



AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES FOR PRESERVING POSITIVE HEALTH: EXPLORING THE SWASTHA CHATUSHKA

Veena^{1*}, Bhuvnesh K. Sharma², Ketan Sharma³, Shubham Sharma⁴ and Manoj Singh
Raghuwanshi⁵

^{1,3,5}PG Scholar, Department of Samhita & Maulik Siddhant, Nia Jaipur.

²Associate Professor, Department of Samhita & Maulik Siddhant, Nia Jaipur.

⁴PG Scholar, Department of Swasthavritta and Yoga, Nia Jaipur.

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*Corresponding Author

Dr. Veena

PG Scholar, Department of
Samhita & Maulik Siddhant,
Nia Jaipur.

ABSTRACT

The *Ayurvedic* principle of *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*, preserving positive health in a healthy person, is beautifully encapsulated in *Acharya Charaka's Chatushka* methodology. *Swastha Chatushka*, consisting of four chapters—*Matrashiteeya*, *Tasyashiteeya*, *Navegandharaneeya*, and *Indriyopakramaneeya*—covers various aspects of health maintenance. Among the seven *Chatushkas*, *Swastha Chatushka* holds a prominent position, focusing on maintaining health in already healthy individuals. It explores concepts like *Matrayukta Ahara* (proper diet), *Swasthavritta* (healthy lifestyle), *Rutucharya*

Paripalan (seasonal regimen), and *Sadvritta* (ethical observances). These actions help balance *Tridoshas* (bioenergies), *Dhatus* (body tissues), *Malas* (waste products), and address factors contributing to disease manifestation—*Adharaneeya Vega* (non-suppressible urges), *Dharaneeya Vega* (suppressible urges), and *Hetu Chatushtaya* (four causative factors). *Swastha Chatushka* provides valuable insights into diligently following principles to preserve all dimensions of health. It presents a unique, holistic approach to preserving positive health and leading a fulfilling life. By embracing the outlined principles, individuals can safeguard their well-being and enjoy optimal health.

KEYWORDS:- *Swastha Chatushka*, *Adharaneeya vega*, Positive health, *Sadvritta*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient medical science of the world, is practiced with the aim of attaining *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksha*. It encompasses both preventive and curative aspects of

disease, as well as the promotion of health through its own principles and approach. The *Charaka Samhita* is widely regarded as the most ancient, comprehensive, and authoritative original text in Ayurveda. The entire text delves into various factors related to health, providing measures to ensure complete well-being and guidance on achieving longevity of life. While the entire *Samhita* holds prime importance, the *Sutrasthana*, which forms the heart of the text, is particularly emphasized. It is further divided into seven *Chatushkas*, with the last two chapters grouped as *Samgraha Dwaya*. The methodology of the *Chatushka* is a distinctive feature of the *Charaka Samhita*, as no other *Samhita* explains in this manner. A comprehensive understanding and application of the concepts within each *Chatushka* are essential for studying the *Charaka Samhita* in the present era. The term *Chatushka* refers to a group of four chapters that compile knowledge related to a specific subject and possess authority throughout the *Tantra*. The seven *Chatushkas* are named as *Bheshaja*, *Swastha*, *Nirdesha*, *Kalpna*, *Roga*, *Yojana*, and *Annapana*. The *Samgraha Dwaya* consists of *Dashapranayataneeya* and *Arthedashamahamooliya*.

The aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and cure the diseases of patients.^[1] The maintenance of the health of a healthy individual is achieved through the *Swastha Chatushka*. It is natural for human beings to desire a healthy and happy life, but the *Swastha Chatushka* aims for more than just happiness and health. The desired life should be good and lead to the fulfillment of the four main objectives of human life, known as *Purushartha Chatushtaya*. Without achieving these objectives, the pursuit of a healthy life is meaningless. The *Swastha Chatushka* addresses various aspects such as *Matrashiteeya Adhyaya*, *Tasyashiteeya Adhyaya*, *Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya*, and *Indiyopakarmaneeya Adhyaya*, which provide advice for maintaining individual health through proper understanding of *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Swasthvritta* (regimen for well-being), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Adharaneey* (substances to be taken), *Dharaneeya Vegas* (natural urges to be controlled), *Indriya Pancha Panchak* (fivefold knowledge of the senses), and *Sadvrittपालana* (upholding righteous conduct), among others.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to thoroughly explore the concepts discussed in the four chapters of *Swastha Chatushka* and their role in *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*, which pertains to the preservation of the health of a healthy individual.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study adopts a descriptive literature review approach. Key concepts from the four chapters of *Swastha Chatushka* in *Charaka Samhita* are critically analyzed to gain insights into their explanations and applications in various aspects of maintaining positive health.

Literature review

The *Chatushkas* are specifically designed to fulfill the *Dwaya-Prayojana* (dual objectives) of *Ayurveda*, namely *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam* (preservation of the health of a healthy individual) and *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam* (treatment of diseases). Among these objectives, the *Swastha Chatushka* holds particular importance as it elucidates the *Pratham Prayojana* (primary objective) of *Ayurveda*.

Swastha Chatuska and Its important contents (Table no.1)

Table no. 1

<i>Matrashiteeya Adhyaya</i>	Description of diet, personal hygiene, <i>Anjan Nasya Dhumpana</i> etc. Basically, deals with the daily regimen to be followed by healthy individuals
<i>Tasyashitiya Adhyaya</i>	Condition of nature and body in 6 seasons, description of <i>Adanakala</i> and <i>Visargakala</i> , regimen of 6 season <i>Satmya Varnan</i> .
<i>Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya</i>	Description of non-suppressible and suppressible urges, description of exercise, etiology preventive and treatment method of endogenous and mental diseases.
<i>Indriyopakramaneeya Adhyaya</i>	<i>Panchapanchak Varnan</i> , <i>Sadvritta Palan</i> (general code of conduct).

Matrashiteeya adhyaya:

Matrashiteeya Adhyaya is the *Prathama Adhyaya* (first chapter) of *Swastha Chatushka*. *Matra* refers to the proper quantity, and *Ashi* refers to various forms of food and beverages such as *Khadya* (solid food), *Prashya* (semi-solid food), *Lehya* (liquefied food), *Peya* (beverages), etc.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of consuming the appropriate quantity of food regularly. *Acharya Chakrapani* describes *Matra* as someone who follows a disciplined practice of consuming the right amount of food.^[2] It is noteworthy that even though there is a separate *Chatushka* dedicated to *Annapana* (food and beverages), *Acharya* explains the significance of *Matravat Ahara* (food taken in proper quantity) in the *Swastha Chatushka*.

Acharya Chakrapani elaborates that among all the factors for maintaining positive health, food consumed in the right quantity holds the utmost importance.^[3] To maintain equilibrium in the body's *Dhatus* (tissues) and *Doshas* (bioenergetic principles), *Acharya Charaka* provides specific dietary and lifestyle guidelines in this chapter. Consuming food in appropriate quantities helps in promoting strength, complexion, happiness, and longevity without disrupting the body's equilibrium. This can be achieved by adopting suitable dietary and lifestyle practices in accordance with the seasonal variations. *Acharya Charaka* also mentions certain food items such as *Shashtika* rice, *Shali* rice, green gram, rock salt, Indian gooseberry, barley, rainwater, milk, ghee, meat from animals inhabiting arid regions, and honey, which can be regularly consumed to preserve health⁴ and prevent the onset of diseases. Thus, the concept of *Ahara* (diet) holds paramount significance in the *Swastha Chatushka*.

