



**Review Article**

**ROLE OF ACHARA RASAYANA (SUBLIME BEHAVIOUR) IN PREVENTION OF NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN INDIA**

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**Article info**

**Article History:**

Received: 16-08-2021

Revised : 30-08-2021

Accepted: 01-09-2021

Published: 16-10-2021

**KEYWORDS:**

*Achara Rasayana*,  
Ayurveda, Health  
Budget, Non-  
communicable  
diseases.

**ABSTRACT**

Everyone in this globe wants to become happy in one's life. But very few becomes successful in doing so. On careful pondering it is apparent that it is possible only after the acquisition of physical, mental, social and spiritual well being. One of the obstacles in attaining it is non-communicable diseases. Available country-level evidence indicates that these diseases pose a tremendous economic burden that can be felt far beyond the health sector. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum's annual risk report, non-communicable diseases have been determined a major risk to economic loss by global business leaders and decision makers. The efforts made by Government of India and the States have not been able to check rising burden of non-communicable diseases owing to limited scale of implementation. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive scheme that should focus on health promotion and prevention of these diseases and their risk factors at various levels across the country. Ayurveda, the most ancient Indian healing science, describes a lot of measures to prevent and manage diseases like these. *Achara Rasayana* is one amongst these measures, which is a code of conduct helpful in attaining a healthy and disease-free living. This article details the various aspects of this priceless measure capable of reducing the Health Budget considerably in the interest of national prosperity.

**INTRODUCTION**

Chronic Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) have replaced communicable diseases as the most common causes of morbidity and premature mortality worldwide. About 80% of the burden occurs in low and middle-income countries and 25% is in individuals younger than 60 years.<sup>[1]</sup> Available country-level evidence indicates that NCDs pose a tremendous economic burden that can be felt far beyond the health sector. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum's annual risk report, NCDs have been determined a major risk to economic loss by global business leaders and decision makers, placing them among other severe risks such as underinvestment in infrastructure, fiscal crises, and unemployment.<sup>[2,3]</sup>

Therefore, prevention of NCDs must be taken into account to save not only lives but also to provide acceleration to the economic development of countries.

The efforts made by Government of India and the States have not been able to check rising burden of NCDs owing to limited scale of implementation. Hence, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive scheme that should focus on health promotion and prevention of NCDs and their risk factors and comprehensive management of NCDs at various levels across the country.

Capable of checking the increasing prevalence as well as the bad impact on quality and productivity of life imposed by NCDs, Ayurveda (the most ancient Indian healing science) contains/describes a lot of concepts/ methods/ devices/measures to not only manage it effectively, but also to prevent its occurrence. *Achara Rasayana* is one amongst these and it does not require any expenditure for its adoption.

**Access this article online**

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<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v9i9.1997>

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## Role of Achara Rasayana

According to the Ayurveda, *Rasayana* is the entity which certainly brings about the proper nourishment to the body tissues of human body leading to prevention of aging, improvement in bodily strength and mental faculties and resistance against diseases. After careful study of different Ayurvedic texts, *Rasayana* may broadly be classified into four groups' viz., *Kamyas Rasayana*, *Naimittika Rasayana*, *Medhya Rasayana* and *Achara Rasayana*.

*Kamyas Rasayana* (e.g. *Chyavanaprasha*) is the drug for the improvement in the health and vigour of a healthy person whereas *Naimittika Rasayana* is helpful in emancipation of diseases easily. On the other hand, *Medhya Rasayana* drugs have specific effect on mental performance (e.g. *Shankhapushpi*, *Brahmi*, *Vacha* etc.). The acquisition of benefits from all these three *Rasayana* requires some expenditure and efforts, but it is the *Achara Rasayana* which is available without any expenditure and is capable of producing the beneficial effects of all these three *Rasayana*.

