SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is very much concerned with spirituality. After study of Ayurvedic text books, we find that its root is very deep in spirituality. Many matters of spirituality on soul, mind, rebirth and salvation have been described by Acharyas. Some spiritual aspects have not been directly described in Ayurvedic texts but mentioned in Vedic texts and to know its utility in Ayurveda, these aspects have been included in the syllabus of BAMS i.e. astangyoga, sad-chakras, Ida Pingla and Sushumnanadis, Panch-kosh theory, etc. Apart from physical health, we can achieve mental, social and spiritual wellbeing to know these spiritual dimensions of Ayurveda. We can reduce corruption and violence to propagate these aspects in the society.

Keywords: spirituality, soul, mind, astang yoga, sad-chakras, nadis.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a holistic healthcare system caring body, mind and soul i.e. physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Acharya Charak has explained that satva(mind), atma(soul) and sharir(body) are like a tripod\(^1\). In the definition of health, Acharya Sushrut has described about physical, mental and social wellbeing. Unlike modern medicine, Ayurveda is concerned with our soul also. Ayurveda tells us about purpose of life, karma and formation of this universe. Ayurveda also deals with salvation and reincarnation\(^2\). In Ayurvedic texts books, we find that only spiritually grown person can write such matters about diagnosis and management of diseases. Acharya Charak has depicted about formation of fetus\(^3\), its month to month growth\(^4\) and fetal anomalies caused by defects in sperms and/or ovum\(^5\).

To know the spiritual values, Central Council of Indian Medicine has included astangyoga, shad-chakras, Ida Pingla & Sushumnanadis, panch-kosha theory in the syllabus of BAMS. I think some other spiritual aspects like seven bodies and aura should be included in the syllabus.

REVIEW

Acharya Charak has described that life is a combination of sharir, indriyas, satva(mind) and atma(soul)\(^6\). He has further described that satva, atma and sharir is like a tripod. Thus, soul is considered as an important component of our life. Ayurveda cares not only body and mind but soul also. Thus, it provides holistic approach of healthcare caring body, mind and soul. Many descriptions have been explained in Ayurvedic texts about the soul. Acharya Charak has written that atma is sakshiand kshetrajna. He has further written that atma is nishkriya(inactive) and chetan(conscious)\(^7\) but mana(mind) is sakriya(active) and achetan(unconscious)\(^8\). If mind combines with atma, indriyas and subject, then one gets...
knowledge. If mind does not combine with atma, indriyas and subject, then one does not get knowledge. Thus, presence and absence of knowledge is characteristics of the mind⁹. There are two properties of the mind- anutva and ekatva¹⁰. Chintan, vichar, uhya, dhyeya, sankalpete are subjects of the mind¹¹. To operate all the indriyas to be involved in them, to stop itself from bad subjects, uhya and vichar are functions of the mind¹². Acharya Charak has depicted that yoga provides salvation¹³. Atma with mind and four mahabhutas (except akash) goes from old body to new body and this movement of atma from one body to another body can be seen only by divya-drishti (divine eye)¹⁴. Atma enters into fetus with mind.

Acharya Charak has explained that whatever present in microcosm or man that is also present in macrocosm or universe¹⁵. He has further mentioned that person who sees the lok within himself and himself within the lok, gets satyabuddhi. He understands that all the lokas are within himself and he is the only root cause of all the worldly problems. He becomes free from worldly desires then gets salvation¹⁶. Acharya Charak has described that one who does not enter into antaratma of the patient with the lamp of knowledge and wisdom, he cannot treat the diseases¹⁷. Acharrasayan is a special contribution of Acharya Charak in the field of Ayurveda. He has described many spiritual works in acharrasayan¹⁸ in which some are as follows-

- Dharmashastraparam- to follow Vedic texts because they provide conscious and enlightened life.
- Adhyatmapravanendriyam- to be involved in spiritual activities.
- Tapasvinam- to be focused on the task.
- Dan nityam- to do charity regularly.
- Devarchneratam- devoted to serve deva, bramhan, acharya, etc.

In Ayurvedic text books, many diseases like kustha are said to be happened due to various sins. Daivayapasrayachikitsa (divine therapy) has been described in the management of many diseases like jwar¹⁹. Acharya Sushrut has explained that if the patient of kustha dies, he gets kustha again in the next birth also²⁰. Probably, atma with lingasharir having causative factors of kustha enters from previous body to the next body and these factors cause kustha in the next body also. This is a proof of description of reincarnation in ayurvedic texts.

