

## Chapter 2

# Basic Principles of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is composed of two words: *Ayu* is that which is always moving, indicating a dynamic dimension. Therefore, *ayu* means life and *veda* means science, hence the name means ‘science of life’. It deals with creation as a whole, with a special emphasis on the biological living being. The principles of Ayurveda are holistic.

Ayurveda, the ‘science of life’, has emerged out of the philosophies of ancient India. Western philosophy and contemporary psychology have promoted Cartesian dualism of the mind and body and scientific parsimony. The specialisations in the field of medicine are seen as hallmarks of scientific advancement. Ayurveda is anchored in Samkhya and Nyaya philosophies, which have anticipated the most advanced concepts of contemporary science. As there is no compartmentalisation of the various disciplines, the medical system of Ayurveda follows the *Samkhya* tradition in its scientific approach. The major Ayurvedic treatises are supposed to be compilations of the works of the sages Charaka, Sushruta, Vagabhatta the younger and elder and Kashyapa (*Charaka Samhita*, 400–200 BC, *Astanga Sangraha* of Vagabhatta, 500 AD, *Sushruta Samhita* 600 AD), especially for children’s diseases. Ayurvedic practices incorporate bio-psycho-social domains of human existence, adopting a holistic approach.

However, most of the theoretical constructs and medical practices in Ayurveda are based on clinical experience gained over the centuries. According to the *Charaka Samhita* (C.S., ca. 400–200 BC), the Ayurvedic theories of aetiology are based on Nyaya *darsana* (one of the major schools of ancient philosophy in India) that presents four scientific methods of proof:

1. The word, based on the experience and intuition of the sages (*shabda*)
2. Direct observation (*pratyaksha*)
3. Inference and deductive logic (*anumana*)
4. Experimentation (*yukti*)

**Table 2.1** Relation between the body and *panchabhuta*

Predominance of elements	Body elements/factors <sup>a</sup>
i. <i>Vayu</i>	<i>Vata</i>
ii. <i>Agni</i>	<i>Pitta</i> , <i>artava</i> (menstrual blood) and intellect
iii. <i>Ap</i>	<i>Kapha</i> , <i>rasa</i> , <i>majja</i> , semen, sweat, breast milk and <i>ojas</i>
iv. <i>Prithvi</i>	Muscle and faeces
v. <i>Agni</i> + <i>Ap</i>	<i>Rakta</i> (blood)
vi. <i>Ap</i> + <i>Agni</i>	Urine
vii. <i>Prithvi</i> + <i>Ap</i>	Fat
viii. <i>Prithvi</i> + <i>Vayu</i>	Bones

<sup>a</sup>These terms are explained in the subsections below

Source Gopinath (2013)

The physical body is made of *panchamahabhuta*, or the five prime elements, namely, *prithvi* (earth), *ap* (water), *tejas* (fire), *vayu* (air) and *akasha* (sky). Every physical object and energy in the universe is a composite of these five physical elements. These elements are present in different proportions in different structures and functions of the body as well. Gopinath (2013) very succinctly describes the relation between the body and the five elements (see Table 2.1).

*Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* are the three vitiating principles (*doshas*) that are composed of the five elements. *Vata* is predominantly *vayu* and *akasha*, *pitta* consists of *tejas*, and *kapha* of *ap* and *prithvi*.

Ayu (life) is defined as a configuration of *sharira* (body), *indriya* (sensory modalities), *satya* (purest form) and *atma* (self) (C.S.). Life is a period when these four aspects function together in cooperation and harmony. In ‘death’ these aspects disintegrate and depart. Ayurveda elucidates this integration, continuation and disintegration by preservation and promotion of health in a healthy individual, and prevention and management of disease in an unhealthy individual.

## 2.1 Some Key Concepts in Ayurveda

### 2.1.1 Svasthya (*Health*)

*Svastha*, or a healthy living being, is the one who possesses the equilibrium of *doshas* (the triad of physiological functional elements), with adequate functioning of *dhatu*s (body tissues), *agni* (metabolic enzymes and digestive functions), *mala* (metabolic by-products and excretory functions), and gratification of *indriya* (sensory modalities), *manah* (mental faculty) and *atma* (self). Ayurveda deals with the complete person and not with the disease alone—the reason it is known as the ‘mind-body medicine’. It primarily aims at health while focusing on the art of living.

