



Personal Hygiene: Perspective of Ayurveda

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Abstract: Personal hygiene is advised in almost all the sciences related to health and also in some other sciences. In Ayurveda also there is much description of personal hygiene, being the science of health. The one of the important aim of Ayurveda is maintaining the health or prevention of diseases and it cannot be facilitated without the knowledge of personal hygiene. So, there is a vast description of personal hygiene in Ayurveda. Ayurveda have a holistic approach and consider mental hygiene too along with physical hygiene. In this paper it is tried to explore the literatures related to personal hygiene, described in Ayurveda and their significances are also elaborated.

Introduction:

Increasing and alarming conditions of a lot of diseases occurring in society have shifted the thinking about the problem of the health towards its preventive side. Ayurveda gives equal importance to both prevention and cure of diseases. It clearly says that aim of Ayurveda is to prevent people from miseries of life and to cure the pathological condition of patients [1]. Now a days contemporary science or modern medicine also much emphasizing on prevention of diseases. Therefore, now, attempts are being made to keep the society healthy at large scale. In this regard, personal hygiene play very significant role. Therefore it is needed to study the ancient principle of health care regarding prevention of diseases specially, in the context of personal hygiene. It is said in Ayurveda that the state of equilibrium of *sharirika* and *manasikadosha*, *agni*, *dhatu*, *malakriya* and happiness of *atma*, *mana* and *indriya* is the health in good sense [2]. In the above described condition, person become able to resist and prevent the diseases. The equilibrium in *dhatu* is called as *prakriti* and disequilibrium is *vikriti*[3] and equilibrium become disturbed due to one or more than one of the three etiological factors which are as

following- *pragyaparadh*, *vishamartha*, *kalaparinama*[4]. The diseases are also categorized into three groups- *nija*, *agantuja*, *manashika*[5]. Among these, endogenous diseases (*nijaroga*) can be prevented by purificatory measures described in Ayurveda known as *panchkarma*. Exogenous diseases can be prevented by taking resources to the avoidance of intellectual errors, control over sense organs, good memory, knowledge of the place, good conduct etc[6]. For prevention of diseases and maintenance of health, certain regimen should be followed regarding hygiene such as *Dincharya*, *riyucharya*, *sadavritta*. Among the above regimens, the conducts described in *dincharya* and *ritucharya* are helpful for hygiene of body and *sadavritta* is helpful for hygiene of mind.

Review of Literature:

Probably *Charakasamhita* is the earliest text among all the *samhita* available in present time. In *Charakasamhita*, personal hygiene is extensively discussed. *Acharya*Charaka has described personal hygiene specially, in the *sutrasthana* (chapter 5 and 6). Other books written by *acharya*Vagbhatta also have detailed subject matter on personal hygiene. Along with these some other writers have also written some subject matters on this topic. All these are as following-

Body hygiene:

Time to Wakeup-

One should wakeup early in the morning thinking about the digestion of food taken last night, respect the god, look into the *ghrita*, and plane mirror, touch the curd, flower, yellow mustard, drink water,



remove the excreta if reflexes are present, should not suppress the reflex of defecation [7].

Time and methods of purification of body-

1. According to *acharya* Vagbhata, during defecation, one should keep face towards north in day time and towards south in night, should keep silence, head covered with cloth, have no other activities and should not strain to remove fecal matter [8]. One should clean the anal area with pure water and clay (devoid of foreign body) to remove feces and fecal smell from anal region and hand [9]. One should not be involved in other work if the natural urges like, *vata*, *mutra*, *purisha* etc. are present. One should not remove sputum, feces, urine in front of the wind, fire, water, the moon, the sun, brahmins and the teachers. One should not urinate on the roadside, in a public place and at the time of meal [10]. One should not remove excreta within a village, close to holy places, at crossings of road and reservoir of water [11]. One should not remove excreta on the collection of ash or soil, at a place where cows rest, plough fields, over or under the trees. In the condition of fear and sickness, this work can be done accordingly [12].

2. One should clean teeth twice in a day with the help of *dataun* having rasa of *kashaya/ katu/tikta*. Top portion of *dataun* should be crushed. *Dataun* should be used in such a way that gums should not get injured. This process removes the foul smell, tastelessness, dirt of tongue, teeth, mouth and increases the taste [13]. *Acharya* Susrutaaid that *dataun* may be of *madhurarasa* as other three *rasa*. He also said that teeth should be daily cleaned with the aid of a compound consisting of honey, powdered *vyosha* (*sunthi*, *maricha*, *pippali*), *trivarga* (*twak*, *ela*, *tejapatra*), *saindhavlavana*, oil and *tejovati* powder [14]. Vagbhata described another tooth powder containing *triphala*, *kustha*, *trikatu*, *trijata* and honey [15]. One should scrap the tongue daily with the help of tongue cleaner. These cleaners should be made of gold/silver/copper/tin/bross/. It should not be sharp edged and should be curved. It removes the direct deposition on the tongue. This obstruction is a cause of obstruction in expiration and gives rise to foul smell in the mouth [16].

