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The concept of Happiness in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

The quest for happiness is something that has enthralled every human since time immemorial. Researchers belonging to different fields along with ancient spiritual scholars have strived to arrive at a pathway for happiness. But since happiness involves different dimensions of itself, the interpretations on happiness have also been varied and different. Ayurveda is a science that was designed to maintain the health of healthy people and to cure the maladies of the unhealthy people. Happiness is an important facet of health and hence is given an important place in Ayurveda. The Ancient Ayurvedic literature has explained the concept of happiness under various terminologies like *Sukha*, *Harsha* etc. In the present research work all the fundamental texts of Ayurveda were screened thoroughly in order to compile the information on concept of happiness in Ayurveda. This was used to draw various interpretations on the science of happiness. The present article is written in order to envisage this concept of happiness in Ayurveda. The article will try to throw light on the usefulness of happiness in health, role of happiness on *Dosha*, *Dhatu Mala* and other physiological processes. The article also aims to suggest ways to achieve happy life with the help of fundamental principles of Ayurveda.

Key words: Ayurveda, Sukha, Happiness, Health.

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is an enigma that each and every living organism in this world is looking for. Happiness is something that is not limited to a few facets of life but is associated with varying degree of dimensions in all walks of life. Ayurveda considers *Sukha* or happiness or quality of life to be a fundamental right of every living organism. Pleasant mind is defined as a prerequisite characteristic of health according to

Ayurveda.^[1]

Happiness involves factors from various physical, psychological and social strides of life. It can be said as a state of mind filled with satisfaction, free from threat and distress. It is a drive that keeps, maintains the physical and mental wellbeing of a person.^[2]

Since happiness is experienced through various facets there are many definitions of happiness. It is generally accepted that happiness is a state of being happy or content. Happiness is a pleasurable or satisfying experience.^[3] Happiness is also defined as a subjective sense of wellbeing.^[4]

Ayurveda is a holistic science that deals all the physical and metaphysical aspects of life. The word happiness or *Sukha* is prominently found in various Ayurvedic descriptions on health and disease. An analysis of happiness according to Ayurveda reveals that happiness can be of two dimensions.^[5]

Manasasukha or *Sukha* that is achieved by the mind without the relationship with sense organs or

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Indreeyas. This *Sukha* is a happiness that can be considered as *Aloukika* or abstract or of a higher level.

The second variety of happiness according to Ayurveda is the *Sukha* that is perceived by the *Manas* through *Indreeyas* or our senses or this is the *Sukha* that is attained at a much more subtle level. This is *Loukika* or subtle nature. Since this *Sukha* is a feeling that is felt by *Atmendreeya Manoartha Sannikarsha* or the union between *Atma - Manas - Indreeyas* and their *Arthas*, it can be achieved through various means.

Sukhayu

Ayurveda envisages a person to be *Sukhayu* or to be leading a happily wholesome life. The concept of *Sukhayu* explains that a person free of physical and psychological illness, having physical and mental ability to perform his duties, having good amount of *Bala, Veerya and Jnana*, one who is successful, one who is free and is not constrained can be considered as *Sukhayu*.^[6]

Precursors for Sukha or happiness^[7]

A person experiences happiness through proper *Samyoga*. Proper combination of *Buddhi, Kala* and *Samayoga* are the general precursors of happiness.

- Basic precursor for *Aloukikasukha* : The requirement for higher form of happiness is detachment from the worldly affairs. But this is a kind of *Sukha* that can be had only after the fulfillment of *Karmas* in initial phase of life.
- Precursor for *Loukikasukha* : *Loukika or Sukha* at a superficial level can be had by an uncluttered *Atmendreeya Manoartha Sannikarsha* i.e. a stress-free mind that is completely mindful and in the present.

Different contexts of Sukha in Ayurvedic literature

1. Sukha as an aim of life

Dharma, Artha, Kama and *Moksha* are the aims of life. *Dharma* deals with the path of righteousness. *Artha* deals with the aspect of finances and earnings; *Kama* is the aim of life dealing with the fulfilling desires of a person. And finally, *Moksha* deals with the salvation.^[8]

Amongst these aims *Kama* or fulfillment of desires is the contentment that is achieved through fulfillment of desires. A human has to achieve happiness by the fulfillment of his righteous desires. Happiness can also be found in each of the other three aims of life.

