

Exploring science behind Ayurveda and its potential to transform the future medicine

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Ayurveda is the oldest system of life science and health care in the world, its antiquity going back to the ancient Vedas. Amazingly Ayurveda has remained in an unbroken professional practice for thousands of years. The classical knowledge of Ayurveda has successfully descended to the present times in the form two sets of authentic texts with three books each, popularly called 1. Brihatrayi and 2. Laghutrayi. The Brihatrayis i.e. three big books – 1. Caraka Samhita, 2. Susruta Samhita, 3. Samhitas of Vagbhata are pre Christian texts while the Laghutrayis i.e. three small books – 1. Madhava nidana, 2. Sharangdhara Samhita, 3. Bhavaprakash, are the texts of medieval period. These texts have been developed over a period of thousands of years and are now easily accessible through their contemporary multi-language editions.

Ayurveda is based upon its own fundamental principles, its own holistic biology, materia medica and diagnostics. The entire basic science of Ayurveda is structured on its quantum logic and pronature holistic biology operating through the theories of *Triguna*, *Tanmatra*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Tridosha*, *Dhatu*, *Srotas*, *Ojas*, *Agni* and *Ama* which collectively forms a unique format of biology with quantum logic. Ayurveda puts greater emphasis on promotion of health and prevention of disease than mere disease and cure.

Ayurvedic medicine has three most important features which pedestal it as very distinct system of life science and health care with potential to transform the future healthcare system globally. These features are: 1. The Pronature approach, 2. The Holistic approach, 3. The Personalized diagnosis and treatment strategy.

1. Ayurveda believes in the doctrine of *Swabhaoparamavada* i.e. self healing suggesting that evolution of a disease, its manifestations and remission (spontaneous or therapeutical) are the functions of nature and are self designed in protection of the organism. Hence a physician should always respect the biological responses and should never act against nature. The overall defensive approach is always welcome over any kind of aggressive offensive approach in disease management. For instance the immune-enhancing strategies are always better than the risky antibiotic chemotherapy and similar other unsafe interventions.
2. The next important feature of Ayurveda is its Holistic approach where the individual living being (microcosm) is considered as a continuum of the universe (macrocosm). In the entire attempt of diagnosis and treatment in Ayurveda the patient is considered a total entity encompassing body-mind-spirit together further connected with the cosmic forces. Hence the patient is to be considered in this sense of “whole”, inclusive of microcosm and macrocosm. This approach is easy to understand in terms of modern quantum physics as opposed to classical one-dimensional Newtonian materialistic view point.

This is why Ayurveda encompasses the entire spectrum of life style management, dietetics and soft nutraceutical medications as the basic matrix of the therapeutic intervention. The patient is “whole”, the disease is “whole”, the goal of the cure is “whole”, and hence the treatment modality has also to be “whole” to be truly holistic as described by Ayurveda in its triple approach of health care through *Daivavyapasaraya*, *Yuktivyapasaraya* and *Sattvavajaya* strategies in therapeutics.

3. The third important unique feature of Ayurveda is its personalized health care strategy. Ayurveda believes that no two patients are equal as each one has distinct *Prakriti* and *vikriti*. Hence each individual patient even if suffering from one common disease, is to be tackled in an individualized manner (*purusam purusam viksyat - Caraka*). The *Prakriti* denotes the genome of an individual. As genome differs, the response of treatment will also differ in different individuals. Thus unless the treatment modalities are pharmacogenomically tested the therapeutic response is not guaranteed. This scientific fact which was described in Ayurveda thousands of years ago is being now posed also in modern biomedical sciences today.

Thus Ayurveda at least theoretically is a full science while conventional modern medicine is still a half science and is now fast converging to these age old ideas. Hence there is a great need of intense interface of Ayurveda with modern biomedical sciences to allow the growth of the third superior dimension of biomedicine today. However for pursuing such a scientific strategy we need to develop new research methodologies to be created afresh through intense interface of Ayurveda and the science of today. Hurriedly borrowed conventional methods of research may not succeed to unfold the complex theories and practices of Ayurveda which are based on entirely a different understanding of the structure and function of human body-mind system.

Biography

Ram Harsh Singh was born on Jan 10th, 1942 and graduated in Ayurved, Medicine and Surgery (ABMS) from Banaras Hindu University (1961). He did Ph.D. (1969) and D. Litt (1982) under the coveted supervision of Padmashri Prof. K. N. Udupa. He is Fellow of the National Academy of Indian Medicine and Jewel Member of All India Ayurveda Academy. He has produced over 100 M.D.s and 30 Ph.D.s under his guidance, many of whom are holding top rank positions in the country. He has published 20 important books and 200 research papers in national and international journals. He is on the Editorial board of several national journals. He has been the Member of National Commission on History of Science and is the Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences. He is the Chairman of AYUSH sector Innovation Council constituted by Govt. of India and is the member of 12th FYP Steering committee of Planning Commission on AYUSH. He is the recipient of the prestigious Ram Narayan Sharma National Research Award (2005) carrying cash prize Rs 1.50 Lakh. The President of India for outstanding contributions in the field of Ayurveda, Hari Om Ashram Award, IASTAM Award, Jivak Award of Asian Medicine, Piyus Pani Award, Life time achievement and Kasturba Oration Award of MGIMS, Platinum Jubilee Oration Award of Indian Science Congress and Distinguished Alumni Award of Banaras Hindu University. He has widely traveled all over the world to promote Ayurveda globally.

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