

Rich traditions in indigenous medicine

People are increasingly becoming disenchanted with allopathy and are turning to traditional Indian systems of medicine, to meet their health needs. These systems, namely Ayurveda, Siddha and Yoga, still offer effective cures for many diseases. We bring you a regular column on these time-honoured systems of Indian medicine.

INDIA's plan to achieve health for all by 2000 A.D. is still groping in the dark, unable to provide any serious medical care for its people. As has happened in every other field, we have become strangers to our own traditions in the field of health care and medicine also. Today, out of necessity, our scientific and cultural heritage is being rediscovered everyday. Fortunately, Indian systems of health care and medicine are still alive and are capable of meeting our needs effectively.

Indian systems of health care and medicine, the Ayurveda, Siddha and Yoga systems, have a systematic approach towards understanding human health and its relation to food, work, regimen, environment and climate.

The science of Ayurveda recognises three constituents in the body responsible for its normal functions. These constituents are *Vaata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, known as the three *doshas*. We enjoy good health as long as these three *doshas*, *vaata*, *pitta*, and *kapha* are in a state of equilibrium. When their state of equilibrium is disturbed, we suffer ill-health. So it is the imbalance of the three *doshas* which results in disease. Thus every disease is associated with the imbalance or derangement of one or more of the three *doshas*. The nature of the *doshas*, whether they are in a state of equilibrium or in a disturbed state, can be found out through an examination of the pulse.

The imbalance of the *doshas* can take place in any part of the body. For example, in the digestive tract, it starts showing symptoms which are typical of the disturbed *doshas*. Due to this disturbance, there can be improper digestion, burning sensation, pain, flatulence and so on. Apart from these typical symptoms, a reading of the pulse can reveal the constitutional peculiarities of the individual and the extent of imbalance of the *doshas*.

In this way, if the derangement of the three *doshas* and their characteristics are understood, it is simple to treat the disease by restoring the balance. So, in the Indian systems of medicine, it is always the cause of the disease which is treated and not the symptom. It is only in exceptional cases, when there is a crisis, is

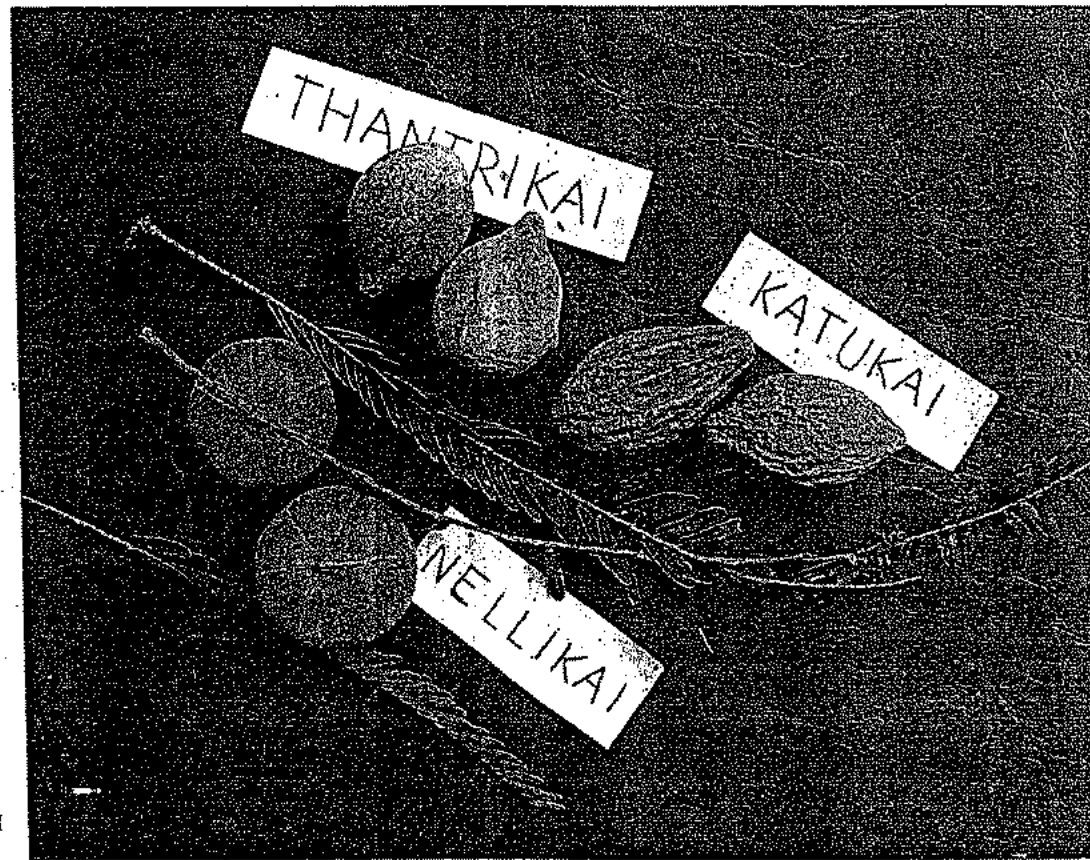
symptomatic treatment resorted to.

For example, while treating diarrhoea, we do not try to arrest it in the beginning. As diarrhoea is caused by the weakening of digestive power, the treatment is aimed at improving the digestive power rather than arresting the symptom, namely diarrhoea. Symptomatic treatment is resorted to when the diarrhoea becomes severe or alarming. In this case, drugs are administered to arrest bowel movements.

Indian systems of health care lay a great emphasis on understanding the properties of food. Food and nutrition are more important than medicines in maintaining good health and in restoring the body to a healthy condition.

The properties of food articles are understood according to their taste. There are in all six tastes, which are commonly encountered in life namely, sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent. Each one of these six is directly related to the three *doshas*. Each one of them either increases or controls one or another *dosha*. As it is possible to know the taste of all food and drink we consume every day, we can ourselves control or adjust our food habits according to our conditions. If these simple ideas are taught early in life, even a child can get to learn about the effect of food on the body. In the treatment of diseases correcting food habits and regimen of the patient is in fact half the treatment itself. As Tiruvalluvar says in the Thirukkural, there is no need for medicine if one takes food after reflecting on its appropriateness to the body.

Often we hear people say that Ayurvedic treatment is a long and tedious affair, which does not yield quick results. This is so only because most often patients come to an Ayurvedic physician for treatment at a chronic stage of the disease. For instance, a patient suffering from arthritis with swollen and stiff joints with excruciating pain would have been suffering for several years. These patients are most often maintained solely on pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs. The ailment thus continues unabated and becomes chronic. At this stage Ayurvedic treatment is sought as a last resort. The disease is no longer amenable to



Equal quantities of Nellikai (Amalaki), Kadukai (Harithaki) and Thantrikai (Vibhitaki) constitutes Triphala, used for a wide range of ailments.

simple remedies. The treatment therefore becomes tedious for the patient as well as the physician.

Diseases get aggravated and become chronic when the cause of the disease is not properly understood. For example, jaundice is caused by the aggravation of the *Pitta* in the body. A person suffering from jaundice ought to give up all food, drink and regimen which increase *Pitta*. If the cause of the disease is not identified to be aggravated *Pitta*, the patient would be undergoing for a long period of time, treatment which is quite unconnected with the disease.

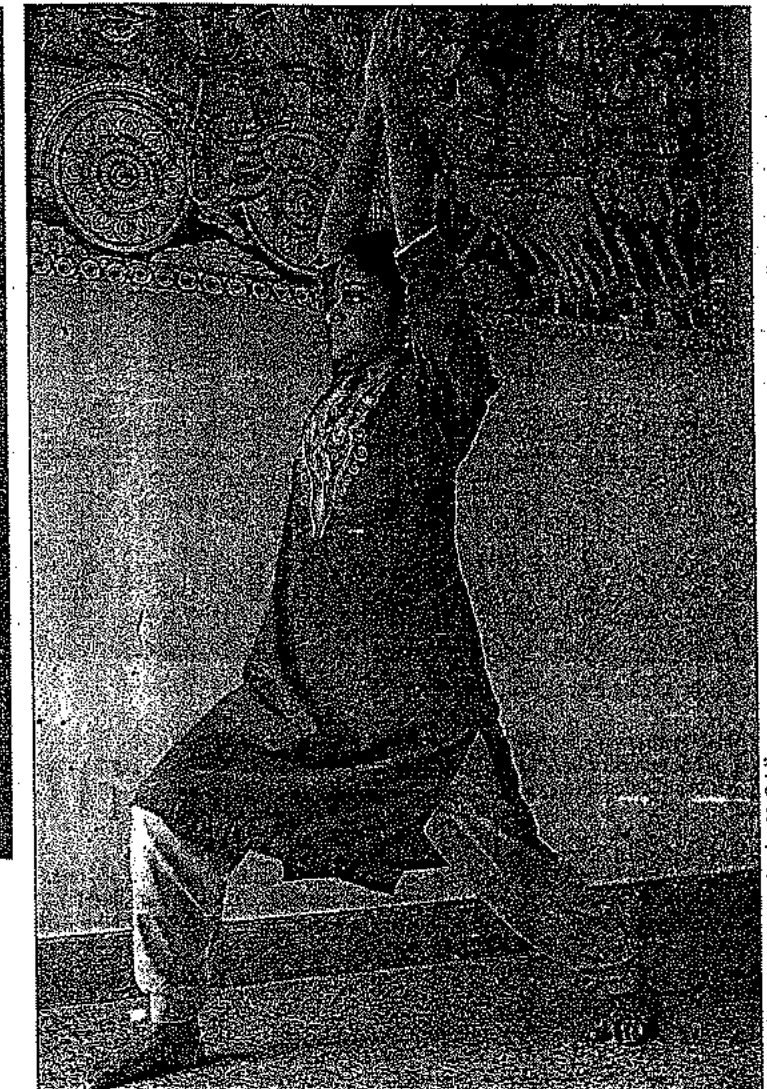
Often it appears that we wantonly ignore simple remedies and choose a complicated route as a solution. One such glaring example was the case of hospitals in Madras trying to airlift medicines from Bombay for treating conjunctivitis during a recent epidemic. Even then, what was being used for the treatment was not meant to control the disease. The decoction made from a powder of Nellikai (Amalaki or gooseberry), Kadukai (Harithaki) and Thantrikai (Vibhitaki), called "Triphala," which is available in any Ayurvedic medicinal shop, is the best known remedy for prevention and control of conjunctivitis.

According to Ayurveda, *Vyayama* or exercise

can play a very important therapeutic role. If done carefully and under supervision, the *doshas* when they are disturbed, can be brought back to a state of equilibrium and the body can be restored to a healthy condition. But if done carelessly and beyond one's capacity, *Vyayama* can cause serious harm and be self-destructive. This is to be kept in mind when we are promised all kinds of miraculous benefits from exercise fads and gadgetry imported from the West and used indiscriminately.

Texts on yoga also make this distinction between a system of exercises which is beneficial to the body and that practice which can cause serious harm to the body. From the therapeutic point of view, the ideal system of exercise is yoga, consisting of *Asana* and *Pranayama*. *Asanas* are postures and *Pranayama* is regulated breathing. Practice of *Asanas* and *Pranayama*, helps eliminate impurities in the body by restoring the balance of the *doshas* and brings about tranquillity of the mind.

It is important to note that yoga must be done under supervision. Practice of Yoga must be varied according to the person's age, disposition, constitution, strength, environment, seasons and so on. Regulation of diet is



The ideal system of exercise for the body is yoga.

important for yoga to become really effective.

In Ayurveda a healthy person is defined as one in whom the *doshas* are in equilibrium, the digestive power is in a good condition, the sensory and motor organs function well and the mind and the spirit are tranquil. Ayurveda and Yoga together give us all the knowledge needed to maintain good health and also to bring the body back to a healthy condition when there is a breakdown in health. Breakdowns occur only when we knowingly violate the norms for healthy living or when we fail to make adjustments with changes in the environment. Ayurveda compares our life to that of the axle of a cart. A well-oiled and well-maintained axle functions well and serves its full span of life. An ill-maintained axle breaks down prematurely. Today, there is a mistaken notion that

Ayurveda and Siddha systems have become outdated in this modern age. The fact is that these systems still offer effective cures for most diseases.

While we choose to ignore our time-honoured tradition and experience in the field of medicine, our precious resources such as medicinal herbs are being exported in enormous quantities to the West. If India plans to achieve health for all its citizens by 2000 A.D., it is time we turned to Indian systems of health care and medicine for help. ■

DR. GIRIJA
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN
Sanjeevani
Ayurveda and Yoga
Health Care Centre

Indian Systems of Medicine

Labour without pain

Pregnancy is a time of joy for the mother. This is the time when her health should be at its peak and her spirits high. She should cherish every moment of her pregnancy. Such happiness and positive spirit contribute immensely towards a healthy offspring.

IN spite of obstetrics being the oldest medical practice, pregnancy and childbirth are viewed, in modern times, as a disease rather than a natural process. Having accepted this as a condition requiring medical treatment, the entire scenario is transferred to the confines of the hospital. If the period of pregnancy exceeds the predicted date of delivery, the woman is subjected to induced labour, failing which a Caesarian section is performed.

These two processes, induced labour and Caesarian section, have become routine procedure in many maternity clinics. To quote a standard text on modern obstetrics: "As yet, no method of induction is both certain and safe. This is not surprising since only some of the factors which provoke spontaneous labour are known, so that it is impossible to set the stage as nature would have it set. It raises the question whether things might not have been better left alone from the first.... whether natural delivery might have occurred had we not meddled in the first place."

In modern times, all aspects of work, rest and care during pregnancy, have taken a distorted course. The symbiotic relationship between the mother and child has been reduced merely to uterus and foetus. The mother thus is not prepared for a natural delivery. Considering the prevailing situation, it is important to understand the practice of obstetrics from the point of view of Indian systems of medicine.

In Ayurveda, obstetrics and gynaecology are one among eight branches of treatment. According to Indian tradition, pregnancy is to be treated as a pleasant phase in a woman's life. She gets special treatment during this time. All efforts are devoted towards keeping her in good cheer. Her desires, however ridiculous they may seem, are fulfilled. From the fourth month of pregnancy, when the foetal heart begins to take shape, it is said that there is a beginning of another stream of consciousness within the mother. Every wish of hers during this period is gratified. This highly protective attitude towards the pregnant mother, has stemmed from the understanding that any physical or emotional disturbance can result in foetal deformities.

How does this happen? During pregnancy, among the three bodily constituents *Vaata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* *Vaata* plays a very major role. It is responsible for the proper development of the foetus. *Vaata* or *Vaayu* protects the foetus and ensures a safe labour for the woman. *Vaayu* is solely responsible for causing movements or blocking movements within the body. Generally, when the proper flow of *Vaayu* is maintained in the body, the movement of urine, bowels, menstrual blood, semen, and of the foetus during labour takes

place normally. When *Vaayu* is deranged, it can adversely affect these bodily functions. This is the reason why, during pregnancy utmost care is taken to keep the *Vaayu* in its normal, balanced state.

Vaayu gets excited whenever the pregnant women receives a mental shock or experiences physical violence. Hard manual labour, starvation, lying down in awkward positions and postures, carrying heavy loads, tiring exercise, emotional stress, shock, dreadful sights, anger, etc. disturb *Vaayu*. This in turn can lead to miscarriage difficulty in labour or foetal deformities. Hence, the proper

HEALTH WATCH

management of *Vaayu* during pregnancy is the guiding principle of a healthy pregnancy.

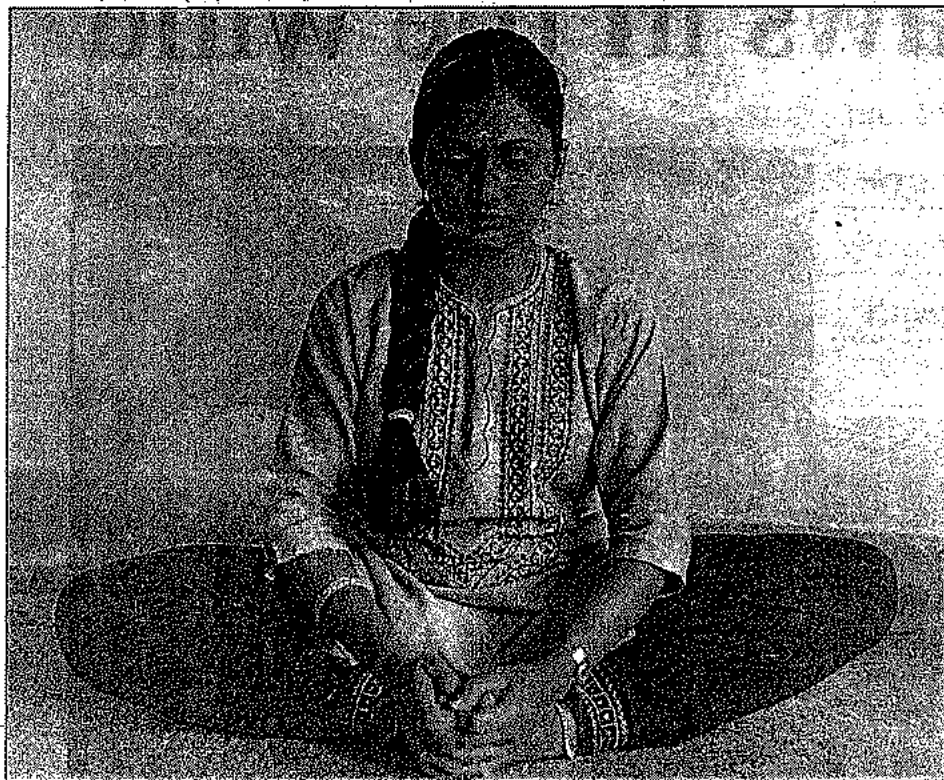
During pregnancy, food is given primary importance. The diet should be sweet and abounding in fluid substances — for example, rice prepared with milk. Food should be well cooked, palatable and prepared with spices which aid digestion.

An important part of the pregnant woman's daily regimen, is the regular application of oil on the body. Oil should be applied especially around the hip, back, groin area and the thighs. This, besides keeping the *Vaayu* in its normal course, also keeps the vaginal passage soft and flexible, and ensures a smooth delivery.

There are several Ayurvedic remedies recommended to combat problems during pregnancy. These are prescribed to contain abdominal pain and cramps, combat fever and diarrhoea, control bleeding, ensure easy labour and prevent miscarriage. In the final stage of pregnancy, Indian medicine prescribes two medicated enemas which bring about an easy and natural delivery, unattended with any disorder. In the event of obstructed labour and abnormal foetal presentation, various manipulations are suggested to ensure a natural and easy delivery.

One of the common problems faced during the post-natal period, is the loss of breast milk. Various causes are attributed to this, such as sadness, anger, malnutrition, hard labour and lack of affection towards the child. A number of Ayurvedic remedies like Satavari (Indian asparagus), wine made out of sugarcane juice and garlic help in generating breast milk.

Yoga practice during pregnancy is not a new concept. There are textual guidelines on what may be practised or avoided during this period.



Colour transparency by Vino John

practice of yoga during pregnancy. It has to be adapted to suit the individual, respecting the stage of pregnancy and her physical and mental condition. The practice during the post-natal period, depends on the nature of the delivery. Modern medical practice often recommends vigorous exercises during the post-natal period. These exercises are supposed to tone up abdominal muscles, but often give rise to problems in other areas of the body like for example, back pain. Yoga practice, on the other hand, is designed to take care of the problems as well as ensure that the mother regains her normal health and strength. ■

Dr. GIRIJA

LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

I

M
M
bc
(U
Lcba
th
of
mu
su
att
res
iml
for
pri
he
des
an

Indian Systems of Medicine

The regimen for respiratory ailments

Ayurveda prescribes a specific line of treatment for respiratory diseases. Intake of kashayams and choornams, food regulation and yoga are found to be very effective.

SOME of the common diseases we encounter these days are those which affect the respiratory system. According to Ayurveda, respiratory diseases stem from the region of *Kapha*. In the human body, the head and the chest region are the main seats of *Kapha*. Therefore, the diseases of the respiratory system usually result from the aggravation of *Kapha* (phlegm).

The life span of a human being can be divided into three stages. Childhood and youth is called the *Kapha* age, middle age the *Pitta* age and old age the *Vata* age. The three constituents of the human body, *Kapha*, *Pitta* and *Vata* influence these three stages of life respectively. During childhood children are prone to diseases caused by *Kapha* and by phlegm which is a form of *Kapha*. Some of the most common ailments during childhood are colds, coughs, nasal discharge, inflammation of the throat, congestion of lungs by phlegm and cold accompanied by fever. Even among adults diseases caused by phlegm are quite common. Among the middle and affluent classes such ailments have become all too common. This can be mainly attributed to the prevailing food habits among the economically better-off.

The causes for all types of respiratory diseases

except *Kshaya Rogam* (Tuberculosis) are dust, smoke, wind, residing in cold and damp places, use of excessively cold water and cold drinks, excessive physical exertion, irregular eating habits, intake of food and drinks which aggravate the three constituents *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, toxins in the body arising from undigested food called *Amam*, intake of

HEALTH WATCH

curds, unboiled milk, tubers etc., and improper assimilation of food. Debility, injury to vital points in the body known as the *Marmas*, poor digestion, diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, injury to the chest, wasting of the body, internal haemorrhage, improper movement of the body constituent *Vayu*, anaemia, and poisoning are also some of the causes leading to respiratory disorders.

Respiratory disorders and bronchial conditions are aggravated during certain seasons. How does this happen? According to Ayurveda, seasons bring about changes in the

balance of the three body constituents. For instance, there is a natural increase of *Kapha* in the body during the colder six months of the year, while the hotter six months have a depleting effect on *Kapha*. Therefore Ayurveda prescribes a regimen of food and habits appropriate to each season. Violation of these prescriptions can definitely cause disease in the body. Hence, individuals who are prone to respiratory diseases are advised to avoid phlegm-forming food during the colder six months so that no room is given for the disease to get aggravated.

In very young children, correct food regimen and a simple course of medicines which maintain them in good health is all that is needed to completely overcome these ailments.

Kaveri, a bright three year old, was suffering from constant bouts of colds and coughs, often accompanied by fever for the past couple of years. Lately she had developed wheezing. This had made her weak and listless. Each time she was unwell, she was put on a course of antibiotics to arrest the ailment. She would get better, only to fall sick again in a couple of weeks, and a similar pattern of treatment would continue. All this was very exhausting for her, making her natural resistance against disease very low and her appetite very dull. On examining her, it was found that there was a

constant accumulation of phlegm in her throat and lungs which was making her fall sick repeatedly. This vicious cycle of ailment and treatment has become a common occurrence in almost every household.

The line of treatment in the case of Kaveri was very simple. She was advised to avoid all food items like curds, citrus fruits, foods sour in taste, cold food and drinks etc. which were responsible for the accumulation of phlegm. She was initially given certain *Kashayams* — direct extracts of herbs through boiling the herbs in water — and *Choornams* — powders of herbs



Transparency by N. Sridharan

Adathodai leaves to fight colds.

— which removed all the accumulated phlegm in the throat and lungs. Once her condition improved, she was put on simple Ayurvedic preparations which acted as preventives and also improved her appetite and general health. Kaveri was too young to be introduced to yoga practice. For older children, yoga is included as part of the therapy.

Ravi, an eleven-year-old, with similar complaints of persistent cold, cough, and nasal congestion was also on a prolonged treatment with antibiotics. In his case, introduction of yoga along with Ayurvedic medication and food regulation was very effective. Initially he was introduced to a simple course of yoga. Once his health improved his practice was gradually intensified so as to build up strength and stamina. In a short period he completely overcame the ailment.

Individuals who come with chronic respiratory ailments usually suffer from thready discharges of mucus from the nostrils, sneezing bouts, heaviness in the head, puffiness below the eyes, a blocked feeling in the ears,

headache, respiratory problems such as breathlessness, laboured breathing and wheezing. Many of them have been under constant and prolonged medication with antibiotics and in the case of asthma, bronchodilators and corticosteroids, with no effective cure.

We are particularly reminded of one such case where a child had been on such treatment for almost ten years. Every attack of cough, cold and congestion of the lungs (termed "allergic bronchitis") was sought to be controlled with very strong drugs. Repeated injections had left scars on the skin. Constant usage of strong medicines had turned his teeth yellow. Prolonged treatment of this nature had led to the depletion of *Dhatu*s tissue elements — in the body. The natural resistance of the body against disease was totally wiped out. The child suffered from chronic constipation. This is a typical example of a case where symptomatic treatment with strong drugs had caused almost irreparable damage to the system. It was with great difficulty that the disease was controlled with Ayurvedic treatment and yoga.

When the ailment is not too severe, use of *choornams* alone is sufficient. There are a number of *kashayams*, *choornams* and *arishtams* (brewed extracts of herbs) which are useful in this treatment. Most of the ingredients of these preparations are items such as black pepper, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, long pepper (*Tippali* or *Pippali*) palm sugar, *Athi Madhuram* (*Madhuyashti*), *Adathodai* (*Vasaa*) etc. *Choornams* are used externally on the head after hath to prevent colds and accumulation of phlegm. Inhalation of steam from water boiled with certain herbs is also used. Medicated oils which act as preventives in respiratory problems are prescribed. Gargling with certain *Kashayams* helps to control the problem in the throat region. Use of medicated oils as nasal drops helps in draining the accumulated phlegm in the nasal passage and facial region.

According to Ayurveda, there are five types of respiratory disorders, Asthma being one of them. It must be emphasised that Asthma is a disease which should be attended to in its early stages without much delay. In this disease, the problem arises when the course of *Prana*

Vayu or the breath, is obstructed by phlegm (*Kapha*) and causes the difficulty in breathing giving rise to laboured breathing and wheezing. Hence the treatment involves a procedure to control both the disturbed *Vayu* and *Kapha*. The condition improves when these body constituents are restored to a balanced state. This is brought about by the combination of a controlled diet (by avoiding food items which aggravate *Kapha* and *Vayu*), medicines and practice of Yoga.

A college professor in her late thirties was treated for Asthma, persistent cough and severe headache by a physician who is considered a specialist in treating bronchial problems. When she no longer responded to the general run of antibiotics, bronchodilators etc., she was put on steroids, with the advice that they should not be used for long. There was no improvement in her condition and her general health continued to deteriorate. Even climbing a flight of stairs became a difficult task for her. At this point she decided to come for Ayurvedic treatment. Within two months of treatment with *Kashayams*, *Choornams*, medicated oils used on the head and Ayurvedic nasal drops and regular yoga practice suitable to her condition, she was completely rid of her ailment. In her case, the disease was still in the stage where it was curable. Once her disease was brought under control, she was put on Ayurvedic preparations to maintain her health.

Regular practice of Yoga plays a vital role in the cure of respiratory diseases and in restoring and maintaining health. Modulated inhalation and exhalation with or without retention of breath in specific postures bring about very effective cures in many respiratory ailments. The choice of breathing pattern and postures would depend on the condition of the patient as well as the disease. Initially a simple practice of Yoga asanas are designed to suit the individual. The practice is intensified as the condition improves. A good practice gradually improves physical strength and endurance needed to overcome the disease. ■

DR. GIRIJA
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

Indian Systems of Medicine

Treating infantile diarrhoea

Mother's milk gets affected by imbalances owing to several reasons, which could lead to infantile diarrhoea.

An important aspect in treatment is the regulation of the mother's diet.

THE most difficult and much dreaded paediatric problem today is what is known as infantile diarrhoea. Breast-fed infants, who have not started on any other form of food, are prone to suffer from diarrhoea and it can become severe. It is not unusual for such infants to have 10-15 bowel movements in a day. When the diarrhoea becomes uncontrollable or alarming, the infants are sometimes hospitalised. In most of these cases, the mother's milk is discontinued on the advice of child specialists. Children are put on infant food formulae. But no solution is offered

solution. What must be inferred from this is that the mother's milk has become disagreeable to the infant. To find out why this happens one has to look into the constituents of the breast milk itself.

How is one to find out the problem with breast milk? Like everything in the human body, breast milk can also be afflicted by the imbalance of the three constituents of the body, *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. This imbalance can affect the quality of breast milk and bring about problems in infants who are nursed on it. Besides the routine method of checking the

HEALTH WATCH

for the problem itself. This is one of the most widely debated paediatric problems in modern medicine.

A five-month-old baby was brought to us with severe diarrhoea. The child was being fed entirely on breast milk. On investigation it was revealed that two months before this, the child had suffered from cold and cough for which a course of antibiotic medicines and cough syrups were administered. Two days later, the infant developed diarrhoea. Strong drugs and antibiotics were administered for four more days to arrest the diarrhoea. As the child did not respond to this, the medication was changed. As there was no sign of any improvement in her condition, the physician once again changed the medication. The diarrhoea stopped for two days and started again. The mother was advised to discontinue breast milk and use infant food formulae. It was at this point that the elders in the family brought the mother and the child for Ayurvedic treatment. The child very quickly responded to the treatment.

