

REVIEW ARTICLE

Ayurvedic Dietary and Lifestyle Interventions for Prevention of *Hridroga* and Cardiovascular Disorders: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: According to World Health Organization statistics, an estimated 17.9 million people died from cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) in 2016. Looking at the menace of CVDs, the concept of prevention of disease has turned eyes toward Ayurveda. Ayurveda has a defined opinion regarding the diseases of the heart and cardiovascular system, with their prevention and management methods.

Objectives: The present write-up aims to provide insight into the concept of prevention of *hridroga* (CVDs) through dietary and lifestyle modifications according to Ayurveda.

Methodology: Ayurvedic classics, textbooks of clinical medicine, scientific journals, and publications were reviewed to carry out the present work.

Discussion: The etiological factors of *hridroga* revolve around dietary intake and the way of living in one's life. *Hridaya* being the moola of *rasavaha-Srotas*, the vitiated *rasa* creates a *Badha* (interruption) in the *Hridaya*, hence *hridroga* manifests. The mentioned Ayurvedic features, such as *hridklama*, *hridshodha*, *hriddrava*, *nirmathyate*, *toda*, *stabdha*, *sweda moorcha*, are the same as those of CVDs. Hence, an integrative approach is needed to manage and prevent people from *hridroga* in today's age of sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy dietary practices. Maintaining a proper state of *agni* and *dhatuparinaman* is essential for maintaining the health of the heart in toto. Ayurvedic concepts of *hridroga* are quite similar to those of modern medicine, and they play a pivotal role in its management and prevention at the clinical level.

Conclusion: Hence, dietary and lifestyle modifications prove to be of great help in preventing *hridroga* and maintaining the longevity and health of an individual.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels, including coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease,

peripheral arterial disease, rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, deep vein thrombosis, and pulmonary embolism. According to World Health Organization statistics, an estimated 17.9 million people died from CVDs in 2016, representing 31% of all global deaths. Of these deaths, 85% were due to heart attacks and stroke. In 2016, India reported that 63% of total deaths were due to non-communicable diseases, of which 27% were attributed to CVDs.^[1] Looking at the menace of CVDs, the concept of prevention of disease has made the community look toward the science of life and healthy living, Ayurveda.

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Ayurveda, being an established system of medical science, whose major aims are to maintain the quality and longevity of life and to treat the sufferings of the diseased,^[2] has a defined opinion regarding the diseases pertaining to the heart and cardiovascular system, with their prevention and management methods. The concept of *Hridaya* has been known for a long time, with a wide range of opinions regarding the same. *Hridaya* is composed of three words – *Harati* (collects), *Dadaati* (gives), and *Yaati* (moves). Predominantly, dealing with the *Hridaya* pertaining to the cardiovascular system, the explanations of Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita are backed by reasoning, careful observation, and thoughtful study. *Hridaya* has been defined as one of the *Tri-marmas* by Charaka Samhita and among 107 *marmas* by Sushruta Samhita. The *Hridaya*, whose seat is between the breasts and in the thoracic cavity, being a *sira* marma with its *vyapat* as *sadyapranaharatwa*, the organ described here is the heart itself. It is in the heart that 10 major vessels (*dhamanis*), the *prana* and *apana* functions of *vata*, *buddhi*, *indriyas*, and *chetana* reside, akin to the spokes of a wheel connected to a hub.^[3] Moreover, the simile of the lotus to the heart with its closing and opening also points out the *Hridaya* to be the heart.^[4] The present article deals with *Urohridaya* (heart), and whenever the term *Hridaya* appears, it should be taken as synonymous with heart.

1.1. Objectives

The present write-up is aimed to provide an insight into the concept of prevention of *hridroga* (cardiovascular disorders) through dietary and lifestyle modifications based on the classical references in the Ayurvedic literature.

2. METHODOLOGY

For analyzing the dietary and lifestyle modification methods, Ayurvedic classics, textbooks of clinical medicine, scientific journals, and Internet publications were consulted and reviewed for carrying out the present work.

