

RECOGNITION OF AYURVEDA
BY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES - A STRATEGY
SPEECH BY MR. PRAFUL PATEL
AT TADVIDYA SAMBHASHA: "AYURVEDA - A JOURNEY
FROM SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION TO GLOBAL VISION"
8 FEBRUARY, 2005 AT BHARTIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen and my friends,

I bring you warm greetings from International Ayurveda Foundation, an independent international NGO set up with Headquarters in the United Kingdom by my colleagues and myself.

Wherever we speak of Ayurveda, we the friends and custodians of this ancient doctrine of health never forget to express our pride in its rich heritage and Vedic history. We emphatically remind the world around that we are successfully using Ayurveda for the past 4000 years. Of course it is an undisputed fact that this is the most ancient science of health known to the humanity, but the credibility of the science cannot be determined only by eliciting its history, but also its development through the years. By the word development, it should imply the increase in its knowledge bank, prompt updating and beyond all, its capacity to reach the maximum number of ailing humanity. India is of course the motherland of Ayurveda. But the sages who propounded the knowledge did not intend to limit the benefits of this art and science of healing to any geographic region or any particular religion of people. Ayurveda is universal. The doctrines hold good equally for an Indian, American, African or a European. The aim of Ayurveda to serve humanity will only be fulfilled if it can reach out to the global community as a sound solution to the puzzling health care issues faced by the people world over. This can be achieved only through a well organized scientific as well as tactful political approach with a clear vision for the next 25 years ahead.

With this aim, the IAF entered the scene in 2002, with lots of hope and enthusiasm with a global vision for the acceptance of Ayurveda in the next 2 decades. As explained in our charter, IAF seeks to bring together global leaders in Ayurveda to provide a neutral, incisive forum for the current issue of global acceptance and recognition of Ayurveda as a separate system of medicine in its own capacity. The main objectives of the IAF Charter are:

- Appropriate state recognition of Ayurveda in as many countries as possible

- Appropriate regulatory status for Ayurveda products.
- Development of research programmes in Ayurveda.
- Appropriate training, education and certification of Ayurveda practitioners.
- Generation and protection of Intellectual property of Ayurveda.
- Co-operation with International and regional organizations to ensure the global recognition of Ayurveda.

The last 31 months have seen us through enormous correspondences with various Governmental, and non- governmental organizations, scientists, legal and other technical experts to address the issue of Recognition of Ayurveda as a separate system of medicine all through the world, with the current focus on the latest developments in the European Union, who have legislated three European Directives, especially Herbal Directive, which will adversely affect all non-European Traditional Systems of Medicine.

The root of the problem

The crucial question of global recognition of Ayurveda cannot be effectively tackled without assessing the basic foundations for the science in India since this is going to be the referral point for the global attempts in the coming future. At this stage, the Indian Ayurvedic Community needs to have an immediate self-retrospection regarding the Indian scenario and the primary points to be scrutinized are:

- a. How has Ayurveda been prevailing and propagated in India through its long historical tradition? Is it being promoted as a science? Philosophy? Therapeutic procedure? Herbal medicine? Grandma's recipe? As a mainstream medical system?
- b. How are the indigenous aspects of education and practice of Ayurveda preserved to maintain its credibility as a Traditional system of medicine? What measures are taken to ensure its sustainability in the light of changing health care needs?
- c. What is the role of marketing forces in the promotion and practice of Ayurveda? Do they have any detrimental effects in the philosophy and ethics of the original science?
- d. Has there been enough R&D works conducted/being conducted for the rational validation of the indigenous techniques and medicines by modern methods of application and interpretation? How much transparency is exercised in sharing such information? Does this information is being transmitted to the grass root level among the student and practitioner community?

The answers to these critical questions are vital to transmit an appropriate message at a global level for the acceptance of Ayurveda as a valid system of medicine with an independent status.

The two alarming factors I have noticed as hindering the global acceptance of Ayurveda are:

- **Lack of a well defined policy for the Globalization of Ayurveda**

While we take profuse pride over the culture and heritage of our Vedic knowledge systems, it is very disappointing that India doesn't have a well-defined policy on Globalization of Ayurveda; neither is there any accepted road map to achieve the goal. All through the past almost six decades of independence the rulers of the country continued to ignore this Indian art and science of healing with a step motherly attitude. As I have emphasized in many of my speeches in the past, it is high time India realize its mistakes and resort to a rapid action strategy as done by the Chinese under Mao for the promotion of our own traditional knowledge bank.

