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“Garbha sanskar - a natural extension of the concept of achara rasayana”

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Abstract

The world has stepped in the 21st century & so have we. This is the modern era of information technology. There is nothing we can't have access to in the world, infact the world is at our fingertips. All the therapies in *Ayurveda* aim to provide complete health – physical, mental and spiritual. Being a holistic science with equal focus on the body, mind, and soul, *Ayurveda* also describes a type of *Rasayana* for psychological and spiritual health, called as “*Acharya Rasayana*”. *Acharya Rasayana* is a right code of socio behavioral conduct. In other words following proper *acharya* and *vicharya* is nothing but *Acharya Rasayana*. *Ayurveda* has always stressed upon a healthy society. Man is a social animal. His health thus depends on his good inter-personal relations in the society. Each individual makes up this society. Hence if a single individual is healthy he contributes to a healthy society at large. *Garbha Sanskar*, where *Sanskar* is nothing but modulation of

one's qualities. The process of selecting and transmitting positive influences to the foetus by means of yoga, reading good scriptures, positive thinking, praying, healthy eating and cheerful behavior is known as '*Garbha Sanskar*'. The need of the hour is not to just give birth to any baby but to give birth to a baby with great qualities (*Supraja*). This focus was never so important than before when most of the families especially in urban setup give birth to and raise a single child. Thus quality precedes quantity.

It can clearly be understood that maintenance or prevention of health was given due importance by advocating "*Rasayana* Therapy" as, both the maintenance as well as the recovery of health can be sought by *Rasayana* itself and the *Garbha Sanskar* is nothing but an extension of the concept of *Acharya Rasayana*.

Key words: Garbha Sanskar, Acharya Rasayana.

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Introduction

Ayurveda is a system of natural healing which is very complete both in terms of its treatments and also in its understanding of the human being. It offers a unique perspective on curing of disease, for preventive health and ultimately for spiritual liberation.

As promulgated by the *Vedas* and *Darshanas* the ultimate goal of *Ayurveda* is *chaturvidha purushartha prapti*.¹ For this very purpose it primarily concentrates on attaining a complete physical, mental, social and spiritual health. *Sushruta* defines healthy person as *Swastha* a state of total equilibrium.² Thus health is not only attainment of physical but also mental, social and spiritual well being. Then only a person is considered to be completely healthy.

There are three main causes for the diseases i.e. *Asatmendriyarthasamyoga*, *Prajnaparadha* and *Parinama/ Kala*.³ The *Atiyoga*, *Ayoga* and *Mithyayoga* of these three factors are the main cause for all the diseases where as their *Samyakyoga* leads to health. The first one is directly related to the *Indriyas/Sense organs*. *Prajnaparadha* is directly related to the mind and intellect. *Ayurveda* clearly explains the bad deeds of *Mana/mind*, *Kaya/body* and *Vak/speech* which come under *Prajnaparadha* and should be avoided at any cost. The treatment for this is considered as *Dhi vijnana*, *Dhriti vijnana* and *Atmadi Vijnana*,— Self understanding or spiritual healing. Among

the three kinds of mental constitution, *Saatwika prakruti* is the best as it is *Laghu*, *Prakashaka* etc.⁴ This is achieved only when we follow proper diet, dietetics, good conducts and behavior. *Ayurveda* is replete with its unique concepts viz. *Dinacharya*, *Rutucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Swasthavrutta*, *Acharya rasayana*, *Ahara vidhi vidhana* etc. factors mentioned by the great sages of *Ayurveda* for attainment of Physical, Mental and Spiritual well being.

The branch of *Rasayana* or Rejuvenation is one of the eight specialized branches of *Ayurveda*, which bestows *Vayahasthapana*, *medha and bala* and also transportation capable of curing *Strotas* specific diseases. The literal meaning of *Rasayana* is “optimum production of all the sharir poshaka bhavas”. The first dhatu produced from ahara rasa is *Rasa* which provides nutrition, enhances the immunity and sustains life.

Acharya Rasayana

Being a holistic science with equal focus on the body, mind, and soul, *Ayurveda* also describes a type of *Rasayana* for psychological and spiritual health, called as “*Acharya Rasayana*”. *Charaka* the first and the only *Samhitakar* introduced the unique concept of *Acharya Rasayana*. *Acharya Rasayana* is a right code of socio behavioral conduct; it teaches us a preferred life style with defined do's and don'ts. In other words following proper *achara* and *vichara* is

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nothing but *Achara Rasayana*. *Achara Rasayana* plays a key role in maintaining the harmonious relations of mankind. By following some rules and regulations complete physical, mental and social well being can be obtained. The code of conduct is as follows⁵:

