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Review Article

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Ayurveda Concept of Immunity and Biological Factors Associated with Immunity

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Abstract

The term immunity stands for the power which protects from the diseases, the immune system acts as defense mechanism against many common diseases including infections. The Ayurveda described term *Vyadhikshamatva* for inherent defense mechanism. There are many drugs especially *Rasayana* herbs which improves immunity, *Bala* and *Agni*. *Vyadhikshamatva* varies person to person depending upon their *Prakriti* therefore some person possess good immunity while others deprived the same. The other factors such as diet, environmental factor, genetic predisposition, mental status and life style, etc. also affect *Vyadhikshamatva* of individual. *Bala* and *Ojas* also associated with inherent immunity, *Ojas* or *Bala* helps to prevents manifestations of common infections thus restore normal health status. Ayurveda ways of daily regimen, balanced diet and *Yoga* can help to improves *Vyadhikshamatva*. Natural drugs like *Guduchi*, *Ginger*, *Tulsi*, *Turmeric* and *Amalaki*, etc. are well known for their immune boosting effects. Present article explores Ayurveda concept of immunity.

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1. Introduction

As per Ayurveda the health merely depends upon the balancing state of body, mind, sense organs and soul. Ayurveda also connects physical and mental status with natural harmony and believes that if person follow good spiritual and moral conducts then he/she can attain disease free health condition. In this regards Ayurveda further elaborated the concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) as power of disease resistance that helps to prevent pathological conditions especially common infectious diseases. The dietary factors (*Aharaja*), daily conducts (*Viharaja*), climatic conditions and genetic factors, etc. are mainly affects immunity of person. (1-4)

Vyadhikshamatva (immunity) varies person to person since each and every individual possess specific inherent constitution (*Prakriti*) therefore susceptibility towards the disease differ person to person. As per Ayurveda the term *Vyadhikshamatva* is made up of two words as depicted in Figure 1 which stands for *Vyadhi* means disease and *Kshamatva* power to suppress, so it is inherent ability of body to provide protection against diseases. (3-7)

Vyadhi disease mainly arises due to the non-equilibrium between *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha*), *Dhatus* (tissues) and *Malas* (excretory products). The physiological haemostatic of these factors is responsible for the maintenance of physical and mental health status. The disturbed biological constitution causes pathological manifestations and this can be brings by the disease causative factors mainly infectious organisms. The *Vyadhikshamatva* combat against such factors and provides strength to prevent disease pathogenesis.

Vyadhikshamatva not only prevent disease invasion but also restrict progress of disease and prevent re-occurrence of the disease. However there are many factors which can be considered responsible for the diminished state of *Vyadhikshamatva*, the factors responsible for decreasing immunity are *Ati-Sthoola*, *Ati-Krishna*, *Anivista-Mamsa*, *Anivista-Asthi*, *Anivista-Shonita*, *Durbala*, *Asatmya-Aaharopachita*, *Alpa-Aaharopachita* and *Alpa-Sattva*, etc. These factors suppress immunity thus decreases disease resistance power. (7-9)

