

PREVENTIVE SOCIAL MEDICINE THROUGH THE LENS OF SWASTHAVRITTA AND YOGA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of Preventive and Social Medicine is to promote health and prevent illness in individuals and communities. *Swasthavritta* has a long proven track record of supporting contemporary preventative health practices. *Swasthavritta* places an emphasis on maintaining one's health by encouraging the use of daily, seasonal and ethical regimens (*Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya* and *Sadvritta*) which promote good health that is physical, mental, social and spiritual. *Yoga's* psychophysiological approach through *Asanas*, *Pranayama* and meditation emphasizes bodily function, mental stability and resistance to stress. When combined, *Swasthavritta* and *Yoga* constitute a holistic preventative model based on the use of holistic methods to decrease incidence rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as improve an individual's quality of life because they promote balance between an individual's body, mind, and environment.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Swasthavritta*, *Yoga*, *Preventive and Social Medicine*, *Asanas*.

INTRODUCTION

Preventive and social medicine (PSM) is an important part of the overall structure of contemporary medicine, highlighting how we can both prevent disease and promote health and improve the quality of life. Today's world has increasingly challenging health care issues related to burden of communicable and non-communicable disease, mental health disorders and conditions arising from lifestyle. These conditions seek holistic and sustainable approaches to preventing such types of diseases.

Ayurveda has established a solid framework for preventive care by defining *Swasthavritta* as the practice of maintaining health. According to *Swasthavritta*, the term "*Swastha*" (the healthy person) + "*Vritta*" (the lifestyle/regimen) represents a healthy way of life, and thus is a guideline for how to live healthily. The components of *Swasthavritta* include; *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta* and hygiene practices. The incorporation of *Yoga* in daily life brings balance of

body, mind and spirit. The combination of *Swasthavritta* and *Yoga* offer a comprehensive method for accomplishing the goals and objectives as stated by Preventive and social medicine (PSM).

Preventive Social Medicine

Preventive Social Medicine utilizes organized community efforts to promote health and prevent disease. Preventive medicine has 4 levels of preventions as depicted in **Figure 1**.

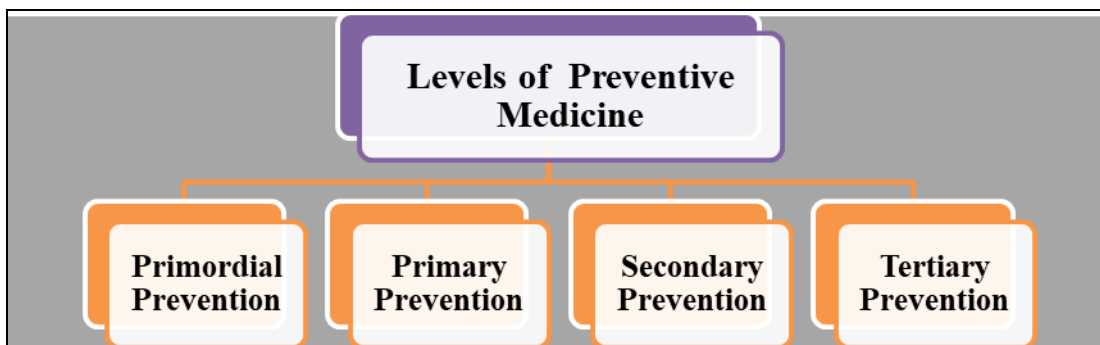


Figure 1: Levels of Preventive Medicine.

As mentioned above the “Primordial Prevention” approach preventing risk factors (e.g. promoting a healthy lifestyle). “Primary Prevention” helps in the prevention of the onset of disease (e.g. immunization, nutrition). “Secondary Prevention” approach helps in early identification of disease and immediate treatment. “Tertiary Prevention” utilizes rehabilitation and reduces disability. Modern (PSM) focuses on epidemiology, sanitation, nutrition, vaccination and health education in addition to those methods already mentioned, but it is often not integrated with the mental, behavioral and spiritual dimensions that make up full health.

Ayurvedic Approach to Preventive Healthcare

In Ayurveda, *Swasthavritta* provides the basis for preventing disease. The aim of *Swasthavritta* is to keep all three *Doshas*, all seven *Dhatus*, and the three *Malas* in balance to facilitate proper physiology. The components of *Swasthavritta* include; *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta* and hygiene practices.

