

THEORY OF ACHAR RASAYANA AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

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Article Received on 05/05/2021

Article Revised on 26/05/2021

Article Accepted on 16/06/2021

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has its unique approach towards healthy life. The main objective of ayurveda is to “maintain the health of a healthy individual by prevention of disease and to cure the disease ones”. Ayurveda being the foremost life science describes way to prevent and manage lifestyle disorders. It provides proper dietary management and lifestyle advices through *Dincharya* (daily regimens), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimens), *Aachar Rasayan* (code of conduct), *Sadvritt* (ideal routines), *Panchakarma* (biopurification), *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) therapies. The psychosomatic problems are as old as human civilization. The psychological (psychiatric) and physiological (organic) i.e. *Manas* and *Sharira roga* respectively are interrelated to each other as per ayurvedic aspect. *Rasayana Tantra* is one of the eight major divisions of *Astang Ayurveda*. In *Ayurveda*, one of the major methods of presentation of positive health has been described i.e. *Rasayana*. There are many activities that promote health and happiness by engendering positive emotions and experiences, which in turn promote the production of *Ojas*. These activities are included in *Achara Rasayana*. These activities are included in *Achara Rasayana*. *Ayurveda* strongly emphasizes prevention, promotion, cure and rehabilitation. A careful analysis of qualities of *Achara Rasayana* reveal that most of them are related with *Mana*, *Dhi*, *Dhriti* along with good conduct and these results in maximum benefit. The principles of *Achar Rasayana* are more relevant today than ever. The following of *Sadvritt* and *Aachar Rasayan* are of utmost important to maintain a healthy and happy socio physiological well being of a person. The *Sadvritt* and *Aachar rasayan* have traditional values. They play an important role in prevention and management of psychosomatic disorders.

KEYWORDS: *Achara Rasayana*, *Ayurveda*, *Ojas*, *Sadvritt*.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is a science of life. It's first and foremost aim is to preserve the good health and to prolong the life, and secondly to combat the diseases.^[1]

Ayurveda as a system to promote the mind, body and consciousness. This holistic approach to life is four dimensional: physical, mental, emotional, and sensorial. Dealing with the aims of *Ayurveda*, it has been further said that the maintenance of homeostasis in the functioning of the body tissues is main object of *Ayurveda*.^[2] *Sushruta* has also supported this view and said that the principle aim of *Ayurveda* is to preserve health of healthy person and to restore the health of diseased person.^[3] The first category of drugs has been stated to promote and preserve the health, strength and longevity in *Svastha* or healthy person and second one

has got capacity to cure the disease of ailing and afflicted people.^[4]

The three goals of *Ayurveda* are to 1) preserve the health of a healthy person, 2) to prevent disease, and 3) to promote longevity by improving the quality of life in mind, body, and spirit. *Sushruta*, one of the great scholars of *Ayurveda*, described the essence of *Ayurveda* as “Sama doshah samagnis’ ca sama dhatu malakriya prassannathemendriya manah swastha ityabhidhiyate”,^[5] meaning health is the state of equilibrium of doshas (biological humor), agnis (transformative physiological system functions), dhatus (tissues and organs), and malas (metabolic byproducts), along with sensorial, mental, and spiritual well being. There are three types of *Rasayana* therapy:

1. *Achara Rasayana*-“positive behavior or good conduct”

2. *Ajasrika Rasayana* – “healthy food”
3. *Ausadhi Rasayana* – “herbs or drugs” Used as part of daily life:
 - *Ajasrika Rasayana* – content of daily life
 - *Achara Rasayana*– healthy lifestyle and conduct

Why the theory of achar rasayana is needed-the mind affect physical diseases

It is well known that the mind can cause physical symptoms. For example, when we are afraid or anxious we may develop a fast heart rate, A thumping heart (palpitations), Feeling sick (nauseated), Shaking (tremor), Sweating, Dry mouth, Chest pain, Headaches, A knot in the stomach, Fast breathing. These physical symptoms are due to increased activity of nervous impulses sent from the brain to various parts of the body and to the release of adrenaline (epinephrine) into the bloodstream when we are anxious.

