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PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE OF *DINACHARYA* AND *RITUCHARYA* IN THE 21st CENTURY: A STRUCTURED REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Today, the biggest health problem of the world is lifestyle diseases. These are diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, poor sleep and sadness of mind. They are also called non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Our modern way of living is the main reason behind them. We sleep late, use mobile phones at night, eat at odd times, sit for long hours and eat packed food. Because of this, our body loses its natural link with day, night and season. *Ayurveda* says that the first duty of a doctor is to keep a healthy person healthy. For this, it gives *Dinacharya* (daily routine) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine). These routines are simple, cheap and easy for the whole community to follow. If we study them from the public health point of view, they can help us plan good prevention programmes for today's society. **Materials and Methods:** We studied *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* with their commentaries. We also studied WHO reports and research articles from PubMed and Google Scholar. All the data were arranged under concept, *Samprapti* and public health headings. **Results & Discussion:** Daily and seasonal routines prevent disease in a person, and they can also be taught in families, schools and offices. They are even more useful today because of body-clock problems and climate change. **Conclusion:** *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* are cheap, easy and well accepted ways to stay healthy. If we add them to primary health care and school health programmes, they can help in reducing lifestyle diseases.

Keywords: *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Swasthavritta*, Public health, Lifestyle disorders, Circadian rhythm

INTRODUCTION

In the past, most people died because of infections. Today, the picture has changed. Now most people die because of long-term diseases that come from wrong daily habits. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that in 2021, at least 43 million people died because of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This is about 75% of all deaths that were not linked with the pandemic. Around 18 million of these people died before the age of 70 years, and most of them lived in poor and middle-income countries. WHO says that the main risk factors are tobacco, lack of physical activity, too much alcohol, unhealthy food and air pollution. Almost all of these are linked with what a person does from morning to night.[1]

In India, this problem is growing very fast. A big national study called ICMR-INDIAB checked 113,043 adults from villages and cities of 31 states and union territories. It found that 11.4% of Indian adults have diabetes, 15.3% have prediabetes, 35.5% have high blood pressure, 28.6% are obese and 39.5% have extra fat around the belly. The study also said that these numbers are much higher than what was thought before.[2] Along with this, life in the 21st century has brought many new problems. People use mobile phones and laptops late at night. They eat at different times every day and eat a lot of fast food. They sit for long hours in offices and classrooms. Many people work in night shifts. Many stay in closed air-conditioned rooms and do not feel the season outside. Mental stress is also very high. All these habits disturb the natural rhythm of the body. Slowly they lead to disease, and now even young people are getting these diseases. Hospitals and medicines alone cannot stop this problem. So, prevention through good daily habits has become a public health need.

Ayurveda clearly says that it has two goals. The first goal is to protect the health of a healthy person. The second goal is to cure the disease of a sick person.[3] Protecting health is written first, which shows that *Ayurveda* gives the most importance to prevention. For this, our *Acharyas* described *Swasthavritta*. It includes *Dinacharya* (daily routine), *Ratricharya* (night routine), *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine), *Sadvritta* (good conduct) and rules about natural urges. These rules are simple, cost very little and can be taught to the whole community. These are the same qualities that public health looks for in a good programme. So, in this review we study *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* from a public health point of view and see how they can solve the health problems of the 21st century.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To study *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* and to understand their use for public health in the 21st century.

Objectives

- To collect the description of *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* from the *Brihattrayi*.
- To explain how lifestyle diseases are formed (*Samprapti*) when these routines are not followed.
- To compare these routines with modern public health ideas like body clock, exercise, hygiene and climate and health.
- To suggest easy ways to add these routines to community health programmes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a structured review based on books and articles. Classical references were collected from *Charaka Samhita* with the *Ayurveda Dipika* commentary of Chakrapanidatta, *Sushruta Samhita* with the *Nibandhasangraha* commentary of Dalhana, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* with the *Sarvangasundara* and *Ayurvedarasayana* commentaries. Modern data were collected from WHO reports and from articles found on PubMed, Google Scholar and the AYU journal. For searching, we used words like “Dinacharya”, “Ritucharya”, “Swasthavritta”, “lifestyle disorders”, “circadian rhythm”, “public health” and “climate

change and health". We took only those sources whose author and publication were clear. We left out opinions that had no proper source. All the collected matter was arranged under conceptual study, *Samprapti*, results and discussion, and was written in simple language.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY – AYURVEDIC REVIEW

