

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE IN  
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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Health has always been considered as one of the most valuable aspects of human life. To understand the broader impact of health beyond mere survival, the concept of Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) was developed to capture the contribution of health to an individual's Quality of Life (QoL). Despite its growing importance in clinical evaluation, research, and policy making, it remains conceptually ambiguous due to a lack of a clearly defined causal framework. In contrast, *Ayurveda* provides a structured and comprehensive understanding of well-being through its fundamental principles, which collectively reflect the foundations of HRQoL, which extend beyond disease management. **Objective:** To review the conceptual foundations of Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) in the *Charaka Samhita* and understand the contribution of fundamental *Ayurveda* principles to this construct. **Methodology:** A literary review and analysis were conducted using *Charaka Samhita* with *Chakrapani's* commentary. Concepts relevant to HRQoL, including *Dhatu Samyata*, *Agni and Ahara*, *Gramyahara*, *Rasayana*, *Dhatu Sarata*, *Sattva*, *Sadvrutta*, *Prakriti*, *Prashasta Purusha Lakshana*, *Sukhayu*, *Hitayu etc.*, were analysed and interpreted along with *Ayurveda* journals and contemporary HRQoL literature. **Results and Discussion:** *Ayurveda* views life as the integrated functioning of *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Sattva*, and *Atma*, thereby inherently incorporating multidimensional well-being. HRQoL is rooted in *Dhatu Samyata* and maintained by *Ahara*, which regulates the proper functioning of *Agni*, structurally expressed through the integrity and excellence of *Dhatu (Dhatu Sarata)*, psychologically regulated by *Sattva*, ethically safeguarded through *Sadvrutta*, and individualised by *Prakriti*, embodied in *Prashasta Purusha* and experienced as *Sukhayu* and *Hitayu*. Collectively, these parameters constitute the fundamental mechanisms through which they contribute to HRQoL. **Conclusion:** HRQoL is not a novel construct of today but an inherent and foundational outcome of core principles of *Ayurveda*. These concepts collectively demonstrate a comprehensive framework through which HRQoL and overall well-being are sustained.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, Health-Related Quality of Life, *Dhatu Samyata*, *Dhatu Sarata*, *Sukhayu*, *Hitayu*.**INTRODUCTION**

In today's rapidly evolving world of healthcare, although *Ayurveda* is often perceived as an ancient science, it remains highly relevant. The concepts that are now gaining momentum in contemporary medicine have long

been inherent to *Ayurveda*. One such concept is Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL), a term that has gained increasing attention and importance in recent decades. Earlier, health was considered as the absence of disease and emphasis was given primarily on biological

pathology.<sup>[1]</sup> With advances in medical science and increasing life expectancy, it has gradually become evident that survival alone cannot fully represent health or well-being. As a result of this, there was a shift from merely prolonging life to improving the QoL experienced by individuals.

This shift contributed to the development of the concept of HRQoL. It is a broad and multidimensional concept that reflects how an individual's health affects their overall well-being and ability to live a fulfilling life.<sup>[2]</sup> It is a subset of the broader concept of QoL, which is understood as an individual's perception of their well-being and functioning across several domains, particularly physical, psychological, and social aspects. Bowling states HRQoL should be defined as an optimum level of mental, physical, social and role functioning (e.g., work, parenting, caregiving), including relationships, and perceptions of health, fitness, life satisfaction and well-being. It consists of both the objective and subjective aspects of health. Objective aspects such as physical and cognitive functioning, and subjective aspects such as the experience of health, including perceptions of physical, mental, and social well-being.<sup>[3]</sup>

Understanding HRQoL offers significant benefits in healthcare, research, and policy-making. It provides valuable insights into the patient's perspective on their health, aids in evaluating treatment effectiveness, and supports patient-centred care. Understanding or developing the concept of HRQoL is challenging due to its subjective, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary nature. There is no agreed-upon definition, and the construct often overlaps with related constructs such as general QoL and well-being. Disciplinary differences, cultural variability, and the lack of a clear causal or dynamic framework further complicate its understanding.<sup>[4,5]</sup>

In contrast, *Ayurveda* has always emphasised well-being over mere treatment of disease. Concepts such as an equilibrium state of Functional and structural components of the body (*Dhatu Samyata*), tissue excellence (*Dhatu Sarata*), health (*Swasthya*), rejuvenation therapy (*Rasayana*), good conduct (*Sadvrutta*), characteristic features of an ideal individual (*Prashasta Purusha Lakshana*), wholesome and happy life (*Hitayu* and *Sukhayu*), clearly demonstrate that HRQoL is not novel to *Ayurveda* - it is foundational. A deeper analysis of these *Ayurveda* concepts reveals certain core parameters from which the characteristics of optimal health and well-being are derived. These parameters likely represent the substrates through which *Ayurveda* therapies aim to enhance HRQoL. However, a systematic understanding of these processes remains limited. This gap hinders our ability to give precise, individualised care. Hence, this article aims to understand the concept of HRQoL by analysing scattered references from the *Charaka Samhita*.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVE

To review the conceptual foundations of Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) in *Charaka Samhita* and understand the contribution of fundamental *Ayurveda* principles to this construct.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A literary review was conducted using *Ayurveda* texts and relevant secondary literature. *Charaka Samhita* with *Chakrapani's Ayurveda Dipika* commentary was used as a primary source for the study. Concepts relevant to HRQoL- *Dhatu Samyata*, *Agni* and *Ahara*, *Gramyahara*, *Rasayana*, *Dhatu Sarata*, *Sattva*, *Sadvrutta*, *Prakriti*, *Prashasta Purusha Lakshana*, *Sukhayu*, *Hitayu*, etc., were identified, systematically analysed and interpreted.

In addition, supporting information was gathered from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journals, dissertations on related topics, and published literature on HRQoL. Relevant information from these sources was reviewed to understand the concept of HRQoL in *Ayurveda*.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Before discussing the "Health-Related Quality of Life", it is essential to first understand the concept of life itself. In *Charaka Samhita*, life (*Ayu*) is described as the union of body (*Sharira*), sense organs (*Indriya*), mind (*Sattva*), and soul (*Atma*).<sup>[6]</sup> Life is therefore not merely biological continuity but the integrated functioning of these four components. HRQoL in *Ayurveda* cannot be assessed only at the physical level. Instead, it is understood in terms of the harmonious functioning of this fourfold union. When these components remain balanced and function properly, overall well-being is maintained, whereas disturbance in any one of them may affect the integrity of life. Thus, HRQoL can be understood through the balanced functioning of this fourfold union.

After understanding life, we need to understand what health is and what it means to be healthy.

## HEALTH IN AYURVEDA

The state of equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* is considered as health (*Dhatu Samya*), whereas disequilibrium (*Vaishamyata*) in these is considered as *Vikara*. *Arogya* is synonymous with *Sukha*, and *Vikara* is synonymous with *Dukha*.<sup>[7]</sup>

The objective of *Ayurveda* is the equilibrium of the *Dhatu*s (*Dhatu Samya*), which is characterised by the pacification of disorders (*Vikara Upashama*).

The *Lakshanas* of *Dhatu Samya* are subsiding of the disease (*Rug Upashamana*), proper quality of voice and complexion (*Svara Varna Yoga*), growth of the body (*Sharira Upachaya*), increase of strength (*Bala Vriddhi*), desire for food (*Abhyavaharya Abhilasha*), appetite at the proper time of meals (*Ruchi Ahara Kale*), proper digestion of the ingested food at the appropriate time

(*Samyak Jarana of Abhyavahrita Ahara*), attainment of sleep at the proper time (*Nidra Labha Yathakalam*), absence of abnormal dreams (*Vaikarina Swapnana Adarshana*), pleasant awakening (*Sukhena Pratibodhana*), proper elimination of flatus, urine, faeces, and semen (*Vata Mutra Purisha Retasam Mukti*), and unimpaired functioning of the mind, intellect, and sense organs (*Mano Buddhi Indriya Avyapatti*).<sup>[8]</sup>

In modern HRQoL research, subjective well-being is considered a domain, separate from physical function.<sup>[9]</sup>

Whereas in *Ayurveda*, subjective well-being is a direct consequence of physiological equilibrium. So, the mechanism underlying HRQoL begins at the level of *Dhatu Samyata*. Thus, *Dhatu samyata* serves as a prerequisite for Subjective Well-being (HRQoL).

The preservation of health is the main cause/means for attaining the human pursuits (*Chaturvidha Purusharthas*), i.e. righteousness /the one that upholds (*Dharma*), wealth (*Artha*), desire (*Kama*), and liberation (*Moksha*).<sup>[10]</sup> Diseases become a major obstacle for attaining these pursuits. In *Ayurveda*, QoL is measured by the capacity to pursue meaningful life objectives. This goal-oriented perspective distinguishes the *Ayurveda* concept from modern HRQoL frameworks, which often focus more on functional ability rather than the deeper purpose of life.

For maintaining the equilibrium of *Dhatu*, the proper functioning of digestive fire (*Agni*) and appropriate food (*Ahara*) are essential.