*Achara Rasayana* may be assumed as the embodiment of the famous proverb "Decency comes without price, but everything can be bought from it". Actually, it is a code of conduct to be practiced for a healthy and disease-free living. One who adopts such conduct gains all benefits of *Rasayana* therapy without physically consuming any material *Rasayana* remedy or recipe.

Although the essence of *Achara Rasayana* is mentioned in most of the Ayurvedic classics, it is the *Charak Samhita* where it has been described namely and in a great detail in 4<sup>th</sup> step of 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of *Chikitsa Sthan* (verse 30-35). *Achara Rasayana* capable of producing the tremendous beneficial effects of *Rasayana* comprises of following behaviour:

- Truthfulness (Truth and fair speaking)
- Avoidance of anger
- Abstinence from alcohol- indulgence
- Abstinence from excessive sex- indulgence
- Non-violence
- Lack of over-exhaustion/ over strain
- Calmness
- Pleasing speech
- Engagement in incantation and cleanliness
- Patience
- Charity
- Penance
- Involvement in offering prayers to the gods, cows, Brahmins, preceptors, teachers and old people
- Lack of cruelty
- Compassion/mercifulness
- Proper awakening and sleeping

- Habitual intake of milk and ghee (wholesome eating)
- Proper knowledge of place, time and tactics
- Abandoning of ego
- Good conduct
- Lack of narrow mindedness
- Involvement of sense organs in spiritual subjects (spiritual temperament)
- Involvement in the worship of elders, theists and persons having self-control
- Involvement in the study of religious scriptures.

## Practical Application

In spite of the amazing beneficial effects of *Achara Rasayana*, one can be afraid of the above listed code of conduct and escape oneself from its adoption. But, on careful observation, it can be found that it is not so much difficult to be practiced, since the above conducts are inter-related and adoption of one is helpful in adoption of next ones.

The above list of code of conduct may be categorized into the following three for the sake of clear-cut understanding and adoption/practice:

**Purity of Speech:** It may incorporate truthfulness and pleasant speech.

**Purity of Mind:** It may incorporate lack of anger, non-violence, calmness, patience, lack of cruelty, compassion/mercifulness, proper knowledge of place, time and tactics abandoning of ego, good conduct, and lack of narrow mindedness.

**Purity of Action:** It may incorporate abstinence from alcohol- indulgence, abstinence from excessive sex-indulgence, lack of over-exhaustion, engagement in incantation and cleanliness, charity, penance, involvement in offering prayers to the gods, cows, Brahmins, preceptors, teachers and old people, proper awakening and sleep, habitual intake of milk and ghee, involvement of sense organs in spirituality, involvement in the worship of elders, theists and persons having self-control and involvement in the study of religious scriptures.

## DISCUSSION

*Achara Rasayana*, reflecting through sublime behaviour, is capable of emancipating the miseries of one and all with its inherent capacity of maintaining overall health and it has been proved by various studies carried out at different platforms.

Truthfulness is the foundation upon which human relationships are built. Truth is the antecedent to trust, and trust is the antecedent to cooperation. Without truth, sustainable success is impossible in human dealings.<sup>[4]</sup> The role of pleasant speech cannot be overemphasized, since abuse of speech is very detrimental inviting embroiling in a lot of trouble. When a person expresses the truth and speaks sweet,

pleasant, and meaningful speech, he accumulates more good karma than what he does by going on pilgrimages.<sup>[5]</sup>

Recent research now indicates that one's cardiovascular system is particularly vulnerable to one's anger and its negative effects. In his book, *Anger Kills*, published by Harper Perennial, Duke University researcher Redford Williams describes a number of possible ways hostility can negatively affect one's cardiovascular system.<sup>[6]</sup> Anger is closely related to mental illness. As per Dr. Cynthia Thaik, a cardiologist and holistic health practitioner based in Los Angeles, chronic anger leads to increased anxiety, insomnia, mental or brain fog and fatigue in addition to reduced immunity etc.<sup>[7]</sup> A calm and peaceful mind makes all difficulties and challenges surmountable.

