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Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya (six essential factors): An Unique tool for the maintenance of human health

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Abstract

Modernization has changed the life style of human beings. Due to change in life style, there is a chance of developing certain abnormalities such as metabolic disorders, mental disorders etc. To prevent the abnormality occurrence, most of the persons are trying to adopt such modalities which keep them fit and healthy. By keeping the demand of maintenance of fitness, there is a need to make awareness about the role of asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya in maintenance of human health. Asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya plays an important role in preservation of existing health. If health is lost, it can be restored by moderation and modification in it. These six essential factors are fundamental in establishing a coordinated biological regularity. The aim of this paper is to focus the effects of asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya on human beings, so that the individuals can choose such routine of life which can prove beneficial for their health.

Keywords: Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya; Metabolic disorders; mental disorders; Moderation; Modification.

1. Introduction

The human beings are continuously breaking the law of nature, even though, they want to live fit as long as possible. In comparison with rural population, the urban suffer more because their daily routine of life is far away from the nature laws. Everything depends on a cause for its occurrence, if these causes are in favour of health, health is gained. In Unani Medicine, it is supposed that there are six causes from which nobody can escape during life known as asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya. These six factors are the efficient causes ^[1] which are responsible for preservation or transition of existing health. These six essential factors are:

- Hawa-e-Muhit (Atmospheric Air)
- Makool-wa-Mashroob (Foods and Drinks)
- Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e-Jismani (Rest and Physical activity)
- Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e- Nafsani (Psychological activity and Repose)
- Naum-wa-Yaqzah (Sleep and Wakefulness)
- Istifragh-wa-Ihtibas (Elimination and Retention) ^[2].

2. Explanation

The word sitta stands for six and because they essentially influence each and every human body is known as asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya. Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya are amongst the important regimens for health preservation and restoration, if lost ^[1]. When all the six factors are in equilibrium, health is maintained; otherwise it needs moderation and modification. The effects of each factor on human health are as follows:

2.1. Hawa-e-Muhit (Atmospheric Air):

All forms of life depend on atmospheric air. Human beings need a continuous supply of air to exist ^[3] because air is a vital rukn of ruh (pneuma) and bodies. It constantly reaches to ruh and become a source of its optimisation and results in tadil-e-ruh (moderation of ruh) ^[2]. Ruh posses quwa (faculties) ^[4]. Quwa and af'al (functions) are complementary to each other ^[2]. Therefore, moderate (mutadil) ruh leads the normal functioning of quwa and af'al.

The two main functions of air are:

- Tarveh is for moderation of hot temperament of ruh. This modification is attained by means of inspiration or inhalation through the lungs.
- Tanqiya (purification) is for expulsion of waste product of ruh. This purification is attained by means of expiration or exhalation.

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Both of these functions occur when the air is in pure form. When it is contaminated, it leads the sue mizaj (mal temperament) of ruh. Therefore, the quality of breathing air is supposed to directly influence the mizaj (temperament) of ruh [2] and thus, either health is maintained or lost. There are certain types of variations that occur in atmospheric air, sometimes these changes are normal (e.g. seasonal) and sometimes are abnormal. The seasonal changes in the air favour the tabiyat-e-insaniyah and become beneficial to health. But when these changes are contradictory to tabiyat-e-insaniyah results in sue mizaj of ruh and qalb (heart) e.g. wabai hawa (epidemic air) [4]. Such types of contradictory changes in the air cannot serve the purpose of maintaining healthy life.

Waba (epidemic) is believed alteration in the 'jauhar' (essence) of air. As a result the air becomes impure and finally, it leads the mal temperament of ruh which become responsible for morbidity or mortality of large number of people [4]. This situation persists until the air become pure. As soon as the air gains normal characteristics, the effected individual gained their normal temperament and health is restored. Therefore, the direct relationship between air and temperament exist. Any contamination in the air may affect the healthy life either slowly or suddenly, it depends upon the intensity of contamination. If the air contamination is intense, it may result in immediate death by suffocation. But the slow effects most commonly linked with air contamination are chronic bronchitis, lung cancer, bronchial asthma, emphysema and respiratory allergies [3].

