



AN INNOVATIVE ROLE OF AYURVEDA FOR THE OPTIMIZATION OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest holistic sciences of life. It provides an integrated approach to preventing and treating illness through lifestyle interventions and natural therapies. *Ayurveda* not only treats a person's physical complaints, but also it helps in improving mental state of a person. There are many simple codes described in texts like *aaharaja* and *viharaja* factors, which are very much helpful to stop in the manifestation of today's lifestyle disorders such as Diabetes, obesity, hypertension and many more which primarily results from stress, improper diet, sleep and irregular sedentary lifestyle. In order to achieve and maintain healthy living (*Swasthay Lakshanani*), it is essential to take proper *aahara* and follow different codes of *vihara* given in ayurvedic texts accordingly. In this context, the primary aim of this article is to discuss about various practices concerned with *aaharaja* (dietary habits) and *viharaja* (lifestyle) to get better and healthy life.

KEYWORDS: *Aahara, Vihara, Swasthya, Health.*

INTRODUCTION

Health: The World Health Organisation in 1946 defined health as a 'A complete state of mental, physical and social well-being not merely the absence of disease.'^[1]

According to Ayurveda health is defined as
Samadosha Samagni ca sama dhatu malakriyah
Prasanna atma indriya manah swastha iti abhidhiyate.

A person is said to be *Swastha* or healthy, who has balanced state of *dosha*, *agni*, *dhatu*, proper elimination of mala from the body, and whose soul, senses and mind are full amused.^[2]

Ayurveda give potential stress on *Aahara* and *Vihara vidhi* to be used *Yuktivat* (planned manner) which includes *Aahara Matra*, *Dinacharya (Day Routine)*, *Rituchrya (Seasonal Routine)*, *Sadavrut* (ideal routines), *Nidra (Sleep)*, Avoidance of *Vegadharana*, *Panchkarma* (five detoxification and bio-purification), *Rasayana* therapy etc. The inclusive utilization of all these treatment modalities has a great effect on lifestyle disorders which gives full beneficial result in body, provided that a person does not indulge in *ahita* and maintains rules prescribes for that. *Ayurvedic* lifestyle promotes physical, mental as well as social health and ultimately leads to symptomatic improvement and promotes the quality of life and then help in prevention

and management of disease. *Charka Samhita* has given *Swastha Chatushka* which describes all above factors elaborately. Some of these prominent practices related to *aahara* and *vihara* are discussed below.

Lifestyle: Defines as the way a person lives. This includes pattern of social relations, consumption, entertainment and dress. A lifestyle typically also reflects an individual's attitude value or worldview. A healthy lifestyle is generally characterised as a balanced life in which one makes "wise choices".

Importance of having a Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle is a valuable resource for reducing the incidence and impact of healthy problems, for recovery, for coping with life stressors and for improving quality of life. It plays a huge part in how healthy we are. Person's lifestyle is the only cause to born lifestyle disorder. Conditions such as Heart Diseases, Cancer, Diabetes, Obesity, joint related problems and mental illness are the diseases which are attain only be living a sedentary lifestyle. So many of these health problems can be prevented or at least their occurrence postponed by having a healthy lifestyle.

Components (keys) of Healthy Lifestyle described in Ayurveda

1. Aahara according to your Prakriti

"*Dosha-dhatu-mala mulam hi shariram*"^[3] *Doshas* are mainly contributes in the formation of *garbha-prakriti*. The dosha which are predominantly present in *shukra* and *shonita* during fertilization, directly leads to formation of prakriti which never changed throughout the life.^[4] Whether a person persists *vataja*, *pittaja*, *kaphaja*, or *dwandaja prakriti*, the most important element for maintaining balance is to having the diet that suits constitution or prakriti of a person.^[5] Ayurvedic texts says that, the prakriti of *aaharaa* i.e., *guru-laghu*, *sheet-ushana* etc. should be always opposite to the *shariraja prakriti* of a person. After having *aahara* according to different regime described in ayurveda like *ashta-aahara vidhi vishesh aayatana*.^[6] and *aahara vidhi vidhana* can help person in poor health to restore balance state in many ways. Finding the right diet, based on our constitution, is the first and most important step in attaining a healthy lifestyle.

