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## BHELA SAMHITA: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERARY REVIEW WITH FOCUS ON SWASTHAVRITTA ASPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

Maharshi Bhela, an ancient Ayurvedic sage, composed the Bhela Samhita, a foundational text that delves into various aspects of health and wellness. A central concept in the Bhela Samhita is *Swasthavritta*, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance through diet, routine, seasonal adjustments, and mental well-being. This work highlights the Bhela Samhita's unique contribution to the concept of *Swasthavritta* and explores its relevance in the modern context. The primary objective of this study is to examine the principles of *Swasthavritta* as described by Bhela, drawing attention to its distinctive approach in comparison to other Ayurvedic texts, particularly the *Brihatrayi*. In today's world, where lifestyle diseases are increasingly prevalent due to stress, poor diet, and sedentary habits, the principles of *Swasthavritta* as outlined in the Bhela Samhita offer valuable guidance. This paper aims to demonstrate how the core concepts of *Swasthavritta* in the Bhela Samhita continue to be relevant in contemporary wellness practices, emphasizing their importance in promoting long-term health and disease prevention.

**Keywords:** Bhela samhitha, *Swasthavritta*, *Swasthalakshana*, Health Parameters,  
Ayurveda Ithihasa

**INTRODUCTION:**

One of the Ancient Ayurvedic text apart from Charaka samhita and Sushruta samhita is Bhela Samhitha, authorised by the Acharya Bhela. Acharya Bhela was a contemporary of the great ancient Charaka and Sushruta, who also made important contributions to early Ayurvedic system of medicine, however no details of his biographical data is available. As per some reference Bhela samhita composition was undertaken in 7<sup>th</sup> centuries at a time only most of basics of Ayurveda samhitas were being consolidates and codified.

It is known from an incomplete manuscript kept at the Sarasvati Mahal Library in Thanjavur. A fragment of Bhela Samhita survives as one page from a paper manuscript found at Tuyuq, dated to AC 9<sup>th</sup> century. The available text in Thanjavoor Library shows so much of difference from the original manuscript. Tuyuq fragments appears to be more similar to the original version. Much of the text is in form of a dialogue between sage Atreya and his disciple Bhela, the author of the text likewise in Charaka samhitha.

While Charaka samhita had concentrated more on *kayachikista* and Sushruta Samhita on the concept of *shalya tantra*, Bhela samhita is known as the "complete mixture of Ayurvedic literature". The Bhela samhita have a full picture of how all these practises are combined in one or other ways. The way

of narration of text have address the concept in a way starting from the theoretical aspects to practical aspects which makes this text unique and different from other, makes this as a fundamental reference for those who want to get a clear picture about various concept.

Being a diligent description of *Dravya* and their useful formulation in details, the composition is extremely important. Moreover, a thorough explanation of medicinal herbs and other treatments, specifying from its sources to its practical applications about their applications. This adds up more knowledge on ayurveda pharmacology literature and offers practical guidance on preparation and administration on different conditions.

Known for its integrative nature, Bhela Samhita acts as a connecting bridge between the theoretical components of Charaka Samhita and the vast surgical technique information found in Sushruta Samhita. In brief, a straightforward response would ask, "Why surgery at all if internal medicine and pharmacology can treat any serious illness as discussed and replace surgery?" This reflects a broader aspect on ayurvedic medicine suggests that the in co-operation of internal medicine, pharmacological literature and surgery are interconnected as a basic component in Ayurvedic treatment modalities. In addition to this encourage and

gives more knowledge for the practitioner in the field of medicine for the better treatment of diseases.

The contributions of *Swasthavritta* are evident in several ayurvedic samhitas in the areas of *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, *ahara*, *vihara*, etc. Unlike other acharyas, acharya Bhela has added up knowledge in the core aspects of *swasthavritta* and has discussed certain typical lakshana of swastha purusha (healthy parameters of an healthy person). Given that the Bhela Samhita is an incomplete work, there might be a number of missing concepts. Since the beginning of sutra sthaana is missing, it may contain more concepts pertaining to *swasthavritta*, such as a chapter devoted to *Dinacharya* or other concepts that have evolved as a brief paragraph in other *sthaanas* [1].

