

Ayurvedic Model of Salutogenesis –From ‘Health for All’ to ‘Health Intelligence for All’

Sujithra M

Amrita Centre for Advanced Research in Ayurveda
Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana PO, Kollam 690525.

Corresponding Author’s Email: sujithra.rm@gmail.com

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Abstract

Health is the most aspired aspect in life. An increase in the life span, does not mean an increase in the health span. Despite eradication of major diseases like Smallpox completely from the face of the earth, ‘Health’ is still a growing concern. Statistically, cardiovascular disease and cancer are declared as the leading causes of death globally. While one can be a silent killer, the other manifests deep-rooted unnoticed over years. Several fatal diseases can be reversed or managed with changes in lifestyle to a certain extent. Better yet, with health intelligence, prevention can be done. The truth is, sometimes people live longer, but disability and morbidity increase as age advances. Hence there is a need for a framework of theory and practice of health that can not only enhance longevity but also proportionally the health span of individuals. The concept ‘Salutogenesis’ exactly covers the aspects of maintenance and promotion of human health. When ‘Health for All’ is the goal of WHO popularized since 1970, the traditional Indian system of medicine-Ayurveda offers a model of ‘Salutogenesis’ that incorporates not only ‘Health for All’ but ‘Health Intelligence for All’. This article elucidates the various concepts mentioned in Ayurveda that corroborates with the modern concept of Salutogenesis, and also harbors the importance of Health intelligence in Preventive medicine.

Keywords : Ayurveda, Health, Salutogenesis, Pathogenesis, Prakriti, Sarira, Manas

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Introduction

‘Health for All’ was the core ideology of WHO, concept proposed as early as 1978.¹ The dominance of the biomedical model of health and disease has led to a preoccupation with bio-molecular disease mechanisms and the use of purified chemical compounds that target specific disease pathways. While this approach has helped us to intervene with dramatic outcomes in many life-threatening diseases, it has led to the negligence of efforts to nurture positive states of health and well-being. As a result, we can survive many life-threatening conditions and prolong death in critical illnesses, only to experience deterioration in the quality of life and well-being. Prolongation of life span is not accompanied by prolongation of health span. Life span and health span

should go hand in hand. Cultivation of health is the responsibility of the individual and not the Institution. In preventive health, the individual is not just the passive recipient of plans but the active controller of his own health.²

If we want to enhance the quality of health and well-being and facilitate, we need to look at health from a different perspective. No less than a paradigm shift is required. If we focus on disease and curing, we will think of health as a commodity that can be distributed or a service that can be offered to the people. However, when we think about nurturing positive states of health, we must visualize health as a state of well-being created by the individual’s active participation. Health becomes a state of well-being that can be created from within. And for

this, we need to cultivate health intelligence in people's minds. From an Ayurvedic perspective, the slogan for the future should be "Health Intelligence for All" and not just "Health for All" or "Health Care for All".

Components of Health and its Importance

Health Intelligence

Ayurveda maintains that lack of health intelligence is the ultimate cause of all diseases. This is *Prajnaparadha*. *Prajnaparadha*³ is misinterpreted as 'sin'. With in-depth analysis, it corroborates a lack of health intelligence. In other words, Prajna means health intelligence. When health intelligence is lacking, it becomes *Prajnaparadha* and hence also becomes the root cause of diseases. The word Prajna stands for Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti. Understanding what is good and bad for life and health (Dhi), Avoiding what is bad for life (Dhriti), Remembering what is good and bad for life in real-life situations (Smriti) are the three composites of Prajna. When we awaken these faculties, then we can cultivate a healthy lifestyle that helps achieve both life span and health span. Initiating Prajna is the first step in Salutogenesis offered by Ayurveda.

Astangahridaya asserts that one must cultivate health intelligence by carefully studying the Ayurvedic texts.⁴ Caraka Samhita outlines explicitly a routine to be followed as part of Sadvritta. This is called the Acara Rasayana and is mentioned as required to maintain health and the prevention of diseases.⁵ The exact time of consuming food, taking water, age related activities are all being elaborated in the classical textbooks as a part of maintaining health. The food that can and cannot be taken on a regular basis, indicate the depth with which health intelligence was handled.

Salutogenesis means the creation of health, contrary to Pathogenesis, which relates to disease development in an individual. This implies the focus on health and all the factors influencing health, in contrary to disease and all the factors causing disease.⁶ 'Salutogenesis' can be termed as a movement towards health.⁷ This concept was

contrived by Aaron Antonovsky almost 4 decades ago. This is proposed as a three-dimensional sense of coherence.⁸ Ayurveda is one of the earliest systems of health care that has put forth a concept of salutogenesis or creating a healthy state of physical and mental well-being. Svastha, an Ayurvedic term for health, means one who gets established in a state of inner well-being in themselves. It will not be inappropriate if we translate Svasthavritta as salutogenesis or the way of life that will create health.

