

**AYURVEDA – A HOLISTIC SCIENCE****GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI***Narayana Gurukula, Fernhill – 643 004, Nilgiris, India.***Received: 10 April, 1991****Accepted: 12 May, 1991**

**ABSTRACT:** *Bing a holistic medical system, Ayurveda is unique in its approach to the study of diseases. It also has the potential of giving rise to a new psychotherapy in which devices of bhakti, yoga and Vedanta can be ably incorporated.*

In the West, the Greek people were pioneers instituting a system of medicine originating with Hippocrates (460 – 360 B.C). In India, the hoary past of Ayurvedic medicine cannot be easily traced because of the nature of our rich oral traditions. However, we do know that the history of the *Materia Medica* of Ayurveda is as old as the Vedas. The *Rik Veda* (prior to 4500 B.C) which is our oldest sastra, described 67 plants. The legendary figure of Dhanvantari and vedic rishis like Atreya and Agnivesa are all mentioned as the theoreticians of ayurveda. In the later days, there came more historically known figures like Caraka, Susruta and Vagbhata. The Chinese people trace their medical sciences to Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen which means the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine.

The Nei Ching is the classic on internal medicine and is attributed to Huang Ti. Like Dhanvantari of India, we do not know whether the Yellow Emperor was a mythical personality, but he is said to have lived from 2697 – 2597 B.C. 2000 years before Lord Buddha. The main exponent of the emperor's medicine was Chi'Po. The sciences developed in Arab countries also has a prehistoric origin. Compared to these system's of medicine. Dr. Christian Friedreich Hahnemann's science of

Homeopathy is a most recent development – being presented to the world only in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first edition of his *Organon of Medicine* was published in the year 1810. In all these medical sciences, great reverence is shown to human life, and it is considered a divine gift-having its origin in the very cause of manifestation.

The human body and its subtle organic infrastructure and functional abilities mainly depend upon the biophysical devices that have gone into the structure of the organism. Like a medicine, the body also has wear and tear. Even the slightest malfunction and dysfunction is to be attended to with urgency, and immediate measures are to be taken to rectify any derangement of the system that governs the organism. Though the normal life span for human beings is about 100 years, it can be considerably shortened when there is infringement on natural laws, invariably, this will lead to disease and death. The psychophysical and biospiritual term that is granted by nature for any living being is called *ayus*. Thus, Ayurveda is the science of longevity. However, the life of human beings on earth are not merely to prolong our existence like a vegetable, but to accomplish the realization of values which are dear to mankind. Like the medical sciences

developed in other countries both East and West, Ayurveda is a positivistic science based on measurable and ascertainable psychophysical facts. Even then, its main basis is spiritual. Even though India is viewed by many western nations as a third world under developed country, she has developed some of the most highly sophisticated, cultured and exact worldly sciences, as well as spiritual sciences. Thus, the science of Ayurveda looks into the spiritual foundations of life and the quality of life that is lived in socioeconomic, ethical, moral and spiritual environments both by individuals and communities.

We have this most beautiful and equally complicated cosmos attributed to the creation of God. And, an equally amazing creative replication of it is held in the mind of every individual human being however humble or august his position among society. At least part of the civilized world is created by man, literally with the powder of his two hands. In accordance with his individual understanding and collective vision and personal talent and cooperative function, man has demonstrated the mechanical and social engineering that have gone into fashioning this world. Thus man takes advantage of the benevolence promised by God's world – improving upon nature by making it for mankind advantage. In this endless confrontation, almost every person comes across the irrefutable experience of his spirit being crushed, his enthusiasm shattered, and his physical and moral skills challenged. Thus, at every level of man's encounter with nature, he is battered and bruised, committing him to either his sick bed or death bed. It is to meet this contingency that every culture developed its science of healthy living.

Much before a physical action is programmed and carried out, it is rehearsed

in the consciousness of man. This trial rehearsal is presented like a mini-theater in which the stages of life are acted out. Thus, much before man gets into the arena of action, he is exposed to the problems of mind which are sometimes so grievous that they can effect the structural and functional efficiency of the body. According to the Indian physician, it is misguided passions that are the origin of disease. Every stimulus whether external or internal can rouse the passion of human beings. So naturally, the passions in the green room of human drama are to be tackled before nay treatment is to be given on the surface. This aspect met with the notice of Chi'Poof China, Atreya and Agnivesa of India, Hippocrates of Greece, and Hahnemann of Germany. The basic medical texts of India, *Caraka Samhita*, *Susruta Samhita* and the *Astange Hridaya* treat man as a whole person in whom the most material aspects and spiritual illuminations are looked upon as part and parcel of life, and yet, for more than a thousand years, Ayurveda has failed in treating the mind of man which is the first to be exposed to disease.

Before presenting the case of mental disease in the *Caraka Samhita*, several diseases of pollution and decay of the human organism are considered. It is not until Ch.9 of the *Caraka Samhita* that the subject of mental diseases are presented under the section described as *Unmada Cikilsitam*. It is here that the pioneer physician Atreya describes the cause, nature, and cure of mental disease. In India, food is considered to be the origin of life, hence, diseases are also directly related to the food one consumes. For this reason, treatment is also to be given through the means of nourishment. Atreya commences his study with a discussion of unwholesome food, rotten or putrefied food, and unclean food. He notes that food or drink that wrongly stimulates can result in

abnormal behavior, therefore, treatment lies in the renormalization of one's system. This had led to a whole world of food supplemented by pharmascopic nutrients and psychotic stimulants to which man is generally drawn.

One special consideration given in the Science of Ayurveda is that opposite tendencies can originate from the same cause, hence, the wide variance in the physical reaction to the same stimulus. This aspect is studied with greater accuracy at the chemical level by in an amazing tracing of original causes by Hahnemann and his disciples. To mitigate the grossness of administering chemicals, modern western medicine has developed the device of psychotherapy to treat mental diseases. This balancing in modern medicine could easily

have been adopted and developed in both Ayurveda and Homeopathy. As the roots of Indian medicine lie spread out in spiritual science, Ayurveda is at an advantageous position to develop an excellent psychotherapy which until now has unfortunately never been attempted. No medical science had really advanced in the analysis of mind and its relationship with body more than in the Organon of Hahnemann which has later elaborated upon and beautifully exemplified by Dr. James Tyler, Kent and others. My appeal to the scholars and practitioners of Ayurveda is to exploit the pharmacological potentials of medicinal herbs to the maximum and also side by side develop a psychotherapy into which devices of *bhakt*, *yoga* and *Vedanta* can be ably incorporated.