

VYADHIKSHAMATVA: THE LINK BETWEEN PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE OBJECTIVES OF AYURVEDA

*¹Dr. Amritanshu Saroch, ²Dr. Rishika Chauhan, ³Dr. Ajay Shukla, ⁴Dr. Kartik Goel

*^{1,2}MD Scholar, Postgraduate Department of Rog Nidan, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, India.

³Lecturer, Postgraduate Department of Rog Nidan, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, India.

⁴MD Scholar, Postgraduate Department of Rachana Sharir, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, India.

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*Corresponding Author

Dr. Amritanshu Saroch

MD Scholar, Postgraduate Department
of Rog Nidan, Rajiv Gandhi
Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic
College and Hospital, Paprola, India.



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ABSTRACT

Health forms the cornerstone of achieving life's aspirations. From ancient times, humans have sought longevity accompanied by optimal health. Ayurveda, the science of life, primarily focuses on attaining and maintaining health through a holistic approach. Practices such as Dinacharya (daily routines), Ritucharya (seasonal regimens), Sadvritta (ethical conduct), Achar Rasayana (behavioral rejuvenation), nutritious diet, and Rasayana therapies collectively support the body's immune system and promote overall wellness. In Ayurveda, Vyadhikshamatva—commonly understood as immunity—is influenced by Bala (strength), Oja (vital energy), and Prakritik Shleshma (natural body humors). Strengthening Bala and Oja, along with adhering to a balanced lifestyle, helps enhance Vyadhikshamatva. This review critically re-examines the Ayurvedic understanding of Vyadhikshamatva, highlighting the influence of diet, lifestyle, seasonal adaptations, psychological well-being, and rejuvenating therapies. Classical texts emphasize the role of Agni (digestive fire), Ahara

(diet), Nidra (sleep), Vyayama (physical activity), Satva (mental stability), and Rasayana in maintaining optimal immunity. By compiling information from ancient Ayurvedic literature

and corroborating it with modern scientific findings, this review presents a systematic perspective on factors promoting immunity and overall health.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Vyadhikshamatva, Bala, Oja, Immunity, Rasayana.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, an age-old system of medicine, primarily aims at preserving health and preventing disease. A central concept in this tradition is Vyadhikshamatva, referring to the body's inherent capacity to resist disease and mitigate its progression. Acharya Chakrapani Datta describes Vyadhikshamatva in two dimensions:

व्याधिक्षमत्वं व्याधिबलविरोधित्वं व्याध्युत्पादप्रतिबन्धकत्वमिति यावत्।

(Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 28/7, Chakrapani Teeka)

1. Vyadhi-Bala Virodhitvam: Ability to resist disease severity (analogous to acquired immunity).
2. Vyadhi-Utpadaka Pratibandhakatva: Capacity to prevent disease onset (similar to innate immunity).

Modern immunology defines immunity as the body's defense mechanism against foreign invaders, including bacteria, viruses, and toxins. Immunity is classified as innate and adaptive. Innate immunity provides immediate defense, while adaptive immunity involves B and T lymphocytes producing antibodies and mediating cellular responses. Effective immune responses are crucial in controlling infections, such as tuberculosis, where coordinated action of immune cells neutralizes pathogens.

Concept of Vyadhikshamatva in Ayurveda

Vyadhikshamatva is described as the body's strength to prevent disease and combat existing ailments. It represents the equilibrium of Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), Dhatus (tissues), and Agni (digestive/metabolic fire). Acharya Charaka emphasizes Oja—the essence of all Dhatus—as central to immunity. Depletion or vitiation of Oja leads to immune deficiencies or aberrant immune responses, increasing susceptibility to infections, hypersensitivity, or autoimmune conditions. Vyadhikshamatva is a central concept in Ayurveda, often translated as immunity or the body's inherent capacity to resist disease. Unlike the modern biomedical concept of immunity, which focuses largely on cellular and humoral mechanisms,

Vyadhikshamatva is holistic, encompassing physical, physiological, and psychological dimensions.

