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"Ancient Wisdom: The Vedic Approach to Naturopathy"

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Abstract: 'शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्' means a healthy body is the means of religion. This quote by the great poet Kalidas is absolutely true. Be it spiritual progress or worldly rise, both are possible only when the body which is its means is energetic. The importance of Ayurveda in the fitness and sustainable health of the body has been universally recognized in ancient Indian knowledge. Currently, the various horrors of Covid-19, which has arisen as a global crisis because of coronavirus, have once again made Ayurveda and naturopathy universally accepted. Ayurveda is a different part of our life. Ayurveda has an important role in the elimination of diseases. There is an interdependent relationship between nature and man. Nature is a boon given by God to man. All the units of nature - water, fire, sun, air and soil continue to benefit man in some form or the other. Our sages have wished for 'जीवेम शतम्' i.e. to live happily for 100 years. Which is possible through proper healthy lifestyle and naturopathy.

Index Terms - Naturopathy, Ancient Indian Wisdom, Fitness and Health, Natural Elements, Panch Mahabhuta.

INTRODUCTION-

Naturopathy plays an important role in protecting humans from diseases naturally by increasing the quality of life along with good health. The present time is of mechanicalness. In the name of development, humans are getting trapped in a mechanical lifestyle and are getting away from nature. Whereas humans are a gift of nature. Naturopathy brings humans closer to nature and gives them the gift of good health. Through this, the physical, mental, moral and spiritual feelings of a person's life develop. The human body is based on five elements - air, fire, water, earth and sky. These five elements are the pillars of naturopathy. Their imbalance in the body gives rise to diseases. An attempt is made to make them uniform and balanced again through naturopathy. Under naturopathy, the basis of treatment and health benefits of people is the natural power to fight germs. This is a constructive method of treatment, whose aim is to attack the root cause of prevention by appropriate use of elements available in abundance in nature. This is not a mantra medical system, but a manufactured lifestyle in accordance with natural elements. Which is related to our civilization and culture.

CONCEPT OF NATUROPATHY-

Naturopathy, in its literal sense, means the treatment through the elements of nature. The human body is composed of five elements: air, fire, earth, water, and space. The balance of these elements ensures good health, and their imbalance causes diseases. Naturopathy aims to restore this balance using natural resources. This method relies on the body's innate ability to combat diseases, targeting the root cause by utilizing abundantly available natural elements. It's not just a treatment method but a lifestyle aligned with our civilization and culture.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF NATUROPATHY-

1. Sun therapy [Surya Chikitsa]

The Vedas describe the therapeutic properties of the Sun's energetic rays. The Sun is considered the soul of the universe, cleansing the mind and enhancing intellect. Morning sunlight, rich in life force, helps eliminate diseases. The Atharvaveda mentions that the rising Sun protects us from death, suggesting that exposure to the early morning Sun's rays can cure heart diseases, jaundice, and anemia. In the Vedas, treatment with the energetic rays of the Sun is described at many places. Surya has been described as the soul of this entire world

– सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्स्थुषश्च ।1

Sun is the one who removes the diseases of the body and purifies the intellect and increases knowledge - अप सेधत दुर्मतिम्, आदित्यासः।2

The rays of the rising sun are highly energetic and cure diseases of the body. In Atharvaveda, the rising sun has been described as protecting from death –

उद्यन् सूर्यो नुदतां मृत्युपाशान् ।3

There is vital energy in the morning sunlight, which helps in destroying diseases. It is said in Rigveda that the rising sun cures heart diseases, jaundice and anemia –

उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमह आरोहन् उत्तरां दिवम् । हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य हरियाणा च नाशय।4

Even in Atharvaveda, the action of Surya has been said to remove heart diseases and blood deficiency - अनु

सूर्यम् उदयतां हृद्योतो हरिया च ते। गो रोहितस्य वर्णेन तेन त्वा परिदध्मसि।5

That is why in Indian culture, it has been prescribed to worship the Sun and do Sadhana facing the Sun, because due to the influence of the Sun's rays, a person remains healthy and free from various types of diseases

- सं ते शीष् णः कपालानि, हृदयस्य च तो विधुः। उद्यन् आदित्य रश्मिभिः शीष् णो रोगम् अनीनशः।6

A long series of diseases that can be cured by sun ray therapy are described in 22 mantras of a hymn of the Atharvaveda.7

Living in sunlight is said to be like living in Amrit Loke – सूर्यस्य भागे अमृतस्य लोके। 8

Sunlight is essential for the body, because it makes a person live longer and gives happiness of health - मां

छित्था..... सूर्यस्य संदशः।9

Agriculture improves only due to the influence of the Sun, which provides us with nutrition.

