



# Ayurveda and Lifestyle Disorder; Role of Ayurveda in Pandemics

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## ABSTRACT

Life style disorders refer to diseases associated with the way a person or group of people lives. Diet and lifestyle are major factors thought to influence susceptibility to this kind of diseases. With rapid economic, technical development and advancement in every field and especially increasing westernization the lifestyle of common man has completely changed which is leading to many common health problems notably stress, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, allergic disorders and thyroid disorders and many more. Lack of exercise, use of preserved and junk food, smoking habits, and alcohol intake also increase risk of developing these types of diseases esp. later in life. The *pragyapradha* which has been mentioned as one important causative factor for the production of diseases is mainly responsible for lifestyle disorders. *Ayurveda* being science of life describes the basic things like *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, *aahara* and *vihara* for the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases. Recently discovered SARC-COV-2 virus is a reason for a contagious disease called Covid-19, which is started from Wuhan, China on December 19, which is spreading to the entire world. World health organization declared it as a Pandemic disease. Not only its high rated of disease person but also spreads fast, its treatment is based on symptoms the important part is the vaccine is not developed yet. So, the whole world is looking towards Ayurveda for its preventive as well as a curative aspect. Ayurveda has mentioned Pandemic disease under the heading of Janapadodhwansa and Infectious disease under Jwar (all types of fever), Kustha (skin disease), Agantuj (Disease due to external factor), Bhoot graham pida (Disease due to external factor). Ayurveda is the mother branch of medical science; it gives brief treatment not only on physical levels but also at psychic and spiritual levels. Now time shows Ayurveda principles in front of the world.

**Key Words:** Covid 19, Lifestyle, Pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

Life style disorders refer to diseases associated with the way a person or group of people lives. These disorders are the outcome of unhealthy choices made by the people. The important causative factors of the lifestyle disorders are malnutrition, poor physical fitness, lack of sleep, fast food habits, stress, worry and poor health

habits like smoking and alcohol. All these have bad impact on health. The common lifestyle disorders are Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, atherosclerosis, asthma, cancer, chronic liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Type-2 diabetes, heart diseases, osteoporosis, depression and obesity. All the Lifestyle disorders are preventable if principles of Ayurveda are



understood and followed. *Acharya Caraka* has described the *siddhanta* of regular intake of the type of *ahara dravya* which maintain the health and prevent the diseases to occur.<sup>1</sup> *Acharya Sushruta* has also advocated the *siddhanta* of *nidan parivarjana*.<sup>2</sup>

*Ayurveda* is not merely medical science, but it is the science of life. *Ayurveda* aims to prevent disease and to maintain health. It is the only science of treatment except for *Ayurveda* which elaborates the basic principles of a healthy life. It is shown that because of living conditions “millions” of homeless people and those living in areas like the slums across Country are at high risk of contracting the Coronavirus. In India, 4 million people do not have proper shelter to live in urban areas, with more than 70 million living in slum areas. Some of the significant issues in such areas were housing arrangements range from sharing various resources and having community access to sanitation and water facilities, having no access to protective measures like sanitisers, gloves and masks, which are very expensive and scarce for BPL people. If this virus reaches in densely populated areas with slum homes, it will infect thousands of poor people who lack awareness about this pandemic and its effects, the need for spreading awareness among them regarding maintaining health and hygiene is significant<sup>3</sup>. Because each BPL family is more susceptible to get a higher risk of exposure to this virus which can also spread the infection to other people in society, because of this inequality in their lifestyle which is felt by poor they put the other people in

the community at risk<sup>4</sup>. With this lockdown suspending all forms of work for weeks, India’s most underdeveloped regions are facing poverty and deprivation. Families in rural areas or slum areas in India are having fewer meals, borrowing money for their survival because of having very little saving money and poor social living and they are brave enough to face police violence to go out and work and get some cash for their survival which made them more susceptible towards infection<sup>5</sup>. As we know, this Coronavirus is a Pandemic disease. Because of which people from all over the world are in a panic, all the schools, cities, roads everything is closed, and this is a very critical time everybody has to stay at their home with their family. During this lockdown, people are mostly living a sedentary lifestyle which not only weakens their immune system but also make them more susceptible towards infections. Hence, *Ayurveda* is a science of life that was mainly focusing on strengthening persons by boosting their immune system through improving our lifestyle by using medicines, diets, meditation and activities like Yoga. Because of not having proper hygiene and water facilities, to having less access to protective measures like sanitisers, gloves and masks, which are very expensive and scarce for the impoverished community. Boosting immunity through *Ayurveda* plays a vital role during this pandemic<sup>6</sup>.

