



Renaissance In Ayurveda

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This article is based on **“Renaissance in Ayurveda”** which was published in The Indian Express on 20/06/2020. It traces the development of Ayurveda as a modern medicinal system and the challenges and solutions in this process.

Ayurveda, the ancient medical system, is considered as one of the best ways to treat diseases and to lead a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, it gained attention, as the government of India has pitched for use of Ayurvedic formulations to boost immunity in its efforts to fight **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Further, the government has announced innovative clinical drug trials to evaluate the safe and effective use of selected and standardised Ayurvedic medicines in the prophylaxis and treatment of COVID-19.

Given the increasing significance of Ayurveda in treating modern diseases, it is now poised to truly and actively participate in the health and medical care system. Thus, there is a need to fast track its progress and transformation into a modern vibrant health and medical system.

However in undergoing such transformation there are several challenges and issues yet to be resolved.

Significance Of Ayurveda

- In Ayurveda it is believed living man is a conglomeration of three humors (Vata, Pitta & Kapha), seven basic tissues (Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Majja & Shukra) and the waste products of the body i.e. mala, mutra and sweda.
- The growth and decay of this body matrix and its constituents revolve psychological mechanisms of these elements and its balance is the main reason for the state of one's health.
- The treatment approach in the Ayurveda system is holistic and individualized having preventive, curative, mitigative, recuperative and rehabilitative aspects.

- The principal objectives of Ayurveda are maintenance and promotion of health, prevention of disease and cure of sickness.

Evolution Of Ayurveda

Pre-Independence Era: The British Raj considered Ayurveda unscientific, mystical and a religious belief and consequently was keen on destroying the system.

- In 1835, the teaching of Ayurveda was suspended in the Calcutta Medical College.
- The **Bhore Committee recommendations** were in favour of modern medicine thus Ayurveda did not get support to modernise in colonial times.
- However, among Britishers, many orientalist indirectly benefited Ayurveda by recovering the vedic texts. It compelled its opponents to revisit Ayurveda and recognise the science within it.
- Also, Indian freedom struggle and subsequent national uprising and social reforms infused new strength in Ayurveda.
- During this time, many Ayurvedic physicians had organised themselves into a professional organisation, started publishing journals and were participating in the freedom struggle.

Note:

- **The Bhore Committee was set up by the Government of India in 1943 under Sir Joseph William Bhore.**
- **The major aim of the committee was to survey then existing position regarding the health conditions and health organisation in the country and to make recommendations for future development to improve the public health system in India.**

Post-Independent India: It was suggested that Ayurveda be integrated with modern medicine. It was argued that a united system would be more perfect than the Ayurveda as an individual science.

- Though there were islands of excellence in the old Ayurveda institutions in Kolkata, Benares, Haridwar, Indore, Pune, Mumbai,
- In the post-1960s, there was a spurt in the growth of well-planned medical colleges and universities, especially in Gujarat and Kerala.
- **However, Ayurveda got impetus by the establishment of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) Ministry in 2014.**

It has set up an efficient network of communications with all stakeholders and enabled education and research, conservation and preservation of Ayurveda.

Challenges Related to Ayurveda

- **Ineffective Treatment in Emergency Cases:** The inadequacies of Ayurveda in treating acute infections and other emergencies including surgery, and lack of meaningful research in therapeutics continue to limit the universal acceptance of Ayurveda.
 - Ayurveda therapeutics are complex and there are too many dos and don'ts.
 - Ayurvedic medicines are slow to act and heal. It is difficult if not impossible to predict response or prognosis.
- **Lack of Homogeneity:** The medical practices in Ayurveda are not uniform. It is because the medicinal plants used in it vary with geography and climate and local agriculture practices.

Unlike Ayurveda, in modern medicine, the diseases are classified and treated as per prior set uniform criteria.
- **Misleading Propaganda by Ayurvedic Pharmas:** Ayurvedic pharmacopeia industry claimed that its manufacturing practices were consistent with the classic Ayurveda texts.
 - For better market appeal of ayurvedic medicines, the pharmaceutical companies publicised many medicinal claims about their ayurvedic products without sufficient scientific basis.
 - This led to further obsession for drugs in the community and ailments requiring lifestyle correction were instead treated with poly-pharmacy.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Over the last few decades, there has been an increase in the global interest in Ayurveda.
 - However, several countries do not officially recognise Ayurveda as a medical field and have placed many restrictions on the use of Ayurvedic medicines.
 - In some countries, including the US, Ayurvedic drugs follow an abbreviated less stringent regulatory pathway for “food and diet supplements” and are sold over the counter not as medicines but as health products.
- **Lack of Deep Knowledge :** In 2004, a leading American journal reported heavy metal (arsenic, mercury, lead) content in some of the Ayurveda drugs sold in the US, way beyond the allowed safety limits.
 - This led to worldwide condemnation and the government made testing of heavy metals in herbal drugs compulsory and the industry was asked to follow WHO standards.
 - It damaged the image of Ayurveda. It remained unexplained that hundreds of Ayurveda herbal formulations contained metals and minerals that had therapeutic properties.
- **Sub-standard Research In Ayurveda:** During the last five decades or so, research in Ayurveda was mainly confined to hundreds of drug trials using the normal procedures that are used in other medical systems.