From the above discussion, the effect of air on human health is clear. So, it is the liability of each and every citizens of the country to prevent the air from any types of contamination, because pure air is effective in attaining health and in preserving it. Today, the government of the developed countries are very much sincere about air pollution and expending a lot of budget.

2.2. Makool-wa-Mashroob (Foods and Drinks)

The word makool stands for foods and mashroob for drinks [4]. In healthy condition food is taken for the preservation of health and for aid of tabiyat but the aim is different in abnormal circumstances [5]. The foods and drinks act upon the body in three ways: by their kaifiyat (quality), by their madda (matter) and by their surat-e-naueia (morph) or vise versa [4]. Therefore, foods and drinks with the help of their quality, madda and morph are believed to ensure healthy state, if taken judiciously.

Foods are categories mainly into three categories such as ghiza latif (light foods) produces thin blood; ghiza kaseef (heavy foods) produces thick blood and ghiza mutadil (moderate foods). They are further subdivided according to their properties either rich or poor in nutrition and of bad chyme or of good chyme [4]. When the individual is taking a balance diet their health is maintained otherwise, they may suffer from malnutrition or other types of abnormalities. In relation to food intake Galen says that food intake should be in accordance with the digestive ability of the stomach and taken in a limit, so that stomach can execute its function easily. If surplus is practiced difficulty may occur such as indigestion. If taken in less quantity, it causes emaciation. Water drinking immediately following meal, should be avoided because it hinders with digestive process. Water must be taken after descending of foods from upper digestive tracts or on severe thirst; this may prove beneficial to digestive process [5]. The water intake with foods either in little or in more quantity is a

very common among the people due to lack of knowledge. By making those aware about its effects on digestive process one can minimise the terrible outcome. The individual must follow their own menu and shifting from one menu to another one is not allowed abruptly because tabiyat is not habituated to digest [5]. Therefore, any intake of food against the individual routine may become harmful, unless their tabiyat become accustomed to digest.

In metropolitan city, too much attention is being paid by people to eating 'correct food' [6] and they take the help of dietitian. But this facility is not available everywhere (especially in rural areas). Therefore, due to lack of dietetic knowledge the people of the community sometime suffer (such as underweight, obesity etc.) [6].

2.3. Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e-Jismani (Rest and Physical activity)

Modernisation changes the life style of both the elders and children's. All the available facilities of present times also play an important role in physical inactivity of individual. We can observe a fact that in free time most of the people including children watching television, using computers, playing video games, playing with mobiles, sitting and reading etc. with little or no physical activity. This lack of physical activity becomes a risk factor for many diseases such as heart attack, anxiety, depression, type 2 diabetes and risk of obesity etc. Therefore, it is the need of hour to educate our community about the role of physical activity and the bad effects of sedentary life.

The effect of harkat (movement) on human body depends on the following types of movement:

- Vigorous or Mild
- Prolonged or Moderate
- Accompanied by rest or not

Whatever an individual executes the movements result in liberation of hararat (heat) [7]. This hararat stimulate the hararat-e-ghareeziyah (innate heat) and dissolve the waste product of the body. In Unani medicine, it is believed that hararat is the tool of all quwa (faculties) especially, quwa tabaiyah (vegetative faculties). Vegetative faculties perform the action of processing in food, metabolism and finally, expel the waste materials out of the body [4]. If these waste materials are getting accumulated and not expelled out of the body regularly, it leads the extinction of hararat-e-ghareeziyah. So, the hararat liberated by physical activity stimulate hararat-e-ghareeziyah [4] and finally, quwa performs the appropriate action either for assimilation or elimination.

Rest, after movement is very essential for health preservation. Because regular movement without rest result in dissolution of ratubat (fluid) and finally, the innate heat becomes affected [4]. Once the innate heat becomes subnormal, the normal metabolic process cannot occur. Rest favour the excellent process of digestion which results in formation of good quality of humour and health depends on humoral balance. But excess in anyone or in both produces baroodat (cold) [4] which affects the action of faculties and finally, the function of the body becomes abnormal. Therefore, the balanced rest and movement exert the optimistic effects on individual health.

