

Thursday, 12 December 2024

Understanding Diseases and the Six Enemies (Ari Shad Varga)

Let's begin with a fundamental insight: all diseases, at their core, are mental in nature. The very first sutra of the Ashtanga Hridayam, one of Ayurveda's foundational texts, emphasizes this idea. This doesn't mean that every illness originates purely in the mind, but rather that the mind and body are deeply intertwined. Our mental state profoundly impacts our physical health.

To illustrate this connection, let me share a story. My guru's elder son, Dr. V.M. Damodaran Namboodiri, is a renowned figure in the field of Ayurveda. He is a brilliant author, with his books prescribed in Kerala for MBBS and MD students. Despite his disciplined lifestyle, rooted in spiritual practices, and the immense knowledge he possesses, he experiences a period of depression each year, lasting for at least a month. Why does this happen? It's because he works closely with psychiatric patients, constantly interacting with their complex energies. His own well-being is deeply influenced by the energy around him, demonstrating how even the most disciplined and spiritually grounded individuals can be affected by external mental forces.

This brings us to the essence of our discussion: diseases are not just physical. Ancient Ayurvedic texts tell us that the root causes of true diseases lie within six internal enemies. These are known as the **Ari Shad Varga** in Sanskrit—the six enemies that affect our health and wellbeing.

What Are the Six Enemies? (Ari Shad Varga)

The term breaks down like this:

- **Ari** means enemy.
- **Shad** means six.
- **Varga** means group.

Thus, **Ari Shad Varga** refers to the group of six enemies within us:

1. **Kama** — Desire or lust
2. **Krodha** — Anger
3. **Lobha** — Greed
4. **Moha** — Delusion or attachment
5. **Mada** — Pride or ego
6. **Matsarya** — Envy or jealousy

These enemies are not external forces. They are not your neighbors, colleagues, or anyone else outside of you. These enemies reside **within** you. They are **congenital** (Sahaja), meaning they are born with you. You cannot escape them because they are always attached to you (**Sataha Anushaktan**) and are present throughout your life. Moreover, they do not only reside in your mind but influence your **entire body** (Ashesha Kaya Paradan).

How Do These Enemies Manifest?

Let's explore how these enemies impact not just the mind, but also the body. Take cravings and aversions, for example. These are not merely mental phenomena—they are often deeply physical. Consider menopausal women who experience strong cravings for cold and a deep aversion to heat. This isn't just psychological; it's a physical reaction to hormonal changes. Similarly, in cases of anemia, some people may crave non-food items like dirt or clay—this is the body's instinctive response to a mineral deficiency. Such cravings and aversions arise from imbalances in the body, not just mental desires.

Even emotions are influenced by bodily processes. Take irritability during premenstrual syndrome, for instance. This isn't just a mental response; it's influenced by hormonal fluctuations in the body. The mind and body are constantly interacting in ways we must recognize to understand the full scope of our health.

Why Do These Enemies Matter?

When we allow ourselves to be controlled by these six internal enemies, we become slaves to them. This enslavement leads not only to diseases but also to a diminished quality of life and, ultimately, to death. The concept of **liberation** (Moksha) is often discussed in spiritual terms, but at its essence, it's about breaking free from these internal tendencies. To be liberated means to free yourself from being a slave to **Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, and Matsarya**.

A Practical Exercise

To help you gain a deeper understanding of these enemies, let's try an exercise. Each of you will choose one of the six enemies and share your insights with the group. You can explore how this enemy manifests in daily life, both in the mind and body. Reflect on how these tendencies influence us and think about ways we might overcome them. For example, one person will speak about **Kama** (desire), another about **Krodha** (anger), and so on. This reflection will help you become more aware of these internal forces and their impact.

Final Thoughts

The **Ari Shad Varga** are not abstract concepts. They are deeply ingrained tendencies that influence every aspect of our being—our thoughts, actions, and even our physical health. Recognizing their presence within us is the first step toward understanding how they shape our

lives. And remember, true **liberation** lies in breaking free from these tendencies. This is the path to true health and freedom.

