

## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF AYURVEDA IN COMPLETE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

// Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah |

/ Sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kashchid dukhbhagbhavet ||

Let all be happy, let all be healthy. Let all see a good life and may no one ever be exposed to sorrow.

In 1974, WHO recognized the potential and scope of traditional medicines and made the Alma Ata declaration accepting traditional medicines as an important tool to achieve health for all by 2000 AD and requested member-countries to improve the service and availability of traditional systems of medicine. Since then the discussion on importance and integration of these traditional systems of medicines along with conventional medicine has improved worldwide even in India also. India is a unique, democratic nation with a multi-population, divergent lifestyles and pluralistic healthcare systems. Such diversity offers an immense scope to observe and document the effects of Ayurvedic drugs, medicinal plants, dietary habits and non-drug healing modalities. Ayurveda is the ultimate art of holistic medicine where individual ingredient in a formulation is as important as the timing of its administration. An experienced Ayurvedic physician should give these global holistic treatments while closely watching vikruthi. It takes long years of practice gathering clinical acumen to really harness the science and art of Ayurveda unlike modern medicine which is more and more based on technology, labs and procedures. Instead of conceiving the body as solid and bounded (as in biomedicine), Ayurveda conceives the body as fluid and penetrable, engaged in continuous interchange with the social and natural environment. It is a living tradition which has provided (and still providing) healing and physical relief to millions of people across the ages. It is based on unique and specific nature of philosophical explanations and reasoning, the predominant one of which is a theory & Tri-dos. This theory does not need either organ localization of disease or any precise anatomical knowledge, when compared with modern medicine. Nor does it need any physiological explanation consistent with modern medicine and anatomical knowledge. In its own way, a theory explains disease, causation, Tridos assuming human body (microcosm) to be in harmony with the universe (macrocosm).

There is need and urgency for an intellectual debate in an environment of positive thinking, openness to understand diverse knowledge systems and felt need to look for better option to fill the gaps of conventional medicine and above all the importance of taking healthcare to the cross section of the community which is affordable and effective.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Allovera, Bioservicing, Homeostasis, Medical pluralism, Panchakarma, Tridosha

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### INTRODUCTION

Indians are pioneers in many fields of Science like Astronomy, Physics, Botany, Mathematics, and Medicine etc., for example in Mathematics Indians contributed 'Zero' which has changed the understanding of Mathematics; In Botany Sir J.C.Bose's contribution on Life of plants brought major changes in understanding plant physiology and plant pathology. Likewise when it

comes to Medical field India is the motherland for 'Ayurveda' which has its origin during 5000 BC. By that time Knowledge was flourishing in a well manner in India, but whereas in the contemporary world it was still in primitive stage. To say Ayurveda is the science of the sum of all the knowledge's related to Life from the Origin of Universe to Pralaya (Dissolution) of Srishti (Nature). And it is not at all an exclamatory to say

Ayurveda is the Mother of all the Medical and Health care sciences in the world.

Ayurveda, in the literal sense, is the knowledge of life. P. C. Ray characterized the long phase of India's cultural history from 600 BC to AD 800 as the 'Ayurvedic period' because he credited Ayurveda with the origins of not only medical sciences but also chemistry and, if one may add, plant and animal sciences.<sup>1</sup>

#### **AYURVEDA – HOLISTIC & WHOLISTIC**

Though the both terms Holistic and Wholistic seems to be synonymous, but there is a fine difference between them in relation to Ayurveda. Holism meaning targeted to the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. Holistic medicine considers not only physical health but also the emotional, spiritual, social, and mental well-being of the person. Whereas Wholistic approach considers Environmental influences on Health in addition to above. Ayurveda has emphasized ecological approach in terms of Ritucharya (Seasonal regime).

