

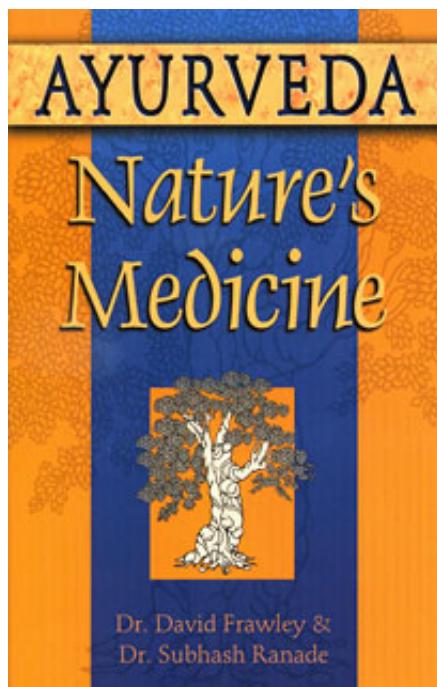
Frawley D. / Ranade S. Ayurveda, Nature's Medicine

Reading excerpt

[Ayurveda, Nature's Medicine](#)

of [Frawley D. / Ranade S.](#)

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Ayurveda, the Science of Life: Historical and Philosophical Background



He who regards kindness to humanity as the supreme religion, and treats his patients accordingly, best succeeds in achieving all the aims of life and obtains the greatest happiness.

— Sushruta

AYURVEDA AND MEDICINE TODAY

Ayurveda, "the science of life", is the traditional natural medicine of India dating back over five thousand years. It is a science, or way of knowledge about life, its powers and its resources. Yet Ayurveda is not a science artificially imposed upon living beings. Its basis is not found in mere chemistry, or in a mechanistic and materialistic view of the human body. Ayurveda is based upon a deep communion with the spirit of life itself, upon a profound understanding of the movement of the vital force and its manifestations within our entire psychophysical system.

As such, Ayurveda presents a striking alternative to the biochemical model of modern medicine, the limitations of which are becoming increasingly evident through time. We are not simply an accident or a design of chemistry but an expression of a living consciousness that is universal in nature - which is inherently wise and which has the power to balance and transform itself once its nature is understood. Reclaiming that connection with life as a whole is the real basis

of healing, not manipulating the life force with drugs, however useful they may be.

Ayurveda is a truly holistic medicine whose great wealth we have just begun to explore in the Western world. It is not merely a kind of antiquated folk medicine as it is sometimes considered to be. It is a science in its own right, with its own rationality and way of experimentation that is extraordinarily intricate and complete. Ayurveda is based upon the observation of living beings and their actual reactions to their environment, not on mere laboratory experiments that seldom address the living being.

Ayurveda classifies all the factors of our lives in an organic and energetic language that reflects the entire living biosphere around us. It shows how our individual constitution and disease tendencies reflect the forces of nature. It shows how foods, herbs, emotions, climates and lifestyles impact the dynamics of our own physiology and psychology that may be different for each person. This enables us to interact with life in an optimal manner both for our own benefit and that of the greater world in a symbiotic manner.

Ayurveda possesses probably the longest clinical experience of any medical system in the world, with a history of Ayurvedic hospitals and colleges going back well over three thousand years. It has carefully examined every sort of disease and life condition and their impact on health and well-being. It contains an intricate and sophisticated system of anatomy and physiology that follows a vitalistic model of the biological humors or doshas that shows us how our life-energies work and how to balance them.

Ayurveda reflects a deep study not only of the body but also the mind and the spirit beyond the mind and body. It reflects an in-depth system of psychology that understands the dynamics of karma and consciousness and how the physical world connects with those more subtle.

For treatment purposes, Ayurveda has created an extensive herbal and mineral industry, offering what is probably the greatest variety of herbal and pharmaceutical preparations available in the world. These include herbal wines, herbal jel-

lies, confections, resins, balsams, various pills and powders, and an extensive system of mineral and alchemical preparations that are unique in the entire world.

Ayurveda possesses a wealth of special clinical procedures, including the use of steam therapy, oil massage, and its own Pancha Karma methods of purification that include everything from enemas to nasal medications. It has special rejuvenation techniques for body and mind that strengthen immunity and retard aging, employing natural methods of diet, herbs, exercise, yoga and meditation.

Perhaps most significantly, Ayurveda uses all these approaches in the context of a greater science of self-care, including an entire methodology of right living for optimum health and the promotion of greater awareness and creativity tailored to the needs of each person. All of this follows a constitutional model that considers the unique nature of the individual as the primary factor in health, not disease as an entity in itself. Ayurveda is a humanistic and person-centered medicine that shows us how to find our own natural health and unfold our deeper energy potentials for the fullness of life, in which drugs and hospitals can become peripheral not primary.