Concept of Sadvritta or Achara Rasayana (behavioral medicine)

Achara Rasayana is a unique concept in *Ayurveda* that implies moral, ethical, and benevolent conduct: truth, nonviolence, personal and public cleanliness, mental and personal hygiene, devotion, compassion, and a yogic lifestyle. These behaviors bring about rejuvenation in the body-mind system. One who adopts such conduct gains all benefits of *Rasayana* therapy without physically consuming any material *Rasayana* remedy or recipe, although it can be practiced alone or in a combination with material substance *Rasayana* therapy. The concept of *Achara Rasayana* is to change our behaviors in order to reverse the disease process and stay in balance.

Persons who are truthful and free from anger, who are devoid of alcohol and sex indulgence, who do not indulge in violence (Himsa) or exhaustion, who are peaceful and pleasing in their speech, who practice Japa (incantation) and cleanliness, who are stable and steady, who regularly practice charity and tapas (penance); who regularly offer prayers to the gods, teachers, preceptors and old people, who are absolutely free from barbarous acts, who are compassionate, whose period of awakening and sleep are regular, who habitually take milk and ghee, who acquainted with the measurement of (things appropriate to) the country and the time, who are experts in the knowledge of rationality, who are free from ego, whose conduct is good, who are not narrow minded, who have love for spiritual knowledge, who have excellent sense organs, who have reverence for seniors, Astikas (those who believe in the existence of God and validity of the knowledge of the Vedas), and persons having self-control and who regularly study scriptures, get the best out of rejuvenation therapy. If persons endowed with these qualities practice rejuvenation therapy, they get all the rejuvenation effects described above. Thus the rejuvenation effects of good conduct are described.^[6]

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Acharaya Charaka described *Achara Rasayana* in *Rasayana Adhyaya Chaturtha Pada* of *Chikitsa Sthana*.

Review and Analysis of Achara Rasayana

A most important key for long life according to *Ayurveda* is to follow *Achara Rasayana*—a code of behavior or code of ethics. One who follows very optimistically all codes of conduct (*Achara Rasayana*) need not take other *Rasayanas*, and those who take other *Rasayanas* without following code of conduct do not receive the optimum results of *Rasayanas* according to *Charaka*. *Achara Rasayana*, as described by *Charaka*, says that everyone who wants to have a long life span should be careful to observe the following rules:

1. *Satyavadinam* – truthfulness

Truthfulness is very much important as it is directly related to a person’s moral character. The integral connection of mind and body is now fully embraced by the modern science also. If a person tells lie he/she creates situations of stress. This stress may cause disease in body. The physiological changes in the body due to stress created in the mind by not being true to “self” or others can be a self-destructive act. When we live in truth, our body finds its harmony and balance of our self, which then help heal our underlying imbalances.

2. *Akrodham* – do not be angry

Anger is associated with *Pitta Dosha* that deals with the fire element. Anger raises *Pitta* in the body, which disturbs the balance of metabolic system in the cellular level. Anger raises the blood pressure as well as the heart rate. Stress triggered by anger disturbs the harmony of the physiological environment of the body. This can make body susceptible to disease. Anger does not bring peace and tranquility to the mind, which is key to health and healing.

3. *Madya Nivrtati* – do not indulge in alcoholic drinks

In *Charaka Samhita* the chapter dealing with alcohol consumption and alcoholism begins with warning that alcohol is considered a toxin. It provides a strict rule for consumption of alcohol. The qualities of Alcohol are *Laghu, Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Amla, Vyavaayi, Ashuga, Ruksha, Vikashi and Vishada*. All these qualities are opposite to qualities of *Ojas*. So it directly effects our *sattva*.

Alcohol depresses the central nervous system and has psychoactive effects in small amount but increased risk of developing alcoholism, cardiovascular disease, malabsorption, chronic pancreatitis, alcoholic liver disease and cancer. Damage to central nervous system and Peripheral nervous system can occur from chronic alcohol abuse.

The liver and kidneys have to take the brunt to clean it out from the system in order to maintain a healthy functioning of those vital organs.

