. She was already on an allopathic medicine (eltroxin) for a thyroid-related condition for more than a year and a half.

The Ayurvedic treatment started with the gradual withdrawal of eltroxin. The Ayurvedic diagnosis was that she suffered from excess *Kapha* and imbalance of *Vayu*. She was prescribed Ayurvedic medication to reduce the excess *Kapha* in the body. She underwent induced vomiting (*vamana*), the cleansing treatment that removes the excess *Kapha*. After two weeks, she underwent *vasti* treatment (medicated enema) to regulate *Vayu*. Thereafter she was treated with nasal medication (*nasya*) which was also aimed at reducing the aggravated *Kapha*. After that, *uttaravasti* (medicated oil enema introduced through the vagina) was administered. This was done after the third day of her menstruation.

After the cleansing treatments, Aruna was prescribed *Dadimadi Ghritam*, a medicated ghee which helps in conception. Her husband

underwent a purgation treatment, to reduce the *Pitta*/heat in the body. He was also prescribed medicines to improve the quality of his semen. On the days of sexual intercourse, Aruna was recommended a diet of black gram (*urad dal*) and sesame oil, which ensures fertility and maintains the heat required for her reproductive *dhatu* for conception. Her husband was recommended milk porridge to enhance the coldness (*soma*) of the male reproductive *dhatu*, which is essential for conception. The very month following the treatment, Aruna conceived. Incidentally, she had her delivery in an allopathic hospital where they put her through a thyroid test, only to find that all readings were normal.

As we have seen, cleansing treatments are frequently resorted to in cases of infertility. Ayurvedic texts compare this process with cleaning a dirty cloth prior to dyeing it. The body is cleansed according to one's strength prior to taking the medicinal formulations, just as a cloth which is dirty is washed prior to dyeing. Otherwise it amounts to dyeing a dirty cloth and the effort may not be successful. Ayurveda advocates use of rejuvenating (*rasayana*) and aphrodisiac (*vajeekarana*) formulations for healthy progeny. By proper use of these formulations, one is endowed with a good physique, strength, virility, complexion and long life. However, sexual indulgence by persons who are very young and very old results in drying up of the body *dhatus*, leading to the destruction of the individual.

CHAPTER 5

Pregnancy

उपचारः प्रियहितैर्भव्वा भृत्यैश्च गर्भदृक् ।
नवनीतघृतक्षीरैः सदा चैनामुपाचरेत् ॥

The woman who has conceived should be looked after affectionately by her husband and family; she should be always given things she likes which are good for health and should be nourished with butter, ghee and milk.²⁵

Signs and Symptoms of Pregnancy

When a woman conceives, certain changes take place in her body. The following are some of these:

- Absence of menstruation
- Excessive salivation
- Loss of appetite or loss of taste
- Nausea and vomiting
- Liking for sour things
- Desire for all types of food, both good and bad
- Heaviness of body
- Heaviness of eyes
- Secretion from the breasts
- Excessive darkness of the areola and nipples
- Mild swelling of feet
- Dilatation of vagina



²⁵ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 43.

Diet and Regimen during Pregnancy

The foetus is free from thirst and hunger. It is dependent on the mother for all its actions, needs and nourishment.²⁶

When a woman is pregnant, her mind is filled with questions about what she can eat, what she cannot eat, and what regimen she needs to follow. In the allopathic system she finds no answers. All she hears from her obstetrician is, 'Indian traditional *pathyam* (special diet) is a mere superstition. Pregnancy is not a disease. Eat well and eat everything. There is no special food or regimen required; you can do everything that you normally do' and so on. But the fact is, pregnancy is a special state requiring special diet and care. This will be elaborated below.

Pregnant women need to follow a special diet and regimen. The diet of a pregnant mother should ensure the following:

- Nourishment of the mother during pregnancy
- Growth and development of the foetus
- Secretion of breast milk
- Anaemia-free pregnancy

A proper diet which ensures the above, leads to safe pregnancy and childbirth.

Food

The type of food recommended in Ayurveda and the care provided during pregnancy serve the above objectives. The food recommended is based on the monthly requirement of the pregnant woman. A diet which is predominantly sweet in taste, liquid in consistency, cold in efficacy and easy to digest, is the desirable diet for a pregnant mother. Gruel made from par-boiled rice, watery *dal*

²⁶ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 6, Verse 23.

prepared from green gram, milk, ghee, and butter constitute a significant part of her diet. Regular intake of meat during pregnancy is not advisable.

During the first three months of pregnancy, the focus is mainly on retaining the foetus. Therefore, the diet of the mother has to ensure that the foetus remains stable and there is no bleeding from the vagina. Bleeding occurring during the initial three months can lead to loss of the foetus.

During the second phase of pregnancy, from the fourth to the seventh month, the maximum growth and development of the foetus take place. The diet during this phase is designed to enable this. During the last phase of pregnancy, the eighth and ninth months, the woman is prepared so as to withstand the strain of a normal delivery. The diet and care given to the mother are designed to make this possible.

More about Food during Pregnancy

Throughout pregnancy, the mother's food should be predominantly sweet in taste. Substances which are sweet in taste are usually cold in efficacy. They increase the secretion of breast milk. Sweet taste provides the maximum nourishment and growth to the body, and is the best diet throughout pregnancy.

There are many food substances that are sweet in taste. Rice, wheat, green gram, milk, ghee, sugar and raisins are some of these. Some herbs which are sweet in taste and which are used during pregnancy are: *bala*, *yashti*, *vidari*, *shatavari* and *gokshura*. All these herbs are very rich in nutritional and medicinal qualities.

Food which is sweet in taste and cooling (cold in efficacy) and which is low in sour, salty and pungent tastes, protects the pregnant mother from anaemia. It also ensures that the pregnant woman does not have premature bleeding. On the other hand, foods that are predominantly pungent (chilli-hot), astringent and bitter in taste

can cause dryness in the body and obstruct the movement of faeces, urine and wind (flatus). This type of food does not contribute to the nourishment of the mother, growth of the foetus or secretion of breast milk. It also does not help in the easy passage of the foetus during delivery. As food which is very sour, salty, hot and pungent is one of the causes for anaemia, it can make the pregnant woman anaemic and even cause bleeding during pregnancy.

The ideal diet for a pregnant woman is a liquid diet. A liquid rice gruel (*kanji*) is easy to digest, and helps in eliminating urine and stool. The pregnant woman is advised to consume food in moderate quantity – she should neither eat too much nor too little.

Milk is the best food during pregnancy. Milk is to be consumed in adequate quantity. A pregnant woman may consume as much milk as she is able to digest without difficulty. It is very important to consume milk right through the nine months of pregnancy.

Generally milk is sweet in taste. It is unctuous (fatty). It promotes the growth of *dhatus*. It is cooling to the body. Milk, especially cow's milk, improves intelligence, sustains life and acts as a rejuvenator. It cures fatigue, excessive thirst, giddiness, respiratory disease, cough and hunger. It is an ideal food for persons suffering from emaciation. Milk is a laxative and an aphrodisiac. It helps prevent bleeding and controls *Vata* and *Pitta*. It increases strength and breast milk. For these reasons milk is the ideal food for pregnant women.

NOTE: The modern practice of drinking skimmed milk with low fat or no fat is unwholesome. To derive all the benefits of milk it should be consumed whole with fat.

CHAPTER 6

Monthly Diet Supplements for Pregnancy

सर्वमन्यत् परित्यज्य शरीरमनुपालयेत्।
तदभावे हि भावानां सर्वभावः शरीरणाम्॥

*Leaving aside all other things, the body is to be protected; in the absence of the body, all other things cease to exist.*²⁷

Month 1

During the first month, milk is an important part of the diet. Milk is to be consumed at room temperature. It need not be processed with any medicinal herb. However, processing milk with *bala* is beneficial.

BALA

Bala is a herb very commonly found in open spaces. It is highly beneficial during pregnancy. It is cold in efficacy and sweet in taste. It bestows strength and improves complexion. It is unctuous (fatty) in nature. Like milk, *bala* also prevents bleeding. It is an excellent herb for regulating *Vayu* and pacifying *Pitta*.

²⁷ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Nidana Sthana*, Chapter 6, Verse 7.

A sweet, cold, liquid and wholesome diet, for example rice with milk, taken twice a day is the ideal food for a pregnant mother during the first month. This diet protects her from premature bleeding. During this month, rubbing or massaging the body with medicines, oils etc. should be avoided.

Month 2

During the second month, milk is consumed after processing it with medicinal herbs which possess sweet taste and are cooling to the body. There are many herbs that can be used during this period. Some of the commonly available herbs usually prescribed are *bala*, *shatavari*, *yashti* and *vidari*. These herbs are boiled along with milk mixed with water till the water portion evaporates. Sugar, if desired, can be added to this milky decoction. Food during this month is (preferably) liquid.

HOW TO PREPARE MILK DECOCTION

Milk decoction for the pregnant woman is prepared in the following manner: Milk – 200 ml, Water – 200 ml, Herb – 50 gm.

Boil the contents till the water evaporates, strain and drink the milky decoction.

YASHTIMADHU

Yashti is one of the herbs used for milk decoction. It is cooling in efficacy, sweet in taste, good for vision, bestows strength and complexion. It is oily, good for hair and voice and increases semen. It controls *Pitta*, and *Vata*. It is good for blood and cures wounds,

oedema, poison, vomiting, thirst, exhaustion and consumption.

SHATAVARI

Shatavari is a very special herb recommended for women during and after pregnancy. It is cooling to the body and sweet and also mildly bitter in taste. *Shatavari* is a rejuvenator. It increases intelligence, improves digestion and is nourishing. It is unctuous (fatty). It improves vision and bodily strength. It controls *Vayu* and *Pitta*, cures blood disorders and reduces swelling (oedema). *Shatavari* improves the reproductive *dhatu* (*sukra*) and increases the secretion of breastmilk.

Shatavari is a creeper with a thin long tuber. The outer skin of the tuber is removed along with the thin vein inside. The fleshy white part of the tuber is used as medicine. If fresh *shatavari* is not available, dry sticks of this tuber may be obtained from the market and used. This valuable and nutritious herb is found in the wild all over our country. *Shatavari* can be grown as a garden plant in our backyards. With very little effort we can reintroduce this herb into the diet of women. Use of such herbs can have a far-reaching effect on the health of our people.

Month 3

The most obvious and common symptom in the early part of pregnancy is nausea and vomiting. Some women suffer a great deal from this. It usually troubles them from around the third month. The diet during this month helps them overcome this problem. Honey mixed with milk and ghee (all at room temperature) is recommended for a pregnant woman in the third month. During pregnancy, honey is recommended only during the third month. Honey prevents vomiting and therefore it is useful in this month. Rice porridge (*kanji*) with milk is the recommended diet during this month.

HONEY

Honey is a substance with many useful properties. It is non-fatty (dry) and in taste sweet and mildly astringent. It is considered the best medicine in the treatment of *Kapha*. Honey improves vision, relieves thirst and prevents bleeding (premature bleeding in case of pregnancy) as well as vomiting. It is used in the treatment of cough, respiratory problems and diarrhoea. It is also used in treating poisons, hiccup, diabetes, skin diseases and worms. It breaks up hard masses in the body, cleanses and heals wounds and joins and heals broken bones. It increases *Vayu*.

Honey is a very popular vehicle for the administration of Ayurvedic medicines particularly in respiratory diseases where *Kapha*



is predominant. *Choornam* (powders) such as *Thaleesadi* used in the treatment of *Kapha* diseases, are usually mixed with honey and administered. Honey is also used as an ingredient in many medicinal preparations. Honey is known as a 'yogavahi'. A *yogavahi* is a substance, which when mixed with other medicinal substances, enhances their properties.

However, while using honey certain precautions have to be observed. Honey should not be heated and it should not be added to substances which are hot in temperature. Bees collect honey from all sorts of flowers including poisonous flowers. Honey thus collected and assembled, when subjected to heat, breaks down and turns toxic. Sometimes people take honey with hot water or tea or hot lemon juice. This is not a healthy practice as honey is subjected to heat. Honey should not be taken in large quantities as it can cause indigestion. Indigestion caused by honey is very difficult to treat.

For women who suffer from severe bouts of vomiting, there are many preparations which can help in overcoming this problem. For example:

- Paste of *dhaniya* with rice-wash added with sugar
- A drink made with the powder of popped paddy (*laja*) mixed with honey and sugar
- Pulp of *bilva* fruit mixed with the water of popped paddy
- A soup made of green gram mixed with the seeds of pomegranate, salt and ghee

- A soup made of goat's meat, without salt, soured with pomegranate and mixed with spices that are appetizing, like ginger, pepper, cinnamon, cardamom etc. This cures vomiting, especially vomiting caused by the aggravation of *Vayu*.
- Rice-wash mixed with sugar, honey, powder of popped paddy, made tasty by adding spices such as cardamom, cinnamon and cloves is especially effective in treating vomiting caused by the aggravation of *Pitta*.
- A decoction of tender leaves of mango and *jamun* mixed with honey is good for vomiting caused by the aggravation of *Kapha* (phlegm).

Depending on the nature of the complaint, different combinations of medicines can be used.

[Note: Wherever honey is used, it is to be added to the drink at room temperature]

During the first three months of pregnancy, extreme care is taken to ensure that there is no bleeding. From the fourth to the seventh month, the emphasis shifts to growth and development of the foetus.

Month 4

By this month, all body parts of the foetus are fully manifested. During this month butter (extracted directly from milk) is added to a glass of milk and given to the pregnant woman. The quantity of butter can be about 12 grams per glass of milk (200 ml).

Butter extracted directly from milk is known as *ksheera navaneeta* – *ksheera* is milk and *navaneeta* is butter. Butter is a very good fatty substance for pregnant mothers. It is

sweet in taste and very cold in efficacy. It has the property of preventing bleeding. Butter improves strength, digestion and complexion. It helps cure cough, consumption, piles and disorders of *Vata*, *Pitta* and blood. It is very good for improving eyesight. During pregnancy it is an ideal food and it helps to create softness of body parts. Among the rural women of Tamilnadu, consuming butter with warm rice-*kanji* (the supernatant water when rice is boiled) during pregnancy is a practice which is widely prevalent even today.

In the fourth month, soup made from meat is a recommended diet. Meat should be free of fat. In general, daily use of meat during pregnancy is discouraged, since it is heavy to digest (*guru*). Regular intake of meat during pregnancy can also lead to excessive increase in weight. During pregnancy, food that is light (*laghu*/easy to digest) is preferred. Meat soup in the fourth month is aimed at improving the growth of the foetus. The foetus should be neither too big nor too small. This can be achieved if the diet of the mother is managed carefully.

Meat in general, is the best food for controlling *Vayu*. Meat soup gives strength and nourishment to the body and provides contentment. Meat is good for improving vision and is an aphrodisiac. Meat in general is heavy to digest. Properties of different meats differ from one another. Meat that is recommended for pregnant women is that of wild animals from arid, dry forests (*jangala mamsa*). Among meats which are commonly

available in the market, soup of goat's meat is preferable. Goat's meat, if prepared as fat-free soup is easy to digest. It does not aggravate any *dosha* in the body. (Of the three canonical texts of Ayurveda, two recommend meat soup during certain months of pregnancy. All three recommend meat and fish during the post-delivery period.)

Strange desires of the Pregnant Woman

A pregnant woman may develop strange or new desires from the fourth month of pregnancy. She until then would never have had any of these likes and dislikes. The only rational explanation for such apparently strange behaviour is found in Ayurvedic texts.

During the fourth month, when the foetus in the womb develops its own heart, the woman starts to carry two hearts within her. As at this stage she possesses two hearts, she is called *douhrdini* ('one with two hearts'). Since the child now possesses its own heart, consciousness arises within it. The heart of the child develops trust and attachment for the mother and feelings and desires are carried from one to the other. The child indicates its desires in worldly objects and this gets reflected through the mother. So the pregnant woman develops new likes and dislikes. For this reason, wishes and desires of a pregnant woman, however strange they may appear, are fulfilled. Non-fulfilment of very strong desires can result in aggravation of *Vayu* in the mother. The aggravated *Vayu* starts moving inside the body and can cause physical deformities in the foetus during its formative stage. If a pregnant woman desires things which are harmful to her, then such things are processed and made harmless or their harmful effects are neutralized by combining them with wholesome food and then given to her in small quantities. Her husband and the people around her have to take care of her

with affection and not subject her to any physical or mental hardship. Proper care of a pregnant woman is the best way of maintaining and protecting the foetus.

Month 5

- Ghee added to milk gruel
- Porridge with milk and rice
- Light and easy to digest meat soup

Like milk, ghee is a very important part of the diet for women throughout pregnancy. **Ghee is the best among all fatty substances.** Ghee is a substance with numerous medicinal qualities. Ghee made from butter which is extracted from milk is ideal for pregnant women, as it helps in preventing bleeding.

Ghee (Clarified Butter)

Ghee is used as food as well as medicine. It has very high nutritional and medicinal value. Any text of Ayurveda can provide you with a long list of properties that ghee possesses.

Ghee is an ideal food which should be consumed daily. Ghee is sweet in taste. It improves intelligence and memory. Consumed in small quantities, ghee aids digestion. It increases semen, virility and life-span, improves eyesight and preserves youthfulness. Ghee is ideal for children, the aged and those wanting to have healthy progeny. It is good for voice and appearance. Ghee is nourishing for those suffering from emaciation, *visarpa* (herpes), injuries to the chest and injuries from weapons and fire. Ghee alleviates diseases caused by the aggravation of *Vata* and *Pitta*. It is useful in countering poison, insanity, consumption and chronic fevers. From the therapeutic angle, ghee is considered the best among fatty substances used in treatment of various diseases. Ghee is cold in efficacy. Ghee possesses a special quality namely, when it is processed

with other substances, it can acquire the quality of those substances without giving up its own natural qualities. This is why a large number of medicated ghees (ghees processed with medicinal herbs) are used in Ayurveda.

Even though ghee used to be an indispensable part of our daily diet, it has been in the midst of a major controversy lately which has brought it down from its pedestal. Overnight young and old alike gave up consumption of ghee and children started growing up without consuming it. Ghee is being equated to 'saturated fats' and is accused of giving rise to the 'silent killer, cholesterol'. To refute this unscientific claim, four cases of patients with relatively high levels of cholesterol, who were administered large quantities of ghee (as part of treatments they were undergoing) are provided in the appendix. In all four cases, after the administration of relatively large quantities of ghee as '*sneha pana*' (a specific therapy where measured quantities of fat are administered), the total cholesterol, LDL, and triglyceride showed lower and normal readings. This leads to the conclusion that vegetarian diet devoid of ghee and generally low on fats need not necessarily mean low levels of cholesterol; on the contrary, they can also sometimes lead to high levels of cholesterol as in these cases. In these four patients, administration of ghee helped in lowering the levels of cholesterol. Therefore, for patients fit to be given ghee as part of their treatment, their having a high cholesterol level need not be a cause for worry. [for details, see Appendix II, page 214].

At Sanjeevani Ayurveda Centre, pregnant women consume medicated ghee throughout pregnancy. They are encouraged to use ghee, milk and butter in their diet. For pregnant women, butter extracted from milk, and ghee prepared from this butter are recommended as these are good for blood and arrest bleeding.

At the end of pregnancy, the total amount of ghee consumed adds up to 10 to 15 kg. The average weight gain during the period of pregnancy is around 8 to 12 kg. Incidentally, the traditional practice in North India, especially in Rajasthan is that, as soon as the parents hear of their daughter's pregnancy /conception, they send her a vessel containing 15 kg. of ghee.

Month 6

- Watery *kanji* (gruel usually made of rice) preparations
- *Gokshura* processed in ghee and added to *kanji* (gruel)
- Ghee (made from butter derived from milk) processed with sweet herbs

Throughout pregnancy, the woman is advised to consume a diet which is liquid in consistency, a *kanji*. It has a major advantage during pregnancy, as *kanji* is excellent for promoting free flow of urine, thereby reducing the retention of fluid and swelling in the body of the pregnant mother. Women who follow the Ayurvedic regimen in diet usually have no swelling or only a very mild swelling during pregnancy. The need for a liquid diet is especially emphasised in the 6th and 7th months. The herbs recommended in these months such as *gokshura* and *vidari* possess diuretic qualities, in other words, they promote free flow of urine. A medicated ghee prepared from these herbs is given to the pregnant woman during the 6th and 7th months. Diet during the sixth month also includes ghee processed with other sweet herbs.

A handful of *gokshura* can be added to two cups (cup=200ml) of water and boiled down to a quarter cup. This decoction is strained and added to the *kanji*. Ghee (prepared from butter extracted from milk) is added to this gruel and the pregnant woman can adopt this

simple diet during this month. This gruel can be consumed twice a day if possible. This makes the flow of urine free and unobstructed. Such a diet prevents swelling and fluid retention in the body of the pregnant woman. This diet is cooling, nourishing and strengthening. It also helps in regulating *Vayu*.

GOKSHURA

Gokshura is a small thorny herb and is found all over India. Most of us would have stepped on these thorns while walking in our villages. These thorns have high medicinal value and are particularly useful during pregnancy. *Gokshura* is cooling and strengthening to the body. It is sweet in taste and helps in improving digestion. One very important property of *gokshura* is that it is an excellent medicine for all problems related to the urinary system. It cleanses the urinary system, facilitates urination, removes urinary stones, and controls diabetes. It is nourishing to the body and is an aphrodisiac. It is useful in treating respiratory problems, cough, piles and heart disease. It controls aggravated *Vayu* in the body.

Month 7

By now all parts of the foetus are developed and the foetus is nourished well. The diet recommended for the seventh month is the same as that of the sixth. A herb which is specially recommended for this month is *vidari*. Ghee processed with *vidari* is a valuable supplement at this time. *Vidari* abounds in medicinal properties and is ideal for pregnant women.

VIDARI

Vidari is an ideal herb during pregnancy. It is sweet in taste and cold in efficacy. It is fatty, nourishing and strengthening to the body. It increases urination and the secretion of breastmilk. *Vidari* improves voice, complexion and increases life-span. It is a rejuvenator and improves fertility. It controls burning sensation in the body, reduces aggravated *Vata* and *Pitta* and is used in blood disorders. Dried pieces of *vidari* are available in the market which can be used for preparing medicated ghee and decoction. Occasionally fresh tubers of *vidari* are sold in the market place.

During the seventh month, the pregnant woman may experience a certain discomfort. She may experience an itching or burning sensation in the body. Many mistake this condition to be some allergic reaction or a result of insect bites. Due to the pressure of the growing foetus, the *doshas Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha* are displaced and get pushed up into the chest causing itching and burning. During this time the woman is asked to refrain from scratching and damaging the skin. If the itching is very severe, kneading and massaging with mild friction may be done. A paste of sandalwood or a paste of sandalwood and *usheera* can be applied on the breasts and abdomen and wherever she experiences itching. She should consume food in small quantity, avoiding salt and oil or using salt and oil in very small quantities. She may drink a small quantity of water after consuming food. She should consume sweet, easy to digest food and that which pacifies *Vata*.

Month 8 & 9

The main thrust of the prescribed diet and regimen of these two months is to prepare the pregnant woman for the forthcoming delivery. During the eighth month, the ideal food for a pregnant woman is thin gruel mixed with milk and ghee. This helps the woman maintain good health while also nourishing the foetus. During this month, the pregnant woman undergoes two medicated enemas or *vasi* (a medicinal decoction enema followed by a medicated oil enema), which prepare her for a normal delivery without complications.

During the ninth month, food mixed with ghee and meat soup or thick gruel mixed with large quantities of fat, preferably ghee, is good for the pregnant woman. This gives her the health and strength to withstand delivery. From the ninth month onwards a pregnant woman never remains without oil on the body. Cotton soaked in oil is placed in the vaginal passage to make the birth canal oily, soft and flexible. This practice of placing cotton soaked in oil in the vagina was very much in vogue in villages of Tamilnadu until recently. (Women were actively discouraged from following this practice on the ground that it leads to ‘infection’!) During this month, a medicated oil enema is administered to the pregnant woman. This eliminates stagnant faecal matter and ensures a proper and easy flow of urine, faeces and *Vata*, thus preparing her for a comfortable, natural delivery.

The food and regimen prescribed for the management of a pregnant woman from the first month to the ninth month bring about all the necessary conditions essential for a normal childbirth. They soften the uterus, pelvis, waist, sides of the chest, and back; ensure normal flow of urine and faeces; soften the skin and nails; improve strength and complexion; and create proper downward movement of *Vayu* which is essential for pushing the foetus out of the body. And the woman, who becomes strong by following this regimen, delivers easily a healthy child endowed with long life.

**SUMMARY OF MONTHLY DIET SUPPLEMENTS
AND REGIMEN**

Month	Food Supplement and Regimen
1	Frequent use of milk in quantity that is digestible for the mother
2	Milk processed with <i>shatavari</i> , <i>yashti</i> , <i>vidari</i> , <i>bala</i> – herbs with sweet taste
3	Milk at room temperature mixed with honey and ghee
4	About 12 gms of butter mixed with milk; also fat-free meat soup
5	Rice gruel, ghee, fat-free meat soup
6	Rice gruel, ghee medicated with <i>gokshura</i> and ghee medicated with herbs with sweet taste
7	Same as sixth; ghee prepared with <i>vidari</i>
8	Rice gruel with milk and ghee; use of medicated enemas
9	Thick rice gruel with plenty of ghee/meat soup with ghee; use of medicinal oil tampons, medicated oil enema and oil application on the body

In general, the pregnant woman's diet is predominantly sweet in taste, cooling in efficacy and liquid in consistency.

WOMEN BELOW POVERTY LINE

Providing milk and ghee in the diet of our poor women who are pregnant need not be a costly affair. The government of Tamilnadu gives Rs.12,000 for each of the first two childbirths to all pregnant mothers from families below poverty line, who deliver in a government institution. Further, the *Janani Suraksha* scheme provides Rs. 700 to poor women for a delivery. This can definitely provide 30 ml of ghee and 400 ml of milk per day for the pregnant woman. What needs to be done is to drive home the message that milk, ghee and butter are absolutely essential in the diet for a healthy pregnancy and delivery.

DRUG KIT

The Government of Tamilnadu formulated a drug kit containing 50 drugs from Ayurveda and Siddha systems, which was distributed all over the state through Health Sub Centres. This kit also contained a set of medicines for pregnancy and post-delivery care. The drug kit was received very well in the rural areas. The medicated oil (*Tailam*) supplied was very popular among the people. One of the medicines provided in the drug kit was *Dhanvantara Tailam* meant for pregnant

women in the ninth month. As *Dhanvantara Tailam* is also very effective in the treatment of aches and joint-pains, it was used up and exhausted even before it reached the pregnant women.

*Dhanvantara Tailam*²⁸

This oil, also known as *Bala Dhanvantara Tailam*, is the most preferred one for women. It is a combination of more than forty ingredients of which *bala* is the main ingredient.

Dhanvantara Tailam is useful in treating all *Vata* diseases; cures diseases of women after childbirth and diseases of children; is beneficial to persons suffering from injury to vulnerable spots (*marma*) and bones; is beneficial to emaciated persons; is useful in consumption and disorders of the genital tract; is used in treating certain kinds of fever, abdominal tumours, psychological illnesses, insanity, hernia, and urinary obstructions.

RATIONALE FOR SPECIAL DIET AND REGIMEN FOR PREGNANCY

0 – 3 MONTHS

Provide nourishment for the pregnant woman; achieve growth, development and stability of the foetus; prevent bleeding from vagina.

²⁸ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verses 47–52.

4–7 MONTHS

Nourish the woman; achieve proper growth and development of foetus; prevent bleeding from the vagina; help production of breastmilk; facilitate proper flow of urine.

8–9 MONTHS

Prepare the woman for labour; eliminate stagnant faecal matter and ensure proper functioning of *Vayu* by administering medicated enema; use of oil-soaked tampons in the vaginal passage to soften the birth passage; oil application on the body especially on the sides of chest, abdomen, hip, back, groin and thighs to regulate the flow of *Vayu* and help in the descent of the foetus at the time of birth; ensure normal childbirth without complications.

To rely on Ayurveda is the best way to ensure a safe and natural childbirth. By following a proper diet and regimen, the pregnant woman is well-nourished and prepared for a normal delivery. By helping nature to take its course, women enjoy a risk-free childbirth.

Restrict the use of Curd in Diet

Curd is a very popular food among urban Indians. It is also the most misunderstood food from the point of view of its properties. Often we hear people say that curd is cooling in nature and that it is an ideal food for summer. There are paediatricians who advise mothers that if their children don't like milk they should be given curd instead. Obstetricians too advocate daily intake of a cup of

curd during pregnancy. The rationale behind such advocacy is however not clear. Media also promotes curd as a very nutricious diet. As there is so much hype about curd, it is time we understood its properties.

Women should restrict the use of curd, particularly during pregnancy. Many pregnant women indulge in excessive and indiscriminate consumption of curd. This leads to many problems. Curd is heating (hot in efficacy) and possesses the quality of enhancing bleeding and triggering bleeding diseases (*rakta pitta*). This is also why excessive use of curd leads to heavy menstruation in women. [However, curd is recommended for women who do not bleed at all during menstruation.] For this very reason the use of curd should not be encouraged during pregnancy, as it may lead to premature bleeding. Curd also has the property of causing swelling (oedema). Therefore, consumption of curd during pregnancy leads to excessive retention of fluid in the body.

Women who consume large quantities of curd, sour fruits and sour food during pregnancy often give birth to infants with skin diseases, respiratory ailments and diseases caused by the aggravation of *Kapha*. Mixing curd with fruit is also an unhealthy practice. It is perhaps these sorts of practices which have led to an unprecedented increase in various types of skin diseases and allergies in infants and children these days. A mother, whose newborn child had a skin disease, described her diet during pregnancy as – curd in large quantities, orange juice and tamarind for chewing.

Consumption of curd can also lead to anaemia and so it is not desirable during pregnancy. Regular consumption of curd results in cold, cough, respiratory problems, fevers and all such conditions associated with an aggravation of *Kapha* and *Pitta*. It also leads to constipation. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid consumption of curd during pregnancy.

