

# Vyadhikshamatva: The Essence of Resilience in Ayurvedic Wisdom

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## Abstract

This study critically explores the Ayurvedic concept of Vyadhikshamatva (immunity) and its significance in disease prevention. While Ayurveda emphasizes disease prevention as its primary objective, the exploration of immunity in the post-independence era has faced neglect, only to regain attention with government initiatives promoting immunization schedules. This research aims to comprehensively understand the relationship between immunity and lifestyle factors as outlined in ancient Ayurvedic texts. Factors such as digestive factors (Agni), diet (Ahara), sleep (Nidra), physical activity (Vyayama), mental stability (Satva), and rejuvenators (Rasayana) are identified as critical contributors to immune function. By synthesizing insights from classical Ayurvedic literature and contemporary scientific findings, this study bridges traditional knowledge with modern understanding. The systematic presentation of immunity-influencing factors contributes to holistic approaches to health and wellness.

**Keywords:** Vyadhikshamatva, Immunity, Ayurveda

## INTRODUCTION

To maintain the health and prevent from diseases is Vyadhikshamatva. Acharya Charaka has introduced the term Vyadhikshamatva in Ayurveda. It means all Doshas are neither of equal strength nor all the bodies capable of resisting disease equally. Vyadhikshamatva has direct role with respect to disease incidence and progress, when etiological factors come in contact with the body, it results in diseases. At the same time, the body tries to resist the disease either to avoid its manifestation or to suppress its intensity.

Chakrapanidatta expounds it as “Vyadhikshamatvam Vyadhibala Virodhitam Vyadyutpada Pratibandhakatvam Iti Yavat” i.e., the individual resistance to disease includes both the capacity of attenuation of the manifested disease as well as the prevention of the unmanifested one.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to above quotation Vyadhikshamatva can be understood as follows.

1. Sharirabala, opposite to the Vyadhibala which is already manifested (Resistance to the disease) is “Vyadhibala-Virodhitva”. It may be correlated with Yuktikrita Bala or acquired immunity.
2. Sharirabala, which oppose the manifestation of the Vyadhi (Immunity for the disease) that is “Vyadhi-Utpadak-Pratibaandhakatva”. It may be correlated with Sahaja Bala or innate immunity.

## Materials

Ayurvedic textual materials were referred, mainly Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Astanga Hridaya and available commentaries of these Samhitas, for the study. Available modern literature and journals

etc.

### **Factors responsible for Vyadhikshamatva**

Vyadhikshamatva depends on the maintenance of the equilibrium of Doshas and the healthiness of Dhatus. The factors which have to be checked while examining a patient have been described by Charaka. Bala (strength) is one of them.

### **Types of Bala (Vyadhikshamatva)**

This Bala (capacity to resist disease) is attainable from three sources i.e.

1. Sahaja,
2. Kalaja
3. *Yuktikrita*

**Sahaja Bala:** This type of Bala or resistance is related to be Prakruta (Natural, in born, genetic) and it exists from birth. It comprehends both Sarira and Sattwa. Hence it depends on the healthiness of Shukra and Aartava and also on the appropriateness of time and place. Mother's milk helps in fighting abdominal infections in new born. These readymade antibodies present in mother's milk is an example of passive natural immunity.

**Kalaja Bala** (seasonal resistance): Bala is derived by the effect of Kala is called Kalaja Bala. Kala is divided into Nityaga and Avasthika. Nityaga depends upon season and Avasthika is the diseased state. It refers to the natural (innate) immune power present in the body by virtue of age and seasons.

Rutu Janya Bala

Aalpa Bala - Aadana Kala (Shishira, Vasant and Grishma Rutus).

Uttam Bala - Visarga Kala (Varsha, Sharada, Hemanta Rutus).

**Vaya Krit:** The Old age persons will have poor resistance and the middle aged persons naturally possess good resistance.

### **Yuktikrita Bala** (artificially acquired)

This Bala is acquired by the consumption of wholesome food (ghee, milk etc.), practice of ideal regimen (exercise etc.) and by the appropriate use of Rasayana and Vajikarana drugs. This can also be generated in the body by inoculating the various toxic antigens in the body in low dose forming antibodies against them in the body to fight against the future disease. The Ayurvedokta example of 'Vishkanya' is one such example of Yukti Krita Vyadhikshama Bala.

### **Bala Vridhikar Bhava**

Acharya Charaka has described Bala Vridhikar Bhava to improve strength of the body as follows.

1. Desha (birth place) - Birth of a person in a country where people are naturally strong.
2. Kula (family) - Birth in a race of strong people.
3. Kala (time) - Birth at the time when people are naturally gain strength.

As per Acharya Charaka at the end of the Visarga Kala and at the beginning of Aadana kala the strength in human beings is maximum.

