

ROLE OF ACHARA RASAYANA - IN PREVENTION AND CURE THE DISEASES

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda “the science of life” deals with various dimensions of human being. In this age old science, psychological factors have been given equal importance as like physiological factors with respect to the aetiology of various diseases. All the therapies in Ayurveda aim to provide complete health – physical, mental and spiritual. *Rasayana* therapy ensures the same, by promoting health, immunity and in turn longevity. Though there are so many rejuvenation therapies, *Achara Rasayana* is mainly advocated for psychosomatic disorders. This type does not require internal administration of rejuvenating formulas. ‘*Achara*’ literally means “discipline”. Following the rules related to eating, sleeping and celibacy create rejuvenation in a person. In addition, following a *Sattvika* diet and life style, speaking the truth, practising non-violence, living in harmony with the nature, following social ethics and conducts are all included under this category of *Rasayana*. Proper implementation of these principles results in qualitative promotion of the *Dhatu*s and increases the quantity and quality of *Ojas*, the vital factor concerned with health and immunity. Hence, a person can get the same benefits as attained by internal administration of *Rasayana*. Recent research has proved that Anger and hostility are associated with CHD outcomes and predict the development of atrial fibrillation (J American College of Cardiology 2009 Mar 17; 53(11):936-46) and (Circulation. 2004 Mar 16; 109(10):1267-71). The clear link between stress due to unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships and cardiovascular disease is scientifically demonstrated (Circulation, 24:1173-84). Similarly religious involvement or spiritual well-being affect development of coronary artery disease and helps in stress management (J Prev Med Public Health. 2010 Sep; 43(5):445-50). Here is an earnest attempt to clarify the role of *Achara Rasayana* in cure and prevention of diseases.

Keywords: *Rasayana*, *Achara Rasayana*, Psychosomatic disorders, *Sattvika diet*, *Dhatu*s, *Ojas*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda conceives in life (*Ayu*) as a four dimensional entity i.e. *Sarirendriya Satvatma Samyoga*.¹ Accordingly it adopts a comprehensive psychosomatic-spiritual approach to preservation of health and cure of diseases. Both are interrelated. Ayurveda offers a system of natural healing that is very complete both in terms of its treatments

and also in its understanding of the human being. It offers a vision of healing for curing disease, for preventative health and ultimately for spiritual liberation¹. As like the *Vedas* and *Darshanas* the ultimate goal of Ayurveda is too get *Moksha*. For this purpose it mainly concentrates to attain a complete physical, mental and spiritual health. Sushruta defines healthy person as *Swastha*

– a state of total equilibrium where the sensory, mental, emotional and spiritual elements are harmoniously balanced.ⁱⁱ Thus health is not only attainment of physical well being but also mental and spiritual happiness. Then only person is considered as completely healthy. Along with the *Tridoshas*, Ayurveda also explains *Trigunas* (*Satva, Raja and Tama*) and two *Manasic Doshas* viz. *Rajas* and *Tamas*ⁱⁱⁱ. There are three main causes for the diseases i.e. *Asatmendriyaartha samyoga, Prajnaparadha and Parinama/ Kala*.¹ The *Atiyoga, Ayoga* and *Mithyayoga* of these three factors are the main cause for all the diseases where as their *Samyakyoga* leads to health.^{1,3} The first one is directly related to the *Indriyas/Sense organs*. *Prajnaparadha* is directly related to the mind and spirituality. Ayurveda clearly explains the bad deeds of *Mana/mind, Kaya/body* and *Vak/speech* are come under *Prajnaparadha* and should not be done in any condition.¹ The treatment for this is considered as *Dhi vijnana, Driti vijnana and Atmadi Vijnana*,^{1, 3} – Self understanding or spiritual healing. Among the three kind of mental constitution, *Saatwika parkruti* is the best one as it is *Laghu, Prakashaka* etc.^{iv} this is achieved only when we follow proper diet, dietetics, good conducts and behaviors. In this regard we find the explanation of *Dinacharya, Rutucharya, Sadvritta, Swasthavrutta, Achara rasayana, Ahara vidhi vidhana* etc factors mentioned by the great sages of Ayurveda for attainment of Physical, Mental and Spiritual health. The branch of *Rasayana* or Rejuvenation is one of the eight specialized branches of Ayurveda, defined as the one which does the *Vayahasthapana, medhya and balakara* and also which is capable of curing the diseases.¹ The

literal meaning of *Rasayana* is “augmentation of *rasa*”, the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food. *Rasa* provides nutrition enhances the immunity and sustains life.

