



Ayurveda: A complete lifestyle to optimize your health

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Abstract

Ayurveda is Anadi (No one before) and Shaashvat (Eternal) medical science in Indian traditional system of medicine. It has two aims, first one is the protection of health of a healthy individual and second is the alleviation of disease of a patient. Out of two aims of Ayurveda first one is 'Swasthyarakshana' i.e. maintenance of healthy status of a healthy individual. This shows the preventive approach of Ayurveda towards the diseases which is emerging due to changed lifestyle, eating habits and their patterns, uncontrolled urbanization and globalization i.e. heart disease, Diabetes etc.. People are very much far away from the meaning of health. For this purpose various principals or tips are described in Ayurvedic classical texts. Some of these are as the concept of Dinacharya ((Day regimen),) Ratricharya (Night regimen), Sadvritta (Right conduct), and Ritucharya (Health promotional activities during specific season), Aahara (Specific diet in preticular regimen), Ahar vidhi (Diet rules), Pathya (Complementary to medications), Apathya (Contradictory to medications) etc. If anyone does not follow them and gets sick, then another purpose is described for that which is curative and preventive health, means alleviation of disease. Present article aims to elaborate the concept of Lifestyle described in Ayurveda to prevent diseases, maintain healthy status and promotes physical, mental health of an individual.

Keywords: ayurveda, lifestyle, health, dinacharya, ratricharya, ritucharya, sadavritta etc.

Introduction

Man who is possessed of unimpaired intelligence, understanding, energy and enterprise and who wishes to secure his good, both in this world and in the other. They are pursuit of Life, the pursuit of Wealth and the pursuit of the other World. The Pursuit of Life From among these pursuits, the pursuit of life is to be given priority because the giving up of life means the giving up of everything ^[1]. Health is the supreme foundation of virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation ^[2]. Which can be achieved only by staying healthy?

Health means An individual who is in a state of equilibrium of body's; Doshas (humors), Agni (digestive fire), Dhatus (tissues), Malah kriya (Physiological functions of excretions etc.) and whose Aatma (soul), Indriya (senses) and Mana (Mind); all are happy, is considered as a Healthy individual ^[3]. Dosha Dhatu and Mala are the root entity of Sharira means the body composed of Doshas, Dhatus and Malas only ^[4] According to Ayurveda each and every thing (Animate and Inanimate) is made up from the Panchamahabhuta (Five elements) including sharira (human body) ^[5]. All these three gets their nourishment from Ahara and perform their function with coordination in the sharira. Dosha out of three is the functional entity of the sharira. Vishiation of Dosha leads an individual to fall ill. Improper Ahar (food) and faulty life style (vihar) are the main cause for that. Equilibrium of all these three entity is essential to maintain the healthy status of a healthy individual. Ayurveda is only an ancient Indian system of medicine, which has insisted more importance to maintain of health rather than treating any disease.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the article is to aware the people to adopt Ayurveda lifestyle rather than Western lifestyle. For this to study the principles about life style (Vihar) which is described in Ayurveda.

Materials and Methods

Various Classical *ayurvedic* texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangrahaand*, *Ashtanga Hridaya* with their commentaries as well as scientific papers, journals, research articles, available data base on the websites related to the topic are used as source materials to the topic.

Approach to Life-style

Health is wealth and it is greatly influenced by Life-Style. According to Ayurveda, Life-style (the rules and guidelines) is divided into three parts:

Dinacharya (Regimen for the daytime)

Ratricharya (Regimen for the night)

Ritucharya (Seasonal regimen)

Sadvritta (Code of Conduct)

Dinacharya (Daily regimen)

Brahmamuhurta jagrana (Get up time)

Brahma muhurta (time of Brahma) is a period (muhurta) one and a half hours before sunrise or more precisely 1Hr 36 Min. before sunrise. (I.e. 96 Minutes) it is traditionally the last phase or muhurta of the night and is considered an auspicious time for all practices of yoga and most appropriate

for meditation, worship or any other religious practice [6]. After a good night's sleep, the mind is refreshed, calm and serene. There is the preponderance of sattva or purity in the mind at this time, as well as in the atmosphere [7]. So a healthy person should get up from sleep to protect his life in the Brahmamuhurta considering the condition of digestion of food taken in previous night.

