

Importance of *Brahmacharya* for Health in Contemporary Times

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient science of health, states that the main purpose of mankind is to maintain health and cure the diseases. For the maintenance of health, it is advised to avoid the bad lifestyle habits. Ayu is the span of life initiating from birth and terminating at death. It is classified into 4 types, hita, ahita, sukha and dukha ayu. The lifestyle and habits of a person determine their ayu. Adapting to a bad lifestyle leads to sufferings via development of pathologies. A healthy lifestyle is the result of good routine habits. Ayurveda preaches the attainment of a healthy lifespan through practice of various disciplines like dinacharya, ritucharya, swasthavritta, sadavritta, aahara, vihara, and achara rasayana.

The three upastambha or supporting pillars of life are ahara, nidra and brahmacharya. Brahmacharya or practicing celibacy is a crucial pillar for maintaining a healthy life. The abstinence from maithuna is known as brahmacharya. It is not always essentially the abstain; engaging in maithuna while adhering to all of the ritukala's rules is also regarded as Brahmacharya. It is also claimed that Brahmacharya is the trail that leads to moksha. Brahmacharya represents a practice that promotes longevity. It is the ideal regulated activities (Samyak Yoga) of Jnanendriya, Karmendriya, and Ubhayendriya with respect to Kala, Artha, and Karma for development and defence of the individual from birth until death.

In this review, the concept of brahmacharya according with its importance is meant to be discussed.

KEYWORDS: Trayopstambha, Brahmacharya, Celibacy

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, is the earliest science of medical study to be known to mankind. The Sanskrit term Ayurveda refers to the science of life. It is a holistic science and covers every aspect of life along with offering many guidelines to help people stay healthy throughout their lives. Trayopastambha (Aahar, Nidra, and Brahmacharya) is one amongst these, which is the combination of three sub-pillars of Ayurveda which help in the maintenance of a healthy living body. As per Acharya Charaka, the human body can be compared to a building and the

trayopstambhas are the sub-pillars of that particular building. For instance, the role of the pillar is crucial in creating any form of secure and strong construction. A single sub-pillar when destroyed causes the entire building to collapse¹.

The third Upastambha, Brahmacharya, aids in preserving the physical, mental and social well-being of the individual by supporting the remaining two Upastambhas. When correctly practiced, brahmacharya helps in the maintenance of Ayu, realizing the effects of Rasayana and other rejuvenators, and the accomplishment of Ayurveda's

primary goal. And so, it gets the utmost priority.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the current study, information was gathered from archival texts, journals, and research papers regarding health, trayopastambha, brahmacharya, and celibacy as well as other available scientific publications. The Ayurvedic technique has been used to compile, analyze, and discuss all the data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Derivation

The words Brahmacharya are composed of two words, i.e., "Brahma" and "Charya". Brahma comes from "*Bruhati vardhayati praja iti brahma,*" which means something that helps in growth and development. Brahma is the absolute, eternal, supreme knowledge. Charya is "Ir-gatau" which means to follow or move. So, the whole life or lifestyle that is required for attaining ultimate knowledge is Brahmacharya.²

Brahmacharya denotes the self-control of the senses, as a means for obtaining gratification and obtaining eternal knowledge. Because it involves excessive control of the sense faculties, it may be dangerous and create mental illnesses if not practiced under strict regulation. Abrahmacharya has been stated by Astanga Sangraha and Astanga Hridaya, and both have emphasized on its significance in preserving health. As per the Samyak Abrahmacharya, having children and maintaining the ghrihastashram is important, and it is also stated that this is the only way to be free of the *Pitru Runa Mukti*. As a result, Abrahmacharya is now considered important in public health.³

DEFINITIONS

• Chakrapani-

ब्रह्मचर्यशब्देन इन्द्रियसंयमसौमनस्यप्रभृतयो ब्रह्मज्ञानानुगुणा गृह्यन्ते ।(Chakrapani Tika Ch.Su.11/35)

This refers to exercising control over the senses, which makes for a pleasant state of mind and also makes it easier to learn about Brahma, the Supreme God.⁴

• Dalhan-

समस्तइन्द्रियसंयम

This means to regulate the all activities of all indriyas (Gyanedriyas, Karmendriyas and manas). It is the most effective path to practise for maintaining a healthy life.

