

# The Role of Dinacharya: Ayurvedic Lifestyle Practices for Health in the Modern Era

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**Abstract:** Health encompasses both physical strength and stamina, as well as mental stability, enabling individuals to meet the demands of daily life. A person with a sound body and mind can withstand social and cultural challenges effectively. Health is not just the absence of disease but also the ability to work with satisfaction and self-control. It serves as the foundation for achieving Dharma (righteous acts), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), and Moksha (liberation). Among various factors, lifestyle modifications are regarded as the most effective way to prevent diseases and premature deaths in modern society. Premature death, particularly in Western societies, is defined as death before the age of 65 and is often caused by unhealthy lifestyle choices. These poor habits contribute significantly to the rise of chronic lifestyle-related illnesses, which have replaced infectious diseases as the leading cause of early mortality. To maintain lifelong fitness, daily preparedness and well-being are crucial, as health heavily relies on one's daily routine. Ayurveda offers Dinacharya (daily regimen) as the ideal lifestyle approach, outlining systematic activities and practices to be followed from one day to the next for holistic health.

**Keywords:** Dinacharya, Daily regimen, Lifestyle disorders, Charak Samhita

## 1. Introduction

The Ayurveda system of medicine goes beyond simply treating diseases; it serves as a comprehensive way of life. Its primary goal is to maintain the health of individuals and provide remedies for the diseased by achieving a balance of Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala. Following the principles of authentic Dinacharya is crucial in achieving this balance. Dinacharya, regarded as one of the foundational methods for preventing lifestyle disorders, is increasingly relevant today due to the alarming rise in such conditions.

Health is more than just the absence of illness—it encompasses complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, as defined by the World Health Organization [1]. Lifestyle disorders have been strongly linked to faulty living habits and are associated with both communicable and non-communicable diseases, including life-threatening ailments like cancer, hypertension, metabolic disorders, diabetes, and obesity. Adopting an ideal lifestyle through Dinacharya offers a significant opportunity to mitigate and prevent these diseases. Despite advancements in modern medicine, a complete cure for many diseases remains elusive. Over the last 2–3 decades, non-communicable diseases, particularly cardiovascular conditions, have become more prevalent. According to Ayurveda, a person is considered healthy (Swastha) when their humors (Doshas), tissues (Dhatus), excretory products (Malas), and digestive capacity (Agni) are in harmony, accompanied by mental, sensory, and spiritual happiness. [2]

Moreover, the recent COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vulnerabilities of current healthcare systems, as the lack of effective medical concepts and facilities resulted in substantial losses to humanity and economies. The pandemic highlighted the urgent need to reassess healthcare preparedness.

Today, multi-level mental stress exacerbates challenges in human lives, leading to issues such as social and family

violence, declining tolerance levels, and instability in relationships. Alongside mental distress, disorganized and inauthentic lifestyle practices significantly contribute to impaired metabolism and weakened immunity, beginning from a young age.

Ayurvedic texts assert that diseases affect both the body (Sharira) and the mind (Manas), emphasizing the equal importance of physical and mental health. A healthy individual is advised to wake up during Brahma Muhurta, considering their digestive state, and perform cleansing activities such as excreting waste products at appropriate times and cleaning the body. The daily regimen includes practices like brushing the teeth with specific herbal sticks (Dantadhavana), applying collyrium (Sauviram) for eye health, nasal drops (Anutaila), and smoke inhalation.

This pressing reality highlights the need to explore and emphasize the relevance of Dinacharya, Ayurveda's cornerstone for maintaining physical and mental health. Conceptual research studies, including surveys and case studies on Dinacharya, provide valuable evidence to demonstrate its applicability. Evaluating and analyzing these concepts through a review of research works is imperative in addressing contemporary health challenges.

