



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

SWASTHAVRTHA AND THE CURRENT HEALTH SCENARIO

KEY WORDS: Swasthavrthta, Dinacharya, Rtucharya, Sadvrthta, Achara Rasayana

Dr. Roopa Mathew

MD (Ay) Kayachikitsa, Assistant Professor, SumatibhaiShah Ayurved Mahavidyalay, Pune

ABSTRACT

Swasthavrthta is a fundamental branch of Ayurveda concerned with preservation and promotion of health through legitimate lifestyle, diet, hygiene and ethical conduct. The term is derived from Swastha (healthy) and Vrttha (daily regimen or code of conduct). In today's rapidly changing world and in a situation of increased prevalence of various lifestyle disorders, mental stress, unhealthy dietary habits, the principles of swasthavrthta are appearing to be more relevant than ever. Swasthavrthta emphasizes balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, adequate sleep and disciplined daily and seasonal routines, helps prevent these disorders. The regimes of dinacharya, rtucharya, sadvrthta, achara rasayana are also imparting rasayana benefits.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, rapid urbanization, technological advancement and changing socio-economic conditions have significantly altered human lifestyle. Maintaining health in modern era is critical for managing increased risks from sedentary lifestyles, high stress and processed foods. Another critical global concern in this era is the mental health. Major stressors like urbanization, job and economic pressures, digital dependency and social isolation.

Health is not a static point but a state of balance that fluctuates throughout life. It is more than just not being sick. Health is multidimensional that covers 8 dimensions like physical, mental, social, occupational, spiritual, emotional and vocational resource for everyday life.

'Health is the soundness of body and mind, the condition in which the functions are duly and efficiently discharged.' (The Oxford Dictionary)

Ayurveda provides a comprehensive and sustainable solution to today's health challenges. Ayurveda through its preventive and holistic approach, offers effective solutions through Ayurvedic principles like Swasthavrthta, Ahara, Vihara and Achara.

A disease free body is the beginning of happiness.

Health in ayurveda is a dynamic balance of body, mind, and consciousness. It goes beyond the absence of diseases and aims at achieving complete harmony within and with nature.

Health in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, health is defined in a very holistic way. The classical definition is:

"samadosha....(Su.Soo15/71)

A person is considered healthy when:

- Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) are in balance
- Digestive fire (Agni) is proper
- Body tissues (dhatus) are functioning well
- Waste products (malas) are eliminated properly
- Soul(atma), senses(indriya) and mind (mana) are in a state of happiness

Acharya Kashyapa defined arogya or health as:

"Aarogyam dosasamatha sarvabhadha nivarthanam" (Ka.sa.khi.5/5)

The balanced state of dosas and absence of any abnormality is known as health.

A man is said to be swastha whose dosas, agnis, dhatus and malas are in the state of equilibrium along with mental, sensory and spiritual pleasantness and happiness.

Swasthavrthta in Ayurveda

Swasthavrthta is specialized branch of Ayurveda that deals with maintaining health and preventing diseases through proper lifestyle practices. This specially focusses on preventive and social medicine, aiming to maintain the health of healthy individual.

Swasthavrutta – *"Swasthasya Swasthya rakshanam"*. It means maintainance of health of a healthy individual.

This includes:

- Daily regimen (*Dinacharya*)
- Seasonal regimen (*Rtucharya*)
- Ethical conduct (*Sadvritta*)
- Proper diet and lifestyle practices

"Prevention is better than cure" is the core approach of Ayurveda. Swasthavrthta provides a holistic, practical and time tested approach to maintain health by balancing body, mind and behavior.

Swasthavrutta plays a vital role in preventing lifestyle disorders by regulating diet, daily routine, mental health and seasonal practices, thereby maintaining equilibrium of dosas and promoting overall wellbeing.

Principles for Prevention of Diseases in Ayurveda

In Swasthavrthta, all the appropriate regimens that are to be followed right from awakening from sleep in the morning are mentioned.

The Swasthavrthta principle can be classified into two:

- **Vaiyaktika Swasthavrthta** – It refers to the principles that are to be followed by the individual to prevent diseases.
- **Samajika Swasthavrthta** – The principles to be followed by the community for the maintainance of health of the society.

In *Bhava Prakasha*, the following rules are depicted for maintainance of health.

