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AYUSH for Healthcare

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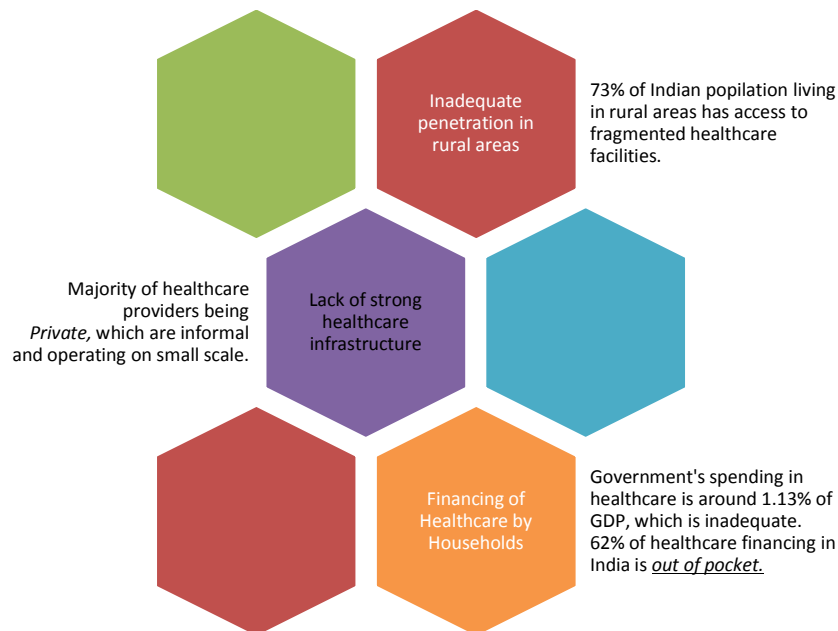
AYUSH FOR HEALTHCARE

Introduction

India's National Health Policy, 2017 aims at: (i) achievement of the highest possible level of good health and well-being for all its citizens, regardless of their age, and (ii) universal access to quality healthcare services regardless of financial capacity.¹ It marks a shift in Government of India's approach to healthcare by moving away from *sick-care* to *wellness* while emphasizing prevention of diseases and promotion of healthcare and reduction in premature mortality on account of non-communicable / lifestyle diseases like chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes etc.

In its pursuance of attainment of *Universal Health Coverage by 2030*, Government of India has taken significant decisions to improve access to quality yet affordable healthcare. In previous decades, India claimed significant successes like elimination of polio, guinea worm disease, reduction in Total Fertility Rate and achievement of Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) Targets and under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the same time, healthcare in India continues to be an unfinished agenda at large, *primarily* on account of the sheer size of its territory and massive population.

These factors continue to be the reason behind significant differentials in health outcomes in access to as well as quality of healthcare, which affect socio-economically disadvantaged sections of our society vulnerable to these gaps.



Considering the challenges mentioned hereinabove, in order to achieve *universal health coverage*, Indian healthcare should have extensive coverage, good health outcomes, financial affordability and responsiveness, i.e. it should focus on satisfaction of patient.

Pluralistic Indian Medicine System (comprising of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, and Siddha) may