Knowing oneself, Personality, Constitution, Pharmacogenomics and Personalized Medicine

To know oneself, the Prakriti of the person must be understood. Prakriti attributes to physical and mental characteristics.⁹ Prakriti is unique to each and every individual. Prakriti manifests because of a different combination of dosas expressed at different levels in each person. Different types of constitutions attribute to other traits amongst people; Jati Prakriti, Kulaprakriti, Desaprakriti, Kalaprakriti, and Vayaprakriti.¹⁰

Personality is the sum of all these constitutions. So Prakriti gives a framework for a person, benefitting the person in understanding himself and the physician to understand the patient in a well-defined manner. In preventive medicine, understanding personality is important. The two specialties, pharmacogenomics and personalized medicine also advocate this system. Understanding the person entirely even at the genetic level, and then using it to prevent or treat a clinical condition. Antonovsky mentions about GRRs- general resistance resources that includes genetic, environmental, and psychosocial characters that attributes to orientation of preventive health. The strength of salutogenesis is adaptability that focuses on problem solving. The Ayurvedic concept of Prakriti matches with the individual sense of coherence and the attitude towards handling situations.

Body as a Self-Regulating System

Tridosas stand for Self-regulation. The body self-regulates itself when a healthy diet and lifestyle are followed.

Prakriti plays a significant role in determining the lifestyle and diet that should be followed. Understanding one's prakriti is also attributed to Health intelligence and using it to develop a lifestyle and diet that can dynamically balance the dosas. The stages of the dosas when they shift from a normal phase to an aggravated degree and then a disease-causing step are very clearly explained in the classical texts of Ayurveda. Caya is the first stage where there is a mild increase of the dosas from the state of normalcy. This will result in discomfort, which when rectified, will immediately cause the alleviation of the dosa that has undergone an increase. Prakopa is the second stage where there is a more significant increase and the vitiated dosas will start moving from their location to other sites in the body. At this stage, just by correcting diet and activities, the vitiated dosas can be managed to some extent; if not, mild intervention may be needed. The following stages Prasara, Sthana samshraya, Vyakti and Bheda¹¹ require treatment along with diet and lifestyle management. Health intelligence targets to break the aggravated dosas within the second stage itself. A similar model was published by Travis J W and Ryan R S as the Illness-Wellness Continuum where there is a degree of change in the spectrum from wellness to illness. The authors mention that at up to one point in the continuum, with diet and lifestyle, the wellness can be maintained and promoted. Beyond this medical intervention is required.¹²

Dinacarya and Rtucarya - Harmonizing with the Rhythms of Nature

The Ayurvedic Classical Texts emphasizes on the specific Ahara and Vihara to be followed during each season as the macrocosm will alternate with the usna and sita, ruksa and snigdha. The food chosen should be opposite to that of the macrocosm. If not, it will aggravate the Dosas. In Ztucarya in Gricma, as the atmosphere is scorching hot, the texts advise avoiding patu, katu etc., so as not to exacerbate the dosas.¹³ Cold water and a preparation called Saktu is advised, during this seasonal regimen, for the body to adjust to the heat in the environment.¹⁴ For all the six seasons, the regimens to be followed are

explained in detail. For example, in Sarad and Vasanta Rtu, the text advices to consume food substances that are ruksa in nature, contrary to the snigdha guna present in the environment.¹⁵

Barett proposes the concept of Behavioral eco-wellness, where the type of food chosen and eaten will be influenced by various factors like culture, social norms, economic status and geography. In The Dietary eco-wellness, all aspects pertaining to food are covered from production to waste.¹⁶ Behavioral and dietary eco-wellness need to co-exist in balance for maintenance and promotion of health.

