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## Ayurveda Medical System in Ancient India

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**Abstract-** Ayurveda, an ancient medical system originating in India over 5,000 years ago, represents a holistic approach to health and well-being, emphasizing the balance between mind, body, and spirit. Rooted in the sacred texts known as the Vedas, particularly the Atharvaveda, Ayurveda is built upon the principles of maintaining equilibrium among the three doshas: Vata (air and ether), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (water and earth). Each individual's unique constitution, or prakriti, is determined by the predominant dosha and guides personalized treatment and lifestyle recommendations. Central to Ayurveda is the concept of Agni, or digestive fire, which is considered crucial for overall health. Proper digestion and elimination are seen as the foundation of physical and mental well-being. Ayurvedic practices encompass a wide range of therapeutic measures, including dietary guidelines, herbal remedies, yoga, meditation, and detoxification processes such as Panchakarma. Panchakarma involves five primary procedures—Vamana (therapeutic vomiting), Virechana (purgation), Basti (enema), Nasya (nasal administration), and Raktamokshana (bloodletting)—designed to cleanse the body of toxins and restore balance. Herbal medicine is a cornerstone of Ayurveda, utilizing a diverse array of plants, minerals, and metals. Prominent herbs include Ashwagandha, Turmeric, and Triphala, each known for their multifaceted health benefits. Ayurveda also places significant importance on lifestyle practices tailored to the individual's constitution and the natural rhythms of the environment, advocating for daily routines (dinacharya) and seasonal routines (ritucharya) to harmonize with nature. Ayurveda's influence extends beyond medicine, permeating Indian culture and daily life. Its resurgence in modern times reflects a growing interest in natural and preventive healthcare. While contemporary scientific validation is ongoing, Ayurveda's comprehensive and integrative approach continues to be valued for its potential to enhance quality of life and foster

sustainable health practices.

**Key-words:** Ayurveda, ancient medical, Ayurvedic Treatments, Prakriti, Holistic Health.

**Introduction-** Ayurveda, derived from the Sanskrit words 'Ayur' (life) and 'Veda' (knowledge), translates to 'the science of life'. As one of the world's oldest medical systems, Ayurveda has profoundly influenced the health and wellness paradigms in India and beyond. This paper explores the historical context, foundational doctrines, therapeutic practices, and the enduring relevance of Ayurveda in the modern era. Ayurveda's origins trace back to the Vedic period, approximately 1500 BCE to 600 BCE, with significant contributions from the Atharvaveda. Over centuries, key texts like the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya have codified Ayurvedic knowledge.

In fact, the Stone Age man can be considered the originator of some branches of science like botany, zoology and meteorology. We get a clear idea of scientific progress in ancient India from the 'Indus Valley Civilization'. A definite city planning system, definite weight-measurement scale, highly developed stone and metal industries mark the engineering proficiency and scientific thinking of the Harappan culture. Vedic Aryans also had knowledge of medical science, astronomy and astrology. Ayurveda's roots can be traced back to the Vedic period in India. The earliest references to Ayurvedic practices are found in the Rig Veda, an ancient Indian text that dates back to around 1500 BCE. The system was systematically codified in the classical texts of Ayurveda, primarily the Charaka Samhita and the Sushruta Samhita. These texts, attributed to the ancient scholars Charaka and Sushruta, provided comprehensive guidelines on diagnosis, treatment, and surgical procedures, reflecting an advanced understanding of anatomy, physiology, and pathology.

### **Fundamental Principles of Ayurveda-**

Ayurveda is based on the concept of the five elements (Panchamahabhutas) – earth, water, fire, air, and ether – which combine to form three basic bio-energies or doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Each individual has a unique constitution or Prakriti, determined by the predominant dosha. Health is achieved by maintaining a balance between these doshas through appropriate lifestyle choices and treatments. Vata (Air and Ether): Governs movement and is associated with bodily functions like breathing and circulation. Pitta (Fire and Water): Controls digestion, metabolism, and body temperature.

Kapha (Water and Earth): Provides structure and stability, governing aspects like growth and immunity.

