

# Medical Sciences in Vedas

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The word for medical sciences in Vedas is **Ayurveda**. The word **Ayurveda** comes from Sanskrit word **Ayuh** (life) and **Veda**(knowledge), means the knowledge or science of life. **Charak Samhita** further defines **Ayurveda** as:

हिताहितसुखंदुखमायुस्तस्यः हिताहितम् । मानं च तच्च यत्रोक्तमायुर्वेदः स उच्चयते ॥

**Hitahitamsukhamdukham-ayus-tyahitahitam.Maanam cha yatroktam-ayurvedahsauchchayate** II.-Charka Samhita, SU.1.41

Ayurveda deals with good and bad life (Ayu), and happy and unhappy life (Ayu). It explains what promotes health and what affects health adversely. It also deals with what affects life expectancy and quality of the life.

**A happy person is the one:** "Who is devoid of mind and body imbalances, whose senses are perfectly functioning, whose body is full of ojas (strong immunity), tejas (shine) and prana (energy), well respected, hardworking, brave,intellectual, scholar, prosperous and can perform all the duties without obstacles."

**Sage Sushruta** defines Health as follows:

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः । प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते । सुश्रुत सूत्रस्थानः १५/४८

"Person, whose all three humors or **Doshas: Vata**(air), **Pitta**(fire) and (water) **Kapha** are in balance, whose appetite and digestion are in balance; whose seven body tissues (Seven **dhatus: rasa, rakta, mansa, meda, majja, asthi and shukra**) are functioning normally; whose malas (urine, feces and sweat) are eliminated properly and whose spirit, senses and mind (satva, rajat, tamas), remain full of bliss is considered healthy."

**In conclusion, the Ayurveda** is a science which has a holistic approach to promote mental and physical health (prevention and treatment both) and happiness, improved quality of life and longevity. The goal in Ayurveda is to achieve the equilibrium of the primary humors, digestion of food and desire for eating, having good sleep without nightmares with timely discharge of bodily waste and proper coordinated function of mind and intellect. Disturbance in food intake, day today living, lack of disciplined life, improper conduct in thought, speech and action leads to disturbed intellect and then it becomes the causes of an illness.

**History of Ayurveda** In eastern philosophy, it has been well established that the **Vedas** are the sources of all knowledge. As per **Vedic** tradition, the Almighty handed over all knowledge in the form of **Vedas** at the inception of humanity and then it was propagated further by oral tradition and then at some point in history, it was recorded. There are 3 entities: God, Soul and nature. In **Vedas**, the knowledge of God and Soul always existed in its perfection and has never needed improvement. The knowledge of nature however has been given in the **Vedas** in a seed form only and has required further development and modifications all along. Such knowledge includes the knowledge of all sciences. Medical science is no exception. Actually, the **Ayurveda** has long been considered the 5th veda or the **Upveda** of **Atharva** Veda. In fact, all 4 vedas contain mantras which deal with health and well-being:

- 1. Rg Veda:** There are mantras in this Veda which define the purpose of **Ayurveda**, qualities of the healer, uses of medications, various parts of the body, various natural treatments such as fire therapy, water therapy, wind therapy, sun therapy, surgery, hand-touch therapy and **yajna therapy**. Also reference has been given to the treatment of poisoning, parasitology, geriatrics and sleep disorders.
- 2. Yajur Veda:** The mantras in this Veda deal with the qualities and actions of the Vaidya (physician), names of different medications, parts of the body, geriatrics, and other natural therapies mentioned in **Rg Veda**.
- 3. Sam Veda:** There is little in Sam Veda about medicine. What is available relates to the qualities and attributes of the healer, few treatments, geriatrics, and how to be energetic.
- 4. Atharva Veda:** This is the main basis of **Ayurveda**. The subjects relating to **Ayurveda** in this Veda are the qualities and actions of Vaidya, parts of body, science of longevity, how to be free of illness, urology, sexual dysfunction, parasitology and other infectious diseases, treatment of poisoning, natural therapies such as sun therapy, water therapy, use of certain poisons in treatment, use of animal products, surgery, etc.

After the *Vedas*, reference to the medical science is found first in the Brahman Literature. Brahmangranth states that the illnesses are more prevalent during change of seasons.

*Vedic* teachings state that the illnesses are based on poisoning, infection and disturbances in Doshas. Poison can gain access to our bodies through injection, ingestion, a poisonous animal bite etc. (Atharva Veda 9.8.10). It is also mentioned that only poison can cure the poisoning. (Atharva Veda 5.13.4). Infectious organisms have been described as visible and invisible. (Atharva Veda 5.13.4). They exist everywhere and gain access to our body and causes illness. It is quite amazing that both bad and good bacteria have been described. Today, probiotics are used extensively and more and more studies are proving the usefulness of probiotics. Many diseases caused by different types of infectious organisms have been described. Vedas describe the diseases to be both mental and physical. Excessive lust and ill thoughts are considered serious reasons for illnesses as well.

*Rg Veda* describes 3 types of medications: Divine, earthly and watery. **Pranayama** has been given considerable importance in disease management. Eating small, wholesome timely meals and avoidance of constipation have been considered quite important. Good thoughts, purification of mind, being peaceful, use of appropriate medications and doing Yajna on a regular basis have been considered the main way to manage diseases.

Different fevers have been described. These could be with chills, simply high fever or cough predominant. **Atharva Veda** 5.22.5 states that being in place with more rains, forest and lack of sunshine increases chances of fever.

In summary, on one hand **Ayurvedic** concepts, even though they have existed for thousands of years, seem very modern when we talk about basic principles of living and life style modification as the main stay of management of illnesses. There is absolutely no question that yogic practice with emphasis on **pranayama** and meditation exceed anything that modern medicine has to offer. On the otherhand modern medicine has gone ahead by leaps and bounds in management of specific diseases and is and will remain the main stay of treatment. Research in **Ayurvedic** medications may produce some gems and should be perused.