### OVERVIEW OF TEXT

Some chapters and sections of the Bhela Samhita, a medical book of significant historical significance, have been lost or damaged over time. Despite the partial preservation of Chapter 4 and the complete loss of Chapter 24, the *Sutrastana* seems to be fairly complete. The absence of chapters also affects the other sections, including *Sidhi Stana* (Procedure Technique), *Sharira Stana* (anatomy), *Vimana Stana* (prognosis and treatment), and *Nidana Stana* (centered on disease origins and diagnostics). The last two chapters of *Chikitsa Stana* (therapy), in particular, are absent, despite the fact that

they might have included crucial closing details or therapeutic techniques.

It's interesting to note that the *Indriya Stana*, which addresses perception and the sense organs, seems to be completely intact. This is significant since it might provide important information on disease diagnosis and sensory experiences. The pharmacology-related *Kalpa Stana* is somewhat damaged, especially in Chapter 2, which may have addressed crucial medication manufacturing or formulations.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVE:

To review the concept explained in core aspects of *Swasthavritta* as per Acharya Bhela

### MATERIALS AND METHOD:

References are collected from Bhela samhita textbook and articles.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Sutra Stana [2]

The fourth chapter of Bhela's *sutra stana* explores the treatment of skin conditions including *kushta* and *svithra* after looking at *Pippali*. These are several remedies that are quite similar to those mentioned in Charaka's *Aragvadhiya* Adhyaya and use *gomutra* (cow urine), bile etc. However, Bhela provides another cleansing solution for both problems. In the fifth chapter, *Adhyashana*, or excessive intake, is discussed and concept of *Sadvritta* (good conduct) then focuses on contemporary virtues for health management. Further in 6<sup>th</sup>

chapter he explained as *vegadharaneeya* which gives importance of suppressible and non-suppressible urges.

In the references of the seventh chapter, only *Maithuna Niyama* (restriction of sexual activity) is stated with relation to time, and *Sadvritta* is referenced near the end. The eighth chapter, *Matrashithiya Adhyaya*, talks about *Bhojanantara Dhumapana*, (smoking between meals).

The eleventh chapter of this stana covers *Matra Bhuktasya*, (the volumetric element of eating), and the ailments that result from it. The main topics of Chapter 13 that is *janapadavibhaktiya* are epidemiology in general and disease control in particular. The 14<sup>th</sup> chapter covers *Pathyapathya*, a crania that describes what is and is not acceptable during *Virechana*. 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter covers *Visha Lakshana*, which covers the clinical indications and symptoms of poisoning as well as specific remedies for these indications and symptoms. In addition, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter highlights the benefits of *Triphala* and *Tanduliya Guna*, and finally, it emphasizes *Sadvritta* once more.

The 19<sup>th</sup> chapter, on the other hand, goes even further than Charaka's initial exposition of the elements, traits, and disadvantages of alcoholic drugs. Chapter 21 begins with a review of *Virechana's* hints and then goes into detail about *Swedana*. The effects on well-being are examined in Chapter 24. While Chapter 25 talks about

*Bhramacharya* and lists the benefits of living a confined, single life in addition to its health benefits, Chapter 24 examines the health effects of *Gaadha Purisha*, which are difficult-to-describe excrement.

### **Vimana Stana [3]**

It is observed that the meaning and intent of *Vimana Stana*, as addressed in Charaka's book, are not covered in chapter 1 of Bhela's literature. Similar to *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* in Charaka, the Bhela focuses more on *Bhojana Vidhi*, or dietary regulations, with supplements on *Avidahi*, or non-irritating, *Swadhu*, or pleasant, and *Balavarna Kara*, or improving vigor and complexion. The third chapter highlights *Agni* and his function in relation to illness and therapy. It also contains a hint of *Satmya*, or flexibility, which is a topic covered in Charaka's *Vimana Stana*. Similar to Charaka in *Sroto Vimana*, the fourth chapter discusses Bhela and highlights the importance of the body's constitution in determining a disease's diagnosis. He presents *Trividha Rogipareeksha* in this chapter, which is the three methods of sickness examination: *Pramsrya*-touching, *Drishtva*-seeing, and *Prushtva*-enquiring. In the sixth chapter, he discusses *Ritucharya*, or seasonal rituals, and how coordinating one's activities with the changing seasons promotes balance and wholeness.

