

AYURVEDA: THE VEDIC SCIENCE OF LIFE

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Abstract:

Classically, *Ayurveda* has sought to define itself as a knowledge system and not merely as a health care approach or medical system. Ayurveda's history is intrinsically linked with Sanskrit, the classical language in which its ancient texts were recorded and preserved, serving as the precise medium for transmitting knowledge across generations. The term "Ayurveda" itself is a Sanskrit word meaning "knowledge of life," highlighting the foundational role of the language in understanding this 5,000-year-old Indian medical tradition. Key historical texts like the Vedas, Charak Samhita, and Sushruta Samhita were written in Sanskrit, establishing it as the scientific and spiritual language of Ayurveda, and making its study essential for accessing authentic Ayurvedic wisdom. This article has tried to highlight the history of Ayurveda and the contribution of the Indian physicians like Charaka, Shusruta, and Nagarjuna. Finally, this study states the use of some important herbs as Ayurvedic medicine and states their medicinal benefits. The study of Ayurveda is still relevant as a part of the ancient Indian knowledge.

Key words: *Ayurveda, tridosha, panchakarma, m.edicinal herbs, health benefits, relevance in modern days*

❖ Introduction:



Dhanvantari, an avatar of Vishnu, is the Hindu god associated with *ayurveda*.

Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. It is heavily practised throughout India and Nepal, where as much as 80% of the population report using ayurveda. The theory and practice of ayurveda is pseudoscientific and toxic metals including lead and mercury are used as ingredients in many ayurvedic medicines.

Ayurveda therapies include herbal medicines, special diets, meditation, yoga, massage, laxatives, enemas, and medical oils. Ayurvedic preparations are typically based on complex herbal compounds, minerals, and metal substances (perhaps under the influence of early Indian alchemy or *rasashastra*). Ancient ayurveda texts also taught surgical techniques, including rhinoplasty, lithotomy, sutures, cataract surgery, and the extraction of foreign objects.

Historical evidence for ayurvedic texts, terminology and concepts appears from the middle of the first millennium BCE onwards. The main classical ayurveda texts begin with accounts of the transmission of medical knowledge from the gods to sages, and then to human physicians. Printed editions of the Sushruta

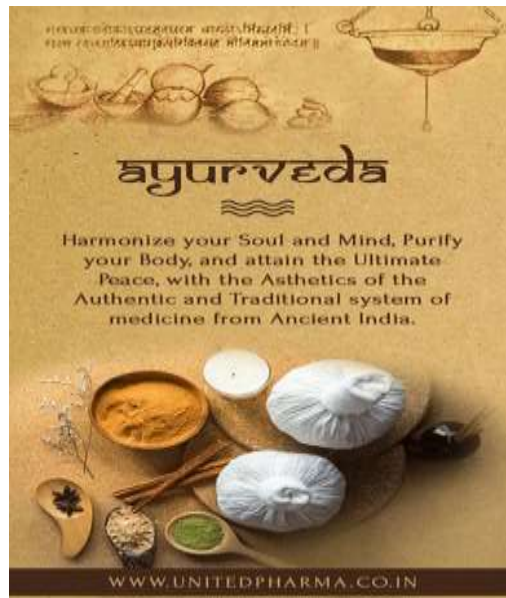
Samhita (*Sushruta's Compendium*), frame the work as the teachings of Dhanvantari, the Hindu deity of ayurveda. He is an avatar of Lord Vishnu, appearing as Divodasa, the son of King Dhanwa. Dhanvantari was the Hindu God of medicine and healing, considered an earthly incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who emerged from the ocean with a pot of Amrita (nectar of immortality) during the "Samudra Manthan" (churning of the ocean). He is revered as the pioneer of Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, and is celebrated for divinely imparting the knowledge of healing to humanity, making him the "physician of the Gods" and a patron for all medical practitioners.

Dhanvantari is considered the originator and teacher of Ayurveda, who brought the knowledge of the science of medicine, including the major branches of surgery, to human. He is credited with dividing Ayurveda into eight categories (Astanga Ayurveda), which cover various aspects of medicine. Dhanvantari is widely honored by Ayurvedic practitioners, with prayers and worship offered to him at the start of clinical and auspicious works. His idol, holding the pot of Amrita, symbolizes his divine ability to cure any illness and provide a spiritually and mentally significant form of healing.

❖ Essence of ancient scriptures:

Etymologically the term *āyurveda* (Sanskrit: आयुर्वेद) is composed of two words, *āyus*, आयुस्, "life" or "longevity", and *veda*, वेद, "knowledge", translated as "knowledge of longevity" or "knowledge of life and longevity". The earliest classical Sanskrit works on ayurveda describe medicine as being divided into eight components (Skt. *aṅga*). This characterization of the physician's art, "the medicine that has eight components" (Sanskrit: चिकित्सायामष्टाङ्गियाम्, romanized: *cikitsāyām aṣṭāṅgāyām*), is first found in the Sanskrit epic the *Mahābhārata*, c. 4th century BCE. The components are:

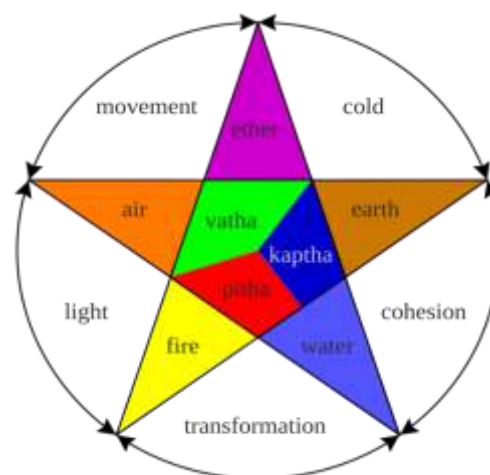
- *Kāyachikitsā*: general medicine, medicine of the body.
- *Kaumāra-bhṛtya* (Pediatrics): Discussions about prenatal and postnatal care of baby and mother; methods of conception; choosing the child's sex, intelligence, and constitution; childhood diseases; and midwifery.
- *Śalyatantra*: surgical techniques and the extraction of foreign objects.
- *Śhālākyaatantra*: treatment of ailments affecting openings or cavities in the upper body: ears, eyes, nose, mouth, etc.
- *Bhūtavidyā*: pacification of possessing spirits, and the people whose minds are affected by such possession.
- *Āgadatantra/Vishagara-vairodh Tantra* (Toxicology): includes epidemics; toxins in animals, vegetables, and minerals; and keys for recognizing those anomalies and their antidotes.
- *Rasāyantantra*: rejuvenation and tonics for increasing lifespan, intellect, and strength.
- *Vājīkaraṇatantra*: aphrodisiacs; treatments for increasing the volume and viability of semen and sexual pleasure; infertility problems; and spiritual development (transmutation of sexual energy into spiritual energy).