Good and Bad Properties of Curd²⁹

Curd is sour in taste and hot in efficacy and increases fat tissue and semen. It improves digestion and is constipating. Curd possesses some medicinal properties. It is a good medicine for persons who suffer from loss of appetite, loss of taste for food, intermittent fever, coldness in the body, extreme dryness, difficulty in urination and nasal discharge. It helps in the treatment of aggravated *Vata*. However curd aggravates *Pitta* and *Kapha* in the body. As it increases *Kapha* it is capable of causing diseases, especially in the respiratory system. It also causes many diseases of *Pitta* origin. Curd has a property known as *abhisyandi*, which means it blocks the fine pathways and channels in the body. Blocked pathways and channels are responsible for many diseases.

While consuming curd, some rules have to be observed:

- Curd should not be consumed daily.
- It should never be consumed at night.
- It should not be heated.
- Curd can be consumed only in winter and rainy seasons. As curd is hot in efficacy it is not to be consumed in hot seasons – spring (mid-March to mid-May), summer (mid-May to mid-July) and autumn (mid-September to mid-November).
- Even in cold seasons it should not be consumed daily.
- While consuming curd, it should be mixed with one of the following – honey, ghee and sugar, green gram, goose berry (*amalaki*).
- Curd which is not fully formed should not be consumed.

²⁹ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 5, Verses 29–33.

Violating the above rules can cause diseases such as fever, bleeding diseases, *visarpa* (herpes), skin diseases, anaemia, giddiness and swelling (oedema). Obviously curd can cause both health and ill health depending on how we use it. Now it is not difficult to understand why daily use of curd is restricted in Ayurveda.

CHAPTER 7

Pregnancy – Some Complications

शास्त्रं ज्योतिः प्रकाशार्थं दर्शनं बुद्धिरात्मनः ।
ताभ्यां भिषक् सुयुत्ताभ्यां चिकित्सन्नापराध्यति ॥

Knowledge of the science (of medicine) is a lamp and one's own intellect is an eye. A physician endowed with both does not commit mistakes during the course of treatment.³⁰

Anaemia and Pregnancy

Pure blood bestows on living beings strength, complexion, happiness and longevity. Indeed life is sustained by blood.³¹

Anaemia is a major health crisis facing India today. Anaemia is characterized by a deficiency in blood. When blood is vitiated, resulting in a loss of its quality and quantity, one is afflicted by this disease. Blood, as one of the *dhatus*, is responsible for the sustenance of life itself. And when there is anaemia, it leads to a whole host of problems affecting the life-sustaining factors in the body. Anaemia is the most common and most debilitating disease among women, pregnant mothers and children of India. More than half of Indian women and three-fourths of pregnant mothers and children are anaemic.³² Anaemia has a major detrimental effect on women's

³⁰ Charaka Samhita, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 9, Verse 24.

³¹ Charaka Samhita, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 24, Verse 4.

³² National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-II (http://www.rchiips.org/NFHS/pub_nfhs-2.shtml)

health. Anaemia during pregnancy increases the risk of death or disease of both mother and child.

In India, anaemia is by far the most significant cause of maternal mortality, that is, death from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes. Maternal mortality in India is among the highest in the world.

There are various factors that lead to a deficiency in blood in the individual. Improper food is an important cause of anaemia. Excessive intake of salty, sour and pungent (spicy-hot) foods along with excessive physical labour is primarily responsible for the prevalence of this disease in our country. Excessive intake of penetrating (*teekshna*) substances, such as alcohol and strong drugs, is another important cause for anaemia. Habitual day-sleep is also a factor which gives rise to anaemia.

Excessive intake of sour, salty, pungent foods, physical exertion etc., during pregnancy, besides causing anaemia, can lead to other complications. Abortion, premature birth, bleeding during pregnancy and childbirth, and low birth-weight of the infant are some of these complications. Anaemic mothers give birth to anaemic children. Deficiency in blood at the beginning of life affects all aspects of a child's growth and development.

Food and regimen recommended in Ayurveda for pregnant women ensure an anaemia-free pregnancy. As we have already seen, a pregnant mother is advised to follow a diet which is cooling (in efficacy) and sweet in taste. All through pregnancy, the mother consumes milk and ghee. Herbs which are sweet in taste and cooling in efficacy are prescribed and are beneficial during this period. Intake of alcohol, day-sleep and hard physical labour are forbidden throughout pregnancy. The diet and regimen which are beneficial and those which are harmful for a pregnant mother are the same as those for a person with anaemia. When pregnant mothers are treated

in the Ayurvedic way, there is very little chance of their being afflicted by anaemia.

In the allopathic system, iron supplements are prescribed during pregnancy to take care of anaemia. These iron supplements have many side-effects, the most common ones being severe digestive disorders in mothers who consume them. Some common side effects are stomach-upset or irritation, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, loss of appetite, skin rashes and darkened stools. As a result many women find it difficult to consume these iron supplements.

For pregnant women, a medicine that is highly beneficial is *Dadimadi Ghritam*, a medicated ghee. The fruit of pomegranate is added to several medicinal herbs and ghee, to prepare this medicine. It is highly effective in treating anaemia among pregnant women and makes a hazard-free labour and childbirth possible. It also prevents infertility in women. This medicine improves digestion and is effective in treating the heart, spleen, piles (haemorrhoids), respiratory problems, cough, and *Vata-Kapha* disorders.

Bleeding in Pregnancy

Bleeding during the first three months:

Pregnant women may notice bleeding from vagina or pain in the initial months of pregnancy. Bleeding during these months occurs due to improper food, physical and emotional stress, disease, and regimen which is not conducive to maintaining pregnancy. If bleeding

occurs during the first three months, pregnancy in most cases may not last as the foetus is immature and not properly formed. However measures which arrest bleeding and help in protecting the foetus should be followed. When bleeding takes place before the end of three months, the diet of the woman is changed to food which is dry (non-fatty) and cooling in efficacy. As soon as bleeding is noticed all fatty and oily foods are discontinued and replaced with foods such as a soup made of green gram and millets (*trna dhanya*, e.g., *shyama*, *kodrava*, *kangu* etc.). Fasting is desirable as also drinking water processed with herbs which help arrest bleeding and which are cold in efficacy such as *usheera*, *chandana*, *musta*, *guduchi*, *dhanyaka*, *ativisha*, *duralabha*, *bala* and *parpataka*. After the bleeding is controlled fatty food is given.

If the foetus is expelled, the woman needs to be treated and brought back to health. The woman is given strong wine or *asava* / *arishta* (fermented herbal liquids) in large quantities, which help cleanse her uterus as well as numb the pain. Those who are not used to drinking wine are maintained on thin and easy-to-digest medicated gruel without fat and salt. In general these women are given medicated gruel and maintained on a dry diet, without adding ghee or oil to their food. The number of days this diet and medicines are consumed should be equal to the number of months of pregnancy. After this, she should be given a diet which is nourishing, strengthening and which controls *Vata*.

Bleeding after three months:

Bleeding occurring after three months is arrested and the foetus protected by providing appropriate care and treatment for the pregnant woman. She is made to stay in a comfortable room, well-ventilated and with a cool breeze blowing. She is made to rest in a bed which is covered with soft, comfortable and cool bed covers and surrounded by people speaking kindly to her. She lies down with legs raised and the head at a lower level than the legs.

A cold paste of *Yashti Choornam* mixed with ghee is soaked in cotton and placed inside the vagina like a tampon. Her body, below navel, is smeared with *Satadhouta Ghritam* (a medicated ghee) and sprinkled with cold cow's milk, cold decoction of *yashti* and cold decoction of the buds of the banyan tree or the decoction of the bark of ficus trees. The woman is bathed with cold water. She is given milk, ghee and rice and foods which are cold in efficacy. Milk and ghee given to her are both medicated and plain. A regimen which is cooling to the body both internally and externally is practised. Care is taken to see that she is not subjected to any physical or emotional stress, excitement like anger or sorrow, physical work, sex and exercise.

A MULTIPURPOSE OINTMENT – SATADHOUTA GHRITAM

Satadhouta Ghritam is a medicated ghee highly useful in our daily life. This ghee can be used like an ointment in many conditions. It is an effective medicine in healing cuts and wounds. It is used to heal rapidly any superficial tear of the vaginal skin which can take place during childbirth. A common problem of nursing mothers, namely cracked and painful nipples is handled using *Satadhouta Ghritam*. On applying this ointment, the nipples heal and become normal very quickly and it certainly helps prevent unnecessary use of pain-killers, antibiotics and nipple shields. Women while cooking quite often burn their hands and as a first-aid this ointment can be used on burns. It removes even the burn marks from the skin.

Satadhouta Ghritam is prepared from the decoction of the bark of the four ficus trees.³³ The name of this medicine is derived from the manner in which it is prepared. *Sata* means hundred and *dhouta* means washing. Ghee is churned repeatedly in this decoction and this procedure is repeated one hundred times to obtain the medicated ghee.

Prolonged Gestation

One of the complications in pregnancy is when the growth of the foetus is inhibited due to various reasons. As a result, pregnancy has an unusually long duration. Such an abnormal pregnancy is known as *nagodara* or *leena garbha* or *upavishtaka* in Ayurveda. If these conditions are diagnosed correctly, they are best treated in the Ayurvedic system of medicine.

Upavishtaka is a condition where a pregnant woman consumes foods which are pungent and hot (in efficacy), leading to bleeding and other forms of secretion from the uterus. As a result, the foetal growth is inhibited. The foetus remains inside the uterus for a very long time.

When the pregnant woman resorts to fasting (*upavasa*), is averse to oil, ghee and other fats, is malnourished and follows a regimen which aggravates *Vayu*, the foetus dries up and it does not grow. This condition is called *nagodara*. A similar condition is also called *leena garbha*. In all these conditions, the foetus remains in the womb for a very long time without growth and

³³ The following are the four Ficus trees [*Chatuhksheeri Vrksha*, or *Nalpalmaram* (Tamil/Malayalam)]: *Vata* – Banyan – *Ficus Bengalensis* Linn.; *Asvattha* – Peepal – *Ficus Religiosa* Linn.; *Udumbara* – Wild fig – *Ficus Racemosa* Linn.; and *Plaksha* –Waved-leaf fig – *Ficus Retusa* Linn.

movement. The following is a case of retarded growth of the foetus (*nagodara*).

Kala, aged 34, came to our centre with many complaints. All her ailments appeared chronic. She suffered from very severe headaches, hip and knee joint pains, a bloated feeling and pricking pain in the abdomen, excessive sweating, trembling, giddiness, burning sensation in the body, fainting, palpitations and nausea. Her menstrual cycles were irregular. Prior to Ayurvedic treatment, she had been consulting a gynaecologist and had undergone hormone treatment to regularize the cycle. She had not responded to the treatment. Her last menstrual cycle had appeared five months back. Normally, when a woman is pregnant, after five months the signs of pregnancy and foetal growth would be visible. However, in this case, there were no such visible signs. The hormone treatment led to growth of facial hair. She found it very embarrassing and started removing facial hair every fifteen days. She perspired profusely even in an air-conditioned room. She was also suffering from cold, cough and a blocked nose. For a number of years, she had been on a Thyroid supplement (Eltroxin). As she did not find any improvement with allopathic treatment, she sought Ayurvedic help for her problems.

As her complaints were numerous and chronic, she was initially administered medicines to alleviate her immediate problems, namely congestion in the chest, cold and cough. After her cough and cold subsided, she was treated with various medicines to address her numerous complaints. *Chandraprabha Vati*, *Mahayogaraja Guggulu*, *Indukanta Ghritam* and *Dhanvantara Tailam* were some of the medicines prescribed for her complaints. Gradually her condition improved. After three weeks of medication, some problems such as headache began to subside. She still did not menstruate and many of her problems continued to trouble her. She was then advised to undergo cleansing treatments. She underwent intake of fats (*snehana*), fomentation (*svedana*) and

purgation (*virechana*).

For a period of two weeks, she underwent oil treatment (*abhyanga*) with *Dhanvantara Tailam*. Daily application of warm oil over the abdomen, groin, thigh, hip, back and sides of the chest was followed by fomentation of these parts with *Vata*-alleviating drugs. She started responding well to these procedures. Her earlier complaints like headache, palpitations, joint pains, back pain, excessive sweating, fainting, pain and bloated feeling in abdomen, had all subsided. However, there was no reduction in nausea and vomiting. The urge to vomit seemed to increase as the treatment progressed. It did not respond to any medication. Kala was administered a purgative (*virechana*). Still the urge to vomit persisted.

Thereafter, the patient had to be prepared for *vasti* (medicated enema) treatment. During this period, her nausea and vomiting steadily increased. On the day of *vasti*, as the patient continued to suffer from nausea and vomiting, *vasti* was not administered. At this point, a fresh look at Kala's condition suggested the following:

- She no longer suffered from the numerous complaints she had when she first came for the treatment.
- Even after administering various medications and treatments for nearly two months, she had not menstruated. Her last menstrual cycle had appeared nearly 7–8 months back.
- She had repeated bouts of vomiting daily.
- There were no other signs or symptoms to suggest or suspect any disease in the body.

This led to the obvious conclusion that the signs and symptoms the patient exhibited could be only due to pregnancy. All treatments were immediately terminated. The diagnosis was discussed

with the patient and her husband. As was expected, they wanted to believe it only after a scan was performed and sure enough the scan report confirmed the existence of a four-month-old foetus. The patient thereafter went through a normal pregnancy and at the end of her term (13 months in this case) delivered a healthy normal child.

In general the treatments recommended for *nagodara* and *upavishtaka* are the following:

Use of drugs which are *Vata*-alleviating, life-promoting (*jeevaniya*) and nourishing (*brmhaniya*);

Use of medicated ghee and *guggulu*;

Frequent use of vehicles for travelling, so that jerky movements are caused;

Frequent massage with warm oil over the abdomen, groin, thigh, waist, sides of chest and back to activate the foetus.

In this particular case, all these were done. She was administered medicines with *guggulu*, medicated ghee, and medicated oil, all of them *Vata*-alleviating. She had to travel everyday from her home to the treatment centre in an auto-rickshaw, which needless to say, caused jerky movements. She underwent *abhyanga* with warm oil and was massaged and fomented. All these led to the revival and growth of the foetus which had dried up inside her uterus and had remained without growth or movement for several months.

As seen in this case, conditions such as these may present themselves along with a host of complaints and they may go unnoticed. These symptoms may not directly indicate the actual condition of the pregnant woman. It is therefore up to the *vaidya* to diagnose the case correctly.

Repeated Abortions

Some women face no problem in conceiving but are unable to retain the pregnancy. Within a month or two of conception, they develop bleeding and the foetus is lost. This sort of disorder is known as '*putrakhnee*' ('killer of child') in Ayurvedic texts. It is caused by the aggravation of *Vata* and *rakta* (blood). [This disease is sometimes diagnosed in Western medicine as a 'chromosomal abnormality' or a 'genetic disorder']. This is a disorder occurring among many pregnant women and is treated successfully in Ayurveda.

One such case is of a woman aged 30 with a single child. She wanted to have a second child but repeatedly lost her foetus before she could complete 3 months of pregnancy. In this case, her diet and habits aggravated both *Vata* and blood (*rakta*). A suitable treatment to pacify the aggravated *doshas* helped her overcome the problem.

Another case is that of a woman who was about 30 years of age, who faced the problem of repeated abortions. She was a busy professional, worked hard and often worked till late at night. Being conscious of her weight, she exercised daily, and quite vigorously. She ate her food practically with no fat. She was very fond of hot, spicy food. Her diet was without fat (dry), and her regimen was also *Vata*-aggravating. When she conceived for the first time, she did not feel the need to change her food or habits. Before the foetus was eight weeks old, she started to bleed and that marked the end of her pregnancy. After a few months, she conceived again and this time too she faced the same problem. Her gynaecologist was not able to deal with this abnormality and so no particular treatment or medication was suggested to her. She then started Ayurvedic treatment to correct this condition.

Here the *dosha* which brought about the destruction of the foetus is the vitiated *Vata*. This aggravation of *Vata* was a consequence of the extreme dryness in the body caused by her regimen, along with a diet which aggravated *Vata*. With mental stress, physical

exertion, lack of sleep, etc., *Vata* can get aggravated in the body. The vitiated *Vata* afflicts blood and destroys the foetus repeatedly.

For this woman who could not sustain her pregnancy, the first line of treatment was to change her diet. She was asked to avoid spicy hot food, cold food and drinks, and late hours of work, as well as excessive physical exercise, all of which had caused *Vata*-aggravation. She was administered *Phalasarpis* and *Dadimadi Ghritam*, both medicated ghees, good for aggravated *Vata* and blood and excellent tonics for fertility. When she conceived for a third time after this treatment, she was able to go through a full term without any problem.

Another instance where the woman conceives but is not able to sustain the pregnancy is SLE (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus). At our Ayurvedic centre, patients of SLE have found effective treatment for their disease and they have been able to conceive and deliver healthy babies as well. According to Western medicine, SLE is an auto-immune disorder which affects mostly women of reproductive age. In Ayurveda it is treated as *Vatarakta*, a disease where *Vata* and blood are aggravated causing severe pain in the joints. SLE patients are usually not able to sustain the pregnancy. And here too the same *doshas*, namely *Vata* and blood are involved, which were involved in the disease ‘*putrakhnee*’ mentioned earlier. Here too the same *doshas* cause loss of the foetus. Those suffering from this disease, if treated early with Ayurvedic medicines, are able to overcome the disease as well as conceive and deliver safely.

Factors which Harm the Foetus

There are various factors that can affect the growth and development of the foetus. Improper food and habits of the pregnant woman can lead to deformity and even death of the foetus in the womb.

The following should be avoided by pregnant women as they can harm the foetus:

- Intake of food and drugs which are pungent, penetrating (*teekshna*) and heating (in efficacy)
- Suppression of urges like urine, flatus (wind) and stool
- Injury to the body, compression of the abdomen, irregular and uncomfortable postures while sitting, standing, squatting or sleeping
- Anger, grief, envy, fear, terror or other emotional trauma
- Activities which are rash, excessive physical exercise, hard physical labour, carrying heavy loads, walking long distances and other such physically strenuous activities
- Excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse
- Hearing sounds or seeing sights which are violent, unpleasant
- Being abusive, quarrelsome and angry
- Travelling in vehicles which are uncomfortable or jerky
- Walking alone at night in lonely and fearful places and sleeping in the open
- Excessive aggravation of the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* (the disease-causing factors)

Pregnant women have to avoid these factors as they can lead to bleeding or premature birth, disease/disorder and there is also the likelihood of the foetus drying up.

NATURAL URGES

Suppression of natural urges (*vegas*) of the body is one of the important causes for all *Vata* diseases. These urges are thirteen in

number. They are: the urge to pass flatus, stools, and urine; sneezing, thirst, hunger, sleep, cough, breathing due to exertion, yawning, tears, vomiting, and the urge for sex. Not attending to, provoking, suppressing or postponing these natural urges give rise to some of the major diseases in the body.³⁴

If a pregnant woman indulges constantly in food and activities which cause an increase of *Vata*, then *Vata* getting increased abnormally, travels all over her body and also in the uterus and produces many diseases of *Vata* origin in the child. The child may become inactive, deaf, mute, of nasal speech, stammering, lame, hunch-backed, etc. Similarly if there is aggravation of *Pitta*, the child may have premature balding and greying of hair. *Kapha* produces skin disorders and other diseases of *Kapha* origin.

In general, pregnant women are advised not to sleep on the back constantly as this can increase the likelihood of the umbilical cord getting twisted around the neck of the foetus. Pregnant women should also avoid day-sleep, consuming alcohol, and consuming in excess any of the six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent).

Therefore, a woman who wishes to have a child endowed with excellent qualities should refrain from unwholesome food and regimen. She should perform acts of virtue (*dharma*) and resort to diet and activities that are beneficial to her. If a pregnant woman suffers from any disease she is to be treated with medication that is gentle, easy to consume and mild in nature.

³⁴ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 4, Verses 1 and 22.

Pregnancy and Exercise

Many women follow an exercise regimen during pregnancy. Some resort to walking while others take up other forms of exercise during this time. It is important to know how to approach exercise during pregnancy.

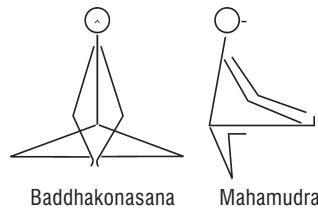
In general women should not perform strenuous and hard physical labour during pregnancy. Heavy physical exertion can cause harm to the foetus. Exertion is one of the factors contributing to anaemia in pregnant women. However, practice of certain *yogasanas* and *pranayama* (regulated breathing) are beneficial during pregnancy. Pregnant women are taught *asana* and *pranayama* at our centre. *Yogasana* practice should be handled by experienced teachers, especially those experienced in teaching pregnant women. Any *asana*/exercise which puts pressure or causes compression to the abdomen and postures which are uncomfortable, should be avoided. More than what should be practised, what ought not to be practised should be borne in mind. One of the important benefits of *asana/pranayama* practice is that it helps in the proper flow of *Vayu*, which is essential for a comfortable delivery.

A pregnant woman, a primi (first pregnancy) aged 35, in her 5th month of pregnancy, described her *yogasana* practice as the following: inverted postures with support – *sarvangasana*, *vipareeta karani*, squats and so on. These are not suitable for a pregnant woman, and in fact may be harmful. Obviously the idea behind an exercise regimen is not to test the capability of a pregnant woman at this stage in her life. Instead, the idea is to practise the right kind of *asana* and *pranayama* which are beneficial and safe during pregnancy. The practice of *asana* does not mean an exercise regimen where the woman sweats it out. The very definition of *asana* is a posture in which one is stable (*sthira*) and comfortable (*sukha*). Especially during pregnancy, the most stable and comfortable *asanas* are those which are practised in seated positions without any strain or pressure on

the abdomen. For example, *baddhakonasana* and *maha mudra* are *asanas* where the woman is seated comfortably and she is taught to practise these and other *asanas* with regulated breathing. Not all types of *pranayama* are suitable for pregnancy.

Those recommended by experienced teachers are *ujjayi pranayama*, *sitali pranayama* and *nadi suddhi pranayama*.³⁵

Asana and *pranayama* practice after delivery also should be guided well. The new mother need not rush into an exercise regimen before the completion of the six week post-delivery period. A typical example of a wrong approach to exercise is the case of an over-zealous obstetrician who insisted her patient perform back strengthening exercises right after her delivery and ended up hurting the patient's back.



³⁵ Sri Nathamuni's *Yogarahasya*, Ed. T. K.V. Desikachar, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, 1998.

CHAPTER 8

Labour and Childbirth

गर्भस्तु खलु मातुः पृष्ठाभिमुख ऊर्ध्वशिराः सङ्कुच्याङ्गान्यास्तेऽन्तः कुक्षौ ।
स चोपस्थितकाले जन्मनि प्रसूतिमारुतयोगात् परिवृत्त्यावाक्शिरा
निष्कामत्यपत्यपथे एषा प्रकृतिः ॥

The foetus lies in the uterus with its face towards the back of the mother, head upwards and limbs folded. At the appropriate time, with the help of Vayu the foetus turns its head downwards. It gets delivered through the birth passage.³⁶

Labour Pains

Women often experience pain or mild contractions days or even weeks before the time of delivery. Such pains usually go away or subside on their own. At times these pains may last several hours. At such times household remedies which pacify *Vayu* are given to the pregnant woman and the pains subside. Some of the medicinal preparations given during this time are: juice of drumstick leaves with salt; decoction (*kashaya*) of *saunf* mixed with jaggery; decoction of black cumin (black *jeera*) seed; a decoction made from tender stems of drumstick, *saunf*, pepper, jaggery, cumin, and garlic. By using these preparations the pains subside, unless they are actual contractions leading up to delivery.

Pains which do not lead up to proper labour pains of childbirth do not intensify and the intervals between pains are irregular.

³⁶ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 6, Verses 22, 24.

Labour pains are identified by their regularity. They appear at regular intervals and their intensity increases steadily and gradually. These pains do not subside when the above *Vata*-alleviating medicinal decoctions are administered.

The interval between contractions is initially around ten minutes or so. It gradually reduces. Towards the end, the interval between two contractions can be just one minute. Each contraction may last from 30 seconds to even over a minute.

As labour approaches, the woman develops fatigue, and she feels exhausted in the limbs even without any physical activity. She develops looseness of the abdomen, a feeling as though a knot is being untied from the chest, as if something is coming down from the pelvis, heaviness in the lower part of the body, drooping and tiredness of eyes, loss of taste and appetite, more salivation and increased urination. There is discomfort and pain in the thighs, abdomen, waist, back, region of the heart, bladder, groin and vagina as well as discharge from the vagina. She also feels continuous pricking or pulsation in the vagina. This is followed by the onset of labour pain and discharge of fluid (amniotic).

'DUE DATE'

From the first day of the ninth month till the end of the tenth month is considered as the period for normal delivery. Usually obstetricians give the duration of pregnancy as 280 days from the first day of the last menstrual cycle. However pregnancy lasting beyond the 'due date' need not be a cause for alarm. Delivery can take place any day from the beginning of ninth month and in some rare cases pregnancy may extend beyond the tenth month.

AUGUST 2013						
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LABOUR ROOM

Traditionally, when the pregnant woman starts her ninth month, she enters the labour room. The labour room is described in the texts thus: It should be constructed on soil with excellent colour, taste and smell; with certain types of wood and with well-plastered walls. Its doors should face east or north. Every portion of the room is well-defined, well-ventilated, with appropriate measurements. Fire place, water storage, a place for pounding, lavatory, bathroom and kitchen should be provided as per instructions laid down in *Vastuvidya*. The room should be made comfortable for that particular season. The room should be equipped with cloth, sheets, bed covers, beds, a number of herbs, medicines, surgical instruments, and other necessary implements.³⁷

Delivery

When the woman begins to have her labour, warm oil is applied to her body and she is bathed in warm water and given a nourishing gruel mixed with ghee to drink.

- The woman in labour is made to sit on a soft bed spread on the ground. She is surrounded by women who are kind, good natured and free from grief; who know her, speak to her gently, comfort her and keep her in good cheer; who have given birth to many children, are experienced in delivering children, tolerant and capable of bearing hardship.

³⁷ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 8, Verse 33.

- She is massaged gently and repeatedly with warm medicated oil, over her flanks, back, hip, thighs to help bring down the foetus.
- She is encouraged to walk briskly and yawn during this time to help the descent of foetus.
- In the event of labour not progressing, she is made to inhale repeatedly a powder (*choornam*) made from herbs. This inhalation is also given between contractions. External application of medicinal pastes around the umbilicus and oral medications and oil application to the birth canal are also helpful in labour progressing.
- When she is tired she is fanned, given water to drink and encouraged with soothing words by saying that the baby is born.

Choornam for Inhalation

Before delivery, the medicated powder for inhalation is prepared and stored. It consists of herbs such as *kushta*, *ela*, *langali* etc. Equal quantities of the herbs are ground and made into a very fine powder. This powder is used for inhalation whenever there is a delay in the progress of labour. This enhances the labour in a natural way without causing any distress to the mother and child; and this way of enhancing labour does not lead to violent contractions of the uterus.

LANGALI (GLORIOSA SUPERBA)

Langali is one of the important herbs stored in an Ayurvedic maternity home. As the name itself suggests this plant has a superb flower. The plant is easily identified by its beautiful and colourful

flowers. It is known as *kalappai kizhangu* (in Tamil) or Glory Lily (in English). The part that is used during delivery is the root /tuber. This plant is intimately connected with childbirth as it plays a vital role in intensifying contractions and also in the expulsion of the placenta after delivery. The tubers of *langali* form a part of the *choornam* that is inhaled by the woman when labour does not progress during childbirth. The paste of *langali* is applied on the palms and soles of feet of the delivered woman when the placenta is obstructed. *Dais* (traditional midwives) all over India use this root effectively in expelling the foetus and placenta. *Langali* has a laxative property. It is used for treatment of skin disease, swelling (oedema), wounds, piles, worms and pain in the stomach. It is alkaline, bitter, and pungent. *Langali* is easy to digest; controls *Kapha*, increases *Pitta* and can cause expulsion of foetus.

Time to Strain and Push

When the pregnant woman

- (a) Starts to feel as though there is laxity /looseness in the sides of her stomach and as though the foetus is getting detached from the heart region and descending into the lower abdomen and
- (b) If there is pain in the pelvic region and increase in the frequency of contractions and labour pains – then she is asked to lie on the bed /table used for delivery and asked to push with just enough force to facilitate delivery.

As the labour intensifies, the woman starts to feel heavier in the lower abdomen as though something is blocking, waiting to come out. She feels as though she wants to pass stools. When the pain is more, she is encouraged to push mildly in the beginning. The birth canal is repeatedly smeared with oil and the passage is lubricated and enlarged to facilitate delivery. Towards the end she is instructed to strain and push with more force until the baby is out. During this time, the mother is constantly reassured and encouraged by the friendly women surrounding her.

There should be no straining and pushing in the absence of pain/contractions, as it does not serve any useful purpose. Bearing down in the absence of pain (contractions) can lead to diseases in the child such as respiratory diseases, cough, emaciation, diseases of the spleen and physical deformities such as hunch back.

The special diet of the pregnant woman, application of oil on her body, use of medicated oil-soaked tampon in the vagina, and the use of medicated enemas set the stage for a comfortable and normal delivery. By these her stomach, back, the sides of chest, hip, groin, thighs and the uterine region become soft and supple and the birth canal becomes soft and elastic. And during delivery the perineum is able to stretch a great deal and delivery takes place without any tearing of the perineum. Even if there is a tear, it is a superficial one which heals within a day with a (herbal) wound-healing medicine applied at the spot.

Delivery of Placenta

After the foetus is delivered, it remains attached to the placenta. Then the placenta is delivered. Cutting off the umbilical cord is not done immediately after the delivery of the foetus. Only after the placenta is delivered is the umbilical cord cut. While the placenta is being delivered, the child is revived by sprinkling water on the face and striking stones near the ears. By following these measures, the child regains the vitality it had lost due to the strain



Baby attached to Placenta

caused by passing through the birth canal during delivery. Only after the placenta is delivered and the baby is revived and cleaned, the umbilical cord is severed. This is the

classical method of child delivery described in the Ayurvedic texts. All over India, *dais* deliver the baby along with the placenta. This is in striking contrast to modern obstetric practice where the umbilical cord is separated from the mother immediately after childbirth and thereafter the placenta is removed from the mother's body. Delivering the child with the placenta has great advantage over the modern obstetric practice. Soon after birth, if the infant is not revived and there is no breath or movement, then our *dais* use a very innovative technique to revive the newborn. The placenta, which is still attached to the newborn, is pumped in a vessel of warm water. This technique helps the newborn revive and regain life.

