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GUEST EDITORIAL

AYURVEDIC MEDICINES: MYTHS AND REALITIES

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Introduction:

Among bests of India, worldwide Ayurveda has its own prominence in perpetuation of healthy life style and health care. In recent decades global biomedical schools are being attracted to fundamental holistic approach of Ayurveda system of medicine and consequently have engaged themselves for researches to get evidence of quality, safety and efficacy of Ayurvedic medicines on their intrinsic parameters. Publications in support of good pharmaceutics and therapeutics of Ayurveda are not rare now. Every reputed journal of health care is carrying authentic information about Ayurveda. Department of AYUSH of Government of India is taking continuous lead for academic and administrative reforms in this sector. Ten amendments in last four year in chapter IV A of Drugs and Cosmetics Acts and relevant Rules are enough evidence about sincerity of Government for mainstreaming of Ayurvedic medicines

(<http://indianmedicine.nic.in/showfile.asp?lid=337>).

But, even after all these academic, administrative and regulatory reforms there are pervasiveness of differential degree of doubts in mind set of elites and commoners as well about Ayurvedic medicines. Quality, standards, stability, safety and true sense therapeutic efficacy of Ayurvedic medicines are under scan of civil society more seriously at present. Hereby, we fraternity of Ayurvedic

medicines will put forward some facts before medicos of country through Institute of Medical Sciences of Banaras Hindu University to consider and reset their opinion in accordance of new particulars about Ayurvedic medicines.

Quality Control of Ayurvedic Medicines-

Myth- “ There is no methodology to check quality and standard of Ayurvedic Medicines so market is full of adulterated ,spurious and misbranded Ayurvedic formulations ”.

Reality - 1.Since last 15 year, 10 volumes of Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India part I (seven volumes consisting of standards of single drug) and Part II (three volumes of compound formulations of Ayurveda) are being published continuously after strict screening by Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia Committee (APC)

(<http://www.ccras.nic.in/PharmacopoeialWork/api/Pdf%20format%20API%20VI%20for%20print/1contents%20etc.%20I-XXXI.pdf>) .

Here it is noteworthy that APC is a high academic authority occupied by top intelligentsia of country from the field of Pharmacology, pharmacognosy, Geology, Chemistry along with Ayurvedists.

2.Pharmacopial Laboratory of Indian Medicine (PLIM) and Central Council of Researches in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) have published “ Protocol for Testing of ASU Medicines” (http://www.plimism.nic.in/Protocol_For_Test)

[ing.pdf](#)) establishing guideline for quality control and standard of Ayurvedic Medicines .

3.Rule 160 has been instituted in Drugs and Cosmetics Rule 1945 for quality control and standard of Ayurvedic Medicines in 2008 which ensures establishment of Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL) throughout country. It is mandatory for each manufacturer of Ayurvedic Medicines to get certificate from these laboratory about quality and stability of their product (<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=101617>).

4.AYUSH Standard and Premium brand (<http://indianmedicine.nic.in/index3.asp?sslid=293&subsublinkid=96&lang=1>) of Ayurvedic Medicines are available in open market with authentication seal of department of AYUSH ,Government of India which ensure quality of Ayurvedic Medicines.

5.Government of India is also aware about all unethical practices going on in field of Ayurvedic medicines and hitting hard to prevent these (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-11-09/varanasi/43853890_1_rasa-shastra-ayurveda-suffixes).

Stability Profile of Ayurvedic Medicines:

Myth- “Ayurvedic Medicines don’t have concept of shelf life. These are forever good”

Reality- 1) Sharangdhar Samita, treated with highest regard among Ayurveda community as part of laghutrayee, had clearly mentioned the concept of shelf life of Ayurvedic Medicines with the title “ Saveerayata Avadhi” in chapter one of Pratham Khanda (first section) in verse number 55, in 13 Century AD. Here, different periods are mentioned for different dosages forms of Ayurveda for example two months for Churna, one year for Avaleha and infinite period for Asav-arishta.

2.With the global demand of Ayurvedic medicines for export of these medicines as medicines ,a compulsory legal requirement was aroused in first decade of this century and Govt. of India notified shelf life regulation for Ayurvedic medicines first time in 2005

([http://amam-ayurveda.org/pdf/shelf life notification 2411 05 .pdf](http://amam-ayurveda.org/pdf/shelf%20life%20notification%20241105.pdf)). This notification was opposed by academia and industry both .Subsequently governments kept it in abeyance and re - notified it in 2009 with through research work from institutions like NIPER, NBRI, and CIMAP etc. Now it is mandatory to print self life period of Ayurvedic formulations from April 01 ,2010 as per norms of Government after fulfilling required criteria.([http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/12821/4/IJTK%2010\(4\)%20672-677.pdf](http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/12821/4/IJTK%2010(4)%20672-677.pdf))

3.Progress is a continuous process .Therefore, Government of India is proposing more modifications in norms and concept of shelf life period of Ayurvedic medicines with all scientific input. (<http://pharmabiz.com/PrintArticle.aspx?aid=71996&sid=1>)

Safety Profile of Ayurvedic Medicines:

Myth- “Ayurvedic medicines are not safe as these contain heavy metals.”

