

Repositioning of Ayurveda in Modern World

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Ayurveda is an ancient medical tradition. The term is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Ayur' meaning "life" or "longevity" and 'Veda', meaning "knowledge" or "science". That's why Ayurveda is the *veda* (knowledge) of *ayus* (life or longevity). It is also a science of life. Ayurveda as being a science of life covers important subjects like philosophy, psychology, logic and dialectics along with its main task of exposition of medical science in a comprehensive style. It defines life's goal, shows the right means for its realization and emphasizes the vital point that the basis of all endeavors is health and normalcy, physical as well as mental. Preventive and curative aspects of diseases are considered as important components of positive health. Ayurveda deals with measures of healthful living during the entire span of life and its various phases. Besides dealing with principles for maintenance of health, it has also developed a wide range of therapeutic measures to combat illness. These principles of positive health and therapeutic measures related to physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare of human beings. Ayurveda has been practiced for more than 2000 years and thus one of the oldest systems of medicine.

The methods used to find this knowledge of herbs; foods, aromas, gems, colors, yoga, mantras, lifestyle and surgery are fascinating and varied. The development and growth of Ayurveda was coeval with the growth and evolution of Indian civilization and culture. Vedas, which are considered to be the repositories of recorded Indian culture, have mention of this knowledge both in theoretical and practical form. The medical knowledge has been the work of ages. It is the out-come of the great power of observation, generalization and analysis combined with patient labor of hundreds of investigators spread over thousands of years. The antecedent of medicinal Ayurveda is found in Atharvaveda. But the systematic theory of medicine started around the time period of Buddha. Early Buddhist texts mention that the disease arises from the imbalance of humoral substances. Kenneth G. Zysk emphasizes that the theory of imbalance of humoral substances would become a cornerstone in Indian medical theory.¹ The first mention of Ayurveda as the name for the science of medicine occurs in the *Mahābhārata*. Mahabharata mentions medicine as a science constituted of eight parts (*cikitsāyāmaṣṭāṅgāyām*) and similar to the number found in the early Ayurvedic compendia.² The primary texts of classical Ayurveda are the *Caraka Samhita* and the *Susruta Samhita*. *Caraka* emphasizes mainly on theory and *Susruta* is primarily a surgical text. Both texts reflect the importance of the *Atharva-Veda* to Ayurveda.³ Ayurveda

focuses on the human physical body and emphasizes on observation and on the importance of theoretical principles for successful therapeutics. The Ayurvedic physicians were using empirical and rational systems of thought. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya belief that Ayurvedic physicians were discarding scripture orientation and insist on the supreme importance of direct observation of natural phenomena and on the technique of rational processing of the empirical data.⁴

Ayurveda identifies three basic types of energy or functional principles that are present in everyone and everything: *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. These principles can be related to the basic biology of the body. Energy is required to create movement so that fluids and nutrients get to the cells enabling the body to function. Energy is also required to metabolize the nutrients in the cells and is called for to lubricate and maintain the structure of the cell. *Vata* is the energy of movement, *pitta* is the energy of digestion or metabolism and *kapha* the energy of lubrication and structure. All people have the qualities of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* but one is usually primary, one secondary and the third is usually least prominent. The cause of disease in Ayurveda is viewed as lack of proper cellular function due to an excess or deficiency of *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha*. Disease can also be caused by the presence of toxins.

Human life and knowledge of preserving it as a going concern, in the face of overpowering and brute physical and biological environment, must have come into being almost simultaneously. The tradition of knowledge which is passing through by oral, literary and archaeological remains is the account for the continuity of human race and survival of its several highly developed cultures and civilizations. Developments within Ayurveda during its long and varied history is attributed with the addition of new theories and practices and their interrelations and the interweaving of medical thought with constantly mutating religious, political and cultural climates, form a rich and complicated pattern of medical and social history.⁵ Under the umbrella of Ayurvedic knowledge we can differentiate and use the terms like *modern Ayurveda* and *global Ayurveda*. These include the study of various forms of Ayurvedic practice, Ayurvedic pharmaceutical research, drug development and industrial production, and academic textual research (both for botanical and pharmaceutical research and for a broader understanding of Ayurvedic theory).⁶

"Modern Ayurveda" is concentrated with Indian subcontinent and understood with the processes of professionalization and institutionalization appeared in India during 19th century and it also led the revivalism of Ayurveda. It

¹ Dagmar Wujastyk And Frederick M. Smith, *Modern and Global Ayurveda: Pluralism and Paradigms*, Sunny Press, New York, 2008, p. 4

² Ibid., p. 5

³ Steven Engler, "Science" vs. "Religion" in *Classical Ayurveda*, NUMEN, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2003), p. 420

⁴ Ibid., p. 421

⁵ Dagmar Wujastyk And Frederick M. Smith, *Modern and Global Ayurveda: Pluralism and Paradigms*, Sunny Press, New York, 2008, p. 1

⁶ Ibid

is secularization of Ayurvedic knowledge and its adaptation to Bio-medicine, and at the same time formulated the theories based on doctrines of classical Ayurvedic texts. On other hand "Global Ayurveda" is basically knowledge of Ayurveda transmitted to outside of India. We can see the three broad lineages of Ayurveda in the process of globalization. First lineage refers to the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. Second lineage focuses on the globally popularized and acculturated Ayurveda and which emphasize on the philosophical and spiritual aspects of Ayurveda. This type of Ayurveda is called as "New Age Ayurveda" as mentioned by K. G. Zysk. Zysk also defines its characteristics – attributing a remote age to Ayurveda and making it the source of other medical systems, linking Ayurveda closely to Indian spirituality especially Yoga, making Ayurveda the basis of mind-body medicine, claiming the "scientific" basis of Ayurveda and its intrinsic safety as a healing modality. And the line of Ayurveda related to the Indic studies in the early 19th century, when Orientalist scholars began to codify and make interest in learning of Ayurvedic literature.⁷

