

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SWASTHA CHATUSHKA IN THE PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

Lifestyle disorders such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases are rapidly increasing worldwide due to unhealthy dietary patterns, sedentary lifestyles, and rising psychological stress. These disorders represent a major burden on global healthcare systems and necessitate effective preventive strategies. Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes prevention as its primary objective, encapsulated in the principle “*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*” (preservation of health in healthy individuals). Swastha Chatushka, described in the Sutrasthana of Charaka Samhita, provides a systematic framework for maintaining health through four chapters; Matrashiteeya, Tasyashiteeya, Navegandharaneeya, and Indriyopakramaneeya. These collectively address diet, lifestyle, seasonal adaptation, behavioral conduct, and physiological regulation. This study adopts a descriptive and analytical review methodology based on classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research literature. The principles of Swastha Chatushka are critically evaluated and correlated with modern concepts of preventive medicine. The analysis reveals that Swastha Chatushka offers a holistic and practical approach integrating diet (Ahara), lifestyle (Vihara), seasonal regimen (Ritucharya), ethical conduct (Sadvritha), and regulation of natural urges. These principles closely align with modern scientific concepts such as metabolic balance, circadian rhythm, stress management, and psychosomatic health. The study concludes that Swastha Chatushka is a comprehensive preventive health model. Its integration into modern healthcare can significantly reduce the burden of lifestyle disorders and promote overall well-being.

KEYWORDS: Swastha Chatushka, Lifestyle Disorders, Ayurveda, Preventive Medicine, Dinacharya, Ritucharya, Sadvritha, Swasthavritha.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, lifestyle disorders have emerged as a major global health challenge. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disorders, and metabolic syndrome are increasing at an alarming rate. These disorders are primarily attributed to unhealthy dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, stress, and environmental influences.

Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and technological advancements have significantly altered human lifestyle patterns. Increased consumption of processed food, reduced physical activity, irregular sleep patterns, and mental stress have contributed to the rising prevalence of

these disorders. Consequently, there is a growing need for preventive healthcare approaches.

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, emphasizes prevention over cure. Its primary objective is twofold: Preservation of health in healthy individuals and management of disease in affected individuals. This is expressed in the classical statement:

“Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam, Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam”

Swastha Chatushka, described in Charaka Samhita, plays a vital role in fulfilling the first objective. It provides detailed

guidelines for maintaining physical, mental, and social health through a structured framework.

The concept of Chatushka refers to grouping knowledge into sets of four chapters with a common theme. Among the seven Chatushkas described in Charaka Samhita, Swastha Chatushka specifically focuses on preventive and promotive health.

This study critically evaluates the relevance of Swastha Chatushka in the prevention of lifestyle disorders and explores its applicability in modern healthcare systems.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim - To critically analyze the role of Swastha Chatushka in the prevention of lifestyle disorders.

Objectives

1. To study the conceptual framework of Swastha Chatushka
2. To analyze its components in relation to lifestyle disorders
3. To evaluate its preventive and promotive role
4. To correlate Ayurvedic principles with modern scientific understanding
5. To explore integrative approaches for modern healthcare

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design - Descriptive and analytical review study

Materials - The present study is based on a comprehensive review of classical and contemporary sources, including Charaka Samhita along with its authoritative Ayurvedic commentaries, as well as relevant published research articles and contemporary scientific literature.

Methodology - Relevant literature on Swastha Chatushka was collected and analyzed. The four chapters were studied in detail and critically evaluated. Their principles were compared with modern concepts of preventive medicine and lifestyle disorders.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Health in Ayurveda - In Ayurveda, health (Swastha) is conceptualized as a dynamic state of equilibrium encompassing both physiological and psychological domains. A healthy individual is characterized by the balanced state of Tridosha, proper functioning and integrity of Dhatus, and efficient elimination of Malas. Equally essential is the optimal functioning of Agni, which governs digestion, absorption, and metabolism.

In addition to these somatic parameters, Ayurveda emphasizes the harmonious state of the Manas, Indriya, and Atma. Thus, health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, reflecting a truly holistic perspective.

