INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD)
© 2026 IJNRD | Volume 11, Issue 11, November 2026 | ISSN: 2456-4184 | IJNRD.ORG

Dinacharya In Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Review of Classical Principles and Their Scientific Relevance in Preventive Healthcare

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Abstract : Ayurveda is a holistic science of life that emphasizes both disease prevention and health promotion. It considers physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being essential for maintaining a healthy life. According to Ayurvedic principles, health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of physiological equilibrium, mental stability, and sensory well-being. *Dinacharya*, meaning daily regimen, is an important preventive healthcare concept described in classical Ayurvedic literature. It provides systematic guidelines for daily activities, beginning with waking up in the morning and extending to appropriate nighttime sleep. Regular observance of *Dinacharya* is traditionally considered beneficial for maintaining the equilibrium of *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) and supporting the body's physiological functions. Its principles can be correlated with contemporary concepts of circadian rhythm, biological clock regulation, personal hygiene, physical activity, nutrition, and sleep hygiene. Furthermore, appropriate daily practices are considered important for maintaining *Trayopastambha*, namely *Ahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya*, which contribute to tissue nourishment, vitality, and disease resistance. This review examines the major components of *Dinacharya* described in classical Ayurvedic texts and discusses their relevance to contemporary preventive healthcare.

IndexTerms **- Dinacharya, Ayurveda, Daily regimen, Lifestyle interventions, Circadian rhythm, Preventive healthcare.**

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda primarily emphasizes two objectives: maintaining the health of healthy individuals and treating diseases in those who are ill.[1] Among its various preventive healthcare principles, *Dinacharya* plays an important role in promoting health through systematic daily activities.

According to Ayurveda, health is a state of equilibrium among *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni*, accompanied by mental, sensory, and spiritual well-being.[2,3] The appropriate regulation of daily activities is considered essential for maintaining this physiological balance.

Classical Ayurvedic literature provides extensive guidelines regarding dietary habits, personal hygiene, exercise, sleep, and other lifestyle practices. These principles are particularly relevant in the present era, when sedentary behaviour, occupational stress, irregular dietary habits, and disturbed sleep patterns contribute to the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related disorders.

Lifestyle modification through dietary regulation, physical activity, stress management, and avoidance of harmful habits plays an important role in disease prevention and management.[4] Ayurveda incorporates these approaches under the broader concept of *Vihara Chikitsa*.[5]

Acharya Vagbhata emphasizes that individuals who consume wholesome food, undertake appropriate physical activity, maintain emotional balance, practise charity, speak truthfully, demonstrate compassion, and respect their elders can maintain good health.[6,7]

The term *Dinacharya* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *Dina*, meaning day, and *Acharya*, meaning conduct or regimen. It refers to the systematic daily activities recommended for maintaining health and promoting longevity. The regimen extends from morning awakening to nighttime sleep.[10]

PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS OF DINCHARYA

The major activities described under *Dinacharya* in classical Ayurvedic literature include:

1. *Brahma Muhurta Jagarana* – Early morning awakening.
2. *Darpana Darshana* – Observing one's reflection.
3. *Malotsarga* – Evacuation of urine and faeces.
4. *Achamana* – Cleansing practices.
5. *Dantadhavana* – Tooth cleaning.
6. *Jihva Nirlekhana* – Tongue cleaning.
7. *Gandusha* and *Kavala* – Oral cleansing procedures.
8. *Mukha-Netra Prakshalana* – Cleansing the face and eyes.
9. *Anjana* – Application of collyrium.
10. *Nasya* – Nasal administration of medication.
11. *Dhumapana* – Therapeutic inhalation of medicated smoke.
12. *Vyayama* – Physical exercise.

13. *Kshaura Karma* – Hair and nail grooming.
14. *Abhyanga* – Oil massage.
15. *Udvartana* – Herbal powder massage.
16. *Snana* – Bathing.
17. *Vastra Dharana* – Wearing appropriate clothing.
18. *Anulepana* – Application of fragrant substances.
19. *Bhojana* – Appropriate dietary practices.
20. *Tambula Sevana* – Traditional betel preparations.
21. *Vritti Dharma* – Occupational activities.
22. *Sandhyopasana* – Prayer and meditation.
23. *Ratri Bhojana* – Appropriate evening meals.
24. *Nidra* – Adequate sleep.

DINACHARYA AND ITS SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

1. *Brahma Muhurta Jagarana* (Early Morning Awakening)

According to Ayurveda, an individual should ideally wake up approximately one and a half hours before sunrise. This period, known as *Brahma Muhurta*, is traditionally considered suitable for meditation, spiritual activities, and intellectual pursuits. Maintaining a regular waking schedule may support circadian rhythm regulation and promote mental alertness. However, waking time should be adjusted according to individual sleep requirements, age, and health status.

2. *Prabhate Kara Darshana* (Observing the Palms)

This traditional practice involves observing one's palms immediately after waking up. The Sanskrit verse, "*Karagre Vasate Lakshmi, Kara Madhye Saraswati, Kara Mule Tu Govindah*," symbolically associates the palms with prosperity, knowledge, and divine blessings. The practice is traditionally considered auspicious and may serve as a positive morning ritual.