**Indriya Stana [4]**

*Shatayu* (hundred years) and *Dheerghayu* (long, stable life) are concepts that are discussed in detail in the first chapter of Bhela, "*Dve va jatham evam vinishyathi*," which deals with the prognosis related to a newborn's survival and future health outcomes. It also clarifies the facts affecting longevity and well-being from birth. The second chapter covers *Swastha Suchaka Lakshana*, or health indicators.

It outlines the Ayurvedic indications of overall health and well-being. *Achikista* is the sixth chapter. 'Bhela' addresses the conditions listed in this chapter where standard treatment methods are less successful. Most significantly, this chapter insists on a liberal perspective on therapeutic matters, such as identifying when the conventional therapies are ineffective and firmly calling for a more liberal, independent therapeutic approach.

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

Bhela's work is well known for providing a comprehensive account of the various facets of *Swasthavritta*, including daily and seasonal routines, the fundamentals of dietetics, and a code of behavior. The following summarizes the ways in which Bhela's text advances *Swasthavritta*.

1. The significance of Bhela's work on dietary habits is highlighted in the poem "*Dve va jatham evam vinishyathi*" that opens the first chapter of *Bhojana Vidhi* [5]. Bhela

goes into great depth about the *Bhojana Vidhi*, including ideas like *Avidahi*, *Svadhu* (pleasant), and *Balavarna Kara*, which promote strength and complexion and enhance health and life from childhood, whereas Charaka places greater emphasis on *Vimana Stana*.

2. Digestive Health-*Agni* and *Satmya*: The function of *Agni* in food digestion and its impact on health and illness are highlighted in the third chapter. As she explains the idea of *Satmya*, Bhela reiterates that the core of *Swasthavritta* is a healthy digestive system, which can aid in nourishing and preventing a variety of illnesses.

3. Bodily Constitution and Disease Diagnosis: Similar to Charaka's explanation in *Sroto Vimana*, Bhela explains the function of body constitution in sickness diagnosis in Chapter 4. A three-dimensional method to health evaluation and constitution knowledge for preserving a prime status of health is provided by an introduction to *Trividha Rogipareeksha*, or the three-fold study of disorders in detail—*pramsrya*, *drishtva*, and *prushtva* [6].

4. Seasonal Routines: Chapter 6 discusses the significance of *Ritucharya*, or seasonal routines, and provides comprehensive instructions on how to adjust dietary and lifestyle habits to correspond with the changing of the seasons [7]. It is crucial for an individual's balance and overall health in a variety of environmental circumstances

since it guarantees that the body does not become out of balance with the surrounding atmosphere throughout the year.

5. The primary theme of Bhela's work emphasizes the value of *Sadvritta*, or moral behavior, throughout all of its chapters. For example, the fifth chapter discusses *Adhyashana* and concludes with a study of the connection between health and ethical living. Once more, ethical behavior is covered in the seventh and eighth chapters, which address *Maithuna Niyama* and *Bhojana Anthara Dhuma Pana*, respectively [8]. These conversations highlight the importance of moral and disciplined conduct in both disease prevention and health maintenance.

6. *Achikista*- Complex Cases and Tailored Treatment: When the main principles of treatment are insufficient to heal, the sixth chapter, *Achikista*, provides comprehensive specifics on how various ailments should be treated [9]. A strong grasp of preserving health is seen in the emphasis on delicate and individualized treatment methods, which suggests that interventions need to be customized.

#### ***Swastha-suchaka Lakshana* [10]**

Some of the Physical health parameters are explained by Acharya Bhela in core concept of *swasthavritta*

It is explained in second chapter of *Indriya sthaana* from shloka 1-7 number. The whole

chapter is contributed for *Swastha Lakshana*.

