



## Review Article

### ACHARA RASAYANA - A BOON FOR HEALTHY LIVING

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#### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is not only the science of healing, but also the one which tells about the art of living. Well being of *Shareera*, *Indriya*, *Satwa* and *Athma* is necessary to achieve a long healthy life. *Achara Rasayana* is a unique concept told by Acharya Charaka which stresses upon various factors which are responsible for the well being of all these entities. The factors mentioned can be categorized as psychological, socio-behavioural, spiritual, food and life style aspects. All these aspects will have positive effects on the physical as well as the mental health, just like the *Rasayana* which helps in attaining longevity. *Achara Rasayana* is the need of the hour as most of the people are prone to psychosomatic illnesses due to the changed life style and stressful work schedules. An attempt is made to analyse the mode of impact of *Achara Rasayana*, along with the outcomes of various researches which scientifically substantiate the concept.

**KEYWORDS:** *Achara Rasayana*, *Rasayana*, *Satwa*, *Athma*, psychosomatic illnesses.

#### INTRODUCTION

In this modern era of changed lifestyle, people are more prone to various physical and mental illnesses. The busy work schedules, polluted environment, improper food habits, etc., are all hampering the health status of an individual, which is often ignored. Health is something which cannot be taken for granted as is the ultimate thing to attain all the *Purusharthas*, i.e., *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Moksha*<sup>[1]</sup>. Hence it is high time to take care of self, in order to have a sound mind and a sound body. This will help attain longevity. Acharya Charaka says, 'Ayu' is the conglomeration of *Shareera*, *Indriya*, *Satwa* and *Atma*<sup>[2]</sup>. So, when we aim at longevity, well being of all these four entities matters a lot. *Achara Rasayana* is one such unique concept in Ayurveda which concentrates on all these four entities, hence helping in healthy living. The word 'Achara' means 'Shastra Shikshaakrita vyavahara', i.e., the good conducts developed or acquired by understanding the Shastras. *Rasayana* is something which helps in attaining longevity. These good conducts have positive effects on our health like the *Rasayana*, hence called as *Achara Rasayana*. Understanding this and following the same is the need of the hour as our health is being ruined day by day due to various such factors which are often neglected.

According to Acharya Charaka, a person who always speaks truth (*Sathyavadina*), who does not

lose his temper (*Akrodham*), who is devoid of alcohol intake and sexual indulgence (*Nivrutta Madhya Maithuna*), who is non-violent (*Ahimsaka*), who is not too much exhausted (*Anaayaasa*), who has pleasant speech (*Priyavadina*), who practices chanting, meditation, etc (*Japa, Tapa*), who maintains cleanliness (*Shaucha*), who is stable (*Dheera*), who regularly offers prayers to Gods, cows, Brahmanas, teachers, preceptors and old people, who are free from barbarous acts (*Aanrushamsya param*), who is always compassionate (*Nitya Karunavedina*), whose sleep-wake cycle is appropriate (*Sama Jagarana Swapna*), who takes milk and ghee on daily basis (*Nitya Ksheera Ghritashina*), who is knowledgeable about one's own habitat and time, (*Desha Kala Pramanajnam*), one who uses his intellect to decide what is good and what is bad (*Yukijna*), who is free from ego (*Anahamkrita*), whose conduct is good, who is interested in spirituality (*Adhyatma*), who have excellent sense organs (*Pravanendriya*), who respects elders (*Upasitara Vruddhanam*), who believes in the existence of God (*Asthikas*), who has self control (*Jitatma*), who indulges in learning the scriptures regularly (*Dharma Shastraparam*) gets all the good effects of *Rasayana*. This is called as *Achara Rasayana*.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Categorisation of Achara Rasayana**

Various factors under *Achara Rasayana*, mentioned by Acharya Charaka can be categorized as Psychological factors, food and life style, socio behavioural factors and spiritual factors.