Respiration after Birth

When the baby does not cry immediately after birth, it is a cause for worry. If respiration is not established immediately and if there is a delay of even one to two minutes, it is said to lead to abnormalities in the newborn. And a delay beyond five minutes means risk of infant mortality. The usual steps in any allopathic institution involve administration of oxygen, intravenous drugs and more hi-tech interventions. However, the resuscitation procedure adopted in the Ayurvedic delivery is a sure and effective way of reviving the newborn. A newborn revived through placental resuscitation has no damage or abnormality, physical or mental, as a result of this method.

Placental Resuscitation at Sanjeevani

This placental resuscitation took place in our Sanjeevani Centre during one of the deliveries. The child was born with no breath, no crying, bluish in color and no movement. All conventional attempts to revive the child failed. At this point, resuscitation through the placenta (still attached to the child), was attempted. The child was placed over a cloth on the floor, with the placenta immersed in a warm herbal decoction which had already been prepared for bathing the child. Constant pumping of the placenta and splashing of the same warm water on the baby was carried on. About 15 minutes later, there was a sound of breath from the child and the respiration was visible with the chest caving in every second. Still the baby did not open the eyes nor did it cry. Placental resuscitation continued with pumping of placenta in hot water. Nearly 50 minutes after birth, the child cried loudly and opened its eyes. Meanwhile the complexion gradually changed from blue to pink. After the newborn was fully revived, the cord was severed and the child was wrapped and placed on the bed. The child was born in the evening. The same night, the child was found to be normal with no signs of distress.



Placental Resuscitation

This kind of revival is possible only if the placenta remains attached without the cord being severed just after the delivery. This type of resuscitation requires no hi-tech interventions nor does the baby start its life with a heavy dose of drugs.

Care of the Newborn

After the newborn gains life and vitality and becomes normal, the infant's body is cleansed with ghee mixed with rock salt. The infant's mouth, palate, tongue and throat are cleared and cleaned. The child is made to vomit, by administering ghee mixed with rock salt, in order to bring out the uterine fluid and the mucus of the throat. The midwives of Tamilnadu give the newborn the juice of the leaves of drumstick tree and salt to make the child vomit the uterine fluid and mucus. By thus clearing the chest and throat, the child develops alertness, lightness of the body and liveliness. A paste of pepper, dry ginger, *pippali*, *hareetaki*, *vacha*, and turmeric given internally also removes the uterine fluid and the mucus of the throat and makes the child alert. A medicinal paste mixed with honey and ghee is given to the child to lick in order to promote intelligence, strength and long life.

Thereafter, the cord is cut about 10 cms above the umbilicus. Medicated oil is applied at the severed end which helps to quickly dry up the cord. The newborn is then bathed in a decoction made from the bark of ficus trees. A cotton cloth soaked in *Bala Tailam* is placed on the head to protect the infant from *Vata* afflictions.

UMBILICAL CORD

Often the umbilical cord of the infant is a cause for concern to the mother and the family. The cord starts to ooze with pus and blood and when oozing persists, the child is administered



Umbilical Cord after 32 hours

antibiotics. All these can be avoided if the severed end of the cord is smeared with the oil medicated with the herb *kushta*. It is specially prepared for this purpose during the time of delivery. This oil is applied over the cord daily until the cord drops off. The medicated oil keeps the cord clean and dries the cord quickly. In many cases it has been noticed that the cord drops off within 72 hours after delivery with the use of this oil.

KUSHTA

The medicated oil used on the cord of the newborn is made from the herb *Kushta*. *Kushta* is an important medicinal herb in the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. Because of its versatile nature, it finds a place in very many Ayurvedic medicinal preparations. As it does not aggravate any *dosha*, it can be effectively used in diseases caused by all three *doshas*. *Kushta* is hot in efficacy and is used in treating skin diseases, herpes, *Vatarakta* (gout), itching and poison. *Kushta* is effective in controlling *Kapha*, *Vata* and blood disorders.

CHAPTER 9

Dai – The Mother of all Obstetricians

स्त्रियश्च बहुयो बहुशः प्रजाताः सौहार्दयुक्ताः
सततमनुरक्ताः प्रदक्षिणाचाराः प्रतिपत्तिकुशलाः
प्रकृतिवत्सलास्त्यक्तविषादाः क्लेशसहिन्योऽभिमताः ॥

*Women who have given birth to many children,
friendly, devoted, well-mannered, resourceful, of loving nature,
free from grief, tolerant of hardship and respected
(should be present at the time of delivery).³⁸*

The traditional midwives in Tamilnadu are known as *maruttuvacci* (medicine woman). In Northern India, they are known as *dai*. Even today, these traditional midwives deliver more than half the children born in our country.³⁹ These *dais* are the true Ayurvedic obstetricians in the field. They practise this branch of medicine with great skill.

Pregnancy care is all about preparing the pregnant woman towards a natural delivery. The *dai* prepares and guides the pregnant woman through the entire period of pregnancy. Bringing about a natural childbirth is the sole objective of any traditional midwife.

India possesses a huge army of traditional midwives, the numbers running into several hundred thousands. In most of our

³⁸ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 8, Verse 34.

³⁹ National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-III (<http://www.rchiips.org/NFHS/nfhs3.shtml>)

remote villages women depend entirely on traditional midwives for childbirth. It appears that even in the heart of the capital city of New Delhi, midwives attend to the delivery of a large number of women in their homes.⁴⁰ For rural women, the midwife is the professional who detects and confirms pregnancy. With minimal resources and locally available materials, midwives provide optimum care during pregnancy and after childbirth.

From the ninth month, the *dai* advises the mother to draw out her nipples. This helps to avoid the painful problem of inverted nipples and the use of nipple-shield after childbirth. She provides the labouring woman medicinal decoctions to enhance labour. The *dai* performs a normal home-delivery. She is able to handle abnormal foetal presentations. After the baby is born, if the infant does not revive and breathe, the midwife resuscitates and revives the baby. Soon after delivery, the mother is given medicinal decoctions to cleanse her uterus. Midwives perform deliveries leaving the perineum of the woman intact. They bathe the mother with oil, hot water and herbal water. This treatment reduces exhaustion and body pain, gives the mother a sense of well being and hastens her recovery. The *dai* applies oil on the abdomen and ties up the loose abdominal muscles firmly. This practice saves new mothers from many complications of *Vata*, which can enter the empty space left behind by the foetus. The *dai* prescribes diet for the new mother and also takes care of the newborn. The *dai* is skilled in taking care of the newborn. All ailments of the infant are managed with various types of herbal remedies. Most importantly, the *dai* does all this as a *dharma* or service to society and does not expect much remuneration for her efforts.

The *dai* does not meddle with childbirth. With her expertise and experience, she views childbirth as a natural event and not as

⁴⁰ NFHS-III, cited above.

an event fraught with complications. She sees her role as only to help nature and facilitate this natural event. Modern obstetric practice is in striking contrast to this.

The following story was reported in a Tamil newspaper. In a hill village near the town of Pazhani, Tamilnadu, officials from the health department conducted an ‘awareness’ camp regarding pregnancy care and the need to have delivery in government institutions. Prompted by this campaign, a pregnant woman from this village came to the nearby Primary Health Centre. She was made to wait for a long time. Then the doctor on duty examined her and declared casually that as there was some foetal distress, she should go to the Government Hospital in Pazhani. In the meantime a woman, perhaps a *dai*, who had accompanied the pregnant woman, took charge and delivered the baby without any fuss right there. This perhaps saved the lives of the mother and child. People who were looking on wondered who really needed awareness – the villagers or the government officials.⁴¹

INFANT MORTALITY

It is often said that childbirths at home and with the help of *dais* have been responsible

⁴¹ Dinamalar, Chennai, 27-7-2010.

for high Infant Mortality Rates (IMR). It is assumed that institutionalization, that is, childbirth in hospitals, will bring down the IMR. However, this does not seem to be true. Some scholars have pointed out that 'there is no evidence of infant mortality being high at home', in other words, home-births with the help of *dais* are not responsible for the high IMR.⁴²



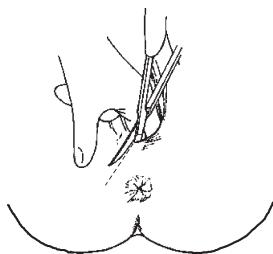
⁴² Harish Naraindas, "A Sacramental theory of childbirth in India" in *Childbirth across cultures*, Ed. Helaines Selin, Springer, New York, 2009, p.97.

CHAPTER 10

Modern Obstetrics: A Critical View

There is an urgent need to critically review and change modern obstetric practices. There are several practices in modern obstetrics which are employed without any scientific validation and justification. Episiotomy is one such practice.

Episiotomy – A Harmful Practice



Modern obstetrics includes a routine practice called episiotomy – an incision made in the perineum, the tissue between the vagina and anus. In India, episiotomy is a standard procedure in all deliveries conducted by obstetricians in both government and private hospitals. The only women who do not have to undergo this harmful and painful procedure are those who are handled by traditional midwives.

Episiotomy has been described as “the quintessential example of an obstetrical practice that persists despite a total lack of evidence for it and a considerable body of evidence against it.” The practice of episiotomy has its origin in a 90-year old article by one DeLee (1920), “that produced not a shred of evidence in its support”.⁴³ There is a huge body of evidence which points to the dangers

⁴³ Henci Goer, *Obstetric Myths Versus Research Realities*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, 1995. Chapter 14 of the book deals with episiotomy.

involved in episiotomy. Episiotomy is justified on grounds that it prevents the perineum from tearing in an uncontrolled and zigzag manner, it reduces risk and damage to the anal sphincter and it protects against incontinence and heals faster.

As a matter of fact, episiotomy causes severe post-delivery pain. Episiotomy can lead to infection and disease. It can result in third and fourth degree lacerations (tears) and longer healing time. It results in faulty repairs of the cut, localized collection of blood, loss of blood, formation of abscess, recto-vaginal fistula with involuntary passage of gas and faecal matter through the vagina and many other medical complications. Often sutures have to be removed to drain wounds and re-suturing is required. Women experience pain during intercourse. Women sometimes continue to suffer this pain many years after childbirth. In fact, this practice is only a medically-sanctioned female genital mutilation.⁴⁴

EPISIOTOMY – A PERSPECTIVE

In the USA, it was estimated that episiotomies were performed in 34% of vaginal deliveries in 1989, down from 70% in 1979. The number of episiotomies began to decrease in the United States in the 1980s when studies started raising questions about their value. By the year 2000, the rate of episiotomy had come down to about 19%. In the Netherlands, episiotomies were performed in 8% of births. Episiotomy rates varied

⁴⁴ Alphonse Selvaraj et al, *Episiotomy – A real need or ritual?*, Institute of Public Health, Poonamallee, Chennai, year not mentioned.

appreciably throughout regions and hospitals in the United Kingdom, ranging from 26 to 67 per cent.⁴⁵

Until 1993, all textbooks of Western medicine maintained that episiotomy should be done routinely and that it was essential for primi (first) deliveries. However, the newer editions do not endorse routine episiotomy. For instance, the 21st international edition of Williams Obstetrics, considered the most authoritative text by modern obstetricians, states: ‘...an episiotomy will increase the risk of a tear, extend into external anal sphincter and /or the rectum... The long held belief that the post-operative pain is lessened and healing improved with an episiotomy compared to a tear appears not to be true... Routine episiotomy is associated with an increased incidence of anal sphincter and rectal tear... It seems reasonable to conclude that episiotomy should not be performed routinely.’⁴⁶ A review article in the Journal of American Medical Association concluded that: (a) There are no benefits from episiotomy and (b) Routine use of episiotomy is harmful...⁴⁷ WHO takes the position that episiotomy can be justified only in 10% of deliveries. Even this seems to be quite an arbitrary figure.⁴⁸

We in India never had such a harmful practice to begin with. However we absorbed uncritically the Western practice of episiotomy into our system, only to find that the medical community in the West is slowly waking upto to its harmful effects. Even so our obstetricians continue to swear by episiotomy and subject our women

⁴⁵ Alphonse Selvaraj et al, cited above.

⁴⁶ Alphonse Selvaraj et al, cited above.

⁴⁷ Katherine Hartmann et al, “Outcomes of Routine Episiotomy – A systematic review”, Journal of American Medical Association, 2005, 293, pp. 2141-2148.

⁴⁸ Alphonse Selvaraj et al, cited earlier.

to this dreadful practice. Indian women who are already highly anaemic, when subjected to this harmful practice lose large amounts of blood, making them weaker and even more anaemic. Bleeding and infection due to episiotomy is one of the risk factors for maternal deaths during child birth.⁴⁹



THE TAMILNADU EXPERIENCE

In the year 2006, Sanjeevani Ayurveda Centre started a systematic campaign against the harmful practice of episiotomy in childbirth. The Centre raised this issue with the Department of Health and its various institutions as well as private practitioners. The response from the Tamilnadu Health Department was very encouraging. Tamilnadu became the first state in India to take initiatives to discourage this harmful practice. The Government of Tamilnadu made concerted efforts to restrict this procedure in all government institutions. A workshop was organised by the Department of Health to end the practice of routine episiotomy in Government hospitals of Tamilnadu. Institute for Public Health (IPH), a premier Government institution in Chennai at that time, gave up the practice of episiotomy in all the deliveries conducted there and played a significant role in influencing the medical community to end this practice.

⁴⁹ Henci Goer, cited earlier and Alphonse Selvaraj et al, cited earlier.

Amniotomy and Stimulation

Another practice which has no scientific validation or justification is, premature or Artificial Rupturing of Membrane (ARM) or amniotomy. By this method the membrane covering the foetus and holding the amniotic fluid is ruptured at the very beginning of labour and the fluid is allowed to drain. ARM is adopted only with the intention of inducing labour and hastening delivery, which is unnecessary for a natural childbirth. Such rupturing often leads to foetal distress and maternal distress paving the way for a caesarean delivery.

According to Williams Obstetrics, ‘the presumed benefits (of amniotomy) are more rapid labour and perhaps earlier detection of instances of meconium (faeces of the foetus) staining of amniotic fluid. Amniotomy may shorten the length of labour slightly but there is no evidence that shorter labour is necessarily beneficial to the foetus or to the mother. Indeed, the reverse may be true.’⁵⁰

Once ARM is performed and there is no pain, then you are left with no option but to administer oxytocin, the most commonly administered labour-stimulating drug during childbirth, to stimulate contractions. This results in larger, stronger and more painful contractions. It now becomes necessary to monitor both foetal heart rate and the contractions, in order to avoid foetal distress and bleeding caused by the increased contractions. During labour, the mother should be in a position to walk around, which helps the progress of labour. But since oxytocin is given in a drip, it restricts the mother’s movement. Strong contractions can cause problems to the foetus and lead to so-called ‘foetal distress’. Even though strong contractions may take place, there may be little progress in the

⁵⁰ *Williams Obstetrics*, 16th Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1980, p.414.

dilatation of the cervix, which makes a caesarean operation the only option. These days, there is indiscriminate and unrestricted use of oxytocin all over the country, with disastrous consequences for women's health.

The violent contractions caused by inducing labour, reduce the mother's ability to cope with pain and therefore the focus now shifts to pain-relief measures and use of pain-relieving drugs. The most commonly used pain-reliever is the epidural drug. It is a numbing medication injected into the lower back near the spine. It blocks the pain sensation and also limits the mother's mobility. She may not be able to push hard since she is no longer able to perceive the pain of labour which tells her when to push. Or she falls asleep in the middle of her labour. She is thus rendered useless and unfit for a natural childbirth. She is ready for the forceps or a caesarean surgical operation, depending on the delivering doctor.

Due Date

Subjecting the pregnant woman to induction and surgical procedures based on the myth of a specific due date is a practice which needs to be put an end to. A childbirth need not take place exactly on the stipulated date. The modern obstetric practice of specifying dates leads to tension and anxiety to the woman and her family and the pressure on the pregnant woman to undergo a caesarean delivery becomes very high.

Cutting the Cord

Another obstetric practice which needs critical evaluation is, cutting the umbilical cord after delivery of the infant. Cutting the cord before delivery of the placenta does not have any scientific validation, whereas severing the cord after the revival of the infant is advantageous to the infant. With the cord intact it is possible to resuscitate and revive the newborn as we have already seen.

Delivery with placenta has another major advantage. It makes the newborn less prone to anaemia. One of the major public health issues in India is anaemia among infants. When the umbilical cord is cut after the placenta is delivered, it allows the maximum possible blood from the placenta to enter the body of the infant. Another advantage of cutting the cord after the placental delivery is that it prevents the cord from going back into the uterus. If this procedure is adopted universally, it can undoubtedly reduce the levels of anaemia among newborn in India and also bring down the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) considerably.

Asphyxia – Cause for Infant Death at Birth

India lost 1.8 million children, of less than 5 years age, in 2008. Of this 1.2 million die ('newborn mortality') within the first 28 days of life.⁵¹ The major cause of newborn death is asphyxia. Even a conservative estimate would put the number of deaths due to asphyxia among newborn at 500,000 per year.

Asphyxia is the inability of the infant to breathe at the time of delivery. A modern Indian obstetrics text defines asphyxia as the following: 'A well-oxygenated baby cries and begins to breathe immediately or a few seconds of birth. Sometimes..., the newborn does not breathe for some time. While the heart continues to beat, respiration is not established.'⁵²

One of the common causes of asphyxia is the administration of analgesics (pain-killers) and sedatives to the mother for relief of pain. Nowadays, such administration of pain-killers has become standard practice in modern institutional obstetrics. The above text book says: 'The obstetrician should as far as

⁵¹ The Hindu, Chennai, 7-9-2010 and 21-5-2012.

⁵² Mudaliar and Menon, *Clinical Obstetrics*, 6th Edition, Orient Longmans, 1967, pg.587.

possible, leave the delivery to normal forces and interfere only when really necessary. The injudicious use of analgesics..., oxytocics and inhalation anaesthetics causes grave harm, especially to premature babies.⁵³

As described earlier, in the Ayurvedic way of delivery, if the baby does not breathe immediately after delivery, the placenta still attached to the newborn serves as a tool for its revival. As the newborn's heart is still beating it is possible to revive the child by adopting traditional methods, if the options are not closed by severing the umbilical cord right at the beginning. For revival of the newborn, methods such as sprinkling water on the face, striking stones near its ears and fanning the newborn till it is revived, are practised. If the newborn does not breathe even after this, the *dais* use the placenta which is linked to the infant to resuscitate and revive the infant. This is why the cord is cut only after the placenta is delivered and the baby is fully revived. Therefore, if delivery is done the traditional way, the newborn deaths prevented each year in India may possibly amount to a few hundred thousands.

The traditional midwife /*dai* does not subject the mother to any of the above violent procedures. In her skilled hands the mother goes through childbirth as a secure and natural experience.

The benefits of traditional obstetric practices are self-evident and the sooner we introduce them into the mainstream, the better it will serve our women. The obstetricians of the modern world may have many valuable lessons to learn from these time-honoured and time-tested traditional practices.

⁵³ Mudaliar and Menon, cited above, p.591.

CHAPTER 11

Training of Village Health Nurses (VHN) – Tamilnadu

Traditional Ayurvedic midwifery practices benefit both the mother and child immensely. This can be witnessed from the practice of the midwives (*dais*), the Ayurvedic obstetricians. Many of the skills and knowledge of the *dais* get passed on to others through association, even though no formal attempt is made by the health department of the Government to preserve this knowledge and improve obstetric skills. Some of this became evident when the author came into contact with the Village Health Nurses (VHN) of Tamilnadu.

Training Village Health Nurses of Tamilnadu in pregnancy, childbirth and post-delivery care according to Ayurveda, has been a very rewarding experience. Out of nearly ten thousand VHN in Tamilnadu who have received training, nearly 2,500 have been trained by us at the Institute of Public Health near Chennai. As the VHN had already been trained in the allopathic medical system, they were very eager to acquire new knowledge and skills from Indian systems of medicine.

Although Village Health Nurses receive their basic training in the allopathic system and practise that system of medicine in the field, many of them had learnt their midwifery skills from the traditional *dais*. And wherever they worked they associated closely with the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) as the *dais* are called. Until the arrival of the VHN, the TBA performed all the deliveries in our villages. Now the TBA has been replaced by the VHN all over Tamilnadu. The VHN are usually well known to the local *dais*, and

in many cases the *dais* assist them during childbirth. On their part, the *dais* are only too willing to assist the VHN and pass on their knowledge to them.

That the VHN learnt many of their obstetric skills from the *dais* is evident when we observe their practice. One important practice is the resuscitation or revival of the child at birth by using the placenta. Some VHN have used this practice, many have witnessed this and most of them have heard about it.

In one of the training programmes, a VHN from Thiruvallur district of Tamilnadu described her experience of a childbirth she had conducted. At Nochili village, she once delivered a 'dead foetus'. A *dai* who was with her at the delivery immediately took over from her. She quickly brought some warm water and immersed the placenta in the water and started rotating and patting the placenta. In about 10–15 minutes, the child started to cry and breathe.

Two other VHN said they had used warm water and salt and rotated and lightly pressed the placenta, to revive the child. Another VHN said she once saw a *dai* revive the child by wrapping the baby with a cloth and following the same procedure. The VHN from Nochili village reported that she saw another child being revived after 30–40 minutes. Two others said that the child was revived almost immediately after birth. On an average ten to thirty minutes seems to be the time taken to revive the newborn with placental resuscitation. More direct observation is necessary to get a better idea of the maximum possible time upto which a newborn may be revived by this procedure.

Another important practice the VHN have learnt from the *dais* has to do with the use of medication when the labour does not progress. All the 2,500 VHN we have trained at IPH unanimously said that they use decoctions of herbs consisting of (various combinations of) *saunf*, cumin, coriander, cinnamon stick, dry ginger, stems of drumstick leaves and palm jaggery, to help the labour

progress. For that matter any decoction made from drugs which alleviate *Vata* is useful in helping labour progress.

Yet another procedure which finds mention in the classical Ayurvedic texts, which the VHN have learnt from the *dais*, is performed by them during delivery of the placenta. Whenever they are unable to deliver the placenta, they take a braid of hair and use it to tickle the inside of the throat of the woman in labour. When the woman gags, it helps in the delivery of the placenta. Tying of the abdomen after the delivery is an important traditional practice, which is also widely practised by the VHN.

No traditional midwife or Village Health Nurse ever practises episiotomy on women and mutilates their genitals. There are some VHN who have conducted more than sixteen thousand deliveries without performing a single episiotomy.

A Village Health Nurse who used the drug kit containing Ayurveda/Siddha drugs provided by the Government of Tamilnadu made an interesting observation. She found that one of the medicines, *Kumaryasava* which has the property of arresting bleeding, was very effective in controlling post-delivery bleeding. She used only this medicine in the place of methergine (an allopathic medicine) for all the deliveries she conducted as long as she had the Ayurvedic kit.

MAIN POINTS OF AYURVEDIC DELIVERY

- Monthly food and regimen during pregnancy for nourishment of the mother and development of the foetus
- Food and medicinal herbs to enhance secretion of breastmilk
- Eighth and ninth month enemas to remove the stagnant old faeces and facilitate delivery without complications
- Oil-soaked tampon (during the ninth month) in the vagina to soften the birth canal
- Delivery leaving the perineum intact
- Cutting of umbilical cord after the delivery of placenta
- When necessary, reviving the newborn through placental resuscitation
- No artificial rupturing of the membrane
- No induction, stimulation of labour and pain-killers (oxytocin, epidural etc.) leading to 'foetal distress'
- No episiotomy, suturing, and allied complications
- Less blood loss as there is no episiotomy
- No antibiotics, local anaesthesia and pain-killers (as there is no episiotomy)
- No anaemia in pregnant mother and infant
- Excellent post-delivery care

CHAPTER 12

Post-Delivery Care

क्षितिजर्लं वियत्तेजो वायुविर्ष्णुः प्रजापतिः ।
सगभां त्वां सदा पान्तु वैशल्यं च दिशन्तु ते ॥
प्रसूष्व त्वमविक्षिष्टमविक्षिष्टा शुभानने ।

*O handsome one, may Prithvi, Jala, Akasha, Agni, Vayu, Vishnu and Prajapati protect you, the pregnant one, at all times and facilitate the delivery of the child. May the delivery take place without any distress either to you or to your child.*⁵⁴

After childbirth, the mother needs to be looked after with great care and vigilance. If a mother is afflicted with any disease immediately after childbirth, it can very easily develop into a serious or incurable condition.

During pregnancy the nourishment of the mother is utilized for the growth of the foetus. Therefore, all the *dhatus* (such as *rasa*, blood etc.) of her body are in a diminished and weakened state. Due to the strain of labour and loss of fluid and blood during childbirth and also due to the emptiness created in the body after childbirth, the mother's health is fragile. Therefore, the mother is nursed with a regimen which has the objective of boosting her immunity and preventing diseases from afflicting her. This regimen helps her regain quickly her lost strength and vitality. Post-delivery regimen is followed for a period of six weeks.

⁵⁴ Charaka Sambita, cited earlier, Sareera Sthana, Chapter 8, Verse 39.

After Childbirth

After delivery, a mixture of ghee and oil is applied on the mother's body and she is washed with warm decoctions prepared from herbs which pacify *Vata*. She is bathed in this manner morning and evening and this helps to remove the pain and strain of the delivery. After delivery an empty space is created in her abdomen. To prevent *Vata* from entering this empty space and creating distension of abdomen and other disorders, a cloth is tied around her abdomen for a few days. An oil-soaked (medicated) tampon is placed in the vagina to relieve the pain. She is given medicines, and special food, which are sweet in taste and which provide vitality, nourishment and protection from *Vata* afflictions. These medicines clean the uterus and reduce substantially the number of days the woman bleeds after childbirth.

- During the first week, light and easy to digest gruels form her diet.
- Nourishing and heavy to digest food is given only after a week. Meat and fish are given only after twelve days.
- *Arishta* (fermented preparations) and other medicines are given to cleanse the uterus and induce secretion of breast milk.

SOWBHAGYASUNTHI – AN ELIXIR FOR WOMEN AFTER CHILDBIRTH⁵⁵

Sowbhagyasunthi is a classical formulation from *Rasa Ratna Samuccaya*, an Ayurvedic text. It was part of the drug kit which was

⁵⁵ *Rasa Ratna Samuccaya*, Sri Venkateswara Steam Press, Mumbai, 1952, Chapter 22, Verses 113 – 117.

provided by the Central and State governments to the Health Sub-Centres (HSC) in Tamilnadu. This medicine was so popular among the rural women after delivery that the HSCs could never meet the demand. Women or their families paid frequent visits to the HSC asking for this medicine. The beneficial effects of this medicine were self-evident.

Sowbhagyasunthi is a medicinal confection / paste (*lehya*) consisting of several herbs. The name *Sowbhagyasunthi* comes from one of its main ingredients namely dry ginger (*sunthi*). It is administered to women after delivery. Almost all households in Tamilnadu prepare a similar medicine at home called *pillai petral lehyam* (medicinal confection / paste for women after delivery). The *dais* administer a similar preparation made of spices and jaggery soon after delivery. Even those women who undergo hospital deliveries are given this kind of medicine at home.

Sowbhagyasunthi is used in all types of fever, diseases of liver and spleen, constipation, anaemia, abdominal tumours, lack of appetite, cough, respiratory diseases, worms and poor digestion. This is considered an elixir for women after delivery. This medicine is prepared and sold by Ayurvedic pharmacies all over India.

Special food and drinks required to deal with the post-delivery condition are prepared by processing them with medicinal herbs. They promote physical and psychological well-being, increase bodily vitality and promote growth of all the *dhatus*. In general, these herbs are sweet in taste and alleviate *Vayu*. The mother follows this regimen for a minimum period of six weeks and upto six months. As long as the mother is nursing the baby, menstruation does not begin. Usually it takes anywhere between six months to one year for the menstrual cycle to appear. But, in some rare cases menstruation is noticed even within three months after childbirth.

One thing that worries women is whether they would get back their earlier physique and strength after childbirth. This depends entirely on the pregnancy care and post-delivery care they receive. During pregnancy, women are advised to consume the right amount of food – neither too much nor too little. The right kind of food in proper measure gives her good nourishment, provides proper growth and development to the foetus and copious breastmilk. Post-delivery care described above is equally important so that the mother regains her strength and vitality quickly. Within a short period, she can regain normalcy.

CHAPTER 13

Caesarean Deliveries

Not relying on Indian systems of medicine for childbirth has cost Indian women and the nation dear. Birth today is viewed as an event fraught with complications warranting surgical and other invasive interventions. Induced labour and surgeries (caesarean deliveries) have become routine procedures at every maternity centre. Private nursing homes in urban and semi-urban areas are notorious for this.

Caesarean surgery, also known as C-section (CS), is a procedure where the infant is removed from the womb surgically by cutting open the belly of the mother. The reasons (clinical indications) necessitating caesarean deliveries are, usually:

- Failure of labour to progress
- Foetal distress
- Abnormal presentation (foetus is in a position other than head down)
- Pregnancy lasting beyond the so-called due date
- Where the woman has already undergone a caesarean surgery in her previous delivery and
- When the mother-to-be opts for CS

While medical care is meant to ensure safe delivery, in reality it has only paved the way for a large increase in caesarean deliveries. CS is performed even in normal head down position of the foetus – what is known as vertex presentation. The so-called due date is only an indication – sometimes the pregnancy can last beyond ten

months. As we have already seen, one of the major reasons leading to CS is the use of oxytocin, which during delivery causes violent uterine contractions resulting in maternal and foetal distress. Women who are not adequately informed choose CS since they perceive natural childbirth to be painful. They feel CS is easy, painless and safe. Occasionally, astrological considerations (baby to be born at an 'auspicious' moment) also play a role in women opting for CS.

For obstetricians CS is convenient. CS can be performed at any time of the day. This surgery takes only around half an hour, as compared to a natural childbirth which may involve a long and tiresome wait – often more than 24 hours. In hospitals attached to teaching institutions, CS is often performed to train students.