### **Ayurveda in ancient India-**

The tradition of Ayurveda existed from the Vedas. Ayurveda has been mentioned in many verses of the Vedas (especially in Atharvaveda). Many diseases like Vata, fever, cough, diarrhea, leprosy etc. are mentioned in the Rigvedic hymns. Sushruta has mentioned about 1,100 diseases in his Samhita. He has described sub-types of many diseases like 26 types of fever, eight types of jaundice, 20 types of root related diseases etc. Ayurveda had established itself as an important subject in ancient times. Ayurveda was studied separately in ancient Indian universities. Ayurveda has been divided into eight parts- Shalya, Shakalya, Kaya Chikitsa, Bhutvidya,

Kaumaaramritya, Angad Tantra, Rasayan and Vajikarana. Famous interpreters of ancient Indian Ayurveda system are- Charak, Sushruta, Vaghbata, Dhanvantari, Madhava, Sarangdhar etc.

Indian medical science developed properly from 800 BC to 1000 AD. Atreya's medical knowledge was compiled by his disciple Agnivesh in Takshila. Later, in the first century BC, Charak summarized and organized it in 'Charak Samhita'. Varanasi was the main center for the study of surgery. Sushruta Samhita was compiled in the fourth century. There is lack of certainty about the period of Sushruta. Probably he was born in Varanasi in 800 BC. He is said to be a descendant of Vishwamitra. It is mentioned in Garuda Purana that he was a disciple of Divodas, the incarnation of Dhanvantari, and he completed his education in medical science under his guidance. Sushruta was a contemporary of the famous physician Atreya. Information about the initial form of Ayurveda is available in Sushruta Samhita and Charak Samhita. It is mentioned in these texts that the knowledge of Ayurveda was first received by humans like Bharadwaj and Divodas from the gods. It was compiled in books by his disciples like Agnivesh, Harit, Sushruta etc. Sushruta Samhita is a notable book of ancient Indian medical system. There is a lot of controversy among historians about its initial form. In Sushruta Samhita, many quotations from the compiled Samhita composed by the old Sushruta have been taken as is. Apart from this, he composed many original verses. Nagarjuna I is also credited with editing and revising the ancient version of Sushruta Samhita. Its period is fourth century AD. The original Sushruta Samhita was created much earlier.

Many texts of Ayurveda were written during the Gupta period. Sushruta Samhita and Charak Samhita describe the surgical treatment of diseases of all parts of the human body. Sushruta Samhita has about 120 chapters which have been divided into five sections- Sutrasthan, Nidanasthan, Sharir Sthan, Chikitsa Sthan and Kalpasthan. Sushruta has described many instruments used in surgery which were made of steel. These included needles, knives, tongs, perforators, scissors, atomizers, rings, needles etc. Many methods of tying bandages are also described in Sushruta Samhita. Methods of restoring dislocated bones are also found. Methods of amputation are largely similar to the present methods. Various aspects like eye problems, delivery related problems, stone formation etc. have been highlighted in Sushruta Samhita. Objects that had entered the body were taken out skillfully. Magnets were also used for this.

Charak Samhita is an important book of Ayurveda. It is a very ancient work, but on the basis of script it is considered to be of Gupta period. It is said in Buddhist texts that Acharya Atreya imparted the knowledge of Ayurveda to his disciple Agnivesh and Charak inherited the knowledge of Ayurveda from Agnivesh and compiled it in the form of a book, which is named 'Charak Samhita'. It is believed that this book of Acharya Charak was a re-edition of the medical book of Acharya Agnivesh. Charak Samhita had been translated into Persian and Arabic. It was translated into Arabic around 800 AD. The period of Charak can be considered to be around the first century AD. He is considered to be a contemporary of Kushan emperor Kanishka. Apart from Charak Samhita, the book 'Navneetakam' is also important from the point of view of Ayurveda. This book is a collection of doctor's prescriptions. These prescriptions have been taken from various texts. It describes

juices, powders, oils etc. Apart from this, diseases of children and their cures are also found in it. Vagbhata also wrote the famous book 'Ashtanga Hridya' on Ayurveda. It was written during the Gupta period. This book was written around the sixth century AD. It contains a summary of previous knowledge related to medicine.