**Table 1: Categorisation of Achara Rasayana**

Psychological	Spiritual	Socio-behavioural	Food and lifestyle
<i>Akrodha</i>	<i>Japa</i>	<i>Sathyavaadi</i>	<i>Nivrutta Madhya, Maithuna</i>
<i>Prashantha</i>	<i>Tapa</i>	<i>Ahimsaka</i>	<i>Anaayaasa</i>
<i>Dheera</i>	<i>Adhyatma</i>	<i>Priyavaadi</i>	<i>Shouchapara</i>
<i>Anahankrita</i>	<i>Asthika</i>	<i>Daana nitya</i>	<i>Samajaagarana Swapna</i>
<i>Jitathma</i>		<i>Deva Go Brahmana Acharya Guru Vruddhaarchana</i>	<i>Nitya Ksheera Ghritashina</i>
		<i>Nitya Karunavedina</i>	<i>Deshakaala Pramanajna</i>
		<i>Shastaachara</i>	<i>Yuktijna</i>
		<i>Upasitara Vruddhanaam</i>	<i>Pravanendriya</i>
			<i>Dharmashastraparam</i>
			<i>Asankeerna Bhoji</i>

**DISCUSSION****Psychological factors**

*Vata, Pitta, Kapha* are the *Shareerika Doshas* and *Rajas, Tamas* are the *Manasika Doshas*, while *Satwa* is considered as the *Mano Guna*, which is responsible for health. The psychological factors mentioned in *Achara Rasayana* are all responsible for enhancing the *Satwa Guna*, while the opposite of all those leads to increase in the *Manasika Doshas*. For example, *Krodha* increases *Rajas*, which may have bad effect on the mental health. *Shareera* and *Manas* are always interlinked to each other as *Shareera* is the abode for *Manas*. Hence *Manasika Doshas* will alter the *Shareerika Doshas* also, leading to *Shareerika Vyadhis*. For Example, *Krodha* increases the *Pitta dosha*. We have instances in our *Samhitas* where various *Manasika Bhavas* lead to *Shareerika Vyadhis*, like, *Bhayaja Atisara*<sup>[4]</sup>, *Krodhaja Jwara*<sup>[5]</sup>, etc. We also have various instances where variations of *Shareerika Doshas* lead to *Manasika Vyadhis*, like *Viruddha/Ashuchi Ahara* vitiating *Shareerika Doshas* and leading to *Unmada*<sup>[6]</sup> and *Apasmara*<sup>[7]</sup>. *Chinta, Shoka, Bhaya, Krodha*, etc., hampers the functioning of *Agni* and hence food cannot be digested properly<sup>[8]</sup>. If *Ahara rasa* is not formed properly, then *Rasa Dhatu* will not be nourished properly. If so, the succeeding *Dhatu*s also will not be nourished. As a result there will not be *Ojo Vriddhi*, making a person prone to various diseases. So, if our mind is regulated as said in *Achara Rasayana*, *Manasika* as well as *Shareerika Vyadhis* can be prevented.

In the present scenario there is increased prevalence of psychiatric and psychosomatic illnesses. The World Health report (Oct 4, 2019) says that mental disorders affect one in four people. As

per the report around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill health and disability worldwide<sup>[9]</sup>. An article titled 'Anger and Health risk behaviours' provides various proofs for anger being one of the causes for Coronary Heart Diseases, Bulimic behavior, Hypertension, Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, car accidents, etc<sup>[10]</sup>. Studies have shown that chronic stress has a significant effect on the immune system. It is said to raise catecholamines and suppressor T cells levels, which suppress the immune system<sup>[11]</sup>. So there is no doubt that mental factors influence our body too. Hence if our mind is under control, surely our immunity will be boosted up, many of the diseases can be prevented and thus we can live a longer life.

**Socio Behavioural Factors**

Behaviour means the actions and mannerisms made by an individual. It is said to be the computed response of an individual or the system to various stimuli or inputs, whether external or internal, conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, voluntary or involuntary. Good behaviours always keep us calm and happy. Violent minds will surely disturb our body functioning too. For Eg: telling lies increases stress level. Research has linked telling lies to an increased risk of cancer, obesity, anxiety, depression, addiction, gambling, poor work satisfaction and poor relationships.<sup>[12]</sup> Research says that dishonesty is bad for health. It is told that on one hand, telling the truth, being altruistic, acting fairly and being concerned are virtues directly linked to a suite of positive health outcomes such as better

health and physical wellness, lower stress, decreases cellular aging, increased psychological well being and longevity of life. On the other hand, lying, being selfish, cheating and engaging in infidelity are said to be associated with a suite of negative health outcomes such as elevated heart rate, increased blood pressure, vasoconstriction, elevated cortisol and a significant depletion of the brain regions needed for appropriate emotional and physiological regulation.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Spiritual Factors