1. Dimensions of Vyadhikshamatva

Ayurveda classifies Vyadhikshamatva into two main components:

1. Vyadhi-Bala Virodhitvam

- Refers to the body's capability to fight or mitigate disease severity.
- Analogous to acquired immunity in modern medicine, developed through proper nutrition, Rasayana therapy, and lifestyle practices.
- Factors influencing this include Oja, Bala, Agni (digestive fire), and Dhatus (tissues).

2. Vyadhi-Utpadaka Pratibandhakatva

- Refers to prevention of disease onset, similar to innate immunity.
- Ensures that the body's natural barriers, metabolic processes, and physiological balance prevent pathogens from causing illness.
- Governed by the equilibrium of Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and the strength of Jatharagni (digestive/metabolic fire).

2. Bala (Strength) and its Types

Bala is the primary determinant of Vyadhikshamatva. Ayurveda recognizes three types of Bala:

1. Sahaja Bala (Innate Strength)

- Present at birth, inherited from parents.
- Depends on genetic constitution (Prakriti), quality of gametes, and maternal health during pregnancy.
- Strong Sahaja Bala ensures resistance to congenital or early-onset diseases.

2. Kalaja Bala (Age and Season-dependent Strength)

- Changes with age, seasonal cycles, and environmental factors.
- For example, strength and immunity are naturally higher during Hemanta (early winter) and Shishira (late winter).

3. Yuktikrita Bala (Acquired or Conditioned Strength)

- Developed through diet, lifestyle, Rasayana therapies, and behavioral conduct.

- Achieved via Dinacharya (daily routine), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), Pathya (proper diet), Nidra (sleep), Vyayama (exercise), and Satva (psychological well-being).

3. Oja – Essence of Immunity

Oja is considered the finest essence of all Dhatus (body tissues) and is directly linked with Vyadhikshamatva

- Functions of Oja
 - Maintains vitality, physical strength, and mental resilience.
 - Acts as a buffer against stress and disease.
 - Supports both innate and adaptive aspects of immunity.
- Ojokshaya (depletion of Oja):
 - Leads to reduced immunity, increased susceptibility to infections, autoimmunity, and faster aging.
 - Causes include improper diet, excessive physical or mental stress, lack of sleep, chronic disease, or environmental toxins.

4. Tridosha Equilibrium and Vyadhikshamatva

The balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha is critical for maintaining immunity:

- Vata: Governs movement and neurological coordination. Imbalance can disrupt metabolic processes.
- Pitta: Governs digestion and metabolic transformation. Imbalance affects Agni and nutrient assimilation.
- Kapha: Provides structural strength, stability, and immunity. Adequate Kapha ensures robust Bala.

Thus, Vyadhikshamatva is an outcome of balanced Doshas, strong Agni, adequate Dhatu nourishment, and stable Oja.

5. Bala Vridhikar Bhava – Factors Enhancing Strength

Classical texts describe several external and internal factors enhancing Vyadhikshamatva:

- Internal factors:
 - Quality of gametes, Prakriti (constitution), age, Oja, Agni, Dhatu health, mental strength (Satva).
- External factors:

- Regional and seasonal influence, diet and regimen (Pathya), environmental conditions, proper exercise, and rejuvenation therapy (Rasayana).

6. Role of Rasayana and Bal-Rasayana

Rasayana therapies directly enhance Vyadhikshamatva by improving Oja, Bala, Dhatu quality, and physiological resilience. Examples include:

- Chyawanprash: Enhances immunity, vitality, and digestive power.
- Swarna Prashana: Boosts immunity, memory, and intellectual development in children.
- Medhya Rasayana: Improves cognitive functions and mental resilience.

7. Integration with Modern Concepts

- Vyadhikshamatva can be correlated with innate and adaptive immunity, highlighting the importance of nutrition, lifestyle, and mental health in disease prevention.
- Practices promoting Oja and Bala may enhance antioxidant status, immunoglobulin production, and stress resilience, bridging Ayurveda and modern immunology.

Trividha Bala (Three Types of Strength)

1. Sahaja Bala: Innate strength from birth.
2. Kalaja Bala: Strength influenced by age and seasons.
3. Yuktikrita Bala: Acquired strength via diet, exercise, rest, and rejuvenative therapies.