Ayurveda encourages certain lifestyle interventions and natural therapies to regain a balance between the body, mind, spirit, and the environment. Ayurvedic treatment starts with an internal purification process, followed by a special diet, herbal remedies, massage therapy, yoga, and meditation.

The concepts of universal interconnectedness, the body's constitution (prakriti), and life forces (doshas) are the primary basis of ayurvedic medicine. Goals of treatment aid the person by eliminating impurities, reducing symptoms, increasing resistance to disease, reducing worry, and increasing harmony in life. Herbs and other plants, including oils and common spices, are used extensively in Ayurvedic treatment. In India, Ayurveda is considered a form of medical care, equal to conventional Western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, naturopathic medicine, and homeopathic medicine. Practitioners of Ayurveda in India undergo state-recognized, institutionalized training.

❖ Principles and terminologies of Ayurveda



The three *doshas* and the five elements from which they are composed.

The central theoretical ideas of ayurveda show parallels with Samkhya and Vaisheshika philosophies, as well as with Buddhism and Jainism. Balance is emphasized, and suppressing natural urges is considered unhealthy and claimed to lead to illness. For example, to suppress sneezing is said to potentially give rise to shoulder pain. However, people are also cautioned to stay within the limits of reasonable balance and measure when following nature's urges. For example, emphasis is placed on moderation of food intake, sleep, and sexual intercourse.

According to ayurveda, the human body is composed of tissues (*dhatu*s), waste (*malas*), and humeral biomaterials (*doshas*). The seven *dhatu*s are chyle (*rasa*), blood (*rakta*), muscles (*māmsa*), fat (*meda*), bone (*asthi*), marrow (*majja*), and semen (*shukra*). Like the medicine of classical antiquity, the classic treatises of ayurveda divided bodily substances into five classical elements (*panchamahabhuta*) viz. earth, water, fire, air and ether. There are also twenty gunas (qualities or characteristics) which are considered to be inherent in all matter. These are organized in ten pairs: heavy/light, cold/hot, unctuous/dry, dull/sharp, stable/mobile, soft/hard, non-slimy/slimy, smooth/coarse, minute/gross, and viscous/liquid.

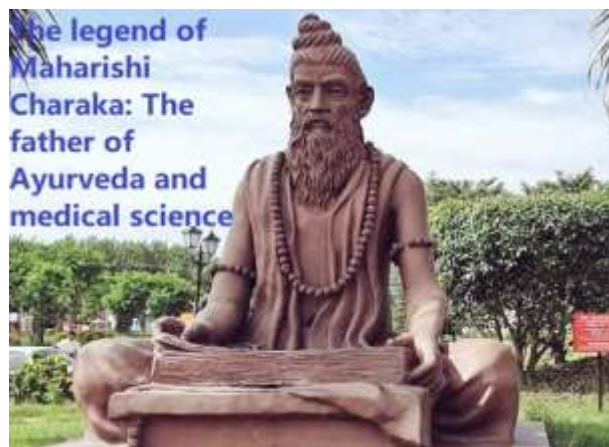
The three postulated elemental bodily humours, the *doshas* or *tridosha*, are *vata* (air, which some modern authors equate with the nervous system), *pitta* (bile, fire, equated by some with enzymes), and *kapha* (phlegm, or earth and water, equated by some with mucus). Contemporary critics assert that *doshas* are not real but are a fictional concept. The humours (*doshas*) may also affect mental health. Each *dosha* has particular attributes and roles within the body and mind; the natural predominance of one or more *doshas* thus explains a person's physical constitution (*prakriti*) and personality. Ayurvedic tradition holds that imbalance among the bodily and mental *doshas* is a major etiologic component of disease. One ayurvedic view is that the *doshas* are balanced when they are equal to each other, while another view is that each human possesses a unique combination of the *doshas* which define this person's temperament and characteristics. In either case, it says that each person should modulate their behaviour or environment to increase or decrease the *doshas* and maintain their natural state. Practitioners of ayurveda must determine an individual's bodily and mental *dosha* makeup, as certain *prakriti* are said to predispose one to particular diseases. Deranged *vata* is also associated with certain mental disorders due to excited or excess *vayu* (gas), although the ayurvedic text *Charaka Samhita* also attributes "insanity" (*unmada*) to cold food and possession by the ghost of a sinful Brahman (*brahmarakshasa*).

Ama (a Sanskrit word meaning "uncooked" or "undigested") is used to refer to the concept of anything that exists in a state of incomplete transformation. With regards to oral hygiene, it is claimed to be a toxic byproduct generated by improper or incomplete digestion. The concept has no equivalent in standard medicine.

In medieval taxonomies of the Sanskrit knowledge systems, ayurveda is assigned a place as a subsidiary Veda (upaveda). Some medicinal plant names from the *Atharvaveda* and other Vedas can be found in subsequent ayurveda literature. Some other school of thoughts considers 'ayurveda' as the 'Fifth Veda'. The earliest recorded theoretical statements about the canonical models of disease in ayurveda occur in the earliest Buddhist Canon.

❖ Physicians of ancient India

➤ Charaka: The father of Ayurveda



The history of Indian medicine is rich and famous. Its oldest ideas are found in the sacred literature known as the Vedas, particularly the metrical portions of the Atharvaveda, which may date back to the 2nd millennium BCE. The creation of the medical treatises known as the Charaka-Samhita and Sushruta-Samhita credited to