*Kama, Shoka, Krodha*, etc are said to be the *Mano Abhigatakaras* which may lead to *Manasika Vikaras*, ultimately affecting the physical health too. Spirituality is something which helps a person to control all these emotions or to overcome them, hence maintaining the mental stability. *Japa, Tapa*, etc., are mentioned by Acharya helps in maintaining mental peace, hence giving a positive effect on body. Many researches have confirmed the positive impact of religious beliefs and other spiritual approaches on health and the course of recovery from acute and chronic diseases<sup>14</sup>.

Many research data show that people who are more religious or spiritual have better mental health and get easily adapted to health problems compared to those who are less religious or spiritual. An extensive review article<sup>[15]</sup> has summarised hundreds of quantitative original data-based research reports examining relationships between spirituality and religious beliefs and health. It reports regarding the enhancement of positive emotions like happiness, hope, optimism, kindness, gratefulness, etc. It proves inverse relationship between spirituality and substance abuse, also social problems like crime. There is a substantial evidence indicating relationship between spirituality and social support. For older adults in particular, the most common source of social support outside of family members is believed to come from members of religious organizations. Researches have also shown positive relationships between Spirituality and Social Capital. Social capital is an indirect measure of community health, which is usually assessed by level of community participation, volunteerism, trust, reciprocity between people in the community and membership in community based, civic, political or social justice organizations. It proves the positive effects on mental health as well as physical health. It provides data to prove its positive influence on Chronic Heart Diseases, Hypertension, endocrine functions, immune functions, etc. The most impressive research on the relationship between religious beliefs and physical health is in the area of mortality. If it has benefits to physical health, then it

should have an impact on mortality too. The research suggests it does reduce the mortality. Hence no doubt that the spiritual aspects told in *Acharya Rasayana* helps in achieving longevity.

### Food and Lifestyle

*Ahara, Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are considered to be the *Trayopastambha*, the three pillars that are responsible for healthy living<sup>[16]</sup>. Unhealthy food habits and life styles are leading to various diseases in the modern generation. Hence it is very much important to succumb to the things told in *Acharya Rasayana* to attain good health and longevity.

### Focus on Ahara

It is advised to take *Ksheera* and *Ghrita* on daily basis as it has the *Rasayana* effect. *Ksheera* has *Madhura rasa* and *Vipaka*, it is *Snigdha*. It has properties similar to *Ojas*, hence it is responsible for *Ojovardhana*<sup>[17]</sup>. Thus it increases the *Bala* and *Vyadhikshamatva* of an individual and helps in attaining longevity. Similarly *Ghrita* is also *Ojovardhaka*<sup>[18]</sup>. It is *Agni Deepaka*, helps in *Pachana* and proper formation of *Ahara Rasa*, hence helping in the nourishment of *Rasadhi Dhathus*.

The scientific evidences collected in recent decades demonstrates that an adequate intake of calcium and other nutrients from dairy foods reduces the risk of osteoporosis by increasing bone acquisition during growth, slowing age related bone loss and reducing osteoporotic fractures. Emerging data also indicates that the specific peptides associated with casein and whey proteins can significantly lower blood pressure. Additionally, a conjugated linoleic acid, a fatty acid which was found naturally in dairy fat, confers a wide range of anticarcinogenic benefits in experimental animal models.<sup>[19]</sup> Lipophilic and hydrophilic antioxidants were found to be present in the milk and dairy products, which delivers health benefits<sup>[20]</sup>.