#### **MEDICAL PLURALISM (Coexisting healing systems & practices)**

Over the last decades, awareness has increased about the phenomenon of medical pluralism and the importance to integrate biomedicine and other forms of health care. The broad variety of healing cultures existing alongside biomedicine is called complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) in industrialized countries and traditional medicine (TM) in developing countries. Considerable debate has arisen about ethical problems related to the growing use of CAM in industrialized countries. This article focuses on equity issues and aims to consider them from a global perspective of medical pluralism.<sup>2</sup>

#### **ALLEGORY ON AYURVEDA**

An article published in Express Pharma titled 'Demystifying ayurveda', the comment of a Senior Consultant of a prestigious Hospital in New Delhi, on Ayurveda discloses the incomprehension of what Ayurveda truly is, as perceived by the so-called modern scientist. The opinion which goes in his terms - "Ayurveda may not be termed a science in modern scientific context, as it did not develop in a test tube or a laboratory. Nor do its concepts change frequently, as it happens in modern scientific allopathic medicine."

If one looks at the description of scientific method in medical practice in Ayurveda, it is absolutely analogous with the description that is made in contemporary times. There are four steps to analyze. They are the first being a careful observation (Pratyaksha), followed with development of hypothesis (Anumana), then quoting the bibliographical references (Aphopadesha) and concluding with deductive reasoning (Yukti).<sup>3</sup>

#### **HOMEOSTASIS – DUALISTIC APPROACH**

The term for health in Ayurveda is 'Swasthya'. This word means, to be established (Sthya) in oneself (Swa). Ayurvedic texts elaborate on the meaning of Swasthya:

// Sama Dosha Samagnischa Samadhatu Malakriya /

// Prassannathmendriya Manah Swasthya iti

abhidheeyatein // (Su.Su.15)

This means One whose physiological functions (doshas), metabolism (agni), body tissues (dhatus) and excretory functions (malas) are in a state of equilibrium with cheerful mind, clarity of intellect and contented senses is said to be established in oneself (svastha). Prasannata denotes happiness and equipoise. Health or swasthya is therefore defined by Ayurveda as a state of equilibrium, of body & mind. It is state of equilibrium of normal anatomical, biological, physiological, mental and spiritual well being. Hence Sama (balanced) state of dhatu, dosha, Agni, and mala is the reflection of

**Homeostasis in Ayurveda.**<sup>4</sup> In holistic approach of Ayurveda, the body, mind and soul are the subjects for the consideration. These entities are represented in human body as Sthula sharir (corporeal body), Suksma sharir (Astral body) and Karana sharir (Causal body).

**Human homeostasis** refers to the body's ability to regulate physiologically its inner environment to ensure its stability in response to fluctuations in the outside environment and the weather. The liver, the kidneys, and the brain help maintain homeostasis. The liver is responsible for metabolizing toxic substances and maintaining carbohydrate metabolism. The kidneys are responsible for regulating blood water levels, re-absorption of substances into the blood, maintenance of salt and ion levels in the blood, regulation of blood pH, and excretion of urea and other wastes.<sup>5</sup>

Above explanations on the Homeostasis from both Modern and Ayurvedic angle gives an idea of broader perspective of Ayurveda in its approach.

#### **AYURVEDA & ALLOVEDA**

Alloveda is a combination therapy incorporating concepts of modern medicine and Ayurveda. This term 'Alloveda' was introduced by Licensee firm in conjunction with Guglip - Commercial preparation containing the ethyl acetate soluble fraction of gum guggulu from *Commiphora mukul*, used to reduce blood cholesterol levels.<sup>6</sup>

Novel approach that needs to be adopted by Ayurvedic doctors is interpreting modern medicines in Ayurvedic terms and the Ayurvedic way. For example One can prepare a product monograph for paracetamol in the Ayurvedic manner. For instance one can explain that paracetamol helps reduce jwara (fever) in kapha imbalances (like excessive mucous in persons suffering

common cold). This sort of an Ayurvedic approach to Western medicine will prove to be interesting and will help assimilate Ayurveda and Western medicine in an integrated way. The principle in Ayurveda to treat fever is to use drugs which have bitter taste that helps to control the morbid pitta thus the raise in temperature will be controlled.