2.4. Harkat-wa-Sakoon-e-Nafsani (Psychological activity and Repose)

The psychic movement and rest influence the human health by different ways. In relation to psychic movement, Unani scholars explained different faculties which govern the internal and external functions of the body. They have categorized the faculties as:

- Quwwat-e-Mudarikah (Sensory Faculties)
- Quwwat-e-Muhrikah (Motor Faculties)^[2].

These two faculties are responsible for coordinated psychic movement and thus, all the psychological functions occur normally. All psychic states are followed by both internal or external movement of ruh (pneuma), khun (blood) and hararat-e-ghareeziyah^[4]. The excessive psychic movement leads the dissolution of ruh^[2] and finally, faculties become debilitated. Therefore, functions of the body become abnormal. After the psychic movement, rest is needed for gaining the substitute for the lost substances^[4]. This clearly indicates that the psychic movements cannot be performed continuously. Body is also influenced by psychic states such as anger, sorrow, fear, worry, happiness etc^[7]. The emotional state of a person plays an important role in health maintenance because the negative emotions make a person physically sick and positive emotions boost the immune system^[8]. Therefore, balance with emotions, psychic rest and movement is essential for preservation of existing health or for restoration, if health is lost.

2.5. Naum-wa-Yaqzah (Sleep and Wakefulness)

Sleep and wakefulness are an essential factor of life. Sleep is analogous to rest and wakefulness to movement. The normal physical and psychosocial functions depend on adequate sleep^[8]. An eminent Unani scholar Zakariya Razi delineates that eight hours of sleep is very essential for health. He also says that sleep strengthens the vital faculty, pneuma and promotes digestion^[9] by retaining hararat-e-ghareeziyah. Sleep also work as a great restorer of lost substances during day time^[4]. Therefore, proper sleep prepares the individual for next day performance by energy conservation. When sleep meets a substance ready for digestion and nuzj (coction), it turns it into the blood. If sleep discovers emptiness or a khilt (humour) which is not primed to digestive faculty it disperses it. Excessive sleep causes dullness of the psychic faculties, cold diseases and heaviness of head. On the other hand, excessive wakefulness produces dryness, impairs digestion etc^[7]. Now days, the life becomes so busy that the person does not have time to sleep adequately. This imbalance in routine surely affects the health and may become a major cause for health deterioration.

2.6. Istifragh-wa-Ihtibas (Elimination and Retention)

Unani medicine believed that balanced between istifragh and ihtibas of substance is very important for maintenance of health. The word istifragh stands for the elimination of unnecessary or waste materials out of the body and retention of the substances which must be eliminated causes certain diseases^[10]. In the same way, elimination of the substances which must be retained^[7] causes the abnormal condition. Elimination is carried through normal channels such as passage of urine, stools, sweat, menstrual blood etc. but excess excretion results in abnormal condition^[11]. The excess loss of fluid, salts, and nutrients in the stools, causes abnormalities. The excessive elimination of any matter always causes the coldness and dryness of temperament, directly^[7]. Therefore, if elimination and retention are balanced and take place at the time when they are needed, they are beneficial and maintain health.

All the above mentioned factors are physical or external factors. An individual by maintaining equilibrium in these factors can achieve the aim of fitness for a long period. Asbab-e-Sitta Zaruriyya either directly or indirectly influences the body; therefore, the public awareness plays an important role

for maintaining their fitness or healthy condition. As the routine of life keeps on changing, it becomes necessary to impart the basic knowledge of asbab-e-sitta zaruriyya at the school level by introducing it, as a part of syllabus. So, each and every individual becomes skilled to adopt the healthy life style and may stay healthy as long as possible.

3. Conclusion

These six factors are the efficient causes which are either directly or indirectly responsible for the preservation or transition of existing health. Nobody could escape from these factors during their life. The synchronization in these factors is necessary for the existence of balance living. Any imbalance in the six essential factors may predispose majority of lifestyle diseases. The physicians while treating any patient should always look for any imbalance in essential factors and advice the appropriate regimen, as per requirement of body e.g. avoid heavy spicy food; avoid water drinking during meal or just after meal, etc. Awareness about the role of these factors on human health among the community at any level, especially by adding it as a part of syllabus in bioscience, can make the individual skilled enough to live healthy lifestyle.

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