



MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT AYURVEDA

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1. What is Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is an art and science of healing, a way of long, happy and healthy living. It literally means ‘to know about life’.

2. How is it defined?

It is defined as one which informs to look after the welfare of all human beings in particular and beings in Particular and beings in general with regard to their Physical, mental, sociocultural and spiritual well being.

3. What is its antiquity?

It existed right from the beginning of life on the surface of this globe, in some unsystematised form. A systematized knowledge of Ayurveda came into existence thousands of years before Christ (B.C)

4. What it is not?

Generally it is considered as a ‘herbal medicine’ or folk medicine or belief system or traditional medicine or Alternative system or native medicine.

The notion that Ayurveda prescribes only medicines of herbal origin is totally baseless though it is true that herbs are major source of vast majority of medicines. Ayurveda prescribes mineral products like gold, silver, diamond, copper, iron, sulphur, alum, mica, zinc, lead, tin and so on after thorough purification, trituration and turning them to Bhasmas which have not been proved yet as harmful. Apart from these minerals, many animal products like ghee, butter, animals urine, horns and skin, flesh –mutton, coral, pearl, conch etc. are also used as medicines wherever necessary. Therefore it is not merely herbal medicine.

Folk medicine has its root in the community especially in rural folks. It is not based on any known foundational ideas and hence beyond one’s reasoning. Moreover, it does not cover all the aspects of human health and disease. The scope of its coverage of the health problems both in respect of diagnosis and treatment of vast many disorders is very much limited unlike systematized Ayurveda. Hence it cannot be synonym of Ayurveda. Traditional medicine leaves an impression that it is based on pure Tradition handed down to generation from generation and practiced by certain family members. The scope of this also is just similar to folk medicine.

Cultural heritage may certainly contribute a lot in preventing many disorders, and in promotion of health while traditional or folklore practices may fail to recognize these positive aspects of health. Hence it cannot be a justifiable synonym to Ayurveda.

Yet another privileged class of our society prefer to call it a belief System. It probably means a system based on only belief and nothing else. It amounts to telling that Ayurveda works, if at all it works, because certain patients believe it and Ayurveda Physician also believes that whatever has been mentioned in any ancient literature is true and he also believes that Ayurvedic drugs act because they are stated to be useful in so and so conditions. This notion is not correct. Belief does act to certain extent. Faith and confidence are necessary to everybody in something of one's own life events Ayurveda to, of course, respects belief, faith and confidence are necessary to everybody in something of one's own life events. Ayurveda too, of course, respects belief, faith and confidence. But it does not mean that Ayurveda is far from reasoning, not amenable to logic. It advocates experimentation, repeated keen observation, logical reasoning and correct conclusion with regard to anything that is worth considering. It vociferously condemns random and thoughtless application of anything related to health science. Therefore it is not fair to equate Ayurveda with 'belief system' as believed to be.

To call Ayurveda an alternative system cannot be fully justified. Literally speaking any system for matter can be alternative to the other, in a world of multitudinal health care delivery systems. Ayurveda existed since more than 3000 years from now when there was no other system of medicine existed. Then it was never alternative to anything else. It was the only main stream system in India even today if all the original specialities of Ayurveda are revived with full swing and people at the helm of affairs act swiftly without any prejudice with a genuine concern, Ayurveda can play a role of mainstream health care system. It has all potency of not playing an alternative role.

Ayurveda can be a native medicine in the sense that it originated in our nation. However it does not deliver the actual root meaning of Ayurveda. No other term or phrase can be a sensible substitute for Ayurveda.

5. What is the literal meaning of Ayurveda?

It is composed of two terms viz., Ayu and Veda. Ayu stands for life and Veda means to know. Thus literally it means 'to know about life'.

6. What is life?

Life ordinarily means the span of duration from birth to death. Span of life depends on the harmonious union of body, senses, psyche and senses disintegrate and fall apart from the psyche and supreme conscious. Life span is that duration of union of these four.

7. What according to Ayurveda are to be known about life?

There are two faces of life. One is negative, the other is positive. Happy and wholesome long life is expected to be ideal on positive side while unhappy, unwholesome short or long life is negative aspect of life. It is not just sufficient to livelong .How one lives is all the more important. The life should be enjoyable and also should be useful to the family and to society at large. To be useful to the society, to enjoy a reasonably respectable life in the society, life should be wholesome. Ayurveda wants us to know the causes, characters/features in respect of both negative and positive aspects of these two basic ingredients of life.

