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THE RELEVANCE OF AYURVEDA IN MODERN TIMES

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Shareeramaadhyam kalu dharma saadhanam

Whether spiritual or materialistic, whatsoever one would like to achieve in life, 'shareera' or the body is the most important tool. Without a healthy body it is not possible for us to achieve anything. The ultimate aim of the human being is the 'moksha' or i.e. to achieve salvation. This requires the purity of the human body for a free flow of energy in the body. Toxicity hinders the flow of energy in the body, and is the root cause of all diseases.

Ayurveda is a science, which is aimed at removing the toxicity of the human body for better flow of energy through the system. In modern times, the lifestyle and the nature of working of human beings is such that there is almost not a person left who doesn't have toxicity in the body. This makes Ayurveda, the science dealing with removal of toxicity, the most relevant in modern times.

However, in the modern times, the Ayurveda itself has not escaped the clutches of toxicity. This paper discusses the factors which make the Ayurveda irrelevant today.

ONE

Ayurveda considers milk as 'amrutha' or the 'nectar'. It is not just the milk, but all the products of milk viz., the butter, ghee, butter milk etc., are considered to be very useful in Ayurveda. In most contexts Ayurveda recommends cow's milk and their products. However, a closer look of the milk goes to say that the milk is an irrelevant product for use in Ayurveda for several reasons, some of which are given below.

- First of all, consider the very cow. Today cow is not a cow. Cow is a cross breed of the cow and various other animals, especially the pigs, horses etc.; even structurally or i.e. physically also it does not resemble the cow.
- The feed given to the cow is a very important factor in determining the quality of milk produced by the cow. Today, the feed that is given to the cows is not at all ethical. We can recollect here as a typical example, the mad cow disease which was a problem created by unnatural feed for the cow.
- Every man requires to exercise his/her body daily till there is perspiration for a healthy body. Similarly the cows are required to walk around and exercise itself, to be active and disease free, which is never a situation in today's mechanized dairies.
- Artificial insemination is yet another problem, depriving the cows of its natural acts.
- Above all, the cow's system is cheated by giving several injections like the oxytocin, etc., to produce more milk through unnatural cycles.

Keeping these in mind, it is quite clear that today's milk is not a natural one that is produced by the cow, but a product that is produced by an altogether new milk making machine, the cross bred cows, in industries called the mechanized dairies. This definitely does not ensure the quality of the milk that is referred to in the Ayurveda, making Ayurveda irrelevant in today's context.

TWO

Let us consider a plant product; a coconut for example.

A coconut tree is considered to be a 'kalpavruksha', wherein the entire coconut tree is having very high values. In particular, the 'coconut copra' (flesh) and the 'tender coconut water' is said to have high medicinal values for several diseases.

But the way the coconut is produced today is harmful. Today, for reasons unknown, almost every coconut tree is infected by several weeds or pests. To consider an example today almost every tree, especially in India is affected by 'Nusi'. In order to overcome this pest, a very unique and scientific(?) method is used.

In this method the roots of the coconut tree is attached to a bag of a very poisonous liquid pesticide, Nuvocron or Endosulphan, which is drawn by the roots. Because of this the leaves and the various parts of the coconut tree becomes poisoned. The weed or the pest that eats the parts of the tree, say the leaves, die because of the poison in the leaf.

What is ironic is that the poison pesticide that is sucked by the roots also goes in the water in the coconut, and, the coconut water, and the copra that is formed out of this is completely poisonous. This problem might be argued to be time bound and does not last long. As such this is just an example of the poisonous practices that are being followed.

Now, as per the recommendations of the Ayurveda if coconut flesh or coconut oil, or if tender coconut water is used for its good properties told in the Ayurveda, definitely the persons have to face the consequences of introducing toxins into the body, and thus making the Ayurveda, the science of removing toxicity in the body, an irrelevant one in today's context.

Let us consider another plant product, the 'grapes'. In order to control pests on the grapes, today, one of the most poisonous pesticide by name 'Endosulphan' is used. Here, Endosulphan is not sprayed on to the bunch of grapes in the plant, but the bunch of grapes hanging down from the plant are dipped in this poison, by taking the liquid Endosulphan in a bowl. Any one can easily notice a coating of Endosulphan (or any other pesticide for that matter) on the grapes. As per Ayurveda grapes has a very distinct advantage in blood purification. However, with the current practice of growing grapes, without doubt, the use of grapes increases the toxins in the body rather than reducing them. Added to this problem is the process of drying grapes. Ayurveda uses dry grapes in several formulae. Today, the process used to dry the grapes uses several chemicals, wherein the grapes are soaked in chemical solutions for a few hours. In the process, much more toxins are added to the grapes. When these dried grapes are used for medicinal



purpose (or even regular use for that matter) the result could be a totally opposite one, and the blame is on the Ayurveda, making Ayurveda irrelevant keeping in mind in the modern practices.

THREE

Again due to the commercialization, similar to chemical pesticides, several chemical fertilizers are used for the faster growth of the herbs. All these are definitely changing the qualities of the plant product and does not provide the qualities as said in the Ayurveda.

FOUR

Another basic ingredient the Ayurveda uses (and also we use in normal conditions too) is the water. It is known beyond doubt for the people world over about the pollution of water resources. Ayurveda considers water to be the 'jeeva rasa' or the 'life fluid'. But, today it can be noted that the majority of diseases are water borne. Hence, in today's context, water cannot be said as 'jeeva rasa' perhaps 'jeeva haaraka'!