Concept of *Swastha* and *Swasthavritta*

Acharya Sushruta has given a full definition of a healthy person. He says that a person is *Swastha* (healthy) when the three *Doshas* are balanced, the digestive fire (*Agni*) works well, the seven *Dhatus* are normal, and waste products (*Mala*) are made and removed properly. Along with this, the soul, the sense organs and the mind should be happy and calm.[4] So, health does not only mean "no disease". It includes body, mind and soul together. This is very close to the WHO idea of health, which talks about physical, mental and social well-being. *Swasthavritta* means the routine that keeps a healthy person healthy. Out of all branches of *Ayurveda*, it is the closest to modern community medicine and public health.

Concept of *Kala* and the Daily Cycle of *Doshas*

In *Ayurveda*, time (*Kala*) is a strong factor that affects every living body. Acharya Vagbhata says that *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are strong in the last, middle and first part of life, day, night and digestion, in that order.[5] This means that in the morning *Kapha* is high, in the afternoon *Pitta* is strongest, and in the evening *Vata* goes up. The same order is seen again in the night. This is actually an old description of the body clock. The whole *Dinacharya* is made according to this clock. For example, we wake up early in the light and active *Vata* time, eat our main meal in the afternoon when *Pitta* and *Agni* are strong, and go to bed early at night.

Dinacharya – Meaning and Order

The word *Dinacharya* is made of two words, *Dina* (day) and *Charya* (routine). So, it means the activities that we should do every day to stay healthy. Acharya Vagbhata starts this chapter by saying that a healthy person should wake up in *Brahma Muhurta*, which is about one and a half hours before sunrise, to protect his life.[6] After this, he gives a clear order of daily work. It starts with passing urine and stool and cleaning the mouth, and ends with bath, food, work and sleep. The main steps and their use for public health are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Main steps of *Dinacharya* and their public health use

Step	What the classics say	Use for public health today
Brahma Muhurta Jagarana	Wake up before sunrise with a calm and fresh mind	Fixed waking time, morning light, better sleep cycle
Malotsarga	Pass urine and stool on time, without force	Good bowel habit, less constipation and piles
Dantadhavana, *Jihva Nirlekhana*, *Gandusha*	Clean teeth with bitter twigs, scrape the tongue, hold oil or herbal liquid in the mouth	Clean mouth, fewer cavities and gum problems
Anjana	Apply collyrium to the eyes daily	Eye care in the time of screens and dust
Nasya	Put medicated oil like *Anu Taila* in the nose	Care of nose and throat in polluted cities
Abhyanga	Oil massage, mainly on head, ears and feet	Healthy skin, less stress, better sleep
Vyayama	Exercise up to half of one's strength (*Ardhashakti*)	Regular exercise, control of weight and sugar
Udvartana and *Snana*	Rub with dry herbal powder and take a daily bath	Body cleanliness, less extra fat (*Meda*)

Step	What the classics say	Use for public health today
Ahara Vidhi	Eat the right amount, at the right time, after the last meal is digested	Fixed meal time, right portion, less obesity
Sadvritta	Rules of good personal and social behaviour	Good mental health and social peace
Nidra (*Ratricharya*)	Sleep on time at night, do not stay awake at night or sleep in the day	Good sleep habits, less screen time at night

Brahma Muhurta Jagarana and *Malotsarga*

After waking up, a person should first think about his own body and check if last night's food is digested. Then he should pass urine and stool without any force. In public health language, this simple step builds a regular toilet habit. It also makes a person aware of his body at the start of the day. Waking up early also gives the body morning light, and this light helps to set the body clock for the whole day.

Care of Mouth, Eyes and Nose

For *Dantadhavana*, fresh twigs of bitter (*Tikta*), pungent (*Katu*) and astringent (*Kashaya*) plants are used, like *Nimba*, *Khadira*, *Karanja*, *Arka* and *Arjuna*. After this, the tongue is cleaned with a scraper (*Jihva Nirlekhana*), and oil or herbal liquid is held in the mouth (*Gandusha* and *Kavala*). *Sauviranjana* is put in the eyes every day, and *Rasanjana* is used once in seven nights to remove extra *Kapha* (*A. H. Su.* 2/5). *Nasya* with *Anu Taila* keeps the nose, head and sense organs strong. Today, mouth diseases, eye strain from screens and breathing problems from dirty air are very common. So, these small daily habits are very useful for public health. *Dhumapana* (medicated smoke) is also written in the classics. But today, tobacco smoking has no place in a healthy routine. Only safe options like steam inhalation, under a doctor's advice, should be used.