8. What is its scope?

Original scope of Ayurveda was far and wide. The major divisions of Ayurveda depict the same. It encompasses the health care of Animals, plants and human beings as shown hereunder:

Major Divisions of Ayurveda

Garayurveda

Vrikshayurveda

Ayurveda

(Related to health of domestic animals)

(Related to health care of plants)

(Related to human beings)

Ancient literature on former two are lost to a great extent and not so much in vogue. However efforts are being made here and there to revive the same. Human Ayurveda is mostly prevalent and practiced to a large extent.

9. Are there any specialized branches of Ayurveda?

Yes. There are 8 specialised branches. The concept of specialization is nothing new to medical field in India. But the basis of specialization is somewhat unique when we consider the period during which this concept of specialization evolved.

The chart below shows 8 branches

Kayachikitsa, Grahachikitsa, shalyachikitsa, jarachikitsa (Rasayana)

Balachikitsa Urdhwangachikitsa Damstrachikitsa

(Shalaky Tantra) (Vishachikitsa) Vajeekarna

1) Kayachikitsa: this is meant for general disorders like fever, diarrhoea, cough, cold, asthma, indigestion, Skin disorders, neuromuscular disorders, arthritis and such other innumerable disorders which are commonly encountered. It is comparable to 'Internal medicine' of modern medical science. This branch is mainly developed by the followers of sage Atreya and hence it is also called 'Atreya Tradition.'

2) Shalya Tantra: the sages came across some peculiar disorders where medical management was not found sufficient to cure the disease. Different kinds of swellings, abscess, piles, fistula in ano, fractures and dislocations, massive ascites, stones in urinary System, abnormal foetal presentation, harelip etc. are few examples where Surgical/para-Surgical/manipulations would be much more helpful in addition to medical management. Such diseases were separately identified and surgical management are described in this branch. This was developed by Sushruta, the father of surgery and his followers and hence it is also known as 'Dhanvantari Tradition', who was the master of surgery and taught it to Sushruta and others.

3) Balachikitsa: this is also known as Koumara Bhitya. This branch deals with health care system of children. From the health point of view children belong to a children. From the health point of view children belong to a very special category. They are tender both physically and mentally. Their immunity system is not properly matured and hence defensive mechanism is weak in many respects. Their communicative skill is relatively poor. They cannot express what they are suffering from. They are likely to be born with suffering. As they are tender they required to be handled with care. Drastic therapies and strong medicines that are applicable to an adult are no longer useful here. The art of diagnosis & mgmt of disorders of children need a special attention. Being aware of these facts, our sages have developed a special branch called ` Bala Tantra` which includes the health care of mother as the soil for human seedlings (babies). Unless the soil (mother) is fertile. Hale & healthy the seed cannot give raise to healthy seedlings. The role of mother in child`s health is not only during pregnancy, but continues to exist even after the birth of child, especially during lactation period. The relationship between a mother & child is not merely physical but also covers psychological. Emotional aspects. Hence, the mothers care is as much important as the child`s own. The concept of mother and child health care which is very much talked of today was already conceived and executed by our ancient Acharyas and the result was emergence of special branch

Koumara Bhryta also called Balachikitsa. This was developed by `Kashyapa`, a sage versatile in paediatrics and his followers and hence it is known as Kashyap Tradition.

4) Graha/ Bhuta Vidya: this is ordinarily translated as demonology which does not convey the real message. Bhuta` simply means anything that has physical existence. This probably refers in the said context, to a variety of viruses and also for some neuro-psychological disorders. The cause of such disorders are not clearly known and also needs a different kind of management Therefore, to deal with such ailments a separate branch was established. For lack of proper understanding, loss of heritage in this respect this branch is not so much developed and not in extensive application in day to day practice.

5) Urdhwanga Chikitsa: this is also called Shatakya Tantra, which mainly deals with disorders of eye, nose, ear, throat, buccal cavity including teeth-lips and head. As the head is the seat of many delicate sense organs like nose, ears and eyes, disorders also are of peculiar nature unlike general disorders. They need to be handled very delicately. They need some local treatment which are specially designed for such disorders, so that sense organs are not damaged and are relieved of their respective illnesses. (In order to achieve this goal a separate branch was necessitated).Instruments, equipment, diagnostic techniques, medicaments etc., applicable to such a diseases invariably need a special variety as compared to similar things, as are applicable to common disorders. Hence this was separately established.

