

A NOTE ON KERALA'S AYURVASTRA: THE CONCEPTUAL JUNCTURE OF TRADITIONAL HANDLOOM WEAVING AND MEDICINE OF AYURVEDA

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Abstract:

A new technique known as "Ayurvasthra" was developed by the Directorate of Handloom and Textiles and the Government Ayurveda College of Kerala with the intention of providing therapeutic value in the manufacturing of fabrics. In Sanskrit, the word "ayurveda" is used. Aye means "life," and Vasthra means "cloth," therefore the combination means "life cloth." This article will go through how the concept of Ayurveda gives a new birth and new dimensions in traditional handloom industry of Kerala, various herbal combinations utilised to provide various hues and unique therapeutic properties to the fabric, as well as its successes in treating various illnesses. Being nontoxic and environmentally benign, ayurveda treats illnesses while simultaneously taking care of the environment.

Key words:

Ayurveda, traditional handloom weaving, sustainable, natural dyes, herbal clothing.

Introduction

The earliest and most well-known Ayurvedic texts are Charaka Samhita and Susrutha Samhita. People in several regions of India used various natural dyeing techniques up until around 100 years ago, frequently dipping their clothing in a solution made of herbs after each wash. These natural colours don't contain any poisons. The first century saw the development of Ayurveda by Siddha and its endorsement by the kings of Tamizhagam Cheras, Cholas, and Pandiyas. The 18 Siddhas are

811

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revered in South India as ancient researchers and scholars who made significant contributions to a variety of disciplines, including martial arts, meditation, astrology, astronomy, and medicine. The art of Ayurvedic dyeing and creating clothing with Ayurvedic properties was also taught by these siddhas. Agastiyar was regarded as the primary siddha, and he lived in Balaramapuram, not far from where we were. He continued to live on AgasthiyarKooda Hill, where he taught these disciples siddhas. Agasthiyar received a temple in Balaramapuram in recognition of his contributions to siddha and ayurvedic textiles. Following Agasthiyar, his disciples made several contributions in this field and received support from the Chera rulers, who then dominated the southern region of Kerala from the capital city of Padmanabhapuram. The Trivancore monarchs (heirs of Cheras) established a treaty with the British government when the British took over India, promising not to invade and to pay tribute. Ayurvedic fabrics are gradually losing their significance. There are many indications that cloth treated with medicinally potent herbs is used to treat wounded soldiers in battle. The process of using handloom fabrics that have been dyed with herbs to treat wounds is known as "cloth wrapping therapy." Even today, practitioners of the well-known martial art Kalaripayattu, which is based on every martial art in the world that uses Veeralipattu, can be seen wearing red (dyed with Kumkum).

Balaramapuram was the site of the initial introduction of handloom weaving during the reign of His Highness the Maharaja (1799–1810). Seven weaver families (Shaliars) were recruited from Tamil Nadu by Maharaja Balaramavarma's Delava in order to restart the traditional textile-making process at Balaramapuram. The Maharaja and UmminiThampi, his Delava (Chief Minister), mutually planned to turn Balaramapuram and the areas around it into an agro-based industrial belt with a variety of traditional industries, including fishing, weaving, and oil extraction. The weavers produce ayurvedic fabrics that are given to monarchs and other members of the royal family. A comparably superior infrastructure for growth is provided by distinct streets that are grouped in certain locations. In

and around Balaramapuram, Maharaja Balarama Varma provided facilities for creating Ayurveda Textiles and invited talented traditional weavers from Tamil Nadu. This area then after became a cluster of handlooms and used to weave traditional clothing.

The colonial invasion and their policy of free trade were further strapped traditional weavers to the lowest levels of society. In independent India that the art of hand loom weaving got restoration and there developed the status of handloom weavers too. In the contrary, the socio-economic conditions of handloom workers and the living standard of women workers in handloom sector was declined as it was before. In the contemporary scenario, the handloom workers were the poorest of the lot, least appreciated, socially and economically underprivileged, living in arrears and once they lost its fame and prosperity. The historic culture of handloom weaving has passed on from generations to generations. But due to the expansion of power looms and machine-made clothes, the traditional handloom sector of Kerala began to fade its glory which enjoyed in past and weavers began to suffer a lot. Both Central and State governments initiated many policies and schemes to revive the industry. Kerala is noted for Ayurvedic treatments, so the mixture of Kerala's traditional method of handloom weaving and ayurveda to the idea of Ayurveda again gives a ray of hope to the traditional handloom industry in Kerala.

