

**Maharishi Ayur-Veda**  
**A Comprehensive System of Natural Medicine**  
**and Preventive Health Care**  
**Introduction and Research Review**

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**I. Introduction**

Ayur-Veda 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 or science. Ayur-Veda is therefore translated as the "science of life", and is strongly prevention-oriented. Ayur-Veda has a detailed scientific literature consisting of classical medical texts, and an uninterrupted oral tradition of classical knowledge predating the written texts.

In recent decades, the ancient Ayur-Vedic wisdom has been brought to light in its completeness by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who introduced Transcendental Meditation to the world in 1957, and is currently establishing Maharishi Ayur-Veda Universities and Maharishi Vedic Universities in all parts of the world. Understood and applied in its totality, in accordance with the classical Ayur-Vedic texts, this complete science of natural health care is known as Maharishi Ayur-Veda.

The aim of Maharishi Ayur-Veda is to create perfect health - full development of mind and body. Maharishi Ayur-Veda contains twenty approaches to the prevention and treatment of disease, that act in four fundamental areas of life: mind, body, behavior, and environment. These approaches are natural, easily applied, and free from harmful side effects. They promote balance by bringing mind and body into harmony with natural law. The approaches of Maharishi Ayur-Veda have been adopted by physicians and health care professionals throughout the world.

**II. Correcting Imbalances in the Mind and Body - Balancing the Doshas**

According to Maharishi Ayur-Veda, biological intelligence expresses itself in the physiology through the operations of three fundamental expressions of intelligence, called doshas, which regulate the different functions of mind and body. These doshas are Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Everyone is endowed at birth with some value of all three doshas, but in each person the exact proportions vary. The three doshas are further divided into numerous subdoshas with different locations and functions throughout the body. In the Ayur-Vedic framework, imbalance in the doshas and subdoshas disrupts normal function and structure, and is seen as the ultimate cause of disease.

The Ayur-Vedic diagnostic process, including a uniquely sophisticated examination of the pulse, enables the physician to detect and evaluate any imbalance in the three doshas and their subdivisions, and in the *dhatu*s (tissues of the body). The Ayur-Vedic texts classify all therapeutic modalities, including diet, herbal supplements, and sensory inputs, according to their effects on the doshas and subdoshas. These approaches treat specific illnesses by promoting balance in the doshas, and are effective in prevention because they correct existing imbalances before they manifest into disease.

Knowing which doshas and subdoshas are out of balance enables the physician to determine the underlying basis of the patient's health problems and tendencies toward specific diseases. At the same time, the patient gains greater insight into his or her own specific needs, which increases compliance with treatment recommendations.

### **III. The Mind-Body Connection - Development of Consciousness through Transcendental Meditation**

Because Ayur-Veda recognizes the mind-body connection to be central in creating health, there is a long-standing Ayur-Vedic tradition of using mental techniques for the prevention and treatment of disease, for reducing stress, and for developing mental potential. The most important of these techniques are the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique and the more advanced TM-Sidhi program. Transcendental Meditation is a simple, effortless, natural technique that allows the active mind to settle down and experience its least-excited state, Transcendental Consciousness. The experience of this field of pure consciousness induces an integrated physiological response that restores balance in the entire physiology. Subjectively, this is experienced as a state of "restful alertness" -- maximum mental clarity along with deep physiological rest -- as indicated by decreased respiration rate, increased basal skin resistance, lower plasma lactate levels, lower cortisol levels, and increased global EEG coherence during TM, compared to simply resting with eyes closed.

Repeated experience of these psychophysiological state changes during TM gradually produces lasting beneficial trait changes in health. For example, in a five-year study of medical care utilization, TM practitioners showed better health as indicated by reduced illness rates compared to a normative data base, including 87% less heart disease and 55% fewer malignant and benign tumors. TM also reduces several cardiovascular risk factors, including cholesterol, cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, and anxiety. In residents of homes for the elderly who practiced TM, significant improvements were seen in systolic blood pressure, word fluency, and cognitive flexibility, in comparison to those practicing mindfulness training and a mental relaxation technique, and a no-treatment control group. All members of the TM group were alive 3 years after the program began, while the survival rate for the other groups was significantly less than 100%.

