

MAINSTREAMING OF AYURVEDA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, Ayurveda, the indigenous health science of India has taken a backseat with the advent of modern medicine. The merits of Ayurveda have been forgotten in the quest for instant remedy. It has lost its own place in its own land of origin. This decline has adversely affected the health of the present generations and shall lead to serious consequences in our developing country. The Indian genetic makeup is on the verge of suffering from lifestyle epidemics in the years to come due to their susceptibility to the atrocities of modernisation. Limitations to the role of modern health system, has urged the world to reiterate the teachings of Ayurveda which are universal and have stood the test of time. It is apparent that mainstreaming of Ayurveda is inevitable in the years to come. Masses in our country have now started realising the importance of the teachings of Ayurveda and its benefits in the long run. Ayurveda shall get a shot in the arm if we make full use of the opportunities in hand. Opportunities are limited but challenges are a plenty. These challenges can be converted into opportunities by proper channelization of the strengths of Ayurveda and having immense faith in this Eternal Science of Life.

Keywords: Challenges, Opportunities, Mainstreaming, Globalisation

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has taken a setback in the recent past, in its country of origin. It is considered as a second fiddle to other contemporary medical sciences.

But the fact of matter is, Ayurveda, never was and can never be regarded as a second string or supplementary or complementary Health Science. Ayurveda is a 'Way of Life' or rather 'Way of Happy Life'. Years, decades, centuries or rather eras ago, the need for this science of Ayurveda was sought after for preserving and prolonging this precious Human life. Acharyas of those times, after enormous contemplation and using nature as their inspiration, put forward this treasure of Ayurveda, which was handed over from generation to generation and preserved the way it

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was perceived. In those days, the universal doctrines of Ayurveda influenced the lifestyles of masses and had become an inseparable part of their lives.

Today, in the 21st century, various health systems have developed throughout the World. The collective aim of all those is the same. The World appreciates the teaching of Ayurveda, which are universal and rests immense faith in its potential to be the saviour for health crisis arising in the 21st century, with the advent of modernisation. With the limitations to the potential of modern medicine, the World has pinned hope on the resurgence of Ayurveda as a global science.

Right since its early days, Ayurveda was practiced throughout the country and there are many references in our mythological literature which suggests it's wide and an implicit use even by travellers of other nations. Ayurveda's references are also found in many of the ancient literatures of other countries like Greece, Egypt, Babylon, Sumeria etc.^[1] Importance of Ayurveda gained foot hold not only in India but even foreign scholars realized its usefulness in those days. Ayurveda was on a flourish during the pre-vedic and Vedic period.

It is only in the medieval period and the modern era that Ayurveda has seen decline in its utility. Ayurveda was deprived of its service to humanity in medieval period due to invasion and attacks by the Mughal emperors who suppressed the use of Ayurveda and promoted their Health Sciences. This was the most tragic period of Ayurveda when valuable Ayurvedic literature of pre-vedic and Vedic period were lost due to attacks on various renowned Universities of Ayurveda. The second outburst of decline of Ayurveda was recently in the past 3 centuries under the rule of Britishers who gave stress on the use of allopathic medicine and giving very little importance to indigenous health sciences. Ayurveda has stood the test of time and survived these

storms and has again and again proved that 'He who has a WHY to live can bear with almost any HOW'.

Now, in the post modern era, in the 21st century, there is a need to further explore the rich heritage of Ayurveda and show to the world that there is no substitute to Nature, to maintain health and why Ayurveda is the need of this 21st century. However, it is easier said than done. Mainstreaming of Ayurveda is a challenge. But we have enough faith in Ayurveda to turn challenges into opportunities.

Proposition and Discussion

Opportunities for Ayurveda

'Opportunities are those useful milestones we came across when we are 100 % focused in accomplishing our GOAL'. Thus if we work relentlessly with the sole aim of Mainstreaming or Globalising of Ayurveda, opportunities are bound to come our way. The opportunities for Ayurveda in today's era, on which we can harness the Glory of Ayurveda to the world, can be discussed as follows.

A) Community Service

Ayurveda has been serving for the Health of not only human community but the entire living community on the earth since time unmemorable. The objective of Ayurveda says, '*Swasthyasya swasthya rakshanam aturasy vikaar prashamanam.*'^[2]

Ayurveda opines not only curing the diseased state of the body but also maintain the health of the healthy. Thus, it serves curative and more importantly the preventive aspect of Health. As the existing health systems basically illustrate the curative aspect of Health, Ayurveda holds a potent opportunity to attract the masses by laying stress on the preventive aspect of health which is elaborated in great detail in Ayurvedic texts.