Health is not just the absence of sickness. It is defined as *prasannatmendriy-amanah*, that is, physical, mental and spiritual health where mind and spirit are in a *prasanna* (happy or content) state. The key to health is a complete psychosomatic equilibrium that makes it essential for us to be aware of the elementary rules and laws of living. This health care involves the entire being at its optimal physical and psychological levels in *samyaka yoga* (adequate contact or association), together with *kala* (season), *artha* (sensory modalities) and *karma* (actions), and is the main definition of health. According to Charaka, correlation of three states, *ati* (hyper), *hina* (hypo) and *mithya* (perverse) engender disease states in humans (C.S.).

General principles of health education in Ayurveda indicate a lifestyle for the maintenance of health. Ayurveda specifies three aspects: being aware, imparting and implementing. The first aspect in health is cultivating health awareness. A health-conscious individual knows how his body functions, how diseases are caused, how they should be prevented to maintain and promote health, to nurse oneself in illness and how to offer similar services to others when needed. The second aspect is participating in or cultivating social responsibility for health. Health is considered a social element where the attempt of an individual to remain healthy succeeds only when the society as a whole is healthy. Therefore, he must impart health education to others according to their learning ability. The third most important aspect is that of cultivating and living a lifestyle by adopting correct dietary habits, avoiding excess and following self-discipline that promotes health. Thus, health education is based on a common set of principles with diverse applications aimed at the maintenance of health for persons of different occupation, habits, place, time, etc. which comprise the lifestyle and behaviour of an individual. The primary motto of Ayurveda is the preservation and promotion of health. It lays stress on inculcation of the methods which are briefly given below.

*Dinacharya*, the daily regimen, is the period after getting up at the beginning of the day till going to bed at the end of the day. The first method is getting up early in the morning. For the ones whose lifestyles differ due to unavoidable circumstances, Ayurveda advises specific diet and mode of living conducive to their occupation.

*Ritucharya*, the seasonal regimen, is for a specific season. The year is divided into six seasons. Climate variations of different seasons have an extensive impact on the body and mind. Alterations in food and habits are considered a must during seasonal changes.

*Sadvritta* is the moral code of conduct recommended for health. Health connotes both physical and mental states in an individual. Linking one's thinking and living with moral standards is considered necessary for harmonious interaction with the society.

The outcomes of the recommended methods in Ayurveda harmonise the mental and the spiritual states, resulting in regularisation of physiological and metabolic activities in the body.

Charaka has described *upastambha trayas* (supporting pillars) (C.S.), namely, *ahara* (diet), *nidra* (sleep) and *brahmacharya* (celibacy). The state of health is balanced on these three supporting factors.

*Ahara* (diet) is considered to be one of the three important pillars of life. Diet is defined in different ways into 20 types of food. The quality of food, the mode of preparation, combination and quality of diet, habits of the person who has to take the diet and the time of taking the diet are stressed upon. Eighteen types of incompatible diets are delineated. Important factors in the selection of diet are *gandha* (smell), *rasa* (taste), *sparsha* (presentation), texture, etc. *Ahara* can also promote *satvika*, *rajasika* or *tamasika* temperaments.

*Nidra* (sleep) is the second supporting factor of good health. Charaka considers it essential for the toning up of the body and mind, balancing of the *dhatus* (bodily tissues) and to give them *bala* (strength). Of the six types of sleep, *ratri svabhavaprabhava* or night-time sleep is the only natural and healthy sleep, whereas the other five types indicate sleep abnormality. *Sushruta* has condensed six types of sleep into three types. Vriddha (Elder) Vagabhata's six types of sleep more or less resemble the one described by Charaka. Sleep for adequate duration alone is considered useful. *Diva svapna* (day sleep) is approved for children and only during summer for adults, but contraindicated for people of *kapha prakriti*.

Brahmacharya is the third pillar. *Brahma* means to increase, expand or rise. *Chari* means follower. *Brahmachari* is a person who follows precautions and regimens for the growth of his body. This word also means *veerya rakshanam* (protection of semen). According to Ayurveda, *Brahmacharya* helps to keep the body young and energetic and to maintain and prolong youthfulness, vigour and vitality of the body. Hence, sexual indulgence should be minimal. *Yuvavastha* is the state of energy and vitality in the body. Basic regimes are recommended for the maintenance of its prolonged state.

