Chapter III

An Alternative Conception of

Disease and Health
CHAPTER-3

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Ayurveda is, basically a natural art whose origin can be traced to the instinct of self-preservation prevalent in all animals including human beings. The medical knowledge to humanity has grown out of an indispensable need to overcome injury, sickness, wound, and pain. This instinct of self-preservation also compelled the man to go for selective cultivation, animal husbandry, processing, mixing and cooking. This prehistoric art of discriminating among the substances on the basis of their usefulness or harmfulness for the immune system of human being forms the integral part of our indigenous medical knowledge system known as Ayurveda. In Ayurveda, the term āyus implies span of life and Veda means certain knowledge. Therefore, the term Ayurveda signifies prolongation of healthy life and prevention of disease.

Regarding the origin of Ayurveda, there are many mythical stories found in the Ayurveda texts, mainly Carakasaṁhitā, and Suśrutaśaṁhitā. These ayurvedic legends speak in details regarding the divine origin of Ayurveda. For instance, Carakasaṁhitā mentions that Brahmā, the creator was the divine source of Ayurveda. According to this text, this medical science was brought into existence long before the creation of mankind. Later on this knowledge passed on from Brahma to the god Dakṣapati. From there, it moved onto the two celestial physicians, i.e. aśvanikumāras. From them, it further moved to the Lord Indra, the god-king and finally to Bhāradvāj, a semi-divine sage. There is a further interesting mythical story about how this healing art finally reached to the human territory. In ancient time, our ancestors realized that pain and suffering due to ill-health and disease had increased to an unmanageable proportion. The sages started performing rituals and prayers to gods to alleviate these sufferings. As a result, Bhāradvāj, the semi-divine sage taught this science to a conference of sages at a meeting that took place somewhere in the Himalaya. The objective was how to regain a healthy (ārogya) life for all living beings.
including human beings.\textsuperscript{11} Such types of legends are available in abundance in many texts of Ayurveda also like \textit{Su\v{s}rutasa\textsuperscript{a}h\textit{hit\texttilde{}a}}, \textit{A\textsuperscript{S}t\textsuperscript{A}ngah\textsuperscript{r}d\textsuperscript{Y}a\textit{m}}, etc. though such types of narratives hardly have any historical value but they can act as good assets to grasp the true objectives and nature of Ayurveda.