Abhyanga, Udvartana *and* Snana

Vagbhata advises *Abhyanga* every day because it slows down ageing, removes tiredness and controls *Vata*. The head, ears and feet should be given special care. *Udvartana* means rubbing the body with dry herbal powder. It reduces extra *Kapha* and *Meda* and makes the body firm. *Snana* (bath) cleans the body, improves hunger and removes tiredness, sweat and dirt. Today, many people suffer from stress, poor sleep and obesity. These practices are cheap self-care methods that every family can do at home.

Ahara Vidhi – Amount and Time of Food

Acharya Charaka starts the chapter on daily routine with a clear rule. He says that one should eat in the right amount, and the right amount depends on the strength of one's digestive fire (*Agni*).[7] Food should be eaten only after the last meal is digested. It should be eaten at a fixed time, in a calm place and with full attention. Heavy food should fill only one-third or half of the stomach, while light food can be eaten till one feels just full. This simple rule of *Matra* (amount) and *Kala* (time) is very close to modern advice on portion size and fixed meal timing. Both are basic steps to prevent obesity and diabetes.

Vegadharana and *Vyayama*

Charaka gives a list of thirteen natural urges that should never be stopped. These are urine, stool, semen, gas, vomiting, sneezing, burping, yawning, hunger, thirst, tears, sleep and fast breathing after hard work. At the same time, he says that we should control the urges of the mind, like greed, sadness, fear, anger, ego and jealousy.[8] In the same chapter, *Vyayama* (exercise) is described as body work that gives stability and strength, but it must be done in the right amount. Today, many people hold their urine or hunger because of busy work, no clean toilets or exam pressure. On the other side, anger and stress are also increasing. So, this chapter guides us for both body health and mental health of the public.

Ratricharya and *Nidra*

Sleep is one of the three main supports of life (*Trayopastambha*), along with food and a controlled sexual life. Charaka says that happiness and sorrow, good health and weakness, strength and weakness, sexual power and its loss, knowledge and lack of knowledge, and even life and death, all depend on sleep.[9] Staying awake at night increases dryness (*Rukshata*) and *Vata*. Sleeping in the day, except in summer, increases *Kapha* and heaviness. Today, students and young workers use mobile phones, play online games and watch shows till late at night. This is a big reason for poor sleep. The old warning of *Ayurveda* matches well with today's advice on good sleep habits.

Sadvritta – Mental and Social Health

Sadvritta is a set of rules for good behaviour given by Charaka to keep the mind and sense organs in control.[10] It has personal rules like keeping clean, bathing and eating on time and wearing clean clothes. It also has social and moral rules like speaking the truth, respecting elders and teachers, helping poor people, not hurting others and controlling the senses. A person who follows these rules gets good health and control over his senses. Today, many people suffer from loneliness, worry, depression and fights in society. *Sadvritta* is a natural guide for mental and social health, which is the third part of the WHO definition of health.

Ritucharya – Seasonal Routine

Concept of *Ritu,* Adana Kala *and* Visarga Kala

Charaka says that a person's strength and skin glow increase only when he knows which food and habits suit each season and follows them.[11] The year is divided into two halves according to the movement of the sun. The first half is *Uttarayana*, also called *Adana Kala*. In this time, the sun and wind are strong, and they slowly take away the moisture and strength of living beings. It includes *Shishira*, *Vasanta* and *Grishma*, and bitter, astringent and pungent tastes become strong. The second half is *Dakshinayana*, also called *Visarga Kala*. In this time, the moon is strong and the earth becomes cool due to rain and dew, so strength slowly comes back. It includes *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta*, and sour, salty and sweet tastes become strong. Body strength is lowest in *Grishma* and *Varsha*, medium in *Vasanta* and *Sharad*, and highest in *Hemanta* and *Shishira*.