3. REVIEW RESULTS

3.1. Hridroga Spectrum in Ayurveda

While Charaka Samhita considered *hridroga* under the description of the *tri-marmas*, i.e., *Trimarmameyachikitsa*, Sushruta Samhita dedicated a separate *adhyaya* as *Hridroga-pratishedham*. Mentioned herein, the etiological factors of *hridroga* revolve around the dietary intake and the way of living in one's life. The *Nidanas* (etiological factors) can be broadly classified into two:^[5,6]

1. *Aharaja* (diet) – *Atiteekshana*, *ushna-rooksha anna*, *atimatra*, *viruddhashanam*, *adhyashanam*, *ajeernaasatmyam bhojanam*
2. *Viharaja* (lifestyle) – *Ativayayama*, *vegadharanam*, *ativamana*, *ativirechana*, *atibasti-prayoga*, *abhighata*, *Mansika* (psychological) – *chinta*, *bhaya*, *trasa*.

The etiological factors vitiate the three *doshas*, move toward *hridaya*, and vitiate the *rasa*. *Hridaya* being the moola of *rasavaha srotas*, the vitiated *rasa* creates a *Badha* (interruption) in the *hridaya*, hence *hridroga* manifests.^[7] Furthermore, the derangement of *agni* at multiple levels in the body afflicts the *doshas*, hence creating a state of *amarasa* with *malibhuta-kapha* that creates a state of *avarana* in *hridaya dhamanis* (coronary artery), hence vitiating *vyana vayu*, *sadhaka pitta*, and *avlanbaka kapha*, creating a condition involving all three *doshas*, one being the dominant one. This *stanshmshraya* progresses to *vyakta* and defined *Lakshanas* of *Vataja Hridroga* (*hridrava*, *bheda*, *shosham*

stambha, *sammoha*, *tudyate*, *nirmathyate*, *deeryate*, and *paatayate*), *Pittaja Hridroga* (*sntrasa*, *taapa*, *jwara*, *hridklma*, *moorcha*, *sweda*, and *mukhshosha*), *Kapha Hridroga* (*stabdham*, *guru*, *tandraa*, and *agnimardava*), and *Sannipataja Hridroga* (accumulative features) manifests.^[6,7]

The three doshas and their impact on the heart:

- *Vata Dosha* – Governs movement, imbalance leads to arrhythmias and irregular heart rhythms
- *Pitta Dosha* – controls metabolism, imbalance causes inflammation, hypertension, and coronary artery diseases
- *Kapha Dosha* – Maintains structure; excess kapha results in blockages and cholesterol-related issues.

Preventive approaches advised in *Ayurveda* are *Dinacharya* (daily routine), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (Ethical living), *Pathya-Apathya* (diet and lifestyle, meditation, yoga, and pranayama), therapeutics (Herbal formulation and *Panchakarma*), etc.

3.2. CVD

CVD is the most common cause of angina and the most common cause of death worldwide. CAD is the buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries. Plaque causes a narrowing or blockage that results in a heart attack. Symptoms include chest pain or discomfort and shortness of breath. High blood levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, low blood levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, diabetes mellitus (particularly Type 2), smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, high levels of apoprotein B (apo B), and high blood levels of C-reactive protein are considered to be risk factors for CAD. The earlier-mentioned Ayurvedic features, such as *hridklama*, *hridshodha*, *hridrava*, *nirmathyate*, *toda*, *stabdha*, *sweda moorcha*, are the same as those of CVDs. Hence, an integrative approach is needed to manage the *hridroga* (CVDs). Primarily, an Ayurvedic approach is needed to prevent people from *hridroga* in today's age of sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy dietary practices.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Dietary Modifications for Prevention of Hridroga

Eliminating the causative factor has been considered the best remedy for a disease in Ayurveda.^[8] Maintaining a proper state of *agni* and *dhatuparinaman* is essential for maintaining the health of the heart in toto. The following are the mentioned dietary regulations for preventing *hridroga*:

Avoiding access to uptake of *atiteekshana*, *ushna-rooksha anna*, *atimatra*, *viruddhashanam*, *adhyashanam*, *ajeerna*, *asatmyam* food in routine. Uptake of food in a defined quantity (*matra*), not *heena-matra* nor *ati-matra*. *Heena matra* (in reduced quantity) of food is responsible for *bala-varna-upachaya-kshaya*; *udavarta* (a specific cause of *hridroga*), *aayunasha*, *ojas-kshaya*, and 80 types of *vata rogas*. While *atimarta ahara* (in excessive quantity) is responsible for the vitiation of all three *doshas* simultaneously, causing a wide range of disorders, including *hridroga*. Following the concept of healthy eating, even if morning food is somewhat digested, one can take evening food, whereas if evening food is not properly digested till morning, not consuming food till the earlier one gets fully digested and *ahara-pachana lakshanas* appear. Consumption of food regularly before sunset, not in the late night; late night foods lead to derangement of *agni* with affliction of the *doshas*, hence paving a way for multiple disorders, predominantly *hridrogas* due to vitiation of *rasa* at the primary level.

Hridaya being the seat of *chetana-manas* and *buddhi*; the *Hridya* (good for the heart) and *manas-priyam* (likened) food articles should be partaken to fulfil the needs of the body. *Pathya ahara*, i.e., good for the *patha* (*srotas*), strengthens *dhatu*s and Hridaya, hence should be partaken. *Hitakara* (good for maintaining the proper functioning of an organ) type of *ahara* should be consumed regularly, following the eight-fold principles of food uptake (*ashta-aahar-vidhi-visheshayatan*) for the prevention of diseases.

4.1.1 Pathya for Hridroga

Taking into account *Agni*, *Kala* and *Matra*, *Jangala Mamasarasa*, *Rakta Shali*, *Kulattha* And *Mudga Yoosha*, *Rasala Mishtaamra*, *Vilepi*, *Khada Yoosha*, *Kamblika Yoosha*, *Shadava*, *Shleshmaataka*, *Patola*, *Purana Kooshmanda*, *Aragvadha*, *Navamulaka*, *Eranda Tailam*, *Gangambu*, *Saindhava Lavana*, *Draksha*, *Takra*, *Purana Guda*, *Shunthi*, *Yavani*, *Lasuna*, *Kushtha*, *Ardra*, *Sauveeraka*, *Saktu*, *Madhu*, *Varuni*, *Chandana*, *Chincha Panaka*, *Tambula* are *pathya* in *hridroga* hence could be utilized for preventive purpose also. Regular usage of *Rasayana* strengthens bodily *Dhatu*s and *Ojas*, hence strengthening *Hridya*.^[9]

4.1.2. Apathya for Hridroga

Patra-Shaka, *Kshara*, *Madhuka*, *Dantakashtha*, *Ahridya Ahara*.

4.2. Lifestyle Modification for Prevention of Hridroga

Avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption. Maintaining an optimal blood pressure. Aiming for a healthy weight, not only for adults or the elderly but for children as well. Controlling calorie intake and physical exercise are ways of maintaining a healthy weight. Body mass index could be helpful for analyzing oneself. CAD and stress have a defined relationship as per a few scientific studies. Stress may be a risk factor for CAD; hence, stress management and improving quality of life are needed. Research even shows that stress reaction in young adults predicts middle-aged CAD risk. Including *dhayana-pranayama-panchakarma-yoga* can help in stress reduction.

4.2.1. Yogasana for Hridroga

Yoga helps to maintain physical fitness, decreases stress and anxiety, and balances the autonomic nervous system. Yoga combines movements of breath and awareness to support heart functions and blood flow. It helps lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and strengthen the cardiovascular system. By practicing the asana told in *Patanjali Yogasutram*, one can destroy diseases and bring balance to doshas, stabilize the nervous system, and regulate circulation. Light exercise, *Shavasana*, *Surya Namaskara*, and *Pranayama* are good for heart health. *Tadasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Trikonasana*, *Veerabhadrasana*, *Cat pose*, *Adhomukha svanasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Setubandasana*, *Ardha matsendriasana* are other helpful *asanas*.^[10]

4.2.2. Pranayama for Hridroga

“*Prana*” means breath, and “*ayama*” means to extend. Regulation of breath or control of *prana* is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after securing that steadiness of posture, i.e., *asana*. *Anuloma Viloma pranayama*, *Ujjayi pranayama*, *Sheetali pranayama*, etc.^[11] *Dhyana*, which is a profound meditation and is a continuous flow of cognition toward that object, also proves beneficial.