The first recorded knowledge of Ayurveda which is of great historical importance can be found in \textit{Rgveda}. Later on, \textit{Atharvaveda} too covered this type of knowledge in greater detail. Both these texts belong to the age of second millennium B.C. It is equally important to mention here that there are substantial evidences to demonstrate that the builders of Indus civilization possessed substantial medical knowledge. The Aryans developed it further. They did not totally discard the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people. The Aryans learned out of earlier medical knowledge and by further speculation and experimentation developed Ayurveda as a full-fledged system of medicine. The Aryan so thoroughly absorbed the medical knowledge of black-skinned indigenous people that it seems now difficult to differentiate between Ayurveda and non-ayurvedic medicine.\textsuperscript{IV} But if we closely observe the beliefs and practices of the primitive aboriginal tribes of India, it is possible to trace the storehouse of ancient medical knowledge there. It appears that these primitive man employed inorganic remedies, secret herbs, animal products, and venoms as medicine. It also appears that some partial remains of \textit{Ag\textsuperscript{A}dat\textsuperscript{A}nt\textsuperscript{A}tra} and \textit{bh\textsuperscript{U}\textsuperscript{T}avid\textsuperscript{Y}\textit{\textit{\textdagger}}\textsuperscript{\textdagger}} found in Vedic tradition and in Ayurvedic treatises can be attributed to the lost branches of non-Ayurvedic medical knowledge.\textsuperscript{V} The medical skills possessed by the indigenous peoples have been fairly appreciated in the popular Indian epic \textit{Ramayana}. Here R\textsuperscript{A}v\textsuperscript{A}q\textsuperscript{A}q, the non-Aryan king is said to be a master of all sciences including medical science. Also in the 6\textsuperscript{th} canto, it is explicitly mentioned that \textit{Lak\textsuperscript{\textdagger}\textsuperscript{M}a\textsuperscript{\textdagger}a\textsuperscript{\textdagger}}, the younger brother of Lord R\textit{A}m\textit{a} was cured from his mortal injury by a medicine prescribed by a skilled doctor among the apes. Coming back to our central theme here, it can be reasonably said that the beginning of Ayurveda can be traced back to \textit{Rgveda} and. But in its development and progress it was remarkably influenced by Ayurveda.
The most ancient world-vision of the Aryans can be traced back to \textit{Rgveda}. In this treatise, one can find the oldest ideas of Aryans on origin of life, cosmic powers, birth, pain, suffering, disease, death, happiness, salvation, etc. The Vedic literature can said to be a storehouse of both medical knowledge and of the pseudo-medical ideas of that time.\textsuperscript{vi} The rudimentary theories on the origins of life and disease in the Vedic lore are an admixture of rational ideas with superstitious beliefs. The Vedic period can said to be a twilight period for Indian medicine where scientific theories and progressive methodology were struggling to come out from a cobweb of primitive ideas and rituals. In Vedic period, the priest himself was regarded as the physician. Though in the \textit{Atharvaveda}, it is mentioned that there were also certain herdsmen who practiced medicine and surgery. The healing art was normally regarded as a part of the divine duties of the priests. In \textit{Rgveda}, the natural forces were personified as gods. It was believed that the natural and cosmic forces influenced the causation and cure of disease. For instance, water was said to be the nectar of immortality. Similarly, plants with curative powers were said to be divine. We find an interesting hymn in \textit{Rgveda} that is addressed to the healing plants,\textsuperscript{vii} It is popularly known as \textit{ausadhistuti}. It is a prayer for the soma, the moon god and the divine ruler of plants. It is also a terrestrial plant from which sacrificial liquor was prepared. There are also many hymns in \textit{Rgveda} that praise the benefits of \textit{sura} (alcoholic beverages) and of \textit{madhu} (honey). Hygiene and food are considered as integral parts of medical science and there are many hymns in \textit{Rgveda} that are exclusively devoted to them. Milk is said to provide to the human body the strength, intelligence, brightness of complexion, and nutrition. It also helps in the proper growth of the foetus. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for the pregnant lady. The idea of rejuvenation of the aging body and its faculties is also first mentioned in the \textit{Rgveda}.\textsuperscript{vii} Interestingly, the surgical removal of an injured eyeball is clearly mentioned there. At another passage, there is a reference of the replacement of a leg amputated in battle by an iron limb. Both of the above mentioned cases require advance surgical procedures and techniques. Therefore, it should be
considered as a great achievement of our forefathers. In another interesting
hymn of Rgveda, the term tridhātu has been employed. It possibly refers to
the three bodily humors. Regarding this term some scholars like Langlois,
the translator of Rgveda, Reinbold Muller and J. Filliozat have different
opinion. They do not accept that the phrase tridhātu sarma vahatam refers
to the bodily humor. But the ancient Indian commentator Sāyapācārya has
translated tridhātu sarma as 'well-being of the three bodily elements'. This
interpretation has been accepted by Wilson, Cordier, and Pauthier and
Braunet. The latter view approved by Sāyapācārya himself appears to be
more justified. Now it is not difficult to see that the Vedic conception of the
humoral theory precedes Greek ideas on this theme by more than one
thousand year.

In Átharvaveda, the importance given to the medical knowledge gets
substantially increased. There it is clearly accepted that diseases including
accidents occurs due to natural reasons also. Such a position is different
from Rgveda where only supernatural factors are accepted as a cause of
disease. It is explicitly mentioned in a passage in Átharvaveda that a disease
can have one of the three possible origins, i.e. abhraja (from clouds), vātaja
(from wind), and susmaja (from desiccating agents). IX In another passage of
Átharvaveda, the term pitta is also mentioned. The term pitta signifies the
fiery principle in Ayurveda. The twin aims of medical science according to
Átharvaveda are, āyusyani, i.e., measures and treatments aimed at
maintaining perfect health of mind and body and also promoting longevity,
and bhaisajyani, i.e., curative treatment by medication. Hygiene and food are
considered integral part of medical knowledge and many passages are
devoted to the preventive aspect of medical science. It is now visible that a
strong foundation for the future progress of Ayurveda was already laid in
Átharvaveda. Many other interesting medical procedures and facts are also
illustrated in Átharvaveda. For instance, the birth of a baby is described in
detail and it is mentioned that in case of any complication in delivery, the
physician should operate upon the mehana (birth channel), yoni (womb), and
gavīnaka (connecting canal). X Many other surgical procedures like incisions
for boil, treatment of fractures, surgical relief of angry swellings caused by imbedded arrows, etc. are also mentioned in detail.