Ahara, Agni and Ama- The Essence of Health

The basis of every disease is Âma.¹⁷ This is produced in the body when the Agni is abnormal. Deranged Agni is the primary cause for every disease. In Ayurveda, the food consumed by a person should not be based on the calorie or nutrition it provides, but the Agni and the Satmya are contrary to modern medicine. Caraka mentions that Agni is the base of the life force itself.¹⁸ If adequately digested and assimilated, there is no Ama, hence no disease. Sometimes, this Ama can accumulate in the due course and create health issues. To prevent this, that occasional cleansing of the body is mandatory. Every material chosen as food has GuGas identical to the qualities of the Dosas inside the body and the Pancamahabhutas that exist in continuum with the body and outside. Consumption of food will either increase or decrease the Dosas, thus creating the risk of causing disease. Hence, it all relates back to choosing the right food (Pathyahara) and avoiding the unsuitable (Apathyahara). Care should be taken so that there is no overt/non/wrong utilisation of food or regimens at all costs.¹⁹ The Sense of coherence is strongly related to various variables like demography, social life, life quality, neighbourhood and mental health.²⁰ It was also established that there is a strong association between sense of coherence and balanced lunches, and regular intake of nutritionally balanced lunch.²¹ This further proves the fact how the choice of diet and food is the essence of maintaining health.

Sarira & Manas - The Containers of Health

The body and mind share a unique bond. When one is inflicted, the other follows the path. Physical strength depends on what the mind decides, and mental strength can make even a sick man energetic.²² It's because of this concept that Ayurveda has proposed the Adidaivika and Adibhautika type of treatment, where the target is health and stability of both mind and body. The best example is Atisara and Chardi. There is a manasika type along with the ones caused by the aggravation of the Dosas.²³ Specific treatments are mentioned for these. In the salutogenetic model, the sense of coherence is already inclusive of mental attitude. The sense of coherence is an inevitable source of health that directly affects the quality of health.²⁴

Results & Discussion

The potential contribution of Ayurveda in the field of medicine is that it is nature centered, person-centered, integrates diet, lifestyle and medication, mind-body medicine, preventive- predictive medicine and healthy ageing. Ayurveda advocates the use of natural resources available in the surroundings of the person for his treatment. Lifestyle and diet are localized according to the geographical condition and season. We should use the experiences of traditional medicine in different geographical regions to build new health applications. By using modern advanced assessments of the physical and mental constitution like genomics, the prevention of diseases can become manageable. Ayurveda traces the ultimate cause of illness to personality traits and the interactions between mind and body. Spiritual, Psychological and Behavioral approaches all belong to the Ayurvedic approach to healing. Meditation, Mindfulness, Yoga and Spiritual Counselling are potential areas where Ayurveda has rich experience for new research.

Future Prospects: As far as the Salutogenetic model is concerned, there are 500 articles available on the theoretical aspects, but much groundwork needs to be done in practicality. As far as Ayurveda is concerned, the

concepts are very clearly listed and are at the extent of being attainable targets by an individual. One Health system Policy aims to incorporate Integrative Health system, where the patient gets the medical system of their choice, as the clinical condition demands.²⁵ Exploring Cross-disciplinary fellowships and acquiring faculty positions in different Institutions, would help understand the challenges and the maintenance of health from a different perspective.²⁶ For an awareness to be created regarding Health Intelligence, the knowledge about the areas out there to be explored is mandatory. With health intelligence, Prajnaparadha can be avoided thus leading to increased health and life span. Awareness program to educate the public would be the first step taken in the direction of the movement 'Health Intelligence for All.' Ayurvedic System of Medicine focuses on individual, and strongly believes in prophylaxis rather than curative medicine.²⁷ Creating awareness about the concepts, mentioned in the Classical textbook with suitable modifications made to suit the present age would attribute to achieving the goal- Health Intelligence for All' as a part of Salutogenetic model of Ayurveda.

Conclusion

Ayurveda is the 'Knowledge of life'. The multiplicity of factors required to maintain and preserve the life force has been explained in Ayurveda. The Ayurvedic Salutogenetic Model can be proposed based on two factors- Physical Health and Mental Health. The Physical Health depends on Ahara, and Vihara. Vihara includes minute-to-minute activities inclusive of sleep. Mental Health is the stability of the mind in all situations and thus avoiding Prajnaparadha. Basically, physical and mental health are under the influence of the dosas, and a balance of the dosas will ensure healthy body and mind. This involves Ahara and Vihara. So, an Ayurvedic Salutogenic model is an interconnected spectrum of factors. Just like the 3-dimensional Sense of coherence suggested in Salutogenesis, from an Ayurvedic perspective, it is Sarira, Atma and Manas. Hence this combination of intersecting factors is all to be in balance

to maintain health thus helping in stress balancing and coping. The Ayurvedic approach advocates salutogenesis beginning with re-establishing the harmony between the microcosm and macrocosm. Self-assessment of one's constitution and personality to formulate an individualized lifestyle regimen, as well as diet to nurture and preserve health, maintaining the sensitive balance of mind-body, helps to be healthy.

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