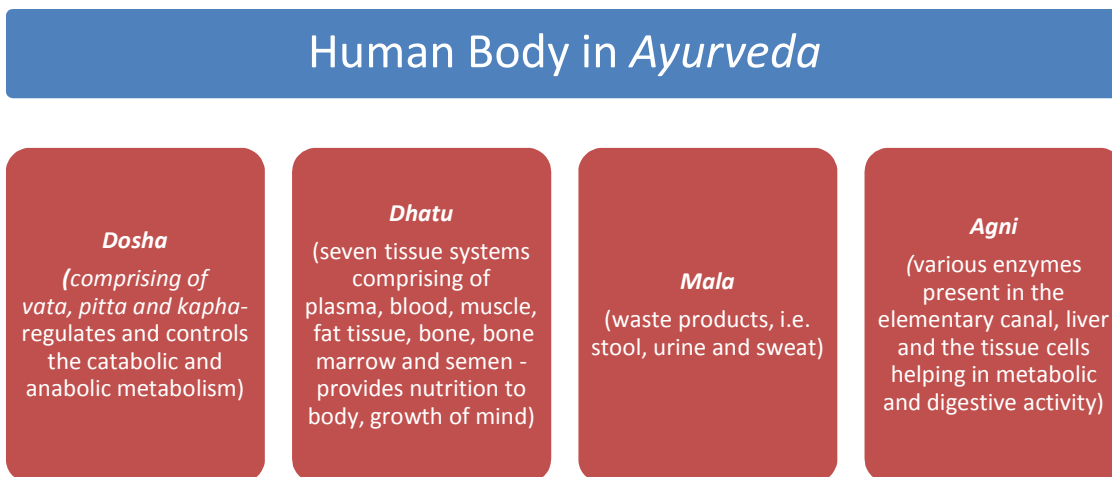
have effective solutions to these challenges posed before Indian healthcare. Well-documented history and practice of these traditional medicinal forms viz. *Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy and Sowa Rigpa*, collectively called AYUSH dates to an era before formal healthcare system took shape.

With advantages like diversity, low-cost, low technological inputs, absence of medicinal side-effects and growing popularity of natural and organic products, AYUSH can play a very important role in providing quality health and medical care to Indian citizens, particularly in under-served, remote and tribal areas.

Systems of Medicine under AYUSH

Ayurveda

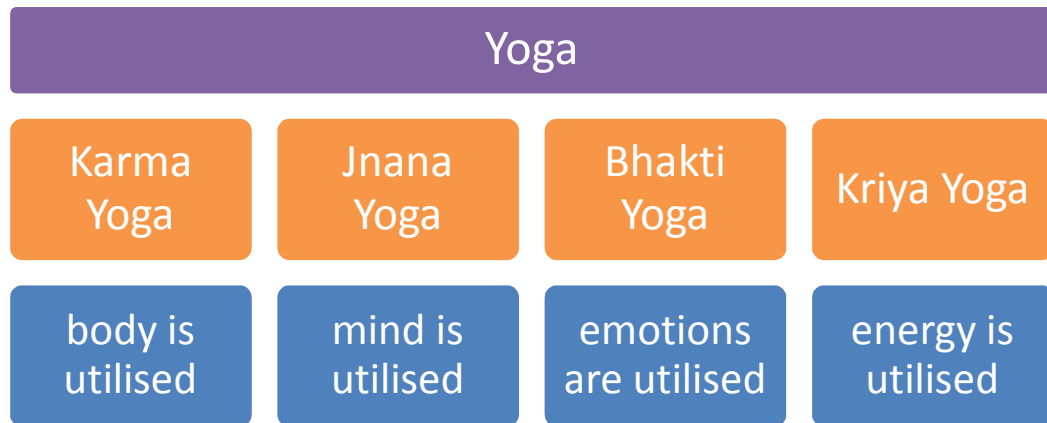
Conjugation of *ayus*(life) and *veda* (science),*Ayurveda* is an ancient comprehensive and holistic system of health care founded on theoretical principles about physical body and its functioning. It focuses more on healthy living than treatment of diseases and personalizes the process of healing.*Mool Siddhant* (basic fundamentals) of Ayurvedic treatment classifies human body to be composed of four basics (*dosha, dhatu, mala and agni*).ⁱⁱ



Thus, the total body matrix comprises of the *doshas*, the tissues and the waste products of the body. Growth and decay of this body matrix and its constituents revolve around food which gets processed into *doshas*, tissues and wastes by the help of enzymes. Ingestion, digestion, absorption, assimilation and metabolism of food have an interplay in health and disease which are significantly affected by psychological mechanisms as well as by enzymes (*agni*) and any disturbance in this equilibrium causes disease as per *Ayurveda*.ⁱⁱⁱ Disturbance in this equilibrium is generally caused by dietary indiscrimination, undesirable habits and non-observance of rules of healthy living and its treatment consists of restoring the balance of disturbed body-mind matrix through regulating diet, correcting life-routine and behaviour, administration of drugs.