Reality- 1.Many of the Ayurvedic medicaments are prepared using mineral/metal in combination with herbs in its natural process of manufacturing under an unique discipline of Ayurveda known as Rasa Shastra. Rasa Shastra started with a rational approach in 5th AD and flourished fully in 11th AD as an independent therapeutic branch of Ayurveda. Later it is accommodated in main stream of Ayurveda on the virtue of its quicker action, longer shelf life, good palatability and wide therapeutic range and continues in practice till date.(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3336271/>)

2.Ancient texts of Rasa Shastra have also defined toxic effects of improperly prepared medicines containing metals in detail with their instant effective therapeutic qualities when used in properly prepared form known as BHASMA which are very much nearer to nano-particles. Precautions about therapeutic administrations of Bhasma are well addressed in books of Rasa Shastra, namely from Rasa

Prakash Sudhakar(10th AD) to Rasa Tarangini(20th AD) in a very systematic way. These guidelines are given for different Bhasma (nano-medicines) with an individualistic approach.(<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378874112002486>,http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-02-06/varanasi/28353173_1_bhasmas-herbo-mineral-formulations-rasa-shastra)

3.From last two decades concern over the safety and therapeutic uses of Rasaoushadhies (Bio Metallic Preparation of Ayurveda) has been growing. Among these worthy to note are

publications from Boston(2004,2008,2010 and 2013)<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1108395><http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2755247/>) and New York (2012 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6133a1.htm>), as a sensational findings of metallic presence and its toxicity among Ayurvedic medicines.

4.Nevertheless, contemporary treatises of Rasa Shastra are progressively validating safety and efficacy of metallic preparations of Ayurveda on scientific parameters. These equally important findings, supporting intrinsic safety of these medicines, when prepared on classical parameters of Rasa Shastra, are in circulation from New Delhi (2012 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22265750>) and many more are now available on PubMed(2010,2011 and 2013)<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378874111000456>,<http://www.hindawi.com/isrn/toxicology/2011/250387/ref>,<http://www.plosone.org/article/related/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0037113;jsessionid=8586EF98C56C577F31D148ABEE51AE67>)

5.Interestingly, findings about toxic effect of these medicines as a new noble discovery in the west are not new for Ayurvedic medical practice. Instead, they are widely known to Ayurvedic practitioners for centuries. We, who are trained in Ayurvedic medicine, are well versed about the side effects of herbo-metallic

medicines of Ayurveda. ([http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/9793/1/IJTK%209\(3\)%20562-575.pdf](http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/9793/1/IJTK%209(3)%20562-575.pdf))

6.We have proven that use of nanoparticles, known as Bhasmas in Ayurvedic Rasa shatra have similar properties as described in nanotechnology

(<http://nopr.niscair.res.in/bitstream/123456789/10656/1/JSIR%2069%2812%29%20901-905.pdf>). In concept of nanotechnology, it has been demonstrated that when materials are reduced to the nano scale they can exhibit different properties compared to their macroscale properties contributing to their unique and unfounded applications.

7.Because of compromised manufacturing methods toxic effects of these preparations are possible. Therefore these should be prescribed, administered and monitored under a trained Ayurvedic practitioner only and should not be used by untrained practitioners or be self-administered as Triphala Churna etc.(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21485807>)

Efficacy Essential of Ayurvedic Medicines:

Myth: “Ayurvedic Medicines are placebo and not working effectively as medicine.”

Reality: 1.These medicines are serving human civilization of this sub continent know as Greater Asia much before birth of any other system of medicines .

2.European Union Directives are permitting those medicines of traditional systems In EU which are being practiced in EU just since last 30 year without any reported adverse effects in those country and has a long history of safe practice in parent country. (http://www.anheurope.org/files/110325_ANH_A5_flyer_2_EU_herbal_directive%5B1%5D.pdf,<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Howweregulate/Medicines/Herbalmedicinesregulation/RegisteredTraditionalHerbalMedicines/index.htm>)

3.World Health Organization accepted Ayurveda as system of medicine after its stringent procedure for the same and supporting this system for its global acceptance.

(<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/documents/s17552en/s17552en.pdf>)

In this brief article we are trying to sensitize every member of public and all elite academicians, researchers of core science and bio medical schools and administrators about all inherent paramount properties of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutics.

We are convinced that on account of all recent advancements which are augmenting

in acceptance of Ayurvedic Medicines as quality ,safe and efficacious medicines , we should humbly request to all stakeholder of health sector to amalgamate these medicines in national health care policies.

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