Under this concept the properties of Acetaminophen can be written as bitter in taste (rasa), dry in properties (guna), cold in potency (Virya), katu in vipaka, controlling pitta and kapha, activity as Jvaraghna. I know this may raise controversies among purists. Just like fusion music (Indian and Western fusion) has generated heat. However, one needs to demolish the barriers and silos to take things forward. And this will not in any way vitiate healthcare. It will also help Allopaths appreciate Ayurveda better.<sup>7</sup>

It is an approach to re-write the ayurvedic pharmacology of contemporary drugs. Ayurvedic pharmacology of allopathic drugs is a new dimension of healthcare science. It will give a new lease of life to Ayurveda. It is Neo – Ayurveda or may Alloedava.

#### POTENTIALS OF AYURVEDA

There are many fundamentals which stood Ayurveda as Supreme Scientific way of Life. Among them some are given below which will contribute to modern medicine to make complete / perfect healthcare system.

1. Concept of Prakriti (AyurGenomics)
2. Concept of Agni (Digestion & Metabolism)
3. Concept of Ojas (Immunity in Ayurveda)
4. Concept of Sathmya (Homologation)
5. Concept of Ama / Amavisha (Auto intoxication)
6. Concept of Healthy Ageing (SUKHAYU)
7. Panchakarma (Bioservicing procedures)
8. Concept of RASAYANA ( Biological Response Modifiers)
9. Concept of Baishajya kala (Chronotherapeutics)
10. Ayurvedic Drug spectrum
11. Concept of Viruddhatha (Incompatibility)
12. Concept of Samprapti / Shatkriyakala (Pathogenesis)

Few of them are discussed below

Prakriti is basically "Bio-Genetic Mind-Body typing". Ayurveda classifies every patient's *prakruthi* (internal nature), which does not change that patient's mind-body type from birth to death. We know everything from color of hair, eyes, build of the body and behavior of each individual is programmed in genetics and the surrounding environment. As long as one is close to the original constitution, patient stays healthy. Constant inevitable interaction with external surroundings by violating the rules of nature for that particular individual gives rise to imbalanced internal nature, which is

*vikruthi*. It is best to treat any first signs of Vikruthi in any individual. The unique thing of Ayurveda is this clinical reading of genetic expression of each individual's Prakruthi and its interaction with external nature producing internal derangement Vikruthi.

Samprapthi - Ayurveda explains 6 stages of the disease process .Accumulation (Sanchaya), .Aggravation (Prakopa), Dissemination (Prasara), Localization (Sthana samsraya), Manifestation (Vyakthavastha) and Disruption (Bhedavastha). Ayurveda treats effectively first 4 stages of the disease where the symptoms are very vague and occasional such as stomach acidity, headaches etc., and modern medicine treats these with over the counter (OTC) medicines. During these stages if the patient visits an MD he or she would not find any serious clinical signs or symptoms of the disease and lab tests will be perfectly normal and patient is sent back home. This window of courtship of imbalance of health lasts many years before the tests show any abnormality. Modern medicine starts to recognize symptoms of any disease in the 5<sup>th</sup> stage and starts to treat 6<sup>th</sup> stage of disease. So 80 to 90 percent of ill health is waiting to mature to be treated as heart attacks, total knee replacements, open heart surgeries, etc. Thus, one can argue that Ayurveda is a preventive medicine treating healthy population, while modern medicine is for totally sick patients. Ayurvedic clinical methods are sensitive enough to pick up subtle imbalance in the mind and body functioning and so we are treating very early before localization of the disease. According to Ayurveda the standard of health is very high and perfect health is not mere absence of disease.<sup>8</sup>

#### OJAS

The entire body, with its limbs and organs is permeated with ojas, and

// tat abhavascha shiryante shareerani shareerinam //  
(Su.Su.15 / 26)

It means in the absence or deficiency of ojus in the body causes wasting, decay, degeneration and destruction.<sup>9</sup> This statement indicates the preservative nature of the apara ojus in preventing the decay of body. Ojas is param teja, being located in hridaya, combines with rasa circulates through the dhamanis and performs the tarpana or preenana of entire body. The significant attached to slaismika ojas, its production and distribution, and its role in the preservation, production of the body against decay, degeneration and disease is described in the condition by susruta under the heading of ojo vikriti, which is further classified into 3 types.