### 2.1.2 Tridosha (Triad of Constitutional Functional Correlates)

The three biological units of the living body responsible for its total functions that include physical physiological functions are called *tridosha*. These three physiological correlates are products of the *panchamahabhuta* (five physical elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and *akasha* of which every physical object and energy in the universe is a composite). The *tridosha* are: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. These control voluntary and physiological functions of body movements, and support the body in a normal and healthy state when in equilibrium. They are susceptible to impairment or imbalance. In an imbalanced state they may disturb structural or functional elements of living beings, causing disorders. Thus, the *tridosha* play an important role in the aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

The first element of the *tridosha*, *vata* (wind), is of five types, which symbolises movement and is responsible for rotating *dosha* and helping in its transformation. The second element, the *pitta* (bile), is of five types. It helps in digestion and formation of psychological thoughts and concepts and thereby helps

transformation. The third element, *kapha*, keeps the resultant cohesion and all the transformations intact at the right place. It functions as an adhesive for the body. *Vata* is an initiator, promoter of biological activity, unstable and has no physical attributes. *Pitta* is responsible for generation of body heat and certain psychological attributes of an individual. *Kapha* is attributed to physiological and psychological features such as heaviness, softness, coolness, stability and sweetness. In short, *vata* is activity, *kapha* is inertia and *pitta* is the balance between these two. The balanced condition or an undisturbed steady state of these three factors is known as *arogya* (health). However, the *tridosha* does not always maintain a state of equilibrium or stability. The imbalance or disharmony of any of the *dosha* results in *dosha roga*, or pathological conditions, resulting in disease and decay.

## Dosha Prakriti

The three *dosha prakritis* are described in detail for adults, as seen below. But sub-typing of children under predominant constitutional types is a very difficult task, hence avoided. Each *dosha prakriti* is defined by certain *lakshana* (physical, physiological and psychological traits). These are present in different proportions in every individual. A person having a maximum number of traits of any of the *tri-dosha* is supposed to belong to that category. The traits of each adult constitution that indicate the basic psychological inclinations or proneness are given below in brief. Every individual has the predominance of one of the following personality types. I am paraphrasing from the original descriptions in the texts as they may appear unconnected and rather convoluted.

**Vata Prakriti:** Individuals of this constitutional type are lean, unattractive, have rough and dry body surface, scanty or sparse hair, harsh, weak, broken and indistinct voice, unsound sleep, dislike for anything cold, have creaking joints while sitting, standing or walking, brisk movements, prominent veins, possess little strength and are incapable of severe exertion. They are infecund, vain, jealous, cruel, thievish, impulsive, ungrateful, talkative, hasty, easily excitable, easily subjected to fear, inconsistent, unsteady in friendship, fond of music and dance. They have quick comprehension, poor memory, habit of nail-biting, teeth grinding in sleep, a few friends, little wealth, have short lifespan.

**Pitta Prakriti:** Individuals who belong to this constitutional type have unpleasant looks, wrinkled skin, soft, yellowish complexion, copper-coloured lips, fingernails, palms, soles, palate, tongue and eyes, freckles, moles, dark spots, small eruptions, baldness or grey hair, loose limbed, quick setting of old age, susceptibility to stomatitis, keen digestion, copious urine, sweat and stools, unpleasant body odour, aversion to warmth, moderate strength, moderate sexual prowess, helping disposition, possession of wealth, moderate longevity. They are irritable, quarrelsome, indomitable, seldom overcome with fear, intelligent and have good memory.

**Kapha Prakriti:** Individuals of this constitutional type have oily, smooth, firm, compact, well-developed body, cheerful face, melodious voice, fond of sweet taste, good appetite and digestion. They are strong, enduring of pain or fatigue,

slow in activities, slow in formation of opinion, respectful towards superiors, obedient towards preceptors, seldom agitated or upset, broad minded, liberal, altruistic, grateful, self-controlled, steadfast in enmity or friendship, are true to their word and well-versed in science and arts. They have patience, selflessness, amiable disposition, sexual propensities that are above normal, possession of large fortune and prosperity, fine health and long lifespan.

A person with the predominance *kapha* is supposed to have *uttam prakriti* (superior personality and constitution), the one with the predominance of *pitta* is considered to have *madhyama prakriti* (medium constitution), and the one with the predominance of *vata* is supposed to have *heena prakriti* (inferior constitution).