As per WHO report, more than 80% of world population uses herbal medicine which is published in the Journal Health Administrator Vol. XX in August 2005.^[3] This indeed

adds a feather in the cap of the Global reach of herbal medicines.

Besides, the fact that there are also estimated one million folk healers in and around villages of India as mentioned in the Journal Health Administrator Vol. XX, gives us an idea of the strong foothold of Ayurveda in rural areas of India even today.

Our aspiration of taking Ayurveda to the world gets a boost by knowing about the strong forts of Ayurveda where in it definitely holds an upper hand over the contemporary health system. Some of the fortes of Ayurveda which are indeed serving as an opportunity to attract Global attention are discussed as follows:

a) Autoimmune diseases / Chronic diseases

There are a number of diseases described in modern health science like Skin disorders, Rheumatoid Arthritis etc. along with chronic ailments like Osteoarthritis, COPD to name a few, which have limited medication in contemporary medicine, providing mostly symptomatic relief. However in Ayurveda these diseases are classified specifically with noteworthy and significant relief from most of these diseases, owing to complementation of Ayurvedic drugs, diet, regimen and most significantly wise and just use of Panchakarma therapies. Astonishingly positive results are seen in such cases without any significant side effects.

b) Reproductive Health

Infertility cases are on a rise in today's era due to the changing climatic condition, stress and as an adverse effect to a numbers of drugs used in contemporary medicine. Although Artificial Reproductive Techniques (ART) are well advanced to treat such conditions but however, the success rate of such therapies is indeed a matter to be pondered upon. Uses of Ayurvedic drugs which have excellent results in these conditions are indeed a boon to restore the impaired Reproductive Health. A wide range of Ayurvedic drugs are

used abundantly to mitigate various conditions like Oligospermia, Erectile dysfunction Polycystic Ovarian Disease, Dysmenorrhoea etc.

When studied minutely, the various regimens meant for pregnant women as mentioned in Ayurveda are useful in producing Supraja or healthy offspring. A testimony to the superiority of Ayurvedic drugs in Reproductive Health is that most of the leading Gynaecologists and Sexologists prescribe these highly potent Ayurvedic drugs.

c) Geriatric Medicines

It is very rightly said that 'What matters is not to add years to your life but to add life to your years. The *Rasayan* drugs mentioned in our texts are a stand point towards improving the quality of life. They cover the preventive aspect of Ayurveda and their regular and right use adds quality days to life. They also act as anti-ageing, antioxidants as well as immune-modulators without any noticeable side effects. This is again one of the most sought after remedies of Ayurveda as the world has severely experienced the adverse effects that are offered free along with the use of contemporary medicine.

d) Yoga Shastra

Yoga Shastra is one branch related to Ayurveda which is the most embraced field by not only Indians but now the entire Global Community. This surge of Yoga Shastra has particularly been seen in the last two decades owing to sincere efforts of some of the stalwarts of Yoga abhyas who have attributed their life for the service of mankind for reaping the highest benefits out of Yoga Shastra and assigning it a Global status. This is seen as a serious opportunity for the spread of Yoga Shastra and Ayurveda because the community has started experiencing not only physical wellbeing by performing *asanas* but also have started exploring their inner self and understanding the true essence of this life by performing *Pranayam* and meditation. We indeed

have a Golden opportunity to harbour Mainstreaming and Globalisation of *Yoga Shastra*.

B) Global Recognition

Many of the countries in the world have started accepting Ayurveda as a Health science in their system of Health, which is indeed a heartening encouragement for Ayurveda, to lay its roots firmly in other countries as well. Recently Russia has declared its warmth and acceptance for Ayurveda as a Health science.^[4]

Reportedly, UK, UAE, Sweden, Indonesia and USA have already recognized Ayurveda as a health care system and 30 more countries are on the verge of doing so.^[3]

C) Habitat

India is regarded as 'The Botanical Garden of the World' as it is the largest producers of medicinal herbs. Due to India's wide variety of climate, soil conditions and diversified rainfall, India has an ample scope in gaining a foothold in the Global plant based Pharmaceutical market. Acc to the Journal Health Administrator Vol. XX, India has 45,000 diverse plant species over 16 different agro climatic Zones, 10 vegetation zones, 25 biotic provinces and 426 habitats of specific species. Out of this vast quantum around 15,000 to 20,000 are of medicinal value, but out of this only 7000 – 7500 plants are used as traditional medicines in India. Hence there is a tremendous scope to expand the spectrum.^[3]