### CONCEPT OF AGNI AND AHARA

In *Ayurveda*, *Agni* is considered the basic force responsible for all metabolism and transformation processes in the body. It is mentioned that lifespan (*Ayu*), complexion (*Varna*), strength (*Bala*), health (*Swasthya*), enthusiasm (*Utsaha*), growth (*Upachaya*), lustre (*Prabha*), vital essence (*Ojas*), radiance (*Tejas*) and even life force (*Prana*) depend on the proper functioning of digestive fire (*Samagni*). It signifies that Digestive fire (*Agni*) is not limited only to digestion, but is involved in various metabolic processes that support life, maintain vitality and overall health.

It functions and remains active (*Jwalati*) through the fuel (*Indhana*) of *Anna Paana*; in its absence, it perishes. When *Agni* is extinguished, life itself cannot be sustained. When it functions optimally, one lives long and remains free from diseases; when it is disturbed, one becomes ill.<sup>[11]</sup>

Food is the life force (*Prana*) of all living beings, and the world constantly seeks food. Enhanced complexion (*Varnaprasada*), pleasant voice (*Sausvarya*), life (*Jivitam*), intelligence or understanding (*Pratibha*), and happiness (*Sukha*) depend on food. Satisfaction (*Tusti*), nourishment (*Pusti*), strength (*Bala*), and intellect that

possesses the power of retention (*Medha*) are also established in food.<sup>[12]</sup>

Although *Ahara* is considered the primary factor in sustaining life, its nutritive potential remains latent unless it undergoes proper digestion by *Jatharagni*.<sup>[11]</sup> Without the action of digestive fire (*Agni*), the transformation of undigested food (*Apakva Ahara*) into *Ahara Rasa* and nourishment of subsequent bodily tissues (*Dhatu*) cannot take place. Therefore, *Agni* is declared to be the very basis of existence.<sup>[11]</sup>

When the digestive fire is functioning optimally, through the coordinated action of *Prana Vayu* and *Samana Vayu*, ingested food undergoes digestion, absorption, and transformation into *Rasa* (nutritive essence) and *Mala* (waste products).<sup>[11,13]</sup> The properly formed *Ahara Rasa* then circulates throughout the body and sequentially nourishes the *Sapta Dhatu*- *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, and *Shukra*. The optimal quality of these tissues results in *Ojas*, the essence of the *Saptadhatu*.

*Doshas* play a crucial role in regulating the digestive fire. When the *Doshas* remain in equilibrium, it functions optimally as *Samagni*. However, when the *Doshas* become vitiated, they disturb *Agni*, leading to impaired digestive states such as sluggish (*Manda*), irregular (*Vishama*), or excessively intense (*Tikshna*).<sup>[14]</sup> This results in the formation of qualitatively defective *Ahara Rasa*, which may subsequently lead to inadequate nourishment and improperly structured *Dhatu*.

While proper *Ahara* and *Agni* maintain *Dhatu Samya*, disturbances arise when inappropriate and unwholesome practices are followed, which are described under *Gramyahara*.

### CONCEPT OF GRAMYAHARA

Diet and Lifestyle practices (*Gramya Ahara* and *Vihara*), which are considered unwholesome or unsuitable for maintaining physiological balance, are described as important contributors to *Dosha* vitiation.

A specific pattern of faulty diet and lifestyle is described including excessive consumption of sour, salty, pungent, and alkaline foods; intake of stale, heavy, incompatible, or unaccustomed food; irregular eating habits, eating before the previous meal is digested; habitual day sleep, frequent alcohol consumption, excessive sexual indulgence, improper or excessive physical exertion, and repeated exposure to emotions such as fear, anger, grief, greed, and mental strain. The habitual consumption of such a diet and habits vitiate all three *Doshas*, disturb *Agni* and compromise the quality of *Ahara Rasa*, thereby impairing proper *Dhatu* nourishment.

Poor nourishment results in structural and functional defects, such as flabby muscles (*Mamsa Shaithilya*), loose joints (*Vimunchyate Sandhayah*), impure/ vitiated blood (*Vidahyate Rakta*), liquefied fat (*Vishyandate*

*Meda*), incompletely formed marrow and bones (*Na Sandhiyate Asthishu, Majja*), and inadequate reproductive tissue (*Shukra Apravrutti*). As this process continues, the essence of all *Dhatu*, *Ojas* gets depleted.

This leads to a cascade of systemic effects, including persistent fatigue (*Glani*), a sense of physical and mental sinking (*Seedati*), excessive sleep (*Atinidra*), drowsiness (*Tandra*), laziness (*Alasya*), loss of motivation or enthusiasm (*Nirutsaha*), breathlessness even with mild activity (*Swasiti*) and inability to perform physical or mental tasks efficiently (*Asamarthy Chestanam Shareera Manaseenam*), cognitive decline (*Nashta Smriti*), diminished intellect (*Nashta Buddhi*), and lustre fades (*Nashta Chaya*) and overall vitality declines. Such a person is described as becoming a seat of diseases and not attaining the full span of life.<sup>[15]</sup>

After understanding the impact of unwholesome practices, *Ayurveda* explains the measures to restore balance through *Rasayana*.