### 2.1.3 Triguna (Three Temperamental or Personality Traits)

Ayurveda mentions three *maha guna* (primary cosmic properties) as components of mind. They are called *guna* because they are considered secondary, as *avayava* (parts) of the mind, and not as qualities or properties of the mind. Of these, *triguna*, the first one is *satva* (purest possible property of the three *gunas*). The latter two, *rajas* (energy) and *tamas* (inertia) are temperamental correlates responsible for various psychological states and vulnerability to disturbances. *Satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are three constituents of the psychological personality as well as *vikriti* (psychopathology). The basic temperamental personality traits are stable. The impairment of *rajas* and *tamas* results in mental disorders. Every individual possesses a unique personality, making each person mentally and physically different. These influence the *manas* (mind) in the same way as *tridosha* do. In a normal individual, the *triguna* maintains equilibrium amongst themselves. The predominance of any of the *triguna* decides the quality of the activity of an individual, whereas their imbalance or disharmony causes abnormality. *Satva guna*, being pure, never gets permanently impaired or deranged. But *rajas* and *tamas guna* when increased in varying degrees, alone or together, act as two disturbing elements causing various types of mental abnormalities, according to the Atharva Veda.

Traits of *manasika* (temperamental) types of nature in adults are paraphrased as follows:

#### Satvika Prakriti

An individual of this temperamental type is truthful, self-controlled, virtuous, kind, forgiving, righteous, mentally and physically pure, theist, intelligent with good memory, studious, genius, empathetic, unperturbed by the good or the bad, sorrows or joys, and likes or dislikes, free from desire, passion, anger, hate, conceit, desirous of doing the right things, fond of music, dignified, attractive and

well-proportioned in appearance, handsome, courageous, energetic, wealthy, luxurious and has all pleasures. Seven types of *satvika* personalities delineated are: *Brahma, Arsha, Aindra, Yama, Varuna, Kaubera* and *Gandharva prakritis*.

### **Rajasika Prakriti**

An individual of this type of temperament is valiant, cruel, authoritarian, intimidating, terrifying, ferocious, brave when angry but timid when calm, pitiless, unkind, indulgent in self-adulation, opportunist, envious, impulsive, exaggerated in emotional expressions, speech, behaviour, sorrows or sufferings, sexually over-indulgent, unclean in habits, cowardly, excessively somnolent and indolent, seeks luxurious environment, abnormal recreation and food, inordinately fond of flesh, gluttonous, has indiscriminate indulgence in worldly affairs, excessive desires, disinclination for action or work, strongly attached, but unstable in responses. Six types of *rajasika* personalities described are *Asura, Rakshasa, Paishacha, Sarpa, Praitya* and *Shakuna prakritis*.

### **Tamasika Prakriti**

An individual of this temperamental type has the following disposition: He is non-intellectual, unwise, somnolent, timid. He has non-persistent likes and dislikes, disgusting behaviour and dietary habits, greed for food. Three types of *tamas* personalities described are: *Pashava, Matsya* and *Vanaspattya prakritis*.

Individuals of the latter two temperamental types are considered mentally imbalanced or unstable. They may not suffer from any specific disease but are susceptible to mental disorders with trivial causes. *Shariraroga* (physical disorders) are the effects of the loss of balance of the *dosha* (three constitutional correlates), whereas *manasaroga* (psychological disorders) are the effect of the loss of balance of the *gunas* (three temperamental traits). Their treatment is through the determination of personality type of every individual. It is, therefore, essential to assess the personality type of the patient before commencing any treatment.

#### **2.1.4 Sapta Dhatu (Seven Basic Body Tissues)**

*Dhatu* includes the physical constituents that support, sustain and nourish. They are bound with body organs and hence considered to be structural constituents. *Dhatu* are stable and intact (S.S.). Nutrition is essential for the system and for the structural framework for physiological mechanisms and psychological functions are constituents of *Dhatu*. They remain in equilibrium in a healthy individual in a specific measure. Their imbalance results in various disorders and if ignored or if not remedied, could prove fatal. *Dhatu* are made of *sthayi* (permanent) and *asthayi*



(temporary) constituents. The permanent constituents consist of basic tissues that support the body, provide structural unity and are lasting. The temporary constituents nourish, sustain and maintain the permanent constituents. The *tridosha* (*kapha*, *pitta*, *vata*) influence the constituents through their activities. Disturbance in any one or two of the *tridosha* are manifested in both types of the body constituents and the *dhatu* get impaired. The *dhatu* called *dushya* are those that are prone to getting weak, affected, impaired, corrupted or contaminated at the physical level.

