

# Rich Heritage of the Traditional Medical System of India

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## ABSTRACT

India has a rich history of a traditional system of medicine based upon six systems, out of which Ayurveda stands to be the most ancient, most widely accepted, practiced, and flourishing indigenous system of India. The other allied systems of medicine in India are Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Yoga and Naturopathy. Ayurveda, the science of life, is one of the oldest traditional medical systems in India. To treat physical and mental health, it relies on a natural approach. Sources of Ayurveda medicine are mainly from plants, but it may also contain minerals, metals, and animal products. Charak was the famous physician of Ayurveda. We get Proper documentation mainly on the medical system from the Charaka Samhita, Shushruta Samhita. Yoga is an ancient science and way of life which includes physical movements, postures, meditation and pranayamas. Yoga has shown a positive impact on mental health and well-being, attention-concentration, memory and physical fitness. Yoga and Naturopathy are drugless systems of healing. Yoga promotes healing, health, and longevity. Yoga, through its asanas and pranayama, is widely applied in the treatment of various disorders. Yoga is a mind and body practice that originated in ancient India thousands of years ago. There are many different styles and approaches to yoga, including Hatha, Vinyasa, Iyengar, Ashtanga, Kundalini, etc.

**Key words: Ayurveda, Yoga, Shushruta Samhita and Charak Samhita**

## INTRODUCTION:

India has a diverse medical system. Basically, in India, there are two medical systems: the allopathic medical system and the traditional Indian medical system. Traditional Indian medicine is one of the oldest medical sciences in the world. The system of medicines which were originated in India and the system which comes outside India contributed a total of six authentic systems of traditional medicine. They are: Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Yoga and Naturopathy. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines traditional medicine as “the total of the knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement and treatment of physical and mental illness (WHO, 2008).

Indian government is making a intermittent efforts to mainstream the Indian traditional medical system through multiple levels by- forming a separate AYUSH (acronym for Ayurveda, naturopathy and Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) department in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, framing a national policy for AYUSH systems in 2002, inclusion of AYUSH in National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), developing integrative research institutions etc.( Singh & Madhavan, 2014). The Government of India started the Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homoeopathy in 1995, under the Ministry of Health and Family

Welfare, and this was renamed as the Department of AYUSH in 2003. The AYUSH programme is to promote all the traditional medical systems in India.

The aim and objective of this paper is to assess Indian medicine from a theoretical point of view. This study is purely descriptive, and information was taken from secondary sources. The secondary sources of data and information include a variety of journal articles and websites.

## **AYURVEDA:**

India has a rich history of a traditional system of medicine based upon six systems, out of which Ayurveda stands to be the most ancient, most widely accepted, practiced, and flourishing indigenous system of India. It thrived in north India and in Kerala in the south. The other allied systems of medicine in India are Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Yoga and Naturopathy. Ayurveda, the science of life, is one of the oldest traditional medical systems in India. To treat physical and mental health, it relies on a natural approach. Ayurveda is made up of two Sanskrit words: “Ayr” means life, and “Veda” means science or knowledge. The literal meaning of Ayurveda is “The science of life” (Prasad, 2002). Ayurveda medicine is a well-organized system of traditional health care. It has both preventive and curative aspects. The preventive component emphasizing the need for a strict code of personal and social hygiene, bodily exercise and yoga. The curative aspect of Ayurveda involves the use of herbal medicines, external preparation, physiotherapy, and diet.

Ayurveda relies on a natural and holistic approach towards physical and mental health. Plants are the main source of ayurvedic medicine, though they may also contain mineral, metal and animal products. Lifestyle modification including dieting, exercise are integral part of Ayurveda (Pal,2020). This medical system came into existence in India over 5,000 years ago, making it the oldest medical system (Mukhopaghyaya & Girindranath, 2003).

The origin of Ayurveda is considered to be divine, from the Hindu GOD, Bhahma who is called as the creator of the universe (Heyn,1990; Mukherjee & Houghton,2009). It is believed that the creator of the universe passed on this holistic knowledge of healing to the sages for the well-being of mankind. From the sages, the knowledge of traditional medicine was passed on to the disciples and then to the common. The information about the healing properties of the herbs and medicines was composed in the form of poems called “shlokas” (Jaiswal & Williams, 2017). The central objective of Ayurvedic treatment is “Ayurveda deals with happy and unhappy life. It explains what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in relation to life, as well as measures the life expectancy and quality of life (Singh, 2008; Mukherjee et al., 2017).”