While Western medicine focuses on identifying external pathogens and controlling disease from the outside, Ayurveda concentrates on the living individual and controlling disease through balancing the life-force within the person. As the limitations of antibiotic medicines are now evident today, with weakening immune systems and the return of contagious diseases once thought to be eradicated, such regimens for strengthening our internal energy and immune system are crucial for our health as a species and its survival through future decades. We can no longer simply try to change our environment for health or happiness, as if manipulating the outer will make us feel better on an inner level. We must learn how to develop and improve ourselves and our own internal resources, including not only how we eat and exercise, but also how we breathe and how we think. Ayurveda shows us how to do this and provides us with the knowledge and meth-

ods to facilitate the process.

As the traditional medicine of the subcontinent of India, Ayurveda reflects the profound spiritual culture of the region. It is an integral part of Vedic sciences that includes Yoga, Vedanta and Vedic Astrology. It brings us the entire cultural, spiritual and natural wisdom of the Himalayan region with knowledge of how the great yogis and seers cultivated their bodies and minds, and interacted with their natural environment, thus reaching the very source of creation in the cosmic mind.

This ancient and oriental Ayurveda is now spreading worldwide as one of the most important and innovative systems of mind-body medicine available today. As part of the global age, it has left its protective shell in India and is now entering the global arena for the benefit of all peoples. Soon Ayurveda will become an integral part of a new and more humane approach to health care everywhere. In the last ten years, interest in the subject has exploded, with the publishing of many books on Ayurveda and the opening of Ayurvedic centers throughout the Western world, indicating the beginning of a trend that is likely to continue for years to come.

The current crisis in health care, brought about by over-reliance on chemical, mechanical and artificial treatment modalities, now demands the return of the natural, life and soul affirmative systems such as Ayurveda, with their lifestyle regimens for self-healing. Western medicine has become so expensive that it is draining both our personal and national resources. Unless we re-learn the art of self-healing, we will be drowned in drugs, medical testing and chronic diseases that leave us not only unhealthy but also financially insecure. This new move to self-healing is bound to be one of the most important developments in culture and in health care for the coming century.

Ayurveda is ushering in a health care revolution in which lifestyle, diet, exercise and meditation are more important than drugs and surgery, not only for health but also for improving vitality. It is helping us to reclaim our health and our vitality so that we can live the lives that we really want to live and

have the creativity and consciousness to make our sojourn on this planet both beautiful and beneficial, not only for ourselves but for all creatures. It is returning medicine to life and to our daily behavior, rather than reducing it to difficult hospital procedures with numerous side effects.

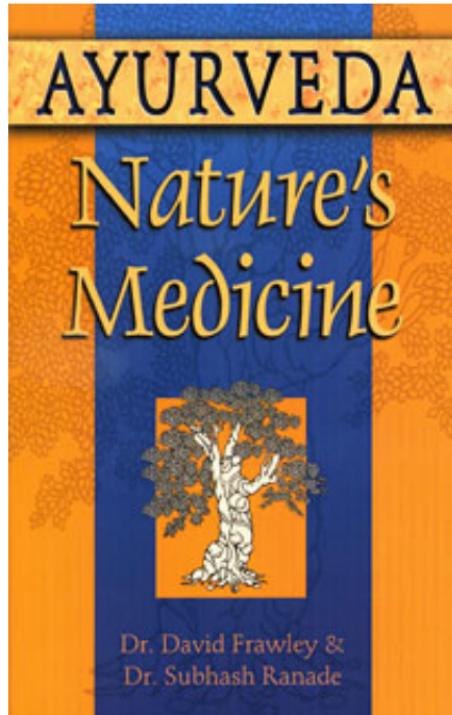
The Meaning and Purpose of Ayurveda

The word Ayurveda has a profound meaning that helps us understand its purpose. "Ayu" refers to all aspects of life from birth to death and all aspects of our nature from body to immortal spirit. It is the continuity and harmony between all that we are and all that we wish to be. "Veda" means knowledge or learning at the deepest level, the wisdom of this conscious universe that we can cognize within ourselves and in our own lives.

Ayurveda is the science by which life in its totality is understood. It describes the diet, medicines, and behaviors that are beneficial or harmful for life and consciousness. It provides a wealth of experiential knowledge and practical healing modalities for all people. Not surprisingly, Ayurveda is called "the mother of all healing" because it cares for all creatures as a mother does for her children. It rejects nothing that is beneficial for life but strives to integrate all valid healing methods in an understanding of how life itself operates.

The sages of ancient India bequeathed Ayurveda to mankind as part of the vast spiritual system of Vedic and yogic knowledge. Seeking out of compassion to alleviate the suffering of all creatures, they looked for all methods of removing pain. They created the system of Yoga to deal with spiritual suffering and Ayurveda to deal with mental and physical suffering. Ayurveda is thus one of the oldest and most comprehensive medical systems in the world, with an unbroken record of clinical experience going back to the dawn of human history.

However, Ayurveda is not only a system of medicine in the conventional sense of a methodology for treating disease. It is a way of life that teaches us how to maintain health and improve both our energy and our awareness - how to live life



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