4.2.3. Achara Rasayana

To protect *hridaya*. Treating *hridaya* like a *mitra* (friend), daily intake of *Sarpi*, *Dadhi*, *Ksheera*, *Madhu*, *Mamsa Rasa*, etc.

4.2.4. Pathya for Hridroga

Samyak Nitya Vyayama, *Dharaneeya Vega Dharana*, *Sadvritta Palana*, *Achara Rasayana*, *Pranayama*, and *Yoga*.

4.2.5. Apathya for Hridroga

Vegavarodha, *Vriuddhahara*, *Raktamokshana*, *Ati-Vaman-Virechana*, *Chinta*, *Krodha*, *Moha*, *Lobha*, *Bhaya*, *Traasa*, *Ati-Vyayama*, and *Ati-Shrama*.

4.2.6. Drugs for Hridroga

In *Charaka Samhita*, 10 drugs are introduced under the “*Hridya Mahakashaya*” group that comprises drugs which contain *Amla rasa* and are rich in Vitamin C.: *Amra*, *Amrataka*, *Lakucha*, *Karamarda*, *Vrikshamla*, *Amlavetas*, *Kuvala*, *Badar*, *Dadima*, and *Matulunga*. These drugs come under *Hridya mahakashaya*.^[12] These drugs work by virtue of their *Rasa*. *Hridya Mahakashaya* enlists fruits that contain *Amla rasa* and are rich in antioxidants, which help in the secondary prevention of heart diseases and Vitamin C. According to Ayurveda, the *Amla rasa* is one of the six primary tastes, and it is believed to have specific qualities and effects on the body. In the context of the heart, it is said that *Amla rasa* nourishes or rejuvenates the heart, as indicated by the statement “*Hridyam Tarpayati*,” which means “nourishes the heart.”^[11] In other texts, such as *Yogaratanakara*, *Amla rasa* is quoted as “*Hridaya Manaso Hitam*,” thus, it is more evident that these drugs are beneficial to the heart as well as the mind and help in reducing stress. Some *medohara* drugs explained in the *samhita* that lower the abnormal lipids in the blood, such as *Guggulu*, *lasuna*, *arjuna*, *triphal*, *guduchi*, *gokshura*, and *punarnava*.

Vitamin C is essential for collagen synthesis, which repairs inflamed arteries and strengthens vessel walls. Without enough Vitamin C, the body cannot make collagen, slow healing and weakened tissues. Vitamin C also reduces arterial inflammation, supports blood pressure and cholesterol regulation, boosts immunity, aids adrenal health, and helps form key brain molecules for mood and stress resistance.^[13] These herbs offer more than cardio-protection; they serve as dietary supplements rich in natural antioxidants, Vitamin C, and flavonoids. Their therapeutic qualities include diuretic, anti-hyperlipidemic, antimicrobial, and anti-stress effects, aiding cardiac ailment treatment. The sour taste enhances *Agneesandhukshana* and *Dhatwagnideepana*, restores vitiated *Vayu*, and alleviates *Ama*, addressing the pathophysiology of *Hridyaroga*.^[14,15] These drugs contain phytochemicals such as alkaloids, polyphenols, glycosides, triterpenoids, tannins, flavonoids, and beta carotene that serve as strong antioxidants, anti-inflammatories, immune-modulatory, antidiabetics, anxiolytics, and antimicrobial agents. They help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, key contributors to CVDs.

5. CONCLUSION

Hridroga has a wide spectrum approach in maintaining and preventing the diseases of the cardiovascular system mentioned in contemporary science. Ayurvedic concepts of *Hridroga* are quite similar to those of modern medicine, and they play a pivotal role in its management and prevention at the clinical level. Since the description and symptomatology of *hridroga* are in parlance to the CAD, the utility of *hridroga* spectrum becomes very significant in the present scenario of prevailing CAD or cardiovascular disorders. Ayurveda, with its holistic and preventive focus, addresses risk factors at their root-diet, lifestyle, stress, and systemic imbalances – long before they develop into overt pathology. To conclude, dietary and lifestyle modifications

prove to be of great help in preventing *hridroga* spectrum disorders and maintaining the longevity and health of an individual.

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7. AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

All the authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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9. ETHICAL STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it was a review article with data obtained through a literature search.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible via databases.

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