Swastavritta:

In the present era, numerous health issues arise due to unhealthy lifestyles. An individual's lifestyle can be considered a measure of their overall health. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and cultivating positive habits significantly contribute to enhancing the quality of health. A proper and healthy lifestyle not only promotes well-being but also aids in the prevention of potential diseases that may arise from disturbances in the body's circadian rhythm. The ancient *Acharyas* were well aware of these factors, as evident from their elucidation of daily regimens known as *Dinacharya*. However, *Acharya Charaka* uniquely presents the theory of *Swasthavritta*, providing a scientific perspective on lifestyle, rather than using the term *Dinacharya*.

The regimens described in the *Swasthavritta* section of *Matrashiteeya Adhyaya* primarily focus on maintaining the balance of *Tridoshas* (three bioenergetic principles). Since all three *Doshas* reside within the entire body, their normal or abnormal states are responsible for positive or negative outcomes, respectively. Positive outcomes include growth, strength, complexion, happiness, and more, while abnormal *Dosha* states lead to various diseases.^[5]

Daily regimen and its importance in preservation of health. (Table No.2)**Table No. 2**

SN	Swastavritta	Preventive and Promotive Role
1.	Anjan	Sleshmahar, Netra Prasadak.
2.	Dhoompana	Helps to alleviate all types of <i>Urdhwa Jatrugata Vikaras</i> .
3.	Nasya	<i>Indriyas</i> get strengthened, and diseases related to head & neck will not get affected.
4.	Dantapavan	This removes halitosis, dysgeusia, induces taste for food by removing the impurities from the tongue.
5.	Jihvanirlekhan	Removes the impurities, deposited at the root of the tongue obstruct inhalation, causing halitosis.
6.	Gandoosha	Strengthens the jaws, voice, excellent gustatory sensations, improves taste buds.
7.	Abhyanga	Alleviates head-ache, premature graying, and alopecia, strong and good-looking body, while slowing his aging process.
8.	Snana	Remover of fatigue, purifying, promotive of virility and longevity.
9.	Nirmalambar Dharan (Vastra Dharan)	Enhances charm and personality of an individual, promotes longevity, prevents bad-luck/inauspiciousness, and brings about pleasure.
10.	Gandhamalya Nishevanam (fragrant articles and garlands)	Enhances virility, promotes longevity, charm, plumpness and strength, is pleasing to the mind, and averts poverty.
11.	Chhatradharan	Averts calamities, promotes strength, affords protection, cover and comfort, and serves as a shield against sun, wind, dust and rain.

Tasyashiteeya adhyaya

It has been observed that a person taking food even in proper quantity may suffer from diseases in different seasons. This implies that apart from the quantity of *Ahara* (diet), the knowledge of regimen for different *Ritu* (seasons) or *Ritusatmya* also plays a significant role in the maintenance of health and prevention of diseases.^[6] Thus, the *Acharya Charak* put forward this *Adhyaya* as *Dvitey Adhyay of Svastha Chatushka*.

Ritu (season) classified by different features expresses different effects on the body as well as the environment. *Acharya Charak* has depicted various rules and regimens (*Charya*), regarding diet and behavior to acclimatize seasonal enforcement easily without altering body homeostasis. The prime principle of *Ayurvedic* system of medicine is preventive aspect, can be achieved by the change in diet and practices in response to change in climatic condition.

This is a very important aspect of preventive medicine as mentioned in *Tasyasiteeya Adhyaya*.