### **IV. Using the Intelligence of Nature - Maharishi Ayur-Veda Herbal Food Supplements**

Ayur-Veda contains a detailed and comprehensive description of the use of medicinal plants and herbal food supplements to restore balance to the mind and body. This includes knowledge of timeliness of plant collection, storage, steps of manufacture, and correct application. The classical Ayur-Vedic texts describe certain herbal preparations for specific disease-as, and other preparations called "rasayanas", which are proposed to promote general health by increasing resistance to disease, activating tissue repair mechanisms, and arresting or reversing the deteriorative effects associated with aging. Each herbal preparation may contain 10-20 separate herbs, each herb having hundreds or thousands of chemical components. According to Ayur-Vedic theory, one principle is paramount: the appropriate portion of the plant should be used in its entirety in preparing herbal mixtures, not just the active ingredient. The use of the entire portion is held to produce a synergistic effect among its many chemical constituents, which also mitigates harmful side-effects. Commonly, many whole plant components are compounded together to form a more balanced preparation.

The majority of the research on rasayanas has involved two compounds collectively called Maharishi Aretit Kalash CMAK). These two compounds are designated MAK-4 (M-4) which is in paste form, and MAK-5 (M-5) which is in tablet form. M-4 and M-5 are distinctly different herbal mixtures. Although they contain different herbs, both have been shown on analysis to include a mixture of low molecular weight substances and antioxidants, such as alpha-tocopherol, beta-carotene, ascorbate, bioflavonoids, catechin, polyphenols, riboflavin, and tannic acid. Research on M-4 and M-5 has shown they have antineoplastic, cardioprotective, immunomodulatory, and antioxidant effects, and they reduce toxicity induced by the chemotherapeutic drugs Cisplatin and Adriamycin, and the solvent toluene.

## **V. The Current Crisis in Health Care**

Health care everywhere is in crisis. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the United States. Critical problems which beset the current health care system include: continuously escalating costs; lack of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of disease; emphasis on treating the symptoms or superficial level of disease rather than treating the root cause; and serious, even life-threatening side-effects of pharmaceuticals and other medical treatments.

With the cost of the current health care system spiraling out of control, government, health agencies, insurance companies, and concerned individuals are looking for new approaches to health care. At the root of this search is the realization that contemporary medical practice alone is unable to provide solutions to the complex health issues which we face today. Unfortunately, our present medical system often contributes to the health care crisis through use of costly and sometimes questionable therapies, production of iatrogenic disease (disease caused by the side-effects of treatments administered), and most importantly, through inadequate preventive measures.

One consequence of this situation is a widespread and growing interest in natural and alternative medicine, among the general public and within the health professions. A recent Harvard Medical School study found that alternative medicine is increasingly being utilized by the American public and has a significant impact on the U.S. health care system. The researchers found that one in three Americans uses alternative medical therapies, and the number of visits to providers of alternative therapies in 1990 was over 400 million--"greater than the number of visits to all primary care doctors nationwide."

Another indication of rising interest in alternative medicine is establishment of the Office of Alternative Medicine by the National Institutes of Health. This new office, established under Congressional mandate, is investigating alternative medical practices for their possible inclusion in the mainstream American health care system.

This expanding interest in natural medicine is a reflection of the rise of collective consciousness in society, which is demanding solutions to the pressing problems of contemporary health care. Our current health care system requires new and profound knowledge -- knowledge of prevention of disease, treatment of stress-related and chronic diseases, and a comprehensive approach to promotion of health which takes into account the relationship between mind and body.

Maharishi Ayur-Veda, the most ancient comprehensive system of natural medicine, addresses the key areas of need in contemporary health care. It is:

- time-tested and authentic;
- prevention-oriented, with systematic approaches for the detection and elimination of imbalances before they manifest as disease;
- holistic -- aimed at promoting balance of mind, body, behavior, and environment;
- oriented to treating the root causes of disease -- violations of natural law, expressing themselves as imbalances in the body's self-repair mechanisms -- rather than treating the superficial symptom level alone;
- and natural and free from harmful side-effects.

## **VI. Gaining Self-Sufficiency in Health Care**

The therapeutic methodologies of Maharishi Ayur-Veda have been time-tested through thousands of years of clinical experience, and are now demonstrating their efficacy through the scrutiny of scientific research. Among its approaches, Maharishi Ayur-Veda incorporates the following:

- programs for development of consciousness and stress management, including the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs;

behavioral and lifestyle approaches;

diagnostic techniques, including pulse diagnosis, to detect imbalances not yet fully manifested as disease;

dietary programs tailored to the individual's dosha imbalances;

herbal dietary supplements;

- mind-body exercise programs, including neuromuscular and neurorespiratory techniques;
- sensory approaches for creating psychophysiological balance;
- physiological purification therapies; and
- programs for collective health.

The goal of Maharishi Ayur-Veda is the achievement of self-sufficiency in health care -- the individual should be able to maintain a stable state of mind-body balance which naturally resists disease and upholds physiological integration and ideal health.

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