2. Sukha in relation to Agni

Having proper *Agni* or digestive fire is a means of happiness. *Agni* is responsible for any transformation in the body, for the metabolism in the body and any action in the body. Proper replenishment and energy is necessary for fulfillment of any *Karmas* of an individual. A body that digests properly, metabolizes properly will perform its deeds in a stronger and smoother manner.^[9] Hence *Sukha* requires the prerequisite of *Agni* for happiness.

3. Sukha in relation to Nidra

Nidra or sleep gives rest to the mind, aids in the growth and repair function to the body. It gives a sense of detachment from fatigue, miseries and hence gives happiness to the mind. Proper sleep is the rest that the mind needs to perceive the state of happiness. A person without proper sleep often has an unhappy mind and will have difficulties in perceiving the happiness around him.^[10]

4. Sukha in context of good dreams and lack of bad dreams

Dreams give an indication of the day to day activities of the person. Pleasant dreams indicate a pleasant state of mind in a person and nightmares are indicative of stress or misery in a person. Similarly, pleasant dreams too give happiness to the mind at a subtle level. Since dreams are based on the cognitive and subconscious activities of a person, happy dreams indicate happier mind and body.^[11]

5. Sukha with relation to Atmendreeya Mano Artha Sannikarsha (Conjunction of Atma, mana, sense organs and their objects)

Oneness of *Atma, Manas, Indreeya* and *Indreeyartha* is the prerequisites for any perception. Unhindered *Atmendreeya Manoarta Sannikarsha* leads to oneness of self with that *Karma*. If a person is completely

involved in his *Karma*, he will be experiencing more involvement and happiness out of that *Karma*.^[12]

6. *Sukha* in the perspective of general health

Abnormal physiological state of body is considered to be health and disease or pathology is considered to be misery. A properly functioning body and mind is a prerequisite for performing any *Karma* or any function in a perfect manner. An unhealthy mind and body will not allow a person to perceive the *Sukha* in a best possible manner. A diseased body will bring about many hindrances for smooth functioning of each of the organs. Hence health itself can be considered as happiness.^[13]

7. *Sukha* in context of good conduct

Ayurveda believes that *Sukha* in its right form can be achieved only through right conduct. Hence the path of righteousness through good conduct is a primary pathway for happiness. Deceit or fakeness brings about a guilt in the mind of a person which will act as a bane for happiness. Following the path of good *Karma* will fulfill the very purpose of human life there by keeping him happy and without distress.^[14]

8. *Sukha* as *Bala*

Good amount of physical and mental strength is necessary for performing a function at its utmost capacity. Good amount of *Bala* is necessary to keep the body free from diseases. Physical and mental strength is also needed to give the composure and temperament to be happy. Happy people experience a physical, mental drive and zeal in their activities. People with lesser physical and mental strength are more likely to be prone to unhappiness.^[15]

9. *Sukha* with relation to proper *Ahara*

Every cell in the body gets its contentment from the nutrition derived out of food. Food is said to be giving *Sukha* to the body because it helps in nourishing all the *dhatu*s from *Rasa* to *Shukra*. *Tushti*, *Sukha*, *Peethi*, *Harsha*, *Preenana* (satisfaction, happiness, passion, nourishment) are functions of some of the *Dhatu*s which also indicate different levels of happiness and contentment. Hence properly nourished *Dhatu*s

through the process of *Dhatuposhana* are required as a precursor of happiness.^[16]

10. Easy evacuation of natural urges and *Sukha*

Suppression of natural urges is one the causes for the occurrence of diseases. Proper conduction of natural urges help in maintaining the normal status of *Doshas* and thereby help in maintain the healthy body. Evacuation of natural urges gives a sense of satisfaction to a person which amounts to happiness at different levels. Natural urges are physiological processes that are protective and cleansing in nature. Hence proper conduction of natural urges leads to happiness.^[17]

