



CONCEPT OF VYADHIKSHAMATVA AND POTENTIAL ROLE OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

The far most objective of *Ayurveda* is to prevent the disease. For prevention of diseases, the concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* (Immunity) is propagated by the *Ayurvedic* science. But this important concept is not merely explored in *Ayurvedic* science after independence and remained neglected for long time only to come in limelight and in syllabus after the awareness and propagation of immunization schedule by government of India. The present study aims to re- explore the *Ayurvedokta* concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* critically. A clear and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between immunity and lifestyle such as daily activities, seasonal regimens, diet, emotional factors and psychological factors is documented in ancient literature. According to *Ayurveda*, the most important contributing factors for the normal immune functioning of the body include *Agni* (digestive factors), *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep), *Vyayama* (physical activity/exercise), *Satva* (mental stability), and *Rasayana* (rejuvenators). In the present work, these factors influencing immunity were compiled from classical texts of *Ayurveda* and presented systematically with the help of published scientific literature.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Bala*, *Oja*, Immunity etc.

INTRODUCTION

The basic concept of immunity is well explained under the heading *Vyadhikshamatva* in classical texts of *Ayurveda*. A healthy and joyful long life is the main priority of *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* explained the concepts related to health and diseases in details, also the knowledge of etiology, symptomology, therapeutics, numerous methods to sustain healthy status and causes behind falling sick.^[1] The main purpose and objectives of *Ayurveda* is the preservation of health in healthy individual and eradication of diseases which are curable. The concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) is of tremendous importance in the daily wellness of human beings, for prevention and recovery from diseases. When etiological factors come in contact with the body, they try to produce disease. At the same time the body tries to resist the disease. This power of the body, which prevents the development of diseases or resists a developed disease, is called Immunity. *Vyadhikshamatva* in *Ayurveda* is not merely immunity against a specific infectious agent or disease such as typhoid, measles or rubella for which modern medicine provides “immunizations”. Rather, *Vyadhikshamatva* implies a resistance against the loss of integrity, proportion, and interrelationship amongst the individual’s *Doshas* (bioenergies) and *Dhatus* (tissues). Resistance to disease or immunity against disease is of two kinds i.e., the one which attenuates the manifested diseases and other variety prevents the manifestation of diseases.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the *Ayurveda* approach for healthy life by enhancing *Vyadhikshamatva*.
2. To describe the *Ayurveda* concept of immunity.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This article is based on Concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* described in various ancient *samhitas*, textbook, internet and research papers will be analyzed thoroughly.

Vyadhikshamatva

The body has an inherent capability to defend itself from ailments, which is termed as ‘*Prakritirakshini*’. This protects the body from the ill effects of unwholesome food, regimes and other non-conductive factors. The basic concept of immunity and immunology has existed and has been well practiced in *Ayurveda* for centuries. The basic concept in *Ayurveda* is to prevent disease and cure the diseased condi-

tion with different treatment modalities. This concept gives importance to prevention rather than the curative aspect. Although the term *Vyadhikshamatva* is generally correlated with the term immunity, this concept has much wider implications. The term *Vyadhikshamatva* has been described under the term *Vyadhibala Virodhitwa*, *Vyadhiutpada Prati-bandhkatwa* by *Chakrapanidatta* which means the strength in a person which waves off the strength of the disease and which inhibits the manifestation of the disease.^[2]

व्याधिक्षमत्वं व्याधिबलविरोधित्वं
व्याधुत्पादप्रतिबन्धकत्वमिति यावत् ||^[3]

तत्र रसादीनां शुक्रान्तानां धातूनां यत् परं तेजस्तत्
खल्वोजस्तदेव बलमित्युच्यते, स्वशास्त्रसिद्धान्तात् ||^[4] According to *Ayurveda*, *Ojas* is the final essence of all the *Dhatus* (structural components of the body) and seat for the *Bala* (strength), which is provided by *Prakrita Shleshma* of an individual that helps to fight against a disease. If *Ojas* get vitiated or decreased, there manifests three kinds of immunity:-

1. ***Ojavisramsas*** (dislodged immune strength) such as autoimmunity.
सन्धिविश्लेषो गात्राणां सदनं दोषच्यवनं क्रियासन्निरोधश्च
विस्रसे ||^[5]
2. ***Ojavyapat*** (aberrant immune function brought about by morbid *Dosha* and *Dushya* interaction) such as hypersensitivities.
स्तब्धगुरुगात्रता वातशोफो वर्णभेदो ग्लानिस्तन्द्रा निद्रा च
व्यापन्ने ||^[6]
3. ***Ojakshayas*** (decrease in its normal quantity)-immune deficiencies and causes many diseases manifestation and over a period of time leads to death of a person as well.

मूर्च्छा मांसक्षयो मोहः प्रलापो मरणमिति च क्षये ||^[7]

Although these three states of *Oja* are different, all of them indicate an immune deficiency. In all these cases, the aim is to enhance *Bala*. *Oja* is vital energy that infiltrates into all tissues and cells and is also an element of our immune health and resistance to disease.