The seven bodily constituents are *rasa* (chyle/a thicker pale yellow fluid, consisting of lymph and finely emulsified fat that is taken up by the tiny lacteal vessels from the small intestines during digestion), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (flesh), *medas* (fat), *asthi* (bone), *majja* (bone marrow) and *shukra* (sperm). They have specific functions in the body. *Rasa* nourishes the body, strengthens blood and enlivens the mind. Blood nourishes flesh, gives bright and clear complexion and invigorates life processes. Flesh promotes body strength and nourishes fat tissue. The body unctuousness comes from fat tissue. Steadiness of the limbs, nourishment of the bone tissue and perspiration are caused by it. Support to the body and nourishment to bone marrow is given by the bone tissue. Bone marrow occupies bones, gives body strength, promotes sperms or ova and indirectly interest in life, enhances health and sexual interest, courage in men and *shonita* (menstrual fluid) in women. Specific disorders are the result of increase or decrease in the quantity of each of these constituents. The *upa-dhatu*, the secondary constituents, are the by-products of the seven constituents, namely, breast milk, menstrual blood, tendons, blood vessels, fat, ligaments, teeth, hair and *ojas* (vitality of all functions).

*Mala* (waste products or excretions) are the by-products of *dhatu*. All the properties of *dhatu* are applicable to *mala*. Excretions in their normal measure are related to normal state of health. Pathological conditions, where there is a change in the volume, colour, compactness, smell, etc. of *mala*, are indicative of disturbances. *Dharaniya vega* and *adharaniya vega* (stagnation of excretions) lead to disorders like constipation and retention of urine. These are treated with cold or hot properties in disturbed states depending on their quantity, location and negative role, to restore the equilibrium of *dhatu*. Clinical examination of stools, urine and sputum are done before arriving at a diagnosis, and prove the importance of *mala* in Ayurveda.

### 2.1.5 Vyadhi (Disease) and Its Aetiological Factors

*Vyadhi* is a condition that causes discomfort to the body or mind. *Vyadhi* is produced by three factors, namely, *asatmendriyartha-samyoga* (incompatible contact of the sense organs and the sense objects, leading to stressful transaction), *prajna-paradha* (errors of judgement or wilful excesses in conduct) and *parinama* or *kala* (the impact of Time in terms of seasonal variations and ageing).



The main aetiological factors of a disease are *hina* (inadequate or poor), *mithya* (improper or perverse) and *ati* (excessive) association, contact or union of *kala* (season), *artha* (object of senses) and *karma* (activities or functions).

Disequilibrium of the *doshas* gives rise to *rogas* (disorders). In these, the disorders included are *nija* (endogenous syndromes arising from the body itself, having internal aetiological factor), *sadhya* (curable) and *asadhya* (incurable) types. They are further subdivided into *susadhya* (easily curable) and *krichra* (curable with difficulty), *yapya* (controllable though persistent) and *anupakarma* (non- responsive to any type of therapy, therefore, fatal).

### ***Janapadodhvamsa Rogas (Epidemics)***

This term indicates an overall large spread, global phenomenon of serious, infectious diseases. One of the causes for *janapadodhvamsa* and also other diseases is *kala* or season. Prevention of epidemics is possible through the prevention of *kala-dushana* (seasonal excesses). Season is considered as *parinama* (that which keeps changing) (C.S.), that is, responsible for the qualitative and quantitative changes in objects or living beings. For example, a mango when very small is bitter. As it grows it changes in size, shape and tastes sour. But when it ripens, it tastes sweet. When seasons change in extreme, *dravyas* (drugs) change to toxic materials, causing *roga* (disorder). Variation in seasons is called *dushitakala*. *Dushitakala* may be due to *hinayoga* (less than normal), *ati yoga* (aggravation) or *mithya yoga* (abnormal or *opposite* nature of the season, e.g. heavy rainfall in summer).<sup>1</sup>

## **2.2 Treatment of Disorders**

Ayurveda is deferred as the holistic knowledge of the harmony of the body, senses, psyche (*sattva*) and soul (spirit). The main medical text, *Charaka Samhita* (C.S.), was originally named *Agnivesha Tantra* (Gopinath 2013). *Charaka Samhita* consists of eight *sthanas* (sections) and these are:

- i. *Sutra* (principles)
- ii. *Nidana* (aetiology, symptomatology and pathology)
- iii. *Vimana* (standardisation of measures)
- iv. *Sharira* (body)
- v. *Indriya* (signs of ensuing death)
- vi. *Chikitsa* (therapeutics)
- vii. *Kapha* (specific formulation)
- viii. *Siddhi* (procedures of treatment)

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<sup>1</sup>Section 2.1 has been mainly drawn from the author's book (Kapur and Mukundan 2002).

The examination of the patient is through observation, seeing, touch, palpating, body temperature, examination through sound, tongue (often inferred as in the case of diabetes). The six tastes are sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent. Each taste is a composite of two elements. For example sweet is earth + water. In addition, the olfactory sense is also used for diagnosis.