6) Visha Chikitsa: Ayurveda developed in agrarian civilization. Population in olden days was thick in rural and forest areas. There was every likelihood of people knowingly or unknowingly eating, tasting or using any form of herbs, fruits, roots, leaves, barks, seeds, latex of plants available nearby which proved harmful to their health. They are surrounded by rabid animals, poisonous snakes, scorpions, bees, flies, and mosquitoes and so on. Health of the people bitten by such creatures used to get upset in a peculiar way. Apart from these some artificial and chemical poisons like arsenic, lead etc. also were noticed in olden days. All such cases needed a special knowledge of cause and symptomatology and also required emergency measures to remove toxic effects and also needed special preventive measures. Realizing all these ancient Acharyas decided to have a special branch for the study of poisons, their effect measures of prevention from poisonous effect and management aspect of poisons which came to be called as Visha chikitsa or Agada tantra, also called as Damstra Chikitsa.

7) Jara Chikista: this is that branch of Ayurveda which takes care of old age problems and preventions of premature ageing. Now a days Geriatrics is gaining momentum in western countries. Old age people are being considered unproductive and burden on the society. Western culture does not permit youngsters conscience to provide moral shelter to the old parents and grandparents. The family system is weak where emotional bondage of souls of different generations has lost priority over other economic considerations. Human values are common casualties. Hence old people are bound to suffer from physical, psychological, emotional problems. Consequently old age homes are springing up to look after old people. Natural ageing itself has some inherent health problems. In bygone days Indian culture was very much oriented. Well knit family system itself was a great solace to the suffering old aged people even such times diseases manifested in old age. Premature ageing was also observed haunting the people. Therefore sages of Ayurveda had taken these problems seriously and tried to find solutions to such age related health problems and established a separate speciality called `Jara Chikitsa` also called as `Rasayana Chikitsa` which includes prevention of premature ageing or gaining vigour and vitality of youthfulness even in advanced age. This is rejuvenation therapy.

8) Vajeeekarna Chikitsa: this is another specialized branch. Almost every aspect of health related problems was covered by one or other specialties either to describe yet thee remained one aspect of life to be answered. Married life is one such important aspect of any one`s life. Normal sexual life is not only an answer to the natural urge. It is not merely an instinctive physiological necessity but also distinctly purposive. Begetting children is to fulfil the desire to continue the progeny to pass on the cultural heritage, to maintain socioeconomic status and so on. An unsatisfied sexual life is quite miserable. Issuelessness or barrenness which is technically called infertility is equally agonizing to married couple. This problem was there even in olden days. In order to prevent and treat such important problems `Vajeeekarna Chikitsa` was founded as a separate speciality. Thus Ayurveda is for people of all age from childhood (K.B) to old age (Jara) of both

sexes (K.B and Vaja) and for diseases from medically manageable to surgically manageable including toxicity. It is for all disorders of body, senses and mind. It also cares for spiritual nourishment of an individual.

10. What are its aims?

Aims of Ayurveda are twofold:

- 1) Prevention of diseases and promotion of health
- 2) Curing the ailment.

11. Which of two is more important?

Of course, both are equally important. However, it is the considered opinion of Ayurveda that prevention is better than cure.

12. What does Ayurveda prescribe for prevention?

A brief answer to this question is difficult. Preventive measure in Ayurveda is more of a life style nature than therapeutic nature. A specific vaccination or inoculation or drug to a specific disease as a preventive therapy is outside the perview of Ayurveda concept. Ayurveda holds that it is the responsibility of every individual to follow certain style of life intended to prevent many diseases. In fact, preventive measure as a lifestyle commences from a pregnant mother. Her life style (food, dresses, exercise, rest and other physical and mental activities) influences the health of the baby in the womb and after. Mother lifestyle continues to influence the health of the baby so long as it is breast fed. Therefore some measures like Swarna Prashana, Karna Vyadhana, Dhoopana, Anjana, etc. which are directly applicable to the child are described. The socio-cultural heritage in rural and tribal areas in our country is impregnated with such health oriented disease preventive, health promotive aspects. The fault or weakness or unscientificity is not in such socio-cultural heritage itself, but it is in the way we look towards them. The difficulty is that preventive measure in Ayurveda is not one time in life, but a continuous process throughout life, barring a few childhood procedures and during pregnancy. Daily routines, food habits, proper exercise, rest and body purification measures depending on the season etc. are to be followed regularly.

13. What is health? How is it defined?

Health is a state of equilibrium of bio- humours or bio-eneries called vata-pitta-kapha, Certain normal qualities, functions and locations are attributed to each of them. Health is a product of normalcy of these attributes of bio-energies.