Swastha Chatushka - Swastha Chatushka is a group of four chapters in Charaka Samhita that deals with maintenance of health:

1. Matrashiteeya Adhyaya
2. Tasyashiteeya Adhyaya
3. Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya
4. Indriyopakramaneeya Adhyaya

These chapters collectively address diet, lifestyle, seasonal adaptation, physiological regulation, and ethical conduct.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SWASTHA CHATUSHKA

Swastha Chatushka encompasses four fundamental pillars of health:

- **Ahara (Diet):** Quality and quantity of food
- **Vihara (Lifestyle):** Daily routine and physical activity
- **Kala (Time/Season):** Seasonal adaptation
- **Achara (Conduct):** Behavioral and ethical discipline

These elements interact to maintain internal equilibrium and prevent disease.

LIFESTYLE DISORDERS: AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

In Ayurveda, lifestyle disorders are understood as disorders arising from sustained derangement of physiological and psychological equilibrium due to inappropriate habits and behaviors. The etiopathogenesis of such conditions is primarily attributed to four fundamental factors: Mithya Ahara (improper dietary practices), Mithya Vihara (faulty lifestyle and activities), suppression of natural urges (Vega Dharana), and Prajnaparadha (intellectual or behavioral errors).

Mithya Ahara includes consumption of unwholesome, incompatible, excessive, or irregular food, which disrupts Agni (digestive fire) and leads to the formation of Ama (toxic metabolic by-products). Mithya Vihara, such as sedentary habits, irregular sleep patterns, and lack of physical activity, further aggravates Doshic imbalance. Suppression of natural urges interferes with normal physiological functions, while Prajnaparadha reflects impaired judgment leading to unhealthy lifestyle choices, chronic stress, and mental disturbances.

These factors collectively result in vitiation of Doshas, derangement of metabolic processes, and gradual manifestation of disease. From a clinical perspective, several modern lifestyle disorders can be correlated with Ayurvedic disease entities. Diabetes mellitus corresponds to Madhumeha, characterized by impaired carbohydrate metabolism and excessive urination. Hypertension is often interpreted as Rakta Gata Vata, involving vitiation of Vata within the vascular system. Obesity (Sthoulya) is associated with excessive accumulation of Meda Dhatu due to Kapha predominance and impaired metabolism. Anxiety and stress-related conditions are categorized under Manasika Vikara, reflecting disturbances in mental equilibrium.

Ayurveda provides a comprehensive framework linking lifestyle factors with disease manifestation, emphasizing

prevention through correction of diet, behavior, and mental processes.

COMPONENT-WISE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Matrashiteeya Adhyaya (Diet and Daily Regimen) - It primarily focuses on the principles of appropriate dietary intake (Matravat Ahara) and the adoption of a structured daily regimen (Dinacharya) for the preservation of health. It underscores the significance of consuming food in accordance with an individual's digestive capacity (Agni), thereby ensuring optimal digestion, absorption, and metabolism. The chapter highlights the importance of a balanced and wholesome diet, along with disciplined daily practices, as essential determinants of physiological equilibrium.

From a critical perspective, contemporary lifestyle patterns characterized by overeating, irregular meal timings, and excessive consumption of processed and nutritionally deficient foods significantly contribute to the development of metabolic disorders. In contrast, Ayurveda advocates moderation, mindful eating, and individualized dietary planning tailored to one's constitution and digestive strength.

These principles exhibit clear parallels with modern scientific concepts such as caloric regulation, nutritional balance, and the role of gut microbiota in maintaining metabolic health. By promoting dietary discipline and routine, Matrashiteeya Adhyaya plays a crucial preventive role in mitigating the risk of obesity and diabetes, sustaining digestive efficiency, and enhancing overall immunity.

Tasyashiteeya Adhyaya (Seasonal Regimen) - It elucidates the concept of Ritucharya, which involves systematic adaptation of diet and lifestyle in accordance with seasonal variations. It emphasizes that fluctuations in environmental conditions directly influence the equilibrium of Doshas, thereby necessitating appropriate modifications in daily practices and dietary patterns to maintain internal balance.

