



Review Article

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF TRAYOPASTHAMBHAS ROLE IN PROMOTING HEALTHY AGING

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ABSTRACT

Trayopasthambha, the fundamental tool in Ayurveda, is essential for preserving a healthy lifespan. Tridanda (Satva, Aatma and Shareera) act as a main pillar according to Charaka and Tridosha (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) act as main pillars according to Acharya Sushruta and these two will be supported by the sub pillars called Trayopastambha. Hence the sub-pillars (Trayopastambha) have been given equal importance as the main pillars (Tridanda and Tristoona) and considered as one of the fundamental factors to stay healthy. Trayopastambha stands as a foundational tool inherent to every human being, essential for safeguarding their destined life. Intricately linked with the three pillars of existence, it sustains well-being and preserves life's vitality. Aging is natural and unavoidable, affected by lifestyle and genetics. Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (balanced living) significantly influence aging. Proper use promotes healthy aging, while neglect accelerates aging, causing premature decay.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, places significant emphasis on both physical and mental well-being through a preventive approach. It defines health as a state where there is a harmonious balance in the functioning of Doshas (biological energies), Dhatus (tissues), Malas (waste products), as well as Agni (digestive fire), alongside a pleasant state of Atma (soul), Indriya (senses), and Manas (mind)^[1]. Ayurveda describes the Tridoshas-Vata, Pitta, and Kapha-as the three main pillars (Tristhuna)^[2] governing bodily functions. Similarly, Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (controlled lifestyle) are regarded as the three external sub-pillars that support the main pillars. When utilized in a proper and planned manner, these three pillars facilitate an individual with the benefits of a life endowed with strength, complexion, and a full lifespan.^[3]

Ahara (food) is the most important factor for sustenance of life.

According to Ayurveda, the universe is formed from the Panchamahabhuta, or five basic elements, namely Akash, Vayu, Teja Jala, and Prithvi. Similarly, Ahara is categorized as Akashiya, Vayavya, Agneya, Apya, and Parthiva. When consumed in appropriate proportions, these elements contribute to nourishment of the body tissues (Deha dhatus), support growth and development, and enhance Ojas (vitality).

One of the most crucial factors for a happy and healthy life is Nidra, or sleep. Sound sleep during the night is considered a natural and vital phenomenon. A high quality of life is closely linked to obtaining sufficient sleep. Sleep is essential for maintaining health and optimal performance, as it induces significant physiological changes in the body. A good night's sleep not only reduces stress but also restores biological functions to their normal state, serving as a clear indicator of overall wellness.

Brahmacharya, as the third supportive pillar, plays a crucial role in preserving the well-being of both body and mind. When practiced diligently, Brahmacharya safeguards one's lifespan, facilitates the benefits of rejuvenation (Rasayana), and aids in attaining life's ultimate purpose by complementing the other two pillars. Therefore, Brahmacharya is accorded utmost importance.

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Aging is an inevitable and irreversible process of becoming older. It is influenced by various factors, with lifestyle and hereditary factors playing significant roles.^[3] Among lifestyle factors, the three sub-pillars- *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (controlled lifestyle)- have a profound impact on the aging process. Proper utilization of these pillars promotes healthy aging, preventing premature aging and mitigating the adverse effects associated with aging. Conversely, improper utilization of these pillars can accelerate the aging process, leading to premature decay.

Role of *Ahara* in Healthy Ageing

Food (*Ahara*) plays a vital role in sustaining life and ensuring normal physiological functions in the human body. It contributes to longevity, complexion, satisfaction, strength, nourishment, and immunity. Proper nutrition not only supports growth, development, and the functioning of sense organs but also enhances both physical and mental well-being.^[4] However, the benefits of food are optimized when it is prepared and consumed correctly. Ayurveda emphasizes the concept of *Ahara Vidhi Vishesha Ayatan*, as prescribed by Acharya Charaka, which outlines specific rules and regulations for the ingestion and preparation of food to maximize its health benefits.