4. *Maithuna Nivrati* – observe celibacy and the sexual act according to the code

Celibacy here does not mean “*Brahma Acharaya*” or observing abstinence for life. The idea is to be active with one partner, not multiple partners, and perform the sexual act based on the season, time – the texts in Ayurveda, it is best to perform sex once a week, or no more than twice a week, depending upon the constitution of both partners. The life essence or “Ojas” is lost every time men ejaculate and women orgasm, although it is less for women. Ojas is our immunity, which helps us against the disease. Therefore, it is best to be involved in a sexual activity when both partners are well nourished and in good health. The desire for sex and the process should be more meditative than just releasing the pressure of stress from day to day lives. Only then it could be more pleasurable and blissful experience in the long run.

5. *Ahimsa* – non-violence

Kaya- physical non-violence (not harming self and others physically)

Vacha- pleasant speech or non-violent communication

Manana- mental non-violence (with thoughts and feelings)

Violence is defined by the World Health Organization as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation”, although the group acknowledges that the inclusion of “the use of power” in its definition expands on the conventional understanding of the word.

Violent minds create violent bodies and a violent environment. When the body is not settled in peace and tranquility, healing is not possible. Our body goes through a constant process of healing when we sleep, rest or relax, meditate, and exercise, and so on. New cells are developed while old cells die off and are shredded out of the system. Every breath we take brings in new life and takes out the junk. The process of filtration of our body and mind is happening every moment with our involuntary act of inhalation and exhalation. The lymphatic system is constantly processing out toxins while the digestive system is doing its part in getting rid of things we no longer need in our body. For all of these processes to happen simultaneously, we do need to have a stable non-violent body and mind. Violence affects the nature of neutral mind and relaxed nature of body.

6. *Anayasaka* – avoid over exertion

It is not recommended to over exert because it aggravates Vata, which is the air quality of our body physiology. Ayurveda says to exercise to fifty percent of your maximum capacity otherwise it harms.^[7] Vyayam or physical exercise, is an essential component of Ayurveda’s system of preventive health care, rejuvenation and longevity. The essence of exercise is to

exert yourself to half of your maximum strength or capacity. This Ayurvedic principle is called as Balaardh. It helps to maintain a consistent energy through your workout.

7. *Prashantam* – be calm and peaceful in mind

Peace of mind is an inner condition, and is independent of external conditions and circumstances, “The absence of mental stress or anxiety”. When mind is at peace, one is not swayed by events or difficulties, and maintains a state of inner poise and clear judgment in all situations. “Inner peace (or peace of mind) is a colloquialism that refers to a state of being mentally or spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord or stress. Being “at peace” is considered by many to be healthy and the opposite of being stressed or anxious.” The body heals itself when the mind is tranquil and is not in a state of emergency. Calm and quiet mind make precise choices, which benefits not only to a doer but also to others. Meditative mind is a neutral mind, which is *Sattvic*, the impulse to evolve, to go forward, to progress.

8. *Priyavadinam* – do not hurt others with your speech. Speak pleasantly

Do no harm is the core principle of every medicine practices. Physical, emotional or verbal abuse is to be avoided to live in harmony with our self and others. Words have consequences; once said it cannot be taken back. Our intention should reflect the true essence of our character. We can offer healing and comfort just by speaking pleasantly.

9. *Japa para* – always remember God

Having connection with the creator of Universe God develops focused mind and cultivates centeredness and grounding. Life becomes much richer and fuller if we recognize the beauty in all things. The concept of “me” or the self-centered nature of modern society is one of the epidemics of imbalanced lifestyle. Meditation and yoga can bridge that gap of separation.

10. *Soucha Para* – Purity

Personal hygiene and cleanliness are major indicators of one’s good health. Impurities on both internal and external body clog up the channels or tissues in our body that is key to healthy metabolism. External source of germs like bacteria and viruses can be avoided to enter into our body if we stay clean and pure. Neat and clean people are often healthier and happier people.

11. *Dheera* – Patience

When there’s victory of mind, then there’s victory in life. Being courageous for good purpose means giving up those habits that no longer serve us and implementing those that benefit for our overall well-being.

