

# Maharishi Ayurveda: A Unique System of Health Care

## **Ayurveda:**

Ayurveda means "knowledge or science of long life". The term Ayurveda refers also to the actual programme of this age-old tradition of knowledge of human life. It describes a comprehensive system of natural health care, offering a range of approaches for different aspects of life. Taken together, these different approaches have the ability to create perfect health and long life.

## **History of Ayurveda:**

The classical texts of Ayurveda in their written form are almost 3,000 years old. However, like all of the 40 areas of Veda and Vedic Literature, the knowledge of Ayurveda has been passed down orally for thousands of years. This makes Ayurveda older than any other science of health.

The classical Ayurvedic texts mention an ancient civilisation where the presence of illness was unknown. Even today, Ayurveda serves to maintain, promote and restore good health as well as prevent illness.

The original purpose of Ayurveda was not just to improve the health of the individual, but also to create a positive influence on the health of society as a whole. According to the Vedic rishis (seers), as expressed in the ancient text, the positive healthy behaviour of each individual combines to produce a disease-free society.

In centuries past, during periods of foreign rule in India, the traditional knowledge of Ayurveda was increasingly pushed into the background. As a result, many important aspects of this holistic approach to health care were lost. Fortunately, however, various parts of this knowledge have been preserved faithfully by traditional families of India and passed on to succeeding generations.

## **Development of Maharishi Ayurveda:**

At the end of the 1970s, Maharishi Organizations began an initiative to bring leading Ayurvedic physicians together in order to share their wisdom, the knowledge of the authentic texts, to integrate the tried and tested treatment procedures of the various family traditions, and to restore the fragmented areas of knowledge to their original wholeness.

A number of additional therapeutic approaches recommended by the classical Vedic texts were systematically incorporated into Maharishi's Vedic Approach to Health. These included disciplines such as meditation (Transcendental Meditation), Yoga, Vedic architecture (Maharishi Sthapatya Veda) and Vedic astrology (Maharishi Jyotish and Yagya), as well as the systematic application of Vedic sounds. This pioneering work to integrate all of these different disciplines included the input from leading Vedic experts and also western doctors and scientists. This has made it possible for the integrated, holistic form of Ayurveda – Maharishi Ayurveda – to be scientifically examined.

### **Why is Maharishi Ayurveda so unique?**

For past several decades Maharishi Foundation (MFI) and other affiliate Maharishi Organizations have held many International conferences and have conducted studies, research and development work with the foremost experts in various branches of Ayurveda and developed a comprehensive, holistic, scientific and systematic health care system known as Maharishi Ayurveda. It involved revival of ancient precious knowledge and technology of health care. By systematizing this knowledge in form of various teaching and training courses, western medical doctors and technicians can be taught and trained in Maharishi Ayurveda, and its fundamental theoretical principles and practice. Similarly all the applied and practical aspects are systematized and packaged in a comprehensive system.

### **Following are some examples:**

#### **Panchakarma and its uniqueness in Maharishi Ayurveda**

One of the aspects of Maharishi Ayurveda on which a very detailed and extensive research and developmental work was taken up is called Panchakarma. These are five broad groups of different physical procedures of Ayurveda. The effects of the individual therapies systematically build upon and complement each other. This achieves a long-term and profound purification of the body. The steps of treatment systematically eliminate toxins and harmful substances from the body. These toxins accumulate as a result of improper lifestyle, diet, environmental toxins and wrong thinking. Health improves as a whole and in the case of chronic disorders this frequently leads to relief from the actual complaints. For healthy people, there is a clear increase in zest, vitality, and performance. Courses have been systematized and developed. Maharishi Foundation imparts this scientific systematic knowledge and its theories and applications, its procedures and techniques to medical doctors and health professionals. Maharishi Foundation also trains technicians in the unique, fine and detailed art of these procedures.

Panchakarma was generally not used for preventive purposes in India. It is only recently, since Panchakarma has been made so popular by Maharishi Ayurveda in the West, that within India and Sri Lanka people are opening Panchakarma centres for wellness purposes.

The techniques used by the trained technicians in Maharishi Ayurveda have been developed and refined over the years with leading Indian Ayurvedic experts and western doctors and massage therapists. These techniques are different and much more thorough in their fineness and details from what is commonly practised in India and other Ayurvedic schools in the west.

#### **Pulse diagnosis and its uniqueness in Maharishi Ayurveda:**

Another major revival that was taken up by Maharishi Ayurveda was the ancient science of pulse diagnosis. This is a very extensive and deep science and art, which deals with analysing the fine impulses of movements and qualities in the pulse on a person's wrist. Pulse diagnosis examines a person's natural body type and the balances and imbalances present at various levels of physiology with respect to his metabolism, body tissues, organs, digestion of food, behaviour and such characteristics. A detailed, systematic and scientific theoretical knowledge with practical training has been developed in this field. MFI trains physicians, health

professionals in this. This kind of pulse analysis is absent in what is usually taught in Indian Ayurvedic colleges. The technique how the pulse is felt and analyzed in its refinement and depth is totally different and the knowledge of the physiology being derived from it is completely unique. The technique for self-pulse reading has also been developed which was not known before.

#### **Uniqueness of Maharishi Ayurveda Products:**

Another area that has been developed over years with great care and detail in Maharishi Ayurveda, is the standardization of the collection of herbal plants, standardization of the formulations of products and the system of producing herbal food supplements, herbal massage oils, herbal teas, beauty care products etc. These products are formulated under the guidance of a council of renowned Ayurvedic experts. They are produced strictly according to traditional Ayurvedic guidelines. Production of these preparations is carried at facilities that meet international hygienic conditions and quality control standards. Doctors trained in Maharishi Ayurveda are also trained in the use and applications of these herbal preparations.

#### **Training in Maharishi Ayurveda:**

Concise and comprehensive training courses for western doctors and health professionals have been developed over years in collaboration with several leading Ayurveda scholars and western trained physicians. The same is also true for technicians' training in Panchakarma procedures and massage techniques. MFI has been conducting these courses and trainings and even updating the knowledge and practice of Maharishi Ayurveda from time to time.

#### **Maharishi Ayurveda on Diet, digestion, nutrition, daily and seasonal routines:**

A very important knowledge that is standardized in Maharishi Ayurveda concerns a healthy and balanced diet that cares for individual needs, for improved digestion, nutrition and metabolism. Doctors are trained in the holistic understanding of a diet that will help pacify imbalances of the body and promote good health and long life. The doctors are trained to give personalised proper advice in this area. They are also trained in Ayurvedic advice regarding people's daily and seasonal routines and behavioural norms.

#### **Neuromuscular integration through Yoga Asanas and Pranayam:**

Another area for which refined and standardized knowledge has been developed in Maharishi Ayurveda is neuromuscular integration through yoga asanas. This involves Vedic exercises to enliven the mind-body coordination. Neuromuscular integration through Pranayam involves Vedic exercises pertaining to the physiology of breathing to restore integrated functioning at all levels of life.