#### **THE CAUSES OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS**

The main causative factors for production of diseases and maintenance of health are unwholesome and wholesome diet.<sup>7</sup> Classically



Ayurveda describes three major causes of illness.<sup>8</sup>  
i.e.

1. Kala Parinama- It refers to the samyaka and asamyaka yoga of different seasons. It is not directly related with the lifestyle disorders but it has got a great significance in relation to the advancement of technology. Due to excessive use of the machinery and increasing industrialization and pollution in modern times, the environment is getting disturbed leading to changes in seasons.

2. Pragyaparadha- It is the demolition (vibhransh) of dhi (intellect), dhriti (patience) and smriti (recalling power) which is responsible for vitiation of all the doshas.<sup>9</sup> It is entirely applicable in production of life style disorders. It has been further associated with actions of body, speech and mind. The person does the things which he should not do.

3. Asatmendriyartha Samyoga- The atiyoga (over use), hina yoga (less use) and mithya yoga (misuse) of the sense organs are responsible for production of many diseases esp. mental disorders. The asamyaka yoga of rasnendriya is directly related with lifestyle disorders. The intake of one or two rasa continuously, not taking some particular rasa and taking the wrong diet is the main causative factor for lifestyle disorders. Mithya yoga of rasna means not following aahar vidhi visheshayatana.

All these factors play major role in etiology of lifestyle disorders.

## THE PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

Ayurvedic classics give special emphasis on three important values which have been considered as the important conductive factors for maintenance of life and health. This important trio consist of *ahara*, *nidra*, *brahmacharya*. These three have been considered as *upstambha* or the basis of life and health. The emphasis given on these factors in connection with positive health is highly relevant as it reflects the fundamental approach of *ayurveda* to positive health and its totality with extended emphasis on mental health.

### 1. *Ahara- Diet and Dietary Regimen*

The adequate growth and maintenance of the body essentially depends on an optimum and balanced diet.<sup>10</sup> Logically an inappropriate and unbalanced diet becomes an important cause of diseases. The concept of balanced diet is clearly defined in *ayurveda* by the terms *sarvagraha* and *parigraha*.<sup>11</sup> This has been illustrated while enumerating the items of wholesome diet.<sup>12</sup> A *hitakara ahara* is termed as *pathya* and the reverse is *apathya*. There is a long list of wholesome and unwholesome diet in the context of diseases. Ayurveda describes a large number of foods and drinks, describes the method of their preparation and the code and discipline of taking the food. There is extensive description available in *Ayurvedic* texts about cooking procedure and the rules to be observed while taking food. *Ayurvedic* texts describe in detail the diet, its contents, preparations and the conduct of its consumption besides fundamental principles in selection of diet for an individual such as *doshas*, *agni*, *desha*, *kala* and the individual constitution ie. *agni* and



*dehaprakriti*.<sup>13</sup> Balanced diet is essential for good health. The diet should be simple, easily digestible; small in quantity. The quantity of diet varies from person to person. Nutritious, easily digestible and *satvika* diet has always been commended. Overeating and consumption of *tamasa* and *rajas* diets should be avoided, because such a diet causes unnecessary overload on digestive and metabolic system of the body. The basic theme of good diet lies in *mitahara*. *Mitahara* stands for small quantity and easily digestible food. Ancient *acharya* have wisely stated that while taking food, half of the stomach should be filled solid food, one fourth with liquids and rest one fourth should be left empty for air and easy digestion of food.<sup>14</sup> Only one kind of diet should not be taken continuously and in excess in order to preserve digestive power and vitality balance. Food containing different *rasas* i.e. taste and *gunas* i.e. properties should be consumed so that all the necessary elemental nutrients are obtained. Therefore, *Sarvarasbhyasa* is considered the key principle of *Ayurvedic* dietetics. In this context not only physical components of a diet are important but accurate planning, mixing of food articles, and method of preparation, quantity, and method of ingestion of food and above all, good mentality and serene mental state are extremely important. This is the underlying facts behind the principles of *astavidha vishesayatana* described by *Charak* and *dwadashasana vichara* described by *Susruta*.