In infants who are entirely on mother's milk, diarrhoea is caused by the milk itself. Therefore when the child is removed from mother's milk the problem is contained. However, depriving the child of its mother's milk cannot be a

pulse and so on, Ayurveda suggests a simple test to identify the aggravation of specific constituents in the breast milk.

The milk is put into a vessel containing water. Depending on the way it floats, settles, froths, striates and colours, the nature of the imbalance of the constituents or the *dosha* is understood. For instance, if the milk floats in water and froths, it indicates that it is afflicted by *Vata dosha*. In other words, the constituent *Vata* is aggravated. Therefore, measures should be taken to correct this imbalance in the mother's milk. When milk striates and displays a yellowish colour, it is dominated by the *Pitta dosha*. When the milk feels heavy, slimy and settles at the bottom of the vessel, it is affected by the *Kapha dosha* and *Ama dosha*. The latter indicates improper digestion in the mother. Pure breast milk, not affected by any imbalance of the constituents, normally mixes well with water.

The treatment therefore becomes simple. Depending on the type of imbalance or impurity affecting the milk, medicines are prescribed to counter the specific constituent or *dosha* which has been aggravated, giving rise to the problem. This method of testing the milk to identify the *dosha* can be followed in any problem affecting



Transparency by V. Srubharan

Simple herbs like Mustha (korai kizhangu) have digestive properties nursing infant.

According to Ayurveda, the health of the new-born is completely dependent on that of the mother, and health problems of the new-born are passed on from the mother through her milk. For any ailment of infants who are fed solely on the mother's milk, the main treatment is aimed at the mother. Medicines are administered to the mother depending on the aggravated *dosha* as well as the disease of the infant. In most cases there is no need to give any medicines to the infant.

Kaveri, a two-week-old infant developed diarrhoea which occurred 10-15 times a day. The child also suffered from stomach aches and cried continuously. As the mother, throughout her pregnancy had consulted us for every health need of hers, she quite naturally approached us with her baby's problem.

On examining the mother we found that her milk was afflicted by the *Kapha dosha* and *Ama dosha*. Therefore, the child which was nursing developed diarrhoea. No medication was administered to arrest the diarrhoea. Instead, medicines were given to the mother to remove the *Kapha dosha* from her milk. This naturally contained the diarrhoea as well as the discomfort in the infant.

In treating infantile diarrhoea two things are important. First of all the breast milk should be purified to rid itself of the impurities or *doshas*. Secondly, the power of digestion of the

infant should be improved so that, the child can digest and assimilate the milk well. Simple medicines such as *Mustha*, (*Korai kizhangu*), dry ginger, (*Chukku or Sunthi*), *Guduchi* (*Seenthal kodai*), *Pippali* (*Tippili*), *Patola* (*Peyppudal*), *Sathavari* (*Indian asparagus*), *Devadaru*, *Vacha* (*Vasambu*), *Rasna* (*Chittarattai*), *Chandanam* (*Sandal wood*), and a variety of other herbs can be chosen for treatment depending upon the disease and the affected *dosha*. A paste of the medicines used can be smeared around the nipple and on the lips of the infant. This treatment usually takes care of the problem.

Breast milk becomes impure and afflicted by *doshas* owing to several reasons. Intake of contradictory food due to wrong food habits known as *Viruddhabhara* (for example, eating a mixture of curd and milk), hunger, mental disturbances, vitiation of tissue elements in the body (*Dhatu dushti*), pregnancy, etc., can afflict and vitiate breast milk.

The most important aspect of the treatment is the regulation of mother's diet after child-birth. This is known as *Pathyam*. By regulating the lactating mother's diet, care is taken to ensure that no serious affliction of breast milk takes place which can give rise to problems in the infant. Besides such *Pathyam*, the mother is usually given *Lehya* (sweet pastes made from herbs) and *Arishta* preparations (brewed extracts of medicinal herbs) which aid digestion and assimilation of food in the mother. These are also excellent carminatives which help in the regulation of *Vayu*, in particular in expelling wind from the intestines.

Modern young mothers are taking up the unwise practice of feeding infants on all sorts of cereals, vegetables and fruits in a mashed form. This is done under the impression that the infant is being fed on very nutritious food from an early stage in life. This kind of feeding can lead to indigestion and diarrhoea in an infant. It must be emphasised that mother's milk alone contains all nourishment required for the infant in the first few months. Even when the milk is insufficient or absent, the child can be fed on goat's milk or diluted cow's milk and the dilution can be gradually reduced.

At times, cow's or buffalo's milk can also cause diarrhoea in older children. These days such a problem is usually termed "milk allergy" or "intolerance to milk." Hence children are usually fed routinely on milk powder. It must be pointed out that milk itself is mildly laxative in nature. It is also a food which by its nature is heavy for digestion. Therefore, good power is required to digest milk well. Since milk is an essential food for growing children, removing this from their diet is not advisable. Instead, it is possible to treat the milk with simple herbs like *Mustha* (*Korai kizhangu*), *Sunthi* (*Chukku*), etc., which possess digestive properties. ■

DR GIRIJA,
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

Indian Systems of Medicine

Disease of the joints

Ayurvedic treatment of diseases of the joints includes restrictions on diet and administration of medicines. An important aspect of treatment is fomentation with oil and powdered herbs. This relieves the pain and will control the disease. Chronic cases may require hospitalisation.

AT 45, Seetha developed a nagging pain in her knee and shoulder joints. Slowly the pain extended to all the joints in the body. Even her small joints of the fingers became stiff and painful. Mild swelling appeared around the knees and wrist. For a few years she was managed on pain killers. The swelling on her wrist was surgically removed. It reappeared again disfiguring her wrist. Over the years the pain became severe. The movements of the knees became restricted. Once when she disembarked from a bus, she suddenly experienced severe pain in her joints and legs, and was unable to take a step further.

The above is the description of a common disease known as *Ama Vatam* in Ayurveda. In Allopathic medicine the terms used for this disease are rheumatism, arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and so on. The general symptoms are pain in the joints, at times very severe, with or without swelling, sometimes accompanied by a burning sensation, heaviness in the limbs, restriction in the movement of the joints, shifting pain, stiffness and so on. This seems to be one of the most misunderstood diseases in modern times.

According to the Allopathic system of medicine, arthritis is an incurable disease. Often patients suffering from this disease, who have been undergoing Allopathic treatment, come to Ayurveda at a very chronic stage. By then they have lost all hopes of any cure. Proper Ayurvedic treatment in time can completely overcome all the problems listed above.

A woman in her late 30s wakes up one morning to find her ankles aching severely for no reason. Day by day not only does the pain become unbearable, she also experiences a shifting pain — one day the pain is in the ankle, the next day in the knees, and at another time it shifts to the shoulder and so on. She is chronically constipated. She approaches her family doctor who immediately puts her on painkillers and antibiotics. Initially the pain subsides. The next time the disease reappears with excruciating pain and swelling in the knee

joints. The patient is advised to keep her weight down to take the pain off the joints. This time she is given, in addition to the pain killers, an anti-inflammatory drug and a few other medicines. Among the latter are two medicines, one meant for external application another to be taken internally, which are both Ayurvedic patented medicines. This makes her turn to Ayurvedic treatment for her ailment.

The name *Ama Vatam*, explains the root cause of the ailment. The main causative factors

involved are, *Amam* and *Vata* or *Vayu*. The term *Amam* in general refers to the residue of undigested food materials in the intestines. This happens owing to the weakening of the power of digestion in the body.

The undigested and unassimilated food residue in the intestines, along with the body constituent *Vayu* which gets aggravated, travels all along the body and finds convenient places such as the joints and deposits itself there. The joints are usually the seat of *Kapha*. The

Amam, when it starts depositing in the joints along with the aggravated *Vayu*, gives rise to excruciating pain, swelling and stiffness. In some patients, the constituent *Pitta* is aggravated and this causes them to experience a severe burning sensation. As the disease becomes chronic it damages the joints and causes deformities.

Those who constantly indulge in incompatible food items *Viruddhaharam*, excessively oily food, too much physical work and have a weak power of digestion are especially prone to this disease. Usually *Ama Vatam* is a disease which appears in middle age. Pain is experienced in the small joints of the hands and feet (knuckles and toe joints), wrists, knees, ankles and neck. The symptoms can start suddenly one day and sooner or later the affected joints become painful and stiff.

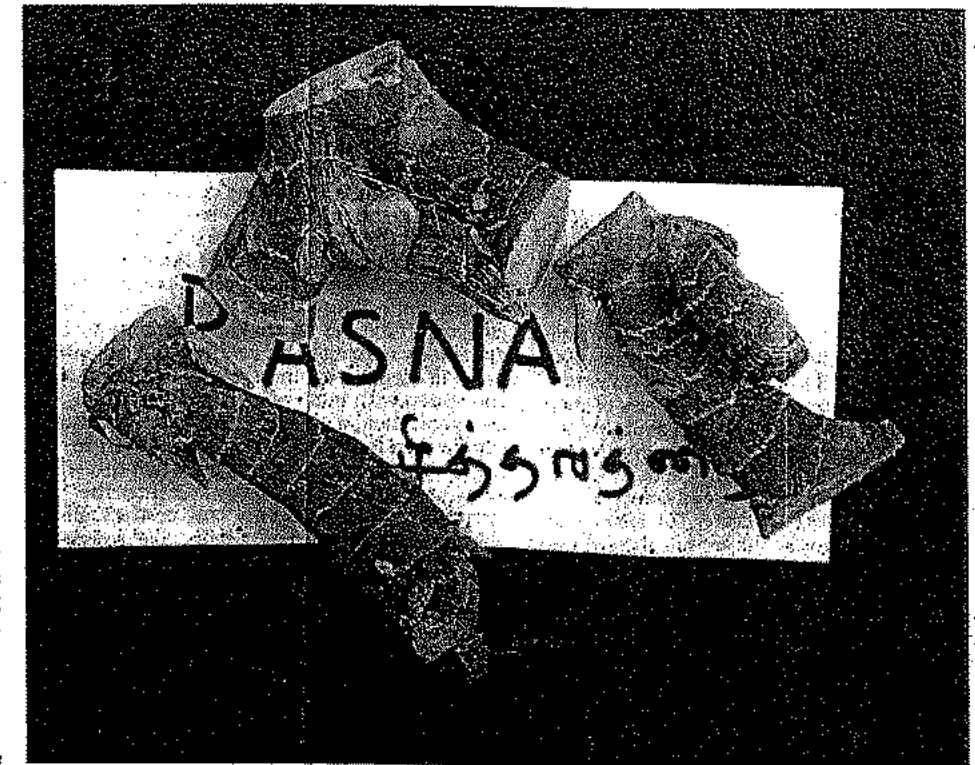
This disease gets particularly aggravated during winters because *Vayu* is naturally aggravated by cold. The aggravation of *Vayu* can be brought under control with food, medicine and regimen which are hot in potency and temperature. Generally, all aches and pains of the joints and muscles are felt acutely during the rain and the colder seasons. Therefore, even a normal warm bath gives one a temporary relief. In those who experience a burning sensation, the choice of food, medicines and regimen is different from the above.

So, the line of treatment for *Ama Vatam* is aimed at eliminating *Amam* from the joints and pacifying the aggravated constituent *Vayu*, *Pitta* or *Kapha* depending on the individual. All therapeutic measures are aimed at achieving this to cure the disease.

In both the cases mentioned above, the treatment included dietary restrictions as well as administration of medicines externally and internally. Food restrictions are important in two ways. First what is eaten should not further increase the *Amam*. Secondly, it should not further aggravate *Vayu*. In the same manner, the medicines chosen also serve these two purposes, that is, to eliminate the *Amam* as well as to pacify the aggravated *Vayu*.

One of the most important medicines in treating *Ama Vatam* is *Guggulu*, a resin from a tree commonly found in the Himalayan region. *Guggulu* for instance has both the above mentioned properties. *Rasna* or *Chittaratal* is another medicine with great therapeutic value in the treatment of this disease. There are of course innumerable medicines in the Ayurvedic pharmacopea which can be successfully used to cure this disease.

A very important aspect of the treatment consists of external application of oil on the body. A variety of oils treated with numerous medicinal herbs are used. The choice of oils and medicines depends entirely upon the severity of the condition, the constitution (*Prakruti*) of the patient and the nature of the disease. Hot fomentation with oil, herbs etc., are also effective and commonly used to relieve pain and



Rasna — useful in disorders caused by Vata.

bring the disease under control. A particularly chronic case may require hospitalization and more complicated treatment such as medicated enemas.

In very early stages of the disease a good practice of *Yogasanas* helps in alleviating the pain a great deal. In some patients, any movement of the body aggravates the pain. In such cases, just the use of Ayurvedic medicines and application of oils are very effective. Practice of *Yogasanas* can start later when the pain subsides.

Sometimes, individuals suffering from *Ama Vatam* go on for years without actually receiving any treatment. Pain killers are often used to suppress the symptoms for short periods. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatory agents, simple analgesics, supplementary vitamins and corticosteroids are commonly used with absolutely no effect on the disease. Lumps and nodules are surgically removed and often recur. Use of heat lamps, hot soapy water for washing hands in the mornings, putting a painful arm in a sling and bed rest do not help in any real sense. The joints soon start losing their shape with swelling and the mobility of the joints gets restricted. The disease is thus allowed to become chronic and the patient can sometimes end up being confined to a wheel chair.

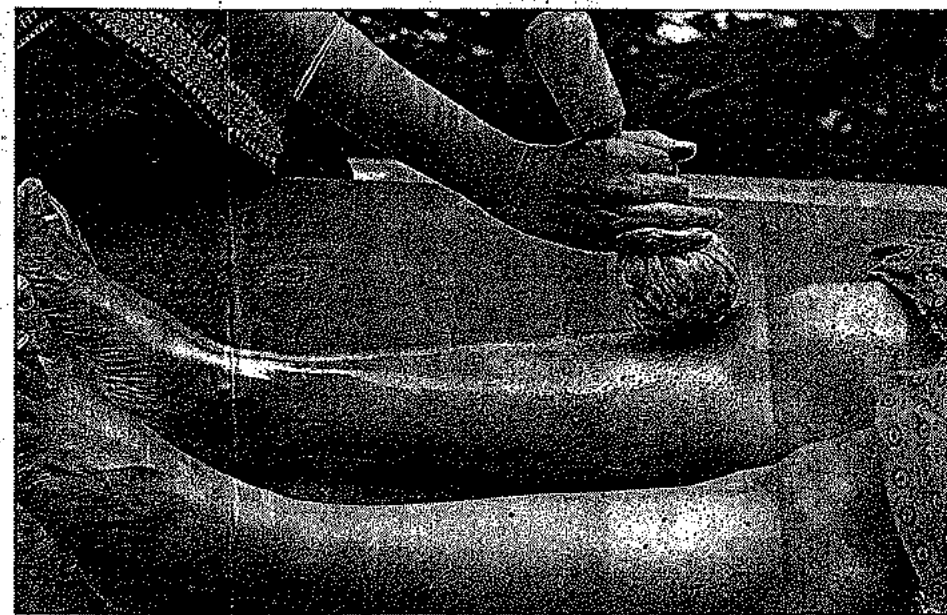
In the West the approach to this disease has taken a peculiar route. It is accepted in the West

that there is really no cure for this disease by way of treatment and as a result institutional care, counselling and complicated surgical procedures have been developed. A whole industry has sprung up to develop a host of equipment. Sticks, modified shoes, wide-handled cutlery, specially designed padding around handles, sticks with magnets fitted at the end and tongs which extend to the floor to pick up small objects without bending down, electric blankets etc., are only a few of the practical aids the West has come up with to deal with this situation. Complicated surgical operations are performed to replace joints and joint surfaces with synthetic material, remove bone ends, replace knuckles with plastic knuckles, to rectify deformities arising out of this disease.

In India however, the scenario is quite different. Pharmaceutical companies prepare a large number of drugs based on the Ayurvedic pharmacopea for *Ama Vatam*. These drugs are available in all towns and cities and for the benefit of medical practitioners a therapeutic index is also provided. A major portion of the sales of these patent medicines is made to Allopathic medical practitioners and one often finds them prescribing these medicines in preference to allopathic drugs. ■

DR. GIRIJA,
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

HEALTH WATCH



Fomentation with medicated oil and herbs.



Indian Systems of Medicine

Treating gynaecological disorders

AMONG the eight branches of Ayurveda, *Stree Rogam* (gynaecology) and *Prasuti Tantram* (obstetrics) occupy an important place. As women are the source of progeny, a great deal of attention is paid to various disorders which impede normal functions of the female genital tract and the uterus. The article deals with some of the common gynaecological disorders encountered today.

Soma Rogam

Excessive white discharge from the vagina is called *Soma Rogam*. This gynaecological disorder is rampant today. The word *Soma* means water. The water element *Soma* which resides all over the body is vitiated and is drained and discharged through the vagina. The body is not able to arrest this discharge. The discharge is clear, odourless, cold and white. Some causes of this disease are — excessive physical labour, sorrow, slow-poisoning from poison embedded in the body, *Gara Visham*, and excessive sexual intercourse. Due to this disease, the woman becomes weak. She experiences excessive drowsiness, yawning, dryness of the skin, lack

of interest in and dissatisfaction with food, fainting spells and so on. Her face and cheeks appear sunken.

Often women carry on with this disease without seeking any remedy. Ayurveda prescribes effective treatment for *Soma Rogam*. The treatment mainly consists of prescribing uterine tonics which tone up the entire urino-genital system. In many cases simple remedies by way of food items help to overcome this condition. For instance, gooseberry *Amalaki* with honey, buttermilk, a particular variety of plantain (*Kadali*), *Keezhanelli* (*Bhoomyamalaki*) are used successfully as single drug therapy to correct this problem. It is also important to abstain from taking pungent food items like pickles, and liquor which is hot in potency which can further reduce the water element in the body.

In some women there is a thick white curdy secretion inside the vaginal tract causing severe itching. The itching is caused by organisms which come to reside in the genitals as a result of unhygienic habits. A young woman who has been suffering from this for nearly four years was treated with local application of medicinal paste, medically treated tampons and internal

medicines. She experienced relief in a very short period.

Udavartini or painful menstruation

Pain during menstruation has become a common syndrome today. In most households, women suffer a great deal of discomfort during menstruation. In some cases, the pain begins

HEALTH WATCH

even days before the menstrual cycle. Severe pain in the lower abdomen, low back, legs, thighs and breasts prompt women to consume painkillers liberally month after month. These days, this pain is termed "Pre-menstrual tension" (PMT) and pain and discomfort during menstruation have come to be accepted as normal physiological symptoms.

Discomfort, pain and cramps during menstruation are definitely symptoms of an unhealthy condition of the reproductive system. They are an indication that the function of

Vayu situated in the *Apana* region — lower abdomen, hip, back, groin, and thighs — is impaired. The *Apana Vayu* is the cause of proper and comfortable flow of menstrual blood. Whenever the course of *Vayu* is disturbed owing to food habits, work and regimen which aggravate the *same*, it gives rise to pain and discomfort during menstruation.

The incidence of "pre-menstrual tension" is more among women who have given up useful regimen such as oil application over the body. The purpose of oil application is to regulate the *Vayu* in the body. Habits such as consuming in excess cold, pungent and dry food and drinks routinely, cause an imbalance of

Vayu. Therefore, food habits and regimen should be such that they do not disturb the balance of *Vayu*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* in the body.

The problem of "pre-menstrual tension" can be overcome with the use of simple medicated ghee. Regular practice of Yoga and application of oil on the body are most beneficial and prevent these problems from occurring. Women taught this early in life need never suffer such pain and tension during menstruation.

Irregular periods and absence of menstruation

This is a condition where the regular menstrual cycle is disturbed. In some women, menstruation is highly irregular and unpredictable and takes place once in several months or once or twice a year. In the extreme case of a woman who came to us for treatment, menstruation had not started even at the age of 20, in spite of her taking hormonal drugs. Most urban women who come for treatment of this problem would have, at some time or other, been treated with hormones. In these cases, menstruation occurs as long as these women are consuming these medicines. In some cases women simply do not respond to hormonal treatment.

Increasingly, urban, educated women resort to liberal use of hormonal drugs which postpone the menstrual cycle. This is done with the ready consent and support of the entire family, so that religious and social rituals do not exclude their full participation. Such tampering with natural body functions have caused the greatest harm to women's health.

According to Ayurveda, the absence of menstruation is caused by the obstruction of deranged *doshas* or the body constituents. The flow of menstrual blood can be established if the imbalance of the *doshas* in the uterine region is corrected. Several food items which help in increasing the flow of menstrual blood such as *Kollu* (*Kulatha* or horsegram), *Ellu* (sesamum or *Til*), *Ulundu* (*Urad* or blackgram), fish etc. are recommended as part of the treatment of this problem. Medicines which enrich and enhance the blood in the system and regulate the menstrual flow by correcting the imbalance



Transparency by N. Sudhakar

The bark of the Ashoka tree yields a fine uterine tonic.

In the *doshas* are prescribed. An appropriate course of Yoga is taught. Women respond to this treatment well and menstrual flow is restored to its healthy and normal condition.

Pradaram or excessive bleeding

Abnormal and excessive discharge of menstrual blood is called *Pradaram* or *Asrigdaram*. The bleeding may be persistent for a long time, or may occur prematurely and frequently along with painful menstrual flow, sometimes with clots in the blood. This may be attended with aching in the limbs, general weakness, vertigo, breathlessness, thirst, burning and so on. The case of *Pradaram* should be attended to before severe complications set in.

Pradaram occurs in women who indulge excessively in salty, sour, heavy, pungent, burning and fatty food, and alcohol. Heavy physical labour, sorrow, extreme emaciation, also give rise to excessive bleeding in women. So does a miscarriage. In *Pradaram* the constituent *Vayu* is aggravated and blood is

produced in excess. This blood then is carried along by *Vayu* and reaches the channels carrying the menstrual blood and causes excessive discharge.

First of all, it is important to regulate the food habits of the women suffering from *Pradaram*. For instance, when a 15-year-old girl came to us with excessive bleeding, it seemed rather unusual for someone so young to suffer from this problem. Examination revealed that this young woman was exceedingly fond of eating salt. Besides using unusually large quantities of salt with her food, she had a habit of sucking pieces of salt in her mouth. This had aggravated *Rakta* (blood) and *Pitta*, both of which are directly aggravated by an excess of salt. This resulted in *Pradaram* of the *Pitta* type. In this case, controlling the intake of salt was half the treatment itself.

In the case of a 40-year-old woman who had been bleeding profusely for over a month, the treatment consisted of administration of medicines internally and externally, which arrested the bleeding and served as uterine tonics. The bleeding stopped within a few days. In severe cases of bleeding, use of vaginal douche, fomentation, fumigation, tampons soaked in medicines, vaginal lotions, washes and pastes are employed. In most cases of *Pradaram*, the problem is handled successfully with medicines and application of medicinal pastes and oils. In all cases, the choice of medicines depends entirely on the type of *Pradaram*.

Yoga

Practice of yoga plays a vital role in controlling painful menstruation, irregular menstruation and excessive bleeding. Asanas such as *Baddha Konasana*, *Vipareeta Karani*, *Mahamudra* and *Pranayama* with emphasis on exhalation are found to be effective in therapy. By working directly in the region of *Apana* these Asanas and *Pranayama* help in regulating the disturbed *Vayu*.

In the Ayurvedic pharmacopeia there are a number of medicines which are effective in regulating menstrual flow. For instance the *Ashoka* tree *Saraca indica* beneath which Sita took refuge in Lanka, is a classic example of a medicinal tree which yields a fine uterine tonic used in all types of gynaecological problems. It is equally effective in irregular or lack of menstruation as well as in excessive bleeding. *Ashoka* forms a part of a variety of medicinal preparations such as ghees, *Arishtam* (fermented preparations), *Choornams* (powders) and pills. There is an enormous variety of medicines used for the treatment of gynaecological problems. *Sathavari* (Indian Asparagus), *Kasisam* (a compound of iron), the kernel of the mango seed, *Yashti* (licorice), *Banyan*, the plant, *Lodhra*, *Arasu* or the *Peepal*, the Fig, *Adathodai* (*Vasa*), coral etc. are only a few of the trees, plants and other medicinal materials commonly used. ■

DR. GIRIJA and
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

Indian Systems of Medicine

Impaired digestion, cause of diseases

The normal physiological activities of the body are maintained well when the Jataragni or the digestive fire functions normally. When this fire is weak, it gives rise to diseases in the body.

A GOOD digestive system is an indication of good health. Many diseases stem from poor digestive capacity. In Ayurveda, the word which refers to the power of digestion is *Jataragni* or *Agni*. The term *Jatara* means stomach/abdomen. *Agni* means fire. Like the fire which possesses the property to cook, so also the digestive fire cooks the ingested food. The digestive fire in the stomach is activated by *pitta* which cooks the food and transforms it into a form which can be assimilated in the blood. Health and ill health depend to a large extent on the power of digestion. Sluggish

substances, known as *amam* in Ayurveda. These toxic substances were causing dullness in the body, aversion to food, heaviness and lassitude. There was a heavy coating on his tongue indicating impairment of digestion. Examination of the pulse revealed an aggravation of *pitta* and *vayu* in the body. His food habits contributed more to his problems. His staple diet consisted largely of curd, food items with large doses of tamarind, pickles, tea, coffee, fried food and so on. The treatment in this case surely had to begin with setting right his impaired digestive fire. The undigested and unassimilated residue had

HEALTH WATCH

digestion, diarrhoea, constipation, piles, flatulence, distension of the abdomen, pain in the stomach, burning sensation, burping, all these conditions which are commonly encountered, have to do with impairment of the power of digestion coupled with the imbalance of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* in the digestive system which is caused by improper food, work and regimen.

A classic example of impaired digestion leading to all sorts of problems can be seen in the following case. Mohan, aged 25, was suffering from a constant feeling of feverishness, congestion of the lungs, continuous dizziness, heaviness in the stomach, total lack of appetite, body ache, flatulence, burping and constipation. For six months he was treated for "oesophagitis" and bronchitis. Besides the routine drugs, he was regularly on antacids, injection of vitamin B-12, and all possible vitamin supplements. He was on medical leave for two months. As his condition had steadily worsened, he was advised hospitalisation for a few days for the administration of 'drips.' There was a lurking suspicion in his mind that he could be suffering from cancer of the intestines as his father and uncle had died of cancer of the stomach. He was subjected to all possible tests, and no test revealed any pathology.

While examining this person, the most obvious fact that would strike a physician is the total impairment of his digestive capacity or his digestive fire. As his digestion was extremely sluggish, he was not digesting and assimilating the food and medicines. Undigested residues of food and medicines, which accumulated over a period of time, were turning into toxic

to be eliminated from the body. His food habits had to be corrected so that the food consumed did not further aggravate the deranged *doshas*, namely *pitta* and *vayu*. Food had to be light for digestion as well as help in inducing digestion.

The choice of food and medicine in this case had the following functions to perform — digest the undigested residues in the body, a function known as *Pachanam*; induce digestion, a function known as *Deepanam*; function as carminatives which regulate the flow of *vayu* in the body; and bring the deranged *doshas* under control. Along with medicine, and a controlled diet, he was taught a simple course of *Yogasanas* for regular practice. He began responding to the treatment. Very soon the coating over the tongue disappeared. His appetite improved steadily. The constant feeling of feverishness disappeared.

After this, for 15 consecutive days he followed a regimen of oil application on the body. At the end of this period he was given a purgative, consisting of herbs especially chosen to suit his problem as well as his constitution. This helped in eliminating the aggravated *doshas* from the intestines. Gradually, his medicines were changed to medicated ghee etc., medicines which he could digest now with his increased capacity of digestion. The practice of *Yoga* was advanced. His bowel movements became regular, appetite was reestablished, flatulence was eliminated and within a few weeks he returned to a normal, healthy condition.