It is wrong to assume that CS is safer than normal, natural vaginal delivery. According to WHO, the major factor responsible for maternal death is bleeding and haemorrhages (25%) and this is certainly more likely in a CS than in a normal delivery. Therefore CS puts women at a greater risk of morbidity (illness) and mortality (death). The estimated rate of mortality from CS is 10 to 20 times higher than the rate of mortality for women who deliver vaginally.⁵⁶ Women undergoing this surgery face risk arising from complications of anaesthesia, utero-cervical and bladder lacerations (cuts), blood loss and surgeon's knife touching the foetus. There are several studies indicating an increased risk of multiple placental abnormalities in women undergoing CS, increased rate of premature births, more likelihood of ectopic pregnancies, and less likelihood of a subsequent pregnancy. CS is also a potential factor in causing respiratory diseases in infants. There are also post-operative complications like fever, urinary infections and infections of surgical wounds which don't heal for a

⁵⁶ Pamela K. Stone, "A History of Western medicine, labour and birth" in *Childbirth across cultures*, Ed. H. Selin and Pamela K. Stone, Springer, New York, 2009, pp. 41–53.

long time.⁵⁷ The mother recovering from the surgery is unable to move, nurse the infant or do any normal activity comfortably. Since she is put on antibiotics and painkillers following surgery, the infant who is on breast milk begins life with heavy doses of these drugs.

It may be instructive to look at the rate of CS in a few countries. In the USA caesarean delivery is the most commonly performed major surgical procedure. The rate of caesarean section had touched an all time high of 46% in 2005, whereas in 1970 the rate was only 4%.⁵⁸ In striking contrast to this, in the Scandinavian countries the rate of C-section is only 10% and maternal deaths in these countries are the lowest in the world.⁵⁹ In China too CS rates seem to be high. In some hospitals in China, the rate of CS is said to be as high as 90%. Over the years, the rate of caesarean deliveries has continued to rise all over India. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, and Kerala have very high levels of caesarean deliveries taking place in institutions (hospitals).⁶⁰ In general it seems to be true that CS surgeries ‘are rising exponentially without a concomitant improvement in maternal and foetal health outcomes’. Scholars have also pointed to ‘rising rates of perinatal and maternal mortality due to excessive obstetrical intervention’.⁶¹

This high rate of caesarean surgeries may often be motivated by monetary considerations. However a high rate of unnecessary surgical interventions is also due to a total lack of obstetric knowledge and skill. Traditionally all types of presentations were managed by

⁵⁷ S. N. Mukherjee, “Rising Caesarean section rate”, *The Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India*, Vo.56, No.4, Jul – Aug 2006, pp.298 – 300.

⁵⁸ Pamela K. Stone, cited above.

⁵⁹ S. N. Mukherjee, cited above.

⁶⁰ Sancheeta Ghosh and K.S. James, “Levels and trends in Caesarean births: cause for concern?”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 30, 2010, pp. 19–22.

⁶¹ Robbie Davis-Floyd and Melissa Cheyney: “Birth and the big bad wolf: an evolutionary perspective” in *Childbirth Across Cultures*, Ed. H. Selin and Pamela K. Stone, Springer, New York, 2009, pp. 1–21.

appropriate manipulations. This requires a high degree of obstetric skill which is not available today. As we have already seen, artificial rupturing of membrane and induction and stimulation (oxytocin) lead to foetal distresss and this is one of the major reasons for Caesarean surgeries. The consequence of all this is the practice of Caesarean deliveries on a large scale.

CAESAREAN DELIVERIES

As early as 1999, in a private nursing home in the small town of Mancherial, Adilabad district, Andhra Pradesh, out of a total of 308 deliveries, the number of caesarean deliveries were 192, accounting for 62 percent of the total. In October the same year, the percentage of women who were subjected to caesarian section was 29 out of a total of 36 or over 80%⁶². This by no means is an isolated or a freak case.

C-SECTION IN KERALA AND CHENNAI

Although Kerala has achieved 100% institutional deliveries, the women of Kerala have paid a high price for this development. Kerala has a very high rate of caesarean deliveries, over 30%, the highest in the country. This seems to be a direct result of doing away with traditional childbirth practices.⁶³

⁶² Field work in Adilabad District of Andhra Pradesh by Sanjeevani Ayurveda and Yoga Centre, carried out in the year 1999.

⁶³ Sancheeta Ghosh and K. S. James, cited above.

Chennai has a high rate of Ceasarean deliveries in Government hospitals. It is estimated that more than 50% of the deliveries are by C-Section.⁶⁴ Ceasarean deliveries in private hospitals are likely to be even higher.

Subjecting women to medically and technologically managed childbirth, besides ruining their health, has also undermined their trust in their biological ability to undergo a safe and normal childbirth. Women become dependent on medical experts and technologies, losing their mental strength and confidence in the normal functioning of their bodies.

The best way to avoid a CS is to rely on the experience of the midwives and doctors with experience and good obstetric skills. A pregnant woman should have proper knowledge of the childbirth processes so that she is not subjected to unnecessary interventions.

⁶⁴ The Hindu, Chennai, 29-5-2012.

CHAPTER 14

Case Studies

तस्मात् सत्यपि निर्देशे कुर्यादूहा स्वयं धिया ।
विना तर्केण या सिद्धिर्यदच्छासिद्धिरेव सा ॥

*One should use ones own intellect in determining the correct treatment despite what is laid down in the text. Success attained without reasoning is only accidental success.*⁶⁵

Seetha's Travails

The following is the real story of an Ayurvedic doctor who wanted to avoid a CS and have a normal childbirth.

Seetha is an Ayurvedic doctor. After her marriage in 2003, for the first three years Seetha did not conceive. She was 30 years of age, very frail and delicate. She and her husband treated themselves with Ayurvedic medicines and visited many temples in the hope of getting a child. Seetha conceived after what was a long wait for both their families.

Seetha and her spouse after careful consideration opted for childbirth in a government medical college hospital. There were two reasons for this decision. As she was 30 years of age, she would have been an easy target for a caesarean delivery in a private hospital. Moreover, the charges in a government hospital would not drain their purse. Seetha was confident that she would have a safe and natural delivery.

⁶⁵ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Siddhi Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verse 28.

During pregnancy, Seetha followed the Ayurvedic monthly food regimen. In addition to this, she regularly consumed *Dhanvantara Gutika*, *Kalyanaka Ghritam* and *Dadimadi Ghritam* (recommended for anaemia). In the ninth month she consumed *Sukhaprasava Ghritam*, a medicated ghee. She also consumed large quantities of milk and maintained herself largely on a *kanji* / fluid diet and avoided spicy food. In the ninth month, she underwent a medicated oil enema (*snehavasti*) prescribed for pregnant women before delivery.

Seetha regularly visited the hospital for her monthly check-up. All scans and investigations seemed normal. She had a scan taken in the last month where the growth and presentation were stated to be normal. In the ninth month, whenever she experienced some pain, she followed the advice of her aunt, who is an ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife), and took a decoction of *saunf* with jaggery and the pains subsided. On the prescribed due date, when she experienced similar pains, she and her mother left for the hospital.

On reaching the hospital, the pains stopped. She was admitted in the ante-natal ward. Seetha and her mother found the hospital unhygienic and felt there was no place to rest. Many unnecessary vaginal examinations were done. The doctor informed Seetha that as there was no pain and since she was 30 years of age, they would induce labour. Seetha felt that there was no reason for them to induce labour. She observed a number of very young women there who were given dates for caesarean deliveries, and none of them knew the reason for this. It was then she realized that in medical college hospitals, caesarean sections were conducted regularly, to train medical students and that the poor and ‘uneducated’ women were being used as guinea pigs and study material. She felt she too would meet with the same fate and left the hospital ‘against medical advice’.

Seetha went to the nursing home of a popular obstetrician, near her home, whom her sister was consulting. Even though this obstetrician was known for a very high rate of caesarean deliveries at her hospital, Seetha hoped that she would come under the small

minority which escaped surgery. As soon as she went in, a scan and check-up were done. She was told that the amniotic fluid was low in quantity and the foetal heart rate was low. Therefore, she was told, a caesarean operation would have to be performed. Seetha and her husband decided to cross-check this with another scan centre. According to this later scan, the amniotic fluid was sufficient and everything was normal. She approached the obstetrician with the fresh scan report and the doctor agreed to wait for three to four days.

Two days later, Seetha developed labour pains around 1 pm, and the fluid escaped. She went to the hospital by 2 pm and the obstetrician was expected to arrive within two hours. The duty doctor checked her and found everything in order. Foetal heart rate was also normal. In the meantime many (unnecessary) vaginal examinations were performed. Seetha found that every time a vaginal examination was done, it was very painful. The duty doctor informed Seetha that the cervix was dilated and a normal childbirth would take place by night.

In the meantime, to Seetha's surprise, the nurses shaved her abdomen. The obstetrician arrived at 7 pm and very harshly performed a vaginal examination and announced that this case had to be a caesarean section because the foetal heart rate was dropping. Seetha said she could feel the foetal heart beat and felt that it was normal. She did not want to undergo an unnecessary surgery. Her family felt that the obstetrician knew better and since she had conceived after many years, she could not afford to lose the precious baby. Seetha refused to sign the consent form and along with her husband left that hospital in search of another hospital.

They went to one major hospital and three nursing homes only to be refused admission as she was not their regular client. Some were willing to take her for a caesarean section. She went around in an auto-rickshaw, while she was in labour, for nearly an hour and a half and finally reached a private nursing home where she was told

that she may have to undergo a caesarean surgery if it became necessary. By this time, the crown of the head was visible and the obstetrician was forced to perform a normal delivery. Seetha was lucky but not so her younger sister, who had her first child, two months later, through a caesarean surgery. Seetha however came to Sanjeevani for her second delivery, which according to her was a joyful experience in striking contrast to her harrowing experience earlier.

Delivery of Twins



Twins attached to Placenta

A twenty nine year old Ayurvedic doctor was to deliver her twin babies at our centre. On that day at 10 pm the amniotic sac ruptured and the amniotic fluid kept draining all through the night and the next day. She however had no pain or contraction all

night and next morning. Fourteen hours after the fluid came out, when there was no sign of any pain, Ayurvedic options for inducing labour were contemplated.

There were many questions that needed answers. First of all, how long does one wait for natural contractions to occur? Secondly, with the amniotic sac ruptured and the fluid drained out, what can happen to the foetus with the indefinite delay in uterine contractions? The usual medical complications one associates with the so called 'dry delivery' were being discussed. One of the women assisting the childbirth was particularly nervous as she had encountered the same problem; she was subjected to caesarean section in an allopathic hospital within hours of the rupture of the amniotic sac.

As the very first Ayurvedic option for inducing labour, the pregnant woman was administered a medicated oil enema. Within a short while she passed a lot of flatus and faeces. This was followed by a number of steps, all of which were aimed at bringing on uterine contractions.

The herb, which is easily available and very effective in stimulating contractions and expelling the foetus, is *langali*. The paste of this herb was repeatedly smeared around the umbilicus. Other measures included internal medications, medicated gruel for drinking, application of a medicinal paste (paste of *patha*) inside the vagina, fumigation of the vaginal area with *madanaphala*, application of soured paste of *langali* on the soles of the feet and tying of the root of *apamarga* around the waist. Ayurvedic methods of inducing contractions are safe and they do not lead to foetal distress or maternal distress. Within a short period of applying the paste of *langali* the contractions started. It was 6.15 in the evening, and some 20 hours after the amniotic sac had ruptured, the pains started to appear. Initially the contractions were mild, but increased gradually and steadily. By the 30th hour the first baby was delivered with its amniotic bag rupturing just before the delivery. Evidently it was the other child's amniotic fluid that had escaped all night. Within minutes the second child was delivered. This baby came out with its feet first. Despite the loss of fluid and elapse of 30 hours, the newborn was intact with no distress of any kind. The mother was not subjected to episiotomy and there was no tear. A superficial tear of the skin was pasted with the mixture of *Sathadhouta Ghritam* and *hareetaki*. Within hours the tear showed signs of healing. The new mother felt a burning at the site only during the first time she urinated. By the second time there was no burning and the tear had healed.

Observers, who were familiar with childbirth at allopathic hospitals, noticed that during the entire delivery there was very little blood loss. During deliveries in allopathic hospitals there is a lot of blood shed as a result of episiotomy.

CHAPTER 15

Breastmilk Secretion

चत्वारः सागरास्तुभ्यं स्तनयोः क्षीरवाहिनः ।
भवन्तु सुभगे नित्यं बालस्य बलवृद्धये ॥
पयोऽमृतरसं पीत्वा कुमारस्ते शुभानने ।
दीर्घमायुरवाप्नोतु देवाः प्राश्यामृतं यथा ॥

Let the four oceans carry milk into your breasts for promoting the strength of the child. O beautiful one, let your child, by drinking your nectar-like milk attain long life, as gods after drinking amrita.⁶⁶

Following the Ayurvedic diet during pregnancy is essential for proper secretion of breastmilk. Medicinal herbs used during pregnancy like *shatavari*, *vidari* etc. are very effective in increasing breastmilk. Generally all herbs with a milky sap help in breastmilk secretion.

Proper flow of breastmilk takes place after 3 to 4 days of delivery. In the initial three days the baby can be given honey and ghee mixed with herbs.

Why does Breastmilk not Secrete ?

After childbirth some women face problems with milk secretion. As the normal flow of milk does not take place, the milk secreted is not sufficient to feed the infant. This is a serious problem and the infants are put on ‘infant formula’ diets very early. This problem is

⁶⁶ *Susruta Samhita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 10, Verses 26, 27.

widespread among urban women as they have no knowledge of diet and regimen that help in the secretion of milk. They are entirely dependent on the advice of paediatricians who have no solutions to offer. However, lack of milk secretion is a condition that can be corrected.

There are many reasons for scanty lactation. The reasons are both physical and psychological. If a mother for instance, is given to too much exertion and strenuous physical labour, it can lead to a reduction in the secretion of milk. Food which is very dry (no fats) does not help in the secretion of milk. Consuming food which is insufficient in quantity, or food which lacks nourishment or not consuming food at all (fasting), can also lead to poor lactation and insufficient breastmilk. If the mother is given to sorrow, anger or lacks affection for the infant, secretion of milk is reduced. To improve lactation, the mother, in addition to eliminating the above causes, should follow a diet which helps in increasing breastmilk.

Food predominantly sweet, sour and salty, liquid food, varieties of rice, wheat, cereals, vegetables, meat, and fish, are examples of food substances which women should be encouraged to eat after delivery. The diet of the new mother should be so designed as to provide nourishment and strength to her and also help in the secretion of breastmilk. There are many foods that increase breastmilk secretion and among these, milk itself is the best. Regular intake of milk increases breastmilk. Powdered popped paddy with milk while keeping the mother on a milk diet, promotes lactation. Generally, a milk diet along with a carefree, sorrow-free, pleasant state of mind and avoidance of physical exertion helps in milk secretion.⁶⁷ In the absence of mother's milk, goat's milk or cow's milk are also used as substitutes. When the mother lacks breastmilk, a common practice among traditional communities is to have a wet

⁶⁷ Charaka Sambita, cited earlier, Sareera Sthana, Chapter 8, Verse 57.

nurse, a woman who has copious milk, to breast-feed the child. This of course is the best alternative for the infant.

SINGHADA

One of the commonly available and beneficial food items for a woman after childbirth, when she does not have enough breastmilk, is water chestnut (known as *singhada* in Hindi). This is available in the central and northern parts of India. *Singhada* is nourishing and cold in potency. When eaten raw it is very crisp, sweet and pleasant to taste. *Singhada* is consumed in the form of roti (bread) made out of its flour. It is very useful for breastmilk secretion. *Singhada* is useful as a medicine for arresting bleeding during pregnancy. *Singhada* is heavy to digest, an aphrodisiac, astringent and constipating. It increases semen, *Kapha* and *Vata*. It reduces *Pitta* and burning sensation in the body. During the autumn and early part of winter, *singhada* is sold by the roadside and is available in plenty.

Herbal remedies to increase Breastmilk

Many medicinal herbs with milky sap help in the secretion of milk when taken internally. *Darbha* and *kusa* grass taken in the form of decoction are effective. *Shatavari* is well-known for its property of inducing secretion of breastmilk. The tuber of *shatavari* is boiled with milk and consumed for improving milk secretion. An equally well known root is *vidari* which has a similar effect when consumed

in the same way as *shatavari*. Coconut-milk, which is a common food in South India, also improves milk secretion. Garlic boiled in milk or as *rasam* is commonly used for this purpose. Sesame, *singhada*, lotus stalk, *dugdhika* and curry leaves are all useful for proper lactation. Milk of cottonseed increases lactation, when taken with cow's milk. When the mother does not have sufficient milk, some of the above preparations are given to her as medicine and as food.



Dugdhika

Jasmine – The Medicine

All of us love jasmine flowers. They are sweet-smelling and pleasing to the heart. Women of the South are rarely seen without jasmine in their hair. No South Indian celebration is complete without garlands of jasmine. The sweet-smelling jasmine possesses many medicinal qualities. It is bitter and sweet in taste and hot in efficacy. It alleviates *Pitta* and *Vata* doshas. Jasmine is used as medicine in diseases of head, mouth, teeth, and eyes. Jasmine is said to possess aphrodisiac properties.



Jasmine is used by women especially while weaning the child from breastmilk. During this time milk collects in the breasts and causes severe pain. To stop milk from collecting in the breasts, women usually cover the breasts with jasmine flowers. They do this for three to four days and the breastmilk stops flowing, as jasmine possesses the property of stopping milk secretion. Jasmine is used as a home remedy for reducing pain in the breast.

A dancer, over fifty years of age, was travelling to Europe. On the day she was to leave, in the afternoon, she developed a severe pain in the breast and it looked red and inflamed. She needed something which would quickly bring down the inflammation and pain. As she relied only on Ayurvedic medicines for all her complaints, she sought our help. She said she could not cancel her trip. She had to be given a medicine which would immediately and surely work before she boarded the flight. We sent for some jasmine which was used to cover her breasts. She was also given some medicines to take internally for the next few days. She travelled to Europe in this state and to our great relief she called as soon as she landed to say she was fine.

Jasmine is very useful in conditions where there is tenderness and pain in the breast. In some women the tenderness in their breasts is so severe that if by accident something happens to touch their breasts, they recoil with pain. In such conditions using jasmine as a first aid, either as a paste or tying the flowers externally helps in getting over the pain and tenderness.

CHAPTER 16

Childcare

नाशुचौ विसृजेद्वालं नाकाशो विषमे न च ।
नोष्ममारुतवर्षेषु रजोधूमोदकेषु च ॥

*The child should not be left in unclean places, in the open,
on an uneven floor, in heat, wind, rain, dust, smoke and water.*⁶⁸

Nursery for the Child

The description of a nursery in the *Charaka Samhita* runs thus:

'It (nursery) should be beautiful, free from darkness, sheltered from draught, admitting air only from one side, sturdy, free from animals, rats, insects etc. (with) well-planned places for water storage, grinding, lavatory, bath and kitchen; comfortable in all seasons and furnished with beds, seats and spreads in conformity with the needs of the particular season. Beds, seats, spreads and apparel of the child should be soft, light, clean and fragrant – those which are soiled with sweat, urine, stool and germs, should be discarded. If it is not possible to procure fresh apparel, then the soiled ones should be washed well and exposed to sun. They can be used only after they are rendered clean and dry.' (A list of medicines and herbs are given in the text for use in fumigation of clothes, bed-spreads and other apparel.)



⁶⁸ *Susruta Samhita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 10, Verse 47.



‘Toys of the child should be variegated, sound-producing, beautiful and light, bereft of sharp edges, incapable of being swallowed, fraught with no danger to life and not frightening.’... ‘A child should never be frightened. Even if she/he cries or does not eat, or does not submit to discipline, the child should not be frightened by mentioning ghosts, etc.’

‘When the child falls ill, she /he should be treated by administering sweet, soft, light, fragrant and cooling therapies. Such therapies are wholesome for children and produce everlasting good effects... Unwholesome regimen should be gradually changed to wholesome ones and all things injurious to health should be avoided. By doing so, the child gets

endowed with excellent strength, complexion, physical constitution and long life.’⁶⁹

Care of the Newborn

The mother’s condition is the root cause for all diseases that a newborn suffers from. Therefore, when treating an infant the mother is also to be treated. This is a concept unique to Ayurveda.

Looking after the newborn, especially in the initial years, is a full-time task for the entire family. For the first six months the baby is entirely on breastmilk and therefore, the problems of the baby are closely linked to those of the mother. Whatever the mother

⁶⁹ Charaka Sambita, cited earlier, Sareera Sthana, Chapter 8, Verses 59 – 65.

consumes as food or medicine is transmitted through the breastmilk to the child. For this reason, whenever the child falls sick, medicines are administered to both the mother as well as the child. The mother should not breastfeed the child when she is hungry, excessively emaciated, tired, suffering from fever, or is in sorrow and during pregnancy. After the first six months, foods which are easy to digest and good for the child, such as cooked par-boiled rice, can be added gradually.

Medication for Children

The child is treated with medicines which are mild and sweet in taste. In general, all medicines that are administered to adults can also be given to children but in appropriate (smaller) doses. There are many herbal formulations prepared from common herbs for children's ailments. Administering a daily dose of certain herbs to boost the immunity and resistance of the child is practised in many households.

MEDICINE FOR NEWBORN

In Tamilnadu, a newborn is given a mixture of dry ginger, turmeric, nutmeg, *vacha*, *mayaphala*, and *hareetaki* every day. The paste of this medicine is prepared and stored as a tablet. This tablet is rubbed daily over a stone and the paste is mixed with breastmilk and administered to the child. This helps the newborn improve its appetite, prevents colic problems and boosts immunity/resistance against diseases. This medicine is known as *urai marundu*.



For infants medicines are administered mixed with substances like milk, honey, sugar or ghee. Medicines can also be applied to the breast of the mother as the child suckles from the breast. Vomiting, diarrhoea, cough, respiratory problems, fever, etc., are effectively and safely treated with herbal formulations. One such popular formulation is called *Rajanyadi Choornam*.

RAJANYADI CHOORNAM

Rajanyadi Choornam consists of eight herbs. It is an excellent remedy and is the drug of choice for all diseases of infants such as, poor digestion and all types of digestive disorders, diarrhoea, fever, respiratory disorders, jaundice, anaemia, cough and problems of *Vayu*. It is effective in building strength, immunity and complexion of the child. It is administered with honey and ghee.⁷⁰

Some Do's and Don'ts

The Child

- Should be carried and held comfortably.
- Should not be frightened, or woken up from sleep suddenly, or scolded.
- Should not be snatched or thrown upwards suddenly as it might lead to aggravation of *Vayu*.
- Should not be made to sit prematurely as she/he may develop a hunched back.

⁷⁰ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Uttara Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verse 38 – 40.

- Should grow up in pleasant surroundings free from fear, with a healthy and cheerful psyche.
- Should not be left in dirty surroundings, in the open or on an uneven floor.
- Should not be exposed to heat, wind, rain, lightning, dust, smoke.
- Should not be left near water, or left under trees and creepers.
- Should not be subjected to fasting and purging.

How to Identify Illnesses of Infants

An important aspect of treating infants is identifying their problems correctly. As the infant cannot express discomfort or pain, one has to go by various signs and symptoms in the child.

Look for the following symptoms in infants:⁷¹

- Pain and discomfort in infants have to be inferred from their abnormal behaviour. Whenever there is sudden and repeated crying, it should be inferred as being due to pain. When there is pain, the infant keeps touching the part which is painful but does not allow others to touch the same.
- When the infant experiences pain in the head, it closes the eyes, shakes the head, cries during sleep, does not sleep, is averse to food and is restless.
- When there is pain in the ear, the infant keeps touching the ear, shaking the head, is restless, there is loss of sleep, loss of taste and dislike for food.
- In diseases of the mouth, there is excessive salivation, the infant does not suckle, is restless, vomits the milk and there is breathlessness.

⁷¹ *Ashṭāṅga Samgraha*, cited earlier, *Uttara Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verses 8, 9.

- When there is pain in the throat, the child vomits the swallowed milk; there is mild fever, tiredness and loss of taste.
- Before the onset of fever, the child yawns, bends the arms and legs and has aversion to mother's milk. There is heat in the body, excessive salivation, excessive heat in the forehead and the feet are cold.
- When there is pain in the heart and chest, the infant bites the tongue and lips, develops difficulty in breathing, clenches the fists and gazes upwards.
- Pain in the abdomen is known by passing of urine and motion or constipation, vomiting, biting of the breasts, intestinal gurgling, bloated stomach, bending of the back and raising of the abdomen.
- Pain in the urinary bladder and genitals is known by obstruction of faeces and urine and frightened look, thirst, fainting, fear, contraction, pain and rigidity of arms and legs, shortening or hunching of the body.
- Pain all over the body is known by excessive and abnormal crying and abnormal facial expressions.
- Stomach pain is known by the child's refusal of breastmilk, crying, hardness of the stomach, coldness and perspiration in the face.

The child should be prevented from eating mud as this gives rise to pallor, oedema, respiratory problems, cough, diarrhoea, worms, vomiting, fainting, poor digestion, aversion to breastmilk, pain in the body and dizziness

While treating children, mild medicines, which do not cause depletion of *Kapha* and fat, should be used. These medicines are to be mixed with substances like milk /honey /sugar /ghee and

administered. For example, if the child is suffering from cold and cough with *Kapha*, the medicine should be mixed with honey. In inflammation of anus, *pitta*-alleviating ghee/honey is used internally and externally. *Satadhouta Ghritam* when applied in the anal region quickly brings down the inflammation. In cases where the umbilical region is bloated, painful and distended due to *Vata*, application of oil, fomentation and poultice with *Vata*-alleviating herbs like *vacha* are effective.

Medicines for infants are to be administered in proper doses. For example, for a one-month-old child, the dosage of a *choornam* can be one pinch and the dosage is increased every month gradually. Here are some home remedies for problems of infants:

- The infant who, after drinking breastmilk, vomits again and again, is given a powder of five herbs (*panchakola*) mixed with honey and ghee to lick.
- A paste of mango-kernel, popped paddy and rock salt mixed with honey, controls vomiting in a child.
- Popped paddy mixed with sugar, honey and rice-wash, cures dysentery in children.
- A paste of sesame and *yashti* mixed with oil, sugar and honey, arrests bleeding and dysentery in children.
- A mixture of pippali, pepper, sugar, honey, cardamom and rock salt, administered as a paste, is a good remedy to cure retention of urine in children.
- A paste of nutmeg with honey arrests diarrhoea.
- In disease or injury of the eye, breastmilk can be dropped into the affected eye. Breastmilk cures eye diseases caused by vitiated *Vata*, *Pitta* and blood.

CHAPTER 17

Can a Child be Allergic to Breastmilk?

मातुरेव पिबेत् स्तन्यं तद्धयलं देहवृद्धये ।

The infant should drink only mother's milk; that alone is sufficient for its growth.⁷²

There is no food which is more complete or more nutritious for a child than mother's milk. Yet breastmilk can cause diarrhoea in some children.

Many mothers visit our clinic with complaints about 'breastmilk allergy' for their infants. They find that while they have sufficient milk, their milk does not agree with the child. They complain that breastmilk causes diarrhoea in the child, who might have as many as 10 to 15 motions a day. They have to feed their child with powder / formula milk. Naturally, mothers wonder how even breastmilk can cause an allergy in an infant. Let us look more closely at this paradox.

An infant's health is very closely related to the health of the mother. When the baby's only intake is mother's milk, disorders in the mother's health affect the baby through the milk. Infants, who only drink mother's milk, sometimes get affected by it and suffer from diarrhoea. Some suffer from it severely, and the doctors often attribute it to an infection, and prescribe antibiotics. If the diarrhoea continues, then they come to the conclusion that the child is

⁷² *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Uttara Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 15.

suffering from ‘breast milk allergy’ or ‘lactose intolerance’. Mother’s milk is stopped and infant formulae are introduced in the baby’s diet. For these children, mother’s milk is considered not suitable.

Generally, the lactating mother is on a light and easy-to-digest diet for the first ten days after childbirth. After that, she begins on a diet that helps her recover her strength and vitality and enhances her breastmilk. Such a diet is known traditionally as ‘*pathyam*’ (regulated and beneficial diet). By adopting an improper diet and regimen, *doshas* are aggravated in the mother’s body and vitiate breastmilk. An example of an improper diet is mixing of incompatible foods in the same meal – for example, milk with sour substances like fruits, etc. Improper diet is one of the major reasons for the vitiation of breastmilk. Breastmilk gets affected by vitiated *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Vitiated breastmilk is discoloured. It can be very dry and frothy or excessively slimy, oily, thready or heavy. Consuming this milk affects the child’s digestion and leads to various disorders. However, denying mother’s milk to the child is not the solution to this problem. It is therefore necessary to cleanse the breastmilk of vitiated *doshas*, and this milk will again become nectar to the child. Before cleansing the breastmilk we need to find out the nature of vitiation.

Examination of Breastmilk

How do we find out which of the three *doshas* is vitiated in the milk? This is possible by subjecting the milk to a simple test. Take a small vessel (about 1 litre capacity) and fill it with water. Gently expel a stream of milk from the breast into the water. Then observe the milk in the water. If the milk froths and floats on the water, it means *Vayu* has vitiated the milk. If the milk spreads out on the water forming yellow lines or circles, it indicates that the milk is vitiated by *Pitta*. If the milk is heavy and sinks and does not mix with water, it indicates that the milk has *Kapha*-vitiation. Depending on the aggravated *dosha*, appropriate treatment is given, which helps

in cleansing the vitiated breastmilk. Milk that is healthy and not affected by any *dosha* dissolves completely in the water without leaving any trace. It does not froth or form any striation/streaks; it also does not float or sink in water.

Qualities of Vitiated Breastmilk

When vitiated by *Vayu*, the milk is blackish or reddish in colour. It has an astringent after-taste; it is clear, devoid of any conspicuous smell, dry (without fat), watery and frothy. The milk is very light and the child is not satisfied after drinking it. Feeding on this milk, the child gets emaciated and the milk gives rise to diseases of *Vata* origin.

Milk when afflicted with *Pitta*, is bluish, yellowish or coppery in colour. It has a bitter, sour or pungent after-taste. It has a foul smell or smell of blood. It is very hot in efficacy and gives rise to *Pitta* diseases in the infant.

