

Approach to Diabetes in Traditional Systems of Medicine

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Abstract

Diabetes is a chronic metabolic disorder. As per the World Health Organization's estimation, the incidence is rapidly rising and has reached an epidemic-like situation worldwide. India, which accounts for 17% of the total number of diabetes patients in the world, is often referred to as the 'Diabetes Capital of the World'. Despite tremendous advances in medical science, there is still a scarcity of drugs that are both relatively safe and effective for its treatment. Diabetes is mentioned in Ayurvedic and Unani literature, and the use of medicinal plants can be utilised for the management of the disease.

Keywords: Diabetes; Ayurveda; Unani; WHO

Abbreviations

A.N.: Ayurvedic Name; U.N.: Unani Name

In India, traditional systems like Ayurveda and Unani have unique concepts in diagnosing disease symptomatology, pathology and prognosis of Diabetes. As per the literature survey, an Ayurvedic physician Charaka reported the first ancient document on Diabetes from India (1000 BC) [1-5]. He described the disease symptomatology, pathology and prognosis succinctly. The association of frequent urination with a sweet-tasting substance in the urine was first reported in Charaka Samhita, the ancient Ayurvedic medical text [2-5]. The classic Ayurvedic literature from the Vedic period said Diabetes with the nomenclature of "Prameha", and Madhumeha (madhu means 'sweetness and meha means excessive urination) denotes excessive urination and flow of sugar from the body. Another great scholar and Ayurvedic doctor Sushruta characterized Diabetes into two broad categories. In his view, one type of Diabetes is caused due to Beeja Doshas; now, it is claimed as a defect in paternal and maternal genes, and named Sahaja Madhumeha means originated naturally by birth. He characterized the persons with Sahaja Madhumeha as thin, dry-

skinned, and eating less. In modern classification, it corresponds to Type I Diabetes. Another type of Diabetes was named Apathamittaja; in his words, it is acquired Diabetes due to excessive food habits with heavy to digest like dairy products, laziness, sleeping for long hours, living in unhygienic conditions, haphazard lifestyle. Now in modern terms, it is claimed as Diabetes II [3-8].

As per the Ayurvedic system of medicine, Diabetes is a disease difficult to cure completely. Ayurveda can, however, help control Diabetes with proper diet, lifestyle, herbs and treatments. Ayurveda can also treat acute symptoms of the disease to bring relief and moderation.

In the Unani system of medicine, "Ziabetes" is the word which denotes Diabetes and "Ziabetes Shakari for diabetes mellitus. It is stated in most Unani literature, such as Al Qanon, Al Hawi, Kamilus Sana'ah, etc. Arabian scholars have also mentioned it in terms like Atsha, Istisqa-e-Amnas, Mo'attisha, Dulaab, Dawwarah, Barkariyyah, Zalaqul kuliya, Ziyasqoos and Qaramees [10].

As indicated by the Unani system, Ziabetes Shakri (Diabetes) is where the devoured water is gone out through the kidney quickly

after admission by the patient. In this sickness, the patient takes a lot of water by detecting over-the-top thirst and passes all the water he expended with no metabolic change (Raji, 2002). Galen (131-201 AD) defined Diabetes as “Diarrhea Urinosa” (diarrhoea of urine) and “dipsakos (thirsty disease). According to the Unani system, Ziabetes causation depends on mizaji (temperamental) and saakhti (structural) deviation. Any unevenness between mizaj (temperament) and saakht (structure) brings about the disease. In this sickness, the mizaj (temperament) of the kidneys progresses toward becoming Haar (Hot), so they absorb water from blood flow and send it to the urinary bladder instantly because of shortcomings in Quwate Masika (retentive power) [11-13]. It has likewise been depicted that kidneys imbibe the watery substance of blood, yet the urinary bladder does not pull in anything. So kidneys acquire the water from the blood circulation, liver, stomach and digestive organs, on account of which patients feel extreme thirst (polydipsia) [11-14].

With the view of the Unani system by the existence or absence of sugar in the urine, Ziabetes is categorized into two sorts. Ziabetes Sada (Diabetes insipidus) is also called Ziabetes gair shakari. It is described by excessive thirst and unnecessary urination, yet no sugar is in the urine. Ziabetes Shakari (Diabetes mellitus) is portrayed by extreme thirst, urination, and the nearness of sugar in the urine. Despite this, Ziabetes is separated into two sorts by sign and indication. Ziabetes Haar has intense side effects of the Ziabetes with unexpected inception, such as excessive thirst (polydipsia) and increment pee (polyuria), with the manifestation and indication of other warm in flanks and dryness of the body, because of the abundance of the warmth of kidneys. Another type is Ziabetes Barid, in which the thirst and recurrence of pee are similarly less [11-14].

As indicated by prominent Unani physicians, the medications that right the temperament of the kidney and liver or reestablish the retentive energy of kidneys are utilized to oversee “Ziabetes”.

These two traditional systems, Ayurveda and Unani, emphasize that the first and foremost principle of prevention, as well as the treatment of any diabetes, is avoidance of causative factors like excessive intake of Carbohydrate rich diet, milk preparations, the flesh of domestic animals, drinking water of rivers and tanks during rains and floods, new grains and fatty foods which increase

body weight and lipids and avoid sleep during the daytime and suggested to take fibre rich foods and raw vegetables by practicing regular exercise and yoga [6-12].

Conclusion

The classical Ayurvedic and Unani texts explored many herbal therapies and different systems of yoga to control Diabetes. The successive stories from ancient India explored the prevalence of Diabetes mellitus as very low in ancient times with their daily activities and ancient customs. In the modern era Random Civilization, Urbanization, Globalization and adopted westernization completely changed the fate of India with the high prevalence of Diabetes mellitus, and the numbers are increasing at an alarming rate. Research studies revealed in India alone, Diabetes is expected to increase by 79.4 million by 2030, and it unveils the urgency of new herbal drug discovery. Herbal medicines continue to play an important role in diabetic therapy, particularly in developing countries where most people have limited resources and do not have access to modern treatment [16-18]. The use of herbal remedies for the treatment of Diabetes has also been authenticated by WHO [19]. The increase in demand for the benefit of plant-based medicines to treat Diabetes may be due to the side effects associated with using orthodox drugs such as insulin and oral hypoglycemic agents [20]. Another important factor that strengthens the use of plant materials as antidiabetics could be the belief that herbs provide some benefits over and above allopathic medicine and allow the users to feel that they have some control over their choice of medication [21].

Single drugs suggested by traditional systems in the management of Diabetes are *Phyllanthus emblica* fruits (A.N: Amlaki; U.N.: Amla), *Curcuma longa* rhizome (A.N: Haridra; U.N.: Haldi), *Syzygium cumini* seeds (A.N: Jambu; U.N.: Jamun), *Gymnema sylvestre* leaves (A.N: Mesharangi; U.N.: Gurmar Booti), *Trigonella foenum-graecum* seeds, leaves (A.N: Methika; U.N.: Methi), *Aloe vera* Leaf pulp (A.N: Kumari; U.N.: Aelwa), *Azadirachta indica* leaves, stem bark, tender shoots (A.N: Neem; U.N.: Neem), *Pterocarpus marsupium* heartwood (A.N: Vijayasara; U.N.: Bijasar), *Momordica charantia* fruit, seeds (A.N: Karavellaka; U.N.: Karela) etc. [6-12].

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