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 impor-
tant 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 tox-
icity of the human body for better flow of energy through the
system. In modern times, the lifestyle and the nature of work-
ing 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 fac-
tors 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 be-
low.

• 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. physi-
cally 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. To-
day, 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 dair-
ies. This definitely does not ensure the quality of the milk
that is referred to in the Ayurveda, making Ayurveda irrele-
vant 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 co-
conut water' is said to have high medicinal values for sev-
eral diseases.

But the way the coconut is produced today is harmful. To-
day, for reasons unknown, almost every coconut tree is in-
fected by several weeds or pests. To consider an example
today almost every tree, especially in India is affected by
'Nusi'. In order the 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 co-
conut water, and the copra that is formed out of this is com-
pletely poisonous. This problem might me 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 co-
conut flesh or coconut oil, or if tender coconut water is used for
its good properties told in the Ayurveda, definitely the per-
sons have to face the consequences of introducing toxins into
the body, and thus making the Ayurveda, the science of re-
moving toxicity in the body, an irrelevant one in today's con-
text.

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
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 is 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, tomorrow’s 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.