The Vedic method of cure often follows a mixed strategy of pacifying the angered gods, appeasement of the malignant forces, magic formulas and rituals along with the use of material use of like amulets, external medicine and internal healing. Along with this complex procedure of tackling the disease at many levels, a psychiatric approach through suggestions and mesmeric repetition is also followed so that the patient can be made assured of progressive healing and finally cure. Despite the use of magic and religion which might appear irrational to a modern mind, Vedic method of treatment contains sufficient use of rational observations and inferences to merit the name of a science. The varieties of diseases affecting heart, head, lungs, eyes, stomach, ears, and skin, urinary complaints, progressive emaciation, external and internal abscesses, jaundice, rheumatism, neuralgia and many others are mentioned in details in early Vedic texts. In Vedic sanhitas we also find more than 300 limbs and inner organs of the body. It is also equally true that no attempt was made during the Vedic period to classify the diseases and other physiological and anatomical information according to some specific scheme. However, symptomatic treatment becomes quite popular and the drug was prescribed according to a scheme in which the drug was supposed to cover up the visible deficiency.

In the later Vedic period, we find serious efforts to classify the diseases and to understand the origins and underlying causes. We find there a number of plausible theories regarding the essence of living and non-living matter, the relationship of human body to its environment, the nature of the vital forces in a living body, the biological functioning of organism and so on. For instance, the theory of pānicamahābhūta got wide currency in this period. In many passages of Brāhmaṇic and Upaniṣadic literature, it was accepted as an axiomatic truth. According to this theory, every entity of this universe is constituted out of five elements, namely, earth, water, air, fire, and space. According to another theory on the origin of life, the life was said to be originated in three possible types, i.e., andaja (oviparous), jarāyuja.
(viviparous), and svedaja (born as a result of combined effects of warmth and moisture). The role of vāyu (wind) in the human organism was mentioned in detail. Rich physiological data and anatomical details were also found in many passages. In Garbha Upaniṣad, we find a detailed description of the periodic changes which occur in the foetus during the period of gestation. There is also mentioned an interesting theory regarding the metabolic changes occurs in the body. It can be fairly said that Ayurveda started emerging as a systematic body of knowledge during this period and the medical theories developed in this period served as a valuable source material for the later science of Ayurveda. In fact, many theories and other physiological ideas are retained with very less modification in the later phases of Ayurveda.

From 6th century B.C. onwards, the outstanding contributions were made by the Buddhist scholars to the Indian medicine. Nāgārjuna, the medical author, the later Nāgārjuna who wrote many treatises on rasacikitsā, Vāgbhatta, siddha authors of the iatrochemical School, medical missionaries who popularized Ayurveda in Tibet, China, Central Asia, and Ceylon were all Buddhists. But it should be noted here that the contributions of Buddhist scholars were not paradigmatically different from the works of Brāhmaṇic tradition. It is very important to note that there were no divisions in the realm of knowledge on the basis of religion. Ayurveda was no exception. It was because the Buddhists of that period were not an isolated community. In fact, it was characteristically completely Indian in outlook.