### CONCEPT OF RASAYANA

The management of *Gramya Ahara-Janya Roga* is described in *Ayurveda* as cleansing (*Shodhana*) followed by *Rasayana* therapy. The term *Rasayana* (*Rasa + Ayana*) literally refers to nutrition (*Rasa*) and its transportation through the body's microchannels (*Ayana*), emphasising its role in nourishing and optimising the formation of *Dhatu*. *Rasayana* therapy goes beyond mere supplementation; it is a holistic approach that strengthens the body from within by improving digestion, absorption, and tissue nourishment. Its primary targets are the digestive and metabolic fire (*Agni*) and the channels that transport nutrients (*Srotas*). Proper functioning of *Agni* ensures complete digestion, prevents the formation of toxins (*Ama*), and facilitates the right nutrition for each *Dhatu*. Healthy *Srotas* then distribute these nutrients throughout the body, supporting *Dhatu Samyata*, strong immunity/ tissue essence (*Ojas*), and overall vitality.

By working at this foundational level, *Rasayana* promotes longevity (*Dheerghayu*), enhancement of memory (*Smriti*), intelligence (*Medha*), health (*Arogya*), preservation of youthfulness (*Taruna Vaya*), excellence of radiance (*Prabha*), complexion (*Varna*), and voice (*Swaraudarya*), optimal strength of the body and sense organs (*Dehendriyam Balam Param*). Mastery over speech (*Vak Siddhi*), social respect (*Pranati*), and lustre (*Kanti*) are also attributed to its effects. *Rasayana* is described as *Labhopyaya*, the most effective means of obtaining the full benefits of superior nourishing essence (*Ahara Rasa*) derived from properly digested food and medicines.<sup>[16]</sup>

After describing how improper diet and lifestyle gradually weaken *Dhatu* and reduce vitality, and how *Rasayana* restores it, the concept of *Dhatu-Sarata* helps

explain the desirable state of *Dhatu*, i.e., the optimal quality of *Dhatu*.

### CONCEPT OF DHATU SARA

While *Gramyahara* describes the process through which *Dhatu*s deteriorate, *Sara* describes the characteristics of well-developed and stable *Dhatu*s and their influence on overall well-being.

In *Charaka Samhita*, eight types of *Dhatu Sara* are described: *Tvak-Sara, Rakta-Sara, Mamsa-Sara, Meda-Sara, Asthi-Sara, Majja-Sara, Shukra-Sara, and Sattva-Sara*. These descriptions extend beyond simple anatomical features and reflect the qualitative status of *Dhatu*. The excellence of each *Dhatu* is reflected externally in physical appearance, strength, and psychological qualities. A person with *Tvak-Sara* is described as having smooth, soft, unctuous, and lustrous skin. *Rakta-Sara* is associated with *Snigdha* and *Rakta Varna* of the ears, eyes, tongue, etc. Individuals of *Mamsa-Sara* show well-developed and firm musculature, *Meda-Sara* show marked unctuousness, particularly in complexion, voice, eyes, hair, etc., while *Asthi-Sara* is reflected in strong bones, large joints, teeth, and nails. *Majja-sara* show very enthusiastic, firm and stable bodies, tolerant to hardship and are long-lived. *Shukra-Sara* is linked with radiant appearance, reproductive strength, along with vitality, attractiveness.<sup>[17]</sup>

The classical descriptions further indicate that the excellence of *Dhatu* is not limited to physical traits alone but is also associated with broader indicators of well-being, such as happiness, tolerance to hardship, courage, intelligence, prosperity, social respect, and longevity. The text emphasizes that strength should not be assessed merely by body size but by *Saratva*, the inherent stability and qualitative integrity of the *Dhatu*. Individuals possessing optimal *Dhatu* (*Sarva Sara*) quality demonstrate greater endurance, self-confidence, stable and well-composed body and gait, unctuous and deep voice, enjoy happiness, wealth and honours, slow ageing, improved tolerance to physical and environmental stress, sustained activity without early fatigue, and better recovery from illness, excellent progeny and long life. Thus, vitality and functional capacity are maintained not merely by the absence of disease but by the strength and integrity of the body tissues.