## Aims and Objectives

- 1) To explore the significance of Dinacharya in maintaining holistic health and preventing lifestyle-related disorders.
- 2) To understand the application of Dinacharya in addressing physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- 3) To evaluate the importance of adhering to Dinacharya practices as evidence-based preventive healthcare.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### Materials:

The study utilized classical Ayurveda texts such as the Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Astanga Samgraha, and Astanga Hridaya, along with their associated commentaries and

complementary Ayurveda literature. Additionally, relevant contemporary medical science resources, including books and reputable online websites, were consulted to provide a comprehensive understanding.

### Methods

Dinacharya, as prescribed in Ayurveda, represents a structured regimen of food consumption and physical and mental activities. Acharya Arunadutta considers this regimen to be a highly genuine approach that benefits individuals in their current life and even influences their future rebirth [3]. Similarly, Acharya Sushruta emphasizes the importance of maintaining a healthy digestive capacity, balancing the humors of the body and mind, and ensuring harmony with bodily tissues, all of which contribute to health maintenance. [4]

To fully understand and achieve the benefits of Dinacharya, familiarity with key Ayurvedic principles is essential. These include:

- 1) **Sarva Vyadhi Nidana (Theory of All Causes of Diseases):** This principle identifies imbalances caused by the incorrect relationship of the human body and mind with time (Kala), senses (Artha), and actions (Karma). Achieving "Samyak Yoga" (proper harmony) between these factors ensures health, while "Hina" (deficient), "Mithya" (excessive), or "Ati" (incorrect) interaction causes disease. [5]
- 2) **Samanya Vishesh Siddhanta (Theory of Similarity and Dissimilarity):** This principle states that the consumption of foods and activities with similar qualities to the bodily factors will increase them, while opposing qualities will decrease them. A purposeful selection of diet and routine can help establish equilibrium in Dosha and Dhatu. [6]
- 3) **Concept of Kriya Kaal (Opportunities for Correcting Dosha Imbalance):** This principle explains the stages of disease manifestation and stresses the importance of timely correction. "Kriya" represents efforts toward rectification, and "Kaal" highlights the opportune moments for restoring balance. This concept underscores the importance of implementing a proper regimen as a natural opportunity for health improvement. [7]

The correct implementation of Dinacharya, based on these principles, significantly enhances health by regulating the biological clock, rejuvenating tissues, strengthening sensory organs, restoring mental peace, and improving physical vitality. This practice promotes longevity and graceful aging while preventing the onset of diseases.

### Components of Dinacharya

- 1) **Prataha - Utthana:** Rising approximately 45 minutes before sunrise.
- 2) **Shauchavidhi—Malotsarga:** Attending to the natural urge for urination and defecation.
- 3) **Danta - Dhavana:** Brushing teeth with herbal sticks.
- 4) **Jihva - Nirlekhana:** Cleaning the tongue.
- 5) **Anjana:** Applying collyrium for eye health.
- 6) **Nasya:** Administering nasal drops.
- 7) **Gandusha:** Practicing oil pulling.
- 8) **Dhumapana:** Inhalation of medicated smoke.
- 9) **Vyayama:** Engaging in physical activity or exercise.
- 10) **Snana:** Taking a bath to refresh and cleanse the body.

- 11) **Bhojana:** Following rules related to food consumption.
- 12) **Sadvrutta Palan:** Observing good conduct and ethical behavior.

This systematic approach not only fosters physical and mental harmony but also serves as a preventive measure against lifestyle - related diseases.

### a) Pratahautthana - Bramha – muhurtautthana [8, 9]

Waking up 45 minutes before sunrise, during the 14th Muhurta of the night, known as "Brahma Muhurta, " is recommended. However, this should only be practiced if the previous night's meal has been properly digested. Otherwise, rising in Brahma Muhurta may lead to metabolic disorders due to Dosha imbalance. As "Brahma" signifies knowledge, Ayurveda identifies this time as ideal for learning or initiating new activities. Research suggests that cortisol, the chief glucocorticoid, peaks approximately 30 minutes after awakening in Brahma Muhurta, providing anti - stress benefits, immune modulation, and metabolic advantages. This auspicious period supports physical, mental, social, and spiritual well - being.

