

*Acknowledgments*

It is a demanding task to be a good and dedicated physician. But when one in addition takes up the burden of leadership in the political debate for the establishment of a medical system, like Pandit Shive Sharma successfully did in times that were not favourable for such developments, there must have been some divine guidance and blessing operating. I feel deeply honoured and moved for being offered the prestigious award in the name of such an exceptional physician and humanist and for the great cause of Ayurveda. I thank IASTAM for valuing and encouraging our efforts with this oration on:

**GLOBALISATION OF AYURVEDA  
FOR SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL HEALTH**

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The twentieth century saw western modern medicine evolve as the global health solution, as the most evolved medical system of human history. Its development and growth were ever accelerated thanks to modern technology and a flourishing global pharmaceutical industry. No government by then felt the need of any alternative solution.

Yet towards the end of the millennium paradigms radically changed. Voices raised from all sides calling for urgent action for protection of environment, safe food and healthcare. The health of the planet and its inhabitants was threatened. Alerting statistics and facts on pollution of earth, water and air – the essential elements for life and health-, on innumerable endangered and extirpated species of animals and plants – the source of food and traditional medicines - as well as on global warming invaded the media and the public debate. Ever since, world conferences are held annually for leaders and scientists to find urgent solutions. Sustainable development became the new urgent call.

Rationalism and materialism that had been celebrated over decades for having brought about unmatched science and modern progress defeating misery experienced all through human history, suddenly revealed an unexpected downside even and perhaps foremost in the field of health.

Modern medicine, while having attained unparalleled summits in the field of surgery, emergency and intensive care, had become so specialised that the patient was no longer treated as a human entity. Its medicines would not only have serious side-effects but focussing on relief from symptoms instead of addressing the root cause they would contribute to a raise of chronic degenerative disorders. Physicians with training in alternative medicine worldwide started to warn from generalised use of antibiotics and vaccinations that would affect the immune system and contribute to an unprecedented spread of auto-immune and immunodeficiency diseases. In addition, pharmaceuticals were detected as contaminants of water, groundwater and throughout the food chain.

Humanity suddenly stood at a cross section and according to scientists has little time left to mobilise new resources to save the fragilised balance of the ecosystem of its planet earth and the human body.

But where to find innovative solutions and answers outside the all-pervading rationalism and materialism that is dominating modernity and its definition of science? The questions of what can be defined as science and scientific, what is the scope of science and who has the authority to decide about it arise in the light of the above considerations.

In 1996 the Swiss Supreme Court decided that traditional medical systems do not have to prove their efficacy mainly according to criteria of modern medicine but with regard to their own system. Since the 90ties nearly 200 alternative methods – amongst which traditional medical systems including Ayurveda – are registered with complementary insurance companies in Switzerland that has in 2009 become the first and so far only country in the West to recognise Complementary and Alternative Medicine in its public health system.

Traditional Chinese Medicine, Traditional European Naturopathy, Homeopathy and Anthroposophic medicine are even reimbursed by basic insurances. Not yet Ayurveda, that is the last system to have joined the international CAM scenario.

Yet, the therapeutic tool of homeopathy is limited to administration of diluted substances. Naturopathy, even including phytotherapy in the West, has no central concept evolving into one complete medical system and has not been developed up to a medical science. Traditional Chinese Medicine has not evolved as a whole but in 3 distinct disciplines practiced separately (phytotherapy, acupuncture and Tuina massage). In none of the mentioned systems the spiritual component of the human being is understood and treated on the bases of elaborate documented concepts.

Ayurveda instead is a multifaceted complete medical science and philosophy of life that over the millenniums has evolved as a whole system including the spiritual dimension of the human being and the cosmos.

Traditional medical systems are commonly considered as empirical. The Oxford dictionary defines *empirical* as based on experiments and observations and relates it to what is archaic and to quack doctors.

But Ayurveda – the knowledge of life – has, since its origins, defined a precise path for building of reproducible and sustainable knowledge. Traditionally Veda (the knowledge) is the result of a process where *sattA* (existence) leads to knowledge (*jJAna*) through experience and observation - not experiments ! - and the inquiry (*vicAra*) of knowledge through analyses and verification leads to attainment (*lAbha*).

For Ayurveda the ultimate criteria for science, for knowledge is truth. According to Ayurveda qualities of truth are permanence and universal value, in modern terms: sustainability and reproducibility.

Ayurveda is based on probably the finest knowledge system that humanity ever knew, the Veda. It is rooted in the fundamental principles of most elaborate philosophical concepts of universal value that transcend time and space: the *Darshana*. Here rational and material approaches go naturally alongside with subtle realities and concepts. There is no polarisation, the science is not exclusive but inclusive, the concepts are not static but dynamic and the vision is multidimensional. Its practice not only protects the natural and social environment but can contribute to restore imbalances at a macro-level.

In the third millennium when humanity and its science are evolving towards quantum logic and sustainable development becomes a *conditio sine qua non* for the survival of our planet, can we afford to further ignore this unique system of knowledge?

But what have we the Ayurveda community done to help the perception of the science evolve from an archaic folk practice to the fine medical art and philosophy of life that it is?