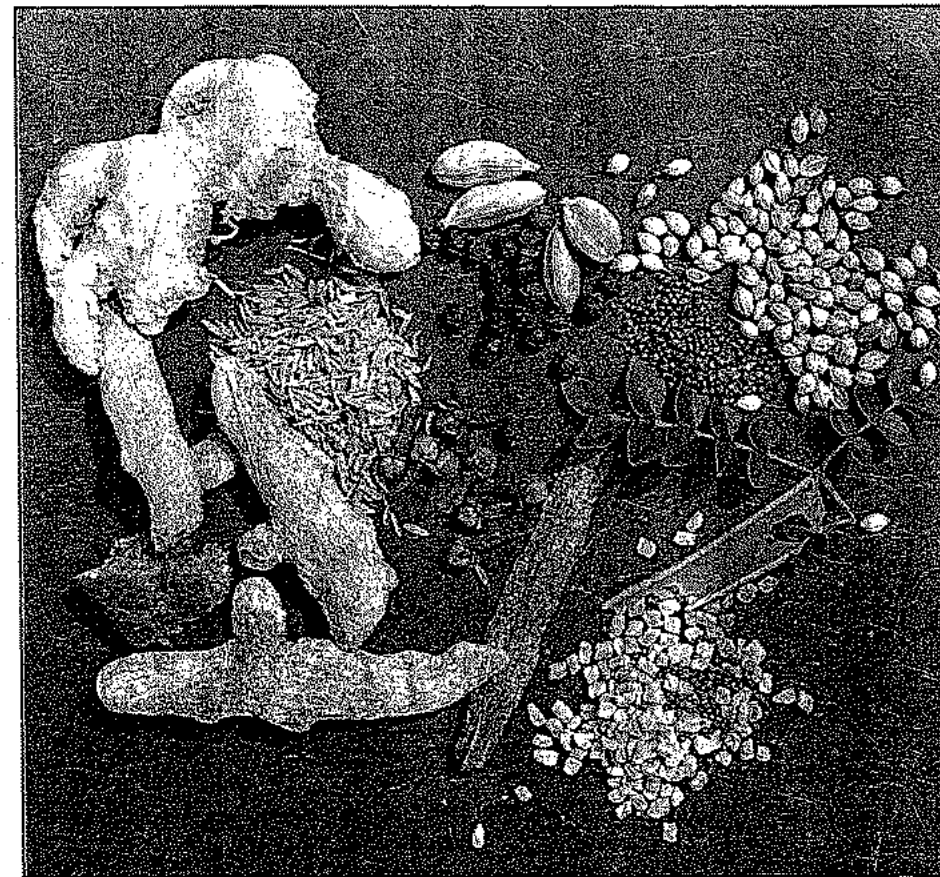
The normal physiological activities of the body are maintained well when the

Jataragni or the digestive fire functions normally. When this fire is weak, it gives rise to diseases in the body. When there is a total absence of the power of digestion it causes death. A good power of digestion gives one strength, a sense of well being, good lustre of the skin, alertness, energy, growth, nourishment and long life.

There are several factors which impede the proper function of the *agni* the digestive fire. For example, an excessive intake of food and drinks dull the *agni*, just like too much fire wood or fuel piled up can put out a small fire. Too little fuel can also kill the *agni* and so the

periodically. Most of these cases are very successfully treated in the Ayurvedic system with food and medicines which possess largely digestive, healing and arresting properties.

A proper understanding of food articles in terms of their digestive properties is certainly most useful in our daily lives. For instance, spices like *jeerakam*, *dhaniya*, pepper, ginger, garlic, cardamom (*yelakkai*), cinnamon (*lavanga pattai*), *vendayam* (*maithi*), *asafoetida* (*hing*), *omam* (*ajmod*), etc. have properties which are digestive (*deepana pachanam*) and carminative. A knowledge of their properties in correlation with the body constituents *vata*,



Spices have properties which are digestive and carminative.

intake of insufficient food weakens the digestive fire. Therefore, excessive or insufficient food, irregular eating habits, consuming incompatible foods, suppression of the urges for urine and motion, irregular sleep — keeping awake at night and sleeping during the day, emotional disturbances like fear, anger, grief, anxiety, are all factors which interfere with digestion. The undigested food residue *Amam*, deposited in the pathways and channels of the body, in the excreta, in the sputum and in the three *doshas* gives rise to all kinds of diseases.

There is a wide variety of problems which stem from our digestive system. For instance, a large number of people suffer from frequent bouts of loose motion. They are treated for problems of so-called 'Amoebiasis', irritable

pitta and *kapha* can certainly find therapeutic usage in the case of ordinary stomach ache, flatulence, indigestion and other common ailments.

Problems such as flatulence and constipation are like two sides of the same coin. They stem from the same cause, namely aggravation and improper function of *Vayu* in the body. A middle aged man who was suffering from a severe complaint of constipation and flatulence found it extremely troublesome to carry on with his daily routine. His stomach felt distended and bloated. The sides of the chest and heart region pressed by the wind caused him extreme discomfort. Under the suspicion that this was an ailment of the heart, he was rushed to the doctors for help several times. Chronic

He developed cramps in the stomach and sides of the back quite easily.

In cases such as these, food and medicines which are carminative play a vital role in relieving the person from such tension. Restricting food habits which aggravate *Vayu*, application of oil on the body and practice of *Yogasanas* can completely overcome these problems within a very short time.

Severe burping is also due to excess of *Vayu* in the digestive tract which ends up travelling in the upward direction. In this case food items commonly found in our kitchens, like dry ginger or *chukku*, *omam*, *jeerakam*, pepper, *hing* etc. are very effective remedies. Yet another problem that many suffer from is the feeling of burning in the chest and stomach region. Any spicy, oily, pungent food usually gives rise to a burning sensation in the stomach. Burning is usually caused by an aggravation of *pitta* in the stomach by indulging in food which has the tendency to aggravate *pitta*. Evidently, controlling dietary regimen is the most important step in combating this problem, besides using medicines which directly neutralise the aggravation of *pitta*. Drinking water boiled with sandalwood, *vettiver* (*ushiram*), *koraikizhangu* (*Mustha*), *Parpatakam* (a type of grass) etc. helps in controlling this problem.

In general, it is very essential to pay attention to what we consume regularly as food and drinks. Health and ill health of human beings depend largely on the type of food consumed. An intelligent person therefore uses discrimination while consuming food. The quantity of food intake is also a crucial factor in the maintenance of good health. It is useful to remember that when we consume food, 1/3rd of the capacity of the stomach should be filled with solids, 1/3rd with liquids and 1/3rd should be left free. And for food to have a beneficial effect on the body, it should be consumed warm.

Consuming food in the right quantity is not such a technical matter. The proper quantity of food is the amount which without disturbing the equilibrium of the body, gets digested and metabolised in proper time. It should also exhibit some physical signs which one should be able to recognise. Food consumed in proper quantity does not cause undue pressure on the stomach. There is no obstruction or pressure felt in the region of the heart or sides of the chest. No excessive heaviness is felt in the abdomen. There should be proper nourishment of the senses. Relief from hunger and thirst should be felt. The person should feel comfortable standing, sitting, sleeping, walking, exhaling, inhaling, laughing and talking. Food consumed in the morning should be well digested by evening and what is consumed in the evening should be well digested by the morning.

Practice of physical exercise should form an essential part of our daily routine. The ideal form physical exercise is the practice of *Yogasanas*. By a judicious practice of *asana* and *pranayama*, proper digestion and assimilation of food is ensured. It brings about body stability, strength, lightness of body, alleviation of bodily *doshas*, ability to work and stimulation of the power of digestion. Everyone must therefore undertake moderate bodily exercise in order to maintain good health.

Asana and *Pranayama* play a very important therapeutic role in correcting digestive problems. Problems such as constipation, flatulence, sluggish digestion are some of the problems for which a regular practice of *Yoga* provides great relief. ■

DR. GIRIJA

A
na
N
natu
also
force
hum
art a
Na
abno
the v
violat
syste
irregu
accur
Bes
distur
electri
place,
electri
germs
produ
or wh
that t
The
cure i
princi
depend
from
treatm
the U.
and o
The
that
cause
mater
waste
remov
elimite
Th
that
infla
erupt
effort
accu
chro
rheu
the r
disea
drug
Th
body
whic
norm
meth
the p
itself
N
of th
conc
cure
con
rem
toxi
inju
stir
puri
A
sick
the
app
sho
O
dise
mas

Indian Systems of Medicine

The problems of digestion

IN diseases of the digestive system, it is of utmost importance that physical symptoms are properly interpreted. For instance, pain is one of the most common symptoms of problems of the digestive system which affect most of us. Whether it arises out of the gastro-intestinal tract or any other location, whatever may be its quality, intensity, frequency, pain is caused by the same factor. The common causative factor for pain is the aggravation of *Vayu*. Therefore, pain subsides or responds to treatment which is aimed at controlling or pacifying *Vayu*.

Rukmani, a poor, 35-year-old woman works in a garment company. For the past three years she had been suffering from excruciating pain around her navel region. The pain occurred more frequently at night. She was very weak and emaciated, weighing not more than 35 kg. Her digestive power was very dull and her food intake became gradually reduced. Whenever the pain appeared, she would nearly swoon and would have to be rushed to a nearby allopathic physician who would help her condition by

while they controlled the *Vayu*, they did not aggravate *Pitta* in her body. Besides this, the medicines administered had to be light, easy for digestion. Simultaneously, her power of digestion had to be improved with the help of other medicines. Even after starting the medications, she suffered twice from pain with the same intensity as earlier. Both times, she was administered *Vata* alleviating ghee and medicines along with a pinch of rock salt and she responded promptly. Within ten minutes her pains subsided. She was started on a course of medications aimed at curing the *Soolam* along with other medicines to improve her power of digestion, assimilation and appetite. Her diet consisted of *Kanji* (gruel) made of boiled rice, broken *Samba* wheat and green gram, meat soup and so on. She was asked to prepare at home a powder of *Kezhanelli* (*Bhoomiamalaki*) for daily intake, to improve her digestion. Her drinking water was boiled with *Vettiver* (*Khas*), *Korakizhangu* (*Mustha*), *Parpatakam* (a type of grass), sandalwood, *Chukku* (dry ginger) etc. Medicated oils were

respiratory complaints should definitely avoid all food which leads to the constant secretion of phlegm in the throat and chest region. A person who suffers from edema (swelling) benefits by staying away from food articles like curd which possess the property of blocking channels (*Srotas*) and passages in the body which aggravate the edema. In this manner, for all diseases, proper food and regimen are prescribed which pacify the aggravated *doshas* which have caused the pathology in the body.

In general, the food taken should be suitable to the individual who consumes it. Food should be easily digestible and should not cause too much of imbalance of the *doshas*. One important consideration which can guide in intake of food is the *Prakruti* or constitution of the individual. The *Prakruti* of a person is determined at the time of birth itself. Depending upon the *Prakruti*, a particular food becomes agreeable or disagreeable to the individual. The dominant *dosha* which forms the constitution of the individual is kept under check by appropriate food and regimen. Thus a careful intake of food can bring about a balance among the three *doshas*. The constitutional factor of the person has to be respected even while choosing medicines so that the individual does not "react" to the medicines.

Another important factor which should guide

HEALTH WATCH

injecting her with a pain killer. The frequency of the pain increased over a period of time and each time, whether it was day or night, she had to be rushed to a physician to receive these shots.

In this case, providing temporary relief from pain, although it was essential, only succeeded in suppressing the pain. Therefore, arresting the pain alone was not sufficient. Pain relieving treatment also had to attack the root cause of the problem to cure Rukmani.

The above is a typical example of what is known as *Soolam* in Ayurveda. The word *Soolam* means pain. *Soolam* in general can be a temporary symptom of aggravation of *Vayu* in the digestive system and in such a case, it responds to simple home remedies which bring down the pain. *Soolam* can also be a disease of the digestive tract due to various reasons. There are several types of *Soolam* depending on the participating *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha*). In all types of *Soolam*, *Vayu* is a significant factor as pain is the most predominant symptom. Therefore if the treatment has to eliminate the disease, it should prevent the contributory factors for *Soolam*, such as irregular eating habits etc. as well as pacify the aggravated *doshas*, keeping in mind the location of the disturbance and the pathology.

Rukmani was administered mainly medicines to bring down the virulence of the *Vayu* which was causing the excruciating pain. The treatment had to respect yet another factor in her case, her constitution. According to Ayurveda, an individual's bodily constitution may belong to one of three major categories based on the three *doshas*, the *Vata* type, the *Pitta* type, or the *Kapha* type. Therefore, any treatment has to respect the constitutional factor, known as the *Prakruti* of the individual. This would naturally mean that for the same disease, the medicines may differ depending on the individual constitution. This means that a medicine which is appropriate for one person need not suit another.

As Rukmani's constitution was the *Pitta* type, the choice of medicines had to be such that



Yogasanas are effective in improving the power of digestion.

prescribed for application over the body. Rukmani steadily regained her appetite, complexion and health and the pain disappeared completely.

Soolam can be of different types. In certain types the pain subsides as soon as food is eaten and begins as soon as the food completes the process of digestion. This is called *Parinama Soolam*. Here the word *Parinama* (transformation, change) refers to food. In another type of *Soolam* known as *Anna drava soolam*, there is relief from pain only after the food is brought out by vomiting. *Soolam* when very chronic and virulent, can be very difficult to cure.

A simple and effective means to protect the power of digestion is the regular practice of *yogasanas*. By means of *asanas* and *pranayama* one can enhance the power of digestion without the aid of any external agents. There are several *asanas* which are very effective in improving the power of digestion. For instance, *Jatara Parivritti* has acquired its name from its action on the digestive fire. *Asanas* like *Ardhamatsyendrasana*, *Paschimatanasana*, *Parsva Uttanasana*, *Sarvangasana*, etc. are simple as well as effective in enhancing the power of digestion, and in regulating the proper movement of bowels and the flow of wind in the body. *Asanas* are more effective when they are coordinated with breathing.

Any ailment of our body and more so that of our digestive system is directly linked with the food we eat. Therefore, it is important to understand the properties and function of food.

Often there is a feeling among the modern educated people that Ayurvedic treatment is cumbersome as it involves *Pathyam* (what is agreeable) and *Apathyam* (what is disagreeable) regarding food. It must be clear that any treatment which does not specify the *Pathyam* and *Apathyam* in relation to disease cannot be a proper line of treatment. For example, a person who suffers from constant

the intake of food and regimen is *Kala* or time. Our food habits and regimen should be adapted according to the changing seasons. There are six seasons in an year. All of them exert profound influences on the body. For instance, we can feel the depleting effect of the scorching sun during the six hot months when the sun is moving northwards. During the rain, all aches and pains of the body are aggravated. Similarly, all seasons influence our body differently by bringing about changes in the balance of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Hence in Ayurveda individuals are taught to adapt their food habits and regimen to suit the changing seasons.

In recent years, we have witnessed a major deterioration in the food habits of our people. Traditional food habits which took into account the constitution of the individuals, the seasons and time and in general what is wholesome for good health, have been given up. For example, regular use of buttermilk which is very essential to maintaining good digestive power is sacrificed for the sake of curd. Nutritious hand pounded rice is substituted by nutritionally inferior machine polished rice. Boiled rice which is light and easy for digestion is replaced by raw rice. Jaggery, palm sugar and other traditional varieties of sugar are replaced by white sugar which is nutritionally far inferior. Today it is not uncommon to find a housewife neutralising the sourness of curd by adding fresh milk to it; or mixing sour fruits with milk to prepare sweet puddings or consuming stale cold food stuffs straight out of the refrigerator. All these types of foods known as *viruddhaharam* (contradictory and incompatible foods) taken over a sufficiently long period of time can cause many problems.

Our food habits are also being transformed as a result of advertising. In the name of modernisation, unhealthy foods are being introduced as alternatives to fresh foods. ■

Dr. GIRIJA and
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

Indian systems of medicine

A quick, safe cure for jaundice

The most important factor in the treatment of jaundice is the restriction imposed on the diet. Any food which helps bring down the vitiation of Pitta is useful in treatment.

IN India, one of the most commonly encountered and much dreaded disease is *Kaamala* (*Kaamaalai* in Tamil) or jaundice. Death due to jaundice is unheard of among communities and people who are traditionally treated by Ayurveda, Siddha and other systems of Indian medicine. It is however a disease for which there exists no known medicine or remedy in the allopathic medical system.

According to Ayurveda, only those who are already suffering from *Pandu roga* or anaemia become susceptible to jaundice. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we deal with *Pandu* or anaemia before discussing jaundice.

A woman in her late forties came to us with the following symptoms. She was suffering from extreme debility, loss of strength, diminished power of digestion, aversion to food, exhaustion, lassitude, giddiness, pain and heaviness in the body. The most striking among her symptoms was breathlessness. She had to labour hard even to utter a few words. She could neither walk or sit quietly and peacefully. Her limbs, waist and body ached. She felt exhausted while walking and climbing stairs. She was generally irritable and sleepy, her complexion was dull and her body felt dry. The colour of her urine was bright yellow. These were symptoms typical of anaemia.

This disease is known as *Pandu roga* from the fact that a deep yellow colour is imparted to the skin of the person suffering from this disease. Anaemia occurs commonly in persons who indulge constantly in food which is alkaline, acidic, sour, salty, extremely hot in potency, alcohol, incompatible and unsuitable

foods and so on. This disease may also occur when bodily *doshas* are vitiated owing to excessive sleep during the day, excessive exercise, suppression of natural urges in persons afflicted with fear, anger, anxiety, sexual impulses, etc. The main *dosha* which is affected in the case of *Pandu* is *Pitta*. Therefore, the main treatment for anaemia is aimed at improving the quality of *Pitta* by bringing down its morbidity.

In the case of anaemia, the *Pitta* which is vitiated is propelled by strong *Vayu* and is spread all over the body. The *Pitta* which is normally located in the space between the skin and flesh is affected and produces shades of complexion similar to yellow and greenish yellow on the body.

Even before the actual disease sets in, there are several premonitory symptoms in the body which indicate the onset of this disease. Palpitation of the heart, salivation, a sense of lassitude in the limbs, roughness in the body, absence of sweat are some of symptoms which precede the disease. In *Pandu roga* there is a deficiency of blood, a feeling of looseness in the body and abnormality of complexion.

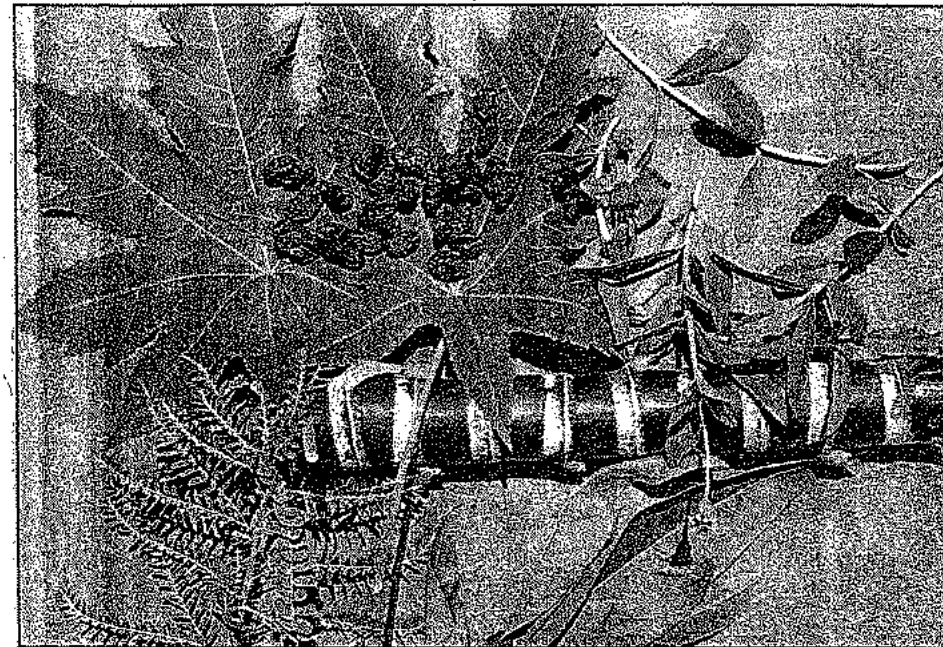
In a strict sense, anaemia has to be treated with medicines only after administering purificatory therapies such as vomiting (*Vamanam*) and purging (*Virechanam*). Both purging and vomiting are done to rid the body of the morbid *doshas*. However, most patients respond rapidly to mere intake of medicines even without any purificatory therapies. The medicines which are administered for *Pandu roga* are such that they improve both the quality and quantity of blood. For the blood to

improve, it is imperative that the medicinal compounds are easily absorbed by the body within a short time.

There are five types of anaemia. Three of these are caused by the vitiation of each of the three *doshas*. The fourth type is due to the combined vitiation of all the *doshas* and the fifth type is contracted due to the eating of mud. Once the general line of treatment is understood for the alleviation of *Pandu roga*, it has to be modified by the physician according to the predominance of the *doshas*. In all cases, alleviation of *Pitta dosha* should be kept in mind while treating the person afflicted with *Pandu*.

Jaundice:

Jaundice is contracted by persons who are already anaemic, as anaemia is a predisposing factor for jaundice. A patient of *Pandu roga* whose food and regimen aggravate *Pitta*, contracts jaundice. *Pitta dosha* in this case burns the blood and flesh and causes *Kaamala* in the body. The patient's eyes, skin, nails and face become deep yellow. Faeces and urine turn reddish yellow. The disease is associated with the burning sensation, indigestion, debility and dislike for food. This happens owing to the aggravation and displacement of *Pitta* from its seat and



Fruits, which are sweet and cold in potency can be added to the diet of a person with jaundice.

and the treatment is very simple and effective.

The most important factor in the treatment of jaundice is the restriction imposed on the diet of the patient. Any food which helps in bringing down the vitiation of *Pitta* is useful in the treatment. *Pitta* is aggravated by food and drinks

HEALTH WATCH

therefore, its function namely digestion is impaired. Typically, a patient of jaundice experiences nausea, vomiting, and fever. The fever does not respond to anti-pyretic drugs or to anti biotics.

In India, particularly in the rural areas, people conduct a simple test to detect jaundice. Some cooked rice is added to the first urine in the morning and allowed to soak for a few hours. When the urine is drained, the rice acquires the yellow colour of *Pitta*, when the latter is present in the urine. To a trained Ayurveda physician, the symptoms are obvious

which are salty, sour, pungent and hot in potency. Likewise, all food items which are sweet in taste and cold in potency such as milk, rice, wheat, grapes and sugarcane, which pacify the aggravated *Pitta* are added to the diets. In treating jaundice there is no single drug used universally by all Ayurvedic and Siddha physicians. There may be hundreds of medicinal combinations which are efficacious in treating this disease. The choice of medicine would depend entirely on the preference of the physician based on the availability and efficacy of the medicine as well as the condition of the patient. Prepara-

tions from Ayurvedic texts, of *choornams* (powders) and tablets, which alleviate jaundice are popularly used. Some physicians use fresh extracts of herbs for a few days, which work very rapidly and effectively. Mild purging, using medicinal herbs which control *Pitta* is always recommended in eliminating excessive *Pitta* from the body. What is interesting is that, whatever medicine is used to alleviate jaundice also alleviates anaemia and vice versa. These medicines are also very effective in disorders of the liver and spleen, indigestion, oedema and so on. It is therefore, impossible to list out all the combinations of the various medicinal preparations — of *Kashayams* (boiled extracts of herbs), *choornams* (powders of herbs), *kalkams* (pastes of drugs) *ghritams* (medicated ghees), *Avalehas* (sweet pastes), *arishtas* (brewed extracts) and *bhasmas* (calcinated drugs) which can be possibly used to cure this disease.

In certain types of jaundice, the patients pass stools which are white. This is accompanied with yellowness of eyes, urine and skin, heaviness along with a gurgling sound in the abdomen and heaviness in the chest region. Due to diminished *Pitta* and because of its dislocation, the patient develops debility, poor digestion,

pain in the sides, hiccups, fever, breathlessness and a dislike for food. This indicates that there is an obstruction of the passage of *Pitta* by *Kapha* which displaces the *Pitta* from its seat. In this case, the treatment does not begin with drugs which control the *Pitta*. To remove the obstruction, medicines which eliminate *Kapha* are introduced at first. The medicines in this case are substances which are pungent, sharp and hot in potency, which are useful in removing the obstructive *Kapha* as well as in pacifying the *Vayu* in the system. As soon as the obstruction is removed *Pitta* reverts to its place. The faeces, since they are pigmented by *Pitta* take on a yellow colour. Thereafter, the general line of treatment for jaundice should be adopted.

There is yet another condition known as *Kumbha Kaamala*. This occurs due to the chronic nature of jaundice, which establishes itself firmly in the body. This condition of the disease is difficult to cure.

"When the patient of *Pandu* develops green, blackish, yellow complexion, with associated symptoms, the disease is known as *Halimaka*. Here, the condition is due to the vitiation of *Vayu* and *Pitta*. The line of treatment therefore is modified according to the participating *doshas*.

In general, jaundice is a disease, which can be treated and cured without giving rise to any complications, provided the management by way of diet and drugs are chosen appropriately to suit the condition. Patients of jaundice succumb to the disease only due to neglect or mismanagement. In cases of jaundice which become fatal, the faeces and urine become blackish yellow, there is excessive swelling, presence of blood in the mouth, eyes, faeces and urine, fainting, spells, burning sensation, total aversion to food, thirst, hardness of bowels, drowsiness, mental confusion, loss of power of digestion and loss of consciousness.

It is quite common, particularly in cities, to come across patients of jaundice being subjected to prolonged treatment by allopathic practitioners who use Ayurvedic patent liver tonics. These tonics can be useful only as supplementary medication. On the other hand, use of antipyretic and antibiotic drugs in the treatment of jaundice is positively dangerous. By now it should be well known that Indian Systems of medicine offer the only effective and quick cure for jaundice. ■

DR. GIRIJA

Indian systems of medicine

Throbbing pain in the head

“DOCTOR, I have tried everything including 'naturopathy' for my headache. Can you treat my case as a challenge?" This came from a middle-aged woman who suffered from severe spells of headache for years together. There was nothing very unusual about this particular case. This sort of a condition is often witnessed in patients who suffer from what is commonly termed "migraine" or "sinus" related headaches.

Most of us have at one time or the other

are identified depending upon the involvement and combinations of dosha *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*, and the specific nature of headache. For instance, in the above mentioned case, the headache was accompanied by a mild and persistent aggravation of *kapha* in the head region. The aggravation of *kapha* was not so obvious. There was no active cold or congestion either in the throat, chest, nasal or facial region. All that she experienced was an occasional irritation in the throat, which slightly affected her voice. Yet, the constant and excessive

HEALTH WATCH

experienced that blinding throbbing sensation, when the head seems like it will split and work becomes impossible. What is an occasional occurrence with most of us can be a regular and frequent phenomenon in some. The headache can be persistent for short or long spells and can be crippling to the individual.

In Ayurveda, headache is treated as a full fledged disease. It is called the disease of the head — 'siroroga'. Headache is grouped under the broad division namely 'Salakhya', which is one of the eight branches of Ayurveda. Salakhya deals with all diseases pertaining to the eye, ear, nose, throat and head — in short, diseases which affect the above clavical region.

Headache as a siroroga is different from what we experience occasionally, which may leave us without any special treatment. For instance, too much physical exertion, going without food, exposure to too much heat, strain and tension can cause a temporary headache. These go away as soon as the cause is abated namely intake of food, resting, cold or warm pack over the head, refreshing bath and so on. The disease known as Siroroga is vastly different from this. The victims of this disease can go on suffering for years together if the causative factor is not identified and treated properly.

Every person who suffers from headache need not have the same type of disease. There are eleven different types of Sirorogams which can cause severe headache in a person. The types

generation of *kapha* in the above clavical region was sufficient to obstruct the normal course of *Vayu* in the head region giving rise to a persistent headache. There was no great challenge involved in treating this case. The most crucial part of the treatment depended upon identifying the factors which caused the constant secretion of *kapha* which was blocking the channels in the head. Once preventive measures were adopted in food and regimen which checked the formation of *kapha*, medicines were administered to aid and accelerate the process of recovery.

In the case of Ramani, a young woman, the aggravation of *kapha* and the resultant headache was obvious. Her throat and palate always seemed to be covered with a coat of *kapha*. Her nostrils were blocked and her voice nasal. She suffered violent bouts of sneezing especially in the morning soon after she woke up from sleep. Her eyes and facial region were puffed up. Her head felt heavy. In this case it was obvious that *kapha* had enveloped the entire head region causing severe headache in the person.

A typical case of headache, vastly different from the above can be found in the following case. Padma suffered "migraine" for the past five years. Over the years the number of different drugs prescribed for her headache was on the increase. She was prescribed several types of pain killers, tranquilizers and sedatives.



Transparency by N. Sridharan

Oil pack on the head to relieve pain

When she came for Ayurvedic treatment, she was on a course of self medication. In all she took a combination of the above mentioned drugs, eight in number, all at a time, four-fold the prescribed dosage. Her headache did not heed to any of this. She suffered violent pain in the head for several days at a stretch. She felt a pulling in the head and her eyes felt as though bulging outward. A pressure kept building up behind her head. During these bouts of violent headache, she tied her head tightly with a cloth and piled up pillows over the head to block out all noise and light. This was a severe case of headache caused solely by the aggravation of *vata* dosha. In this case there was no trace of any *kapha* involved in the pathology. The treatment therefore consisted of measures which alleviated *Vayu* in the head region. Application of medicated oil on the head which alleviate

Vayu naturally constituted the most important aspect of the treatment. Nasal drops were employed to bring down the virulancy of *Vayu* in the above clavical region. Her regimen of food, work and rest were regulated. Padma responded very quickly and completely overcame the headache.