The knowledge about Ayurveda comes from three surviving texts of Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhata. Charaka was the famous physician and principal contributor to Ayurveda. Charaka wrote the Charaka Samhita (1st century AD) in which he described ayurvedic medicine. The Charaka Samhita was first taught by Atreya and codified and compiled by Agnivesa. Charaka is called the Father of Medicine in India (Pal, 2020). Sushruta Samhita is a medical literature described about surgical part written by Sushruta ( 4 th century AD. Sushruta is called the Father of Plastic Surgery (Champaneria et al., 2014). The Charaka Samhita and Shusruta Samhita give descriptions of internal medicine, surgery, treatment of head and neck disease, toxicology, psychiatry, sexual vitality, rejuvenation, care of the old, and gynaecology, obstetrics, and pediatrics (Panday et al.,2013; Singh et al.,2005). Vagbhata wrote the third set of major texts (5<sup>th</sup> century AD) called Ashtanga sangraha and Astanga Hridaya, and in this book, he acknowledged the knowledge derived from the writings of Chraka, Sushruta, Agnivesha, Bhela and others.

Ayurveda has been practiced by the Indians since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, and it originated from two schools of thoughts Vaisheshika, an ancient school of Hindu philosophical teachings and the Nyaya, the school of logic. The Nyaya-Vaisheshika schools propagated the knowledge of Ayurveda throughout the country. During the Vedic era (about 1400 BC to 600BC), there were four vedas contains various kinds of knowledge, thoughts and legends. The Four Vedas are- Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda. Atharva Veda contains many medical contents, including information on human structures, physiology, embryo, disease, medicine and treatment (Shi et al., 2021).

## **YOGA AND NATUROPATHY:**

Naturopathic therapies include nutrition, hydrotherapy, fasting therapy, yoga, behavioural therapy, health promotion, etc. (Tripathy, 2015). This system was mentioned in the Vedas and in other ancient texts. Gandhiji was a firm believer in Naturopathy. Naturopathy is an essential drug that balances age-old healing traditions with logical progress.

Yoga is an integral part of naturopathy. Tirumalai Krishnamacharya is considered the father of modern yoga. Yoga came from the Sanskrit word (yuj), which means to join or unite. Evidences suggest that Yoga has been practiced since ancient times and has evolved in different forms in different ages. Pre-Vedic period (Before 3000 BC), yoga postures have been found in the excavations at Harappa and Mohanjo- Daro indicating that yoga was practiced at that time. According to yogic lore, Shiva was the first yogi or adiyogi and the first guru or adiguru. Several thousand years ago, on the banks of Lake Kantisarovar in the Himalaya, Adiyogi poured his profound knowledge into the legendary saptrarishi or “seven sages”. These sages carried his powerful Yogic science to different parts of the world.

There are many different styles and approaches to yoga, including Hatha, Vinyasa, Iyenger, Ashtanga, Kundalini, and many others. Hatha yoga focuses on physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and relaxation. In Vinyasa, every movement is linked to an inhalation or exhalation, creating a continuous flow of movement. Ashtanga yoga follows a sequence of postures (asanas) that are linked together with a specific breathing technique called Ujjayi breath.

Yoga is an ancient science and way of life which includes physical movements: postures, meditation, and pranayamas (Joice et al., 2018). Yoga aims to achieve eternal peace and harmony between body, mind and soul through Asana (physical exercise), Pranayama (breathing technique) and meditations (Ganpat et al., 2013). As a mindfulness practice, yoga requires one to be fully aware in the present moment. This practice helps to diffuse anxiety and sadness. All the yogic practices use present moment, non-judgmental awareness as the foundation.

Yoga explores preventive and curative aptitudes as a training exercise for people to improve mindfulness (Adhikari & Paul, 2018). Yoga promotes healing, health and longevity.