12. *Dana* – Charity

Accumulation of things we do not need or over consumption creates not just the physical clutter in the

space we live in but it reflects the lack of clarity in mind. We keep what we need just like we do things that up lifts our spirit. Donating things or money helps make us align with what Gandhi once said, "Simple living higher thinking." The blessings and grace from giving is priceless which opens up the heart of selfless service. Selfless service is selfless living. We are not only here to consume and be wealthy. The joy of living for others is a true healing in it.

13. *Tapaswin – Austerity*

Human civilization has gone through thick and thins in terms of religious conflicts. A garden has many flowers with different smells and colors but they are always living in perfect harmony with one another. No one religion or a belief system is ideal for all. In this multi racial, multi ethnic society, every religious view has its own essence and pitfalls. The best way to weave through life is to understanding one's own belief and living in virtue. Imposing one's own religious views and beliefs on others can be self-destructive. But rather how can we make a difference by doing virtuous acts based on our own belief system? People like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and Dalai Lama followed their own spiritual guidelines and made a lasting impact on others of many faith and religion.

14. *Samadara – Be respectful*

Knowledge and wisdom are acquired from parents, teachers, elders and gurus. No one is born enlightened or has attained self-mastery. There is always a training or teaching involved in one's evolutionary process. We are who we are partly because of their guidance and teachings. We are influenced by their vision and the insight. Giving respect to peers and elders are a common decency of a healthy society. Our teachers and sages have gone through the discipline required to gain that knowledge and wisdom. To respect their journey and the process is to respect our own existence.

15. *Anrashamsya – do not be cruel to anyone*

Cruelty breeds hatred; makes our heart and mind unsettled. If we were to live in harmony with nature and our true essence is unconditional love, why would we then be cruel to anyone may that be animals, birds or fellow humans? There should not be mental satisfaction in being cruel; but the joy of being kind and generous spreads around as in what goes around comes around. What goes around comes around. If we want to be loved and cared for, we can reciprocate by being kind to others.

16. *Nitya karuna vedinah – be merciful to all who are in need of help*

The poor, sick, and the vulnerable always need a hand to uplift them in society. Self-centered people often have fewer friends and few good neighbors. Human beings have the capacity to rise to the occasion and give to those in need. Sympathy and empathy are essential in one's own evolutionary process.

17. *Sama Jagrana – swapna – Maintain balance in waking and sleeping. Do not stay up long into the night and do not sleep in the daytime*

In *Ayurveda* there is concept of *Avastha paka*^[8]. *Ratri* and *Divas* are also divided in three parts according to *Dosha* dominancy. According to modern science, Different organs of our body are active at different times of day and night. For example, liver is active between 12-2 am in the morning while small intestine is active between 12-2 pm in the day. For the optimum function and health of these organs, we should be in a restful state of sleep during the time when liver is processing the toxins and should be awake during the day when small intestine is actively digesting foods. If we are awake in the middle of the night, the organs, which are active during that time, could not do its job in effectively.

18. *Nitya ksheer ghrishinah – Take milk and ghee in moderation in your diet*

Warm milk is easy to digest yet grounding in quality. Milk nourishes the deepest tissues and tones the body. The sedative quality of milk when used with a pinch of nutmeg is often recommended for people with insomnia. Ghee or clarified butter lubricates the tissues and nourishes the body. It is the only dairy product considered to be good for people with high cholesterol. It raises the healthy cholesterol (HDL) while maintaining the bad cholesterol (LDL) and not raising it when consumed in moderation.

19. *Desha-Kala-Pramanagya – be a knower of place, time, and measures of activities*

Our body takes time to adapt to a new climate and weather conditions. When we live in harmony with nature and the season, we experience greater health of body, mind and spirit.

20. *Yuktigya – Plan ahead to achieve your goals*

It is said that "failing to plan is planning to fall" in your life. Without a clear path, there is no destination. Similarly, without plans, it is difficult to reach the objectives. Tools like meditation and yoga help to gain clarity so we can plan our future effectively. Without a clear plan of action, life can be overwhelming and challenging.

21. *Anahamkari – avoid super egotism*

Breaking the ego is the best possible practice in the modern day world. We are driven by ego, but not by our heart. When body, mind, and soul are aligned, ego is shaken up and crushed, manifesting the best deeds and actions from one's soul.