Kamala was only 12 years old and she frequently suffered from severe headache. She was subjected to all possible investigations and none revealed any pathology. She was finally brought for yoga therapy. In this case, just a single glance was sufficient to detect her problem. There was severe stiffness in the neck and shoulder region. Even a simple movement such as raising the arms above the head pushed her head and neck in the forward direction. She was soon started on a course of yogasana. Regular practice of asana and pranayama facilitated proper and easy movement of her neck region. The tension in her head, neck and shoulder was released. She was advised to practice a regimen of oil bath to prevent any problem in the future.

As mentioned earlier, there are different types of Sirorogam. For instance, a middle aged man suffered from a peculiar type, his head ached severely affecting exactly half of his head. Periodically he experienced this pain accompanied by a host of other complaints from head to toe. This type of headache is called Ardhava Bhedaka which literally means pain in half the head. Ardhava Bhedaka is caused by the aggravation of all the three doshas. His complaint was treated with a combination of internal medicines, medicated oils for the head, nasal drops, yogasanas and external application of lepas (paste) on the forehead. A couple of occasions when he reported with headache nasal drops as well as snuffs (powdered medicinal compounds for inhalation) were employed to relieve his tension and pain.

An elderly woman once mentioned that she found relief from headache only if she applied an ice pack over the head. She suffered severe burning in the head, ulcers in the mouth and burning in the feet. All these are typical symptoms of aggravated *pitta* in the body. Treatment in pittaja headache is with medicines and regimen which are cooling to pacify *pitta*.

There are many other types of headache. A severe type with burning and heat sensation in the head, intolerable pain even at the slightest touch is associated with the aggravation of blood in the head region.

Headache is also caused due to wasting of Dhatus (body elements) in the head region. This is marked by a severe pain in the head. The

headache is aggravated sharply by any attempt at fomentation, fumigation, errhines (administering medicines through nasal passage) emetic or any depleting therapy. This is called *kshayaja siroroga*. As this type of headache is caused by atrophy or wasting of local fat etc., in the head region, the treatment lies in employment of nutritive measures and remedies to overcome the problems.

Headache can also be caused by the existence of *krimi* (parasites) in the head. This of course is not a commonly occurring disease. This type of headache is marked by a pricking and tingling pain as if being stung by insects. This is accompanied by watery discharge mixed with blood from the nostrils. Among patient of *siroroga*, a type of disease called *Suryavata* is common. In this case, the headache begins with the sun-rise. Severe pain is experienced around the eye and eyebrow. The pain becomes more and more intense with the progress of the day. Slowly the pain lessens as the sun begins to set. This is called *Suryavata* caused by the action of all the three doshas.

In the disease called *Anantavata* violent pain is experienced in the back of the head and neck. It affects the region of eyes, eyebrows and temples. A throbbing pain is felt in the cheeks, and the jaws and the eyes become inactive with the severity of the disease.

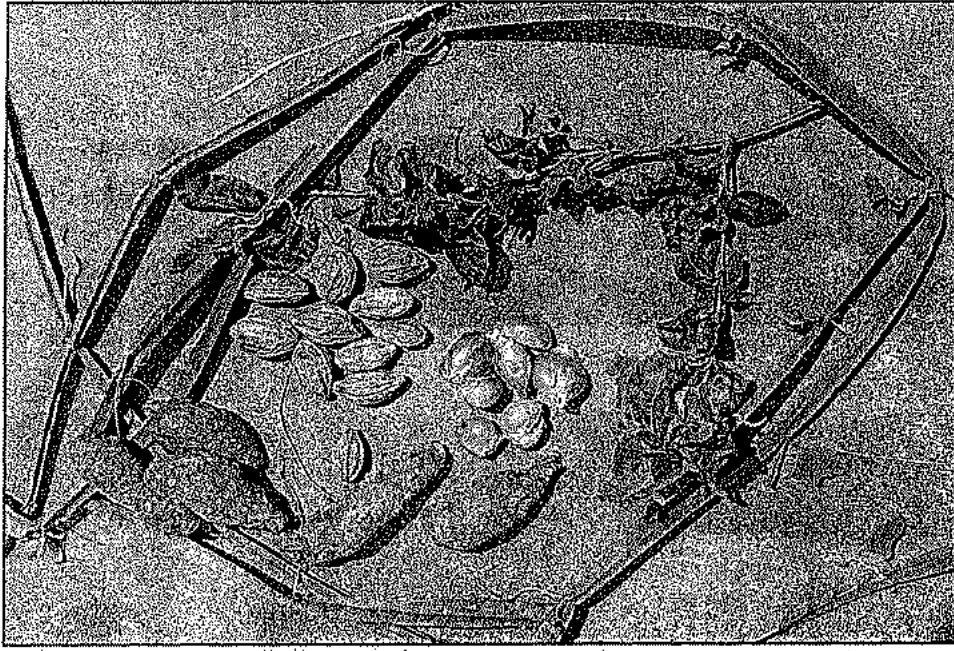
Siroroga has become a common disease these days. Patients of this disease find no effective cure when the pathology is not properly understood and treated. As a result, many are host of painkillers, tranquilizers and sedatives. *Siroroga* does not afflict a person who practices a healthy regimen of oil bath (*Abhyanga*) routinely. Oil application over the head plays a vital role in the prevention and cure of this disease. Regular application of oil to the head and body is a daily regimen practiced in our traditional way of living. Another useful daily regimen which has been banished from active practice is the use of nasal drops to clean the nasal passage. Special preparations are made for the use as nasal drops. One who practices the nasal therapy does not suffer from diseases of eyes, nose and ears. Diseases like stiffness of the neck, headache, facial paralysis, lock jaw, rhinitis, tremors of the head are cured by nasal therapy. It strengthens the sense organs, nourishes the hair roots, veins, joints ligament, tendons in the head and neck region and keeps the above clavical region free from morbidity.

DR. GIRIJA,
LAKSHMI RANGANATHAN

Indian Systems Of Medicine

Buttermilk — an excellent remedy for piles

The most effective cure for piles can be obtained by regulating dietary habits and by using medicines which are carminative and which improve the power of digestion.



Medicines which are carminative and which improve the power of digestion, are effective in treating piles.

HEALTH WATCH

A very common disease which troubles a large number of people is *Arshas*, commonly known as "piles." There are many questions which plague the mind of a person suffering from *Arshas*. What are the causes which give rise to this disease? What is the treatment for it? Is surgery desirable? Why do piles reoccur even after surgery? What are the types of food which can aggravate piles? Is this disease curable?

Arshas is a disorder characterised by a fleshy growth in the three ano-rectal folds which are situated within the space of a few inches inside the anus. This disease is classified into several types depending on the site of occurrence of the growth, shape and colour of the growth, whether the growth is congenital or acquired, whether it is wet or dry and on the various causative factors.

Raman is a 42 year old businessman. He suffered severe pain and bleeding from the anus. He experienced pain in the hip, back, groin and thighs and was unable to sit comfortably. As he used to travel a lot, his food habits were erratic. His food comprised pungent, spicy, heavy and oily articles, often accompanied with alcohol. Whenever he consumed chicken meat, alcohol or hot spicy food, bleeding would begin almost immediately. Often his problems got aggravated, practically incapacitating him.

Manu (26), developed severe itching in the anal region. Gradually he also developed a lump in that region: Itching would be severe before he moved his bowels and this was followed by slight pain and discomfort. Mild bleeding, with a slightly slimy secretion occurred and the pain was bearable. His digestion was easily disturbed. He was also prone to colds and congestion in the throat.

The case of Sita, 35, was quite different. She suffered profuse bleeding with pain and burning. She constantly felt the fleshy growth in the anal region, while walking or while being seated.

All these three cases were quite different from one another. In the first case, the vitiated dosha was predominantly *Vayu*; in the second it was *Kapha* and in the third both *Pitta* and *Rakta* (blood) were vitiated.

Piles can occur with or without bleeding. In general, piles can be of two different types. One is congenital and the other acquired. Congenital piles occur due to the genetic morbidity of the anal folds; acquired piles are due to several causative factors in combination with food habits and a poor digestive capacity.

How do piles occur? The factor which plays the most crucial role in causing piles is the poor capacity for digestion. Due to a variety of reasons arising out of food habits and regimen, the digestive fire of the individual is suppressed. And because of the dull power of digestion, the waste materials (*mala*) are accumulated in excess in the digestive tract. Thereafter, the accumulated *Mala* moving downward, comes into contact with the aggravated *Apana Vayu* one of the five *Vayus* which is seated in the hip-groin-thigh region. The *Apana Vayu* carries the *Mala* to the anal fold and this gives rise to piles.

What are some of the causes which disturb or vitiate the *Apana Vayu* in general? Constant use of uneven hard seats, journey on an irregularly moving vehicle, excessive sexual intercourse, a tear in the ano-rectal region, improper introduction of instruments through the anus, frequent contact with excessively cold water, constant and excessive straining of the body, forcing or suppressing the urge to pass wind, urine and stools, all these are factors, which can vitiate *Apana Vayu*. In the case of women, abortion, foetal pressure, a difficult labour, are also factors which contribute towards vitiating *Apana Vayu* mixes with the excreta and causes piles.

From the point view of treatment, piles can be

divided into two types, the dry and the wet. The dry type is caused by the association of *Vayu* and *Kapha*. The latter type is caused predominantly by *Pitta* and *Rakta*. All the three *doshas* and *Rakta* can be combined in various ways in different types of piles.

In the case of piles caused by an aggravation of *Vayu* all factors which cause an aggravation of *Vayu* become relevant. The treatment for this type of piles would consist of all measures which are efficacious in controlling *Vayu* in general in addition to those which control piles. Similarly, in the case of piles caused by *Kapha*, *Pitta* and *Rakta*, the treatment has to take into account the specific *doshas* involved.

When the piles show symptoms of all *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, the situation is similar to that of congenital piles. In certain severe cases of piles, all the above *doshas* as well as the ano-rectal folds, are severely affected. Such severe piles can become distressing precursors of various diseases affecting the whole body and are often most difficult from the point of view of treatment.

There are four types of treatment for piles. These are, administration of medicines, application of alkali, cauterization and surgical excision. Among all these, the most preferred and the easiest is the one through the administration of medicines.

In general, a person suffering from piles, swelling and pain in the ano-rectal region and poor digestion, is relieved of piles, colic pain and hardness of bowels when treated with medicines which are digestive and carminative, which help in the proper flow of *Vayu*. Even though the pile mass is surgically removed, if this

treatment is not supported by proper medication to improve the digestive power of the patient, the piles can reappear again. Therefore, medicines which are digestive and carminative are most crucial in the treatment.

There is a simple and excellent remedy available to anyone suffering from piles. This is the use of buttermilk, also known as *Takra Prayoga*. Depending on the strength of the patient, and the time, the patient is put on a diet consisting entirely of buttermilk for a period of one week to one month. In the case of piles caused predominantly by *Vata* and *Kapha* there is no remedy better than the use of buttermilk. Buttermilk is administered both as medicine and as food. In patients in whom digestion is extremely poor, the use of buttermilk is most efficacious and appropriate.

The patient in this case is given a gruel of buttermilk, a *lehya* (paste) of buttermilk cooked with the flour of parched paddy, rice with buttermilk, and fat, vegetables and meat soup also mixed with buttermilk. While preparing the buttermilk, medicines which are useful in alleviating piles are mixed with it. The use of buttermilk can be prolonged for a month and withdrawn gradually. Piles thus treated and got rid of by means of buttermilk do not reappear again. The Charaka Samhita says that just as buttermilk poured on the ground eradicates even the deep-rooted grass, it also eradicates the dry piles in persons whose digestive power has been stimulated by its use. By this application of buttermilk, the channels in the body are cleared. The digested portion of food, known as *Rasa*, which comes out of these channels gives rise to sturdiness, strength, a good complexion and a sense of well being.

While administering medicines to cure piles, one has to be attentive to the digestive power of the patient. In general, loss of power of digestion gives rise to three main disorders. These are diarrhoea, piles and a disorder called *Grahani* (the release of ingested food, before it is fully digested, from the seat of digestion). These three disorders also influence each other by becoming the causative factors for one another. The severity of these diseases increase as soon as the power of digestion is diminished and vice versa. Therefore, to overcome these three digestive disorders, the power of digestion has to be protected and improved at any cost.

There are many techniques adopted while treating piles. Fomentation, fumigation and application of pastes relieve piles of their stiffness, swelling, itching and pain. These measures also help in discharging the accumulated defective blood from the piles. In the case of vitiated blood, if the disease does not subside with pacifying measures, blood is drained from the pile mass with the help of instruments. In the case of bleeding piles, the blood is never arrested immediately. If impure blood is arrested at the very beginning it causes many diseases related to disorders of blood. Therefore arresting blood is desirable only after the impure blood is allowed to drain. A physician well acquainted with aetiology, symptoms, time, strength of the patient and the colour of the blood ignores the bleeding initially. Therefore, medicines are used to stimulate the digestive fire, arrest the bleeding as well as pacify the aggravated *doshas*.

To sum up, the most effective cure for piles can be obtained by regulating dietary habits and by using medicines which are carminative and which improve the power of digestion. A patient should always consume food and medicines which help in the proper flow of the *Vayu* and which are protective of the digestive fire. They should scrupulously avoid all practices which are contrary to the above. ■

DR. GIRIJA

I
i
I
wa
19
inc
—
pro
I
as i
rhe
cog
aut
see
gen
clin
livi
dise
unl
N
sho
way
the
dise
dev
prev
and
exa
betv
W
the
sam
nati
198
una
cou
infe
been
due
chro
rem:
Te
deve
since
your
"Yea
Inter
Card
to di
inter
natio
form
Card
to gi
devel
Th
of fi
devel
treat
symp
one
joint
cases
attac
descr
bites
Th
Muc
tende
deter
defor
valve
pumi

Indian Systems of Medicine

Managing the fever

RECENTLY, Madras witnessed the large scale occurrence of a particular type of fever. It was termed "viral fever." This fever was accompanied by cold, cough, chest congestion and body pain. The fever rose in the forenoon and evening. It normally lasted for six days. In cases where the management was not appropriate, the fever persisted. Many were hospitalised for a longer period. Those who treated them were puzzled about why the fever was not coming under control. Some patients were discharged from hospitals and taken back home with fever persisting. Some of them were treated by ayurvedic physicians in the first instance, while others came to ayurveda for a second round of treatment after completing a course of antibiotics.

A typical case of this fever was that of a 60 year old woman. More than two weeks of

of bitter extracts and the next couple of days with medicated ghee along with restricted diet brought her fever and lung congestion down. Soon she was on the road to recovery with an improved appetite and digestion.

According to Ayurveda, fever is the foremost of all diseases. It is called *Jwara*. The most important aspect of treatment for *Jwara* lies in the proper management of the patient by way of diet and drugs taking into account the stages of the disease.

Fever is a disease experienced by all of us. Just before the onset of fever, we experience fatigue, aversion to food and work, bad taste in the mouth, dullness in the eyes, yawning, aching of limbs, and a feeling of creeping cold in the body. The unmistakable symptoms of fever are increased heat in the body, body pain and cessation of sweat, all of which appear

the *Amasaya*. This is obvious from the fact that one of the very first symptoms of *Jwara* is the loss of appetite in the person. Often, one might notice that *Jwara* follows an upset or disturbed digestion. When a person has consumed food which is disagreeable to the body, it can result in fever the following day. At times, when diarrhoea is arrested prematurely without improving one's power of digestion, it can result

HEALTH WATCH

in fever, as in the case of a 70-year-old man, who after a by-pass surgery was administered a number of medicines, one of which caused diarrhoea in him. As the doctor did not want to withdraw the drug, medicines were administered to arrest diarrhoea. This resulted in a constipation, as well as indigestion, causing severe discomfort in the stomach and fever. Subsequently, he came in for Ayurvedic treatment. Here the important part of the treatment consisted of using medicines to improve his power of digestion and regulate the flow of *vayu*. This treatment helped in bringing down the fever.

There are many factors which precipitate the attack of fever, indigestion; excessive fatigue, any process of physical wasting, improper and excessive use of oil for the body internally and externally, any kind of blow received by the body, suppuration of a boil or ulcer, introduction of poison into the body, violation of habitual diet and conduct, sudden change in season, inhalation of poisonous substances, grief, planetary influences, anxiety, fear, and in women, effect of miscarriage or untimely parturition, improper regimen after childbirth, first accumulation of milk in the breast — these are some of the causes which can lead to an attack of fever, by causing derangement and aggravation of the three bodily doshas *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.

What happens when the bodily *doshas* get deranged? The aggravated *doshas* enter the stomach and intestines or the *Amasaya*. There, they get mixed with the *rasa* which is the first product after the transformation of food in the digestive tract. The deranged *doshas* mixed with the *rasa* impair the digestive fire. They course through the body obstructing the *rasa* carrying and sweat carrying channels. After impairing digestion, they expel the inherent heat out of the seat of digestion and spread it all over the body causing the rise in the bodily temperature and putting a stop to perspiration.

What are the types of fever? They are eight in number — seven due to the three *doshas* and their combinations and one caused by factors external to the body. *Doshas* are vitiated by their respective aggravating causes (food and regimen) and the dominance of *dosha* is also influenced by different seasons.

Apart from the above, there is a range of fevers which are classified as a *Vishama Jwara*, the intermittent fever. These afflict the body when an attack of fever is not properly treated and cured. Even a small residue of the deranged bodily *doshas* in a patient just cured

of an attack of fever can give rise to *Vishama Jwara*. Especially, a person who is weak and who indulges in inappropriate food and regimen after a fever creates a conducive atmosphere for the residual *dosha* to get aggravated and cause fever.

There are five different types of *Vishama Jwara*. They may appear everyday, alternate days and once in three days. This type of *Vishama* fever never finds complete remission. The *doshas* lurk in the deeper elements of the body of *dhatu* such as bone and bone marrow. They produce a characteristic emaciation, physical weakness and heaviness of limbs. Charaka compares this type of fever to a seed lying dormant in the soil which sprouts in favourable times — the *doshas* stay in the

about a speedy digestion of deranged *doshas*, kindles the digestive fire, brings about lightness in the body, a liking for food and improvement in the digestive processes of the body. Later on medicinal compounds and decoctions are administered to completely cure the patient of the disease.

During fever, use of hot water is most effective. Hot water disintegrates the accumulated phlegm, restores the deranged *pitta* and *vayu* to their normal condition, quenches thirst and cleanses internal channels. Water is boiled with digestive, appetising, light, anti-fever drugs. The choice of drugs can be varied according to the predominance of *dosha*. The most effective and popular drink in fever is called the *Shadanga panam*: it consists of Vettiver (*Ushiram*), Parpatam (a variety of grass), Black vettiver (*Hivera*), Sunthi (dry ginger), *Mustha* (korai kizhangu) and sandalwood. This combination is ideal for digesting the *doshas*, improving the appetite, quenching the thirst and burning sensation and removing the bad taste in the mouth. It also possesses anti-fever properties.

For the disease to be cured completely, it is essential that the deranged *doshas* are digested. The stage of the disease when the *doshas* remain undigested is called the *Ama* stage. Any anti-fever medicine administered during the *ama* stage (undigested stage) of the disease which results in the mere suppression of the disease, produces the recurrence of the fever. This in turn forces the disease to become *Vishama Jwara* or an intermittent fever. Once the fever becomes *Vishama*, it puts insurmountable difficulties in the way of its cure. The name *vishama* itself is derived from the erratic nature of this disease.

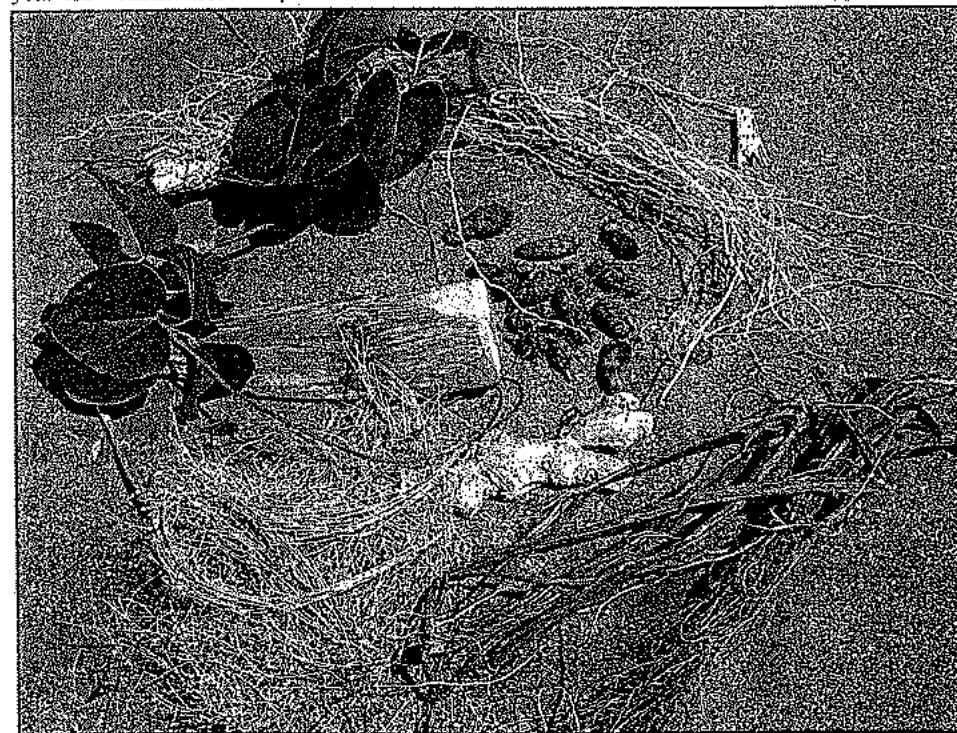
Normally, fever finds remission in six to seven

days. A middle aged man who suffered an attack of fever for seven days, did not overcome the fever. Daily the thermometer would show around 99 degrees and he felt feverish. Not wanting to take one more course of antibiotics, he changed his treatment to ayurveda. This is a typical case of what is known as *Jeernajwara*. A low grade fever persists, and does not respond to general run of medicines. This happens when the patient is weak and the elements of the body also lack strength. The *doshas* in a digested form, stay in the body, giving rise to *Jeernajwara*. In this stage of the disease, the fever responds quickly to medicated ghee. There are several types of medicated ghees which have anti-pyretic properties depending upon the type of *dosha* predominant in the disease. However, medicated ghee can be administered only in the case of *Jeernajwara*.

After the fever leaves the body, it is important to follow certain regimen to prevent a relapse of the disease. One should avoid food which is heavy for digestion and that which is disagreeable, physical exercise, sexual intercourse and so on.

Today, a whole host of fevers are called "viral" fevers. Strictly speaking, viral infections do not respond to treatment by antibiotics. However, routine administration of antibiotic drugs are carried on with the rationale that it may prevent a secondary infection. The fever, in spite of these drugs, runs its normal course and leaves the body. What is most important is to manage the fever knowing its *Avastha* or stage. This alone can prevent any complications from arising in a fever. By this we can also avoid unnecessary drugging of our system. ■

DR. GIRIJA



The most popular and effective drink for fever is Shadanga Panam comprising Vettiver, dry ginger, sandalwood and a variety of grass.

treatment and hospitalisation could not abate the fever. She was reduced to a bag of bones. Even after two weeks, she was continuing a course of antibiotics, vitamins and so on, with no remission in her fever, cough and congestion of lungs. During the course of the treatment, she underwent all possible tests — blood test, culture, motion test, Ecocardiogram, endoscopy, echo of heart, chest X-ray, ultrasound of abdomen, lung function tests and so on. But the cause of the fever could not be identified.

In this type of fever, modern medicine found the same difficulty which it usually finds in treating respiratory ailments. Mere antibiotic, anti pyretic drugs of any kind was of no consequence to the disease wherever it did not go along with prevention of phlegm through appropriate use of diet and drugs. In the case of this elderly man, she was consuming food which constantly increased phlegm. Two days

simultaneously in a person. A proper understanding of the causes and nature of *Jwara* is essential today. It helps in preventing unnecessary or excessive drugging, as well as in overcoming the extraordinary fear which develops when one is afflicted by the disease.

At times, we may experience a sense of feverishness, or mild warmth of the body. This need not necessarily develop into a full-fledged fever. This feeling of feverishness goes away without any special medication. Fever also appears along with other diseases — measles, jaundice, chickenpox, herpes, and a whole host of other diseases. In none of these situations, any special medication is required. The fever disappears with the disease which is managed generally well by most of our people without many drugs or professional help.

In *Jwara*, the main seat of affliction is the stomach and small intestines area, known as

Linked to the

V

(UN
thin
dise
E
and
env
up,
pro
link
P
the
env
or
env
thio
to
mer
in s
fres
W
env
rem
hend
prob
was
asso
heal
popu
Hum
Stock
The
Health

Indian Systems of Medicine

Treating diseases of the urinary system

Little is known about the causes of various diseases that afflict the urinary system and the way to cure these ailments.

THANKS to the great advances made in modern medicine, we know everything about the kidney, bladder and the entire urinary system. We can look at every bit of the anatomy of the various organs involved in the urinary system with sophisticated diagnostic tools employed to identify the pathology of these organs. Yet little is known about the causes of various diseases that afflict the urinary system and the way to cure these diseases. A lack of proper knowledge and understanding about the complex function of this system has led to widespread use of surgical and complicated hi-tech methods to deal with many of the diseases of the urinary system.

A typical example of this sort of treatment can be seen in the case of enlargement of the prostate. Rajan, 76 years old, was finding it difficult to control the passing of urine which led to frequent urination and great discomfort. His physician diagnosed the case as a problem of the prostate and recommended surgery as the only possible treatment according to modern medicine. Some Ayurvedic patent medicines which could possibly cure him of his problem were also recommended. Thus Rajan found his way to Ayurvedic treatment. His condition was diagnosed as one of the many urinary diseases, where the prime factor involved was *vayu*. This type of urinary disease is called *Mutraashsteela*. The deranged *doshas* lodged in the region between the bladder and anus give rise to a thick lumpy swelling, causing discomfort and difficulty in controlling the passing of urine. Rajan was administered two sets of medicines, one to restore the proper function of the deranged *vayu* which controls

the function of the urinary system. The second set was specifically directed to act in the region of the disease — the kidneys, bladder and the urinary tract. The medicines proved to be effective in curing the problem, avoiding the need for surgery.

According to Ayurveda, the urinary system is not merely the kidney, bladder or the urethra. It is a complex function of a whole host of organs situated in the pelvic cavity. The pelvic region is known as the *Apana sthana*. The interconnection of various body parts and organs — the kidney, the bladder, the back, the testes, the penis and the anus — situated in the pelvic cavity is called the urinary system. The main agent which controls the function of this system is the *vayu* which in the pelvic region is known as *Apana Vayu*. Therefore, in diseases of the urinary system, the treatment is aimed at setting right the proper functioning of the entire *apana* region by pacifying or alleviating the deranged *Apana Vayu*. Any impairment of *Apana Vayu* can impair the proper and normal expulsion of semen, menstrual blood, faeces and urine. It is the same *Vayu* which controls the movement of the foetus at childbirth.

In general, diseases involving difficult urination, known as *Mutra kricchram* arise due to the following factors which aggravate the

HEALTH WATCH

doshas especially the *Vayu*: suppression of the urge to urinate, excessively dry food, excessive physical exercise and sex, travelling in fast moving vehicles on uneven surfaces, indigestion, excessive intake of sharp and pungent medicines, meat obtained from marshy lands, etc.

Krishnan, 70, was alarmed when he found that he was passing blood along with urine. He was diagnosed as having cysts over the kidneys. The usual course of allopathic medicines failed to arrest the bleeding. As he was afraid to try a more drastic course of treatment suggested to him by his physician, he sought Ayurvedic medical help. The disease could be quickly identified as a particular type of urinary disease where *pitta* and *rakta* (blood) are vitiated along

with *vayu* due to habits which constantly aggravated the *doshas*. He was in the habit of consuming alcohol everyday as also large quantities of curd thrice a day. This habit of consuming food which was sharp and hot in potency soon caused burning and pain while passing urine and the passing of blood along with the urine.