Some spiritual aspects have not been explained directly in ayurvedic texts but these have been explained in other Vedic texts. These spiritual aspects have been included by Central Council of Indian Medicine in the syllabus of BAMS to know its importance and utility in Ayurveda. These spiritual aspects are as follows-

- Astangyoga²¹-

Like astang Ayurveda, astang yoga has been explained by Patanjali-

1. Yama (moral codes)
   - Ahimsa- nonviolence
   - Satya- truthfulness
   - Asteya- nonstealing
   - Bramhacharya- celibacy
   - Aparigrah- nonpossessiveness

2. Niyam (personal disciplines)
   - Shauch- Purity
   - Santosh- satisfaction
   - Swadhyaya- study of Vedic literatures which leads to self realization
- **Tapa** - austerity and observances for body and mind
- **Ishwarpranidhan** - surrender to God

3. **Asana** (yogic posture) - It provides physical and mental equilibrium

4. **Pranayam** (yogic breathing) - It provides physical and mental health

5. **Pratyahar** - withdrawal of senses from external objects

6. **Dharana** - concentration on objects

7. **Dhyana** - meditation

Undisturbed flow of thought around the object of meditation

8. **Samadhi** - salvation

State of super bliss, merging of individual consciousness into universal consciousness, union of Shiva and Shakti in Sahasrar Chakra

There are seven main chakras in the human body - Muladhara, Swadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Ajna and Sahasra.

1. **Muladhara Chakra** - This is located in the pelvic plexus at the base of our spine. This is the base chakra and it is root of awareness of the divinity in our lives. The seat of Muladhara is coiled kundalini which is a vital power. This chakra is associated with adrenal glands, excretory system of body and spinal column. Its element is earth. It helps in relating to opposite sex physically, mentally and spiritually. It is accountable for fight and flight response. When this chakra is underactive people have conditions such as constipation and body pain. When the chakra is overactive, individuals tend to become materialistic, greedy, hypertensive, asthmatic, obsessed with being secure and resistant to change. Concentration and meditation is needed to rectify this chakra. Chakra bhandasana and Yoganiadra are required to balance this chakra.

2. **Swadhishthana Chakra** - This chakra is axis of our sexual and creative energy. It covers all the creative sides like art, music, emotions, story-telling, business etc. Its element is water. It governs reproductive system and associated organs. This chakra is used to treat sexual problems. It also focuses on liver, kidneys and lower abdomen. It is responsible for assimilation, procreation, lymphatic systems and menstrual secretions. When this is underactive individuals can get disease like diabetes, blood cancer etc. and when this is hyperactive individuals tend to become emotional. Ardhamatsyendrasana and Nakra-kriyas are done for improvement of this chakra.

3. **Manipur Chakra** - This chakra is solar plexus which is related to will power, dynamism, assimilation and digestion. This is associated with pancreas and adrenal glands. It governs stomach, liver, gall bladder and spleen which manufacture and emit enzymes, acids and juices needed for digestion. This chakra is said to radiate and distribute prana in the rest of the body. Its element is fire. It lies in center of the body and is associated with many ailments. Hence, this chakra is commonly used for the treatment of many diseases. Dhanurasana and Vaishali mudra are done to activate this chakra.

4. **Anahata Chakra** - This is heart chakra which is concerned with no longer attachment to worldly pleasure, honors or humiliations. This is associated with thymus gland. It governs blood circulations, heart, lungs, liver and hands. Its element is air. If it is underactive, causes asthma and heart problems and if it is hyperactive, causes problems
with love. Ushtrasanand bhujangasanare done to activate this chakra.

5. Vishudh Chakra- This is throat chakra which is associated with thyroid and para-thyroid glands. It governs the respiratory system including bronchial apparatus. Its element is akash. When this chakra is underactive individual may suffer from cold, cough, thyroid problems and lack of communications. When this is hyperactive individual tends to speak in an authoritarian manner. Halasanis done to balance this chakra.

6. Ajna Chakra- This is third eye chakra which is associated with pituitary glands, hypothalamus and CNS. It governs the lower brain, left eye, ears and nose. It helps in thought formation and visualization as well. The two physical eyes see the past and the present while the third eye reveals the insight and the future. Ida and Pinglaare time bound and upto the fifth chakra, yogi is also time bound. If this chakra is underactive, individuals develop negative thoughts causing bad karmas and lack of energy. If this chakra is hyperactive, individuals become disillusioned, live in a fantasy world and suffer from hallucinations. Yoga mudra is done to balance this chakra.

7. Sahasrar Chakra- This is head chakra which is associated with pineal gland which is a light sensitive gland that produces melatonin. It governs upper brain and right eye. In this particular stage, there is no activity of the mind and no knower, no knowledge, nothing to be known. Knowledge, knower and known, all become unified and liberated. Matsyasanim done to balance this chakra.

