

## Vyadhikṣamatva In Ayurveda: The Fundamental Concept Of Immunity For A Healthy Life

Dabas Ravi<sup>1</sup>, Sweety<sup>2</sup>, Kar A. C<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Medical Officer (Ayurveda), Directorate of AYUSH, Government of NCT of Delhi, India

<sup>2</sup> Ayurvedic Medical Officer, Directorate of AYUSH, Government of Haryana, India

<sup>3</sup> Professor & Head, Department of Vikriti Vigyan, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi, India

### Corresponding Author:

Dr. Ravi Dabas

Medical Officer (Ayurveda), Directorate of AYUSH, Government of NCT of Delhi, India

E-mail: Ravidabas1988@gmail.com

Cite this paper as: Dabas Ravi, Sweety, Kar A. C (2025) Vyadhikṣamatva In Ayurveda: The Fundamental Concept Of Immunity For A Healthy Life. Journal of Neonatal Surgery, 14, (6s) 947-952

ACCEPTED 18-03-2025

PUBLICATION 25-03-2025

### ABSTRACT

Vyādhikṣamatva is a fundamental concept of Ayurveda that denotes the inherent capacity of the body to resist disease and maintain physiological equilibrium. Unlike the modern biomedical understanding of immunity, which predominantly focuses on pathogen-specific defense mechanisms, Ayurveda conceptualizes immunity as a holistic, dynamic, and integrative phenomenon. It is governed by the balanced functioning of Doṣa, Dhātu, Mala, Agni, and Ojas, which together sustain health and vitality. In Ayurvedic literature, immunity is not viewed merely as a defensive response against external agents, but as an expression of overall systemic strength and adaptability. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Vyādhikṣamatva as having a dual role: the prevention of disease manifestation and the capacity to counteract the intensity and progression of disease once it occurs. This approach highlights both preventive and curative dimensions of immunity. The maintenance of optimal digestive and metabolic activity through Agni is considered central to immune competence, as proper digestion leads to the formation of healthy tissues and prevents the accumulation of metabolic toxins. Ojas, regarded as the essence of all bodily tissues, is considered the substratum of strength, vitality, and resistance against disease. Further, factors such as Dhātu Bala (tissue strength), Prakṛti (constitutional makeup), dietary habits, lifestyle practices, and psychological well-being significantly influence Vyādhikṣamatva. Ayurveda emphasizes that mental disturbances such as stress, fear, and anger can impair immunity, whereas a balanced and positive mental state enhances resistance to disease. Rasāyana therapy, encompassing rejuvenative medicines and ethical conduct, plays a vital role in promoting longevity, strengthening immunity, and improving quality of life. In contemporary healthcare, where infectious diseases, lifestyle disorders, and stress-related illnesses are increasingly prevalent, the Ayurvedic concept of Vyādhikṣamatva offers a comprehensive framework for preventive and promotive health care. By focusing on strengthening the host rather than solely targeting pathogens, this classical concept supports an integrative approach that complements modern medical science and contributes to sustainable health management.

**Keywords:** Vyādhikṣamatva, Immunity, Ojas, Agni, Rasāyana, Ayurveda, Preventive health

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda defines health as a state of equilibrium among Doṣa, Dhātu, Mala, Agni, and a balanced state of mind and senses [1]. This harmonious state ensures proper physiological functioning, psychological stability, and adaptability to environmental variations. Maintenance of this equilibrium depends largely on the body's inherent resistance to disease, known as Vyādhikṣamatva [2]. Vyādhikṣamatva represents the collective strength of the body to prevent disease occurrence and to withstand pathological challenges without disturbing internal balance.[3] The primary objectives of Ayurveda—Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam (preservation of health) and Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam (alleviation of disease)—are deeply rooted in this concept [4]. These objectives emphasize that health preservation through strengthening host resistance is as important as disease management.

Modern medicine explains immunity mainly in terms of innate and adaptive immune responses involving immune cells, antibodies, and molecular mediators [5]. This framework has contributed significantly to understanding host defense

mechanisms and advancing therapeutic interventions. However, despite its scientific precision, this approach often neglects host-related factors such as digestion, metabolism, mental health, and lifestyle, which play a crucial role in overall disease resistance [6]. These factors influence immune competence indirectly but are not adequately addressed in conventional immunological models.

