

## Innovative Views

## Ayurpathy: A modern perspective of Ayurveda

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Over the last few decades, popularity of Ayurveda has increased several folds not only in India but abroad as well. More than 200 Universities throughout the world are now running the courses of Ayurveda. The situation of Ayurveda in its native country, that is, India, is suffering with dichotomy of thoughts. There are two streams of scholars of Ayurveda. One is those who believe in the principle of *aptopadesh* and are strong supporters of Ayurveda in its original form. They also believe that their faith on Ayurveda and its products is validated by the fact that despite onslaughts by Mughals and Britishers, the system has survived due to its own inherent strengths and fundamental principles. This perception convinced them to believe that there is no need for scientific validation of Ayurveda or its products because they feel that usefulness of Ayurvedic products can always be substantiated on the basis of their traditional use. This thinking is exhibited by current Indian regulations as well, for example, vide Gazette Notification dated 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2010, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of AYUSH, New Delhi, giving the conditions of license, classical Ayurvedic medicines have been exempted from both safety and efficacy studies.

On the contrary, there is a stream of stakeholders and equally strong supporters of Ayurveda who believe that although whatever has been written in the ancient Ayurvedic text books might be correct, there is a need to understand that for over thousands of years geographies, environment, weather conditions, and soil composition have changed so much, that chances of mutation in the medicinal plants also cannot be ruled out. This stream believes, therefore, that there is a need for scientific scrutiny and validation of ancient Ayurvedic claims in the language that is understood by today's world with scientific temper.

Earlier Vaidyas were preparing the medicines at a small scale for their patients in limited volumes. Now the advent of commercialization has brought with it the need for ensuring the mechanisms of consistency of raw material from lot to lot and ensuring batch to batch consistency to provide the same efficacy of the Ayurvedic products over a period of time. Probably, understanding the requirements of enacting batch to batch consistency, Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India was constituted with a view to lay standards for raw materials and finished products. Pharmacopoeia is a book of standards providing the tests of purity, strength, and accuracy. The Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India has been relying on various Ayurvedic organoleptic, physicochemical and pharmacological attributes of herbs, namely, *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and *Prabhava*. For centuries, the proponents of Ayurveda have also been relying on

these various attributes of herbs. However, although Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India has given *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and in certain cases *Prabhava* of herbs, it has not given any standard test procedures to evaluate the same thus mentioning of these Ayurvedic attributes redundant for Pharmacopoeia. However, it has given the standard test procedures for other physicochemical parameters, chromatographic tests, assays, heavy metal tests, and so on.

To the best of our knowledge after 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, that is, after Bhavprakash, Indian Ayurvedic specialists have hardly provided *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and *Prabhava* of any new medicinal herb. This brings us to a debatable point of the usefulness of Ayurvedic attributes like *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and *Prabhava* of Ayurvedic medicinal plants in the present day scientific context. Today we are talking about the standardization of crude herbs, extracts and finished products with the modern analytical tools like HPLC, HPTLC, GC, estimation of functional groups, marker compounds and estimation of biologically active compounds. Under these circumstances, we have already deviated from basic Ayurvedic principles.

The dichotomy of thoughts and diversion of views on Ayurveda have further been strengthened recently by a survey (Kishor Patwardhan *et al.*: Global Challenges of Graduate level Ayurvedic education: A survey: International Journal of Ayurveda Research, Jan-Mar 2010, Vol 1, Issue 1) conducted by Department of Sharir Kriya and Department of Community Medicine, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, wherein a questionnaire was filled by teachers working in CCIM recognized Ayurvedic College, Post graduate students registered for MD (Ay) or MS (Ay) courses and students of BAMS who have passed the III Professional BAMS examination. As per this survey the data collected from across the country showed a strong tendency toward agreement that the issues related to safety profile and standardization of Ayurvedic products are serious ones. Also there is a general tendency toward agreement that Ayurvedic academicians do not figure anywhere in authoring the scientific and evidence-based papers in reputed international journals and they do not voluntarily participate in international platforms to present their research data. The study also suggested that Ayurvedic academicians do not follow international standards while planning the protocols of research projects and while writing research reports. A significant number of participants in the study agreed that no standard international indexed and peer-reviewed journals are published by Ayurvedic institutions making it difficult for Ayurvedic researchers to have global attention. A majority of students and teachers in the present study agreed that pharmacodynamic/pharmacokinetic properties/

efficacy/safety profiles and chemical compositions of Ayurvedic formulations are yet to be established making it difficult for experts in conventional medicine to accept Ayurveda.

The survey continues to conclude that “there is a need for incorporating in the Ayurvedic study curriculum the basic methods of standardization of medicinal products, fundamental principles of evaluating the toxicity of the medicinal products, basics of pharmacovigilance, essentials of healthcare management, and basics of cultivation and marketing of medicinal plants. There is also a need of phytochemistry, pharmacognosy, pharmacology, biotechnology, and other relevant field experts and train the existing Ayurvedic academicians in standard method of research and documentation skills and other relevant topics. This would make students more involved in research activities and more driven toward innovative research”.

While writing a book on Modern Ayurveda entitled “Modern Ayurveda—Milestones Beyond the Classical Age” under the aegis of Society for New Age Herbals, a very interesting idea of AYURPATHY was conceived while discussing this issue with C.P. Khare, the Founder President of the Society and authors of several blockbuster books on herbal drugs, which are prescribed in several Universities in the West. Ayurpathy should represent modern Ayurveda, which includes the application of modern scientific analytical tools for standardization, modern pharmacological tools for safety and efficacy evaluation, and

application of biotechnology to elicit the mechanism of action as far as possible. Conventional Ayurveda may run parallel and continue to preach ancient theory of *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and *Prabhava*. Ayurpathy while still using traditional knowledge as base, it will also use modern scientific disciplines, such as phytochemistry, clinical pharmacology, biotechnology, statistics, and others, for standardization, quality control and to generate evidence of safety and efficacy of Ayurvedic products. The medicines which are developed in Ayurpathy discipline have to pass the test of reproducibility under validated experimental conditions. We do not see any conflict of interest in running Ayurveda and Ayurpathy as parallel streams but we see a great potential of using Ayurpathy as a route for globalization of Ayurveda and compete with Traditional Chinese Medicines in the International market.

We wish to initiate an academic debate on the issue of Ayurveda vs Ayurpathy following the principle of co-existence rather than divergence.

These are my extremely personal views and are being put forward to promote progressive Ayurveda.

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