

# SOME CHALLENGES IN AYURVEDIC RESEARCH

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes total health for all. Practiced since the Vedic period in India, it is based on the most ancient propositions of the Indian Rishis, who, according to Puranas, acquired this knowledge from Devine sources. The very word 'Ayurveda' means superior knowledge about 'Ayuh', which actually means the state of integration of the physical body consisting of the five sensory organs, the five organs of action, the mind and the invincible life force, which is called 'Prana' by Indians.

*Aayurasmin vidyatenenavayurvedathi ityaurvedaha*

The above definition of Ayurveda expressly implies that it not only helps in the amelioration of diseases but generates in the body sufficient immunization mechanism for preventing their resurgence, thereby making the man stronger, better and healthier. Such a thing is possible in Ayurveda because it identifies the human body with nature through the Panchabhootas. No other system of medicine has this dual advantage, which makes Ayurveda a unique prescription for a completely disease – free society. The western world, which has so far blunted the progress of Ayurveda by a strong torrent of money power and materialism, is now slowly coming round to absorb and assimilate this ancient wisdom and is currently supporting heavy investment in R&D to 'modernize' this knowledge. It is the duty of the Indian people and the Indian government to keep abreast with modern science and enliven and popularize Ayurveda by removing misunderstandings and misconceptions in its theory and practice, before the West attempts to export our knowledge back to us in a 'refined' form. If Ayurveda has to be reinvented and reintroduced in India for a healthy society, Indian scientists are better qualified and Indian environment is better suited to do so, I-SERVE has conducted several seminars and discussions among contemporary and traditional scientific intelligentsia in the subject of Ayurveda and came to a conclusion that an evidence based investigation of Ayurveda must be taken up at the application level with tangible public and government support. This is one of the main objectives of I-SERVE, to which the Principal Investigator affiliated.

The present R&D proposal has the limited objective of studying the effect of supportive medication (Anypaam) and preventive medication (Pathyam) in the role of curative medication (Oushadham) for treating selected digestive disorders for which Ayurveda has a definite conclusive cure and for which other systems of medicine has less than satisfactory remedy.

## MOTIVATION TO THE PROPOSAL.

Rural and semi-urban India is characteristically poor both in monetary terms and in respect of civic amenities such as safe drinking water, sanitation and personal hygiene. It is estimated that over 80% of the people in these areas suffer from one or other digestive system

disorders. Prominent among them are water borne diseases like jaundice and Amoebiasis, and life style diseases like hyperacidity. Even though modern allopathic treatment provides relief in these cases, it is quite well known that once the medicines are stopped, the symptoms reappear, and that repeated medication often requires a stronger medicine until the patient stops responding to the most potent medicine available. On the other hand, successful Ayurvedic treatment of such diseases is gaining popularity to such an extent that even allopathic doctors have begun to prescribe it along with their own brand of medicine. There is a subtle danger and illegality in this practice as Ayurveda is not a part of modern medical curriculum. Besides, ancient Ayurvedic texts have invariably described how a particular disease has to be treated, how medicines are to be prepared and how the recovery of the patient has to be followed, they are mostly silent on how the medicine works. For this reason, Ayurvedic practice continues to be an art, a variant art at that, even though it is based on sound ancient wisdom. This proposal is motivated by the need to remove this variance in practical Ayurveda and uncover its unified scientific basis.

### AYURVEDA VIS – A VIS MODERN MEDICINE

The modern medicine, popularly known as allopathic system, is symptomatic and essentially treats the patient in the person rather than the person in the patient. The body and the mind are therefore disconnected and unbound to each other. In this system, the body forms the primary, and often the only, target for medical remedial measures and the treatment consequently localized. As long as the medicine is present the symptoms recede to the background and once the medication is stopped, the symptoms reappear with more vigour. The classic example is that of fever fighting drugs. Even though this approach provides quick relief in acute and severe cases, the real problem escapes scrutiny at least temporarily. However, in area of diagnostics, modern medicine has progressed significantly so that in an emergency precious life saving time is not lost in identifying the disease.

The primary disadvantage of Ayurved lies in its diagnostic methods which are completely based on the sensory examination of the sick person. They are subjective and often unreliable except in case of experts. Over the ages, they remained an art in the hands of a few individuals, who are reluctant to pass the experience even to their progeny. An example is Nadi Sastra.

Ayurveda treats the person in the patient rather than the patient in the person. According to Ayurveda Dosha, Dhatu and Mala are three qualitative parameters, which determine the physical state of health in a person.

#### *Dosha – dhatu – mala moolam hi shareeram*

Doshas are three: Vaatha, Pitta and Kapha. In a healthy person, they are supposed to be in Sama state or equilibrium, even though this equilibrium state may differ from person to person in the sense that a predominantly Vaatha person and a predominantly Kapha person may be equally healthy and so on. In a healthy person, these three Doshas work in perfect unison to produce energy from food through a sequence of seven Dhatu prakriyas (actions). These seven Dhatu prakriyas produce respectively seven Dhatus, namely, Rasa, Raktha Mamsa, Medo, Asti, Majja and Shukra, each of which has a specific function in the body. This sequential process also produces three kinds of wastes called Malas – muthra, mala and sweda, which leave the body as separate streams. The uniqueness of Ayurveda is that the

tridoshas, Vaatha – Pitta-Kaphas, are not confined to only the human body; they attributed to all food, plant and other materials in nature as well as time of the day, day of the moon-month, season or Ritu of the year and era; they may vary with the person's age as well as the religion to which he belongs as summarized the following sloka.

*Kaala budhyoundriarthanam yoga mithava nayaticha*

*Iyastrayanam vyadhounam vividhi hethusangraha*

*(from Ayurveda system by Sengupta; original source is different)*

Religion wise and country wise availability of medicinal substances have greater potency to cure the diseases suffered by people of the region or country.

*Yasmin deshe hiyo jathaha*

*Tajjam tasyaushadham hitham*

If a person is used to a certain type of food, after relief from the disease he has to go back to the same kind of food.

*Satmyam hryasu balam datthe*

*Naathi dosham cha bahasi*

Any or all of these factors can disturb the equilibrium and cause Vishama state in the tridoshas at any point of time while the Dhatu prakriyas are taking place in the body resulting in generation of lower energy and higher Mala, hence leading to illness. Ayurveda has recognized the connection of all organs of the body through blood circulation as evident from the following sloka.

*Samvarthamanam hridayam samavisayatpunaha*

*Santhatya bhojya dhatunam parivrithistu chakravat*

Therefore any imbalance in the tridoshas are transported through blood circulation to other parts of the body and because of the sequential nature of the Dhatu prakriyas, the imbalance can become more and more embedded deeper into the body to remain hidden. Cure of a disease at Shukra level is more difficult and complicated than at Rasa level. Ayurveda recognizes that whatever may be malady, the whole body mind system, that is the Aayuh, is eventually covered by it, unless treated. This is done through a three-fold prescription of Aahara (food), Vihara (life style) and Oushadham (medicine). By this the Vishama Dosha state in the body of an ill person to the Sama Dosha state to make him healthy again. Since Ahara and Vihara are part of the remedy, and since they differ considerably from person to person, all persons suffering from the same disease can not and should not be treated in the same way.

These concepts indicate that Ayurveda is not a universal treatment procedure and does not work for every body, every where and every time, making R&D in Ayurveda very difficult and challenging.