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# **Maharishi Ayurveda**

## **„The science of life“**

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### **Definition**

Ayurveda is the oldest existing health care system, originating in the ancient Vedic civilization of India. The word Ayur-Veda is derived from two Sanskrit roots: „Ayus“, meaning life or life-span, and „Veda“, meaning knowledge, science or intelligence. Ayurveda is, therefore, translated as „science of life“.

Recognized by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Ayurveda has recently been undergoing an extensive revival under the auspices of the leading Vedic scientist Maharishi Mahesh Yogi - who introduced Transcendental Meditation to the world in 1957 - in collaboration with leading Ayurvedic physicians and scholars. This modern restoration of Ayurveda, called Maharishi Ayurveda, re-establishes the full integrity of all aspects of Ayurvedic therapy found in the classical system of Ayurveda. Maharishi Ayurveda is widely practised throughout the world and is like a trademark which guarantees the highest medical standards of diagnosis and therapy. Maharishi Ayurveda is one of the 40 disciplines of Maharishi's Vedic Approach to Health.

### **A new holistic approach to health**

The goal of Maharishi Ayurved is to enliven the physiology's inner intelligence, described as „Veda“.

The Vedic tradition understands that nature is not fundamentally objective; it is not based on material objects. Rather, the most fundamental reality is said to be completely subjective – an unbounded and eternal field of pure, abstract intelligence, or consciousness. This unified field („Veda“) is the home of all the laws of nature (Hagelin J.S., <1987>, Is consciousness the unified field? A

field theorist's perspective; *Modern Science and Vedic Science, 1, 29-87*). What we see as the material world is, according to Vedic science, waves or fluctuations, or impulses, of this non-material underlying field of pure consciousness. Therefore „Veda“ does not mean a collection of ancient books, rather it is the modes of vibration of this transcendental unified field of pure knowledge. Veda and the Vedic literature is an abstract blueprint of creation including our physiology; they are therefore more basic than the level of DNA. Our physiology is a compact expression of this unmanifest field of intelligence. Research conducted by the neuroscientist Tony Nader has shown that there is a one-to-one relationship between the physiological structure and function of our nervous system and the structure and function of the Vedic literature (see T. Nader, *Human Physiology: Expression of Veda and the Vedic Literature*).

Therefore Maharishi Ayurveda especially emphasizes the central role of consciousness in creating health - the mind-body-environment connection (see Yoga and Transcendental Meditation). It furthermore emphasises non-pharmacological approaches to the prevention and treatment of disease, including stress management, behavioral modification, nutrition, herbal therapeutics and purificatory procedures (Panchakarma). The holistic therapeutical concepts in Maharishi Ayurveda are natural and without any harmful side-effects.

Maharishi Ayurveda can easily be integrated into the medical practice. A profound and systematic training programme for medical doctors (at present under revision) guarantees the highest expertise.

### **Health is Wholeness**

In the traditional textbooks of Ayurvedic medicine health is defined as follows: „Balanced Doshas, balanced Agnis, balanced Dhatus and elimination of waste materials (Malas), and bliss established in consciousness, senses and mind – this is said to be perfect health“ (Sushrut Samhita, Sutrasthan 15.41).

#### \* Doshas – the 3 basic functional elements of the physiology

Vata – movement, transportation, communication

Pitta – metabolism, digestion, transformation

Kapha – stability, cohesion, lubrication

The 3 Doshas are everywhere in the physiology and are always functioning together. Every individual is a specific combination of Vata, Pitta and Kapha. This is the basis for the constitutional system in Maharishi Ayurveda. If for

example Vata is predominant in the physiology, we speak about a Vata constitution; likewise Pitta, Kapha, or Vata/Pitta, Vata/Kapha, Pitta/Kapha, or Vata/Pitta/Kapha constitution. If Vata, Pitta and Kapha are in balance – in terms of the individual constitution - the physiology as a whole is in balance. This is only possible if there is a lively connection between the inner intelligence – or the inner nature („Prakriti“) – and the different outer constituents of physiology (Doshas, Dhatus, etc).

- Symptoms of balanced Vata:

Exhilaration, alertness, normal function of tissues, normal elimination, sound sleep

- Symptoms of balanced Pitta:

Contentment, courage, sharp clear intellect, normal heat and thirst mechanisms, good digestion

- Symptoms of balanced Kapha:

Affection, generosity, stability of mind, normal joints, muscular strength, vitality

- Symptoms of imbalanced Vata:

Dry or rough skin, insomnia, constipation, tension headaches, intolerance of cold, degenerative arthritis, anxiety

- Symptoms of imbalanced Pitta:

Inflammatory skin diseases, inflammatory bowel diseases, visual problems, peptic ulcers, heartburn, excessive body heat, premature greying of hair, hostility

- Symptoms of imbalanced Kapha:

Oily skin, excessive sleep, lethargy, mental dullness, slow digestion, sinus congestion, nasal allergies, asthma, obesity

\* Agni – digestive fire

Agni is the power of transformation. In Maharishi Ayurveda one distinguishes 13 different Agnis. If one or more is disturbed, the whole process of digestion is disturbed.

