

The Art of Dinacaryā in Āyurveda

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Abstract:

As a holistic science of life, Āyurveda addresses every dimension of human well-being. It provides all the essential tools to help an individual achieve both physical health and genuine happiness. Within this system, *Dinacaryā*, i.e., daily routine, plays a vital role in a person's life. The ancient treatises, such as the *Carakasamhitā* and *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam*, teach that a daily routine called *Dinacaryā* maintains physical health and prevents diseases. It includes a series of daily practices such as waking up early, oral hygiene, exercise, bathing, etc., that are all synchronized with the natural rhythms of the body and environment. These practices help maintain the balance of the *doṣas*, viz., *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*, and promote physical fitness, mental clarity, and overall well-being. In the modern era, where lifestyle-related disorders are increasing, the Āyurvedic concept of *Dinacaryā* offers a holistic and preventive approach to healthy living.

Keywords: Āyurveda, Holistic, Dinacaryā, Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam, Triḍoṣa.

Introduction:

Human life manifests in four distinct dimensions: it can be beneficial or harmful, and it can be joyful or sorrowful. The science that illuminates what supports or undermines these states, guides optimal choices in diet and lifestyle, determines the measure of longevity, and defines the very essence of existence is known as Āyurveda. Ultimately, it is the comprehensive understanding of a beneficial life, a harmful life, a happy life, and a sorrowful life that forms the true foundation of this wisdom.¹ According to the *Carakasamhitā*, Āyurveda is the most superior and virtue-bestowing because other fields of knowledge only guide one towards otherworldly welfare. Āyurveda addresses the well-being of both this world and the next world; such is the opinion of the wise.² The term Āyurveda is derived from two words, i.e., *āyu*, which means life, and *veda*, which means knowledge. Thus, Āyurveda literally means the knowledge of life. According to Ācārya Suśruta, Āyurveda is the science that helps one understand life and provides guidance for living a long, healthy, and wholesome life.³ Traditionally, Āyurveda is believed to have originated from Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, who received this knowledge through meditation. The sacred knowledge was first transmitted by the creator Brahmā to Dakṣa Prajāpati, who later imparted it to the twin gods, i.e., the Aśvins. The Aśvins taught Āyurveda to Indra, and Indra later shared it with the Ṛṣis who approached him for this knowledge. Among Indra's disciples, Bharadvāja and Dhanvantari became renowned teachers. Bharadvāja is regarded as the founder of the school of physicians, while Dhanvantari is considered the founder of the school of surgeons. Thus, Āyurveda is believed to have

descended from Lord Brahmā through the gods to humanity. Āyurveda is also known as the *Upaveda* of the *Atharvaveda*.

Dinacaryā:

In Āyurveda, *Dinacaryā* refers to the daily regimen or healthy routine that should be followed from morning to night to maintain physical and mental well-being. In Āyurveda, it is said that a healthy individual seeking to safeguard their lifespan and achieve a life that is both joyful and purposeful should awaken during the sacred hours of the *brāhmamuhūrta*.⁴ Upon waking, one should first assess the state of the body to determine whether one is fit to rise. If one feels ready to begin the daily routine, one should perform the cleansing rites of elimination and purification. Following this, one should brush the teeth using a thin twig from a medicinal tree such as *arka*, *bargada*, *khair* or *babūla*, *karañja*, *kakubha*, etc.⁵ After purifying the mouth, one should apply *sauvīra añjana* to the eyes daily, as it is highly beneficial for vision. The eyes are organs of light, inherently dominated by the element of fire, which leaves them constantly vulnerable to the cold qualities of *kapha*. Therefore, to expel excess *kapha* from the eyes, one should apply *rasañjana* at least once a week.⁶ After applying *añjana*, one should sequentially perform nasal therapy, i.e., *nasya*; practise oil pulling or rinse the mouth, i.e., *gaṇḍūṣa*; inhale medicated smoke, i.e., *dhūmapāna*; and lastly, chew *tāmbūla*.⁷ According to Āyurveda, one should practise *abhyāṅga*, i.e., oil massage, every day. This practice delays aging, relieves tiredness, and eliminates nervous system disorders. Furthermore, it clears the vision, nourishes the body, prolongs life, and induces deep sleep. It also maintains beautiful skin while keeping the muscles firm, strong, and well-toned.⁸