Yoga

Derived from *Yuj*(to unite), Yoga is a spiritual exercise which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body for healthy living. Practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with universal consciousness, which is aimed at overcoming all kinds of sufferings that lead to a sense of freedom in every walk of life with holistic health, happiness, and harmony.^{iv}

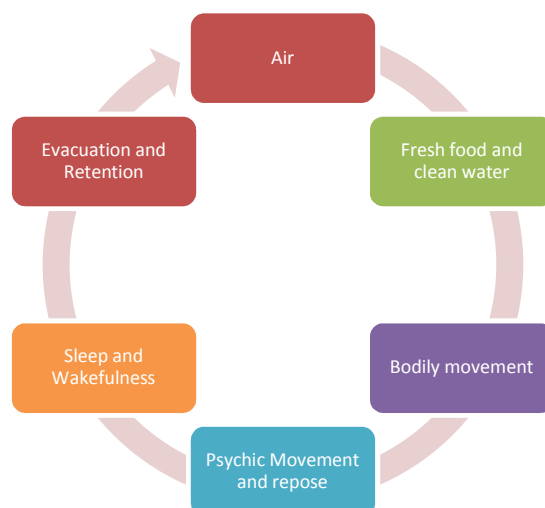


Thus, human beings can achieve union between the body and mind to attain self-realisation. The aim of Yoga practice (*sādhana*) is to overcome all kinds of sufferings that lead to a sense of freedom in every walk of life with holistic health, happiness, and harmony.

Unani

Originated in Greece, the Unani system of medicine was introduced in India by Arabs and Persians.^vThe theory of Unani system is based upon the well-known four - humour theory of Hippocrates. This presupposes the presence, in the body, of four humours viz., blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.^{vi}In the Unani system, the temperament of the individual is especially important as it is considered unique. An individual's temperament is believed to be the result of the interaction of the elements.^{vii}

Prevention of disease is as much a concern of the system as curing of sickness. Right in its formative stages the influence of the surrounding environment and ecological condition on the state of health of human beings has been recognized. There is emphasis on the need for keeping water, food and air free from pollution. Six essentials pre-requisites (*AsbabSitta e Zaroriayah*) have been laid down for the promotion of health and prevention of disease.^{viii} These are:



- a. *Air* - Good and clean air is considered as most necessary for health. Unani system notes that change of environment relieves the patients of many diseases.
- b. *Food and drinks* – Unani system recommends one to take fresh food and clean water, free from putrefaction and disease producing matter
- c. *Bodily movement and repose* – It considers exercise as well as rest necessary for maintaining good health and considers it to be good for health of liver and heart.
- d. *Psychic movement* and repose;
- e. *Sleep and wakefulness*– it considers normal sleep and wakefulness essential for good health.
- f. *Evacuation and retention* - Proper and normal functioning of the excretory processes is necessary for keeping good health. If the waste products of the body are not completely excreted or when there is disturbance or blockage, it leads to diseases and sickness.

Unani medicine uses physical methods of treatment to improve the constitution of body by removing waste materials and improving the defence mechanism of the body and protect health. In other words, these are the best known ‘*detoxification methods*’.

Siddha

Siddha system is one of the oldest systems of medicine in India and is largely therapeutic in nature. Like Ayurveda, it believes that all objects in the universe including human body, the food it takes and drugs it uses are composed of five basic elements *viz.* earth, water, fire, air, and sky.^{ix}

It also considers the human body to be a conglomeration of three humours, seven basic tissues and the excretory products. Food is considered as the basic building material of human body which gets processed into humours, body tissues and waste products. The equilibrium of humours is considered as health and its disturbance or imbalance leads to disease or sickness.^x

Diagnosis of diseases in Siddha system involves identification of causes, which involves examination of pulse, urine, eyes; study of voice, colour of body, tongue, and status of the digestive

system. This examination is holistic in approach and involves study of the person as well as his/her disease.