14. How is health assessed?

It is assessed by the following:

1. A good complexion-normal lustre
2. A normal voice
3. Absence of any sort of discomfort feeling
4. Weight and compactness of the body
5. Strength enough to do daily routine
6. Desire to consume food on time regularly
7. Digestion of the consumed food on time
8. Getting sleep regularly on item
9. Absence of unhealthy dreams

10. Feeling fresh immediately after awakening

11. Normal nature calls such as flatus, urination, defecation and normal sexual life

12. Overall normalcy of mind, intellect and senses.

15. How curative object of Ayurveda is achieved?

The second aim is curative it is achieved by using medicines of herbal. Mineral. Animal origin, diet and regulating other life activities influencing the health of the body and mind.

16. What are the principles of treatment in general?

The chief principle is to bring back normalcy in 3 bio energies which are in a state of imbalance.

This is achieved by 3 methods. They are:

1. Avoidance or to keep away from causative factors

2. Elimination of morbid materials

3. Promoting the disease resistance power

First one is helpful to reduce the strength of morbidity and to arrest further change to the bio energies and vital tissues.

The second one helps to remove the morbid and clear the passage to medicines and diet so as to enable them to reach their proper destination and to act quickly with lower dosage and also helps to retain them in the body until a desired time.

The third one improves the resistance power of all the tissues and also prevents the further formation of morbid material.

17. What is elimination therapy and what are they?

Elimination therapy is ordinarily considered as Panchakarma. But these two are not identical. Emesis, purgation, medicated enemas of two kinds and nasal therapy are called as Panchakarma (five kinds of therapies). Emesis, purgation, enemas of certain drugs, some nasal therapy and bloodletting fall under elimination therapy.

Before applying elimination therapy body is prepared to sustain the violence of elimination therapy, it is so prepared that the patient will not suffer dehydration even after emesis and purgation. The preparations of the patient also means that the morbid materials lodged anywhere in the body are brought to elementary canal or near the elimination passage before the actual therapy is adopted. The morbid materials are eliminated through the nearest route from the place where it is mainly located. Post-operative procedure includes certain type of diet which help to rehydrate, strengthen the digestion power, soothe the membrane and muscles of the elementary canal and also nourish the body. Palliative medicine will act better after this therapy.

18. Is it true that Ayurveda gives violent treatment before commencing any healing therapy?

No. As described earlier elimination therapy appears to be violent but actually body is prepared to prevent any such violent effect on the body. They are however drastic measures to be performed under the supervision of a duly qualified and experienced physician. If everything is done properly, according to the texts it will not be adopted for 'all and sundry'. This is not required for many. In such cases direct palliative therapy is administered.

19. Is Ayurveda preaching and practice based on any literature?

Yes. Both teaching and practice are totally based on literature which are of proven authenticity.

20. Whether they are ancient or modern?

Both. Number of ancient literature are still available dating from 600 BC or earlier to earliest part of modern era (16th century A.D). Even modern Ayurveda literature are based on original thoughts and concepts found in ancient texts. The ancient literature which are followed even today are (1) Charaka Samhita (2) Sushruta Samhita (3) Astanga Hridaya; Sangraha (4) Madhava Nidhana (5) Sharangadhara Samhita (6) Yogaratnakar (7) Bhava Prakasha (8) Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya (9) Samhita

Many modern Ayurvedic scholars have contributed to enrich the exiting ancient literature. There are good number of literature by giving their reflective thoughts.

21. Is it true that Ayurveda believes that diseases are caused by Bhoota-Preta and sins of past life?

To say that Ayurveda believes only in such causes as states above is a part of total mispropaganda about anything that is Indian. Indian communities believed in such things only during past few centuries for want of proper dissemination of real knowledge embedded in ancient authentic Sanskrit literature belonging to an enlightened era even Before Christ (B.C.). The ancient Ayurveda literature reveal that the causes can be hereditary (genetic), congenital, accidental, erroneous food and drink habits or wrong way of life style, excessive or improper use of one's own sense organs, seasonal abnormalities, polluted air, water, season and region (total environmental pollution) Toxic drugs and foods, harmful microbes and sinful acts. Several thousands of causes for various disorders are described which are discernible in day to day life of every individual even certain professions are considered as causes of many disorders. Bhoota in the cited context does not mean devil/demon as ordinarily understood, but it clearly stands for a set of invisible microbes.

Sins simply mean the error of lifestyle. It may be mental. Physical or verbal. Every sin produces same negative vibration in respective field of body, mind and senses. Such negative vibrations are encoded in the respective gene which get transmitted to the next life. Such genes may give raise to a particular disease on getting predisposing causes in the next life or else it may remain dormant. Unless there is a triggering cause in the present life. Gene of a past life cannot to anything harmful. It remains undecoded.

