Concept of health in Ayurveda-A Literary Review
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ABSTRACT:
Ayurveda, the science of life gives prime importance to the management of disease as well as maintenance of health. In Ayurveda, health is considered to be the normalcy of doshas (bio energies), Dhatu (body tissues), mala (waste products), agni (digestive fire) and happy state of soul, sense organs and mind. Present article tries to unleash the concept of health in different Ayurveda literatures for the benefit of human society.

KEY WORDS: Arogya, Ayurveda, Health, Swastha

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of India, is believed to be originated in pre Vedic period (Before 1500 BC), at the end of Indus valley civilization and it is considered as the Upaveda of Atharvaveda.[1][2][3] Initial references of health in Ayurveda was from Rigveda in the form of Tridhatu theory which opines that the equilibrium state of Tridhatu (Three body tissues) maintains the health and derangement leads to disease. Famous commentator of Vedas, Sayanacharya interpreted Vata, Pitta and Sleshma as the Tridhatu (Three body tissues), paving the bridge to Tridoshasidhantha in Ayurveda.[4] The concept of health is also seen in Mahabharatha, one of the two epics of ancient India in which mental and physical aspect of health is mentioned. Seetha (cold), Ushna (hot) and Vayu (air) are the three Gunas (qualities) of Sareera (body) and Satwa, Raja and Tama are the three Gunas (qualities) of mind. The balance of Sareerika (body) and Manasika gunas (psychic) comprehensively produce health.[5] The addition of Manasika (mental) aspects to the concept of health is really visible here. It was in Padma purana the more vivid concepts of Ayurveda like Panchamahabhutas, Tridoshas etc were mentioned. Garudapurana gave more clear picture regarding the concept of health, detailing the Tridoshas, Sapthadhatus(7 body tissues) and Trimalas (3 types of waste) and their role in generating diseases with their symptoms.[6] Brihatrayees (Major 3 texts of Ayurveda) have elaborately mentioned regarding the health concept and the factors influencing it. Today in a changing world, with sedentary life styles and newly prevailing diseases it is very relevant to discuss ayurvedic views on health concept.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literary references are collected from various Ayurveda literatures like Charaka Samhitha, Susrutha Samhitha, Ashtanga hruadaya etc. and published articles in various research journals on the concept of health in Ayurveda.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept of health from Ayurveda classics

Acharya Susrutha, father of surgery has explained the health in a broader spectrum considering almost all aspects of life. A person is said to be Swastha (Healthy) if he has normalcy or equilibrium state of doshas (bio energies), Dhatus (body tissues), mala (waste products) agni (digestive fire) and happy state of soul, sense organs and mind.[7] Comparing this reference with the definition of health by WHO- ‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’[8], we may analyze that Ayurveda has given prime importance to the equilibrium state of every components, not merely stating the absence of disease. More over interconnected bases of health like physical, mental and social aspects are explained with other components influencing it like Dosha, Dhatu and Malas. The addition of happiness or equilibrium status of soul gives an additional platform of spirituality for health concept.

Acharya Charaka opines that abnormal state of Dhatu (Body tissues) produces unhappiness or disease and balanced state produces happiness or Arogya in Ghuddakachathusp adaadhyaya.[9] He also suggest that Swastha (Health) is the condition where body devoid of any abnormality.[10] Charaka has not specifically mentioned the Sareerika (Body) and Manasika bhava (Mental conditions) while explaining health. But the equilibrium concept of Dhathus (including dosha dhathu and mala) is stated with prime importance. Manasikabhavas (Mental conditions) like raja and Tama are mentioned in
Dheerghamjeetitheeya adhyaya.\[11\] While explaining the lean person Charaka has mentioned the qualities of wellness like balanced proportion of muscles, compactness, firmness in organs, does not fell in to a disease, tolerance for hunger, thirst, sun, cold and exercise, balanced Agni (digestive fire), normal metabolism etc.\[12\]

Latest text among Brihatrayees Ashtangahrudaya explains Aroga concept (those who are not having disease) which is a reverse detailing of health concept. Person who always consumes wholesome food, practices wholesome habits and thoughts, who is not interested in earthly matters, who sacrifices, balanced towards every one, forgives, honesty and who follows apta (scholars) words does not develop any disease.\[13\]