11. *Karma* is *Sukha*

Ayurveda believes *Karma* or doing ones deeds in a selfless manner to perfection is itself *Sukha*. The nature of *Karma* may vary from person to person based on their profession, social status, family responsibilities etc. whenever a person fulfills his *Karma* he will be distressed relieved and happy.^[18]

12. Control of *Prajnaparadha* and *Sukha*

Prajnaparadha is the willful over use or disuse or faulty use of our senses. Either of these three will lead to different miseries either by addiction of the body to these faulty lifestyles or due to being a cause for sickness. A mind or a sense organ that is over used or ill-used undergoes either addiction or fatigue. Either of these will act as a hindrance for happiness.^[19]

13. Absence from disease or infirmity as a state of *Sukha*

State of absence from disease or infirmity itself can be considered as a source of happiness. Disease is a source of misery. A state of body and mind where all the *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s and *Malas* are functioning normally is a state of happiness.^[20]

14. Happiness in the definition of health

Ayurveda defines health as a state of normalcy of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*, along with pleasantness of *Atma*, *Indreeya* and *Mana*. This itself is an indicator that pleasant mind is the prerequisite for a person to

be called healthy. Hence a consistently unhappy person can be deemed to be unhealthy.^[21]

15. Sukha Lakshana of Atma in the body

Sukha, Dukkha are the features of the presence of *Atma* in the body. Every human body will have to go through these experiences in its existence.^[22]

16. Lack of Wordly desires

Ayurveda believes that desires are the root cause of sorrow and detachment from desires as a cause of *Sukha*. More desires are likely to cause more expectations and more disappointments from life. This will bring the overall quality of life and happiness in a patient.^[23]

17. Vasavahsukham

In the context of *Loka Purusha Samya* wealth or having the resources for fulfillment of basic needs is considered to be a part of *Sukham*.^[24]

18. Wisdom is happiness and ignorance is sorrow

Having clarity of knowledge will lead to happiness and improper understandings will cause sorrow.^[25]

Happiness is also envisaged in Ayurvedic literature in other technical terms also like *Harsha* and *Tushti* (contentment). *Harsha* is one among the functions of *Vatadosha*, similarly *harsha*,^[26] *Preethi* are also functions of *Shukra Dhatu* too. The functions of *Rasa Dhatu* namely *Tushti* and *Pushti* are also satisfying function of the body. *Ojus* too plays a key role in enabling happiness in the body.^[27] Excess comfort is also been explained as an etiological factor for some of the diseases like *Prameha* in Ayurveda.^[28] This is an indication that *Sukha* or happiness is good but when it turns morbid it can lead to pathology. In other words, *Sukha* that is not experienced as a part of *Karma* is detrimental to the body and *Sukha* that is experienced mindlessly without due discretion will lead to unhappiness.^[29]

DISCUSSION

A human can achieve happiness in its different perspectives by following the indicators and path for happiness as mentioned in Ayurveda.

Happiness is not merely a small trivial facial emotion. Happiness encompasses all the complex facets of the human body ranging from mind, body, conduct, urges etc.

Based on the above references we can infer that Ayurveda advices certain lifestyle and advices for happy life as follows;

- To stay free of deceit and greed,
- To have a control over the mind.
- To be in present.
- To avoid addictions and *Prajnaparadhas* (willful overuse under use or improper use of senses).
- To involve oneself in his lawful deeds or *Karmas*.
- To respect ones *Agni* and *Ahara* and to have a diet in accordance with *Agni*.
- To have proper sleep in accordance to the body constitution
- To stay free of disease and to be happy by maintaining the balance of *Dosha Dhatu* and *Malas*.

CONCLUSION

The science of happiness has a very large role to play in the current health scenario. Happiness is a state of being free from disease and health cannot be complete without happiness. Therefore, working towards happier society may have the keys to a healthier society. The role of happiness in Ayurveda is immense because Ayurveda ultimately aims at giving happiness to each and every soul. By following the regimens on happiness as mentioned above a person can have better quality of life free from disease and illness.

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