2. Rasayana Therapy (REJUVENATORS)

A variety of ancient supplements has been described in different *Samhita's* in context of *Rasayana* therapy which ultimately promotes the quality of healthy life. It helps to rejuvenates the body and the maintained adulthood, vitality, dynamic and energetic state. *Rasayana sevana* promotes various effects in which body feels young and refreshed.^[7] Rejuvenators are not only improving the standard of healthy living but also helps to fight different chronic disease also it can be used in any stage of life, whether in children or in geriatric stage So, including *rasayana* therapy are powerful solutions to problems whatever upsets balance and health, ultimately promotes to live healthy life.^[8]

sMatravat Aahara (Importance of food taken in proper quantity)

'*Aahara*' is called as a *Mahabhaishajaya* in *Kasyapa samhita*. There is no medicine equivalent to food. If a person is taking a proper diet, it is possible to make a person disease free. Taken in Appropriate quantity, food certainly helps the individual in bringing about strength, complexion happiness and longevity without disturbing the equilibrium of *Dhatu*s and *Doshas* of the body.^[9] Taking *aahara* in *sama-matra* also helps to maintain digestive fire which is said to be the main cause for origin of many diseases. As described in the *Samhita's* that *atimatra-ashan* leads to *sarvadasha-prakopa* which itself being the main cause for disease manifestation.^[10] So *aahara* should be in proper quantity for having healthy and disease-free life.

3. Aahara according to Agni (Digestive fire)

Quantity of food to be taken is decided according to digestive capacity of *Agni*.^[11] If *Agni* is weak then one should take food only once or should take food in less quantity. Food taken once i.e., at one time which gets

digested completely and properly, is said to be *Matra/Quantity* of food to be taken.^[12]

Considering four parts of the stomach, one should take food such as 2 parts of the stomach get filled by the food taken, one part to be filled by liquid matter and one part should be kept free for the '*Vayu*' to move.^[13] The digestion capacity of the person which varies from person to person and so does the *Matra*. The proper quantity of food also depends upon the nature of food i.e., *Guru* and *Laghu Aahara*. If the food article is *Guru* only three fourth or half of the stomach capacity is to be filled. In case of *Laghu Aahara Dravya* excessive intake is not conducive to maintenance of the power of the digestion and metabolism.^[14]

4. Aahara Vidhi-Vidhana (Rules of taking food)

Nowadays, People are well aware about what to eat, but least concern about how to eat. *Aahara* and its related codes and conducts have been long forgotten, which are responsible for manifestation of various diseases. As food along with its ways of consumption plays an important role in Etio-pathogenesis, control and prevention of disease. That's why, the standard protocols to consume food are very important. These protocols are well explained by our ancient science *Ayurveda* as *Aahara-Vidhi Vidhana*. It includes the twelve disciplines of eating as described by *Aacharya Charaka like food should be hot, unctuous*, consuming required quantity of food fulfilling the appetite, non-antagonist in potency, without talking or laughing, etc. helps in metabolism and proper digestion of food;^[15] so that no digestion related problems like Hyperacidity, abdominal distention Constipation will be occurred.

5. Virudha Aahara (Unbalanced diet)

Virudha literally means opposition. *Virudha* defined as a food, drinks and medicines which dislodges dosha from its site but does not expel it out.^[16] Eighteen types of *Virudha Aahara* mentioned in *Samhita's* (*Desha, Kala, Agni, Matra, Veerya Virudha* etc.).^[17] Regular intake of *virudha aahara* vitiates *dosha's* and *Rasaadi Dhatu's* and becomes the cause for manifestation of many diseases. *Virudha Aahara* is unwholesome to body causing disturbance of digestive fire which further responsible for the production of acute and chronic poison.^[18]

It affects our health completely in every aspect includes physical illness (skin disorders, constipation, hyperacidity, impotence etc.) and also psychosomatic disorders too. So, all those types of food which are categorised under *Virudha* should not be taken at all for having diseased free and healthy life.^[19]

Role of Vihara in Healthy Lifestyle

Likewise, *Aahara, Vihara* has also a great importance in to maintain healthy or disease-free life. If a person follows the regimen described below properly then many of the lifestyle disorder can never be affected to him.