Kashyapa elaborates the features of health in Khilastana. Desire for food intake, Proper easy digestion of ingested food, normal evacuation of feces, urine and flatus, lightness in the body, pleased sense organs, timely sleep and awakening, gain of strength, color and life, pleasant mind and normal digestive fire are the features of health. Reverse state of mentioned factors are causes for disease or state of illness. Here Kashyap has scientifically added almost all systems like digestive system, Genito urinal system, nervous system, musculoskeletal system and endocrine system to unleash the health concept. Poetic lines and in-depth scientific meanings are capable of explaining health even in the modern era.\[14\]

Proper categorization of health was done by Ugraditya the author of Kalyanakaraka as Paramartha swasthya (ultimate health) and Vyavahara swasthya (general health). General health is the normalcy of Agni(digestive fire), Dosha, Dhatu (Body tissues) and Mala (Waste products), where ultimate health is eternal happiness experienced by soul due to liberation or salvation. Here also the spiritual root of health can be visibly felt.\[15\]

Components of Health-An Ayurvedic view
Components of health can be discussed under the light of Acharya Susruthas health concept. Factors directly affecting health are Dosha, Dhatu (body tissues) and Agni (digestive fire). Equilibrium stage of above factors results in proper elimination of waste products and Cleanliness (prasannatha) of Atma(soul) indriya (senses) and mana(mind/heart).\[16\]

Balanced state of Dosha: Physiological variations of Doshas can be occurred based on the life time(age), diurnal and status of digestion. To acquire balance state of Dosha one should be very careful regarding the Ahara(diet) and vihara (Life style). Samadosha has also influence in Cleanliness (prasannatha) of Atma(soul) indriya (senses) and mana(mind/heart).

Balanced state of Agni (digestive fire): Agni (digestive fire) is one among the 10 seats of Prana (life) and its equilibrium is influenced by Ahara(diet) and vihara (Life style), influences Atmadi (soul, sense organs and mind) and Malakriya (removal of wastes). Jataragni is responsible for digestion of food and Dhatwagni (digestion at tissue level) for the nourishment of Dhatus.

Balanced state of Dhatus (body tissues): Along with Ahara(diet) and vihara (Life style) samadhatutwa (balanced state of dhatus) is influenced by Samadosata and Samaagnitwa (Balanced dosha and body tissue). It is very important that the body tissues should be in equilibrium for the proper functioning of human body.

Sama Mala (wastes of the body mixed with ama): Proper excretion is as important as that of food intake (ahara) and digestion (with the help of samagni)

Prasanna atma, indriya and Manah (The Manas, or mind, should be balanced, calm and satisfied): Sadvritta (good code of conduct)and Dharaneeyavega (suppression of urges) are also important in this case. All above
mentioned factors also contribute for this to happen. While analyzing the components of health we can identify that each component is interlinked and complementary. In short Dosha, Dhatu (body tissues) and mala (waste materials) influenced by Ahara (diet) and vihara (Life style) and Manasikabhavas (Psychological) produce Arogya (health) and anarogya (Unhealthy). The factors responsible for health are also responsible for disease as per Ayurveda. Acharya Charaka has explained Ayurveda as the one which deals with good, bad, happy and unhappy life. (17)

**Prevention is better than cure-An ayurvedic view**

Prevention of a disease is mainly based on Swasthavrutha—the regimens followed routinely to maintain health. (18) It can be classified to Vaiyyakthika swastavrutta (Principles followed by individual) and Samajika swastavrutta (Principles followed by community) to maintain health and prevent the occurrence of disease. Acharya Bhavamishra emphasizes to follow those procedures which keeps man healthy. (19)

Prevention of a disease can be primary and secondary. Primary prevention (prevention from occurrence) is the measures taken by an individual before the onset of a disease which will reduce the chance of occurrence in future. (20) Specialty of primary prevention is that action is taken before the pathogenesis of a disease, hence early to its manifestation. This type of prevention is important in the case of life style diseases like diabetic mellitus, obesity and hypertension. Concepts like Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya (Seasonal regimen), Rasayana (rejuvenators), Adharaneeyavegas (non suppressible urges) are also included in Primary prevention.

Secondary prevention (prevention from reoccurrence) is halting the progress of a disease and preventing the complications or reoccurrence of a disease. Knowledge regarding Kriyakala (stage of pathogenesis) and proper pathogenesis is very crucial in secondary prevention.

**CONCLUSION**

Concept of health in Ayurveda is Scientific, precise and enshrouds all aspects of life. The equilibrium of soul is mentioned in the definition of health, which gives a spiritual platform for health Concept in Ayurveda. The scientific methods mentioned in the Ayurveda classics are relevant even in the current era to ensure good health practice. Unrolling of these concepts, in a comprehensive way to the human society need to be ensured for the wellness of society.

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