Classification of *Rasayana*

1. In *Charak Samhita Chikitsa Sthana* chapter 1-1¹, *Rasayana* is classified in two groups-

- a. *Kutipraveshaka (mahaphalaprada)*
- b. *Vatatapika (suryamaruta)*

In *Charak Samhita* 3 types of *Rasayana* are also mentioned¹-

- a. *Medhya Rasayana*
- b. *Dronipraveshika*
- c. *Acharya Rasayana*

2. *Dalhan* describes 2 different classifications² –

A. 2 Types –

- a. *Shodhana* (does *dosha shodhana*)
- b. *Shamana (Nagabala rasayanadi)*

B. 3 types –

- a. *Kamya (bala budhi vridhhi)*
 - *Shree Kamya (lavanyakara)*
 - *Medha Kamya*
 - *Ayu Kamya*
- b. *Naimittika (vyadhihara – Shilajatu, Bhallataka etc.)*
- c. *Ajasruja (ksheera, Ghrita etc.)*

3. Others –

- a. *Ahara Rupi (ksheera, ghrita, madhu) (As-tang Hrudaya)*
- b. *Aushadi Rupi (Amruta etc.) (Sharangdhar Samhita & Yoga Ratnakar)*
- c. *Panchakarma chikithsa Rupi (Vangasena)*
- d. *Adravya Bhuta (Vangasena)*

Acharya Rasayana

Being a holistic science with equal focus on the body, mind, and soul, Ayurveda also describes a type of *Rasayana* for psychological and spiritual health, called as “*Acharya Rasayana*”. *Charaka* the first and only *Sam-*

hitakar introduced the unique concept of *Achara Rasayana*.

Achara Rasayana is a right code of socio-behavioral conduct; it teaches us a preferred life style with defined do's and don'ts. In other words following proper *achara* and *vichara* is nothing but *Achara Rasayana*. *Achara Rasayana* plays a key role in maintaining the equilibrium state of mankind. By following some rules and regulations complete physical, mental and social well being can be obtained.

Adoption of ethical elements like:

- Serving elderly people.
- Speaking the truth - lying has been found to boost blood pressure and stress.
- Free from anger - chronic anger, irritability produces elevation in blood pressure and it can be a serious risk factor for CHD.^v

Anger not only creates *Ama* and *Amavisha*—flooding the body with harmful hormones—but it also burns *Ojas*.

Charaka has mentioned in *Vimana Sthana* – If an individual is affected with grief, fear, anger, sorrow, excessive sleep & excessive vigil, wholesome food consumed in proper quantity may not be properly digested.¹

- Devoid of Alcohol and sex indulgence.
- *Ahimsa* (non violence).
- *Prashanta* (peaceful).
- Sweet speech.
- *Japa sauchparam* (who practice *japa* and cleanliness).
- *Dhira* (stable and Steady).
- *Dayanityam tapasvinam* (regularly practice charity & *tapa*).
- *Devgobrahmanacharyaguruvrdharchane Ratam* (who regularly offer prayers to god, cows, *brhamana*, teachers, preceptors, and old people). Ayurveda men-

tions that disrespecting the elders or teachers is the cause for various diseases too like *Unmada*, *Kushta* etc.

- *Aanrishansya param nityam* (absolutely free from Barbarous acts).
- *Nityam karunavedinam* (compassionate)
- Period of awakening and sleep should be regular.

Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death – all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Like a night of destructions, untimely and excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both happiness and longevity. The same sleep if enjoyed properly brings about happiness and longevity in human beings as the real knowledge brings about *Siddhi* (spiritual power) in a *Yogi*. According to Ayurveda one should awake at *Brahmi muhurta* (before sunrise) and should not sleep during day time. Sleeping during the day time and vigil during the night time causes vitiation of *kapha-pitta* and *vata* respectively.¹

Recent research has proved Behavioural sleep deprivation results in alterations in glucose metabolism, up regulation of appetite and reduced energy expenditure, and it is also associated with shorter SWS, increased levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and low grade inflammation.^{vi}

- Take ghee and milk daily.

Ghee and milk are *Saatvik*, meaning they are pure and convert easily to *Ojas*. They are *Medhya*, supporting the physical brain, and enhancing the coordination of mental functions, such as *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* (learning, retention and recall). *Tamasa* foods are the opposite of *Saatvik*—they break down the coordination between mind and body

and inhibit the experience of pure consciousness. They create darkness rather than light. *Tamasik* foods include alcohol which have little life force.

- Gain Vedic knowledge.
- Fraternal love
- Acting according to the situation wisely.
- Avoiding bad habits.

