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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF WATER AS DESCRIBED IN ASHTANGAHRIDAYA

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ABSTRACT

When thought about the novel gifts of mother nature the name of “water” comes to our mind with air. No creature in the creation can think life without water. Even the non living objects like soil, stone etc. cannot continue their integrity without water. Hence, the nature has made a system to gift the whole creation with water in different forms. In some places it is made available as rain whereas in some places in other form like ice etc. The heap of ice, in due course converts into water which is used by the users collecting from different sources. Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha/Ashtanga Hridaya are combinely designated as “Vrihatrayee” of Ayurveda which means “THE BIG THREE”. These three books (Samhita) are containing almost all informations about health prevailed at that time. Charaka was the founder of medicine (Kayachikitsa), Susruta of Surgery (Shalyatantra) whereas Bagbhata is considered as a scholar who gathered knowledge from Charaka Samhita and Susruta Smhita, practised their concepts, did observation and wrote two books Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha. As per available concept Charaka can be considered as of 3000 years B.C., Susruta of 2000 B.C. and Bagbhata of 6th century A.D. Charaka and Susruta, in addition to their specialized works on medicine and surgery, also did research on other topics which is reflected in their Samhitas. Water is also such a substance that is vividly discussed by the two authors with priority. Following their path Bagbhata has also did extensive study on the natural elements like water and documented his experience in Ashtanga Hridaya/Ashtanga Sangraha. With an aim to avoid unexpected length of the article a discussion on water as per Bagbhata as described in Ashtanga Hridaya is taken as the content of this article which is expected to be informative about the concepts of our ancestors on water.

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INTRODUCTION

Water is considered to be “the life of the livings”. In practical experience it is seen that, to live without water is even cannot be imagined by us. Water has been using in different forms, in different way, for different purposes by the human society since time immemorial. One cannot live without water even for some hours. Expansion, production, generation all are directly or indirectly dependent upon it. Nature has also arranged a continuous chain of supply of water to the earth to assist the livings to get it abundantly.

Water, being unavoidable for the creation, sometimes proves to be the source of untoward effects. If one uses contaminated, dirty water may become the victim of some acute or chronic health problems. Such problems may, sometimes even end in a long lasting suffering / death. Hence the intelligent group of people, since the beginning of civilization, paid their attention towards observation and study of water with reference to it's character, usefulness, harmfulness, pollution, purification etc. Charaka, Susruta and Bagbhata are considered to be the eminent ones among the ancient Indian scholars working specially in the field of health science.

Bagbhata is considered to be a scholar working on the concepts of Charaka and Susruta who authored Ashtanga Hridaya / Ashtanga Samgraha. Like Charaka and Susruta Bagbhata has also discussed elaborately about water in his Samhita. To make it easy to understand the scientific background of the concepts of Acharyya Bagbhata a discussion on water as described in Ashtanga Hridaya is made which is expected to be proved to be informative and inspiratory for the researchers.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study is made with the following aims and objectives

- To study Ashtanga Hridaya in detail to gather the descriptions made on water
- To note all the descriptions on the topic made by the author
- To lay a discussion on the concepts of the author on the topic with the aim to justify with scientific reasonings
- To prepare a summary and conclusion on the observations

- To prepare an article as per protocol and send it for publication in peer reviewed journal for appraisal of the scientific forum.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The whole work was completed by following the below mentioned method

- Ashtanga Hridaya was studied thoroughly in central library of Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha, India
- The descriptions available on water was collected
- All collected informations were discussed with an aim to evaluate with scientific reasonings
- A summary followed by conclusion was framed
- Adding with the references the article was completed and sent to peer reviewed journal for publication.