The shloka goes like this as:

- “*Mukha-netra sharira cha panipada tadhiva cha saraktam drishyathe*” - The body parts like mukha (face), Netra (eyes), even sharira (body) appears as Reddish in colour considered as swastha. Here it explained about general body features.
- “*Yasmin Churnaabham Naranam Murdhini Drishyathe*” – The person head should have an appearance of Gomayachurna (cowdung powder) seems to be healthy.
- “*Shirassi snihyamane cha kandusanjayathe dhridam*” - An assessment parameter has been explained as while applying oil to head if that person have itching considered as a indicator of skin diseases.
- “*Yasya kesha pramuchyande sheernamoolam*” – Hair falls from person scalp having a withered root along with similar appearances in body considered as a healthy parameters.it might be a contraverse statement here it considered as a swastha lakshana.

- *Naasya denthaha praharshayenthi* – Resembles teeth are stable or firm in the socket
- *Mukham cha na vilupyathi* – No signs of deterioration in oral cavity.
- *Na bhandam bhashyathe cha api* – The vocabulary is clear without any stammering.
- *Na vikshipathi gatranam* – Body parts do not show involuntary movement.
- *Swaro aasya na vivarthathe* – Voice remains steady and stable.
- *Vastrena guhathe guhyam* – Proper covering of body with proper hygiene and modesty.
- *Na bhavathyunnatho nabhihi* – Navel region is not protruded or elevated, as Ayurvedic reference it as a sign of vikrutha lakshana
- *yadha avasto abhithishtandhi* – Maintaining stable postures
- *Sukham shwasithi ratri cha* – Person respiration at night time without any disturbance.
- *Na nakham karkashabhyam* – Healthy nails will not be having any brittleness and not rough.
- *Na syavam na nishprabham*- no discolouration and not lacking its lustre
- *Prasannasu suprabhashchaiva* – having a pleasant appearance

- *Aathapadhishtitho yastu na prakashashcha, na cha lochithastu*- While exposing to sunlight should not show any redness and skin should remain clear and radiant.

### STRENGTH [11]

The *Bhela Samhita* offers significant insights into the historical progression of Ayurveda, particularly in the development of specialized fields like Agada Tantra (toxicology). It highlights the evolving sophistication of Ayurvedic medicine by documenting the appointment of a court physician proficient in the eight branches of Ayurveda (*Aṣṭāṅga*), an indication of the comprehensive nature of the medical system. One of the notable innovations in the text is the introduction of new terminology for fevers, not only in humans but also in animals and plants, showcasing a broadened scope for understanding diseases across various species.

Bhela also describes eight types of Sveda-Karma (sweating therapies), including Saṅkara, Prastara, and Seka, which expanded therapeutic approaches within Ayurveda. This indicates a deeper understanding of how sweating could be employed in diverse treatments. Further, Bhela's new terminology for body constituents, such as Pṛthvī-Kāya (earth body), Ap-Kāya (water body), Teja-Kāya (fire body), and Vāyu-Kāya (air body),

marks a more nuanced understanding of the elemental composition of the body, reflecting an advanced conceptualization of the interaction between these elements in maintaining health and treating disease.

Another fascinating contribution from Bhela is his distinction between two types of Alocaka Pitta (one located in the eyeball and the other in the intellect). This distinction enriches the understanding of the role of Pitta in both physiological and mental functions, highlighting the complex interplay between body and mind in Ayurvedic thought. Additionally, the *Bhela Samhita* includes descriptions of surgical procedures, such as for Aśmarī Udara (bladder stones) and Vātarakta (gout), indicating a high level of surgical expertise in ancient Ayurvedic practices.

The text also offers a unique perspective on the location of the mind (Manas), placing it behind the palate (*Tālu*), which adds to the anatomical understanding of mental functions in Ayurveda. In terms of disease pathology, Bhela introduces a novel association between Vātalika fever and Lasikāgranthi (nodules in the eyelids), further expanding the connections between different diseases and symptoms in Ayurvedic diagnostics.

Finally, the *Bhela Samhita* provides descriptions of various countries and their specific diseases, offering valuable insights into how geographical factors influence

health patterns and medical practices. This geographical aspect of the text underscores the comprehensive nature of *Bhela Samhita*, not only in understanding the human body and diseases but also in recognizing the influence of the environment and culture on health across different regions.