### 2.2.1 Chikitsa (*Treatment of Disorders*)

Treatment or remedial measure encompasses all those aspects of remedy that are the subject matter of and utilised as a part of treatment from the start for the cure of a disorder. The scope and application of treatment as a means to cure disorders, in Ayurveda, is very vast. The type and the nature of the disorder determines the mode of therapy, the selection and application of which must be done very carefully. Charaka describes three types of treatments, viz., *daiva vyapashraya* (divine therapy), *yukti vyapashraya* (rational therapy) and *satvavajaya* (psychotherapy) (C.S.). The treatment here includes not just drugs, medicines and diet but also non-drug applications like *satvavajaya chikitsa* (psychotherapy). It is interesting to note that right from conception, anything prescribed and advised to the mother for the maintenance of her health and the healthy growth of the foetus is a part of the treatment. Every remedy is not considered a cure because it gives temporary relief and can cause recurrence. On the other hand, *upashaya* (cure) is described as an act of healing, a process or the method of preserving and a step in treating the disease. Continuation of the same remedial drug without a break for a long duration, with additional drugs of the same property, for the maintenance of the state or healing as the next step in treatment, is known as cure. Therefore, treatment encompasses many steps or stages. Drugs that give quick relief can thus be called remedies and not treatments.

Knowledge in the areas essential for treating a person include health, disorders and their symptoms, causes of changes in the human system and diagnosis for determining treatment, and remedies for the disorders. Before commencing any treatment, importance should be given to the type of disorder. It is important to verify whether the disorder is *nija* (endogenous, arising from internal cause like the imbalance or aggravation of *dosha*) or *agantu* (exogenous, caused by trauma or external factors). The *agantuja* types sometimes need urgent medical intervention, which, if not rendered in time, can lead to complications or deterioration in the condition or even death of the patient. These are called the *ashutva* (emergency) disorders. Head trauma, severe bleeding due to accident, sudden environmental changes, injuries caused by foreign bodies like thorns, wooden substances, pointed stones, dust, sand, bones, metals, metallic substances, etc. are examples of this type. *Shalakyas* (surgery) is also recommended for some of these conditions. The branch of surgical operations pertaining to acute conditions is termed as *ashu-atyayika* (disorders of emergencies) and Charaka, Sushruta and Vagabhata have discussed these in detail.

Diseases can thus be located in the body and mind. They afflict one or both. Correct diagnosis can be made through an attempt to understand the imbalance that has caused the illness or infection in a particular area. It is advisable to consult a treating physician in case of doubt or chronic symptoms to decide upon correct medication or other types of therapeutic interventions.

Certain diseases, generally *vata vikara* (type of disorders), manifest themselves immediately after premonitory symptoms like *apasmara* (epilepsy), whereas the ones which are slow in their formation are grouped as *manda vikara*. Neglect of an insignificant condition or its wrong or ineffective medication leads to a third group of disorders in which the disease grows rapidly, worsens the condition of the patient and manifests abruptly. For example *pratishyaya* (coryza) can get converted into *kasa* (cough) to further worsen as *shvasa* (disorders of breathing).

There are six stages in every disease before its final manifestation (S.S.). Sushruta advises adequate precautionary measures, care and treatment at the first stage of a disease. Administration of improper or lack of treatment at this stage can lead the disease to enter the second stage and then the next, complicating the signs and symptoms, causing distress and endangering the life of a patient. This needs immediate treatment. Any mode of therapeutic intervention that provokes, aggravates or creates another disease is not the right intervention. Right treatment should cure the disease completely without creating a new one. This is similar to the principles of Hippocrates in Western medicine, 'First, do no harm'. *Tiryak gata* (certain types of disorders) should not be given *ashukari chikitsa* (instant and fast-acting, 'quick relief' treatment) as it may prove to be non-conducive to the patient and cause harm. In *agantu vyadhi* (exogenous disorders) like wounds caused by sudden physical trauma, fevers and poisoning, instant acting treatment is essential. Sushruta recommends surgery in the management of certain exogenous disorders.

### Fast-Acting Drugs in Ayurveda

Ayurveda advocates using the drug in 'whole' state in its natural integrity and design, as it consists of certain 'balancing agents' that channel and control the bioavailability and the action of the active ingredients. Human body identifies the 'whole' drug in natural state as 'self', hence it is neither rejected nor does it produce negative effects. The demerit of 'whole' drug is its slow absorption as it is crude in form, which makes it necessary to introduce it through gastric routes only. It takes due time to produce its effects on the human body. Hence, the necessity for fast-acting drugs.

