Ayurveda: Choicest Health-Care Choice
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MY TURN

Ayurveda: Choicest Health-Care Choice

We already possess an age-old healing art capable of preventing most disease

Dr. Vasant Lad

Beginning in 1979, I traveled from the East to the West coast of the United States, talking to people about ayurveda. It was on a small scale, usually in someone's private home or even in the backyard with a few chairs. They didn't even know how to pronounce the word ayurveda. Now it is growing, becoming quite popular and many people have been touched by the ayurvedic way of life.

During my journey, I learned that the people in the United States are looking for alternative systems of healing. When a system has limitations, naturally people look for an alternative system to find answers to their problems. It is my experience, in the last 14 years of teaching ayurveda in the United States and the United Kingdom, that people are extremely open to it. Everyone wants to know what is his or her prakruti, the individual constitution, and the vikruti, the present, altered state or imbalance.

Ayurveda is the art of healing that considers every individual uniquely. Ayurveda is not only herbal medicine. It deals with each problem directly at the root cause, using diet, lifestyle, proper yoga postures, meditation and certain sounds for healing purposes. Its discipline requires one to learn about one's own life so that one can definitively have proper health of body, mind and consciousness.

Ayurveda is the science of life. And life is all; life is body, mind and consciousness integrated. In that sense, ayurveda is the right kind of alternative system of medicine.

Initially, the medical community was not open to ayurveda. In modern medicine, the mind is separate from the body and the body has nothing to do with the mind. But as more research occurs, the West is coming to the realization that there is an intimate relationship between body, and mind. Today many medical professionals are open to yoga therapy and meditation. They respect the system and like to learn and incorporate ayurveda into their practice.

In the beginning, my students were mostly lay people who had the time to learn something. They came for ayurveda and their own self-healing. Many students felt their lives changed and healed. But slowly, the students are increasing in number and are more dedicated to learning ayurveda. Many are professionals--chiropractors, acupuncturists, even medical doctors and nurses. These professionals are coming to learn ayurveda, and they have the goal in their hearts to become ayurvedic healers.

In our institute, students in the first year just come to learn ayurveda. As they study, they want to learn more in depth, so they join our gurukula program. A total education in ayurveda to become a BAMS--Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery--has similar requirements as a medical doctors', taking seven to nine years. Probably the most realistic option is for Western medical doctors and professionals to incorporate some ayurveda into their practice, rather than to go back to medical school.

Ayurveda has been used to treat the whole patient for almost 10,000 years. It was only 200 years ago that ayurveda began to be looked upon as secondary medical care. It is now rising to its former prominence as the preferred health care option. My vision is that there will be regular ayurvedic medical colleges and schools at the university level where full graduate courses of ayurveda can be learned.

Dr. Vasant Lad, director of the Ayurvedic Institute, New Mexico, USA, has been practising ayurveda for more than 25 years.