

Physiological Basis of Ayyappa Deeksha Rules

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In Hindu tradition, Ayyappa was considered a child of Hari and Hara, that is, Lord Vishnu (ayya) and Lord Shiva (appa). Ayyappa Deeksha is considered one of the toughest Deekshas in Indian tradition. There are a lot of rules to be followed during the Deeksha. The minimum number of days of Deeksha is 41 days. The individual who wears the Deeksha mala is called a swami, which means they are equal to God during the Deeksha period. They need to wake up early in the morning before sunrise. Waking up one hour before sunrise (Bramhamuhurtam) is recommended in the Bhagavadgita for a happy and healthy life. This concept is supported by Ayurveda, the ancient medical system of India. This time can be used for daily workouts or meditation, so that it prepares us psychologically to deal with the rest of the day effectively. Swami has to bathe with cold water twice a day, in the morning before sunrise and in the evening before pooja. A clinical study reported that a cold water bath helps to combat depression.¹ It also improves circulation and offers good sleep. Further, this rule improves the punctuality of an individual. Swami has to visit the temple every day. It is well known that visiting a temple gives us a positive mindset and relaxation. Swami has to perform pooja every day for Lord Ganesha, Murugan, Lakshmi Devi, and Swami Ayyappa by chanting 108 names of those Gods and at the end of the day, chanting Harivarasaram to Swami Ayyappa. Here comes the effect of chanting a mantra, which has been proven scientifically to cause

improvement in cognition and offer relaxation. Swami has to wear a black dress during the Deeksha. Usually, black is considered inauspicious in Hindu tradition, but black color prevents negative energies from entering the body and at the same time also prevents the loss of positive energies from the body. A study conducted in the US proved that handheld umbrellas can block 90 percent of ultraviolet rays in summer.² Swami has to wear mala for 41 days and they are not supposed to remove it in between. They usually use rudraksha mala, Tulasi mala, or spatika mala. Each of them has its benefits. All three mala help to overcome stress and provide health benefits. Tulasi is well known in Ayurveda for its antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial qualities. Spiritually, it was explained that these malas help in the alignment of the chakra of the body. Walking without shoes is another rule. It was explained that walking barefoot on acupressure points and improves sleep, increases parasympathetic activity, prevents inflammation, etc. Ayyappa Swami has to do a lot of trekking while visiting Sabarimala. Walking barefoot for 41 days serves as a preparatory phase for trekking barefoot. A wonderful diet plan was prescribed to the Deeksha swami. Morning, they have to eat fruits as breakfast and afternoon, satvik food which is freshly prepared with minimum salt and chili and at night they should eat light food like idlis. They are not allowed to eat meat and onion, garlic-like substances. This diet plan helps to regulate body weight in 41 days and offers multiple health benefits, like eating less salt to keep the blood pressure in control. They should not

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use alcohol and should not smoke during the Deeksha period. So this is a natural de-addiction therapy. They have to wear fresh and clean clothes every day, which keeps them away from any infections or allergies. They need to control arishadvargas, which means six detrimental qualities: kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya and should not be involved in any sexual activities. This rule helps them to control their sense organs. They have to sleep on the floor and should not use a bed or pillow. It is reported that rapid eye movement sleep is conditioned by gravity on Earth.⁴ A better and sound sleep was reported by sleeping on the floor. Hence, Ayyappa Deeksha keeps oneself healthy in a traditional way, following a healthy lifestyle. The total period of Deeksha is 41 days. As the year has 360 days, when it is divided by 9, it comes to 40 days, which is considered a mandalam. If someone practices this simple lifestyle for 41 days, they usually become adopted to this and follow the same rest of the days also. Hence, Ayyappa Deeksha keeps oneself healthy in a traditional way, following a healthy lifestyle. Many scientific articles explain the

importance of change in lifestyle for the management of multiple diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, etc. Hence, Ayyappa Deeksha keeps oneself healthy in a traditional way by following a healthy lifestyle. There is a strong need to undertake scientific studies in this area to understand the physiology behind the Deeksha rules. Traditional beliefs also might be the reason for the excellent outcomes, as someone believes it strongly, so improvement. To clarify this, there is a strong need to undertake an RCT and observe the effectiveness of Deeksha rules.

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