

IDEAL LIFESTYLE: THE AYURVEDIC WAY**Dr. Shikha[#], Dr. Yogeh Jakhar* Dr. Anupam Pathak****

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ABSTRACT

Modern medical science has eliminated the threat of death and disability from most infectious diseases through improved sanitation, vaccination, and antibiotics. But death from lifestyle diseases is now the primary concern. Altered lifestyle has many implications on human health which are potentially preventable. Concept of lifestyle varies with culture and geographical area. Considering these variations *Ayurveda* advocates an ideal lifestyle applicable for all. By following the principles of lifestyle told in *Ayurveda* it is possible to fight the lifestyle diseases on several fronts. Various aspects of lifestyle are dealt under the headings of *Dinacharya*, *Rutucharya* and *Sadvritta*. The present scientific era demands an evidence base for every concept before it is being accepted universally so also is the concept of lifestyle

in *Ayurveda*. An attempt is made in the article to explore the concepts of Lifestyle in *Ayurveda* with possible evidence base.

KEYWORDS: Lifestyle diseases, Dinacharya, Sadvritta.

INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle is a way used by people, groups and nations and is formed in specific geographical, economic, political, cultural and religious text. Lifestyle is referred to the characteristics of inhabitants of a region in special time and place. It includes day to day behaviors and functions of individuals in job, activities, fun and diet.

Lifestyle denotes the way people live, reflecting the whole range of activities, attitudes of everyday from sunrise to sunset. Dramatic shifts in the way humans live their lives, often due to advancements in a society or its scientific progress leads to altered lifestyle which has many implications on human health and may lead to many disorders including diabetes mellitus, CHD, primary hypertension, obesity. These diseases are often termed as ‘Diseases of longevity’ or ‘Diseases of civilization’. Lifestyle diseases are different from other diseases because they are potentially preventable, and can be lowered with changes in diet, lifestyle, and environment. *Ayurveda* being a holistic healing science emphasizes the importance of a healthy lifestyle in preventing diseases which is evident from its objective i.e., “*Swasthya rakshanam*” (Maintenance of health).¹ *Ayurvedic* perspective of an ideal lifestyle include, following *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Rutucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (codes and conduct) all of which are instrumental in the prevention of disease and promotion of ideal health. Lifestyle diseases are becoming even more widespread with the substantial change in Peoples' diet and regimen in the second half of the twentieth century as countries became more industrialized. The need of the hour is conversion of defective sedentary lifestyle to an ideal, healthy and disease free lifestyle. *Ayurvedic* perspective of an ideal lifestyle

***Ayurveda* emphasizes much on the systematic daily routine in order to maintain ideal life style through the following principles.**

Dinacharya

Sadvritta

Dinacharya – It includes

- *Brahmamuhurtha jagrana*
- *Achamana*
- *Dantadhavana*
- *Jihwa nirlekhana*
- *Anjana*
- *Nasya*
- *Kaval and Gandush*
- *Dhumpana*
- *Tambulsevan*
- *Vyayama*

- *Snana*
- *Vastra dharana*

Sadvritta

It is right conduct in order to lead an ideal social harmonious life as guided by the classics.

- *Madhura bhashana*
- *Indriya vyavahara*
- *Gamana vidhi*
- *Dharma acharana*
- *Shareera chesta vidhi*
- *Achara rasayana*

Critical Analysis of the Chief Components of *Dinacharya*

1.) ***Brahmamuhurta jagrana***^[2]: It is advisable to wake up during *Brahma muhurta* (early in the morning i.e. 90 minutes before sunrise.)^[3]

- Nascent oxygen in the atmosphere in the early morning easily and readily mixes up with hemoglobin to form oxy-hemoglobin which nourishes the remote tissues rapidly.
- Exposure to bright light in early morning causes the release of serotonin (neurotransmitter biochemically derived from tryptophan)^[4] which contributes to feelings of well being and happiness and keeps the person active and alert.^[5]
- In the early morning, there is minimal pollution (noise, water, air) which enhances the concentration.

