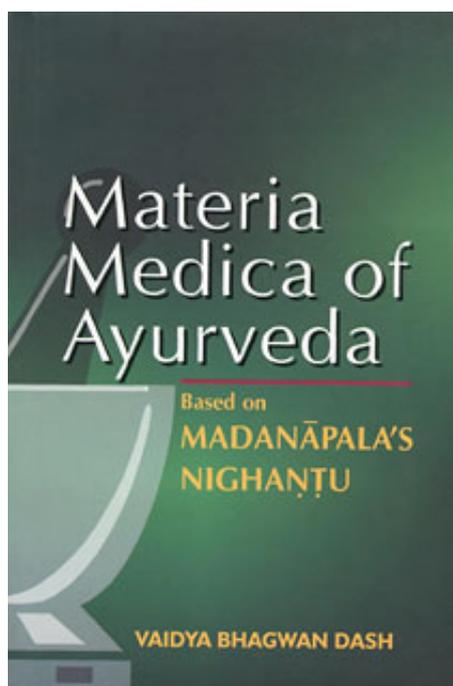


# Vaidya Bhagwan Dash Materia Medica of Ayurveda

Reading excerpt  
[Materia Medica of Ayurveda](#)  
of [Vaidya Bhagwan Dash](#)  
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Tel. +49 7626 9749 700  
Email [info@narayana-verlag.com](mailto:info@narayana-verlag.com)  
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## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the science of life, deals with the physical, mental and spiritual health of an individual-human-beings, animals, birds and even plants. According to Indian philosophy, both animals and plants have mind and soul in addition to physique. In some, these are well manifested and in others these are in latent or sublatent states. Therefore, along with commonly known ayurvedic texts for humanbeings, there are books on *gavayurveda* dealing with cattle health, *asvayurveda* dealing with the health of horse, *gajayurveda* dealing with the health of elephants and *vrksayurveda* dealing with the health of vegetable kingdom. Ayurveda, in a narrow sense, is also interpreted as the science of medicine. Simple freedom from conspicuous diseases and possession of robust body is not considered as health in ayurveda. Along with the harmony of *dosas* (physical entities governing the body-physiology) and *dhatuas* (tissue elements composing the anatomical structure), the person should have perspicuousness of the soul, senses and the mind to be called healthy. Thus, ayurveda deals with the signs and symptoms of the happy and unhappy life, and drugs, diet, drinks and other regimens which are useful and harmful for good health. In other words, ayurveda prescribes dos and don'ts for the preservation as well as promotion of positive health, and prevention as well as cure of diseases.

### Unique Features of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a holistic science of health. Apart from the sign and symptoms of the diseases manifested in the affected part of the body, it prescribes measures to ascertain the place of origin of the disease (*udbhava sthana*) and the channel through which the morbid material has traversed (*sancara marga*) from the site of origin to the site of manifestation of the disease. Thus, fortreatment, it prescribes measures to correct the site of origin and the channels of transportation of the morbid material along with the site of manifestation of the disease. By doing so, it helps in the complete eradication of the ailment and not only giving mere relief from the agonising signs and symptoms. Apart from the whole body, it emphasises upon correcting the mental aberrations which are also considered to be important factors of causing diseases.

Ayurveda recognises the roles of foreign organisms like bacteria, virus, etc. in the causation of diseases. But these are considered

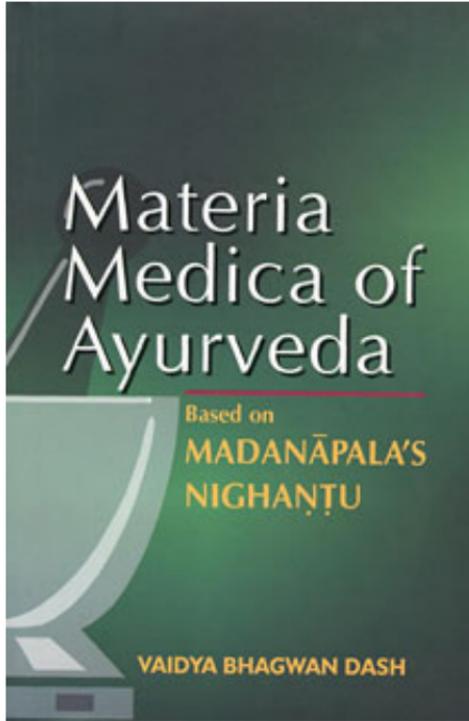
as "secondary causes", the primary cause being the disturbance in the harmony of dosas (physical entities responsible for regulating body-physiology) and *dhatu*s (tissue elements constituting the structure of the body). If these dosas and *dhatu*s are in their appropriate state of equilibrium, then these foreign organisms, howsoever virulent they maybe, will not be able to multiply or grow to cause a disease. This principle is applied to both the preservation as well as promotion of positive health and prevention as well as cure of diseases. Apart from good conduct (*acara rasayana*), regimens for different parts of the day and night and for various seasons are prescribed. If a person is unable to follow these instructions because of ignorance or wilful negligence and falls victim to the attacks of organisms or metabolic aberrations, then therapies are prescribed in the form of drugs, diet, drinks, massage, exercise, etc., to restore the harmony of dosas and *dhatu*s, and to correct mental perversions. Once the harmony is restored, the invading germs stop growing and succumb to their death in the absence of congenial atmosphere and because of the presence of hostile environment around them.

Thus, ayurvedic therapies, along with correcting the ailment, promote body resistance or immunity against the disease causing organisms. Ingredients of these therapies, before acting, become homologous to the tissues and they do not act as foreign elements. Therefore, instead of *side (toxic) reactions*, they produce several *side benefits* inasmuch as the body becomes immune to several other invading organisms.

### **Dravya Guna (Materia Medica)**

As has been stated above, drugs apart, diet, drinks and other regimens are used as therapeutic measures in ayurveda. Thus, in ayurvedic works on materia medica, all these items are described and their properties are elaborated.

In the books on ayurvedic materia medica, drugs, ingredients of food and drinks are classified into several categories. Generally, different methods are followed for such classification in different works and each of these groups is described in separate chapter. These chapters are named after the primary drugs described in the beginning, for example, *Abhayadl varga*, which is the first chapter of this text. Of each item, in the beginning, synonyms are provided. These synonyms are generally indicative of the botanical characteristics, therapeutic effects, parts of the plant used, place of growth,



Vaidya Bhagwan Dash

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