This concept of negative vibration (sin) encoded in a tiny gene and its transmission to next life, which in turn being triggered by some predisposing cause in the present life to produce a disease is a hypothetical postulate laid down by Indian philosophies. This is governed by the law of Karma and birth-rebirth cycle (laws of rebirth). The contemporary science, at present, has its own limits and hence the postulate in question is not supported by any known so called scientific theory. It should not surprising if one day in future proves that the ancient postulate of transmigration of gene from one life to another, carrying a seed of a disease and death-rebirth cycle, is marvellously true.

22. Is it a fact that there are only three types of diseases namely vata, pitta and kapha?

Vata, pitta and kapha are the names of bio energies only and not the names of diseases. These 3 bio energies are chiefly responsible both for health and ill health. They are the technical terms indicating functional units of bio energies. There are more than 1000 disease s which are named and described elaborately.

23. Ayurveda describes rigid die tic and other regimen. Hence people are afraid to take Ayurveda medicines. Is it so?

Strict regimen (dietary and others) should form a part of management aspect of any disease in general. Certain dietary restrictions are necessary and this fact has been recognised even by modern medicines. Salt

restriction in oedema, gout, renal disorders and sugar in diabetes, of fat oedema, gout, renal disorders and sugar in diabetes, of fat and fried substances in obesity, biliary and pancreatic stones etc. may be quoted here as exemplary ones, which are advisory to be followed even in modern medicine.

In fact Ayurveda prescribes pathyahara, vihara, vichara for the followed even in modern medicine.

- 1) To help the medicine to reach its destination (site of action) properly without any hindrances while passing through the carrying channels.
- 2) To prevent harmful effect if any, as an antagonistic.
- 3) To enhance the action of a therapy to obtain quicker result
- 4) To accelerate the absorption of medicines
- 5) To help medicines to be retained for much longer time in the body so that it is not eliminated before it acts
- 6) To avoid causative elements of a specific disease
- 7) To raise immunity of the body prescription of pathya depends on the condition of the patient or a disease and the therapy or drug to be used.

What is to be taken or not to be taken should be decided by selectively choosing from among the vast number of food and food articles. It requires a deep knowledge of deistic science and also a trained skill. To avoid such complexities involved in choosing a particular type of regimen some of the traditional Vaidyas resorted to much easier method to advising only milk or buttermilk diet or gruel of some sort which was harmless to the patient and also served the purpose to a large extent. This in course of time has adversely affected Ayurveda by creating a fear psychosis in the minds of common man. A pathya diet need not always be sugar free, salt free, condiments free. It can be palatable, acceptable and nourishing to the patient simultaneously serving the genuine purpose of dietary regimen.

24. Does Ayurveda superstitiously believe that some disease like chickenpox, small pox, measles, etc. are due to provocation of goddess,Devi/Amma?

Ayurveda does not believe in such superstitions. Masurika, Romantika, Sheetala (chickenpox,measles, smallpox) are described in ancient texts like Charaka samhita and Sushrutha Samhita where no such reference to goddess or Devi or Amma is found. This alleged superstition appears to have started only after 16th century A.D. The present day Ayurveda does not describe to this.

25. Does Ayurveda advocates pure vegetarianism?

Ayurveda, being health Science does not take any side. It considers the effect of food articles of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian stuffs on the health of the body and mind. Both good and bad effects of vegetarian food articles on the bodily elements bio energies are very well described of course with as much details those in vogue, in the socio cultural scenario of their contemporary period were critically analysed by the seers from taking health point of view and remained neutral leaving the choice to the consumers.

26. How does Ayurveda views alcoholic drinks?

The practice of drinking was very much prevalent even in ancient India. Royal families, army men were using drinks very commonly. It was probably unacceptable social custom. Therefore Ayurveda describes the mode of preparation of various type of alcoholic beverages, mode, place, occasion of consuming such drinks. Meanwhile it also describes the advantages and disadvantages of such beverages from health point health point of view. Abuse of alcoholics has been considered as a cause of many diseases also. Ayurveda remains neutral without advocating either to consume or not to consume.

It would be proper, may not be out of place) here to note that quite a few medicines (described in the texts) such as Ajamamsarasayana, Chagaladya Gritha are composed of animal products and many liquid preparations like Asavas and Aristas contain self-generated alcohol to an extent of 7 to 9 or even more exceptionally.

27. Whether Ayurveda prescribes any dress code?

Certainly yes. The dress should be neat, tidy and clean, without folds or wrinkles, attractive but not destructive, suitable to the occasion, season, region and the community. It does not speak anything about the form of dress. It recommends cotton, woollen or silk clothes according to necessities and ability.

