

Role of Vyadhishamatva in Disease Prevention and Management A Review with Clinical Applications

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Abstract

Vyadhishamatva is a fundamental concept in Ayurveda that denotes the body's natural ability to fend off diseases and sustain health by achieving a balanced state of physiology and immunity. This review article examines the classical Ayurvedic perspective on Vyadhishamatva, categorizing it into three types: innate immunity (Sahaja), acquired immunity (Akalaja), and therapeutic immunity (Yuktikrita). It delves into the key mechanisms related to Bala (strength), Agni (digestive fire), Ojas (vital essence), and the integrity of Srotas (body channels). By linking these traditional notions to contemporary immunological concepts, such as innate and adaptive immunity, gut-immune interactions, and the regulation of systemic inflammation, the article illustrates Ayurveda's comprehensive approach to disease prevention and treatment. Additionally, the review covers practical applications of Vyadhishamatva, focusing on Rasayana therapy, lifestyle changes (Dinacharya and Ritucharya), and personalized treatments adapted to individuals' constitutions (Prakriti) and disease conditions (Vikriti). Recent experimental and clinical research supports the immunomodulatory effects of Ayurvedic herbs like Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia) and Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), underlining their significance in enhancing the body's defense mechanisms. However, the review also points out existing challenges, such as the necessity for standardized evaluation methods, and advocates for integrative studies to unite Ayurvedic principles with modern medical practices. The combination of traditional wisdom and current scientific evidence reinforces Vyadhishamatva as a valuable model for fostering holistic health, improving treatment results, and enhancing preventive healthcare strategies today.

Keywords: Vyadhishamatva, Ayurveda, Immunity, Disease Prevention, Rasayana, Immunomodulation, Agni, Ojas, Prakriti, Ayurvedic Herbs, Modern Immunology.

Introduction

Health and illness have been key topics in medical science throughout history. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical system, provides a holistic and integrative perspective on health, highlighting the essential balance between the body, mind, and environment.¹ A core principle in Ayurveda that pertains to health preservation and disease prevention is Vyadhishamatva, often translated as disease resistance or immunity. In contrast to modern medicine, which mainly addresses targeted immune responses against pathogens, Ayurveda views Vyadhishamatva as a multifaceted concept that includes physical robustness, metabolic energy,

mental strength, and alignment with the environment.

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Vyadhishamatva refers to the body's natural ability to fend off the onset and development of diseases by preserving the balance of essential biological forces, which include Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), Agni (digestive fire), Dhatus (body tissues), and Ojas (vital essence). This concept also highlights the importance of Bala (strength), encompassing both physical health and mental resilience, in protecting individuals from various health risks.³ The preservation and functionality of bodily channels (Srotas) along with the efficient removal of toxins (Ama) further contribute to this protective capability. Therefore, Vyadhishamatva is not merely a function of the immune system but a complex framework

incorporating nutrition, metabolism, mental health, and lifestyle choices.⁴

In modern biomedical science, the concept of immunity has broadened to not only encompass protection against infectious pathogens but also to involve the regulation of inflammatory responses, tissue healing, and the preservation of homeostasis. Recent developments in immunology have uncovered intricate relationships between the immune system and other bodily systems, including the gut microbiome and neuroendocrine networks. These discoveries align with Ayurvedic teachings, notably the focus on Agni and digestive wellness in influencing overall systemic immunity.⁵

This review article endeavors to connect traditional Ayurvedic principles with contemporary scientific insights by investigating the significance of Vyadhashamatva in the prevention and treatment of diseases. It analyzes how age-old methods for boosting Vyadhashamatva—such as Rasayana therapies, specific dietary and lifestyle practices, and individualized treatments—can enhance and complement modern preventive and therapeutic measures. Furthermore, the article underscores existing scientific data that supports the immunomodulatory properties of Ayurvedic herbs and formulations, thus facilitating the integration of these practices into health care. By revisiting and integrating these viewpoints, this review aims to validate the importance of Vyadhashamatva in today's health care landscape, while advocating for increased research and clinical applications geared towards holistic, patient-focused disease prevention and management.

Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To review and analyze the classical Ayurvedic concept of Vyadhashamatva and its significance in health and disease.
- To correlate Vyadhashamatva with modern immunological principles.
- To highlight clinical applications of Vyadhashamatva in preventive and therapeutic contexts.

Objectives

- To compile and interpret classical Ayurvedic literature on Vyadhashamatva.

- To explore scientific evidence supporting the immunomodulatory effects of Ayurvedic therapies related to Vyadhashamatva.
- To discuss practical clinical approaches for enhancing Vyadhashamatva in patient care.

Materials and Methods

Literature Search

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. Modern databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus were reviewed for relevant studies on immunity, disease resistance, and immunomodulatory effects of Ayurvedic herbs and therapies.

Inclusion Criteria

Articles and studies describing Vyadhashamatva or related Ayurvedic immunity concepts.

Experimental and clinical research on immunomodulatory properties of Ayurvedic formulations and Rasayanas.

Reviews correlating Ayurveda and modern immunology.

Exclusion Criteria

Non-English language articles without available translation.

Studies lacking methodological clarity or relevance to Vyadhashamatva.

Methodology

The data from classical texts and contemporary scientific literature were analyzed qualitatively. The synthesis of traditional concepts with modern evidence was performed to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of Vyadhashamatva in disease prevention and management.

Classical Perspective of Vyadhashamatva

Definition and Scope

Vyadhashamatva, as detailed in traditional texts like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, refers to the innate capability of the body to fend off the emergence and advancement of diseases. This resilience is accomplished through the equilibrium of the Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), the vigor of Agni (which pertains to the digestive and metabolic fire), and the proper functioning of Dhatus (the body's various tissues).⁴

Types of Vyadhishamatva ⁶

- Sahaja Vyadhishamatva: Innate immunity present from birth, governed by Bala (strength) and genetic factors.
- Akalaja Vyadhishamatva: Acquired immunity developed through proper diet, lifestyle, and use of Rasayanas (rejuvenative therapies).
- Yuktikrita Vyadhishamatva: Induced or therapeutic immunity gained through medical intervention and treatments.

Mechanisms According to Ayurveda ⁷

- Bala (Strength): Physical and mental vigor enhances the body's resilience.
- Agni: Strong digestive fire prevents accumulation of Ama (toxins), a primary cause of disease.
- Srotas (Channels): Unobstructed channels maintain proper circulation and nourishment, preventing disease nidana (causative factors) from settling.
- Ojas: The essence of immunity, Ojas strengthens the body's defense and vitality.

Vyadhishamatva and Modern Immunology: A Correlation

The Ayurvedic principle of Vyadhishamatva refers to the body's capacity to fend off illness and finds interesting parallels with contemporary immunology, even though they stem from different frameworks. Modern immunology primarily investigates the cellular and molecular processes through which the immune system detects and mitigates threats. In contrast, Vyadhishamatva presents a broader perspective on immunity that encompasses not only physiological equilibrium and metabolic well-being but also mental fortitude and the influence of the environment. ⁴

Innate and Adaptive Immunity

In modern immunology, immunity is divided into two main types: innate immunity, which serves as the body's immediate and nonspecific defense against pathogens, and adaptive immunity, characterized by a specific and acquired response involving memory cells that confer long-term protection. Similarly, Ayurveda categorizes Vyadhishamatva into three types: Sahaja, representing innate or congenital immunity; Akalaja, denoting acquired immunity influenced by lifestyle

and environmental factors; and Yuktikrita, which refers to therapeutic or induced immunity. This classification reflects the contemporary understanding of immune defense mechanisms.

Sahaja Vyadhishamatva reflects the innate strength and resilience a person is born with, which depends on genetic factors and constitution (Prakriti).

- Akalaja Vyadhishamatva is akin to the adaptive immunity that develops from exposure to the environment, diet, and lifestyle, which enhance the body's capacity to respond to disease-causing agents.
- Yuktikrita Vyadhishamatva corresponds to immunity enhanced or modulated by targeted interventions such as Rasayana therapies, herbal medicines, and clinical treatments.

