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### Review

## AYURVEDIC CONCEPTS IN VEDAS

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### Abstract

*Ayurveda* and Veda have a relation in depth *Ayurveda* is not a merely medical system. It is a sacred science of life. It helps the human being to lead a happy life with pure body and mind. The Vedas date back to about five thousand years. They preach the philosophy of life. *Ayurveda* is considered as *Upaveda* of *Atharvanaveda*. Vedas are ancient doctrines of great knowledge on earth. Vedas are collections of mantras. It reflects the living habits of ancient people, their thought, customs etc. Vedas also contain the methods and measures, adopted for health care and treatments. The Ayurvedic concepts explained in each veda is discussed in this paper.

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**Key words:** *Ayurveda*, *Veda*, *Upaveda*, *Atharvanaveda*

### 1.1 Introduction:

*Ayurveda* literally means "Science of life and longevity." *Ayurveda* is one of the traditional systems of India. It is the complete knowledge for long life. It is the oldest divine science describes the health and diseases. It also describes drugs, diet and disciplines, which promotes positive health and cures diseases.

Besides, dealing with principles for maintenance of health, it has also developed a wide range of therapeutic measures to combat illness. These principles of positive health and therapeutic measures relate to physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare of human beings.

The hymns, the mantras and the medical information contained in the Vedas were contributions of *Rishis* and *Munis* or sages, over a period of time. Many of these sages were learned saints who devoted their life to understanding the world.

#### 1.1.1 Definition of Ayurveda:

It is that knowledge of life which deals elaborately and at length with conditions beneficial or otherwise to the humanity, and, to factors conducive to the happiness, or

responsible for misery or sorrow besides indicating measures for healthful living for full span of life<sup>1</sup>.

According to the ancient books of knowledge, health is considered as a prerequisite for achieving the supreme ends of life consisting of righteousness, wealth, artistic values and spiritual freedom. Preventive and curative aspects of diseases are considered as important components of the concept of positive health.

*Ayurveda* becomes one of the oldest systems of health care dealing with both the preventive and curative aspects of life in a most comprehensive way. A perusal of its several classical treatises indicates presence of two schools of Physicians and Surgeons and eight specialties. These eight disciplines are generally called "*Ashtanga Ayurveda*" and are,

- *Kaya Chikitsa* - Internal Medicine
- *Kaumar Bhritya* - Paediatrics
- *Bhoot Vidya* - Psychiatry
- *Shalakya* - Otorhinolaryngology and Ophthalmology
- *Shalya* – Surgery

- *Agad Tantra* - Toxicology
- *Rasayana* – Geriatrics
- *Vajikarana* - Eugenics and aphrodisiacs

### 1.1.2 Ayurveda in Vedas:

The true history of *Ayurveda* starts from the time of the Holy books, the Vedas. Ancient mythology contends that the concept and essence of *Ayurveda* was revealed by the creator of the world himself – Lord Brahma.

There are four Vedas. They are:

- *Rig Veda*
- *Yajur Veda*
- *Sama Veda*
- *Atharvana Veda*

Every *Veda* has an *Upa-Veda* of its own order:

- *Rig Veda* - *Dhanur Veda* (Deals with Archery)
- *Yajur Veda* – *Gandharva Veda* (Music Science)
- *Sama Veda* – *Stapatya Veda* (Architecture)
- *Atharvana Veda* – *Ayurveda* (Science of Life)

The rituals of paying homage to the five great elements are explained in *Rig Veda* because these were the Gods that should take care of the universe. In *Yajur Veda*, the procedures were outlined. If there was change in the five great elements such as drought the people of that age knew how to activate change by praying to the Rain God, the Fire God. They understood and paid homage to the importance of Fire.

In *Sama Veda* all the stanzas and slokas were written down. These were the prayers they used to chant. All Indian classical music comes from this *Veda*. They noticed the singing (*Achamana*) had an effect on wellbeing and it is what we understand today as vibrational medicine.

In *Atharvana Veda*, there is more mention of the medical uses of the plants. Many of these plants were offered to the Gods such as *Brahmi* which is good for the mind. They were using these plants and knew what each plant was good for. They understood the disease process. They also knew internal anatomy of the animal kingdom. From all this information they understood how physiology is related to our anatomy.

*Atharva Veda* contains the principles of healing on which *Ayurveda* is based. The physicians of ancient India were well versed not only in human anatomy, but also well versed in anatomy of goats, horses, and elephants.

References about micro-organisms (*krimi*) are available in all Vedas. Classification of several herbs based on their morphology and medicinal properties has been noticed in the Vedas. Classification of metals and minerals has also been

mentioned. Some drugs and their uses are also noticed in Vedas. It is shown in Table – 1.

The Vedic literature contains various descriptions about medicine and their uses some preparations found in Vedas are as under.

Soma Rasa is the first ever swarasa extracted juice *kalpana*. About Soma the ninth section of *Rig Veda* is fully dedicated in its praise but nothing is written about the preparation of Soma Rasa. In *Rig Veda* the annotation 6-68-10 descriptions of different liquors is found. The process of preparation is not given. There are various descriptions about the foods grains cereals, the milk preparations and more.

For example *dhana* (roasted food grains) *saktu* (flour of roasted food grains), *parivaap* (roasted food grains), *dadhi* (curd), *amiksha* (boiled and clotted milk) are some of the preparations. Some preparations like *ksheera paaka* (medicated milk), *takra* (curd milk) *navaneeta* (butter), *payasya* (cheese), *tokama* (germinated paddy grains), *madhu* (honey) are also found in the Vedas.