BALA- The *Vyadhikshamatva* for the most part depends on *Bala* that restricts the clutter state of

Doshas. *Charaka* portrays that the support of wellbeing depends completely upon the *Bala*. This quality is achievable from three sources.

Sahaja Bala: Constitutional strength is the one which exists in the mind and body from the very birth.

Kalaja Bala

Temporal quality is the one which is based on division of seasons and age of the individual. In Adana kala (late winter, spring and summers) Bala of person will be less and in Visarga kala (stormy seasons, harvest time and winter) it'll be more. Bala will be Alpa (least) in child and ancient age, Uttama (greatest) in youthful age.

Yuktikrita Bala

Acquired strength is the one which is achieved by the combination of diet and physical activities.^[8]

Factors Influencing the Immunity

The classical text of *Ayurveda* very clearly identified and explained the role of daily activities, seasonal regimens, diet, emotional and psychological factors in the proper functioning of the immune system. The most important factors that contribute to *Vyadhikshamatva* include *Agni* (digestive factors), *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep), *Vyayama* (exercise), *Satva* (mental stability), *Vyadhi* and *Vaya*, patency of *Srotas* (structural and functional channels), normal *Dosha* (bodily humors) and balanced condition of *Dhatu* (Physiological parameters) and *Rasayana*. These factors oscillate around holistic perpetuity under *Ayurveda* and contribute to assessing the immunity of an individual. The *Rasayana* are rejuvenating and health promoting agents which support the body to build resistance against diseases. *Oja* is responsible to boost immunity and *Rasayana* have been used since ancient times as *Oja* promoting herbs in *Ayurveda*.

1. Agni (Digestive/ metabolic factors)

Agni is the entity in the body that is responsible for digestion, metabolism and the assimilation of nutrients. As per *Acharya Charaka* classical text of *Ayurveda*, *Agni* is the fundamental causative agent for longevity, health, good strength, normal *Ojas*, resistance against infection, motivation, and skin lusture.^[9] The cause of all diseases is *Mandagni* (hypo-metabolism) and the treatment protocol of any diseases in *Ayurveda* begins with normalizing the *Ag-*

ni.^[10] Among all *Agni*, *Jatharagni* (metabolic factors located in the digestive tract) is the base for the normalcy of *Bhutagni* and *Dhatvagni*. *Jatharagni* is responsible for all the physiological and vital functions occurring in the body.^[6] This shows if one wants strength, good immunity, and longevity, one should consume a wholesome diet with a healthy lifestyle and contrary to that if one consumes an unwholesome diet, suffer from the disease with vitiation in *Grahani* (disturbance in the gastrointestinal tract).

1. Ahara (Diet/Food/Nutrients)

Ahara (food) is composed of *Panchamahabhuta* and is said to be *Prana* (life), which means that homeostasis of our body and mind is dependent upon the compatible diet, i.e., our diet has a direct impact on our immune system. *Ahara* (food) is the most important aspect as food contributes to the building of body cells and enables to fight off disease. *Yuktikrita Bala* (acquired immunity) is achieved with a proper diet. One of the best ways to enhance *Bala* and *Ojas* is through consuming proper food. Wholesome food is one of the important measures for strength, longevity, happiness.^[11] Food consumed should be *Push-tivardhak* (nourishing), *Medhya* (increasing intellect) and *Balya* (increasing strength and immunity).

2. Vyayama (Physical Activity/ Exercise)

Vyayama is any physical activity that enhances the strength of body.^[12] Any Karma which brings *Ayasa* (exhaustion) is called as *Vyayama*.^[13] As per the classical text of *Ayurveda* physical activity, not only maintains health but also reflects its ill effects if done excessively and inadequately. The balance has to be stuck in both the ones which stimulate the rejuvenation and immunomodulation of the body. It helps in maintaining the balance between three *Dosha* (regulatory functional factor of the body- *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) enhances *Ojas*, stimulates *Agni* and maintains homeostasis in general. It maintains a healthy weight, bones, muscle strength, psychological wellbeing and strengthens the immune system. According to *Ayurveda* treatises, lack of exercise leads to *Prameha Vyadhi* and *Sthoulya*. All of this shows how it helps in preventing disease. *Acharya Charak* defined *Vyayama* as *Balavidhikarbhava* i.e., immune en-

hancer. Acharya Sushruta has said that the function of *Oja* is *Sthirupachitamansata* (well-nourished compact muscle) and assessment of *Bala* (strength) is done by *Vyayama Shakti Pariksha* (evaluation of body strength). This indicates the link between physical exercise or activity and immune mechanism.