Charaka, a physician, and Sushruta, a surgeon respectively, heralded the beginning of the golden period of Indian medicine, which spanned from 800 BCE to around 1000 CE. All subsequent books on Indian medicine were built on the foundation of these texts. Charak, an Ayurvedic practitioner, and Charak Samhita, a comprehensive text on ancient Indian medicine. About Charak Acharya Charak was born around 300 BC and was a key contributor to Ayurveda's ancient art and science, medicine, and lifestyle philosophy that was developed in Ancient India. Charaka lived between AD 150-200 and 100 BC. He is well known as the editor of the medical treatise Charaka Samhita, one of the basic books of traditional Indian medicine and Ayurveda, which is contained in the Brhat-Trayi. According to Charaka's ideas, health and sickness are not predestined, and human effort and attention to lifestyle can prolong life. According to Indian tradition and the Ayurvedic system, prevention of all forms of ailments is more important than treatment, including lifestyle restructuring in line with the rhythm of nature and the six seasons, which will ensure overall health. While Charaka studied all parts of medicine, including the logic and philosophy underlying the Indian medical system, he placed a specific focus on illness diagnosis and regarded Ayurveda as a holistic system of health care that addressed both preventative and curative elements. He also elaborated on topics such as foetal production and development, physiology of the human body and function and malfunction of the body. According to Charaka, a body works because it has three doshas or principles: movement (Vata), transformation (Pitta), and lubrication and stability (Kapha). These doshas correspond to the Western categorization of humour, wind, bile, and phlegm. They are created when dhatus (blood, flesh, and marrow) interact with the food consumed. However, for the same amount of food consumed, one body creates dosha in a different amount than another. That is why one body differs from another. Furthermore, he emphasised that disease is caused by a disruption in the equilibrium of the three doshas in the human body. He suggested medicines to help restore balance. Although he was aware of microbes in the body, he did not regard them highly.

➤ **Shusruta: The father of Indian Surgery**



Sushruta (c. 7th or 6th century BCE) was a physician in ancient India known today as the “Father of Indian Medicine” and “Father of Plastic Surgery” for inventing and developing surgical procedures. His work on the subject, the *Sushruta Samhita* (Sushruta's Compendium) is considered the oldest text in the world on plastic surgery and is highly regarded as one of the Great Trilogy of Ayurvedic Medicine; the other two being the *Charaka Samhita*, which preceded it, and the *Astanga Hridaya*, which followed it. Ayurveda was practiced in India for centuries before the Greek physician Hippocrates (c. 460 - c. 379 BCE), known as the Father of Medicine, was even born.

Little is known of Sushruta's life as his work focuses on the application of medical techniques and does not include any details on who he was or where he came from. Even his birth-name is unknown as “Sushruta” is an epithet meaning “renowned”. He is usually dated to the 7th or 6th centuries BCE but could have lived and worked as early as 1000 BCE; although that seems unlikely as Charaka lived shortly before him or was a contemporary. He has been associated with the Sushruta mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, the son of the sage Visvamitra, but this claim is not accepted by most scholars.

Sushruta significantly developed different surgical techniques & invented the practice of cosmetic surgery. Sushruta's contributions to surgery were truly revolutionary. His techniques for cataract surgery, rhinoplasty, and the treatment of fractures and wounds were superior for his time. He pioneered the art of suturing, using materials such as horsehair and plant fibres, and meticulously documented each procedure, instrument, and the necessary postoperative care. His emphasis on precision, safety, and cleanliness set new standards for surgical practices.

All that is known for certain about him is that he practiced medicine in northern India around the region of modern-day Varanasi (Benares) by the banks of the Ganges River. He was regarded as a great healer and sage whose gifts were thought to have been given by the gods. According to legend, the gods passed their medical insight down to the sage Dhanvantari who taught it to his follower Divodasa, who then instructed Sushruta.

Sushruta's advocacy for cadaver dissection was a landmark in his medical practice and education, particularly in a culture that resisted such practices. In the *Sushruta Samhita*, he emphasized the necessity of direct observation through dissection to master human anatomy. Despite Hindu beliefs that regarded the human body as sacred in death, Sushruta navigated these restrictions innovatively. His meticulous method involved submerging bodies in flowing water to aid decomposition and then examining them layer by layer. Sushruta specified the use of only bodies free from disease, not older than 100 years, and not poisoned. After seven nights of decomposition, the body was carefully cleaned and dissected. This approach allowed Sushruta and his students to study anatomical structures in detail, significantly advancing their understanding of human physiology and pathology.

After performing dissections with these innovative techniques, Sushruta significantly advanced anatomical research. His observations were not superficial; he classified and described anatomy in comprehensive detail, laying out the relationships between different structures, which enabled a well-rounded understanding of human anatomy. His teaching methods included using clay, wax, and ghee to simulate human tissues, enabling students to practice surgical techniques in a controlled setting before performing them on real patients. This hands-on approach was pioneering for its time and set a new standard for medical education. Emphasizing the importance of anatomy in surgery, he encouraged students to practical experience, detailed anatomical study, and step-by-step surgical instructions, highlighting his influence on future generations of medical practitioners.

Surgical instruments

Sushruta's understanding of the human body and surgical precision is evident from the diverse range of instruments he designed. He meticulously labelled and described 121 surgical instruments, categorized into Yantras (blunt instruments) and Shastras (sharp instruments).

Surgical procedures

Sushruta's procedures had given pioneering contributions to surgery and medical practice beyond the basic classification of surgical procedures (Shastrakarma). These encompass a wide range of therapeutic interventions and advanced surgical techniques. Some of them are listed below:

- Cauterization (Agnikarma) and Bloodletting (Raktamokshana)
- Reconstructive Surgery
- Bone Setting and Fracture Management
- Suturing and Wound Management
- Use of Anaesthesia
- Cataract Surgery: Early Ophthalmology
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology

The *Astanga Hridaya* combines the works of Charaka (c. 7th or 6th century BCE) and Sushruta, presenting a comprehensive text on both surgical and medical approaches to treatment, while also offering its own unique perspective. Sushruta's work, however, offers the greatest insight into the medical arts of the three owing to the commentary he provides in-between or included in discussions of various ailments and treatment.

➤ **Nagarjuna: The Einstein of India**



Golden Statue of Acharya Nagarjuna

in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh India.

Nagarjuna (born 150—died *c.* 250), was an ancient Indian scholar and scientist known for his contributions to alchemy and Ayurveda and was considered an early metallurgist and alchemist. He conducted lab experiments on metallurgy, developed techniques for transmuting base metals, and authored texts on alchemy such as **Rasaratnakara**. He also contributed to the field of medicine by developing curative medicines and explaining the vascular system and blood tissue. In recognition of his diverse knowledge, he was appointed Chancellor of the University of Nalanda.

Key contributions

- **Alchemy and Metallurgy:**

Nagarjuna conducted significant experiments in alchemy and metallurgy, including the "gold-shine mechanism" technology used in the jewelry industry for imitation gold.

- **Ayurvedic Medicine:**

While the Buddhist philosopher Acharya Nagarjuna was not a practicing physician, historical sources suggest he systematized Rasashastra (Ayurvedic alchemy) and was associated with powerful elixir-like formulations. He developed curative medicines and made significant contributions to the field of Ayurveda and is credited with knowledge of the circulatory system and blood tissue.

