

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CONNECTION WITH COVID-19: THROUGH INDIAN TRADITION

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Introduction:

“Health is Wealth”- this is a widespread truth. A healthy mind and body can fight against all odds. It refers not only to the absence of disease, but the ability to recover from illness and other problems. Similarly, wellbeing refers to having good mental health, high life satisfaction and ability to manage stress. The sense of good health, hygiene and wellbeing can make us able to combat with this crisis of present situation. We have seen that the novel coronavirus, designated SARS-Cov-2, has caused an international outbreak of respiratory illness termed Covid-19. The full spectrum of Covid-19 ranges from mild, self-limiting respiratory tract illness to severe progressive pneumonia, multi-organ failure and death. Having declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization and whole world are stressed and preparing for or already managing an influx of pretentious patients. Covid-19 presents a severe acute care crisis of unknown duration, in which potentially hundreds of thousands of people will be sick, many will be critically ill and thousands may die. During these challenging times, it is important for all of us to come together to support one another.

Cleanliness, Hygiene and Universal Brotherhood in Indian Tradition:

In Indian tradition health is considered to be the highest treasure. There is a saying in Sanskrit literature. “*sariram aadyam khalu dharmasadhanam*”. (Kalidasa’s *Kumarasambhamam*, 5th canto). That means our body is really the first means of performing or fulfilling dharma. In every situation in Indian tradition hygiene was maintained. Like *praksalana* (cleanling), *padodaka* (washing of feet) etc were followed as daily customs. In

our every doctrines purification, cleanliness etc are in our mind in every situation of life. In Indian tradition a person can only enter the house after proper cleanliness.

Not only physical wellbeing instructs asanas i.e. yoga exercise directly gives physical fitness and practice of yama and niyama etc, can bring mental balance. This concept of wellbeing is very relevant at this moment. We can achieve both these wellbeing from yoga and meditation. Now most of psychiatrics have suggested for mental wellbeing. Regarding the Universal brotherhood, it is seen in our culture that the slogan for brotherhood has not given only for individual benefit. Always there is a Universal appeal. Like “*Vasudhaebakutumbakam*” (the world is one family), *bahujana hitaya bahujana shukhaya*”(welfare of the many, the happiness of the many) all these are for universal wellbeing .

As the world has seen the explosive attack of COVID-19, the fiercest pandemic recently, the context of Indian traditional views about good health, hygiene and wellbeing can be recapitulated here once again without going for a second thought. Starting from the Vedic age, Indian tradition can boast of its huge treasure of ideas and ideals that voiced for societal hygiene, global health and universal wellbeing. Indian tradition, most importantly looked for individual and universal advancement simultaneously since time immemorial. The habits, the practices, the customs instructed to be followed by men for health, hygiene and wellbeing in Indian scriptures are generally holistic in nature. Those are instrumented for a better living and blissful coexistence of all living beings together. The Vedic message *griha hi pashunam pratistha* (*Aitareyabrahmana*, 12.13) proclaims that home is the most desired place for all living beings and under present situation no one even dares to deny the gravity of this saying uttered in the hoary past. The instruction of cleanliness invoked in the *Shshrutasamhita* through the sentence *naprakshalitapanipado bhunjita* (*Cikitsa*,24.98) which advocates that one should not take one’s food without washing hands and feet has become the slogan of survival at present. The practice of Yoga has been proved to be the best comfortable exercise that can be chosen for physical fitness even during quarantine time. The indefatigable sermons of the *Gita* prescribed for right food can be endorsed definitely as the means of good health anyway. The present write up will be an endeavour to focus on the Indian traditional views on the issues related to good health and wellbeing both physical and mental which can remain as remedial and precautionary measures for the prevention of any type of disease.

The pandemic in recent time has taught us all that the issues of health and wellbeing are the most important concern for survival of the mankind in this world. The life if saved can
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achieve the supreme. The tiny virus has remained beyond any treatment so far. So to restrain the damage of life, the whole world has been experimenting various ways and means to fight with the present attack. Unfortunately, everything remains on the table of experiment only and to save the mankind from further decay some decisions have been taken by the highest medical authority of the world which have been almost unanimously followed in each and every place of the globe as the fighting guidelines in this juncture. These guidelines, mostly echo the life style strategies prescribed in the pages of Indian scriptures. Thus arises the context of looking into the field of health and wellbeing from Indian traditional perspective today.