A type of gargling called *Gandusha* should be done regularly. It is beneficial for the strength of jaws, depth of voice, flabbiness of the face, good gustatory sensation, good taste for the food. One never gets dryness of the

throat, get healthy lips (lips do not get cracked), get healthy teeth i.e. teeth do not get carious and will be deep rooted, do not suffer with toothache, do not suffer with numbness of tooth after intake of *Amlarasawith* regular practice of *Gandusha* [17]. For cleanness, taste and pleasant smell of mouth, some substances are advised to retain or chew in mouth such as, fruits of *jaati*, *katuka*, *punga* etc. , flower stalk of *lavanga*, fresh leaf of *tambula* and extract of *karpura* [18]. One should regularly wash the face and eyes with the decoction of *kshirivriksha*, mixed with milk or decoction of *amalaki* or cold water. It helps in get rid of some problems like nilika, dryness of mouth, pustules, *vyanga* and the diseases caused by *rakta* and *pitta*. Face becomes lighter and sight becomes stronger with this practice [19].

3. One should regularly use the *anjana* made of *sauveera* for benefit of eyes. *Rasanjana* should be applied to eyes once in five or eight nights for lacrimation of the eye [20]. Eyes are susceptible to *kaphamahabhuta* because eyes have *tejamahabhuta* predominantly. Even though such therapy like use of *rasanjanam* must not be applied during day time as the eyes get weak by drainage and will be adversely affected at the sight of sun [21].

4. One should take medicines or different *dravyas* in a particular form from nostrils, it is called as *nasya*. *Nasya* is of five types, according to *acharya* Charaka- *navana*, *avapeeda*, *dhmapan*, *dhuma* and *pratimarsha* [22]. Among these, *Pratimarsha* is used for personal hygiene and rest others used for various diseases [23]. One should practice the nasal therapy i.e. *nasya* because due to use of nasal therapy, eyes nose and ears remain healthy, hair and beard never becomes white or grey, never suffers from fall of hair, hair grow profusely, diseases like facial paralysis, headache etc. get cured, veins, joints, ligaments and tendons of head and neck gain greater strength, face become cheerful and plumpy, voice becomes sweet, established and stertorous, sense organs become clear and gain strength, diseases of head and neck do not attack sudden and old age does not affect head or brain [24].

5. *Dhumapanais* a type of smoking in which medicated fumes are inhaled or puffed. It should be practiced because *dhumpana* relieves heaviness of head, headache, rhinitis, hemicranias, earache, pain in the eyes, cough, hiccough, dyspnea, obstruction in throat, weakness of teeth etc [25]. Proper smoking



makes the mind, heart, throat and sense organs clear [26].

6. Bathing is always a procedure which removes somnolence, burning sensation, fatigue and thirst. It checks itching and perspiration. It is good for heart, purifies the body greatly and clears the sense organs. It removes lethargy, aphrodisiac, improves the appetite and purifies the blood [27]. Bathing with little warm water is always beneficial for bath in the case of below the neck of body [28]. Regular bath, conducted with water and *amla*, provides long life free from wrinkles, greyness and falling of hair. One should rub his/her body with a towel immediately after taking bath. This will keep the skin free from the diseases and produce lusture in the body [29].

7. One should not suppress the natural urges like urine, feces, ejaculation of sperm, flatus, vomiting, sneezing, eructation, yawning, hunger, thirst, tears, sleep and breathing caused by over exertion [30].

8. Food should be cooked as well as taken in clean atmosphere. Kitchen should be made spacious, clean and pure stuffed. All the food articles should be kept in clean and pure place, prepared by an experienced cook. After that food should be touched with antitoxic medicines and detoxified by the special *mantras* before serving [31].

9. Women should follow *bramhacharya* during the period of menses. She should sleep on the earth. She should wear white dress on fourth day after taking bath. She should maintain hygiene [32].

10. Massage with oil make the human body strong, smooth, resistant to diseases of *vata* dosha. Due to massage, body does not easily get exhausted and fatigued. Massage is exceedingly beneficial to the skin [33].