3. *Achamana* (Cleansing Practices)

Achamana involves cleansing the hands, feet, and mouth with water. It promotes personal hygiene and helps remove accumulated dirt and environmental impurities. Regular handwashing is particularly important in reducing the transmission of infectious microorganisms.

4. *Ghrita and Darpana Darshana*

Traditional Ayurvedic descriptions include observing one's reflection in a mirror and *Ghrita*. These practices are associated with auspiciousness, mental well-being, and longevity. However, their specific therapeutic benefits require further scientific investigation.

5. *Usha Jalapana* (Early Morning Water Consumption)

Usha Jalapana refers to drinking water after waking up. Adequate hydration is essential for maintaining fluid balance, supporting metabolism, and facilitating normal physiological functions. Drinking water in the morning may help restore fluids lost during sleep. The quantity should be individualized according to hydration requirements and medical conditions.

6. *Mala-Mutra Visarjana* (Natural Elimination)

This practice involves the timely evacuation of urine and faeces. Ayurveda recommends avoiding unnecessary suppression of natural physiological urges. Adequate hydration, dietary fibre, and regular physical activity support normal bowel function and digestive health.

7. *Dantadhavana* (Tooth Cleaning)

Dantadhavana involves cleaning the teeth using suitable cleansing materials or traditional herbal preparations. It is traditionally considered beneficial for oral hygiene and the removal of accumulated impurities. Modern dental science recognizes regular toothbrushing with fluoride-containing toothpaste as an important measure for preventing dental caries and periodontal diseases.

8. *Jihva Nirlekhana* (Tongue Cleaning)

Jihva Nirlekhana involves removing accumulated coating and debris from the tongue using an appropriate cleaning instrument. It helps maintain oral hygiene, reduce unpleasant mouth odour, and improve subjective taste perception.

9. *Ishta DeVata Smarana* (Prayer and Gratitude)

Remembering one's chosen deity and expressing gratitude are traditional spiritual practices. They are associated with mental purification, emotional stability, and spiritual development. Prayer and meditation may also contribute to psychological relaxation and stress management.

10. *Mukha-Netra Prakshalana* (Cleansing of Face and Eyes)

Classical texts describe cleansing the face and eyes using suitable substances, including preparations of *Lodhra* and *Amalaki*. These practices are traditionally associated with maintaining facial and ocular health. From a contemporary perspective, facial cleansing helps remove sweat and environmental impurities. However, only sterile, medically appropriate preparations should be used for ocular applications.

11. *Gandusha* and *Kavala* (Oral Cleansing Procedures)

Gandusha involves retaining a suitable liquid or medicated oil in the oral cavity, whereas *Kavala* involves holding and moving a smaller quantity of liquid inside the mouth. These procedures are traditionally recommended for maintaining oral cleanliness,

strengthening oral structures, and improving voice quality. Oil pulling has been investigated for its possible effects on oral hygiene; however, it should not replace conventional toothbrushing and dental care.

12. ***Anjana* (Application of Collyrium)**
Anjana refers to the application of medicinal preparations to the eyes. Classical Ayurvedic literature describes its use for maintaining ocular cleanliness and managing certain eye-related complaints. Nevertheless, the safety and efficacy of traditional preparations require scientific validation. Non-sterile substances should not be applied to the eyes.

13. ***Pratimarsha Nasya* (Nasal Medication)**
Pratimarsha Nasya involves administering a small quantity of suitable medicated oil through the nostrils. It is traditionally recommended for maintaining the health of structures above the clavicle, collectively known as *Urdhvajatrugata* organs. Its therapeutic effectiveness and long-term safety require further clinical evaluation.

14. ***Dhumapana* (Medicated Smoke Inhalation)**
Dhumapana refers to the inhalation of smoke generated from selected medicinal substances. Classical Ayurvedic literature describes its application in certain *Vata* and *Kapha*-related conditions. However, smoke inhalation may expose the respiratory tract to harmful particles and chemical substances. Therefore, its safety should not be assumed, and it requires appropriate scientific evaluation.

15. ***Abhyanga* (Oil Massage)**
Abhyanga involves the application of suitable oil over the body. It is traditionally recommended for maintaining the equilibrium of *Vata Dosha*, promoting physical strength, reducing fatigue, and maintaining skin health. Massage may also support relaxation and provide temporary relief from muscular discomfort.

16. ***Udvartana* and *Utsadana***
Udvartana involves rubbing the body with herbal powders such as *Vacha*, *Lodhra*, and *Triphala*. *Utsadana* involves rubbing suitable substances over the skin. These procedures are traditionally considered beneficial for removing superficial impurities, excess oil, and dead skin cells. Excessive friction should be avoided to prevent skin irritation.

17. ***Vyayama* (Physical Exercise)**
Vyayama is an essential component of the daily regimen. Ayurveda describes exercise as beneficial for physical strength, stamina, digestive capacity, and overall fitness. Contemporary scientific evidence supports regular physical activity for maintaining cardiovascular health, metabolic function, muscular strength, and psychological well-being. Exercise intensity should be individualized according to age, physical capacity, and health status.

