

CHATURMAS UPAVAS (FASTING) – A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Chaturmas Upvas is as old as human being. *Maharshi Vyas* transcribed first time regarding various rituals. *Chaturmas* means four months. It is a holy period from July to October. *Upvas* is withdrawal of senses from materialistic world as well as going back from misconduct and living quality life at all level. It is practiced for spiritual upgrading as well as to worship the God. It is 'willful refrainment from eating all or some kind of food or drink or total abstinence from all kinds of food for definite period of time' but it is much more than simply not eating, it is for overall well-being and to acquire divine grace. It contributes in purification of body as well as mind and improves overall health which is mainstay of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* for which human is supposed to borne. In this article, *Chaturmas Upvas* and its contribution in physical, spiritual and mental health is reviewed scientifically.

Keywords: *Chaturmas*, *Upavas*, *Chaturmas Upvas*, fasting etc.

INTRODUCTION

Balanced state of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, *Malakriya* and *Prasanna Atma*, *Indriya* as well as *Mana* is considered as health ^[1]. It is concerned at physical, spiritual, mental as well as social level. Physical health is possible

by healthy lifestyle and natural food. Spiritual health can be accomplished by following *Veda*, *Upanishad*, exact rituals and festivals etc. Mental health may be a product of physical and spiritual health. Human life is

considered for *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* which depends upon health. [2] Scientific rituals as well as festivals are designed to contribute to health.

Chaturmas

The Sanskrit word *Chaturmas* is combination of *Cha-tur* (four) and *Mas* (month). It is a holy period of four months (July to October), beginning on *Deva Shayani Ekadashi* [The eleventh day of the first bright half, *Shukla Paksha*, of *Ashadh* (fourth month of the Hindu lunar calendar)] up to *Deva Prabodhini Ekadashi* [The eleventh day of the first bright half of *Kartik* (eighth month of the Hindu lunar calendar)]. The first month of *Chaturmas* is *Shravan* (Hindu lunar month) which is dedicated to Lord *Shiva*, especially the Mondays. Important festivals like *Rakshabandhan*, *Nagpanchami*, *Janmashtami*, *Bendur (Pola)* are celebrated in this month. The second month is *Bhadrapad* in which famous festival *Ganesh Chaturthi* is celebrated as well as in the dark fortnight *Mahalayshradha* (rituals to appease departed ancestors and subtle bodies) is carried out. Distinguished festivals like *Durga Puja*, *Navratri*, *Sharad Purnima* and *Dashehara* are celebrated in *Ashwin* month. *Dipavali* festival is celebrated in *Kartika* which is last month of *Chaturmas*. [3] As per *Vishnupuran* and *Garudpuran*, during *Chaturmas* Lord *Vishnu* is in *Yoga Nidra* with demon king *Bali* in *Sutallok*.

Upvasa

The Sanskrit word *Upvasa* is combination of *Upa* (close to) and *Vas* (to dwell). Hence living like god and close to god is *Upvasa*. It is withdrawal of senses from materialistic world. In *Purana* and epic history, *Upvasa* means going back from misconduct and living quality life at all level. It is as old as human being. It is practiced in *Bharat* (India) since ancient time by sages for their spiritual upgrading. It is also practiced by religious peoples to worship the God. Fasting is defined as ‘willful refrainment from eating all or some kind of food or drink or total abstinence from all kinds of food for definite period of time’ but it is much more than simply not eating, it is for overall well-being and to acquire divine grace. It contributes to purification of body as well as mind and improves overall health.

[5]

Scientific method of Chaturmas upvasa

Chaturmas is for going back from misconduct and living quality life at all level. *Atmachintan*, *Parmatma Chintan*, worship to God *Vishnu* and *Shiv*, *Mantra* chanting, *Maun Vritta* (Silence), holy river bath, good conducts etc. are practiced in *Chaturmas*. Eating particular variety of healthy food once in a day. Food should be taken probably up to 1 pm after praying God. Abstaining from Onion, Garlic, Brinjal, black gram, leafy vegetables, meat, alcohol drinking, traveling etc., which are not good for health during *Chaturmas*. [6]

Today’s pattern of Chaturmas upvasa

Worship to God and *puja* is completed as a part of *Chaturmas* effort but not from inner level. Full heavy meal is taken in afternoon. In evening or in-between majority humans are commonly practicing tasty food which gives short pleasure to tongue and mind like fried food, *Shabudana Vada*, *Bhagar Dosa*, *Rajgeera Thepla*, *Bhagar*, Potato *Samosa*, *Bhagar Sabudana Kachori*, Potato *patis*, *Bhagar Dhokla*, Potato chips, Banana chips, Potato *Papadi*, *Bhagar Papadi*, *Sabudana Papadi*, *Farali Chivada*, Ice-cream etc. These are not healthy during *Chaturmas*.