RESULTS

After a thorough study the following observations were noted –

(1)The author of the book ASHTANGAHRIDAYAM describes water in the chapter DRAVADRAVYA VIGYANIYA under the heading TOYAVARGA (2)Rain water (Gangambu) is said to be beneficial for life (Jivana), nutritious (tarpana), beneficial for heart (hridaya), produces happiness (hladi), increases intelligence (buddhiprabodhana), clean (tanu - swaccha), has no taste (avyaktarasa), of sweet nature (mrasta -swadu), cold (shita), light (laghu), like nectar(amritopama). After falling on the ground this water gets the quality that determines it's usefulness (pathya) and harmfulness (apathya) depending upon the effect of the Sun (arka), the Moon (indu) and Air (maruta) and also according to place (soil)(desha) and time (season) (kala) (1) . (3)Gangyajala – It is said to be the best water for use. It can be identified by the test as – keep some quantity of cooked shali (processed without boiling) rice in a silver utensil (rajatapatra) in the rain water for some time. If it will remain clean (aklinna) and without colour change (abibarna) then it is gangyajala. If the observation will be otherwise then it should be identified to be Samudrajala which should not be used for internal use (pana). This water should only be used during the month of September – October (Ashwina masa) (2) (4)The character of usable water – Rain water (aindrajala) kept in clean, good quality utensil (supatra) which is clean (abipanna) is advised to use regularly. If such water will not be available then bhumistha jala (surface water) having the qualities of antariksha jala and clean (suchi), stored in wide reservoir (prithu - bistritam), collected in the place where the soil is black or white in colour (ashita /sweta desha) and remain in touch of Sun (arka) and air (Pawana) should be used (3) (5)Characters of rejectable water – The water that is having clay, algae, grass, leaf (panka, shaibala, trina, parnavila), not touched by Sunrays -Moonrays -air (suryya-indu-pavanadristam), new rain water (abhibrishtang), thick (ghana), heavy (guru), having froth (fenila), having insect or other aquatic living organisms (jantumata), hot (tapta), causes irritation of the teeth due to excessive cold (dantagrahya atishaitayah), rained in unusual time (anartavam), first rain even of proper season (yaddivymartavang prathamang), mixed with spiders, feces, urine, other poisonous substance etc. (lutaditantubinmutrabishasangshleshadushitam) (4) (6)Quality of river water –Paschimodadhiga (flows towards west) – of strong current (shighrabaha), clear (amolodaka), hence pathya. The water of the rivers flowing towards other direction are apahtya (5). The water of the rivers originating from Himalaya and Malaya mountain (Himabat- Malayodbhuta) is pathya as it gets strong friction with stones resulting in breaking (bikshobha). But when this water becomes stagnated then it becomes the aetiology of worm (krimi), filariasis (sleepada), heart disease (hridroga), throat diseases (kantharoga), diseases of the head (shiroroga) etc. (6) The water of the rivers originating from Prachi, Abanti, Aparanta etc. causes piles (durnama), from Mahendra parvata abdominal diseases (udararoga) and filariasis (sleepada), Sahyadri and bindhya causes skin diseases

(kustha), anaemia (pandu), diseases of the head (siroroga), pariyatraja pacifies the doshas (doshanashak), increases strength and vigor (bala-paurashakaraka), sea water (samudrajala) produces vitiation of tridosha (tridoshakrit) (7) (7)The water of well (kupa), pond (tadaga) etc. follow the quality of the place where it is like dry place (jangala desha), wet place (anupa desha), neither dry nor wet place (sadharana desha) etc. (8) (8)Contra -indication of water – The persons suffering from the diseases like reduced digestion (alpagni), tumour (gulma), anaemia (pandu), abdominal diseases (udara), loose motion (atisara), piles (arsha), irritable bowel syndrome (grahani), emaciating diseases (shosha), oedema (shotha) should not take water. If they become weak due to reduced fluid in the body then also they should take less quantity water frequently (9) (9)Except during sarad and grishma ritu (Autumn and Summer season) a healthy person also should take less quantity of water frequently (10) (10)Benefits of cold water – It is beneficial in alcoholism (madatyaya), depression (glani), fainting (murcha), vomiting (cchardi), fatigue (shrama), delirium (bhrama), thirst (trishna), increase of temperature (ushna), burning sensation (daha), diseases due to vitiation of pitta (pittaroga), diseases due to vitiation of blood (raktaroga), poisoning (bishu) (11) (11)Benefits of warm water (ushnajala) – Increases digestive capacity (deepana, pachana), good for throat (kanthya), light (laghu), warm (ushna), cleans the bladder (bastishodhana), beneficial in hiccough, flatulence, diseases due to vitiation of Vata (hikka, adhma, anilaroga), beneficial in the diseases due to vitiation of kafa (shleshmaroga), person who has undergone purification therapy just before sometime (sadyahshuddhi), acute fever (nabajwara), cough (kasa), indigestion (ama), rhinorrhoea (pinasa), breathing problems (swasa), pain of the flanks (parshwaruk) nashaka (12) (12) Boiled water (when half / one fourth residue is kept after boiling and used in cold state (kwathitashitala jala) does not cause obstruction (anabhisyandi), light (laghu), cures diseases due to vitiation of pitta (pittaroganashak) (13) (13)Water kept overnight (Vyushita jala) causes vitiation of tridosha (tridoshakrit) (14) (14)Coconut water (narikelodaka) is oily (snigdha), sweet (swadu), aphrodisiac (brishya), cold (hima), light (laghu), cures thirst -pitta and vayu (trishna-pitta-anilahara), increases digestive capacity (Deepana), purifies bladder (bastishodhana) (15) (15)Between the rain water (divya jala) and river water (nadeya jala) divyajala is superior (16)

