

The Reliability of Sushrutokta Anagatabadha Pratishedha in the Present Perspective

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Abstract

Ayurveda focuses primarily on healthcare and disease prevention. The concept of Anagatabadha Pratishedha in the Sushruta Samhita highlights proactive steps to prevent future diseases. This study examines its relevance today in enhancing public health. A review was conducted from the Sushruta Samhita and classical commentaries (Dalhana, Gayadasa), alongside modern scientific evidence from clinical and community medicine literature and peer-reviewed journals. Daily practices like Dantadhavana, Jihva-nirlekhana, Netra-mukha prakshalana, Abhyanga, and Vyayama are shown by modern research to enhance immunity, hygiene, metabolism, and mental health. Anjana kriya and Tamboola sevana, while specific in context, can benefit eye and oral health when used wisely. The preventive protocols outlined in Anagatabadha Pratishedha are both philosophically strong and scientifically valid. Integrating these practices into our daily and seasonal routines can boost disease resistance and support overall health, aligning with modern wellness approaches.

Keywords

Anagatabadha, Ayurveda, Health, Pratishedha, Prevention

Introduction

Ayurveda, an established system of medical science, gives equal importance to the maintenance and promotion of health by preventing ailments and curing them. The branch of Ayurveda, which deals with the upkeep of swasthya or the state of well-being (dynamic equilibrium), is known as Swasthavritta. It primarily

includes the regimen of Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), and Ahara-Vihara (food and lifestyle).

Sushruta Samhita, the epitome of ayurvedic classical texts pertaining to the specialty of surgery, defined the age-old concept of “prevention is better than cure” under the heading of Anagatabadha Pratishedha adhayaya in the Chikitsasthanam. Anagata is defined as “An + Agata” or “Ishat-Agata,” which means that it hasn’t come yet or has come in minute proportions, respectively. Abadha means dukkha or vyadhi, while Pratishedha means Chikitsa or prevention. Hence, anagatabadha pratishedha deals with the prevention of the badha that hasn’t come, is yet to come, or has come in a lesser potent form. The pratishedha is defined in terms of swasthavritta palana, i.e., following the ideal day-night and seasonal regimen. Any individual who longs for complete health, quality, and longevity of life is required to rigorously follow the mentioned principles with utmost sincerity.¹

Objective

This write-up aims to provide insight into the reliability of the concepts of Sushrutokta

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Anagatabadha Pratishedha from a contemporary perspective, highlighting its importance and utility.

Methodology:

For analyzing the principles of Anagatabadha Pratishedha, the Ayurvedic classics, primarily the Sushruta Samhita, along with the Nibandhasamgraha Teeka of Sri Dalhana and the Nyaya Chandrika Teeka of Sri Gayadasa, as well as textbooks of clinical and community medicine, scientific journals, and internet publications, were also consulted and reviewed for the present work.

Review Results

Concept of Anagatabadha Pratishedha in Today's Era: To preserve a wholesome lifespan, a healthy person should arise from sleep in the brahma-muhurta. Brahma means knowledge. The time apt for perceiving knowledge is known as brahma-muhurta. Mentioning "Utthaya-Utthaya", Acharya Sushruta defines the ideal regimen to be followed by a swastha individual who longs for Arogya. Research suggests that rising early in the morning, as practiced in ancient India, affects attentional processes and enhances memory.²

Danta-dhawana & Jihva-Nirlekhana (Cleaning of Teeth and Tongue): Acharya Sushruta mentions the usage of Kashaya, Madhura, Tikta, or Katu rasa dominant Danta-pawana that is 12 angulas in length and equivalent to the girth of Digitus minimus taken from the trees of Nimba, Khadira, Madhuka, Karanja, etc. for cleaning the teeth and gums (dantadhawana). Also, for cleaning the tongue (jihva-nirlekhana) a 10-angula-long implement made of silver, gold, or twig of a tree should be used. Oral hygiene is essential for the maintenance of proper health. Intake of excess sweet, salty, or sour foods are not advised for optimal oral health, as these may cause decay of the denture, especially the enamel, if used continuously.³ In addition, chewing on these stems leads to leveling of biting surfaces, facilitates salivary secretion, thereby reducing plaque.⁴