It is also equally true that the Buddhist canonical literature contains a great deal of medical information. The Bhaiṣajyavāstu, for instance, gives valuable information regarding the use and dosage of medicinal drugs, classification of plant drugs, the useful parts of various plants, etc. The Civaravastu contains detailed information regarding the medical training imparted to the prince Jīvaka and many extra-ordinary cures discovered by him. Jīvaka was the physician of king Bimbasāra and also a contemporary of Gautama Buddha. According to this work, Jīvaka performed difficult surgical operations called kapāla mocana. This operation involves a complex
procedure where a portion of the skull has to be removed to reach up to the brain inside. Other complex surgical operations like removal of vaginal tumors, treatment of internal tumors, dropsy, eye surgery, curetting of the cervical region, etc. also mentioned in this work. Besides these medical achievements, we also find very interesting information about Jīvaka in this work. He studied medicine at Takṣaṣiḷā for a prescribed period of seven years under a world-class faculty on medicine. But even this long and rigorous training was not sufficient enough to earn a license to practice medicine. He had to undergo a practical examination prescribed by his teacher. His teacher said, 'Take this spade and seek round about Takṣaṣiḷa a yojana on every side, and whatever plant you see which is not medicinal, bring it to me.' It is said that Jīvaka covered every inch of Takṣaṣiḷa to undertake his botanical investigation but he failed to discover even a single plant that has no medical worth. The teacher was extremely happy and gave Jīvaka some money with leave to go home and practice as a physician.\textsuperscript{xv} This narrative should be given sufficient consideration to understand the shared belief among the medical practitioners of that age. The belief was that all plants along with water, reeds, stone, and metal possess potentiality of healing. We find the same idea later in Caraka Sařhitā where it is mentioned that, ‘each and every substance, due to its peculiar characteristics, can be utilized in some disease or other’.\textsuperscript{xvi} Jīvaka also understand the importance of accurate observations and of valid deductions based on such observations. There are many mythical stories popular regarding Jīvaka which suggests that he gave due importance to many typical observations and correlations among them which are normally considered unimportant by others. Finally, another important virtue of Jīvaka was that he believed that that medical skill is a divine gift which should be taught to others for the wider benefit of the society.

Ayurveda emerged on this land in the form of healing art in the ṛg-vedic period. Later on it continued to grow as a rational medical system along with the parallel growth of religion, arts, philosophies, and sciences on this land. Our present day knowledge of this ancient science comes mainly
from the surviving written treatises of the golden age of Indian civilization. The three oldest are Bhelasarñhitā, Carakasañhitā, and Suśrutasañhitā respectively. The text, Bhelasarñhitā is named after Bhela. It seems that it is the oldest medical treatise in existence. Many independent references in other ancient texts as well as the internal evidences are enough to demonstrate its antiquity and authenticity beyond any reasonable doubt. For instance, Nagnajit, a toxicologist of ancient India who was mentioned in the Aitareya and ātapatha Brāhmaṇa also appeared in this medical text as a contemporary living person. Therefore, we can safely place this text in the period of Brāhmaṇas. The chief value of this text lies in the fact that it contains the literature that can fill the gaps in both later texts, i.e., Carakasañhitā as well as Suśrutasañhitā. Unfortunately we could get only an incomplete and partial manuscript of this valuable text. Therefore, this text does not provide us a complete picture of Ayurvedic medical knowledge. The next very popular treatise on Ayurveda is Carakasañhitā. This famous ancient medical text describes the eight different branches of medical knowledge. This treatise too accordingly contains eight chapters where each chapter is devoted to a different branch of medicine though it is also true that the major stress of this text is on therapeutic medicine. Broadly, this text deals mainly with aetiology, anatomy, physiology, diagnosis, prognosis, pathology, treatment, objectives of the medical profession, influence of environment factors, medicines and appliances, procedure and sequence of medicine. To cover all these topics, this work is divided into eight sthāna-s or sections. Another popular text, i.e. Suśrutasañhitā follows more or less the same pattern but this text provides surgery the supreme place. Actually, this text belongs to Dhanvantri school of medicine which believes surgery to be the most ancient and most efficacious of the eight branches of medical knowledge. xvii The Suśrutasañhitā contains six sections dealing with fundamental axioms, pathology, embryology, anatomy, therapeutic and surgical treatment, toxicology, and a last section on the latest and advanced knowledge of the earlier discussed topics. This text is a well codified scientific treatise. It is a repository of factual information which describes at a
great length the necessity and modus operandi of dissections on human cadavers for acquiring precise anatomical knowledge. It describes more than 290 different types of operations, more than 120 different types of instruments and about 45 different surgical processes. The materia medica is extensive and represents a complete utilization of environmental resources. In *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, more than 600 drugs of animal, plant, and mineral origin are mentioned. The extensive medicinal prescriptions, methods of compounding, therapeutic methods including psychiatric and surgical processes employing specific instruments for each type of operation are sound, exhaustive and scientific.