Some of the fast-acting drugs may be self-prepared, which are simpler and act promptly. The form of preparation influences the rate of absorption of a self-prepared, fast-acting drug. Liquid preparations act faster than solid ones. For example, the water-soluble and transformed (*paka*) content of *kashaya* (decoction) is readily absorbed into the system. *Kshara* (alkalis) and *lavana* (salts) are other examples. Other preparations absorbed rapidly are through *ghritam* (medicated clarified butter). *Taila* (medicated oils) are also prescribed though less frequently.

Chewable forms like thick extracts of plants with sugar and syrups act fast as they have an access to direct circulation and are absorbed prior to gut absorption. These are better utilised in respiratory disorders. Preparations in alcohol form, viz., *asava* and *arishta* are absorbed rapidly. *Madyam* (alcoholic beverages) have a specific property, *vyavayi*, that enters general circulation. Drugs that have *tikshna* (irritant) and *sukshma* (fine) properties are absorbed rapidly. To acquire efficacy, certain *samskara* (processes) are necessary. These properties are then attributed to the drug, for example grains popped into *laja* (or popcorn) acquire light and fine properties. *Shaktu panam* (a drink prepared) of popcorn gives instant energy.

Vehicles for the administration of drugs and acquisition of faster actions are known as *anupana*. They are *madhu* (honey), *sarkara* (sugar), *madyam* (alcohol) and *visham* (poison). Of these, only honey and sugar are used for infants and children.

Routes for administration of drugs are many, with oral being the major one in Ayurveda. This route has the disadvantage of slow absorption as it has to go through the digestive system. To promote the rate of absorption and rate of action, other suitable routes in accordance with the site of the disease are selected. For example, after fomentation, local application of a hot poultice or a rubefacient or counterirritant ointment or oil may provide a faster relief for an inflamed joint as compared to the oral administration of a drug. Another important route for faster action is through the nose for various disorders. Inhalations through nose are absorbed quickly through lungs into systemic circulation. *Basti* (enema) also provides fast absorption through rectum and quicker results.

### Time of Administration of Drugs

In acute states of disorders where instant relief is desired, Charaka advises frequent administration of medicine in small doses. Drugs that penetrate deeper tissues or have specific affinity with particular tissues in the body should be selected. They prove to be more effective in disorders caused by derangement of specific pathogenic tissues. Hence, the need for accurate diagnosis of disorder and its stage of pathology. These drugs enhance or reduce the existing rate of body functions. The speed of body functions is dependent on the natural rhythm and the speed of the human body. Since stretching beyond the capacity of the body is not advisable, *kshara* (alkalis) and *visha* (poisons) are not recommended for prolonged use.

Ayurvedic approach teaches not just to avoid disease but to proactively develop and maintain a healthy state by simple *dinacharya adhaya* (daily regimen) (VV). This is applicable to children above three years of age.

*Vyayama* (exercise) should be avoided by those who have *vata* and *pitta* disorders, indigestion, by children and the aged. *Udvardhana* (massage) for children is only a light massage. *Abhyanga* is a process where oil made from vegetable seeds or sesame is rubbed on the whole body, especially the head before taking a hot water bath. The oil has a beneficial influence on the whole system through *shrota* (internal channels). The oil is first applied to the head and later to the whole

body. Massage should be practised daily as it prevents ageing, relieves weakness, promotes good vision, increases body physique or growth, longevity, good sleep, colour and complexion and smoothness to skin and the body becomes strong. It should not be practised during indigestion, just after meals and when one has *kapha roga* like asthma and cough.

Ayurveda recommends a daily bath in the morning. It cleanses the body, clears the skin of dirt and itches, reduces heat in the body, relieves drowsiness, fatigue, thirst and inflammation, lowers the effect of *visha* (toxins), and is helpful in reduction of body fat. It is also considered important in the improvement of eyesight. Besides its hygienic virtue, the other virtues of bathing are that it gives strength, increases appetite, invigorates digestive process, nourishes body, enhances lifespan, *ojas* (vitality) and semen and cheers the mind. Bathing implies bathing over the head. Different temperatures of water used for bath are said to have different effects on the body. Cold water is generally recommended, however, *koshna* (tepid) water may be used in winter and spring. Habitual bathing in hot water is considered bad for the eyes but after physical strain hot water is considered advantageous. Tepid water bath is beneficial for the *tridoshas*. It pacifies the *dhatu*s. Bathing with very hot water aggravates *pitta* and this results in the impairment of health, hence is considered harmful. Cold water bath is recommended for those who suffer from biliousness, burning sensation, vertigo, fainting spells, toxic states, blood impurities, hemoptysis, oedema, putrefaction of food in the abdomen without digestion, parching of mouth and throat and hangover caused by excessive intake of alcoholic beverages. Cold water bath must be taken only in the morning. It corrects disturbances caused by *vata* and *kapha*. Head bath or oil bath is contraindicated in disorders caused by the aggravation of *kapha*, fever, indigestion, constipation, chronic diarrhoea, dysentery, loss of consciousness, consumption, asthma and disorders of head, eyes, ears or nose.