Within 'global Ayurveda' there are certain paradigms of analysis: a) New age Ayurveda, b) Ayurveda as mind-body medicine, d) Traditional Ayurveda in an urban world. These are interconnected categories and representations of certain kinds of Ayurveda. New age Ayurveda focuses on the adaptation of an "Ayurvedic lifestyle", which strengthen the immune system and helps prevent diseases. It is also a positive lifestyle index as a system for curing illness. Ayurveda as mind-body medicine is an attempt to translate the Indian discourse of Ayurveda and bring them into western conceptualization. The traditional Ayurveda in an urban world is related to recognizable medical practice based on scientific and practice-based norms. Paradigms represent differences as well as substances also. By substance we consider that there may be differences in the training and practices or practitioners and many of them undergo other kinds of bodywork training such as massage or non-biomedical healing.⁸

The widespread use and expansion of Ayurveda started through the western counterculture which led to Ayurveda being included in the wide range of 'complementary and Alternative Medicine' (CAM) therapies in Europe and North America. If we look at Ayurveda's place in the modern world, we can't trace the single flavor. Ayurveda offers as profession in India or in the west. Two main educational paths are available for the modern student of Ayurveda, the institutional and the traditional. The former is associated with degree from any college which can then lead to higher degrees. The latter is associated with lineage, where a student may serve or even live with a teacher, gaining his trust and wisdom over many years. This is the system of knowledge which is passed from the guru to the disciple. This was the universal system of education until the establishment of Ayurvedic colleges in the early 20th century.⁹ The lineage tradition of knowledge has played a vital role in making Ayurveda as a corollary of modern medical system. The diffusion of Ayurveda has occurred through institutionalized approach and by attempts to retain a certain regional and textual lineage. On this basis we can say that both approaches of understanding Ayurveda reflects the

spiritual nature of medicine, along with empirical side and other emphasizes only the empirical science of Ayurveda.

Ayurveda in modern India has developed in response to the various challenges that were posed by modern medicines when it came to India through British colonialism.¹⁰ The challenges could be seen in terms of ready availability of mass-produced medicines, a continuous output of information regarding the large number of medicines for various ailments that were on the market and the efficacy of the new medicines as compared to the old. The competition needed Ayurveda to respond from various fronts like- production, marketing and research. These production and expansion accelerated the developments of Ayurveda. The developments led to certain kind of transformations like the standardization of medicines in accordance with the principles of mass production, in exactly the way that had to come to characterize modern pharmaceuticals. The standardization of Ayurvedic medicine production has influenced the internal structure and epistemology of this knowledge. This is resulted in what we call the "pharmaceuticalization" of Ayurveda and reduced to the position of merely a supplier of pharmaceutical products. They now do not continue on the original system of knowledge. This is the drawbacks of standardization of Ayurvedic medicine production and thus the capacity of Ayurveda to be able to pose an "alternate" system is being gradually eroded.

The government has also recognized the use of Ayurvedic medicine. The reason behind this is Ayurvedic medicines are all natural and have no side effects. People and government had cited for using Ayurveda because – Ayurveda were (1) they thought that "diagnosis is more accurate", (2) it "works better for chronic ailments (3) the "healing works more because of faith than physiology", and (4) "It is the oldest thing from our culture."¹¹ The British and Indian governments tried to regulate medical practice in India which we can see in numerous, long and scattered documents. The reports like the Bhore Report 1946, and the Chopra Report 1948 shows that the political influence British state medicine had in India which was aimed at the control of medical education and physician's licensing, which at the same time disenfranchised indigenous physicians.¹² Ayurveda came to public notice in the West, particularly in Europe and the United States in the 1980s. The interest of Ayurveda developed first within the circles of Yoga and naturopaths. Ayurveda was principally popularized by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement. In 1985, Maharishi introduced in his teaching what is called as Maharishi Ayur-Ved (MAV), a form of Ayurveda and tried to spread beyond the borders of India.¹³ People are also using because most of the home remedies are based in principle of Ayurveda. The notion of medicine is given by foreignness. The preexisting contents and processes of a cultural framework might have been lost or forgotten in the process of colonization, decolonization and recolonization or globalization.¹⁴

Thus, in the conclusion we can say that Ayurveda holds that specific diseases conditions are the marker of underlying imbalance. And Ayurveda restore balance and help us to

⁷ Ibid., pp. 2-3

⁸ Ibid., pp. 11-12

⁹ Ibid., p. 129

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 201

¹¹ Ibid., p. 234

¹² Ibid., p. 61

¹³ Ibid., p. 285

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 240

create a healthy lifestyle that the imbalance won't occur again. Living in health and balance is the key to a long life free from disease. Perhaps the most important lesson Ayurveda has to teach is that our health is up to us. Every day of our lives, every hour of every day, we can and do choose either health or illness. The theoretical side of Ayurveda provides insights into how to live one's life in harmony with nature and natural laws and rhythms. Its practical side – its guidelines for an intelligently regulated diet and daily routine, its techniques for stress management, and its exercises for increasing body fitness and also help us to take control of our life. Its traditional values have become the needs of modern times.

References

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