When milk is aggravated by *Kapha*, it is exceedingly white in colour and very sweet in taste. The milk possesses the smell of ghee, oil, muscle fat or bone-marrow. It is slimy, thready and difficult to digest. This milk gives rise to *Kapha* diseases in the infant.

After correctly identifying the aggravation of *dosha* in the milk, appropriate medicines are administered to the mother to cleanse the breastmilk.

Breastmilk can also be vitiated if the mother becomes pregnant while still nursing the child. Also, if the nursing mother falls sick, it can lead to disease in the infant. Some mothers are all too eager to feed their babies with a wide variety of food substances. They believe that feeding their babies with various cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables and meats, very early in life, ensures good health. This is not true. In the initial months, mother's milk alone is the best diet for the child. If the mother is not able to nurse the child, goat's / cow's milk can be given to the infant in appropriate quantity

and dilution. Usually, in this situation, cow's milk is boiled with herbs like dry ginger and *musta*, to make it easy to digest and this medicated milk is given to the child.

After eruption of teeth, the child is gradually weaned from the breast. The child is shifted to cow's / goat's milk along with cereals. While weaning the child, the mother can apply bitter pastes to the breasts and also make the breasts appear unattractive to the child. This keeps the child away from the breast. During weaning, the women of Tamilnadu apply a paste of *thoor dal* or a paste of the leaves of casuarina tree or jasmine flowers, to stop milk secretion. From the age of two, the child is fed a normal diet.

TEETHING

Different kinds of diseases are likely to afflict an infant during teething. At this time, it is not necessary to follow a strict dietary regimen for the infant. The diseases arising during teething subside by themselves once the teeth erupt. Children are treated with appropriate medicines for these problems.

ENGORGEMENT

In a nursing mother, breasts, when full of milk, can get 'engorged' in the early days of feeding. Breasts become hard and the infant cannot take the feed properly. For the mother, engorged breasts can be painful and she may feel feverish. Regular expulsion of milk from the breast is necessary to prevent engorgement.

CHAPTER 18

Treating Sick Children

प्रयोगः शमयेद् व्याधिमेकं योऽन्यमुदीरयेत्।
नाऽसौ विशुद्धः शुद्धस्तु शमयेद्यो न कोपयेत्॥

A treatment which, while curing one disease gives rise to another, is not a proper treatment. A proper treatment is one which cures a disease without giving rise to another.⁷³

Children whose problems are neither treated properly nor in time, can become chronically ill at a very young age. Treating children repeatedly with strong drugs, like antibiotics, weakens their immunity.

PARACETAMOL OVERDOSE IN CHILDREN

The Hindu, Chennai (dated 6-8-2010) reported that children were admitted in Chennai hospitals with complications resulting from overdose of paracetamol. Paracetamol, which is a very common drug, can lead to serious complications, including liver failure, in children.

⁷³ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 13, Verse 16.

A working couple with two children mentioned that one or the other of their two children was always in the hospital with cough, cold, fever and wheezing and they had to take leave in turns to attend on them. What was more worrying for the parents was the use of strong drugs on their children, at times given intravenously. Not knowing how to put an end to this cycle of repeated ailments and hospitalization, they sought advice from a colleague who had tried Ayurvedic treatment for her child. Thus their children were brought to our clinic for treatment. Exactly after four weeks of Ayurvedic treatment, there was visible improvement in the health of their children. The parents expressed confidence in this treatment and they began recommending Ayurveda to other parents in similar situations.

When a child is unwell, parents often rush to a paediatrician. The child could be having a fever with cough, chest congestion and cold. Some children are repeatedly hospitalized at regular intervals with these complaints. For children with such complaints, a course of antibiotic drugs with paracetamol is a common prescription. If the child finds it difficult to breathe or is wheezing, a broncho-dilator, or inhalers/nebulisers are added on. Despite all this medication, there is no solution to the problems of such children. At a very young age, they become chronically ill. The drastic consequences of such strong drugs are well known. Even some allopathic practitioners believe that children should never be subjected to antibiotics and other strong drugs. Treating children repeatedly with strong drugs weakens their immunity. They become anaemic, lose their appetite, strength, complexion, and the ability to resist diseases and fall ill again and again. However, doctors who do not believe in drugging children with strong drugs, remain a small minority at the fringe of the allopathic community. Less drugging, though less damaging, does not address the basic complaint of the child. A system which can treat the disease as well as build up the immunity of the child is what is needed.

Respiratory diseases like asthma should be treated and cured at the very initial stages. Any amount of antibiotics and other drugs do not offer a cure for these diseases. If not cured in the initial stages, diseases like asthma become chronic and incurable. Such diseases are best treated in the Ayurvedic system. Half the cure for these diseases lies in identifying the foods and habits which aggravate the problem and avoiding them.

When children suffer from frequent coughs, colds, fevers and respiratory disorders, it is usually due to the aggravation of *Kapha*. Childhood being the age dominated by *Kapha* (just as middle age is dominated by *Pitta*, and old age by *Vata*), children are usually prone to diseases related to *Kapha* (phlegm) aggravation.

In the case of a disease caused by the aggravation of *Kapha*, it is best to avoid food, drinks, and habits that aggravate *Kapha*. Thereafter, appropriate medicines are prescribed to bring the disease under control. Among urban children, the most common causes for *Kapha*-aggravation are foods such as curd, citrus fruits and fruit juices, sweets, chocolates, ice-creams, cold food and drinks and cold, air-conditioned living spaces.

Cough and respiratory diseases can also be caused by aggravation of *Vayu*. If the disease is caused mainly by the aggravation of *Vayu*, it is usually due to excessive physical activity, keeping awake at nights, cold foods and drinks, air-conditioned rooms and foods which are very dry without any oil or fat. Inhalation of smoke/dust, suppression of natural urges like passing of urine and stool, exposure to excessive wind, bathing in cold water, improper treatment of indigestion, diarrhoea, vomiting, anaemia, and fever – all these can also lead to respiratory disorders.

A four-year-old child was living in the U.S.A. and had a severe respiratory problem. Over the four years of his life he was hospitalised many times. At 6 months, he had a ‘viral’ infection with chest congestion and was hospitalised for 15 days (1 week in the ICU).

At that time, he was given oxygen and amoxicillin, Solu-Medrol (steroid which was given intravenously every 6 hours) and Albuterol (for the nebuliser). He stayed on such medicines and was managed over the next two years. At three years, he underwent hospitalisation again for one week, with similar medication. At four years he was hospitalised for two weeks, for flu and pneumonia and was on similar medication, and also on tamiflu (used for swine flu). He was also on a level of oxygen which was the maximum dose for him. A few months later, he again had a two-week hospitalisation and was admitted in the ICU with HDU (High Dependency Unit) oxygen, strong antibiotics and steroids.

The mother was terrified when she came the first time to the Ayurvedic clinic with the wheezing child. She was brought here by her sister-in-law. She was weeping at the thought that when he needed oxygen he would only be on Ayurvedic medicines and not in an allopathic hospital. She took the doctor's home phone number and went away still terrified. She explained later that the situation of the child then was exactly such as would have precipitated hospitalisation; oxygen levels at that point would have been relatively low according to her and they would have put him on the whole range of medicines and on oxygen.

The child was brought in a wheezing condition, and was initially given *Thaleesadi Choornam*, *Pravala Panchamritam* and *Kanakasava*. After two days, *Thippili Rasayanam* was added. In a week, the child was well and had only a mild cough. In two weeks, he had completely recovered and was prescribed *Agastya Rasayanam*, *Ashwagandhadi Choornam*, and *Thaleesadi Choornam*. Later, after another two weeks, when he caught a severe cold with wheezing and vomiting, he was managed with the above medicines and decoction of *vasa*, *Dadimadi Ghritam* and *Vayu Gutika*.

After the first week of treatment, the mother acquired confidence in Ayurveda and wanted to know how to manage the child on Ayurvedic medicines on returning to USA. The next month

she was looking very relaxed. She was so relaxed that she wished she had come here the first time itself, when the child was six months old, as had been suggested to her. A year later she wrote from USA that the child was keeping very well.

Her first child had a milder respiratory condition and he also had been on similar allopathic medicines. He is now hyperactive and it is suspected that it could be because of the medicines.

Health expenses in USA were covered by insurance, but a deficit of \$ 17,000 had to be picked up during the last hospitalisation of the boy. Expenses in an Indian allopathic hospital a month ago came to Rs. 50,000/- for the two-day period. (This high cost was supposedly because they had put him on the HDU oxygen). In India and USA together, there was a total of six weeks of hospitalization. This should have cost Rs.15–20 lakhs in India itself. In USA, it would have cost far more. The Ayurvedic treatment cost about Rs. 1,000/- and it was also directed at building up health and immunity, instead of weakening the child.

Understanding Fever

Fever is the most common disease that can afflict you and your family. When children are afflicted by fever, you are likely to be very anxious. A better understanding of fever may help you handle this disease better. It will also help you stay away from administering a course of antibiotics on yourself, your family and especially your child.

Before the onset of fever, there are several symptoms which one can identify. There is a total lack of appetite and distaste for food even before one starts feeling feverish. There is body-ache, lack of perspiration, heaviness, indigestion, lethargy, loss of strength, restlessness, excessive sleep and unsteady gait. Eyes become cloudy. One tends to yawn excessively and there may be horripilation (hair standing on end). Before the temperature begins to rise, the person

tends to be irritable, and has a dislike for sweet dishes. There is alternately like and dislike, without any reason, towards sound, heat (fire), water, cold breeze, sunlight and shade. These symptoms are followed by a rise in body temperature.

Fevers are of different kinds. In children, you may see a runny nose, cold and cough along with fever. There may be salivation, nausea, excessive sleep and not very high fever. This type of fever is largely due to the *Kapha*-aggravating diet and habits of children. A careful examination will reveal that the fever could have been caused by indiscriminate consumption of heavy foods, curd, ice-cream, cold fruit-juices, etc. leading to an increase in *Kapha*.

Indigestion is a common cause of fever. After a very heavy night meal, you could be down with fever the following day. Excessive physical fatigue due to an exhausting game or workout can cause fever. Fever can also result from excessive loss of bodily *dhatus* or emaciation. Injury or other external factors, boils ripening with pus, consumption of poison and unfamiliar foods can be some of the other immediate causes of fever. A very common factor that gives rise to fever is sudden seasonal changes and variations in the weather. Also a person who is afflicted by extreme sorrow, fear, love and other emotional trauma can develop fever. In women, miscarriage or premature delivery can give rise to fever. After childbirth, if a woman consumes food which is not agreeable to her, she can develop fever.

After the first stage of fever marked by loss of appetite, there is a rise in temperature which is sometimes followed by thirst, delirium, giddiness, nausea and difficulty in breathing. This is usually the stage when mothers become anxious and are in constant touch with their doctor /*vaidya*.

When the fever subsides, there is lightness of body and the person overcomes exhaustion, delusion and discomfort. The person perspires, the mind becomes normal and there is desire for food.

During and after fever, it is important to avoid foods and drinks which are heavy to digest (*guru*) and cause thirst or a burning sensation during digestion. Food during this period should be light and agreeable to the body. Immediately after a fever, one should avoid exercise, sex, physical exertion, roaming and bathing, until he/she regains strength.

'VIRAL' FEVERS

Fevers caused by the vitiation of *Vata*, like Chikunguniya and Dengue, with chills and severe body and joint pains, and various intermittent fevers, have become prevalent in India today. Many of these fevers are classified as 'viral', which is a blanket term used by allopathic physicians. There is no known allopathic remedy for a viral fever. So, unnecessary administration of antibiotics and other unrelated medicines only results in other complications and harms the body.

First-Aid for Fever

When a child is suffering from fever, the first step is to stop feeding heavy foods. A child with fever should be immediately put on to easy-to-digest gruels (*kanji*). If the fever is caused by aggravation of *Kapha* (phlegm), rice (prepared from par-boiled grain) can be given instead of *Kanji* and hot water should be used for drinking. Where there is very high fever and there is no cold, cough or congestion, a cloth soaked in cold milk can be applied to the forehead. In case of headache, a warm paste of *Rasnadi Choornam*, a medicinal powder, can be applied on the forehead. In all fevers,

fomentation with water boiled with medicinal herbs is useful. *Rasnadi Choornam* can also be used for fomentation. At the end of fever, when normalcy returns, the child is fed easy-to-digest foods.

There are some medicines which can be used as home remedies by everyone. In cold, cough and fever, *Thaleesadi Choornam* is an effective medicine. This medicine improves digestion, checks nausea and vomiting, controls cough, fever and respiratory problems. In all types of fevers, *Sudarsana Choornam* / tablet is effective. In fevers, *Dhanvantara Gutika* is a very popular medicine and it is an effective and safe medication. Except major fevers, most cases of fever can be treated with just these medicines and a proper diet.

Ayurvedic *vaidyas* administer a variety of drugs for fevers, based on the aggravated *doshas*. This line of treatment cures the fever without giving rise to any side-effects. Especially, fevers caused by *Vata* like Chikunguniya and Dengue have effective cures in Ayurveda and it is wise not to resort to treatment with antibiotics, pain-killers and steroids.

Trying to suppress a fever as soon as it occurs, by repeatedly swallowing paracetamol, is not the right way to go about treating fevers. By swallowing 'anti-pyretic' drugs one may suppress the fever, but suppressing a fever can lead to weakness, tiredness, anaemia, loss of appetite, itching in the body and skin disorders. When a fever is suppressed, at times the fever does not entirely leave the body. There is always a mild fever present which persists for a long time. A typical case was that of a woman who was treated for a week with antibiotics for fever and yet continued to suffer from a low grade fever. She had a temperature of 99–100° F, which persisted. Two more courses of antibiotics did not relieve her of her suffering. This condition is known as *jeernajvara*. For such persistent low grade fevers, milk is the ideal medicine. Milk boiled with medicinal herbs and medicated ghee work wonders in prolonged fevers.

Deworming of Children

'Doctor, can you prescribe some deworming medicine for my child?' is a frequent request from concerned mothers. Even if the child does not suffer from worms, many mothers routinely deworm their children. Often children with worms continue to suffer despite frequent deworming. Both these are instances of over-drugging without achieving any purpose.

Routine deworming without being sure of the presence of worms can only be harmful to the child. Administering repeated deworming treatment and yet failing to completely eliminate worms is an indication that the factors which lead to the production of worms have not been addressed.

When a child suffers from worm infestation, this can be diagnosed by certain symptoms. The child is prone to frequent fevers. Complexion and appearance become dull. The child frequently complains of pain in the stomach, diarrhoea and giddiness. There is distress and discomfort in the heart region, itching in the anus and vomiting. There is a lack of appetite and no interest in food. When some or all of these symptoms are present, they indicate the presence of worms.

Some of the important causes for production of worms are excessive intake of sweets, sour foods, fluids, food made of flour and intake of uncooked food. Consuming jaggery regularly can give rise to worms in the intestines. Persons who are not used to physical exercise and who indulge in sleep during the day are also prone to worm infestation.

Children are highly prone to worm infestations. This is because their diet is largely sweet, liquid and often made from flour. Children also sleep during the day. Small children are not given to physical exercise, and in fact children of tender years should not be made to exercise. However, even older children in urban areas these days do not exercise.

Children who are fed constantly on chocolates, milk, fruit-juices, sweets, curd, cold drinks, desserts and raw salads are the ones who are repeatedly afflicted by worms. Unless their food habits are corrected, merely administering deworming drugs repeatedly can only be harmful without producing the desired result.

Worms – A Misdiagnosis

Sometimes simple problems can be misdiagnosed, leading to unnecessary tension for the person and the family concerned. We give below an example of such misdiagnosis.

A child, five years old, had been suffering from severe stomach ache for four months. The mother took him to the specialists. According to a paediatrician, he was suffering from ‘appendicitis’. So he was taken to an allopathic hospital where he was treated for a period of two months for appendicitis. During the treatment, he underwent many scans. There was no improvement in his condition.

Then the mother took the child to another leading childcare hospital where treatment went on for another two months. Again scans and tests including a barium test were taken. Again the doctors came to the conclusion that he was suffering from appendicitis. They recommended a laparoscopy for determining the precise condition. They also wanted to open the stomach for an examination.

So the mother sought another opinion. After seeing all the reports, the doctors again came to the conclusion that the appendix had to be removed and warned of further problems if the procedure was delayed or avoided. Over the last few months the child had been simultaneously treated for ulcers, constipation, etc. Some doctors had also recommended psychiatric treatment for the child as there was no response to medicines. As the child’s stomach ache was still continuing, the mother began to consider the possibility of a laparoscopic surgery. In the meantime, a friend directed her to Ayurveda.

When the child came to the Ayurvedic clinic, he was suffering from stomach ache which would recur many times a day. At that time, he was also on deworming medication. And simultaneously he was consuming chocolates, fruit-juices and milk-shakes. So his diet itself was creating an environment for worms to thrive in and this had not been corrected. Obviously, his stomach ache was a consequence of the presence of worms.

At the beginning of Ayurvedic treatment, his diet was corrected and leafy vegetables, salads, milk, sweets and day-sleep were prohibited. He was prescribed *Vidangasava*, *Kalyanaka Kshara* and *Rajanyadi Choornam*. These medicines in addition to clearing the worms also help in improving digestion and restoring the proper flow of *Vata* (*Vata-anulomana*). In two weeks, the child reported feeling completely well. He has been well since then.

Mala's Malady

The following is the case of a child who finally found a cure only by resorting to Ayurveda.

Mala had a problem of not being aware of her bowel movements. She would have her bowel movement anytime, anywhere without being aware of it. Schools refused to accept her. The school bus would not take her. The day-care centre did not want to admit her. Her mother was consulting a pediatrician who finally referred her to a child psychiatrist. Medication only seemed to worsen her condition.

The child came to Ayurveda and an examination showed that the problem was physiological and not psychological. She was given a medicine to address her impaired digestion and set right the *Apana Vayu*. A medicated oil for external application, around her waist, back and thighs, was also prescribed. The very next day the child became aware of her need to pass motion and her problem got addressed. She also underwent *vasti* (medicated enema), one of the *panchakarma* treatments, to ensure that her problem does not recur.



PART III

Ayurveda for Healthy Life

CHAPTER 19

More about Food

नित्यं सर्वसाभ्यासः स्वस्वाधिक्यमृतावृतौ ।

One should consume all the six tastes every day. The predominance (of one or the other) changes from season to season.⁷⁴

The Six Tastes

We have already had a brief introduction to the six tastes of food substances. Now we shall learn about the six tastes in greater detail.

Sweet Taste

Ghee, milk, jaggery, sugar, sugarcane, rice, wheat, dates, chocolates and pastries – all these are sweet in taste. All of us like to eat sweets. Sweet is a taste we are used to from birth, as mother's milk is sweet in taste. However, we need to know what exactly happens to the body when we consume sweet-tasting foods.

Properties and Benefits

Cold in efficacy
Fatty
Heavy to digest
Controls *Vata* and *Pitta*
Nourishes the *dhatus*

⁷⁴ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 3, Verse 57.

Increases life span
Good for sense organs, skin, hair and complexion
Ideal for children, the aged, and the weak and emaciated
Increases body bulk, gives firmness to the body
Increases breastmilk
Reduces burning sensation, dryness of tongue and fainting spells

Sweet Taste in Excess Causes

Obesity
Loss of digestion
Sloth and excessive sleep
Respiratory problems
Diabetes
Diseases of the throat, neck and eyes
Loss of consciousness
Tumours
Vomiting
Headaches
Cough, chronic cold
Fever
Worms
Diseases of the stomach
Excess salivation

A woman in her mid-forties had small lumps all over her body and newer ones kept appearing in different parts. She had no known family heredity of such a complaint. On enquiry it was found that she consumed huge quantities of sweets daily. Any sweet she could lay her hands on was good enough. She had developed, over a period, a strong craving for sweet taste.

Sour Taste

Buttermilk, curd, mango (raw), tamarind and citrus fruits are all examples of substances with a predominantly sour taste.

Properties and Benefits

- Easy to digest
- Hot in efficacy
- Increases *Kapha*
- Vitiates *Pitta* and blood
- Reduces *Vata*
- Stimulates digestive fire
- Increases moisture in the body
- Good for the heart

Sour Taste in Excess Causes

- Looseness and flabbiness of the body
- Loss of strength
- Cataract in the eye
- Giddiness
- Itching
- Pallor
- Skin disease, boils
- Swelling
- Thirst
- Fever

A teacher from an orphanage once brought three of her students with skin problems, all of them with white patches on their body. On enquiry it was found that these children constantly ate fruits of the tamarind tree in their school. Surely the treatment here begins with curtailing the intake of all sour substances. We often find that people who consume curd indiscriminately suffer from skin diseases.

Salty Taste

There are five types of salts. The salt we commonly use is the sea salt. The best among salts is *saindhava lavana*, which is a rock (land) salt. Ayurveda prohibits the daily use of any salt, other than *saindhava lavana*, as such use leads to weakness, tiredness, looseness of muscles and vitiation of blood.

Properties and Benefits

- Adds taste to food
- Hot in efficacy
- Controls *Vayu*
- Vitiates *Pitta*
- Improves taste
- Reduces rigidity in the body
- Clears obstructions of channels
- Increases power of digestion
- Lubricates
- Penetrates tissues
- Causes sweat

Salt in Excess Causes

- Vitiation of blood and bleeding
- Balding, greying
- Wrinkles
- Skin diseases
- Reduction of strength

A girl once was brought to us with excessive menstrual bleeding. As we went over her diet, it was noticed that she was in the habit of eating plain salt regularly and this was in fact the main cause for her bleeding.

SAINDHAVA LAVANA (ROCK SALT)

Saindhava Lavana has many beneficial qualities and is the ideal salt for daily use. It increases the power of digestion and digests the undigested material (*ama*) in the body. It is unctuous (oily) and easy to digest (*laghu*). It increases the taste of food. Saindhava Lavana is cold in efficacy and improves fertility. It has subtle (*sookshma*) and penetrating qualities. It is good for the eyes. Above all, it pacifies all the three *doshas* in the body.

Bitter Taste

Bitter gourd, fenugreek and neem are examples of substances with bitter taste.

Properties and Benefits

- Cold in efficacy
- Improves power of digestion
- Easy to digest
- Increases appetite
- Reduces *Kapha* and *Pitta*
- Eliminates worms
- Cures skin diseases
- Removes nausea, thirst, burning, fever
- Dries up moisture, fat, marrow, faeces, urine
- Cleanses breastmilk and throat

Bitter Taste in Excess Causes

- Depletion of *dhatus*
- Disorders of *Vata* origin

Pungent Taste

Chilli, pepper, asafoetida, mustard, ginger and garlic are some of the common food substances which are predominantly pungent in taste.

Properties and Benefits

- Hot in efficacy
- Improves digestion
- Light to digest
- Cures diseases of throat and skin
- Reduces *Kapha*
- Increases digestive fire
- Increases *Vata* and *Pitta*
- Cures indigestion, swelling
- Dries up oiliness, fat, moisture and food
- Dilates and opens up channels
- Breaks up hard masses in the body

Pungent Taste in Excess Causes

- Cramps
- Tremors
- Pain in the waist, back
- Bloated stomach
- Constipation
- Loss of reproductive *dhatus* and virility
- Loss of strength
- Thirst and Fainting

Women who are used to consuming pungent / spicy food are more likely to suffer from *Vata* disorders like painful menstruation.

Astringent Taste

Jamun fruit, plantain flower, raw wood apple and areca nut are some of the commonly available substances which are predominantly astringent in taste.

Properties and Benefits

- Cold in efficacy
- Alleviates *Pitta* and *Kapha*
- Heavy to digest
- Acts as water /fluid absorbent
- Blood purifier
- Heals ulcers and wounds
- Dries up moisture and fat

Astringent Taste in Excess Causes

- Stagnation of food
- Flatulence
- Pain in the heart region
- Thirst, emaciation
- Loss of virility
- Obstruction of channels
- Constipation

A middle-aged woman who came to consult about her flatulence and constipation was found to be consuming large amounts of jamun fruit at that time. Getting her to stop consuming large quantities of such astringent food was an essential first step in the treatment to relieve her of constipation.

CHAPTER 20

Healthy Diet

यदन्नं देहधात्वोजोबलवणादिपोषकम् ।
तत्राग्निर्हेतुराहारान्न ह्यपक्वाद्रसाद्यः ॥

*Food nourishes the dhatus, provides strength, complexion, etc.
However, agni is vital as without food getting digested (by agni),
dhatus etc. cannot be produced.⁷⁵*

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, food plays a vital role in health and ill-health. Most people are familiar with only modern Western theories of nutrition. They are somewhat familiar with categories such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and so on. Even our school textbooks describe food in terms of these modern categories. These modern categories do not tell us, for instance, about substances which can help in digestion, or about those which can give rise to an increase in phlegm, or qualities of foods which can lead to constipation or relieve constipation, or about foods which can improve one's appetite, or what one should eat in summer or avoid in spring, and so on. Answer to these questions can be found only in the Indian systems of medicine. It is therefore important that we learn about food from the Ayurvedic point of view.

Some of the most common questions about food are the following:

- Which foods are good for health?

⁷⁵ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Chikitsa Sthana*, Chapter 15, Verse 5.

- Is raw and uncooked food superior to cooked food?
- Is eating meat advisable or is vegetarian food better?
- Do we need to drink a lot of water?
- Should we reduce rice and wheat and instead include more vegetables?
- Is it better to consume food in small quantities but more frequently?

It is only natural that we are beset with so many doubts about food. With modern /Western categories we cannot hope to judge the nutritional and therapeutic value of our daily foods such as rice, wheat, milk, ghee, buttermilk, ginger, garlic, turmeric and pepper. For example, according to modern /Western theory of nutrition, ghee is a mere fat which increases body fat and ‘cholesterol’. Ginger and pepper are mere spices, which just flavour the food. Allopathic doctors advise their patients to stay away from ghee saying it is saturated fat and bad for health. Based on Western theories of nutrition, it is not possible to explain the numerous nutritional and medicinal qualities of ghee. The properties and actions of foods which modern science is ignorant of, are passed off as ‘not scientifically validated’.

Health has to be maintained throughout our lives by consuming proper food and following a proper regimen. We need to follow some simple rules of diet. By violating these rules we suffer from major diseases. Eating correctly is the best and most important step in taking care of our health. For instance, constipation is caused by the aggravation of *Vayu*. Burning in the stomach is caused by food which aggravates *Pitta*. And phlegm in the throat is caused by food which increases *Kapha*. When we are confronted with problems such as these we need to examine our diet.

Ideally, we should consume food which includes all six tastes – sweet, sour, salt, pungent, bitter and astringent. Intake of any one taste in excess and exclusion of others invariably leads to diseases as

we have seen. If we analyse our daily food, it generally consists of all the six tastes. Milk, rice, wheat are sweet; buttermilk is sour and astringent; salt is salty; spices are predominantly pungent; and there are always substances with bitter and astringent tastes in our meal. In general, sweet, sour, and salty tastes contribute more towards general strength and building up of *dhatu*s in the body while bitter, pungent and astringent tastes have a greater therapeutic role to play.

In our daily life we observe and attribute several qualities to various food substances. Such knowledge is widespread in our country and this knowledge is handed down from generation to generation. For instance, we commonly associate *dals* (pulse) with generation of wind in the stomach. We talk about some food substances as ‘cooling’ and some others as ‘heating’ to the body. These are all concepts from Ayurveda which even today guide a vast majority of Indians in their daily lives. This knowledge helps us to be discriminating about our food. It helps us to consume food according to our capacity for digestion, our constitution, disposition, the prevailing season, etc. Properties of different foods can be understood if we carefully observe their taste, the time taken by them to undergo digestion, whether they are oily/fatty or dry and so on.

Familiar spices like pepper, ginger, garlic, asafoetida, cinnamon, turmeric are pungent in taste and hot in efficacy. These spices, even when consumed merely as powders or decoctions, act efficiently in controlling common, everyday problems like phlegm, colic pain and indigestion. With this knowledge we can learn to deal with simple health problems in our daily lives. For instance, if we suffer from a burning sensation in the body (a typical consequence of increased or aggravated *Pitta*), we learn to avoid food and drinks which can cause burning. If we consume excessively salty, sour and pungent food, *Pitta* is further aggravated and burning is further increased.

Balanced Diet

Given the wide variety of food substances, we should really know what should be consumed regularly, as part of a balanced diet.

A healthy state of the body is the state in which the various body constituents are in a state of equilibrium. A balanced diet is one which does not upset this equilibrium but helps to maintain it. In other words, the food we consume should maintain the equilibrium of the three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*), and that of the seven *dhatus* (*rasa*, blood, flesh, fat, bone, bone-marrow and the reproductive *dhatu*). Food consumed appropriately gives strength, nourishes the *dhatus*, sense organs and intellect and bestows a long life.

A balanced daily diet should consist of rice, wheat, *yava* (Indian barley), meat of animals from arid areas which are easy to digest, tender radish, *hareetaki*, gooseberry, grapes, green gram, sugar (*sarkara* or country sugar), ghee, honey, rain-water, milk, pomegranate and rock salt. Among green leafy vegetables, *sunishannaka* and *jeevanti* are the best for daily use.⁷⁶

The daily diet should include all the six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent). The diet however should be predominantly sweet in taste (e.g., rice, ghee, milk, wheat). Such a diet gives all the nourishment the body requires and prevents disease. For instance, a diet predominantly sour, salty and pungent causes anaemia. A diet which is predominantly pungent, astringent, spicy and dry (without any fat) gives rise to joint pains and other *Vata* diseases.

Some of the substances which should not be regularly consumed as part of our food are curd, blackgram (*urad dal*), meat of domestic

⁷⁶ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 8, Verses 42, 43.

animals such as pig, sheep, cow, buffalo, and fish, sprouted grains, dried vegetables, raw (uncooked) or matured (not tender) radish, alkaline food, boiled curd and dried meat. Food should not consist predominantly of vegetables, since vegetables are usually *Vata*-increasing. Only small quantities of vegetables should be consumed with food. Food should be freshly cooked and warm and not reheated.

There shall always be a few people who can violate many of these rules and still not be affected much. These are people with very strong power of digestion, those who are physically very active, and young.