Often it was found that standardisation of formulation and quality of methods and data in the study was substandard.

Way Forward: Facilitating Growth of Ayurveda

- **Reverse Pharmacology:** A very interesting research development in Ayurveda was the conceptual framework of “reverse pharmacology”, which was championed by a researcher in Mumbai.
 - It is defined as the science of integrating documented clinical experiences and experiential observations into leads, through transdisciplinary exploratory studies, to develop these into drugs.
 - In the conventional model, the pharmacological research precedes clinical validation by several years and the entire process may take 15-20 years and cost billions of dollars before a successful drug is launched in the community.
- **New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI): New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative programme** is a flagship scheme to catalyze innovation centered scientific and technological developments as a vehicle to attain for Indian industry a global leadership position.
 - It seeks to build, capture and retain for India a leadership position by synergising the best competencies of publicly funded R&D institutions, academia and private industry
 - The Ayurvedic medicine system is one area of promising industrial potential for India on a global scale.
- **Emulating Kerala Model:** In this roller coaster journey since independence, there has been one bright exception, the state of Kerala, where Ayurveda continues to occupy a unique position in the health and medical care sector.
 - Kerala has been promoting Ayurveda as a way of improving immunity in the general population. It promotes Ayurvedic formulations and recommends Ayurveda practices to all demographics of its population.
 - The Kerala model has been lauded across the globe for its effectiveness in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - The state has taken several steps to keep its case count low, and one of them is a focus on improving the immunity levels of people, using Ayurveda.

Conclusion

Though deeply rooted in antiquity and Hindu civilisation, Ayurveda has carried forward some of the finest traditions in healing and cure the world has ever seen. Moreover, it has undergone some transformation to suit modern India, but more is required.

Thus, there is a need for state patronage, so that Ayurveda can claim its rightful place along with modern medicine as a mainstream medicinal system.

Boosting Immunity

Ayurvedic immunity improving measures

- Take 1 tablespoon of Chyawanprash in the morning
- Diabetics should consume sugarless Chyawanprash
- Drink herbal tea from tulsi (Basil), dalchini (cinnamon), kaali mirch (black pepper), Sonth (Dry Ginger) and munakka (raisins) once or twice a day
- Add jaggery or fresh lemon juice in place of processed sugar
- Golden milk, i.e. half teaspoon of haldi powder in 150 ml of hot milk once or twice a day

General measures

- Take warm water throughout the day
- Pranayama and meditation for at least **30 minutes**
- Use lot of spices, including haldi (turmeric), jeera (cumin), Dhaniya (coriander) and lehsun (garlic) in cooking

Ayurvedic procedures

NASAL APPLICATION

Apply sesame oil/coconut oil or ghee in both the nostrils (Pratimarsha Nasya) in morning and evening

OIL PULLING

Take 1 tablespoon of sesame or coconut oil in mouth. Do not drink but swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit and later rinse with warm water once or twice daily

During cough and sore throat

- Steam inhalation with fresh pudina (mint) leaves or ajwain (caraway seeds) can be practised twice daily
- Lavang (cloves) powder mixed with natural sugar or honey can be taken **2 to 3 times** a day in case of cough or throat irritation
- These measures are meant for normal dry cough and sore throat. It is better to consult a doctor when the symptoms persist



Yoga

UTTANA PADASANA AND SHAVASANA

Effective in overcoming depression, anxiety and stress-related disorders by relaxing mind and body. It balances navel centre (Nabhi, Manipurachakra) and is helpful in relieving abdominal pain and flatulence. Helps in indigestion and diarrhoea and strengthens the abdominal and pelvic muscles

VRIKSHASANA

People with arthritis, vertigo and obesity, should avoid this asana. It helps improve neuromuscular coordination, balance and endurance. It also helps improve alertness and concentration



Drishhti Mains Question

With increased significance of Ayurveda in treating modern diseases, it is now poised to truly and actively participate in the health and medical care system. Comment.

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This editorial is based on “**Sure Power**” which was published in The Hindu on July 13th, 2020. Watch this on our Youtube channel now.