The name "Nagarjuna" is a prominent symbol in Ayurveda today, with the Nagarjuna Ayurveda Group in Kerala being a leading manufacturer of Ayurvedic medicines and a provider of treatments and therapies. This Group developed an Ayurvedic Centre in Kalady, establishing itself as a pioneer in Kerala's Ayurvedic medicine and restoring Ayurveda as a mainstream healthcare system.

- **Education:**

He served as the Chancellor of the [University of Nalanda](http://www.nalanda.edu), a renowned centre of learning.

Nagarjuna is named "Einstein of India" because he taught the theory of relativity and claimed that only because of a long dimension relative to it, shortness is possible. Similar to Einstein's theory of relativity, he promoted the theory of Sunyavada.

❖ Practice of Ayurveda

Ayurvedic practitioners regard physical existence, mental existence, and personality as three separate elements of a whole person with each element being able to influence the others. This holistic approach used during diagnosis and healing is a fundamental aspect of ayurveda. Another part of ayurvedic treatment says that there are channels (*srotas*) which transport fluids, and that the channels can be opened up by massage treatment using oils and Swedana (fomentation). Unhealthy, or blocked, channels are thought to cause disease.

❖ Diagnosis

Ayurveda has eight ways to diagnose illness, called nadi (pulse), mootra (urine), mala (stool), jihva (tongue), shabda (speech), sparsha (touch), druk (vision), and aakruti (appearance). Ayurvedic practitioners approach diagnosis by using the five senses. For example, hearing is used to observe the condition of breathing and speech. The study of vulnerable points, or marma, is particular to ayurvedic medicine.

❖ Panchakarma

According to ayurveda, panchakarma are techniques to eliminate toxic elements from the body. Panchakarma refers to five actions, which are meant to be performed in a designated sequence with the stated aim of restoring balance in the body through a process of purgation.

❖ Treatment and prevention

Two of the eight branches of classical ayurveda deal with surgery (*Śalya-cikitsā* and *Śālākya-tantra*), but contemporary ayurveda tends to stress attaining vitality by building a healthy metabolic system and maintaining good digestion and excretion. Ayurveda also focuses on exercise, yoga, and meditation. One type of prescription is a Sattvic diet.

Ayurveda follows the concept of Dinacharya, which says that natural cycles (waking, sleeping, working, meditation etc.) are important for health. Hygiene, including regular bathing, cleaning of teeth, oil pulling, tongue scraping, skin care, and eye washing, is also a central practice.

❖ Scientific evidence supporting ayurveda.

One of the major debates around Ayurveda is its scientific validity. While some Ayurvedic remedies have been clinically studied, others still lack extensive research. However, several studies indicate that Ayurvedic medicines can be effective for specific health conditions:

1. **Chronic Diseases:** Ayurveda has shown promising results in managing chronic ailments like diabetes, arthritis, and digestive disorders.
2. **Skin and Hair Care:** Herbal formulations like neem, turmeric, and aloe vera are widely used for acne, eczema, and dandruff treatment.
3. **Immunity Boosting:** Herbs like Ashwagandha, Tulsi, and Amla are known to enhance immunity and reduce stress.
4. **Digestive Health:** Ayurvedic herbs like Triphala and Ginger aid digestion and improve gut health.

While these studies provide positive insights, more large-scale clinical trials are needed to establish the effectiveness of Ayurvedic medicines across various health conditions.

❖ Substances used in ayurvedic medicine.

The vast majority (90%) of ayurvedic remedies are plant based. Plant-based treatments in ayurveda may be derived from roots, leaves, fruits, bark, or seeds. In the 19th century, William Dymock and co-authors summarized hundreds of plant-derived medicines along with the uses, microscopic structure, chemical composition, toxicology, prevalent myths and stories, and relation to commerce in British India.



Some important medicinal herbs used in ayurveda are-

1. Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)



Ashwagandha is one of the most important herbs in the Ayurvedic system of medicine used as a powerful *rasayana* known for its adaptogenic properties which has been used traditionally for thousands of years. As a powerful adaptogen, Ashwagandha helps our body cope with physical and mental stress, regulates healthy cholesterol levels and promotes a sense of physical and mental balance.

It also increases stamina, boosts energy levels, and enhances cognitive function, especially in children with memory deficits and old age people with memory loss. Ashwagandha also contains anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritis properties which can be useful in cases of both types of arthritis, rheumatoid and osteoarthritis.

Ashwagandha is considered a rejuvenating herb that can nourish and revitalize our body and mind, help it fight mental and physical stress, and boost stamina and memory function of the brain making it an important herb for overall well-being and vitality.

Health Benefits of Ashwagandha

- Potent adaptogen
- Reduces stress

- Provides anxiety relief
- Improves sleep quality
- Enhances cognitive function
- Boosts immune system
- Increased energy and vitality
- Balancing hormones
- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Support muscle strength and recovery

2. Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*)



Shatavari, a powerful adaptogen, is an important herb in Ayurveda that has been used to treat various health conditions since time immemorial. Shatavari has been used for thousands of years in Ayurveda as a powerful *Rasayana* which prevents ageing, increases longevity, imparts immunity, improves mental function, and vigour and added vitality to the body. With its adaptogenic properties, the shatavari herb is considered to help our body cope with mental and physical stress.

Shatavari is especially known for its usefulness in restorative impact on the reproductive health of females. It is considered to support hormonal balance, ease menstrual discomfort, and promote lactation in breastfeeding mothers.

Shatavari is also considered a cooling herb that nourishes and moisturizes the tissues, making it useful for addressing dryness and inflammation. It is often used as a tonic for the female reproductive system, supporting fertility, and overall reproductive health.

Shatavari Health Benefits

- Hormonal balance
- Female Reproductive Health Support
- Menstrual cycle regulation
- Relief from menopausal symptoms
- Increased breast milk production
- Digestive system support
- Anti-inflammatory properties
- Immune System Enhancement
- Stress reduction and mood stabilization

3. **Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum Linn)**



Tulsi, also known as Holy Basil, is one of the most revered herbs in Ayurveda and is considered the “queen of herbs”. In Hinduism, Tulsi is considered a sacred plant, an earthly manifestation of goddess Tulasi, an avatar of goddess Lakshmi.

Tulsi is also revered for its numerous health benefits which help promote our overall wellness and help achieve balance of body, mind, and soul. Tulsi acts as an adaptogen, helping the body cope with stress and promoting a balanced response.

