



Procedure to a Happy Life: According to *Ashtangahridayam*

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Abstract: *Ancient yet timeless, Ayurveda gives us the means of attaining and maintaining our own optimal health and well-being. Its benefits have been proven over centuries of use, and its methodologies are as applicable today in the West as they were thousands of years ago in India. Ayurveda recognizes that each person is unique and offers a customized approach to wellness. This paper outlines the basics of Ayurveda, and explains how you can spend a happy life.*

Keywords: *Ayurveda- meaning, Astangahridaya-Vagbhat*

Introduction:

Ayurveda is considered one of the world's oldest healing sciences, originating in India at least 5,000 years ago. Its name is a Sanskrit word that literally translates as "the wisdom of life" or "the knowledge of longevity" (it is a compound of 'ayus' meaning life or longevity, and 'veda' meaning deep knowledge or wisdom). In accordance with this definition, Ayurveda views health as much more than the absence of disease. Health, from an Ayurvedic perspective, is defined as a gracious, tranquil, content, joyous, bright, and clear state of the body, senses, mind, and spirit, including the balanced state of one's natural constitution, all bodily tissues, the digestive capacities, and waste excretion. Health is completed when you are associated with your own natural and unique state of balance.

Ayurveda places great emphasis on prevention and encourages the maintenance of health through close attention to balance in one's life, right thinking, diet, lifestyle and the use of herbs. Knowledge of Ayurveda enables one to understand how to create this balance of body, mind and consciousness according to one's own individual composition and how to make lifestyle changes to bring about and maintain this balance and make the life be happy.

Ashtangahridayam:

The Ashtanga Hridayam, the “Heart or Essence of all the Eight Branches of Ayurveda,” is one of the primary ancient root texts of Ayurveda. Today, the Ashtanga Hridayam continues to serve as a root source for Ayurvedic philosophy and protocol, providing clear guidelines in all aspects of health. Acharya Vagbhata is among the three classic writers of Ayurveda who have composed ‘Brihatrayi’ and Vagbhata is one of the most influential classical writers of Ayurveda his work ‘Ashtanga Hridaya’ embraces the best parts of earlier treatise of Acharya Charak and Sushruta along with his original contributions. It is mentioned in Ashtanga Sangraha itself that the portrayal in Ashtanga Sangraha is the collecting work based on Sushrutsamhita and Charakasamhita. Ashtanga Sangraha is placed in the first or second half of 7th century by historians. Ashtanga Hridaya has its own advantages over Ashtanga Sangraha. The way Ashtanga Hridaya has been written it shows the expertise of Vagbhata in Ayurveda, Sanskrit and Poetry. Vagbhata was the son of Simhagupta. His grandfather too was known by the same name i.e. Vagbhata. He is believed to hail from the region of river Sindhu. His father and grandfather, both were great Ayurvedic scholars Vagbatta is said to be the disciple of Avalokita. Vagbhata was the author of two great treatises of Ayurveda namely ‘Ashtanga Sangraha’ and ‘Ashtanga Hridaya’. Vagbhata is famous for having presented Ayurveda and its essence in an easy, simple, comprehensive and understandable way. Ashtanga Hridaya contains about 7120 poetic verses. Mainly focussing on kayachikitsa, Ashtanga Hridaya also discusses in detail about various surgical treatments. Ashtanga Hridaya Samhita is divided into *sutra*, *nidana*, *sharira*, *chikitsa*, *kalpa*, and *uttara sthana*, and was also written by Vagbhata. Ashtanga Hridaya (Ashta = 8; Anga = Organ) deals with the eight *angas* or organs of the body. Namely:

- *Kaya Chikitsa* – Treatment of the body.
- *Baala Chikitsa* – Section on pediatrics
- *Griha Chikitsa* – Section on psychiatry
- *Urdhvanga Chikitsa* or *Shalaky Tantra* – Treatment for eye, ear, nose and parts above neck
- *Salya Tantra* – Section on surgery
- *Damsthra Chikitsa* – Section on Toxicology
- *Jara Chikitsa* or *Rasayana Chikitsa* – Rejuvenation Therapy
- *Vrishya chikitsa* or *Vajeekarana Chikitsa* – Aphrodisiac Therapy

The second, third and fourth chapters of Ashtangahridayam give us a happy life. So, I will discuss those chapters with brief to show how this text enriched our Ayurvedic tradition and support to make a good life.

Discussion:

This text is divided six chapters. Ayurveda starts with instructions for practices to be followed in daily life. In the second chapter of *Dinacharya* in *Ashtangahridaya*, the programme for daily life is meticulously charted, right from getting up early in the morning to the time when one goes to bed at night. These steps are to promote the energy by which diseases are dispelled and life prolonged. The state of physique and the influence of time are co-related favourably. An important feature of Ayurvedic treatment outlook is that it takes the causes and ways of treatment not mechanically but by considering all the social and ecological factors. Man is a social organism. So his relationship with society is very important. Practice of virtue and proper behaviour according to social circumstances is important for keeping good health.

In the chapter *Ritucharya* is the routine to be followed in each season. As already stated, there are six seasons in India. Since the three seasons *Sisira*, *Vasantha* and *Greeshma* are during the movement of the sun to the North, *Uttarayana*, it decreases our physical strength. The other three seasons help to increase our strength. The ancient Acharyas divide a year into two halves-Uttarayana and Dakshinayana. The **fourth/third** chapter in *Ashtangahridaya* deals with *Ritucharya*.