• Linga purana -

मैथुनस्याप्रवृत्तिर्हि मनोवाक्कायकर्मणा ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमिति प्रोक्तं यतीनां ब्रह्मचारिणाम् ॥

Sexual activity should always be avoided, whatever the situation, not just physically but also mentally and verbally.

• Karmapurana -

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा सर्वावस्थासु सर्वदा ।
सर्वत्र मैथुनत्यागं ब्रह्मचर्यं प्रचक्षते ॥

Acharya's advice in every stage of life, physically, mentally, and socially, is to forget sexual activities that is Brahmacharya.

REFERENCE OF BRAHMACHARYA IN DIFFERENT TEXTS

The reference of Brahmacharya is stated in Ayurveda as per different Acharyas as follows,

As per Charaka

त्रय उपस्तम्भा इति- आहारः, स्वप्नो,
ब्रह्मचर्यमिति

एभिस्त्रिभिर्युक्तियुक्तैरुपस्तम्भमुपस्तम्भः

शरीरं बलवर्णोपचयोपचितमनुवर्तते यावदायुः॥

Diet, Sleep, and Brahmacharya - These are the three sub-pillars of life. The body, stabilized or steadied by the trio acquires strength, character, gradual growth, and thus retains a healthy state.⁵

As per Ashram Vyavastha

Four stages have been stated viz.,

1. Brahmacharya (celibacy)
2. Grihasthrama (House holder's life)

3. Vanaspatya (Stages of spending time in forest)
4. Sannyasha (Mokshya).⁶

As per Astanga Yoga

Yama (abstinences) are five- Ahimsa (non-harm), Satya (truth), Asteya (nonstealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy) and Aparigraha (non-covetedness).⁷

Classification of Brahmacharya

• Naistika

For the benefit of Swasthya and to fulfill the primary goal of life, this is practiced from birth until death. Samyak Yoga of the Indriyas concerning Kala, Artha, and Karma without engaging in Hina, Ati, or Mithya Yoga is the method used to regulate control over the 11 Indriyas (Jnanendriya, Karmendriya, and Manas).

• Vaivahika

After entering Gruhastashrama, this is practised. It is stated that Stree and Purusha can enter Gruhastashrama after reaching the ages of 16 and 25, respectively. Based on this, one can practise Vaivahika Brahmacharya by adhering to every rule outlined in the Shastra to achieve Pitru Runa Mukti.

Classifications of brahmachari

According to Shankaracharya, it has been categorized into two types-

1. **Urdhwareta** - They are regarded as the best.
2. **Askhalitareta** - They have desires, but their strong will prevents them from wasting their energy on sensory activities.⁸

Importance of Brahmacharya

1. "**Brahmacharyam ayushyanam**" ayushya means the promoters of life that are dependent on brahmacharya where as "**Paradaravigamanam anayushyanam**".⁹
2. As stated in Hathayoga Pradipika, there is bond between shukra and manas and since they are dependent on each other,

one should try to conserve shukra in order to balance manas bhava."¹⁰

3. Practicing brahmacharya means that one is using sexual energy to regenerate the connection to spiritual self and in a way not harming others.¹¹
4. Under Achara rasayana, Acharya Charaka has advised to refrain from sexual indulgence in order to get the benefit of rasayana and live a healthy life.¹²
5. For maintenance of health, one can prevent the *pratiloma kshaya* of *sukra dratu*. It's only prevented by practicing celibacy or limiting sexual activities according to the guidelines advised.
6. **आहारस्य परं धाम शुक्रं तद्रक्ष्यमात्मनः।
क्षयो ह्यस्य बहून् रोगान्मरणं वा नियच्छति।**¹³
Sukra is the essence of ahara rasa and its depletion causes diseases.

