

Ayurveda

Ancient Wisdom  Modern Life

Kumudini Shoba, M. Sc.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Sri Chinmoy, who devoted his life to changing the consciousness of humanity and bringing an awareness of deep spiritual wisdom to the modern world and modern living. His teaching is dynamic and yet soulful – a divine consciousness for an aspiring humanity.

Sri Chinmoy's poetry is interspersed throughout this work for its insightful inspiration.





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About the Author

Kumudini Shoba, M. Sc., is an Ayurveda practitioner and master herbalist. She comes from a traditional Ayurveda-healing family in Sri Lanka and is a distinguished graduate in both Western science and Ayurveda. A gifted teacher, Kumudini imparts Ayurveda's ancient healing wisdom, with Western herbal traditions and a deep understanding of human psychology and spiritual development.

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“*When my heart sings
The song of newness,
My life becomes
The dance of fulness.*¹

— SRI CHINMOY

Introduction

Ayurveda was developed over many thousands of years in ancient India. The knowledge of Ayurveda comes from an illumined body of knowledge called the Vedas. *Veda* means wisdom and in combination with *ayur*, meaning life, refers to the wisdom of life.

You might wonder, how does Ayurveda, this body of knowledge that was created and gradually evolved in India, help me? This is the question many people have asked me in my work as an Ayurveda practitioner. The ancient word Ayurveda suggests reverence and also obsolescence. People say, I'm living in a modern age, in 21st century America. Ayurveda is too complicated, I don't understand the Sanskrit, and, besides, too much discipline is required!

Ayurveda, although not simplistic, looks at life in a natural and practical way. So the questions we all need to ask are these:

Could this knowledge make my life today better... whole... dynamic... or more creative? Could Ayurveda go beyond cultural and language barriers?

I started writing this book to try to answer such questions because I believe Ayurveda can not only bring wisdom to modern living but

also create a deeper understanding of the human psyche that helps us in all our relationships.

Even though it was created in ancient India, Ayurveda is a living, active knowledge that is just as valid today as it was yesterday. Ayurveda enables us to be empowered with the wisdom to live in harmony and oneness. Its approach to life is about living in the here and now, about creating balance, health and happiness.

Before you can access and use this wisdom, you must understand the fundamental concepts of Ayurveda. It is also important that you be open to new ways of thinking, because even though we all love newness, it is not always easy for us to change.

The Creative Knowledge of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is founded upon a profound understanding of our human connection to nature. Our daily rhythms are deeply connected to nature. In ancient India, people who had this knowledge were called *Rishis* or seers; men and women who developed abilities beyond normal human sensory perception. Through prayer and meditation, they were able to understand nature and its connection to the Divine.

The Rishis of Ayurveda were not only interested in daily sensory living but also in transcending the known sensory world. Their goal was to seat themselves in a place of higher awareness, a higher consciousness, and thus to connect the physical world with the world of the Divine. The Rishis taught from an elevated

consciousness and stressed the value and importance of obtaining an inner as well as outer perception of life, and having faith in the Divine consciousness.

To be healthy, it is not enough for us to feed the body and mind. We also need to feed our vitality and spirituality. Health is not just a disease-free state; it is a state of consciousness, of knowing oneself. We may have a disease but still learn from it, even search for God through it.

Before we begin our journey into Ayurveda, I would like to talk a little about language. Sanskrit, which has twice as many letters as English, is the melodious and rhythmic language in which the Vedic Rishis of ancient times wrote their hymns. Some words of Ayurveda are hard to translate. Yet you do not have to know Sanskrit in order to gain knowledge from Ayurveda; you just have to incorporate a few Sanskrit words into your vocabulary.

For example, we do not translate well-known terms such as *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* and *dosha* since there are no corresponding terms in English. Once you understand what these words mean, you can apply them and Ayurveda can become part of your daily life. It can be used to improve daily life today just as it did in ancient times.

Ayurveda emphasises cultivating a feeling of gratitude towards the natural world that sustains human life. This book will try to approach Ayurveda from a modern perspective for today's consciousness.

“*The body of the Vedic poetry is simplicity.
The vital of the Vedic poetry is sincerity.
The mind of the Vedic poetry is clarity.
The heart of the Vedic poetry is purity.
The soul of the Vedic poetry is luminosity.*²

— SRI CHINMOY