- **A newly emerging trend of a "Herbal lobby" among Indian Ayurveda Industry which surrender the interest of Ayurveda at large to some vested market interests.**

The new era herbalist lobby emerging in India in recent days throws light to a very suicidal tendency among a group of Ayurvedic people to surrender the identity and self-respect of this age-old tradition to the selfish market interests. These scientists working in the field of herbal medicines seems to have lost belief in mainstream Ayurveda. They do not want to get involved in the process of globalization in the name of Ayurveda, but want to reap all the benefits offered by the system. They conveniently use the terms like "herbals" and "natural products" but the term Ayurveda is not acceptable to them. This should be viewed against the back ground of the latest European scenario, where The MHRA of the UK in a joint statement with the Ministry of Health in UK accepted that *"the practice of Ayurveda extends beyond the use of herbs and that they fully accept that Ayurveda is a distinct discipline in its own right."*

Global scenario

Ayurveda has entered the global health arena initially as a massage system two decades back. With the spread of Health tourism in India in the recent years, the popularity of Ayurveda boomed in the west. Many foreign students started

coming to India to learn Ayurveda and this promoted the spread of short-term Ayurveda courses in India. Many people who have undertaken this courses went back and started practicing as Ayurveda practitioners. Since in many of the countries there was no definition for who a qualified Ayurveda doctor is, anything done in the name of Ayurveda got popularized in the west. The initial attempts to globalize Ayurveda started with Ayurvedic educational institutions offering various courses ranging from 1 month to 3 years. Then, many positive health care centers and spas started offering a variety of Ayurveda therapies varying from massages to "pancha karma" treatments! Many well qualified and semi qualified Ayurveda professionals migrated to the west from India and started their own institutions setting up their own standards. Many well-known brands of Ayurveda thus got popular in the west and I fear this has compromised to a great extent the credibility of the system as a scientific system of medicine.

The current issue as I understand is not the "globalisation" of Ayurveda. Ayurveda has already been globalised in a very big way. The question is to save the face of Ayurveda from the branded images and get it recognized over the globe as a scientific system of medicine in its own capacity. Ayurveda has been misinterpreted by various custodians of the system in the west under various labels to suit their convenience to get established themselves in accordance with the situations in the country of practice. Thus Ayurveda became "herbal medicine", "natural medicine", CAM, Holistic medicine, etc. etc. Nowhere in the world other than in the Indian sub continent, Ayurveda has been able to keep its identity as a mainstream medical system. This has to change. Our aim should be to propagate globally the immense potentials of this system to heal, in as many countries as possible, in its own capacity as a scientific medical system of India.

If we fail to do the same at the earliest, irreversible damage can be done to its credibility globally by many a negative forces which are trying to damage the reputation of Ayurveda and questioning its age old tradition of healing powers and scientific base as a system of medicine. Already the herbal label given to Ayurveda is damaging the reputation of the system and limiting its scope beyond what we can imagine with far reaching repercussion.

The latest example for such a disaster is in front of us in the report published by the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) regarding the heavy metal contents in Ayurveda medicines that they call as HMPs, i.e. Herbal Medicine Products. They are right in their capacity as modern scientists when they worry how HMPs can have metallic contents. The answer to the question lies in the difference between HMP and Ayurveda medicine. This article as you all know has created a lot of uproar among the Ayurveda community India and abroad. This has really hit us as a Tsunami, practically wiping off the landmarks we have achieved world wide in these 30 months for the acceptance and recognition of Ayurveda. The IAF has been engaged in intense correspondence

with the authors as well as various experts in the field of Ayurveda and pharmacology in our attempt to strategically defend the credibility of the science. At the same time, it is the responsibility of all of us to save ayurveda from any kind of unethical and spurious practices and should not allow any negative forces to develop within ourselves that damage the reputation and name of this age-old tradition of healing. We have already written to the authors expressing our concerns regarding the unilateral and rather ill informed conclusions they have made on the basis of mere "presence of heavy metal particle above permitted daily dosage" without any toxicity study, or any attempt to search for the rationality behind the findings in Ayurveda point of view. We have also written to the editors of JAMA as well as the Government of India (GOI) in this regard and we are pledged to take up the issue and earnestly try to mend the damage caused. We are on the verge of sending out a questionnaire to all the Indian manufacturers seeking answers to many related issues so that we can prepare a detailed response with enough scientific information to support our case.

Ayurveda in Europe - the need of a "PERISTROYKA"/revolution

The IAF has been closely working for the past 31 months with various European Union authorities in an attempt to de rail the anti- Ayurveda stand adopted by them in the oncoming Food Supplements (FSD), Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (THMPD) and the amendments to Pharmaceutical Directive (PD). In this regard IAF has prepared an impact assessment document to explain to the Ayurveda community regarding the dangers hidden in these very damaging Directives. The new Directives in the name of better regulation are actually trying to favor the monopoly of Western herbalism and wipe off the rest of the non- European traditional Medicine systems. The suggestions are so illogical and biased that it blindly takes away the basic right for choice in health care for about 10 million population in Europe who depend on these systems for there routine health care. The combined effects of the three new Directives, will effectively ban most of the Ayurveda products from the European market and this is going to bring a major set back to the Indian economy, especially the Ayurveda exporting houses in India.