PROTEIN

Ayurveda and Western science of nutrition perceive the properties of the same substance differently. This can be explained with the example of so-called protein-rich food. Many patients with severe joint pains approach us for Ayurvedic treatment. Joint pains, in general, are caused by the aggravation of *Vata* and therefore these patients are advised to keep away from all *Vata*-aggravating food such as pulses /*dals*. Patients who are vegetarians immediately worry about the lack of protein-intake.

Let us look at two substances which are said to be rich in protein, namely pulses and meat. The protein from pulses is known as pulse-protein and the other as meat-protein. Both these essentially constitute the protein-rich

part of our diet. Many modern vegetarians, wanting to increase their protein intake end up consuming large quantities of *dals* in the form of sprouts and curries. From an Ayurvedic point of view, consuming large quantities of *dal* (barring *urad dal*) leads to aggravation of *Vata* in the body. In contrast to pulses, the most important property of meat is that it controls the aggravation of *Vata*. Therefore, meat soup or *mamsa rasa* is the food of choice in many major *Vata* diseases. Thus even though both meat and pulses are protein according to Western nutrition, and ought to be more or less similar in properties and in their action in the body, pulse and meat in fact possess opposite qualities according to Ayurveda.

Meat and meat soup are generally heavy to digest and are avoided in *Kapha* diseases, whereas pulses in general are easy to digest. A soup made of pulse (*yusha*) is the ideal diet when *Kapha* is aggravated.

The Power of Digestion – *Agni*



A good power of digestion is most crucial for good health.

An Ayurvedic book would be incomplete if it does not deal with the subject of digestion. A good power of digestion is an indication of, and essential for, good health. Many diseases arise from poor digestion. The word which describes the power of digestion is *agni*. *Agni* means fire. Like fire which possesses the property to cook, so also the digestive fire cooks or digests the

food we consume. A proper diet nourishes the *agni*, just as a well-regulated fuel nourishes a fire. And a well-nourished *agni* is the main support for the body.

Health and ill-health depend on the power of digestion. Sluggish digestion, diarrhoea, constipation, piles, flatulence, distension of the abdomen, burning sensation in the stomach, burping – all these conditions which are commonly encountered are due to the impairment of the power of digestion or *agni*. When the fire (*agni*) is weak, it gives rise to diseases in the body. Total absence of fire causes death. A good power of digestion gives strength, a sense of well-being, good lustre to the skin, alertness, energy, nourishment, growth and long life.

There are several factors which interfere with the proper functioning of the digestive fire. Excessive intake of food and drinks makes *agni* dull, just as too much firewood piled up on top of a small fire can put out the fire. Intake of insufficient quantity of food weakens the digestive fire just as too little fuel can kill a fire.

Factors which Interfere with Digestion⁷⁷

- Excessive or insufficient intake of food
- Irregular eating habits
- Consuming incompatible foods (for example, milk and sour fruits together)
- Suppression of urges for urine and motion
- Irregular sleep – keeping awake at night and sleeping during the day
- Intake of too much water
- Emotional disturbances like fear, anger, anxiety, and grief

⁷⁷ *Susruta Sambhita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 46, Verses 500, 501.

When food is not digested properly and fully, it gives rise to a residue known as *ama*. This is deposited in the fine pathways and channels of the body, in the excreta, in the sputum and in the *doshas*, giving rise to all kinds of diseases. *Ama* spreading through the body produces various symptoms like heaviness, blockage of *Vata*, laziness and lethargy, indigestion, excess salivation, constipation, lack of taste for food and tiredness. From these symptoms, we should know that the food has not been digested properly and that *ama* has been produced in the body.

AMALAKI (Indian gooseberry)

Amalaki abounds in nutritional and medicinal qualities. It possesses sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and astringent tastes. It is easy to digest, cooling in efficacy and good for the eyes and intellect. It improves the power of digestion, increases the life-span, is an aphrodisiac, increases strength and immunity. It is used as a medicine in fevers, anaemia, jaundice, respiratory diseases, heart disease, severe digestive disorders, diabetes, and many other diseases. *Amalaki* pacifies all the three *doshas* in the body. This is why *amalaki* is recommended for daily use.

CHAPTER 21

Rules of Diet

आहारसंभवं वस्तु रोगाश्चाहारसंभवाः ।
हिताहितविशेषाच्च विशेषः सुखदुःखयोः ॥

The body as well as diseases are caused by food; wholesome and unwholesome food are responsible for happiness and misery respectively.⁷⁸

It is important to pay attention to and be discriminating in our choice of what we consume regularly as food. The food substances we consume regularly have to satisfy several criteria.

Quantity

An important consideration when consuming food is quantity (*matra*). The quantity of food intake is a crucial factor in maintaining good health. Food when consumed in an appropriate quantity stimulates and activates the digestive fire, *agni*. The proper quantity of food is that amount which, without disturbing the equilibrium of the *doshas*, gets digested and absorbed in proper time. There are some physical symptoms which help us to know the appropriate quantity:

- Food consumed in proper quantity does not cause undue pressure in the stomach.

⁷⁸ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 28, Verse 45.

- There is no obstruction or pressure felt in the region of the heart or sides of the chest.
- No excessive heaviness is felt in the abdomen.
- There is proper nourishment of the senses.
- There is relief from hunger and thirst.
- One feels comfortable standing, sitting, sleeping, walking, breathing, laughing and talking.
- Food consumed in the morning should be well-digested by evening and what is consumed in the evening should be well-digested by morning.

Difficult to digest/heavy (*guru*) as well as easy to digest/light (*laghu*) food, both need to be consumed in proper quantity for proper digestion. Heavy foods like sweets should be consumed only up to half satiation. This means, one should stop when one still feels like eating some more. Light foods may be consumed to full satiation but not more than that. In general one should consume food only upto three-fourths the capacity of the stomach. Half the stomach should be filled with solid foods and a quarter with liquid. The remaining quarter should be left empty. For the food to digest well, it should be consumed warm.

Order

The order in which food is consumed is important. Heavy to digest, fatty, sweet, solid foods – such as sweet dishes – are consumed at the beginning of the meal. The traditional practice of serving sweets at the beginning of a meal is based on this theory. In the middle of the meal, food that is predominantly sour and salty – such as *sambar* and *rasam* in the South Indian meal – is consumed. At the end of the meal, light, easy to digest, dry (not fatty), liquid type of food is consumed. Buttermilk is an example of such a food. These days, perhaps under the influence of the Western habit of having a dessert at the end of the meal, we have taken to consuming sweets

at the end of the meal. The advantage of eating the sweet dish at the beginning of a meal is that after this heavy food, we can correctly estimate the remaining quantity we need to eat. A more important reason has to do with the relationship of the *doshas* to the process of digestion. Food when consumed in this order gets digested properly.

Agreeability

In general, food consumed should be suitable to the individual who consumes it. One factor which can guide us in the intake of food is the *prakrti* or constitution of the individual. Depending on the *prakrti*, a particular food becomes agreeable or disagreeable to the individual. The dominant *dosha* that determines the constitution of the individual is kept under check by appropriate food and regimen. Thus careful intake of food can bring about a balance among the three *doshas*.

PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION OR *PRAKRTI*

Each individual possesses a bodily constitution or *prakrti* which is determined at birth. When the reproductive *dhatus* of the parents combine at the time of conception, depending on the *doshas* present in the reproductive *dhatus*, some *dosha(s)* can become dominant in the foetus. This determines the constitution or *prakrti* of an individual.

Our diet and activities should largely be agreeable to our individual constitution. In other words, we should take care not to indulge in food or activities which are not compatible with our constitution.

Proper time for Consuming Food⁷⁹

One is ready for a meal only

- After eliminating urine and stool
- When the belch is clean
- When the heart feels light and clear
- When the appetite is well-developed
- When the senses are functioning clearly
- When the body feels light
- When the previous meal has been digested

Incompatible Foods (*Viruddha Ahara*)

*Incompatible foods should be considered equal to poison.*⁸⁰

One of the outstanding contributions of Ayurvedic dietetics is the concept of incompatibility of foods or *viruddha ahara*. The word *viruddha* means contradictory or incompatible. *Ahara* means food. Some food combinations are incompatible and hence they ought not to be consumed together. For example, milk should not be combined with any substance which has a sour taste. Nowadays, milk-shakes (milk with fruits) have become very popular and as most fruits are sour, milk-shakes are classic examples of incompatible foods. Some add milk to curd to make the curd less sour. Both these are incompatible combinations which can lead to many diseases. Curd or butter-milk with plantain is another incompatible combination. Heating curd, honey or alcohol makes them unfit for consumption. Another example of an incompatible combination is milk and fish. This fact is known to all traditional fish-eating communities in India.

⁷⁹ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 8, Verse 55.

⁸⁰ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 7, Verse 29.

Many of the major diseases are caused by regular intake of incompatible foods. When consumed, incompatible foods cause the increase and vitiation of *doshas* which do not get eliminated, thus leading to disease.

Water Intake

Water is a substance consumed by us everyday. But there is a lot of confusion about how much, when and how one should drink water. Ayurveda tells us the properties of water, and how it should be consumed. Just as hunger is an indication for consuming food, thirst is an indication for consuming water.

Water can be consumed either before a meal, after a meal or during a meal. Each of these ways of drinking water has different consequences. Water consumed before a meal reduces the power of digestion and leads to emaciation. Water consumed after a meal leads to an increase of *Kapha* and fat. Water consumed during a meal maintains the body and *dhatus* in equilibrium and helps in the easy digestion of the food consumed.

Water can be consumed in four different forms – hot water, cold water, boiled and cooled water, and water boiled with herbs. Each of these has different properties and is used in different situations.

Hot water increases appetite and stimulates the power of digestion. It helps in the proper digestion and assimilation of food. It is the ideal drink during a meal. It is good for throat and voice. It cleanses the urinary system. Hot water is useful in treating hiccups, bloating of stomach, increase of *Vata* and *Kapha*, cough, breathlessness, chronic colds, pain in the body, indigestion, increase of fat in the body and fevers.

Cold water is used in treating alcoholic intoxication, excessive tiredness and fainting, giddiness, dryness of tongue,

burning sensation in the body, increased *Pitta*, haemorrhage and poison.

Water which is boiled and cooled is easily digested, more easily than cold water (not boiled). It cures tiredness and is good for alleviating all the three *doshas*. However, boiled and cooled water should not be kept overnight for use the next day. If it is used this way, it causes an increase in all the three *doshas*.

Water which is boiled with herbs possesses the medicinal properties of those herbs. In summer, water boiled with *useera* and cooled is used as a cooling and refreshing drink.

Except during summer and autumn, in all other seasons, one should drink water in moderation. In summer and autumn, we naturally feel an excess of thirst. So, we consume relatively large quantities of water to quench our thirst. However, even when we are very thirsty, we should not drink water in excess. If we do, it interferes with digestion and leads to an increase of *Kapha* and *Pitta* in the body.

People suffering from poor digestion, anaemia, *udara* (a disease where fluid collects in the stomach), diarrhoea, piles, severe digestive disorders (*grahani*), diabetes, diseases of eyes and throat, wounds, consumption and swellings in the body, should not drink water. Such people, even when they are thirsty, should drink water only in small quantities.

When we have fever, we should not drink cold water. Cold water consumed during a fever leads to indigestion and formation of the toxic residue of food, *ama*. It further causes thirst, excessive lethargy and sleep, bloating of stomach, a feeling of heaviness in the body, cough, excessive salivation, respiratory diseases and chronic colds. During fever, when thirsty, one should consume hot water, in small quantities. Hot water has the quality of alleviating fevers. In fever, water boiled with certain herbs like dry ginger is very beneficial.

COCONUT-WATER: In South India, water from tender coconut is a very popular drink. Coconut-water is unctuous (fatty), cooling and easy to digest. It is an aphrodisiac. It has a sweet taste. It helps cure dryness of tongue, *Pitta* and *Vata*; increases the power of digestion, cleanses the urinary system and is the ideal drink during the extreme heat of summer. Nutritionally and in every way, coconut-water is far superior to any of the bottled drinks available to us.



CHAPTER 22

Kitchen – A Pharmacy at Home

जगत्येवमनौषधं न किञ्चिद्दिवरे द्रव्यं ... ।

There is nothing in this universe which is non-medicinal ...⁸¹

The role of Spices in our Food

For women, their kitchen serves as a pharmacy. Many minor ailments can be tackled by preparing different decoctions out of the various herbs that are available in the kitchen. For instance, spices like cumin seed, coriander, pepper, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, fenugreek, and asafoetida have properties which are digestive and help regulate the *doshas*. Knowledge of their properties in relation to *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* can certainly be useful in treating common ailments of the digestive system. Ailments like stomach-ache, flatulence or indigestion can be taken care of by simple home remedies with substances commonly found in our kitchen.

Let us look at the properties of some of these commonly used spices.

Dry Ginger

Ginger is probably the most common spice in the Indian kitchen. It is used in two forms, wet/raw and dry. Of the two, raw ginger is more commonly used in cooking. Dry ginger is a valuable

⁸¹ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 9, Verse 10.

medicinal substance. It can be said that dry ginger is one of the most important medicinal herbs in Ayurveda. Therefore, it is also called *vishvabheshajam*, meaning universal medicine, a medicine for all diseases. There is even a proverb (in both *Tamil* and *Malayalam*): ‘There is no *kashayam* (a medicinal decoction) without *sukku* (dry ginger)’.

Dry ginger is pungent in taste, hot in efficacy and is unctuous (fatty). It reduces *Kapha* and *Vata* in the body. It is a good medicine in the treatment of swellings, distaste for food, stomach /digestive problems, respiratory problems, elephantiasis, *ama* (undigested residue of food) and heart disease. Water boiled with dry ginger and taken warm is a good medicine for heart disease caused by *Vata*.

Dry ginger is used in digestive problems such as stomach pain, diarrhoea, bloatedness of stomach and lack of appetite. At times a warm paste of dry ginger on the forehead provides relief from headaches. For toothaches dry ginger ground with salt and camphor is applied inside the cavity; for swellings dry ginger is ground and applied warm. All these remedies are commonly practised by our people.

Pepper

India has been very famous for pepper from time immemorial. This spice was known as black gold. Pepper is an integral part of Indian cooking.

Pepper is pungent in taste. It is dry (not fatty) and has a penetrating quality. It is hot in nature /efficacy. Therefore, pepper reduces *Kapha* and *Vata*, but increases *Pitta*. It is a good medicine



for diseases such as phlegm, cough, respiratory problems, intestinal worms, stomach pain and other digestive problems. It is an important ingredient in medicines for all types of fevers.

Turmeric

This is one of the most important spices in our kitchen. It is very difficult to cook an Indian meal without turmeric. Turmeric is rubbed by Indian women on the skin when they bathe as it is good for the skin. Turmeric is valued on account of its numerous medicinal properties. It is also considered auspicious.

Turmeric is bitter in taste. It improves taste when added to food. It is dry (not fatty) and hot in efficacy. It reduces *Kapha*. It is used in the treatment of chronic colds and other *Kapha*-related problems. It has blood-purifying properties. It is one of the most important medicines in the treatment of skin diseases and so is a part of practically every herbal preparation used for skin diseases. Turmeric removes itchiness and gives a good complexion to the skin. It can be used as an antidote for poisons. Because of its anti-toxic and insecticidal properties, it is used in fumigating unclean places. It is also used in the treatment of diseases caused by worms, both internal and external. Turmeric can cleanse and heal wounds. *Nisamalaki*, a medicine used in the treatment of diabetes, is made up of equal quantities of turmeric and gooseberry.

Cumin

Cumin or *jeeraka* is another important spice in our cooking. It is a dry substance (not fatty). It is pungent in taste and hot in



efficacy. It is easy to digest and is capable of digesting the undigested residue of food called *ama*. *Jeeraka* possesses many medicinal properties. It is capable of cleansing the uterus. Water boiled with *jeeraka* is used often as drinking water, to improve digestion. *Jeeraka* has the property of curing fevers. Medicines for fevers are often given along with water boiled with *jeeraka*. It reduces *Kapha* and removes tastelessness. It can enhance virility and the intellect. It binds the bowels (constipates). It gives strength to the body. *Jeeraka* is beneficial to the eyes. It helps reduce *Vata*. It is a good medicine for diseases caused by the vitiation of *Vata*, like bloatedness of the stomach, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

Generally, *jeeraka* is used in diseases caused by *Vata* and *Kapha*. Because of its pungent taste and hot efficacy, *jeeraka* increases *Pitta*.

Coriander

Coriander or *dhaniya* seed is a very popular spice, used both in food as well as in medicine. It is astringent and bitter in taste, oily, and facilitates better urination. It is easy to digest, hot in efficacy and increases the power of digestion. *Dhaniya* also possesses the special property of digesting the undigested residue of food (*ama*). It is an effective medicine in controlling fever. Many of the decoctions used in treating fever have *dhaniya* as one of the ingredients. It improves taste, binds the bowel (constipates) and controls all three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. There are many conditions in which *dhaniya* is used as a medicine, for example, thirst, burning sensation in the body, vomiting, respiratory problems, cough, emaciation and intestinal worms.



Cinnamon

Cinnamon is used both in food as well as in medicines. It has a fine flavour and taste. It is an integral part of various types of cooking *masalas*. A decoction of cinnamon is used as tea in the Kashmir valley. Because of its high medicinal value, it finds an important place in many Ayurvedic preparations.

In taste cinnamon is pungent, sweet and bitter. It is easy to digest and hot in efficacy. It increases *Pitta* and controls *Kapha* and *Vata*. This is why powders such as *Thaleesadi Choornam* and *Sithophaladi Choornam*, used in the treatment of respiratory diseases, have cinnamon as one of the ingredients. Cinnamon relieves itching, and runny nose. It is useful in treatment of worms, loss of appetite, and piles (haemorrhoids) caused by the aggravation of *Vata*. Cinnamon is good for the heart and urinary bladder. It reduces semen in men.

Cardamom

There are two varieties of cardamom – big (*sthoola*) and small (*sookshma*). Both have important medicinal properties.

Small cardamom is used in the treatment of *Kapha* (phlegm), cough, respiratory diseases and consumption. Therefore, it is an important ingredient in medicines like *Thaleesadi Choornam* and *Sithophaladi Choornam*, which are medicines for *Kapha* and respiratory diseases. Cardamom stimulates the digestive fire and increases appetite. It removes tastelessness in the mouth. It is good for the heart. It is a good medicine for diseases where the flow of urine gets obstructed. It is cold in efficacy.



Big cardamom is generally used as an ingredient in cooking. It is bitter in taste. It is an antidote for poison. It can cure wounds, and itching. It is used as a medicine for pain in the urinary bladder.

Clove

A prominent spice in the kitchen is clove. Its medicinal qualities are numerous. Clove is pungent and bitter in taste, cold in efficacy and easy to digest. It improves taste and digestion (*deepana*), as well as digests the undigested portions of food that may remain in our body (*ama*). It can be effectively used in a variety of digestive disorders such as vomiting, flatulence, and stomach pain. Clove acts as a medicine in treating thirst, cough, breathing problems, hiccups and consumption. It is effective in pacifying *Kapha*, *Pitta* and blood-related complaints. It is good for the eyes.

Garlic

Garlic is a popular spice used in cooking as well as a medicinal substance. It is fatty and pungent in taste. Garlic is hot in efficacy and penetrating in action. It is heavy to digest (*guru*). It nourishes the body and adds strength, increases virility and improves the voice. It is a good medicine for joining broken bones, for improving the intellect, complexion and eye-sight. Because garlic has so many important medicinal qualities, it is called a *rasayana*, a substance used in rejuvenation.

Garlic is used as a medicine in the treatment of many diseases. For example, in certain heart diseases milk boiled with garlic is a

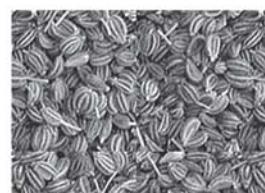


very useful medicine. Garlic is used as a medicine in chronic fevers (*jeerna jwara*). It is a good medicine for stomach pains, constipation, certain abdominal tumours, cough and phlegm, lack of appetite, swellings, piles, skin diseases, worms and respiratory diseases. In general, in diseases of *Vata* and *Kapha*, garlic can be used as a medicine. It is particularly effective in *Vata* diseases. But it can vitiate both *Pitta* and blood because of its pungent taste and hot efficacy. Therefore, in aggravation of *Pitta* and blood, it is necessary to avoid garlic.

Asafoetida

In Tamilnadu, asafoetida is an essential ingredient in the preparation of popular dishes *sambar* and *rasam*. It imparts its strong flavour to food. The asafoetida which is used in cooking is not the pure variety. Pure asafoetida is extremely penetrating and hot in efficacy and pungent in taste. It is so hot and penetrating that some people get a nose-bleed merely by smelling pure asafoetida.

Asafoetida reduces both *Vata* and *Kapha* due to its hot efficacy and pungent taste. In diseases of *Vata* aggravation, it is an important medicine. It is an excellent medicine for digestive problems. Asafoetida helps to digest the undigested residue of food, *ama*. It removes tastelessness in the mouth. It is used in treating worm-infestation. In diseases of the stomach and digestive system, like bloatedness, pains, abdominal tumours, and *udara* (ascitis), it is an excellent medicine. However, because of its hot efficacy and pungent taste, it vitiates *Pitta* and blood. Therefore, in diseases of *Pitta* and blood, asafoetida must be avoided.



Ashta Choornam

Here is a simple preparation, a *Choornam* (powder) which helps improve digestion as well as control *Vata*.

- Dry Ginger
- Cumin
- Black Cumin
- Pepper
- Long pepper
- Asafoetida
- Ajwain* seeds
- Rock salt (*saindhava lavana*)

All the above ingredients taken in equal parts and powdered together constitute what is called *Ashta Choornam*. The name is derived from the number of ingredients (eight) that go into making this *Choornam*. It is an effective medicine for curing indigestion, lack of appetite, lack of taste for food and stomach pain. Mixed with oil, ghee, hot water, *kanji* or butter milk, *Ashta Choornam* improves the power of digestion. It is a good digestive which can be used as a first-aid in treating diarrhoea, especially when taken with buttermilk. Normally a teaspoon of *Ashta Choornam* is mixed with hot rice and ghee and taken at the beginning of a meal. Taken in this manner, it improves digestion and cures bloated stomach due to gas (*Vata*).



COOKING VEGETABLES

Vegetables are meant to be cooked and consumed rather than consumed raw. While cooking vegetables, they are first boiled in water. After they are cooked for a short while, the water is strained and discarded. The vegetables are then cooked with fats (ghee or oil). This is the traditional way of cooking vegetables and this is based on Ayurveda.

Vegetables cooked without adding fat and without filtering out the residual water after boiling, are unfit for use.⁸²



⁸² *Charaka Samhita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 27, Verse 316.

CHAPTER 23

More about *Doshas*

पित्तं पङ्गु कफः पङ्गुः पङ्गवो मलधातवः ।
वायुना यत्र नीयन्ते तत्र गच्छन्ति मेघवत् ॥

*Pitta, Kapha, the waste products and the dhatus, are all lame. They go wherever Vayu carries them, just as clouds are carried by wind.*⁸³

Vata, Pitta and Kapha – factors which cause disease

A basic knowledge of the locations, functions and characteristics of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* is essential for understanding how our body functions.

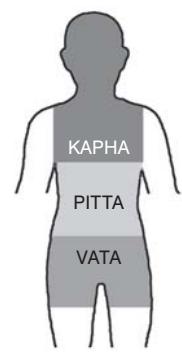
Although the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, are present all over the body, their most important locations are the following:

Vata : Below the navel

Pitta : Between the navel and heart

Kapha : Above the heart

VATA



Vata or *Vayu* is found everywhere in the body. At different locations in the body, it carries out different functions. Yet it has its

⁸³ *Sharngadhara Sambita*, translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, 1995: Section I, Chapter 5, Verse 25.

primary seat below the navel. Since *Vata* is the moving force behind *Pitta* and *Kapha*, we look at *Vata* in some detail.

Functions of *Vata*

Vata performs certain vital functions in the body when it is in its normal equilibrium state. One of the important functions of *Vata* is to enable respiration and make the respiratory organs function properly and to help swallow food. It is responsible for natural urges like sneezing, belching, passing urine and faeces. *Vata* activates intellect, sense organs, heart and mind.

If *Vata* does not function properly, it leads to impairment of our energy, strength, enthusiasm, complexion, intellect, memory and our ability to speak. If a person, for instance, has been suffering from difficulty in speech and inability to swallow, it does not require great research to figure out that he or she is affected by the aggravation of *Vata*.

Vata travels all over the body at great speed. When *Vata* is functioning normally, it helps all movements in the body – expansion, contraction, upward and downward motion; it ensures flow of blood and sweat in the entire body; it maintains even the small and minute vessels without any block or impediments and carries nutrition to all the *dhatus*.

Vata helps in maintaining proper digestive activity. It remains in the small and large intestines and helps to digest food, separates the waste products from the nutrients and filters out the waste matter.

If *Vata* is not aggravated and carries on its various functions normally, the body remains healthy. If *Vata* is vitiated and loses its equilibrium, its activities are affected, resulting in diseases. ‘Pain in the neck’, ‘unbearable headache’, ‘radiating hip pain’, ‘stomach ache’, ‘joint pain’ – all these pains in different parts of the body are caused by *Vata*. Without aggravation of *Vata* there can be no pain in

the body. A number of painful diseases for which patients seek Ayurvedic help, such as spondilitis, slipped-disc, and arthritis are all different kinds of *Vata* disorders. Patients afflicted by *Vata* diseases suffer a great deal without being able to bend, sit or even turn in bed without pain. Cutting and piercing pain, stiffness of the body as though a stick is tied to the back – all these and more are endured by patients afflicted by aggravation of *Vata*.

Vata can get aggravated in any part of the body – intestines, joints, bones, chest, muscles, skin, tendons, sense organs and reproductive organs and can cause disease in any of them. We often witness athletes suffering from injuries and cramps in legs, shoulders, hip or whichever organ is being used in excess. This is a direct result of aggravated *Vata*.

For *Vata* disorders, there are safe and effective treatments in Ayurveda. Common allopathic remedies like pain-killers, traction, and physiotherapy may or may not provide temporary relief. Many people are routinely subjected to surgical procedures to overcome the pain temporarily in diseases such as slipped-disc. Many suffer pain for years. ‘Reduce your weight and your knee pain will go’, ‘bones are worn off’ etc. are some of the common explanations given to them by their allopathic physicians. However, a proper line of treatment to pacify *Vata* will yield good results in most of these *Vata*-aggravated diseases.

A young man once came with a complaint of frequent cramps. On examination, it was found that he was exercising and swimming for several hours every day. He consumed large quantities of potatoes and pulses on the advice of his coach, as starch and protein are supposed to be necessary for swimming. After swimming practice, he quenched his thirst with iced drinks. His favourite foods were chilli-hot and pungent. He was very proud of the fact that he took an oil-bath only once a year, that was on *Deepavali* day. It was obvious to the Ayurvedic physician that his food and exercise regimen were

causing an aggravation of *Vata*, which in turn caused severe cramps. Here the treatment obviously had to start with correcting his *Vata*-aggravating food and regimen.

MUSCLE CRAMP

There is a raging debate and much research about one of the common *Vata*-aggravated conditions, namely muscle cramps and the possible remedies for this condition. Quinine and its derivatives are commonly prescribed for cramps. But research has shown that these medications are ineffective in handling muscle cramps / pulls. Patients are needlessly exposing themselves to a sure risk of serious side-effects including severe allergic reactions and a variety of 'gastro-intestinal' and 'neurological' problems.

There are many symptoms which we can identify in our body when *Vata* is aggravated. Emaciation, dryness, roughness, loss of sleep and strength, and constipation are typical symptoms of aggravated *Vayu*. One may feel bloating of stomach, an astringent taste in the mouth and black or red discolouration in the body. There are more serious symptoms associated with *Vata* such as trembling, lack of sensation / numbness, loss of function of the sense organs, pricking pain in the bones, dislocation of joints, loss of movement of limbs, weakness, splitting pain, twisting/shrinking of the body parts, incoherent speech and mental depression. If one finds that some of these symptoms are present, then it should be understood that *Vata* is aggravated. As one can see, *Vata* if not properly maintained can totally immobilise the body.

How does one maintain *Vata* in its normal state? By understanding the qualities of *Vata* we can maintain its balance.

By nature, *Vata* is dry (non-fatty), light, cold, rough, subtle, and mobile. As these are the qualities of *Vata*, substances with similar qualities always bring about an increase of *Vata* in the body. And substances with qualities opposed to the qualities of *Vata* decrease *Vata*.

Vata is dry – *Vata* possesses qualities similar to air. The most important quality of air is that it is dry. Wind helps dry up substances. We dry wet clothes or a wet floor with the help of wind or breeze from a fan. This means that in our body, wherever there is an increase of *Vata* it leads to dryness. In other words, wherever there is dryness it can be understood as a symptom of *Vata*-aggravation. Also, constant intake of food cooked very dry (without fat or oil) increases dryness in the body and leads to an increase in *Vata*.

An extreme example of *Vata*-aggravation was a British woman who was severely constipated and was able to move her bowel only once in two to three weeks. No laxative ever worked for her and a couple of times she had to be hospitalised as she tried to swallow huge quantities of laxative tablets (40 and 60 tablets on two occasions). What this woman needed was a diet containing unctuous (fatty) substances like ghee, butter, milk, oil and medicated ghee and external oil treatments to correct the aggravation of *Vata*. She responded to this treatment within a week.

Vata is light – All food that is light and easy to digest, such as most of the vegetables and *dals* (except *urad dal*), increases *Vata*.

Cold, both in temperature and efficacy, is a property of *Vata*. Cold foods like ice-cream and cold drinks tend to increase *Vata*.

Vata is mobile – All movements in the body are caused by *Vata*. Therefore, movements such as travel, physical exertion and exercise lead to its increase.

Vata is subtle – This means that *Vata* can reach even the most minute pores which are otherwise inaccessible.

Since *Vata* is dry and cold, opposing qualities like oil and heat decrease *Vata*. This is why applying warm oil on the body helps in reducing pain. This procedure known as *abhyanga* is an important part of treatment in *Vata* diseases.

