

CONCEPT OF VIHARA IN AYURVEDA - A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has great contribution in treatment of diseases as well as prevention of diseases. *Ayurveda* gives equal importance to *Ahara* and *Vihara*. *Vihara* is defined as the second most important pillar of the *Ayurveda*. The modern world is currently facing an epidemic of lifestyle related diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart diseases, etc., as a result of stress, improper diet and irregular or sedentary lifestyle. Hence the person becomes psychological and physical illness and unable to enjoy full life span. *Ayurveda* believes that in order to achieve and maintain healthy living (*Arogya*), it is essential to practice a healthy *Vihara* like *Dinacharya* (day regimen), *Ratricharya* (night regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Ahara Vidhi* (diet rules), *Sadavritta* (code of conducts) etc. are described in detail in *Ayurveda*. *Ayurvedic* lifestyle promotes physical, mental as well as social health and ultimately leads to symptomatic improvement and improvement in the quality of life and thus help in the prevention and management of diseases. Present article aims to elaborate the concept of Lifestyle in *Ayurveda* classics.

Keywords: Lifestyle, *Ayurveda*, *Dinacharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadavritta*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda always gives equal importance to *Ahara* and *Vihara* to maintain good health as well as to cure diseases. *Charaka Samhita* has given *Swastha Chatushka (Matrashitiam)* shows the importance of *Vihara*. The description of *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadavritta*

and *Nidra* depicts the importance of *Vihara* in maintaining healthy life. According to the health statistics of WHO, among 57 million global deaths in 2008, 63% were due to non-communicable diseases (NCD) like cardiovascular, cancers, respiratory diseases, etc.

⁽¹⁾. "Every year, roughly 5.8 million Indians die from heart and lung diseases, stroke, cancer and diabetes. In other words, 1 in 4 Indians risks dying from an NCD before they reach the age of 70"⁽²⁾. Therefore it can be said that non-communicable diseases (NCD) are prone to kill more people than communicable diseases worldwide. Amongst them lifestyle disorder is a prime factor for diseases. The factors contributing to lifestyle diseases mainly include irregular food habits, sedentary work, and stress. A growing body of scientific evidence has demonstrated that lifestyle intervention is an essential component in treatment of chronic disease that can be effective as medication but without risks and unwanted side effects⁽³⁾. Lifestyle interventions like diet, exercise, stress management, de-addiction play important role in the treatment and management of diseases. Therefore *Vihara chikitsa* (Lifestyle interventions) are a major *Ayurvedic* preventive and therapeutic approach for health.

MATERIALS AND METHOD:

Classical *Ayurvedic* texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* with their commentaries as well as scientific papers, journals, research articles, data base of related to the topic.

CONCEPT OF VIHARA

Vihara includes pattern of social relations, consumption, entertainment and dressing sense. A lifestyle is a characteristic bundle of behaviours that makes sense to both others and oneself in a given time and place, including social relations consumption, entertainment

and dress. The behaviours and practices within lifestyles are a mixture of habits conventional ways of doing things and reasoned actions.

Sadaatura Vihara:

According to Acharya Charaka, these are persons who are always exposed to diseases due to their wrong *Vihara*⁽⁴⁾

a) Shrotriyas: The *Shrotriyas* life is always engaged in the study of the Vedas, observance of different types of sacred *Vratas*, performance of daily rituals etc. so, they fail to attend to regimens which are useful for their health.

b) Raja sevakas: *Raja sevakas* life is always preoccupied with such acts as would cause the gratification of the King's mind. They cater to the requirements of other subordinates of the King and they are exposed to excessive worry and fear; thus, they fail to attend to their regimens which are useful for their health.

c) Veshyas: Depending upon the whims and the moods of men (clients), the *Veshyas* devote herself to their entertainment constantly by keeping her body clean, and by using various cosmetics as well as ornaments. Thus, they fail to attend to their regimens which are useful for their health.

d) Panya jivins: *Panya jivins* constantly lead a sedentary lifestyle & being excessively attached to greediness involved in their profession of selling and purchasing goods. Thus, they fail to attend to the regimen in which are useful for their health.