A study of first four chapters will help to have a basic knowledge of the fundamental vision of Ayurveda. For a beginner this study may be useful which share the nature of primary instructions. These four chapters are therefore, the most important in *Ashtangahridaya*. The chapter on *Dinacharya* or daily routine gives important points to be observed by us for long life and healthy living. So said the sages *Atreya* and others:

“*Brahmamuhurta uttishteth swastha rakshartha mayusah*”

Meaning- a *swastha* should get up in the *Brahmamuhurta* or the early hours of dawn. The word *swastha* is defined as one who is within one's own. He is not simply a man free from any diseases. *Swastha* is one whose *Doshas* are in equilibrium (proper order) and whose soul, organs and mind are in a pleasant state. Not only is one free from disease, but he is one, pleasant and active in playing the role he is entrusted with by virtue of his position in life and in society. Ayurveda starts from *swasthavrittha* the way of life, a set of rules to lead a healthy life. It appeals to all persons to promote life and to live the full span of life (full span of life according to our ancients was 120 years). Long life is necessary to fulfil one's own mission in life. But long and healthy life is possible only if we adhere to the rules of hygiene in our daily life with necessary adjustments to seasonal and other changes. Violation of these rules leads to sickness. Since prevention is better than cure, it is advisable to study the rules for the proper way of life and strictly follow them, understanding the basic principles. Therefore we start from *Dinacharya*, the daily routine. A 'Swastha' is advised to get up in the *Brahmamuhurta* for protecting his life. It is bad if a healthy man sleeps in the early hours of the dawn, which is generally calculated as three hours earlier to sunrise. Since it is the time when the whole nature wakes up and springs to

activity, getting up at that time agrees with nature and therefore is conducive to one's health.

After one gets up, he has to think over the conditions of his health. First of all, he has to think about the food he had taken the previous night and see whether it is properly digested, if not one has to wait until it is digested. Then attend to the call of nature and after proper hygienic washings, one has to clean the teeth by means of self-made brushes. The brushes prepared from medicinal plants like *neem* are the best. The herbal material powder for clearing the teeth can be a piece of *Triphala* or *Trikatu* as suggested in *Ashtangasamgraha*. It gives more names of trees to be selected for preparation of tooth brushes. After brushing the teeth the tongue is to be rubbed or cleaned with a tongue cleaner. Thus tongue, mouth and teeth are freed from being seats of impurities. Besides, loss of taste and bad odours are also prevented and appetite and cleanliness are gained. *Samgraha* says cleaning the teeth gives immediate appetite by removing the impurities of tongue, teeth and mouth and dental insensitivity to taste is removed. The tongue-cleaners used to be made also from metals like gold, silver, copper, lead and brass. When brushing the teeth is over, *Ashtangasamgraha* recommends the application of collyrium in the eyes. It is useful for protection, prevention and strengthening of eyesight and increasing the beauty of the eyes.

Asthangahridaya recommends oil unction on the head and all over the body to be practised daily. It removes decrepitude and weakness due to overexertion. It gives brightness and shine to the eyes, nourishment to the body, increases the span of life and promotes good sleep, good complexion and strength to the body. Oil is to be applied not only on the head but all over the body. It has to be practised daily. Application of oil on the vertex is good for growth of hair and is a tonic for the scalp. Filling the ears with oil relieves pain on the chin, sides of neck, head and ears. Application of oil on the feet increases their firmness and removes numbness of feet, tiredness etc. Lightness, efficiency of action, stimulation of gastric fire, reduction of fat, properly differentiated and firm physiques are created by exercise, advises *Ashtangahridaya*. Exercises are to be taken after smearing the body with oil. No disease occurs to one whose body is made strong with exercises.

People who take ghee with food can take more exercise. Unwholesome food is like poison, so too overeating. But even such food habits do less harm to those who take regular exercise. There is no other remedy equal to this to reduce obesity of the body, which causes quick ageing. After taking exercise, apply pressure by massage all over the body. Massage is also a part of exercise.

Bath is considered to be very important for the body. It removes itching, dirt, physical exhaustion, sweat, lethargy, throat - burning sensation etc. After bath, one feels proper hunger and appetite. So before meal a healthy person is advised bath. Washing the body below the neck with water is good to increase strength. But washing the head with hot water decreases the strength of hair and eye sight. Total immersion inclusive of head is real bathing. After bath massaging the entire body with wet cloth is good.

Ashtangahridayam says that take only wholesome and proper food. Take only food which is beneficial and not what pleases us. And it has to be limited. *Mita Ahara* i.e. food that is just enough or limited food is recommended. Timely intake of food is also important. The proper time is, when the food taken previously is digested. Excessive eating causes serious maladies. It is more harmful than malnourishment. Untimely food is to be avoided.

Maintaining cleanliness and social appearance are deemed to be duties to be followed by all. When going for walks take an umbrella to protect the head and shoes to protect the feet. *Padatrana* or protector of the feet is the meaningful term used for shoes.

After taking the steps, the modes and means for safe guarding health by anointment, diets and others according to the conditions of the seasons, certain other methods are also prescribed by Vagbhata in Ashtangahridaya to promote a sense of happiness, and elevation. After taking bath in the prescribed way, one can adorn the body with cosmetics, such as camphor, musk agar and saffron. They keep the body warm, and pleasant odour enhances happiness.

Conclusion:

Ashtanga Hridaya is the third major treatise on Ayurveda and most legitimate and extensive summary of Ayurvedic principles. It is neither a very brief nor an elaborate form of Ashtanga Samghra. Ashtanga Hridaya deals with eight angas. Ashtanga Hridiya being a comprehensive text and a part of Brhitrayi is apt of quenching thirst of knowledge. It describes all the important concepts of health and how we will spend a happy life.

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