Among the eight types, *Sattva Sara* holds a special place as it reflects mental strength. It is classified as *Pravara, Madhyama, and Avara*. Individuals with *Pravara Sattva* remain mentally stable, calm and composed even during severe suffering, fear, pain or adversity. Those with *Madhyama Sattva* tolerate moderate distress, whereas individuals with *Avara Sattva* may become disturbed even by minor discomfort.<sup>[18]</sup>

When *Dhatu Sarata* and *Sattva* are well developed, they contribute to an optimal state of health and functioning.

*Charaka Samhita* describes such an integrated state of physical, mental, and functional excellence through the characteristics of *Prashasta Purusha*.

#### CONCEPT OF PRASHASTA PURUSHA LAKSHANA

In *Charaka Samhita*, the features of an ideally constituted individual (*Prashasta Purusha*) are described systematically. Such a person possesses proportionate and well-developed musculature (*Sama Mamsa Pramana*) and a compact, well-knit body structure (*Sama Samhanana*), indicating balanced tissue growth and structural integrity. The individual is endowed with strong and stable senses (*Dridha Indriya*) and is not easily overpowered by diseases due to inherent strength (*Vikaranam Na Balena Abhibhuyate*). Endurance is reflected through tolerance to hunger and thirst (*Kshut Pipasa Saha*), tolerance to heat (*Atapa Saha*), tolerance to cold (*Shita Saha*), and the capacity to withstand physical exertion (*Vyayama Saha*). Internal metabolic balance is expressed as balanced *Agni* (*Sama Pakta*), proper and timely digestion and metabolism (*Sama Jara*) and proportionate nourishment and development of tissues (*Sama Mamsa Chaya*) further indicate physiological harmony.<sup>[19]</sup>

While the characteristics of *Prashasta Purusha* represent the ideal state of human health and functional excellence, *Ayurveda* also emphasizes that the maintenance of such a state depends on appropriate behavioural and ethical conduct. These principles of disciplined living are described under the concept of *Sadvrutta*.

#### CONCEPT OF SADVRUTTA

The disturbance described under *Gramyahara* is not limited to physical indulgence; it is closely connected to errors in judgment and conduct. *Ayurveda* does not restrict the cause of health deterioration to material factors. The intellectual and ethical dimension of life is also considered important for the maintenance of health.

In the *Charaka Samhita*, the error of intellect is described as a fundamental cause of disease (*Pragnyaparadha*).<sup>20</sup> When an individual acts against better judgment, repeatedly indulges in harmful habits despite knowing their consequences, suppresses natural urges, or allows uncontrolled emotions to dominate, disturbance of *Doshas* is said to occur. Thus, imbalance is not seen merely as a physiological entity; it often begins with a failure of discrimination.

In this context, the observance of *Sadvrutta* is prescribed. It is important to understand that *Sadvrutta* is not presented as mere moral instruction but as a practical regimen for preserving health. *Sadvrutta* related to various aspects of life has been mentioned, like activities that should be done or avoided, related to food, natural urges, women, self-control, social relations, etc. Speaking mindfully, controlling sensory indulgence, not overindulging in desires, being patient, staying truthful, and managing emotions are all advised because they

preserve equilibrium. Through proper conduct, both *Arogya* (freedom from disease) and *Indriya-Vijaya* (mastery over the senses) are said to be attained.<sup>[21]</sup>

The variations seen in physical and mental strength further lead to the understanding of individual differences explained through *Prakriti*. The levels of *Sattva* also point towards the same. *Ayurveda* explains these inherent variations through the concept of *Prakriti*, which represents the unique constitution of an individual.

#### CONCEPT OF PRAKRITI

*Ayurveda* recognizes that each person is born with an inherent constitutional nature. In *Charaka Samhita*, *Prakriti* is described as the inherent nature of a person (*Svabhava*), determined at the very beginning of life at the time of conception. The predominance of a particular *Dosha* in semen (*Shukra*) and ovum (*Shonita*), supported by factors such as time (*Kala*), the condition of the uterus, and maternal diet and lifestyle, shapes the constitutional type of the embryo. From the very beginning of life, this predominance establishes the individual's inherent physiological and psychological tendencies and shapes the constitutional type of the individual.<sup>[22]</sup>

Thus, individuals are described as *Kapha*, *Pitta*, or *Vata* predominant, as well as mixed types, while the balanced state is referred to as *Samadhatu*. A *Kapha-Prakriti* individual is described as stable, steady, well-developed, and long-lived. Strength, vitality and endurance are naturally supported, and emotional reactions are generally slower and more controlled. A *Pitta-Prakriti* individual is characterised by moderate strength and lifespan. Activity, decisiveness, and metabolic capacity are prominent, though tolerance to stress or heat may be comparatively limited. A *Vata-Prakriti* individual is described as quicker, with comparatively less stability and endurance. Quickness in thought and action is noted, yet tolerance to strain may be lower. *Prakriti* is distinct from *Vikriti*, which refers to pathological disturbance occurring later.

