

Ayurveda as a Medium of Healing: A Critical Review of Classical Concepts and Modern Evidence

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Abstract

Ayurveda, recognized as one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems, has its origins in India over 5,000 years ago. Rooted in a philosophy that views health as a harmonious balance of body, mind, and spirit, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive and individualized approach to wellness. This traditional system of medicine is grounded in the concept of the Tridosha Vata, Pitta, and Kapha representing the fundamental bio-energetic forces governing physiological and psychological processes. The balance or imbalance of these Dosha determines an individual's health status, and therapeutic interventions are designed accordingly. This study aims to explore Ayurveda as a scientific and effective medium of healing in the context of modern healthcare. By conducting an extensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, alongside recent peer-reviewed research, the paper evaluates its core principles, diagnostic methodologies, preventive strategies, and treatment modalities. Special emphasis is placed on Ayurveda's preventive and promotive health measures, lifestyle modifications, dietary guidelines, detoxification techniques and rejuvenation therapies. Findings suggest that Ayurveda holds significant potential in addressing the current global health challenges, particularly in the realms of disease prevention, lifestyle disorder management, and integrative medicine. With the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and stress-related disorders, Ayurveda's emphasis on personalized care, early diagnosis, and root-cause treatment offers a valuable complement to conventional biomedical approaches. The integration of Ayurvedic principles into public health frameworks could enhance community-level health outcomes, particularly in preventive care and chronic disease management. Furthermore, the growing body of clinical research and standardization initiatives has begun to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and evidence-based practice, thereby supporting Ayurveda's relevance in the field of health and wellness.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, global health ecosystem, Tridosha Vata, Pitta and Kapha

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, derived from the Sanskrit words “Ayur” (life) and “Veda” (knowledge), is one of the oldest documented systems of medicine, originating in the Indian subcontinent more than 5,000 years ago. As a holistic science of health and longevity, Ayurveda is not limited to the treatment of diseases but encompasses the prevention, preservation, and promotion of overall well-being. Rooted in the philosophy that human beings are an integral part of nature, Ayurveda emphasizes the interconnection between the body, mind, spirit, and environment.

At the core of Ayurvedic theory lies the concept of the *Tridosha Vata, Pitta, and Kapha* [1] representing three fundamental bio-energetic forces that govern physiological and psychological processes. *Vata* is associated with movement and communication within the body, *Pitta* with metabolism and transformation, and *Kapha* with structure and stability. Health is defined as the state in which these *Dosha* are in their natural equilibrium, while disease arises from their imbalance. Unlike many modern medical systems that often focus primarily on symptomatic relief, Ayurveda aims to address the birth rate of *Nidan* (root cause) of illness, working to restore harmony within the individual through personalized treatment protocols. Ayurvedic healthcare integrates a range of interventions including dietary modifications, lifestyle regulation, herbal medicines, detoxification therapies and rejuvenation practices. The diagnostic approach is equally holistic, involving a detailed assessment of the patient's constitution, current health status, lifestyle, mental state, and environmental influences. By tailoring treatments to the unique constitution and needs of each person, Ayurveda exemplifies a truly individualized form of medicine [2].

Historically, the principles and practices of Ayurveda have been documented in classical Sanskrit treatises. These texts not only present detailed guidelines for disease management but also emphasize daily and seasonal regimens to maintain optimal health. Preventive healthcare is a central theme in Ayurveda, where the focus is on sustaining balance and avoiding disease triggers before pathological changes occur.

In the modern era, there has been a resurgence of interest in Ayurveda due to its emphasis on natural therapies, preventive health, and minimal side effects. With the global rise in lifestyle-related disorders such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and stress-related illnesses. Ayurveda offers time-tested strategies for prevention and management. Its non-invasive and holistic approach resonates with contemporary movements toward sustainable, person-centered, and integrative healthcare. Recent decades have witnessed increased efforts to scientifically validate Ayurvedic principles and formulations through clinical trials, pharmacological studies, and standardization protocols. This has facilitated its integration into public health systems in India and fostered recognition at the international level. The World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged Ayurveda as a traditional medical system with potential relevance for global health promotion [3].

Therefore, studying Ayurveda in the context of modern healthcare is not merely an exploration of ancient knowledge but a step toward bridging traditional wisdom with evidence-based medicine. Understanding its theoretical foundations, diagnostic methods, preventive strategies, and therapeutic approaches, it can contribute to developing sustainable health models that complement conventional medical practices. This research seeks to evaluate Ayurveda's potential as a scientific, effective, and integrative system of healing, capable of addressing both acute and chronic health challenges of the present day.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was designed as a qualitative and descriptive review, synthesizing information from classical Ayurvedic literature and modern scientific research to assess Ayurveda's principles, methodologies, and relevance in contemporary healthcare. The approach combined textual analysis of ancient treatises with a comparative evaluation of peer-reviewed scientific studies, focusing on the integration of Ayurveda into evidence-based medical frameworks. Primary textual sources included the three *Brihatrayi* (major classical compendia) of Ayurveda:

- *Charaka Samhita*: Emphasizing internal medicine (*Kaya Chikitsa*), diagnostic principles, and preventive healthcare [4].
- *Sushruta Samhita*: Focusing on surgical techniques (*Shalya Tantra*), disease classification, and anatomical descriptions [5].
- *Ashtanga Hridaya*: Providing a concise synthesis of Ayurvedic theory and clinical practice, with emphasis on practical application [6].