Indian tradition has always focussed the issues of precautions with utmost importance. The Yoga philosophy and Ayurveda have projected the methods of physical as well as mental fitness and treatment of diseases in an expanded manner. The community development being the utmost concern of the Vedic society, the doctrines of the Vedas also endorse many valuable data about health, hygiene and wellbeing in general. The *Atharvaveda* which is regarded as the pioneering source of Indian medicine i.e. Ayurveda offers a wide field of such ideas many of which are very much relevant in the present-day context. The doctrine of the *Atharvaveda*, *udayurud balam*¹ establishes the idea of enhancing the span of life and strength in this world for the betterment of mankind. This book again utters the prayer of making the span of life holistic in nature, i.e. *draghiya ayuh prataram dadhanah*² .

The *Sushrutasamhita* has elaborately discussed the types of diseases and their respective treatments elaborately. According to this book diseases are of four types basically, viz., *Agantuka*, *Sarira*, *Manasa* and *Svabhavika*³. Among these the *Agantuka* type refers to that kind of diseases which is of extraneous origin. From this perspective the COVID-19 can be taken within the range of this kind of ailment as it comes from outside. The type called *Sarira* relates the diseases which affects the balance of the bodily particles like blood etc. In connection with COVID-19, the virus comes from outside but causes imbalance in the body for which it can be treated as a *Sarira* type of ailment also. The third category of disease relates the ailment that affects the mind and so it is termed as *Manasa*. COVID-19 being the most dreaded disease in this world at present, causes severe mental agony not only to the patient but also to all of his/her family members. The panic even percolates to the person

¹ V.9.8

² *Atharvaveda*, XII.2,30

³ *Sutrasthana*, 1.19

sitting in the highest position of administration also as it has the capacity of destroying human life in great volume. So this pandemic with all its destructive power can be encountered successfully when all types of precautions can be followed strictly. The *Sushrutasamhita* prescribed four ways of treatment, viz., *samshodhana*, *samsamana*, diet and behavioural rules or conduct.⁴ The first one means cleanliness. The second one refers to the pacification of the disturbed molecules in the body. The third one relates the proper ingredients and the ways of consuming food. The fourth one relates behavioural regulations to be followed during the time of ailment. If we observe the present scenario of the pandemic, these four are the means which appear as the most effective ways for saving our life. In connection with the fight against this demonic disease, the practice of Yoga can be endorsed as a strong measure to keep oneself fit for the fight. In connection with the diet, the *Srimadbhagavadgita* has offered an effective discussion. According to this book food that lengthens life (*ayuh*), generates inspiration (*utsaha*), strength (*bala*), health (*arogya*), happiness (*sukha*), delight (*priti*) and which is juicy (*rasyah*), balanced with fat and oil (*snigdha*), remains fruitful for a longer time (*sthira*), are the food for the people of highest level (*sattvika*). Food which is too tangy (*katu*), sour (*amla*), salty (*lavana*), hot (*usna*), too sharp in taste (*atitiksna*), dry (*ruksha*), of burning effect (*dahakara*), that brings suffering, misery and infliction, are the food for the people of hyper actions (*rajasika*). Food which is half cooked (*mandapakva*), bereft of juice (*gatarasam*), badly scented (*puti*), stale (*paryyusitam*), left over (*ucchistam*) and which cannot be offered for sacrifice (*amedhyam*), are the food for the people with degraded sense (*tamasika*).⁵ Among these types of food the *svattika* type is obviously the best one and can be consumed without any doubt. Not only for combating the disease, this type of food should be taken even in normal time as it keeps the body healthy and strong.

In ancient India, people generally ate plant based homemade food which were cultivated by themselves to become healthy. To become fit physically and mentally they did yoga and meditation with prayers. It is noteworthy that the Yoga system has been introduced in Indian society for enhancing physical and mental immunity all though, so that human body as well as the mind stay away from the bad practices, The COVID-19 has taught us a lesson that we should detach from bad belongings. We have seen that the whole world is adopting our most of the old traditions as these are like mandates to survive in the present scenario. For

⁴ *Ibid.*,1.20

⁵ XVII. 7-10

example, in our tradition, whenever a guest or any other person comes to meet another one, then both persons greet each other by joining the palms which is the famous practice of namaskara and this greeting avoids any type of physical touch which is obvious in the handshakes etc which most of the western countries preferred.

