Ayurveda is the user’s manual that provides guidance to take care of one’s body, mind and self in the journey of life.

The human organism is an evolutionary miracle. It is an amazingly conscious super machine that is involved in a perpetual exchange of matter and energy with the external environment to sustain itself. It exhibits admirable resilience to withstand the vagaries of external living conditions and has an inbuilt ability to reestablish normalcy within itself. On top of it all, the human organism is automated to a great extent for self adjustment and self adaptation. Not only that, it is also gifted with a mind that helps it to become aware of itself.

The automated inbuilt adjustment system needs to be activated consciously. Ayurveda represents the knowledge that every human being can discover to fully utilize the self-healing mechanisms of the organism to discover health and happiness. Ayurveda gives guidelines on how to cultivate a lifestyle of wholesome behavior that will optimize the body’s innate abilities to resist disease and establish health.

Learning Ayurveda is like reading the user’s manual of life itself, and Ayurveda can help us to not only prevent diseases but also cure many chronic illnesses. It is also important to realize that Ayurveda can improve the quality of health and elevate one to higher levels of well being. Ayurveda works best when there is a chance to invoke the innate healing powers of the organism. Ayurveda is all about helping the body to help itself. So it does not sometimes work well in emergency conditions and acute illnesses.

Working with Ayurveda begins by gaining an understanding of oneself, one’s physical and mental constitution and the characteristics of the environment in which one is placed. And Ayurveda looks at the human persona as a three dimensional composite of the body, mind and self.

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Working with Ayurveda begins by gaining an understanding of oneself, one’s physical and mental constitution and the characteristics of the environment in which one is placed. And Ayurveda looks at the human persona as a three dimensional composite of the body, mind and self. With this information, it becomes possible to chalk out personalized guidelines to regulate the activities of one’s life so that the body, mind and self are harmonized optimally to reap the rich harvest of health and happiness.
Ayurveda - A Primer

The origins of Ayurveda, and for that matter, Indian civilization, are shrouded in mystery. While some scholars have been enthusiastically pushing Ayurveda into remote antiquity, others are vehemently arguing that most of the Ayurvedic literature available today have come into existence only a few centuries before Christ or even after the beginning of the common era. To add more spice to the curry, historians have also opened up a debate on the vedic and extra vedic origins of Ayurveda. Some swear that Ayurveda is a product of the vedic tradition while others scoff at such ‘deceptive’ notions pointing out that Ayurveda is in fact, anti-vedic. The most recent and quite a revolutionary proposition is that Ayurveda originated from Buddhism.

Anonymity of authors of Ayurvedic literature poses major difficulties in the study of Ayurvedic history. Another problem is that great personalities often become institutionalized and it is difficult to decide whether a name like vAgbhaTa refers to one individual, a group or institution.

We can definitely state that Ayurveda is a product of the Indian civilization process. But it is very difficult to understand how much of Ayurveda has been borrowed by other medical approaches and how much of Ayurveda is borrowed from other medical approaches.

It is probable that at least in a certain period of history, Ayurveda attained the status of cosmopolitan medicine to some extent and spread from India to the neighboring countries. While it grew out of its own land of origin, Ayurveda also adapted itself in a region specific manner creating many regionally specialized approaches to health care within the land of its origin.

The Ayurvedic traditions of Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western regions stand out uniquely in terms of literature, practice, techniques and pharmacopoeia. On top of it all, Ayurveda emerged as the refined classical version of a self-existent folk stream of medical lore in India with which it established a symbiotic relationship.

It has merged into the very life breath of the people of the Indian sub-continent and is very much alive in contemporary India.

What Ayurveda is not!

Ayurveda is not just herbal medicine: Contrary to popular belief, Ayurveda is not just herbal medicine. It uses many animal products as well as minerals and chemicals to treat diseases.

Ayurveda does not advocate vegetarian diet: Ayurveda describes the properties of meat in great detail and does not propagate vegetarianism. It points out the benefits and disadvantages of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian diets and gives guidelines for taking the best decisions in given circumstances. Ayurveda has summarized the diet habits of human populations and given recommendations for specific constitutions and diseases.

All Ayurvedic treatments are not safe: It is important to realize that all Ayurvedic treatments are not safe. Self medication can sometimes lead to unwanted effects. It is always good to consult a qualified practitioner before consuming prescriptions drugs. Even a simple oil massage if done in the wrong way or when contraindicated can aggravate illness. If not manufactured under controlled conditions, some Ayurvedic medicines can be contaminated and unsafe for use.