Probable mode of action of Achara Rasayana

Various views may explain the role of *Achara Rasayana* in prevention and cure of diseases. For example-

Loud and excessive speech, pungent drinks, vigil, excessive sexual indulgence, trauma etc. aggravate the *vata*; Alcohol, anger etc. aggravate the *pitta*; and sedentary habits, sleep during day time or excessive sleep aggravate the *kapha*.¹ Hence improper lifestyle or following bad conducts lead to deranged *doshic* equilibrium. Any disturbance in the equilibrium of *Dhatu*s (*Vatadi*) is mentioned as disease and their state of equilibrium as health. Health and disease are also defined as pleasure and pain.¹ *Charak* has mentioned that heterogeneous qualities of aggravating factors constitute alleviators of *Dhatu*s (*doshas*).

Hence, by following opposite conduct of bad conduct i.e. *Achara Rasayana* person can preserve or get back the *Doshic* equilibrium.

One more view can explain the role of *Achara Rasayana* which states that *Achara Rasayana* will reduce the stress and thus prevent the release of free radicals and improves the psychoneuro-immunity.^{vii}

Anger or any exogenous stressors can have a direct impact upon cardiovascular diseases through the HPA axis and the sympathetic nervous system, their activation leading to

an excessive liberation of corticosteroids and catecholamine. Chronic liberation of such stress hormones can produce an avalanche of events, including hemodynamic and metabolic modifications, vascular problems, immunosuppression^{viii}, and disorders of the cardiac rhythm. Stress can also contribute to the adoption of an unhealthy lifestyle (smoking, consumption of high caloric aliments, alcohol and caffeine consumption).^{ix}

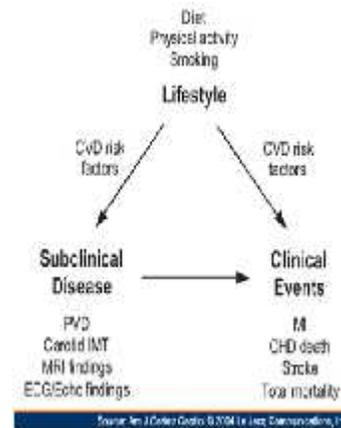
Prolonged sleep curtailment leads to a general enhancement of markers for inflammatory activity e.g. C-reactive protein, an important clinical biomarker of inflammation. While the sleep period in human is characterised by a profound down-regulation of the two stress systems, the Hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the Sympathetic nervous system (SNS). Thus immunity is supported by proper nocturnal sleep.^x For example – we can understand this mode of action with special respect to Hypertension.

Hypertension

Risk factors of Hypertension are –

In Allopathy –

- Genetics
- Environmental factors
- Heavy consumption of alcohol
- High salt intake
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise^{xi}
- Stress (*Circulation*. 2004 by Eaker ED et al; *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2009 by Chida Yet al.).



- In Ayurveda¹

- Unwholesome diet
- Over physical exertion,
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Terror
- *Ama*
- excessive sex
- suppression of vomiting

Converging evidence from both experimental and epidemiological studies indicates that there is a bidirectional association between depression and cardiovascular disease. The presence of exogenous stressors influences both mood and cardiovascular regulation esp., chronic stressors. Environmental stressors also influence the pathogenesis of hypertension.

Environmental stressors including marital conflicts, health problems and work overload, can lead to altered neurochemical function, such as disruptions in the synthesis and utilization of norepinephrine, changes in dopamine activity and altered synthesis of serotonin (5-HT) by activation of HPA-axis and abnormal feedback in this system. Endocrine changes associated with depression – including activation of the HPA axis and abnormal feedback in this system – are similar to the body's physiological responses to stressors and have been linked directly or indirectly to cardiovascular regulation.

Alterations in corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF) have been observed in the cerebrospinal fluid, hypothalamus, and locus coeruleus of depressed patients.

Activation of the immune system is linked directly to specific cardiovascular disorders. In the setting of acute myocardial infarction, the pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF- α , IL-1 and IL-6 are released into the

systemic circulation. These have adverse effects on the heart and circulation, and may act on the central nervous system in parallel to induce endocrine and autonomic deregulation. Peripheral cytokines influence the release and metabolism of several central nervous system neurotransmitters, including dopamine, norepinephrine and 5-HT. These neurotransmitters are involved in sympathetic nerve outflow to the cardiovascular system.