### 1.1.3 Rasa Shastra in Vedas:

References to the use of metals in Indian literature are available from the pre-Vedic times. The various uses of metals and minerals at home and for commercial purposes are available in the Vedas. The *Atharvana Veda* dedicates one chapter to working with lead, to make vessels, bracelets etc. and to be applied externally in the form of collyrium.

In *Ayurveda*, *Charaka*, *Susrutha* and *Vagbhatta* place more stress on herbal drugs. The period between the 8th and the 10th centuries AD is considered the golden age for alchemy. Some books written in the 10th century talk about people consuming mercury as a medicine.

Alchemy (*Rasa Shastra*) in *Ayurveda* slowly gained importance in the 11th century because of advantages in dosage, methods of administration, preparation and swiftness of action. Books dedicated to alchemy started getting published from this period on. Earlier alchemists paid greater importance to converting base metals into precious metals such as, gold and silver.

The usage of metals like *Tamra*, *Swarna* and *Kamsya* is seen in *Rig Veda* (1/56/1, 1/122/2). Here *Ayas* is referred to as *Tamra*. *Lohitayas* refers to *Tamra* and *Krishnayas* refers to *Loha*. In *Yajur Veda* 18/13 and *Atharvana Veda* 11/3/7 – 8 reference of six dhatus is available. In *Yajur Veda* the references of *Swarna*, *Ayas*, *Syama*, *Loha*, *Trapu* and *Seesa* are found. In *Atharvana Veda* 1/13/2 – 4 there are references about *Rajata*, *Lohitayas*, *Syamayas* and *Seesa* are noticed<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.1 Ayurveda in Rig Veda<sup>2</sup>:

The time period of *Rig Veda* is roughly between 1700–1100 B.C.

- Reference of three *doshas* of the body can be found in Rig Veda. It also mentioned about five elements of the earth (*Pancha bhootas*) and the equilibrium of the three *doshas* is called as health.
- The names of the three *doshas* are mentioned as *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*.
- Air, fire and water have been explained as the symbolic representative of three doshas of the body.
- Descriptions about the body and diseases like tuberculosis, cardiac diseases are available in *Rig Veda*.
- *Rig Veda* also deals with treatment of animals (*Mriga Ayurveda*).
- *Atharvana Veda* explains in detail about the mythological background of *Ayurveda*.
- Anatomical structures, digestion and metabolism, circulatory system, pathology, herbology, general medicine, metals and minerals, their proper applications, surgical methods have all been described.
- The signs and symptoms of abnormal labour and puerperal disorders have been discussed.
- Identification and classification of plants is available in *Atharvana Veda*. This *veda* classifies the plants based on form, size, colour, morphology and habitat

*Rig Veda* explains the usage of natural therapies like sunrays, fire, air, water for the prevention of diseases. This is shown in Table – 2.

### 2.1.1 Ayurveda in Yajur Veda:

It is estimated to have been composed between 1,400 and 1000 B.C. There are two primary versions of *Yajur Veda*, *Sukla Yajur Veda* and *Krishna Yajur Veda*.

- References about the anatomical structure of human beings and animals have been widely discussed.
- Morphological features of important herbs which are used in rituals have been discussed.
- The 12th chapter of *Sukla Yajur Veda* explains about the medicinal properties of the herbs, their applications, collection and preservation.

### 2.1.2 Ayurveda in Sama Veda:

Its earliest parts are believed to date from 1700 B.C.

- References are seen about the use of natural therapies
- *Sama Veda*, records the number of bones in the human body as 360.
- *Sama Veda* also explains about the process of digestion, assimilation, metabolism and nourishment of the body.

### 2.1.3 Ayurveda in Atharvana Veda:

The time period is 12<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.

### Discussion:

According to Hindu Mythology, the Universe was created by *Brahma*. He created Vedas by capturing knowledge from the four directions. The Vedas contain knowledge about the Universe. Hence it contains knowledge about life also. So, *Brahma* is regarded as the *Adya* (first) *Guru* of *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* subjects are dealt not only in Vedas, but also in *Aranyakas*, *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* also. *Garbhopanisad* mentions about *doshas*, *dhatu*, and growth of foetus.

A structured presentation or making a treatise on *Ayurveda* had taken place only between 2nd century B.C. and 10th century A.D. The most popular and authentic *Samhitas*, which are still in use, are *Charaka Samhita* and *Susrutha Samhita*. *Charaka Samhita* deals mostly with the General Medicine (*Kaya Chikitsa*) and *Susrutha Samhita* deals mostly about the Surgery (*Shalya Tantra*).

*Agnivesha Samhita* (*Charaka Samhita*) was well accepted and was propagated as the backbone of *Ayurveda Samhita*. The *Sushruta Samhita* was written by *Sushruta*. It deals with a complete systematic approach to *Shalya Kriya* (General Surgery) and *Shalakyia Tantra* (Eyes, Ear, Throat and Nose). The period of *Sushruta Samhita* is considered to be around 500 B.C. just before Buddhist Period.

### Conclusion:

*Ayurveda* is the science, which tells about the ways and measures to be adopted for sustaining and extending the span of life. According to the ancient books of knowledge, health is considered as a prerequisite for achieving the supreme ends of life consisting of righteousness, wealth, artistic values and spiritual freedom. Preventive and curative aspects of diseases are considered as important components of the concept of positive health.

These principles of positive health and therapeutic measures related to physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare of human beings. Thus *Ayurveda* became one of the

oldest systems of medicine dealing with both the preventive and curative aspects of life in a most comprehensive way.

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