- i) Ojo visramsa – Immuno compromised states
- ii) Ojo vyapath – Auto immune disorders
- iii) Ojo kshaya – Immuno deficiency disorders

**AYURVEDA VIS – A – VIS MODERN MEDICINE**

There need not be any contradiction between Ayurveda and Modern Medicine. The two systems may truly and effectively complement each other, when structural knowledge is judiciously integrated and interpreted in the Ayurveda paradigm of 'whole person' functional performance. Contrary to common perception, through the ages, the seers of Ayurveda recognized the need to ensure that Ayurveda was relevant to contemporary needs and developments. Vagbhata, the latest of the acharyas, says in his text that he is trying to make the system up-to-date and suitable for the times (yuganuroopa). Further, modern advances in risk management, emergency management, organ transplantation, and surgical interventions of all types can only complete and enhance the value of Ayurveda and in no way detract from it. One may posit that for early to mature stages as well as chronic stages of a disease, Ayurveda has excellent answers to the health needs of mankind; while once a person has already reached an acute or emergency health state, modern

medicine and surgical technique with attendant medical technologies is unparalleled in its effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>

**AYURVEDA & MODERN CONCORDANCE**

The exchange of philosophies can lead to both systems co-existing and prove a double boon to patients. A certain amount of synergy already exists between the two systems. Modern medicine has many examples of plant products used successfully in their natural form or synthetic form. Here are a few examples.<sup>11</sup>

- Aspirin or Acetyl Salicylic Acid was originally discovered in the bark of the white willow tree (Salix Alba). The chemical was later synthesized.
- The chemicals Digoxin and Digitoxin are extracted from the plant Digitalis. This is used in the treatment of arrhythmia.
- Alkaloids like Reserpine from the plant Rauwolfia Serpentina are used in hypertensive drugs.

**CONTEMPORARY APPRAISAL OF AYURVEDA**

From the following five contemporary perspectives, Ayurveda can be definitely appraised as a part of complete health care system.

S/no.	Social aspects of Medicine	Description
1	Patient Centered Medicine (PCM)	Ayurveda basic approach is at the gross level of the Patient. It considers various kinds of Sathmya like Foods, drugs, Places, etc., in relation to patient during management.
2	Narrative Based Medicine (NBM) – Doctor and Patient relationship	NBM represents one of several patient-centered approaches to the practice of medicine that can give the physician access to the lived experience of their patients. As an enhanced form of history taking, narrative approaches can assist the physician in formulating more appropriate diagnostic and treatment options as well as improve doctor-patient relationships (Adler; Greenhalgh 1999). Patients feel <i>known</i> by their doctors, and in turn, physicians can better assess the effectiveness of their interventions. Ayurveda is formulated based on these approaches.
3	Value Based Medicine (VBM)	These values include an acceptance of the value of individual human life in quantity and quality, and of the importance to both individuals and communities of human security and flourishing. Information system that improves the quality of health care and, at the same time, makes health care more cost effective and efficient medicine. Most of the Ayurvedic drugs are cost effective and efficient in making the body aware of true situations not like that of agonistic and antagonistic effects.
4	Evidence Based Medicine (EBM)	Most of the Ayurvedic principles are perceived by the modern science in current sense. It shows that Ayurveda was formulated based on the evidences of those days.
5	Humanistic medicine	Medicine devoted to the rational solution of the problems of human illness. Humanistic medicine seems to mean a medicine that is rooted in a concern for fellow humans, for their emotions, their suffering, their peace of mind. This humanistic approach of medicine is itself mentioned in the definition of Ayurveda.