From a critical standpoint, neglecting seasonal adjustments can lead to Dosha imbalance, impaired physiological functions, and heightened susceptibility to disease. Ayurveda highlights the importance of aligning human behavior with natural cycles to preserve homeostasis and prevent pathological manifestations.

These principles demonstrate close correspondence with modern scientific observations, including seasonal variations in immunity, environmental health influences, and the prevalence of climate-related disorders.

The preventive significance of Tasyashiteeya Adhyaya lies in its ability to maintain physiological stability, enhance adaptive capacity to environmental changes, and reduce the incidence of seasonal illnesses. By promoting timely and

context-specific modifications in lifestyle and diet, it serves as an essential component of preventive healthcare.

Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya (Regulation of Natural Urges) - It delineates the principles governing the appropriate regulation of natural urges (Vega), emphasizing their timely expression or control. It classifies urges into Adharaneeya Vega (non-suppressible urges such as micturition, defecation, hunger, thirst, and sleep) and Dharaneeya Vega (suppressible urges related to emotional and behavioral responses).

From a critical perspective, the suppression of non-suppressible urges is identified as a significant etiological factor leading to various somatic and psychological disorders. Such practices disturb physiological homeostasis and impair normal bodily functions.

These classical concepts correlate with modern understandings of psychosomatic disorders, gastrointestinal dysfunctions, and stress-related conditions, where disruption of natural biological processes contributes to disease manifestation.

The preventive significance of this Adhyaya lies in maintaining physiological integrity through proper regulation of bodily functions. By advocating the timely expression of natural urges and control over harmful behavioral impulses, it plays a crucial role in preventing chronic diseases and promoting overall systemic balance.

Indriyopakramaneeya Adhyaya (Sadvrta) - It emphasizes the principles of Sadvrta, encompassing ethical conduct, mental discipline, and appropriate regulation of sensory and behavioral activities. It highlights the importance of maintaining mental hygiene and cultivating socially appropriate behavior as essential components of overall health.

From a critical perspective, psychological stress, emotional instability, and improper behavioral patterns are recognized as significant contributors to the development of lifestyle disorders. Ayurveda identifies disturbances in mental and sensory regulation as key factors disrupting both physiological and psychological equilibrium.

These principles demonstrate close alignment with modern concepts such as behavioral medicine, stress management, and mindfulness-based interventions, which emphasize the role of mental well-being in disease prevention.

The preventive significance of this Adhyaya lies in its capacity to promote psychological resilience, reduce stress, and foster social harmony. By encouraging disciplined conduct and emotional balance, it contributes substantially to the prevention of stress-related and psychosomatic disorders, thereby supporting holistic health.

Role of Swastha Chatushka in Lifestyle Disorders

Swastha Chatushka offers a structured preventive framework for addressing major lifestyle disorders through regulation of diet, behavior, and daily practices:

- 1. Obesity (Sthoulya)** - In Ayurveda, Sthoulya is primarily attributed to excessive accumulation of Meda Dhatu resulting from impaired metabolism and Kapha predominance. Swastha Chatushka emphasizes the principle of Matravat Ahara, consumption of food in appropriate quantity according to digestive capacity; thereby preventing overnutrition and metabolic overload. In addition, incorporation of Vyayama (regular physical activity) and adherence to proper daily regimen (Dinacharya) help in maintaining energy balance, enhancing metabolic efficiency, and preventing fat accumulation. These measures collectively contribute to weight regulation and reduce the risk of obesity-related complications.
- 2. Diabetes Mellitus (Madhumeha)** - Madhumeha, a subtype of Prameha, is closely linked to dietary indiscretions, sedentary lifestyle, and impaired metabolic processes. Swastha Chatushka advocates a balanced, wholesome, and easily digestible diet (Ahara) tailored to individual constitution and digestive capacity. Coupled with a disciplined daily routine (Dinacharya), including timely meals, adequate physical activity, and proper sleep, these practices support glycemic control and metabolic homeostasis. This integrative approach aids in preventing the onset as well as progression of diabetes.
- 3. Hypertension (Rakta Gata Vata)** - Hypertension is correlated with Rakta Gata Vata, wherein vitiated Vata affects the vascular system. Swastha Chatushka underscores the importance of mental regulation through Sadvritta (ethical conduct), stress management, and disciplined lifestyle practices. By promoting emotional stability, controlled sensory engagement, and balanced routine, these principles help in modulating autonomic functions and maintaining cardiovascular stability. Thus, it contributes to the prevention and management of hypertension.
- 4. Mental Disorders (Manasika Vikara)** - Mental disorders in Ayurveda are understood as disturbances in the equilibrium of Manas (mind), often influenced by stress, emotional instability, and Prajnaparadha. Swastha Chatushka places significant emphasis on Sadvritta, which includes ethical living, self-discipline, and proper regulation of sensory and behavioral activities. These practices enhance psychological resilience, promote emotional balance, and prevent stress-induced and psychosomatic disorders. Consequently, they play a vital role in maintaining mental well-being and overall health.