सविता नः सुवतु सर्वतातिम् ।

सविता नो रासताम् दीर्घमायुः।10

To keep the environment clean, it is necessary to destroy germs, and sunlight is the destroyer of germs. Seven types of energy are obtained from rays. In fact, the sun's rays are a boon for humans - अधुक्षत् पिप्युषीमिषम्

ऊर्जम् सप्तपदीमरि। सूर्यस्य सप्त रश्मिभिः।11

If a person wakes up early in the morning and humbly faces the Sun, keeping various parts of the body as open as possible, spends time through meditation etc. So, he automatically remains free from various types of diseases - उत् पुरस्कार सूर्य एति, विश्वदृष्टो अदृष्टहा।12

Indian culture promotes Sun worship and practicing Yoga in the presence of the Sun to stay disease-free.

Therapeutic Properties of Sun's Rays:

- The sun is a powerful source of life and energy. Its rays possess therapeutic properties that can promote healing and well-being.
- Exposure to sunlight stimulates the production of vitamin D in the skin, which is essential for bone health and immune function.
- Sunlight has been shown to improve mood by increasing the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that contributes to feelings of well-being and happiness.

2. Air therapy [Vayu Chikitsa]

Prana Vayu, or vital air, is essential for human life. It provides strength, vitality, enthusiasm, and radiance, flowing continuously through every part of the body. The depletion of this energy leads to various diseases. Pranayama, a form of air therapy, is beneficial for enhancing this vital energy. The Vedas describe Prana as the master of the universe, encompassing everything. Proper inhalation and exhalation during Pranayama purify the blood and eliminate toxins. Atharvaveda asserts that the present, past, and future all depend on Prana. Enhancing Prana makes a person healthy, courageous, and radiant. Prana Vayu is the basis of human life. The smooth flow of Prana Vayu gives strength, vigour, enthusiasm and vitality to the body. Life force flows continuously through Prana Vayu in every part of the body. Due to the loss of its power, various diseases arise in the body. Therefore, air therapy, which is also called Pranayam therapy, is considered to be especially beneficial for such diseases. Pranayam means expansion of the power of Prana. Prana Shakti has been described as extremely important in the Vedas. Prana has been called the master of the entire universe –

प्राणो ह सर्वस्येश्वरो यच्च न ।13

Everything is established in Prana only.¹⁴ Strength of Prana is the basis of health and weakness of Prana is the cause of various diseases –

प्राणो मृत्युः प्राणस्तक्मा प्राणम् देवा उपासते।15

Prana Vayu has been described in two forms – one that is inhaled in the form of inhalation and the other that comes out in the form of exhalation. The air inhaled in the form of Prana purifies the blood and the air exhaled in the form of Apana removes the impurities from the body. ¹⁶ Prana has also been called Matrishva and Vayu in the Vedas. ¹⁷ It is described in the Atharva Veda that present, past and future everything depends on Prana –

प्राणे ह भूतं भव्यं च प्राणे सर्व प्रतिष्ठितम् ।18

The excellence of life force makes a person healthy, brave and bright. Prana itself is a medicine. It is the medium of treatment of diseases, that is why it is said in Atharvaveda that the best form of Prana is the medicinal element. It provides life power –

अथो यद् भेषजं तव तस्य नो धेहि जीवसे।19

Prana is the element of fire. This flame gives bright energy and heat. Therefore, its main function is to remove defects and provide purity, energy and vitality. It is described in Atharvaveda that it has the power to destroy defects and provide energy. Hence it is called Surya. Along with this, it enhances peace, ease, happiness, love and sweetness in the body, hence it is also called the moon - **प्राणो विराट् प्राणो देष्ट्री प्राणं सर्व उपासते ।**

प्राणो ह सूर्यश्चन्द्रमाः प्राण माहुः प्रजापतिम् ।।20

In Rigveda and Atharvaveda, air is considered as the treasure of nectar and is said to be the means of longevity –