In summary, the *Bhela Samhita* represents an advanced, multifaceted approach to Ayurveda, contributing foundational knowledge on topics ranging from toxicology and surgical procedures to the elemental composition of the body, mental health, and disease pathology.

#### **WEAKNESS**

A key work in Ayurvedic literature, the *\*Bhela Samhita\**, contains flaws that restrict its applicability to contemporary practitioners. One major problem is the existence of missing chapters, which leads to manuscripts that are not full and create gaps in knowledge on important facets of Ayurveda, including particular therapies or intricate pharmacology. Furthermore, the text frequently conveys ideas in a concise and streamlined way, lacking the depth required for comprehension and real-world application. Due to its brevity and assumption of prior knowledge or expertise with the subject, it may be difficult for contemporary readers to completely understand the complex Ayurvedic principles. Additionally, inconsistent manuscripts result from a lack of

consistency, which might make it difficult to apply the lessons taught in the book.

The immediate applicability of many of the treatments discussed may be limited by their age or difficulty in relation to contemporary conditions. Finally, another flaw in the text is the lack of illustrations or thorough examples that could aid practitioners in comprehending particular therapies. All things considered, even while the \*Bhela Samhita\* provides insightful information, its brevity, missing material, and archaic language pose serious problems for modern Ayurvedic treatment.

#### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

These Ayurvedic lyrics describe the *Swastha Lakshanas*, which offer a comprehensive guide for identifying health and vigour. According to Ayurveda, health is a condition of harmony between the body, mind, and spirit rather than only the absence of illness. The indicators of health discussed here are comprehensive and encompass a variety of behaviours, bodily characteristics, and even emotional states.

The color of the skin and face is the first important indicator; a reddish tint is regarded as a sign of healthy digestion and circulation. The body's internal equilibrium and the effective operation of metabolic processes are reflected in the skin's inherent color and vibrancy. Likewise, there must be no evidence of decay, redness, or abnormalities in the mouth, teeth, or eyes. A

robust, undamaged oral cavity, solid teeth, and clear eyes are indicators of excellent health and enough nutrition.

A healthy system is also indicated by outward manifestations such as silky hair and the lack of scalp discomfort or itching. Well-nourished follicles produce healthy hair, and symptoms of a dry or itchy scalp may indicate underlying medical issues.

Since stable cognitive function and mental clarity are essential elements of general health, a healthy person should also speak clearly and steadily without stuttering. A healthy neural system and muscles are also indicated by stable posture and the absence of involuntary movements.

The general appearance, which includes glowing skin, a clear voice, and steady motions, also suggests emotional well. For instance, emotional equilibrium and mental peace are reflected in a nice manner and clear speaking. Healthy nails that are smooth and free of brittleness or discoloration indicate optimal nutrition, and self-care awareness is indicated by appropriate body covering and hygiene.

Last but not least, the fact that there are no problems with breathing or digestion, whether during regular activities or at night, suggests that internal functions like metabolism and digestion are operating smoothly. Healthy skin should not be red or irritated even when exposed to sunlight,

demonstrating its capacity to defend itself and perform as intended.

These *Swastha Lakshanas* essentially highlight the interdependence of the body, mind, and spirit as well as how each bodily characteristic or behaviour reflects an individual's general state of health. By looking at these indicators, Ayurveda teaches people to see health as a balanced and harmonious state rather than only concentrating on particular symptoms. A comprehensive framework for preserving health and preventing disease in Ayurvedic practice is provided by Bhela's contributions to *Swasthavritta*, which include specific dietary guidelines, the significance of digestive health, insights into bodily constitution and disease diagnosis, seasonal routines, ethical living, and customized treatment approaches. Put another way, because of its age, the *Bhela Samhitha* is comparable to a touchstone of Ayurvedic knowledge. It has historical relevance since it has been used as a heuristic in pharmacology, medical theory, and the blending of many therapeutic modalities from ancient times, all of which have influenced the development or comprehension of Ayurveda.

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