It is important to note here that these two *saṃhitā*-s contains the gist of our ancient wisdom regarding the art of healing. The aim of these texts is not just the treatment of a disease. They have a higher aim in their sight. They are concerned with the perfect blending of secular conduct with the spiritual pursuit through the realization of true relationship between body, mind, and soul and the eternal universe. Therefore, they represent a comprehensive philosophy of life covering almost all aspects of human existence. The vibrant scientific spirit remains alive throughout the pages of these texts. Theories of creation of life, of biological origination, of sensory and intellectual perceptions, genetic axioms, the physiological and pathological effects of heredity and gestation, theories of metabolism, circulation of blood and other bodily fluids, functions of bodily eliminations and the all-embracing theory of the three omnipresent *doṣa*-s (which is said to be responsible for the origin and prognosis of all pathological conditions and also their cure) - all are discussed at length in these two *saṃhitā*-s.

Apart from that a rigorous standard for the training of physicians, a detailed code of personal ethics and social conduct for the medical profession is also covered. Careful observations, exhaustive, systematic and classified information, and an effective presentation of the available knowledge in medicine and allied subjects like botany, chemistry, environmental science, pharmacy, etc. also form the distinctive feature of these texts.
Apart from these two all time great texts, there are also many other valuable treatises on medicine which have been lost beyond all possible hope of recovery. Some of these texts belonged to the Ātreya School of medicine that stressed more on the therapeutic branch of knowledge. These texts are samhitā-śs credited to Agniveśa, Kṣarapaṇi, Jatukarṇa, Parāśara, Hārīta, Kṣaranaṇa, Visvāmitra, Kapila, and Gautama, etc. Many other texts belonged to the Dhanvantari School with their stress on surgery. Here the lost works are the Vṛddha Sausraṭṭa or Sausraṭṭa tantra, the treatises credited to Aupadhenava, Aurabhra, Pauskalavāṭa, Gopurarakṣīta, Vaitaraga and Bhoja.

The Tridosa theory of Ayurveda:

A proper understanding of the Ayurvedic science is not possible without grasping the real nature and the significance of the three doṣa-śs. The Tridōṣa theory is a comprehensive theoretical postulate in Ayurveda that has far-reaching applications in all the three major branches of medical knowledge, i.e., physiology, pathology, and therapy. It should be mentioned in the beginning to avoid any confusion that there are significant differences between the humoral theory of Greek medicine and the tridōṣa theory of Ayurveda. The three humors of Greek were air, bile, and phlegm. Some theorists have tried to equate vāta, pitta, and kapha of Ayurveda with the air, bile, and phlegm of Greek medicine. But it is highly misleading. In Ayurveda, vāta, pitta and kapha are supposed to present in all living creatures, diffused simultaneously in every minute portion of the organism. These three doṣa-śs govern and activate the entire biological process between conception and death. In Ayurveda, the three doṣa-śs are manifestation of universal motile, fiery, and placid phenomena.

Vāta, the universal principal of motion manifests itself by its properties of coldness, lightness, sound, and inconceivable latent power. The bodily manifestation of vāta can be noticed in constant currents flowing in the body at very high speed. If its course is impeded or obstructed by any reason then
it may get accumulated at wrong place. As a result of it, it may produce undesirable pressures and hence derangement. In its deranged condition, it is the principal dosa, because it has the greatest possibility of causing damage.\footnote{Vata is said to be the principal humor in equitable state also as it maintains a desirable equilibrium between the humors, digestive fire, metabolic processes and excretions. Pitta, the universal fiery principle, is responsible for the creation energy, vitality, heat, blood and perception to all forms of radiant energy in the body. It also maintains the pumping action of the heart and skin temperature. Kapha provides the cooling principle to the body in the processes of semen formation, growth, nutrition, taste-perception, and lubrication. If pitta or kapha or both gets deranged then they will give rise to peculiar symptoms affecting the body elements in their respective spheres of influence.}