The biological effects of violence have become increasingly better understood and include effects on the brain, neuroendocrine system and immune response. Consequences include increased incidences of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide; increased risk of cardiovascular disease; and premature mortality.<sup>[8]</sup> With the practice of non-violence, these consequences can be avoided very easily.

The impact of patience on our health cannot be overestimated. In their 2007 study, Schnitker and Emmons found that patient people were less likely to report health problems like headaches, acne flare-ups, ulcers, diarrhoea, and pneumonia.<sup>[9]</sup>

The role of lack of cruelty and compassion is crucial in the acquisition of a healthy life. Research by APS William James Fellow Ed Diener, a leading researcher in positive psychology, and APS James McKeen Cattell Fellow Martin Seligman, a pioneer of the psychology of happiness and human flourishing, suggests that compassion or mercifulness reflected by connecting with others in a meaningful way helps us enjoy better mental and physical health and speeds up recovery from disease. Furthermore, research by Stephanie Brown, at Stony Brook University, and Sara Konrath, at the University of Michigan, has shown that it may even lengthen our life spans.<sup>[10]</sup>

Offering prayers to the gods, cows, Brahmins, preceptors, teachers and old people may be here assumed as paying due attention towards their teachings and care, which will ultimately provide the boon of good health. This is in accordance with the reality.

Prayer improves overall physical and emotional health and makes one more resilient to stress and it is evident from one large population study by Harvard Professor Tyler Vander Weele, who found that young adults who prayed daily had a whole range of positive effects in comparison to those who never prayed. In her 2018 book *The Superstress Solution*, Dr.

Roberta Lee points to some remarkable data on physical effects of spirituality/prayer as "Heart patients were fourteen times more likely to die following surgery if they did not practice religion."<sup>[11]</sup> The acquisition of similar benefits is possible with offering prayers to cows, Brahmins, preceptors, teachers and old people also.

It is not an exaggeration that proper knowledge of place, time, dose, and tactics can save one and all from the circumstances leading to illness, while abandoning of ego attracts the cooperation of others, alleviates the stress and consequently preserves the health. Good conduct mean good social behaviour, personal conduct and character. Good conducts are a sure key to success. They help in making friends, winning over people and in obtaining appreciation and admiration and subsequently leading a healthy life.

The utility of lack of narrow mindedness is evident from the recent research which shows that open-minded individuals see the world differently and as a result are happier, healthier, and more creative.<sup>[12]</sup>

The role of abstinence from excessive alcohol indulgence cannot be exaggerated when its stoppage itself is enriched with tremendous benefits. Research shows that damages caused to brain, liver, cardiovascular system and gut begin to slowly heal after the stoppage of drinking and resulting into recovery from an alcohol use disorder. Better looking skin, better mental Health, improved Immunity, enhanced nutrition, lower risk of cancer, reduced cardiovascular risk, better memory and thinking are the benefits of recovery from alcohol use disorder helping in moving forward with a healthier lifestyle.<sup>[13]</sup>

With the abstinence from excessive sexual indulgence one can escape from the serious health concern posed by it which include taxation of body (owing to excessive release of Epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol), Weakening of immunity (overproduction of hormone prostaglandin E-2), depression, anxiety, persistent sexual arousal and sexual dysfunction, hair loss etc.<sup>[14]</sup>

Lack of over-exhaustion plays a pivotal role in the prevention of non-communicable diseases as opposed to overworking which negatively impacts one's life and productivity by inviting mental and physical health problems such as depression, high levels of stress, high blood pressure, heart problems, infertility, migraine, diabetes, allergies, impaired memory etc.<sup>[15]</sup>

Sincere practice of incantation helps to control perturbations of thoughts and emotions because *Japa* is an activity that engages the major faculties of mind with natural harmony and 'tunes' them coherently with the rhythm and vibrations of the mantra which is being enunciated or chanted. This positive effect is most prominent in the case of the *Vedic Mantras*,

because of their sublime phonetic/sonic patterns and corresponding syllabic configurations discovered/realized by the spiritual acumen of the great Indian sages/spiritual scientists of Vedic times in a deep state of trance.<sup>[16]</sup> The value of cleanliness in the maintenance of healthy is known to all since the very beginning of our lives.