**CONTEMPORARY AYURVEDA – Futuristic Global Healthcare System**

It will be a new paradigm for a reconstructed view of healthcare and an ideal health care system with synergy between Ayurveda and modern science.<sup>12</sup>

It's a Vision for a Complete / Perfect Health care system

The complementing approach of Ayurveda together with modern medicine could bring a completely new situation for the health care system, including

- Improved efficiency in the medical treatment especially of chronic diseases and in prevention of diseases
- Lowering the harmful side-effects of modern medicine treatment concepts

- Prevention of many surgeries like ESWL in Renal stones, Cholecystectomy in Biliary stones etc., by Ayurvedic lithotriptic drugs and most of cardiac surgeries can also be prevented.
- Pizhichil (Oil birthing ) can be applied to prevent most of the scissor deliveries<sup>13</sup>
- Adopting ayurvedic rehabilitation methods like Abhyangam sweda, Patra pottali sweda, Njavarakizhi etc., in debilitating and disability conditions to make patients independent.
- An improved cost-expenditure ratio
- Increases the patient compliance, for example Para surgical procedures of Ayurveda like Ksharasutra under modern anesthesia

Contemporary Ayurveda does not want to exclude the advantages of modern medicine but to extend its diagnostic and therapeutic scale. Together with the great knowledge of modern medicine, this can bring the dawn of a new era in which we come back to the basic task of medicine: to create perfect health in the individual and a disease-free society.

It is equally important to improve the quality of education of the Ayurvedic practitioner and ensure that qualified medical professionals of this science practice family medicine with personal rapport with their patients. The idea of an Ayurvedic physician as a family doctor needs to be pursued and promoted to realize the true validity of this science.

#### EPILOGUE

We are trying to understand Ayurveda through modern science, while the fundamentals of Ayurveda are quite different. The two systems may be integrated to take advantage of each other, but one system cannot be evaluated and researched with fundamentals of the other. However, independent overall clinical outcomes and evidence can be evaluated. On one hand it is important to have studies like Dr. Moore's to authenticate the scientific basis of these ancient medicines, and on the other hand it is a mistake to try to insert and practice ayurvedic-allopathic medicine thinking that we are integrating the two systems of medicine. The real integration of Ayurveda and modern medicine is achieved by following the principles of Ayurveda with the aid of modern technology. It is very important to follow the methodology of Ayurveda in its entirety, if we want to achieve the goal of overall health of the individual and the society.

If there is to be any merger of these two medical traditions, it can only be one in which the broader foundation of the ayurvedic tradition is complimented by various experimental findings of allopathy, not vice versa. Ayurveda should however not be thought of as a total replacement for conventional medicine. Each form of medicine has its own strengths. Ayurveda is about increasing health and disease prevention through increased self awareness.

Many leading pharmaceutical concerns have already ventured into Ayurveda or other herbal industries. GUFIC- Mumbai is said to have only herbal products. Their allopathic units no longer interest them. All these efforts make sense because it is not just the domestic market one is looking into. The global market, especially the American and European markets are said to be growing at a rate of 35 per cent a year (a record growth for last three years continuously). America is literally undergoing an herbal and natural product revolution. So

a time may come when the affluent, educated and sophisticated will use the costly and highly evolved, free-from-side effects, herbal products and the poor and less informed in the developing countries will use the chemical-based, cheap and easily available conventional medicine.

I believe we need to remind ourselves of a profound statement made by Mahatma Gandhi. He said 'I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed; I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible'. Gandhiji implied that our minds should be open and uninhibited. We should be open to new ideas and new thinking. There should be no artificial boundaries, no walls or borders between different domains of knowledge or their practitioners.

I sincerely feel for joint research projects between Modern medicine and Ayurveda are necessary and desirable for promoting "mutual understanding, dialogue and exchange but not for validating Ayurveda". There is enormous variety of knowledge, natural resources, and skills that India has gained through perhaps one of the longest unbroken medical cultures of the world (5000yrs). Based on these resources Ayurveda can make a marked contribution to all efforts in the context of pluralistic health care. If the need for supporting medical pluralism is appreciated and work towards is initiated, Ayurveda will be able to contribute to frontiers of medicine. This calls for paradigm shift.

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// Ayurvedo amritanam //  
Life is eternal through Ayurveda