यददो वात ते गृहे, अमृतस्य निधिर्हितः ।21

Intake of pure air, entry of pure air in the house, living in a place free from air pollution, makes the body healthy. This kind of meaning is contained in many mantras of Vedas. Air is medicine. It gives strength to the heart and makes the body long-

वात आ वातु भेषजम् ।22

It removes the impurities of the body.²³ Hence, it is considered as protector, father, nourisher, friend and helper.²⁴ It is mentioned in Rigveda that the house in which pure air enters unhindered, that house is pure, and the person living in it is safe from diseases –

मरुतो तस्य हि क्षये स सुगोपातमो जनः।25

In this way, intake of pure air is pranayam and circulation of pure air in the house is a natural treatment in itself. It keeps the heart and body of a person healthy and gives him a long life.

In essence, both Sun and Air therapies, as described in ancient texts, are invaluable for maintaining good health and vitality

Naturopathy, in its literal sense, means treatment through the elements of nature. The human body is composed of five elements: air, fire, earth, water, and space. The balance of these elements ensures good health, and their imbalance causes diseases. Naturopathy aims to restore this balance using natural resources. This method relies on the body's innate ability to combat diseases, targeting the root cause by utilizing abundantly available natural elements. It's not just a treatment method but a lifestyle aligned with our civilization and culture.

Importance of Prana Vayu and Its Benefits:

- Prana Vayu, or vital air, is essential for human life. It provides strength, vitality, enthusiasm, and radiance.
- The continuous flow of prana through the body ensures overall health and well-being. Depletion of prana can lead to various diseases and ailments.

Pranayama and Proper Inhalation/Exhalation Techniques:

- Pranayama is a practice in yoga that involves controlled breathing techniques to enhance the flow of prana in the body.
- Proper inhalation and exhalation during pranayama purify the blood, eliminate toxins, and improve lung capacity.
- Pranayama techniques, such as Anulom Vilom (alternate nostril breathing) and Kapalabhati (skull-shining breath), help calm the mind, reduce stress, and increase focus.

3. Fire therapy [Agni Chikitsa]

In naturopathy, fire therapy holds significant importance. The Yajurveda describes fire as a remedy for cold-related ailments. Fire can be used to treat various illnesses caused by cold weather. Additionally, the Vedas highlight fire as a therapeutic agent. For instance, fire is used to neutralize the venom of a snakebite by applying a heated iron rod to the affected area, thereby eliminating the venom. Fire also destroys germs that cause diseases. Burning guggul (resin) in fire produces a fragrance that eradicates ailments.

Fire therapy is effective in treating injuries, pain, and wounds through heat application. The Atharvaveda states that fire possesses the qualities of all 33 deities, serving as a source of energy and vitality. Fire is linked with attributes such as brilliance, longevity, strength, and honor. Fire therapy also has an important place in naturopathy. In Yajurveda, fire has been described as a medicine for cold – - अग्निहिमस्य भेषजम्।26

It means that treatment through fire is beneficial in cold and cold related diseases, hence fire has been called the medicine for diseases in various Vedas - अग्नि च विश्वशंभुवम्। 27

To remove the poison of a snake, if the part bitten by the snake is burnt with hot iron, the effect of the poison gets eliminated - अग्निर्विषम् अहेर्निरधात्।.28

Fire destroys the worms that cause diseases. The aroma produced by burning Guggul in fire also destroys diseases –

न तं यक्ष्मा अरुन्धते।यं भेषजस्य गुल्गुलोः सुरभिर्गन्धो अश्नुते ।29.

Agni i.e. hot application reduces the pain in various injuries, pains and wounds. While describing the properties of fire, it is said in Atharvaveda that all the characteristics of 33 Gods are included in fire –

त्रयस्त्रिंशद् यानि च वीर्याणि। तान्यग्निः प्र ददातु मे। 30

This means that the basic source of energy is fire. Agni has been said to be the cause of bright virchas, ojas, longevity, strength and fame –

इदं वर्चो अग्निना दत्तम् ,

आगन् भर्गो यशः सह ओजो वयो बलम् । 31

Fire therapy in the form of Yagya is also being used in present times. Yagya fire is an effective means of destroying the germs in the environment. Rigveda says that people who do not perform yajna suffer from diseases. The flame of fire benefits a person by making him healthy - देवममीवचातनम्।32

अनग्नित्रा अभ्यमन्त कृष्टीः।33

शमग्निरग्निभिः करत् ।34

Thus, fire is not only useful for food etc., but it also plays an important role in medicine

Presently, fire therapy is practiced in the form of Yagna (sacred fire ritual). The Yagna fire is a powerful medium to eliminate pathogens from the environment. The Rigveda suggests that those who do not perform Yagna are prone to diseases. The flame of Yagna promotes wellness by purging ailments, thus ensuring good health.