Ayurveda, in contrast, adopts a host-centric and preventive approach, emphasizing enhancement of the individual's strength rather than mere eradication of pathogens [7]. By focusing on metabolic balance, mental well-being, appropriate diet, and lifestyle regulation, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive framework for sustaining immunity and long-term health. This holistic outlook underscores the relevance of Vyādhikṣamatva in both preventive and promotive healthcare

### ETYMOLOGY AND CONCEPT OF VYĀDHIKṢAMATVA

The term Vyādhikṣamatva is derived from *Vyādhi* (disease) and *Kṣamatva* (capacity to resist). Acharya Charaka defines Vyādhikṣamatva as the body's ability to prevent the occurrence of disease and to resist the severity of disease if it manifests [1,3]. Thus, Vyādhikṣamatva has two dimensions:

**Vyādhi-utpāda pratibandhakatva** – resistance against disease manifestation

**Vyādhi-bala virodhitva** – opposition to disease severity and progression

This dual concept reflects the preventive and curative aspects of immunity in Ayurveda [8].

### CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF VYĀDHIKṢAMATVA

Vyādhikṣamatva is not attributed to a single structural or functional entity but represents the cumulative effect of multiple physiological and psychological components functioning in a state of harmony [2]. Ayurveda considers immunity to be an emergent property of systemic balance rather than an isolated defense mechanism. The coordinated functioning of Doṣa, Dhātu, Mala, Agni, and Ojas forms the foundational framework upon which Vyādhikṣamatva is established.

Balanced Doṣas ensure the regulation of physiological activities and facilitate proper nourishment of body tissues. Dhātus, when adequately formed and maintained, provide structural integrity and functional strength, contributing to resistance against disease. Agni plays a pivotal role in this process by governing digestion, metabolism, and transformation at both gross and subtle levels. Proper Agni ensures efficient nutrient assimilation and prevents the formation of metabolic toxins, which are considered detrimental to immune strength.

Ojas, described as the essence of all Dhātus, represents the qualitative aspect of immunity. It is responsible for physical endurance, mental stability, and resistance to pathological insults. Psychological factors such as emotional balance, mental strength, and stress regulation are equally important in sustaining Vyādhikṣamatva, as mental disturbances are believed to impair metabolic processes and deplete Ojas.

Thus, Vyādhikṣamatva is a dynamic and integrative concept that reflects the overall health status of an individual. It emphasizes that immunity cannot be enhanced through isolated interventions but requires a comprehensive approach addressing diet, lifestyle, mental well-being, and metabolic balance. This holistic understanding forms the conceptual basis for preventive and promotive healthcare in Ayurveda.

### OJAS: THE BASIS OF IMMUNITY

Ojas is described in Ayurvedic literature as the essence (*Sara*) of all seven Dhātus and is regarded as the fundamental substratum of strength (*Bala*), vitality, and immunity [9]. It represents the most refined and subtle product of tissue metabolism and is essential for sustaining life and maintaining physiological stability. Ojas is responsible for promoting physical endurance, maintaining mental clarity, and enhancing the body's resistance to disease-causing factors. Its presence reflects the qualitative health of the body tissues and the efficiency of metabolic processes.

Adequate Ojas ensures stability of bodily functions, emotional balance, and adaptability to environmental stressors. Classical texts describe individuals with well-nourished Ojas as possessing enthusiasm, strength, and resilience against illness. In contrast, depletion or vitiation of Ojas leads to symptoms such as fatigue, fearfulness, mental confusion, reduced vitality, and increased susceptibility to infections and chronic disorders [10]. Such depletion may occur due to improper diet, irregular lifestyle, excessive physical or mental stress, chronic illness, and impaired digestive and metabolic activity.

The preservation and enhancement of Ojas are therefore considered central to maintaining Vyādhikṣamatva [11]. Ayurveda emphasizes that Ojas cannot be directly replenished but is sustained through proper nourishment of Dhātus, balanced Doṣas, and optimal functioning of Agni. Psychological well-being also plays a crucial role, as emotional disturbances are believed to negatively influence Ojas. Thus, Ojas serves as the biological and functional foundation of immunity in Ayurveda, linking physical health, mental stability, and disease resistance into a unified conceptual framework.

### ROLE OF AGNI IN IMMUNE REGULATION

Agni governs digestion, metabolism, and tissue nourishment [12]. Proper Agni ensures complete digestion of food, formation

of healthy Dhātus, and prevention of Āma (toxic metabolic by-products) [13]. Impaired Agni leads to Āma formation, which plays a key role in immune dysfunction and chronic inflammatory disorders [14]. Hence, Agni is considered the foundation of immunity in Ayurveda.

### DHĀTU BALA AND DOṢA BALANCE

Well-nourished Dhātus provide structural and functional integrity to the body and enhance resistance to disease [15]. Balanced Doṣas maintain physiological harmony, whereas Doṣic imbalance disrupts Dhātu nourishment and weakens Vyādhikṣamatva [1,16].

