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# An overview of *Vyadhikshmatva* (Immunity) in the promotion of health

Ishwari Sachan<sup>1</sup>, Chetna Rathor<sup>2</sup>, Hemant Kumar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Ayurveda Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous) Ayurveda College & Institute, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.

<sup>2</sup>Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Swasthavrutta, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous) Ayurveda College & Institute, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Prasuti Tantra evum Stree Roga, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Rajasthan Ayurved University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.

## ABSTRACT

Health is a basic element of achieving all the desires of life. A long healthy life has been the wish of every being since antiquity. *Ayurveda* is the science of life with the main aim of attaining health. *Ayurveda* emphasizes a holistic approach, by implementing various practices such as *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvrutta* and *Achar Rasayan*, daily intake of wholesome food, *Rasayana* therapies, etc. these fundamentals serve to regulate the immune system and promote overall health. *Vyadhikshmatva* (immunity) is described in *Ayurveda* as depending on *Bala*, *Oja* and *Prakritik Shleshma*, increasing *Bala* and *Oja* and adopting a way of living life we can help in enhancing immunity, so this attempt is aimed to review the concept of *Vyadhikshmatva* and its factors that help in health promotion.

**Key words:** Health promotion, *Vyadhikshmatva*, *Ojas*, *Bala*

## INTRODUCTION

The word *Vyadhikshamatva* is first mentioned by *Charaka* in the *Sutrasthana* 28 chapter (*Chakrpani* commentary) while explaining the causation of diseases. The author says that all *Doshas* are neither of equal strength nor that all bodies are capable of resisting diseases equally. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the promotion of health through the strengthening of the host's defences, to act as a resistive force against day-to-day physiological extremes and opportunistic

maladies. This force to reckon with, as regards everyday wellness is termed as "*Vyadhikshamatva*" in *Ayurveda*.<sup>[1]</sup>

*Ayurveda* propounds that prevention is an equally important aspect of disease management as a cure. Thus, strengthening the immune system is a natural way to help the body fight against the disease-causing pathogens.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Vyadhikshmatva* is a concept described in the classical text of *Ayurveda* in detail and magnificent way which can be considered equivalent to the modern concept of immunity. Many *Acharyas* and their commentators had specified various factors in *Ayurvedic* texts like *Sleshma*, *Bala*, *Ojas*, *Hitakar* and *Ahitkar Aahar*, *Agni*, *Rasayana*, etc. which help to develop the *Vyadhikshmatva*.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the *Vyadhikshmatva* i.e., *Ayurvedic* immunity.
2. To find out the relevance of *Vyadhikshmatva* in health promotion.

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Ishwari Sachan

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Ayurveda Samhita Siddhant, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Government (Autonomous) Ayurveda College & Institute, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.

E-mail: tarasachan3@gmail.com

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**Concept of Vyadhikshmatva<sup>[3]</sup>**

The *Vyadhikshmatva* is a Sanskrit word *Vyadhi* (disease) and *Kshmatva* (suppress or overcome) as *Ayurveda* stated, *Vyadhi* is the situation where non-equilibrium between *Doshas* (physiological factors i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*), *Dhatu*s (tissues systems) and *Malas* (excretory products of body). The normal state of *Tridosh* (physiological factors i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*), is responsible for maintaining physical and psychological health.

The other word, *Kshamatva* is a derivative of "Kshamussahane" which means to be patient or composed to suppress anger, to keep quiet or to resist. Hence *Vyadhikshamatva* means the factor that restricts the pathogenesis and suppresses the power of disease.

*Acharya Chakrapani Datta*, while commenting on *Charaka Samhita*, gave his view on the term *Vyadhikshamatva* and explained the term in two divisions, i.e.,

*Vyadhikshamatvam Naam Vyadhibala Nirodhiktvam |*

*Vyadyutpadak Pratibandhkatva Miti || (Ch.Su.28/7, Chakrapani)*

<p>1. <b>Vyadhibalanirodhiktvam</b></p>	<p>It is the capacity to resist the strength of the disease i.e. Improving the strength against a specific disease, which can be achieved by <i>Naimittika Rasayana</i>. It may be correlated with <i>Yuktikritabala</i> or acquired immunity.</p>
<p>2. <b>Vyadyutpadakpratibandhkatvam</b></p>	<p>The resisting power of the body is competent enough to prevent the occurrence and re-occurrence of the disease, it may be correlated with <i>Sahaj</i></p>

	<p><i>Bala</i> and innate immunity.</p>
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These subtypes of *Vyadhikshmatva* combine to form a resistance against many types of disease and help in the health promotion of individuals.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The material for the review was collected from *Ayurveda* classical literature, different journals, research papers, health bulletin, and textbooks on *Vyadhikshmatva*, which have also been reviewed to throw light on the *Ayurveda* facts regarding health promotion and *Vyadhikshmatva*.