Internationally and in India Ayurveda has mainly been developed in the fields of wellness, tourism, esotericism and beauty. The New-Age movement followed world over by the Wellness era have naturally absorbed Ayurveda in their ideological and commercial spread without ever developing Ayurveda's real potential in the field of global health.

Ayurveda naturally addresses most of the global health needs: it is based on primary care, prevention, root cause treatment and eco-friendliness. It understands the pathological processes underlying metabolic, chronic degenerative and immune related diseases and disposes of tools for early diagnoses and treatment.

Be it merely the successful treatments of discus hernia avoiding spine surgery, of dis-obstruction of coronaries after a myocardial infarction preventing from relapses or of various rheumatological diseases getting cured or stabilised, Ayurveda's medical potential to address global health issues is substantial.

Limiting factors are the patient's compliance, environment and habits as well as the stage of the disease. Nowadays there are additional limitations: interactions with allopathic treatments, access to quality Ayurveda medicines and to well-trained professionals.

Meaningful efforts for the globalisation of Ayurveda should thus focus on training of high level professionals and on manufacturing of quality medicines, on overall quality assurance and patient safety as well as on awareness raising about the patient's role and responsibility in the process of maintaining and restoring health. This requires setting of world standards and design of corresponding regulations and SOPs.

Switzerland has in fact defined two new professions with government diploma in which Ayurveda is regulated on the levels of medicine and therapy with clearly distinct knowledge related competences for patient safety. The law on therapeutic products has also been revised for simplified access to Ayurvedic medicines as therapeutic products in a quality assured environment. In 2016 the Indian government has decided to start promoting this regulatory model in the West and beyond.

The scope – and why not set it a global timeline like 2025 or 30 – is that Ayurveda medicines shall no longer be sold as food supplements or cosmetics but as therapeutic products and therapists who do not dispose of the knowledge of *nidana* (diagnoses), *cikitsa* (medical treatments), *dravya guna* and *bhaishajya kalpana* (study of medicinal substances and formulations) should no longer independently indicate and practice manual treatment techniques with the use of Ayurvedic medicinal products. They should work under the medical supervision of Ayurveda practitioners as indicated in the classical texts and practiced since antiquity until recent times.

But there is yet another challenge in the globalisation of Ayurveda: it is the transmission of the authentic knowledge according to its founding principles. Or else Ayurveda's

irremediable fate is to get diluted and degenerated and what will be bequeathed to humanity is an empty label instead of a knowledge system. Are we sufficiently aware of these stakes and of the power of the Shastra, the classical texts?

The foundational textbooks of Ayurveda are preserved until today in Sanskrit and translations and comments are available. But the access to the knowledge in these texts is sealed. Without initiation by a teacher, they remain silent. One can try to extract interpretations and create one's own concepts, but the whole system will become incoherent and useless, even dangerous.

The depth of the teaching in these works goes far beyond human imagination. The finesse, the elaboration and implacable coherence of the various concepts and of the whole system are such that no human mind, however brilliant and genius, was ever able to conceive even a small part of it. Is India aware of the extraordinary privilege and at the same time of the responsibility for having been entrusted such a universal treasure of knowledge for the sake of mankind? The Shastra constitute a cosmic entity endowed with an intrinsic power based on its subject matter: the Truth.

With the re-institutionalisation of Ayurveda after Independence, the mode of transmission has been adapted to the one of modern medicine and the teaching incrementally moved away from the traditional textbooks. They are considered as outdated because in an attempt to approach them through modern, more rational and materialistic but bi-dimensional specs, their deep multidimensional concepts are no longer understood.

Is it too late to come back to authentic knowledge? Has the last generation of masters expired before we realise what we are losing?

The traditional texts say that Ayurveda is a universal knowledge that needs to evolve and to be adapted in time and space. But can we do this without having been deeply initiated in the teaching? Can we simply interpret and adapt Ayurveda to modern trends and habits without diluting its essence?

These were the main concerns during the regulation process of Ayurveda in Switzerland between 2009 and 2015 as well as for the design of a unique training program in Ayurveda medicine for international students according to WHO and Swiss regulatory directives. The Indo-Swiss Ayurveda Foundation is further working on the creation of a global platform for the setting of standards and the development of innovative systems and practical models in an interdisciplinary approach of integrative medicine. A focus will be the revival, preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge and skills to ensure sustainability of the globalisation process of Ayurveda.

If India shall bequest to humanity its most precious legacy intact, then syllabi and teaching techniques will have to be revised, the training be based on deep initiation into the classical texts and the teaching become interactive and multimedia based. Innovative research for the development of the science and not merely for the proof of its legitimacy and a meaningful model for integrative medicine where Ayurveda is practiced as a complete medical system need to be developed. Interdisciplinary collaboration and a global communication strategy will be paramount. Medicines shall be sold as therapeutic products and not as food supplements or cosmetics. World standards need to be set and met in all fields. Then only the Indian Ayurveda community can live up to its privileged role

and responsibility and assure the bases for a sound globalisation of Ayurveda: a vibrant authentic practice at home.