### DETERMINANTS OF VYĀDHIKṢAMATVA

Vyādhikṣamatva is influenced by multiple intrinsic and extrinsic factors that collectively determine an individual's capacity to resist disease and maintain physiological balance. Among these, Prakṛti, Ahāra, Vihāra, and Manasika Bhāvas play a pivotal role in shaping immune strength.

**Prakṛti** represents the innate constitutional makeup of an individual and forms the biological foundation of immunity. Kapha-dominant individuals generally exhibit better tissue stability, endurance, and resistance to disease due to the nourishing and stabilizing qualities of Kapha. In contrast, Vāta-dominant individuals are more susceptible to illness because of lower tissue stability, dryness, and greater physiological variability, which may predispose them to frequent imbalances [17].

**Ahāra** is considered one of the most significant determinants of Vyādhikṣamatva, as it directly influences Agni and Dhātu nourishment. A wholesome, balanced, and seasonally appropriate diet supports optimal digestion and metabolism, leading to the formation of healthy tissues and preservation of Ojas. Conversely, incompatible food combinations, irregular eating habits, and improper dietary practices impair Agni, promote the formation of metabolic toxins, and weaken immune resistance [18].

**Vihāra**, encompassing daily and seasonal lifestyle practices, plays a crucial role in maintaining physiological harmony. Adherence to Dinacharyā and Ritucharyā, adequate sleep, regular physical activity, and personal hygiene contribute to metabolic balance and immune stability. Disruption of these practices adversely affects both physical and mental health, thereby compromising Vyādhikṣamatva [19].

**Manasika Bhāvas** profoundly influence immunity, as mental and emotional states are closely linked to physiological functioning. Chronic stress, fear, anger, and grief deplete Ojas and weaken resistance to disease, whereas Satvika mental attributes such as calmness, contentment, and emotional balance enhance Vyādhikṣamatva and overall well-being [20].

**Table1: Determinants of Vyādhikṣamatva**

Determinant	Ayurvedic Description	Influence on Vyādhikṣamatva
<b>Prakṛti</b>	Constitutional makeup determining physical and metabolic characteristics. Kapha Prakṛti individuals possess greater tissue stability and endurance, while Vāta Prakṛti individuals show relatively lower strength and adaptability	Determines inherent immunity and baseline resistance to disease [17]
<b>Ahāra</b>	Quality, quantity, and compatibility of diet, including seasonal appropriateness	Proper diet strengthens Agni, nourishes Dhātus, and enhances immunity; improper and incompatible diet impairs digestion and weakens resistance [18]
<b>Vihāra</b>	Daily and seasonal lifestyle practices including sleep, exercise, and hygiene	Adherence to Dinacharyā and Ritucharyā maintains physiological balance and immune stability [19]
<b>Manasika Bhāvas</b>	Psychological and emotional states influencing mental balance	Positive mental attributes preserve Ojas and enhance immunity; chronic stress, fear, and anger deplete Ojas and weaken Vyādhikṣamatva [20]

## VYĀDHİKṢAMATVA AND MODERN IMMUNOLOGY

Ayurveda classifies Bala into Sahaja, Kalaja, and Yuktikṛta Bala, which correspond closely with innate immunity, age- and season-related immunity, and acquired immunity described in modern science [21].

**Table 2: Comparison of Vyādhikṣamatva and Modern Immunity**

Aspect	Ayurveda	Modern Immunology
Basic concept	Holistic disease resistance	Pathogen-specific defense
Primary basis	Ojas, Agni, Dhātu	Immune cells, antibodies
Preventive focus	Strong	Limited
Mind-body role	Integral	Minimal
Therapeutic aim	Host strengthening	Pathogen elimination

### ROLE OF RASĀYANA THERAPY

Rasāyana therapy is a specialized branch of Ayurveda that focuses on rejuvenation, promotion of longevity, and enhancement of Vyādhikṣamatva through strengthening of bodily tissues and preservation of Ojas [22]. The primary objective of Rasāyana therapy is to improve the quality of Dhātus, enhance metabolic efficiency, and support optimal functioning of physiological systems, thereby improving resistance to disease. By acting at the tissue and cellular level, Rasāyana therapy contributes to both preventive and promotive aspects of health.

Rasāyana therapy is broadly classified into **Dravya Rasāyana** and **Ācāra Rasāyana**. Dravya Rasāyana includes the use of specific herbal and mineral formulations that possess rejuvenative and immunomodulatory properties. These substances support nourishment of Dhātus, enhance Agni, and prevent degeneration associated with aging and chronic diseases. Regular administration of such Rasāyana drugs helps in sustaining physical strength, mental clarity, and adaptive capacity.