Dhanvantari is also considered a famous scholar of Ayurveda. Some scholars consider him a member of the royal court of Chandragupta Vikramaditya. He was a man of extraordinary talent and had a versatile personality. Dhanvantari has been addressed by many names such as Adi Dev, Amarvar, Amryoni, Abj etc. Dhanvantari has been called the physician of the gods. It is said that Dhanvantari emerged from the ocean with Amrit in his hand as a result of Samudra Manthan. Dhanvantari's major contribution is in the field of surgical treatment of Ayurveda. Dhanvantari trained seven capable disciples in this knowledge. Among them, Sushruta is the only one whose system is still available. The study of Ayurveda was included in the curriculum of universities of the Gupta period. Ayurveda and astrology were taught in Nalanda University. Chinese traveler Itsing has mentioned eight branches of Ayurveda prevalent in India at that time.

In the seventh century, Ayurveda scholar Vagbhat wrote the books named 'Ashtanga Hridya' and Ashtang Sangrah. 'Madhavanidana' was written by Acharya Madhavakar of the eighth century, which is considered useful for disease diagnosis. Treatment of diseases with various medicines has been prescribed by Acharya Bund in the book named 'Vrindamadhava'. In the middle of the eleventh century, commentaries on Charak and Sushruta were written by Acharya Chakrapanidatta, 'Ayurveda Deepka' and 'Bhanumaati' respectively. Chakrapanidatta worked on the chemical therapy propounded by Nagarjuna and also wrote an independent book named 'Chikitsa Sangrah'. Among Indian Ayurveda scholars, the name of Sharangdhar of the twelfth century is taken with respect, 'Sharang Samhita' was his famous work.

## Future Directions-

### 1. Scientific Research and Evidence-Based Practices

Investing in research to validate Ayurvedic treatments through clinical trials and scientific studies is crucial. Collaboration between Ayurvedic practitioners and biomedical researchers can bridge the gap and create a robust evidence base.

### 2. Standardization and Quality Control

Developing standardized protocols for the preparation of Ayurvedic medicines, along with stringent quality control measures, can ensure consistency, safety, and efficacy. Implementing global standards for practice and products can enhance credibility.

### 3. Integrative Medicine Approaches

Promoting integrative medicine that combines the strengths of Ayurveda and modern medicine can offer comprehensive healthcare solutions. Training programs for healthcare professionals that include both systems can foster better collaboration.

### 4. Education and Awareness-

Increasing awareness about the benefits of Ayurveda through educational

campaigns and including it in medical curriculums can improve public perception. Providing accurate information about Ayurveda's preventive and therapeutic potential can attract more individuals.

## 5. International Collaboration and Regulation-

Working with international health organizations and regulatory bodies to harmonize standards and practices can help Ayurveda gain acceptance globally. Creating a framework for the international practice of Ayurveda can facilitate its integration into various healthcare systems.

## 6. Innovation in Product Development-

Leveraging modern technology to develop new formulations and delivery methods for Ayurvedic medicines can enhance their appeal and effectiveness. Innovations like encapsulation, controlled-release formulations, and digital health tools can modernize Ayurveda.

## Conclusion-

Ayurveda represents a rich tradition of medical knowledge that has evolved over millennia. Its holistic approach to health and well-being, focusing on the balance of mind, body, and spirit, continues to offer valuable insights and treatments in the contemporary world. As modern science increasingly acknowledges the efficacy of many Ayurvedic practices, this ancient system of medicine holds promise for contributing to global health and wellness in the future. In India, Ayurveda medicine progressed considerably under the patronage of benevolent rulers and religious institutions. A ruler like Ashoka was proud of the fact that he had made separate arrangements for the treatment of both human and animal species in his kingdom. Chinese traveller Fa-Hien writes that here religious institutions had established dispensaries where medicines were distributed free of cost. Indian doctors were experts in various diseases. Although due to the prohibition on contact with dead bodies, there was not enough progress in the field of anatomy and biology, yet Indians had developed an empirical surgery. Postpartum surgery was known, expertise in bone grafting had been acquired and doctors could fix nose, ears and lips destroyed, wounded in war or mutilated as a punishment by joining them again. Thus, Ayurveda science made remarkable progress in different periods of ancient India. In this field, Indian knowledge and science was also accepted and appreciated by foreigners.

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