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## Ayurveda: The Way of Life

Aswari Uday Bapat

Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal.

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the oldest traditions of knowledge from ancient India. Written references and manuscripts related to Ayurveda are available from the Vedic period. The two brothers called Ashvinikumaras are mentioned in Rigveda as the physicians of gods and experts in Ayurveda medicine. Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata are the three significant authors of Ayurveda whose texts are called the Brihat-trayee (the three great treatises). The word Ayurveda is defined as *Ayushah Veda* which means the science of life.<sup>1</sup> Ayurveda is the science to prevent disease. Thus, the aim of Ayurveda is to promote and preserve the health, strength, and longevity of the healthy person and to cure the disease in the ailing and afflicted.<sup>2</sup> Ayurveda contemplates upon such a lifestyle that prevents the occurrence of disease. In this way, Ayurveda is a way of life. It considers the change in time within a day and the change in seasons as well. This concept in Ayurveda is called *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya* respectively. This determines the diet and lifestyle regimens at specific times of the day and in specific seasons.

**The concept of three Doshas:** Ayurveda has the unique concept of three *Doshas*. The general translation of *dosha* is vice. But in Ayurveda these three *doshas* are bodily humor important for the formation of a body; they are *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*.<sup>3</sup> *Vata* is the energy of movement; *Pitta* is the energy of digestion or metabolism and, *Kapha* is the energy of lubrication and structure. These three *doshas* are found all over the human body and govern all physical and mental processes and the character of every individual is based on the combination of these three *doshas*. Generally, these *doshas* are in harmony, as a result, a man remains healthy<sup>1</sup> but if we eat the wrong food and do not follow the rules of the *doshas* for a longer time then it leads to the problems such as sleep and digestive disorders. Each *dosha* has certain ill effects. For example, *Vata* causes disorders like

sleep difficulty and problems in digestion as well as mental hyperactivity which may lead to anxiety. *Pitta* creates disorders such as gastritis, increase in body heat, difficulty in calm sleep, and masy bowel movements. *Kapha* creates obesity and lethargy which may lead to depression. These three *doshas* changes according to variations in the season. Thus, to balance these three *doshas* certain do's and don'ts are fixed in Ayurveda and called *Pathya*.<sup>4</sup>

**Pathya (Proper diet):** *Pathya* is a proper diet suitable to the region, time, and season which changes from person to person. *Pathya* for one person will not be the same for another one. It changes even with the same person depending upon various factors like age, physiological condition, condition of *doshas*, the location of his residence,<sup>5</sup> etc. While diagnosing the disease, which is termed *Nidana* in Ayurveda, it considers diet, lifestyle, environmental factors, and injuries as sources of any disease that overall leads to the imbalance of *doshas*. For a successful treatment, observing the rules and regulations of diet is considered very important. In many instances, the food itself is used as a curative measure in Ayurveda and hence prescribes specific diet patterns for the diseased conditions and also recommends certain prophylactic and interventional diets.<sup>4-6</sup>

**Easy Availability of Medicines:** Food is given utmost importance in Ayurveda. It is considered one of the three pillars of life (*trayopastambha*) among food, sleep, and abstinence.<sup>7</sup> Food is taken as a preventive as well as a curative measure. Ayurveda explains the medicinal quality and importance of food that are easily available around us. Ayurveda has documented the medicinal qualities of every food substance which are used on regular basis as a part of Indian cuisine like turmeric, ginger, garlic, cumin seeds, clove, curry leaves,<sup>8</sup> and so on and so forth.

The five thousand years old concept of Ayurveda deals with the regimens of a healthy

### \*Corresponding Author:

Asawari Uday Bapat

Director; Swami Vivekananda  
Cultural Centre  
Embassy of India, Kathmandu,  
Nepal

icc.kathmandu@gmail.com

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diet and also the lifestyles which include optimum exercise, good social conduct, and body purification therapies.<sup>9</sup> One who is conscious about their health should follow these simple and easy-to-follow yet important Ayurvedic Principles in their life.

**Ayurveda/The Life Science:** Ayu means life. Ayu or life is the conjunction of the body (sharira), senses organs (indriya), mind (satva), and soul (atma).<sup>1</sup> Ayurveda is the science of life and treatment, where treatment is possible only in the living. Only till the time body has a soul it is said to be living. It is true that, in man, the soul cannot exist without the body. Ayurveda describes Atma or soul as one among the nine *karana dravyas* as the cause of the origin of life.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Atma or soul is the life force in the body.

According to Ayurveda philosophy, the soul is indestructible, and free from any pathogenicity, provided the mind and body are in their healthy form. This means the existence of a soul in a particular body depends upon the physical condition of that body. The soul leaves the body at a stage it is unable to control the physical and biological processes and imbalances in three *doshas* within the body. A human soul under a healthy state of mind and body tends to be more spiritual and helps to communicate with divine energy. Therefore, the age-old practice of medicine from *Bharata* (India) not only thinks of physiological equilibrium but also the soundness of the mind or senses, soul, and spiritual contentment.

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