D) Research

With the fast developing Modern Age, research has been the trend for the exploitation of the usefulness of the drugs and to invent new drugs. Now a day a number of Research laboratories are set up which facilitate standardized research work for the world wide acceptance of drugs. *Rasa Shastra* and *Bhaishajya Kalpana* are the branches of Ayurveda which deal with the pharmacology of Ayurvedic medicines. There is a tremendous scope for evidence based research activity in this field. The dynamics, kinetics and analyti-

cal aspects of various pharmacological preparations and forms can be explored with the use of advanced technology. This shall help answer various facts and myths associated with these medicines and thus clear the air for their wider use. Non-toxicity of these drugs can thus be established using modern parameters and if the need arises newer parameters according to Ayurveda texts need to be devised to establish their safety profile. This shall lead to its widespread acceptance by the masses. Research on the concept of *Bhasma* preparation which are regarded as Ayurveda's nanomedicines shall open up newer avenues in drug research.

E) Health Tourism

Health Tourism has seen a rise in India as never before since the last decade. Kerala is one state in our country which is taking Ayurvedic Health tourism to the world. Foreign nationals, Hollywood stars are seen flocking to various parts of our country especially Kerala to reap the benefits of the soothing and highly stress busting effects of the packages of Health Tourism. In today's life of stress and anxiety, especially with the upper class of society, Health Tourism is instrumental in attracting them towards healing and soothing ways of Nature and Ayurveda.

It is very rightly said that 'Roads to success are never smooth and if they are smooth then we are on the wrong track. Similarly, though we have a fertile ground for opportunities yet there are challenges a plenty. Difficulties are bound to surface in the quest for Globalisation of Ayurveda. But we ourselves have to be strong enough, so even let the difficulties know how difficult we are. It is rightly said that 'Charity begins at Home.' In order to quench our thirst of Global aspiration, we have to reassess the plight of Ayurveda at its root level and then wish to reap the fruits of Globalisation. Some of the important Challenges back lashing Ayurveda's rise are discussed as follows.

Challenges for Ayurveda

A) Education

The first and the foremost challenge that needs to be dealt with is to change the mentality of students who consider to pursue Ayurveda as a secondary choice after failing to get admissions into modern medicine. This challenge can be converted into an opportunity by encouraging the students and assuring them of a bright future for the science and an opportunity to serve Humanity.

Since its inception, Ayurveda has been taught to the students in the form of *Gurukul* system. Handing over knowledge from the Guru to the Shishya with a number of conferences called as 'Tad Vid Sambhasha'. With the changing time we definitely need to change the education system but keep the basic tradition of discussions and conferences the same, in order to generate curiosity among the students in this life science.

With the need of the hour, there also seems to be a want for reassessing the curriculum of Ayurveda. It has been stagnant since many years and there should be addition of subjects important from Research and Clinical point of view, right from the 1st year of BAMS. Based on the clinical experience of the Vaidyas, number of topics which have clinical significance in practice have to be instilled. Subjects which will make Ayurveda a curious science and generate research quest among graduates need to be included. More stress should be given on the implication of *Siddhantas* of Ayurveda and their utility in treating the patients.

A major setback for Ayurveda is the lack of proper infrastructure for Ayurvedic colleges and Hospitals. There is a lot of difference in the infrastructures of Ayurvedic and Medical colleges. This gap needs to be done and dusted once and for all. CCIM plays an important role for meeting this need. It needs to check if it is falling short to match the standards of functioning of MCI.

Now a day, PG seats are allotted to colleges in whose hospitals the infrastructure and the basic requirements fall short to meet the essential norms, which is indirectly hampering the quality of PG output from many colleges in our country.

Barring a few like Gujarat Ayurveda University, Banaras Hindu University etc, most of the other Ayurvedic colleges are in dire straits. We need to bring back the glory of Nalanda and Takshashila Universities back to leading universities in India to shine on a Global map.

In order to promote growth of Ayurveda abroad, the Govt. needs to start Universities abroad by gaining their confidence and in collaboration with other Governments.

B) Health Service

Just as there is a structure for disbursement of medical budget ever year, similarly, even for Ayurveda such a structure should be laid. Lack of Government support is the biggest cause of worry for development of Ayurveda. Owing to the growing trend and wide spread acceptability of Ayurveda, the Government needs to increase the share of Health Budget for Ayurveda. This step can work wonders for upliftment of Ayurveda. It is the lack of funding by the Government which is discouraging the undertaking of developmental plans for Ayurveda.

This fact will definitely be accepted by the readers of this article that Ayurveda graduates are treated as accessory supplements for the cause of Health Services like Civil Health services as well as Primary Health Services and Rural Health Services. There are a numbers of instances when Ayurveda graduates are instilled in the Health Services when the MBBS graduates fall short but they are shown the door when MBBS graduates are available. This concern needs to be accessed immediately. Such discrimination should be stopped and the graduates of both fields should work harmoniously by sharing knowledge both ways where limitations are encountered. In

near future, I would also recommend the need to introduce separate PHCS and RHS for Ayurveda where only trained Ayurvedic physicians would handle cases the Ayurveda way.