- Serving elderly people.
- Speaking the truth - lying has been found to increase blood pressure and stress.
- To be free from anger - chronic anger, irritability produces elevation in blood pressure and it can be a serious risk factor for CHD⁶ (Chronic Heart Disease). Anger not only creates *Ama* and *Amavisha*—flooding the body with harmful hormones, but it also burns *Ojas*. *Charaka* has mentioned in *Vimana Sthana* –If an individual is affected with grief, fear, anger, sorrow, excessive sleep & excessive vigil, wholesome food consumed in proper quantity may not be properly digested.⁷
- To be devoid of alcohol and excessive sex indulgence.
- To practice *Ahimsa* (non violence).
- To be *Prashanta* (peaceful).
- To practice sweet speech.
- To be *japa shauchparam* (who practice *japa* and cleanliness).
- To be *Dhira* (stable and steady).
- *Dayanityam tapasvinam* (regularly practice charity & *tapa*).
- *Deva, gau, brahmana, acharya, guru, vridharchane ratam* (who regularly offer prayers to god, cows, *brhamana*, teachers, preceptors, and old people).

Ayurveda mentions that disrespecting the elders or teachers is the cause for various diseases too like *Unmada, Kushta* etc.⁸

➤ *Aanrishansya param nityam* (absolutely free from barbaric acts).

➤ *Nityam karunavedinam* (compassionate)

➤ Period of awakening and sleep should be regular. Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death – all these depend on optimum sleep. Untimely, inadequate and excessive sleep hampers both happiness and longevity. On the other hand if enjoyed properly sleep brings about happiness and longevity in human beings like real knowledge which bestows *Siddhi* (spiritual power) in a *Yogi*. According to *Ayurveda* one should awake at *Brahmya muhurta* (one & a half hour before sunrise) and should not sleep during day time. Sleeping during the day time and vigil during the night time causes vitiation of *kapha-pitta* and *vata* respectively.

Recent research has proved that sleep deprivation results in alterations in glucose metabolism, up regulation of appetite and is also associated with shorter SWS (slow wave sleep a third stage of NREM), increased levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and low grade inflammation⁹.

➤ Take ghee and milk daily- Ghee and milk are *Saatvik*, meaning they are pure and convert easily to *Ojas*. They are *Medhya*,

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improvising the brain function and enhancing the coordination of mental functions, such as *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* (learning, retention and recall). *Tamasa* foods are the opposite of *Saatvik*—they cause lack of coordination between mind and body and inhibit the experience of pure consciousness. They lead to darkness rather than light. *Tamasik* foods include alcohol which have little life force.

- Gain Vedic knowledge.
- Practice fraternal love
- Acting according to the situation wisely and
- Avoiding bad habits.

Garbha Sanskar

Vedas mention the *mantra* “*Matrudevo bhava*” meaning the mother is higher consciousness and it is true as a newborn’s whole world is only his/her ‘Mother’! A crying baby finds peace in his mother’s lap. Only *Ayurveda* promotes for a healthy baby; both *Shiva* (male energy) and *Shakti* (female energy) need to be healthy. *Ayurveda* emphasizes upon four important factors as a basis for a healthy child.

As for growing a healthy plant, a farmer needs to have four factors – a good/right season when the seed is planted, a healthy seed, fertile soil and optimum water. *Ayurveda* propagates similar analogy regarding the birth of a healthy child.

1) *Rutu* – Right time/period of conception.

2) *Kshetra* – healthy uterus as well as healthy woman/mother

3) *Ambu* – Good quality nutrients for growth of fetus.

4) *Beeja* – Healthy Ovum and Sperm.

Ayurveda has always stressed upon a healthy society. Man is a social animal. His health thus depends on his good interpersonal relations in the society. Each individual makes up this society. Hence if a single individual is healthy he contributes to a healthy society at large. *Garbha Sanskar*, where *Sanskar* is nothing but modulation of one’s qualities. ‘*Garbha Sanskar*’ or modulating the physical and mental characteristics of a fetus during pregnancy is a well known ancient truth. It is a scientific fact as mentioned in *Ayurveda* thousands of years back. All parents desire intelligent healthy and well cultured child but are unaware that they can choose to do so as per the science of *Ayurveda*.

The word ‘*Garbha Sanskar*’ is itself self explanatory. Foetus/*garbha* means a new life taking shape in a woman's womb. During this period whatever emotional perceptions a woman experiences the same are transmitted to the foetus/*Garbha*. The process of selecting and transmitting positive influences by means of *yoga*, reading good scriptures, positive thinking, praying, healthy eating and cheerful behavior is known as ‘*Garbha Sanskar*’. During the nine month period of pregnancy *Ayurveda* has documented what a pregnant woman should eat; to which God/deity

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should she worship and which mantras she should listen/recite in particular month of pregnancy.

As per *Charakacharya* the foetal mind is like a plain canvas and it imbibes stories, songs and music a pregnant woman is exposed to and thus would consequently influence the mind of her foetus. Clearly, if you want your child to be well behaved with extraordinary and creative mind the pregnant woman should give up negative thinking and should always listen to such things which can influence her mind with positive thoughts and good *Sanskars*.

