



DINACHARYA – DAILY ROUTINE OR LIFESTYLE

Bio-rhythms are well understood today – it is an accepted fact that we have different time cycles governing us on a regular basis. Thus a branch of modern medicine called chronobiology is discovering that the human body is a finely tuned timepiece. It has 23-26 hour daily (circadian) cycles, lunar (15 or 30 days) cycles, solar (circannual – one year) cycles, and cycles which follow the ebb and flow of tides. These cycles influence almost every aspect of body functioning. Research has shown that a tooth is most likely to begin aching between 3 and 8 in the morning, and least likely to begin aching between 3 and 4 in the afternoon. Diseases and their treatments affect us differently at different times of the day and year; a substance may be fatal at one hour and not cause serious harm at another. Research is also showing that keeping unnatural routines can weaken the body's immune strength and general effectiveness. There is evidence to suggest that night shift workers have more medical problems especially gastro-intestinal complaints which showed improvement when the worker returned to day shifts.

Ayurveda has studied these rhythms in great detail and very clearly elaborates the effects of time cycles on the health of the individual. Further, there are cycles within cycles that govern our functioning. This is true not only of the individual or the microcosm but also of the universe or the macrocosm. Everything that exists in the universe is also seen in the individual and vice versa. Hence all the rules that are applicable at the universal level are also applicable at the individual level and vice versa. Thus even as creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe occurs externally, so also does impregnation, growth and death or decay occur in every individual. The four yugas or kṛta, treta, dwapara and kali yuga which are representative of entire time cycles in the universe are represented as childhood, youth, old age and diseased stage in the individual. The concept of yugantara or the period between two full time cycles (incorporating all the above 4 yugas) is represented by marana or death of the individual which is again representative of the period between the end of this birth and the beginning of the next birth.

Thus in yuga after yuga a quarter of righteousness is reduced in this order along with similar reduction in the qualities of living beings leading finally to dissolution of the universe. Hence it should not surprise one that today we are living in the midst of extreme strife and stress which is partly due to our own making and partly due to the time cycle that we are



presently in. The only way that we can minimize the harmful effects of this time cycle is to become consciously aware of this fact, and then apply the principles of healthy living.

Thus Ayurveda tells us that we should wake up with sunrise and commence our daily routine. Even as the sun mitigates the external darkness (read it as impurity), one should commence the natural cleansing process starting with the physical and then moving internally. Do remember that Ayurveda is based on the understanding that what happens in the external world is also reflected on the human body. Thus many a time, it is easy to understand the working of the human system by observing the phenomena in the world outside and then applying the same to the human body.

The very first activity on waking up would be the cleansing of the bowels and the bladder. This is a natural cleansing process removing the impurities of the digestion of the previous day and should not require any aids such as drinking large quantities of water. While doing so, one should observe the stool – the movement, the quantity, the form, the colour etc. and determine whether one has had a normal digestion or whether some of the food ingested the previous day has not agreed with one's system – if so, appropriate adjustments are to be made.

After this, comes the cleansing of the sense organs – namely the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. Some procedures which enable this cleansing include -

- Starting with the mouth where brushing of the teeth with specified herbs where the lower row of teeth should be brushed first followed by the upper row.
- Next the tongue is scraped using a tongue scrapper. Both these cleansing procedures will remove the dirt, bad taste and smell of the tongue, mouth and teeth. It induces better taste, cleanliness and softness of the mouth and dispels the diseases of the tongue, mouth and teeth.
- After this, keeping the mouth filled with water, the eyes are to be splashed with water every morning – with cold water in summer and with warm water in the cold seasons. Do not ever use hot water to clean the eyes.
- After splashing water onto the eyes, one should apply a herbal eye-salve daily.



- The next procedure is nasya or the application of 2 drops of oil in either nostril; if medicated oil like anu taila is not available, then simple til or sesame oil can be used. Daily use of nasal drops will ensure a pleasant smelling mouth, pleasant and clear voice, clean and efficient sense organs and the skin will be devoid of wrinkles, grey hair and black patches.
- Then one moves on to perform gandusha which is the filling of the mouth with oil (sesame oil can be used) for 5-10 minutes after which the oil is gargled and spat out. This will prevent cracking and roughness of lips, dryness of the mouth, diseases of the teeth and disorders of the voice. This will also ensure good appetite, removal of bad taste, dirt and excessive salivation.

Increase of vata and kapha which are caused by the use of anjana can be overcome by nasya; that caused by nasya by kavala; and that caused by use of kavala by dhooma.

All the above procedures performed in sequence and commencing with brushing of teeth will not take more than 15-20 minutes at the maximum and one can surely see the results over a period of time.

- Next one should perform abhyanga or oil application. This is primarily for the purpose of mitigating vata and hence here again sesame oil can be used which has this specific property. Abhyanga quells vata, promotes strength, sleep, growth and firmness of hairs; is useful to subside pains, tiredness and debility akin to the axle of the chariot becoming durable by oiling. Rubbing oil all over the body alleviates foul smell, heaviness, drowsiness and itching. The body of one who does oil application regularly does not become affected much even if subjected to accidental injuries or strenuous work. Oil should be applied especially to the head, ears and feet; on the head it is good for the hairs, skull and sensory organs; inside the ears, it relieves the pain of the lower jaw, neck, head and ears; applied to the soles of the feet it makes them strong, promotes sleep and vision; further coarseness, stiffness, roughness, fatigue and numbness of feet are alleviated in no time; it also prevents occurrence of sciatica, cracking of soles and constriction of veins and ligaments. Oil application should be avoided by those suffering from diseases of kapha origin, and those



having indigestion. Depending on time available, one can keep the oil on the body for 10-45 minutes – the development of the habit is most important.