28. Does it recommend religious practices?

A society or community totally devoid of religious practices is difficult to be traced in the history of mankind. Any branch of Knowledge evolved within the framework of the community or society cannot ignore the contemporary prevailing socio cultural practices. Ancient seers were inseparable part of the same society or community. Thus, they could not have remained isolated choosing not to take cognizance of religious practices. They were constrained to observe, analyse such practices and gave their opinion about the positive influences on health and related issues. As a result there are enough recommendations in the classical literature to observe religious practices like prayer, chanting mantras, wearing gems and precious stones, sacrifices, homa, yajna, yaga, worshipping, visiting pilgrimages and so on. Such socio-cultural religious practices were found benefiting quite a few sufferers having been relieved from distress and agony repeatedly. Ayurveda could not remain a dumb spectator to this and hence included in health science, with a sense of pragmatism.

29. Ayurveda has no side effects?

People deserve to be complemented, who hold this impression. Anything natural be it a herb or animal or mineral cannot be branded as good for health. There are many which are known for their toxicity. If these drugs are used as such deleterious effects on health are bound to occur. Ayurveda identifies such drugs and advises to purify them by some specific detailed procedures of detoxicating and reducing deleterious effects what so ever. The dose, method of administering a drug, the vehicle to be used, and the dietary prescription are strictly followed and hence no side effects observed.

30. Ayurveda is very economic and within the reach of common man.

This is the impression of many. It may be surprising to know that there are those who hold quite opposite view. Both are right in their own economic perspectives.

It is considered cheap for the following reasons:

- 1) It is cheap simply because it is herbal.
- 2) Raw herbs, mostly single herb, which is naturally grown in the surrounding fields of forests and procured by the physician himself and distributed freely or shows the herb to the patient and asks him to procure for himself.
- 3) Does not require too many investigations as diagnosing technique is very simple.
- 4) One time single dose of medicine will be sufficient in many cases.
- 5) Even manufactured and marketed products are cheaper compared to modern medicine.
- 6) Physician does not charge consultation fees.

Many of the above factors were true in the past. Medical profession was not chief means of livelihood of most physician, it only formed a part of his social service or family prestige or cultural practice. Now time has changed. Those diseases which are simple and can be cured by a single herb or juice of raw herbs have cheaper treatment even today. Such diseases and herbs are only few, countable in single digits. Ayurveda is no longer cheaper as it was in earlier periods, on account of altered socio economic perspectives. It is considered costlier because:

1. Many products available in the market are highly priced.
2. Ayurveda physicians also charge consultation fees.
3. Prolonged treatment needs prolonged use of medicines and hence becomes costly.

The hike in price of Ayurveda medicines is the product of socio economic evolutions. Further diseases have increased manifold with the raise of population, industry and environmental pollution and so on. Besides, the flora and fauna have been adversely affected with a diminishing effect, many medicinal plants are threatened and many others have become extinct, there is a great scarcity of medicinal plants which are naturally grown.

As the demand for medicine is higher compared to olden days, the issue of preparing medicines by physicians themselves sufficient to meet the requirements is out of question. The art and science of manufacturing the medicines in large quantity has shifted from physician to pharmaceutical concerns. It has become an industry now. Any manufacturing unit is abide by laws of the land. It has the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the employees, installation of machineries and equipment suitable to manufacture medicines in large quantity, collection of drugs from different parts of the country, procurement, presentation, of raw drugs, maintenance of research and development of the unit, marketing the products at wholesale and retail outlets, advertisement and publicity, appealing presentation packing of the products and so on which account for costing a product.

Raw drugs are also becoming costly because non availability at one place and in sufficient quantity. This affects the price of raw material because of cost of collection, preservation and transportation from place to place. This apart, many products are herbo-mineral which contain very costly raw materials like gold, silver, diamond, pearl, musk, almond, dry fruits, ghee, oil etc. These cost influencing factors involved in any commercialized industry are to be considered while alleging the high cost of Ayurvedic treatment. Despite all these, there are many cost effective remedies and therapies for number of common disorders. Only in some chronic diseases or serious illness where either Panchakarma therapy or medicines of costly ingredients are essential the total cost of management may possibly become very high quality treatment and quality drugs naturally cost more. Ayurveda is helpless in such cases, so far as economic consideration is concerned. Ayurveda works out cheaper despite all the above, when considered from another angle. The total cost of treatment from the stage of early diagnosis is certainly cheaper compared to modern medicine, in many chronic cases, where diagnostic measures and monitoring cost more than the medicine itself. Many disorders which are considered surgical in modern medicine can be medically managed with Success by treatment. This also makes Ayurveda cost effective. Any efforts towards making it more cost effective in more areas uncovered so far are definitely welcome.