Medical treatment in Siddha System is oriented not merely to disease but has to take into account the patient, environment, the meteorological consideration, age, sex, race, habits, mental frame, habitat, diet, appetite, physical condition, physiological constitution etc. This means the treatment must be individualistic, which ensures minimal mistakes in diagnosis or treatment.^{xi}

Homeopathy

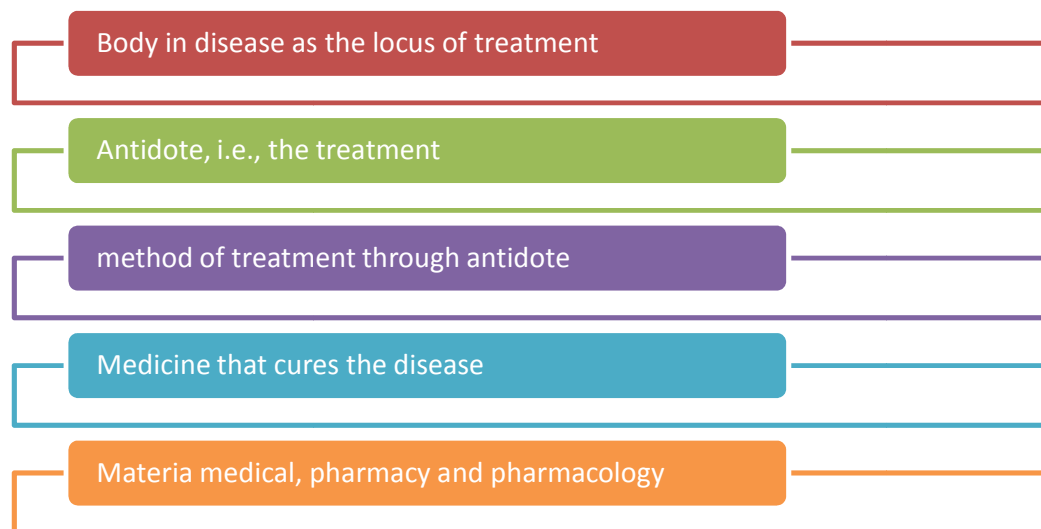
Based on natural law of healing, *Similia Similibus Curantur* (Likes are cured by likes), Homeopathy involves treating diseases with remedies, prescribed in minute doses, which can produce symptoms similar to the disease when taken by healthy persons.^{xii}

In producing remedies for diseases, homeopaths use a process called *dynamisation* or *potentisation* whereby a substance is diluted with alcohol or distilled water and then vigorously shaken by ten hard strikes against an elastic body in a process called *succussion*.^{xiii}

Sowa-Rigpa

Commonly known as *Amchi* system of medicine, *Sowa Rigpa* is one of the oldest and well documented medical tradition, which is popularly practiced in Tibet, Magnolia, Bhutan, some parts of China, Nepal and Himalayan regions of India.

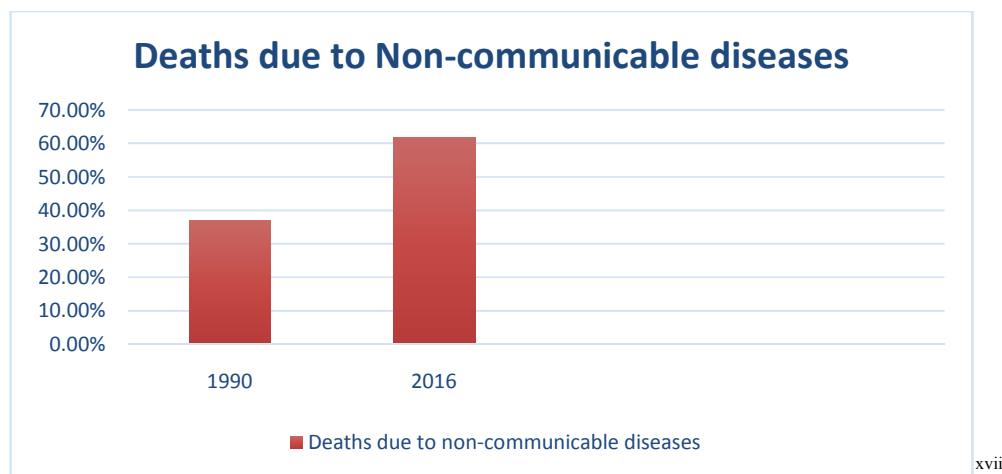
The basic theory of *Sowa-Rigpa*^{xiv} may be adumbrated in terms of the following five points:



Sowa-Rigpa is based on the principles of *Jung-wa-nga* and *Ngepa-Sum*. It states that bodies of all the living beings and non-living objects of the universe are composed of *Jung-wa-nga*; viz. *Sa, Chu, Me, Lung and Nam-kha* (Prithvi, Jal, Agni, Vayu and Akash).^{xv} Our bodies are composed of these elements in proportion and any imbalance in this proportion leads to body disorder.

Mainstreaming of AYUSH in Healthcare

Because of its time-tested traditional knowledge and non-severable link with lifestyle, AYUSH system of healthcare has capability to deliver quality, i.e. *promotive, preventive, rehabilitative* and *social (community)* health care. AYUSH medicines play a significant role in developing immune system, which increases human body's resistance to diseases. AYUSH has immense potential in treating non-communicable / lifestyle diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, care of older persons and health problems/issues related to women and children.^{xvi}



Universal health coverage in India is guided by 10 principles^{xviii}, some of which are not relevant for AYUSH system of healthcare. Yet, AYUSH meets the requirement of most of these principles, which are:

Universality	• AYUSH contributes in meeting requirements of rural health through co-location of services in PHC / CHC by complementing allopathic care
Equity	• Treatment as well as medicines are cost-effective and cheaper than allopathic system and oriented towards equity.
Non-exclusion and Non-discrimination	• AYUSH services are concentrated at PHC / CHC levels under NRHM and are available to population at large.
Comprehensive care that is rational and of good quality	• Effectiveness in tackling lifestyle-related and non-communicable diseases.
1. Financial Protection	• Easy affordability for patients as well as minimal financial burden to Government on account of colocation in PHC / CHC.
Protection of Patient Rights	• AYUSH contributes to totality of healthcare, thus, honours a patient's rights during the entire period of treatment.
Consolidated and strengthened public health provisioning	• AYUSH workforce provide public health as well as clinical services, thus, partly makes up for shortage of allopathic doctors in rural areas.
1. Accountability and transparency	• Ayurveda and Unani have strong traditional roots and have well-codified documents on their therapeutic values.
1. Community participation	• Integration of AYUSH with NRHM led to availability of AYUSH medicines in ASHA's drug kits, leading to wide medical coverage, especially in women and child care.
Putting health in people's hands	• AYUSH considers every patient and his relation with environment on forefront, leading to a bottom up approach.

Acknowledging the potential of AYUSH in delivering universal health coverage, National AYUSH Mission (NAM) was launched as part of 12th Plan by Government of India.^{xix} NAM envisages better access to AYUSH services through increase in number of AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries, ensuring availability of AYUSH drugs and trained manpower.

To mainstream services of AYUSH with public health care services, co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) and District hospitals (DHs) are being implemented under NAM and National Health Mission. Consequently, 7620 PHCs, 2758 CHCs and 495 DHs had been co-located with AYUSH facilities as on June 2019; thereby, making AYUSH treatments available to the public in different parts of the country.^{xx}

Recently, Government has also decided to operationalize 10% of the Health and Wellness Centres of the *Ayushman Bharat Scheme* through the Ministry of AYUSH and has provided *Grant-in-aid* of Rs. 89.92 crore to 1,032 AYUSH Dispensaries under existing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of NAM to upgrade them as AYUSH Health and Wellness Centres.

Similarly, in March 2020, the Government of India approved the inclusion of AYUSH Health and Wellness Centre component of Ayushman Bharat Scheme in NAM, which will achieve objectives such as establishment of a holistic wellness model based on AYUSH principles and practices focusing on preventive promotive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative healthcare by integration with the existing public health care system.^{xxi}

Challenges before AYUSH

- a. Raw Material related issues - lower supplies of raw materials, degrading quality, escalation of prices and adulteration in active raw materials,
- b. Limited Research Centres of AYUSH in India,
- c. Inefficient distribution of resources as well as workforce,
- d. Slower healing compared to allopathic treatment.