This parallel demonstrates that Ayurveda's ancient framework anticipated the need for both natural and acquired immunity and recognized the potential for medical intervention to modulate immune responses, a concept central to modern immunotherapy and vaccine development.

The Role of Agni and Metabolism in Immunity

Ayurveda places significant importance on Agni, which refers to the digestive and metabolic fire, as a fundamental factor in maintaining health and immunity. The effective functioning of Agni is crucial for proper digestion, absorption, and metabolism, which helps prevent the buildup of Ama, a toxic byproduct resulting from faulty metabolism and thought to be a primary contributor to various diseases. ⁸ In contemporary scientific terms, this idea can be associated with the gut-immune axis, where the health of the gut and its microbiota play vital roles in regulating the immune system. Current understanding recognizes dysbiosis—an imbalance in gut bacteria—and weakened gut barrier function as contributing factors to systemic inflammation and immune dysregulation, analogous to the Ayurvedic notion of Ama as a detrimental element. Thus, sustaining optimal Agni and averting the accumulation of Ama can be seen as effective approaches to mitigate chronic inflammatory conditions and improve immune system oversight, highlighting the cohesive relationship between Vyadhishamatva and the maintenance of systemic balance. ⁹

Ojas and Immune Vitality

A fundamental concept in Ayurveda is Ojas, which is the refined essence that signifies the final outcome of tissue nourishment and serves as the foundation of immunity and vitality. Ojas is frequently characterized as the physiological basis for strength, mental clarity, and emotional resilience. Its function is similar to that of immune function in contemporary discussions, as it affects both humoral and cellular immunity. A reduction in Ojas is associated with a heightened vulnerability to infections, fatigue, and chronic diseases, akin to states of immunodeficiency. Recent research has shown that stress, inadequate nutrition, and lifestyle choices negatively impact immune performance. Ayurveda addresses these issues by promoting Ojas enhancement through practices such as Rasayana therapies, meditation, and a balanced lifestyle.¹⁰

Psychoneuroimmunology and Holistic Immunity

Ayurveda recognizes the importance of mental and emotional factors in determining Vyadhisamatva, which aligns with the field of psychoneuroimmunology. This area of study examines the effects of psychological stress and emotional states on the immune system. Research indicates that prolonged stress can weaken immune responses, leading to a higher risk of infections and autoimmune diseases. Ayurvedic techniques, including meditation, yoga, and mantra therapy, focus on mental stabilization, which can enhance Vyadhisamatva by influencing the neuroendocrine-immune connection.¹¹

Immunomodulatory Effects of Ayurvedic Herbs¹²

Several Ayurvedic herbs traditionally used to enhance Vyadhisamatva have been scientifically validated for their immunomodulatory properties. For example:

- Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia) enhances macrophage function, stimulates cytokine production, and improves antioxidant defenses.
- Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) modulates stress response and supports immune cell proliferation.
- Amalaki (Emblica officinalis) is rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, promoting immune health and reducing inflammation.

These findings provide a mechanistic basis for the therapeutic enhancement of Vyadhisamatva,

showing how herbal interventions align with immunopharmacology.

Clinical Applications of Vyadhisamatva**Disease Prevention¹³**

- Rasayana Therapy: Use of herbal formulations like Amalaki, Ashwagandha, Guduchi to enhance immune function and longevity.
- Dinacharya and Ritucharya: Daily and seasonal regimens to maintain Dosha balance and promote Vyadhisamatva.
- Nutrition and Lifestyle: Emphasis on sattvic diet, stress management, and physical activity to bolster immunity.

Disease Management¹⁴

- Strengthening Bala and Agni to combat diseases like chronic infections, autoimmune disorders, and metabolic syndromes.
- Use of immunomodulatory herbs and therapies tailored to individual constitution (Prakriti) and disease state (Vikriti).
- Integrative approaches combining Ayurvedic immunity concepts with modern therapeutics.