Among these, the balanced constitution (*Samadhatu*) is regarded as superior because the equilibrium of *Doshas* supports proper functioning without excessive dominance of any one quality.

After understanding the metabolic, structural, psychological, behavioural and constitutional foundations of health, *Ayurveda* describes their highest expression through happy life (*Sukhayu*) and Wholesome life (*Hitayu*) it can also be understood as the most comprehensive expression of well-being described in *Charaka Samhita*.

#### CONCEPT OF SUKHAYU AND HITAYU

Happy life (*Sukhayu*) and Wholesome life (*Hitayu*) are described as attributes of an ideal life that is wholesome, fulfilling, and long. Conversely, an unhappy life

(*Asukhayu*) and an unwholesome life (*Ahitayu*) are identified as their opposites and are to be avoided. *Sukhayu* encompasses the physical and psychological dimensions of well-being and health, whereas *Hitayu* addresses the spiritual and social dimensions of well-being.

*Sukhayu* is described as a state in which life is lived with comfort, fulfilment, and functional completeness. Its characteristics are freedom from both physical and psychological diseases (*Sharira Manasabhyam Rogabhyam Anabhidrutah*). Vitality, particularly during youth (*Visheshena Yauvanavan*), is emphasized, not merely as chronological age but as preserved functional capacity. Realisation of one's maximum strength (*Samarthanugata Bala*), courage and optimal zeal (*Samarthanugata Virya*), having gained respect and honour (*Samarthanugata Yasha*), having physical strength and being efficient (*Samarthanugata Paurusha*), and bravery (*Samarthanugata Parakrama*) are described as essential attributes.

Clarity of understanding through knowledge (*Jnana*) and discriminative knowledge (*Vijnana*) is included, i.e., combining the power of knowledge and reasoning (*Jnana Vijnana Bala Samudaya*), along with proper coordination between the senses and their objects (*Indriya Indriyarth Bala Samudaya*). Material sufficiency or possessing enough wealth is acknowledged through the ability to enjoy legitimate pleasures (*Paramrdhi Ruchir Vividhopabhoga*) and possessing adequate means or resources to initiate and accomplish intended pursuits (*Samrddhasarvarambha*). Autonomy is reflected in the ability to make decisions, conduct life, and act according to one's own terms (*Yatheshta Vichari*). The absence of these qualities is termed a life lacking fulfilment and contentment (*Asukhayu*), signifying diminished Quality of life.

While *Sukhayu* describes experiential well-being, *Hitayu* expands the concept to include ethical and purposeful living. A life of *Hitayu* is characterized by goodwill toward all beings (*Hitaishi Bhutanam*), truthfulness (*Satyavadi*), one who is established in mental tranquillity and emotional balance (*Shamapara*), and one who acts after careful evaluation and thoughtful consideration rather than impulsively (*Pareekshyakari*). Vigilant, attentive, and free from negligence in thought and action (*Apramatta*), able to maintain balance between *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kama* (*Trivargaparasparena Anupahatam Upasevamana*), and respectful conduct toward elders and worthy persons (*Pujaarha Sampujaka*) are emphasized.

Further qualities include one whose disposition is marked by tranquillity born of knowledge and discriminative wisdom (*Jnana Vijnana Upashama Sheela*), one who respects elders (*Vrddhopasevi*), one who has well-controlled desire, anger, jealousy, and pride (*Suniyata Raga Rosha Irshya Mada*), one who is consistently devoted to charitable acts and generosity in

diverse forms (*Satata Vividha Pradaanapara*), one who is habitually devoted to discipline, knowledge, and mental tranquility (*Tapo Jnaana Prashama Nitya*), one devoted to spiritual knowledge and self-realization (*Adhyaatmavidastatpara*), and one who thoughtfully considers both the present world and the world beyond in conduct and decision-making (*Lokam Imam Cha Amum Cha Avekshyamana*). The absence of such qualities constitutes *Ahitayu*.<sup>[23]</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of HRQoL, though it has gained momentum in recent decades and is widely discussed in contemporary health science, is deeply rooted in the fundamental principles of *Ayurveda*.

As stated before, understanding about life is essential before understanding HRQoL. Life (*Ayu*) is viewed as the integrated functioning of *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Satva* and *Atma*. Therefore, Quality of Life cannot be limited to physical health alone; it inherently includes mental stability, emotional balance and purposeful living. Since *Ayu* represents the coordinated functioning of the fourfold union, its stability and quality are reflected in health, which is achieved through equilibrium of structural and functional components of the body (*Dhatu Samya*).