In various scientific studies, it has been found that Tulsi can boost our immune system, support respiratory health, and act as a powerful antioxidant, which neutralizes cell-damaging free radicals and protects against oxidative damage. Tulsi also aids digestion, supports liver function, and has antimicrobial properties, making it an all-round herb for maintaining optimal health.

Tulsi (Holy Basil) Health Benefits

- Adaptogenic properties
- Stress reduction
- Immune system support
- Antioxidant effects
- Respiratory health support
- Anti-inflammatory properties
- Digestive system aid
- Liver detoxification support
- Cardiovascular health promotion
- Cognitive Function Enhancement
- Improved vitality and energy levels

4. Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*)



Also referred to as the ‘herb of grace’, Brahmi is considered one of the most important Ayurvedic herbs and is used to balance Vata and Kapha doshas in Ayurveda. Due to its cold potency and astringent properties, Brahmi is a staple herb in Ayurveda for healthy skin, enhancing mental clarity and improving cognitive functions as well as for liver and immunity.¹⁶ In fact, one of the most important uses of Brahmi in Ayurveda is for promoting mental well-being and improving brain function.

Brahmi has also been traditionally used in Ayurveda for hair loss, baldness, and dandruff because of its *sheeta* (cold) potency. According to Ayurveda, Brahmi has *kashaya rasa* (astringent property) which nourishes your scalp and it has cold potency that helps strengthen roots promoting stronger and healthier hair growth and preventing split ends.

Some scientific studies have also found Brahmi as one of the potential ayurvedic herbs for alcohol addiction as it may help get over alcohol abstinence-related anxiety thus reducing the chances of relapse in those trying to quit alcohol permanently.

Brahmi Health Benefits

- Cognitive function enhancement
- Memory improvement
- Stress reduction
- Helps with neurodegenerative diseases
- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Anti-Cancer properties
- Wound healing properties
- Hair growth stimulation
- Blood circulation improvement
- Antioxidant properties

5. Aloe Vera (Ghrit Kumari)

Most of us are familiar with Aloe vera as it is widely used in sunburn and skin care products for youthful energy, beauty, and radiance. But surprisingly, many of us are unfamiliar with the various health benefits of Aloe vera.



Aloe vera's medicinal properties include protection against cancer, immunity booster, a natural laxative, managing blood sugar levels and anti-inflammatory action among others.

It is commonly used topically to soothe skin irritations, burns, and wounds. Aloe Vera has cooling and moisturizing effects, making it beneficial for dry and inflamed skin conditions.

Aloe vera gel stands out as an effective home remedy for hemorrhoids also called piles, are swollen veins in the anus and lower rectum. due to its abundant reserves of vitamins, minerals, and enzymes.

Considered one of the most versatile & powerful Ayurvedic herbs, Aloe vera also supports digestive health and promotes healthy bowel movements. It also helps in case you are having occasional digestive discomfort.

Aloe Vera Health Benefits

- Skin health promotion
- Wound healing and soothing properties
- Sunburn relief
- Moisturization and hydration
- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Digestive system support
- Gives piles of pain relief
- Immune system enhancement
- Dental health support
- Scalp and hair health

5. **Triphala (Sanskrit; tri = three and phala = fruits)**



Triphala is a combination of three fruits: *Amalaki (Amla)*, *Bibhitaki*, and *Haritaki*. It is a well-known Ayurvedic formulation used for its cleansing and rejuvenating effects. Triphala supports healthy digestion,

improves nutrient absorption, and regulates bowel movements, promoting optimal gastrointestinal health. It also has antioxidant properties, helping to protect against cellular damage. Triphala is considered a gentle detoxifier, supporting the body's natural detoxification processes, and promoting overall well-being.

Triphala Health Benefits:

- Digestive health support
- Detoxification and cleansing
- Natural laxative properties
- Improved nutrient absorption
- Antioxidant effects
- Anti-inflammatory properties
- Immune system enhancement
- Skin health promotion
- Eye health support
- Oral health maintenance

6. Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*)

Cinnamon is one of the most widely used ayurvedic herbs native to Sri Lanka and Southern India. A widely used spice in Indian dishes, curries dal and vegetables, Cinnamon is known as *Dalchini* in Hindi, *Darchini* in Bengali.

Most of you must be familiar with “garam masala”. Cinnamon is one of the spices present in garam masala which is used to add flavour to a variety of Indian cuisine. From dal tadka in the North to Sambhar in the South, its uses are very common and almost a staple.



Cinnamon has been referred to in Ayurveda as a beneficial herb that balances *vata* and *kapha* dosha. Traditionally, Cinnamon has been used in Ayurveda to treat and cure a number of diseases like diabetes and blood sugar control, to protect against heart disease, to aid with joint pain and arthritis and common ailments like skin care, cold & flu and to aid in digestion.

Health Benefits of Cinnamon:

- Improves and supports digestion
- Protects against cardiovascular disease
- Aids in blood sugar control improves insulin sensitivity
- May help reverse the effects of neurodegenerative diseases
- May help fight cancer
- Reduce period pain
- Alleviates joint pain and symptoms of arthritis
- helps control and cure colds & flu
- Helps support dental and oral health

7. Fenugreek and Fenugreek Seeds (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*)



Methi as we know it is commonly known across the world as Fenugreek. It's an easily available and widely used spice blend, a flavouring agent for an array of food and beverages as well as flavour in tobacco. *Methi* is something most of us are familiar with. It's a staple food in North India with favourite cuisines being “*methi ka parantha*” and “*methi ka saag*”. Fenugreek has been used since antiquity in the Indian subcontinent.

Health Benefits of Fenugreek:

- Regulates blood sugar
- Helps with the digestive system
- May increase breast milk production
- Boosts testosterone production
- Aids in [weight management](#)
- Supports respiratory health
- [Improves natural immunity](#)

9. Ginger and Ginger Tea (*Zingiber officinale*)

Digressions apart, Ginger (Hindi name *अदरक/adrak*) is hot, sweet, dry, spicy, fatty, and heavy in terms of the Ayurvedic attributes of food, which in the typical diet alter the balance of our dosha constitution. Thus, if taken in greater amounts, it decreases *vata* and *kapha* and raises pitta.

Ginger is quite commonly used in the preparation of numerous Indian dishes as well as chutneys, curries, and *daals* (lentils). According to Ayurveda Ginger is a powerful herb with an array of medicinal properties. It balances *vata* dosha and helps alleviate symptoms associated with imbalances caused by *vata*.