18. ***Snana* (Bathing)**
Snana refers to bathing and maintaining bodily cleanliness. Classical texts describe bathing with warm or cold water according to individual requirements. It is traditionally considered beneficial for removing sweat, dirt, and impurities while promoting freshness and relaxation. Water temperature should be selected according to individual comfort and health conditions.

19. ***Vastra Dharana* and *Anulepana***
Vastra Dharana refers to wearing clean and appropriate clothing, whereas *Anulepana* involves applying suitable fragrant substances, including sandalwood paste. These practices are traditionally associated with personal hygiene, appearance, comfort, and social well-being.

20. ***Bhojana* (Dietary Practices)**
Ahara is considered one of the fundamental pillars of health. Ayurveda emphasizes the quality, quantity, timing, and method of food consumption through the principles of *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana*. Food should be wholesome, freshly prepared, and appropriate to individual digestive capacity. Balanced nutrition supports tissue nourishment, physical strength, and metabolic health.

21. ***Tambula Sevana* (Betel Preparations)**
Tambula Sevana traditionally involves consuming betel leaves with ingredients such as *Khadira* and areca nut. It is described as beneficial for oral freshness and reducing unpleasant mouth odour. However, areca nut consumption is associated with oral submucous fibrosis and oral cancer. Therefore, areca nut-containing preparations should be avoided.

22. ***Vritti Dharma* (Occupational Activities)**
Vritti Dharma refers to engaging in appropriate professional and occupational activities. Classical descriptions include agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and administrative responsibilities. Meaningful occupational engagement may contribute to financial stability, social participation, and personal satisfaction. A proper balance between work, rest, and recreation is essential.

23. ***Sandhyopasana* (Prayer and Meditation)**
Sandhyopasana involves prayer, meditation, and spiritual practices during the transitional periods of the day. These activities are traditionally associated with mental purification and self-discipline. Meditation may also support emotional regulation and psychological well-being.

24. ***Ratri Bhojana* and *Nidra* (Evening Meals and Sleep)**
Ayurveda recommends consuming an appropriate quantity of easily digestible food during the evening. Excessive food consumption immediately before bedtime may cause digestive discomfort. *Nidra* is considered one of the three pillars of health, collectively known as *Trayopastambha*. Adequate sleep supports physical recovery, memory consolidation, hormonal regulation, metabolic functions, and mental well-being. Maintaining regular sleep and waking schedules is therefore an important component of preventive healthcare.

DISCUSSION

Dinacharya represents a comprehensive traditional approach to health promotion and disease prevention. Its principles emphasize regularity in daily activities, personal hygiene, physical exercise, appropriate nutrition, mental relaxation, and adequate sleep.

Several components can be correlated with contemporary scientific concepts. Early morning awakening and regular sleeping schedules are relevant to circadian rhythm regulation, while *Dantadhavana* and *Jihva Nirlekhana* emphasize oral hygiene. Similarly, *Vyayama*, *Abhyanga*, and dietary discipline highlight the importance of physical activity, relaxation, and nutrition.

The concepts of *Ahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya*, collectively described as *Trayopastambha*, emphasize the importance of maintaining fundamental lifestyle practices.

However, traditional descriptions should be distinguished from scientifically established therapeutic effects. Practices such as exercise, balanced nutrition, personal hygiene, and adequate sleep have substantial contemporary scientific support. Other interventions, including *Anjana*, *Dhumapana*, and certain forms of *Nasya*, require further investigation regarding their safety and efficacy.

Thus, the integration of *Dinacharya* into contemporary healthcare should be guided by scientific evidence, individual suitability, and appropriate safety considerations.

CONCLUSION

Dinacharya is an important preventive healthcare principle described in classical Ayurvedic literature. It provides systematic guidelines for daily activities, including early morning awakening, personal hygiene, exercise, oil massage, bathing, dietary regulation, occupational engagement, and adequate sleep.

Appropriate daily routines may support physiological stability, healthy biological rhythms, and overall well-being. The principles of *Dinacharya* can be correlated with modern concepts of circadian regulation, lifestyle modification, and preventive medicine.

Ayurveda emphasizes the maintenance of *Tridosha* equilibrium, proper nourishment of *Dhatu*, and preservation of *Ojas* for maintaining health and disease resistance. Nevertheless, individual practices should be adopted according to age, constitution, season, and health status. Further scientific research is necessary to establish the clinical efficacy and safety of specific traditional procedures.

Overall, *Dinacharya* offers a holistic framework for integrating traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary preventive healthcare.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgements

I express gratitude to the Department of *Kayachikitsa* and Hospital Authority for giving me this opportunity to study this particular research topic. Special thanks to Mr. Anil Gujar Sir Hon'ble secretary of Maharashtra Arogya Mandal Hadapsar Pune- 411028 and Mr. Arun Gujar Sir Hon'ble Joint Secretory of Maharashtra Arogya Mandal, Hadapsar Pune- 411028, Department of Kayachikitsa teachers for co-operating throughout the research study**.**

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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