These positive changes in health service are possible only when the men who matter, i.e. the cabinet of Ministers take adequate steps. I also strongly support the idea of increasing the vocal representation of Ayurveda in the state as well as central Health Ministries so that the policies for Ayurveda, which are suppressed under the dominance of policies favouring modern medicine, get a way out.

Vastly experienced Vaidyas striving for glory of Ayurveda since years along with the support of budding youngsters is the right solution to this dilemma.

C) Standardization

The major hurdle in the wider acceptability of Ayurveda and its products is the lack of proper standardization techniques and its unpreparedness to accept Global challenges. The quality of raw drugs used in manufacturing and finished drugs of Ayurveda is still seen with suspicion world-wide. We need to reassure the masses and our Global partners by providing then evidence of quality of medicines we prepare in terms of reproducible efficacy and standardization. Even the effects of *Panchakarma* therapy need to be advocated with a scientific backing. Lack of stable rules and regulations throughout our country without proper centralization has resulted into no uniform and slow progress of the science. Uniform and standard rules and regulations for the sources of herbs, their collection, cultivation, harvesting, post harvesting practices, storage, contamination should be framed for their universal acceptability.

D) Plantation

As a number of Ayurvedic drugs are categorized as endangered species today, there is a challenge upfront to find authentic substitutes at least for classical Ayurvedic products. These herbs can be planted as fencing for

other cultivation but plantation on a large scale is the need for survival of Ayurvedic Herbs.

E) Research

1) Literary Research

It is a known fact that a number of our *Granthas* of Ayurveda are incomplete and the original manuscripts of a number of them are present in the museums of other countries. It is not only a matter of pride but our right to get those original manuscripts of *Granthas* back to the place where it belongs to. Government should take active initiative in bringing back the lost treasure. Another challenge is to gather the scattered matter of Ayurvedic literature and summarize it either as software or as hard copy so that it becomes an easy access to the deep and widespread knowledge of Ayurveda. Another suggestion would be to establish a council of members involving eminent names in the field of Ayurveda to come under one roof and work selflessly to centrally study the *Samhitas* and bring about the unanimous meanings of the sutras of Ayurveda. This will benefit the future generations of Ayurveda.

2) Clinical and Drug Research

For testing the efficacy of a drug, clinical research is of prime importance. Now days, clinical trials of many Ayurvedic drugs are carried out yet it is a challenge to centralize the clinical research by establishing Research centres at prime localities in our country. Clinical research should be studied with both modern as well as Ayurvedic parameters.

Another problem faced by exporters of Ayurvedic products is the absence of herbal monographs in Indian Pharmacopoeia.

Even our *Rasaashadis* face a grave problem for their export. Owing to the rise of Ayurveda in recent past, the followers of other health sciences have devised a tactic to malign Ayurveda by spreading a false alarm to the world regarding the high metallic contents of *Rasaashadhi* and their consumption leading to kidney failure. This claim is without any significant documentation. In order to prove

these claims wrong we need to prepare standardized scientific documents about the preparation and use of *Rasaashadhi* and giving standard instructions to the pharmacies for their preparation.

Identification of active biological markers without which no pharmacokinetic or bioavailability studies are possible should be undertaken in centralized Research Laboratories.

Now a day Ayurvedic drugs are exported to many foreign countries as food supplements. This should be stopped and laws should be made to export them as medical entities.

CONCLUSION

Thus Ayurveda has the potential to be the saviour of human race in the 21st century. This is precisely the aim of Ayurveda. The article highlights the areas which can be harnessed and embarked upon to steer Ayurveda to newer pedestals in the years to come. Proper planning, governmental support and inculcating faith in the youth of Ayurveda shall help in the long run for the mainstreaming of Ayurveda. Up-gradation and revalidation of this age old health science shall help rejuvenate its lost glory, having said that the challenges for Ayurveda in today's world may stall its mainstreaming. Though, opportunities for Ayurveda worldwide are increasing but there is a mountain of obstacles to cross. We have to strive in the right direction having faith in our science. With Power of faith which we possess nothing is impossible to achieve. The ocean of infinite power is within us. We need to put in united efforts by harnessing the wisdom and experience of our *Vaidyas* and the enthusiasm, creativity and never say die attitude of the youth of Ayurveda. This combination can work wonders because we intend to have a Desire, a Dream and a Vision for our

3000 years young and still counting, science of AYURVEDA.

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