- Proper observance of the daily regimen, seasonal regimen, night regimens are essential
- The person should always consume wholesome food, practice robust habits, not be too much indulged in worldly matters, staying balanced towards all beings, forgive, speak truth and follow the *Apta vachana*. These helps him to stay healthy.
- Diet: Acharya Charaka emphasizes on intake of wholesome foods and given examples such as rice, green grams, rock salt, goose berry, barley, milk, ghee, meat, honey etc. These can be understood as references of balanced diet in Ayurveda – rice and barley are sources of carbohydrates, green gram and meat making upto protein source, ghee as fats, honey as a source of sugar where as rock salt, milk and goose berry as sources of various vitamin and mineral source.

- Ideal conduct: It is advised in the Ayurveda classics, that a person must always avoid *prajnaparadha* (intellectual errors), avoid the over utilization, under utilization and wrong utilization of the sense organs. One should maintain proper knowledge and memory and inadvertently follow the rules of *Sadvrtta* in order to stay away from diseases.
- Seasonal Purification of body : Acharya Vagbhatta have elaborated the rules and timings of purificatory therapies to be administered to a healthy individual, in order to prevent the disease occurrence. The *Kapha dosha* produced during *Hemanta* and *Sisira* *rtu* should be expelled out in the beginning of *Vasanta* *rtu* through emesis, *Vata dosha* accumulated during *grishma* *rtu* should be expelled during *varsha* *rtu* through *asthapana basti* and lastly, *pitta dosha* accumulated during *varsha* *rtu* should be expelled in *Sarat* *rtu* by purgation and blood letting.
- One should always avoid suppression of natural urges
- The person desiring well being , should take appropriate treatments while the disease is in its initial stages.

Components of Swasthavrtta and its Relevance :

- Dinacharya: This mainly consists of the following main protocols:
- Waking up early (*Brahma muhurta*)
- Oral hygiene (*Danta dhavana and jihwa nirlekhana*)
- Oil massage (*Abhyanga*)
- Exercise (*Vyayama*)
- Bath (*Snana*)
- Timely meals and sleep

All these regimen can play a role in preventing metabolic disorders and conditions like obesity and diabetes.

- Ritucharya :
- Adapting a proper lifestyle and diet according to the season
- Helps to prevent seasonal diseases

Maintains the doshic balance and prevents seasonal aggravation of diseases.

- Sadvrtta or Code of conduct:
- Ethical behavior
- Control over emotions
- Maintaining social harmony
- Practicing meditation and yoga

Helps in maintaining the psychological well being and overall health.

- Ahara or the Dietary discipline
- Take a proper diet according to prakriti
- Avoid junk, processed and incompatible foods
- Eating at proper time with mindfulness

These habits prevent metabolic syndrome and digestive disorders.

- Nidra (Sleep)
- Timely and adequate sleep
- Avoid late night habits

Incorporating these habits, helps in preventing stress, insomnia, obesity and hypertension.

- Vyayama or Exercise
- Regular physical activity according to capacity

Improves the cardiovascular health and prevents obesity and its complications.

Lifestyle Disorders – A Growing Global Concern

Lifestyle disorders, also known as the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are illnesses primarily caused by unhealthy habits such as poor diet, sedentary habits or lack of physical activity, stress and various addictions. In the modern era, these diseases have reached epidemic proportions globally, affecting both the developed and developing countries.

Global prevalence – The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that NCD's account for 74% deaths annually. The major contributors are :

- Cardiovascular diseases
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Chronic respiratory diseases

India has been considered as the “diabetic capital of the world”. There is rapid rise in cases of Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension, Obesity and PCOS in young women. Rapidly spreading among people of all socio-economic status, urban population is more affected than the rural population.

Sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet, stress and mental health issues, sleep disturbances and various addictions like substance abuse, alcohol, smoking etc contributes to the increasing prevalence of lifestyle disorders.

Impact of lifestyle disorders :

- Increased mortality and morbidity
- Reduced Quality of life
- Economic burden on families and healthcare systems
- Long term medications and further complications like stroke, kidney failure.

Application of Principles of Swasthavrtta in Our Modern Life:

Ayurvedic principles play a major role in preventing and managing modern lifestyle diseases. By emphasizing Swasthavrtta principles like balanced diet, disciplined lifestyle, mental well being, detoxification and individualized care, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive and sustainable solution to today's health challenges.

