

AYURVEDA DAY

2 November 2021
Stockholm

Remarks Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Thank you for joining us as we celebrate the Ayurveda Day,

Ayurveda, as we all know, is an ancient plant-based healing and cure system that has stood the test of time. This traditional medicine system is our collective heritage.

The role of forests, trees and plants in sustaining life has been keenly understood by people since millennia across the world. They provide oxygen; clean the air of pollutants; shelter birds and animals; are source of food, wood and other materials, and also herbs and medicines for human societies.

It is no surprise that a whole range of plants and trees are considered sacred and worshipped in many traditions. In Sweden too there has always been a strong love for nature and forests. There is also evidence of herbal medicine use in Sweden dating back at least to several centuries.

It is remarkable how thousands of years ago, physicians developed this detailed knowledge of a holistic nature. It shows how our ancestors understood the inter-connectedness of life. They identified specific herbs for specific uses and also to boost general immunity and health.

The *Atharva Veda* dating back to more than 3000 years mentions many medicinal plants and concepts from Ayurveda. The 3000 years old texts of *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* are considered the original texts of Ayurveda. The regular teaching started with the *Guru-Shishya parampara* (master-disciple system). There is believed to have been a department for Ayurveda at the Takshshila University in the 7th century.

There are extensive studies and documentation on the very large number of plants that are considered sacred in our culture and which are also known for their various medicinal properties.

In Ayurveda there is a significant focus on medicinal plants specific to a geography, climate, seasonal variations and local agriculture practices. Each individual's physical constitution is also a fundamental aspect of clinical assessment.

Ayurvedic formulations are known for their holistic approach to treating any condition and their effectiveness in treating many ailments especially the lifestyle and non-communicable diseases.

Modern science is validating the medicinal properties of many of these herbal medicines. This traditional knowledge has even sought to be unethically patented in some high-profile instances.

In 1827, classes in Ayurvedic medicine began at Government Sanskrit College in Calcutta in India. A century later, a five-year degree course in Ayurvedic medicine and surgery was offered at Banaras Hindu University from 1927.

After India's independence, non-allopathic medical systems were again sought to be revived. In 1970 the Ayurvedic formulary was published by the Government of India. In 1999 the first Part of the Ayurvedic pharmacopeia of India was published by the Government.

In recent years, the Government of India has actively promoted these traditional medicine systems including Ayurveda, Yunani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH). A separate Ministry of Ayush was established in 2014. It is estimated that there are nearly half a million Ayurveda physicians, over 15,000 Ayurveda related health facilities, 2,400 Ayurveda hospitals and several hundred Ayurveda pharmacies in India.

Another important initiative has been the setting up of a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library to protect traditional knowledge from biopiracy and unethical patenting practices as also to digitalize and document ancient texts and formulations.

In recent decades there is a growing interest in Ayurveda and traditional medicine to treat the increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases, for instance diabetes or blood pressure. There is also a rapid growth in herbal pharmaceutical industry.

The Covid19 global pandemic has highlighted public health concerns. Individuals with co-morbidities have been more vulnerable. In this context the general immunity strengthening aspects of Ayurveda have been brought to the fore.

The therapeutic potential of Ayurveda is being explored. Clinical drug trials to evaluate the safe and effective use of selected and standardised Ayurvedic medicines in the prophylaxis and treatment of COVID-19 have been initiated. This also brings together Ayurvedic physicians and experts of modern medicine together. This can have longer term impacts.

Ministry of Ayush has also issued an advisory for use of well-known Ayurvedic formulations to improve the general immune system and health.

The All India Institute of Ayurveda under the Ministry of Ayush is collaborating with the U.K.'s London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct a study on 'Ashwagandha' for promoting recovery from COVID-19.

International support for Ayurveda continues to grow. Ayurveda Day is celebrated in more than 35 countries. More than 50 Unani and Ayurveda products have been registered in 8 countries by the Ayush Ministry.

13 MoUs have been signed with various international universities for setting up of Ayush Chairs. MoUs have also been finalized with 23 countries for cooperation in the fields of Traditional Medicine and Homoeopathy. More than 100 scholarships are offered to international students every year to pursue higher studies in Ayush systems.

In Latvia for instance, there is an Ayurveda Chair at the University of Latvia in Riga. Ayurveda has been known in Sweden for a number of decades and awareness about Ayurveda as an alternative medicine system is growing gradually. There are a number of Ayurveda practitioners in Sweden. Some of them have joined us here today for an expert Panel discussion.

I understand that around 30 countries have endorsed the inclusion of Ayurveda as Module-2 of the 26th Chapter of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), who is the global health information standard managed by World Health Organization (WHO).

Last year in February, WHO and the Ayush Ministry of India signed an MoU to develop the Traditional Medicine module in the ICD-11 series. Work is ongoing on a union set of classifications covering Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine and WHO consultations have been initiated with Member States.

Friends,

Last year in India, Prime Minister Modi dedicated two important institutions for growth and development of Ayurveda in the 21st century. These are the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA), Jamnagar and the National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), Jaipur. The ITRA now has the status of an Institution of National Importance. And NIA now has the status of a Deemed University. These are important steps in the modernization of Ayurveda education, which is a priority area for the Government.

The utilization of the immense potential of AYUSH systems of healthcare for effective and affordable solutions for India's public healthcare challenges remains the priority of our Government.

We look forward to an engaging and informative discussion by the experts who have joined us today.

In conclusion, may I offer our best wishes for the festive season. For good health, peace & prosperity.

Thank you