Agni is the first expression or sound of Rik-Ved (the part of Vedic literature which expresses the holistic aspect of Veda or consciousness); this shows the direct interconnectedness of the process of transformation and digestion with the inner intelligence of the physiology.

### \* Dhatus – the 7 tissues

In a process of refinement, food gets transformed into plasma (Rasa), blood cells (Rakta), muscle tissue (Mamsa), fat tissue (Med), bone tissue (Asthi), bone marrow (Majja) and reproductive tissues (Shukra). The most refined product of the digestive system is called „Ojas“. It links the material physiology with its inner intelligence, described as „Veda“ or „Transcendental Consciousness“.

### \* Malas – waste products

faeces, urine and sweat

In Maharishi Ayurveda there is a detailed description of how food gets divided into its constituents and how from them body-tissues get built up. If these refinery processes are not in balance, the end product – Ojas – does not come out in optimal quality and quantity. This creates a restriction between the inner intelligence level („Veda“) and the different parts of the body. Maharishi Ayurveda sees this as the main cause of the development of diseases. It is called „Pragya-aparadh“, the mistaken intellect. When the intellect is not open to the level of Veda, intelligence is not lively in the physiology (Ojas is not produced in proper quality and quantity); this creates imbalances, which are the first step to the development of a manifest disease.

The whole therapeutic concept aims at enlivening the body's inherent intelligence. Therefore Yoga and meditation (Transcendental Meditation) play a central role in the therapy of Maharishi Ayurveda.

As in human physiology, every lively material structure in nature is built up from a level of intelligence („Veda“) together with the 3 Doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha). Therefore with this system in Maharishi Ayurveda we have the basis for a holistic therapeutic concept:

- Herbs and Minerals (Dravya-Guna)
- Diet
- Neuromuscular and neurorespiratory integration techniques such as Yoga-Asanas and Pranayama
- Music therapy (Maharishi Gandharva-Veda)
- Aroma therapy
- Maharishi Jyotish and Yagya

According to the principle that everything in the universe is interconnected with everything else on the basic level of intelligence, for establishing a

state of perfect health one also has to take in account the influence from the cosmos – the cosmic counterparts (The classical textbooks of Maharishi Ayurveda mention the interconnectedness between micro- and macrocosm). Therefore Maharishi Jyotish has an important role in preventing diseases: „averting the danger before it arises“.

- Maharishi Sthapatya-Veda

Vedic Architecture: living in accord with Natural Law

- Pulse diagnosis (Nadi Vigyan)

The primary diagnostical method in Maharishi Ayurveda is pulse diagnosis. By detecting imbalances in the physiology through this special technique one enlivens the inner intelligence of the physiology and thereby strengthens a balanced state. So pulse diagnosis in Maharishi Ayurveda is both diagnosis and therapy at the same time.

- Transcendental Meditation (TM)

The TM technique is a mental method of the Yoga system with a thousands-of-years-old tradition. It has a profound and solid scientific research background. TM is not a religion and it does not require a specific belief or lifestyle. It is natural and effortless and easy to learn. It is practised for 20 minutes twice a day.

During the practice of Transcendental Meditation the mind experiences a deep state of rest, the ground state of consciousness which is called „Transcendental Consciousness“. In Maharishi Ayurveda this ground state is defined as „Veda“, the level of the inner intelligence of physiology (see chapter: a new holistic approach to health). Through the practice of Transcendental Meditation this level of intelligence gets enlivened. This is the main mechanism to restore balance and maintain health in physiology. Therefore the emphasis in Maharishi Ayurveda is on the development of consciousness, which is the prerequisite for re-establishing health in the physiology. That is the reason why Transcendental Meditation plays a central role in the therapeutic concept of Maharishi Ayurveda.