To maximize the benefits of Prataha Utthana (early rising), a disciplined routine is advised. This includes going to bed early, having light meals for dinner, avoiding stress or exposure to noise, light, and gadgets, and practices such as Padabhangya (foot oil massage) and Nasya. These habits foster deep, natural sleep, optimal metabolism, and active awakening during Brahma Muhurta. Adhering to an authentically approved Ratricharya (night regimen) is essential.

For individuals required to stay awake at night due to shift work, it is recommended to balance the Dosha by practicing Divaswapan (day sleep) for half the duration of the Ratrijagarana (night awakening) the following morning on an empty stomach. For other reasons, such as night parties, gadget use, or stress, the ill effects of suppressed sleep should be countered by following treatments prescribed in Ayurveda for Nidra Vega Vidharan (suppression of sleep). [10]

### b) Shouch Vidhi (Urination and passing feces) [11]

Shouch Vidhi, which involves urination and defecation, is ideally done early in the morning after waking up, as previously mentioned. During this time, the dominant Vata Dosha, specifically Apana Vayu, naturally stimulates the urge for defecation. Delaying or ignoring this urge may lead to various disorders, ranging from mild to severe, including potential cardiac issues.

### c) Dantadhavna [12, 13, 14]

(brushing teeth) is recommended twice daily, in the morning and at night, as stated by Charakacharya. Additionally, Vagbhatacharya suggests brushing teeth in the morning and after every meal. Substances with astringent, spicy, or bitter tastes are considered suitable for Dantadhavan. Ayurveda pharmacopeia describes various Dantya Dravyas (herbs promoting dental health and hygiene) such as Karanja (*Milletia pinnata*), Asana (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), Kakubha (*Lactuca serriola*), Nyagrodha (*Ficus bengalensis*), and Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*).

Modern research raises concerns about the harmful effects of toothpaste additives, including chemicals, pesticides, genetically modified organisms, glutens, fluoride, saccharin, SLS, abrasives, carrageenan, parabens, triclosan, artificial sweeteners, and propylene glycol. Therefore, Dantadhavana using toothbrushes is recommended to be replaced with herbal twigs of Dantya herbs with authentic tastes. Awareness about oral hygiene practices, such as consuming bed tea and its possible harsh effects, should be emphasized.

#### d) Jihva – nirlekhan [15]

Jihva - nirlekhan (tongue cleaning) should be performed regularly after brushing to eliminate surface impurities that cause foul breath. According to Charak Acharya, using a flexible metal strip or plant material is an effective method. It alleviates Kapha, improves Annaruchi (interest in eating), and enhances Laghuta (activeness) in speech.

From a biomedical perspective, tongue cleaning helps eliminate bad breath, removes coating, toxins, and bacteria from the tongue, and improves the functioning of taste buds. A case study observed that tongue cleaning for one week removed tongue coatings caused by streptococci and lactobacilli. However, the tongue coating reverted to its pre-cleaning state within one day, leading to the conclusion that tongue cleaning should be performed at least once daily to manage breath odor. [16]

#### e) Kavala

Kaval (gargling) and Gandusha (medicated oil pulling) are effective practices for preventing diseases of the mouth, teeth, and gums. According to Acharya Charak, Gandusha strengthens the jaws and voice, enhances facial firmness, improves gustatory sensations, and promotes good taste. It helps prevent throat dryness, lip cracking, and most dental issues, while also strengthening teeth, enabling them to chew even the hardest foods. [17]

Research studies show that oil pulling significantly reduces plaque, gingival scores, and the number of bacteria in the mouth. The antimicrobial properties of Sesame oil are particularly effective against *S. Mutans*, helping to reduce plaque-induced gingivitis. It has also been recognized as an alternative to chlorhexidine, without causing teeth staining.