In Āyurveda, it is recommended that one should engage in regular physical exercise, i.e., *vyāma*, as it increases the capacity for work, stimulates the digestive fire, and reduces excess fat to eliminate obesity. Furthermore, it brings distinct definition to the muscles, leaving the limbs firm and well-toned.⁹ After completing physical exercise, the entire body should be gently massaged in the *anuloma* direction, or each limb should be systematically kneaded in a sequential manner to bring comfort.¹⁰ After exercise, one should apply a herbal paste. This process destroys excess *kapha*, melts and dries up fat tissue, strengthens the limbs, and makes the skin radiant.¹¹ According to Āyurveda, bathing stimulates the digestive fire, i.e., *jaṭhārāgni*, acts as an aphrodisiac, i.e., *vṛṣya*, prolongs life, and enhances enthusiasm and physical strength. Furthermore, it destroys itching, skin impurities, fatigue, sweat, drowsiness, thirst, burning sensations, and disease.¹² Āyurveda says that bathing the lower body from the neck down with warm water increases physical strength.

However, washing the head with that same water diminishes the strength of both the hair and the eyes.¹³ All living beings desire happiness; therefore, Āyurveda says that all their activities and pursuits are directed towards attaining it. Yet, true happiness cannot be achieved without *dharma*, i.e., righteousness. Consequently, everyone must remain actively devoted to performing righteous actions.¹⁴ One should always abandon the ten types of sins committed through mind, speech, and action. Through bodily discipline, one must renounce physical

misdeeds, which include violence such as physical assault and hurting another's feelings, theft, and unlawful sensory indulgence such as forbidden relationships. Through the mastery of speech, one must refrain from verbal transgressions, which encompass malicious gossip, harsh or unpleasant words, falsehood, and hypocritical, two-faced speech. Finally, within the depth of the mind, one must completely eradicate mental sins: plotting harm or murder, coveting and wishing to usurp another's wealth, and harboring false beliefs such as atheism or thinking in contradiction to sacred scriptures and the words of enlightened sages.¹⁵ One should act appropriately, in accordance with one's physical and financial capacity, towards those who have no livelihood and those suffering from disease and grief; that is, one should extend financial assistance to the jobless, medical aid to the sick, and proper reassurance to the grief-stricken, treating them with empathy and support.¹⁶

One should consider all living beings as equal to oneself, even if they are mere insects or ants; that is, one should not look down upon anyone as insignificant or inferior. One should not cause them any distress and should show compassion towards them.¹⁷ One should revere deities, cows, Brāhmins, the elderly, physicians, kings, and guests, offering them due respect and warm hospitality.¹⁸ Remain equanimous in prosperity (happiness) and adversity (sorrow). Investigate the cause behind why prosperity was attained and why adversity was received. One should harbor aversion towards the cause that brought about the adversity rather than hating the adversity itself.¹⁹ One should speak opportunely and say what is beneficial, keeping words concise and reasoned. Speak the unassailable truth that leaves no room for dispute, and always express it with gentleness and grace.²⁰

One should not completely deprive the senses, such as the eyes and ears, of experiencing their natural objects of sight and sound; yet one must never allow oneself to become utterly indulgent or enslaved by those pleasures.²¹ One should refrain from any action that hinders the attainment of the *trivarga*, i.e., righteousness, prosperity, and desire, or conflicts with these pursuits. In all matters of conduct, adopt the middle path, avoiding both fanatical adherence and vehement opposition to any specific practice. In this context, the term *dharma* refers to the virtuous path of living prescribed by Āyurveda; one should consistently practise moderation along that path.²² One should not allow body hair, nails, or facial hair to grow excessively, ensuring that they are regularly trimmed. Maintain strict cleanliness of the feet and the excretory passages. Practise daily bathing, wear pleasing fragrances and elegant attire, and avoid any loud, flamboyant, or improper appearance, aligning one's conduct instead with that of a refined and civilized person.²³ Precious gemstones such as diamonds, rubies, yellow sapphires, and blue sapphires; empowered mantras such as *balā*, *atibalā*, and *aparāhitā*; and potent sacred herbs such as *sahadevī* should be worn on the arms or around the neck in accordance with the guidance of an Āyurvedic physician and an astrologer. Furthermore, whenever walking, one should use an umbrella for protection, wear proper footwear, and keep one's gaze fixed safely on the path about four cubits ahead.²⁴ If any necessary work arises at night, one should walk with a stick in hand, tie a turban on the head or wear a cap, and take someone along for assistance.²⁵ One should not pick the nostrils with a finger without reason. One should not scratch or dig the ground with fingers without reason.

