

Dentistry in Ayurveda

Preface

Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine literally means 'Knowledge of life.' It includes art of living, science of health and philosophy of life. Though more than 5,000 years old, it is by no means an outdated science. Even today, people of India think and live according to the principles of Ayurveda. There are over hundred colleges all over the country, which teach Ayurveda in a systematic manner.

The close resemblance of the word *dantashastra* and dentistry suggests a strong possibility that the word dentistry is derived from the word *dantashastra*. Dentistry is one of the recognised sub-specialities of 'Shalakya-tantra', that is, surgery of head and neck, which is one of the eight recognised specialities of Ayurveda. In Ayurvedic literature, one finds reference of several textbooks of *Shalakya-tantra* (surgery of head and neck) namely *Nimi-tantra*, *Videha-tantra*, *Gargya-tantra*, *Kankayana-tantra*, *Krushnatreya-tantra*, *Galava-tantra*, *Satyaki-tantra* and *Shounaka-tantra*. These texts were named after the respective authors. In addition, one finds reference for *Chakshushya-tantra*, that is, ophthalmology and *Karala-tantra*, that is, science of irregular teeth or textbook of orthodontics. Unfortunately, these textbooks are not available and we are missing a lot of valuable information. It is surprising that even with the available literature, practically all the dental disorders mentioned today have been described in Ayurvedic texts. The Principles of Ayurveda are based on sound scientific principles, which will remain as eternal truths. Ayurveda believes in treating man as a whole. Hence, dentistry was specially taken up at the postgraduate level. Naturally, every '*dantashastradhnya*', that is, dentist was well versed with Ayurvedic medicine and surgery. As local measures and surgical treatment constitute important therapeutic measure, *dantashashtra* was a surgical subspecialty. Even today's dentist styles himself as a dental surgeon and not as a physician.

In this book, an attempt is made to dig out the golden mine of Ayurveda, so that this hidden wealth of knowledge can be easily digested, absorbed and utilised by the dentists all over the world. I sincerely hope that the modern dentist will utilise this knowledge for promoting the health and hygiene of teeth so that man can live a better life. - **Authors**

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