## 2. *Nidra*-Proper Rest

*Nidra* or sleep is another essential requirement for life and health. Thus, a good normal sleep is an important factor needed for preservation of health. It is noteworthy that in today's hastily lifestyle rest or sleep is not given proper attention and consideration leading to anxiety, stress and many other disorders. Either the people are in the habit of excessive rest or improper sleep.

## 3. *Brahmacharya*- Curbing and Controlling

Desires besides *Ahara* and *nidra*, *brahmacharya* is third component of *upstambha traya*. *Brahmacharya* means a balanced fulfillment of physical desires. The practice of *brahmacharya* promotes life and preserves health and as such is an important practice.

## 4. *Sadvritta*- Rules of Good Conduct

The practices described for promotion of mental health in *ayurveda* include *Sadvritta*. This schedule is described in great details in *ayurvedic* classics. Sage *Caraka* has given a comprehensive account of the mode of healthy and happy life. Sage *Susruta* considers a man healthy only when he is in the state of biological balance and enjoys sensorial, mental and spiritual wellbeing.<sup>15</sup> Such a state of health can be achieved only by observing the rules of good conduct i.e. *sadvritta*.

## 5. *Dharaniya* and *Adharaniya Vega*-Suppressible and Non Suppressible Urges

Besides the context of *sadvritta*, the *ayurvedic* texts describe the concept of *dharaniya* and *adharaniya vega*. The *adharaniya vega* essentially refers to the biological urges like urination, defecation, ejaculation, emesis, sneezing,



yawning, appetite, thirst, sleep etc. which are essentially bodily urges and as such they have been advocated not to be restrained.<sup>16</sup> Retaining of such urges leads to a number of disorders and disease such as *udavarta* etc. On the other hand, the texts describe a number of *dharaniya vegas* such as *sahasa* (unnecessary daring), *lobha* (greed), *shoka* (grief), *bhaya* (apprehension or fear), *krodha* (anger), *ahankara* (ego) *nirlajjata* (lack of remorse), *irshya* (jealousy), *raga* (undue attachment with living and non-living things) etc.<sup>17</sup> All these are different kinds of vicious mental urges. In the interest of social and personal health and to prevent lifestyle disorders, these urges must be restrained. These *dharaniya vega* induce a variety of mental conflicts at the level of individual besides their untoward impact on the society including the family and relatives of the individuals, a great risk of society health. It appears easily perceivable that a peaceful happy life resulting out of good conduct will obviously be associated with a state of positive health and anabolism.

## 6. *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* - Daily and Seasonal Regimen

*Ayurveda* advocates a comprehensive regimen of life as the means to preserve normal health. This routine regimen is called *swasthavritta* which can be described in terms *dinacharya*, *ratricharya* and *ritucharya* etc. *Ritucharya* or regimen of life in different seasons has been described in extensive details in all the *ayurvedic* classics. It is postulated that if an individual follows the prescribed *ritucharya*, he may adopt and overcome the

stresses of seasonal variations and as such may not suffer from ill health ordinarily produced by *kala parinama*.

## 7. *Vyayama*- Exercise

*Vyayama* is considered an important component of *dincharya*. *Acharya Charaka* states that when moderately performed, the physical exercises provide lightness in the body, physical activity, steadiness and fortitude.<sup>18</sup> He has emphasized that muscular activity is essential to promote physical and biological strength.

## 8. *Panchakarma* – Purification Therapy

*Ayurveda* is the only system of medicine in the world which proposes the need of undertaking the purification of body. It is classically termed as *samshodhana* or *panchakarma*. It includes five measures which are *vamana* (emesis), *virechana* (purgation), *niruha* (non - unctuous enema), *anuvasana* (unctuous enema) and *nasya* or *shirovirechana*. *Raktamokshan* (bloodletting) has also been described under *panchkarma* by *Susruta* and *Vagbhatta*. Purification is important because it covers a wide range of preventive, curative and promotive conditions. For preventive point of view sage *Charaka* has said that accumulation of vitiated dosha should be eliminated in the months of their vitiation.<sup>19</sup> The preparatory measures *snehana* and *swedana* have also got importance in prevention of diseases.