## **HOMEOPATHY:**

Homoeopathy is derived from the Greek words “homois”, which means similar, and “Pathos”, which means suffering. The term homoeopathy was coined by Samuel Hahnemann in 1796. Homoeopathic physicians believe that a substance that causes symptoms of a disease in healthy people can cure similar symptoms in sick people. This doctrine is called “like cures like”. Homoeopathy is the second most popular form of treatment sought by the Indian population. About 10% of Indian uses Homeopathy for curing their illness (Pal, 2020).

John Martin Honigberger introduced Homeopathy in India. Babu Rajendra Lal Dutta is called the father of Indian Homoeopathy. He brought Homoeopathy into high esteem by curing illustrious luminaries like Pandit Ishwar Chandra vidyasagar etc. Mahendra Lal Sircar was the first Indian who became a certified Homoeopathic physician and did a lot of work in this area. Homoeopathic methods have been polished for over 200 years in India and are now practiced throughout the world.

### **UNANI:**

The Unani medical system originated in Greece. The Unani system of medicine was introduced to India by Persian & Arabian. It was founded by Hippocrates. It is based on Hypocrate,s theory of Humours. It says that there are four types of Humours- Dam (blood), Balgham (phlegm), Safra (bile) and Sauda (black bile). A healthy body maintains balance in the quantities and qualities of these humours. Any imbalance in their quantities and qualities results in diseases (Lone et al., 2011). According to Unani theology, to be healthy spirit - lifestyle is necessary. Pure air, food, and water, physical movement and rest, sleep, wakefulness, retention of beneficial elements, and outflow of waste materials from the body are the “6 essentials” of illness prevention and health promotion (Kareem & Yoganandham, 2022).

### **SIDDHA:**

One of the earliest types of Indian traditional medicine is Siddha. It is a South Indian Tamil traditional medicine. The Siddha system of medicine originated in Tamil Nadu and is one of the oldest medicinal systems of India. Maharshi Agasthya is considered the father of the Siddha System of Medicine. The word Siddha originated from the word Siddhi, meaning achievements in life arts, such as wisdom, yoga, philosophy, alchemy, medicine, and the most important art of longevity (Sampath, 1983). The person who attained this Siddhi was known as “Siddhars” It is said that Shiddhi was attained by 18 Siddhars. These 18 Siddhar were assumed to cure countless diseases. Maharshi Agasthya was one of the 18 Siddhars. He is also known as Hippocrates of Siddha Medicine (Subbarayappa,1997). In Siddha, examination of 8 areas is required to reach a diagnosis: Na (Tongue), Varnam (colour), Kural (voice), Kan (eye), Thidal (touch), Malam (stool), Neer(urine), Naari (pulse). Drugs used for treatment are – Thavaram (herbal products), Thadu (inorganic substance), and Jangamam (animal products) (Pal,2020). The Siddha approach considers a patient’s age, gender, race, customs, environment, diet, and physical condition in addition to their illness.

The Siddha System of Medicine, assumes that a healthy body must maintain a normal equilibrium of three humours- vatham, pitham, and kapham. A healthy body is expected to maintain a ratio between these three humours are 4:2:1, respectively. The Siddha system of medicine also emphasizes the role of diet and lifestyle in maintaining good health and in the treatment plan of disease. In Siddha, it is known as pathya and apathya. Basically, it is a list of do’s and don’ts (CSIR-AYUSH, 2012).

### **FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL INDIAN MEDICINE:**

Nowadays, people are more inclined towards using herbal medicine because synthetic drugs have more side effects. According to a WHO survey, 80% of the world’s population is optimistic about the development of traditional medicine and is willing to try herbal medicine as their main healthcare drug (Adekson, 2016). In villages, people still use Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic medicine more than allopathic medicine, because our traditional medicines are cheaper than Western medicine. In urban areas, expensive aromatherapy and essential oil therapy of Ayurvedic medicine are also very popular. In Europe and America, Indian medicine is regarded

as an alternative therapy to modern medicine. Many Europeans come to India to learn Yoga, meditation, massage, spiritual lectures and a healthy lifestyle. They are very much influenced by Buddhism and the Buddha's teachings.

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