***Dhatu Samya***- When there is *Dhatu Samyata*, all the functions like digestion, metabolism occur properly, leading to *Bala*, *Varna*, *Ayu*, *Arogya* etc. As *Dhatu Samya* is considered *Sukha* it also gives a sense of happiness and comfort. Subjective well-being in *Ayurveda* is not considered as an independent domain as in contemporary science but as a direct expression of internal physiological balance. Since this state of *Dhatu Samyata* is not self-sustaining, it becomes important to understand the factors that continuously support and regulate it, among which *Samyak Ahara* and *Agni* play a major role.

***Agni and Ahara***- The sequence of *Ahara* → *Agni* → *Ahara Rasa* → *Uttarottara Dhatu Poshana* → *Ojas* gives rise to optimally functioning *Dhatu*s. When *Agni* is supplied with the proper *Ahara Rupi Indhana*, and *Doshas* are in *Samyavastha*, it functions optimally, and the *Dhatu*s are nourished adequately. However, when *Agni* is hampered due to improper *Ahara*, *Vihara*, or vitiated *Doshas*, it leads to the formation of poorly nourished *Dhatu*s. One of the major causes for the vitiation of all three *Dosha* and *Agni* is *Gramyahara* and *Vihara*.

***Gramyahara and Vihara*** - The unhealthy and unwholesome practices mentioned in the context of *Gramyahara* and *Vihara* do not always produce a disease as such; instead, they begin as subtle metabolic changes leading to progressive impairment at the level of *Dhatu*s.

This gradual deterioration highlights that impairment in *Dhatu Poshana* does not occur suddenly but evolves through the continuous disruption of metabolism and equilibrium of *Doshas*. First, metabolic disturbance affects the nourishment of the *Dhatu*s. Weakened *Dhatu*s gradually affect vitality, mental clarity and functional capacity. As a result, the ability to carry out daily activities, maintain social participation, and engage in purposeful activity gets reduced, increasing vulnerability to diseases. These changes can be considered as early indicators of reduced HRQoL, even in the absence of a clearly defined disease condition.

Understanding this progressive decline caused by Unwholesome practices makes it necessary to find out measures that can reverse or rectify this process. One such measure described in *Ayurveda* is *Rasayana*.

**Rasayana-** *Rasayana* plays an important role in restoring and maintaining QoL. It functions by improving digestion and metabolism through the proper functioning of *Agni* and *Srotas*, thereby ensuring adequate nourishment and stability of structural and functional components of the body (*Dhatu*s), and protection of the vital essence (*Ojas*).

By strengthening Quality of *Dhatu*, preserving vitality, and enhancing mental clarity, *Rasayana* supports the structural, functional, psychological and social dimensions of HRQoL. It promotes optimal strength of the body and sense organs, memory and intelligence, health, enhances complexion, social well-being, and resistance to disease. Thus, *Rasayana* is not merely limited to delaying ageing or treating disease; it enhances the body's resilience and functional capacity of the individual. In this way, it serves as a practical means of sustaining the state of well-being described as *Sukhayu* and *Hitayu*, emphasizing not only longevity but also the quality and purposefulness of life. As *Rasayana* restores proper nourishment and strength of *Dhatu*s, it results in their superior quality expressed as *Dhatu Sarata*.

**Dhatu Sara and Sattva Sara-** The qualitative excellence of *Dhatu*s determines physical strength, endurance, and the ability to sustain daily activities, while the *Sattva Sarata* influences the mental strength and emotional stability. Individuals with higher *Sattva* exhibit greater resilience and are better able to cope with stress, pain and adversity. These variations in both physical and psychological capacity explain why individuals perceive and respond to health and illness differently. In modern HRQoL assessment, such differences in perception, tolerance, and response to suffering are considered subjective and essential components. *Ayurveda* thus provides a deeper understanding of this subjective well-being by relating it to the integrated state of both physical integrity and mental resilience, both of which are constitutionally influenced and fundamental to overall well-being.

When *Dhatu Sarata* and *Sattva* are well developed, they are expressed as the ideal features of an individual described under *Prashasta Purusha Lakshana*.

**Prashasta Purusha Lakshana-** It shows the characteristics of an ideal individual having optimal health. It reflects not only physical strength but also structural integrity, efficient metabolism, well-functioning sensory faculties, and adaptability. In relation to HRQoL, this represents an ideal state of optimal functioning, in which an individual is capable of sustaining daily activities, resisting disease, and maintaining balance even under stress, thereby contributing to sustained well-being and longevity. However, such an ideal expression varies from person to person, which is explained by the concept of *Prakriti*.