Dinacharya is a comprehensive regimen of all daily activities, which include; awakening early, efficient oral care, (*Dantadhavana* & *Jihva Nirlekhana*), *Gandusha*, *Vyayama* and *Snana* (bathing). When performed regularly, these daily activities promote detoxification, facilitate metabolism and maintain the body’s rhythm.

Ritucharya is used to modify dietary & lifestyle habits according to seasonal changes to maintain balance among the *Doshas* and to protect against seasonal illness. The conduction of daily activities as per seasonal variation helps to restore normal haemostatic of body.

Ahara is dietary guidelines that support to acquire all nutritious benefits if consumed foods and helps to avoid any consequences associated with awful dietary habits. In Ayurveda, *Ahara* is the way to nourish the body. Nourishment needs to be balanced according to the individual nature and *Prakriti*. According to the concept of *Ahara* one should use fresh, unprocessed foods wherever possible, one should avoid eating food combinations that are not compatible (*Viruddha Ahara*) and follow all rules of dietary guideline as per ancient Ayurveda.

Sadvritta is one of the most important components of *Swasthavritta* which encompasses all forms of moral and ethical behaviour that support good mental and social health. The various components of *Sadvritta* are as follows:

- ✚ Truthfulness
- ✚ Control over emotions and anger
- ✚ Living harmoniously in society
- ✚ Be kind and respectful to elder
- ✚ One should follow good moral and ethical behavior

Hygiene Practices

Ayurveda places importance on the cleanliness of one’s surroundings, the disposal of waste in an environmentally sound manner and the provision of clean air and water; these are consistent with the definitions of environmental sanitation used by many public health agencies today.

Yoga as Preventative Measure

Yoga is a holistic practice that brings together the physical, mental and spiritual aspects and help to prevent diseases whole also promoting overall health. The various *Asana* works to stretch the body, increase strength and mobility and support the functioning of the organs. *Pranayama* teaches the use of breath to improve lung function, increase the amount of oxygen in our bodies and achieve autonomic balance. *Dhyana* (Meditation) provides relaxation and also reduces levels of stress and anxiety while allowing for better mental clarity. Yoga has proven to reduce stress hormone levels significantly, thus preventing psychosomatic illnesses; such as hypertension, diabetes and depression.

Significance of Modern and Ancient Approaches

The principles of *Swasthavritta* and *Yoga*, when combined in preventive medicine, create a complete and whole model for health promotion and preventing the onset of disease. These two ideologies closely align with the various types of prevention recognized by public health authorities. For example, at the primordial type of prevention, both encourage healthy lifestyle choices through *Dinacharya* and performing *Yogic* activities on a regular basis. In primary prevention the two works together to build up the body’s immunity by encouraging good nutrition, physical activity, and practicing *Pranayama*. In secondary prevention, *Swasthavritta* and

Yoga help to increase awareness of the body and develop self-discipline so that people can find and treat any disease indicators early. Finally, in tertiary prevention, *Yoga* therapy and proper lifestyle adjustments are vital components of rehabilitation and reducing the progression of disease. By utilizing these traditional practices together, a complete care method is created that considers not only the physical but also the mental, social, and spiritual aspects of well-being.

Challenges

- ✓ Lack of awareness and education about these systems
- ✓ Limited integration of these systems into mainstream health care
- ✓ Need for scientific validation and standardization
- ✓ Need of research based data to support the practice of these systems in public health
- ✓ Inclusion of these systems in the health policy
- ✓ Implementation of community programs to support these systems

CONCLUSION

Yoga and *Swasthavritta* are examples of a preventive and health promoting approaches that are firmly based in Ayurvedic knowledge. A comprehensive approach for attaining optimal health and well being is provided by its integration with social and preventive medicine. These methods address the underlying causes of illnesses rather than just their symptoms by placing a strong emphasis on lifestyle control, mental discipline, and environmental harmony. Thus, incorporating *Yoga* and *Swasthavritta* into contemporary healthcare can greatly helps in long term health promotion and illness prevention at the individual and societal levels.

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