Normally all individuals on earth have a predominance of one of the three humors and therefore, there is an inherent imbalance involved in the existence itself. But there does exist a few exceptions or near exceptions to the above rule. Such kind of people are said to be immune to diseases and enjoy perfect health. In contrast, there are some who are very susceptible to diseases due to inherent acute imbalance. Normally, human beings remain tolerably healthy as long as the humors are not provoked by injudicious diet, wrong conduct, or environmental conditions which are not favorable to their individual humoral state. For instance, if a vata-dominating person indulges in foods or acts which provoke that humour, the obvious consequence would be the derangement of that humor and affliction of that person with mental or physical disorders specific to that humor. The same also holds true for pitta and kapha. It is also interesting to note here that the individual types are benefited if he or she indulges in food or acts that provoke the other two humors.

The distinctive diagnosis, aetiology, and prognosis of different diseases are due to innumerable numbers of permutations and combinations of the three humors, each with their five varieties and also due to multiplicity of functions and various possible degrees of humoral derangement.
Diseases are classified into minor, major, or incurable in accordance with the degree of humoral derangement. A vaidya is supposed to detect the provoked humor or humors and assess the severity of their derangement. At the same time, he must identify the specific disease by case history and symptoms. Once the process of diagnosis is complete, the physician with varied drugs and processes at his command can apply his knowledge of medical science to correct the specific imbalances and ultimately cure the patient. It may be added here as passing remark the Ayurveda’s views regarding infection and infectivity. Ayurveda accepts infections but maintains that they are not the intrinsic cause of a disease. Infection is merely a remote cause of the disease. The infecting agent is just like all other external agents. Like other external agents, the infecting agent also upset the unstable equilibrium of the doṣa-s. This disturbance in the equilibrium of the doṣa-s in turns acts on the dhātu-s and produces the disease.\textsuperscript{xxi}

In the above passage it has been highlighted that any disease is a manifestation of the derangement of doṣa-s. In any living organism there is a propensity for the aggravation of doṣa-s due to inherent imbalance of doṣa-s.\textsuperscript{xx} Diseases have been classified into certain types according to the derangement of doṣa or doṣa-s. When all the three doṣa-s are deranged simultaneously, the disease is said to be sannipāṭika. Such a disease is said to be severe or even fatal. Apart from this doṣa based classification, there is another classification which is based on the cause behind the derangement of disease. The first type here is ādhyātamiṇa in which the cause of disease lies inside the organism himself. It also has the following three sub-types: ādibalaprayṛṭta, janma-balaprayṛṭta, and doṣa-balaprayṛṭta.\textsuperscript{xxii} The first sub-type of diseases includes those which are inherited from the stage of spermovum. The second sub-type of diseases includes those that are acquired after conception but before birth. They are usually acquired from the mother, her behavior or from other environmental factors. The third one is acquired due to improper diet, conduct, etc. The second type of diseases is known as ādhibhautika. It occurs as a result of adverse external causes. There are two further sub-types under it depending on the origin of external cause. The first
one is *samghatabalapravṛttta* which occurs as a result of painful physical contacts, accidents, poisonous bites, etc. The second one is *kalābalapravṛttta* which occurs as a result of abnormal climatic conditions. The third type of diseases can be placed under the category of *ādhidaivika*. It is said to occur as a result of fate, malign influence of evil, and other unknown reasons. It has two further sub-types: *daivabalapravṛttta* and *svabhāvabalapravṛttta*.