**Prakriti-** The understanding of *Prakriti* further emphasizes that HRQoL is inherently individualised. Since each person is born with a unique constitution that determines their strength, tolerance, adaptability and susceptibility, the experience of health and well-being varies from person to person. Response to stress, disease and recovery capacity are all influenced by the constitution of the individual, showing differences in both Physiological and psychological foundations. In contemporary science, HRQoL is considered subjective and different according to different individuals, but the reason for those differences needs explanation, which are found in *Ayurveda*. It is understood that HRQoL cannot be uniform and must be understood in a personalised manner. In *Ayurveda*, health is not merely the absence of disease, but the harmonious functioning of an individual in accordance with their *Prakriti*. Alignment of lifestyle and behaviour with one's *Prakriti* helps maintain equilibrium, whereas deviation leads to disturbance and reduced HRQoL.

While *Prakriti* determines inherent tendencies, the maintenance of balance also depends on conscious regulation of the behaviour, which is explained through the code of conduct /good conduct (*Sadvrutta*).

**Sadvrutta and Pragnyaparadha** - *Ayurveda* also emphasizes the importance of behaviour and ethics through *Sadvrutta*. It states that *Sarva Dosha Prakopa* arise from improper actions and poor judgment/errors in intellect (*Pragnyaparadha*). This also clarifies that disturbances in equilibrium are not only physiological but often originate from errors in intellect. By promoting disciplined living, emotional control, and ethical conduct, *Sadvrutta* helps maintain mental stability and social harmony, thereby contributing significantly to overall well-being. When this *Sadvrutta* and *Dhatu Samya* are maintained together, they lead to a state of *Sukhayu* and *Hitayu*.

**Sukhayu and Hitayu-** They represent the most comprehensive understanding of HRQoL in *Ayurveda*. *Sukhayu* reflects the experience of happiness, comfort

and functional ability, while *Hitayu* emphasizes living in a way that is beneficial, ethical and meaningful. Together, they form the foundation for understanding HRQoL in its fullest sense. It becomes evident that *Ayurveda* integrates multiple dimensions of well-being. Physical health, mental stability, social recognition, economic sufficiency, ethical discipline, and spiritual awareness are not treated as separate domains but as interconnected aspects of a meaningful life.

From this, it can be understood that well-being is dynamic and is continuously influenced by one's choices, behaviour, ethical conduct, and awareness. The inherent relationship between the mind and body describes that a stable and content mind supports proper digestion and metabolism, leading to adequate nourishment of the *Dhatu*s and sustained vitality. When this balance is disturbed, it gradually affects both health and the overall QoL. Unlike the contemporary healthcare that mainly categorizes HRQoL under different domains like physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment components (includes financial resources) without a causal framework, *Ayurveda*, however, provides the causal chain explaining how these domains are interrelated, generated and sustained. It does not merely assess functioning, it explains the mechanism underlying it.

As a result of the balanced functioning, the states of *Sukhayu* and *Hitayu* are achieved. These are not separate states but a natural expression of a well-regulated life, where the body functions optimally, the mind remains stable, and actions are aligned with what is beneficial and purposeful. Thus, in *Ayurveda*, Health-Related Quality of Life is ultimately experienced as a life that is both happy, fulfilling (*Sukhayu*) and wholesome (*Hitayu*).

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Health-Related Quality of Life, although widely discussed in contemporary healthcare, is not a novel construct of today but an inherent and foundational outcome of core principles of *Ayurveda*. Rather than merely measuring the outcomes of health and disease, *Ayurveda* explains the underlying mechanisms through which HRQoL is achieved and maintained.

In *Ayurveda*, life is understood as the integrated functioning of *Sharira*, *Indriya*, *Sattva*, and *Atma*, thereby inherently incorporating a multidimensional understanding of well-being. HRQoL is rooted in *Dhatu Samyata*, sustained by proper *Ahara* regulating the optimal functioning of *Agni*, disturbed by *Gramyahara* impairing the *Agni* and nourishment of *Dhatu*, restored by *Rasayana* improving metabolic balance and strengthening *Dhatu* and *Ojas*, structurally expressed through the integrity and excellence of *Dhatu*s, psychologically regulated by *Sattva*, ethically safeguarded through *Sadvrutta*, and individualized according to *Prakriti*, Exhibited through *Prashasta*

*Purusha Lakshana* and experienced as *Sukhayu* and *Hitayu*. Collectively, these interconnected fundamental principles constitute the underlying mechanisms through which they contribute to HRQoL. Ultimately, HRQoL in *Ayurveda* is the outcome of these parameters aimed at fulfilling the human pursuits (*Chaturvidha Purusharthas*).

Thus, a careful analysis of the concepts described in the *Charaka Samhita* reveals that Health-Related Quality of Life is deeply embedded within its fundamental principles.

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