Additionally, ginger has a potent antibacterial and anti-inflammatory impact. It helps clean blood in our body and boosts the heart and circulatory system. It may also potentially help in treating hives, arthritis, haemorrhoids, oedema, and jaundice. *Adrak ki Chai/ Adar Cha* is something that most of us wake up to. It's an integral part of offices and smoking breaks if you are living an urban sedentary corporate life.

Health Benefits of Ginger

- Promotes digestive health
- Helps with nausea and vomiting
- May help relieve joint pain
- Supports immune system
- helps with weight management
- Helps manage heart-related risks

10. Fennel & Fennel Seeds (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

Fennel (Hindi name सौंफ, *mouri* in Bengali) is a nutritional powerhouse and a widely available and used Ayurvedic herb. In one form or another, you must have consumed or come across fennel as a part of food or diet.

Fennel is consumed in many forms across the world. It is commonly used as a mouth freshener after a meal, it is used as a flavour in preparing herbal tea, as well as in snacks and bakery products and it is also consumed in raw seed form.

According to Ayurveda, fennel seed is an excellent home remedy for digestive health. Fennel seeds also treat *krimi* (worms), bad habit (constipation), *Anila* (Vata/bloating), *Dahan* (burning sensation), *aruchi* (anorexia, lack of interest in food), *bomi* (vomiting), and *Shordi-Kasi* (cough & cold), according to the Ayurveda expert.



Health Benefits of Fennel

- It can ease tummy troubles like gas and bloating
- Remedy for menstrual cramps and period pain
- Chewing fennel seeds can make your breath smell better
- It has nutrients that support healthy vision
- It supports a healthy heart and blood vessels
- Fennel can make you feel more awake and energetic
- Fennel has antioxidants that keep your skin healthy and glowing
- It can soothe a sore throat and reduce coughing

11. Amla or the Indian Gooseberry (*Phyllanthus emblica*)



Phyllanthus emblica, also known as Indian gooseberry, Malacca tree, or amla, from the Sanskrit आमलकी, is a fruit obtained from a deciduous tree of the family Phyllanthaceae.

Because it supports everything due to its *tridoshic* (vata, kapha, pita doshas), it is also known as Amalaki and is referred to as “The Mother” in Ayurveda. In Ayurveda, *amla* is classified as a rasayana, which means that it has rejuvenating and restorative properties.

Vital nutrients like antioxidants, vitamins, minerals etc. are present in abundance in amla. Amla is a rich source of nutrients that include iron, calcium, potassium, vitamin E, and vitamin A.

Yet another important nutrient present in abundance in *Amla* is Vitamin C which plays an important role in the efficient functioning of our immune system.

Health Benefits of Amla

- Strengthens the immune system
- Promotes healthy digestion
- Protects the heart and blood vessels
- Improves skin health
- Promotes hair growth
- Improves liver health
- Regulates blood sugar levels

12. Vidarikand or Indian Kudzu



Known as *Vidarikand*, Indian Kudzu or *Pueraria Tuberosa*, this herb holds immense therapeutic importance in Ayurveda. The cooling and soothing properties of this tuberous root provide benefits for various health concerns ranging from skin and respiratory problems to digestive problems.

This powerful Ayurvedic herb also holds great importance in Ayurveda as an aphrodisiac. It has been used traditionally to improve potency by boosting testosterone production and stimulating sperm count and motility.

Vidarikand is considered a *rasay rasayan*. Ayurveda and is reputed for its role in promoting health and longevity.

Its notable feature lies in being a ‘balancing’ herb, which harmonizes the vital energies of the body – *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* – and brings balance to the overall well-being of the individual.

Health Benefits of Vidarikand

- Boost Testosterone
- Improve sperm count in male
- Helps in quitting alcohol consumption
- Boosts the immune system
- Promotes wound healing
- Reduces inflammation
- Treats respiratory problems
- Improves digestion

- Treats digestive problems
- Treats respiratory problems
- Protects the heart
- Treats skin problems

12. Turmeric or Haldi



Turmeric is an ancient spice which has been used mainly in cooking. It is also used as a medicine in providing relief from pain and inflammation caused due to rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. This is due to the presence of curcumin which has anti-inflammatory properties. According to Ayurvedic textbooks, Turmeric is known to have various medicinal properties, which are mentioned in the following sloka:

हरिद्रा कटुका तिक्ता रूक्षोष्णा कफवातहा। वण्यां त्वग्दोषमेहाम्रशोधपाण्डुवणापहा॥

Turmeric is *Katu* (pungent) in smell and *Tikta* (bitter) in taste.

It is advisable to avoid Turmeric during summers as it can cause dysentery and diarrhea. This is due to its hot potency. Although Turmeric is safe in food amount, keep a gap of 1-2 months if you are taking Turmeric as a medicine.

Health Benefits of Turmeric

- Turmeric helps to balance *Kapha* due to *Rusksh* (dry) property.
- It helps reduce the symptoms of aggravated *Vata* due to its *Ushna* (hot) nature.
- Turmeric also has *Varnya* (good for skin) property which is beneficial in treating skin problems.
- Regular use of Turmeric can provide relief from inflammation and other blood-related disorders.
- Turmeric also helps manage diabetes by lowering blood glucose levels. Its antioxidant property helps reduce diabetes-related complications like ulcers, wounds, and kidney damage.
- External application of Turmeric powder helps control skin problems like acne due to its antibacterial property.

13. Neem/Margosa Tree/Azadirachta Indica



Neem is considered a boon for mankind by nature. Use of Neem has been recommended by Ayurveda for a wide range of diseases. Such usage is attributed to its purification effect on blood. Scientific research on Neem demonstrates it to be a Panacea. It is suggested to be an antibacterial, anthelmintic, antiviral, anticancer and more importantly Immunomodulatory agent.

