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Concept of *Vyadhikshamatva*

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ABSTRACT

The natural ability of the body to fight diseases or prevent diseases is called *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity). The body has an inherent capability to defend itself from the ailments, which termed as '*Prakritirakshini*'. This protects the body from the ill effects of unwholesome food, regimes and other non-conductive factors. The intervention by the physician is required only when the '*Prakritirakshini*' or inherent power to protect the body fails. The innate ability to resist diseases is explained as *Vyadhikshamatva* by *Charaka*. Without the depletion of the natural strength of the body the disease doesn't occur thus, strengthening the immune system is a natural way to help the body fight against the disease causing pathogens. The present article is aimed to review the concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* and various factors that help in occurrence and prevention of disease.

Key words: *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Prakritirakshini*, *Sahaja Bala*, *Kalaja Bala*, *Yuktikrita Bala*, *Ojas*, *Immunity*.

INTRODUCTION

To maintain the health and prevent from diseases is *Vyadhikshamatva*. Acharya Charaka has introduced the term *Vyadhikshamatva* in *Ayurveda*. It means all *Doshas* are neither of equal strength nor all the bodies capable of resisting disease equally. *Vyadhikshamatva* has direct role with respect to disease incidence and progress, when etiological factors come in contact with the body, it results in diseases. At the same time, the body tries to resist the disease either to avoid its manifestation or to suppress its intensity.

Chakrapanidatta expounds it as "*Vyadhikshamatvam*

Vyadhibala Virodhitvam Vyadyutpada Pratibandhakatvam Iti Yavat" i.e., the individual resistance to disease includes both the capacity of attenuation of the manifested disease as well as the prevention of the unmanifested one.^[1]

According to above quotation *Vyadhikshamatva* can be understood as follows.

1. *Sharirabala*, opposite to the *Vyadhibala* which is already manifested (Resistance to the disease) is "*Vyadhibala-Virodhitva*". It may be correlated with *Yuktikrita Bala* or acquired immunity
2. *Sharirabala*, which oppose the manifestation of the *Vyadhi* (Immunity for the disease) that is "*Vyadhi-Utpadak-Pratibaandhakatva*". It may be correlated with *Sahaja Bala* or innate immunity.

MATERIALS

Ayurvedic textual materials were referred, mainly *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Astanga Hridaya* and available commentaries of these *Samhitas*, for the study. Available modern literature and journals etc.

Factors responsible for *Vyadhikshamatva*

Vyadhikshamatva depends on the maintenance of the equilibrium of *Doshas* and the healthiness of *Dhatus*.

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The factors which have to be checked while examining a patient have been described by *Charaka*. *Bala* (strength) is one of them.

Types of Bala (Vyadhikshamatva)^[2]

This *Bala* (capacity to resist disease) is attainable from three sources i.e.

1. *Sahaja*,
2. *Kalaja*,
3. *Yuktikrita*.

Sahaja Bala

This type of *Bala* or resistance is related to be *Prakruta* (Natural, in born, genetic) and it exists from birth. It comprehends both *Sarira* and *Sattwa*. Hence it depends on the healthiness of *Shukra* and *Aartava* and also on the appropriateness of time and place. Mother's milk helps in fighting abdominal infections in new born. These readymade antibodies present in mother's milk is an example of passive natural immunity.

Kalaja Bala (seasonal resistance)

Bala is derived by the effect of *Kala* is called *Kalaja Bala*. *Kala* is divided into *Nityaga* and *Avasthika*. *Nityaga* depends upon season and *Avasthika* is the diseased state. It refers to the natural (innate) immune power present in the body by virtue of age and seasons.

Rutu Janya Bala

Aalpa Bala - *Aadana Kala* (*Shishira, Vasant and Grishma Rutus*).

Uttam Bala - *Visarga Kala* (*Varsha, Sharada, Hemanta Rutus*).

Vaya Krit: The Old age persons will have poor resistance and the middle aged persons naturally possess good resistance.