The debris present on the dorsal posterior aspect of the tongue accounts for a significant portion of oral malodor. Tongue cleaning removes organisms and debris from the tongue. It also reduces tooth and periodontal disease. Many implements are available for tongue cleaning. The tongue-cleaning procedure is simple and fast, and the benefits for most people far outweigh the small investment and time required to accomplish this procedure. Tongue cleaning is proven to improve digestive power, reduce constipation, and improve quality of life.⁵

Netra-Mukha Prakshalana (Washing eyes & face): It is advised to wash eyes and face with the decoction of Ksheeri Vrikshas, viz. Ashwatha, Vata, Plaksha, etc., or with cold water. Following the principles of hydrotherapy, scientific research shows that it improves immunity and manages pain-anxiety-fatigue. Superficial cold application may cause physiologic reactions such as a decrease in local metabolic function, local edema, nerve conduction velocity (NCV), muscle spasm, and an increase in local anesthetic effects.⁶

Anjana (collyrium): Anjana Kriya is a traditional therapy for the

eye, and it has unique efficacy for several types of ophthalmic disorders. It has a promotive, protective, and curative effect on the body. Its regular and judicious use plays a prime role in maintaining eye health. For long term usage Anjana becomes a great option because of its easy administration, availability, and affordable price. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned anjana use in conditions of daaha, kandu, drishtikleda, ruja, and tejahani in the eyes.⁷

Anjana (Collyrium) are scientifically designed methods to enhance ocular absorption of drugs which increases retaining power of eyeball. Hence lifestyle disorders are better managed through Ayurveda as it emphasizes on Nidana parivarjana.⁸

Tamboola Sevana: The text mentions the use of karpooora, jati, lavanga, pooga, etc., with tamboola patra for hanu-danta-swarajihva-vishodhana purpose. Since there is no mention of tobacco in the mentioned context, the concept of tamboola sevana should not be substituted with this, and judicious use of tambula is paramount. Moreover, researches show that excess use of betel nut could be a cause of lesions in the oral cavity, paving the way for oral malignancies.⁹

Shira-Taila-Abhyanga and Keshaprasadana (Hair Oil & Combing): Regular application of oil especially to the head has been indicated not only for good hair growth with luster and bulk, but also as a remedy and preventive measure for shirorogas. Chakrataila, made with madhuyashti, ksheeravidari, and devadaru like drugs, is prescribed for regular use as hair oil. Hair loss is a distressing condition for an increasing number of men and women nowadays. A multitude of plants have been identified with anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, adaptogenic and immunomodulatory effects for potential benefits in hair health.¹⁰ The mechanical action of application (shiroabhyanga) aids in the absorption of oil and hence is of great importance as therapy for the treatment of hair loss.¹¹ Furthermore, combing is advised to keep hair free from dust, lice, or unwanted substances and also to look good.¹²

Abhyanga (Body Massage): Daily application of oil on the body is recommended. It enhances skin tone and elasticity, pacifies aggravated Kapha and Vata dosha, provides

vigor to the bodily dhatus, and enhances one's complexion and strength. Oil massage benefits are those related to the oil application and those related to tactile kinesthetic stimulation due to the massage. Topical oil application has been shown to improve the skin barrier function, thermoregulation, and is also suggested to have a positive effect on growth. Absorption of fats through the thin skin of children has also been proposed in some scientific research. Moreover, Body massage might be used as an effective and safe non-medical intervention for increasing weight gain in low-birth-weight preterm neonates.¹³