Health Benefits of Neem

- **Treats Acne/ pimple** -Neem has an anti-inflammatory property which helps reduce acne. It also helps reduce skin blemishes.
- **Nourishes Skin** -Neem is a rich source of Vitamin E which help repair damaged skin cells.
- **Treats Fungal Infections** -Neem has scientifically proven antifungal property which helps treat fungal infections.
- **Useful in Detoxification**- Neem can prove useful in detoxification both internally and externally. Consumption of neem leaves or powder stimulates kidneys and liver increasing the metabolism and eliminating the toxins out of the body. Externally, neem scrubs or paste can be used to remove germs, bacteria, dirt, etc from your skin preventing rashes and skin diseases.
- **Increases Immunity** -Neem is known for its antimicrobial and antibacterial effects. These properties play a huge role in boosting immunity.
- **Insect & Mosquito Repellent** -You can burn a few neem leaves to ward off the insects. This is also effective against different types of mosquitoes. From all the home remedies for malaria, neem is the best for treating the early symptoms of malaria.
- **Prevents Gastrointestinal Diseases** -Neem's anti-inflammatory properties help reduce inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract which helps reduce a series of diseases like constipation, stomach ulcer, flatulence, etc.
- **Treats Wounds** -Neem leaves have an antiseptic property which is why it is used to heal wounds.
- **Reduces Dandruff** -Neem is extensively used in shampoos and conditioners. Neem has antifungal and antibacterial properties which help eliminate dandruff and strengths your hair.
- **Reduces Joint Pain** -Application of neem oil or extract on the affected area can help reduce pain and discomfort. Hence it is widely used for treating arthritis.

- **Exfoliates skin**-Neem is an excellent exfoliant. It helps remove dead cells from the surface of the skin which will help prevent the growth of blemishes.

14. Vasaka/ Malabar nut

In Ayurveda, vasaka (Malabar nut) leaves are primarily used for respiratory ailments like cough, bronchitis, and asthma, acting as an expectorant to loosen mucus and a bronchodilator to open airways. The leaves also possess antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties and are used for blood purification and to address skin issues, joint pain, and ulcers, with various parts of the plant incorporated into different Ayurvedic preparations.



Health Benefits of Vasaka/ Malabar nut

- **Respiratory Relief:** Vasaka is most known for its use in treating coughs, bronchitis, and asthma. It helps to liquefy thick, sticky sputum, making it easier to expectorate.
- **Bronchodilation:** The leaves act as a natural bronchodilator, helping to open up airways that are often blocked in conditions like allergic rhinitis.
- **Expectorant:** Vasaka extracts are used as an expectorant in many pharmaceutical formulations, aiding in the removal of excess mucus from the respiratory tract.
- **Anti-inflammatory and Antimicrobial Action:** Vasaka extracts contain bioactive compounds that exhibit anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties, helping to fight infections.
- **Blood Purifier:** It is also considered a cardiac tonic and is used in Ayurveda for blood purification, with compounds that may help in managing blood pressure.
- **Other Conditions:** In addition to respiratory issues, Ayurvedic practitioners may prescribe vasaka for chronic fevers, intrinsic haemorrhage, skin diseases, piles, and stomach ulcer.

15. Mint/ Pudina

Mint has numerous medicinal uses, primarily related to digestion, respiratory issues, and skin conditions. It's known for its ability to relieve indigestion, bloating, and gas. Mint also acts as a decongestant and can help with respiratory problems like congestion and coughing. Additionally, it can soothe sunburns and insect bite.



Health Benefits of Mint/ Pudina

- **Digestive Aid:** Mint, especially peppermint oil, is widely recognized for its ability to soothe upset stomachs, relieve indigestion, and reduce bloating and gas.
- **Respiratory Health:** Menthol, a compound in mint, acts as a natural decongestant, easing symptoms of colds, coughs, and other respiratory issues.
- **Skin Conditions:** Mint's cooling and anti-inflammatory properties make it useful for soothing sunburns, insect bites, and minor skin irritations.
- **Headache Relief:** Inhaling peppermint oil or applying diluted peppermint oil to the temples may help alleviate headaches and migraines.
- **Antimicrobial Properties:** Mint extracts have shown antimicrobial activity against bacteria like E. coli and Staphylococcus aureus, which can be beneficial for oral health and potentially for skin infections.
- **Other Potential Benefits:** Mint has also been explored for its potential in managing symptoms of IBS, reducing allergy symptoms, and even improving athletic performance, although more research is needed in these areas.

❖ Chart: Medicinal plants and their uses

Hindi Name	English Name	Botanical Name	Uses
Aduśa/Vasaka	Malabar Nut	Adhatoda vasica Nees	Cough, Asthma, Bronchitis
Ananas	Pineapple	Ananas comosus	Sore Throat, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity
Babool	Indian Gum	Acacia arabica Willd	Oral Care, Bleeding Gums, Wounds
Brahmi	Thyme leafed gratiola	Bacopa monniera Pennel	Enhances Memory, Anxiety
Dhaniya	Coriander	Coriandrum sativum: Linn	Useful in Indigestion, Flatulence, Controls Spasmodic Pain
Kalmegh	Kalmegh	Andrographis paniculata	Indigestion, Acne, Diarrhea
Lashun	Garlic	Allium sativum	Ringworm, Dysentery, Wounds
Nagarmotha	Nut Grass	Cyperus rotundus Linn	Fever, Diabetes, Solar Dermatitis
Punarnava	Spreading Hogweed	Boerhaavia diffusa Linn	Anemia, Liver Diseases, Wounds, Kidney health
Shalparni	Shal Leafed Bush	Desmodium gangetium DC	Analgesic, Anti-Inflammatory
Tulsi	Holy Basil	Ocimum sactum Linn	Indigestion, Heart health, Respiratory Diseases
Vridhadaru	Elephant Creeper	Argyreia speciosa Sweet	Diabetes, Skin Diseases, Wounds
Agarkasth	Eagle Wood	Aquilaria agallocha Roxb	Bed-Wetting, Incontinence of Urinary Bladder

