BRAHMACHARYA: A PREREQUISITE TO HEALTHY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is science of living being with an aim to live healthy life and curing of ailments. Arogyata (healthy life) is root to achieve the purushartha chatushtaya which are dharma (religious rituals), artha, kama and moksha. Kama in society is taken in sexual lust but Vatsayan has described kama as the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling, assisted by the mind together with the soul. The ingredient in this is a peculiar contact between the organ of sense and its object, and the consciousness of pleasure which arises from that contact is called Kama. A well organised, controlled form of kama comes under brahmacharya. Acharya Charaka has specified brahmacharya among three subpillars which assists in healthy living being. Brahmacharya leads to conservation of shukra dhatu which is essence of ahara. This shukra dhatu is responsible for bala, virya, yash, dhairya, preeti. Development of these qualities assists higher faculty buddhi or pragya not to indulge in pragyaparadh leading to correct decisionary power and patience. Healthy state of mind is achieved with this brahmacharya. Through this paper a review over various parameters of brahmacharya have been discussed and concluded.

Keywords: Kama, dhairya, pragyaparadh, health, shukra dhatu.

INTRODUCTION

Brahmacharya is taken literally from two components: Brahma, (shortened from brahman), the absolute, eternal, supreme God-head. (As opposed to Brahma, the deity in the Hindu triad responsible for creation). charya, which means "to follow". This is often translated as activity, mode of behaviour, a "virtuous" way of life. So the word brahmacharya indicates a lifestyle adopted to enable one to attain the ultimate reality\[1\]

Phase of strict regulation and study: Brahmacharya asrama occupied the first 20-25 years of life roughly corresponding to adolescence. Upon the upanayan sams-kara (a ceremony in which the child got education in gurukula ) which taught to learning all aspects of dharma that is the "principles of righteous living". Dharma comprised personal responsibilities towards himself, family, society, humanity and God which included the environment, earth and nature. This educational period started when the child was five to eight years old and lasted 14–20 years. During this period the traditional veda were studied along with the religious texts contained within the veda and upanishad. This stage of life was characterised by the practice of strict brahmacharya\[2\]
Misconception for “kama” in current society: Kama in society is taken as sexual lust but vatsayan has described kama as the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling, assisted by the mind together with the soul. The ingredient in this is a peculiar contact between the organ of sense and its object, and the consciousness of pleasure which arises from that contact is called kama.[3] A well organised, controlled form of kama comes under brahmacharya. In prabodh chandrodaya it has been quoted that memorising of female is sufficient enough to cause mano vikara (psychic disorder).[4] Manu has quoted that one should never reside alone with maternal, sister or any female because even the most intellect are not able to control their indriyas indulging into it.[5]

Difference in sexual desirous(kama) and celibacy(brahmacharya):
“Kamachari tu kamen ya indriyasukhe ratah |
brahmachari sadaivaisha ya indriyajaye ratah ||” (Mahabharat)
kamachari is one who is always indulged in sensory amusement but brahmachari keeps a control over his senses[6]

Importance of marital act:
“vivaho na vilasarthah prajarthameva kevalah|
tejobuddhibaladhwan sho vilasatprabhaveta khaloo ||” (Mahabharat)
Marriage is not just meant for sexual indulgence, it has been meant for production of prajya(child). Sexual indulgence leads to loss of teja(lustre), buddhi(intellect) and bala(vigour).[7]

In garunapurana it has been stated that brahmacharya is abstinence by all mean in karma, mana and vaak in all possible conditions of time, place.[8] Practically people misunderstand that celibacy is just avoidance of coitus but it is myth. Avoidance of physical touch is not a sufficient definition because even then people are involved with manas or other indriyas to indulge and thus in Yagya valkya smriti a complete eight paths have been described to be controlled for following brahmacharya(celibacy). These are smaranamemorising of female by male or vice versa), kirtan (talking about qualities), keli( to indulge in play), prekshana (to look uriously), Guhyabhasana( talking in lonely place), sankalpa(to prepare for coitus), adhyavasaya(to attempt or effort), kriya (coitus or sexual intercourse) these eight are considered as maithuna and to control these has been described as brahmacharya.[9]

Categories of brahmchari: “Ko brahmacharyavaan syat yashcha askhalito urdhwaretaskah” (shankaracharya) There are two categories who have been considered as brahmachari one is urdhwareta who are best because they don’t have any lust while askhalitareta are the ones in which there arouses perceiviance of attraction but by their strong will they compress all desires and does not waste their vigour in sensory amusements.[10]

Importance of brahmacharya: In hatha yoga pradipika it has been quoted that there is interrelationship between shukra and manas. It has been said that they both are interdependant on each other and one should try to conserve shukra and regulate manas.[11] Acharya patanjali has proposed 8 paths to yogic practice in which first path is yama which includes brahmacharya. “Brahmacharya pratishthayam viryalabhaha” (Yoga sutra) i.e following brahmacharya leads to conservation of
virya (vigour) abstinence, particularly in the case of sexual activity. Also responsible behavior with respect to our goal of moving toward the truth. It suggests that we should form relationships that foster our understanding of the highest truths. "Practicing brahmacharya means that we use our sexual energy to regenerate our connection to our spiritual self. It also means that we don’t use this energy in any way that might harm others."[12] Advantages of brahmacharya are dirghayushya (longevity of lifespan), teja (lustre), bala (power), virya (vigour), pragya (intellect), laxmi (money), mahayash (pride), punya (austerity), priyatva (dearness).[13] In mundakopanishad it has been quoted that satya (truth), tapa (penance), Samyak gyana (true knowledge) and brahmacharya (celibacy) leads to self knowledge.[14] In describing tapa (penance) done from sharira (body), it has been quoted in Bhagwad Geeta that one should follow brahmacharya (celibacy) along with other measures like worshipping brahmananas, spiritual master, father, mother, cleanliness, simplicity and nonviolence.[15]