Furthermore, one must avoid making unnatural or distorted gestures with the limbs, face, or eyes, such as grimacing or rolling the eyes, and should refrain from sitting in an awkward, strained squatting posture.²⁶ One should avoid staying under a tree at night and refrain from loitering, even during the day, near or inside three-way intersections, sacred shrines, major crossroads, temples, taverns, slaughterhouses, dense forests, abandoned houses, or cremation grounds.²⁷ One should not gaze intently at the sun, nor carry a heavy burden on the head. One should also not look continuously at microscopic, very bright, impure, or unpleasant objects.²⁸ One should neither sell liquor, manufacture liquor, nor trade in it, and it must not be consumed either. Only for medical purposes may liquor be consumed.²⁹ Being compassionate towards all living beings, giving charity, maintaining control over the body, mind, and speech, meaning not leaving them unchecked, and treating the interests of others with the same regard as one's own self-interest is considered the complete path of righteous conduct in a nutshell.³⁰ Anyone who reflects deeply every day on how their days and nights are passing and what kind of person one is becoming will never succumb to misery.³¹

Conclusion:

Dinacaryā, as prescribed in Āyurveda, is not merely a daily routine but a complete way of life designed to maintain harmony between the body, mind, and environment. The ancient Ācāryas emphasized that health is preserved through disciplined living, proper hygiene, a balanced diet, righteous conduct, and alignment with the natural rhythms of nature. The practices described in the classical texts, such as waking during brāhmamuhūrta, maintaining personal cleanliness, exercising regularly, performing abhyaṅga, following ethical behaviour, and cultivating compassion, collectively contribute to the balance of the tridoṣas and the promotion of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. In the present age, where stress, unhealthy habits, and lifestyle disorders have become increasingly common, the principles of Dinacaryā offer a practical and preventive approach towards healthy living. By incorporating these timeless Āyurvedic guidelines into daily life, an individual can attain longevity, vitality, mental clarity, and inner peace. Therefore, Dinacaryā remains highly relevant even today and serves as an essential foundation for achieving a balanced, healthy, and meaningful life.

References:

1. hitāhitam sukham duḥkhamāyustasya hitāhitam /
mānam ca taśca yatroktaṁāyurvedaḥ sa ucyate // Carakasamhitā, 1.1.41
2. tasyā'yusaḥ puṇyatamo vedo vedavidāṁ mataḥ /
vakṣyate yanmanuṣyāṇāṁ lokayorubhayorhitam // Ibid, 1.1.43
3. āyurasmin vidyate'nena vā āyurvidandatītyāyurvedaḥ // Suśrutasamhitā, 1.1.13
4. brāhme muhūrte uttiṣṭhet svastho rakṣārthamāṣaḥ / Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam, 1.2.1
5. śārīracintāṁ nirvatya kṛtaśaucavidhistataḥ //
arkanyagrodhakhadīrakaraṅjakakubhādijam/
prātarbhuktva ca mṛdvagraṁ kaṣāyakaṭutiktakam // Ibid, 1.2.1-2
6. sauvīramañjanam nityam hitamakṣaṇostato bhajet /
cakṣustejomayam tasya viśeṣāt śleṣmato bhayam // Ibid, 1.2.5

