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Unfolding the concept of 'Swasthya' in IKS: A focus on SDG 3

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Abstract:

Health, often referred to as "Swa-Sthya" in our Indian Knowledge System, is a complete well-being that includes mental, physical, and spiritual balance. It is attained by a harmonious relationship between the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—and the body's three doshas—Pitta, Kapha, and Vata—through a healthy diet and lifestyle. Mindful practices, i.e., living in harmony with nature and one's inner self with prevention and equilibrium maintenance, were prioritised over merely treating illness. Our understanding of health has evolved with the World Health Organization's definition in 1948 as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." These two concepts are merely quite similar, but the idea of 'Swasthya' is rooted in the text of the Indian Knowledge System, such as in the Charak Samhita and the Sushruta Samhita. UNESCO proposed SDG-3 and its targets for achieving Good Health and Well-being by 2030. Realizing the importance of health, its knowledge, and associated lifestyle, the present research was taken. This qualitative research aims to unfold the concept of 'Swasthya' in IKS and its interconnections to 'Health' in the modern era with special reference to SDG 3. The content analysis and thematic analysis of the data provided by 20 participants were used to examine the concept of 'Swasthya' in IKS in parallel to 'Health' and aligned with SDG 3. The study showcases the potential of IKS to understand health in terms of 'Swasthya' in a broader aspect and promote the integration of the concept of 'Swasthya' in this modern healthcare system. This can provide a more holistic approach to achieving SDG-3.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System, Swasthya, Health, SDG 3, Well-being.

Introduction:

From an Indian perspective, a significant transformation in the concept of health has been found. This transformation can be seen in the differences between the ancient and modern Indian practices in the field of medicine and surgery. In the ancient Indian knowledge system in which health is defined in terms of 'Swasthya'. In this term, 'Swa' means myself, and 'stha' means to be

situated. Ayurveda invites us to consider ourselves as more than just a simple body with base actions, more than just cognitive functions and accomplishments (McManus, 2017). The concept of 'Swasthya' is considered, a dynamic state that is influenced by various factors including diet, lifestyle, and mental and emotional state. In the ancient Indian system, 'Swasthya' is considered by its unique constitution known as 'Prakriti', which is a result of a perfect balance of three fundamental energies or 'dosha' – Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. A little imbalance in these energies can lead to various health issues. This understanding of 'Swasthya' highlights the importance of personalized approaches to health and wellness. In contrast, the modern scientific era, current healthcare practices in the twenty-first century are distinguished by scientific advances, technological advances, and evidence-based medicine (Johnson, 2024). The concept of health is an important aspect of human life and its development and its significance can be seen by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. SDG 3 is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2015, and all the goals are aimed to be achieved by 2030 and encompass a broad range of health-related targets to promote overall well-being and quality of life. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goal- 3 "Good Health and Well-Being", Ayurveda plays an important role by preventing diseases in the primordial stage itself (Rangaswamy, 2024). A study on tracking health-related sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nepal has been conducted and the results and findings of the research suggested that an adequate investment for research is required for knowledge generation, capacity building and innovation and the communication with the policy makers in relation to the goal can help to track the progress in achieving the SDGs (Dhimal, 2017). But the ancient Indian Practices such as Yoga and Meditation, Ayurveda also have potential that can provide a more holistic approach to achieve the goal, while this side of the Indian Knowledge System is lacking in the targets and mode of implementation of SDG 3.

Objective:

The study has been made to find the concept of Health in SDG 3 and 'Swasthya' in the Indian Knowledge System and to find the interconnectedness between both.

Methodology:

A qualitative approach has been adopted to achieve the study's objective. The purposive sampling technique has selected a group of 20 participants. A digital platform has been used to collect the data from the participants on SDG 3. They were informed to share information about SDG 3 through various means of knowledge, like books and the internet. The data has been analysed by thematic analysis of the text. To find the interconnectedness between the text shared by the participants and the ancient knowledge of India on health, Sanskrit literature has been explored.

Result & Findings:**Table No.-01 Extraction of themes and sub-themes from the data**

Thematic Analysis of Data		
Initial Codes	Themes	Sub-theme
SDG 3	Targets of SDG 3	Target 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7
	Best Practices of Government	Mid-day meal, Pradhanmantri Matritva Abhiyan, Poshan Abhiyan, Janani Suraksha Yojna
	Awareness	Celebrating Swachh Pakhwara, analysis of School book content
	General information of Targets	focusing areas of target.

Table No. 01 shows several themes and sub-themes under the initial code 'SDG 3' from the data set in which the researcher tried to find their interconnectedness with the concept of health and well-being in the India Knowledge System. The Table also shows that the participant talked about several targets like 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 which are related to reducing the global Maternal Mortality Rate, End All Preventable deaths under 5 years of age, End the epidemics of AIDS, TB, Malaria, and NTDs, strengthen prevention, treatment of substance abuse, and Reduce deaths and injuries due to road traffic accidents, and universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education respectively. The respondents have also discussed the Mid-Day meal, Pradhan Mantri Matritva Abhiyan, Poshan Abhiyan, and Janani Suraksha Yojna under the theme extracted as best practices of the Government. Few of the participant in this study tried to relate the best practices in their department and try to find information in the school text books related to health and food that may help to achieve the goal under the theme awareness, and under the theme of general information of targets the respondents discussed about the focusing areas of the targets such as Maternal mortality rate, reproductive health and care, healthy life style, road safety, communicable and non-communicable diseases, and a general information about the SDG 3 they have.