Additionally, oil pulling increases saliva production, and the resultant oil/saliva emulsion contains more bacteria than saline samples. This process significantly decreases the overall microbial burden when compared to saliva samples examined before and after pulling. Raising awareness of the benefits of Gandusha, along with knowledge about specific decoctions or oils tailored to one's Prakriti and Dosha condition, can promote it as a valuable Ayurvedic alternative to conventional mouthwash options like chlorhexidine. [18]

#### f) Anjana

Anjana (collyrium) is recommended for use after Dantadhavan. Acharyas recognize various symptoms in the eyes, caused by Dosha imbalances due to daily eye use, such as burning, itching, discharge, watering, and pain. Regular application of Anjana helps address Tridosha imbalances in the eyes, enhancing their ability to perceive even the minutest

details and ensuring clear visibility of the conjunctiva, sclera, and pupil. [19]

Ayurveda describes two types of Anjana for maintaining eye health. Sauviranjana is mild and recommended for daily use to normalize any Dosha-related symptoms in the eyes. Rasanjana, on the other hand, is a stronger Anjana that prevents Kapha Dosha accumulation and its related symptoms in the ocular area. [20]

Research highlights additional benefits of Anjana, such as helping to unclog the nasolacrimal duct. Furthermore, Manahshiladi Anjana has been found to alleviate issues like polyopia, diplopia, hazy vision, cyanopsia, erythropsia, night blindness, day blindness, difficulties with close work, and the perception of clouded vision.

#### g) Nasya

Nasya (medicated nasal drops) has been extensively explored by Acharyas for its numerous benefits. Regular and authentic use of Nasya is said to maintain unimpaired sight, smell, and hearing, while also preventing premature hair fall and graying. It is effective in addressing conditions such as torticollis, headaches, facial paralysis, lock-jaw, rhinitis, hemicrania, and tremors. Additionally, it strengthens the blood vessels, joints, ligaments, and tendons of the cranium, brightens the face, improves the melodious quality of the voice, and fortifies all the senses. [21]

Ayurveda places special emphasis on the daily use of Pratimarsha Nasya to fully achieve these benefits. Nasya is a part of the AYURAKSHA kit, which includes Anutail, an oil used for Nasya. Research indicates that the use of the AYURAKSHA kit is linked to reduced susceptibility to COVID-19 and improved quality of life [22]. Furthermore, a study using the Glasgow Coma Scale observed improvements in verbal, motor, and eye responses in a patient after two sessions of 15 days of Nasya. [23]

#### h) Abhyanga

Abhyanga (oil massage) performed daily offers numerous benefits, including delaying aging, relieving exertion, pacifying excessive Vata symptoms, enhancing vision, nourishing tissues, promoting healthy and deep sleep, improving skin tone, and ensuring a radiant complexion. It also helps prevent neurological diseases, nourishes the entire body, enhances joint and muscle mobility, improves peripheral circulation, and eliminates metabolic wastes. [24]

Research on the mechanism of Abhyanga suggests that it facilitates the release of amino acids like tryptophan, which enhance blood flow and stimulate serotonin production. Serotonin, a precursor to melatonin, induces sleep and helps normalize the circadian rhythm. Furthermore, studies reveal that daily Abhyanga with Bala Tel can effectively manage Akaalajara (premature aging). Standardized scalp massage has been shown to increase hair thickness, reduce stress hormone levels, and regulate blood pressure and heart rate through the action of norepinephrine and cortisol. Head massage also supports the regulation of the Cardiac Autonomic Nervous System. Additionally, massage therapy during the perinatal period aids mothers by enhancing the coordination of the developing circadian system. [25]

In today's busy lifestyles, Abhyanga can be adapted for feasibility while retaining authenticity. It is especially beneficial for the elderly, individuals with Vata - dominant constitutions, or those with specific ailments. For those short on time, localized Abhyanga on the head, ears, and feet can provide comparable benefits. Pada - Abhyanga, performed before sleep, is particularly effective in reducing stress and promoting restful sleep.

