

EDITORIAL

The present era is characterized by the formidable advances in science and technology. These advances have greatly impacted the lives of ordinary citizens to diffuse even into remote rural areas. Do not rural farmers today use mobile telephones and electronic calculators? Yet one area where all these developments have failed is to ensure an enhanced quality of life. In the health sector though the advances are too numerous to recapitulate, yet the elusive factor is contentment and a sense of wellbeing. Although there have been spectacular developments in diagnostic techniques and designer crafted therapeutic agents, many diseases are still intractable, and some are old ones. New diseases like HIV, and those caused by unidentified viruses defy control. The approach has been a materially based approach, and this is perhaps the flaw. Modern society still suffers from preventable heart diseases, cancers, strokes, infectious diseases, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes and mental illnesses. Large sections of society while not perhaps sick are not in a true state of health, or wellness. This state of affairs touches both the affluent as well as the poor. It was the Nobel Laureate Professor Abdus Salam who identified the two types of disease as "diseases of the Rich and diseases of the Poor". The diseases of the Rich according to the noted scientist were the result of having too much, and those of the poor the result of having too little.

It is in this regard that the age old methods and philosophies of Ayurveda can help. In Ayurvedic concepts, health is more than the absence of definable disease. Ayurvedic philosophy considers health, as very much more than just "nirogi"- or without illness. Health is conceptualized as a symbiotic and dynamic relationship between the environment, the human body, mind and spirit. Quite simply, health is a state of wellbeing of body and mind.

The science of Ayurveda is our legacy and is an enormous resource. Broadly it is stated that every expression of human endeavour whether

it be Art, Science, Medicine, or Agriculture etc., is structured in the laws of nature which govern and order our existence. A celebrated authority of both western and Ayurvedic medicine, Dr. Sunil V. Ghosh, has recorded thus::

"I probed more deeply into Ayurvedic theory and clinical practice and became impressed by its logic and charmed by the power and completeness of its comprehensive understanding of life. It describes a vital connection between individual life and the whole of nature. Human life is perceived as a microcosm of the entire universe."

The basis of Ayurveda the *Panchkarma*, is considered to be a "comprehensive system of knowledge and practices to purify the body of toxins and restore it to balance, with natural law." The increasingly rapid pace of modern lifestyles, the galloping environmental degradation, and the disengagement from the natural rhythms of life, are taking a heavy toll on health and contentment. People are beginning to lack motivation and enthusiasm, and, anxiety and depression are common syndromes. Ayurvedic philosophy and practices if truly engaged, appears to have the capacity to deal with many of the problems of the modern day. Ayurveda is not merely a healthcare system, but a complete approach to living. It offers a rich comprehensive conception of life and health that accommodates all facets of human existence. The answer therefore is to induce the powers that be to engage Ayurveda as well as modern medicine in a joint effort to combat the diseases of the rich as well as the diseases of the poor. The pharmaceutical companies direct their attention only towards the former as the profit driven pathway dictates. But the repertoire of Ayurveda can well be employed in a collaborative effort in national health care. For this to be accommodated Ayurveda itself has to engage the benefits of modern science and technology. No longer can it be argued, as Nehru once observed, that "the last word could have been said thousands of years ago"