Since more than five years ago, the Handloom Weavers Development Society in Kerala has been manufacturing and exporting ayurveda. Currently, the association exports ayurvedic textiles to Singapore, Malaysia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy. At Kerala's Government Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram, the efficacy of these textiles was recently assessed clinically. A Research with 40 carefully chosen individuals who had skin diseases was carried out in 2006. The patients were placed in a study unit furnished with Ayurvedic-inspired apparel, bedding, carpets, and towels. The study's findings made it abundantly evident that the Ayurveda had a beneficial impact on

accelerating the healing process. In the research ward, patients with skin conditions like swelling, itching, pain, inflammation, pus formation, and ulceration started to improve after 14 days, whereas in the general ward, patients found relief after 40 days. In a similar vein, patients with rheumatism, eczema, and psoriasis significantly improved in 25 days as opposed to 42 days for patients on the general ward. For the research team, it is particularly intriguing to see how patients with rheumatism and arthritis are doing because these conditions are not skin-related, and so it suggests that the Ayurveda may have health benefits that go beyond just treating skin issues on the skin.

At Balaramapuram, there started the Ayurveda project in 2006 and brought the antiquated dyeing technology to the modern era from Balaramapuram handloom cluster. Balaramapuram is the only location where genuine Ayurveda and Ayurvedic textiles are produced. New-born are still transported in herbal-processed towels in various regions of India to immunise against microbial diseases. Balaramapuram handloom is well known for its intricate patterns, beautiful motifs, and luxurious feel. There are still more than 2000 people working as handloom weavers today.

Production Process of Ayurveda.

The production process of Ayurveda is having a number of steps that are meticulously controlled in a set of temperature and humidity conditions. Ayurveda attire are completely organic, sustainable, and disposable. According to Ayurveda, medicinal cloth is used to cure diabetes, skin infections, hypertension, asthma, and arthritis. Ayurveda clothing is constructed of 100 percent organic cotton or silk, wool, jute, and coir goods that have been handloom processed and coloured with various herbs to include therapeutic characteristics.

Ayurveda will be made of organic cotton and natural fibres. Bleaching, desizing/gumming, mordanting, dyeing (medication), and finishing are all steps in the dyeing process. In the first process

of Bleaching, the cloth or yarn is first bleached using cow urine, milk, honey, and biodegradable, organically produced, organic cleaning agents and surfactants. The cloth or yarn is then exposed to direct sunshine to complete the process. In the process of Desizing / Gumming, there is cleaning cloth or yarn to get gums and oils out. For that here using natural mineral-rich water and sea salts. In the process of Mordanting, making the colours brilliant and quick by using natural mordants, this is done sometimes prior to dyeing the cloth or yarn.

Another process is Dyeing (Medication). Since medical plants are employed to give cloth or yarn the necessary natural colour, the word medicine is utilised instead of dyeing. Depending on the condition or affliction being treated, the yarn or fabric is next medicated in a precisely regulated blend of herbal medicine formulations known as Kashayas (concoctions). The mixture of herbs, the temperatures of the dyes, the quantity and length of dye soaks, and even the equipment utilised were meticulously regulated. To preserve the therapeutic properties of the herbs, they are directly put to the fabric with the aid of natural components. After being dyed in a particular shade, the fabric is allowed to cure for three days before being "seasoned" for 15 days. During this time, the Kashaya is given a chance to fully dry and get ingrained in the cloth. Following a 15-day seasoning period, it is cleaned, shade-dried, and preserved.

Next process will be Finishing process. Finishing involves applying pure water to the fabric and stretching it under tension while using hand rolls, aloe vera, castor oil, etc. Remaining material will be recycled after dying. The entire procedure is natural. Unlike synthetic colours, it does not harm the environment. Filtration separates solid and liquid waste, which is then utilised for farming, as manure and for watering the fields, as well as for producing bio-manure and biogas.

To create ayurvastra garments in many colours, 200 or more herbs are using. Each colour is made using a mixture of precisely mixed and meticulously prepared medical herbs, plants, flowers, roots, and barks. For example, turmeric is used in garments dyed with turmeric along with 40 or more other mostly other plants and herbs. The following are some of the most often utilised herbs and ayurvedic preparations that provide fabrics both medical benefits and colour for Ayurvastras are:

- Terminalia chebula (Myrobolon) - Because the fruit or blossom of this plant has a high tannin content and gives textiles a dull yellow hue, it is frequently used in natural dyes. It possesses expectorant, asthmatic, antiviral, antispasmodic, and antispasmodic effects. To treat gastrointestinal issues, it is frequently used as a powder in Ayurvastras.
- Curcuma domestica, or turmeric, is a plant that is frequently taken for internal comfort and is used externally on wounds due to its antibacterial characteristics uses in Ayurvastras.
- Lawsonia inermis (Henna): Due to the astringent and anti-bacterial qualities of henna leaves make them using in the making process of Ayurvastra.
- Manjistha, also known as Rubia cordifolia (Madder), is a plant that is used to treat burns and is an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic. In Hindi, the term "vastraranjini" means "fabric colour" in Ayurvastras.
- Ayurvedic philosophy claims that Terminalia arjuna is particularly effective for treating asthma, excessive sweating, or body discharges. Additionally, it has uses as a diuretic, energizer, and aphrodisiac.