Despite its immense benefits, it is essential to heed its contraindications. Abhyanga should be avoided in cases of Kapha - related conditions, after purification therapies, or during indigestion. [26]

#### i) Vyayama

Vyayama (exercise), when systematically practiced in alignment with Ayurvedic guidelines, offers numerous benefits, including increased activeness, stamina, enhanced metabolic rate, reduced fat accumulation, disease resistance, purification of the body's channels (Srotas), improved blood circulation, better efficiency of vital organs, prevention of obesity, and attainment of an ideal body shape and strength. It ensures the overall well - being of every part of the body. [27]

Studies indicate that Vyayama enhances organ endurance, intelligence, and perceptual ability. It has also been shown to improve cognitive function in older adults with Alzheimer's disease, reduce blood pressure in hypertensive individuals, lower HbA1c levels in patients with type 2 diabetes, and decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases. [28]

According to Ayurveda, Vyayama should be performed when the body is in a strong state and in a tolerable quantity. It is particularly recommended to limit exercise to half of one's capacity during cold seasons or spring. Individuals engaging in Vyayama should consume appropriate amounts of fatty food to sustain balance. Mild exercise is advised for maintaining Dosha equilibrium if the body condition is not ideal. At the conclusion of exercise, all body parts should be massaged for comfort. [29]

Acharyas emphasize the importance of following proper guidelines, as over - exercising can result in severe consequences. A striking simile likens the fate of those who over - exercise to that of a lion that perishes after vanquishing an elephant. Over - exercising may cause excessive thirst, loss of physique, breathing difficulties, bleeding disorders, hypertension, exhaustion, persistent fatigue, unexpected cough, fever, and vomiting. Correctness in Vyayama practice is paramount.

Common practices today, such as staying awake late at night, walking long distances regularly, excessive sexual activities, or overindulgence in laughter and speaking, mimic the effects of over - exercise. Additionally, the pursuit of rapid muscular growth often leads individuals to over - exert themselves in gymnasiums. Vyayama must never be performed immediately after eating. Acts related to food intake and the quantity of exercise must always adhere to Ayurvedic recommendations.

#### j) Snana

Snana (Bathing), when done appropriately, enhances digestion, acts as an aphrodisiac, safeguards life, boosts zeal and vigor, alleviates itching, and removes dirt, sweat, exhaustion, tiredness, thirst, burning sensations, and impurities. Following the prescribed rules and acknowledging contraindications is vital for attaining these benefits. For instance, warm water poured over the body strengthens it, but pouring it over the head can weaken the hair and eyes. Bathing is contraindicated for individuals who have just eaten, and for those with conditions such as facial paralysis, eye, mouth, or ear diseases, diarrhea, flatulence, rhinitis, and indigestion. [30]

#### k) Bhojana (Food)

The principles of Ahara - Bhojana (food consumption) are extensively outlined in Ayurveda, emphasizing key aspects such as AharaMatra (quantity of food) and the concept of Ashana (timing and intervals between meals). It also delves into Anupana (specific liquids paired with particular foods) and the study of RasaPanchaka (the qualities and attributes of each food item). Additionally, Ayurveda discusses the Concept of ViruddhaAhara (incompatibility of food items when consumed together), Anna Visha (the idea of food contamination), as well as AharaVidhiVisheshAyatana and AharaVidhiVidhana (guidelines and detailed rules for food consumption). [31]

#### l) Sadvrutta

In addition to physical well - being, Ayurveda advocates Sadvrutta (good conduct) to maintain mental health by balancing Mano Dosha (Raja and Tama) and fostering the preferable rise of Satva Guna in Mana (mind). The functions of the mind include Chintan (thinking), Vichara (consideration), Uha (speculation), Dhyana (concentration), Indriyanigraha (control of senses), Sankalpa (determination), and Kalpana (imagination).