7. tato nāvanagaṇḍūṣadhūmatāmbūlabhāgbhavet // Ibid, 1.2.6
8. abhyaṅgamācarennityaṁ sa jarāśramavātaḥ /
dṛṣṭiprasādapuṣṭiprasādapuṣṭayāyuh svapnasutvaktvadāḍharyakṛt // Ibid, 1.2.8
9. lāghavaṁ karmasāmarthyaṁ dīpto'gnirmedasaḥ kṣayaḥ /
vibhaktaghaṇagātratvaṁ vyāyāmādupajāyate // Ibid, 1.2.10
10. taṁ kṛtvā'nusukhaṁ dehaṁ mardayecca samantataḥ // Ibid, 1.2.12
11. udvartanaṁ kaphaharaṁ medasaḥ pravilāyanam /
sthīrīkaraṇamaṅgānāṁ tvakprasādakaraṁ param // Ibid, 1.2.15
12. dīpanaṁ vṛṣyamāyusaṁ snānamūrjābalapradam /
kaṇḍūmalaśramasvedatandrāṭṭrddāhapāmajit // Ibid, 1.2.16
13. uṣṇāmbunā'dhaḥkāyasya pariṣeko balāvahaḥ /
tenaiva tūttamaṅgasya balahr̥tkeśacakṣuṣam // Ibid, 1.2.17
14. sukhārthāḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ matāḥ sarvāḥ pravṛttayah /
sukhaṁ ca na vinādharmāttasmāddharmaparo bhavet // Ibid, 1.2.20
15. himsāsteyānyathākāmaṁ paśunyaṁ paruṣāṅrte /
Sambhinnālāpaṁ vyāpādamabhidhyāṁ drgviparyayam /
pāpaṁ karmeti daśadhā kāyavāṇmānasaistyajet // Ibid, 1.2.21-22
16. avṛttivyādhiśokārtānanuvarteta śaktitaḥ // Ibid, 1.2.23
17. ātmavatsatataṁ paśyedapi kīṭapipīlikam // Ibid, 1.2.23
18. vimukhānnārthinaḥ kuryānnāvamanyeta nākṣipet // Ibid, 1.2. 24
19. sampadvipatsvekamanā hetāvīṣyetphale na tu // Ibid, 1.2.25
20. Kāle hitaṁ mitaṁ brūyādavisamvādi peśalam // Ibid, 1.2. 26
21. na pīḍayedindriyāṇi na caitānyati lālayet // Ibid, 1.2.29
22. trivargaśūnyaṁ nārambhaṁ bhajettaṁ cāvirodhayan /
anuyāyātpṛatipadaṁ sarvadharmeṣu madhyamām // Ibid, 1.2.30
23. nīcaromanakhaśmaśrurnirmalāñighramalāyanah /
snānaśīlaḥ susurabhiḥ suveṣo'nulbaṇojjvalaḥ // Ibid, 1.2.31
24. dhārayetsatataṁratnasiddhamantramahauṣadhīḥ /
sātapatrapadatrāṇo vicaredyugamātradr̥k // Ibid, 1.2.32
25. nīśi cātyayike kārye daṇḍī maulī sahāyavān // Ibid, 1.2.33
26. nāśikāṁ na vikuṣṇīyānnākasmādvilikhedbhuvam /
nāṅgaiśceṣṭeta viguṇaṁ nāśitotkātakaściram // Ibid. 1.2.36
27. tathā catvaracaityāntaścatuspathasurālayān /
sūnāṭavīśūnyagr̥haśmaśānāni divā'pi na // Ibid, 1.2.38
28. sarvathekṣeta nādityaṁ na bhāraṁ śīrasā vahet /
nekṣeta pratataṁ sūkṣmaṁ dīptāmedhyāpriyāṇi ca // Ibid, 1.2.39
29. madyavikrayasandhānadānādānāni nācaret // Ibid, 1.2.40
30. ārdrasantānatā tyāgaḥ kāyavākcetasāṁ damaḥ /
svārthabuddhiḥ parārtheṣu paryāptamiti sadvratam // Ibid, 1.2.46
31. naktamdināni me yānti kathambhūtasya samprati /
duḥkhabhāṇna bhavatyevaṁ nityaṁ sannihitasmṛti // Ibid, 1.2.47