A comparative analysis of Health in SDG 3 and *Swasthya* in the Indian Knowledge System-

SDG 3 is all about good health and well-being. In 1948, WHO defined health as, a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not only the complete absence of disease or

infirmity. While in Sushrut Samhita, a healthy person is defined as

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः ॥

प्रसन्नात्मेयमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥४२॥

Meaning- A person will be considered as 'Swasth' (Healthy) only in the presence of a state of equilibrium of doshas. Equilibrium of Dosa means, Sama Agni (Normal and balanced digestive fire), Sama Dhatu (Equilibrium of Tissues), Sama mala kriya (Proper excretion of excreta and their balance), and Prasanna Atma, Indriya, Mana (Calmness of Soul, Sense organs and Mind).

In the modern scientific era, a person's good health depends on their physical, mental, and social well-being, while the Indian knowledge system defines 'Swasthya' as a holistic and multidimensional entity that deals with the interconnectedness in physical, mental, and spiritual health of an individual. This also defines health as maintaining balance in the body, mind, and soul. Holism, balance, harmony, and self-awareness provide a more inclusive understanding approach to Swasthya. Yoga is another spiritual and aesthetic discipline of breath control and mind relaxation, which aims to achieve spiritual liberation. In Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutra', Yoga is defined as-

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥२॥

Meaning- Yogah (Yoga), Chitta (Mind), Vritti (Modification, changes), Nirodhah (Restraint)

Furthermore, well-being is a holistic approach to living that depends on the overall quality of life of a person. It also includes satisfaction, a sense of happiness, and fulfilment in various aspects of life. This concept of well-being in IKS is explained as-

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामया ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत् ॥

Meaning-Sarve bhavantu sukhinah (May all beings be happy), Sarve santu niramaya (may all be free from all diseases and illness), sarve bhadraṇi pashyantu (may all see auspiciousness) and, maa kashchit dukh bhagbhavet (may all not suffer any sorrow at all).

In modern science, the concept of well-being has come into account with the emergence of health care, which is a concept that is heavily influenced by the medicinal practices which was initially developed from the process of treating a body with medicines and treatments. In this concept, there is no connection between physical, mental, and social health of a person initially, while IKS defines 'Swasthya' in a more holistic manner that incorporates diet, lifestyle, and spiritual practices and emphasizes the interconnectedness among body, mind, and soul.

Discussion:

In this study, the concept of health and well-being in special reference to Sustainable Development Goal 3 has been explored. The 9 targets of SDG 3 largely focused on different aspects of health and well-being, like Maternal Mortality Ratio, Health of newborn, Drug abuse, Communicable and non-communicable diseases, Road injuries and accidents, and Global Health

coverage. The respondents also focused on these aspects and different governmental practices that may help to achieve the goal before the targeted year. Besides all these, the concept of 'Swasthya' in the Indian Knowledge system has been explained in a more holistic approach. The health practices in Ayurveda, Yoga and Meditation have the potential to deal holistically with illness. But this aspect was untouched in all the text from Sustainable Development Goal 3.

Conclusion:

The existing education system in India is heavily influenced by Western models, often marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems and practices (Lal & et. al, 2024). However, Ancient Indian Practices, such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and meditation, emphasize the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and spiritual health and offer a more comprehensive approach to attain well-being. The practices of the ancient Indian Knowledge System not only benefit human health, but also the practices like 'Yagya' benefit the environment. The Vedic Yagya is the process by which we return the atmosphere, that we have taken from the atmosphere (Rani, 2019). That is why the concept of 'Swasthya' in the ancient Indian Knowledge System also focuses on the equilibrium between the internal environment of a human body and the external environment. The ancient Indian practices like Vedic Yagya are helpful in balancing between the two. Furthermore, Ayurveda is the science of living beings that imparts all the knowledge of life (Meena, 2015). Being the birthplace of Yoga and Ayurveda, India has the potential to become 'Vishwa Guru' in these areas. India is the reservoir of traditional knowledge and can leverage its expertise to promote Yoga and Ayurveda globally. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal -3 "Good Health and Well-Being" Ayurveda plays an important role by preventing the disease in the primordial stage itself (Rangaswamy, 2024). However, despite their proven efficacy, these practices have been largely neglected in the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) framework. Moreover, SDG 3 focuses on health and well-being at all ages through modern medicine and the Western healthcare system. So that by understanding, adopting, and incorporating the principles of 'Swasthya' in the ancient Indian practices can provide a more comprehensive approach to health that addresses the physical, Mental, and Spiritual dimensions of human existence and may also help us to lead ourselves from disease to wellness and honors the wisdom of the Indian Knowledge System.

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