

From the Bhavan's President
**Ayurveda—
A Science of Life**

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Eminent scholars of Ayurveda from all over the world believe that Ayurveda is the science of life. *Ayu* means life and *veda* means science. The Vedas themselves especially the *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda*, the oldest classics of the world date back between 1500 and 1000 BC. Ayurveda is said to have been developed as a separate science of life between 1000 and 500 BC in greater India. Ancient Ayurvedic classics like *Charka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* were written around 5th century BC. These classics were themselves the results of scientific

experiments made by *Ayurvedacharyas* for thousands of years.

The blessing of *Jivem-Shardah Shatam*—May you live 100 years implies that man's life span is normally 100 years and it is possible to live that long with the help of the science of Ayurveda. Ayurveda believes that life is a synergy of several factors, mental, physical and spiritual. The system is developed on the principles of *Tridosha* which have stood the test of time and proved efficient over centuries. An appropriate balance of *Tridosha* gives health and imbalance leads to disease.

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There are references in Buddhist literature about Jeevaka who was a great physician, surgeon and paediatrician during the time of Lord Buddha. He studied Ayurveda at Takshila University for seven years under Atreya.

Ayurveda flourished during the period of the great emperor Ashoka in 3rd century BC. He established the famous Arogyavihar at Pataliputra, ruins of which can be seen even today. He also worked on medicinal plants. It is mentioned on the rock edict of emperor Ashoka at Girnar that 'Medicinal herbs useful for men and those for animals, wherever they do not exist have been caused to be imported and planted'. Likewise roots and fruits wherever they did not exist were caused to be imported and planted by emperor Ashoka.

There were arrangements for regular institutional training of Ayurveda in ancient universities of Takshila and Nalanda between 5th century BC and 12th century AD. Students from all over the world

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specially from Central, Middle and South-East Asia have studied Ayurveda in these ancient universities during those days. In addition to theoretical teaching, there were arrangements for practical training in clinical subjects and hospitals were also attached to these training institutions. Arrangements for specialization also existed in various disciplines like general medicine, surgery, ophthalmology. Gynaecology, etc. the surgical teaching of *Sushruta Samhita* in respect of plastic surgery and treatment of fistula by medicated thread etc. are accepted even today by the experts of modern medicine. There were interrelation also among the oriental systems of medicine of those days. After 12th century AD the system declined due to various reasons which came in the way of further

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It is mentioned on the rock edict of emperor Ashoka at Girnar that 'Medicinal herbs useful for men and those for animals, wherever they do not exist have been caused to be imported and planted'

development and research in the system. However, teaching of Ayurveda continued even in smaller form not only in India but in the neighbouring countries also.

In addition to India, Ayurvedic system of medicine is popular in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The existence of the system is also seen in Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Bhutan, etc. The system is becoming popular in Latin American and African countries also. The Government of Mauritius has recognised Ayurvedic system of Medicine by an Act of their Parliament during 1989. Even Ayurvedic Society or groups for study of Ayurveda exist in countries like Britain, France, the USA and Japan.

There are other oriental systems of medicine in existence in the world like Chinese system of medicine, Unani System of Medicine, Tibetan medicine, etc. There are many similarities

between these systems at the level of principles as well as practice. It would be desirable to encourage more interaction among these systems. Useful knowledge of these systems, can be synthesized to form ultimately an alternative universally applicable system.

The development of Ayurveda gained considerable tempo after Independence. The Indian National Congress resolved in 1920 that Ayurvedic system of medicine should be recognised as a national system of medicine. Many colleges of Ayurveda were started during this period and the curriculum and syllabus for Ayurvedic training was also strengthened. The Government of India after Independence has taken interest in the revival of these systems and specific Plan allocation for development of Ayurveda and other systems of Indian

medicine has been made. While the allocation during the First Five Year Plan was only Rs. 40 lakh, it was increased to Rs. 129 crore during the Seventh Five Year Plan.

The Central Council of Indian Medicine was constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1971 to regulate practice of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine and also to prescribe curricula—syllabi and minimum standards of education for these systems. There are about 100 Ayurvedic colleges in this country affiliated to 43 universities imparting five-and-a-half year uniform graduate course in Ayurveda. About 4000 Ayurvedic graduates are coming out every year from these colleges. Facilities for higher education in Ayurveda is also available at Postgraduate Institutions of Ayurveda at Jam Nagar and Varanasi and the National Institute of Ayurveda at Jaipur. About 30 departments of various Ayurvedic Colleges have also been upgraded for postgraduate training in

Ayurveda. About 200 postgraduates are completing training in various disciplines of Ayurveda every year.

The teachers of Ayurveda and members of the Central Council of Indian Medicine, responsible for regulating education of Ayurveda should do some serious thinking on the future pattern of Ayurvedic graduate and postgraduate education in order to ensure that they inspire confidence in the system. Unlike western systems, Ayurveda and other indigenous systems of medicine do not rely on mechanical devices for diagnosis of a disease. The intuition which senior practitioners display largely depends on their past experience of dealing with same or similar cases. These experiences are not recorded and coded properly with the result that one does not gain from the experience of another. A methodology needs to be devised for recording of unique experience and for exchange of such knowledge with others so that expertise may

be built on the collective wisdom of eminent people.

Medical colleges need to address themselves to the needs of foreign students. They must create conducive conditions so that India is able to share its heritage with those who wish to learn and benefit.

We also need to address ourselves to the problem of making Ayurvedic literature more comprehensible by defining the nature and scope of the various ingredients used in the medicine and by laying down Pharmacopial standards.

One great advantage of Ayurveda and other oriental systems of medicine is that it has no toxic side or after-effects in any of these medicines. The reactions from modern systems of medicine have been so severe that other diseases are caused by drugs intended to cure one disease. It is said that during that last sixty years man has come into contact with more toxic substances than he has done in the previous four hundred years.

People are finding *Ayurvedic*

system of medicine safe from this angle. According to *Charaka Samhita*, any medicine which produces side-effects, in addition to curing the disease, is not a perfect medicine. Perfect medicines are only those which cure the disease and also do not produce any side-effects. Many mineral and metallic origin drugs and some of the poisonous substances like arsenic etc are used in Ayurveda as drugs but these are used only after purification and oxidation processes so that reactionary and toxic effects of these drugs are removed. This method was invented after great research. We have to ensure that in future also no Ayurvedic medicine produces any side-effects.

Most of the drugs of these systems are based on plant origin. About 1500 medicinal plants are commonly used in these systems. The present source of raw material for Pharmaceutical industry for Indian systems of medicine and Homoeopathy is mainly from the forests, known as minor

forest products. A good number of drugs of medicinal value are also collected from wild sources in the plains, fields and wastelands. A few, medicinal plants are also cultivated in required quantity, a drawback which calls for serious thoughts and remedy in various parts of the country. Many of these plants are not available in measures. It would be desirable that concerned ministries and organisations like Ministry of Environment and Forest, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Research Council of Indian Medicine, Central Institute for Medicinal and Aromatic plants, etc. work in a co-ordinated manner to produce the required

quantity of medicinal plants not only for this country but also to meet the requirement of the world.

The present day Ayurvedic medicines manufacturers give the ingredients and quantities used in the preparation either on the container or as material information. Active research should be conducted to analyse the effect of each of these ingredients on the human body and also the effect of varying quantities used. There is no limit to human ingenuity; it can go on expanding the knowledge without any limit. May be such research in indigenous systems could lead to finding remedies for many of the diseases like cancer, AIDS, etc. for the cure of which the world today is still groping in the dark.

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