Prarthana: (Prayer)

In the morning there is flow of sattva guna. It produces good thoughts. Hence, before getting out of the bed, offer prayers to the God. Thank Him for giving such wonderful life. This time of the day is really good for meditation [8].

Ushna jalpana: (Drink lukewarm water)

Then drink water kept for whole night in copper pot should be taken before sunrise [9]. Drinking a glass of warm water in this period helps to eliminate ama or toxins from the body [10].

Malotsarga (voiding the excrements)

After getting the urge of urine and faces naturally the person should eliminate them because the last portion of the night being ruled by vata to eliminate the body's physical waste. Proper elimination also helping remove the kapha that naturally accumulates overnight. Defecation once or twice daily is the best [11]. Holding back natural urges can give rise to so many diseases [12].

Dantdhavan and Jihwa nirlekanam: (Cleaning the teeth and Tongue)

Mouth is an important point and must be taken care of first. Clean the teeth with 12 fingers long, straight, sharp one end crushed fibrous root, which is astringent to strengthen the gums, pungent to stimulate the blood flow to the gums and bitter to kill bacteria in taste. Traditionally neem stick or licorice stick was used as toothbrush. Clean the tongue with a thin 10 finger long spatula made of gold, silver, copper or soft wood or leaf [13]. This is to be done twice in a day. This helps in removing plaque/coats from tongue.

Gandush (Gargling)

To strengthen teeth, gums, and jaw, improve the voice and remove wrinkles from cheeks, gargle twice a day with warm sesame oil. Hold the oil in your mouth, swish it around vigorously, and then spit it out. Then gently massage the gums with a finger [14].

Abhyang (Massage)

Abhyanga is an integral part of the daily routine by Ayurveda. It may be done using oil, herbal powder, herbal pastes or ghee. It is used for relief of pain, stiffness and tiredness [15]. It makes the skin supple, controls vata by reducing its cold, dry, light, rough & erratic qualities, enhances blood circulation, encourages quicker removal of metabolic wastes and relaxes the body. Follow the normal direction of hair growth, use a little extra oil over the body's vital parts, massage the scalp and head at least weekly and just the soles of your feet if short of time [16].

Vyayam (Exercise)

Any activity which produces exertion in the body is known as Vyayam [17]. It has a great role in maintaining a healthy & balanced life. In earlier times people use to do their work by without being dependent on any instrument so there was no requirement for additional exercise. Due to development of electronic instruments in today's time, most of our physical exercise has been reduced. Physical exercise brings about lightness in the body, increases the ability to do work & tolerance, power, and reduces the increased Dosha of the body. It increased Agani (digestive power) of body and thus helps to digest every type of diet including an incompatible diet also (viruddha ahara) which produces slow poison in the body [18]. So we can say it essential component of Ayurveda's system of preventative health care, rejuvenation and longevity [19].

Snan (Bathing)

Bathing removes somnolence bodily heat and a sense of fatigue. It allays thirst and checks itching and perspiration. Brings on a fresh relish for food, removes all bodily impurities clears the sense-organs gladdens of the mind, purifies the blood, increase the appetizing power. destroys rowdiness and sin, and increases semen. The sight of a man is invigorated by applying cold water to the head at the time of bathing while the pouring of warm water on the head tends to injure the eye sight [20].

Anjan (application of collyrium in eyes)

The antimouy collyrium which is beneficial to the eyes should be used daily and, the extract of Indian beberry should be used once in every fifth or eighth night for the drainage of the eyes. The eye is of the element of light. So, it is specially liable to be adversely affected by kapha that is watery element. It is beneficial to keep the vision clear [21].

Ahar (Diet)

Ahara is first among the three significant pillars of Ayurveda and essential for running smooth life. One must eat in Matra (Quantity) and Matra of food is determined by digestive capacity of individual. The quantity can't be the same for all persons because the strength of *Pachak Agni* varies in each individual. That should be known as the proper quantity of food which, when taken is digested in due time without impairing one's health [22]. But positively promotes one's strength, complexion, health and life [23]. Daily food should be such that not only helps to maintain present health but also prevent upcoming disease [24].