While AYUSH's impact is immense, the sector continues to have a lot of infrastructure that remains unutilized such as hospital beds, health human resource, AYUSH hospitals and dispensaries, etc. Its network of hospitals and dispensaries across various States only engages in clinical medicine as per local needs. All efforts should now be made to consolidate and fully utilize the existing available resources and orient them to achieving the national health outcome goals.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming of AYUSH and revitalization of local health traditions is one of the innovative steps to bring untapped AYUSH workforce and services into mainstream health care system in India taken by the Government of India. However, its mainstreaming should not just be limited to co-location of AYUSH facilities with PHC / CHC or DHC. Rather, mainstreaming of AYUSH must

transcend beyond co-location to address critical issues like as adequate utilization of services, proper training, and orientation of AYUSH workforce, effective recruitment policy, provision of drugs and necessary equipments and infrastructural correction in remote and rural areas.

Mainstreaming of AYUSH in healthcare is beneficial to the society on two fronts, *firstly*, it will lead to revival of traditional health systems and *secondly*, citizens of India would benefit from healthcare services that are low-cost, low technological inputs, and don't have medicinal side-effects, which are not always available in the modern system of medicine.

ⁱGoal, Principles and Objectives, National Health Policy, 2017, available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/nhpfiles/national_health_policy_2017.pdf

ⁱⁱFundamentals of Ayurveda, National Health Portal; available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/fundamentals-of-ayurveda_mtl.

ⁱⁱⁱCausation, Ayurveda, National Health Portal; available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/fundamentals-of-ayurveda_mtl.

^{iv}Yoga: Its Origin, History and Development, Dr. Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, available at https://www.mea.gov.in/search-result.htm?25096/Yoga:su_origen_historia_y_desarrollo.

^vIntroduction to Unani Medicine, National Health Portal, available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/unani_mty.

^{vi}Unani at Glance, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, Ministry of AYUSH, available at http://www.tkdil.res.in/tkdil/Langdefault/Unani/Una_Unani-glance.asp.

^{vii}Ibid.

^{viii}<http://nhp.org.in/en/unani?start=105>.

^{ix}Siddha: Basic Concepts and Principles, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, Ministry of AYUSH, available at http://www.tkdil.res.in/tkdil/langdefault/Siddha/Sid_Siddha_Concepts.asp.

^xIbid.

^{xi}Siddha Pharmacology, National Health Portal; available at http://nhp.gov.in/siddha-pharmacology_mtl.

^{xii}Key Principles, Homeopathy, National Health Portal; available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/key-principle_mtl.

^{xiii}Homeopathy and Homeopathic Medicines, Safety Issues in preparation of Homeopathic Medicines, p.3; available at <https://www.who.int/medicines/areas/traditional/Homeopathy.pdf>.

^{xiv}Sowa Rigpa: Theories and Practice; available at <https://main.ayush.gov.in/about-the-systems/sowa-rigpa/theory-and-practice>.

^{xv}Ibid.

^{xvi}Management of Lifestyle Diseases through AYUSH; available at http://www.spc.tn.gov.in/spc_reports/Ayush.pdf.

^{xvii}Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDS) In India; available at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1576626>.

^{xviii}Universal Health Coverage, National Health Portal; available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/universal-health-coverage_pg.

^{xix}National AYUSH Mission, Framework for Implementation; available at https://www.nmpb.nic.in/sites/default/files/downloads/4197396897-Charakasamhita_ACDP_english_0.pdf.

^{xx}Year End Review, Ministry of AYUSH; available at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1597195>.

^{xxi}Cabinet approves inclusion of AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres component of Ayushman Bharat in National AYUSH Mission; available at https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/cabinet-approves-inclusion-of-the-ayush-health-wellness-centres-component-of-ayushman-bharat-in-national-ayush-mission/.