The research, recently published in the Journal of Economic Psychology, found that donating to charity may actually improve a giver's physical and emotional well being.<sup>[17]</sup> Health benefits associated with giving can include lower blood pressure, increased self-esteem, less depression, lower stress levels, longer life and greater happiness and satisfaction.<sup>[18]</sup>

Tapas, in Hinduism, is ascetic practice voluntarily carried out to achieve spiritual power or purification. It is endurance and acceptance willingly of hardship like that via fasting, the holding of difficult and often painful bodily postures, vigils kept in the presence of fires or extreme cold and breath control. It may also include meditating and living in seclusion, contemplation, confession, and repentance of sins. Performing one's duty without attachment, fear or desire for fruits is also Tapas.<sup>[19,20,21]</sup> The description of Tapas by different scholars is itself an indicator of its importance in the restoration and promotion of health.

The role of proper awakening and sleeping for a healthy living is obvious. It has been observed that people who are chronically sleep deprived are more likely to be overweight, have strokes and cardiovascular disease, infections, and certain types of cancer than those who get enough sleep.<sup>[22]</sup>

Cow's milk (and dairy products), due to their composition, can facilitate the appropriate intake of some important macro- and micronutrients throughout life. The available evidence from the scientific literature suggests that the vast majority of associations between milk consumption and health are favourable. This especially applies to the early stages of life, where the relationship between milk and dairy products consumption and bone mass is evident.<sup>[23]</sup>

Ghee has been considered superior to other fats due to the fact of the presence of characteristic short chain fatty acids, carrier of four fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, K and essential fatty acids such as linolenic acid and arachidonic acid. It is considered as a healthy fat because of antidiabetic, anticancer, antistress, eye lubricant activities, hepatoprotective, cardioprotective, and wound healing properties.<sup>[24]</sup>

The emerging medical field of psychoneuro immunology is recognizing the central role of worship in the prevention, amelioration and cure of disease.<sup>[25]</sup> Worship of elders, theists and persons having self-control may lead to the acquisition of experience equivalent to that gained from a library full of thousands of book.

Spirituality plays an important role in quality of health, especially among the elderly and those afflicted with non-communicable diseases.<sup>[26,27]</sup> A large volume of research shows that people who are more religious and spiritual have better mental health and adapt more quickly to health problems compared to those who are less religious and spiritual. These possible benefits to mental health and well-being have physiological consequences that impact physical health, affect the risk of disease, and influence response to treatment.<sup>[28]</sup>

The role of *Achara rasayana* has also been substantiated in some clinical and evidence based studies carried out at different platforms. For example, the survey study carried out on 66 students of final BAMS by an objective questionnaire concludes that following *Achara rasayana* leads to a good physical, mental and social health.<sup>[29]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Achara Rasayana*, described in Ayurveda, is capable of preventing NCDs which is a huge obstacle in the path of accelerated economic development of a country like India. Adoption and popularization of *Achara Rasayana* is the need of the hour. Observational study on large scale at multiple centres should be carried out to substantiate its benefits and its outcome should be submitted to the Government, so that essence of *Achara Rasayana* may be included in the Health policy. It will help in the national prosperity with a considerable reduction in Health Budget.

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**Cite this article as:**

Shrawan Kumar Sahu, Rahul D. Ghuse, Ashok Kumar Sinha, Sunil Kumar Pandey. Role of Achara Rasayana (Sublime Behaviour) in Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases in India. *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research.* 2021;9(9):59-63.

<https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v9i9.1997>

**Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared**

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