Today's modern lifestyle results into development of many faulty habits like late night sleeping and waking up late in the morning. Late night sleeping or chronic sleep loss causes the elevation of cortisol which in turn is responsible for rise in B.P (secondary hypertension) and is likely to promote the development of insulin resistance, a risk factor for obesity and diabetes.^[6]

(2) ***Achamana***^[7]/***Mukha –netra prakshalana***^[8]

(Washing of face and eyes): To prevent eye diseases.

(3) ***Dantadhavana (Tooth brushing)***^[9]: It is directed to clean the teeth in the morning and after taking meals.^[10]

- It stimulates taste perception and increases the salivation.
- Saliva contains salivary amylase (ptyalin) which plays a role in breaking down food particles entrapped within dental crevices, thus protecting teeth from bacterial decay.^[11]
- Saliva contains lysozyme and secretory IgA which act as antimicrobial agents.^[11]
- Population subjected to excess fluorine in drinking water over a period of time will suffer from fluorosis. (Ayurwave-Nov.2002).

This is the logic behind indicating twigs of plants possessing *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter), *kashaya* (astringent) *rasas* (tastes) for the purpose of *danta dhavana* as it poses minimum risk of allergic reactions or mucosal irritation. It is a known fact that astringent drugs possess analgesic and antiseptic properties.

(4) Jihva –nirlekhana (tongue cleaning)

Tongue should be cleaned by a long flexible strip of metal or plant material.

- According to acupressure theory, tongue has many more acupressure points which initiate the proper functioning of vital organs like liver, kidney, bladder, stomach, intestine.
- It also stimulates taste perception and increases the salivation (saliva contains Ptyalin, lysosomes, which acts as bactericidal).

(5) Anjana (application of collyrium in eyes)

In today's time, excessive work on computer results in dry eye or computer vision syndrome.

- When *Anjana* dravyas are applied, it causes irritation to eyelids and conjunctiva and enhances the circulation.
- Many researchers predict that high frequency emerging from cell phones increases the stress level and may also cause vision problems.

(6) Nasya: *Nasya* is a unique method of delivering drug via transnasal route. It promotes strength and prevents diseases of *urdhwajatru gata angas* (head and neck). One distinct advantage of transnasal drug delivery is that drug uptake into the blood by absorption through the nasal mucosa can be quite rapid.^[12,13] This is due to the large surface area, porous endothelial membrane, high total blood flow, the avoidance of first-pass metabolism, and ready accessibility. Transnasal drug delivery may be the route of choice for diseases such as migraine headaches, since there may be direct access from the nasal cavity to the central nervous system (CNS) via the olfactory neurons, thus avoiding the problems with the blood-brain barrier observed for drugs administered intravenously; however, this remains to be

confirmed and quantified. Another distinct advantage of trans nasal drug delivery over conventional oral drug administration in the form of drug-containing tablets and liquids is the avoidance of low pH, associated chemical degradation, enzymatic inactivation and hepatic elimination of the drug.^[14]

The logic behind advocating medicated oils for the purpose of *nasya* is evident from the fact that the nasal mucosa presents an ideal site for bioadhesive drug delivery systems. Drug delivery systems, such as microspheres, liposomes and gels have been demonstrated to have good bioadhesive characteristics and that swell easily when in contact with the nasal mucosa. These drug delivery systems have the ability to control the rate of drug clearance from the nasal cavity as well as protect the drug from enzymatic degradation in nasal secretions.^[15]

(7) Gandusha and kavala

They are intended to tone up jaw and facial muscles along with maintaining oral hygiene. The oral mucous membrane has the capacity to absorb lipid soluble drugs especially the buccal mucosal cell membrane which is lipophilic in nature permitting considerable absorption of lipid substances across the mucosa.^[16] Hence the lipid soluble constituents present in *kavala and gandusha* gets absorbed. It enhances the sensory and motor functions of tongue, stimulate blood flow, relieve tension, and improve overall appearance of the face.