**Health Promotion and Vyadhikshmatva**

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve health, health is subjected to constant change under various influences so it is equally important to maintain and promote health.

**Synonyms**

Equivalent words for *Vyadhikshmatva* are *Sleshma*, *Bala*, and *Ojas* these play an important role in the promotion of health which we reviewed in this paper.

**Sleshma<sup>[4]</sup>**

*Sleshma* in normalcy gives strength to the body & known as '*Bala*'. In an abnormal state, it is like *mala* (excreta), which should be expelled out of the body. This *Bala* itself is considered an *Ojas*. The properties of *Sleshma* are *Snigdha*, *Sheeta*, *Guru*, *Manda*, *Shlakshna*, *Mrutusana*, and *Sthira*.

**Oja<sup>[5]</sup>**

*Ojas* is the essence of seven *Dhatu*s and is responsible for the strength of an individual. *Ojas* is formed first during the formation of the body, which is characterized by the colour of *Sarpi* (clarified butter), the smell of *Laja* & sweet taste. Its loss (destruction, absence) may lead to death and its presence in the body is responsible for the life. *Oja* is the reason for different conditions and activities related to the body.

**Bala (immunity)<sup>[6]</sup>**

Arogya is termed as *Adhishtan* of *Bala* which means Arogya (health) is dependent on the *Bala*. According to *Acharya Shushrut*, *Bala* imparts firm integrity to the muscles, improves the voice and complexion, and helps the person to perform his natural functions normally.

In Ayurveda there are three types of *Bala*:

1. *Sahaja Bala*: Which is present since birth in the body, it depends on the healthiness of *Shukra* and *Artava*.

SN	Uttarayana <sup>[7]</sup>	Dakshinayana <sup>[8]</sup>	Bala
1.	Shishira	Hemanta	Uttama Bala
2.	Vasanta	Sharada	Madhyama Bala
3.	Grishma	Varsha	Heena Bala

2. *Kalaja Bala*: It is based on the time of day, seasons, and person's age according to *Ritu* and *Vaya* for enhancing immunity.

a) According to the *Kala (Ritu)*

SN	Vaya (Awastha) <sup>[9]</sup>	Bala
1.	Balyavastha	Madhyama Bala
2.	Yuwavastha	Uttama Bala
3.	Vruddhavastha	Heena Bala

b) According to *Vaya (Age)*

3. *Yuktikrita Bala*: *Yuktikrita* means acquiring *Bala* or the strength obtained by the proper healthy diet (*Ghritha*, *Dugdha*, *Mansa*, etc.), physical activities (*Vyayama*, *Pranayama*, *Yoga*, etc.) and by taking *Rasayana Dravya's* (*Chavyanprash*, *Guduchi*, *Amalaki Rasayana*, etc.)

**Factors help in health promotion by influencing the Vyadhikshmatva.<sup>[10], [11], [12]</sup>**

SN	Factor	Impact
1.	<i>Dincharya</i>	The principles of <i>Dinacharya</i> should be followed for healthy <i>Indriyas</i> (Sensory

		and motor organs), hygiene, and pleasantness of mind.  Simple procedures like <i>Kavala</i> , and <i>Gandusha</i> for oral hygiene along with teeth brushing, <i>Pratimarsa Nasya</i> for prevention of diseases above the clavicle, <i>Abhyanga</i> for longevity, etc.
2.	<i>Ritucharya</i>	The importance of modification of lifestyle as per seasons and emphasizing on consumption of seasonal and regional fruits and vegetables for health promotion and prevention of seasonal disorders.
3.	<i>Sadvratra &amp; Achar Rasayana</i>	Various codes of conduct related to social, mental, and environmental-hygiene need to be taught for promoting mental health.
4.	<i>Pathya Aahar</i>	<i>Ahara</i> (food) is the most important aspect as food contributes to the building of body cells and enables them to fight off disease. <i>Yuktikrit Bala</i> (acquired immunity) is achieved with a proper diet. One of the best ways to enhance <i>Bala</i> and <i>Ojas</i> is through consuming proper food.
5.	<i>Rasayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> is described in eight branches of the <i>Ayurveda</i> , it is used for the enhancement of the immunity and strength of the body. It is a promotive aspect of health, in which the body constituents are prepared to their optimum quality which is nothing but the enhancement of the immune system with various immunomodulating agents.
6.	<i>Bal-Rasayana</i>	<i>Acharya Kashyap</i> explained the <i>Swarna Prashana</i> benefits for newborns as an immunity and memory booster, feeding of gold increases intellect, digestive & metabolic power, and strength, and gives long life.  <i>Parammedhavi</i> - By Feeding the gold for one month, the child becomes extremely intelligent and is protected from diseases.  <i>Shrutdhar</i> - By Using it for 6 months, the child can retain for a long time whatever he hears.