31. Ayurveda gives cure but very slow and that is the reason why it is not popular. Comment please.

There are several reasons for Ayurveda not being popular. The above opinion itself needs to be scrupulously scrutinized as to how far it is a fact. It is alleged that Ayurveda medicines are to be taken continuously for long time for any disease. There are diseases like many skin disorders, gastric ulcer, joint disorders, neuromuscular disorders, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, mental retardness, growth retardness, asthma, TB, hypertension, diabetes, hyperacidity, sinusitis, epilepsy and scores of others where treatment is required for longer duration or for life time in any system of medicine. Ayurveda can give either permanent cure for many of the above and better relief without giving rise to any side effects for some of them. Immediate symptomatic relief by modern medicine itself is mistaken as cure and compared to the time taken to cure by

Ayurvedic medicines. Time taken to relieve pain symptoms and to cure the disease are not to be equated and thus not to be mistaken. Acute complaints like ordinary headache, fever, diarrhoea, pain anywhere in the body, cough etc. and emergency condition like an acute heart attack, brain haemorrhage, shock condition etc. requires medicines which act q quickly. Ayurveda lags little behind in such cases which should not however be generalized to brand it as slow acting.

32. Ayurveda needs research in order to make it acceptable.

Every honourable dignitary on the Dias invited to address Ayurveda physicians and students considers it as a part of his noble duty to drop a piece of suggestion that Ayurveda needs to be validated by research work. This is the view of many self-proclaimed intellectuals.

This is not to say that there is no need of research. It is an ongoing process in any field of knowledge pertaining to any sphere of human life activities. Ayurveda is no exception for research. Research work going on in true spirit of its past research heritage. A glance at the history of Ayurveda literature from ancient period through middle age to the modern era reveals that research was going process as consequent of which description of many diseases like Rheumatoid arthritis, Guinea worm diseases, Syphilis gonorrhoea, have been added, many new drugs like opium, cannabis are incorporated later, many diagnostic techniques like pulse reading, examination of urine etc. are accepted and included in later texts. The scientific temperament with genuine concern to health related problems was continuously flowing through the generations in the past. Similar trend continues in present day generation. Research work is going on in organized manner both in private and govt. sectors. Literary research, standardization of drugs (single and compound drugs), survey of medical plants-their geographical distribution, identification of threatened and extinguished species, clinical research in classical drugs and diseases, pharmacological and pharmaceutical research, are already taken up. Reputed Ayurvedic manufacturing units also are engaged in adopting modern techniques in processing, preservation, packing and presentation and quality control to make themselves fit to export Ayurvedic products. Ayurvedic injectable with manifold fortification of essential ingredients, established manufacturing units have been encouraging clinical research within their own territorial limits. Modern research methods, parameters of assessment and evaluation of the outcome of research are adopted in Ayurveda research field. Many PG centres and research centres are rendering their own humble service in this regard. Regardless of all these, the pace of research work in Ayurveda should be enhanced. It is the considered opinion that the direction in which research is going on needs to be thoroughly verified so as to make the outcoming research to be truly helpful in adopting Ayurveda concept for the benefit of mankind. The product of research should be useful either to Ayurveda or to some other. Such outcome which is useful to neither is a colossal waste and unaffordable to a country like ours.

33. Is it harmful to take any other medicine along with Ayurvedic treatment?

This is most common doubt among the public. Patients are curious to know whether any reaction takes place as a result of combination of modern medicine and Ayurveda medicine prescribed by respective physician or either of the two may not work. Or both may nullify each other? Ordinarily there is no harm in taking both modern medicine and Ayurvedic medicine simultaneously. Some patients might have started modern medicine for hypertension, diabetes, neurological disorders, heart disease, mental disorders, arthritis etc. which require prolonged, treatment before coming to Ayurvedic physician. In such condition, modern medicine need not be advised to be discontinued forthwith. It is advisable to discontinue modern medicine gradually over a period of time, as advised by the physician. Better not to mix both medicines of modern medicine and Ayurveda medicine for the same problem.

34. How is Ayurveda different from Unani, homeopathy, naturopathy and yoga?

These are different systems which care for the health of human beings. All these are prevalent health care practices that are found in India and have independent existence. They are differentiated on the basis of their place of origin and development, philosophy and concepts, mode of preparation and use of drugs, type of therapies adopted and so on. Unani medicine which was originally called `Greek medicine` came to India thousands of years ago with the foreign traders or invaders who settled here and encouraged it. It is somewhat nearer to Ayurveda in principle.