With the change in season, the change is very evident in the environment we live in. If the body is unable to adopt itself to stressors due to changes in specific traits of seasons, it may lead to *Dosha Vaishamyā*, which in turn may render the body highly susceptible to one or other kinds of disorders.^[7] That's why in this *Adhyaya* it is said that “*tasyāśītādyādāhārādbalaṃ varṇaśca vardhate -yasyartusātmyaṃ viditaṃ ceṣṭāhārvyapāśrayam*” which means ‘the strength and complexion of the person knowing the suitable diet and regimen for every season and practicing accordingly are enhanced.’^[8] As we see moon and wind are responsible for the dispersion of different seasons like *Shishira*, *Vasanta*, *Grishma* under *Adana Kala*, *Varsha*, *Sharat* and *Hemanta* under *Visarga Kala*⁹. These seasonal shifts mainly influence variations in four factors viz., *Agni*, *Bala*, *Rasa*, and *Dosha* in an individual.^[10] *Agni and Bala* either strengthen or weaken according to the seasonal changes as a response to the effect of nature. Specific *Rasa* achieves its predominance in specific seasons because of the impact of environmental changes.^[11] So the regimen prescribed for this period (six Seasons) is calculated to help in a smooth change over as to remain *Swasthya*. *Ritu* has its influence from the time of conception until death. The main theme of this chapter is to make people aware concerning the methods to live in accordance with the environment and adaptations according to the changes, is the key for survival. The knowledge of *Ritucharya* (regimen for various seasons) is thus important for *Swasthya Rakkshanam*.

Seasonal guidelines (Table No.3)

Table No. 3

Season	Using Diet	Vihara/ Lifestyle	Shodhana
<i>Hemant</i>	Oil & ghee, <i>Brimhana</i> , <i>Madhura</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> , diet, jaggery, milk products.	<i>Abhyanga</i> , Warm rooms, sunbath	-
<i>Shishir</i>	Oil & ghee, <i>Brimhana</i> , <i>Madhur</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> , diet, jaggery, milk products	Stay in less windy and warm shelters(homes).	-
<i>Vasant</i>	Avoid heavy to digest, sour, unctuous and sweet food items, food made up of barley and wheat,	<i>Vyayama</i> , <i>Udwardan</i> , <i>Anjana</i> <i>Kavalgraha</i>	<i>Vaman</i> , <i>Nasya</i> , <i>Dhoomapana</i>
<i>Greeshma</i>	<i>Madhur</i> , <i>Sheet</i> , <i>Drava</i> , <i>Snigdha</i> (Rice with ghee &	<i>Sheet Lepa</i> of <i>Chandana</i> etc.	-

	milk) <i>Annapana</i> .		
<i>Varsha</i>	Consume sour, salty unctuous food, and old barley; wheat and Shali rice.	Practice of <i>Pragharsha</i> , <i>Udwartana</i> , <i>Snana</i> , use of fragrance, garlands, wearing light and clean clothes and should reside in the place which is free from humidity.	-
<i>Sharad</i>	Consume <i>Madhur</i> , <i>Laghu</i> , <i>Sheet</i> , slightly <i>Tikta</i> foods & Drinks, <i>Shali</i> rice, barley and wheat should be taken.	Avoiding, heat, day sleeping, curd, oil over eating.	<i>Raktamokshan</i> , <i>Virechana</i>

Navegandharaneeya adhyaya

As we examine the explanations of *Hitakar Ahar Matra* and *Ritusatmya* in the previous chapters, *Ahar* is considered *Swasthyahita* when the body excretes metabolic waste products like *Mutra-Purish*, etc., without any suppression that occurs after *Aharpak*. Therefore, this chapter is named "*Na Vegandharaneeya*" (Non-suppressible Urges).^[12]

Adharaneeya vega

The human body is a remarkable mechanism equipped with various natural urges, known as *Vegas*, which help balance substances that can be beneficial or harmful. *Vega* refers to these urges, while *Dharana* refers to the restraint of urges. According to *Chakrapani*, *Vega* is defined as "*Pravritti Unmukhatvam*^[13]" indicating urges that are on the verge of being expelled. Thus, in this third chapter of *Swastha Chatushka*, *Adharaneeya Vega* (non-suppressible urges) and *Dharaneeya Vegas* (suppressible urges) are explained. The chapter also covers disorders caused by the long-term suppression of urges and their treatments. Among the thirteen *Adharaneeya Vega*, the first seven urges, namely *Mutra*, *Pureesha*, *Shukra*, *Vata*, *Chardhi*, *Kshavathu*, and *Udgara*, expel the accumulated waste (Mala) from the body. The next six urges, namely *Jrumbha*, *Kshudha*, *Pipasa*, *Nidra*, *Bhashpa*, and *Shrama Shwasa*, occur in response to the physiological requirements and reflexes of the body.^[14] *Acharya Charak* emphasizes that those who wish to prevent these diseases should not suppress any of these urges.^[15] Responding to these *Adharaneeya Vega* is crucial for maintaining the body's homeostasis, leading to positive health.