### **A vision for a perfect health care system**

The complementing approach of modern medicine together with Maharishi Ayurveda could bring a completely new situation for the health care system, including

- \* improved efficiency in the medical treatment especially of chronic diseases and in prevention of diseases (see below scientific research about Maharishi Ayurveda)
- \* lowering the harmful side-effects of modern medicine treatment concepts (Brennan, T.A., Leape, L.L., Laird, N.M., et al.(1991). Incidence of adverse events and negligence in hospitalized patients: result of the Harvard Medical Practice Study I. *New England Journal of Medicine* 324: 370-376)
- \* an improved cost-expenditure ratio (cost-savings through Maharishi Ayurveda in health care systems between 30 to 50%, Volkamer, 1996).

Maharishi Ayurveda does not want to exclude the advantages of modern medicine but to extend its diagnostic and therapeutic scale. Complementary medicine in general has to adopt the highest medical standards, including the scientific validation of there therapeutical concepts (this should be equally valid for modern medicine: according to the editor of the British Medical Journal, only 15% of the therapies used in medical practices have a scientific basis or any proof of their efficiency; *British Medical Journal*. 1991;303:798-9). If this is accomplished – as in the case of Maharishi Ayurveda (but also with many other systems of complementary medicine) - there should be no restriction to implement complementary medicine in our health care systems. It will decrease the harmful side-effects, increase the patient compliance, the effectiveness of the treatment, and the reduction of health care costs.

A modern health care system has to introduce more effective concepts in preventive medicine. „In most cases the doctors are too busy to reduce the symptoms; ...the efforts to prevent diseases are inadequate“; Leaf, A. (1993); Preventive medicine for our ailing health care system; *Journal of the American Medical Association* 269: 616-619.

Maharishi Ayurveda has a complete knowledge about health and how to maintain health in the individual and in society. Together with the great knowledge of modern medicine, this can bring the dawn of a new era in which we come back to the basic task of medicine: to create perfect health in the individual and a disease-free society.

## **Scientific Research**

Maharishi Ayurveda has been the subject of extensive scientific research and clinical experience which has verified its effectiveness in the prevention and treatment of disease. More than 600 studies have been published in leading scientific journals. For example, a large-scale study found that regular practice

of Transcendental Meditation (TM technique) results in an average 50% decrease in medical care utilization, both in-patient and out-patient (Orme-Johnson, *Psychosomatic Medicine* 49 <1987>; 493-507). In addition, recent studies of traditional Maharishi Ayurveda herbal preparations have found significant effects which impact on the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular, rheumatic, pulmonary, gastro-intestinal and other chronic diseases, as well as on the ageing process.

- Free-radical scavenging: inhibition of Human Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) Oxidation in vitro by Maharishi Ayurveda Herbal Mixtures (MAK 4, MAK 5, MA 631), Hari M. Sharma, et al., *Pharmacology, Biochemistry and Behavior*, Vol. 43, pp. 1175-1182, 1992: The alcoholic extracts of the MAHMs were at least 1000 times more potent than vitamin C, vitamin E and Probuocol.

- Immunomodulatory effects by Maharishi Ayurveda Herbal Mixtures (MAK4, MAK 5) in mice, Ryoichi Inaba, et al., *Japan Journal of Hygiene*, Vol. 50, Nr. 4, pp. 901-905, 1995.

- Hypoglycaemic, Hypolipidaemic and general beneficial effects of a Maharishi Ayurveda Herbal Mixture (MA 471), Amulya R. Sircar, et al., *Alternative Therapies in Clinical Practice*, Vol. 3, Nr. 5, pp. 26-31, Sept./Oct. 1996.

- Improved Occupational Health; The traditional Yoga technique of Transcendental Meditation was introduced to 447 employees of Sumitomo Heavy Industries in Japan; after 5 months the Meditation group showed a significant decrease in physical, emotional and mental complaints; *Japanese Journal of Industrial Health* 32 (1990), 656.

- Reduction for Hypertension through regular practice of Transcendental Meditation; A randomized controlled trial of stress reduction for hypertension in older African Americans; Robert H. Schneider, et al., *Hypertension*, Vol. 26, pp. 820-827, 1995.

- Cost-effective hypertension management: comparison of drug therapies with an alternative programme; Robert E. Herron, et al., *The American Journal of Managed Care*, Vol. 2, pp. 427-437, 1996.

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- Hari Sharma, M.D., Christopher Clark, M.D.; Contemporary Ayurveda, medicine and research in Maharishi Ayurveda, Churchill Livingstone, New York, 98, ISBN 0-443-05594-7
- Tony Nader, M.D., Ph.D.; Human Physiology: Expression of Veda and the Vedic Literature; a textbook for life; Maharishi Vedic University Press, Holland
- Nancy Lonsdorf, M.D., Veronica Butler, M.D., Melanie Brown, Ph.D.; A Woman's Best Medicine, Tarcher/Putam, New York
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