Ankol	Sage alangiium	leaf	Alangiium salvifolium	Traditionally used in Snakebite, Scorpion Bite, Dog Bite
Badi Elaichi	Greater Cardamom		Amomum subulatum Pennel	Bronchitis, Asthma, Appetizer, Digestant
Chirchita	Prickly flower	chaff	Achyranthes aspera	Indigestion, Cough, Asthma, Liver health
Elaichi	Lesser Cardamom		Elettaria cardamomum Maton	Nausea, Vomiting, Dry Cough
Kanghi	Country Mallow		Abutilon indicum	Nervine tonic, Joint Disorders, Increases Strength
Malakangini	Staff Tree		Celastrus paniculatus Willd	Muscle Cramps, Backache, Osteoarthritis, Hair care
Neem	Margosa Tree		Azadirachta Indica A. Juss	Skin health, Eye Disorders, Bloody Nose, Intestinal Worms
Pyaj	Onion		Allium cepa Linn	Prostate health, Digestive,
Shatavari	Asparagus		Asparagus racemosus Willd	Infertility, Loss Of Libido, Uterine health, Improves Lactation
Ulatkambal	Devil's Cotton		Abroma augustum a	Gynaecological Problems, Irregularity In Periods
Yavasa	Camel Thorn		Alhagi camelorum	Rheumatism, Vomiting, Stomachache, Constipation
Akarkara	Pellitory		Anacyclus pyrethrum	Toothache, Dryness Of The Mouth, Throat, Catarrh, Loss of libido
Ashgandh	Winter Cherry		Withania somnifera Dunal	Stress Tolerance, Immunity, Joint Pains, Skin health
Bael	Bengal Quince		Aegle marmelos Corr.	Dysentery And Diabetes, Coolant, Gut health
Chitrak	Leadwort		Plumbago zeylanica Linn	Arthritis, Skin Diseases, Menstrual Disorders, Obesity
Ghee Kunwar	Aloes		Aloe vera Tourn ex. Linn	Ulcers, Burn Injuries, Jaundice, Acne, Women's health
Ketaki	Crepe Ginger		Costus speciosus (Koeing) Sm.	Obesity, Hyperlipidaemia, Diabetes
Mandukparni	Gotu Kola		Centella asiatica Urban	Improves memory, Brain health, Hair care,
Palasha	Flame of forest		Butea monosperma Kuntze	Complexion of Skin, Worm Infestations, Roundworm
Ratti	Rosary Pea		Abrus Precatorius	Joint Pains, Fungal skin infections, Alopecia
Shirish	Siris Tree		Albizia lebbeck (Linn) Benth Pennel	Bronchial Asthma, Detoxification
Bach	Sweet Flag		Acorus calamus	Flatulent Colic, Atonic Dyspepsia, Ulcers
Amaltas	Indian Laburnum		Cassia fistula Linn	Mild laxative, Ulcers, Wounds
Ashok	Sorrowless tree		Saraca indica	Menstrual Irregularities, Uterine Stimulant
Bharangi	Bharangi		Clerodendron serratum Moon	Common Cold, Chronic Sinusitis, Allergic Rhinitis,
Chitvan	Dita		Alstonia scholaris	Skin Ulcers, Fever, Increasing Lactation
Guggulu	Indian Bdellium		Commiphora mukul Engl	Joint Disorders, Heart Diseases, Hypolipidaemic,
Kadirkasth	Cutch Tree		Acacia catechu Willd	Skin & Respiratory Problems, Oral Hygiene, Astringent

Meetha Vish	Monks hood	Aconitum ferox	Fever, Diuretic Action, Arthritis
Patha	Velvet Leaf Tree	Cissampelos pareira Linn	Ulcers, Sinuses, Skin Diseases, Poisonous Bites
Senna	Indian Senna	Cassia angustifolia Vahl	Laxative, Constipation, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Weight Loss
Supari	Areca Nut/Betelnut	Areca catechu Linn	Obesity, Hyperlipidaemia, Diabetes, Irregular Menstruation
Vajradanti	Barleria	Barleria prionitis Linn	Strengthens Teeth, Useful in Fever, Catarrh
Amla	Indian Gooseberry	Emblica officinalis Linn	Antioxidant, Antistress, Constipation, Fever
Atees	Indian Ateech	Aconitum heterophyllum Wall	Fever, Respiratory
Bhojpatra	Himalayan Birch	Betula utilis D. Don	Wounds, Obesity
Dalchini	Bark Cinnamon	Cinnamomum Zeylanicum Breyn	Antibacterial, Antiseptic
Jimikand	Elephant yam	Amorphophallus campanulatus	Dysentery, Piles, Haemorrhoids
Kulanjan	Greater Galangal	Alpinia galanga	Flatulence, Dyspepsia, Vomiting, Motion sickness, Catarrh
Mulethi	Liquorice	Glycyrrhiza glabra Linn	Digestive Disorders, Ulcers, Bronchitis, Skin health
Pippali	Long Pepper	Piper longum Linn	Asthma, Cough, Indigestion
Shalai Guggal	Indian Olibanum	Boswellia serrata Roxb.	Joint Pains, Headache, Diabetes
Tamalpatra	Cinnamon Leaf	Cinnamomum tamala Nees	Diabetes, Digestion, Cold
Varun	Three Leafed Caper	Crataeva nurvala Buch-Ham	Kidney Stones, Bladder Stones Prostate health

❖ Conclusion:

Owing to fast paced world that we are living in, we are getting far from the nature. While the lifestyle that we live can have adverse effect on us, it is important to know that by introducing small changes in our daily life can go a long way in keeping us healthy and energetic. Therefore, the importance of Ayurveda holds true in today's life as it is based on the principal of bringing us close to nature and relying on its natural powers to cure us and keep us healthy without any side effects.

Navigating the complex world of casino strategies for students can be particularly interesting because it offers both intellectual challenges and potential financial rewards. The application of mathematical skills, probability theories, and psychological knowledge makes casino games a rich ground for strategic thinking. However, high stakes and potential addiction require a balanced approach. Ayurvedic medicines and products today have become a symbol of safety in contrast to synthetic drugs that are considered unsafe and hazardous for overall health.

One way of understanding the basic fundamentals of Indian Ayurveda is to spend more time with nature and observe the plants and herbs. Each plant or herb has a specific quality and can be used to treat multitude of ailments and diseases. Medicinal plants like aloe, turmeric, *tulsi*, pepper, *elachi* and ginger are commonly used in a number of Ayurvedic home remedies and are considered to be the best aid among fighting ailments related to throat and skin. As a rich source of nutrients, anti-bacterial and antioxidant properties, ayurvedic herbs are non-toxic in nature and so the products or remedies made using them are often recommended for their high therapeutic value.

Treatment with herbal medicinal plants also hold a strong ground because these plants are considered to be safe and have no side effects. Since they are in sync with nature, they hold greater advantage over chemically treated products and synthetic medicines. As opposed to other drugs and medicines, Ayurvedic herbs are known to treat the disease from the root and thus aid in keeping you healthy and fit in the long run.

Effectiveness of Ayurveda in modern healthcare

The integration of Ayurveda with modern medicine is gaining traction. Many doctors now recommend Ayurvedic treatments alongside conventional therapies for better results. While **Ayurvedic medicines are effective** for numerous conditions, it is crucial to consult a qualified practitioner before starting any treatment. Ayurveda offers a natural, holistic way to maintain health and treat various ailments. While scientific backing is still evolving, its centuries-old wisdom continues to benefit millions worldwide. By choosing authentic, high-quality products and consulting trained professionals, Ayurveda can be a valuable part of a healthy lifestyle.



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