In addition to the immune system, the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS) is activated in some forms of heart disease such as CHF, resulting in high circulating levels of angiotensin II and aldosterone. Angiotensin and the pro-inflammatory cytokines both activate the HPA axis to increase circulating glucocorticoids and catecholamines. These two stress-associated humoral systems interact in the brain, where aldosterone stimulates circulating TNF- α level, and in the periphery, where cytokines prevent the feedback inhibition of renin release by circulating angiotensin II. The interactions of aldosterone with mineralocorticoid receptors in the brain and periphery may lead to adverse outcomes in depressed patients with a risk of cardiovascular dysfunction. Aldosterone can stimulate increased sympathetic drive and activation of pro-inflammatory cytokines, promoting vascular injury, endothelial dysfunction, myocardial necrosis, catecholamine release and cardiac arrhythmias. Similarly, blockade of mineralocorticoid receptors with spironolactone reduced both sympathetic drive and circulating TNF- α level in rats with experimental CHF, lowered mortality in humans with severe CHF, and may improve cardiovascular status in patients with mild CHF symptoms.

These data suggest a potential pathophysiologic role for central mineralocorticoid receptors in mediating autonomic and cardiovascular dysfunction in the context of cardiovascular diseases.^{xii}

Non medical management of Hypertension –
11

- Appropriate life style measures may obviate the need for drug therapy in patients with borderline Hypertension.
- Correcting obesity, reducing alcohol intake, restricting salt intake, taking regular physical exercise, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and quitting smoking can all lower blood pressure and may prevent further cardiovascular risk.

Previous studies have found that positive affect is associated with increased survival, improved immune function, and lower risk of diabetes and hypertension, whereas negative emotions such as anger/hostility and depression are associated with a higher risk of incident coronary heart disease (CHD). Positive affect is defined as the experience of pleasurable emotions such as joy, happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, and contentment. Positive affect, but not negative affect, has been shown to predict enhanced parasympathetic modulation of heart rate. Positive affect is associated with blunted SBP, DBP, and norepinephrine reactivity during a standardized, stressful laboratory task and with lowered 30 min post-awakening cortisol levels in these same subjects. Increased positive affect may protect against CHD via improvements in sleep habits and smoking cessation.^{xiii}

Role of Achara Rasayana –

Achara Rasayana is a code of good socio-behavioural conduct, such as worship to

Gods (improves personality i.e., *satwa*), respect to elders, and ables, speaking truth, avoiding anger, avoiding excessive indulgence in alcohol, sex and excessive labour, keeping self-peaceful, speaking sweet words, and practicing *mantra, japa*, kindness to living beings, balanced sleep, regular use of nutritious elements of diet, being humble, kind and well behaved, practicing meditation and studying religious texts. By adopting these measures, a person can be free from the emotional disturbances and, gives less stressful life and maintains the adequacy of these defence mechanisms. Practicing this also helps to avoid stimuli or circumstances that disturb biological rhythms or emotional harmony and probably generates passive state in autonomic nervous system and in the central nervous system. The bio-feedback cycle starts with perception of body sensations in the central nervous system, which leads to emotional reactivity. That implies nervous activity in the limbic system, which in turn activate hypothalamus, which further onsets reverberations in the autonomic system. This may normalize the important neurotransmitters like serotonin, nor epinephrine, gamma amino butyric acid metabolism and regulates a wide variety of neuro-psychological processes like mood disturbances, sleep induction etc. There by it normalizes the neuro-endocrinal equilibrium of body and lower the cardiovascular risk.

CONCLUSION

Following the rules relating to eating, sleeping, and celibacy create rejuvenation in a person. In addition, following a *Sattvik* diet and life style, speaking the truth, practicing non-violence, living in harmony with

the nature, following social ethics and conducts, are all helps in the complete well being of a person. Following these principles leads to formation of high quality *Dhatu* (tissues) and increases the quantity and quality of *Ojus*, a vital factor for health and immunity. By following these factors the *Satwa Guna* get increases which helps one to realize himself hues attainment of spirituality. All therapies in Ayurveda aim to provide complete health – physical, mental, and spiritual - so that people can engage in achieving the real goal of life—self-realization. The dietetic rule, *Sadvritta*, *Achara Rasayana* makes it easily possible with its remarkable benefits on health, immunity, and longevity. “*Mana Eva Manushyanaam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoh*” – for all the deeds of a man the root cause is *Manas*. It promotes him to do either good or bad deeds. If his mind is predominant with *Satva* it leads to good activity. On contrary if it is full of *Rajas* and *Tamas* he will suffer from various diseases and fall into darkness. Thus to have control over one’s mind spiritual understanding is very essential and it is achieved by following good diets, conducts and self realization.

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