Krishnan was asked to give up alcohol, curd, pickles and all sharp, pungent and spicy food. *Sathavari* — Indian asparagus — processed in milk was given to him twice a day. This way of

administering *Sathavari* was effective in pacifying the aggravated *pitta* and *rakta*. *Sathavari* is also an excellent tonic and it is a *Rasayana* which gives strength and immunity to the body. When processed and administered as a *kashayam* in milk, the properties of *Sathavari* are enhanced. In this type of urinary disease, drugs processed and administered in milk are effective. Krishnan was also administered medicines which are diuretic that checked the blood flow immediately. The pain and burning also stopped. Even though *Sathavari* has no direct connection with urinary diseases, it was ideally suited for pacifying the vitiated *doshas* namely *vata* and *pitta* as well as blood which had given rise to this problem.



Herbs like gokshura are effective in treating ailments of the urinary tract.

Uma, a 30-year-old, suffered irritation and pain while urinating. As she left this problem unattended for several days, she developed fever, which shot up to 104 F. In this case, the fever was a result of the urinary disease, which she was suffering from for some time. Here the treatment was mainly aimed at curing the urinary disease, along with some medicines which were useful in treating the fever.

There are 13 types of urinary diseases in which urine is obstructed. This condition is known as *Mutraaghatam* in Ayurveda. Retention of urine in the bladder causing spasmodic stricture, pulling sensation from the navel, passing urine in small quantities or dribbling of the urine in drops whenever there is some strain or exertion, a thick non-shifting lump in the pelvic region, distention and pain in the bladder, obstruction of the orifice of the bladder causing retention of the urine, scanty jets of urine on straining with or without pain, urination with blood with or without pain, a burning sensation, scanty accumulation of urine in the cavity of the urinary organ, tumours in the bladder which obstruct the passage of urine, passing of slimy urine with pain, or yellow non-slimy urine which leaves a sediment when it is dried — these are some of the diseases classified in Ayurveda under *Mutraaghatam* or obstructed urine.

Apart from this, there are eight types of diseases described under *Mutrakricchram*, painful or difficult urination. A very common condition called *Asmari* is classified under this. *Asma* means stone. In this disease, gravel and stones block the passage of urine and cause

pain. The primary cause for the presence of stones in the urinary passage is the deranged and condensed *Kapha* in the urinary system. Stones are formed when this *Kapha* mixes with the urine. These stones, when acted upon by *Pitta* and *Vayu*, split into gravel which obstruct the passage of urine. People who suffer from this disease exhibit symptoms such as pain in the cardiac region, shivering, cramps in the loins, diminution of the digestive fire, fainting, painful and obstructed urination sometimes with blood, and excruciating pain in the bladder, penis, navel regions. The treatment for stone and gravel consists of employing medicinal compounds which are alkalis, liquid extracts of drugs and medicated ghees as well as injecting medicine through the urethral passage. Only in cases where these methods have failed to effect a cure, surgical methods are recommended for the cure of *Asmari*.

Herbs and minerals: Among the extraordinary variety of Indian herbal and mineral substances, there are three important, simple medicines which are useful in all diseases connected with the urinary system. These are *Gokshura* (*Nerunjil* in Tamil), *Punarnava* (*Mookkarattai* in Tamil), and *Silajithu*, an exudation from rocks. In the Ayurvedic pharmacopea one hardly comes across a medicinal compound, used in the treatment of diseases of the urinary system, which does not include one of the three mentioned above.

Gokshura or *Nerunjil* is an insignificant small plant which grows close to the soil. Most of us do not notice the plant until its sharp thorns pierce the soles of our feet. Even though the thorn appears to be the most insignificant part of the plant, it is the one which is used in

medicine. *Gokshura* possesses several medicinal properties. It increases strength and promotes sturdiness in the body, it improves appetite and can also act as an aphrodisiac. Above all it cleanses the urinary system and helps in eliminating stones.

Punarnava is one of the finest herbs in Indian medicine. Among the poor and the non-westernised Indians, this plant still carries a great deal of value as a food item. It is meticulously collected, cleaned and used as a green leaf in food. As the name itself implies, it is an indestructible plant, which comes up again and again.

The importance of *Punarnava* arises from the fact that it alleviates all the three *doshas* — *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. As a result it is one of the most important herbs used in Ayurvedic pharmacopea for a variety of diseases. It is effectively used in the treatment of anaemia, and remarkable results are obtained when used in cases of swelling in hands, feet, face and the whole body. It is highly effective in the treatment of diseases of the kidney and the heart. *Punarnava* is also useful in cases of blood-spitting, cough, and pain in the abdomen. In combination with other drugs, *Punarnava* finds wide application. *Silajithu* is a rocky exudation usually found in the Himalayan ranges. It is a *Rasayana* medicine — which promotes strength and immunity of the body and alleviates disorders — commonly used by the people living in the hill areas. *Silajithu* is excellent in alleviating diseases connected with the urinary system and in treating edema, anaemia, diabetes, diseases of the spleen and abdomen, obesity, diseases of the skin and so on. ■

DR. GIRIJA

Indian systems of medicine

Taking care of heart disease

TODAY, anything concerning the heart has become big business as the mention of heart disease seems to cause undue scare and paranoia among the educated public. Even ordinary people, at the slightest physical discomfort quite unconnected with the heart, readily subject themselves to a series of tests relating to the heart. When a person with a pacemaker assured of long years of guaranteed life dies within a few years of its implantation, even this does not deter people from resorting to such mechanical means of correcting heart conditions. Artificial hearts, heart transplants, palliative procedures like bypass surgery, complicated hi-tech and prohibitively expensive and risky methods of removing blocks by opening up arteries are certainly ways of attempting to circumvent the problem. Even where continued medical treatment is clearly the most positive option, adventurist practices seem more attractive to many. Given this state of affairs, it has become

of a person who is affected by mental tension, stress anxiety, terror, hard physical labour or excessive indulgence in sexual activities. All these lead to the derangement of *Vayu* and cause heart disease which is primarily *Vataja* in nature.

Food habits: Among the various causes of heart disease, the most important is the food regimen of an individual. Constant indulgence in food articles which are *Rooksha* or exceedingly dry without any oily substance, *Ushna* or heating in potency, incompatible in combination (for example, fish and milk, sour fruits and milk, etc.), indigestible for the stomach, not congenial to the system, raw and uncooked, as also intake of food before the digestion of the previous meal — all these factors can give rise to improper digestion. Consequently, *Amam* — an undigested residue — is produced and gets lodged in the various minute passages and channels in the body.

How does all this affect the heart? The first

reducing the so-called risk factor. Yet, the most vital factor responsible for reducing the risk factor has been missed out altogether by modern medical practice. It is not enough to merely reduce or monitor the food intake. It is necessary to ensure that the individual possesses a good power of digestion. This alone can ensure that no undigested residue is left behind. And it is here that the most advanced medical practice fails miserably. There is no known medicinal compound in the modern pharmacopea which possesses the property of kindling the power of digestion and digesting

while a dull digestive fire cannot digest fully even the lightest food. Thus even though a great deal of caution has been exercised in seeing that the right kind of food is consumed by patients of heart disease, the problem still remains. Improper function of the digestive fire leading to improper digestion and assimilation, can also result in corpulence or excessive emaciation. This in turn can give rise to many diseases.

Due to the various factors mentioned above, the vitiated *Rasa dhatu* deranges the *doshas*, and deposits itself in the heart, causing the characteristic pain in the organ. This is known as *Hridroga*. There are five distinct types of heart diseases. Among these, three are caused by the *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, the fourth is due to the combined action of all the three *doshas*, and the fifth is due to the action of *krimi* or living organisms.

numbness, lack of appetite, and a sweet taste in the mouth. The heart disease which is caused by the concerted action of all the three *doshas* combines all these symptoms.

The heart disease caused by *Krimi* (living organisms) exhibits symptoms such as nausea, salivation, piercing and cutting pain with itching sensation in the heart, darkening of vision, aversion to food, dull yellow hue of the eyes and emaciation of the body. In all cases of heart disease, vertigo, a sense of exhaustion accompanied by a feeling of tiredness in the body, emaciation of the body, and loss of consciousness are some of the symptoms which cause a great deal of distress.

Treatment: Once the *dosha* which is predominant in the heart disease is properly identified, the treatment follows the natural course of treatment specific for each *dosha*. Measures for pacifying the *doshas* are undertaken with drugs specific to the *dosha* and the disease. The *krimija* type of heart disease — that caused by living organisms — is considered a difficult disease to cure. The measures adopted at first are aimed at dislodging the *krimis* from the heart, and expel them afterwards. All medicines which are useful for treating worms are used in this case.

In all types of heart disease, except the *Vata* type, milk and milk products are prohibited from use, except when processed specially with medicines to cure the disease. In the *Vata* type of disease, the diet and medicines chosen are predominantly sour and salty. Meat of certain animals, different varieties of salts such as rock salt, *Vacha* (*Vasambu*), asafoetida, ginger and milk products are effective in *Vata* type of heart disease.

In the *Pitta* type, the diet and medicines used are bitter, astringent and sweet. Gooseberry, grapes, sugarcane, honey, dates, sugar are effective in this type of disease. In *kapha* type of disease, diet and medicines are bitter, astringent, pungent and heating in potency. Ginger, horsegram, *Vacha*, asafoetida and pepper are some of the common and familiar items which can be useful in preparing food and drinks for a person afflicted with the *kapha* type of heart disease. Oiling, fomentation, mild enema purgation are administered depending upon the type of heart disease.

Two of the important medicines used in the treatment of heart disease are *Arjuna* (*Marudam*) in Tamil, botanical name *Ternanalia Arjuna* and *Srnga* (deer horn). *Arjuna* is a fairly large sized tree, found throughout India. It is very useful in preparing a reputed heart tonic in the Ayurvedic pharmacopea. It is used in many medicinal combinations and in single drug therapy also.

Srnga or deer horn is used in preparing an effective tonic for the heart. It also possesses qualities which help cure breathlessness, cough, phlegm, hiccups, pain in the sides of the chest. It also gives strength to the body. ■

DR. GIRIJA

The cause of diseases

AYURVEDA declares that the source of health and ill health is the same. Diseases of different organs do not arise from different sources. The source of health and ill-health stem from the same source namely the proper and improper function of three main aspects of the body. These aspects are *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*. The *Doshas* are *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. *Dhatu*s are the body elements which are seven in number, namely, *rasa*, blood, muscle, fat, bone, bone-marrow and the essence of reproduction called *sukra*. And *malas* are sweat, faeces and urine. When there is morbid interaction between the *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala*, it becomes the source for any disease.

Some important details relating to pathology are well described in Ayurveda. The concept of *srotas* described in Ayurveda is a prime factor in all diseases. *Srotas* means pathways and channels in the body. The *doshas* when aggravated spoil the *srotas*. This is a factor in the causation of any disease.

There are 13 main channels *srotas* in our body and one overall channel which is connected with the mind. The 13 channels consist of those concerning respiration, digestion, circulation, muscular system, fat, skeletal system, reproduction, and excretion. The channel concerning the mind envelops the whole body and controls all other channels.

Thus the whole body itself can be described as a conglomeration of *srotas*. Therefore, *srotas* are involved in every disease as well as in the maintenance of good health. These pathways are obstructed by the vitiation of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*, due to unhealthy and unsuitable food and regimen of work and rest.

What happens when one takes to unsuitable food and regimen? The individual is afflicted by *amam* a toxic product of one's own system which gets entry into the channels of *dhatu*s. When *amam* comes into contact with the three *doshas*, *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* and causes their derangement, the channels of *dhatu*s are obstructed creating a fertile ground in our body for various morbid interactions.

Here it is interesting to note that in Ayurveda, all diseases are termed by a special name *amaya*. For instance, jaundice can be called *amaya* of the liver. Liver is one of the main *srotas* or pathway for *pitta* and *rakta* (blood). When the liver is afflicted by *amam*, it gives rise to jaundice or any other liver trouble. The spot at which the *amam* gets hold of, becomes the first location for morbid interaction of any disease. This can happen either in the heart, kidney, brain, blood, muscles, or any other tissues of the body. The main cause of *amam* is weak power of digestion. *Amam* is the root cause of all disease. ■

DR. K. S. VISWANATHA SARMA
Venkata Ramana Ayurveda College, Madras

HEALTH WATCH

imperative that we try and understand the causes and management of heart disease according to Ayurvedic systems of medicine.

According to Ayurveda the human body consists of 107 vital parts known as *marmas* which are seats of prana or life force. The heart is one of them. It is classified under the group of vital parts which, if injured seriously, can lead to death. The word *Hridaya* (heart) is derived from its two main functions namely "receiving" and "giving." The heart is compared with the girder which supports a frame. It is the substratum of life.

What are the causes of heart disease? Broadly the causes which contribute to heart disease can be brought under three categories: 1) Suppression of natural urges like urine and motion and being subjected to stress, anxiety and fear. 2) Indulgence in food which are excessively heavy for digestion, exceedingly dry, incompatible indigestible food etc. 3) Any serious injury to the heart itself.

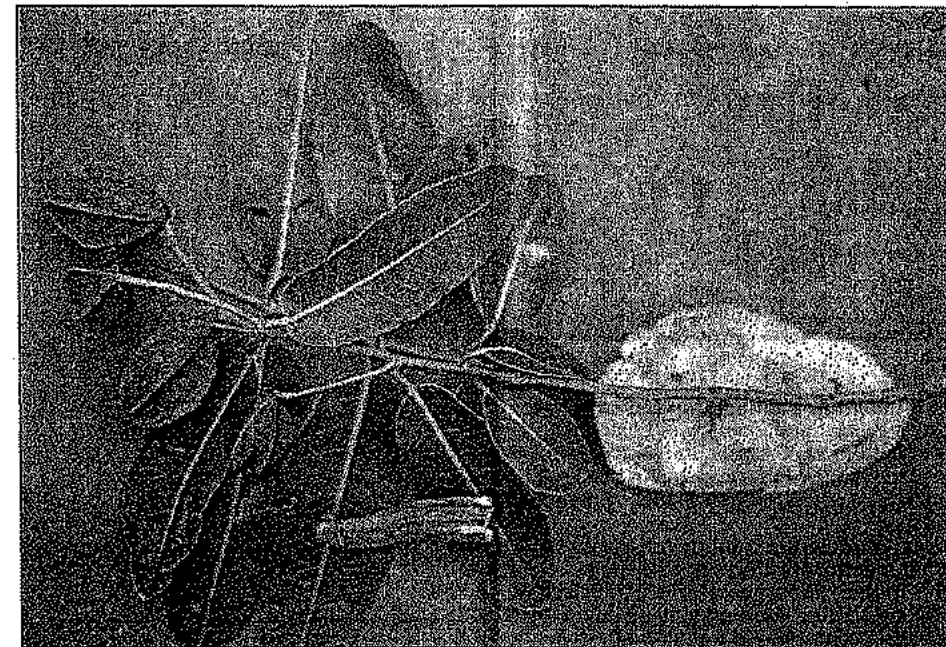
Natural urges: There are 13 natural urges which ought not to be suppressed under any circumstances. They are called *vegas* of the body and these are urine, movement of the bowels, tears, belching, semen, flatus, vomiting, sneezing, yawning, hunger, thirst, sleep, and breathlessness caused by over-exertion. When a person constantly suppresses these bodily urges, *Vayu* is excited. This happens also in the case

product of food which emerges after digestion is called *Rasa*. It flows through the whole body and has its primary seat in the heart.

Rasa successively transforms itself into blood and then into other body elements. It is the essence of assimilated food and is extremely thin. From the heart, which is its seat, *Rasa* traverses to the remotest parts of the body. The quintessence of *Rasa* after its passage through the liver and the spleen, and through the effect of the heat in the body, gets transformed into blood. Some of the characteristic qualities of blood are lightness, fluidity and mobility.

It is therefore very important that when *Rasa* emerges after the digestion of food it does not carry with it any undigested residues or *Amam*. And any impairment in the process of digestion leads to the *Amam* being carried into the heart which is the seat of *Rasa*. Having thus entered the heart, *Amam* vitiates all the three *doshas*, *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. And the *Rasa* which carries *Amam* loses its typical property namely thinness. This is why one of the causes which lead to the vitiation of *doshas* in the heart is the intake of food which leads to improper digestion.

It is a well known fact today that food habits have a direct link with heart disease. There is a lot of talk about reducing the intake of fat, cholesterol etc. which is supposed to help in



Arjuna leaves and Srnga (deer horn) used in treating heart diseases.

the undigested residue. At best, some liver tonics and digestive enzymes may be prescribed but this is hardly sufficient.

Most of the digestive disorders are today taken care of by liberal administration of antacids. By this popular treatment, the problems of digestion go unattended for a long period. A person with hypertension and with a weak power of digestion remarked, "I have in the past few years consumed at least a lakh of antacids. I swallow nearly 10 tablets a day." This is a classic case of improper digestion, where the treatment has no relation to setting right the impaired digestion and assimilation. A person who possesses good digestive fire can digest and assimilate well the heaviest meal.

In the *Vata* type of heart disease, there is severe pain and spasm in the heart region, which feels as if it is being crushed, drawn, pierced, cracked, pricked and split. A vacant feeling in the heart, palpitation, wasting, mental confusion are also some of the symptoms exhibited.

When the heart disease is of the *Pitta* type, the symptoms are thirst, a burning sensation, a sucking pain in the heart, epileptic fits, perspiration, a feeling of expelling fumes while belching, dryness in the mouth, heat in the body and fever.

In the *Kapha* type of heart disease, there is a sense of heaviness in the chest, secretion of mucus, aversion to food, a feeling of

Indian Systems of Medicine

Epilepsy and fainting fits

The most important aspect in the treatment of epilepsy is to release the brain and the channels of the mind from a state of being enveloped by the aggravated doshas.

ACCORDING to Ayurveda, the mind is made up of three *gunas* or qualities, namely *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. These qualities are responsible for the performance of certain functions in the body. For example, qualities like kindness, gentleness, compassion etc. are derived from the *Sattva* guna. Movement, action, enthusiasm, involvement etc. are derived from *Rajas* and inertia and sleep are derived from *Tamas*. Among these three *gunas*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are called the two doshas of the mind. When these two mental doshas are aggravated they, along with bodily doshas give rise to diseases like

the mind in a fiercely aggravated form. As a consequence the person becomes unconscious. The deranged bodily doshas, choke all channels to the mind. This causes a giddy state in the person. In this state, the world seems to vanish from the eyes of the affected person, and the perception of pleasure and pain is suspended temporarily. As a result of all this, the person drops down insensible like a log of wood. This condition is called *Moorcha*.

Sridhar, 24-year old, goes about on a bicycle everyday collecting old newspapers from every house. From childhood, he periodically experienced fainting spells. The disease came on

specifically effective in curing *Moorcha*. He was advised not to move around in the sun. Sridhar responded to the treatment and gradually the fainting spells became lesser in number and in intensity. The treatment continued and Sridhar was well on the road to recovery.

Moorcha is classified into six types, depending upon the predominance of different causative factors. *Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* cause three different types of the disease. Another type is due to the vitiation of blood, one due to the

Apasmara or epilepsy is a disease connected with the mind. The name of the disease, *Apasmara* is derived from the fact that the person afflicted loses the faculty of memory. The word *smriti* denotes the faculty of recalling past experiences and prefix *Apa* denotes the separation or departure of memory. Epilepsy is associated with an entering into darkness or an unconscious state, accompanied with unpleasant movements of the body caused by the derangement of intellect and mind.

The disease is brought about by various factors. In a person afflicted by epilepsy, the mind is afflicted by the aggravation of *rajas* and *tamas*, with diminished *sattva* guna. The bodily doshas are aggravated due to intake of unwholesome, uncongential and unclean food, improper conduct and repression of the natural

change in the appearance of the person and sleeplessness are the symptoms which usually precede an attack.

There are four types of epilepsy. Three of these are based on the action of single doshas, *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. The fourth is due to the joint action of all the three doshas. Each type is characterised by certain distinct symptoms. At times, mild seizures are seen in infants. This cannot be called epilepsy as it does not have the same causative factors as epilepsy. It occurs due to disorders in the digestion and assimilation powers of the infant. These seizures disappear with the use of simple medicines.

The most important aspect in the treatment of epilepsy is to release the brain, the channels, and the mind from a state of being enveloped by the aggravated doshas. Drugs which are beneficial to the intellect (*Medhya*) are employed in the treatment. Several types of medicated ghees, like *Kalyanaka*, *Mahatikta*, *Shatphala*, *Panchagavya* and a host of others are very effective in treating epilepsy. Certain *choornams* and *bhasmas* are also very effective. Many therapeutic practices like purging, medicated enemas, inducing vomiting, nasal drops, etc. are used wherever necessary and indicated by the specific conditions.

There are many herbal medicines which possess the property of nourishing the mental faculties. *Sankhupushpi*, *Brahmi* and *Vacha* are three common herbs which possess this property.

Sankhupushpi is a perennial creeper found throughout India. There are three different varieties of this plant and the most common ones are the white and the blue. The white variety is superior in its medicinal properties. It is very cooling and is an excellent tonic for the brain. Besides this, it is useful in pacifying *vata* and *pitta*, helps in hair growth, induces sleep, arrests bleeding, promotes strength, fertility, reduces burning sensations in the body, and nourishes the body elements. It is a very useful drug in the treatment of epilepsy, mental disorders, heart diseases, voice disorders, difficulty in urination and skin disease.

Vacha is known as *Vasambu* in Tamil. It is a medicinal herb which is found in almost every home. It is a strong smelling aromatic root. It is hot in potency and is one of the most useful drugs in the Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia. In traditional homes, a paste of *Vacha* in small quantities is given regularly to infants as it helps in improving the intellect, memory, speech and digestion in infants.

Vacha relieves constriction and distention of the abdomen and helps in the proper passage of urine and motion. It is useful in the treatment of *vata* and *kapha* diseases, insanity, epilepsy and psychological disorders such as hysteria.

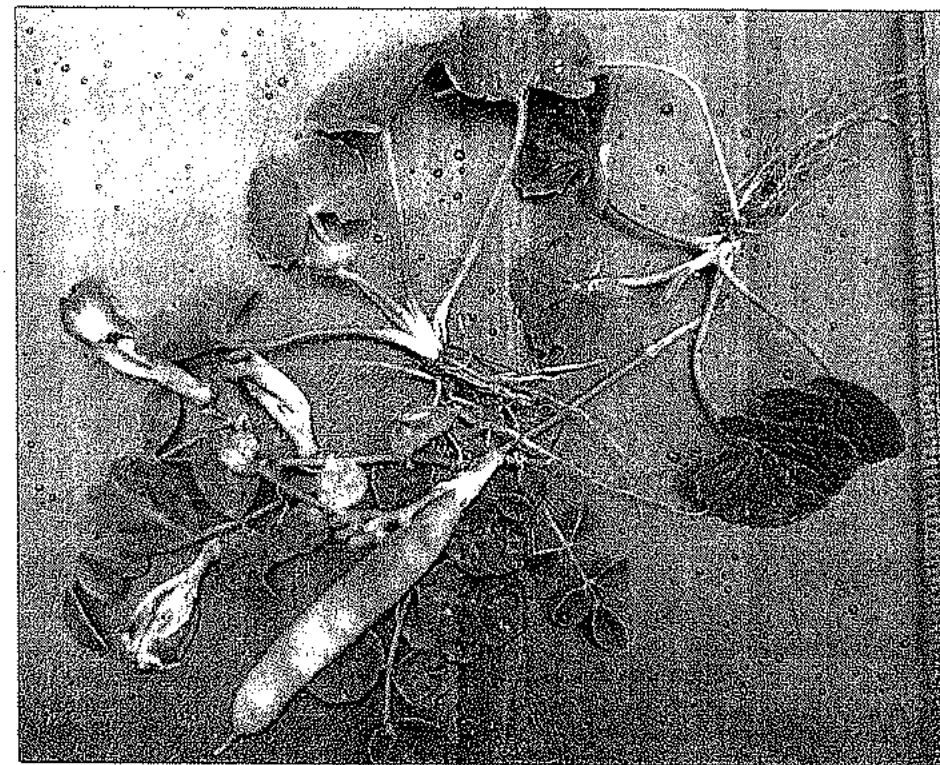
Brahmi is known as *Vallarai* in Tamil. It is a small plant and is popular as a green leafy vegetable in cooking. It is cooling in potency and improves the intellect. It is a reputed brain tonic, especially used in loss of memory. It improves the power of speech, and is used in the treatment of epilepsy and mental disorders. It also improves the voice, and is used in anaemia, blood diseases, cough and skin diseases.

In diseases connected with the mind, the mind is deranged by the bodily and mental doshas. Ayurveda in a single verse describes the treatment and the best remedy for all diseases of the mind as *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhairya* (courage) and *Atmadi Vignyanam* (knowledge of self). All activities which help in the development of the *Sattva* quality of the mind such as *Yoga*, meditation (*dhyana*), study and developing a positive attitude towards life, also help in overcoming these diseases.

urges. The mind is injured due to anxiety, passion, fear, anger, grief, agitation etc. Due to all these factors, the aggravation of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* as well as *rajas* and *tamas* takes place. The mind is enveloped by the deranged doshas, and they choke all the channels connected with the mind which in turn affects the mind and consciousness, giving rise to *Apasmara*.

In epilepsy, the channels (*Srotas*) connected with the mind are overwhelmed by the concerted action of the deranged doshas. This brings about an aggravation of *rajas* and *tamas* which in turn causes unconsciousness and forgetfulness of all past events. The afflicted person writhes in agony and throws about the hands and legs in convulsive jerks. The tongue, eyes and eyebrows are contracted and twitching occurs. There is excessive salivation. The person gnashes the teeth and falls down with the eyes open and there is frothing at the mouth. Consciousness returns within a short while and the person awakens after this episode as if from sleep.

There are certain premonitory symptoms which indicate the onset of an epileptic attack. A throbbing of the heart, a sense of emptiness



Vallarai and Sankhupushpi — herbs which nourish the mental faculties.

influence of wine, and the sixth is due to the effect of poison. Whatever may be the cause of *Moorcha*, in all the types a predominance of deranged *Pitta* can be detected. Because of the aggravation of *Pitta*, the following measures are found to be effective in all types of *Moorcha* — constant sprinkling of cold water over the body, bathing in cold water, contact with cold gems, garlands, flowers, cold plasters and cold compresses made out of medicinal herbs, cool breeze, fanning the body, cold and perfumed drinks and all cooling measures in general.

once a month, or sometimes once in two months. When this happened, he fainted four to five times in a day and at times the spells occurred continuously. When the disease became more severe, the spells came on even ten times in a day and also caused nausea. For some years, Sridhar was consuming antiepileptic drugs, sedatives and multi-vitamins. He gave up all these medicines, since according to him his condition remained the same whether he consumed the drugs or gave them up.

This was a typical case of *Moorcha*. In this disease, the treatment in general is at first purificatory and later *Rasayana* or strength-promoting. In the case of Sridhar, he was advised to switch to food which was light for digestion and free from meat, alcohol, spices etc. He was asked to use three medicated oils, one for the head, the other a nasal drop, and the third for the body. He was advised to apply oil on his head and body continuously for a period of one month. A mild purgative was administered after two weeks of this treatment. He was also given *Bhasmas*, *Choorname*s (powders of drugs) and *Ghritams* (medicated ghee) which are

HEALTH WATCH

epilepsy, fainting fits etc. Just like *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, which when disturbed from their balance and their abode, upset the health of the human body, aggravation of *rajas* and *tamas* cause diseases which are connected with the mind. These three *gunas* are constantly nourished through food, as the various food articles we consume also possess these three *gunas*. Food articles which possess predominantly *Sattva* qualities nourish the *Sattva* guna. Similarly food articles also nourish *Rajas* and *Tamas* in a person.

Moorcha (fainting fits) and *Apasmara* (epilepsy) are two of commonly occurring diseases which are closely connected with the mind. These two diseases are quite different from each other. During fainting fits, there are no seizures which are very characteristic of epilepsy. The causative factors for fainting fits are the following: A person who is weak and emaciated with aggravated *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* can easily be afflicted by this disease. Constant indulgence in incompatible foods is an additional contributory factor. In such a person, suppression of natural urges and injury to the body result in the *sattva* guna getting reduced. The doshas enter the organs of perception and

Managing diarrhoea

IT is good that other practitioners of Indian system of medicines are also invited to participate in this useful discussion. Though Homoeopathy is not strictly Indian, Dr. Hahneman, a German by birth, accepts the theory of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, though he names these differently. We too accept this theory of Ayurveda, that a disease can take root only if the body, prepares the ground for it. In addition, we accept the two maxims of Ayurveda — *visham vishasya aushadham*, and *mardhanam guna vardhanam* meaning, poison is the medicine for poison and trituration increases the efficiency (potency) of any item. This has been amply proved.