Table-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Sthana</th>
<th>Vriti</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muladhar</td>
<td>Between rectum and genitals</td>
<td>Creative thinking, emotions and pleasure</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swadhisthan</td>
<td>At the root of genitals</td>
<td>Doubt, lack of faith, false knowledge</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>At the nabhi</td>
<td>Shyness, jealousy, desire, laziness, sorrow, ignorance</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anahat</td>
<td>Chest of cardiac region</td>
<td>Hope, protection, anxiety, effort, power, consciousness</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuddha</td>
<td>At the root of neck</td>
<td>Origin of seven kinds of voice</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajna</td>
<td>On the forehead between eyebrows</td>
<td>Trigunas</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahasrar</td>
<td>At crown</td>
<td>Universal consciousness</td>
<td>Violet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ida, Pingla and SushumnaNadis

The spinal column is called merudand. There are two nadis on either side of the spinal column called Ida and Pingla and a hallow canal called Sushumna lies between them. Kundalini Shakti sleeps at lower end of Sushumnain a trance sleep(yoga nidra). Ida starts from the right testicle and Pinglafort the left and they both meet the Sushumnaat the muladharchakra. Ida flows
through the left nostril and *Pingla* through the right. *Ida* is cooling while *Pingla* is heating. *Ida* and *Pingla* indicate time while *Sushumna* is the devourer of time. Yogi defies death by devitalizing *Ida* and *Pingla* and taking the pranathrough *Sushumna* the crown of the head or *Bramha-randhra*. When the *kundalini* enters the *Sushumna*, the *prana* also enters the *Sushumna* with *kundalini* and its progress is characterized by supernatural visions, acquisition of special powers, knowledge, peace and bliss. Regular practice of *Uddiyan Bandha* is a powerful yogic kriya to awaken *kundalini*. The practice of *yogasans*, pranayama, *murdras* and *Bandhas* is required regularly to awaken *kundalini*.

There are different opinions about the positions of chakras in the body. Doctors dissect the physical body but they are not able to find the centers, lotuses and so forth. Some says that chakras are situated only in the astral body and others say that chakras are developed during the course of meditation and they are not in the astral body. Reality is that the chakras are in a dormant state in the *pranmaya kosha* of the astral body which can be opened by deep meditation.

*Panch-kosha*:

There are five material sheaths that envelope the soul like concentric rings. Each sheath is more subtle than preceding one and each succeeding sheath controls the activity of preceding sheath. These sheath are as follows:

1. **AnnamayaKosh** or Food Sheath
   - The physical body is known as food sheath. The physical body arises out of food, exists in food, after death goes back to become food for other organisms. This organ consists of five organs of perception and five organs of action. Personality of the individual depends on the condition of this *kosha*, the formation of which continues life after life. The physique in the next birth is decided by the state of *annamaya kosha* of earlier births. Living through this layer, man identifies himself as a mass of skin, flesh, fat, bones and filth. Purification and development of this *kosh* is possible through *upawasa*, *asana*, *tatva-suddhi* and *tapashcharya*. All medicines prescribed in allopathy act on this kosh.

2. **PranamayaKosh** or Vital- Air Sheath
   - This contains all the *pranvayus* in the systems, energy channels(*nadis*) and energy centers(*chakras*). This sheath represents internal physiological functions of the body. It contains 5 faculties:
     - *Prana* - perception
     - *Apana* - excretion
     - *Samana* - digestion
     - *Vyana* - circulation
     - *Udana* - thinking
   - This sheath controls and regulates the food sheath. *Pranayam*, *acupuncture*, *reiki* and magnetotherapy seem to be working on this *kosha*. Homeopathy medicines in moderate potencies act on this *kosha*.

3. **ManomayaKosh** or Mental Sheath
   - This is psycho-emotional sheath. *ManomayaKosh* decides whether a person is emotional or unemotional, sensitive or nonsensitive and easily or uneasily movable. Mind along with five sensory organs is said to constitute this *sheath*. This *sheath* controls both the
previous sheaths. Aromatherapy, music therapy, colour therapy and homeopathic medicines in higher potencies act on this kosha.

4. VigyanamayaKosh or Intellectual Sheath
This sheath is full of intelligence. This is the level of cognition, conditioning or de-conditioning of one’s core beliefs. This is the seat of ego. This sheath is composed of intellect associated with the organs of perception. Meditation and psychotherapy works on this sheath.

5. AnandmayaKosh or Bliss Sheath
This is the innermost of all the sheaths and controls the intellectual sheath. It consists of desires before they become manifest into thoughts and actions. This sheath has its fullest play during deep sleep.

Apart from these five sheaths, there are two sheaths also- chittakosh and sat kosh. Development of all seven sheaths is necessary for complete spiritual evolution.