The Six *Ritus* and Their Routine

Acharya Vagbhata names six seasons. Each season has two months, starting from *Magha*. The six seasons are *Shishira*, *Vasanta*, *Grishma*, *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Hemanta*.[12] For each season, he gives a full plan of food and activity that keeps the *Doshas* balanced when the weather changes. A short summary is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Six *Ritus* with *Dosha* state, body strength and main routine

Ritu (approx. time)	*Dosha* state	Body strength	Food (*Ahara*)	Activity (*Vihara*)
Shishira (mid-Jan to mid-Mar)	*Kapha Sanchaya*	Highest	Oily, sour and salty food, wheat, warm drinks	*Abhyanga*, sunlight, warm clothes
Vasanta (mid-Mar to mid-May)	*Kapha Prakopa*	Medium	Light food, old barley and wheat, honey; no heavy, cold or sweet food	*Vyayama*, *Udvartana*, *Vamana*; no day sleep
Grishma (mid-May to mid-Jul)	*Vata Sanchaya*, *Kapha Shamana*	Lowest	Sweet, cold and liquid food, rice, milk, ghee; no salty, sour or spicy food	Stay in cool places, short day sleep is allowed, no heavy exercise

Ritu **(approx. time)**	***Dosha*** **state**	**Body strength**	**Food (*Ahara*)**	**Activity (*Vihara*)**
Varsha (mid-Jul to mid-Sep)	*Vata Prakopa*, *Pitta Sanchaya*	Low	Old grains, boiled and cooled water, light warm food, a little honey	*Basti*; no day sleep, do not get wet, do not drink river water
Sharad (mid-Sep to mid-Nov)	*Pitta Prakopa*	Medium	Sweet, bitter and astringent food, rice, green gram, ghee	*Virechana*, *Raktamokshana*, *Hamsodaka*
Hemanta (mid-Nov to mid-Jan)	*Pitta Shamana*	Highest	Heavy and nourishing food, milk products, sweet, sour and salty taste	*Abhyanga*, *Vyayama*, warm clothes and warm rooms

Ritusandhi – Meeting Point of Two Seasons

The last seven days of one season and the first seven days of the next season together are called *Ritusandhi*. In these fourteen days, we should slowly leave the routine of the old season and slowly start the routine of the new season. If we change our food or habits suddenly at this time, disease can come, because the body is still getting used to the new weather. Many seasonal problems like cold, cough, fever, allergy and stomach upset are seen at this time. So, *Ritusandhi* gives a clear and useful message for preventing seasonal diseases.

Seasonal *Shodhana* and Lifestyle Diseases

Ayurveda also advises seasonal cleansing. This removes the *Dosha* that has collected in the last season before it can cause disease. *Vamana* is given in *Vasanta* for *Kapha*, *Basti* in *Varsha* for *Vata*, and *Virechana* in *Sharad* for *Pitta*. Thakkar and his team studied the seasonal routines of the classics. They said that when the body cannot adjust to the change of season, *Dosha* imbalance happens, and the person easily gets many diseases. They also said that lifestyle diseases are now seen even in young people, and they suggested *Ritucharya* as an easy way to prevent this.[13]

Samprapti (How Disease Forms) when *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* are Not Followed

Flow Chart 1: *Samprapti* of lifestyle diseases

Nidana **(causes): Waking late and sleeping late, mobile use at night, eating at odd times and eating too much, junk food, sitting for long hours, stopping natural urges, stress, not following seasonal diet and *Ritusandhi***

↓

Kala Viparyaya **– body clock does not match with day, night and season**

↓

Agnimandya **– digestive fire becomes weak and irregular**

↓

Ama Utpatti **– undigested, sticky waste is formed in the body**

↓

Dosha Sanchaya → Prakopa → Prasara **– mainly *Kapha* and *Vata*, and *Pitta* according to the season**

↓

Srotodushti **– channels like *Rasavaha*, *Medovaha*, *Mutravaha* and *Manovaha Srotas* get blocked and disturbed**

↓

Sthana Samshraya – Dosha **and *Ama* settle in weak *Dhatus* like *Meda*, *Rakta* and *Mamsa***

↓

Vyakti – Prameha **(diabetes), *Sthaulya*** **(obesity), *Hridroga*** **(heart disease), *Anidra*** **(sleeplessness), *Amlapitta*** **(acidity), *Vishada*** **(depression)**

↓

Bheda **– long-term problems, disability, early death and more burden on public health**

