

**BRAHMACHARYA: A PREREQUISITE TO HEALTHY LIFE****Upadhyay Devanand**

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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.<sup>[1]</sup>

**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*.<sup>[2]</sup>

**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*.<sup>[3]</sup> 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).<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Diffrence 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Importance of marietal act:**

“*vivaho na vilasarthah prajarthameva kevalah |*

*tejobuddhibaladhwansho vilasatprabhaveta khaloo ||*” Marriage is not just meant for sexual indulgence, it has been meant for production of *praja*(child). Sexual indulgence leads to loss of *teja*(lustre),*buddhi*(intellect) and *bala*(vigour).<sup>[7]</sup>

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<sup>[8]</sup> Practically people mi-

undersatand 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 *sma-rana*(memorising of female by male or vice versa), *kirtan* (talking about qualities), *keli*(to indulge in play), *prekshana* ( to look urjuously), *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*.<sup>[9]</sup>

**Cotegories of brahmchari:**“*Ko brahmacharyavaan syat yashcha askhalito urdhwaretaskah*” (**shankaracharya**) There are two cotegories 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.<sup>[10]</sup>

**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*.<sup>[11]</sup> **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.<sup>[12]</sup> Advantages of brahmacharya are *dirghayushya* (longevity of lifespan), *teja*(lustre), *bala*(power), *virya*(vigour), *pragya*(intellect), *laxmi*(money), *mahayash*(pride), *punya*(austerity), *priyatva*(dearness).<sup>[13]</sup> In **mundakopani-shad** it has been quoted that *satya*(truth), *tapa*(penance), *Samyak gyana*(true knowledge) and *brahmacharya*(celibacy) leads to self knowledge<sup>[14]</sup> 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 *brahmnanas*, spiritual master, father, mother, cleanliness, simplicity and non-violence.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Ayurvedic view:** "*brahmacharya shabden indriya sayyamsaumanasya prabhritayo 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).<sup>[16]</sup> Acharya charak has described *brahmacharya*(celibacy) under *trayopstambha* or three supporting pillars of life. Others includes *ahara* and *nidra*.<sup>[17]</sup> These three have to be used tactfully. "*Brahmacharyam ayushya-*

*nam*"(ch.su.25/40) *ayushya* or promoters to life is dependant on this *brahmacharya*.<sup>[18]</sup> It has been said that following brahmacharya along with other two leads to increament in *bala*(power), *varna*(lustre), *vrididhi*(growth).<sup>[19]</sup> *Brahmacharya* is more seen as preservice 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), *karshya*(emaciation), *pandu*(anaemia), *kshaya*(decreased immunity).<sup>[20]</sup> **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.<sup>[21]</sup> Under the *Acharya rasayana* Acharya Charaka has given "*nivritam madyamaithunat*" i.e one should refrain away from sexual indulgence by any mean to get result like *rasayana*.<sup>[22]</sup> 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*.<sup>[23]</sup> **Patanjali yogasutra** describes these methods opted for *chitta prasadana* (conquer of psyche, intellect, ego)<sup>[24]</sup>. 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 bapuvrnabalanvita| sthiropachitamamsashcha bhavati stri-shu sayyatah*|| (su.ch.24) [29]

“*dharmyam yashasyamayushyam lohadwayarasayanam| anumodamahe brahmacharyamekantanim*” *dharm* (promoter to righteous conducts), *yash* (pride), *ayushya* (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 sanyoga* (contact between male and female), *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 reason being that before 16 years all *dhatu*s are not matured and if someone is indulged suffers *shosha* while if indulged after 70 gets harmful results. Acharya Sushruta has considered 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 Vagbhatta advised once in 15 days in *grishma*.

*Hemant* and *shishir* (winter seasons) – can do *vyavaya* (coitus) as per will.

*Vasanta* (spring) – controlled sexual indulgence. (charak), *vasanta* (spring) and *sharada* (autumn) on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 *dhatu*s are not matured as per ayurveda and one is said to be involved in studious phase where concentration is highly needed. *shukra* has *gunas* like *sara*, *vishra*, *pichhil*, *guru*, *sukshma* which on exposure to alluring stimuli as per **Yagyavalkya** *smriti* may leave its place. *Shukra* gives *dhairya* (patience), *chyavan* (built), *preeti* (affection). Our society is soon descending to stage where the adolescent age people are too much indulged in sexual offences breaking the *brahmacharya* rules and it is invariably seen as the crimes like rape offences are increasing due to lack of *dhairya* and *preeti*. The second stage of life is *grihasthashram* ; practice of *brahmacharya* is still advised in which it has been advocated to have sexual pleasure in controlled manner with an aim to conceive child. Even proper ages in ayurveda for sexual indulgence is given. This *brahmacharya* leads to conservation of *shukra dhatu* which gives *priti*, *yash*, *sthairya*, *bala*, *manaprasannata*. *Brahmacharya* is practiced for *chitta prasada* which leads to yogic living achieving higher goals to healthy way of living.

## CONCLUSION:

Healthy life is possible when *trayopstambh* (subpillars) hold their strength. *Brahmacharya* should be followed at every

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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