

7th AYURVEDA DAY

28 OCT 2022

STOCKHOLM

REMARKS

AMBASSADOR TANMAYA LAL

Namaskar,

Thank you all for joining us today for this special event on Ayurveda.

In Sweden, Ayurveda has been known for a number of decades and awareness about Ayurveda as an alternative medicine system is growing gradually. There are a number of Ayurveda practitioners in Sweden.

Embassy has facilitated a closer engagement among the Ayurveda practitioners and consultants.

Embassy also facilitated an Ayurveda outreach at the prestigious Scandinavian festival, the Gotherburg KulturKalas recently.

Some of you had participated in the special events on Ayurveda that we co-hosted in February this year and October last year.

It is good to see that there have been several further relevant developments since then.

One is that now an association of Ayurveda practitioners and experts in Sweden has been established by the name Ayurveda Sweden. Ms. Stina Andersson is here today who is closely associated with this initiative.

This new association will help network the Ayurveda experts in Sweden more closely; this will allow more exchange of information and practices among this growing community.

It will also help generate new ideas for collaboration and identify bottlenecks if any in furthering such efforts.

This will also focus more structured exchange between Ayurveda communities across other countries such as in Germany or UK or Latvia, where an Ayush Chair is based at the University of Latvia.

One of the most important recent developments has been the joint commencement of work to establish the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Healing in Jamnagar Gujarat in India by Prime Minister Modi and the WHO Head a few months back.

This will pave the way for much closer collaboration leading to modern research methods into the efficacy and harmonization of Ayurveda and other traditional healing systems.

Friends,

The understanding about and acceptance of traditional healing systems continues to grow around the world.

Sometimes these systems are termed as 'alternative' systems of medicine. There is often a perception that these systems are not science based.

The very fact that their practice is so widespread in so many societies across the world is a pointer about their abiding efficacy.

They are still being used simply because they work ! They represent a distillation of traditional knowledge of healing for many conditions across scores or even hundreds of generations.

Modern medicine is based on molecules that are synthetically produced. The traditional systems of healing, especially Ayurveda is a more holistic system that relies on several aspects including food and largely plants-based formulations.

The confusion arises because of lack of standardisation or harmonisation of formulations or the issues of competence of practitioners.

It is, therefore, necessary that there is a closer dialogue between practitioners of modern and traditional medicine and generation of evidence-based scientific knowledge.

Friends,

The role of forests, trees and plants in sustaining life has been keenly understood by people since millennia across the world.

It is, therefore, no surprise that a whole range of plants and trees are considered sacred and worshipped in many traditions, including in India.

In Sweden too there has always been a strong love for nature and forests. There is also evidence of herbal medicine use in Sweden dating back at least to several centuries.

It is remarkable how thousands of years ago, physicians developed this detailed knowledge of a holistic nature. It shows how our ancestors understood the interconnectedness of life. Something, modern science is beginning to understand now.

Modern science is validating the medicinal properties of many of these herbal medicines. This traditional knowledge has sometimes even sought to be unethically patented in some high-profile instances.

An important initiative has been the setting up of a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library to protect traditional knowledge from biopiracy and unethical patenting practices as also to digitalize and document ancient texts and formulations.

There is a growing interest in Ayurveda and traditional medicine to treat the increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases, for instance diabetes or blood pressure. There is also a rapid growth in herbal pharmaceutical industry.

Friends,

The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted public health concerns globally. Individuals with co-morbidities have been more vulnerable. In this context the general immunity strengthening aspects of Ayurveda have been brought to the fore.

The therapeutic potential of Ayurveda is being explored. Clinical drug trials to evaluate the safe and effective use of selected and standardised Ayurvedic medicines in the prophylaxis and treatment of COVID-19 have been initiated.

This also brings together Ayurvedic physicians and experts of modern medicine together. Hopefully this will contribute to a better scientific understanding more widely of Ayurveda over medium and long term.

International support for Ayurveda continues to grow. More than 50 Unani and Ayurveda products have been registered in 8 countries by the Ayush Ministry.

MoUs have been finalized with more than 20 countries for cooperation in the fields of Traditional Medicine and Homoeopathy. More than 100 scholarships are offered to international students every year to pursue higher studies in Ayush systems.

In Latvia for instance, there is an Ayurveda Chair at the University of Latvia in Riga.

Dr. Shantala Priyadarshini has joined as the new incumbent of the Ayush Chair. It is good to see that she will be participating in today's seminar, as also Dr. Geeta Krishnan from WHO Geneva.

I understand that a growing number of countries have endorsed the inclusion of Ayurveda as Module-2 of the 26th Chapter of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), who is the global health information standard managed by World Health Organization (WHO).

In 2020, WHO and the Ayush Ministry of India signed an MoU to develop the Traditional Medicine module in the ICD-11 series. Work is ongoing on a union set of classifications covering Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine and WHO consultations have been initiated with Member States.

In India, Prime Minister Modi has dedicated two important institutions for growth and development of Ayurveda in the 21st century. These are the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA), Jamnagar and the National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), Jaipur. The ITRA now has the status of an Institution of National Importance. And NIA now has the status of a Deemed University.

These are important steps in the modernization of Ayurveda education, which is a priority area for the Government.

The utilization of the immense potential of AYUSH systems of healthcare for effective and affordable solutions for India's public healthcare challenges remains the priority of our Government.

Friends,

I may also mention here that as part of Indian initiative the next year 2023 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Millets.

Millets are highly nutritious and climate resilient and, therefore, have a high significance globally.

We are also working to promote the wonderful variety of millet products to mark the upcoming Year of Millets to spread awareness about this. You can sample some of the Millet preparations here today.

We look forward to an engaging and informative discussion by the experts who have joined us today.

Thank you