We also fully agree with the 'virus' theory as enunciated by Ayurvedic physicians. I quote here a passage from a book by Dr. James Tylor Kent. Dr. Kent was a renowned allopath in the U.S. before he switched over to Homoeopathy.

"The physicians of these days will tell you that they go back to the cause, but they present no cause; they only bring up the superficial conditions that make the consumptive man worse. They will also tell you that a bacillus is the cause of tuberculosis. But if the man had not been susceptible to the bacillus he could not have been affected by it. As a matter of fact, the tubercles come first and the bacillus is secondary. It has never been found prior to the tubercle, but it follows that and comes there as a scavenger. The causes of the tubercular deposit rests with psora, the chronic, miasm, bacilli are not the cause of disease, they never come until after the disease.

"Allopaths are really taking the sequence for the consequence, thus leading to a false theory, the bacteria theory. You may destroy the bacteria and yet not destroy the disease. The susceptibility remains the same and only those who are susceptible get the disease. Bacteria have a use, so the bacteria theory would make it appear that these micro organisms are here just to make man sick.

"The more bacteria the less poison. A typhoid stool when it first passes from the bowel has a very scanty allowance of bacteria, yet it is very poisonous. But let it remain until it becomes black with bacteria and it is comparatively benign.

"... we have the cause of phthisis not in the bacteria but in the virus, which the bacteria are sent to destroy...."

Though we prepare medicines from all the three kingdoms. (I intentionally avoid nosodes — disease products) namely, vegetable, mineral and animal. The vegetable is preferable as it is least harmful. Here, the modalities are very important. The colour and consistency of the stool will lead to the correct remedy. I restrict myself to three remedies — *rheum*, *jalapa* and *magnesia carbonica*.

Rheum (*rhubarb*) is *nervalam* in Tamil, which, if taken in crude form, gushes out all the intake.

Jalapa — (Root of *Ipomoea* — a Mexican plant — also grows in India) Child passes stools mostly during night and it screams. There will be constant contortions of the body, bending forward, backward and sideways alternatively. The main indication is colic and diarrhoea.

Magnesia Carbonica — child doubles up with colic because the changed position gives it relief. There will be amelioration after passing stools.

When ONIDA performs, everyone shuts up and watches.

Indian Systems of Medicine

A foothold to good health

“PREVENTION is better than cure” has become merely a catchword without much substance. As more and more emphasis is laid on cure, we have altogether forgotten all the daily and seasonal regimen which help in maintaining good health. Ayurveda gives great importance to these regimen and prescribes in detail the practices which contribute to good health and long life. Today, these practices are looked down upon as some crazy habits or addictions of our people, which may even be harmful to the body. It is time that we understood the basis for these practices and the benefits we derive from them. Let us look at some of our daily regimen which in the recent years have undergone a great deal of transformation.

One of the first actions we all perform in the morning is the cleaning of teeth and oral cavity. Many of us have consciously opted for sweet tooth pastes for cleansing our teeth. In spite of the great claims made by the manufacturers of tooth paste, it is well known to every dentist that toothpastes do not do much good to teeth and gums. If only we were to look at the variety of sticks used by the villagers for cleaning their teeth, we can see that all these sticks possess one of three different tastes — bitter, pungent or astringent. Sticks or tooth powders which have these tastes, cleanse the teeth, remove foul smell and tastelessness from the mouth and also prevent the formation of *kapha* early in the morning. Also, holding an oil like gingelly oil in the mouth for a short period of time strengthens the jaws, voice, facial muscles, roots of the

oil regularly wards off old age, develops the ability to withstand exertion and enjoys good vision, good physique, long life, sound sleep and a lustrous skin. Oil application eliminates bad odours, as well as heaviness, drowsiness, itching and unpleasantness due to sweating. It also prevents *quridra* (pain in the lower back radiating down to the legs), cracking of feet, numbness, constriction of vessels and ligaments in the body. Application of oil on the head benefits the sense organs, scalp, roots of the hair, and prevents stiffness of the neck and sleeplessness. However, one should stay away from oil massage and bath when there is an aggravation of *kapha* in the body or indigestion. In the case of chronic complaints of *kapha* affecting the head region, use of specially medicated oils on the head is extremely beneficial. The use of a medicated oil, *Anu Thailam* as a nasal drop is also a daily regimen which alleviates all the three *doshas*, strengthens the sense organs and prevents all diseases above the neck region.

The use of *Anjanam* (collyrium) in the eyes is another practice which is being discouraged and given up. Collyrium prepared with ingredients prescribed in Ayurveda is good for the eyes and is meant for daily use. The eye is highly susceptible to diseases cause by the aggravation of *kapha*. Therefore, a specially prepared collyrium can be used once a week to drain the eyes and keep them free from diseases. Regular use of collyrium is said to make the eyes spotlessly bright.

Food habits and regimen: To maintain good health, we have to adapt our food habits and

Sarad or autumn; *Hemanta* or winter and *Sisira* or late winter. Each season lasts for a period of two months. Broadly, the six seasons can be brought under two categories, the hot and cold halves of the year. The hot half of the year is that period when the sun is travelling northward. It is called the *Uttaravana*. The cold half of the year is the *Dakshinayana*. The changing seasons have profound influences on the body. It naturally means that the food and regimen of human beings have to be so adapted

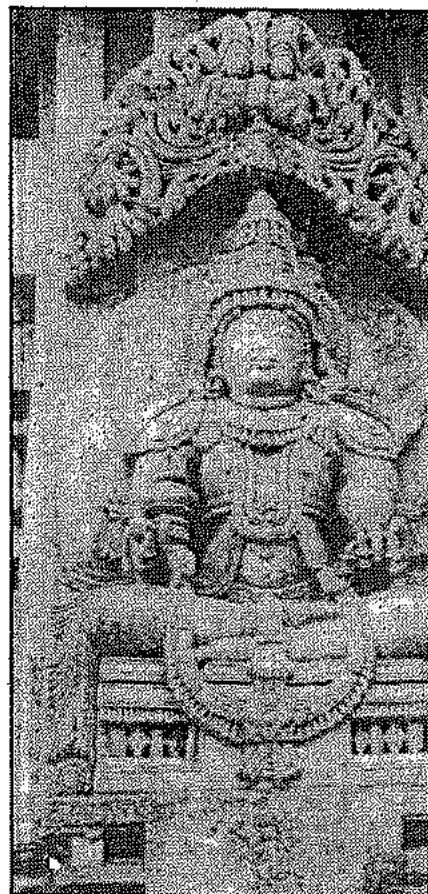
Application of oil on the head benefits the sense organs, scalp and prevents sleeplessness.

to suit the changing seasons. By such adjustment, we are able to prevent the adverse effect of the seasons from affecting our bodies.

In summer, the heat of the sun increases day by day. It becomes destructive, causes depletion of *kapha* in the body. Consequently, *Vayu* starts getting aggravated. The power of digestion is generally weak. As these are the unavoidable effects of this season on the body, we must compensate for or counter the ill effects of this season by way of food and regimen. The food consumed should therefore be sweet, oily but light for digestion, cold in temperature and potency and liquid in nature. Bathing in cold water, avoiding excessive physical exercise, staying away from alcohol, and the use of drinking water processed with cooling herbs like *vettiver* (*Usecram*) and *Mushta* (*Korai Kizhangu*) and cooled in mud pots are beneficial to the body. These practices prevent dehydration, compensate for the excessive dryness and overcome the drastic effects of the summer.

Ramani, aged 50, complains that her joints and body ache severely, especially in the rainy season or when she has to work long hours in water. She finds coldness and dampness unbearable. Ramani is able to identify the effect of rainy season on her body.

The effect of the rainy season, is quite different from that of the summer. In this season, the *Vayu* which is already vitiated due to the extreme dryness of the heat of the summer, gets aggravated because of the effect of coldness and dampness of the rains. Water is polluted during the rains. The *doshas* of the body vitiate one another. The power of digestion which is already weak in summer is further reduced. In this season, all measures should be adopted to improve the power of digestion. To counter the excessive vitiation of *vayu*, food should possess properties opposed to those of *vayu*. Sour, salty, and oily foods pacify *vayu*. Rice, wheat, soup of pulses and certain meats are also appropriate. Honey is helpful especially in countering the dampness of rains. During this season, one should avoid sleep during the day. In fact, day sleep should be avoided in all seasons except summer, as it aggravates all *doshas* in the body, especially *kapha*. In summer a short period of a sleep during the day is allowed. Only infants, the



Dhanvantari — the foremost physician of Ayurveda — from Vishnu temple, Somanathpura (11th Century Hoysala Art).

debilitated, the convalescent, and the very old may sleep during the day in any season.

Immediately after the rainy season, there is a sudden warming up of the climate. Because of this *pitta* which is already excited in the rain, gets further vitiated. Therefore, the food and regimen should be so adjusted as to counter the effect of the aggravated *pitta*. The best way to control the *pitta* during this season is to use food articles which are bitter, sweet and astringent in taste since these tastes act against *pitta*. Rice, *Amalaki* (*Nellikai*), green gram, sugar, honey are some of the food articles which help in controlling *pitta*.

In winter, our appetite becomes much stronger. The digestive fire is trapped inside the body by the cold external environment, and this

gives rise to a strong power of digestion. The nights are longer and one feels hungry early in the morning. The body requires food which is sweet, sour and salty. New rice, oily substances, sugarcane, milk, pulses and meat etc. are beneficial during winter. Practice of regular exercise and oil baths are essential. One should avoid taking cold food and drinks.

People who suffer from asthma or any other respiratory ailments dominated by phlegm suffer a great deal during the months of December to April. All respiratory ailments get aggravated with the onset of the cold season. This season causes an excessive increase of phlegm and also breathing problems, coughs and colds. Those who do not pay attention to the effect of phlegm causing food articles suffer excessively due to the increase of *kapha* in the respiratory system.

By the end of winter and with the onset of spring, the accumulated *kapha* starts getting released from the body. This aggravated *kapha* dampens the digestive fire giving rise to a variety of diseases. Hence, all food and regimen during this season should aim at reducing the *kapha* and increase the digestive fire. Use of nasal drops, gargling and exercise are important. Honey, *Arishtas* (fermented solutions of herbs), water boiled with dry ginger (*sunthi chukku*), *Mushta* (*Korai kizhangu*), and food articles which are pungent (pepper, garlic etc.), bitter and astringent in taste are beneficial in bringing the aggravated *kapha* under control.

Daily physical exercise of *Vyayama* is a regimen which is beneficial to everyone. Exercise brings about lightness of the body, good digestion, ability to work, depletion of excess fat, and a strong physique. In general, those who consume fatty foods should exercise everyday. Exercise is especially beneficial in cold seasons and in spring. This is because it aids in controlling the excessive accumulation of *kapha* during these seasons as long as exercise is performed only to half of one's physical capacity. During the other seasons, exercise should be practised mildly. Today many people practise daily exercises quite recklessly and beyond their capacities. Excessive exercise can affect the body drastically and produce thirst, emaciation, severe breathing difficulties, bleeding diseases, exhaustion, debility, cough, fever and vomiting.

With the changes brought about in our way of life due to Western education, we have brought upon ourselves innumerable health problems which could have been avoided by following healthy food habits and regimen. Our education has made many of us ignorant of the properties of various food articles and the effect of food, both positive and negative, on our bodies. Modern science is yet to understand the properties of food articles used daily in our country, their relationship to *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, and their impact on various diseases. For a proper understanding of the properties of the food articles we use everyday, it is necessary that we adopt the Ayurvedic approach to food and nutrition. ■

DR. GIRIJA

HEALTH WATCH

teeth, taste for food, prevents dryness of throat, cracks in the lips, tooth ache, tingling sensation in the teeth caused by sour foods, and gives strength to chew hard food items.

One of the very important regimens recommended by Ayurveda is *Abhyanjana* or oil bath — applying oil on our head and body and bathing. This is a practice much maligned and totally discouraged by the modern medical practitioners. A patient quoted his Allopathic physician describing oil bath as "positively harmful and wasteful". Perhaps it is here that we should once again begin our health education. Paediatricians these days prohibit parents from using oil on the children. Even when we physically experience the positive and beneficial effects of oil baths, we allow ourselves to be guided by the contention of modern medical practitioners that oil bath does no good to the body. Except the poor and the non-westernised people of India, the rest have forgotten the use and value of oil application on the body.

Normally, oil is to be applied from head to toe. What is the basis for this practice, and how does the body benefit by this? *Vayu*, one of the three *doshas* is dominant in the sensory organ of touch. This sensory organ is in the skin. The inherent qualities of oil are opposite to those of *Vayu*. So, regular application of oil or massage with oil pacified the aggravation of *Vayu* in the human body. Ayurveda says that one who uses

regimen according to the changing seasons. It should be fairly obvious that different seasons produce different effects on the human body. For instance, we are prone to more phlegm in certain seasons of the year. Aches and pains in the body get aggravated in certain seasons. In summer, we feel dehydrated and sapped of all energy. Why does this happen? This is due to the changes taking place in the seasons as a result of the movement of the sun. Changing seasons interfere with the three *doshas*, *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.

As a simple illustration we can consider *Vayu*. Coldness is one of the properties of *Vayu*. Therefore, cold seasons, cold food and drinks, all these naturally increase *Vayu* in the human body. Consequently the body begins to show signs and symptoms of the aggravation of *Vayu*. To prevent such vitiation of *doshas*, we must physically protect ourselves from the cold. We must also eat and drink warm food items, and avoid all food and regimen which can increase *Vata dosha*. This is possible only if we understand the nature of the season, its effect on the bodily *doshas*, and the qualities of food substances and their relation to *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. We can first look at the nature of the different seasons and the appropriate regimen for the seasons which help in protecting and maintaining good health.

There are six seasons; *Vasantha* or spring, *Greeshma* or summer, *Varsha* or rains;

P
U
E
exch
ways
goods
and te
Au
ment
techn
energ
netwo
Hong
may a
count
The
Devel
Secret
betwe
plastic
long-t
The
Kong
establi
request
centre
positio
of plas
HKE
provid
compa
the ma
plastic
to worl
at the t
availab
informa
inform
networ
Melbor
the Can
the Ru
(Rapra
"An i
will be
enviro
confere
Toront
interna
need fo
knowle
The
for assi
by a tec
led by I
technol
Hong K
October
internat

Indian systems of medicine

NOWADAYS we are taught to look at food in terms of carbohydrates, proteins, fat and vitamins. What do adults and children understand by these categories? Does this tell us the properties of ordinary food items like milk, buttermilk, curd, rice, wheat, pepper, ginger etc? Which of our food articles can help digestion? Which of them can cause phlegm, cold or a running nose? What can cause or relieve constipation and flatulence? What causes swelling or stops a stomach ache or a cramp? What should one take in summer or avoid in winter?

In our daily lives we observe and attribute several properties and qualities to various food substances which we consume. For instance, we commonly associate peas and potatoes with the generation of flatulence. At times we may refer to something as cooling or heating for the body. These are concepts from Ayurveda which we still use from time to time. Ayurveda understands properties from modern science. This knowledge helps us to discriminate and guide the intake of food according to our age, constitution, disposition and the seasons.

Let us as an example take the case of ghee. Is ghee mere fat? Is it only to be understood as a substance which can cause the much dreaded cholesterol and quickly take us on the road to a heart attack?

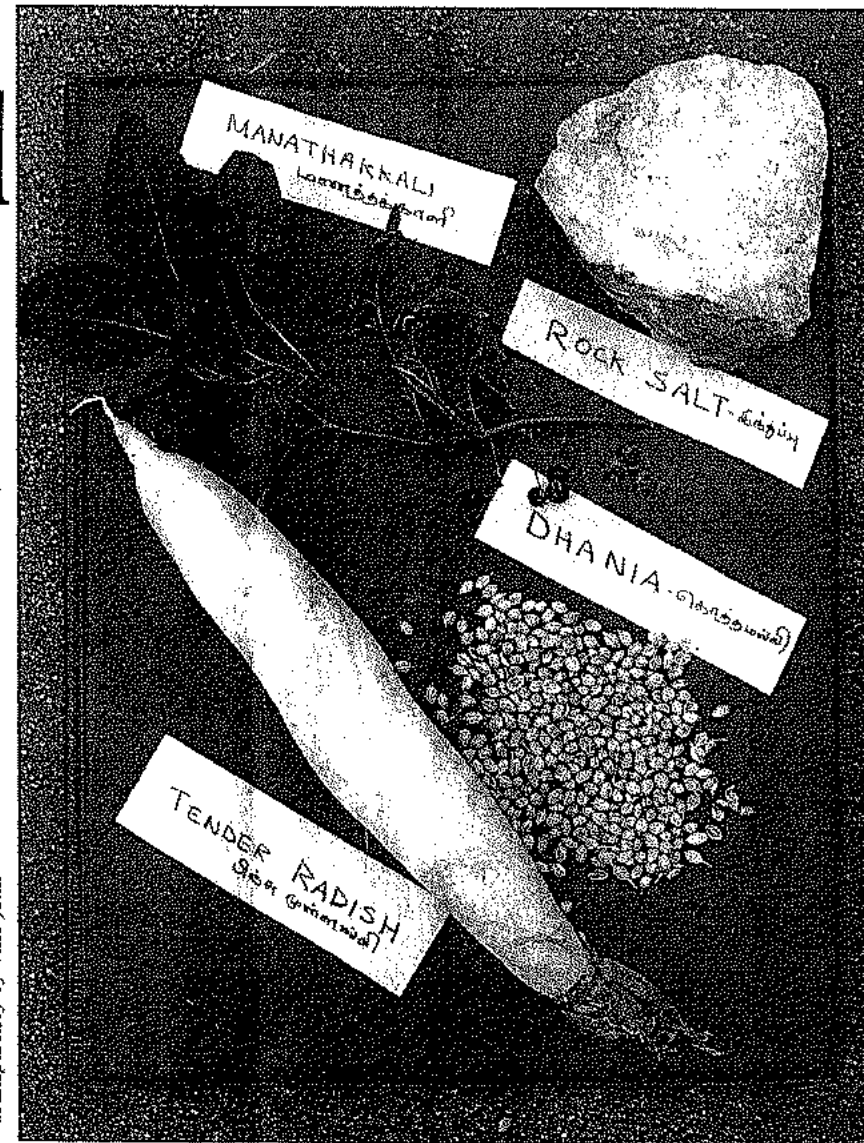
According to Ayurveda, ghee is an ideal food substance which is sweet in taste. It improves intelligence, memory and in small quantities, aids digestion, increases semen, adds to the life span and improves eye sight. Ghee is ideal for children, the aged and for those wanting to have healthy progeny. It is good for the voice and appearance. It is nourishing for those suffering from emaciation, due to injuries to the chest region, or due to injuries from weapons and fire and to those suffering from *Visarpa* (herpes). Ghee alleviates diseases caused by the aggravation of *vata* and *pitta*. It is useful in countering poison, insanity, consumption and in chronic fevers. From the

The food we eat

Ayurveda understands the properties and action of our food articles differently from modern science. This helps in the choice of one's food according to one's age, constitution, disposition and the seasons.

ones seem to be done quite indiscriminately. How does Ayurveda characterise a substance? Broadly, a substance is characterised by its taste (*rasa*), potency (*veerya*) and its special action (*prabhava*) Taste or (*rasa*) is defined in relation to the three *doshas*, *vata* *pitta* and *kapha*; action on the body; effect on diseases; digestion and so on. All food and drugs should possess a combination of six distinct tastes. These are sweet, sour, salt, bitter, pungent and

Transparency by Vino John



Common items which help alleviate the doshas.

They alleviate disorders caused by *vata*, *pitta*, and by poisons. Ghee, milk, jaggery, rice, wheat, ripe grapes, are all examples of substances which are predominantly sweet. However, sweet taste is heavy for digestion. Taken in excess it can produce diseases of *kapha*, *premeha* (diabetes), enlargement of the glands in the neck region, tumours and so on. It can also lead to fat, obesity and a sluggish digestion.

Sour taste acts on the body by stimulating the digestive fire. It is hot in potency. Butter milk, curd, mango, tamarind, citrus fruits, are all examples of items with a predominantly sour taste. Even though there are exceptions, in general sour substances cause moistening in the body, are easy for digestion and good for the heart. They give rise to an increase of *kapha* in the body. They vitiate *pitta* and blood in the body and act on the *vayu* and regulate its flow.

However, sour substances cannot be taken in excess. This can cause looseness and flabbiness of the body, loss of strength, cataract (*Timira*), a giddiness, itching, pallor, herpes, swellings, pox, thirst and fever.

Salt taste is an essential one as it removes rigidity in the body, clears obstructions of channels in the body, increases the power of digestion and lubrication, causes sweating, penetrates the tissues and improves taste. Salt controls the aggravation of *vayu* in the body. Too much of salt can cause vitiation of blood, baldness, wrinkles, greying, ailments of the skin and diminish strength.

The other three tastes, namely, bitter, pungent and astringent have great therapeutic value. Even a simple understanding of properties of tastes and food articles possessing these tastes helps in handling simple cases of indigestion, colic pain, cold and so on effectively.

Substances with bitter taste are ideal in improving the power of digestion and removing a lack of interest in food. They eliminate worms, skin diseases, fever, nausea, thirst and burning sensation in the body. They are cold in potency and light for digestion. Bitter substances dry up moisture, fat, marrow, faeces and urine. They cure disorders caused by *kapha*, cleanse breast milk and the throat. When bitter substances are

used in excess, they give rise to depletion of tissue elements (*dhatu*s) and diseases of *vata* origin.

Pungent taste is predominant in substances like pepper and garlic. It cures diseases of the throat, skin, indigestion and swelling. It dries up oiliness in the body, fat and moisture, increases hunger by increasing the digestive fire and aids in digestion. It dries up food, dilates channels in the body, breaks up hard masses and mitigates *kapha*. Excessive use of substances with a pungent taste gives rise to many *vata* disorders like cramps, tremors, pain in the waist region or in the back. It also leads to a loss of reproductive elements, of strength and causes thirst and fainting.

Substances which have a predominance of astringent taste act as blood purifiers, and possess the property to heal ulcers and wounds. They dry up moisture and fat in the body and act as water absorbents. Astringent taste is cold in potency and alleviates disorders of *pitta* and *kapha*. Substances which are predominantly astringent in taste are usually heavy for digestion. Taken in excess they can cause stagnation of food without digestion, flatulence, pain in the heart region, thirst, emaciation, loss of virility, obstruction of channels in the body and constipation. The fruit of Jamun (Naval in Tamil), wood apple (*Kapittha*) and areca nut are some of the common food substances which are predominantly astringent in taste.

From the above, we can get an idea of food in its relation to our bodies. In general, sweet, sour and salt tastes contribute more towards general strength and to the building up of tissues in the body, while bitter, pungent and astringent tastes have a greater therapeutic role to play.

With this basic knowledge we can learn to deal with simple health problems in our daily lives. For instance, if we suffer from a burning sensation in the body (a typical action of vitiated *pitta*), we learn to avoid food and drinks which can cause burning. By consuming more and more of salt, sour and pungent food, *pitta* is further vitiated and the burning is only further aggravated.

In therapeutics, potency is usually more important than taste. Some familiar items like pepper, ginger, garlic, asafoetida, cinnamon, turmeric are all examples of substances which are pungent and hot in potency. These spices, even when applied merely as powders or boiled extracts, act efficiently in controlling phlegm, colic pain, indigestion and so on.

Thus substances with different tastes and potencies have different effects on the body. This gives us a clue as to how food substances can act positively or negatively depending on the disposition of the individual. This is the reason why in all diseases, the instruction on food intake figures importantly along with the intake of medicines.

Ideally, we should consume food which has all six tastes. Intake of any one taste in excess and exclusion of others invariably leads to disorders. If we analyse our daily food, it generally consists of all the six tastes. Milk, rice, wheat, are sweet; buttermilk is sour and astringent; we always include salt, pungent, bitter and astringent tastes. ■

DR. GIRIJA

This article is the last in the present series on Systems of Indian medicine.

Smile as clocks

A and radia. An called prod build can c D for Dr Weiz that rapid years "T imagi Ac 4 issu conve perce shells Dr. by loc of asp age. T the te alive Railro Dr. allow river spect favor aspar that

Ly A repo poss "T elim the t at Y Med Al able very poss Ly towl the l the l that varic In whet a tin to 30 chilli cases Lym antih

Ayurveda – myths and facts about headaches

*According to Ayurvedic
practitioners a very severe
headache can be brought down
in intensity by a single
application of nasal drops.*

THESSE days there is a lot of talk about Western medicine being nearly able to find a cure for headaches. Treatment for headache is a great challenge that is facing neurological research in Western medicine. There seems to be no end to the studies made on headaches. The various correlations arrived at so far have been far too many. None of these studies however, seem to arrive anywhere near the cause for the many types of headaches. So much so, Western experts no longer feel it important to identify the causes. They are more than satisfied if they could find some effective drugs to contain this widely prevalent and crippling disease.

Even a casual examination reveals the extent of confusion that is prevailing in this area. First of all, the list of items which are said to trigger a headache is arbitrary and endless. Anything, from chocolates, milk, bananas, onion, potato chips, cheese, figs, cigarettes, gasoline and stress, to birth control pills and the weather may trigger headaches. Most people are told that their headaches are sinus related, allergic and so on. Until recently, "migraines" and headaches were explained away as "psychological" diseases. Now however, the attempt is to suggest that they are inherited diseases. For years, headaches were believed to be caused by certain unconscious tensing of muscles around the head and neck, but studies now seem to reveal facts to the contrary. What was once thought to be the result of dilated blood vessels pushing against nerves is no longer so, as the experts currently believe it to be the result of a chemical process in the brain. There is however no proof that irregularities of these chemicals bring on a headache! Stress management, relaxation techniques, headache talks are on the rise. Genetic factors and gender relations are also taken to be serious factors in all this. What is most astounding to the experts are the ever so many types of headaches commonly found among the sufferers.

Ultimately no one knows for sure how headaches start. The attempt currently is to explain headache as an organic disease and not as neurosis. The current predicament is best explained by Dr. Seymour Solomon, director of the headache clinic at New York's Montefiore medical centre who says "all the theories will turn out to be correct. Everyone is touching the elephant in a different place." Recently, an American expert was invited to Madras with much fanfare to expound on these theories - to put it differently, to explain whichever part of the elephant he was touching! However, the confusion regarding headache is just one symptom of a larger malady which confronts Western medicine as a whole.

Perhaps our Indian experts can cut short or

all along. In Ayurveda headache is treated as a full-fledged disease. It is called a disease of the head, "Siroroga." Headaches are classified according to the types, symptoms, causative factors and treatment. There are 11 types of headaches. Four of them are caused by single factors, Vata, Pitta, Kapha and Rakta (blood). The fifth is caused by wasting of the body elements (dhatus) in the head. One of the types of headache is caused by parasites (krimis) in the head. The rest are brought on by the various combinations of the three factors - Vata, Pitta and Kapha. The treatment range from internal medications, application of ointments, pastes and oils, nasal drops etc. There are hundreds of medicinal preparations as well as different remedies suitable for the various types of headaches which are mentioned in the Ayurvedic texts. It is a common experience of Ayurvedic practitioners that a very severe headache can be brought down in intensity by a single application of some nasal drops rather than by a host of pain killers.

All these facts however do not seem to impress the headache experts in India. We have to now worry about this newly developed wonder drug from the U.S., a single dose of which can cost anywhere between 35 and 65 dollars. There is no certainty that repeated doses may not be required. What is unfortunate is not even the staggering price of the drug. The side effects makes it inappropriate for any person suffering from heart disease or uncontrolled high blood pressure, to use this drug.

Perhaps Indian experts are worried sick wondering whether these new discoveries of the West will no longer be cheaply available to us as a result of our Government signing the GATT (Dunkel) agreement. Perhaps, this would be the only way we Indians are going to relearn our own medicine to find solutions to our health problems. What is however intriguing is the way the U.S. is operating even here.

All along graduates of Western medicine, of IITs and other technical institutions were the cheap imports from India into the U.S. This so-called "brain drain" was considered a great loss to India. Now the U.S. no longer needs these experts, since a point of saturation has been reached and these experts have nothing new to contribute to their society. What the U.S. needs now is new knowledge, especially in the area of medicine. The West today seems to be turning to Chinese and Indian medicines in a big way in order to find a breakthrough.

Recently the U.S. has given the green signal for starting a series of colleges in their country (nearly 50 in number) where Ayurveda is going to be taught and practised. Large scale export of Indian Ayurvedic Vaidyas and medicines is taking place to fulfil this American need. Some of us may believe that this is the only way Ayurveda is going to receive recognition not only in India, but all over the world. However, soon, we may find our own preparations sold back to us under a new name and form with the patent laws of the U.S. attached to them, thus creating a new headache for us. Is it not time that we woke up?