22. *Shastachara – maintain good behavior established by Apta – the great sages and saints of society*

The good behavior established by sages is the bi-product of their discipline set through their experiences of the ups and downs of ever changing life. These can be guiding principles for our own personal journey through life.

23. Asamkiran –be generous and sharing

Giving is receiving; the more we give, the more we receive. Being generous doesn't mean giving everything away or renunciation. Sharing cultivates caring of others and in turn, caring for yourself. Generosity creates harmony with family and friends, neighbors and co-workers.

24. Addhyatma Parayanam – be conscious

No matter how small an act is, if we are engaged with pure consciousness, we achieve the highest outcome. A conscious mind is a pure mind or a Sattvic mind. Sattva is the impulse to evolve, to go forward, to progress.

25. Upasitarah vridhdhanam – respect and serve your elders

Elders have showered us with so many blessings – giving birth, raising us, and giving us knowledge and wisdom in order to weave through life with the utmost grace. They do not just earn our honor and respect but we are who we are because of them. Serving them is serving your own soul.

26. Upasitarah Astikanam – respect and serve priests, sages, and saints Who serve your religion and God.

They are priests, sages, and saints because they have lived their life with moral excellence. We can learn much from their path of righteousness. One way to learn that goodness is to serve them or have respect for their path of excellence.

27. Upasitarah Jitmanam – respect and serve the people who have Conquered their senses (masters of desires)

We are pulled in so many directions because of our desires to be healthy, wealthy, and powerful. Our senses cause desire. Healthy desires are good for overall wellbeing, however, we are often engaged in unhealthy desires such as excessive sex, unethical or fraudulent ways of making money and hurting others to satisfy one's own desires. People who have conquered their senses have conquered their own existence. Serving them can bring great insight into how to live without being ruled by our senses.

28. Dharma Para – keep yourself busy in religious activities

Whatever your belief system or your religion may be, it is utterly important to have devotion and faith in your practice. A focused and devoted mind can conquer any obstacle in life with utter grace. Having engaged in religious activities gives us a meditative mind, which has clarity and precision.

29. Shastra para – continually study new sciences, advances, research, and philosophies and utilize them for the benefit of all human beings

Ayurveda, the science of life, has been around for more than 5000 years; however it has been changing

throughout time. The inventions and breakthroughs in technology and medicine have ushered in amazing progress in science over the last 50 years. It is important to have an understanding of all practices including holistic and modern sciences to maintain the health of a healthy person and treat the disease. When we put our heart and mind into combining all practices, new advances, and research in treating the root cause of an imbalance – an evolution of a healthy society will not be a distant dream.

DISCUSSION

The definition of health is more than just the absence of disease. Prevention and wellness has increasingly been practiced in recent years in response to ever increasing incidence of chronic diseases. Ayurveda has been effectively using preventive or longevity measures, such as Achara Rasayana “behavioral medicine,” for a long time. Ayurveda goes a step further in defining health as a balanced state of physical, mental, emotional, sensorial and environmental health-an interdependence of mind, body, and the spirit is an understatement. Achara Rasayana gives us tools to find balance in our daily life. The behavioral medicine plays an important role in addressing the challenge we face today in dealing with chronic conditions stemming from stressful life resulting from unhealthy lifestyle. The principles of Achara Rasayana, if implemented properly in our lives, can make us healthy, wealthy, and a disease free society. It not only prevents the disease in the first place but also reverses the stages of disease process.

CONCLUSION

In today's lifestyle of hurry worry and curry, stress is increasing day by day. Modern medicines are good for short term treatment but having many untoward effects and having their own limitations. Ayurveda and Yoga if practiced in daily life has both preventive as well as curative effect. In fact Achara rasayana and Sadvritta palan are of greater relevance in today's highly mobile society than it was when first proposed by our ancient Acharya. By follow Sadvritta, mind and senses of person gets controlled gradually and he is capable of avoiding the indulgence of causative factors.

Other hand Rasayan chikitsa basically physical and mental immunity of person will enhance gradually and also Satvik kind of mind also predominant as compare to Rajas and Tamas kind. Thus the holistic approach of Ayurveda including its safe herbal remedies, if pooled to the main stream of world medicine of today, it can bring a big positive revolution to the quality of health care for the suffering humanity world over.

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