Ayurvedic view: “brahmacharya shabden indriya sayyamsaumanasya prabhrityayo brahmagyananuguda grihyante."(chakrapani tika on ch.su.11/35) This term has been given for control over senses, purity of manas and conducts towards goal to brahma. It has been advised to be used very tactfully as excess use or even non use leads to manokshobha (psychic disturbances).[16] Acharya charak has described brahmacharya (celibacy) under trayopstambha or three supporting pillars of life. Others includes ahara and nidra.[17] These three have to be used tactfully. “Brahmacharyam ayushya-nam” (ch.su.25/40) ayushya or promoters to life is dependant on this brahmacharya.[18] It has been said that following brahmacharya along with other two leads to increment in bala (power), varna (lustre), vriddhi (growth).[19] Brahmacharya is more seen as preservance of shukra dhatu (~semen) as it has been indicated that among all dhatu shukra is last formed dhatu and its preservation leads to healthy life. Shukra has been considered to the specialised converted product of ahara or food. Not following brahmacharya leads to excessive loss of shukra dhatu leading to various diseases. Ati maithuna (excessive coitus) has been contra indicated by Acharya sushruta as it may lead to shoola (pain), kasa (cough), jwara (fever), swasa (dyspnoea), karsya (emaciation), pandu (anaemia), kshaya (decreased immunity).[20] Acharya charaka has indicated that excessive gramya dharma (maithuna karma) along with others like vyayama (exercise), hasya (excessive laughing), bhashya (speaking), prajagarana (awakened in night) should be avoided.[21] Under the Achara rasayana Acharya Charaka has given “nivrittam madyamaitunat” i.e one should refrain away from sexual indulgence by any mean to get result like rasayana.[22] Under sadavritta i.e various conducts followed which leads to indriyajaya (conquer over senses) brahmacharya has been described along with gyana, dana, mitrata, daya, harsh, upeksha. [23] Patanjali yogasutra describes these methods opted for chitta prasadana (conquer of psyche, intellect, ego).[24] In grihasthashram (phase of entry into married life) if one has sexual intercourse with an aim to conceive a child ,it has been considered as brahmacharya as it is done with
an aim to conceive and in a regulated way.

“ayushmanto mandajara bapuvarnabalavita| shiropachitamamsasheca bhavati stri-
shu sayyath|| (su.ch.24) \[29\]

“dharmyam yashasyamayushyam lohad-
wayarasayanam| anumodamahe brahma-
charyamekantanirmalam” dharma (promoter to righteous conducts), yash (pride), ayu-
shya (age promoter), two of the rasayana
and brahmacharya has been always been
praised. \[25\]

Acharya charak has described that shukra
leaves its place if there is stripurusha sa-
nyoga (contact between male and fe-
male),cheshta (desire for intercourse),sankalpa (desire stage of manas for
making love), pidana (touching of sexual parts together for intercourse). \[26\]

**Ages for sexual activity:** Acharya charak and vagbhatta: age >16 and <70 yrs, the rea-
son being that before 16 years all dhatus are
not matured and if someone is indulged suf-
fers shosha while if indulged after 70 gets
harmful results. Acharya Sushruta has con-
sidered this age >25 and < 80 yrs. \[27\]

**Relationship with seasonal variation:** Acharya charak has advised to avoid sexual contact
in grishma (summer), varsha (rainy), while Vag-
bahtta advised once in 15 days in grishma.
Hemant and shishir (winter seasons) –can do
vyavaya (coitus) as per will.

Vasanta (spring)- controlled sexual indul-
geence.(charak), vasanta (spring) and sha-
rada (autumn) on 3rd day (vagbhatta) \[28\]

**DISCUSSION:**

Brahmacharya includes greater physical
and mental sexual discipline, until a person
experiences complete absence of sexual
desire despite the most alluring
stimuli. Brahmacharya denotes the practice
of sexual continence or celibacy adopted by
those following a spiritual path (sadhana).

Abstaining from sexual activity is highly
praised. This word seems to have been used
in two contexts, firstly is worthious deeds
with controlled senses in path to achieve brahma and secondly is related to controlled
and well practiced indulgence in sexual life
which can be followed in society
practically. In four stages of life first stage is brahmacharya. Generally this is stage where
dhatus are not matured as per ayurveda and
one is said to be involved in studious phase
where concentration is highly needed. shu-
kra has gunas like sara, vishra, pichhil, guru, sukshma which on
exposure to alluring stimuli as per Yagya-
valkya smriti may leave its place. Shukra gives dhairya (patience), chyavan (built),
preeiti (affection). Our society is soon des-
cending to stage where the adolescent age
people are too much indulged in sexual of-
fences breaking the brahmacharya rules and
it is invariably seen as the crimes like rape
offences are increasing due to lack of
dhairya and preeiti. The second stage of life
is grihashtashram; practice of brahma-
charya is still advised in which it has been
advocated to have sexual pleasure in con-
trolled manner with an aim to conceive
child. Even proper ages in ayurveda for sex-
ual indulgence is given. This brahmacharya
leads to conservation of shukra dhatus which

**CONCLUSION:**

Healthy life is possible when
trayopstambh (subpillars) hold their strength.
Brahmacharya should be followed at every
Upadhyay Devanand: Brahmacharya: A Prerequisite To Healthy Life

stages of life. Its aim is control over senses and preserve shukra dhatu which is sara of ahara and precious. Shukra dhatu if present in body leads to dhairya (patience), preeti (affection), yash (pride).

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