7.	<i>Nidra</i>	Quality sleep is a reflector of good health, supports a good immune system and stress reliever, it improves digestion and restores the natural equilibrium of body tissue, <i>Nidra</i> increases <i>Kapha Dosh</i> and <i>Kapha</i> means <i>Bala</i> . This shows a strong association between the immune system and <i>Nidra</i> .
8.	<i>Agni</i>	Immunity is predisposed by the strength of <i>Agni</i> , digestive fire, and absorb nutrients in human bodies, in a healthy, strong, and immune body, invaders get destroyed and expelled out of body. Therefore, <i>Jatharagni</i> is considered to be the root of the most important sustaining factor of living beings.
9.	<i>Yoga</i>	Different Yogic practices including <i>Asana</i> , <i>Pranayama</i> , and meditation for enhancing health, strengthening lungs, boosting immunity, and promoting concentration, memory, and mental health should be taught.
10.	<i>Satva</i> (Psychological Wellbeing)	<i>Manasik Vyadhikshmatva</i> or <i>Bala</i> can be understood in the sense of making an individual strong mentally to cope with mental stress variably and can tolerate the disease and treatment. It also depends on <i>Satva</i> ( <i>manas</i> ) <i>Bala</i> , as far as the mind or psyche is concerned it endows an individual with the feeling of strength and delightfulness.
11.	<i>Balvradhhikar Bhava</i>	A place where the persons are strong like the <i>Sindhu</i> region, the season when strength is more like <i>Hemanta</i> & <i>Śísira Ritu</i> , healthy male gamete, female gamete & uterus, food which enhances strength & <i>Ojas</i> , robust body, conducive food & regimen, strong mind, practice of exercise, young age & action which bring about pleasantness of mind are factors, which enhance strength.

**DISCUSSION**

Major lifestyle changes in the current scenario are a reason for many new health challenges being faced by mankind, ayurveda emphasizes people having good immunity and people who have poor immunity or who

lack immunity. We must know the factors responsible for the good or bad immunity.

Factors responsible for *Vyadhikshamatva* → Equilibrium state of *Dosha-Dushya*, *Bala Ojus*, *Satmya*, *Satva Karmas*, *Vikaravighatakara Bhava*.

Factors that reduce *Vyadhikshamatva* → Imbalance in *Dosha - Dushya*, *Asta Nindita Purusha*, *Vikara Vighatakara Abhava*.

The origin and absence of disease are dependent on the presence and absence of *Vyadhikshmatva* in the body, for that advocating healthy diet habits and regular exercises for children of obese parents, and avoiding consanguineous marriages to prevent many genetic disorders is essential.

In Ayurveda advocating the *Prakrti* - specific diet and lifestyle among healthy individuals for the prevention of diseases, *Pumsavana Karma* for healthy progeny, the practice of *Yoga and Sadvrta* for prevention of stress and stress-induced diseases, etc. are mentioned in classical text, by following these fundamentals all the Seven *Dhatus* get properly stabilized ultimately *Ojovridhi* and good immunity is achieved.

**CONCLUSION**

According to WHO, Health promotion is "the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve health".<sup>[13]</sup>

Relevance in recent times-

Health Education	Here the people are educated about various health-related issues like hygiene, a healthy and nutritious diet, immunization, the importance of exercise and Yoga, etc.
Environmental modifications	Highly essential to prevent pollution, which is a causative factor for many diseases. Sanitation and hygiene are also included under this, which can prevent infectious diseases like cholera, polio, malaria, filarial, etc
Nutritional intervention	In the form of a special nutrition program for vulnerable or target groups, food fortification to bring about the desired effect in the community as well as nutrition education in the community.



Lifestyle and behavioral Modifications

They are key in the prevention of lifestyle disorders as well as the management of alcohol, tobacco, and other forms of addiction. Even problems like aggression, crime, etc. can also be prevented and managed with behavioral changes.

*Bala* (immunity) is directly responsible for the prevention, inhibition, and arrest of the factors that cause the diseases, hardly any science is reported to have put thrust as huge as *Ayurveda*, it gives an insight into *Dhatusamy*, and *Doshasamy* for enhancing the *Vyadhikshmatva*.

In brief, through the Ayurvedic concepts of *Vyadhikshmatva* not only we can keep healthy at the level of the physical bodily elements but also prevent various psychological discrepancies. However, there is a need for further scientific research to understand all these principles for their immunomodulating and health-promotive effects so that they can be utilized to enhance the immune system naturally and effectively.

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