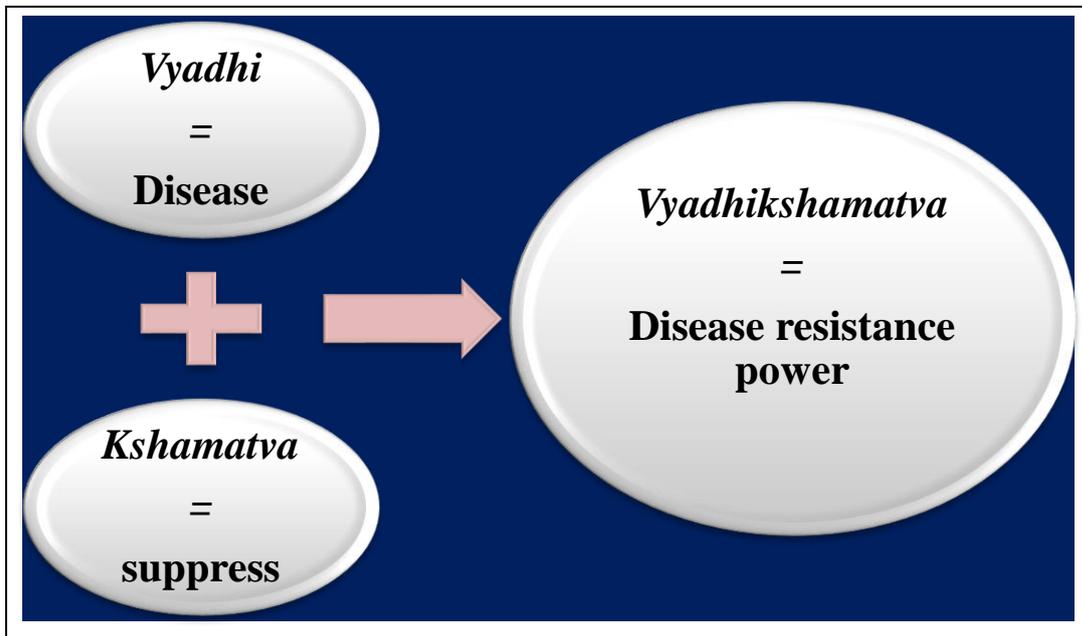


Figure 1. Literal meaning of term Vyadhikshamatva

2. Factors associated with Vyadhikshamatva

- ❖ *Sleshma Kapha*
- ❖ *Hita and Ahita Ahara*
- ❖ *Bala*
- ❖ *Agni*
- ❖ *Oja*

Sleshma Kapha possesses *Snigdha, Sita, Guru, Manda, Slaksna, Mrtsna* and *Sthira* properties. *Sleshma* in normal state is associated with *Bala* and *Oja* while in abnormal conditions it is associated with *Mala*. The optimum state of *Sleshma Kapha* provides stability, virility, resistance and courage thus gives good immunity while abnormal state of *Sleshma Kapha* is responsible for lack of immunity.

Hita and Ahita Ahara is main factors that can alter immune power. The wholesome and suitable foods considered as *Satmya* or *Hita* substances i.e.; water, *Ghee*, milk, wheat and rice, etc. The *Ahita* or *Asatmya* substances like excessively sour, hot, spicy and oily foods with lack of nutritional value causes ill-effects and decreases immunity. The *Hita Ahara* is responsible for the healthy production of *Dhatu*s which further forms *Ojus* and increases *Bala* thus increases *Vyadhikshamatva*. The *Ahita* substance is responsible for improper nourishment of *Dhatu*s due to which *Ojus* get decreases and *Vyadhikshamatva* also diminishes.

Bala is also associated with *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Bala* provides strength to the body tissues and it is responsible for the strength. Essence of *Dhatu*s, strength of *Rasa* and *Shukra* is associated with *Bala* thus it support whole body and provides *Vyadhikshamatva*. *Sahaja Bala* exists from the time of birth thus provides inherent immunity; *Kalaja Bala* is temporal strength which acquired with the variation of seasons and age thus gives specific immunity while *Yuktikrutaja Bala* is acquired by the combination of diet and daily routine thus gives

immunity based on the nutritional diet and exercise. *Bala* remain in *Alpa* state in childhood and elderly age while remain *Uttama* in young age therefore adult peoples possess good immunity as compared to the elderly and children.

Agni means power to digest and assimilate food which also related with *Vyadhikshama*, *Jatharagni* is responsible for the life, strength, enthusiasm, complexion, *Ojas*, *Tejas* and *Prana*. The optimum state of *Jatharagni* provides essence of foods to the tissue therefore nourishes body and boost immunity. The impaired state of *Agni* disturbed *Tridoshas* and deteriorates immune response. *Agni* digest, assimilate and metabolizes foods thus improves process of nourishment and boost nutritional intake thus enhances strength of tissues thereby boost immunity.

Oja is another factor that strongly related with *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Oja* appeared during embryogenesis as essence of *Saptadhatus* (*Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Majja* and *Shukra*). *Oja* as seat for strength can be termed as *Bala*, *Ojas* as *Sara* of *Dhatu*s pervades all over the body and control strength as well as energy. *Ojas* is viscous, greasy, *Somatmaka* and clear in nature. *Ojas* gives life and energy thus improves immunity. Anger, worry, hunger, exertion and diseased condition leads *Ojakshaya* due to which immunity get suppressed. (9-12)

Rasayana and Vyadhikshamatva

Rasayana are ayurveda drugs used as rejuvenation therapy and also improves immunity. **Rasayana** therapy improves *Oja* and *Bala* thus increases *Vyadhikshamatva*. **Rasayana** therapy provides long life, memory, intelligence, youthfulness, strength and protection from diseases. **Rasayana** increases immunity by improving nutritive function and immunomodulatory action. The antioxidant, neuroprotective, haemopoietic and anti-ageing effects of **Rasayana** therapy helps to improves

natural immune responses. The *Rasayana* drugs used as immunity booster are as follows:

- ✓ *Guduchi*
- ✓ *Amalaki*
- ✓ *Yasthimadhu*
- ✓ *Shatavari*
- ✓ *Ashwagandha*

Immunity boosting foods

Vegetables and fruits rich in beta carotene, vitamins and ascorbic acid improves immunity, certain foods like tomato, bell pepper, mushrooms, broccoli, spinach and other green vegetables also build resistance against infections.

3. Conclusion

Ayurvedic concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* can be correlated with modern concept of immunity. The normal state of *Kapha*, *Bala* and *Oja* provides good immunity. *Oja* as essence of *Dhatu* provides good immunity while *Bala* as strength gives power against diseases. *Hita Ahara* and *Agni* also contributed significantly towards the normal level of immune responses. The *Rasayana* therapy nourishes *Dhatu*, provides internal strength and enhances *Ojas* thus increases immunity. The immunomodulatory effect of *Rasayana* therapy improves inherent immunity. The *Vyadhikshamatva* can be improved by some natural drugs like; *Tulsi*, *Ashwagandha*, *Triphala*, *Ginger*, *Garlic*, *Turmeric* and *Black cumin*, etc.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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