



P.K. Warriar
Commemoration
Series - 03

AYURVEDA THE EXPANDING FRONTIERS

An Anthology of Essays by Experts to mark the
150th Birth Anniversary of Vaidyaratnam P.S. Variar



ESTD. 1902

VAIDYARATNAM P.S. VARIAR'S
ARYA VAIDYA SALA, KOTTAKKAL



150
VAIDYARATNAM P.S. VARIER
THE DOYEN OF AYURVEDA

"It was our considered decision that AVS should bring out a sort of a status report on the current state of affairs of ayurveda viewed from an academic perspective. This anthology of professional essays is the outcome of that decision. Changes, indeed, are taking place in every domain of ayurveda. It is for certain that the frontiers of ayurveda are really expanding. We thought that taking an interim stock of the status of that scenario will be appropriate at this juncture. We are sure that such an academic volume would naturally help the national efforts to strengthen ayurveda."

Dr. P.M. Varier in his Preface

This brief anthology of invited essays by professional experts, as a collective effort, attempts to take a perspectival view on some current concepts, concerns and approaches pertaining to the core components of ayurveda, in the context of the ongoing paradigmatic shifts. There has happened a boosting of enthusiasm and proliferation of activities in both the academic and the functional domains of ayurveda. This volume is conceived as a record of those developments and their implications.

The authors of the essays have expressed their expectations and concerns in the context of the advancing frontiers of ayurveda as a consequence of the shifting paradigms of its knowledge base. The fact that they have been put forth here for the informed consideration of all stakeholders can itself be seen as a major forward step in the long process of strengthening ayurveda.

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Vaidyaratnam P.S. Varier's
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SPICES AS MEDICINES

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Abstract : Phytochemicals have a long history of usage for treating various diseases. Spices are prominent among such traditional usage. Spices add flavour and taste to food. They also possess tremendous health benefits. The paper presents a general picture of the potential health application of selected spices and their derivatives.

Introduction

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food", said Hippocrates. In Ancient times, it was Priests who used the 'technique' of Phytotherapy to keep the sick alive and if possible, cure them, but from Hippocrates onwards the herbalist-doctors practised 'medicine', as the art of knowing how to administer precise plant extracts, chosen and proportioned according to the illnesses diagnosed. The oldest evidence of plant therapy comes from the Egyptians, around 4000 BC, as also from the Chinese, Tibetans and the Indians. The Chinese text from 3000 BC (*Pen Tsao*), contains over a thousand natural remedies, and even many remedies against cancer.

Spices and management of diseases

Chronic diseases, also called as non-communicable diseases which include Alzheimers, arthritis, cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVD), diabetes and Parkinsons remain the primary root cause of death and disability

worldwide. The major risk factors associated with these diseases are unhealthy lifestyles including lack of physical activity, poor diet, stress, excessive tobacco and alcohol consumption, exposure to radiation and infection with pathogenic microorganisms. It is now well established that these agents induce inflammation and dis-regulate inflammatory pathways, which lead to the development of chronic diseases (Prasad *et al.*, 2012). Since time immemorial, phytochemicals, both in their natural as well as in synthetic forms are used for the treatment of various chronic diseases. The root, leaf, bud, seed, bark, berry, and stigma of a plant or flower used for the culinary purposes are generally called as spices, which not only add flavour and taste to food, but also exhibit tremendous health benefits (Nilius and Appendino 2013). Congregate evidences suggest that a diet rich in plant-based items including spices has the ability to prevent most of the chronic diseases. The earliest evidence of the use of spices by humans dates back to 5000 BC, and till today their biological