IAF has drawn a three-tier strategy to tackle this issue. We have been dealing the case in scientific, political and legal angles and we have been getting tremendous support from the GOI in our political battle. Recently the GOI has set up a committee with representatives from the field of trade and Commerce, Department of AYUSH, and members from Ayurveda community including myself. We have pursued the GOI to include our case in the current dialogue between India and EU. The GOI has proposed for the constitution of an Indo-European Task Force to study and make the required recommendation in this issue. All of us have to realize that this is a now or never situation for the acceptance of Ayurveda in its own capacity in the west. If we are successful in

Europe, the Americas and the rest of the world will follow. If we fail here, it is better to forget about globalisation of Ayurveda as it is for the next half century at least.

As I have mentioned, the issue has to be tackled three tiers. We have to scientifically establish the efficacy of the system with enough clinical and scientific data. The scientific strategy should be based on transparency, credibility and honesty. The entire Ayurveda scientific community should join hands and do rigorous R&D studies for the classical and patented products and there should be free information sharing and mutual collaborations. Data should be collected from every possible source and should be presented scientifically and with credibility.

The major issue in globalisation is regarding the quality of Ayurveda medicines exported. Ayurveda pharmacology has to be developed as a separate entity from Herbal researches and separate courses have to be started. Ayurveda Pharmacy Council should be formed and GMP should be strictly implemented. Our letter to The GOI has clearly chalked out the need for a clear-cut policy in this matter. We have suggested the formation of a committee with the following targets:

- a. In-depth study of all international issues pertaining to Ayurveda and clear line of action suggested based on the study
- b. Prompt reaction and response to international Ayurveda related and where necessary resort to legal aid
- c. In-depth study of various committees that now exist in relation to traditional systems of medicine and understanding their current role and work - where necessary expanding or redefining their roles with clear timelines to ensure better productivity
- e. Ensuring that the following areas of activity are covered under existing committees or Acts and where necessary, recommending the creation of new committees or Acts:
 - i. Create and monitor the educational standards of Ayurveda Pharmacy courses at the graduate and post-graduate levels
 - ii. Study the existing Ayurvedic GMP norms and where necessary reform, restructure and ensure strict implementation
 - iii. in-depth study of the means to achieve quality control and standards for Ayurvedic medicines and then enable stage

wise implementation of these standards in all Ayurveda manufacturing units across the country

- iv. Rigorous study of the contents of all classical Ayurveda medicines based on western parameters and consequently establishing the standards - the permitted maximum levels of heavy metals, arsenic etc. in each of these medicines
- v. Based on the above, establishing the different categories of medicines wherein the most potent category can be sold only under the guidance of a qualified Ayurveda physician
- vi. Creating well equipped government sponsored R&D labs in every state where there are more than 10 manufacturers of Ayurveda medicines and making it mandatory for every medicine that goes into the market to be certified by these laboratories
- vii. These laboratories should also be equipped to study the quality of the raw material and over a period of time, establish the standards for the raw material that go into the preparation of different medicines
- viii. Creating clear standards and protocol for recognition of any new medicine which is labeled as "Ayurveda" - and also reviewing all existing OTC medicines which are sold in the name of "Ayurveda"
- ix. Making the labeling of Ayurveda medicines more comprehensive with clear description of ingredients, mode of usage etc.

Ayurveda products are marketed in European Union as Food Supplements, not as a separate entity in the form of Ayurveda products. Whereas, in USA there is a regulatory body called FDA, which describes the norms for market authorization of any product. So under those norms, any Ayurveda product fulfilling the criteria can be introduced in the US market. Precisely, Ayurveda products in European Union are put equivalent to herbal products due to which these products need to be processed for market authorization in the same manner. But the fact is Ayurveda products are virtually different from so-called herbal products. Ayurveda products are manufactured in accordance with the philosophy/principles of the Ayurveda system. So Ayurveda products should be first kept distinct from the herbal products and the Western regulatory authorities need to be convinced on this aspect.

If both the scientific and the political approach fail to yield, a credible legal challenge is the choice. IAF's partners the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) have successfully challenged the FSD in the European Court and the hearing is going in a favorable trend for us. IAF's legal team is currently on our way to mount a legal challenge against the THMPD if everything fails in the next 10 months.

Irrespective of what we NGOs do from our end, the Government of India has to urgently develop a well defined policy on globalization. It should focus at the above mentioned areas and there should be aiming at nothing less than a due recognition for Ayurveda as India's own Scientific System of Medicine. Steps should be taken for a better assurance of the quality of the medicines that are marketed as Ayurveda products. The necessary amendments are to be made to the Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940 so as to define various categories of Ayurveda medicines and the labeling norms should also be well defined. It should be emphasized that the necessary consumer information is provided in the labels regarding the contents, usage and the need of medical supervision by a qualified Ayurveda physician as and when applicable.

IAF is pledged to take up this campaign to the end and we are always ready to give any kind of technical, legal or policy advices on these complex issue. We are going through the toughest phase of our current lobby and in the next 10 months we have to go in a very time bound and fully dedicated manner to win the case over. I request earnest co-operation from all like minded people to join hands with us in this cause and to spread the message of Ayurveda as envisaged by the saints to heal the humanity over the globe.