Wearing ayurvastra clothes is most helpful while the body is at rest, such as during sleep or meditation, because this is when the body is mending and re-establishing equilibrium. As a result, ayurvastra was first utilised for sleepwear, bed linens, and meditation clothes. Herb-treated fabric is

being manufactured into sarees, dresses, and daily apparel since it is used not just to heal but also to prevent illnesses.

In the process of the production of Ayurvastra, basic colours are applied in it naturally. For the colour of Red, here using Sandalwood, Safflower, Madder Root. For the colour of Yellow here using plants of Indigo, and lime. Jaggery and for the making of green coloured ayurvastra attires there need the plants of Pomegranate, Indigo, Neem, Amaltas, and Turmeric. For Orange colour dresses in Ayurvastras, demands the plants of Safflower, Madder Root, and Marigold. In order to produce Blue coloured Ayurvastra attires, Indigo, lime, Jaggery plants are used. For Black colour, Iron Scrap, Jaggery, Peanut Oil, Castor oil are using and for Brown colour, Cateccu, Lai Kashish, and Henna plants are using.

Benefits of Ayurvastra.

Ayurvasthra has a good impact on enhancing health. Medicinal Cloth appears to be effective, according to a clinical experiment conducted by the Ministry of Health at the Government Ayurveda College in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. For the study, Medicinal Cloth garments, bed linens, and mattresses were used to continuously expose patients with rheumatism, allergies, hypertension, diabetes, psoriasis, and other skin conditions to ayurvedic herbs for 30 days. The subjects' chamber also had Medicinal Cloth coir mats covering the walls, floors, and ceilings. Dr. Vishwanathan, the former dean of the Ayurveda College's drug research division, claimed that the reaction was "remarkably good," particularly in cases of arthritis and skin conditions where patients shown a "significant improvement." The clinical evaluation of ayurvasthra conducted in 2005, and a study of therapeutic value of ayurvasthra conducted in 2006, By Government ayurveda college, Trivandrum under the super -vision of the health department, Kerala, showed very positive results.

- Using herbal materials ensures that no pollutants are released into the environment during the dyeing process, making it totally eco-friendly.
- The use of herbal dyes enhances the visual appeal of cotton garments in a sustainable manner.
- Herbal materials are lightweight and provide for the ideal breezy clothing. The finest feature of cotton herbal clothing is that it is both warm and extremely cool in the summer.
- Natural dyes provide distinctive tones of colours.
- The distinct flavour of the ayurvasthra elevates the attitude.
- Clothing made of organic cotton is especially beneficial for those who suffer from allergies and chemical sensitivity since conventional cotton may still contain toxic residues that are damaging to the body.
- Organic cotton will just feel nicer on the skin, even if a person does not have sensitive skin.

Unlike synthetic materials, which take hundreds of years to degrade and release polluting materials into the soil, natural fibres and natural colours used in the manufacture of ayurvasthra allow for its natural decomposition without harming the environment. Since there are few costs associated with production, ayurveda is more affordable and available in many countries around the world.

Down sides of Ayurvastra.

Even though, the idea of Ayurvastra is new to people but is actually it is an established practise. The main shortcomings of this product are hindrances for its familiarity and efficacy in market. Important drawbacks of Ayurvastra are:

- Natural fabrics and dyes lack the variety and variances of synthetic hues.
- Washing with care is essential to preserving the item's colour and herbal advantages. Each piece must be cleaned individually, ideally by hand or in a light machine wash, and only

shade-dried. You must use detergents devoid of bleach. The consumer's life is made particularly tough by the procedure' complexity, length, and requirement that each stage of the dyeing process be carried out under strictly regulated circumstances.

- Since they can only be acquired by using medicinal plants, all colours cannot be used to treat all illnesses. As a result, the buyer is forced to compromise on colour.
- It is because of the foundation of Ayurveda, it will not may produce immediate effects. It will take some time for the results to be positive.

Ayurveda produced effective outcomes, although they took time to manifest. Although customers have not reported any negative reactions, some individuals believe that ayurveda has adverse effects for youngsters.

Conclusion.

Ayurveda has limitless potential to dominate the global market. The best method to embrace a healthy lifestyle is to combine Ayurveda with textiles to obtain wellness in an environmentally responsible way. All around the world, there is growing awareness about ayurveda. One of the best ways to resurrect and expand the market for the Indian handloom industry is through ayurveda. The solution to achieving excellent health in a natural approach is Ayurveda. Thus, as “Blessing in disguise”, covid-19 reminds the world of human beings to be hygienic and healthy in all realms of life and therefore through the concept of *Ayurveda* and climate, eco-friendly clothes are the need of today and weavers may repossess the status of privileges what they enjoyed in the ancient society. Therefore, there is a wide chance of opportunities to the ever-fluctuating status of traditional handloom weaving industry or the undergoing status of weavers of Kerala to the graph of a sustainable growth of development.

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