Mental hygiene:

Respect should be paid to gods, cows, Brahmins, elderly people, person accomplished in spiritual field, teachers and cross roads. One should oblation to fire, should wear good herbs, should perform *sandhya*, twice a day. Persons should clean excretory passage and feet frequently. One should have haircut, nail cut and shave properly in three *paksha*. One should wear undamaged apparel. Persons should be happy, should having habit to take initiative, having delightful face, protect people in affliction, offer oblation, perform religious ceremony, offer donation, honor the guests,

speak sweet words, should be self-controlled, envy in action, not envy in results, wise, having enormous enthusiasm, clever, forbearing, virtuous, clever, having faith in god, devoted to teachers, having intellect, learning heredity, display good manner etc[34].

Discussion:

In Ayurveda, *swasthviritta* i.e. code of health and *sadviritta* i.e. code of conduct have been enough discussed with an emphasis on its regular practice. The daily routine and personal hygiene of healthy living starts from rising in *brahmamuhurta*. The need for early rising in the morning might be for the expulsion of excreta, produced in the body during night, as early as possible. Delayed removal of excreta may be a cause of hard stool, gas and constipation. Awaking in early morning also enable for meditation, worship and study. Morning drink may be helpful in cleaning of nasal passage and creating bowel movement by producing pressure.

All the diseases of the oral cavity arise due to vitiated *kaphadosha* situated in the mouth, according to *acarya* Vagbhatta. So different *acharya* have described use of pungent, bitter and astringent material as *dataunto* subsided *kaphadosha* and prevent diseases.

For personal hygiene, *pratimarshanasya* has been prescribed. For this, oil is more suitable as compared to other facts, because head is a usual site for *sleshma*. *Dhumpana*, indicated in Ayurveda, made of medicated substances so *dhumapana* is advised for maintenance of health as well as for curative purpose.

Oiling massage and rubbing of the scalp might be helpful for stimulation of sebaceous glands to act, as well as nourishes skin. Same is also true in the case of *abhyanga* (massage). Massage also increases the circulation of blood and also muscles get exercised. Wrinkles in skin appear due to insufficient supply of fat by sebaceous gland. Massage helps in supply of fat and improves wrinkles.

Utsadana and *udwartanakarma* should be practiced for clean and healthy skin.



Regular bath should be taken. It cleans the body properly. It removes the dirt and dust from the body and tiredness from the body. It increases digestive power, capacity to work and pleasant feeling. But it has to be remembered that bath should not be taken immediately after meal or exercise. After bath damp places of body (like axilla etc.) should be dried properly to avoid harms like fungal infection etc.

Natural urges should not be suppressed at any cost because it is highly unhygienic and causes various diseases. But there are also some urges which have to be suppressed like anger, greed etc. to get mental peace.

There are some differences of opinion regarding the order of eating articles of different tastes and qualities. In conclusive mode we can say that one should eat in the beginning the sweet and unctuous substances and at the end pungent and bitter one for purification of mouth as advocated by Susruta and also by Bhavmishra. Stating *sampurnaaharvidhi*, Susruta has described the situation of the kitchen and it's assistants on which the preparation of the food items depends. The way of presentation of food articles in particular vessels and meals made up by different things is of a great value to prevent the chemical changes from the contact of metals as well as to please the eater.

Menstruation, in women, is a very unique physiological process which is of high concern in hygiene point of view. It might be considered as a normal healthy function for the cleansing of internal passage. The regimen during this suggests that a woman should keep away herself from luxurious life and should prevent the coitus during menses. She has been considered unfit for housework during menses might be for providing her rest. Light diet is prescribed during this probably to facilitate the process of removal of tissues from body because heavy diet may cause constipation and other types of obstruction.

Sadavritta and *achararasayana* are the ethical conducts which inculcates the discipline related to mind, character, social, religious and personal life to gain real happiness at personal level as well as on society level. It must be practiced for one's own pleasure. It should be made an obligatory part of

public education at every level. Such education will improve the physical, mental and spiritual health of an individual and of the society as a whole. In other words, it is a code of conduct or methods to maintain mental hygiene. These conducts are for maintaining the psycho-somatic health of an individual and of the society as a whole, so that they may enjoy a healthy life.

Thus it appears that Ayurveda has made a very comprehensive approach towards the entire problem of health at physical, mental, spiritual and social level.

Conclusion:

1. There is a systemic description of various routine measures conducive to positive health i.e. promoting hygiene, in Ayurveda. These literatures describe all the points related to uplift of health.
2. Ayurveda describes the personal hygiene in the context of *Swasthavritta* and mental or social hygiene in the context of *Sadavritta*.
3. *Swasthavritta* is discussed in the form of *dincharya* and *ritucharya* while *Sadavritta* is discussed in the form of *sadachara*, *achararasayana* etc.
4. Most of such things are being practiced in India as traditional belief but these principles of *Swasthavritta* and *Sadavritta*, should be utilized as the major components of health education.

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