Yuktikrita Bala (artificially acquired)

This *Bala* is acquired by the consumption of wholesome food (ghee, milk etc.), practice of ideal

regimen (exercise etc.) and by the appropriate use of *Rasayana* and *Vajikarana* drugs. This can also be generated in the body by inoculating the various toxic antigens in the body in low dose forming antibodies against them in the body to fight against the future disease. The *Ayurvedokta* example of '*Vishkanya*' is one such example of *Yukti Krita Vyadhikshama Bala*.^[3]

Bala Vridhikar Bhava^[4]

Acharya Charaka has described *Bala Vridhikar Bhava* to improve strength of the body as follows.

1. *Desha* (birth place) - Birth of a person in a country where people are naturally strong.
2. *Kula* (family) - Birth in a race of strong people.
3. *Kala* (time) - Birth at the time when people are naturally gain strength. As per *Acharya Charaka* at the end of the *Visarga Kala* and at the beginning of *Aadana kala* the strength in human beings is maximum.
4. *Sukhascha Kaalayoga* - Favorable conditions in all aspects leading to good strength.
5. *Beeja Kshetra Sampat* - Excellence of *Beeja* (Sperm & Ovum) and *Kshetra* (Uterus) qualities.
6. *Ahara Sampaccha* - Excellence of nourishment. *Bala* is achieved by proper combination of the intake of wholesome food like *Rakta Shali, Mudga Yusha, Saindhava, Amalaka* etc. Other regimen to maintain proper *Bala* like proper rest, exercise and appropriate use of *Rasayana-Yogas*.
7. *Shareer Sampaccha* - Excellence of bodily constitution. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned those who have well compact body are strong otherwise weak.
8. *Satmyasampaccha* - Excellence of suitability substance conducive to an individual is called "*Satmya*" and the use of such substances result in the wellbeing of that individual.
9. *Satvasampaccha* - Excellence of the mind. On the basis of *Bala*, *Satva* is of three types - *Pravara, Madhya* and *Avara*. *Pravara-Satva-Purusha* is called as *Satva-Sarapurusha*. *Satva-Sarapurusha*

with small body structure will be able to tolerate different type of disease states.

10. *Swabhav Sampaccha* - It refers to the person's engagement in strength increasing measures.
11. *Yuvan* (youth) - An individual has good strength in middle age as compared to childhood and old age.
12. *Karma* (Exercise) - The *Karmaj Bala* here refers to the strength obtained through exercise. The exercise tones the muscles and arouses the appetite and boosts the immunity.
13. *Sanharsha* - It is the orgasm obtained after sexual intercourse. This releases the happy endorphins in the body which gives pleasing sensation and happy and contented mood.

Ayurveda propounds that prevention is an equally important aspect of disease management as cure and thus, strengthening the immune system, is a natural way to help the body fight against the disease-causing pathogens.

Relation between Immunity and Ojasa

Chakrapanidatta says that *Ojas*, which is *Sara* or essence of all *Dhatus*. It is directly related to the strength of the body. Hence immunity is also dependent *Ojas*. It is also known as an *Uttampranayathana* (best seat of life). It is observed that in diseases accompanied by profuse tissue loss there is also diminution of strength, *Ojas* and immunity. This condition is observed in tuberculosis, diabetes, anemia etc.^[5]

Type of Ojas^[6]

According to Acharya *Chakrapanidatta*, *Ojasa* is of two types

1. *Para Ojas*: found in *Hridaya* (heart), have a quantity of eight drops and loss of even single drop are fatal to the person.
2. *Apara Ojas*: *Ardhanjali Pramana* (half *Anjali*), the depletion of this *Ojas* is not so deleterious as compared to *Paraojas*.

Ojas and *Bala* are resultant of *Agnivyapara* (proper digestion) and assimilation of the wholesome food. So,

any impairment in the *Agnivyapara* and lack of wholesome food will affect the quality of *Ojas*.