Mechanism of psychosomatic changes in Brahmacharya practices

The finding that the majority of components of reproductive elements are likewise composed of lecithin, cholesterol, phosphorus, and other substances found in nerve and brain tissue. The absence of these essential nutrients that support healthy nerve activity is what causes the nervous system and brain to function improperly. If one maintains brahmacharya, an equivalent amount of nutrients is used to increase mental abilities since the same nutrients, when would be lost due to external factors, are then available for the development of new brain and systema nervosum cells.

Age limit for sexual activities

>16 and < 70 yrs - Charak & Vagbhatta
>25 to < 80 yrs- Sushruta

Time of intercourse according to Bhavaprakash¹⁴

The instructions for intercourse are advocated as,

Do	Don't
Winters -At night	During evening
Summers- At day	On full moon day
Spring- Any time (day, (1)night)	During mid-night etc.

Vyavaya Yogya Ritu

Diff. Acharya	Shishira,Vasanta	Grishma,Varsha	Sharada,Hemanta
Astanga Hridaya	As per strength/ Once in 2 days	Once in 15 days	Once in 2 days
Yogaratanakar	As per strength/Desire or Once in 3 days	Once in 15 days	Once in 3 days
Bhavaprakash	As per strength/Desire or Once in 3 days	Once in 15 days	Once in 3 days/after taking vajikarana dravya

According to Acharya Sushruta, it is recommended engaging in sexual activities, every three days during all seasons except the summer, when the gap should be 15 days while Acharya Charaka has advised to avoid sexual contact in *grishma* (summer), *varsha*(rainy).

Helpful techniques after sexual interactions (Maithuna Paschatkarma)

Bath, anointing, proper sleep, exposure to cold air/water, intake of sugarcane juice, sugar candy with milk, consumption of mamsa rasa, yusha, sura, prasanna etc.

DISCUSSIONS

At every stage of life, one should adhere to Brahmacharya. Its objectives are to maintain shukra dhatu, which is the sara of ahara rasa, and to control the senses. When Shukra Dhatu is present in the body, it promotes qualities such as *Dhairya* (brave), *Preeti* (attraction), *Deha Bala* (increased physical strength and fitness) etc. *Yagyavalkya smriti* explains the *Ashta Maithuna*, that are *Smarana* (thinking), *Keerthana*(speaking), *Keli* (indulging), *Prekshana* (looking), *Guhyabhashanam* (speaking with women secretly), *Sankalpa* (deciding), *Adhyavasaya* (beginning) and *Kriyanivritti* (completing of coitus). One should abstain from these to incorporate *Brahmacharya*.

As per the division of ashram vyavastha, a comparative study between the grihasthashram and the other three can be conducted to evaluate the correlation between the status of shukra and the mansika bhava in the 4 stages of life. Moreover, further study for assessing the quality of life and mental and physical health using various health assessment questionnaire can be conducted.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda promotes healthy behaviors and discourages unhealthy ones through a variety of individual characteristics, including dinacharya, ritucharya, swasthavritta, sadavritta, ahara, vihara, and achara rasayana. According to Ayurveda, Trayopastambha Ahara, Nidra, and Brahmacharya—are the sub-pillars of life and the foundation of the swastha purusha is based on them. Brahmacharya promotes the maintenance of one's physical, mental, and social well-being by abstaining from sexual activities in order to preserve health and avoid pratiloma kshya of shukra dratu. One should follow Brahmacharya, which attempts to uphold a healthy existence and regulate the senses, at every stage of life. Dhairya, Preeti, and Deha Bala feel empowered by this. In order to adopt Brahmacharya, Ayurveda emphasizes the significance of avoiding eight types of Maithuna. People can live healthy lives by adhering to these ideas.(1)

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