



THE POSSIBILITIES ARE IMMENSE

by

Dr. K. K. HARIKRISHNAN

[drharikrishnankk@sancharnet.in](mailto:drharikrishnankk@sancharnet.in)  
[punarnava@sancharnet.in](mailto:punarnava@sancharnet.in)

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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE IMMENSE.....

### "COMPLEMENTARY" HEALTH

With the all-round disgruntlement and frustration with western medicine in terms of its potent side effects, inability to root out the problem completely, high costs of diagnosis and treatment, and super specialization, people are now turning to other systems of medicine to meet their health needs.

In the USA, almost 42% of the people are resorting to some form of "complementary" medicine for their various problems. This is up from 33% a couple of years back and is continuously increasing.

In India, even today, up to 75% of the community's health needs are met by traditional systems of medicine primary among which is Ayurveda. The same statistics hold true for most of the developing nations in the world and the developed nations are also fast moving in the same direction despite all their sophisticated medical armory and specialization.

#### Among the different medical systems that exist, Ayurveda has several unique advantages ...

- It can be said to be the OLDEST MEDICAL SYSTEM OF THE WORLD.
- It is not a mere medical system; it is a WAY OF LIFE and places greater emphasis on the PREVENTIVE & PROMOTIVE aspects of health care as compared to any other system
- It is a HOLISTIC & NATURAL health care system which is almost completely devoid of side effects
- Its outlook of the UNIVERSE AS MACROCOSM OF THE LIVING BEING, the microcosm gives its system of diagnosis and treatment a totally different perspective
- In the above perspective, the treatment it gives ensures the complete rooting out of the problem without creating any other problems
- It WORKS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL and not the disease; thus it becomes very PRECISE & SPECIFIC in its treatment of the disease.



## THE AYURVEDA WAY

All the above makes it very convenient for Ayurveda to assume the mantle of looking after the GLOBAL HEALTH needs. However for that to happen, there are several internal problems that need to be corrected or rectified. Among the two resource bases - namely the MATERIAL resource base and the KNOWLEDGE resource base - that are primarily required for any system to exist or survive. Today there is a great degree of interest in preserving the material resource base of Ayurveda which in the present context means the herbs from which the majority of medicines are derived.

## WHERE IS THE GOOD VAIDYA?

However not much effort is being taken to protect and develop the knowledge resource base, which in the present context means the physicians. WE HAVE TO TAKE IMMEDIATE EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AYURVEDA PHYSICIANS OF THE HIGHEST CLASS if Ayurveda is to really serve the needs of the community. Even those who come from the West are more interested in merely learning some "massage techniques" and then go back and open Ayurveda centers on the pretext of having learnt Ayurveda fully and properly - THIS IS DANGEROUS. Even though I mentioned earlier that Ayurveda is ALMOST devoid of side effects, WRONG APPLICATION OF AYURVEDA PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES can certainly have devastating effects.

To become a TRUE Ayurveda physician, one should be prepared to spend several years in intensive study of the principles and theories before one can even BEGIN to think of the practice. If the Ayurveda physician is really good, then nothing can come in the way of his or her treatment; the depletion of the material resource base does not really matter. For, he would be able to find suitable local resources to meet the health needs of the local community. If such high quality Ayurveda physicians are not developed, then Ayurveda will soon go the way of western medicine wherein people will become disappointed and look for another solution to their health needs.

## INTEGRATION....EAST MEETS WEST?

This is a very interesting subject, which has been discussed for several years now. The common mode of integration today is WESTERN DIAGNOSIS and AYURVEDA TREATMENT. How can such treatment be called Ayurveda - it is actually Western Diagnosis and HERBAL treatment that is being practiced - this is a typical outcome of the reductionist western approach that has come to be practiced today at every level. There is no way that Ayurveda can be combined at this level with Western medicine.



The primary reason being, these belong to two entirely different thought processes - while the Ayurveda thought process is a BOTTOM UP approach where one builds up the universe or the human body after laying a strong foundation (similar to building a house), the Western thought process is the TOP DOWN approach where using the single instrument of knowledge called PERCEPTION, they are going further down trying to search for the smallest unit of existence - thus where earlier the atom was considered to be the smallest unit, research has continued to show smaller and smaller particles like the subatomic particles and this process of discovery continues. This is why I say that the two systems are based on two entirely different thought processes and any attempt to integrate the two at the SUPERFICIAL LEVEL will only have disastrous consequences.



This is also why western theories and principles of understanding continue to change, while in Ayurveda, the theories and principles are eternal and it is only the practice that is adapted based on changing times or geographic location or other variable factors - to sum this up, the HOLISTIC approach of Ayurveda ensures that its theories never change while the REDUCTIONIST approach of Western medicine ensures that they continually find newer and newer ways of looking at the human body thus condemning what was good yesterday - this is all in the name of development or progress.





If at all integration is to be considered, it should be at either of the given levels:

\* At the level of the fundamental principles or the basic foundation of both the systems - the expert thinkers of both systems should sit together and discuss their theories, principles, concepts, categories etc. in an OPEN and FRANK discussion and see whether there is any meeting point at this very basic level... if they can come to some CONSENSUS, then it should be built upon gradually and in a sure and systematic way.



\* As the above is a very long-term process, the other method of integration that can be considered is to identify the areas of STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES IN EACH SYSTEM in terms of diseases that can be treated/not treated. Then, as is presently done in China, every hospital can have sections for different systems of medicine, and when a patient comes for treatment, based on his condition, he is referred to that system which is best equipped to deal with the particular condition. For example, in a surgical condition, it is best to be referred to the Western medicine specialist; while for a condition like arthritis or skin diseases, it is best to be referred to an Ayurveda specialist.

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