Ācāra Rasāyana, on the other hand, emphasizes ethical conduct, mental discipline, and social behavior as essential components of immune health [23]. Principles such as truthfulness, emotional restraint, compassion, mental calmness, and avoidance of excessive stress are considered equally important as medicinal interventions. Ayurveda recognizes that psychological imbalance and unethical lifestyle practices can impair metabolic processes and deplete Ojas, thereby weakening immunity.

Thus, Rasāyana therapy represents a holistic approach to immune enhancement by integrating pharmacological interventions with behavioral and psychological regulation. Its role in maintaining Vyādhikṣamatva highlights Ayurveda's comprehensive understanding of immunity, wherein physical rejuvenation, mental well-being, and ethical living collectively contribute to sustained health and disease resistance.

### CLINICAL AND PREVENTIVE SIGNIFICANCE

Enhanced Vyādhikṣamatva plays a crucial role in both the prevention and management of diseases by strengthening the body's inherent resistance and adaptive capacity [24]. From a preventive perspective, individuals with well-maintained Vyādhikṣamatva exhibit greater resilience against infectious agents, environmental stressors, and seasonal variations. By maintaining metabolic balance, tissue integrity, and mental stability, Ayurveda emphasizes reducing disease susceptibility rather than merely responding to illness after its onset.

In clinical practice, strengthened Vyādhikṣamatva contributes to improved disease prognosis by enabling the body to effectively counteract pathological processes. Patients with better immune strength often experience milder disease manifestations, quicker recovery, and reduced complications. This is particularly relevant in chronic and lifestyle-related disorders, where impaired metabolism, stress, and poor tissue nourishment play a significant etiological role. Enhancing Vyādhikṣamatva through appropriate dietary measures, lifestyle regulation, and Rasāyana therapy supports sustained therapeutic outcomes and minimizes disease progression.

Furthermore, Vyādhikṣamatva is instrumental in reducing disease recurrence by addressing underlying host factors rather than focusing solely on symptomatic relief. Recurrent infections and relapsing conditions are often indicative of weakened immunity, and Ayurveda advocates restoring internal balance to break this cycle. The promotive aspect of Vyādhikṣamatva is also reflected in its role in healthy aging and longevity. By preserving Ojas, maintaining Agni, and ensuring mental well-being, individuals can achieve prolonged health span along with enhanced quality of life.

Thus, the concept of Vyādhikṣamatva holds significant clinical and preventive value, offering a sustainable and holistic framework for disease prevention, effective management, and promotion of long-term health.

## 2. DISCUSSION

The concept of Vyādhikṣamatva provides a comprehensive and integrative understanding of immunity that extends beyond the conventional pathogen-centered framework. Ayurveda emphasizes that disease manifestation is not solely dependent on the presence of causative agents but is significantly influenced by the host's internal strength and ability to maintain physiological balance. In this context, Vyādhikṣamatva reflects the functional integrity of Doṣa, Dhātu, Mala, Agni, and Ojas, collectively determining the body's resistance to disease and capacity for recovery.

One of the distinctive features of Vyādhikṣamatva is its dual role in both prevention and mitigation of disease. The ability to prevent disease occurrence corresponds to optimal tissue nourishment and metabolic efficiency, while resistance to disease severity highlights the importance of systemic resilience during pathological states. This approach aligns with contemporary views that host immunity plays a decisive role in determining disease outcomes, particularly in chronic and recurrent disorders. Agni emerges as a central factor in immune regulation, as impaired digestion and metabolism lead to the formation of metabolic toxins that weaken tissue strength and compromise immunity. Similarly, Ojas represents the qualitative essence of immunity, linking nutritional status, mental stability, and tissue vitality. The depletion of Ojas due to improper diet, lifestyle irregularities, or psychological stress underscores the multidimensional nature of immune dysfunction described in Ayurveda.

