

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS for SEM 2, CVAC 2.2)

ANCIENT INDIAN MEDICINE (AYURVEDA)

Ayurveda is a traditional system of medicine from India focused on balancing body, mind, and spirit. It uses personalized diets, lifestyle habits, and herbal remedies to prevent illness and promote long-term wellness. Ayurveda, (an upveda of *Atharva Veda*), an indigenous ancient medical science of India, is more than 5000 years old. **The term *Ayurveda* is composed of two words, (*āyur/ayu*, "life" or "longevity", and *veda*, "knowledge"), is translated as "knowledge of longevity" or "knowledge of life and longevity".** Ayurveda therapies have varied and evolved over more than two millennia. Therapies include herbal medicines, special diets, meditation, yoga, massage, laxatives and medical oils. The transmission of medical knowledge was made from the gods to sages and then to human physicians. The *Sushruta Samhita* (*Sushruta's Compendium*), claims that this medical knowledge was derived from the teachings of **Goddess Dhanvantari**.

Many ancient works on Ayurvedic medicine are lost to posterity, but manuscripts of three principal early texts on Ayurveda have survived to the present day. These works are

1. **Charaka Samhita** (written in **Sanskrit**, by **Acharya Charak**, who was the physician in the court of **King Kanishka**).
2. **Sushruta Samhita** (by **Sushrut**, where cataract surgery and rhinoplasty are mentioned for the first time).
3. **Bhela Samhita** (where, much of the text is in form of a dialogue between the sage **Atreya** and his pupil Bhela, the author of the text.).

The Chinese pilgrim **Fa Hien** (c. 337–422 CE) wrote about the healthcare system of the Gupta empire (320–550) and described the institutional and scientific approach of contemporary Indian medicine.

Tridosha: Ayurveda treatises describe three elemental *Doshas*: ***Vāta*, *Pitta* and *Kapha***, and state that optimum balance of the *doshas* (bio energies or life forces) results in health, while imbalance results in disease. The three postulated elemental bodily **humours** (as per the Western concept) are equivalent of the three

doshas (Ayurvedic concept). The *tridosha*, are *vata* (air, which some modern authors equate with the nervous system), *pitta* (bile, equated by some with enzymes), and *kapha* (phlegm, or earth and water, equated by some with mucus). The ‘humours’ (*doshas*) may also affect mental health. Each *dosha* has particular attributes and roles within the body and mind. The natural predominance of one or more *doshas* explains a person's physical constitution (*prakriti*). Ayurvedic tradition holds that imbalance among the bodily and mental *doshas* is a major cause of disease. This concept of ‘balance’ is similar to the idea of ‘humours’ as mentioned in medical treatises of the Western world.

Food Intake Methods: Ayurveda, focuses on protecting the **Digestive Fire (*Agni*)** of the individual. Practitioners recommend eating freshly cooked, warm meals only when hungry, making lunch (at noon) the largest meal of the day as the digestive power (*AGNI*) is strongest when the sun is at its highest point. The person should eat slowly without distractions and leave a portion of the stomach empty for digestion. Food should be chewed well to mix it with saliva and help the stomach process it easily. Warm or hot foods stimulate digestion, while cold or iced foods weaken *Agni*. Water should preferably be stored in **copper vessels** for maximum benefit to the body. Small sips of **warm water** are recommended during the meal if needed, but large glasses of ice-cold water that put out the digestive fire, are to be avoided.

Disease Management Elements:

Ayurveda manages disease by restoring balance among the body's bio-energies (*doshas*), digestive fire (*agni*), and tissues (*dhatus*). The management framework relies on root-cause identification which is a four-layered therapeutic system (*chikitsa chatushpada*), internal purification and long-term lifestyle alignment. Successful disease management requires the coordinated function of four essential elements: **Physician (Bhishag** :A trained doctor with deep knowledge of classical medicine and diagnostic skill), **Nurse (Upastha**: A knowledgeable caregiver who supports the patient and executes daily care), **Patient (Rogi**: The participant who shows clear symptoms of illness and follows the care plan), **Medicine (Dravya**: High-quality, properly prepared herbal or mineral remedies).

Core Therapeutic Strategies include the following:

Shodhana (Purification): Intensive bio-cleansing through *Panchakarma* (such as therapeutic vomiting or purgation) to remove deep-seated toxins from the body.

Shamana (Pacification): Palliative care using herbs, fasting and physical activities to bring aggravated *doshas* back to a normal state, in order to restore balance through herbal formulations, dietary regulation and lifestyle adjustments.

Rasayana (Rejuvenation): Therapies and medicines designed to rebuild tissues, boost immunity and promote longevity and functional recovery.

Along with this, Lifestyle and Regimen Modifications are achieved through **Ahara** (Tailored dietary rules/food habits based on the body type and the specific imbalance of *doshas*).

Vihara (Lifestyle changes and physical activities recommended to correct the imbalance of *doshas* in order to lead a healthy life).

Dinacharya (Daily Lifestyle Management, specifying that that natural cycles like waking, sleeping, bathing, working, meditation etc. are important for health).

Ritucharya: (Seasonal adjustments which require modifying diets and habits as the weather changes through the year by adopting structured daily and seasonal routines to prevent health setbacks).

Wellness (Application of Botany and Medical Science):

Ayurveda achieves wellness by merging plant science (botany) and healing arts (medical science). It uses roots, leaves, and bark of trees as natural medicines. Ancient texts like the *Sushruta Samhita* match plant parts with human body needs to prevent and cure sickness. The practitioners identify specific healing herbs, trees and shrubs by their scientific traits and use leaves, seeds, roots and flowers to create powders, medicinal oils and pastes to aid treatment. In India, around 25,000 effective plant-based formulations are used in traditional and folk medicine. Some of the plant based ingredients are:

a) **Neem (Nimba):** It has strong health alleviating activity, used as a tonic and astringent that promotes healing. Its usage in Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years has proved its detoxifying properties and has shown most beneficial effects for the circulatory, digestive, respiratory and urinary systems.

b) **Karela (bitter gourd)** has been widely used in Ayurvedic medicine. It contains Gurmarin, a polypeptide considered to be similar to insulin and has a strong sugar regulating effect. Helpful for people with diabetes.

c) **Maricha (black pepper)**: The black pepper is one of the most important spices which is widely used to amplify the body's ability to absorb nutrients contained in the food and aid the digestive process.

d) **Sunthi (Ginger)**: It is considered an essential element in many Ayurvedic formulas as it enhances absorption and prevents gastrointestinal side effects. It is a very common spice which is used in Ayurvedic medicine to prevent nausea, improve digestion and help bowel movements.

e) **Triphala**, a herbal formulation of three fruits, Amalaki, Bibhitaki, and Haritaki, is one of the most commonly used Ayurvedic remedies for immunity and well-being.

Ayurveda views health as a fine balance of body, mind, and spirit. Its main goal is to keep people healthy by using natural daily routines, proper food choices and mental tranquillity. The Indian government supports research and teaching in Ayurveda through many channels at both the national and state levels and helps institutionalise traditional medicine so that it can be studied in major towns and cities. The Government of India set up the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** in 2001 to serve as a repository for formulations from Indian medicine, such as Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha medicine. In India, promotion of Ayurveda is undertaken by the Ministry of **AYUSH** (promoting Ayurvedic, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy as alternative medicine systems) through a national network of research institutes.

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