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### Concept of health in Ayurveda-A Literary Review Dr Nidhin MS<sup>1</sup> Dr Steffy Julia Thomas<sup>2</sup>

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1. Production In Charge, The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy(Cbe) Ltd., Kanjikkode ,Palakkad
2. Assistant Manager Quality Control Department, The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy(Cbe) Ltd.,Kanjikkode, Palakkad

**Corresponding Author :-** Dr Nidhin MS, Production In Charge, The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy(Cbe) Ltd., Kanjikkode, Palakkad  
Email: drnidhinnandu@gmail.com

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#### ABSTRACT: -

Ayurveda, the science of life gives prime importance to the management of disease as well as maintenance of health. In Ayurveda, health is considered to be the normalcy of *doshas* (bio energies), *Dhatus* (body tissues), *mala* (waste products), *agni* (digestive fire) and happy state of soul, sense organs and mind. Present article tries to unleash the concept of health in different Ayurveda literatures for the benefit of human society.

**KEY WORDS:** Arogya, Ayurveda, Health, Swastha



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## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of India, is believed to be originated in pre Vedic period (Before 1500 BC), at the end of Indus valley civilization and it is considered as the *Upaveda* of Atharvaveda.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Initial references of health in Ayurveda was from Rigveda in the form of *Tridhatu* theory which opines that the equilibrium state of *Tridhatu*s (Three body tissues) maintains the health and derangement leads to disease. Famous commentator of Vedas, Sayanacharya interpreted *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Sleshma* as the *Tridhatu*s (Three body tissues), paving the bridge to *Tridoshasidhantha* in Ayurveda.<sup>[4]</sup> The concept of health is also seen in *Mahabharatha*, one of the two epics of ancient India in which mental and physical aspect of health is mentioned. *Seetha* (cold), *Ushna* (hot) and *Vayu* (air) are the three *Gunas* (qualities) of *Sareera* (body) and *Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama* are the three *Gunas* (qualities) of mind. The balance of *Sareerika* (body) and *Manasika gunas* (psychic) comprehensively produce health.<sup>[5]</sup> The addition of *Manasika* (mental) aspects to the concept of health is really visible here. It was in Padma purana the more vivid concepts of Ayurveda like *Panchamahabhutas*, *Tridoshas* etc were mentioned. *Garudapurana* gave more clear picture regarding the concept of health, detailing the *Tridoshas*, *Sapthadhatus* (7 body tissues) and *Trimalas* (3 types of waste) and their role in generating diseases with their symptoms.<sup>[6]</sup> *Brihatrayees* (Major 3 texts of Ayurveda) have elaborately mentioned regarding the health concept and the factors influencing it. Today in a changing world, with sedentary life styles and newly prevailing diseases it is very relevant to discuss ayurvedic views on health concept.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literary references are collected from various

Ayurveda literatures like *Charaka Samhitha*, *Susrutha Samhitha*, *Ashtanga hruadaya* etc. and published articles in various research journals on the concept of health in Ayurveda.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Concept of health from Ayurveda classics

Acharya Susrutha, father of surgery has explained the health in a broader spectrum considering almost all aspects of life. A person is said to be *Swastha* (Healthy) if he has normalcy or equilibrium state of *doshas* (bio energies), *Dhatus* (body tissues), *mala* (waste products) *agni* (digestive fire) and happy state of soul, sense organs and mind.<sup>[7]</sup> Comparing this reference with the definition of health by WHO- 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'<sup>[8]</sup>, we may analyze that Ayurveda has given prime importance to the equilibrium state of every components, not merely stating the absence of disease. More over interconnected bases of health like physical, mental and social aspects are explained with other components influencing it like *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Malas*. The addition of happiness or equilibrium status of soul gives an additional platform of spirituality for health concept.

Acharya Charaka opines that abnormal state of *Dhatus* (Body tissues) produces unhappiness or disease and balanced state produces happiness or *Arogya* in *Ghuddakachathuspadaadhyaya*.<sup>[9]</sup> He also suggest that *Swastha* (Health) is the condition where body devoid of any abnormality.<sup>[10]</sup> Charaka has not specifically mentioned the *Sareerika* (Body) and *Manasika bhava* (Mental conditions) while explaining health. But the equilibrium concept of *Dhatus* (including *dosha dhathu and mala*) is stated with prime importance. *Manasikabhavas* (Mental conditions) like *raja* and *Tama* are mentioned in

*Dheerghamjeevitheeya adhyaya*.<sup>[11]</sup> While explaining the lean person Charaka has mentioned the qualities of wellness like balanced proportion of muscles, compactness, firmness in organs, does not fall in to a disease, tolerance for hunger, thirst, sun, cold and exercise, balanced *Agni* (digestive fire), normal metabolism etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

Latest text among Brihatrayees Ashtangahrudaya explains *Aroga* concept (those who are not having disease) which is a reverse detailing of health concept. Person who always consumes wholesome food, practices wholesome habits and thoughts, who is not interested in earthly matters, who sacrifices, balanced towards every one, forgives, honesty and who follows *apta* (scholars) words does not develop any disease.<sup>[13]</sup>