4. Water therapy [Jal Chikitsa]

Water therapy, epitomized by the phrase "water is life," has been universally accepted since Vedic times. Both the Rigveda and Atharvaveda emphasize the importance of water in healing. Deities such as Rudra and Varuna are associated with water therapy. Rudra is considered the foremost divine healer, while Varuna is regarded as the chief physician among the deities.

According to the Rigveda, King Soma proclaims that all medicinal properties reside in water. Water can cure various diseases, as it contains therapeutic attributes akin to nectar. Water fortifies the body and eliminates ailments, providing nourishment and vitality. Mixing Soma and other essences with water grants longevity and sustains health.

Vedic texts describe the numerous benefits of water. The water from rivers originating in the Himalayas is particularly beneficial for heart diseases. Flowing water is pure and invigorating, enhancing strength and agility. The Atharvaveda advises consuming water and medicinal herbs to maintain productivity. Rainwater is also deemed exceptional, promoting longevity and eradicating diseases. Water enhances beauty and tranquility, akin to a mother's care, and is indispensable for life.

This statement 'Water is life' has been universally accepted since the Vedic period. Water therapy has been given utmost importance in both Rigveda and Atharvaveda. Rudra and Varun Dev are pioneers in hydrotherapy. Rudra has been considered the first divine beggar – प्रथम दैव्यो भिषक् । 35

Rudra is the god of water - Rudra Jalashbhashjam.36

Varun has been called the master and physician of the Vaidya group रुद्र जलाशभेषजम् । 37

It is mentioned in Rigveda that King Som says that water has all the medicinal properties. Various diseases can be cured with water - अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीद् अन्तर्विधानि भेषजा। आपश्च विश्वभेषजीः। 38

In another mantra, water has been described as equivalent to nectar. Water has medicinal properties- अप्स्वन्तरमृतम् अप्सु भेषजम् । 39

Water gives strength to the body and destroys diseases- आपः पृणीत भेषजम् वरुथं तन्वे मम । 40

By mixing juices like soma in water and consuming it, a person attains longevity-

आपो अद्यान्वचारिषं रसेन समगस्मह । 41

Water has been described as the best knowledge. Water removes heart diseases. Various properties of water have been described in many hymns of Vedas. The water of rivers originating from Himalayas is especially beneficial. It should be used in heart diseases.42 Flowing water is pure and beneficial. It gives strength and speed to a person. It has been said in Atharva Veda that for hard work, consume water and medicines.43

Rain water has also been described as excellent. It cures diseases and gives longevity-

आ पर्जन्यस्य वृष्ट्या । 44

Water is a strength enhancer. It increases charm and beauty. Water gives peace and happiness to human beings like a mother. Life is impossible without water. Water is the best of the things to be desired. It acts as a medicine for life- अयक्ष्मंकरणीरपः। 45

Vaidya should use water therapy. Water drawn from deep depth is considered best for treatment as it is good. Water has life-giving power. By its regular use, human beings can attain the age of 100 years. Water therapy is called 'Jalashbhashaj' and Rudra is presented as water doctor-

रुद्र जलाशभेषज 46

In Atharvaveda, water therapy is said to be a quick beneficial medicine. In this therapy, the diseased part is soaked in water and is treated by pouring water stream on it. By consuming water in proper quantity, stomach related diseases are kept away. Water removes all the contaminated substances from inside the body and keeps the body healthy.