4. Sukhascha Kaalayoga - Favorable conditions in all aspects leading to good strength.

5. Beeja Kshetra Sampat - Excellence of Beeja (Sperm & Ovum) and Kshetra (Uterus) qualities.
6. Ahara Sampaccha - Excellence of nourishment. Bala is achieved by proper combination of the intake of wholesome food like Rakta Shali, Mudga Yusha, Saindhava, Amalaka Other regimen to maintain proper Bala like proper rest, exercise and appropriate use of Rasayana-Yogas.
7. Shareer Sampaccha - Excellence of bodily constitution. Acharya Charaka has mentioned those who have well compact body are strong otherwise weak.
8. Satmyasampaccha - Excellence of suitability substance conducive to an individual is called "Satmya" and the use of such substances result in the wellbeing of that individual.
9. Satvasampaccha - Excellence of the mind. On the basis of Bala, Satva is of three types - Pravara, Madhya and Pravara-Satva-Purusha is called as Satva-Sarapurusha. Satva-Sarapurusha with small body structure will be able to tolerate different type of disease states.
10. Swabhav Sampaccha - It refers to the person's engagement in strength increasing measures.
11. Yuvan (youth) - An individual has good strength in middle age as compared to childhood and old age.
12. Karma (Exercise) - The Karmaj Bala here refers to the strength obtained through exercise. The exercise tones the muscles and arouses the appetite and boosts the immunity.
13. Sanharsha - It is the orgasm obtained after sexual intercourse. This releases the happy endorphins in the body which gives pleasing sensation and happy and contented mood.

Ayurveda propounds that prevention is an equally important aspect of disease management as cure and thus, strengthening the immune system, is a natural way to help the body fight against the disease-causing pathogens.

### **Relation between Immunity and Ojas**

Chakrapanidatta says that Ojas, which is Sara or essence of all Dhatus. It is directly related to the strength of the body. Hence immunity is also dependent Ojas. It is also known as an Uttamapranayathana (best seat of life). It is observed that in diseases accompanied by profuse tissue loss there is also diminution of strength, Ojas and immunity. This condition is observed in tuberculosis, diabetes, anemia etc.

### **Type of Ojas**

According to Acharya Chakrapanidatta, Ojasa is of two types

1. Para Ojas: found in Hridaya (heart), have a quantity of eight drops and loss of even single drop are fatal to the person.
2. Aparaj Ojas: Ardhanjali Pramana (half Anjali), the depletion of this Ojas is not so deleterious as compared to Paraojas.

Ojas and Bala are resultant of Agnivyapara (proper digestion) and assimilation of the wholesome food. So, any impairment in the Agnivyapara and lack of wholesome food will affect the quality of Ojas.

### **Vitiation of Ojas**

- **Ojovisramsas:** Dalhana and Chakrapanidatta explain Visramsas as leakage of Ojas from the Dhatus or the impairment of the distribution of Ojas to the Dhatus. The symptomatologies associated with Visramsas are flaccidity of joints, weakness of the body, displacement of Doshas and obstruction of activity.

- **Ojovyapath:** the condition is explained by Chakrapanidatta as the diminution of natural qualities of Ojas by the vitiated Doshas. Dalhana explains this as a movement of Ojas away from the natural state as a result of its interaction with vitiated Doshas and Dhushyas. It presents the following symptoms, Sthabdagurugatrata (inertness and heaviness of extremities), Vatasopha (swelling due to Vata), Glani (feeling of fatigue), Varnabheda (discolouration of the skin or change of complexion), Tandra (drowsiness) and Nidra (sleepiness).
- **Ojakshaya:** The Kshaya of Ojas is brought about by Abhigata (trauma), Kshayat (diminution of dhatu), Krodha (anger), Soka (grief), Dainya (anxiety), Srama (exhaustion) and hunger (Kshudha). The symptomatology of Kshaya of Ojas includes: Murcha (loss of consciousness), Mamsakshaya (wasting of muscle), Moha (stupor), Pralapa (delirium) and Marana (death). Dalhana says that here the normal function of Bala is also impaired.

**Avyadhi saha Sharirani:** Individuals incapable of resisting diseases.

Over Obese individual.

Over emaciated person

Whose muscle and blood are diminishing markedly.

Debilitated person.

One who consumes unwholesome food.

One who consumes less amount of food.

Whose mental faculties are weak.

One the other hand, individuals having opposite type of physical constitution are capable of resisting diseases.

### **Contributing factors for Vyadhikshamatva**

Nonviolence is the best among the promoters of longevity of living beings; Knowledge is the best among promoters of nourishment.

Strength, health, longevity and vital breath are dependent on the condition of Agni. When the proper quantity of food and drinks supplied to a person which is commensurate with the power of digestion in the form fuel, which sustains the Agni otherwise leads to abnormal functions.

For the maintenance of equilibrium state of Dhatu the following adaptations are essential.

Proper use of actions and consumption of food contrary to the properties of place time and the self.

Avoid over utilization and improper utilization of time, intellect and sense objects.

Non suppression of impelled urges.

Do not indulge in activities which are beyond one's own capacity

### **DISCUSSION**

Vyadhikshamatva in Ayurveda. The process of preventing of diseasedevelopment and capacity to resist disease are jointly known as Vyadhikshamatva. Chakrapani has described this in two aspects – antagonistic to the strength and virulence of disease (Vyadhi Bala Virodhitva) and the capacity to inhibit, contain or bind the causes on factors of disease (Vyadhi Utpadaka Vibandhakatva).

