ii. Āyurveda and various schools

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Introduction

- The origins of Āyurveda trace back to the **Vedic period**, where early references in the Atharva Veda laid the groundwork for a sophisticated medical system.
- Over centuries, knowledge was transmitted and refined through lineages (paramparā) and schools (sampradāyas). These schools specialized in different facets of healthcare, leading to the development of distinct texts, commentaries, and branches (aṣṭāṅga) of Āyurveda.

Two Major Classical Schools

Atreya School (Medical Tradition)

1. Founder/Patron:

- o Rooted in the teachings of **Ātreya Punarvasu**, a legendary sage and physician.
- His disciples included **Agniveśa**, Bhela, Jatūkarṇa, and Harita, who composed the earliest known treatises (later expanded or redacted into Caraka Saṃhitā, Bhela Saṃhitā, etc.).

2. Focus:

- **Kāya Chikitsā** (internal medicine) was the primary emphasis—diagnosis, pathology, and medical therapeutics for systemic diseases.
- o Stress on clinical examination, tri-doşa theory, dietetics, pharmacology, and preventive measures.

3. Key Texts:

- Agniveśa Tantra (now lost in its original form), redacted by Caraka into the famous Caraka Samhitā.
- o Bhela Samhitā, Harita Samhitā (in fragments).

4. Historical Impact:

- Shaped the foundational concepts of Ayurvedic pathology, diagnosis, and medicinal formulations.
- The Caraka Samhitā remains a cornerstone for Ayurvedic internal medicine worldwide.

Dhanvantari School (Surgical Tradition)

1. Founder/Patron:

- Linked to Lord Dhanvantari, revered as the deity of medicine and surgery.
- Suśruta is the most prominent representative, credited with systematically codifying surgical techniques.

2. **Focus**:

- **Śalya Tantra** (surgery) was the core discipline—covering diverse procedures from **incision**, **excision**, **suturing**, to advanced reconstructive surgeries (skin grafts, rhinoplasty).
- Detailed anatomical studies via cadaver dissection, marma (vital points) analysis, and specialized surgical instruments.

3. Key Text:

 Suśruta Samhita, which meticulously describes operative procedures, instruments, bandaging, fractures, and marma therapy.

4. Historical Impact:

- o Influenced global surgery by introducing methods like rhinoplasty and precise surgical classification.
- Emphasis on practical training, dissection, and post-operative care established a strong tradition of Ayurvedic surgical excellence.

Emergence of Aṣṭāṅga (Eight Branches) Ayurveda

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WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

While the Ātreya and Dhanvantari schools laid the foundation, Ayurveda soon branched into eight specialized fields (aṣṭāṅga):

- 1. Kāya Chikitsā (Internal Medicine)
- 2. **Śalya Tantra** (Surgery)
- 3. Śālākya Tantra (ENT & Ophthalmology)
- 4. Kaumāra Bhṛtya (Pediatrics/Obstetrics)
- 5. **Bhūta Vidyā** (Psychiatry/Demonology in ancient context)
- 6. Agada Tantra (Toxicology)
- 7. Rasāyana (Rejuvenation & Anti-aging)
- 8. Vājīkarana (Aphrodisiacs & Reproductive Health)

Key Points:

- Although the Ātreya and Dhanvantari lineages primarily addressed **internal medicine** and **surgery**, the expanded eightfold classification shows how **specialized schools** of thought grew around each domain.
- This diversification allowed in-depth exploration of **pediatrics**, **toxicology**, **mental health**, and more.

Further Schools and Commentators

Vāgbhaṭa School

- Vāgbhaṭa I & II produced seminal works:
 - Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha
 - Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya
- Integrated Caraka and Suśruta teachings into a concise format, popular among practitioners.
- Strengthened the concept of Aṣṭāṅga and unified earlier schools' approaches.

Other Specialized Traditions

- 1. Kāśyapa Saṃhitā School (Kaumāra Bhṛtya)
 - Centered on pediatrics, gynecology, obstetrics.
 - Authored or attributed to sage Kāśyapa—though much of this text is partially lost.
- 2. Mādhava Nidāna School
 - Pioneered **diagnostics** (**nidāna**), focusing on systematic classification of diseases and their etiopathogenesis.
 - o Influenced subsequent diagnostic paradigms.
- 3. Yoga-Ayurveda Congruence
 - **Yoga** and **Ayurveda** share Vedic roots and complement each other. Various yoga schools (e.g., Patañjali's) integrate with Ayurvedic principles for **holistic** therapy.

Medieval and Later Developments

- Post-7th century CE, Ayurvedic knowledge was consolidated via commentaries and compendia (e.g., Śārngadhara, Bhāvaprakāśa).
- Various regional schools emerged (e.g., Kerala's tradition specializing in Pañcakarma, Kerala-specific therapies like Dhāra, Pizhichil, Navarakizhi).
- Influence of **Tibetan, Persian, and Greek** medicine led to **syncretic practices** and translations (e.g., Unani influence in some Indian regions).

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WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

Modern Perspective: Unity and Diversity

1. Contemporary Institutions

 Institutes across India follow a unified curriculum blending Caraka-Suśruta-Vāgbhaṭa teachings, but some regional lineage-based nuances persist (e.g., certain paramparā focusing on bone-setting, marma therapy, or pharmacopeia).

2. Revival and Global Spread

- In modern times, there is a resurgence of interest in **Ayurvedic integrative medicine**, with schools offering specialized training in panchakarma, rasāyana, marma, etc.
- Ayurvedic concepts are adapted in clinics worldwide, fostering new schools of applied Ayurveda.

Conclusion

- The **core** of Āyurveda stems from **two principal schools**: **Ātreya** (internal medicine) and **Dhanvantari** (surgery). Over centuries, these lineages inspired **eight specialized branches** (aṣṭānga) and further sub-lineages.
- Renowned textual traditions (Caraka, Suśruta, Vāgbhaṭa, Kāśyapa, Mādhava, etc.) reflect diverse focuses—ranging from pediatrics and surgery to toxicology and mental health.
- As these classical schools evolved and integrated influences from regional, cultural, and philosophical fronts,
 Äyurveda became a pluralistic science—embracing multiple methods yet unified by its fundamental principles of
 holistic well-being (śarīra-manasa-ātma).

Key Takeaway

Āyurveda's major schools—**Ātreya** for internal medicine and **Dhanvantari** for surgery—laid a **foundational dichotomy** that blossomed into the full spectrum of the **eight branches** of Ayurvedic practice. Through the works of **Vāgbhaṭa**, **Kāśyapa**, and others, these traditions have seamlessly **merged** into a **comprehensive system** still revered and practiced globally for its integrative, person-centered approach.

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