DR. GIRIJA

The crisis in healthcare

THE news from the Western medical front is ominous. We who are so used to looking westward for all kinds of miracle cures are in for a shock. It has been recently reported that antibiotics have become increasingly ineffective. Many of the bacteria known to western doctors are said to have developed resistance to several widely used antibiotics. In the U.S., in 1992 alone, 13,300 hospital patients died of infections that resisted every drug used. The crisis is serious enough for an American doctor to admit in a recent best-seller that Western medicine's "purported triumph over infectious disease has become an illusion".

Major diseases which once were eradicated through antibiotics are on the rise again in the West, tuberculosis for instance. The growing list includes malaria, meningitis and gonorrhoea. There is a great deal of overprescription and consumption of antibiotics all over the world. And we are warned that unnecessary consumption of antibiotics can make things worse. The more antibiotics you take the more you make the diseases resistant to them. Doctors in the west have recently discovered that there is only a single antibiotic which can control blood poisoning in surgical wounds.

In the West, there is not only over consumption of antibiotics, there is also abuse in human diseases as well as in cattle. This abuse is so widely acknowledged that milk in the U.S. is allowed to contain a certain concentration of 80 different antibiotics. Taking such milk can have unexpected consequences, since one ends up consuming enormous quantities of antibiotics without being aware of it.

Even with such a crisis brewing, we continue to flounder in a disoriented manner, carrying on with our old habits. Doctors routinely prescribe antibiotics that have no effect on the disease. Antibiotics are prescribed even in so-called "viral infections" where they are known to be useless. Many young children with coughs, colds, and respiratory ailments are given a whole range of antibiotics, in high doses, for years together. This treatment does not give the child any relief.

How does the Indian tradition in medicine look at this issue? What solution does it offer?

In Ayurveda, the healthy state of the body is defined as a state in which the following conditions are fulfilled, the three constituents of the body Vata, Pitta and Kapha, also known as the doshas, are in equilibrium; the digestive fire is steady; the tissue building and excretory activities are proceeding evenly and the consciousness, sensory organs and the mind are all clear. Disease strikes when the human body loses this internal equilibrium.

This equilibrium can be disturbed by various factors - food, seasons, activities of a person such as excessive physical labour, day sleep and suppressing the calls of nature. As long as this equilibrium is maintained, the body is not susceptible to disease. This is why healthy people as well as the sick should observe discipline in food, work and regimen. The primary aim of Ayurveda is to maintain this equilibrium so that the field or the soil, namely the human body, does not become a

fertile ground for diseases.

However, it is the equilibrium between the three doshas which is of primary importance in Ayurvedic therapeutics. Once disease strikes, treatment consists of understanding how the equilibrium between doshas has been disturbed and trying to restore their balance. In fact, the great Ayurvedic text Charaka Samhita reassures the physician that it is not important to know the precise name of each new disease. Since each disease is characterised by a certain imbalance in the doshas, it is enough to understand the exact nature of this imbalance in order to treat the disease.

That is why Ayurveda does not advocate extermination of organisms external to the human body. Ayurveda recognises that vitiation of the physical environment, air, water, soil etc., can lead to epidemics and diseases in human beings. A vitiated environment causes a disturbance of the internal equilibrium in individuals. So a clean physical environment is essential to healthy living. However, it is the internal equilibrium of the body which is the primary condition of good health.

The current crisis of Western medicine reveals a fundamental flaw of that system, its understanding of disease and its approach to treatment. In Western medicine, the origin of disease is always outside the body. Many of the common ailments are traced to various bacteria. Treatment consists of exterminating these organisms through a variety of antibiotics. This is a never ending process, since each new organism discovered calls for a new antibiotic to fight it.

Another major feature of Western medicine is that the theories and approaches to treatment are continuously changing. Many of its major innovations have occurred only in the last 50 years or so. What is a revolutionary innovation today, may prove to be an extremely dangerous medicine with all sorts of side-effects. For instance, when cortisone was introduced as a treatment for arthritis, it was considered a revolutionary innovation and the physician who came up with this discovery received a Nobel prize for medicine. Yet today it is known that this line of treatment can result in debilitating side-effects. Western medicine seems to have no understanding of this disease. Even today, there is a whole galaxy of diseases and symptoms which continue to baffle Western medical experts. On the other hand, Ayurvedic physicians have been treating all these diseases very effectively for many centuries and continue to do so.

The writing is on the wall. The current crisis in Western medicine ought to remind us that our blind and continued reliance on this alien system of medicine can only lead to inevitable catastrophe. The only way out of this morass is to beat a hasty retreat and take to our traditional and time-tested systems of healthcare and medicine which have stood us in good stead for thousands of years. We can ignore this simple truth only at our own peril. ■

Dr GIRHA

Toward new healthcare

It is commonly assumed that since Western medicine has seen most of its innovations only in the last 50 years, there was no medical knowledge of any significance in the world prior to this. Such Euro-centric assumptions have no longer relevance today. We only have to remind ourselves about the fallacy of such assumptions and build up a healthcare system which is self-reliant and efficacious. Ayurveda alone can help us dispel these notions and rebuild our healthcare system.

India has, since 1947, tried to follow the western model of healthcare and medicine. It has achieved precious little for the majority of its large population. The question is, can we not achieve an excellent and self-reliant system of healthcare and medicine based entirely on Ayurveda? First of all let us examine the nature and scope of Ayurveda and its current status.

Ayurveda is organised under eight parts known as the Ashtanga. The eight branches

Ayurveda and other Indian

systems of medicine offer

economic healthcare of the

people. For these systems to

prosper plant, animal and

mineral resources ought to be

used carefully.

are the following:

Kayachikitsa: This branch of medicine forms the basis of Ayurveda. The various constituents of the body and mind, their balanced and imbalanced states, the preventive and promotive aspects of healthcare, various types of diseases and their treatment, pacificatory therapies, purificatory treatments, their scientific principles and the pharmacopeia of medicines forms this branch.

Salakhyatantra: Treatment for diseases of ear, nose, throat, eyes and head, including those which require surgery is known as Salakhya. It deals with 76 diseases of the eyes, 28 diseases of the ear, 31 disorders pertaining to the nasal passage, 11 diseases of the head and 67 disorders pertaining to the oral cavity and throat. All these disorders are dealt with, in detail, along with their causes, symptoms and treatment. Salyatantra: The surgical tradition of Ayurveda is well-known to the world. "Susruta Samhita," is the pioneering text for many surgical procedures which were actively practiced until the country came under the rule of the British. The tradition of bone-setting is still popular and is practised widely. European surgeons learnt all these techniques during the

British rule in India. Plastic surgery which we used to practise in India, became a prominent branch of Western medicine.

In Ayurveda, the anatomy of the body is understood for surgical purposes as having 107 marmas or vital points which are the life-centres of the human body. Here it must be emphasised that Ayurveda recommends surgery only when the disease cannot be cured by medicine and various purificatory treatments. This may be contrasted with the current-day practice of indiscriminate surgery.

Stree Roga and Prasuti Tantra: The gynaecological and obstetric tradition in Ayurveda takes care of various types of gynaecological disorders, infertility, factors responsible for conception, formation of foetus, pregnancy, proper food and regimen during pregnancy, childbirth, obstructed labour, manipulation of obstructed labour and surgical interventions connected with this as well as management and care of post-delivery situations and complications. Even now much of this tradition is alive in the hands of the traditional midwives of our country, who are well-endowed with the skills of obstetrics. That nearly 80 per cent of Indian babies continue to be born at home shows the strength of this tradition.

Kaumarabhritya or paediatric science:

HEALTH WATCH

Soon after birth, the child is taken care of in various ways. The regimen prescribed creates in the infant a general immunity against all diseases. Thus the medical system does not worry about creating individual immunity against each and every disease such as polio and so on. Several medicinal preparations are administered to improve the body, intellect, memory, speech, complexion, longevity and to destroy mental ailments. Some of these preparations are also anti-toxic. Thus the body and mind of the child are protected right from the time of birth. The most effective treatment is given to infants in the event of their being afflicted by diseases. When infants who are fully dependent on mother's milk are treated, medicines are given to both the infant and the mother. If the mother's health is vitiated, the child can also be affected though the mother's milk. Similarly, any medicine administered to the mother will act on the child. This profound understanding is unique to Ayurveda.

Agadatantra: Treatment for poisons is not some forgotten branch of our tradition. Treatments for bites of poisonous snakes, scorpions, spiders, rats, dogs, insects as well as for poisons of all plant origin and for slow poisoning from other sources, all these constitute this branch of Ayurveda. Even today, victims of various poisonous bites are rushed to local vaidyas who specialise in this treatment. The visha vaidyas of the villages of

Kerala and the Irulas of Tamil Nadu are competent in identifying poisonous bites as well as the stages of the spread of poison inside the body. By observing the specific symptoms and condition of the victims, these vaidyas provide the appropriate treatment. Apart from medicinal compounds for specific poisons, there are general anti-poisonous formulations which are effective in all conditions.

Rasayana and Vajeekarana: Rejuvenating the body is a concept unique to Ayurveda. By this method, the ageing process of human body and the decay of the body elements are retarded. This method prolongs the life of the individual and improves health and vitality. The Vajeekarna branch of Ayurveda treats infertility. Bhuta Vidya: The mind is deeply studied and understood in the Indian tradition Manovyadhi or mental disorders of various types are treated by large number of medicinal compounds and different types of therapies like Panchakarma and Dhara. Thus the Ashtanga of Ayurveda make it a complete science of healthcare and medicine. Due to the setback Ayurveda received during the period of the British rule, and due to the gross neglect during the post-independence period, the science of Ayurveda has been dismembered. Today it is difficult to find all the Angas of Ayurveda being practised in the same

place. However, experts of each of the Angas can be found in different parts of our country. What is urgently needed is that the knowledge of various experts is brought together at one place so that the various Angas can begin to develop anew. This task can be accomplished in a short while if the appropriate resources are provided. Ayurveda and other Indian systems of healthcare offer the only hope of efficacious and economical healthcare to our people. For these systems to prosper we must protect our precious plant, animal and mineral resources and utilise them carefully for our own benefit. We need to engage a large team of Ayurvedic experts to identify our medicinal herbs which need to be protected. Instead of such protection, we seem to have opened the flood gates to the Western onslaught. Already, there is an enormous and ever-increasing demand from the West for Indian medicinal herbs. Recently, the Government of India had proposed to send a delegation to several countries of the West to explore export markets for Ayurvedic herbs! Not only should there be a ban on export of precious medicinal herbs but there should be a major effort to protect such herbs in their natural environments. They must be made easily available to our own people and vaidyas. This is the only way by which one can get on with the work of reconstructing a healthcare system which is efficacious and self-reliant. ■

DR. GIRIJA

Coping with infertility

INFERTILITY is a common phenomenon. For those who are anxious to have children, but cannot, Ayurveda may have an answer. Since having healthy children is considered one of the important objectives of marital life, Ayurveda devotes an entire branch of medicine to the problems of infertility. Among the eight branches of Ayurveda, Vajeeekarana deals with fertility of the male, Streerogam (gynaecology) deals with the various problems connected with the reproductive system of the female.

For conception to take place, there are four factors which are important. They are: proper season (Ritu), place (Kshetra), nourishment (Ambu) and seed (Beeja). Here conception is compared to the sprouting of a plant from the seed. Ritu literally means season. For conception, the union of Sukra (semen) and Artava (female reproductive tissue) has to take place during the fertile season in the monthly cycle of the menstrual calendar. The word

semen. Excessive indulgence in physical exercise, sex or abstinence; intake of rough, bitter, astringent, salty, sour and hot food in excess, fasting, morbidity of the body tissues and old age can result in the diminishing and weakening of semen. Defective semen can be frothy, thin, rough, of abnormal colour, foetid and exceedingly slimy. Ejaculation can occur with difficulty and semen may be in small quantity. There can be burning sensation while ejaculating and at times even with blood.

Ramu and Usha had crossed thirty years of age and were anxious to have a child. Over the years, they had undergone various tests and kinds of treatment. Ramu suffered from "low sperm count" according to Western medicine. But he had other complaints too. Even mildly spicy food would cause frequent bloody motions. His digestion was impaired. Usha suffered from constipation and vaginal itch.

Ramu started the treatment with a special decoction of herbs for cleansing the pathways

HEALTHWATCH

"Kshetra" means field. Here it means the uterus, which after conception houses the foetus until its birth. Unless the uterus enjoys all the healthy attributes, the conception and the growth of the foetus do not take place properly.

Ambu means water. For the seed to sprout, proper nourishment has to be provided by watering the seed. Therefore, nourishment is essential for conception and thereafter for sustenance of the foetus. Beeja means the seed. Just as a healthy seed is necessary for sprouting, so also the semen should be free from defects. Thus, all the four aspects have to be ensured for healthy conception.

For Kamini, the Kshetra or uterus was the cause of infertility. She was troubled by frequent and heavy bleeding from the time she started menstruating. Menstruation occurred once in 10 or 15 days. Travelling by bus or hard work would trigger menstruation. At times she would bleed continuously for twenty days. She suffered from pain during those days. She had in her groin, thighs and lower abdomen. She was very weak. Her hair dropped in large quantities. She had undergone various treatments at different times. Even at this point she was on many drugs.

When she started Ayurvedic treatment, all medicines were stopped. Hers was a difficult case. After nearly four months of treatment the menstrual cycle became regular. One of the most useful medicines was the decoction of the barks of banyan and peepal trees. Also, use of tampons dipped in medicated oil proved extremely beneficial. Before long, Kamini's health improved and she conceived.

Infertility can occur as a result of the derangement of the three doshas, namely Vata, Pitta or Kapha in the reproductive tissue (Dhatu) of either the male or the female. When vitiated by doshas, these dhatus cannot be effective in fertilisation.

Among males various physical and psychological factors can lead to defective

of the body. After taking this decoction for a couple of weeks, he was given Rasayana formulations to improve his semen. Usha was given medicinal pastes to apply in her vagina and uterine tonics. Both of them were started on a simple course of yoga asanas, to improve their general health, digestion and help in conception. Within three months of starting the treatment, Usha conceived.

The defects of the female reproductive organ are twenty in number. They arise as a result of the derangement of the three doshas. They may be caused by practising faulty regimen, wrong eating habits, congenital defects and so on. Infection and itching of the genitals; excessive bleeding; swelling and numbness of the genital tract; pain in the back, waist, thighs and groin; discharge of pale fluid with piercing pain; discharge of white mucus; tender, swollen and painful genital tract with discolouration of menstrual flow; painful discharge of menstrual flow and difficulty; prolapse of the uterus; destruction of the foetus due to roughness of Vayu; exceedingly painful coitus or intolerance to coitus; painful retention of urine and a faeces and dryness of the vagina; semen coming out after entering the uterus; growth of flesh; rough, frothy and painful menstrual discharge; inflammation and burning sensation; all these are problems of the female reproductive system. When the reproductive system is affected by these defects, it does not hold the semen and the woman does not conceive.

Treatment includes internal medication, washing the genitals with decoctions of drugs, application of medicated vaginal tampons, local application of medicinal paste, sprinkling of medicine in the lower abdomen, massaging the body with medicated oils and fomentation, purgation, medicated enemas with oils, ghees and decoctions of herbs and so on.

Kamala was 30 years old and married for nearly two years. She was childless. She came with a complaint of acute pain in her back, which started eight months ago. She had been

She had mentally prepared herself for a surgery.

Fortunately, the family decided to take a new course of treatment by switching to Ayurveda. Her treatment for backache started right away. Her backache was due to a severe affliction of Vayu. This very same Vayu was also responsible for her not conceiving. Hence treatment aimed at pacifying Vayu also took care of both her problems. She underwent oil massage, fomentation, purgation and enema treatment along with medication. She was advised to follow a diet. By the end of it all, her backache had gone. She returned to her native place with the prescribed uterine tonics for conception. Her husband was also prescribed some Rasayana formulations. Within two months, conceived.

In the case of infertility, regular use of uterine tonics and Rasayana formulations are prescribed to overcome the problems. However, these drugs are not prescribed right away. Normally the treatment for infertility is effective and best results are achieved after the body is cleansed of impurities, (Malas) as in the case of Kamala.

This is achieved by subjective the individual to different methods of cleansing such as purgation, enema and so on. Acharya Charaka compares this to the dyeing of a cloth. He says that one should first cleanse the body according to one's strength prior to taking the Rasayana formulations. Otherwise, it amounts to dyeing on a dirty cloth, and the effort would not be successful.

Acharya Charaka advocates regular use of Rasayana formulations for healthy progeny. Normally, these tonics and formulations have certain specific properties. They are sweet in taste, unctuous, heavy to digest, life promoting, bulk promoting and pleasing to the senses and the heart. After replenishing the body with such food and preparations, sexual intercourse is extremely beneficial for obtaining healthy progeny. By proper use of these formulations, one is endowed with good physique, strength, virility, complexion and long life. However, sexual indulgence by persons who are very young and very old leads to the destruction of the individual, by drying up the body tissues.

In addition to medicated ghees, special herbs and rasayana formulations, regular use of certain type of diet is beneficial for individuals who are infertile. Milk, ghee, meat soups, rice and wheat are some of the important food items.

Dr. P. L. T. GIRIJA

HEALTHWATCH

The cost of ignoring ancient systems

IN obstetrics and gynaecology, what has happened to Indian women is shocking, to say the least. Not relying on Indian systems of medicine has cost the Indian woman and the nation dear, in terms of ensuring women's health. This degeneration is striking when viewed from the point of view of Ayurveda.

Take, for instance, obstetrics. A birth is today viewed as an event wrought with complications, warranting surgical and hi-tech intervention. Induced labour and caesarian sections have become routine procedures at every maternity centre. Private nursing homes in semi-urban and rural areas are classic examples.

In one case, a private nursing home at Mancherla, Adilabad district, Andhra Pradesh, has given the following statistics. For 1999, the number of caesarian deliveries accounted for 70 per cent of the total number of deliveries. In September the same year, the percentage of women who were subjected to Caesarian-section was an all time high - 91.3 per cent.

This is by no means an isolated or a freak case. This high rate of Caesarian procedures is often motivated by monetary considerations. However, unnecessary surgical intervention is also due to a total lack of obstetric knowledge and skill.

To quote a standard text book on obstetrics: "As yet, no method of induction is both certain and safe. This is not surprising since only some of the factors which provoke spontaneous labour are known, so that it is impossible to set the stage as nature would have it set ... it raises the question whether things might not have been better left alone from the first ... whether natural delivery might have occurred had we not meddled in the first place".

Unfortunately, the reason for performing a caesarian with increasing impunity is attributed only to improved medical facilities. Thus the practices of episiotomy (cutting just below the opening of the birth canal, which helps in birth), Caesarian-sections and hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) have all come to stay as routine, advanced medical practices.

Obstetric care in Ayurveda is in striking contrast to this. Ayurveda ensures a safe and natural delivery by helping the factors which "provoke spontaneous labour". This is achieved by a regulated diet and regimen during the pregnancy, administration of herbal decoctions and medicinal preparations needed for each month, a regular application of oil on the mother-to-be and application of medicinal oil enemas in the ninth month to make more supple the birth canal, placenta, pelvis, waist, sides of the chest and back.

Ayurveda explains that the *Apana Vayu*, the *Vayu* that moves downwards from the hip region, is responsible for childbirth. Therefore, these measures help in the smooth flow of *Apana Vayu* and ensure a hazard-free and safe childbirth. During pregnancy, common problems like abdominal pain, cramps, fever, diarrhoea, oedema, anaemia, back pain, cold and cough are cured by administering Ayurvedic medicines. In the *Susrutha Samhita*, various manipulations are suggested to deal with abnormal foetal presentations so as to ensure a normal delivery. In spite of all these, if the situation warrants, surgical intervention is recommended in an obstructed labour.

With the advent of modern medicine, and with its emphasis on institutional care for a delivery, the situation is fast changing. Modern obstetrics no longer aims at allowing

The aggressive campaign to wean women away from traditional practices in obstetrics and gynaecology has cost us dear in terms of ensuring women's health. Dr. P.L.T. GIRIJA advocates a return to Ayurveda.

or aiding nature to take its course. Since the factors that give rise to spontaneous labour are not fully known to Western medicine, it is also not in a position to prepare the pregnant woman for a natural and risk-free delivery. The high rate of Caesarian deliveries seems inevitable in view of the fact that according to Western medicine, a typical pregnancy can last only upto 40 weeks. However, most obstetricians do not wait beyond 36 to 38 weeks. Pregnancies which continue beyond the specified date, are sure to face the knife.

Ayurvedic texts say that a pregnancy can last anywhere between nine and 12 months (*Susrutha Samhita*). Even though a 12-month pregnancy is a rare phenomenon, 11-month pregnancies were not uncommon for mothers of the older generation who were lucky enough to escape institutional deliveries. Hence, there is no need to panic and rush a mother-to-be to hospital unless it is an emergency. It is precisely here that modern medicine ought to apply its "scientific rigour" and arrive at this truth sooner than later. The next major predicament a modern doctor faces is medication. What drug can be prescribed for a pregnant woman in an ailment? There is no single drug in the modern allopathic pharmacopea which can be safely used during pregnancy. Both the doctor and the patient are left with little option except to take whatever is available.

The plight of the woman is even more agonising when it comes to modern practices of

delivery. A high point in any routine delivery is a practice called "Episiotomy" (incision made in the tissue between the vagina and the anus). Episiotomy has been justified on the grounds that it prevents the perineum from tearing in an uncontrolled and zigzag manner; it reduces the risk of damage to the anal sphincter, protects against incontinence and heals faster. Medical research of the last 30 years has not proven any of these benefits.

On the contrary, studies reveal that this widespread and routine practice has in fact caused harm. It causes more post partum (after childbirth) pain, infection, increase in third and fourth degree vaginal laceration and a longer healing time. It results in faulty repairs of the episiotomy, localised collection of blood, a loss of blood and a formation of abscesses. Often, sutures have to be removed to drain the wound and resuturing has to be done. In short, this mutilation and reconstruction seems to be a ritual which serves no medical purpose.

The practice of episiotomy provided the modern obstetrician with reasons to sneer at and ridicule the traditional mid-wife who conducted deliveries without mutilating the birth canal. The valuable role of the mid-wife was vehemently denied. National and international agencies ganged up against her. Wherever a more tolerant attitude prevailed, demands were placed on her for "improving" her mid-wifery skills. Later, she was tolerated

as a necessary evil, until such time when modern institutional care could be extended to the rural population.

India possesses a huge army of mid-wives, its numbers running into several lakhs. Even now the national average for non-institutional deliveries is still as high as 50 and 60 per cent. This percentage is far higher for some of the remote areas in India. It goes without saying that these mid-wives are the only obstetric professionals left, who can practise this branch of medicine skilfully. They are the ones who are able to manipulate abnormal presentations and ensure delivery the natural way. Indeed, it is the absence of this very important skill that has reduced childbirth to routine surgery.

With minimal resources, and with locally available material, mid-wives provided the optimum ante and post-natal care to the mother-to-be and prepared her for natural, easy and painless childbirth. They knew to manipulate and handle abnormal foetal presentations and to resuscitate and revive the baby when necessary. They performed deliveries leaving the perineum intact, in most cases, massaged and bathed the mother with medicinal oils and hot water which reduced her body pain, gave her a sense of well-being and hastened her recovery. They would massage the woman's abdomen and tie up the loose abdominal muscles and the hip region firmly, a practice which saves the new mother from many complications of *Vayu*, back pain for instance.

The mid-wife also performed the job of a paediatrician to the new born and prescribed regulated diet (*pathyam*) for the mother. In the case of a nursing mother, this diet took care of the infant's health and well-being too. Many of the procedures followed by mid-wives are based on the theory of Ayurveda

and are described in Ayurvedic texts. With the overemphasis on institutional care for a delivery and the constant propaganda to stay away from traditional practices, the modern mother lost all this valuable care.

A much dreaded cause for maternal deaths is uterine bleeding after delivery or post-partum haemorrhage. The diet, regimen and medicines instructed by Ayurveda largely took care of this. Ayurveda uses a whole range of drugs like *Samanga*, *Nyagrodha*, *Udumbara*, *Ksheera Vriksha*, *Sarjarasa*, *Gairikam*, *Madhuka*, *Sathavari* and *Dhataki* which, with their cooling, astringent and constricting qualities along with cooling diets, arrested haemorrhage after delivery. A significant number of maternal deaths also occur due to anaemia and jaundice and it goes without saying that Ayurveda offers the best remedy for both.

In gynaecology too, Indian women have paid a heavy price. Hysterectomies have become routine. Any gynaecological complaint - irregular menstruation, heavy menstruation, pain during/before the menstrual cycle, white discharge, menopause and fibroids or cysts in the uterus can lead women only in one direction - a hysterectomy. Ayurveda provides effective cures for all these ailments. Excessive menstrual bleeding is called *Pradaram* in Ayurveda. This and 20 other gynaecological problems are dealt with in Ayurvedic texts with medicines, panchakarma treatment, *uttara basti* (cleansing of the uterus), medicinal tampons and so on. The aggressive campaign to wean women away from traditional practices has left our urban women, and, increasingly, our rural women too, in a pitiable condition. Considering all these, it must be admitted that women's health today has hit an all-time low. ●

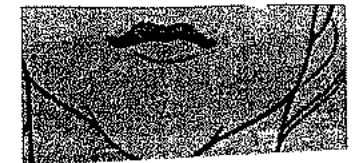
Future medicine



images from any angle in the body. Powerful computer technology allows doctors to combine MRI images into a three-dimensional portrait of a patient's blood vessels. Because it is completely non-invasive, scans can be repeated with no risk to the patient. Five years ago, a

The disease doctors still miss

A large number of people have a thyroid disorder, but only half know it. Here are the symptoms to look for, and the test you should demand today, says RONNY FRISHMAN



In the articles titled "Yoga of healing" in *The Hindu*, Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan has raised many questions, which have gone unanswered. The articles were full of assumptions and statements by Dr. Rajagopalan. They were incorrect and misleading. He asserts:

Indian medicine fails to lend itself to scientific scrutiny, validation, analysis and peer review.

The weakness of Indian medicine is in the all-important yardstick by which treatment has to be measured, namely, reproducibility.

"Whatever therapy you give must be equally applicable to all those with the same disease". He says "even if we grant that it has cured one person. It cannot be reliably promised to everyone else with the same problem". And in Western medicine "if the right drug is given it will work regardless of who gave it".

Before we proceed, let us look at the simple definition of what is a science. Science is a body of knowledge based on observation of phenomena and their systematic classification under a theoretical framework which itself is tested in observations.

Thus, science is based on a sufficiently large body of observational data.

It has an elaborate theoretical framework to classify the data.

The legitimisation of the theoretical framework is through observation.

A glance at some of the major Ayurvedic texts will reveal that this system is built on the foundation of an enormous body of data based on empirical observation and they are classified under an elaborate theoretical framework.

Ayurvedic texts mention drugs of vegetable, animal, metal and mineral origin. Just the three major texts or Samhitas - Charaka, Susruta, Vagbhata - mention 600 to 700 medicinal plants. The methods of collection and therapeutic value of the different parts of these plants - roots, bark, exudation, pith, stalk, juice, sprouts, alkalies, milk, fruit, flowers, ash, oils, thorns, leaves, buds, bulbs, offshoots - are discussed meticulously. Similarly, drugs of animal origin such as honey, milk, bile, marrow, blood, flesh, excreta, urine, skin, semen, bones, sinews, horns, nails, hooves and hair are described according to their therapeutic use. Charaka Samhita alone mentions 165 varieties of animals and 64 main minerals used as sources for drugs. Later texts added all possible metals including mercury, their medicinal uses, different methods of purification, poisoning by impure preparations, remedial measures, and so on.

That Ayurvedic science is based on a large body of observational data can be seen from the following example. Charaka, after discussing 600 purgatives with their ingredients, various preparations of each one of them along with their sources and 500 decoctives (grouped into 50's for convenience of description) such as digestive stimulants, diuretics, those which improve breast milk (galactagogues), anti-toxic, cardiotoxic, anti-emetic and so on, says "unlimited are these drugs and it is not advisable to take recourse to too much brevity ... so the descriptions given here are neither too exhaustive nor too brief. What is stated here is for the use of persons of low intelligence. This will also help persons of high intelligence in exercising their own imagination for grasping other drugs which have not been included here."

All Ayurvedic texts meticulously deal with the importance of dietetics. Food, its different types, quality, quantity, their relationship to digestion, wholesome and unwholesome food, methods of processing, relationship between food and diseases, changes in food to suit the changing seasons, classification of foods based on their action on the body and so on.

Ayurveda describes in detail dissection of corpses, anatomy of the body, types of constitution, all major diseases, as well as a

In defence of Ayurveda

their etiological factors, signs and symptoms and courses of diseases, latent diseases, therapeutics and their effectiveness, complication in therapeutics and their management, importance of thorough examination and dialogues on the utility of medicines.