5. Earth therapy [Mritika Chikitsa]

Among natural elements, earth (soil) plays a pivotal role. The Vedas prescribe the use of soil for various therapeutic purposes. Soil is recognized for its disease-curing properties, employed as a poultice to staunch bleeding. The black soil from anthills is recommended by Sushruta for its efficacy in treating diseases. Earth [soil] has an important place among the natural elements. In Vedas, soil has been prescribed at many places for treatment. Soil is also said to be a disease killer. To remove blood flow, it is applied like an ointment -

उपजीका उद्गरन्ति समुद्रादधि भेषजम् । तदास्त्रावस्य भेषजं यद् रोगमशीशमत् ।। 47

अरुन्नामिदं महत् पृथिव्या अध्युद्धतम् ।48

Sushruta says that if other medicines are not available then use black soil of Bami. It is helpful in destroying the disease - पाययेतागदांस्तांस्तान् क्षीरक्षौरद्रधृतादिभिः।

तदभावे हिता वा स्यात् कृष्णा वल्मीकमृत्तिका।49

Soil has many properties, which help in physical fitness. Soil paste is applied to stop blood flow and there is a provision of treating with soil in snake bites. Apart from this, soil bath or soil paste is considered useful for beauty enhancement since ancient times

Soil possesses numerous qualities that aid in physical well-being. It is used to halt bleeding and treat snakebites. Additionally, earth baths or mud packs have been traditionally used for enhancing beauty.

CONCLUSION

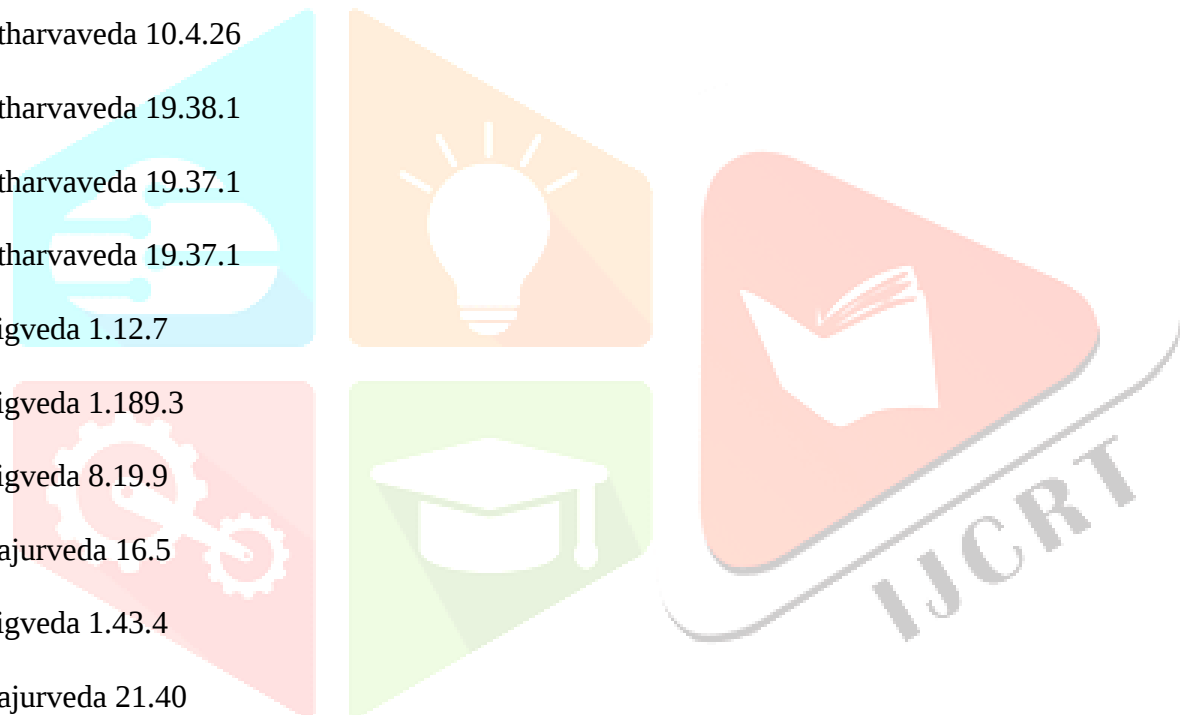
The *Manusmriti* states that the Vedas encompass all knowledge, including Ayurveda and naturopathy. The Atharvaveda, also known as the *Bhishagveda*, is rich in therapeutic mantras. Charaka and Sushruta describe Ayurveda as an integral part of the Atharvaveda, confirming its origins in Vedic literature. Both the Rigveda and Yajurveda contain extensive references to Ayurvedic practices.

Naturopathy, as a holistic treatment method, aligns with the natural elements that constitute the human body, ensuring no adverse effects. In the contemporary world, it is imperative to embrace naturopathy to reestablish harmony between nature and humanity, promoting a healthy, joyous, and long life.

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