- After the application of oil, one should proceed to do some exercise or vyayama. The bodily movement which is meant to produce firmness, stability and strength is known as vyayama or physical exercise; one should practise it in moderation. Lightness of the body, increased capacity to work, keen appetite, reduction of body fat, and the parts of the body becoming distinct and firm are the good effects of exercise. It should be avoided by persons suffering from diseases of vata and pitta origin; by young children, old persons and by those suffering from indigestion. Strong persons and those who are accustomed to good healthy and unctuous food should do exercise to half their capacity during the cold seasons and spring; for others and in other seasons it should be still less. After finishing exercise, the whole body is to be rubbed well. Too much of exercise leads to thirst, emaciation, breathlessness, bleeding from the nose, exhaustion, cough, fever and vomiting. Exercise, keeping awake at nights, walking long distances, sexual intercourse, excessive speaking and other such acts of exertion will destroy the body, just as a lion which fights with an elephant dies after winning due to severe exhaustion.
- Exercise is followed by snana or bath. Bath improves appetite, sexual vigor, span of life, and strength; removes itching, dirt, sweat, thirst and burning sensation. Pouring hot water below the neck region is strengthening while the same over the head diminishes the strength of the hairs and eyes. Bath is not good for persons suffering from fever, facial paralysis, diseases of the eyes, mouth and ears; diarrhoea, distension of the abdomen, running nose, indigestion, and soon after taking food.
- After bath, the process of physical cleansing is complete. Now after adorning clean clothes, the process of mental and spiritual cleansing commences. For those who practice Yoga, this should be done only after bath; for such people, exercise before bath should not be done. Yoga is done after bath because it is not merely physical but is also cleansing the mind and providing food for the soul. Meditation and prayers may be done according to one's beliefs.



- After this, one may proceed to take food which has been explained separately in great detail. One small point that needs to be re-emphasised here is the need to reduce dependency on food. It is best to have two good meals a day – the morning meal should ideally be taken between 10a.m. and 2p.m. for this is the time when one's digestive prowess is at its peak – rather even as the sun blazes brightly outside, inside the digestive fire is also burning brightly during this period and hence the main meal of the day should be consumed at this time. In the evening, food should be taken immediately after sunset after one has finished one's prayers. This will enable a sufficient gap between the intake of food and the time one goes to bed thus ensuring that the food is mostly digested by the time one retires for the day. In case one has to take more than two meals a day, one should ensure that there is sufficient gap between the meals and that the main meal is in the afternoon as said earlier. This may sound difficult for office goers most of whom are content with a snack in the afternoon but this is one of the most unhealthy practices and greatly contributes to ruining one's digestive fire and consequently creates the base for the formation of various diseases. Ayurveda very clearly states that all diseases arise in the stomach or due to improper digestion and hence it is imperative that the digestive fire is protected and nurtured to ensure good health. Also eating between meals is not a good idea or eating small quantities more frequently does not do any good to the body – there should ideally be a gap of at least 4 hours between intake of food for this will ensure proper digestion of the previously ingested meal.
- To continue with the daily routine, one should then engage in some work which would take care of one's own as well as the family's material needs. Here the understanding is that desires never cease and hence one should be careful to ensure that desire does not blind one to the point that one resorts to unethical means to amass wealth and higher goals are forgotten. Though spiritual growth is very important and many of the Ayurveda dictates may tend to sermonize, it must be reiterated that all of it is said primarily from the point of view of one's health. Ayurveda takes the viewpoint that one should not indulge or engage in anything that is detrimental to health from the physical, mental, spiritual, social and environmental perspectives. This holistic view becomes all the more



relevant today where stress is one of the key factors in creating ill-health. And stress is invariably because of misplaced priorities where accumulation of material wealth becomes the all-consuming need and creation and maintenance of health is given the last priority. Hence it is only when one takes a holistic view and ensures that one's own health is given primary importance to the exclusion of everything else that one can truly understand the importance of concepts like sadvrta or good conduct in thought, word and deed.

Thus inculcation of a value system from a very early age is an extremely important step in the pursuit of good health.

- At night, early to bed is important for two reasons. The first is obvious – in order to gain a sufficient amount of sleep, an early riser needs to retire early. In addition, sleep gained early in the night is more refreshing because kapha is the dominant dosha till about 10p.m. and hence if one retires before this hour one's sleep will be more rested and relaxed since it is dominated by kapha's qualities of heaviness and tranquility. After 10, until 6a.m., it is pitta and vata that dominates due to which sleep commenced during these periods is more difficult, stressed and less refreshing. Thus Ayurveda says that sleep gained after sunrise will not be as refreshing as sleep gained before midnight.

This is thus, the lifestyle advocated by Ayurveda in general. Based on place, climate, individual constitution and other factors, this can be adapted; the prime consideration should always be to adopt a lifestyle which minimizes stress and disease and helps one to lead a high quality life.