## 9. *Rasayana*- Rejuvenation Therapy

Besides, the prescribed mode of life, dietetics and physical exercise *ayurveda* also advocates the appropriate use of *rasayana* and *vajikarana* remedies as restorative agents for promotion of





health and prevention of diseases. *Rasayana* is one of the eight clinical specialties of classical *Ayurveda*. *Rasayana* is not a drug therapy but is a specialized procedure practiced in the form of rejuvenate recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting conduct and behaviour i.e. *achara rasayana*. The improved nutritional status and the better qualities of dhatus lead to a series of secondary attributes of *rasayana* such as longevity, immunity against diseases, improved mental and intellectual competence etc. Besides the use of *rasayana* drugs and *ajasrika rasayana* in terms of nutritious diet, it has been claimed that *rasayana* effect both on mind as well as on body may be achieved by practicing improved code of socio-behaviour conduct i.e. good conduct such as worship of god, respect of elders and able, holding on truth, nonviolence, avoiding anger, avoiding indulgence in alcohol, sex and excessive labour, keeping peaceful, speaking sweet words, practicing *mantra*, *japa* etc. Kindness to living being, balanced sleep regular use of nourishing diet, caring for weathers and climates, keeping humble and well behaved, meditation, study of religious literature and by respecting the believers of god and the self-restrained. An aspirant who lives such a life and practices *sadachara* achieves the *rasayana* effect i.e. longevity, immunity and intellectual power without the use of any drug for that purpose. Probably the code of *achara rasayana* keeps the aspirant free from the emotional disturbances and permits a less stressful life pronounced anabolic state leading to due health and happiness.

## ROLE OF AYURVEDA

*Ayurveda* has many different fundamental principles such as *Dinacharya* (daily routine), *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine), *Sadavrutta*, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Trayopastambha*, *Rasayana*, *Vajikarana*, *Dharanaiya* & *Adharaniya*<sup>20</sup>.

### *Vyadhikshamatva*

Whenever any etiological factors came in contact with the body, it results in *vyadhi*. Our body tries to resist this *vyadhi* either to avoid its *Stanasamshraya* (Manifestation) or to suppress the intensity of the disease. And this power of the body resistance to prevent the development of *vyadhi* or resistance the strength (*Bala*) of *vyadhi* (disease) is together called as “*Vyadhikshamatva*” or body’s defensive mechanism or immunity. In *Charaka Samhita Vyadhikshamatva* can be understood as – Immunity of body (*Sharira Bala*), opposite to the Disease Strength (*Vyadhi Bala*) which is already manifested is “*Vyadhi Bala-Virodhitva*” and *Sharira Bala*, which oppose the manifestation of the *Vyadhi* (Immunity for the disease) that is “*Vyadhi-utpadakpratibaandhakatva*”<sup>21</sup>.

## IMPORTANCE OF DINACHARYA DURING JANAPADA DYAMSA

In *Charaka Samhita*, the Chapter which describes worldwide epidemics is “*Janapada Dvamsa Vyadhi*”. In this Chapter, Charaka describes that this is an excellent opportunity that we should remain at our home. During this lockdown period, it is essential to follow our *dinacharya* that is Daily regime. Which starts from waking up early in the morning (*Bramha-muhurta*), brushing our



teeth, *Jivha Nirlekhana* (scraping tongue), *Achmana* (rinsing mouth) and *Ushna Jala Sevana* (drinking hot or warm water). *Kwath* which is having ginger, cinnamon and *guda* (Jaggery), Tea which is made with *tulsi*, or even mint, cinnamon and *Guda*. These herbal teas boost our energy. So, *Ayurveda* has a great way of prevention. Keeping our *Agni* (digestive fire) strong we can prevent ourselves from being infected, and for that, we have to follow our *dinacharya*. It is the first important thing that *Ayurveda* recommends every individual<sup>22</sup>.