DISCUSSION

From the observations the following points can be considered for discussion

- The scholar Bagbhata has incorporated a special section in a chapter to discuss about water, the most important and unavoidable nature's gift.
- Rain water is described as the best and useful water by the author. He also nicely describes the qualities of rain water. It is also said that, when this rain water falls on the earth it follows the character of the soil where it gets collected and becomes useful or harmful accordingly. The modern concept of freeness of the atmospheric layers from contaminants after a certain height is supporting the opinion. When the rain water falls on the earth and remains collected in the natural reservoirs the quality of the soil affects it's quality. This concept has also scientific justification. The effect of Sunrays, Moonlight and air on the surface water is also important. As the time causes difference in the effect of these 3 hence the concept of "kalaprabhava" is also scientific.
- The concept of Gangya (best for use) and Samudra jala(rejectable) and test described for differentiation needs some further study.
- Advice of preservation of rain water in good quality, clean vessel is self explanatory. Selection criteria of the surface water for use also need no further explanation as these are always the good qualities of a substance. The concept of choice of black or white colour soil where the water reservoir is there has some need of further study.
- The criteria for identification of rejectable water also needs no explanation as the water contaminated with clay, grass, weeds,

insects, excreta etc. are unanimously agreed to be the cause of many diseases. The new rain water washes away the dirtiness of the environment. Hence it's rejectable nature is also undebatable.

- The concept of qualities of river water according to source, character of the soil through which it flows have got scientific background. The rivers originate from the mountains. The height of the source determines the speed of the river. Strong speed produces some beneficial change in water (aeration). Presence of stones, sand etc. helps in purification of water by filtration method. Hence these are also considered as the determinant factors of the character of water. List of the diseases that can be caused by some rivers need further study and survey.
- The relation of the surface water with the character of the soil needs study and analysis. But Ayurvedic classics provide sufficient ground to justify the concept.
- The conditions mentioned as contra-indication of water needs explanation in modern light though Ayurvedic concepts support it. The advice regarding the process of taking water is also very interesting.
- The description of hot water, boiled water, water kept overnight, coconut water etc. with their indications and benefits needs only explanation and simulation with the modern concepts.
- The superiority of rain water in relation to river water is repeatedly described by the author which can be easily justified with the concept of the higher chance of contamination of river water by the contaminants washed and mixed with it.

SUMMARY

The study can be summarized as follows

- Bagbhata was a researcher and scholar of the field of healthcare. He describes a number of interesting facts on water.
- The author has elaborately discussed the characters of rain water, surface water, river water etc. with justification, some of which need modern elaboration and explanation.
- Beautiful description of cold water, warm water, cold water, hot water, coconut water etc. are also interesting and only modern co-relation may increase the acceptability.
- Scientific qualitative analysis, survey study etc. are some necessary activities to be conducted to understand the concepts of Bagbhata on water.
- The study, observation and analysis of Bagbhata on water as mentioned in ASHTANGAHRIDAYAM may be proved to be more beneficial and usable for the human society due to simplicity, authenticity and utility.

CONCLUSION

As conclusion it can be said that, the concept of Bagbhata on water has a great scope of study and research. Systematic work on these concepts with multi disciplinary effort may be proved to be invaluable for the society.

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