While describing *Matravat Ahara* the *Kukshi*(*Amashaya*) to be divided in three parts and the food items should be taken accordingly. One part of *Kukshi* should be filled up with solid food, the 2nd part with liquid and 3rd part should be left for *Tridosha Sancharana* [25]. Food which is taken in accordance to this principle protect from the adverse effect that arises due to the intake of food in improper quantity.

Vega (Urges)

Vega means natural urges. Initially Vega are normal body

activities through which unwanted body materials are excreted, thus the body keeps itself healthy. According to Ayurveda it is of two types. Adharniya vega (Non suppressible urges) and Dharniya vega (suppressible urges).

Adharniya vega

Adharniya means the one that is not to be suppressed and vega means urge. Thirteen types urges, which should not be suppressed i.e. Vata vega (Urge of passing flatus), Purish vega (Urge of feces), Mutra vega (Urge of urine), Kshavathu vega (Urge to sneeze), Trushna vega (Urge of thirst), Kshudha vega (Urge for hunger) Nidra vega (Urge to sleep), Kasa vega (Coughing urge), Shramashwas vega (Urge to breathe heavily on exertion), Jrumbha vega (Urge to yawn), Ashru vega (Urge to cry), Chardi vega (Urge to vomit), Shukra vega (Urge to discharge seminal fluid). The various type of disease are born of the suppression of these urges [26].

Dharniya Vega (suppressible urges)

Dharniya means the one that is to be suppressed and vega means urge. Three types urges, which would need to be suppressed by every living being i.e. *Suppressible urges of the sharir (body)*, *Suppressible urges of the mana (mind)*, *Suppressible urge of the vaachan (Tongue)* [27]. *Suppressible urges of the share (body)* are *Par-pida* (trouble to others) or *hinsa* (violence in any form), *Par-Stree sambhog* (to indulge in sexual intercourse other than one's wife), *Chori* (theft). *Suppressible urges of the mana (mind)*, *Lobha* (greediness), *Shoka* (depression), *Bhaya* (cowardliness), *Krodh* (anger), *Ahankar* (ego), *Nirlajata* (shamelessness), *Irshya* (jealousy). *Suppressible urge of the vaachan (tongue)*, *Atyant kathor vachan* (unpleasing talks), *Anvrut* (to tell lies). Suppression of these urges make an individual's man, sharer, vachan free from sin, Acquires spiritual merit, wealth and sense pleasures [28].

Jeevikoparjan (Occupation)

Every person would have the three pursuits. These are the pursuit of life, the pursuit of wealth and the pursuit of other world. Second of three is the pursuit of wealth. One must have a desire of wealth because there is no wretchedness than that of the man possessed of long life. So one must try to earn money from various sources those are not approved by society or good man. These sources are farming, breeding of cattle, trading and Government service etc. Doing so one may get long life without suffering and prestige in society [29].

Ritucharya (Season)

According to the ayurved one year is divided in Uttarayan and Dakshinayan depending on the direction of movement of sun. During Uttarayan, sun & wind are powerful which takes away the people strength & cooling qualities of earth. During Dakshinayaan, sun releases the strength, moon is more powerful & earth regains its coolness through clouds, rain & cold winds.

The year is it consists of six parts when divided according to the seasons namely, Shishira (winter), Vasanta (spring), and Grishma (summer) in Uttarayan and Varsha (monsoon), Sharata (autumn), and Hemanta (late autumn) in Dakshinayana [30]. As Ayurveda has its origin in India, the above seasonal changes are observed predominantly in Indian subcontinent Ritu means season & charya means Regimen or discipline. Ritucharya consists of lifestyle and diet routine to cope with the bodily and mental impacts caused by seasonal changes as recommended by Ayurveda. Ritucharya enables us to build our physical strength and mental capability to battle ailments that may happen due to seasonal changes. In addition to that, it balances all the three doshas in our body and keeps us fit and healthy throughout the year [31]. So each and every individual should manage their diet plan and daily activities keeping in mind the change of each dosha in accordance to the seasons.

