

Āyurveda- Indian system of Medicine

Āyurveda

- The ancient Indian wisdom of healing (or medicine) known as Āyurveda, is derived from the tradition of the Vedas.
- The Ṛgveda is a compilation of verses on the nature of existence. The Ṛgveda refers to the cosmology known as Sāṃkhya which lies at the base of both Āyurveda and Yoga.
- The Ṛgveda contains verses on the nature of health and disease, pathogenesis (the manner of development of a disease) and principles of treatment.
- Āyurveda is Upaveda (applied knowledge) of Ṛgveda

Āyurveda

The Āyurveda is a science which helps in extending the longevity of a person. And this is achieved by-

1. Protecting healthy person from diseases, and
2. Curing a diseased by healing.

Diseases occupy

1. Body, and
2. Mind

Doṣas affecting the Body

According to the Āyurveda, the body is comprised of three primary forces, termed Doṣa

(i) Vāyuh

(ii) Pitta, and

(iii) Kapha.

The state of equilibrium between the doṣa is perceived as a state of health; the state of imbalance is disease.

वायुः पित्तं कफश्चेति त्रयो दोषाः समासतः ॥ 6 ॥

विकृताऽविकृता देहं घ्नन्ति ते वर्तयन्ति च ।

- अष्टांगहृदयम् प्रथमोध्याय

Primal Elements

Each Doṣa represents characteristics derived from the five elements of

1. Space
2. Air - Vayuh
3. Fire - Pitta
4. Water - Kapha
5. Earth

Similarly, for mind Satva is the state of balance and Rajas and Tamas is the state of illness.

Herbs are used to heal the diseases of the mind and body and to foster longevity.

Schools of Ayurveda

There were two main schools of Āyurveda;

1. **Ātreya**- the school of physicians, and
2. **Dhanvantari**- the school of surgeons.

These two schools made Āyurveda a more scientifically verifiable and classifiable medical system.

There are two main re-organizers of Āyurveda whose works are available today - Caraka and Suśruta. Caraka Saṁhitā is mainly a medical text while Suśruta Saṁhitā concentrates on surgery. The third major treatise is called the Aṣṭāṅgahrdayam by Vāgbhaṭṭa, which is a concise version of the works of Caraka and Suśruta.

Origin of Ayurvedic Wisdom

Brahmā
Prajāpati
Aśvinīkumars'

Indra

Bhāradvāja

Ātreya- Punarvasu

Ātreya- Punarvasu had six students namely- Agniveśa, Bhel, Jatukarṇa, Parāśara, Hārīti and Kṣārapāṇi. Agniveśa was the most intelligent and his compilation is known as “Agniveśa Saṁhitā” or “Agniveśa Tantra”. Ācārya Caraka edited this text and added some commentary, which was later known as “Caraka Saṁhitā”.

Origin of Ayurvedic Wisdom

Suśruta, a student of Dhanvantari has contributed greatly in the area of surgery (Śalya Cikitsā) through his text known as Suśruta Saṁhitā.

However, there were many parallel streams of knowledge (medical) practiced at that time, are evident through the texts like Kāśyapa Saṁhitā (by Kaśyapa), Śālākya Tantra (by Nimi or Videha) etc.

Besides Caraka and Suśruta Saṁhitās, the third major treatise is called the Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam by Vāgbhaṭṭa, which is a concise version of the works of Caraka and Suśruta.

Branches of Ayurveda

Aṣṭāṅgahr̥dayam lists eight branches of the Āyurveda. They are-

1. Kāya Cikitsā (Internal Medicine),
2. Bāla Cikitsā (Treatment of Children / Pediatrics),
3. Graha Cikitsā (Demonology / Psychology),
4. Urdhvāṅga Cikitsā (Treatment of disease above the clavicle),
5. Śalya Cikitsā (Surgery),
6. Damṣtra Cikitsā (Toxicology),
7. Jarā Cikitsā (Geriatrics, Rejuvenation), and
8. Vr̥ṣa Cikitsā (Aphrodisiac therapy).

कायबालग्रहोर्ध्वाङ्गशल्यदंष्ट्राजरावृषान् ॥ 5 ॥
अष्टावङ्गानि तस्याहुश्चिकित्सा येषु संश्रिता ।

- अष्टांगहृदयम् प्रथमोध्याय

What we inherited?

Ancient Indian healing system used mix of religious practices with secular medicine. They used incantations in combination with administering drugs and performing operations. It involved observing the patient as well as observing their natural environment.

They also used an extensive range of medicine; Caraka Saṁhitā listed 500 medicines while Suśruta Saṁhitā mentioned over 700 vegetable-based medicines.

Over 121 different steel instruments were used in different types of surgery - to sew up wounds, drain fluid, remove kidney stones and to perform plastic surgery.

Where we stand?

- Āyurveda is practiced in different parts of India since Vedic times.
- Over 70 percent of Indian population is dependent on this ancient knowledge of healing.
- The fundamental principles of Āyurveda are at the heart of many "alternative" therapies used in the West, today.
- Through this portal, an attempt is being made to establish the relevance of this ancient system of medicine in today's world, by making the available texts and researches (analysis of the knowledge based on modern scientific methods and standards, practiced worldwide), in public domain.

Thank You