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- The *Ayurvedic* meaning of *Swastha* covers body, mind and soul. It is very close to the WHO meaning of health. *Swasthavritta* is the branch of *Ayurveda* that is closest to public health.
- The daily cycle of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* given by Vagbhata is an old idea of the body clock. *Dinacharya* is planned according to this clock.
- Steps of *Dinacharya* like waking early, regular toilet habit, care of mouth, eyes and nose, *Abhyanga*, *Vyayama* and bath directly support body cleanliness and exercise.
- The rules of *Matra* (amount) and *Kala* (time) of food match today's advice on portion size and fixed meal time for preventing obesity and diabetes.
- *Nidra* is one of the three supports of life. Staying awake at night and sleeping in the day are clearly called causes of *Dosha* imbalance, which matches today's sleep advice.
- Rules about natural urges (*Vegadharana*) and *Sadvritta* cover both body health and mental health, and help in stress control and social well-being.
- *Ritucharya* gives a food and activity plan for every season, based on *Adana–Visarga Kala* and the changing strength of the body.
- *Ritusandhi* teaches us to change habits slowly when one season ends and another starts. This can help in reducing seasonal infections and allergies.
- When daily and seasonal routines are not followed, *Agnimandya*, *Ama* and *Dosha* imbalance start. This is the common root of *Prameha*, *Sthaulya*, *Hridroga* and *Anidra*.
- All these methods are cheap, can be done at home and are well known in Indian culture. So, they are good for large health promotion programmes.

DISCUSSION

Dinacharya can be called an old form of chronobiology, which is the science of the body clock. Potter and his team wrote a detailed review on this topic. They explained that modern changes like light at night, night shifts, less sleep and less daylight can disturb the body clock and cause many problems of metabolism. They also said that a large part of the world population is now at risk of this problem. They suggested some solutions, like sleeping at a fixed time, getting more light in the day, using less light at night and eating at the right time of the day.[14] These solutions are almost the same as the classical advice of waking in *Brahma Muhurta*, eating the main meal in the afternoon, eating a light and early dinner and sleeping on time. The daily routine does not need any costly machine. It can be taught in families, schools, colleges and offices, and it can reach a large number of people at a very low cost. So, it is a strong tool for primary prevention.

Ritucharya teaches us to live in harmony with nature, and this lesson is more important today because of climate change. The 2024 report of the Lancet Countdown says that in 2023, the average surface temperature of the earth was 1.45°C higher than before the industrial age. It also says that ten out of its fifteen markers of climate-related health danger reached new and worrying records.[15] In India, we can see this as longer and hotter summers, heavy and irregular rains and polluted winter air in many cities. The *Grishma* routine of cool and liquid food, rest in cool places and no heavy exercise in the heat works like a personal heat safety plan. The *Varsha* routine of boiled water, light food and staying away from dampness helps in preventing diseases spread by water and mosquitoes. The rule of *Ritusandhi* helps us get ready for seasonal flu. At the same time, the classical season calendar should be adjusted to the local climate and to the changing nature of seasons.

To make a real change in public health, these routines must become a part of the health system. The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 was adopted by the Seventy-eighth World Health

Assembly. It has four goals: to make the evidence stronger, to make sure of safety and rules, to add traditional and complementary medicine into health systems, and to use its value in other sectors also.[16] Following this, simple *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* charts can be shared through primary health centres, wellness centres, community health workers, school health programmes, college orientation and office wellness programmes. Mobile apps can also send reminders about seasonal food and habits. But some classical advice needs careful updating. For example, *Dhumapana* should not be taken as permission to smoke, and food advice should suit local food habits and the person's *Prakriti*. Good community studies and long-term studies that check weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, sleep quality and mental health are needed to build strong proof for this approach.

CONCLUSION

Dinacharya and *Ritucharya* are not just old rituals. They are a well-planned system for preventing disease, and they match closely with modern ideas of body clock, exercise, cleanliness, sleep and adjusting to climate. When they are not followed, a chain of *Agnimandya*, *Ama* and *Dosha* imbalance starts, which ends in the lifestyle diseases that we see in society today. These routines are simple, cheap, can be done at home and are accepted in our culture. So, they are very good for public health at the level of the person, the family and the community. If they are added to primary health care, school and office health programmes, with the support of good research, they can help a lot in reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases in the 21st century.

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