Table 1: Dosha Sanchaya, Prakopa and Shaman during a year as follows:

Dosha (Humar)	Sanchaya (Accumulation)	Prakopa (Vitiatiann)	Shaman (Pacification)
Vata	Greeshma (Summer season)	Varsha (Rainy season)	Sharada (Autumn season)
Pitta	Varsha (Rainy season)	Sharada (Autumn season)	Hemanta (Winter season)
Kapha	shishir (Cold and dewy season)	Vasanta (Spring season)	Greeshma (Summer season)

Ritu sandhi

The seven days at the end and commencement of the Ritu (Season) is known as *Ritusandhi*. During that period, the regimen of preceding season should be discontinued gradually and that of the succeeding season gradually adopted. Sudden continuation and adaption give rise to disease [32].

Ratricharya (Regimen for the night)

Avoid to consume curds at night, dinner should always be light, person should go to sleep with pleasant mind, offering obeisance's to god, his own bed, kept in a place which is clean and comfortable, devoid of too many people, furnished with suitable pillows, should be of the height of one's knee, are broad, even and; the cot and the chairs etc., soft and beautiful. Head should be placed towards the east or south and legs not stretched towards teachers/elders etc. The bedroom should be either in the east or west of the house. Person should think of

only dharma (righteousness) at the time of going to bed [33].

Nidra (Sleep)

Sleep is referred to as *Bhuta Dhatri* [34] meaning provides nourishment and rejuvenation to all the creatures. When the mind get tired, the sense organs get detached from their objects as a result nothing to feed the mind for the sake conveying to soul, in this status tired mind does not perceive anything and the state of sleep occur.

Strength and misery, nourishment and emaciation, strength and debility, virility and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, life and death are all dependent upon sleep [35]. Sleep indulged in at improper time, in excess or not at all, destroys one's happiness and life. Day sleep should be avoided. Exception unless the following conditions apply:

Individual those are work the night shift, or after physical exertion. Physical injury or psychological problems. Sleep

period during day time should be ½ of the night sleep.

Vyavaya (Intercourse)

Sexual desire may vary with age, constitution, body condition and even with variations in the seasons but essential for mental and physical health. All living beings have Necessity of intercourse for procreation. Sex at the right time and in correct frequency improves quality of life and longevity because *Ojas* is essence of all *Dhatu* ^[36]. Frequent sex depletes *Ojas* (immune system) and therefore should be avoided.

Suppression the urge or desire causes 'Vata' aggravation, and many other psychological symptoms. In winter, sex can be performed quite frequently. In the spring it should be reduced to maximum twice a week and in the summer to twice a month. The minimum age is puberty.

Sadavritta (Code of Conduct)

Health is a balance of body, mind, social and spiritual well-being according to Ayurveda. To achieve this, ayurveda prescribes certain codes of conduct. It can be mainly divided in underlying categories.

Ethical conduct

One must always speak truth ^[37], Keep self control, do not harm to anyone, and should have good character, courageous, free from anger, jealousy and anxiety.

Social conduct

This reflects behavior and social mannerisms for family and society. One should be respect parents, elders, teachers ^[38] and other learned intelligent people and learn to be tolerant.

Mental conduct

Keep faith in god, Chant mantras and shlokas to generate positive energy ^[39], Understand the responsibilities, try to understand who you are, Always prefer to be in the company of good people.

Moral Conduct

Do not pass adverse comments to women ^[40], help the poor and needy people, linked himself to moral duties such as donating blood or organs and follow the path of righteousness or dharma.

Physical Conduct

Personal hygiene and cleanliness is part of this regimen. So follow the daily regimen as described above.

Conclusion

The goal of Ayurveda is *prevention is better than cure*. People are engaging with unhealthy habits like smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity. These days a faulty lifestyle is a prominent cause for chronic diseases. Principles of ayurveda are as a key for the people to remain healthy. Seven types of Happiness (happiness means Sukh in hindi) described by our ancestors. First one amongst them is *Pehla Sukh Nirogi kaya* (Fit Body). So make a plan and follow it strictly to adopt the ayurvedic life style which keeps healthy, provide longevity, wealth and happiness.

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