Vata increasing /decreasing foods can also be easily identified by the taste. Foods with pungent, bitter and astringent tastes increase *Vata*. They generally tend to dry up the body and thus aggravate *Vata*. On the other hand, sweet, sour and salty foods nourish the body. Since these foods tend to be unctuous (oily / fatty) they help in reducing and controlling *Vata*.

Avoid *Vata*-aggravation

If we know what factors aggravate *Vata*, we can avoid those and manage our lives without vitiating this *dosha*. Starving or not eating sufficient food dries up the body and leads to emaciation and increases *Vata*. This is why indiscriminate dieting can do more harm than good. Passing urine, faeces and flatus are normal functions of *Vata* and suppressing these urges vitiates *Vata* and gives rise to many serious diseases. Therefore one should never postpone calls of nature. Excessive consumption of foods which are pungent/bitter/astringent in taste, heavy physical labour or exercise, excessive travel, exposure to cold weather, intake of food and drinks which are cold in temperature, intake of food which is excessively dry (lacking in oil), irregular eating habits and keeping awake at nights are to be avoided as all these aggravate *Vata*.

PITTA

When it is in its normal, equilibrium state, *Pitta* carries out different functions in different parts of the body. Although it is everywhere in the body, the main seat of *Pitta* is between the navel and chest.

Functions of *Pitta*

Some of the important functions of *Pitta* are the following: It helps in digesting food, maintaining body heat /temperature, proper vision, hunger, thirst, lustre of the skin, and intellect.

Qualities of *Pitta*

Pitta is oily, penetrating and quick-acting, hot, light, foul-smelling, and liquid. *Pitta* also contributes to loosening of the bowels.

As these are the qualities of *Pitta*, substances with similar qualities always bring about an increase of *Pitta* and substances with opposite qualities reduce and control *Pitta*.

Factors Vitiating *Pitta*

Intake of food which is excessively sour, salty and pungent, food that creates a burning sensation, exposure to sunlight and anger – all these cause an increase of *Pitta*. For example, a chilli-hot and spicy curry causes an increase of *Pitta* in the body as *Pitta* is hot in nature. Often, people after consuming very spicy and sour food complain of sour eructation and burning sensation in chest and stomach. Many frequently resort to antacid tablets to reduce their discomfort. A man once mentioned that he had consumed ‘more than a lakh of antacid tablets’ to control ‘stomach burning’, which is a typical symptom of aggravated *pitta*. Pepper, asafoetida, garlic are some examples of *Pitta*-increasing food substances. Ghee, milk, butter, raisins, *amalaki*, sandal wood, water boiled with *usheera*, are all examples of substances which control *Pitta*.

What happens to the body when *Pitta* is vitiated?

The following are some of the symptoms of vitiated *Pitta*: body feels tired, there is a lack of clarity of sense organs, a lack of strength, and there is a feeling of heat and burning sensation in the body. Aggravation of *Pitta* can cause drying of the tongue, fainting, loss of

sleep, anger, reddish discolouration, ripening, formation of pus, ulcers and inflammation of wounds / boils, sweating, wetness and rotting (of wounds). Other symptoms are bitter and sour taste in the mouth, yellow colour of skin, nails and urine.

KAPHA

Kapha is found everywhere in the body and the main seat of *Kapha* is the region above the heart.

Functions of *Kapha*

Just like *Vata* and *Pitta*, *Kapha* performs some very important functions in the body when it is in its normal, equilibrium state. Some of the important functions of *Kapha* are the following:

- Provides firmness and oiliness to the body
- Binds the joints and bones firmly
- Provides strength and is responsible for serene mental states like patience.

Qualities of *Kapha*

Kapha is heavy, cold, fatty / oily, slow-acting, smooth, viscous, non-mobile, and solid.

We may observe these qualities in phlegm which is a manifestation of *Kapha*. Substances with qualities similar to *Kapha* bring about an increase of *Kapha* and those with opposite qualities reduce *Kapha*. For example, cold and heavy (to digest) substances cause an increase of *Kapha* in the body. Sweet taste normally increases *Kapha* as also sour and salty foods; whereas, pepper and ginger reduce *Kapha* as they are hot, pungent, light and dry, which are qualities opposite to the qualities of *Kapha*. Intake of food which is fatty, sweet, sour, salty and cold (in temperature and efficacy), exposure to cold weather, day-sleep and lack of physical exercise – all these bring about an increase of *Kapha*.

What happens when *Kapha* is vitiated?

Aggravation of *Kapha* is responsible for respiratory problems, cough, and excessive salivation in the mouth. A typical symptom of *Kapha* aggravation is the sensation of itching. There are other symptoms as well. Hardness, heaviness, excessive oiliness, coldness, a tingling sensation, sweet or salt taste in the mouth – these are some of the other symptoms of vitiated *Kapha*.

Aggravation of *Kapha* also produces obesity, laziness and lethargy. It blocks the channels in the body, causes lack of enthusiasm and sleepiness. With increase in *Kapha*, digestion becomes sluggish and there appears a white colour or paleness in the skin, nails and urine.

Summary

Different kinds of food affect the three *doshas* differently. For example, sweet food and spicy-hot food have different effects on the body. Heavy work or lack of work, too much sleep or lack of sleep, act on *doshas* in different ways. Heavy work depletes *Kapha* but increases *Vata* while too little work increases *Kapha*. As heavy work increases *Vata*, less work is recommended for a person suffering from a disease caused by *Vata*-aggravation. Similarly, different seasons too have different effects on the body. Each *dosha*, *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha*, increases or decreases during each of the seasons, namely, hot, cold or rainy. In this way, food, seasons and activities which have qualities opposite to the qualities of a *dosha*, reduce and control it; whereas those which have qualities similar to those of the *dosha* increase and aggravate it.

When a *dosha* is vitiated or aggravated, some of its characteristic symptoms are manifested in the body. One simple rule we need to remember about *doshas* is:

There is no pain without aggravation of *Vata*.

There is no burning sensation without aggravation of *Pitta*.

There is no itching sensation without aggravation of *Kapha*.

Childhood is associated with dominance of *Kapha* and diseases of *Kapha*; middle age with dominance of *Pitta* and old age with that of *Vata*.

If we know and understand the characteristic symptoms of the three *doshas*, we can identify which *dosha* or *doshas* are causing disease in our body.

CHAPTER 24

Daily Routine (*Dinacarya*)

आहारशयनाब्रह्मचर्येयुक्त्या प्रयोजितैः ।
शरीरं धायते नित्यमागरमिव धारणैः ॥

*Food, sleep and sexual activity, properly regulated, support the body constantly, just like a house is supported by columns.*⁸⁴

‘Prevention is better than cure’ is a very apt saying from an Ayurvedic point of view. As more emphasis is being laid these days on cure, we have stopped caring about how to prevent diseases. The modern allopathic method of prevention is by developing more and more preventive vaccines. As newer diseases keep surfacing and as diseases are innumerable, this approach is not viable. The Ayurvedic approach to this problem is by building up immunity and resistance of the body to diseases. Ayurveda prescribes a daily regimen as well as a seasonal regimen in order to make the body strong and healthy.

To maintain good health we need to cultivate certain habits. Some are part of a daily regimen such as bathing and others are according to the prevailing season – for example, a change in diet to suit the season. The daily and seasonal regimen are essential for promoting good health and for preventing diseases. Traditionally, many aspects of these regimens were part of our daily life. Today,

⁸⁴ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 7, Verse 52.

we look at these practices as some strange traditional practices or irrational habits of our people. We therefore need to understand the basis for these practices and the benefits we derive from them. Let us look at some of these daily practices, which in recent years have no doubt undergone a great deal of transformation.

Whatever routine that we ought to practise every day is called *dinacarya*. The word *dina* means day and *carya* means routine. Our daily routine consists of practices such as brushing the teeth, bathing, exercising and so on. The following are practices which help in maintaining health on a daily basis.

Cleaning Teeth

We begin the day with the cleaning of teeth and of the oral cavity. Most of us use sweet tooth pastes for cleansing our teeth. If only we were to look at the variety of sticks used in our villages for cleaning of teeth, we would see that these are taken from trees like neem, banyan and pongamia. These sticks possess bitter, pungent or astringent tastes. These are the tastes ideal for cleaning the teeth. Sticks or tooth powders which have these three tastes clean the teeth, and remove foul smell and tastelessness from the mouth. *Kapha* (phlegm), which is found in the throat early in the morning, is also removed.

Holding sesame oil in the mouth for a short period of time strengthens the jaws, voice, facial muscles, roots of the teeth and increases the taste for food. It prevents dryness of throat, cracks in the lips, tooth ache, tingling sensation in the teeth caused by sour foods and gives strength to the teeth to chew hard food items.

Nasal Drops - *Anu Tailam*

Application of a couple of drops of oil into the nose is a very useful daily practice. *Anu Tailam*, a medicated oil is used for this



purpose. There have been innumerable instances at our clinic when even some of the severest headaches have been relieved by just two drops of *Anu Tailam*, instilled into the nostrils. Those who use *Anu Tailam* as a nasal drop regularly derive great benefits.

The use of *Anu Tailam* every day alleviates all the three *doshas* in the head, strengthens the sense organs and prevents diseases above the shoulders.

Before using the nasal drops one lies down on the back, with the head slightly lower than the body. After this, two drops of *Anu Tailam* are instilled into each nostril. After taking in the medicine the head, neck and face are massaged well. The phlegm that drains and comes to the throat is spat out. *Anu Tailam* can be used with benefit for all diseases above the shoulder region. Those suffering from frequent headaches can surely begin by using *Anu Tailam* daily as a first step. *Anu Tailam* is available in most Ayurvedic medical shops.

Collyrium (*Anjana*) For the Eyes

The use of *anjana* (collyrium) in the eyes improves eye-sight and makes eyes look beautiful. *Anjana* is meant for daily use by men and women. Traditionally, families made their own *anjana* at home. *Anjana* can be prepared with ingredients prescribed in Ayurvedic texts. Regular use of *anjana* makes eyes spotlessly bright. What is recommended for daily use in the eyes is called *Sowveeranjana*. It is also known as *surma*. Eyes are highly susceptible to diseases caused by the aggravation of *Kapha*, the watery element. Therefore, a specially prepared *anjana* should be used once a week to drain the excess *Kapha* from the eyes and keep them free from diseases. *Narikelanjana*, a preparation meant to drain the eyes can be used (once a week) for this purpose.

This protects the eyes from major eye diseases and ensures good eye-sight.

Exercise

Daily physical exercise (*vyayama*) is beneficial for everyone. Exercise brings about lightness of the body, reduction of fat, good digestion, ability to perform work, and a strong physique. Those who consume fatty foods should exercise everyday. Exercise is especially beneficial in cold seasons and in spring. This is because it helps to reduce the accumulation of *Kapha* which takes place during these seasons. Even in these seasons, exercise should be performed to half of one's physical capacity. During the other seasons, exercise should be practised mildly. After exercise, the body should be gently massaged.

These days, with the proliferation of gyms, it is common to find people exercising quite recklessly and well beyond their capacities. Excessive exercise can affect the body drastically and produce thirst, emaciation, severe breathing difficulties, bleeding diseases, exhaustion, debility, cough, fever and vomiting. Of all exercise regimens *yogasana* and *pranayama* are the best for maintaining our health. *Yogasana* done with proper breath coordination and *pranayama* (regulated breathing) can keep us healthy well into old age.

Bath

Bathing (the head and the body) is an essential part of the daily regimen. It helps improve appetite, vigour, virility, enthusiasm and strength. It also helps increase the life-span. It removes itching, dirt, exhaustion, sweat, dullness, thirst and burning sensation in the body. Bathing with warm water improves bodily strength but pouring warm water over the head weakens the eyes and hair. Bathing should be avoided if one is suffering from diarrhoea, indigestion, fever and cold. In diseases of eyes, mouth

and ears, bathing the head should be avoided. Bathing should also be avoided immediately after consuming a meal, since this interferes with digestion.

Points to Note⁸⁵

- Food should be consumed only after the previous meal has been digested.
- Food should be agreeable to the individual.
- It should be consumed in proper quantity.
- The bodily urges should not be forcibly provoked.
- Once the urges appear they should not be suppressed, nor should one attend to other activities before the urge is satisfied.
- A disease should be attended to before it becomes chronic.
- All our actions should be virtuous and beneficial to all living beings.

⁸⁵ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 2, Verses 19, 20.

CHAPTER 25

Season, Food and Regimen (*Rtucarya*)

यावन्तो हि लोके मूर्तिमन्तो भावविशेषाः ।
तावन्तः पुरुषे यावन्तः पुरुषे तावन्तो लोके ॥

*All the manifest objects of the universe are present in the human being and all those in the human body are present in the universe.*⁸⁶

Seasons

To maintain good health, we have to adapt our food and habits to the changing seasons. Clearly, different seasons produce different effects on the human body. For instance, we are prone to more phlegm and bouts of cold in spring. Aches and pains in the body get aggravated in the rainy season. We feel dehydrated and sapped of all energy in summer. Why does this happen? This is due to the changes taking place in the seasons as a result of the movement of the sun, which, in turn, bring about changes in the body. Changing seasons influence the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, causing imbalances in them.

The digestive fire (*agni*) and the three *doshas* undergo changes in each season. Our diet must be so designed that it balances the changes that are taking place in the body. For instance, in winter *agni* is at its strongest. Our diet therefore should consist of foods which are heavy to digest, so as to feed the *agni* sufficiently.

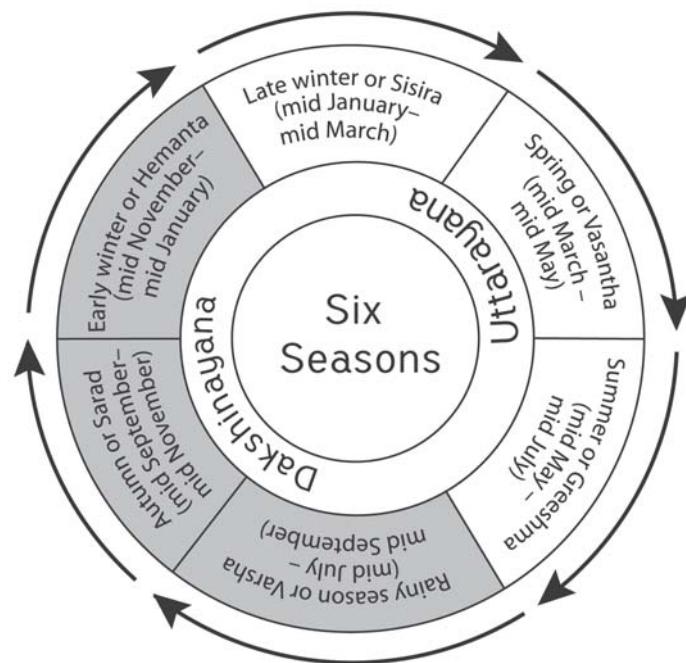
⁸⁶ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sareera Sthana*, Chapter 4, Verse 13.

However, in the rainy season *agni* is at its weakest. Our food and habits should be altered to suit the season. Therefore, we need to understand the nature of the seasons and their effect on the bodily *doshas*.

Let us look at the nature of different seasons and the appropriate food and regimen for these seasons which protect and maintain good health.

There are six seasons in a year:

1. Spring or *Vasantha* (mid-March to mid-May)
2. Summer or *Greeshma* (mid-May to mid-July)
3. Rains or *Varsha* (mid-July to mid-September)
4. Autumn or *Sarad* (mid-September to mid-November)
5. Early winter or *Hemanta* (mid-November to mid-January) and
6. Late winter or *Sisira* (mid-January to mid-March)



Each season lasts for two months. These six seasons can be brought under two categories – the hot and cold halves of the year. The half of the year when the sun is travelling northwards is called the *uttarayana*. The beginning of *uttarayana* is celebrated all over India as *Makara Sankranti* (*Pongal* in Tamilnadu). *Uttarayana* starts with the beginning of late winter season (*Sisira*), and ends with the end of summer. The other half of the year is when the sun travels southwards and it is called the *dakshinayana*. This starts with the beginning of rainy season (*Varsha*) and ends with the end of early winter (*Hemanta*). The changing seasons have a profound influence on the body. The seasons and their relationship to the *doshas* are described below.

Summer (mid-May to mid-July)

In summer, the heat increases day by day and the climate is dehydrating. It causes dryness and depletes *Kapha* and moisture in the body. As a consequence of extreme dryness, *Vayu* (which is inherently dry) starts getting aggravated. In summer, the power of digestion is generally weak. As these are the unavoidable effects of this season on the body, we must compensate for or counter the impact of this season by way of food and other regimen.

The food consumed in summer should therefore be sweet, non-dry (fatty) but easy to digest, cold in temperature and efficacy and predominantly liquid. *Kanji* made from par-boiled rice and coconut-water are examples of this type of diet. Bathing in cold water, avoiding excessive physical exercise, staying away from alcohol, drinking water processed with cooling herbs like *usheera* or sandalwood and cooled in mud pots, and drinking sweet fruit-juices, are beneficial to the body. These practices prevent dehydration, compensate for the excessive dryness and overcome the drastic effects of summer. Incidentally, this is the only season when day-sleep is beneficial and is recommended for all.

DAY-SLEEP

In all seasons except summer (mid-May to mid-July), sleeping during the day is unhealthy. Only infants, the debilitated, the convalescent and the very old may sleep during the day. In general, day-sleep aggravates all *three doshas*, especially *Kapha* and *Pitta*. In case one misses sleep during the night, it can be made up during the day by sleeping on an empty stomach for half the duration of the lost sleep.

Rainy Season (mid-July to mid-September)

Summer is followed by the rains. The effect of the rainy season is quite different from that of summer. In this season *Vayu*, which is already aggravated due to the extreme dryness of the heat of summer, gets further vitiated due to the effect of the coldness and dampness of the season. Water gets polluted during the rains. All the three *doshas* of the body are vitiated. The digestive power (*agni*), which is already weak in summer, is further weakened. In this season, all measures should be adopted to improve the power of digestion. To counter the excessive vitiation of *Vayu*, our food should possess properties opposed to those of *Vayu*. Sweet, sour, salty, and fatty (non-dry) foods pacify *Vayu*. Rice, wheat, soup of pulses and soups of meats that are easy to digest, are appropriate.

Autumn (mid-September to mid-November)

Following the rainy season, there is a sudden warming of the environment. This is the autumn season. Because of the heat, the aggravated *Vata* is pacified, but *Pitta* gets vitiated. Therefore, food

and regimen should be changed to counter the aggravated *Pitta*. The best way to control *Pitta* during this season is to consume food which is bitter, astringent and sweet in taste, as these tastes reduce *Pitta*. Rice, gooseberry, green gram, sugar, honey and bitter food substances, help in controlling *Pitta*.

Winter (mid-November to mid-March)

In winter, our appetite becomes much stronger. The body heat is trapped inside by the cold external environment and this gives rise to a strong digestive fire and the power to digest heavy food. The nights are longer and one feels hungry early in the morning. We require food which is sweet, sour, salty and heavy to digest during this season. Newly harvested grains, oily substances, sugarcane, milk, *urad dal*, meat, etc. are beneficial during winter. Practice of physical exercise, oil-bath, bathing in warm water, sweating, basking in the sun, warm house and woollens are useful in this season. One should avoid consuming cold food and drinks during winter. Coldness is an inherent property of *Vayu*. Therefore cold seasons, cold food and cold drinks, naturally increase *Vayu* in the human body and the body begins to show symptoms of aggravation of *Vayu*. To prevent this, we must physically protect ourselves from the cold. We must also consume warm food and drinks and avoid all food and regimen which can increase *Vayu*.

Spring (mid-March to mid-May)

Spring follows winter. During winter, *Kapha* in the body increases. By the end of winter and with the onset of spring and warmth, the accumulated *Kapha* starts getting loosened and released. This aggravated *Kapha* dampens the digestive fire (*agni*) giving rise to a variety of diseases. People who suffer from respiratory ailments like asthma, which is the consequence of an aggravation of *Kapha*, suffer a great deal during the period of March to May. Coughs and colds are common in this season because of the increase

in *Kapha*. Those who do not pay attention to this and consume *Kapha*-increasing food substances such as curd, buttermilk, sweets, citrus fruits and chilled food and drinks, suffer from an increase of *Kapha* in the respiratory system. Hence, all food and regimen during this season should aim at reducing *Kapha* and improving the digestive fire. Regular use of nasal drops, gargling and physical exercise are to be practised. Honey, *arishta* (fermented herbal preparation), water boiled with herbs like dry ginger and *musta*, and food articles which are pungent (pepper, garlic, etc.), bitter and astringent in taste are beneficial in bringing the aggravated *Kapha* under control. The aggravated *Kapha* gets naturally dried up in the dehydrating heat of summer which follows spring.

Note : The diet and regimen described for each season are meant for persons who are healthy.

SUMMARY

Season	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Agni</i>	Food
Summer (mid-May – mid-July)	↑	↑	↓	Weak	Sweet, liquid, easy to digest, fatty (not dry) and cold (efficacy)
Rainy (mid-July – mid-Sept)	↑↑	↑	↑	Weak	Sweet, sour, salty, easy to digest, fatty and hot (efficacy)
Autumn (mid-Sept – mid-Nov)	↓	↑↑	↓	Weak	Sweet, bitter, astringent, easy to digest, dry (not fatty) and cold (efficacy)

Seasons	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Agni</i>	Food
Early Winter (mid-Nov – mid-Jan)	↑	↓	↑	Strong	Sweet, sour, salty, heavy to digest, fatty and hot (efficacy)
Late Winter (mid-Jan – mid-March)	↑	↓	↑	Strong	Sweet, sour, salty, heavy to digest, fatty (not dry) and hot (efficacy)
Spring (mid-March – mid-May)	↓	↓	↑↑	Weak	Pungent, bitter, astringent, easy to digest, dry (not fatty) and hot (efficacy)

Key : ↑ : increase
 ↑↑ : aggravation
 ↓ : decrease

PLACE AND SEASON

As a rule, the qualities of food and regimen together should be opposed to the qualities of the place, season and one's constitution.

For example, if the place we live in is dry and desert-like, we need to sleep during the day. This will balance the dryness of the place we live in, by increasing the *Kapha* in the body. During spring, we should exercise regularly, as exercise reduces *Kapha* which increases in the body during this season. During the peak of summer (months of May and June) we should consume cool, sweet, liquid and light *Kanji* (gruel), coconut-water and sweet juices. These food substances have qualities which are opposed to the heat and dryness of the summer. Similarly, if a person is fat by constitution, he/she should exercise regularly and not sleep during the day.

The period covering the last week of one season and the first week of the next season is called the meeting of seasons (*rtu sandhi*). The change in food and regimen from one season to the next should not be abrupt. The changes should be introduced gradually during the *rtu sandhi* period.

Fundamental Causes of Diseases

There are three fundamental causes which give rise to diseases in human beings. They are:

- 1) Wrong or unhealthy contact between the sensory organs and their objects
- 2) Violation of laws of nature through our actions
- 3) Abnormalities of seasons and environment.

1) Wrong and unhealthy contact between the sensory organs and their objects can cause diseases. If we take the eye as an example, wrong contact can be of three kinds :

- (a) Too little contact – not using the eye at all
- (b) Too much contact – using the eye excessively and
- (c) Harsh, unpleasant, violent contact – looking at objects which are too bright, too small etc. (An example is looking constantly at a computer or TV screen.)

These three types of contact can be the cause of diseases. Only a normal, measured contact between the eye and its objects can be a foundation for good health. This holds good for all the other sense organs too – ears, tongue, nose and skin.

2) Violation of laws of nature through our actions is also a major cause for diseases. Actions can be of three kinds: through body, speech and mind. Wrong use of these three can cause various diseases. Wrong use can be of three types again: too little use, excessive use and harsh / unpleasant / inappropriate / violent use.

Harsh/inappropriate/violent use of the body means restraining the urges of the body like the urges of urine and stool, violent and cruel behaviour, not observing sexual restraint, etc. Inappropriate use of speech means speaking while eating,

maligning and slandering others, back-biting, abusive language and harsh speech, falsehood and untruth, speech causing dissension, etc. Inappropriate use of the mind means excessive attachment, fear, hatred, jealousy, greed, misunderstanding, etc.

Therefore, Ayurvedic texts say : *Ethical conduct is a foundation for good health.*

3) The third fundamental cause of diseases has to do with abnormalities of the seasons. Each season, when it exhibits its normal (expected) characteristics, is healthy for human beings. If any season exhibits abnormal characteristics, it can cause diseases.

There are three types of seasons: hot, cold and rainy. In these seasons, abnormality may be of three types:

- a) Deficient: Hot season is not hot enough; cold season not cold enough or rainy season has not enough rain.
- b) Excessive: Hot season is excessively hot, cold season excessively cold or rainy season excessively rainy.
- c) Erratic: The hot, cold and rainy seasons exhibit characteristics which are erratic and not typical of these seasons; for example, cold season is hot, or hot season is cold or rainy season has no rain.

Thus in this chapter, we have explained the impact of different seasons on the human body, the rationale for adopting different diets and regimen according to the changing seasons and the three fundamental causes which give rise to diseases.

CHAPTER 26

Panchakarma

इत्यातुरस्वस्थसुखः प्रयोगो बलाद्युषोर्वृद्धिकृदामयमः ।

Panchakarma therapy is useful for both the healthy and the sick.

It promotes strength and longevity of the healthy and cures diseases in the sick.⁸⁷

Panchakarma refers to five types of cleansing of the body. *Pancha* means five and *karma* means action. *Panchakarma* cleansing treatments are unique to Ayurveda. The five cleansing therapies are:

- Vomiting therapy (*Vamana*)
- Purgating therapy (*Virechana*)
- Enema therapy (*Vasti*)
- Nasal medication therapy (*Nasya*)
- Blood-letting therapy (*Raktamokshana*)

These five therapies are used to cure specific problems. They are useful even to healthy individuals for maintaining their health.

Treatment of a disease means bringing the aggravated *dosha(s)* back to equilibrium. There are two ways of doing this: 1) Pacifying the *dosha(s)* with medication (*samanā*), and 2) Expelling the excess *dosha(s)* out of the body by cleansing (*sodhana*).

⁸⁷ *Charaka Sambhita*, cited earlier, *Siddhi Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 53.

When the aggravation of *dosha(s)* is mild, pacification of *dosha(s)* is achieved through medication. When the aggravation of *dosha(s)* is severe, cleansing through *panchakarma* is necessary. These five therapies remove excess *dosha(s)* from the body. In a disease where the *dosha*-aggravation is mild, it can be treated with just medication. However, when the aggravation of *dosha(s)* is severe, merely pacifying them with medication works only as long as the patient is taking the medicines. When the medication is stopped, the disease may reappear. For this reason, cleansing treatment is undertaken so that the disease does not appear again.

VAMANA (Induced Vomiting): When any *dosha* is vitiated, it increases in quantity. For example, in asthma (*tamaka svasa*), *Kapha* is aggravated. It increases in quantity and spreads through all the minute channels and pathways which are involved in respiration. Phlegm thus blocks the passage of air through these fine channels and an asthmatic is unable to breathe. The patient breathes with a great deal of effort. When air passes through the pathways blocked by *Kapha*, it makes a characteristic, whistling sound known as ‘wheezing’.

The excess *Kapha* is removed by *vamana* therapy. The patient undergoing *vamana* therapy is given a relatively large quantity of fat (*sneha*) initially, usually in the form of medicated ghee, for three to seven days. This is followed by oil-application (*abhyanga*) and fomentation (*svedana*). These are the necessary preparatory procedures for *panchakarma* therapies. By these methods, the aggravated *Kapha* is liquefied and loosened from all the minute channels which it had blocked. Following this, the patient is made to vomit, by a systematic procedure. Vomiting brings out the liquified *Kapha* and clears all the choked pathways of respiration, thereby giving immense relief from the disease. Normally, spring (*Vasantha*) is the best season for *vamana* therapy. However, it may be administered at any time of the year, if the need arises.

VIRECHANA (Induced Purging): *Virechana* also follows a similar procedure in order to remove the excess *Pitta*. Purging is effective in all diseases where *Pitta* is the predominant *dosha*, such as jaundice, skin diseases, various abdominal disorders, abscesses, chronic fever, etc. Generally, autumn is the ideal season for purgation therapy because in this season *Pitta* is naturally aggravated in the body. Until recently, taking a purgative once a year used to be a common household practice in India.

VASTI (Enema): When *Vata* is aggravated, it accumulates in various joints and other body parts causing tremendous pain and distress. Through consumption of fats, oil-application and fomentation, the aggravated *Vata* is brought into the intestines and is removed through the anal passage with the help of medicated enemas. The number of medicinal enemas and the types of enema given to a patient depend on the disease for which the treatment is given.

UTTARA VASTI: This cleansing therapy is of two kinds. The first type is administered through the urinary passage, for both men and women, for a variety of urinary disorders. The second type is administered into the vaginal passage in diseases like prolapse of the uterus, pain in the uterine region, excessive menstrual bleeding and infertility.

NASYA (Nasal cleansing): This is a treatment where a medicine is introduced through the nostrils. The nasal passage has a direct access to the head. *Nasya* is vital for all diseases occurring above the shoulder/collar-bone. Different types of headaches, numbness and heaviness of the head, diseases of the eyes, diseases of the throat, abscesses in the neck and throat, nasal blocks, frozen shoulder and many such disorders are treated by nasal medication. As we have already seen, the use of *Anu Tailam* as part of our daily routine prevents diseases above the collar-bone from taking root.

BLOOD-LETTING: Removing the vitiated blood from the site of disease is one of the *panchakarma* therapies. It is called

raktamokshana. Depending on the predominance of *dosha*, different techniques of blood-letting are employed. In general, blood-letting is practised to cure diseases of blood. The use of leeches to remove vitiated blood is one of the effective treatments for skin disorders.

CHAPTER 27

Ayurvedic Home Remedies and First-Aid Kit

तदेव युक्तम् भैषज्यम् यदारोग्याय कल्पते ।

That is an appropriate medicine which bestows health.⁸⁸

This chapter is aimed at providing the readers with some useful tips on home remedies. Traditionally, most of the minor ailments were treated at home by our elders. In our cities where there are no readily available herbs and hence no herbal remedy is possible, it is useful to have a first-aid kit containing medicines that can be used in times of necessity.

A common problem many of us face is that of frequent headaches. This will not trouble us if we are in the habit of using *Anu Tailam* as nasal drops regularly. Your first-aid kit can start with *Anu Tailam* (see page 189).