Dharaneeya vega

Another set of *Dharaneeya Vegas* (suppressible urges) related to *Manasika* (mental) urges like *Lobha* (greed), *Shoka* (grief), *Bhaya* (fear), *Vachika* (verbal) urges like *Parusha* (harsh

speech), *Anruta* (falsehood), *Atimatra Vachana* (excessive speech), and *Kayika* (physical) urges like *Parapeeda* (excessive exertion), *Streebhoga* (sexual indulgence), etc., are described in the *Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya*. *Acharya Charak* gives significant importance to suppressing these urges for the well-being of an individual in this life and even after death.^[16] It is interesting to note that these *Dharaneeya Vegas* are connected to emotional states of mind. The natural urges of the mind are crucial aspects of a living body and significantly determine the state of health or disease in an individual. Individuals desiring good health should control these urges by gaining control over the sense organs. If these nine *Dharaneeya Vegas* are not controlled, they can lead to *Tridosha Prakopa* (imbalance of body humors) and result in various psychosomatic manifestations by provoking *Prajnaparadha*, which in turn affects the body. Thus, these *Dharaneeya Vegas* should be suppressed to achieve complete health in terms of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, ultimately attaining the four Purusharthas (goals) of *Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha*.

Vyayama (physical exercise) is an important regimen explained in the context of *Dinacharya* (daily routine). *Vyayama* plays a key role in maintaining health and preventing diseases. It significantly regulates and humanizes the mechanisms of all systems in the human body. *Ayurveda* mentions that proper physical activity not only affects the body but also has a positive influence on the mind, emotions, senses, and spirit. When someone performs proper *Vyayama* as mentioned in *Ayurvedic* literature, it helps maintain health and brings maximum benefits. However, if *Vyayama* is done improperly or using the wrong method, it can lead to the development of various serious diseases.

Although the concept of *Vyayama* is a daily regimen, *Acharya Charaka* describes it in the *Navegandharaneeya Adhyaya* as a *Cheshta*^[17] (activity). *Acharya Chakrapani*^[17] considers *Vyayama* as *Vidharya-Avidharya Pravritti* (suppressible and non-suppressible) and justifies its placement after *Dharaneeya Vega*.^[18] *Vyayama* plays a key role in maintaining health and preventing diseases. Proper performance of *Vyayama* as mentioned in *Ayurvedic* literature helps maintain health and maximize its benefits. However, improper or incorrect methods of *Vyayama* can result in the development of various serious diseases.

Indriyopakramaneeya adhyaya

This final and unique *Adhyaya* of *Swastha Chatushka* focuses on the mind, senses, and the ethical and moral principles of behavior and conduct. It primarily deals with sensory perception and its means. The concept of *Indriya Pancha Panchaka*, where the senses act as

instruments for the mind and the soul to acquire knowledge, is explained. The mind controls the senses, which are further controlled by the intellect (*Buddhi*) and ultimately by the soul (*Atma*).^[19] When these four components are in harmony, it leads to proper health.^[20]

On the other hand, when they are imbalanced, it misguides the intellect and results in ill health. The chapter also emphasizes *Sadvritta*, which consists of self-control and proper activities. It encompasses self-reliance, auto-suggestions (*Kayika, Manasika, Vachika*), and all aspects of daily life, including the ability to discern and exercise control over suppressible and non-suppressible urges. The principles of good conduct (*Sadvritta*) aim to preserve all dimensions of health and provide insights into managing life and health correctly. It recognizes the individual as a social organism, emphasizing the importance of their relationship with society for overall life and health. Practicing virtues and adhering to social traditions are crucial for disease prevention and the promotion of good health. In summary, this chapter describes unique ways to prevent diseases, preserve personal and social health, and lead a productive and meaningful social life.