### IMPORTANCE OF PRANAYAMA FOR BOOSTING IMMUNITY

*Acharya Charak* also describes the importance of *Pranayama* in *dinacharya*. There are eight important pranayama exercises, 1)*Suryabhrdana* 2)*Ujjayi*, 3)*Sheetkari*, 4)*Sheet*, 5)*Bhastrika*, 6)*Bhramari*, 7)*Murcha*, 8)*Platini*. By performing these eight types of beneficial *Pranayama*, our immune system will get strengthened up. It cleanses our *srotas* which includes our *pranavaha srotas* (respiratory system), our *Rasa vaha srotas* (lymphatic system), and thus we can build our immune system. *Srotas* are an important part of our body. Normalise the functioning of *srotas*, normal is our health. By performing this *Pranayama*, it will also maintain the balance of *ojas* (immunity, strength), *prāna* (vital life force) and *Agni* (digestive power) in our body<sup>23</sup>. This way, we can clean our *srotas* and boost our immunity to keep *Coronavirus* away. Another way to boost energy is to perform *yogasana* or *Suryanamaskara*. Some interesting *Yogasanas* are

*Ardha Matsyendrasana*, *Matsyasana*, *Uttanasana*, *Ushtrasana*, *Balasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Tadasana*, *Vrksasana* and *Setu bandhasana* or by just doing *Surya Namaskar* it will work<sup>24</sup>.

### IMPORTANCE OF SURYANASKAR

In *Samhitas*, it is explained that our body is made up of *Sapta dhatus* (seven bodily tissues) and there are total 12 essential poses of *Surya Namaskar*. So, we have to perform seven rounds minimum and 12 rounds maximum for *Surya Namaskar*. Importance of meditation is also mentioned as it is claimed that health is not only bodily but also mentally healthy. For mental health, meditation plays an essential role; we can Chant *Hum* or *OM* during meditation. For this, we have to sit silently in *Vajrasana*, *Padmasan* etc. pose. This is an excellent way to perform meditation. While performing meditation, we will feel our inner joy and beauty. By sitting quietly, we can explore our presence, and it calms our mind and soul. Our awareness is *Sat Chit Anand*.<sup>25</sup>

### IMPORTANCE OF AYURVEDA DURING PANDEMICS

There is a beautiful message from *Acharya Charaka* in the chapter “*Janapada Dvamsa Vyadhi*”, which states that during epidemics, they performed *doomasvanadyay*. People in their era would play the *dhooms* during outbreaks. Even in India today, when our prime minister addressed everyone that they can honour those people who are working to fight against this *Coronavirus* by clapping or ringing a bell in their home. Even when we are at our home, we worship god daily or



performs rituals and do *aarati* (offering of light during worship to god). The other people in our house claps while doing *aarati*. The sound produced while clapping is nothing but a generating sound of *marma* (vital points). This clapping strengthens our immunity or energy because it is a *marma* of critical organs like lungs, heart, brain and kidneys. This process of clapping generated in our *marma* will send a message to our vital internal organs. This is also one of the *dhooma doomasvaniaydahya*. Just like we chant OM hence *doom doom* is also nothing but a *mantra*. By Chanting this as it is very creative, it sends positive vibrations to higher centers of our body. By all these measures, we can strengthen not only ourselves but also will improve our family, neighbours and our friends so that we will stand, share and light with this pandemic together<sup>26</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Lifestyle disorders are outcome of *mithya ahara* and *vihara*. *Mithya ahara* is faulty diet and dietary habits and *mithya vihara* is faulty behavioural and mental regime. It is provoked by *pragyaparadha* and *asatmya indriyarthasamyoga*. Not following *dincharya* and *ritucharya*, holding non-suppressible urges and not restraining suppressible urges, not following rules of dietetics, not indulging in any type of exercise and not making the balance between rest, sleep and physical activities are the reasons for production of lifestyle disorders. If one follows the rules of dietetics, *sadvritta* and undergoes *samsodhana*

regularly and other preventive measures, he cannot fall prey to lifestyle disorders.

The main goal of *Ayurveda* is cure the diseased person and maintain the health of healthy person. India has stood strong enough to protect through several epidemics and pandemics. *Ayurveda* does not claim to cure corona, but it will help to protect every individual by improving its immunity. This is the main aim towards using *Ayurvedic* medicines is that if we don't have any perfect way or strategy to destroy our enemy, then the best way is to protect ourselves by having an efficient and robust shield. Coronavirus is a severe disease, and we are very sensitively approaching this as a brand. By Regularly consuming powerful *Ayurvedic* herbs not only boosts our immunity system but also helps by keeping even the most dreaded infectious diseases away. Nowadays, people are adopting so many preventive aspects for a healthy lifestyle and for that they are taking *Ayurvedic* Science seriously. And many people are now moving towards organic food and lifestyle, and *Ayurveda* helps them as a precautionary measure.





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