Ayurveda and Yoga for Immunity:

Indian health care system proclaims and practises the norm that prevention is better than Cure. Starting from its early source till date Ayurveda has been suggesting all types of precautions along with its ways of treatment. This is the holistic and natural approach of health care, coming from an ancient source of wisdom. It is the science of balancing life on all levels: physical, mental, social and in relationship with the environment. Long ago it was revealed by a tradition of holy masters and its wisdom has been maintained throughout the ages. Ayurveda is not just for curing the health problem, it focuses beyond all on prevention, avoiding the danger before it has come. It is a holistic way of life in itself. It starts from the principle that every human being is divine in nature. It explains that the human soul, as long it is not co-operating with the pure ego, carries a person from one body to another. The body is the vehicle for the soul in its physical existence and mind and intellect are instruments to become aware of our real identity. For this reason, body, mind and intellect need all care and love to maintain in a good condition.

The medical science has given emphasises that if we boost our immunity system, then the virus can not attack. So, we have to improve our immunity system.

Some simple ayurvedic purification treatments to strengthen the immune system and area of the throats/lungs, to be protected against corona- and other viruses are prescribed by renowned Vedic astrologer Narada Kush. (www.naradakush.nl)

These are as suggested by him-

- 1. Nasya:** We should Apply sesame oil / ghee (clarified butter) 2 drops in both the nostrils in morning and evening.
- 2. Oil Therapy:** We should Take 1 tablespoon of sesame or coconut oil in our mouth. Swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinse. This can be done once or twice a day.
- 3. Neti Therapy:** We can buy a little copper pot in an ayurvedic shop. Fill it with lukewarm water and add a little natural salt (half teaspoon). Deposit the spout of the little pot in our right nostril and let half of the the water flow out from the left nostril, and vice versa. This is one of the best remedies to clean the whole area of our head

and naturally it will strengthen the immunesystem. we can apply this in the early morning before shower or bath.

- 4. Nadi Shodana.** We can do daily performance of alternate nostril therapy (5-10 minutes) before practicing our meditation. Simple but very effective, especially for proper brain functioning in connection with balance in breathing, together with strengthening and cleansing of the lungs.

To boost our immunity we can do some yogasana also which will help our immunity according to Yoga Expert. These yoga asana are like- Setubandhasana, sarvangasana, halasana, matsyasana, matsendrasana If we do these asanas regularly then we can protect our body from all harmful element of surroundings.
(https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2572707566351584&id=1944642982491382&sfnsn=wiwspwa&extid=ewXx5uBsHQsCJ2hd&d=w&vh=e)

There are three levels of response to the COVID-19 outbreak: how it affects us physically, mentally and spiritually. The physical response came first, and by now everyone knows about self-isolation, social distancing and testing. The second effect, on our psyches, is being experienced personally but with only fitful answers and advice. The best advice in the mental area is meditation and yoga, relaxation techniques and paying attention every day to finding not just relaxation but joy and comfort in your life. It doesn't terribly matter what kind of meditation you do; using a simple mantra like "So 'ham" is effective, but you can find meditation instructions everywhere online. The point is that among all the ways to find spiritual fulfilment, this is the most lasting, the most satisfying and the most meaningful. (Deepak Chopra, MD, FACP, Chopra is founder of The Chopra Foundation, a non-profit entity for research on well-being and humanitarianism.)

Recommendation and Conclusion:

So, during this day of fear so long proper vaccine or medicine does not come we can strictly follow these social rules and practices. Then not only individual but whole society, whole universe and next generation can also be benefited. Proper food, regular exercise and philanthropic attitude in life can make one stronger internally and externally. This heightens the immune system of the body that can fight for any odds anytime. This may be regarded as the call of the day. Indian tradition, in this way may be recapitulated again during this critical situation throughout the world. Ayurveda and *Yogashastra* can prove their utility once again. During quarantine time many have been suffering from mental disturbance, so our *Astangamarga* (right views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right

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concentration, right effort, right mindfulness) can be taken as a boon for regulated life. The modern science has proved that maintaining distance is good for health to fight against covid19. It is proved that daily practice of *Yogasana*, Pranayama for at least thirty minutes, doing nasal application, oil pulling therapy, steam inhalation, the use of various healthy spices like turmeric, cumin, coriander, garlic are beneficial to build up immunity. The famous verse of the *Brihadaranyakaopanisad*, which has a universal Appling towards mankind is most appropriate in the current situation, which is as follows-

“om, sarvebhavantusukhinah,sarvesantuniramayaah

sarvebhadranipashyantumaakashcid-duhka-bhaag-bhavet.”

That means may all be happy, may all be free from illness, may all see what is auspicious and may no one suffer. Thus, in this paper we have tried to focus that our rich heritage has much more teachings for the learners in this time of pandemic.

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