Evidence from Recent Studies

In recent years, scientific interest in substantiating the Ayurvedic principle of Vyadhisamatva has increased, leading to a range of experimental research, clinical trials, and pharmacological studies. These investigations have focused on the immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and adaptogenic effects of traditional Ayurvedic herbs, formulations, and lifestyle strategies. As a result, there is now empirical evidence supporting the significance of Vyadhisamatva in both disease prevention and management.¹⁵

Immunomodulatory Effects of Ayurvedic Herbs

Several classical Rasayana herbs known to enhance Vyadhisamatva have been extensively studied for their effects on the immune system:

Tinospora cordifolia (Guduchi): Multiple in vitro and in vivo studies demonstrate that Guduchi activates macrophages, enhances phagocytic activity, stimulates the production of cytokines such as interleukin-6 (IL-6) and tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α), and increases antioxidant enzyme levels. Clinical trials have reported improved immune

responses in patients with infections and chronic diseases, affirming its role in boosting innate immunity.¹⁶

Withania somnifera (Ashwagandha): Research reveals Ashwagandha's ability to reduce cortisol levels, modulate immune cell counts, and promote lymphocyte proliferation. Its adaptogenic properties help mitigate stress-induced immunosuppression. Clinical studies indicate improved quality of life and immune function in populations with chronic stress and autoimmune disorders.¹⁷

Emblica officinalis (Amalaki): Rich in vitamin C and polyphenols, Amalaki exhibits potent antioxidant effects that protect immune cells from oxidative damage. It has been shown to enhance neutrophil function and antibody responses, supporting both innate and adaptive immunity.¹⁸

Phyllanthus emblica (Amalaki), *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (Licorice), and *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric): These herbs demonstrate anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory properties by modulating cytokine profiles and inhibiting inflammatory pathways such as NF- κ B, which are pivotal in chronic disease pathogenesis.¹⁹

Lifestyle and Behavioral Interventions

The traditional Ayurvedic emphasis on *Dinacharya* (daily routine), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), and *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct) has also been examined for immune benefits:

Yoga and meditation, integral to Ayurvedic lifestyle, have been shown to reduce stress hormones, lower inflammation markers, and improve immune cell profiles, supporting the psychoneuroimmune link highlighted by *Vyadhisamatva*.

Dietary regimens promoting digestive health (*Agni*) and reducing toxin accumulation (*Ama*) correlate with improvements in gut microbiota diversity and function, a key factor in maintaining systemic immunity.

Challenges and Future Directions

- Need for standardized protocols to assess *Vyadhisamatva* quantitatively.
- Integrative research bridging Ayurveda and modern immunology for personalized medicine.
- Increasing awareness of preventive Ayurveda in public health policies.

Discussion

Vyadhisamatva, as described in ancient Ayurvedic literature, presents a comprehensive and

complex interpretation of immunity that surpasses the limited focus on specific pathogen defense mechanisms commonly found in contemporary immunology. This concept incorporates various elements, including physical health, metabolic processes, psychological well-being, and environmental influences, to establish a flexible and adaptable state of resistance to illness. Such an inclusive view of immunity highlights the effectiveness of Ayurveda in tackling not only infectious diseases but also chronic, lifestyle-related, and degenerative conditions, which are significant contributors to the global health challenges of today.²⁰

A fundamental component of *Vyadhisamatva* is the significance of *Agni*, often referred to as digestive or metabolic fire, which is closely associated with overall health and immunity. Contemporary studies regarding the gut-immune axis reinforce this ancient perspective, revealing how the gut microbiota and digestive health significantly affect systemic immune responses and levels of inflammation. A weakened *Agni* can lead to a buildup of *Ama*, which refers to toxins or metabolic waste. This concept can be linked with current understandings of endotoxemia and chronic low-grade inflammation—factors that play a role in numerous chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular issues, and autoimmune disorders. Hence, ensuring optimal digestive health through proper diet, lifestyle choices, and Ayurvedic practices can help to prevent illness at its source, aligning well with the principles of preventive medicine.²¹