The host-centric orientation of Ayurveda also highlights the significance of individualized care based on constitutional factors and lifestyle patterns. Unlike uniform therapeutic strategies, Ayurveda advocates strengthening the individual's adaptive capacity through dietary regulation, behavioral discipline, and rejuvenative measures. Rasāyana therapy, including both medicinal and behavioral components, plays a pivotal role in enhancing Vyādhikṣamatva and promoting longevity. In the current era marked by increasing lifestyle disorders, stress-related illnesses, and immune-mediated conditions, the Ayurvedic concept of Vyādhikṣamatva offers valuable insights for preventive healthcare. Integrating this holistic perspective with modern immunological understanding may contribute to more sustainable and person-centered health strategies.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Vyādhikṣamatva represents a comprehensive and multidimensional concept of immunity in Ayurveda, encompassing physical strength, metabolic efficiency, mental stability, and ethical conduct. Unlike reductionist models of immunity, Ayurveda emphasizes prevention through maintenance of internal balance rather than focusing solely on disease management. The preservation of Agni, nourishment of Dhātus, protection of Ojas, and regulation of psychological factors collectively contribute to sustained immune competence. Strengthening Vyādhikṣamatva through appropriate diet, disciplined lifestyle practices, and Rasāyana therapy offers a sustainable and preventive approach to health promotion and disease resistance. Furthermore, the integration of Ācāra Rasāyana highlights the importance of mental and behavioral factors in maintaining immunity. In the context of rising infectious diseases, lifestyle disorders, and stress-related illnesses, the Ayurvedic concept of Vyādhikṣamatva provides valuable insights for holistic healthcare. Integrating this classical framework with modern immunological understanding may enhance preventive strategies, improve therapeutic outcomes, and support the development of person-centered and sustainable healthcare models..

## REFERENCES

- [1] Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala. Charaka Saṃhitā. Sutrasthana, 30/26–27. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2018.
- [2] Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala. Charaka Saṃhitā. Sutrasthana, 28/7–8. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2018.
- [3] Agnivesha, Charaka, Dridhabala. Charaka Saṃhitā. Vimanasthana, 8/94–97. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia; 2018.
- [4] Sushruta. Sushruta Saṃhitā. Sutrasthana, 15/41. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan; 2017.
- [5] Vagbhata. Ashtanga Hridaya. Sutrasthana, 11/1–2. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2019.
- [6] Vagbhata. Ashtanga Hridaya. Sharirasthana, 3/68–69. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2019.
- [7] Sharma RK, Dash B. Caraka Saṃhitā: Text with English Translation. Vol I. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2014.
- [8] Tripathi B. Charaka Saṃhitā with Chakrapani Commentary. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Surbharati Prakashan; 2017.
- [9] Lad V. Textbook of Ayurveda: Fundamental Principles. Albuquerque: The Ayurvedic Press; 2002.

- [10] Dash B, Sharma RK. Rasāyana Therapy in Ayurveda. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 2013.
- [11] Patwardhan B, Mutalik G, Tillu G. Integrative approaches for immune health: Ayurveda perspective. *J Ayurveda Integr Med.* 2020;11(4):453–459.
- [12] doi:10.1016/j.jaim.2020.06.002
- [13] Balkrishna A, Verma S, Sharma N. Concept of immunity in Ayurveda: A critical review. *Anc Sci Life.* 2019;38(4):196–203.
- [14] doi:10.4103/asl.ASL\_189\_18
- [15] Chauhan S, Gupta A. Vyadhikshamatva: An Ayurvedic perspective of immunity. *AYU.* 2018;39(3):125–130.
- [16] doi:10.4103/ayu.AYU\_32\_18
- [17] Fulzele SV, Satturwar PM, Joshi SB, Dorle AK. Study of immunomodulatory activity of Rasayana drugs. *Indian J Pharm Sci.* 2003;65(4):387–390.
- [18] Singh RH. The holistic principles of Ayurveda in health and disease. *J Res Ayur Siddha.* 2006;27(3–4):1–10.
- [19] Kulkarni R, Patil V. Concept of Agni and Ama in immune disorders. *AYU.* 2019;40(2):67–72.
- [20] Sharma H, Clark C. *Contemporary Ayurveda: Medicine and Research in Maharishi Ayurveda.* New York: Churchill Livingstone; 2008.
- [21] Mishra LC. *Scientific Basis for Ayurvedic Therapies.* Boca Raton: CRC Press; 2004.
- [22] Patil VC, Baghel MS. Role of Dinacharya and Ritucharya in prevention of diseases. *AYU.* 2017;38(1):30–35.
- [23] Acharya YT. *Charaka Samhitā with Ayurveda Dipika Commentary.* Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia; 2016.
- [24] Abbas AK, Lichtman AH, Pillai S. *Basic Immunology: Functions and Disorders of the Immune System.* 6th ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier; 2020.
- [25] Janeway CA, Travers P, Walport M, Shlomchik M. *Immunobiology.* 8th ed. New York: Garland Science; 2018.
- [26] WHO. *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014–2023.* Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013.
- [27] Balkrishna A, et al. Ayurveda-based immunity enhancement strategies: Evidence and perspectives. *J Ethnopharmacol.* 2021;267:113484.
- [28] doi:10.1016/j.jep.2020.113484.