3. *Nidra* (Sleep)

Nidra (sleep) is one of *Trayopastambhas* (three great subsidiary pillars) on which a person's health is firmly balanced. As per *Ayurveda* to determine the basic function of sleep *Dosha* plays a very important role. The dominance of *Vata Dosha* creates a disturbance in sleep quality and *Kapha* helps in quality sleep. Sleep is an essential factor responsible for a healthy life, provides nutrition to maintain good health. Quality sleep is a reflector of a good health-supporting good immune system and stress reliever.^[14] The body and nervous system convalesce in a condition of sleep.^[15] It improves digestion, restores the natural equilibrium of body tissue. In a condition of sound sleep, the hormone that controls appetite, energy metabolism and glucose metabolism is secreted by the body and less sleep disrupts these and other hormones.^[16] The quality of sleep has a strong relation with immunity and strength of the body. *Nidra* increases the *Kapha Dosha* and *Kapha* means *Bala*. The word *Vyadhikshamatva* is attributed to *Kapha Dosha* in *Ayurveda*. In the condition of *Nidranasha*, *Bala* is reduced. This shows a strong association between the immune system and *Nidra* (sleep).

4. *Satva* (Mental Strength) / Psychological Well – Being

According to *Ayurveda*, *Satva* is one among three distinct categories called *Triguna* and is an integral component of mind and energy requirement for creation. The mental characteristics of an individual are determined by the predominance of one or another *Triguna* (three primary attributes) *Satva* of the human being is significant to maintain the homeostasis within the body. *Ayurveda* describes three types of *Satva* i.e superior (*Pravara*), medium (*Madhyam*) and inferior (*Avara*). Among all those with superior *Satva* or *Pravara Satva*, *Sara Purusha* (a person with strong mental strength) is able to withstand physical and

psychological stress and these patients show a good response in treatment.^[17]

Methods to Boost up *Vyadhikshamatva*: In *Ayurveda* texts, various codes of conducts are described for each person of any age (from conception to old age) to follow in different seasons, during healthy and diseased conditions terms of dietetic (*Ahara*) and mode of life (*Vihar*). These are:

1. For outcome of healthy fetus – follow *Garbhini-masanumasiparicharya*, *Punsavana karma*.
2. To promote health of infant- *Lehana Karma*, various *Medhya rasayana* (memory enhancing drugs).
3. Following *Swasthavrittaparipalana* (*Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*).
4. Proper nutritious diet (*Satmyaahara*).
5. Regular proper sleep, exercise, yogic asanas,
6. Adopting *Shodhana* (*Panchkarma*) according to *Ritu* in *Swastha purusha* (healthy person).
7. Following *Achararasayana*: for promoting mental and spiritual strength.
8. Meditation for spiritual growth.
9. Use of various drugs: *Vajikarakadravya*
10. (*Vajikaranayogas* help to acquire strength by fulfilling necessary deficiencies in deficient *dhatus*.)
11. *Rasayana* therapy - It promotes and rejuvenates the physiology of the body, produces resistance against disease both physically and mentally.

According to *Acharya Charaka*, use of *Rasayanas* results in disease-free long life (*Dirghamaayu*), *Smriti* (recapitulating power), *Medha*, *Aarogyam* (healthy wellbeing), *Tarunvaya* (youthfulness), *Prabha*, *Varna* (complexion), voice, strength etc.

DISCUSSION

Vyadhikshamatva -resistance to diseases or immunity against diseases is of two kinds i.e., the one which attenuate the manifested disease and other variety prevents the manifestation of diseases. It is observed that good immunity in an individual will be due to the effect of active and healthy functioning of the digestive system. *Ayu*, *Bala*, *Varna*, *Swasthya*, *Utsaha*, *Upchaya*, *Prabha*, *Oja*, another *Agni* of *Sharira* de-

pend on the *Jatharagni* of the *Sharira*. Appropriate food of *Dhatus* will depend on wholesome and unwholesome nourishment. The last and fabulous essence of *Dhatus* starting with *Rasa* to *Shukra* is *Ojas* which *Ojas* is said to be *Bala*. Quality diet, required quantity and balanced food, is the base for the proper digestion and in turn for the development of a strong immune system. Exercises improve metabolic health which in turn provides a good immune system. Even sleep affects the immune system. Good sleep provides strong immune responses; it results in the formation of antibodies which along with white blood cells- cellular immune system of body and fight against the disease. Psychological well-being also can increase living comfort. *Rasayana* provides a defense mechanism against diseases (*Vyadhi*) in the body. Proper understanding and application of these concepts in clinical practice can be a preventive strategy for a number of diseases.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* is very well documented in *Ayurvedic* literature. *Vyadhikshamatva*, which is synonyms to *Swastha*, *Bala* and *Ojas* is basic resistance of body in present world where every day new sort of diseases is evolving. Different people have different *Vyadhikshamatva* which depends upon *Oja*, *Bala*, season, diet and regimen, *Anupana*, *rasa* etc. One should wisely adopt these into one's lifestyle so as to make one's body and mind strong enough to deal with all the physical and mental stresses of the modern era. Thus, *Ayurveda* is a holistic science with a multi-dimensional approach and constitutes special methods to formulate good immunity.

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