Apart from this cosmological evolution of matter and living organism where Ayurveda heavily borrowed from the Indian schools of philosophy especially *Sāṃkhya* here, there are many other philosophically relevant concepts that have been employed by Ayurveda. Although it is equally true that Ayurveda accepted the various philosophical theories only to the extant where it matches with its major perspective regarding the life on earth. It was also necessary because the central aim of Ayurveda was to cure a person here and now. One such philosophically significant concept employed by Ayurveda is that of the concept of microcosm. The concept of microcosm is quite popular in Indian tradition since the time of *Upaniṣads*. According to it, both the universe and man are manifestations of one and the same eternal spirit. It implies that spirit and matter are equally integrated in both. Man is a microcosm of the macrocosm. The material part of both man and universe is constituted of the same five primal elements. Each of the five primal elements confers its specific traits and characteristics to both, i.e., man as well as the universe. For instance, *prthvi* confers the solid element to both. *Apas* confers the liquid element and *tejas* confers the vision, body heat and digestive fire to man and radiant energy to the universe. Similarly, *vāyu* element confers bodily movements, vital breath, and growth from the foetal stage onwards to man and motion, growth, and combustion to the universe by enveloping and permeating it. Also *ākāśa* provides the orifices and empty spaces inside the body. As we see that there is an infinite diversity present in
the universe. Likewise, the different units that constitutes the body are also too numerous to count. Corresponding to the moods in the mind of man there are moods of nature too. Similar to the position of Brahma in the universe is the position of Puruṣa in the man. Both are capable of creating life by the act of impregnation. Both are limitless in their might and potentiality. The true nature of both is beyond the apprehension of human being.

Many other basic concepts of Indian philosophy are also have also been largely incorporated by Ayurveda. Ayurveda, like all schools of Indian philosophy believes that suffering and evil is due to human error of discrimination between the body and mind which suffer and the self which is immune to all kinds of suffering. Therefore, the final wisdom is to shed illusions and passions. The quest for ultimate truth and realization is accepted as the highest aim of life in Ayurveda. Ayurveda accepts the puruṣārtha theory and declares liberation to be the highest pursuit of man. Ayurveda recognizes that the ultimate essence of awareness and power is very much there in man making him potentially omniscient and omnipotent. It is possible for a trained mind to achieve self-realization and hence salvation. But this desirable end can be achieved only by a healthy body, long life, and a pure mind. These concepts are not just abstract ideas of philosophy. For Ayurveda, they have far reaching personal, social, and medical implications. That could be the reason that Ayurveda gave high importance to self-discipline in all spheres of life, medical healing, hygienic rules, etc. so that mind and body can be tuned to the highest pitch and longevity can be increased. Only then the highest aim of self-realization can be brought into reality.

Also in Ayurveda the spiritual insight or intuition has been given a privileged position. It has been mentioned that the perception of our senses is not valid in absence of spiritual insight. One of the reasons behind giving a detailed moral code of conduct for an ayurvedic practitioner is to cultivate and nourish the faculty of intuition in him. The source of all knowledge lies within the man himself. Therefore, a journey to explore the inner world is
highly recommended for a vaidya. Caraka while elaborating the duties of a student of medicine has explicitly mentioned that he must arose at or before dawn. He should perform the necessary ablutions and then salute the gods, the seers, the cows, the Brāhmīns, the guardians, the elders, the adepts and the teachers. He should sit at ease on an even and clean ground. The real motive here is to purify the heart of the disciple and inculcate the message of supremacy of the welfare of the people from the very beginning. The faculty of spiritual insight can grow only in a pure, simple and holistic mind.

It would be appropriate here to say something about the role of morality in the medical profession as envisaged in Ayurveda. A vaidya was expected to be a qualified person in all respects. The virtues demands for this profession were compassion, integrity of character, insight, keen intelligence, purity of mind and body, self-control, courage, acuteness of perception, retentive memory, and a thorough theoretical as well as practical knowledge of all branches of medical science. A long, rigorous training under the competent and inspiring teacher is necessary before one can be graduated into the medical profession. The aspirant to medical profession can choose a particular branch of his medical knowledge as his special area of interest but he is at the same time required to have an adequate knowledge of all branches of medicine. Not only is this but he also required to have a reasonable knowledge of other sciences and philosophies which can help him getting a comprehensive view of Ayurveda. An understanding of the philosophical basis of Ayurveda is a necessary prerequisite for anyone aspiring to become a Vaidya. All these arts and sciences should be thoroughly mastered before one can be given permission to practice medicine independently. A physician should remain a learner all his lifetime. He should enrich his experience, knowledge and understanding regularly. A mastery over all the above-mentioned skills is an intellectual obligation on the part of an aspiring physician.