Swasthavrtta serves as bridge between ancient Ayurvedic wisdom and modern preventive healthcare. The principles of swasthavrtta are highly applicable in the modern era for preventing and managing lifestyle disorders. By adopting proper daily routine, balanced diet, mental discipline and seasonal adaptation , individuals can achieve optimal health and reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases.

The main objective of *dinacharya* , the regimens beginning with getting up from bed till one goes to his bed in the night , are:

- Maintainance of Hygiene
- Brighten the indriyas
- Strengthen the body
- Promote health and longevity
- Keep the mind at peace and harmony

The modification in diet and lifestyle to be brought about according to the *Agni* and *Bala* of an individual to prevent seasonal disorders. During *Hemanta*, *Sisira* and *Vasanta* *rtu*, sweet, sour and salt tastes respectively should be consumed. In *Sarat* and *Vasanta* dry and cold foods and in *Sisira* and *Hemanta* unctuous and hot food should be used. Along with this, proper evacuation of each dosa, in the appropriate season by *Vamana*(emesis), *virechana*(purgation), *Basti* (enema), also play a preventive role in many disorders.

Swasthavrttha as Rasayana in the Current Scenario

Health promotion is given utmost importance in Ayurveda. Rasayana is one of the eight major branches of Ayurveda and is primarily concerned with rejuvenation, healthy ageing, disease prevention and enhancement of physical, mental and spiritual well being.

Modern lifestyles have led to a rise in non-communicable diseases, reduced immunity, mental stress, and an array of various lifestyle disorders. Swasthavrttha helps administer rasayana as part of preventive or a daily regime. Under the preventive regime, primarily *nidana parivarjana* (abstaining

from disease causing agents or lifestyles), acts as a promoter of longevity and can be considered to have rasayana effects. Higher mental faculties such as *dhee*, *Dhriti* are responsible for differentiating between wholesome and unwholesome. So refraining from unwholesome deeds or *nidana parivarjana* is brought about mainly by *Satvaavajaya*.

Satvaavajaya helps to refrain from various *kshaya karanas* namely overly indulging physically draining activities (*balavat vighraha*), excessive physical exercises and strains (*ati vyayama*), over indulgence in sensual pleasures (*ati maithuna*), suppression of natural urges (*vega dharana*), and absurd eating habits (*vishamaasana*, *ahitaasana*). *Satvaavajaya* as a treatment modality thus serves the purpose of rasayana.

Dinacharya regimes enhances the health and endurance, if followed appropriately. *Abhyanga* and *pratimarsha nasya* helps prevent *jara* and improve sensorium and cognition. *Anutaila* may be instilled as *pratimarsha nasya* to get desired effects. In addition proper and timely *Ahara* and *vyayama* enhances the effect of rasayana. *Brahmacharya* is another vital regime with rasayana effect. *Rtucharya* or various seasonal regimes along with *rtu sodhana* attracts special attention. *Hareetaki* a classical rasayana dravya has been advised to be used in different *rtu* (*Rtu Hareetaki*) , to help promote longevity and maintain homeostasis in the body.

Panchakarma is another regime, applied in both curative aspect and preventive strategy to impart rasayana effects. It helps bring forth *sroto-shuddhi* and *dhatu poshana*. Various *Keraliya chikitsa* modalities such as *pizhichil*, *anna lepa*, *shastika shali pinda sweda* have been proven to have effects of tissue regeneration, improving tissue repair through increased vascularization.

Acharya rasayana and *sadvrttha* are concepts of code of conduct and etiquette are explained in Ayurvedic literature. These helps in mainly attain purity in psychological, social and spiritual health domains. This has definitive preventive benefits against many lifestyle disorders that afflicts the human race. In this era of increasing psychological and behavioral disorders in the society, *acharya rasayana* and *sadvrttha* , helps create a discipline and decorum in the society. These in turn also has supportive action during a rasayana therapy or a *pathya* to get desired health benefits.

CONCLUSION

Integrating principles of swasthavrttha into the modern life can considerably reduce the burden of lifestyle diseases, improve mental health, promote a healthy ageing and enhance the overall quality of life. Swasthavrttha is definitely one of the most valuable contributions of Ayurveda to the contemporary healthcare sector. Swasthavrttha principles provide cost effective methods to promote well being and improved long term health outcomes.

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