1. *Dinacharya* (Daily Regimen)

Dinacharya simply means day-routine or healthy and sustainable rules of lifestyle followed by a person for being healthy.^[20] To achieve this, *Ayurveda* describes a specific routine in general and also focus on *Prakriti* (constitution-based) regimen of every individual. *Dinacharya* practises include waking up early in the morning, elimination of our natural wastes, maintaining oral hygiene (cleaning teeth and tongue, gargling etc.), exercising regularly, body massage, bathing, clothing, eye care, nasal care, etc.^[21] *Dinacharya* is a concept in ayurveda that looks at the cycles of nature and bases daily activities around these cycles which is useful for promoting health to a great extent and also offers to prevent many lifestyle disorders by keeping *dosha*'s in balanced state.

2. *Ritucharya* (Seasonal regimen)

Ritucharya is the ancient ayurvedic practice and is comprised of two words, "Ritu" which means season and "Charya" which means Regimen.^[22] It consists of ayurvedic diet routine lifestyle pattern to cope with the both physical and mental impacts caused due to seasonal changes. It enables person to increase physical and mental strength to fight with seasonal diseases and keeps fit and healthy throughout the year. There is a link between *dosha*'s and *ritu*, so to pacify the vitiated *dosha*'s in its respective *ritu* one has to eat diet and follow the same routine as described in texts for having diseased free or healthy life.

3. *Nidra* (sleep)

The three main pillars of life is *aahara*, *nidra* and *brahmacharya* are termed as *traya-upstambha*, which plays an important role in maintenance of health in human beings.^[23] Ayurveda explains many benefits of having proper sleep that happiness and sorrow, strength and weakness, growth and wasting, virility and impotence, even Knowledge and ignorance and last one the most important is the survival of life is completely depending on the sleep.^[24] So *nidra* is the most essential factors responsible for a healthy life. Good sleep adds quality to the life. *Ayurveda* describes many rules regarding sleep like when to sleep, whom to sleep, whom not to sleep, how much time a good sleep comprises etc. because a quality sleep nourishes and re-energised our body and mind status.^[25] Therefore, it is necessary to have a good sleep for maintaining healthy and joyful life.

4. *Sadvritta* (Code of Conduct)

Literal meaning of *Sadvritta* is good behaviour. A balanced state of body, mind, social and spiritual well-being is called as health. In order to get this, there are certain code of conduct describe in ayurveda known as *Sadvritta*. It includes ethical, social, mental, moral, and physical conduct which improves the complete health and well-being of individuals. It can be categorised under *Adravyabut-chikitsa* in which without using a drug, person can attain healthy and peaceful life. *Sadvritta* explains many codes of conduct such as avoiding being

greedy, always be honest & truthful, having morals, and avoiding hatred and jealousy.^[26] Also maintaining general hygiene, diet, exercise, and sexual life and can prevent both physical and mental lifestyle disorders.

5. *Yoga & Dhyana* (Meditation)

'Yoga' in Sanskrit means 'union'. It means the act of combining the body with the mind through exercise.^[27] Different types of *yogasana* have been described in *ayurvedic* texts in general and some are according to diseases. *Dhyana* improves your concentration, mind stability, grasping power, spiritual believe and helps to achieve mental peace. Regular practicing of yoga helps to improve digestive fire, stamina and immunity which ultimately makes body resistant against several diseases and makes individual healthier.

Regular use of *Panchkarma* techniques

Panchkarma is the most advantageous treatment method describes in *ayurveda* which is helpful to detoxifies the body and mind, and also balances the physiological functions.^[28] It removes vitiated *doshas* from the nearest possible route to attain the equilibrium of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala* in the body and rejuvenates the body cells and tissues causing delayed ageing. It is clearly mentioned in texts that the vitiated *doshas* which are treated by *shaman chikitsa* can be reoccur but *shodhana chikitsa* works on to complete eradication of disease from its roots itself.^[29] In simple words *panchkarma* rejuvenates and strengthens the body and improves immune system which ultimately helps to keeps body free from all types of lifestyle diseases and makes it healthier.

CONCLUSION

Prevention is better than cure and this can be achieved only by following different *ayurvedic* regimen. These *Ayurvedic Aahara* and *Vihara*, if practised daily, it will definitely give excellent results in the prevention or cure of diseases which is the primary goal of ayurveda. It helps to live healthy joyful, and diseased free life. Many physical and mental disorders are arising in number day-by-day due to having sedentary lifestyle and complete negligence of ideal dietary and behavioural pattern and in this regard *ayurveda* not only corrects it completely but also treat its root cause with no any side effects and complications.

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