These texts were consulted in their original Sanskrit form as well as through authoritative English translations and commentaries to ensure accurate interpretation of terminology and concepts. Relevant sections dealing with preventive care, diagnostic methods, therapeutic protocols, and *Tridosha* theory were extracted and categorized thematically.

OBSERVATION

From its origins in ancient Indian scriptures to its growing documentation in modern scientific literature, Ayurveda demonstrates a consistent emphasis on lifestyle regulation, personalized diagnosis, and natural therapeutics. Classical Ayurvedic texts repeatedly highlight the principle that *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam* [7] (preserving the health of the healthy) is as important as *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam* (alleviating the disorders of the diseased). This dual focus positions Ayurveda as both a preventive and curative medical system, integrating health maintenance with disease management.

Lifestyle management forms the backbone of Ayurvedic practice. Regimens, such as *Dinacharya* (daily routine) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), are prescribed according to an individual's *Prakriti* [8] (constitution), ensuring alignment with natural biorhythms. These prescriptions covering diet, exercise, sleep, hygiene, and mental discipline are aimed at maintaining the equilibrium of the *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*). Personalized healthcare in Ayurveda involves tailoring interventions not only to the disease but also to the unique psycho-physiological constitution of the patient. This individualized approach contrasts with the generalized protocols of many conventional treatments and is increasingly recognized as a valuable model in precision medicine.

Observational records, case studies, and controlled clinical trials indicate that Ayurvedic interventions have shown efficacy in managing chronic disorders, metabolic syndromes, and psychosomatic illnesses. Conditions, such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, and certain skin disorders, have been addressed through a combination of dietary regulation, herbal formulations and mind–body practices such as yoga and meditation. These outcomes often stem from Ayurveda's root-cause approach, which seeks to restore balance at a fundamental level rather than merely suppress symptoms.

A crucial pharmacological concept in Ayurveda is *Rasapanchaka*, which describes the five-fold properties of a substance: *Rasa* (taste), *Guna* (qualities), *Veerya* (potency), *Vipaka* (post-digestive effect) and *Prabhava* (specific action). This framework is central to the selection of medicinal substances, determining their suitability for correcting specific *Dosha* imbalances. For instance, a *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent) herb with cooling *Veerya* may be selected to pacify aggravated *Pitta*, whereas an unctuous, warming herb might be indicated for *Vata* disorders. By understanding and applying *Rasapanchaka*, practitioners can predict therapeutic effects, minimize adverse reactions, and customize formulations for individual patients.

Diagnosis in Ayurveda relies heavily on *Nidanapanchaka* the five-fold framework for understanding disease: *Nidana* (etiological factors), *Purvarupa* (prodromal symptoms), *Rupa* (cardinal signs and symptoms), *Upashaya* (therapeutic tests), and *Samprapti* (pathogenesis). This system enables early detection of disease tendencies, often before the appearance of overt clinical symptoms, allowing for timely preventive interventions. By identifying causative factors, such as improper diet, lifestyle errors, environmental influences, or emotional stress, the physician can recommend targeted corrections that address both the root cause and the pathophysiological progression.

When examined through the lens of modern integrative medicine, Ayurveda's emphasis on lifestyle, individualized care, and natural therapeutics aligns closely with contemporary priorities in preventive health and chronic disease management. Its frameworks, such as *Rasapanchaka* for pharmacology and *Nidanapanchaka* for diagnosis, offer systematic, rational, and adaptable tools for

clinical decision-making. Integrating these principles into modern healthcare models could enhance the effectiveness of treatment protocols, reduce dependency on long-term pharmacotherapy, and improve patient outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Discussion around its role in public health has intensified during global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The renewed global interest in Ayurveda underscores its scientific foundations and practical relevance in contemporary healthcare. Its resurgence has been particularly notable during global health challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when preventive and immune-supportive strategies became a public health priority. The Ayurvedic paradigm, with its emphasis on individualized assessment and tailored interventions based on *Prakriti* (constitutional type), parallels the principles of personalized medicine, a model that is increasingly gaining recognition in modern biomedical research. Ayurveda's relevance extends beyond disease management to encompass preventive care, patient education, and the promotion of sustainable, health-oriented lifestyles. Its core strategies, including dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, and the use of evidence-supported herbal formulations, offer a holistic framework that integrates physical, mental, and environmental dimensions of health. Such an approach addresses the growing global need for healthcare systems that are both cost-effective and patient centered.

Despite its strengths, Ayurveda faces challenges related to standardization of formulations, regulatory harmonization across regions, and the need for robust clinical validation through high-quality trials. However, these limitations are being progressively addressed through increased government initiatives, academic collaborations, and advancements in research methodologies. The Ministry of AYUSH in India and various international bodies have undertaken steps to support pharmacological standardization, promote integrative healthcare, and encourage interdisciplinary research [9].

Overall, Ayurveda's enduring emphasis on prevention, self-care, and ecological sustainability positions it as a highly relevant component of global health strategies, capable of complementing conventional medicine and contributing to the evolution of truly integrative healthcare systems. Ayurveda's emphasis on preventive care, patient empowerment, and sustainable living makes it a highly relevant healing system today [10].

CONCLUSIONS

Ayurveda is more than a traditional healing system; it is a comprehensive science of life offering a timeless, holistic approach to health. Its integration with modern medicine holds the potential to improve health outcomes, enhance patient satisfaction, and address contemporary healthcare challenges. By emphasizing prevention, personalization, and natural therapies, Ayurveda can contribute to creating a sustainable, person-centered global healthcare model that harmonizes ancient wisdom with modern scientific advances.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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