The aging process is intricately linked to the state of the *Dhatu*s, or bodily tissues, which begin to decline as aging sets in. A healthy state of the *Dhatu*s is essential for a prolonged and healthy lifespan. Since all *Dhatu*s originate from *Ahara Rasa* (the essence of food), the quality of *Ahara Rasa* greatly influences the formation of *Dhatu*s. Improper intake of food, such as consuming inappropriate or incompatible food types (*Ahita Ahara*), unwholesome food (*Asatmya Ahara*), contradictory food combinations (*Viruddhara*), or contaminated food (*Malina Ahara*), disrupts the proper formation of *Ahara Rasa*. Additionally, disregarding dietary rules, consuming food before the previous meal is digested, overeating, or irregular eating habits can impair *Agni* (digestive fire), leading to the formation of *Ama* (toxins). This, in turn, contributes to various diseases and depletion of the *Dhatu*s.

Consuming a healthy diet and adhering to dietary guidelines ensures proper formation of *Ahara Rasa*, nourishing all *Dhatu*s effectively. This promotes optimal functioning and excellence of each *Dhatu*, ultimately delaying the aging process.

Dietetic Recommendations in Classics

1. Consuming food with all taste is best to promote strength and immunity.^[5]
2. One must take food in proper quantity, which depends on the strength of *Agni* (digestive power).

3. Heavy food articles should be taken upto one third or one half of the saturation point (of capacity of stomach); even light ones should not be taken in surfeit in order to maintain the strength of *Agni*.^[6]
4. One should not be habitual to take dried meat, dried vegetables, *Shaluka* (tuber of lotus-*Nymphaea alba* Linn.) and *Bisa* (stalk of lotus-*Nymphaea alba* Linn.) as these are heavy to digest. One should never eat meat of emaciated animals. One should not be habitual to take coagulated milk, cream-cheese, pork, meat of cow and buffalo, fish, curd, black-gram and wild-barley.
5. One should regularly consume *Shashtika* rice (*Oryza sativum*), *Shali* rice (varieties of *Oryza sativum* rice), *Mudga* (*Vigna radiata* green gram), rock-salt, *Aamalaka* (*Phyllanthus emblica* -Indian-gooseberry), *Yava* (*Hordeum vulgare*-barley), rain-water, milk, ghee, flesh of *Jangala* animals (arid habitat) and honey.

Role of *Nidra* in Healthy Ageing

Nidra, or sleep, contributes to maintaining appropriate weight, enhancing complexion, boosting enthusiasm, and sharpening sensory alertness. When combined with *Ahara* and *Brahmacharya*, *Nidra* yields vital physiological effects that promote overall health of body and mind. Ayurveda recognizes *Nidra* as a cornerstone of life, crucial for regulating normal physiological functions. It plays a pivotal role in influencing both physical and mental well-being, inducing relaxation and improving immunity to ward off common diseases. Adequate sleep also alleviates stress and anxiety, preventing mental health issues. Conversely, inadequate sleep or insomnia, known as *Nidranasha*, can lead to various health issues including digestive problems, depression, mental illness, and fatigue.^[7]

Lack of sleep or irregular sleeping patterns disrupt the balance of the three *Doshas*, particularly increasing the roughness or *Rukshata*^[8] of the body, which exacerbates *Vata dosha*. This imbalance in *Vata dosha* can impair all bodily functions. Proper sleep is essential for maintaining equilibrium among all *Doshas*, including both physical and mental aspects. A healthy state of these *Doshas* ensures the overall well-being of the body and maintains the health of the *Dhatu*s.

Benefits of Healthy Sleep Routine

In classics the benefits of proper sleep pattern are mentioned as following:^[9]

1. Proper sleep nourishes the body.
2. It maintains physical and mental relaxation.
3. Good sleep fosters spiritual beliefs and synchronizes with nature.