In today's fast world, people prefer fast foods, which are said to be the source of free radicals. If free radicals overwhelm the body's ability to regulate them, then a condition known as oxidative stress ensues. These free radicals adversely alter lipids, proteins, DNA and trigger a number of human diseases. It thus contributes to the etiology of many chronic health problems such as cardiovascular and inflammatory disease, cataract and cancer<sup>[21]</sup>. The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has found that Alcoholism may accelerate normal ageing or cause premature ageing of brain<sup>[22]</sup>. Specifically alcohol activates HPA axis, which causes glucocorticoid secretion and elevation of levels of stress hormones in the body. Chronic exposure to these hormones results in an acceleration of the

ageing process. Hence it is important to consume wholesome foods and avoid alcohol intake as mentioned in *Achara Rasayana*, in order to live a longer life.

### Significance of Sleep

*Nidra* is another important aspect to be concentrated upon. *Ratri Jagarana* leads to *Vata* and *Pitta Prakopa*. *Diwaswapna* leads to *Kapha Prakopa*. Hence it is very important to maintain appropriate sleep- wake cycle to maintain the equilibrium of *Doshas*. Sleep plays an important role in the functioning of brain and systemic physiology across many body systems. Several factors contribute to sleep disruption, ranging from lifestyle and environmental factors to sleep disorders and other medical conditions. Sleep disruption is said to be associated with increased activity of the sympathetic nervous system and hypothalamic- pituitary- adrenal axis, metabolic effects, changes in circadian rhythms and also proinflammatory responses. Researches show that short-term consequences of sleep disruption include increased stress responsivity, somatic pain, emotional distress, mood disorders, cognitive, memory and performance deficits. Various behavioural problems and cognitive functioning are associated with sleep disruption in children. Long-term consequences of sleep disruption is said to include conditions like hypertension, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular disease, weight-related issues, metabolic syndrome, type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, etc<sup>[23]</sup>.

### Role of *Brahmacharya*

'*Nivritta Maithuna*' is mentioned in the context which indicates the third pillar, i.e., *Brahmacharya*. Excessive *Maithuna* leads to excess loss of *Shukra*. This leads to *Ojo Kshaya* and *Vata Prakopa*<sup>[24]</sup>. This in turn causes various diseases. Hence sustenance of *Shukra Dhatu* is essential for a long healthy life.

### Hygiene and Health

The word *Shouchapara* can be interpreted as *Kaya, Vak* and *Mana Shaucha*. The matters pertaining to *Vak* and *Manas* are already discussed. Maintaining personal hygiene and cleanliness of the surroundings is also important to maintain health. Various factors like polluted air, water, land leads to *Janapado dwamsa vyadhis* (Epidemics)<sup>[25]</sup>. So the root cause of pollution is *Prajnaparadha*. Once we realize the importance of *Achara Rasayana* and practice it, all this can be controlled.

### Personal responsibility and Health

The ultimate thing is one's *Yukthi*. One should know what is good and bad to oneself, may be the *ahara* or *vihara* and act wisely. So, one should have the knowledge regarding *Desha* and *Kala*. Choosing

the *Ahara* as per *Kala* is important, may be the day and night cycle or may be the seasons. For eg, Curds should not be consumed at night, one should not consume cold food items in cold seasons. One should also consider the *Sathmyatha* (conductiveness) while consuming *Ahara*. So Charaka has told '*Athmanaam Abhisameekshya Bhunjeeta Samyak*'<sup>[26]</sup>, i.e. one should understand oneself and choose the right one. *Yuktikrita Bala* is the *bala* which is acquired by our dietary habits and lifestyle. So if we stick on to the right regimens, surely one can enhance that *Bala* and achieve longevity.

### CONCLUSION

All the aspects mentioned in *Achara Rasayana* influence our mind as well as our body. The psychological, socio behavioural and spiritual aspects helps in enhancing the *Satwa guna* by combating the *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Manas* and *Shareera* are always interlinked. Hence it helps in maintaining the equilibrium of *Shareerika Doshas* too. Following proper diet and lifestyle retains the normal functioning of *Agni*, helps in digestion. Hence nourishes the *Rasaadi Dhathus*. This results in *Ojo Vriddhi*, ultimately resulting in *Ayu Vriddhi*. Various research reviews prove that the concept of *Achara Rasayana* is scientific and highly relevant in the present scenario.

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