Bala Vridhikar Bhava includes factors enhancing strength, such as birthplace, lineage, season, diet, constitution, mental resilience, youth, and physical activity. These collectively influence Vyadhikshamatva.

Role of Oja and Bala

Oja maintains vitality, resilience, and immunity. Its depletion (Ojokshaya) predisposes to diseases like Rajayakshma (tuberculosis). Lifestyle factors, diet, excessive physical exertion, mental stress, and environmental influences contribute to Oja depletion. Maintaining Oja through balanced nutrition, Rasayana therapy, and regulated lifestyle is critical for robust immunity.

Factors Influencing Vyadhikshamatva

Lifestyle / Factor	Health Impact / Benefits
Daily Routine (Dincharya)	Maintains healthy sensory and motor organs, hygiene, and mental well-being. Practices: Kavala & Gandusha (oral care), Pratimarsa

	Nasya (disease prevention above clavicle), Abhyanga (longevity).
Seasonal Regimen (Ritucharya)	Adjusting lifestyle and diet according to seasons supports health and prevents seasonal illnesses.
Conduct & Behavior (Sadvratta & Achar Rasayana)	Following social, mental, and environmental codes promotes psychological health and overall well-being.
Balanced Diet (Pathya Aahar)	Proper nutrition builds cells, enhances immunity (Yuktikrit Bala), and strengthens Ojas.
Rejuvenation Therapy (Rasayana)	Enhances immunity and body strength by optimizing tissue quality and using immunomodulators.
Child Immunity Therapy (Bal-Rasayana)	Swarna Prashana boosts immunity, intellect, digestion, metabolism, strength, and longevity in children. • Parammedhavi: 1 month → improves intelligence & disease resistance • Shrutdhar: 6 months → enhances memory retention
Sleep (Nidra)	Quality sleep improves immunity, digestion, stress management, and tissue balance; increases Kapha (strength).
Digestive Fire (Agni)	Strong Agni supports nutrient absorption, immunity, and elimination of pathogens.
Yoga Practices	Asanas, Pranayama, and meditation strengthen body, lungs, immunity, and mental faculties (memory, concentration).
Mental Well-being (Satva)	Satva strengthens mind to handle stress and illness, providing inner strength and satisfaction.
Strength Factors (Balvridhnikar Bhava)	Enhanced by favorable region, season, healthy gametes & uterus, strength-promoting diet, robust body, proper regimen, exercise, youth, and pleasurable actions.

Methods to Enhance Vyadhikshamatva

Ayurvedic texts recommend age-specific and condition-specific interventions:

- Prenatal Care: Garbhini Paricharya and Pumsavana Karma support fetal health.
- Infancy and Childhood: Lehana Karma, Medhya Rasayana, and nutrition optimize growth and immune development.
- Adults: Dinacharya, Ritucharya, balanced diet, regulated sleep, yoga, physical exercise, meditation, Panchakarma (detoxification), Achar Rasayana, and Rasayana therapy sustain immunity.

Key measures include wholesome diet, regular physical activity, quality sleep, mental and spiritual practices, and Rasayana therapy for enhanced Oja and vitality.

DISCUSSION

Modern lifestyles have disrupted traditional dietary, behavioral, and activity patterns, contributing to immune dysregulation. Applying Ayurvedic principles of Vyadhikshamatva provides a structured framework for disease prevention and wellness. Equilibrium of Doshas, optimal Agni, adequate nutrition, exercise, mental well-being, and rejuvenative therapies

collectively enhance immunity, reduce susceptibility to infections, and promote longevity. Practices such as Prakrti-specific diet, Pumsavana Karma, Yoga, Dinacharya, Ritucharya, and ethical conduct exemplify practical approaches to strengthening Vyadhikshamatva.

CONCLUSION

Vyadhikshamatva, synonymous with Bala, Oja, and overall health, represents the body's innate resistance to disease. Its strength varies among individuals, influenced by constitution, diet, lifestyle, seasons, and rejuvenative interventions. Adopting balanced nutrition, regulated routines, exercise, quality sleep, Rasayana therapy, and mental wellness practices enhances immunity and prepares the body to handle modern physiological and psychological stresses. Ayurveda offers a multidimensional, holistic approach to sustaining health, emphasizing prevention alongside cure.

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