4. Sleep helps prevent diseases, particularly mental illnesses.
5. Sleep promotes longevity, youthfulness, luster, and complexion.
6. Sleep enhances memory and intelligence.
7. The development and proper functioning of the physique and sense organs depend on adequate sleep.
8. Sleep boosts immunity and counters early aging symptoms.

Role of *Bramhacharya* in Healthy Ageing

Charaka mentions the third *Upastambha* as *Brahmacharya* whereas *Astanga Hrudaya*^[10] and *Sangraha* mentions it as *Abrahmacharya*. *Brahmacharya* involves regulated activities of both the body and mind to promote individual growth. It encompasses all actions beneficial for the body and mind while avoiding harmful associations such as *Asatmya Indriyarta Samyoga* and *Prajanparadha*. Thus, *Brahmacharya* is regarded as a crucial pillar among all, with influence extending to all aspects of well-being.

Acharya Charaka emphasizes *Brahmacharya* as the general or ideal principle to be followed by everyone, aiming to achieve life's main purpose. This includes adhering to principles such as *Sadvritta* (good conduct) and *Achara Rasayana* (code of conduct for rejuvenation), which are universal guidelines for all individuals.

Acharya Vagbhata's perspective on *Abrahmacharya* focuses on individual needs and protection, guiding individuals to follow righteous acts aligned with life's main purpose. This encompasses practices such as *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), tailored to suit individual requirements and circumstances.

Bramacharyam Ayananam ^[11]

Following *Brahmacharya*, which includes practices like *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Rutu Charya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* (good conduct), *Achara Rasayana* (code of conduct for rejuvenation), and *Adhyayana* (study), yields benefits equivalent to those of *Rasayana Phala* (rejuvenation therapy). These benefits include longevity, enhanced memory, increased fat metabolism, robust health, and strength of both body and senses. By adhering to these practices, individuals can fortify the *Tridandas* (three pillars of life) and *Tridoshas* (three biological energies), thus averting diseases of the body and mind throughout life. *Brahmacharya* is achieved through control of the senses (*Indriya Samyama*) and mind (*Mano Samyama*), leading to the maintenance of bodily functions (*Shareera Dharana*) and eventual attainment of knowledge or self-realization (*Aatma Jnana*). Therefore, it is regarded as the most effective pathway for spiritual and physical well-being.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda adheres to the principle of "*Ati Sarvatra Varjayet*," cautioning against excess in any aspect of life, be it food, sleep, or sex, as it can lead to harm. Balanced functioning of the triads- *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra* (sleep), and other activities-is crucial. According to the first pillar, *Ahara*, food selection should align with one's *Prakriti* (individual constitution), with the most suitable diet determined by *Dosha Prakriti*. A balanced intake of the six tastes is essential for maintaining good health. Imbalance in the consumption of these tastes can disrupt the *Doshas-Vata, Pitta, and Kapha*-resulting in disease. The second pillar, *Nidra*, emphasizes the importance of natural and adequate sleep, which helps replenish strength and vitality. However, untimely and insufficient sleep can lead to various diseases. *Brahmacharya* and *Abrahmacharya* essentially refer to the same principle: the regulated activities of the senses and actions concerning time, purpose, and duty, from birth until death. This includes adhering to daily and seasonal routines, good conduct, and rejuvenation practices for a healthy life and spiritual liberation. Therefore, *Brahmacharya* plays a pivotal role in supporting the foundational pillars and other aspects of daily life.

CONCLUSION

Aging is an inevitable process, but its early onset can be delayed through a healthy lifestyle. Among various factors, *Ahara* (diet), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (controlled lifestyle) are particularly significant in maintaining the health of *Dhatu*s (bodily tissues), which is essential for healthy aging. By diligently following these three pillars, the *Dhatu*s can be kept in excellent condition, thereby promoting healthy aging and longevity.

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