FIVE

Today Ayurveda has become a big big business. Currently most Ayurvedic medicines are available through business companies. In the modern times, commercialization has become the order of the day. With the motive of making money, there could be compromise on the quality of production. For example, the Chyawanaprash, which is a 'dhaathu vardhaka' is manufactured by so many Ayurvedic medicine manufacturing companies through which tons and tons of Chyawanaprash is produced. Although, every company claims that they have strictly followed the procedure as indicated by the Chyavana Maharshi, each of them differ in their taste, their color, form, etc. etc., which is a clear indicator of the loop holes in the preparation of the medicine, and thus the effect of the medicine. Today, rapidly, commercial sources are the majority sources of medicine. Use of these commercial products are making Ayurveda an irrelevant one.

SIX

In the pretext of making huge money, it is also possible the process of preparation violate the very basics. Two examples are discussed below.

- certain medicinal herbs are required to be available in a certain conditions, say a very tiny and tender leaf of 'yekka' plant is required. Instead, to make available large quantity of 'yekka' leaves, a large and non-tender leaf may be used;
- In another case, a fruit that is well ripened is required. Instead of using a fruit that is well ripened on the very tree or the plant itself, having no time/patience to wait, the fruit may be cut off very early, and artificial ripening agents, majorly, the chemicals may be used. The result is a poor quality of the fruits with a reduction in their OFV (Original Fruit Value). This is similar to a baby being separated from the mother's womb after 4 months itself, instead of allowing the baby to develop within the mother's womb for 9 months, making the baby underdeveloped. Thus, in case of fruits, the fruit obtained is not only underdeveloped, but also has poisonous chemicals in it.

Use of such modern practices, which is a natural one today, definitely does not result in a very useful medicine, making Ayurveda ineffective.

SEVEN

Today there is an every increasing use of genetically modified versions of the plant products. It is very soon becoming the order of the day. For example, a tomato that is referred to in Ayurveda is probably no longer available. There are so many artificially modified forms of tomatoes, wherein, definitely each variety of tomato has different properties. Today a tomato is available with a gene that is introduced from a fish, to inculcate certain properties in the tomato, for better commercialization. These tomatoes, unknowing of how it comes, are very naturally used as normal tomatoes. Now, a person who wants to prepare an ayurvedic medicine using tomato would very naturally use this, which alters the property of the medicine

EIGHT

The motive of Ayurveda is to see that the health of every person is maintained, and that no one should suffer. Today Ayurveda almost has become a property of the rich. Common man cannot afford buying Ayurvedic medicines. Adding fuel to this fire, patents have come in a big way by making Ayurvedic medicines much and much more costlier. Being costlier is one aspect. But another greatest threat is, one business minded company which has patented for an Ayurvedic prescription does not allow any other company to produce the same, thus not leaving any competitor, and leading to further increase in the prices and dependency for a medicine. As such no Ayurvedic formula is a property of one company. It existed since thousands of years. It is a free property of one and all in the universe.

All these acts of patents are against the very Vedas which believes that there shall be no bounds to the knowledge. Hence these anti-vedic and commercial attitudes of certain companies have come a very large way in making the Ayurveda not at all reachable to common man.

NINE

Although different factors are discussed above, all of them are not acting in an isolated manner, but there could be a combination of the same, making the situation more complex.

But.....

Keeping in mind the fact that there is not a person who is left with toxins in their bodies, it is very much essential to see that Ayurveda is made relevant in modern times. Hence it is essential to first see that the Ayurveda if free from the clutches of toxicity. The simple and one point straight forward step for the purpose is "Look back and step back to leap forward". This shall definitely help in making the world a better place to live.

Some of the essential step backs are:

- The original breeds of the cows must be protected.
- Natural feeds should be made available to the cows, wherein the cows go around and graze in large fields.
- Unnatural methods to exploit cows have to be curtailed.
- Go to a more simpler methods of dairying rather than making the things sophisticated. Decentralization could help a lot in the context.



- Chemical- pesticide-free (organic) and chemical-fertilizer-free-farming (organic) is to be adopted. Of course the method is gearing up today, after realizing the sufferings of the current practices. These definitely increases the nutrition value of the agricultural produce.
- Water and other natural resources have to be saved from pollution. Although water is the most vastly available element on earth, tomorrows wars are likely to be for water. Potable water should be protected from pollution at whatever costs.
- Although money and business are the inevitable parts of the living today. No compromise to be made on the quality of Ayurvedic medicines in the name of money.
- Similar to the cows, original plant varieties should be protected. G.M. versions although look to be advantageous today, in the long run, it could lead to the suffering, as it happened in case of the chemical fertilizers.
- These are just a few steps listed out. In all, the basic keyword is that, we should be more natural. The current education system has to include these aspects, for which a reconstruction of the system is essential.
- Today's system of education has to be thoroughly revised to give importance on knowledge based education, leaving away the certificate based education.
- Nature is giving the herbs. Ayurvedic scriptures are one of the oldest which existed since the time when none of these commercial companies claiming the patents came into existence. No patents should be allowed on any of the Ayurvedic formulae.

It is some of these step-backs which could ensure, not only making Ayurveda relevant in modern times, but also ensures making a healthier living.