A good way to prevent constipation is to introduce changes in your diet before trying medicines. Try to consume food which is freshly cooked and warm. Along with food, drink only warm water. Add sufficient oil or ghee in the diet so that food is not too dry. Add full-cream milk to the daily diet. Milk has the property of loosening the bowels. A good medicine to relieve constipation is a spoonful of *Triphala Choornam* mixed in warm water taken internally.

⁸⁸ *Charaka Sambita*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 1, Verse 134.

TRIPHALA⁸⁹

Triphala Choornam is a powder of three fruits, *amalaki*, *hareetaki* and *vibheetaki*, taken in equal quantities. *Triphala* acts as a rejuvenator (*rasayana*) for the body if consumed regularly. It helps reduce fat, *Kapha* and moisture from the body. It is a good medicine for diabetes and all blood-related diseases.

Triphala is useful in skin diseases. It improves digestion and enhances taste. For throat pain, use a warm decoction of *Triphala* for gargling. *Triphala* heals wounds. A cut in the skin can be washed with water boiled with *Triphala* and bandaged with *Triphala Choornam*. It heals rapidly. Common conjunctivitis is treated with washing the eyes with *Triphala* decoction at room temperature. It can also be used as a preventive for conjunctivitis. Intake of *Triphala* with honey and ghee every night at bedtime improves eye-sight.

Pain in the stomach is a common complaint. A warm decoction of (water boiled with) dry ginger or *ajwain*, helps to reduce the discomfort and pain. The pain associated with indigestion needs no medication. The best remedy for such pain is to drink hot water.

If you burn your hand apply *Satadhouta Ghritam* (refer pg. 63). This helps the wound to heal rapidly and without leaving a scar.

⁸⁹ *Ashtanga Hrdayam*, cited earlier, *Sutra Sthana*, Chapter 6, Verse 159; Chapter 8, Verse 44.

For cold, cough, and fever follow a light diet and use only warm water for drinking. A teaspoon of *Thaleesadi Choornam* with honey along with 2 pills of *Sudarsana Choornam* three times a day, for 2-3 days, is good enough to take care of the complaint.

Diarrhoea is a digestive disorder. Diarrhoea is treated with light, easy to digest, liquid, rice gruel prepared from par-boiled rice. It can be mixed with *Ashta Choornam*. Gruel is consumed at room temperature. Juice of pomegranate and buttermilk are ideal for improving digestion. *Dadimashtaka Choornam* is an Ayurvedic powder which can be used with honey or mixed with buttermilk or pomegranate juice to control diarrhoea.

Vomiting can be handled by consuming popped paddy (*laja*). It can be mixed with honey. Both popped paddy and honey possess the property of preventing vomiting.

There are innumerable home remedies, which used to be practised by our elders. By relying on the wisdom of our grandmothers, we can be more self-reliant in handling our health.

[Buy your medicines from a reliable source and ensure that your medicines have been manufactured within the previous six months.]

APPENDIX - I ANAEMIA

The Paradox of Anaemia

Anaemia is a major public health issue in India today. Anaemia can be called our national disease and in fact, it is a national calamity. The figures for anaemia among women and children of India are truly staggering. It is estimated that more than half of all Indian women and three-fourths of Indian children suffer from anaemia. Ayurveda understands and treats anaemia effectively and can offer a solution to this national problem.

In the following, we focus on anaemia among women and children of India. We first examine the nature and extent of the problem facing our women and children.

WOMEN: According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-II, 1998-99), 52% of Indian women are anaemic. However, other estimates put this at a much higher level. In states like Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal more than 60% of the women suffer from anaemia! In Kerala anaemia level is the lowest in the country at 22.7%. Data from the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB-2003) indicate that in India nearly 75% of the pregnant mothers are anaemic. For the eight states for which data are available, anaemia among pregnant mothers ranges from a low of about 50% in Kerala, to a high of about 84% in Madhya Pradesh.

Anaemia has a significant detrimental effect on women's health. Anaemia during pregnancy increases the risk of death or disease of both the mother and the child. In India, anaemia is by far the most significant cause of maternal mortality – that is, death from pregnancy

and childbirth-related causes. Every year more than 100,000 women die from these causes in India. It is estimated that 40% of these maternal deaths are caused by anaemia and anaemia-related complications. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in India is among the highest in the world. MMR in India is about a hundred times that of Sweden and ten times that of China.

Complications that arise during pregnancy and childbirth due to anaemia among pregnant mothers have been well documented. Conditions such as abortions, premature births, bleeding during childbirth and low birth-weight of infants, are associated with anaemia during pregnancy. In general, anaemia increases the susceptibility of women to diseases especially after childbirth. It is known that anaemic mothers give birth to anaemic children. The more severe the anaemia of the mother, the more severely the child is affected.

CHILDREN: The health status of Indian children is a cause for great concern. The health of children seems to be even worse than that of the mothers. The levels of anaemia among infants and children of India are truly worrying. About 75% of Indian children in the age group of 6–35 months are anaemic. In this, the most vulnerable group is that of 12–24 months and in this group anaemia afflicts 77.7% of the children. In states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Punjab more than 80% of the children in the age group of 6–35 months are anaemic. Deficiency in blood at the beginning of life affects all aspects of a child's growth and development. With more than 75% of pregnant mothers chronically anaemic, children are often born with low birth-weight (weight below 2.5 kgs). Children born with low birth-weight are inherently weak. They lack resistance to diseases. Low birth-weight constitutes a major cause for infant mortality – death before the age of 12 months. It is estimated that at least one-third of the newborn in India are of low birth-weight.

National Nutritional Anemia Prophylaxis Programme

It is not that the crisis of anaemia has escaped the attention of the Indian State. During the 4th Five year plan, the Govt. of India initiated the National Nutritional Anaemia Prophylaxis Programme. The stated objective of this programme was to prevent anaemia among mothers and children (1–12 years). The programme involved providing a daily supplement of Iron and Folic Acid tablets to prevent ‘mild’ and ‘moderate’ anaemia. The target groups were ‘at risk’ groups – pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under 12 years of age. As part of this programme, pregnant women were expected to consume 100 tablets of Iron and Folic Acid over a period of 3 months during pregnancy. Advice on so-called ‘iron-rich food’ was given. This programme is now part of the Reproductive and Child Health Programme (RCH) which is operative in every state. However, to say that this programme has been a failure is an understatement. After all these decades, with many hundreds of crores of rupees spent, women and children of India continue to be chronically anaemic.

Ayurvedic approach to Anaemia

Even after several decades, if we have not succeeded in getting rid of anaemia, it only means that we have not understood the disease. We have not understood the various factors related to food and regimen that give rise to anaemia. Anaemia affects blood, one of the seven *dhatus* in the human body. These *dhatus* are formed from the food that we consume. Of these, the second, *rakta* or blood is responsible for the sustenance of life itself. When blood is vitiated, resulting in a loss of its quality and quantity, one is afflicted by anaemia. Therefore, anaemia leads to a whole host of problems affecting the life-sustaining factors in the body.

There are various factors which lead to a deficiency of blood. Improper food is one of the important causes of anaemia. For instance, a diet excessively sour, salty and pungent is one of the causative factors for anaemia. So also is the consumption of alcohol, physical exertion and day-sleep. Excessive physical exertion combined with wrong kind of food can leave anyone anaemic. That is why a majority of Indian women, especially the poor, are anaemic. Therefore, someone who consumes more than the stipulated levels of calories, proteins and fats and even iron, may yet be anaemic if the diet, work and regimen are not proper.

Anaemia and Pregnancy

The food and regimen recommended in Ayurveda for a pregnant mother ensures an anaemia-free pregnancy. This is because the diet and regimen which are beneficial and those which are harmful for a pregnant mother are the same as those for a person with anaemia. It is easy to see that when pregnant mothers are treated in the Ayurvedic way, there is very little chance of their being afflicted by anaemia.

APPENDIX - II CHOLESTEROL AND GHEE

It is a common myth that ghee increases cholesterol and triglycerides. We present four case studies to dispel this myth.

CASE 1

- Patient A, female, age 55, vegetarian, suffering from back pain and knee pain for many years; cholesterol levels high consistently from 1990 to 2009.
- Treatment: Intake of medicated ghee and *vasti* (medicated enema).

GHEE INTAKE

- Name of medicine: *Brhat Chagaladya Ghritam*
- Medicated ghee taken for four days (*snehabana*)
Quantity:
 - Day one: 75 ml
 - Day two: 100 ml
 - Day three: 120 ml
 - Day four: 150 ml
 - Total intake: 445 ml

Readings before and six weeks after the intake of ghee are shown in the table below:

Patient A				
	Before			After
Date	15/7/2006	12/6/2007	2/6/2009	11/6/2009
TC	298	304	263	227
LDL	213	213	187	144
TGL	224	241	149	126

CASE 2

Patient B, male aged 60, on a fat-free diet. His regular diet consists mainly of vegetable soup, salads, rice and fish. Plays golf and travels a lot.

He suffered from pain and restricted movement in the shoulder joint. He had high levels of cholesterol prior to Ayurvedic treatment. As a part of treatment he was administered *Guggulu*

Tikta Ghritam – a medicated ghee in quantities of 60 ml a day – 30 ml twice daily, for a period of two weeks.

Readings before and immediately after the intake of ghee are shown in the table above.

Patient B		
Before		After
Date	8/1/2008	21/3/2008
TC	238	185
LDL	172	125
TGL	86	65

CASE 3

Patient C, male, aged 66, suffering from radiating pain from hip down to the right thigh; not able to lift right leg; pain in the knee joint; on slight exertion feels feverish; mild hearing loss.

He is a vegetarian and was on a low-fat diet as he had a high level of cholesterol for several years consistently.

During Ayurvedic treatment he was prescribed initially *Indukanta Ghritam*, a medicated ghee taken in doses of 30 ml a day for four weeks, along with ghee added to all meals.

He was subsequently prescribed another medicated ghee, *Vastyamayantaka Ghritam*, for his urinary problem and the

Patient C		
Before		After
Date	19/3/2007	7/1/2009
TC	206	182
LDL	132	115
TGL	65	48

following month he was prescribed two other medicated ghees namely, *Dadimadi Ghritam* and *Maha Triphala Ghritam*. Apart from these medicated ghee preparations, he had included ghee in his diet regularly. After four months his cholesterol level showed a reduction for the first time.

CASE 4

Trivikraman had been found to have high triglycerides, when he went for a “master health checkup”. He was administered medicines but his triglyceride levels were erratic and would go as high as 800. When the readings shot up, he would get severe abdominal pains and would need hospitalization. In the hospital, he was maintained on IV fluids and medicines and his cholesterol levels were brought down. The four hospitalizations over the last four years had cost him over two lakhs of rupees. After each hospitalization his medicines would be altered, but the same situation would recur.

The pains were attributed to his pancreas having got affected due to the medication he was on. He was suspected of being an alcoholic, given the damage to his pancreas, and so insurance also became a problem. In the course of this treatment he lost his business, health and peace of mind. He was advised to eat very little at a time so as to reduce the load on his digestive system. His wife cut out ghee and oils from his diet and was at her wit's end when despite everything his triglycerides kept mounting. The readings would touch 800. He gave up on allopathic drugs and turned to Ayurveda. It reduced his triglyceride levels to some extent but then he was on a diet which was totally devoid of ghee and oil.

When he came to Sanjeevani, he was prescribed a medicated ghee and told to add ghee and oil to his diet. In a week his triglyceride levels dropped from 390 to 255. Such a drop had been achieved earlier only with a week of hospitalization and with having been only on IV. He regained his health with this Ayurvedic treatment.

The comment of a senior allopathic physician in this case is that treatment of hyperlipidaemia with statins and fibrates, as is commonly done, is avoidable as it can have very severe side-effects including muscle damage, ending in renal (kidney) failure. In any case, according to Ayurvedic understanding, a patient who requires fats has to be given medicated ghees/oils as fats. The fact of his triglyceride levels being high is irrelevant. And only this treatment succeeded in bringing Trivikraman's triglycerides to normal levels.

GLOSSARY

<i>abhisyandi</i>	property of creating blocks in pathways; property of curd
<i>abhyanga</i>	oil application on body
<i>agni</i>	fire/heat/power of digestion
<i>ama</i>	undigested residue of food
<i>ambu</i>	water/nourishment
<i>anjana</i>	collyrium
<i>apana vayu</i>	Vayu in region below the navel
<i>artava</i>	female reproductive <i>dhatu</i> /menstrual blood
<i>asava /arishta</i>	fermented medicinal preparation
<i>asthi</i>	bone
<i>beeja</i>	seed/semen
<i>choornam</i>	medicinal powder
<i>dai</i>	midwife
<i>dakshinayana</i>	period of the year when the sun travels southwards
<i>dharma</i>	virtue
<i>dhatu</i>	building material of the body (seven)
<i>dinacarya</i>	daily routine
<i>doshas</i>	the disease causing factors <i>Vata, Pitta, Kapha</i>
<i>douhrdini</i>	one with two hearts (woman during the fourth month of pregnancy)
<i>garbha</i>	conception; foetus
<i>ghee</i>	clarified butter

<i>grahani</i>	serious digestive disorders
<i>greeshma</i>	summer
<i>guru</i>	heavy/heavy to digest
<i>hemanta</i>	early winter
<i>jangala mamsa</i>	meat of wild animals from dry, arid forests
<i>kanji</i>	gruel, usually made of rice
<i>Kapha</i>	one of the three <i>doshas</i> ; water / cold aspect of the body
<i>kashaya</i>	medicinal decoction
<i>ksheena artava</i>	scanty bleeding during menstruation
<i>ksheera navaneeta</i>	butter extracted from milk
<i>kshetra</i>	field / woman's reproductive system
<i>laghu</i>	light / easy to digest
<i>leena garbha</i>	lack of growth of foetus / prolonged gestation
<i>majja</i>	bone marrow
<i>mamsa</i>	flesh
<i>marma</i>	vital points in the body
<i>maruttuvacci</i>	midwife
<i>medas</i>	fat
<i>nagodara</i>	lack of growth of foetus / prolonged gestation
<i>nashtartava</i>	loss / absence of menstruation
<i>nasya</i>	nasal medication therapy
<i>panchakarma</i>	five types of cleansing of body
<i>pathyam</i>	regulated and beneficial diet
<i>pichu</i>	application of oil soaked cloth / cotton in any part of body including vagina

<i>Pitta</i>	one of the three doshas; fire /heat aspect of the body
<i>pradara</i>	excessive menstrual bleeding
<i>prakrti</i>	nature of body /constitution
<i>pranayama</i>	regulated breathing
<i>putraghnee</i>	destruction of foetus
<i>rakta</i>	blood
<i>rakta mokshana</i>	blood letting therapy
<i>rasa</i>	liquid formed after digestion of food (the first <i>dhatu</i>)
<i>rasayana</i>	medicine for rejuvenation
<i>rtu</i>	season /right time for conception
<i>rtu sandhi</i>	meeting of seasons
<i>samana</i>	pacifying <i>doshas</i>
<i>sarvangasana</i>	a <i>yogasana</i>
<i>sharad</i>	autumn
<i>sisira</i>	late winter
<i>sneha pana</i>	consumption of measured quantities of fat as medicine or as a preparation for <i>panchakarma</i>
<i>sodhana</i>	cleansing of the body
<i>soma</i>	cold aspect
<i>sonitha</i>	menstrual blood /ovum /female reproductive <i>dhatu</i>
<i>sthira</i>	stable
<i>stree roga</i>	diseases of women
<i>sukha</i>	comfortable
<i>sukra</i>	male reproductive <i>dhatu</i> /sperm
<i>svedana</i>	fomentation
<i>tamaka svasa</i>	a respiratory disease

<i>teekshna</i>	penetrating
<i>trna dhanya</i>	millets
<i>udara</i>	ascites /disease in which stomach is filled with fluid
<i>upavasa</i>	fasting
<i>upavishtaka</i>	lack of growth of foetus /prolonged gestation
<i>uttara vasti</i>	medicated enema through the vaginal or urethral opening
<i>uttarayana</i>	period of the year when the sun travels northwards
<i>vaidya</i>	physician
<i>vajeekarana</i>	treatment for enhancing male fertility
<i>vamana</i>	vomiting therapy
<i>varsha</i>	rainy season
<i>vasantha</i>	spring
<i>vasti</i>	enema therapy /medicated enema
<i>Vata</i>	one of the three <i>doshas</i> /wind
<i>Vata anulomana</i>	proper flow of <i>Vata</i>
<i>Vayu</i>	<i>Vata</i>
<i>veeryam</i>	efficacy (heat and cold)
<i>vega</i>	natural urges
<i>vipareethakarani</i>	a <i>yogasana</i>
<i>virechana</i>	purging therapy
<i>virudhdha ahara</i>	incompatible food
<i>visarpa</i>	herpes, shingles, cellulitis
<i>vyayama</i>	exercise
<i>yogasana</i>	yogic posture
<i>yogavahi</i>	a substance which when added to medicines, enhances their properties

LIST OF HERBS

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Ajamoda	Ajowan	Omam	Ajwain	<i>Trachyspermum roxburghianum</i>
Amalaki	Embelic myrobalan / Indian gooseberry	Nelliukka	Amla	<i>Emblica officinalis / Phyllanthus emblica</i>
Amra	Mango	Mangai	Aam	<i>Mangifera indica</i>
Apamarga	Prickly chaff flower plant	Nayuruvி	Chirchita	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>
Ashoka	Ashoka	Asokam	Ashok	<i>Saraca indica</i>
Ashwagandha	Winter cherry	Amukkura kizhangu	Asgandh	<i>Withania somnifera</i>
Ashwaitha	Peepul	Arasa maram	Pippal / Pipli	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>
Ativisha	Atis root	Athividayam	Atis	<i>Aconitum heterophyllum</i>
Bala	Country Mallow	Kurumthotti/ Chittamutti	Kharethi	<i>Sida cordifolia / S. rhombifolia</i>
Bida lavana	Black salt	Karuppu uppu	Kala namak	
Bilva	Bael tree / Holy fruit tree	Vilvam	Bel	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>
Bisa	Lotus stalk	Tamarai thandu	Kamal kakkadi	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Brhati	Poison berry	Mullankattiri	Badi Kateri	<i>Solanum indicum</i>
Chandana	White sandal tree	Chandanam	Chandan	<i>Santalum album</i>
Ghinchha	Tamarind	Puli	Imli	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>
Dadima	Pomegranate	Madulai	Anar	<i>Punica granatum</i>
Darbha	Thatch grass	Darbaippul	Daabh	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>
Dhanyaka	Coriander	Kothamalli	Dhaniya	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>
Draksha	Common Grape	Dratchai	Angoor	<i>Vitis vinifera</i>
Dugdhika	Asthma weed	Ammappacharis	Doodhi	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>
Duralabha	Indian stinging nettle	Sirukanchori	Dhamasa	<i>Tragia involucrata</i>
Ela	Cardamon	Elam	Elaichi	<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i>
Gokshura	Land caltrops / Puncture vine	Nerinjal	Gokharu	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>
Guduchi	Tinospora Gulancha	Seenthilkodi	Giloy	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>
Guggulu	Indian bdellium tree	Erumaikan kungiliyam	Guggul	<i>Commiphora mukul</i>
Hareetaki	Chebulic myrobalan	Kadukka	Harad	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>
Haridra	Turmeric	Manjal	Haldi	<i>Curcuma longa</i>

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Hingu	Asafoetida	Perunkayam	Hing	Ferula narthex
Ikshu	Sugarcane	Karumbu	Ganna	Saccharum officinarum
Jati / Matati	Common Jasmine	Malligai	Chamelei	Jasminum grandiflorum / J. officinale
Jambu	Jamun / Black plum	Naval	Jamun	Syzygium cumini
Jatiphala	Nutmeg / Mace	Jathikka	Jayphal	Myristica fragrans
Jeeraka	Cumin	Jeerakam	Jeera	Cuminum cyminum
Jeevanti	Holostemma Creeper	Keeralippalai	Chirvel	Holostemma ada - kodien / Leptadenia reticulata
Kala Shaka	Curry leaf tree	Karuveppilai	Karipatha / Meetha nim	Murraya koenigii
Kangu	Foxtail Millet	Tinai	Kangli	Setaria italica
Kantakari	Yellow-berried nightshade	Kantakkattiri	Kateri	Solanum xanthocarpum / S. surattense
Kapiththa	Wood apple	Vilaam	Katbel	Limonia acidissima / Feronia limonia
Karavellaka	Bitter gourd	Pavakka	Karela	Momordica charantia

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Karpasaasthi	Indian cotton	Paruthikkottai	Kapas	<i>Gossypium herbaceum</i>
Kharijura	Date Palm	Pereechampazham	Khajur	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>
Kodrava	Kodo millet	Varagu	Mandva	<i>Paspalum Scrobiculatum</i>
Kramuka / Pugaphala	Betelnut tree	Paku	Supari	<i>Areca catechu</i>
Kusa	Sacrificial grass	Kusa	Kush	<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i>
Kushta	Costus	Koshtam	Kuth	<i>Saussurea lappa</i>
Laja	Popped paddy	Nel pori	Kheel	<i>Oryza sativa</i>
Langali	Malabar glory lily	Kalappai kizhangu	Languli	<i>Gloriosa superba</i>
Lasuna	Garlic	Vellaippundi	Lasun	<i>Allium sativum</i>
Lavanga	Clove	Krambu	Laung	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>
Lodhra	Lodh Tree	Ven lodhram	Lodhra	<i>Symplocos racemosa</i>
Maricha	Black pepper	Milagu	Kali mirch	<i>Piper nigrum</i>
Masha	Black gram	Ulunthu	Urad dal	<i>Vigna mungo</i>
Mayaphala	Oak gall / Magin nut	Masikka	Majuphal	<i>Quercus infectoria</i>
Methika	Fenugreek	Vendayam	Methi	<i>Trigonella foenum</i>

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Mishreya	Fennel	Sombu	Saunf	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
Mulaka	Radish	Mullangi	Muli	<i>Raphanus sativus</i>
Musta	Nut grass / Coco grass	Koraikkizhangu	Nagarmotha	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>
Narikela	Coconut Palm	Thengai	Nariyal	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
Nimba	Neem / Margosa	Vembu	Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
Nimbuka / Jambira	Lime	Elumichai	Nimbu	<i>Citrus limon</i>
Parpataka	Indian Fumitory	Parpatagam	Pitapatra	<i>Hedysotis corymbosa</i>
Pippali	Indian long pepper	Tippali	Pipli	<i>Piper longum</i>
Plaksha	Chinese Banyan	Ithi	Paakar/Pakdi	<i>Ficus microcarpa / retusa</i>
Saindhava	Himalayan rock salt	Induppu	Saindha Namak	
Sarjarasa	Indian dammer	Ven Kungiliyam	Raal	<i>Shorea robusta</i>
Sarshapa	Indian mustard	Kadugu	Sarson	<i>Brassica juncea</i>
Shatavari	Wild asparagus	Thanneervittan kizhangu	Shatamuli	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>
Shigru	Drumstick tree	Murungai	Sahajan	<i>Moringa oleifera / M. pterygosperma</i>

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Shringataka	Water chestnut	Simkara	Singhada	<i>Trapa bispinosa</i>
Shunti	Dry ginger	Sukku	Sonth	<i>Zingiber officianale</i>
Shyama	Indian jalap	Sivathai	Nishoth	<i>Operculina turpethum</i>
Sowveeranjana	Antimony sulphide / Stibnite	Anjanakkal	Surma	
Sunishannaka	European pepperwort/ water clover	Neeraarai	Chauhattiya	<i>Marsilea quadrifolia</i>
Tila	Sesame	Ellu	Til	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>
Twak	Cinnamon	Lavanga pattai	Dalchini	<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>
Udumbara	Cluster fig / Country fig	Atti	Anjeer	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>
Upakunchika	Black cumin / Small fennel	Karunjeerakam	Kalonji	<i>Nigella sativa</i>
Usheera	Cucus	Vettiver	Khas-khas	<i>Vetiveria zizanioides</i>
Vacha	Sweet flag	Vasambu	Bacch	<i>Acorus calamus</i>
Vasa	Malabar nut	Adathodai	Adusa	<i>Adhatoda vasica</i>
Vata	Banyan	Ala maram	Bat / Bargad	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>

Sanskrit	English	Tamil	Hindi	Latin
Vibheetaki	Belleric myrobalan	Tanrikkai	Baheda	Terminalia bellirica
Vidari	Indian kudzu	Paalmudukkan kizhangu / Bhoomi chakkarai Kizhangu	Vidari kand	Pueraria tuberosa
Yashtimadhu	Liquorice	Atimaduram	Mulhetti	Glycyrrhiza glabra
Yava	Barley	Bariarisi / yava dhanyam	Jau	Hordeum vulgare

LIST OF MEDICINES

Medicine	Text
<i>Agastya Rasayanam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Anu Tailam</i>	Charaka Samhita
<i>Ashta Choornam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Ashwagandhadi Choornam</i>	S. Vaidya Sahasra Yogam
<i>Brhat Chagaladya Ghritam</i>	Bhaishajya Ratnavali
<i>Chandraprabha Vati</i>	Sharngadhara Samhita
<i>Dadimadi Ghritam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Dadimashtaka Choornam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Dhanwantara Gutika</i>	Sarvaroga Chikitsa Ratnam
<i>Dhanwantara Tailam</i>	Charaka Samhita
<i>Guggulu Tikta Ghritam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Indukanta Ghritam</i>	Sahasrayogam
<i>Kanakasava</i>	Bhaishajya Ratnavali
<i>Kalyanaka Ghritam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Kalyanaka Kshara</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Kumaryasava</i>	Sharngadhara Samhita
<i>Maha Triphaladya Ghritam</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Mahayogaraja Guggulu</i>	Sharngadhara Samhita
<i>Nisamalaki</i>	Charaka Samhita
<i>Panchakola Choornam</i>	Ashtanga Samgraha
<i>Phala Sarpis</i>	Ashtanga Hridayam
<i>Pravala Panchamritam</i>	Yogaratnakara

Medicine

Pushyanuga Choornam
Rajanyadi Choornam
Rajapravartini Vati
Rasnadi Choornam
Satadhouta Ghritam
Sitopaladi Choornam
Sowbhagya Sunthi
Sudarsana Choornam
Sukhaprasava Ghritam
Sukumara Rasayanam
Thaleesadi Choornam
Thippili Rasayanam
Triphala Choornam
Vastiyamayantaka Ghritam
Vidangasava

Text

Charaka Samhita
Ashtanga Hrdayam
Bhaishajya Ratnavali
Sahasra Yogam
Anubhava Vaidyam
Yogaratnakara
Rasa Ratna Samuccaya
Sharngadhara Samhita
Yoga Grantha
Ashtanga Hrdayam
Charaka Samhita
Agastiyar Paripoornam
Sharngadhara Samhita
Sahasra Yogam
Bhaishajya Ratnavali

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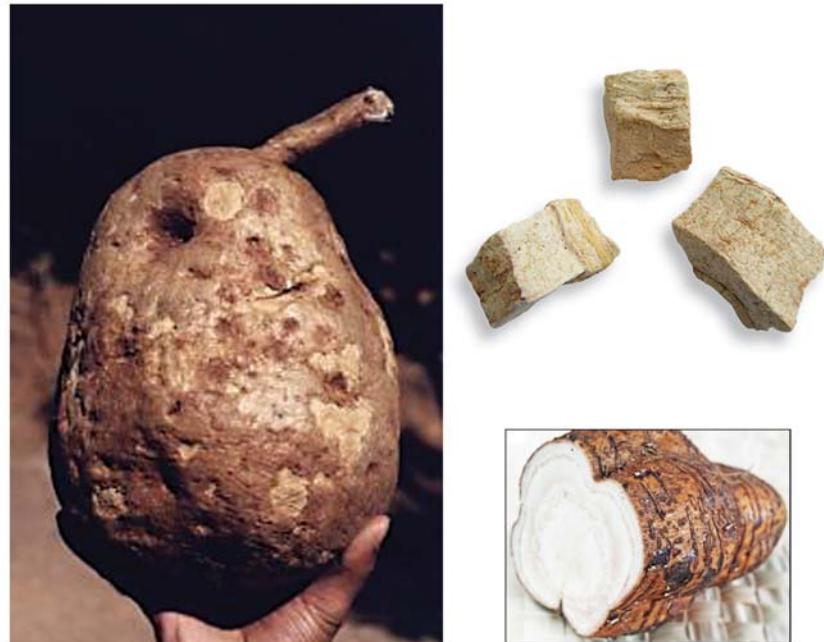
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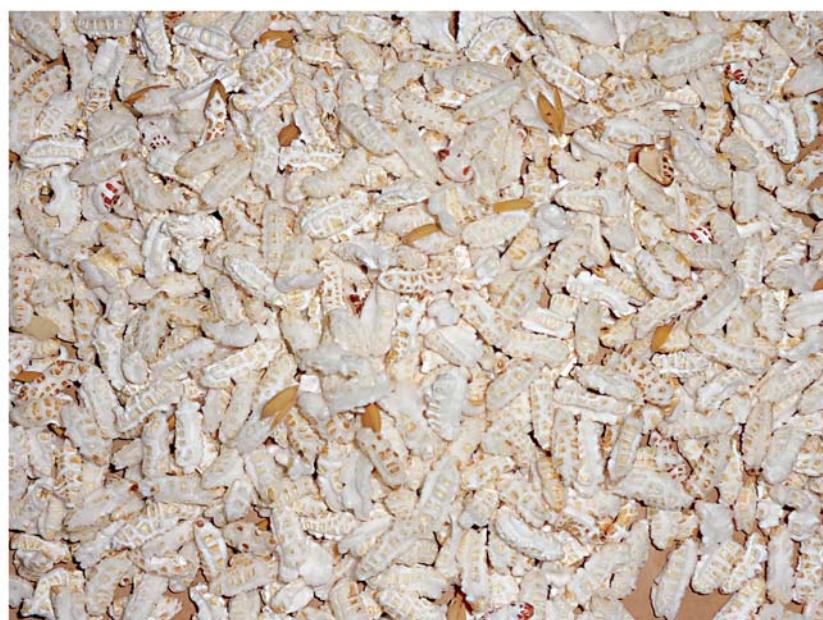
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