Currently, disruptions in the functioning of Mana are evident from increased violence, broken relationships, reduced tolerance, and jealousy. Upholding a righteous code of conduct also emphasizes mindful practices starting with eating habits. It is advised to consume food only after the complete digestion of the previous meal, and in limited quantities. Natural urges should neither be suppressed forcefully nor ignored, but attended to as they arise. Additionally, even minor signs of health instability must be addressed promptly. [32]

Ayurveda also identifies certain diseases as Dosha - Karmaja, resulting from Dosha imbalances or misdeeds (sins) from the current or past life. These conditions often exhibit intense symptoms with seemingly mild causes. The "Dashavidhapapakarma" (ten sins) detailed under Dinacharya serve as preventive measures for such diseases.

### 3. Discussion

Non - communicable diseases are spreading rapidly in both developed and developing nations, including India, where their prevalence has increased in recent years due to the adoption of Western lifestyles and habits. To mitigate this, Ayurveda emphasizes adherence to Dinacharya (daily

routine) principles through proper understanding and application of rules, logical sequences, contraindications, and respect for activity - specific benefits to the body.

The sequence of Dinacharya activities, such as Dantadhavan (brushing), Jihva Nirlekhan (tongue cleaning), Anjana (collyrium), Nasya (nasal drops), Gandusha/Kawal (oil pulling or gargling), and Dhumapaan (medicated smoking), is logically structured to balance Doshas and maintain overall health. For instance, Anjana facilitates the removal (Shodhan) of Kapha - dominant Doshas from the eyes and surrounding regions. Nasya clears residual Doshas in areas beyond Anjana's reach, such as the neck and mouth, while Gandusha/Kawal further addresses Doshas in the oral cavity. Dhumapaan then completes the process by drying (Shoshan) any remaining Doshas.

Dinacharya activities interact with Doshas, Dhatus (body tissues), and Agni (digestive fire), influencing them based on the principle of Samanya Vishesha Siddhanta (the law of similarity and dissimilarity). If performed incorrectly, these activities can lead to an imbalance, which is a recognized cause of all diseases under the concept of "Sarvavyadhinidana." Thus, the correct execution of Dinacharya practices ensures Samyak Yoga (proper alignment) of actions, preventing disease and maintaining equilibrium.

Acharya Sushruta highlights the importance of Kriyakaal (timely intervention), which allows the body to be restored to normalcy at the early stages of Dosha, Dhātu, and Agni imbalance. For example, Vyayama (exercise) affects Doshas and Dhatus in specific ways—it is Samanya for Vata - Pitta Doshas and Vishesh for Kapha Dosha and Medo Dhātu (fat tissue). Overexercise leads to Atiyogam, resulting in dangerous effects like severe Vata - Pitta vitiation, depletion of Dhatus, and adverse impacts on intellect. However, adherence to guidelines such as exercising at half capacity (Ardhashakti Vyayam) and considering food and seasonal factors ensures Samyak Yoga, optimizing health benefits while avoiding ill effects.

Overall, lifestyle disorders arising from deviations in Dinacharya principles, whether through neglect, disobedience, or malpractice, can be prevented by adhering to Ayurveda's structured regimen. By applying conceptual logic and respecting natural sequences, these practices offer a sustainable path to holistic health and wellness while minimizing the risk of diseases caused by Dosha and Dhātu imbalances.

#### 4. Conclusion

To reduce the rise of non - communicable diseases linked to lifestyle disorders, Ayurveda stresses the importance of following Dinacharya (daily routine) practices. Activities like brushing, tongue cleaning, Nasya, and exercise are structured to balance Doshas, regulate body functions, and prevent diseases. Proper execution ensures harmony and health, while negligence may lead to imbalances and illnesses. Incorporating these practices thoughtfully fosters holistic well - being in modern life.

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