Table-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Kosh</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Parts of the body</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Realm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sthul</td>
<td>Annamayakosh or food sheath</td>
<td>Organic body</td>
<td>10 organs (5 gyanaendriyas+5 karmendriyas)</td>
<td>Eat, drink and be merry</td>
<td>Mineral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukshma</td>
<td>Pranamayakosh or vital air sheath</td>
<td>Energy body</td>
<td>All vital air routes</td>
<td>Vitality seeker, health conscious</td>
<td>Plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukshma</td>
<td>Manomayakosh or mind sheath</td>
<td>Psychic body</td>
<td>6 organs (5 gyanaendriyas+mana)</td>
<td>Philosopher, socialist</td>
<td>Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukshma</td>
<td>Vigyanmayakosh or intellectual sheath</td>
<td>Intellectual body</td>
<td>6 organs (5 gyanaendriyas+buddhi)</td>
<td>Sage, scientist</td>
<td>Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Anandmayakashor bliss sheath</td>
<td>Body of joy</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Self and God realized</td>
<td>Divine man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aura
Aura is an energy field emanating from the surface of a person or object. This emanation is visualized as an outline of cascading colour and may represent soul vibrations. Modern metaphysics identify the aura as electromagnetic fields. The existence of electromagnetic fields around every object is a scientifically proved fact. Scientists say that aura may be seen by naked eyes but this ability weakens with age. Focused training may improve the ability to see auras.
Auras vibrate to different colors, sounds and light frequencies. The color spectrum varies with one’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual states. Auras of our body can be recorded by Kirlian photography. To know conditions of aura, we can detect diseases occurring in future and can be managed before manifestations. Acharya Chakra has explained seven types of prabha. This prabha can be correlated with aura.

Table-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Growing age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Muladhara</td>
<td>I move</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>0-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etheric</td>
<td>Swadhisthana</td>
<td>I am vital</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>7-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astral</td>
<td>Manipura</td>
<td>I feel</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>14-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Anahata</td>
<td>I think</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>21-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Visuddha</td>
<td>I know</td>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>28-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmic</td>
<td>Ajna</td>
<td>I see</td>
<td>Manas</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirvanic</td>
<td>Sahasrara</td>
<td>I am</td>
<td>Being</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>42-49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acharya Sushrut has described very minute structures and functions of our body like formation of skin by blood, seven layers of skin, their thickness and diseases of each layer and their management. Acharya Charak has described that fetus is formed in the uterus due to union of *shukra* (sperm) and *shonit* (ovum). He has explained about development of fetus month by month. He has further described that defect in sperm and/or ovum leads to defect in the fetus. He has mentioned the cause of birth of male, female and intersex baby and also the cause of twins. They knew about internal anatomy and physiology of our body without advanced diagnostic tools like USG, CT-SCAN, MRI, etc. It is possible to see these microstructures and microfunctions without any microscope in the state of fourth body. Acharya Sushrut has explained that *the parts of body that can be seen through naked eyes are less, those that cannot be seen are infinite. The knowledge of those unseen parts like Atmacan only be had by the eyes of meditation and eyes of knowledge*.

Our Acharyas has described *rasa, guna, veerya, vipak and prabhav* of millions of plants. It is not possible to know medicinal properties of so many plants by clinical trials. It is possible when plants tell their properties themselves. It is said about Lukman that he asked plants about their medicinal properties and plants replied. A person of fourth body can talk to plants. These are spiritual dimensions of Ayurveda which will be understood by science in future.

**CONCLUSION**

Modern medicine considers human body as a complex biotic machine. It treats the disease not the patient. Some people feel that something is lacking in the management of modern medical science even after having ultra-advanced technology in medicine and surgery. Modern medicine treats the disease but does not care the patient causing iatrogenic disorders. Many parts of body can be replaced by modern surgery i.e. kidney transplant, liver transplant, heart transplant, etc. Now, scientists consider that human is more than this physical body and therefore, only physical wellbeing is not sufficient.

Ayurveda emphasizes on prevention of diseases rather than treatment. Acharya Charak has described first to maintain the health of a healthy person then, management of the diseases of the diseased person. He has described various methods for prevention of diseases such as *dincharya, ratricharya, rituscharya, swasthvritta, acharrasayan* etc. To spend some amount on prevention we can save very much amount which is spent on treatment. In treatment also, we can save very much amount to follow Ayurvedic methods of diagnosis and management. Thus, we can prevent physical, mental and...
social problems to adopt these preventive media.

Thus, to do spiritual growth and to adopt Ayurvedic methods of diagnosis we can reduce dependency on instruments and laboratories leading economic management of diseases. By spiritual growth, we can reduce corruption, terrorism, criminalism and violence in the society causing social well-being which has been mentioned in the definition of health by WHO. Thus, apart from physical well-being, we can achieve mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being to follow these spiritual dimensions of Ayurveda. It is required to popularize these aspects of Ayurveda in the society to make this planet healthy, happy and peaceful.

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