(8) Dhumpana (medicated fume inhalation)

- When the *dhumpana* dravyas are lightened with fire, it releases the smoke, soot and even CO₂.
- Carbon atom in CO₂ has the tendency to stimulate the respiratory centre present in brain stem which may triggers the normal physiological function of respiratory system.
- Disinfective action of the *dhumpana* dravyas like *haridra, guggulu and vacha* cleanses the respiratory tract, oral cavity and pharynx.

(9) Tambula bhakshana (chewing betel leaves)

- stimulates the taste bud
- Increases salivation (Ptyalin enzyme¹⁶), scraps the deposited matter.

Tambula Guna: Teekshna, Ushna Veerya, Ruchikaraka, Kashayarasa, Saraguna Asyavairasya Nashaka. Besides the aforesaid benefits betel leaves has many proven medicinal uses.^[17]

Nutritional composition of fresh betel leaf Constituents' with approximate composition

- Water 85-90%
- Protein 3-3.5%
- Fat 0.4-1.0%
- Minerals 2.3-3.3%
- Fibre 2.3%
- Chlorophyll 0.01-0.25%
- Carbohydrate 0.5-6.10%
- Nicotinic acid 0.63-0.89 mg/100g
- Vitamin C 0.005-0.01%
- Vitamin A 1.9-2.9 mg/100g
- Thiamine 10-70 µg/100g
- Riboflavin 1.9-30 µg/100g
- Tannin 0.1-1.3%
- Nitrogen 2.0-7.0%
- Phosphorus 0.05-0.6%
- Potassium 1.1-4.6%
- Calcium 0.2-0.5%
- Iron 0.005-0.007%
- Iodine 3.4 µg/100g
- Essential Oil 0.08 - 0.2%
- Energy 44 kcal/100 g

The essential oil contained in the leaves possesses antibacterial, antiprotozoan and antifungal properties. Therefore, the oil kills or inhibits growth of dreadful bacteria causing typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis etc that needs proper evaluation and exploitation.^[17]

(10) Vyayama (Physical Exercise)

Half of one's capacity (*Ardha shakti*) is considered as beneficial in *Ayurveda* as it Increases the digestive power, makes body light and able to withstand exhaustion.

- Physical Exercise increases the carbohydrate metabolism (Glycolysis) and causes lipolysis of accumulated adipose tissue (Gluconeogenesis) thereby causing abolishment of extra fat.
- It increases O₂ supply to remote tissues.

- The perspiration takes out the accumulated toxins from the body. It helps in maintaining a healthy state of body and mind, and aids in maintaining ideal body weight, lypolysis of accumulated excess adipose tissue, metabolize carbohydrate, increases oxygen supply to all tissues, increases BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate).

(11) Abhyanga (oil massage)

It will increase blood circulation locally providing better transportation of oxygen and nutrients in body.

- Massage enhances the overall blood circulation and transport the potency of drugs to desired part.
- Massage triggers the acupressure point which induces the release of endorphins which shows analgesic effect.

(12) Ahara Sevana: Concept of balanced diet in *Ayurveda* is considered under the heading of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayathana* (Eight dietetic measures) and *Dwadasha ashana pravichara* (twelve factors to be considered while planning a meal). In general food must be pleasant to taste and should be pure, fresh and warm. The influence of psychology over food consumption is well appreciated nowadays as the nutritionists and dieticians recommend not to eat in front of the TV or while busy with other activities, pay attention to what you are eating, chew your food well, and fully enjoy the smell and taste of your foods.¹⁸ These concepts are being explained in *Ayurveda* under *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayathana* which states that the food consumed should be fresh and warm, unctuous, balanced and one should not take any food unless there is proper digestion of previous meal and good appetite.

CONCLUSION

Concepts related to lifestyle told in *Ayurveda* are very unique; evidence based and aims at physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing which are practical even in the present era. “Prevention is better than cure” hence incorporation of the concepts of lifestyle definitely confers complete health to a person.

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