Principle of naturopathy is nothing new to Ayurveda but the way it is developed and practiced is somewhat different from Ayurvedic way of application. It can be very well considered as an extended part of or a specialized therapy of Ayurveda.

`Yoga` is one of the oldest philosophies in India. Originally, it is intended to attain salvation, to become one with the supreme consciousness. Thus philosophy in fact forms a foundation to Indian psychology and psychiatry. Availing the advantage of results of research work on the effect of yogic practices on human health, it is now being considered as healing therapy. It is more useful as preventive than curative. All those who are desirous of good health should spare some time every day to practice yoga and obtain health promotive disease preventive benefit out of such practice.

Homeopathy is again not of Indian origin. Its philosophy of diagnosis and pharmacopeal products are somewhat different from Ayurveda. But medicines are found much effective in many disorders and much cheaper, very cost effective. It is also becoming popular nowadays.

35. Ayurveda works only when the patient has faith in ayurvedic physician

Faith in medicine and physician is always good. There is no denial of the fact that faith has a definite role in healing. Based on this there is one branch of knowledge called "faith healing". But it is not necessary prerequisite for Ayurveda possessed by a physician and Ayurvedic medicines have enough inherent strength to alleviate the sufferings, independent of patient's faith.

36. Ayurveda works better if the Physicians hand has some inherent healing quality/hasta guna.

This is yet another belief that common man has in his mind. The great Ayurveda classical literature does not speak anything about such special qualities of good physician's hand. However, we find the term Amrita Hasta or Dagdha-Hasta (bad hand) of physician attributed to successful or unsuccessful is not his hand literally but his proficiency or otherwise in mastering the knowledge, skill, attitude and ethics. It is certainly surprising that many physicians with least knowledge of medicine and patients quite often are able to attract number of patients, more than a well-qualified, knowledgeable, professor of Ayurvedic medicine. This might have led the people to believe in 'Hastaguna.' Individuals attractive power may be a God's gift, but cannot be brought under any conceptual frame.

37. Ayurveda advocates strictly that knowledge of Ayurvedic treatment should be top secret and should not be disclosed to anybody?

Secrecy has nothing to do with efficiency. They are not mutually effective. Ayurveda does not tell us to keep the treatment secret in order to obtain good results. It never believes that the efficacy of certain therapy or a drug is lost, if disclosed to anybody else. It is true that some traditional Vaidyas or even self-styled Vaidyas still practice and believe in keeping secrecy of a drug. This may be due to their limited knowledge about the drug or therapy.

Being afraid of their ignorance becoming public or an individual's strong belief in the words given to him by his ancestors or Guru that it becomes fruitless if it is disclosed to anybody, he may strongly believe that he is in possession of healing power, so long he keeps it secret. Ayurvedic literature does not support this opinion. It condemns ignorance, half knowledge and transmission of such ignorance to others. This might have been mistaken by somebody at some point of time which has led to misconception.

38. All said and done, why people do not come to Ayurveda as much as to modern medicine?

Reasons for this are very many. Most important among them are given below:

- 1) Lack of publicity: Ayurvedic physicians have not properly utilized the available mass media for publicity, informations impregnated to public through literature in local languages, articles of eminence in magazines, newspapers and so on, speeches or talks on radio and television, public speeches, rural and urban camps and interaction with common man.
- 2) Myths and misconcepts: In the absence of proper information for centuries about the true nature of Ayurveda, people have framed their own opinion, developed wrong notion and have totally misconceived and hence have lost confidence in the effectivly of Ayurvedic treatment.
- 3) The tradition of teaching Ayurveda either through Guru-Shishya parampara or through institutions was broken for over a long period of centuries. Hence its knowledge was not dissipated through generations. In the absence of such teaching tradition, it was difficult to understand the Principles and practice of Ayurveda which resulted in breach of continuity of preaching and practice of Ayurveda. In addition foreign missionaries further dampened the progress of Ayurveda. As invaders had their own commercial interest and wanted to impose their own system of medicine, Ayurveda was discouraged and relegated to background. Now the situation has changed. Even foreigners are interested to know about Ayurveda. But our own rural folks and urban elites many a times do not believe Ayurveda owing to lack of proper information on the one hand and pseudoscientific temperament of the elites on the other. Personal interaction, publicity, making available of ayurvedic practitioners with firm conviction will definitely go a long way in popularizing Ayurveda. Steps should be taken to make therapy or product cost effective and standardized.