Need of Chaturmas Upvas

In materialistic world human is trapped in vicious cycle hence his lifestyle is significantly changed. Sitting job, genetically modified and processed food, frequent consumption, over eating, ingestion without hunger sensation, improper methods of intake, physical as well as mental stress etc. progress into various disorders like Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension, Heart diseases, Cancer, Stroke, Skin problems, Immune mediated diseases etc. In *Chaturmas*, rainy season is already prone for various air born, water born and food borne diseases. *Agni* status (digestive and metabolic fire) is not better in this season. To overcome all these problems, it is necessary to follow *Chaturmas* which helps to promote physical, spiritual, mental plus social health.

Science behind Chaturmas Upvas:

Maharshi Kashyap mentioned that “*Aaarogyam Bhojanadinam*” means health is product of healthy food.

[7] *Aacharya Charak* enlightened that ‘*Ekashana Bho-*

jan Sukhparinamkaranam', means taking meal once in a day gives beneficial effects in all aspects.^[8] Hence variety, quantity, quality and frequency of eating should be according to *Prikriti, Desha, Kala, Ritu, Agni* status, as well as *Aharvidhivisheshyatan* (dietic rules)^[9] however maximum humans are careless regarding this which results in variety of diseases.

Scientific *Upvasa* helps in complete normal assimilation, abnormal metabolites digestion or excretion, elimination of harmful substances from cellular or minute level, enhance metabolism, and promote cleansing of body. It helps in reduction of body fat and mass, give complete physical, physiological and sensory rest, improve and strengthens immune system, repair and rejuvenates the whole body system, prevents harmful changes in vital organs and improve their functional efficiency, helps to improve the strength of cardiovascular system and reduces incidence of myocardial infraction, fasting awakens the mind, develops inner tranquility, helps to prevent metabolic and lifestyle disorders etc.^[10] Thus *Chaturmas Upvas* in proper way improves health at all level.

It is assumed that *Chaturmas* is the period of rest of God. During this period evils becomes more active hence malicious frequencies reach to the earth. It harasses the humans therefore some peoples are disturbed physically as well as mentally to some extent. Protection from such evil frequencies is possible by *Satvic* practices like eating of *Satvic* food, *Atma Chintan*, *Parmatma Chintan*, and worship to God etc.

DISCUSSION

Chaturmas fasting initially may cause weakness, headache, disturbed sleep, acidity, giddiness etc. in *Pitta* as well as *Vata Prikriti* humans and subsides after seven days. In such condition pure suitable fruit can be taken after proper hunger sensation. *Kapha Prikriti* persons can easily go for fasting. Humans suffering from disease in which fasting is not suitable should take advice from their family doctor.

Healthy, *Satvic*, easily digestible, natural food is advised at once during *Chaturmas*. Due to restriction on the habit of frequent eating, food is digested completely to form best final product for our body and mind.

Various abnormal byproducts (*Ama*) from minute level will be processed or excreted from our body and helps to prevent the disease prone condition.

During *Chaturmas Atmachintan*, *Parmatmachintan*, worship to God, Chanting etc. are practiced. It helps to uplift the spiritual health. Best physical and spiritual health contributes in mental as well as social health. The *Jalamahabhuta* as well as *Kleda* in environment is elevated in *Chaturmas*. It is favorable for survival of various organisms hence infectious diseases are very common. If we use fresh cooked warm food once for eating and boiled drinking water, then *Jalamahabhuta* as well as *Kleda* in our body will be automatically balanced and prone condition for infection is prevented.

In *Chaturmas* various festivals are celebrated like *Durga Puja, Navratri, Sharad Purnima, Dashehara, Dipavali* etc. which brings close to relatives, friends, society members. It helps to develop a healthier attachment as well as contributes to improve social health.

After end of *Chaturmas* one should not start excessive eating, frequent eating, fast food, fried food, unhealthy practices etc. because it may cause diseases hence try to eat healthy easy digestible food once or twice only. If someone who is not able to keep lengthy *Chaturmas Upvas* may be benefited with intermittent *Upvas* designed in various rituals by sages.

CONCLUSION

Chaturmas Upvas is training for living with control on mind as well as senses and continuing awakening early in morning, *Atmachintan, Parmatma Chintan*, worship, *Yoga, Pranayam*, minimum required frequency of healthy food intake etc. which result in health at all level.

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