

Ayurveda The Science of Living

Sometimes it takes being at death's door before you realize that health is life. Some of you turn to Ayurveda because you know what it means to take back responsibility for your own health and be cured. There is no emotion quite like the feeling when you get a second chance to start over again, with a new lease of life like a fresh, blank canvas.

Expounded by sages in India no less than 5000 years ago, Ayurveda flourished into a great science where even the 'miraculous' was mapped out, in reach for everyone, any age, any culture. Ayurveda is a medical system that empowers you to be your own doctor; a user-friendly system that actually makes complete sense, incorporates all aspects of life and most especially is accessible to everyone. It is an honest system without hidden side-effects, a system that teaches you that the keys to ultimate health and contentment lie in your own hands. This is a mighty health system that promotes spiritual development, arts, literature, music; one that teaches you how to be not only a doctor but an astrologist, a doctor and a poet, a doctor and a parent, a doctor and a chef, a doctor and a devotee.

If you scratch deep enough below the surface of science you will arrive at spiritual revelation. If you scratch deep enough below the surface of spirituality, you will arrive at $E=mc^2$. Stands to reason why today's celebrated scientists continually proclaim astounding discoveries that reflect the very same principles already in employment thousands of years ago by the sages, rshis, yogis and seers.

Stands to reason why these ancient mages propounded a system that instructed all principles of human existence in an inclusive way that served not only physical and mental health but no less than the evolution of human consciousness.

In India 1830, Ayurveda was outlawed by the British who considered their own imported medicinal system superior. They concurred that Ayurveda was based on superstitious principles scientifically unsound.

Remember back in the day when religious thinkers argued that the world could not be round? Or when millions of women were burned at the stake for being intimate with the ways of nature. How about the remarkable woman whose skin was scraped off by shells for teaching mathematics? We all look back to those times and agree how far we have progressed. Now we look back to the 1800's and wonder what scientific advance-

ments might have been made had Ayurveda been encouraged to thrive. We can only be grateful that this age old 'Science of Life', mother to Chinese, Tibetan, Unani medicine and modern day plastic surgery, is still intact, poised to provide many missing links to today's allopathy and naturopathy, poised indeed to transform our modern healthcare as we know it.

We are re-entering an age of reason, reason to believe not to doubt. There was a time in the west when natural healing was denounced as sacrilegious; herbs became relegated to hocus-pocus and were substituted for synthetic mutations. It might take some time before the general public can entrust their health again to nature's wisdom. But time is running out.

It has been clear for some time that our modern health system is failing us. But now it is frighteningly clear that modern medicine is killing us!

This may seem like a preposterous statement but here are the facts:

Well over 125,000 Americans die from drug reactions and mistakes each year. That could make pharmaceuticals the fourth-leading national cause of death after heart disease, cancer and stroke.¹

The number of prescriptions has swelled by two-thirds over the past decade to 3.5 billion yearly²

Even rising ranks of doctors, researchers and public health experts are saying that America is overmedicating itself.

It seems critical that we integrate a system as comprehensive and time-tested as Ayurveda into the public awareness, not as an alternative route, or a trendy jaunt down antiquity lane, but as an adjunct, a validated and natural resource for an evolutionary healthcare system.

5000 years ago, a comprehensive system of preventative and curative health care was established, patronized, and sanctioned by the spiritual and governmental bodies for the people of the land.

In 800 BC the first Ayurvedic school was founded by Atreya. Charaka a student who lived and taught in 700 BC compiled the extant Charak Samhita that describes in detail the properties of 1,500 plants, 350 of which have valuable medicinal properties. Great

universities like Takshashila and Nalanda which flourished from the 5th to 13th AD attracted tens of thousands students from far flung countries.

Today, there is a resurgence of interest in Ayurveda. When Deepak Chopra and Maharishi peddled Ayurvedic principles and tonics to the hungry public, they were publicly derided by the medical community for lack of credible research, proof, and statistics. This time around there are many notable allopathic physicians who are eager to be associated with the undeniable breakthroughs that Ayurvedic doctors are documenting on a continuous basis.

For instance, these results just out: it has been proved that tumeric, the yellow kitchen herb prevents and treats breast cancer. Neem is the wonder herb that cures 3 inch deep bedsores that were deemed beyond treatment with modern super drugs. Triphala is reversing myopia in hundreds of school children in India. The results keep coming.

Ayurveda is founded on the premise that the very same elements that compose the universe also compose the body. "As above so below" rings true through the ages and is currently expounded by leading scientists and quantum physicists.

The universal elements, earth, water, fire, air and space interact as the bioenergetic forces that compose and maintain our bodies. Space and air interact as Vata; fire and water as Pitta; earth and water as Kapha. These three forces can be simply understood as gas, acidity and mucous. While they are the fundamentals of structure and while they govern the function of human physiology, they can also be the cause of disease. And so they have been called doshas, a name chosen to describe their tenuous, 'oh-so-precious' nature.

The Dhatus are the seven basic tissues of the body, which tend to grow as the body grows. Tissues are groups of cells alike in structure and function. These are: rasa dhatu (plasma), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscle), meda (fat), asthi (bone), majja (nerve tissue and bone marrow) and shukra (reproductive tissue). The dhatus build up and maintain the body structures.

The Malas are waste products: fecal matter, urine and sweat. Formed continuously as the result of metabolic activity in the body, malas clean the body as they are thrown off or eliminated.

When doshas, dhatus and malas are in equilibrium, health and contentment are the

result. When imbalances and disturbances occur, disease and its symptoms result.

In India, Ayurvedic doctors study a minimum of 5 1/2 years before they grasp the enormity and application of wisdom entrusted to them. At that point they specialize with eight main branches to choose from: internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, geriatrics, diseases of ear and nose, reproductive health, rejuvenation and immunology, virility.

Whatever level of knowledge a practitioner may possess, each one will tell you that to prevent or cure disease and maintain optimum health and contentment, you want to attune to natural cycles of day, night and season. You want to balance the forces of anabolism, metabolism and catabolism. You want to purify the bioelectrical currents and regulate the nervous system in the body in order to influence the brain. You want to nourish the body and senses with foods that create internal balance. You want to eliminate the wastes that have completed their purpose in the body. The list goes on. There might be some major changes to your diet, your lifestyle. But as you sit with your Ayurvedic practitioner, one thing becomes very clear: This person is invested in my health, not my disease.

1. Associated Press projections from landmark medical studies of the 1990s
2. IMS Health, a pharmaceutical consulting company