Vyayama (Physical Exercise): Any physical workout leading to lassitude in the body is referred to as Vyayama. It is attributed to be deepana, shareera-upachayakara, sthairyakara, laghavakara, with arogya being the ultimate benefit of vyayama. Moreover, regular practice of vyayama prevents aamajanya and viruddha-aaharajanya vyadhis. It is advised to do exercise in all seasons up to the Ardha Bala stage. Exercise is of various types, such as aerobic exercise, anaerobic exercise, and flexibility exercise. Aerobic exercise moves the large muscle groups with alternate contraction and relaxation, forces deep breath, heart to pump more blood with adequate tissue oxygenation. Examples of aerobic exercise are walking, running, jogging, swimming, etc. In anaerobic exercise, there is forceful contraction of muscle with stretching, usually mechanically aided, which helps to build up muscle strength and muscle bulk. Examples are weight lifting, pulling, pushing, sprinting, etc. Walking (Chankramana) is a good example of aerobic exercise, easy to perform, safe, effective, does not require any training or equipment,

and has less chance of injury. It is helpful for relieving anxiety, stress, and brings a sense of well-being and overall physical fitness.¹⁴

Udvartana-Udgharshana and Snana: Usage of udavartana and udgharshana is mentioned before taking a bath. They are made for Kapha-Medo-vilayana, sthirikaranam, and twak-prasadana. To maintain the overall personal hygiene, freshness, and relief from false odour-sweat and itching, a full body bath (snana) is advised with taking into account the use of cold water for the head and hot water for the rest of the body. Use of hot water on the head could cause Pitta aggravation, leading to pertaining vyadhis of the head and causing trouble to the indriyas. Where bathing is not feasible, sponging or anulepanam could be practiced.

Ahara (Dietary Habits): Food is the essence of human wellbeing, hence food that is pushti-aayu-teja-utsaaha-smriti-ojas-agni enhancing should be consumed. Quoting a few, curdled milk, stale milk, curd in the night, etc., should be avoided. It is advised to maintain the optimal status of Agni, for which the usage of Sneha (ghrita, taila, etc.) is indicated. Incompatible food or viruddha ahara, being



the disease-causing factor, should be avoided to the maximum.

Miscellaneous: Cleaning of feet removes the filth and dirt, but also prevents soil-borne diseases. The same could be understood in the case of Padatrana (footwear) usage. Chatra usage may not seem feasible all the time in today's scenario, but it seems fully applicable in seasons like rain, excess heat and hailstorms. Furthermore, Danda dharana or carrying a stick is not in practice in the cities, but in rural scenarios, the same could be visualized, and its utility of protection from dogs, snakes, animals, for support and defense is evident. A long walk followed by samvahanam (pressing feet) helps in getting a sound sleep. As mentioned in classics, it is not advised to be in contact with cold wind, fire, or sunlight for a prolonged period. Keeping hair and nails trimmed and short is advised and it seems evident to prevent contamination and the spread of diseases. In addition, avoiding scrapping of the earth is advised for the same purpose.

Alluding to the sexual act, it is advised to indulge in the sexual act at an interval of three days in all seasons, but at an interval of one fortnight in the summer (greeshma) season. Appropriate understanding is needed both at the level of male and female partners before indulging in sexual activity to prevent diseases and bodily problems. Having sex with a pregnant, menstruating, or diseased woman is forbidden.

Conclusion

The methods of prevention of disease and optimal maintenance of health explained by Acharya Sushruta seem to be of great practical utility in today's fast-moving era of technological advancements, sedentary lifestyle, and emerging new diseases. New diseases like

SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) have emerged in the past and shall emerge in the future, causing humanitarian and economic crises. The tactics outlined in Anagatabadha pratishedha are not merely the measures to prevent disease, but primarily are the measures to make oneself self-reliant and healthy enough to overcome the disease. These measures are to be included in the daily and seasonal regimen of an individual to achieve the status of health and well-being.

Ayurveda, being the eternal science of life, has bestowed mankind with the ways to live a happy and healthy life. A diseased body can never experience true happiness. Anagatabadha pratishedha is one such widely explored and researched area of the Sushruta Samhita, that helps an individual to stay Niroga and overcome vyadhis, to experience the eternal happiness, Ananda; since the true nature of the human beings is Sat-chitta-Ananda.

Conflict of Interest

Nil

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