In Carakasaṁhitā, it has been considered normal for a physician to aspire for wealth, fame and success but within a limit. An obligation towards the society and patient is considered to be of supreme value which cannot
be compromised under any circumstances. It is a physician’s highest duty to treat all deserving patients to the best of his abilities. A physician should whole-heartedly apply all his faculties, skills and wisdom to treat his patient. A patient surrender himself completely before he doctor. Even those patients who do not have any faith in their own parents, children, and other relations, when they come to doctor they put all their trust in him. Therefore, it is the supreme duty of a physician not to breach this trust under any circumstances. A physician should take care of each of his patient like his own children. A deep mutual trust between physician and patient is an important ingredient in the process of healing itself.

The physician should provide the best infrastructure to his patients. He should maintain an advanced dispensary and should prepare medical prescriptions from raw materials under his own supervision and should arrange for the services of qualified attendants, and nurses. Certain guidelines have also been set in Carakasaṁhitā for a physician interested in carrying out private practice. A private practitioner must not enter a residential house without introducing himself properly. He also should not attend a woman in absence of her husband or guardian. He also must not divert any information he had learned from his patient during the process of treatment. He also took great care while talking to his patients. Any word uttered from his mouth can either heal or kill his patient. Therefore, he must not say anything objectionable to the patient, or to the relatives and friends of the patients. He should be cooperative towards his fellow colleagues and should participate in open debates and discussions with them. He should lead a disciplined and pure life. He should be pleasant in his manners and speech and should be considerate in all matters. Compassion for the ailing, friendship towards all, devotion to his noble profession and a philosophical attitude to cases with fatal endings- these have been declared to be the four cornerstone of medical practice in Carakasaṁhitā.
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ii 1.8.23, CS
ii 1.6.14, CS

iv “Both in its development, as also in the production of the famous medical compendiums of the later period, the methods and practices of the earlier period typified by the Indus civilization, it is reasonable to believe, exerted no mean influence.” P. 215, Ch. 4, A Concise History of Science in India, Ed. By S.N. Bose

v P. 229, Ch. 4, A Concise History of Science in India, Ed. By S.N. Bose

vi “in the waters is the nectar of immortality, and in the water is the potent curative powers”, I.23.19, RV

vii X. 97, RV. Translated into English by H.H. Wilson, 6 Volumes, London.
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x P. 144, Jean Filliozat, La doctrine classique de la Mécine Indienne ses oigines et ses paralïæs Grecs, Imprimerie Nationale, paris, 1949; translated into English by Deb Raj Chanana, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1964.
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xvi 26.12.29, Sūrāsthānām, CS
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xx 1. 118. 54, CS.
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xxi “Ayurveda is closely associated with the sāṁkhya and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which alone deal with some sort of physics in Indian philosophy. It is pointed out by Narasimha kavirāja in his Vivaraṇa-siddhāntacintāmaṇi that according to Sāṁkhya it is the doṣa transforming itself from a state of equilibrium to a state of unbalanced preponderance of any of them that is to be called a disease. The Naiyāyikas, however, hold that disease is a separate entity or substance, which is produced by doṣa, but which is not itself a doṣa. So a disease is different from its symptoms or effects. Narasimha further holds that, since Caraka speaks of disease as being fiery and aerial, he tacitly accepts the diseases as separate substances. That Caraka sometime describes a disease as being dhātu-vaisaṁya is to be explained as due to the fact that, since dhātu-vaisaṁya produce diseases, they are themselves also called diseases in a remote sense.” – P. 3, MS, Vivaraṇa-siddhāntacintāmaṇi, Narasimha kavirāja.

xxii 1.22, Āstāṅga-saṁgraha.
xii 1. 24, Sūrasthānam, CS.
xiv 1. 24, SS.
xv 25. 24-25, Sūrasthānam, CS.
xvi 9. 26, Sūrasthānam, CS.