Ayurveda gives great importance to the prognostic consideration in management of patients and classification of diseases according to prognosis. Above all, Ayurveda defines clearly what constitutes health and illhealth.

All this enormous amount of data is systematically understood and classified under an elaborate theoretical framework in Ayurveda. The science of Ayurveda discusses meticulously the method of selection of medical texts, sources of knowledge, methods of obtaining knowledge, and procedures for debate among medical community to perfect the knowledge.

Charaka declares "in this discipline everything is viewed as made of matter in five forms ..." Susruta Samhita adds "it is claimed that knowledge of matter in its different forms is alone relevant for medicine, because in the therapeutic context it is impermissible to conceive of anything transcending matter". Charaka concludes that Ayurveda deals with such things as are inherent in nature and since natural manifestations are eternal, Ayurveda, the science of life is eternal. Since the inherent attributes of the five forms of matter are eternal, like the heat of the fire and the liquidity of water and the science does not deal with artificiality which is not innate in matter, the concepts dealt in this science are valid for all times. Thus Ayurveda is constantly concerned with methodologies and categories which are valid for all three times - past, present and future.

Ayurveda is clearly skeptical of any knowledge that is not acquired in pursuance of the scientific method and rational means. Ayurvedic texts go to the extent of stating that any success achieved without following the correct method is sheer accidental success and it is to be discouraged.

In spite of the fact that Ayurvedic science lays so much emphasis on theoretical formulation of medical problems, they believe that the final test of any hypothesis lies in practice. Susruta Samhita says: "A learned physician must never try to examine on grounds of pure logic the efficacy of a medicine which is known by direct observation as having by nature a specific medical action. Thus for example, even a thousand logical grounds will not make the Ambashata group of drugs have a purgative function." Thus says Charaka "the physician starting medical treatment in time, well versed in medical knowledge, inclusive of the knowledge of difference between curable and incurable diseases is absolutely certain to attain success ... in cases of diseases amenable to medical treatment, medicine can never be ineffective."

This should answer Dr. Rajagopalan's assertion that Indian medicine suffers from great weakness in the areas of scientific authenticity and reproducibility. As for reproducibility, it should be self-evident that an anti-diarrhoeal group of drugs, for instance, will act only according to its properties in a given situation in a particular problem, no matter who administers the medicine.

Here it should be pointed out that unlike in Western medicine, all Ayurvedic texts go to the extent of proclaiming that a treatment, which, while curing one problem, gives rise to other problems is no treatment at all. And just by this

have side-effects as in allopathic medicine, will not at all be considered as legitimate treatment in Ayurveda.

Ayurveda puts together a huge body of knowledge classified under various sections such as principles of medicine, diagnosis of diseases, specific determination of drugs, therapeutics and diseases, anatomy, embryology, prognostic signs, treatment and therapeutics and pharmaceutical preparations under eight branches. These branches are: Internal medicine: Diseases specific to supra-clavicular region - eye, ear, nose, mouth, throat, head etc.; Surgery, Toxicology, Psychological diseases; Paediatrics; Rejuvenation of the body and Fertility.

Ayurveda, lays great emphasis on debates and a free flow of information among medical practitioners. It lays down rules, procedures and guidelines for medical debates. It explains the desirability of entering into debates with similarly placed knowledgeable physicians as a means of obtaining and perfecting knowledge. A large part of Charaka Samhita for instance consists of recordings of symposia, debates and meetings of medical practitioners.

It should be clear therefore that Ayurveda is not concerned with esoteric things. Allopathic practitioners should not make light and casual statements about Ayurveda without having proper knowledge of this science. Such casual comments may be acceptable from lay persons but not from medical practitioners. ■

DR. P.L.T. GIRIJA

Yoga of healing ...

Continued from page VII

do you explain this acceptance? I ask this because modern medicine does not accept other systems easily.

Enough research has now been carried out to show that there are clear neuro and hormonal changes that take place in the body after an acupuncture treatment and these are sufficient to explain the effects that take place. And given that sort of body of research, most Western doctors have to accept that something has taken place.

On the contrary, suppose you put the needle in the wrong place. What will happen?

Well, a lot of the research does use what they call dummy needling or needling in the wrong place and this is contrasted with needling in the right place. And the studies seem to show that needling in the right place makes a significant difference. Acupuncture seems to stimulate the body's self balancing mechanisms.

So there is no defect at all in the system? Nothing goes wrong?

Anatomically if the needle is passed through a vital organ or something, then clearly there will be damage to the patient and occasionally this has happened, but only by practitioners who are not properly trained or qualified.

Do you do acupuncture for very small children?

I personally do not treat infants with needles. But I do treat them with laser. I do not like putting needles in children. They do not like it very much either, but some practitioners do and they say that it is very, very effective. Normally, in that case, the needle is not left in. It is inserted and withdrawn immediately.

Talking of needles, people are so scared of needles. Do you use new needles every time?

Yes, I use pre-sterilised disposable needles as most people now do. I used to use an autoclave to sterilise my needles, which is perfectly satisfactory, but pre-sterilised disposables are safer for everybody. Actually safer for the practitioner, because the less you handle the needle, the less likely you are to contaminate yourself. The needles that are used, are very, very fine, finer than a sewing needle or a pin. There is little pain if the needles are injected

A unique therapy

WE have often come across or heard of therapies such as oil massage, fomentation, purgation, enema, nasal errhines and so on. To those who are ignorant of the Indian system of medicine, namely Ayurveda, these are therapies that do not make any sense. To many others these are "naturopathy techniques" to lose weight. These and many others are however therapeutic techniques which belong to the Ayurvedic system of medicine. They come under the treatment called panchakarma in Ayurveda.

Panchakarma techniques are not arbitrarily practised on persons. These are therapies applied to cure specific problems; they are also therapies practised on healthy individuals to maintain their health. Panchakarma treatment is thus unique to Ayurveda.

The objective of Ayurveda is two-fold. To help human beings maintain good health; cure patients once they contract a disease. Health and ill-health are states of balance and imbalance of the three doshas, *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* in the body. When the three doshas are in a balanced state, the individual keeps good health. Whenever there is an imbalance in doshas, it gives rise to ill health.

The three doshas can be vitiated due to various factors. When the doshas are vitiated, they increase in quantity. The vitiated doshas then start blocking the various minute channels in the body. They start interacting with the tissue elements (*Dhatu*s) in the body, causing pathological conditions in Chyle (*rasa*), blood, muscle tissue, fat, bone, bone marrow and reproductive tissues. The doshas thus give rise to various diseases in the body. To avoid development of pathological conditions, the minute channels and pathways have to be free from stagnation of doshas and waste products. By means of the Panchakarma treatment, the doshas and waste products which accumulate and block the pathways are expelled from the body. Panchakarma therefore is recommended for healthy as well as for

persons who suffer from various diseases. Thus this form of treatment fulfils the twin objectives of Ayurveda.

The Panchakarma treatment consists of five therapeutic techniques namely, inducing vomiting, purgation, two different types of enema and nasal medication. These treatments are used in various conditions. For example, Indira who is 55-years-old, suffered acutely from joint pains, back and neck pain, aches all over the body and chronic constipation. No amount of pain-killers seemed to help her condition. In this case, subjecting her to the Panchakarma therapy was the only way the disease could be brought under control. The doshas and waste products which accumulated in her system caused tremendous pain and distress. Any respite from the disease was possible only if the doshas were brought out of the body.

In Panchakarma, this is achieved by first oiling the entire body of the patient with medicated oil for a period of two weeks followed by fomentation of the body. Even the two weeks of oil massage and fomentation give tremendous relief from aches and joint pains. By repeated application of oil and heat, along with internal medicines the doshas loosen and liquify. They move from the periphery of the body to the centre, namely the alimentary canal. From here, the doshas are removed by means of the various therapies, i.e., vomiting, purging, enema and nasal medication.

HEALTHWATCH

All these therapies are not applied at the same time. They are practised at different intervals. Each of the therapies perform different functions in the body. For those who suffer from disease of the respiratory tract, such as asthma, severe chest congestion with phlegm, diseases affecting the throat region and tumour around neck and throat, skin diseases, bleeding diseases with downward trend etc. vomiting is the ideal therapy.

For example, Gopal, aged 45, was treated for cough and cold from his childhood. During the past two years his suffering had become chronic and he became an asthmatic. At this point, Gopal decided to try Ayurveda. It was in October that he suffered a severe attack of wheezing, which responded well to medication. In February, he again suffered a severe bout of wheezing with a lot of phlegm blocking all his respiratory tracts. No drug was effective enough to eliminate the *Kapha dosha*.

Finally, there was only one way out. That was to take recourse to vomiting therapy. Gopal was thus prepared for the treatment and it was carried out systematically. From that day onwards, he felt a tremendous sense of relief. Once the excess *Kapha dosha* was expelled from his system, the medicines worked wonders. Gopal was relieved of his problem since then.

The next important therapy in Panchakarma is purgation. Purgation is effective in all diseases where *pitta* is the predominant dosha. A wide range of diseases including jaundice, skin diseases, various abdominal disorders, abscesses, intestinal parasites, chronic fever, gout, and so on are ideally suited for purgation. A person who is purged well enjoys clean channels in the body, a clarity of senses, lightness, energy, proper digestion and freedom from diseases.

Autumn is the season chosen for purgation, as this is the time when *pitta* naturally increases in the body. Purgation once a year during autumn used to be a household practice among us until recently.

The prime therapy among the Panchakarma treatment is *vasti* or enema. It is the best treatment for patients of gout, arthritis; pain in the abdomen, distention of the abdomen, disorders and obstruction of semen, gynaecological problems, obstruction of faeces, flatus and urine, numbness, colic pain, disease of the spleen, stiffness and pain in the hip, knee, thigh, ankle, heel, feet, waist and joints, contraction, dislocation and so on.

Usually the enema is applied after the oiling, fomentation and purging are



completed. Enema treatment pacifies all disorders as it is capable of eliminating impurities situated all over the body. Those who undergo enema therapy enjoy a clarity of tissue elements and sense organs, good sleep, digestion, strength and long life. It is a wholesome treatment for both healthy as well as persons who suffer from various disorders.

Nasyam, which is introducing medicine through nasal passage, is an important therapy in Panchakarma. The nasal passage is the only direct access we have to the head. *Nasyam* is vital for all diseases occurring above the collar bone. Different types of headaches, numbness and heaviness of the head, diseases of the eyes, throat, abscesses in the neck and the throat region, skin discolouration, epilepsy, nasal blocks, dryness of the nostrils and mouth, stammering, frozen shoulder and many other disorders are treated by nasal medication. For *Nasyam*, oils, direct extract of herbs, powders of medicines, fermented medicines, etc. are appropriately chosen for different disorders. Ayurveda recommends for *nasyam* the use of *Anu thallan* as a daily regimen to keep free from any disease above the collar bone.

The Panchakarma treatment is designed to suit each individual according to their age, health conditions, mental make-up, physical constitution as well as changes in the seasons. By resorting to Panchakarma periodically, we take care of the accumulation of the doshas in the body and we literally clean up the body of all the doshas and waste products that adhere to it. That is why it is called "*Sodhana Chikitsa*" - *Sodhana* means cleaning. Panchakarma therapy thus occupies a very unique place in the Ayurvedic system of medicine.

DR. GIRIJA

The matter of the heart

I OFTEN think that I should put cardiac (heart) bypass surgery in perspective. It is a relative newcomer and has benefited a number of patients. However, it has to be used circumspectly, after weighing the pros and cons. If one is in good health but for the cardiac condition, only then it should be accepted. In the presence of many age-related problems like failing vision, deafness, joint problems, loss of memory, social handicaps like loneliness and financial insecurity, etc., bypass surgery would only prolong the misery. The decision should always be participatory - the physician, the patient and his family.

Further, in my experience, many who develop angina around the age of 50 gradually get over the symptoms spontaneously - probably due to development of alternate blood vessels (collaterals) and/or due to change of lifestyle.

All said and done, genetic factors, faulty (fatty) diet, continued stress and lack of exercise predispose one to ischaemic heart disease (lack of enough blood supply to the heart). Inasmuch as animals do not seem to suffer from coronary atherosclerosis (narrowing of blood vessels supplying the heart), one can venture to say that this condition is God's dispensation for human beings. Die one must and therefore at

VIEW POINT

an appropriate age, one should welcome cardiac death - it is the least troublesome. Preventive measures and treatment are warranted to prevent premature death.

The value of one's life is not judged by its length but by what is accomplished irrespective of its duration. I am against extraordinary measures to lengthen life unless one is sure of comfort, dignity and utility. We have to be objective and practical in this respect.

"Enough unto the day the evil thereof," Jesus said: life is after all an extension of a day.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "I do not wish to be kept alive anyhow and somehow, believe me, it would please me to die with my faith intact."

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin echoes the same idea when he says, "Not everything that is technically possible is humanly desirable."

Listen also to Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of World Health Organisation. "Increased longevity without quality of life is an empty prize. Health expectancy is more important than life expectancy." Also, he expresses another paradox. "The richer the person, the greater are the odds of suffering and dying from a chronic disease at an advanced age." This also obliges the workforce (young and working men and women) to provide and care for two sets of dependents, children and the elderly. They are thus doubly-burdened, endangering their own health and productivity.

For the perceptive and sensitive, life is a monstrous mystery - it ridicules rules and surprises all formulae. Samuel Johnson felt that the conditions of life were such that it is only endured rather than enjoyed.

As for me, I would like my utility and life to be co-terminus. DR. SUSIKARAN THANGASAMI.

The Egyptian mummies.

Proof that pneumonia can affect anyone.

and people with a weak immune system, e.g. AIDS are most susceptible.

What causes pneumonia?

Bacteria, Mycoplasmas and Pneumococci. But most often by viruses. Especially those viruses associated with respiratory infection. Unlike in the other forms of pneumonia, viral pneumonia shows no physical signs of lung tissue becoming filled with fluid whatsoever.

Symptoms: High fever. Shaking chills. Headache. Muscle or chest pain. Nausea. Vomiting. Diarrhoea. Sore Throat. Breathlessness. Cough and expectoration in later stages. If you notice these symptoms, contact your doctor.

Treatment: Besides antibiotics, a proper diet helps. In some cases medication may be needed to ease chest pain.

After temperature returns to normal, medication must be continued according to your doctor's instructions. Relapses can be far more serious than the first attack.

INDIA'S MOST INTEGRATED PHARMA GROUP.



THE GREAT INDIAN TOMORROW.

Torrent House, Off Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009. Tel: 658 5090. Fax: 658 2100.

Muscle imbalance: This is particularly important to sprinters if the hamstring-quadriceps power ratio is disturbed. As a consequence of explosive hip flexion, the muscle antagonist (hamstring) may be injured.

Inadequate fitness: Poorly trained muscles are prone to early fatigue, with a loss of shock absorption. Statistics reveal increased incidences of injury in a game like football, especially in the last quarter.

Inadequate "warm up" and "warm down": Increased temperature should be achieved by graded "limbering up" exercises which include long, slow stretches.

"Warm down" and post-exercise stretching prevents over-rapid cooling. Removal of lactic

normally secondary to over use.

Tenosynovitis: If a tendon has a sheath, its inflammation may result from over use, e.g. dequervain tenosynovitis of wrist.

Treatment lies in prevention. Proper training, warm up, warm down and hydration can go a long way in preventing niggling and sometimes serious injuries.

Equipment used should also be according to a sportsman's physique e.g. circumference of tennis racquet would vary according to the size of the grip. Improper size transmits abnormal forces through the forearm leading to tennis elbow.

Good physiotherapy and local ultrasonic exposure can help. If not, then a local steroid

obvious inconsistency.

(b) **Partial tear (grade II):** Shows some degree of joint laxity, secondary to ligamentous insufficiency.

(c) **Complete tear (grade III):** in which there is dislocation or substantial disruption of the joints.

Sprains are best managed with RICE, i.e. Rest, Ice application, Compression bandage, Elevation. Plaster application can be harmful.

Early physiotherapy, mobilisation as soon as practical and early return, to sports as soon as conditions permit is encouraged. Grade II/III tears may need cast - bracing and grade III injuries may need surgery.

Traction injuries: Sometimes called

Yoga of healing, point-counter point

With reference to the concluding part (June 27, 1999) of the 'Yoga of Healing' series of articles, Dr. P.L.T. GIRIJA writes:

THE concluding article "The spirit of the Yoga of healing" makes several assertions about Allopathic and the Ayurveda/Siddha systems of medicine which call for a further "free and frank" discussion on the subject.

Let us examine Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan's claim about modern Western science and medicine - that "historically, it seems to be the model that has revealed the most in the shortest period of time." The fact is that the discoveries made in Western medicine or therapeutics have come into existence only in the last century or so. Prior to this, the West practically had no specific medicine or treatment for most diseases. One has to merely look up a textbook of (allopathic) medicine written around this time to see how, for most diseases, there are no specific cures at all.

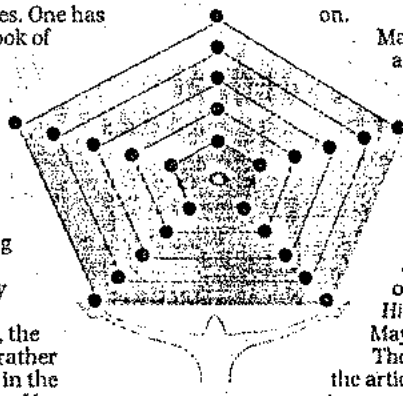
While the time-honoured and tested Ayurvedic system of medicine has been serving our civilisation for over 5,000 years with a highly developed theory and therapeutics, in the West, the science of medicine is of rather recent origin. It was only in the 17th Century that William Harvey "discovered" that blood circulates in the body. Ayurvedic physicians of that period in India had long known about this. However, text books continue to pay homage to Harvey. Thus in a historical sense, Dr. Rajagopalan's statement is valid only for the West, that too because of the total absence there of a working system of medicine and therapeutics till recent times.

Dr. Rajagopalan's remarks about Copernicus and Western science takes us beyond just medical science. This is an observation about Western science and society. He says "when Copernicus first proposed that the earth was not the centre of the universe, it shook people. If we still continue to follow the belief system before Copernicus, I am sure that a lot of the ways in which we understand the world today

will not work."

Current scholars who are conversant with astronomy agree that long before Copernicus came up with the theory that the planets go around the sun, the Kerala school of astronomers did very significant work on heliocentric (sun-centred) models of planetary motion. It must be pointed out that both in medicine and in Astronomy, major innovations of the Western society took place much later than in India. **These are second claims.**

Unlike the other systems, only allopathy rests on scientific study, or submits itself to the rigours of science. Allopathy is a system which is intellectually honest and other systems should follow its example. The system is verifiable unlike the other systems - specifically Ayurveda which has no single frame of reference. Therefore, whatever Ayurveda recommends is not easily verifiable, and so on.



Many of the issues raised or assumptions made by Dr. Rajagopal such as scientificity, verifiability of Ayurveda and the way Ayurveda emphasises that "matter in different forms alone is relevant for medicine", have already been dealt with in detail in an earlier article, "In defence of Ayurveda" published in The Hindu "Sunday Magazine" on May 10, 1998.

The crucial issue not discussed in the articles is the world-view of western medicine, which is that it looks at the body as a chaotic collective of molecules; it views human beings as engaged in a constant struggle against nature for survival. Such a science can have no theory of health and ill-health. It cannot instruct us on how to maintain health by following the ways of nature. In its constant fight and intervention against the natural order of things, it has developed therapeutics and drugs of questionable worth, fraught with dangerous side-effects.

The Allopathic system, as the dominant and national medicine in independent India, has achieved precious little in improving health care. For instance, the 50 year campaign of tackling anaemia, (a major problem among women), relying on the allopathic system, has been a failure. In gynecology, especially in

controlling uterine bleeding, in a variety of digestive disorders, skin diseases, urinary diseases, respiratory ailments, migraine and other headaches, all sorts of rheumatic and related problems, to name only a few, the Allopathic system has no easy remedy; quite often, no remedy at all. Yet, a systematic campaign in favour of Western medicine combined with State patronage has resulted in a situation where even the poor are compelled to seek out these highly interventionistic, expensive, and at times, even futile treatments - this out of sheer "blind faith" in its "efficacy". This trend has reached such ridiculous heights that, today, a patient is no longer happy or satisfied with an easy cure to a problem, but expects and insists on a hi-tech diagnosis and treatment at any cost or risk.

Yes, a yoga of healing is now essential. But for a true yoga of healing, we have to seriously study and learn from Ayurveda and other Indian systems of medicine and health care. The Indian systems must be restored to their rightful place as the national systems of medicine and health care. No government has done anything in this direction. This is a matter of great urgency. ■

A total healing system

T.K.V. Desikachar replies:

THERE is no doubt that Ayurveda is a total healing system. Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan has acknowledged it, more than once. But the fact remains that the breakthrough in the health care system today is mostly due to western medicine. Even so, there is no guarantee that one system can take care of every sickness at every stage. Even experts in other systems of healing rush to western medicine when they are in crisis or where surgery is the solution.

Experts in western medicine are open to other systems and refer their patients to whatever can help them. But there is a tendency in other systems to make claims without validation.

Technology has made it possible to understand the human system like never before. With due respect to Ayurveda there were many deaths due to infectious diseases before western medicine came up with antibiotics.

Can we be honest and acknowledge our strength and weakness and look for ways where there is strength? Let us sit together and find out how various systems can serve society and not how society can serve a system. If this is accepted, the yoga of healing begins and there is more hope than ever before. ■

Treating the traditional way

THE LANCET, the famous British Medical Journal in an article on muscle cramps, (The Hindu, March 23, 1987) in somewhat typical, authoritative and Western-centric language claimed that "no one knows their cause". Of course, this statement applies strictly to Western medical science. What would seem elementary in Ayurvedic science seems to be a complicated matter requiring a great deal of research in the Western medical world. And there seems to be a raging debate about the causes of muscle cramps and the possible remedies. This debate also throws some light on the medicines used widely at present, with questionable efficacy and possible deadly side effects. Says *The Lancet*, "Nur does anyone know for certain how the drugs commonly prescribed for the cramps, quinine and its derivatives quinidine and hydroquinine, are supposed to work. Indeed some researchers question whether they work at all".

Some researchers in fact "were concerned that if these drugs were not effective, then, thousands of patients in a harmless condition, were needlessly exposing themselves to a sure risk of serious side effects, including potentially life-threatening allergic reactions and a variety of unpleasant gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms".

What has Ayurveda to say about this issue? Ayurveda defines health as a state of equilibrium of the three basic constituents of the body called *doshas* - *vayu*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Ill health or disease is a state where this equilibrium is disturbed because one or more of the *doshas* increase or decrease from the optimum level.

Contraction or expansion of muscles, limbs or any part of the body are caused by *vayu*. Therefore muscle cramps occur whenever there is an increase in the *vayu* beyond its optimum level.

A teenager is brought to the Ayurvedic doctor with complaints of muscle cramps and muscular pain. Normally children of this age should not have *vayu*-related problems. On examination it was found that the youngster practised swimming for several hours every day. His diet consisted of a large quantity of potatoes and a variety of pulses, as advised by his coach. Whenever he was tired he consumed cold drinks and potato chips. He is also very fond of spicy hot food with a lot of chillies in it. All these factors were responsible for an enormous increase of *vayu*.

The basic characteristics of *vayu* in the body are similar to the characteristics of wind in nature. *Vayu* is *rooksha* or dry - it has the capacity to dry up things. It is *laghu* or light, *seetha* or cold, *khara* or rough - it can cause roughness. It is *sookshma* or minute - it has the capacity to penetrate into the minute parts of the body. *Vayu* is also *chala* or mobile. In fact *vayu* is the only constituent of the body which can move on its own. The word *vayu* comes from the root "va" which indicates movement.

A middle-aged woman was suffering from severe pain and cramps. She had eliminated all unctuous items like oil and ghee from her diet. She believed or was made to believe that oil and ghee were bad for health. As a consequence *vayu* increased and this resulted not only in severe body pain but also chronic constipation. To make matters worse, she was using ice packs on her body hoping this would dull her pain. This, only further aggravated her condition.

How are we to know what causes an increase or decrease of *vayu*? Any food consumed by us, which has characteristics similar to those of *vayu*, would increase the *vayu* in the body. For example, *vayu* is *seetha* or cold. When cold water from the refrigerator is consumed, it immediately increases *vayu*. That is why one sometimes gets a severe stomach cramp after drinking very cold water. Similarly habits or regimen can also increase the *vayu*. Exposure to a cold climate or bathing in very cold water would also result in an increase in the *vayu*. Going hungry without eating for a long time, keeping awake at night or excessive physical exercise can result in an increase of *vayu*. Any diet or regimen which has characteristics opposite to those of *vayu* would decrease it. Drinking warm water, or consuming ghee or oil which are unctuous (*smigdha*) as opposed to *vayu* which is dry (*rooksha*) would help in reducing it.

An increase of *vayu* in the body is inferred from the following symptoms - emaciation and drying up of the body, black colouring in any part of the body, a desire for heat, trembling, bloating and pain in the abdomen and constipation. Since *vayu* is dry (*rooksha*) it can dry up the body or the bowels leading to dryness and constipation. Likewise, a decrease of *vayu* from its optimum level is indicated by tiredness, lack of enthusiasm, inability to speak or move, feebleness of the mind, poor appetite and poor digestion, excess salivation, lethargy and heaviness of the body, paleness, coldness and tiredness of limbs, shortness of breath, cough and excessive sleep.

Due to the change in the seasons, the three *doshas*, *vayu*, *pitta* and *kapha* accumulate in the body. This can also lead to disease if this accumulation is not taken care of through appropriate treatment. *vayu* naturally accumulates in the summer season, when the atmosphere becomes

extremely dry. And this accumulation can lead to vitiation of *vayu* and to diseases characteristic of *vayu*.

When *vayu* is vitiated it can cause the following - slipping and breaking of joints; inability of limbs to contract or expand or move; lack of sensation in parts of the body; all kinds of pain such as pricking and piercing, obstruction to flow of urine, faeces etc., hardening of bowels and constipation, contraction of limbs or cramping of muscles, thirst, trembling, throbbing, hardness, drying up of the body, an astringent taste in the mouth, black, grey or light red colour in any part of the body.

Treatment for pacifying vitiation of *vayu* includes, in-take of ghee/oil and massaging limbs with oil following sudation or sweating; gentle cleansing of the body; foods which are sweet, sour and salty and hot (in temperature and potency); covering or tying the affected limbs with cloth etc., sprinkling decoctions of herbs on the body, consumption of fermented decoctions of herbs, enemas with warm oils and decoctions of herbs, consumption of oils and ghee prepared with herbs which stimulate digestion and increase assimilation, etc. This treatment will break the effect of *vayu*.

In order to keep the *vayu* under control, habitual oil baths are essential. Ghee and oil are the most important substances in the treatment of diseases arising out of a vitiation of *vayu*. Modern day man has given up the habit of taking regular oil baths. Incidence of muscle cramps can be avoided if oil is regularly applied on the body.

This is particularly relevant for those who undertake excessive physical exercise. For instance, athletes, who are prone to muscular cramps and injury. The spread of Western medicine even into remote parts of the country should not be let to destroy the traditional ways of health care. We would do well to look into our traditional wisdom and once again adopt the older ways, which had kept us healthy for millennia. ■

Dr. GIRIJA

There is one obvious symptom: A suicide note.

Most people don't recognize depression till it is too late, mistaking it for the blues. It is important to know that 1 man in 10 and 1 woman in 5 have a serious depression, usually before their 40s. More than 80% of the victims, however, can recover within a few weeks.

Symptoms: (general) A low feeling. Disinterest in everything, even pleasurable activities. Emotional paralysis. Big increase or loss in weight. Sleeplessness or over sleeping. Fatigue. Slowed body movements or thoughts. Feelings of worthlessness or guilt. Inability to concentrate or indecisiveness.

Thoughts of death and suicide. Manic depressives: mood changes-wild euphoria to deep despair. (affects 1% of the population.) Untreated major depressions generally last 6 months to 2 years. Average duration: 9 months.

Treatment: Do something constructive. Write an action plan daily. Break activities into manageable steps. You may never feel like doing anything. Take a small step to get started. Helping other people has a therapeutic effect. When you're sad, smile, sit up straight. Exercise. Get outdoors. Get more light. Never stay alone. Get together with friends. Master a new skill. If you don't feel better in 2 weeks, talk to a doctor. Write in for a detailed information booklet.

INDIA'S MOST INTEGRATED PHARMA GROUP.



THE GREAT INDIAN TOMORROW

Torrent House, Off Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009. Tel: 658 5090. Fax: 658 2100.