Prevention of Diseases through Vihara⁽⁵⁾:

For a healthy body we need to discourage the harmful *Vihara* and find out the high risk population and make them adopt the real principles of *Vihara* through *sadvruttapalana* etc.

Primary prevention:

- Action taken prior before the manifestation of disease:
- Avoid *Vega Dharana* and *Udheerana*
- Do *Ritu Anusara Shodhana*
- Adopt the principles of *Pathya* in *Ahara & Vihara*
- Adopt *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya* & *Ratricharya*

Secondary prevention:

- To reduce & limit the impairment & help the system to come back to normalcy
- Therapeutic nutrition (*Ahara* based on *Ahara vidhi Vidhana* etc.).
- *Rasayana Sevana*⁽⁶⁾ (20).
- Rehabilitation at psychological (*Satvava-jaya*), vocational, & medical components (*Aushadha*).

An Ayurvedic therapist is focused on raising the awareness of the patient for better health through *Vihara* and is concerned about social healthy relationships, work and spiritual growth in addition to the currently prevailing disease.

- Stress management (through *Satva*, *Daiva* etc. *Chikitsa*)
- Restful sleep techniques (*Nidra*)
- A daily balancing routine (Proper *Dinacharya*)

- Mind - body integration (*Sharir & Satva*)
- Herbal supplementation (*Yukti Chikitsa*)

A Healthy Lifestyle Model for Everyone:

Ayurveda promotes a lifestyle that's in harmony with nature. It's used to treat a variety of ailments including depression and eating disorders. Below are the basic steps & details of how to follow an Ayurvedic lifestyle.

Steps for an Ayurvedic daily lifestyle:

1. Try to wake up between the hours of 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. The 2 hours before sunrise are supposed to be the purest of the day⁽⁷⁾.
2. Be sure to eliminate the body's waste products at dawn to avoid illness⁽⁸⁾.
3. Wash your face & eyes with water, warm decoction etc.⁽⁹⁾. Put 1 to 2 drops of *Anu oil* in your nostrils to clear sinuses⁽¹⁰⁾.
4. Exercise early in the morning to keep diseases away⁽¹¹⁾.
5. Consider getting an oil massage regularly to delay aging.
6. Eat a light breakfast as per *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*.
7. Try to obtain gainful employment that fits your type⁽¹²⁾.
8. Plan to have a light dinner between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.⁽¹³⁾
9. Try to go to bed at about 10 p.m. to get at least 7 hours of sleep⁽¹⁴⁾.

Different Lifestyles for Different Prakriti:

a) The Vata dominating person⁽¹⁵⁾:

- As the *Vata Dosha* denotes activity, restlessness and irregularity, a *Vata* dominant individual should aim to follow a regular routine every day.

- This includes waking up at the same time every day, eating food at set times every day and going to bed early, preferably around 10pm.
- They should avoid cold and dry foods. Relaxing *Yoga* and meditation is a must for *Vata* dominated people.
- Keeping oneself warm also helps to balance the *Vata Dosha*.
- Herbs such as *Shatavari* and *Brahmi* are beneficial for the balancing the *Vata Dosha*.

b) The *Pitta* dominating person⁽¹⁶⁾:

- The *Pitta Dosha* denotes heat, fire and transformation. Such individuals should aim to follow a lifestyle that helps pacify fire. This includes consuming cooling and refreshing foods.
- Staying in a cool and refreshing environment also helps pacify the *Pitta Dosha*.
- People of this *Dosha* tend to get hungry more often than the other *Dosha* types. Therefore they should have small regular meals and snacks.
- Avoiding spicy foods also helps to balance the *Pitta Dosha*.
- Herbs like *Triphala* and *Neem* are good for balancing the *Pitta Dosha*.

c) The *Kapha* dominating person⁽¹⁷⁾:

- The *Kapha Dosha* represents heaviness, stability and less movement. These individuals should exercise as often as possible and drink plenty of warm water.
- *Yoga* exercises such as the Sun Salutation help to remove lethargy and sluggishness. By maintaining a healthy metabolic rate,

Kapha people can avoid getting overweight.

