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the spiritual aspect of ayurveda - body, mind & spirit



Chapter 1



Chapter 1

the spiritual aspect of ayurveda = bodily, mind & spirit

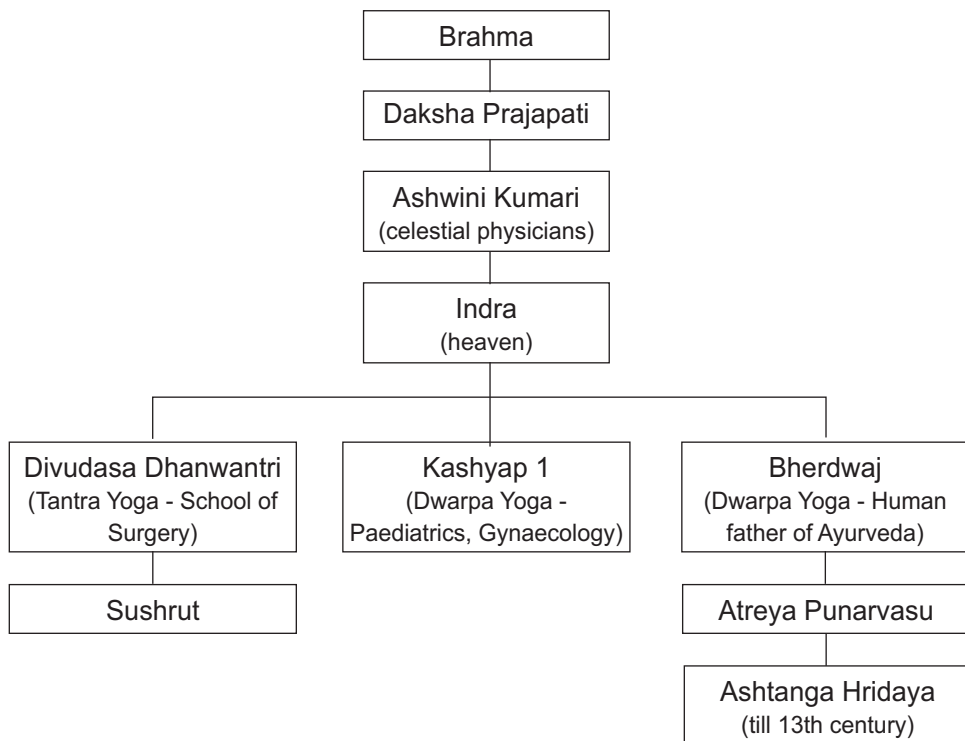
Ayurveda, the 'Science of Life', is the ancient holistic medical science of India. Just as the wisdom of Hinduism of which it is an important part is a way of life rather than a religion Ayurveda too is a way of life. Ayurveda suggests safe, gentle and effective ways of healing the diseases that afflict us and of living a long, healthy and happy life. Ayurveda has been practiced in India for thousands of years and it is considered to be the fifth Veda. The secret of Ayurveda's individualized healing method has been well preserved in India for more than 5,000 years, whereas in other cultures the ancient wisdom has been lost.

Ayurveda is said to be a 'World Medicine' and is the most holistic or comprehensive medical system that is practiced today. Veda Vyasa,

the spiritual aspect of ayurveda = body, mind & spirit

the famous sage, preserved the complete knowledge of Ayurveda in writing, along with the other spiritual insights of ethics, virtue, and self-realization. Ayurveda is believed to have been passed down from God to his angels, then to the celestial beings, and finally to humans. The knowledge of Ayurveda was transmitted from Brahma to Daksha Prajapati, to the Ashwin twins who are celestial or divine doctors, who then passed it to Indra. Sage Bharadvaja volunteered to go to heaven to receive this wisdom from Indra. He became the first human to receive the knowledge of Ayurveda, which was then passed to Attreya, Punarnavasa, and finally, to Agnishesha.

The History of Ayurveda



History

The principal sacred book of Ayurveda, Charak Samhita, opens with a description of the Rishis, or enlightened sages, in meditation. Many thousands of years ago, at the beginning of human civilization, the Rishis gathered together near the Himalayas to find a way to conquer disease. Together, they went into a state of deep meditation, and the knowledge of Ayurveda was transmitted to them by their supreme God: Mahabrahma.

According to this knowledge, disease was regarded as an evil, which prevented the individual from attaining self-realisation. For a person to be free from disease, he or she has to follow a truly spiritual path, which will help him to become liberated from the constraints of the physical body. Anyone who was ill was believed to be possessed by evil and attached to the material world, hence, it was necessary for the person to meditate to receive divine light and to enjoy, physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Ayurveda has three main texts: *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, and the *Ashtanga Hridaya Samhita*. These books are believed to be more than 1,200 years old, and contain the original and complete knowledge of the science of Ayurveda (world medicine), thus proving that Ayurveda is the only complete ancient medicinal system that is still in existence.

The oldest surviving text of Ayurveda is the Charak Samhita. Samhita means 'text' or 'thesis' and Charak is the name of the doctor who made the immense effort of transforming the text into its present form. Charak, literally meaning 'one who moves around', is a vaid or doctor who goes around teaching and practicing medicine. The second text is the Sushrut Samhita and the third one is the Ashtanga Hridaya. The Charak Samhita is the direct transmission of Ayurveda from God or the Creator (Brahma) to the enlightened sages.

Charak represents the Attreya School of physics and contains details of physiology, anatomy, etiology, symptoms and signs of disease, diagnosis, treatment, prescription of medicines, prevention of disease, and longevity. Both the internal and external causes of illness are also studied.

The 4 Main Book of the Vedas include the following:

- Rig Veda
- Sam Veda
- Yajur Veda
- Atharva Veda

The Atharva Veda contains the teachings of one branch of Ayurveda, as well as the basics of Vedic astrology. Among the 10,572 hymns of the Rig Veda, we find discussions mentioning the three doshas or constitutions of the human body - vata, pita and kapha. The Atharva Veda, contains 5,977 hymns of praise and of healing, with descriptions of anatomy, physiology, and surgery.

Ayurveda is rich with the knowledge of medicinal herbs, foods, colours, aromas, and fragrances and of the healing properties of gemstones and the rudraksha, Yoga, mantras, and meditation. It teaches that prevention is better than curing. By protecting our environment and by achieving wider knowledge of the various methods of healing, we can attain longevity.

Ayurveda is a way of life that has a rich spiritual tradition. It was not tested on animals; on the contrary, it is directly concerned with human beings. Beginning with the knowledge of our origins in the universe, it teaches us everything that is necessary for a long and healthy life.