DISCUSSION

Acharya Charak established rules and regulations regarding daily routines and activities necessary to achieve the first principle. The *Matrasiteeya Adhyaya* of *Charak Samhita* is dedicated to health maintenance. Starting with food, *Acharya Charak* extensively explains how the quality and quantity of food affect our bodies. The quantity of food to be ingested depends on the power of digestion (*Agnibala*). The proper quantity of food is the amount that is consumed, digested, and metabolized in a timely manner without disturbing the equilibrium of *Doshas* and *Dhatus*. Therefore, the relationship between the quantity of food and *Agni* is explained in *Swastha Chatushka* as a primary context.

The chapter also mentions various regimens such as *Anjana* (application of medicated collyrium), *Dhumapana* (smoking therapy), *Nasya* (nasal administration), *Dantapavan* (cleaning the teeth), *Jihvanirlekhan* (scraping the tongue), etc. These regimens specifically address imbalances in *Doshas* and help expel excessive *Doshas* from the Supraclavicular region, thereby maintaining equilibrium and preventing *nija vikara*²¹. *Acharya Charak* also mentions that practicing these regimens enhances the clarity and strength of the senses and prevents sudden onset of diseases related to the head and neck, even with aging²². Other regimens like *Nirmalambara Dharana* (maintaining cleanliness), *Gandhamalya Nishevana*

(use of fragrant substances), etc., provide protective effects against external factors when practiced regularly.^[23] The chapter highlights the importance of following *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and *Ritusandhi* (transitional periods between seasons) for maintaining *Dhatu* balance and ensuring continuous health. *Acharya Charak* emphasizes the timely evacuation and control of suppressible and non-suppressible urges, respectively, as essential for perfect health and the body's homeostasis. By practicing *Sadvritta* (regimens of right conduct and behavior), individuals not only obtain and maintain their health but also contribute to building a civilized society and nation. *Sadvritta* can help prevent various physical and psychological disorders and promote a long and healthy life in terms of physical, psychological, and social aspects. In conclusion, *Sadvritta* is an essential tool in the modern era for preventing and eradicating the root causes of various diseases.

CONCLUSION

The *Swastha Chatushka* is a crucial part of *Sutrasthana*, fulfilling *Ayurveda's* primary goal of "*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*" (preserving the health of the healthy). The four *Adhyayas* of *Swastha Chatushka* provide comprehensive explanations of *Matrayukta Ahara* (appropriate diet), *Swasthavritta* (regimen for health maintenance), *Ritucharya Paripalan* (seasonal regimen), and *Sadvritta* (regimens of right conduct and behavior). These actions contribute to the maintenance of health in a healthy individual by balancing *Tridoshas*, *Dhatu*s, and *Malas*, and by addressing suppressible and non-suppressible urges, physical activity (*Vyayama*), and causative factors (*Hetu Chatushcaya*). By following these guidelines, diseases can be prevented, and individuals can maintain good health. The regimens described in the four *Adhyayas* not only promote health but also play a role in managing certain diseases. The principles explained in this *Chatushka* provide a holistic approach to health and life. Implementing these described regimens in daily life takes care of all aspects of health, including physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions. This, in turn, enhances the quality of life and helps individuals attain the four *Purusharthas*: *Dharma* (ethical living), *Artha* (material prosperity), *Kama* (fulfillment of desires), and *Moksha* (liberation).

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