*Panchakarma* (five procedures) are processes of periodical cleansing and conditioning of the body, as the pre-therapeutic measure in most disorders along with *rasayana* (rejuvenation) and *vajikarana* (aphrodisiac) therapies. *Panchakarma* for every season are recommended. The six seasons have an impact on the physiological and metabolic activities of the body. Even slight negligence can create seasonal disorders. To avoid the disorders, *panchakarma* is recommended in the mid-period of spring, monsoon and autumn seasons. The six seasons are *vasanta ritu* (spring) from 16 March to 15 May, *grishma ritu* (summer) from 16 May to 15 July, *varsha ritu* (monsoon) from 16 July to 15 September, *sharada ritu* (autumn) from 16 September to 15 November, and *hemanta ritu* and *shishira ritu* (late autumn and winter) from 16 November to 15 March. Treatment methods vary for persons with disorders. *Panchakarma* is done as a part of the daily regimen. *Snehana* (oleation) and *svedana* (fomentation) are preparatory process for other therapies.

The *Panchakarmas* are:

- *Vamana* (emesis): At the end of oleation and sudation therapies, emetics may be administered.
- *Virechana* (purgation therapy): This too may be done at the end of oleation and sudation. Emesis and purgation therapies vary according to the individual requirement.
- *Basti* (enema): *Sneha* (oil) and *niruha* (medicated) and these two are administered alternatively with oil enema preceding the *niruha* enema.
- *Nasya karma*: Local nasal oleation and sudation is followed by inhalation of prescribed medicine.
- *Raktamokshana* (purification of blood).

There are indications and contraindications for the use of every procedure in different disorders. The discriminative use of each depends upon ten conditions that are prerequisites of treatment. Of these, only purgation therapy in a mild form is done for children.

To summarise the key concepts, the three constituents are *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. These have been interpreted differently amongst the Ayurveda scholars as well as in the other systems such as Siddha, Unani and Tibetan medicine. These states control the functions of the biological parameters, metabolic activity and preservative functions. These are derived from the five elements, namely, the *panchamahbhutas*. *Vata* is the dynamic principle which governs the utilisation of energy by the various cells and organs for their anabolic (energy producing) and catabolic (energy destroying) activities. It also controls the movements of *pitta* and *kapha*, thus regulating all the functions and activities of the body. The mood states, breathing (inspiration and expiration), voluntary actions such as talking and walking, circulations of fluids in the body, excretion of waste products from the body are attributed to *vata* (C.S.). *Pitta* represents *tejas* (fire) and produces physical and mental processes that are *satvik* in nature. In its ambit come the functions of vision, digestion, heat production, hunger, thirst, softness and suppleness of the body, cheerfulness and intelligence. *Kapha* constitutes the cellular and intracellular structure of the body and maintains the internal environment. Maintenance of smooth working joints, integration of structure of the body along with mental processes of courage, vitality, knowledge, etc. While the *tridhatu/tridosha* is predominantly physiological, the *triguna* construct highlights the psychological constituents of *rajas*, *satva* and *tamas* traits. The *doshas* are called *dhatu*s within their normal limits while in their vitiated conditions lead to symptoms of pains, inflammation, etc. Waste products such as perspiration, faeces and urine are called *malas*. The harmonious functioning of the *dhatu*s leads to health, while disharmony leads to ill health. Disharmony is caused by unwholesome diet and undesirable conduct. Maintaining harmony and balance is the key to health according to Ayurveda. The above *tridhatu* and *triguna* are mainly the physiological and psychological constituents that determine the person's constitution or *prakriti*. As

the diseases are manifestation of combinations and predominance of the physical and psychological triads, no disease can be considered purely physical or psychological.

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Psychological Perspectives on Childcare in Indian  
Indigenous Health Systems

Kapur, M.

2016, XXI, 265 p. 17 illus., 8 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-81-322-2427-3