Ayurveda classifies *Vyadhisamatva* into three categories: *Sahaja* (innate), *Akalaja* (acquired), and *Yuktikrita* (therapeutic) immunity. This classification provides a detailed understanding that aligns with contemporary concepts of innate and adaptive immunity, while also highlighting the possibility for therapeutic interventions to alter immune responses. This framework supports the application of *Rasayana* therapies—herbal mixtures recognized for their rejuvenating and immune-modulating effects. Modern pharmacological research has validated these therapies, demonstrating their capacity to improve immune markers, including natural killer cell activity, cytokine equilibrium, and antioxidant levels. These therapies may provide additional benefits in the management of chronic

infections, immunodeficiency, and age-related declines in immune function.

The clinical application of Vyadhishamatva is distinguished by its personalized methodology, which takes into account an individual's constitution (Prakriti) and current health status (Vikriti). This approach parallels the evolving field of precision medicine, aiming to customize treatment based on unique genetic, metabolic, and lifestyle factors of each patient. Ayurvedic methods, such as Dinacharya (daily routine) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), also enhance immune resilience by aligning the body's internal conditions with external influences, thereby lowering susceptibility to seasonal illnesses and environmental challenges. However, several obstacles need to be overcome for the better integration of Vyadhishamatva into modern healthcare. Firstly, the absence of standardized, objective biomarkers for the quantitative assessment of Vyadhishamatva hinders its application in clinical trials and practice. Secondly, the intricate nature of Ayurvedic formulations and personalized treatment plans complicates the establishment of rigorous scientific studies needed for broader validation. Lastly, there is a critical need for more interdisciplinary research that brings together Ayurveda, immunology, microbiology, and systems biology to elucidate the underlying mechanisms of Vyadhishamatva.^{20, 4}

Future research directions should focus on developing validated tools and biomarkers to measure immune resilience as defined by Ayurveda, conducting randomized controlled trials on Rasayana therapies and lifestyle interventions, and exploring the gut-immune-metabolic axis in the context of Vyadhishamatva. Collaboration between traditional Ayurvedic practitioners and biomedical scientists will be crucial to translating these concepts into evidence-based, integrative healthcare solutions.

Conclusion

Vyadhishamatva, a fundamental aspect of Ayurvedic philosophy, represents a comprehensive and integrative understanding of immunity. It not only involves the body's ability to resist and fight diseases but also emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance, vitality, and resilience in physical, mental, and environmental contexts. This review illustrates that Vyadhishamatva transcends a simple immune reaction to pathogens; it encompasses

a complex, multifactorial interaction between key elements such as Bala (strength), Agni (digestive and metabolic fire), Ojas (vital essence), and the integrity of Srotas (body channels). Together, these components form a strong defense mechanism that aids in averting the onset and progression of diseases. By combining traditional Ayurvedic insights with contemporary scientific knowledge, it becomes clear that Vyadhishamatva presents a thorough framework for disease prevention and management. This framework resonates with modern concepts like the gut-immune axis, systemic inflammation, and personalized medicine. Clinical applications derived from Vyadhishamatva, such as Rasayana therapies, specific dietary and lifestyle practices, and tailored treatments, offer promising opportunities for improving host immunity and enhancing outcomes, particularly for chronic and lifestyle-related illnesses. However, to harness the full potential of Vyadhishamatva within today's healthcare systems, there is an imperative need for rigorous scientific validation. This includes the establishment of standardized assessment methods and biomarkers, the implementation of well-structured clinical trials, and interdisciplinary research that connects Ayurvedic philosophies with contemporary immunology and systems biology. Essentially, Vyadhishamatva proposes a timeless and holistic perspective on health that promotes proactive, personalized care. Its integration into modern preventive and therapeutic practices could greatly enhance healthcare by building resilience, alleviating disease burdens, and supporting long-term well-being. As healthcare frameworks increasingly shift towards more patient-centered and holistic approaches, Vyadhishamatva emerges as a significant concept poised to reshape our understanding and enhancement of immunity in the 21st century.

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