*Kashyapa* elaborates the features of health in *Khilastana*. Desire for food intake, Proper easy digestion of ingested food, normal evacuation of feces, urine and flatus, lightness in the body, pleased sense organs, timely sleep and awakening, gain of strength, color and life, pleasant mind and normal digestive fire are the features of health. Reverse state of mentioned factors are causes for disease or state of illness. Here Kashyap has scientifically added almost all systems like digestive system, Genito urinal system, nervous system, musculoskeletal system and endocrine system to unleash the health concept. Poetic lines and in-depth scientific meanings are capable of explaining health even in the modern era.<sup>[14]</sup>

Proper categorization of health was done by *Ugraditya* the author of *Kalyanakaraka* as *Paramartha swasthya* (ultimate health) and *Vyavahara swasthya* (general health). General health is the normalcy of *Agni*(digestive fire), *Dosha*, *Dhatu* (Body tissues) and *Mala* (Waste products), where ultimate health is eternal happiness experienced by soul due to liberation or salvation. Here also the spiritual root of health can be visibly felt.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Components of Health-An Ayurvedic view

Components of health can be discussed under the light of Acharya Susruthas health concept. Factors directly affecting health are *Dosha*, *Dhatu* (body tissues) and *Agni* (digestive fire). Equilibrium stage of above factors results in proper elimination of waste products and Cleanliness (*prasannatha*) of *Atma*(soul) *indriya* (*senses*) and *mana*(mind/heart).<sup>[16]</sup>

Balanced state of *Dosha*: *Physiological* variations of *Doshas* can be occurred based on the life time(age), diurnal and status of digestion. To acquire balance state of *Dosha* one should be very careful regarding the *Ahara*(diet) and *vihara* (Life style). *Samadosha* has also influence in Cleanliness (*prasannatha*) of *Atma*(soul) *indriya* (*senses*) and *mana*(mind/heart).

Balanced state of *Agni* (digestive fire): *Agni* (digestive fire) is one among the 10 seats of *Prana* (life) and its equilibrium is influenced by *Ahara*(diet) and *vihara* (Life style), influences *Atmadi* (soul, sense organs and mind) and *Malakriya* (removal of wastes). *Jataragni* is responsible for digestion of food and *Dhatwagni* (digestion at tissue level) for the nourishment of *Dhatus*.

Balanced state of *Dhatus* (body tissues): Along with *Ahara*(diet) and *vihara* (Life style) *samadhatutwa* (balanced state of *dhatu*s) is influenced by *Samadosata* and *Samaagnitwa* (Balanced *dosha* and body tissue). It is very important that the body tissues should be in equilibrium for the proper functioning of human body.

*Sama Mala* (wastes of the body mixed with ama): Proper excretion is as important as that of food intake (*ahara*) and digestion (with the help of *samagni*)

*Prasanna atma*, *indriya* and *Manah* (The Manas, or mind, should be balanced, calm and satisfied):*Sadvritta* (good code of conduct)and *Dharaneeyavega* (suppression of urges) are also important in this case. All above

mentioned factors also contribute for this to happen. While analyzing the components of health we can identify that each component is interlinked and complementary. In short *Dosha*, *Dhatu*(body tissues) and *mala* (waste materials) influenced by *Ahara*(diet) and *vihara* (Life style) and *Manasikabhavas* (Psychological) produce *Arogya*(health) and *anarogya* (Un healthy). The factors responsible for health are also responsible for disease as per Ayurveda. Acharya Charaka has explained Ayurveda as the one which deals with good, bad, happy and unhappy life .(17)

### **Prevention is better than cure-An ayurvedic view**

Prevention of a disease is mainly based on *Swasthavrutha*-the regimens followed routinely to maintain health.<sup>[18]</sup> It can be classified to *Vaiyyakthika swastavrutta* (Principles followed by individual) and *Samajika swastavrutta* (Principles followed by community) to maintain health and prevent the occurrence of disease. Acharya *Bhavamishra* emphasizes to follow those procedures which keeps man healthy.<sup>[19]</sup>

Prevention of a disease can be primary and secondary. Primary prevention (prevention from occurrence) is the measures taken by an individual before the onset of a disease which will reduce the chance of occurrence in future.<sup>[20]</sup> Specialty of primary prevention is that action is taken before the pathogenesis of a disease, hence early to its manifestation. This type of prevention is important in the case of life style diseases like diabetic mellitus, obesity and hypertension. Concepts like *Dinacharya*(daily regimen),*Ritucharya* (Seasonal regimen),*Rasayana* (rejuvenators), *Adharaneeyavegas* (non suppressible urges) are also included in Primary prevention.

Secondary prevention (prevention from reoccurrence) is halting the progress of a disease and preventing the complications or reoccurrence of a disease. Knowledge

regarding *Kriyakala* (stage of pathogenesis) and proper pathogenesis is very crucial in secondary prevention.

## **CONCLUSION**

Concept of health in Ayurveda is Scientific, precise and enshrouds all aspects of life. The equilibrium of soul is mentioned in the definition of health, which gives a spiritual platform for health Concept in Ayurveda. The scientific methods mentioned in the Ayurveda classics are relevant even in the current era to ensure good health practice. Unrolling of these concepts, in a comprehensive way to the human society need to be ensured for the wellness of society.

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