Vitiation of Ojas^[7]

1. ***Ojovisramsa***: *Dalhana* and *Chakrapanidatta* explain *Visramsa* as leakage of *Ojas* from the *Dhatuvaha Srotansi* or the impairment of the distribution of *Ojas* to the *Dhatus*. The symptomatologies associated with *Visramsa* are flaccidity of joints, weakness of the body, displacement of *Doshas* and obstruction of activity.
2. ***Ojovyapath***: the condition is explained by *Chakrapanidatta* as the diminution of natural qualities of *Ojas* by the vitiated *Doshas*. *Dalhana* explains this as a movement of *Ojas* away from the natural state as a result of its interaction with vitiated *Doshas* and *Dhushyas*. It presents the following symptoms, *Sthabdagurugatrata* (inertness and heaviness of extremities), *Vatasopha* (swelling due to *Vata*), *Glani* (feeling of fatigue), *Varnabheda* (discolouration of the skin or change of complexion), *Tandra* (drowsiness) and *Nidra* (sleepiness).
3. ***Ojakshaya***: The *Kshaya* of *Ojas* is brought about by *Abhigata* (trauma), *Kshayat* (diminution of *dhatu*), *Krodha* (anger), *Soka* (grief), *Dainya* (anxiety), *Srama* (exhaustion) and hunger (*Kshudha*). The symptomatology of *Kshaya* of *Ojas* includes: *Murcha* (loss of consciousness), *Mamsakshaya* (wasting of muscle), *Moha* (stupor), *Pralapa* (delirium) and *Marana* (death). *Dalhana* says that here the normal function of *Bala* is also impaired.

Avyadhisaha Sharirani

Individuals incapable of resisting diseases.

- Over Obese individual.
- Over emaciated person
- Whose muscle and blood are diminishing markedly.
- Debilitated person.
- One who consumes unwholesome food.

- One who consumes less amount of food.
- Whose mental faculties are weak.

One the other hand, individuals having opposite type of physical constitution are capable of resisting diseases.^[8]

Contributing factors for Vyadhikshamatva

Nonviolence is the best among the promoters of longevity of living beings; Knowledge is the best among promoters of nourishment.^[9]

Strength, health, longevity and vital breath are dependent on the condition of *Agni*. When the proper quantity of food and drinks supplied to a person which is commensurate with the power of digestion in the form fuel, which sustains the *Agni* otherwise leads to abnormal functions.^[10]

For the maintenance of equilibrium state of *Dhatu* the following adaptations are essential.

- a) Proper use of actions and consumption of food contrary to the properties of place time and the self.
- b) Avoid over utilization and improper utilization of time, intellect and sense objects.
- c) Non suppression of impelled urges.
- d) Do not indulge in activities which are beyond one's own capacity.^[11]

DISCUSSION

Vyadhikshamatvam depends upon the maintenance of the equilibrium of *Doshas* and the healthiness of tissues and channels. Similarly, the *Bala* (strength) of the body is related to immunity and it also depends upon the healthiness of tissues. Amongst the factors responsible for immunity, the greatest importance has been assigned to the healthy condition of the three tissues- blood, muscle, and bone. In our opinion the reasons for this are:^[12]

1. There is a typical relation between these three and *Tridosha* - i.e., between blood and *Pitta*, muscle and *Kapha*, bone and *Vata*. The healthy condition of these three tissues will naturally maintain

equilibrium of the three *Doshas*, which is also required for resisting disease.

2. The white cells of the blood are the force, which fights against any infection and prevents any foreign substance from entering the body; the plasma of the blood contains gamma globulins.
3. Red bone marrow in the bones is the reticuloendothelial system responsible for the manufacture of the red and white cells of the blood.

CONCLUSION

After the brief discussion on the *Vyadhikshamatvam*, it shows that, it is the primary goals of every individual to live disease free life. *Vyadhikshamatva* depends upon various factors like equilibrium state of *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Bala*, dietary habits, *Agni*, *Ojas*, *Satva*, *Satmya* etc. Health as well as disease is dependent on these factors.

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