A pregnant woman desiring to give birth to intelligent, courageous, good looking and healthy child should listen to and read the biographies of great people with such qualities.

In *Ramayana* also a reference is found that before the birth of Lord *Rama* during '*putra kameshti yagya*' the *Agni devata* gave King *Dashratha* '*payas*' which can be considered as a form of '*Garbha Sanskar*'. In *Mahabharat* also there is a well known mythological story as to how Lord Krishna had taught *Abhimanyu* to enter in '*chakravyuha*' when he was in his mother *Subhadra*'s womb. This story too proves the fact that men during mythological period too believed and practiced the concept of *Garbha Sanskar*.

Ayurveda too is replete with many such do's and don'ts stated for the *Garbhini* to be followed which are nothing but the *Garbha Sanskar*. It has also been scientifically

proved that subconscious mind of a foetus can be influenced more powerfully than conscious mind of grown up child after birth.

An ideal *Garbha Sanskar* can be more effective by means of sound in the form of mantras, *shlokas* because the rhythmic sounds are captured by a child's subconscious mind very effectively. The vibrations of sound waves can influence both mother and her foetus therefore the music designed for *Garbha Sanskar* is useful for the health and personality development of foetus.

To compete in today's overgrowing population and resulting challenges and competitions our future generation needs to be very intelligent, resourceful and creative. It is believed that "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world".

The need of the hour is not to just give birth to any baby (*prajanan*) but to give birth to a baby with great qualities (*suprajanan*). This focus was never so important than before when most of the families especially in urban setup give birth to and raise a single child. Thus quality precedes quantity.

The *Garbha Sanskar* is nothing but a natural extension of the concept of *Acharya Rasayana*.

Probable mode of action of *Acharya Rasayana*

Various views may explain the role of *Acharya Rasayana* in prevention and cure of diseases. For example- Loud and excessive

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speech, pungent drinks, excessive sexual indulgence, trauma etc. aggravate the *vata*; alcohol, anger etc. aggravate the *pitta*; and sedentary habits, sleep during day time or excessive sleep aggravate the *kapha*.

Hence improper lifestyle or following bad conducts lead to deranged *doshic* equilibrium. Any disturbance in the equilibrium of *Dhatu* (*Vatadi*) is mentioned as disease and their state of equilibrium as health. Health and disease are also defined as pleasure and pain. *Charak* has mentioned that heterogeneous qualities of aggravating factors are alleviators of *Dhatu* (*doshas*). Hence, by following opposite conduct of bad conduct i.e. *Achara Rasayana* person can preserve or attain the *Doshic* equilibrium. One more view which can explain the role of *Achara Rasayana* which states that *Achara Rasayana* will reduce the stress and thus prevent the release of free radicals and improves the psychoneuro-immunity.¹⁰ Anger or any exogenous stressors can have a direct impact upon cardiovascular diseases through the Hypothalamus pituitary- adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system, their activation leading to an excessive liberation of corticosteroids and catecholamine. Chronic liberation of such stress hormones can produce an avalanche of events, including hemodynamic and metabolic dysfunctions, vascular problems, immunosuppression¹¹, and disorders of the cardiac rhythm. Stress can also contribute to the adoption of an unhealthy lifestyle

(smoking, consumption of high caloric aliments, alcohol and caffeine consumption).¹² Prolonged sleep curtailment leads to a general enhancement of markers for inflammatory activity e.g. C-reactive protein, an important clinical biomarker of inflammation. While the sleep period in human is characterized by a profound down-regulation of the two stress systems, the HPA axis and the Sympathetic nervous system (SNS). Thus immunity is boosted by proper nocturnal sleep.¹³ Optimum sleep is the body's key mechanism of repair and restore. Hence *nidra* is said to be an important basic pillar of our health.

Conclusion

Following the rules related to eating, sleeping, and celibacy are a cause for rejuvenation in a person. In addition, following a *Sattvik* diet and life style, speaking the truth, practicing non-violence, living in harmony with the nature, following social ethics and conducts, are all help in the complete well being of a person. Following these principles leads to formation of high quality *Dhatu* (tissues) and increases the quantity and quality of *Ojus*, a vital factor for health and immunity. By following these factors the *Satwa Guna* increases which helps one to realize and attain spiritual bliss. The root cause of all the deeds of a person is his *mana*. It coerces him to do either good or bad deeds. If his mind is predominant with *Satva* it leads to good activity. On contrary if it is full of *Rajas* and *Tamas* he will suffer

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from various diseases and fall lead to darkness. Thus to have control over one's mind spiritual understanding is very essential and it is achieved by following good diet, good conduct and self realization. All this is guided by *Achara Rasayana* the ultimate social, personal and spiritual ethical guide promoting supreme well-being. The *Garbha Sanskar* is nothing but a natural extension of the concept of *Achara Rasayana*.

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