



BIRD EYE VIEW ON CELIBACY (CONCEPT OF BRAHMACHARYA) IN AYURVEDA CLASSIC

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***Brahmacharya* (Celibacy)^[1]**

The word *brahmacharya* stems literally from two components:

1. *Brahma*, (shortened from *brahman*), the absolute, eternal, supreme God-head. (As opposed to *Brahma*, the deity in the Hindu triad responsible for creation).
2. *charya*, which means "to follow". This is often translated as activity, mode of behavior, a "virtuous" way of life.

So the word *brahmacharya* indicates a lifestyle adopted to enable one to attain the ultimate reality.

To see the importance of *Brahmacharya* or regulated sexual conduct we need to begin with an understanding of *Shukra* or semen, and how *Ayurveda* understands its formation.

The human body requires food in substantial amounts to sustain it. This food is processed at three levels (i) *Jaatharaagni* (gross conversion from solid to fluid state) (ii) *Panchamahaabhootaagni* (the fluid is subjected to further digestion to convert it into the *Panchabhautika* components) and the (iii) *Dhaatvaagni* (the tissue metabolism).

The *Dhaatvaagni* finally takes the fluid and converts it into a subtle form, which can.

- a) Replenish its own tissue
- b) Form the nutrient part of the next *Dhaatu* or *Ojas*
- c) Form the waste material and
- d) Form the *Upadhaatus* (subsidiary tissues)

This elaborate and complex procedure is spread over a period of one month, finally culminating into a substance of an unctuous, sweet, dense, heavy, cold, slimy nature of body constituent called *Shukra*. It differs from other body tissues it can procreate. Hence it is close to the soul. *Charaka* has said the transcending soul and mind use *Shukra* as a vehicle. Since *Shukra* is a very potent, structurally complex and dense tissue and is derived

from the ingested food in a very condensed, concentrated form, its loss can have far reaching effects on the body. Since all the *Mahaabhootas* are participating, it can be stimulated by any of the sense organs as well as the mind. Therefore, all ancient Indian Sciences have laid great emphasis on preservation of *Shukra*. This process is known as *Brahmacharya* (observation of celibacy).

The regenerative capacity of *Shukra* is utilized for the formation and growth of various body constituents until the person attains maturity. On reaching maturity when the tissues have become stable enough to perform their normal functions, *Shukra* starts functioning as a reproductive tissue. Therefore till the attainment of physical maturity, sexual act is prohibited which in males is between 20-25 years and in females between 12-16 years.

Depending on various parameters such as individual constitution, dietary habits, season of the year, the frequency of coitus has been recommended. Importance is also given to regular use of appropriate aphrodisiacs. This is helpful to replenish the ejaculated *Shukra*. Thus *Shukra* being a vehicle of *Atman* and mind and a major contributor of *Ojas*, *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) has been rightly described as the third of the triad. Thus, in short, proper food replenishes the *Bhautika* constituents, sleep is helpful to soothe the mind and sensory motor apparatus and observance of celibacy or moderation in sex is responsible for spiritual well being.

As long as one is situated in the material world, there must be pleasure and pain arising from the material body. As *Krsna* advises in *Bhagavad-gita*, *tams titikṣasva bharata*. One has to learn how to tolerate the temporary pains and pleasures of this material world. One must also be detached from his family and practice celibacy. Sex with one's wife according to the scriptural injunctions is also accepted as *brahmacharya* (celibacy), but illicit sex is opposed to religious principles, and it hampers advancement in spiritual consciousness.

Brahmacharya as controlling sex^[2]

Brahmacharya means a balanced sex and worldly life. Besides *ahara* and *nidra*, *brahmacharya* is the third component of *upastambha-traya*. It essentially negates over-indulgence in sex and similar worldly acts. The practice of *brahmacharya* promotes life and preserves health and as such is an impotent practice. Carnal desires and their timely satisfaction play a very important role in maintaining good health and promoting longevity in adult individuals. Ayurveda has never been in favor of voluntarily suppressing this urge (thereby inviting diseases) but much emphasis has been on the controlled indulgence of sex.

Although the sexual maturity starts by 12th year in girls and in 21st year in boys, it is advisable for them to avoid sex, marriage and conception till the 16 and 25 years of age, respectively, since the internal organs till the above mentioned ages are not fully matured.

Indulgence

Generally the frequency of indulgence depends on

- The age.
- Moods.
- Surroundings.
- Nutrition.
- Willingness of the other partner.

Indulgence is advised in

- Winter and spring season.
- One can have sex as much as he wants or as much as his physical capacity and age permits.

Indulgence is less advised during

- Monsoons not exceed twice a week.
- Summers, to the extent of once in a fortnight.

Benefits of following the rules advised in indulgence

- To save the vital powers from draining out of the body and
- To avoid physical over-exertion.

Who should avoid the sex: Even a normal person is asked to avoid sex if he is:

- Physically over-stressed.
- Mentally not prepared.
- Worried or tense.
- Suffering from fever.

- Suffering from prolonged systemic disease.
- Having a venereal disease.
- Surroundings are not good.
- Partner is not willing.
- All these factors may lead to one or the other physical or sexual problem.

Women should avoid sex

- During menstruation.
- In very early or late pregnancy.
- After menopause.

Males should avoid

- Frequency of sex after 50 years of age.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

If celibacy is not observed by body, speech or mind/sense and sensory organs, sex hormones flow out of the body of men and women. The sex hormones are mostly made of lecithin, phosphorus, nitrogen, and iodine, the components which are very useful to life, body and brain. Sometime one has to give up hope for life as a result of excessive sexual activities.

In this connection 'Science of Regeneration', the book written by Raymond Bernard is worth reading. He says that man's sexual tendencies are fully controlled by endocrine glands. The endocrine glands produce sex hormones and they control other glands. Youth subsists on abundance of sex hormones in the blood. As endocrine glands decrease the production of sex hormones, we begin to experience old age and weakness. Semen is a treasure of inexhaustible strength. By protecting and preserving it man can maintain his energies and youth for a very long time.

Just imagining about sexual pleasures can use up energy. Those who have lost much of their semen become easily irritated. They lose their balance of mind quickly. Little things upset them. The body and mind refuse to work energetically. There is physical and mental lethargy. Exhaustion and weakness are experienced. Bad memory, premature old age, impotence, various sorts of eye diseases and nervous diseases are attributable to the heavy loss of this vital fluid. Those who have not observed the vow of celibacy become slaves of anger, laziness and fear. If you do not have your senses under control, you venture to do foolish things which even children will not dare to do.

Modern science does not lag behind in making experiments for regaining youth, rejuvenation etc. but the energy lasts only for 3-4 years. Therefore, in order to sustain, youth endocrine glands should be kept active and sex hormones in blood should be abundant.

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