DISCUSSION

Swastha Chatushka represents a comprehensive and multidimensional framework for preventive healthcare, integrating physical, mental, and social dimensions of

health. Unlike conventional biomedical models that predominantly focus on disease management, this Ayurvedic construct emphasizes preservation of health by addressing the root causes of disease. It systematically incorporates Ahara (diet), Vihara (lifestyle), Ritucharya (seasonal adaptation), and Sadvritta (ethical conduct), thereby ensuring a holistic approach to well-being.

A critical analysis reveals a strong conceptual alignment between Swastha Chatushka and modern preventive medicine. Principles such as regulated diet, circadian adaptation, behavioral discipline, and stress management correspond closely with contemporary understandings of metabolic regulation, chronobiology, and psychosomatic health. Furthermore, the emphasis on individualized care, based on factors such as Agni, Prakriti, and environmental influences, reflects a personalized approach comparable to emerging trends in precision medicine.

The integration of mental and physical health is another significant aspect, particularly through the concept of Sadvritta and regulation of sensory and behavioral activities. In this context, the Ayurvedic notion of Prajnaparadha (intellectual error) assumes considerable relevance, as it identifies inappropriate lifestyle choices, faulty decision-making, and disregard for natural rhythms as primary etiological factors in lifestyle disorders. This concept parallels modern interpretations of behavioral risk factors underlying non-communicable diseases.

From a critical standpoint, Swastha Chatushka demonstrates several strengths, including its holistic orientation, preventive focus, individualized therapeutic approach, and enduring clinical relevance. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. These include the paucity of large-scale clinical trials validating its principles, lack of standardized protocols for practical implementation, and limited awareness within contemporary healthcare systems.

An integrative approach combining Ayurvedic principles with modern medical practices holds substantial potential for improving preventive healthcare outcomes. Such integration can contribute to reducing the burden of lifestyle disorders while enhancing overall quality of life. Strategic measures may include incorporation of Ayurvedic lifestyle counseling into routine healthcare, inclusion of preventive modules in public health programs, and rigorous research aimed at evidence-based validation of classical concepts.

CONCLUSION

Swastha Chatushka represents a systematic and comprehensive model of preventive healthcare in Ayurveda, maintaining strong relevance in the modern era marked by a rising incidence of lifestyle disorders. Its emphasis on regulated diet (Ahara), structured daily regimen (Vihara), seasonal adaptation (Ritucharya), ethical conduct (Sadvritta), and appropriate physiological

regulation provides a multidimensional approach to health preservation.

By focusing on the underlying causes of disease, rather than symptomatic management, it offers a sustainable strategy for long-term health maintenance. The integration of physical, mental, and behavioral aspects within this framework reflects a holistic understanding of well-being.

Furthermore, the principles of Swastha Chatushka show notable parallels with contemporary concepts of preventive and lifestyle medicine, enhancing their applicability in current healthcare systems. Adoption of these principles in modern practice can contribute to reducing disease burden, improving quality of life, and promoting a balanced and health-oriented lifestyle.

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