Vyadhi Bala Virodhitva is concerned with the action or process after the disease has manifested in the body. This process indicates the further escalation of the virulence of the disease is inhibited and the

diseases process is contained. Vyadhi Utpada Vibandhakatva controls the disease during the Samprapti only. This is actually the prevention of the manifestation of disease.

According to Charaka, not all human beings are equally capable of Vyadhikshamatva. This is due to the different nutritional status of the individuals because Ojas, Bala and Vyadhikshamatva are dependent on nutritious food. A change in the nutritional capacity of food leads to the change in the Bala and Vyadhikshamatva. It may also be further pointed out that the constitutional status or Prakruti also differs from individual to individual and therefore the Vyadhikshamatva. In Ayurvedic literature, the natural inherent strength or power of the body which is responsible for the health is termed as Bala. Bala depends upon the health status of Dhatu, Prakruti, Desha, Kala and Ojas. Bala is classified into three types – Sahaja, Kalaja and Yukti Kruta. Sahaja Bala refers to the inherent characteristics property of an individual present since birth. And this is formed from the time of formation of Garbha based on excellence of Shukra and Arthava. The understanding of Sahaja Bala resembles to the innate immunity.

Innate immunity refers to nonspecific defence mechanism that come into play immediately or within hours of an antigen's appearance in the body. These mechanisms include physical barriers such as skin, chemicals in the blood and immune system cells that attack foreign cells in the body. Kalaja Bala refers to the strength attained by the individual due to the impact of seasonal variation and ageing phenomenon, which is temporary. In modern science, it resembles the acquired or adaptive immunity.

Specifically mentioning, the immunity developed by an individual after any infection in due course of subject's life. The third type mentioned is the Yuktikruta Bala. It is gained by the planned implementation of combination of diet, medication and other regimen by the patient as planned by the physician. In modern medical literature it is the acquired immunity where in it includes active immunity induced by vaccination and passive immunity due to administration of antibody containing preparation. In normal state, in a healthy human body – Vata, Pitta and Kapha Dosha irrespective of opposite qualities coexist each other rather than contradicting each other. This is termed as Sahaja Satmya, which the conventional system coined as the so called immune tolerance. Hence, this is the reason why the body's own immune cells are not attacking self from Ayurvedic point of view.

But, due to the influence of Daiva (past deeds or unknown factors) or due to Svabhavika Karanas (in which we can include all the probable theories or mechanism of initiating autoimmunereaction such as microbial, genetic, immunological) potentially paving way to imbalance or disequilibrium or disability to the Sahaja Satmya, there by the immune cells (leucocytes) lose the ability to identify self from non – self or foreign agents. Functioning of Dosha (ojovisramsas – as it is the malfunctioning and displacement of Dosha. They manifestation of diseases – spectrum of autoimmune disorders in different body parts depend on the cause and the site engaged by the cause. To be precise the area where Kha Vaigunya has been manifested progress to the Dosha Dushya Samurchana and ultimately culminates in the manifestation of disease. Even in the modern medical literature the autoimmune disorders are classified as organ specific and organ non – specific or systemic based on the auto antibodies engaging the site.

As there is Prakopa of Vata and Pitta there is no question in the status of Kapha. There will be comparative reduction of Kapha or to an extent Malarupi Kapha is formed (altered leucocytes). Kapha

Dosha is acknowledged as Balakrut i.e. confers strength to the body. Bala is one of the synonyms of Kapha Dosha. Bala can be interpreted here as the Slaishmika Ojas or Aparaj Ojas which bestows Vyadhikshamatva Shakti i.e. power to resist and overcome the forces or factors which bring about diseases and decay. To be precise according to Acharya Dalhana, Ojas is the essence of all Dhatus which are Moortimat. So, Ojas is a substance (that can be interpreted as the white fraction of blood – the white blood cells or leucocytes) and the Bala imparted is the functional outcome or component. Both are decided by Kapha Dosha even though Vata and Pitta has its own role in judgment and attack. When Anyadosha (except Kapha dosha) Prakopa occur, it causes Kshaya to Kapha relatively or formation of Malarupi Kapha (altered leucocytes) ending in immune system malfunctioning.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Vyadhikshamatva made its appearance as a result of observations. It was noticed that in spite of living in same infected surrounding and utilization of unwholesome and contaminated food and drinks only some persons get affected while others remain unaffected. It was also seen that some of the diseases persons get rid of their disease even without treatments. The occurrence or non-occurrence, mildness in every aspect forced the ancient scholars to think of those very factors which were responsible for these inter-individual variations. The same was named as Vyadhikshamatva by Acharya Charak. The latter scholars and commentators gave some concept and tried their best for making concerning principles. It was indicative of some internal energy or force latter on describe as Ojas or Bala. However the relation between Bala and Ojas is parallel to that relation between cause and effect or mass and energy. Ojas is known by Upachaya of all Dhatus while Bala is indicated by work. Thus Ojas and Bala represent the outer and inner aspects of same things. The Ojas is not only providing the power of resistance to diseases but it is source of mental and physical energy and strength. So Ojas should always be restored because it is root cause or pillar for diseases free condition.

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