- Avoiding sweet foods helps to eliminate heaviness. *Kapha* individuals should aim to eat only when they are hungry.
- Keeping themselves warm and dry will also help balance this *Dosha*.
- Herbs such as *Pippali* and *Ashwagandha* help to balance the *Kapha Dosha*.

Benefits of Practicing a Daily Lifestyle:

- *Suchita* – Maintenance of hygiene.
- *Suprasannendriyata* – Brightness of Indriyas.
- *Balalabha* – Strengthens the body.
- *Ayusholabha* – Promote the health and longevity.
- *Soumanasyata* – Keep the mind at peace and harmony.

In order to follow a lifestyle for a good health as per *Ayurveda* suggests a specific daily routine for each individual. This is based on the individual's basic body constitution (known as "*Dosha*"). To be able to follow Ayurvedic principles, one not only needs to take Ayurvedic herbs and massages according but also follow an Ayurvedic lifestyle this suits his or her *Dosha & Prakruti*.

Dinacharya is the Ayurvedic term for daily routine. *Dina* means day and *Charya* means to follow. Following a proper *Dinacharya* is one of the best methods to prevent disease, promote good health and prolong life.

Ayurveda places a lot of importance on the various times of the day and night which correspond with the three *Doshas*. Each *Dosha*

dominates two cycles during the day and night as follows⁽¹⁸⁾:

- The *Kapha Dosha*, which comprises the elements of water and earth, is strongest between 6am to 10am and 6pm to 10pm.
- The *Pitta Dosha*, which comprises the elements of fire and water, is dominant between 10am to 2pm and 10pm to 2am.
- The *Vata Dosha*, which comprises the elements of air and space, is strongest between 2am to 6am and 2pm to 6pm.

DISCUSSION

In *Ayurveda*, it has been quoted that *Ratri Jagaran* is harmful for today's life. It leads to *Vata Prakopa* and *Agnidushti*. In human body, Wakefulness in night causes disturbance in activities of digestive enzymes which leads to indigestion. Except in *Grishma ritu*, it causes vitiation of *Kapha-Pitta* and also it is a cause for *Agnidushti*. According to the researchers, daytime sleep disturbs the daily activities of digestive enzyme. In 21st century, due to industrialization, there is increase in number of shift workers. 2007 study lead by the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) showed that shift work has been associated with cancer. Most common disorder in shift workers is Shift work sleep disorder (SWSD). It is a sleep disorder which requires medications with lifestyle changes. Disturbance in this axis due to disturbed sleep pattern leads to diseases like Diabetes mellitus, Cancer etc.

According to *Ayurveda*, *Vyayama* leads to increase in *bala* (strength), *agni* (digestion). Physical exercise activates hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis and increase number,

function and movement of lymphoid cells. Mild to moderate exercise stimulates gastric emptying and increases secretions of gastric juice which leads to rapid and healthy digestion. Now days, due to growing use of technologies, daily physical activity is decreasing, Lack of exercise/ sedentary lifestyle leads to delayed gastric emptying. It has been proved that exercise has role in the treatment of Diabetes mellitus and Obesity.

Acharyas have quoted that *Abhyanga* is essential for maintenance of health. According to modern researchers, skin blood flow increases diverting blood from muscle following 12 minutes of massage which helps in lactate clearance and recovers body from fatigue due to accumulation of lactate in muscles after prolong exercise.

Vegadharana has been contraindicated by *Acharyas* as it is a direct cause of many diseases. Researchers have been proved that voluntary suppression of defecation delays gastric emptying and retention of urge of micturition causes significant increase in the level of blood pressure, pulse rate, respiratory rate.

Vishamashana means taking food in irregular quantity and at irregular time. Now a day, due to irregular job or business schedule people take meal at irregular time and irregular quantity. Irregular time of food intake disrupts the normal digestive pattern which adhered to daily activity. Intake of *Ushna ahara* has been advised by *Acharyas*. It helps for digestion. It lacks due to intake of cold food items which results in indigestion.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda has emphasis on preventive aspects related to health rather than management. Ayurvedic *Ahara* and *Vihara*, if experienced daily, can produce excellent results in the prevention or cure of diseases. It can help manage stress in daily life and reduce the use of modern medicine and their side effects that give rise to untoward complications.

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