

# Indian Traditional Medical Approaches

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**Abstract – Food is the major source for serving the nutritional needs, but with growing modernization some traditional ways are being given up. Affluence of working population with changing lifestyles and reducing affordability of sick care, in terms of time and money involved, are some of the forces that are presently driving people towards thinking about their wellness. There has been increased global interest in traditional medicine. Efforts to monitor and regulate traditional herbal medicine are underway. Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medicine, remains the most ancient yet living traditions. Although India has been successful in promoting its therapies with more research and science-based approach, it still needs more extensive research and evidence base. Increased side effects, lack of curative treatment for several chronic diseases, high cost of new drugs, microbial resistance and emerging, diseases are some reasons for renewed public interest in complementary and alternative medicines. Numerous nutraceutical combinations have entered the international market through exploration of ethno pharmacological claims made by different traditional practices. This review gives an overview of the Ayurvedic system of medicine and its role in translational medicine in order to overcome malnutrition and related disorders.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine has a long history. It is the sum 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 or treatment of physical and mental illness.

What makes traditional medicine attractive is that it is –

- ▶ accessible,
- ▶ affordable,
- ▶ It is also culturally acceptable and trusted by large numbers of people.

India has a rich heritage of medical wisdom derived from the Vedas that prevailed as Ayurveda. This was further enriched by the ancient Saints (Rishi's) with Siddha system and Yoga practices. These were the principle medical practices of the country for centuries, forming part of Indian ethos and culture. Unani Tibb that was known from period of Hippocrates came to India during 8th Century A D. subsequently, the Western medicine that is based on biomedical concepts, commonly known as Allopathy, came to India and also got assimilated into the Indian medical practice. Homeopathy, a system developed in Germany in 18th century

quickly gained popularity and has got blended with the Indian traditional medical practices due to similarity in its holistic medical philosophy and principles. Naturopathy, a drug less system of healthy living practices of all civilizations got organized and also become part of the medical pluralism of the country. Thus, there evolved a unique medical paradigm with traditional practices along with the Bio medicine. After Independence, the Government started supporting all the medical systems for their growth, thereby offering the public a choice for their routine health care need. Because of this as now there are public patronage and institutional support to widen the strength of these systems in curative, preventive, promotive aspects of health care.

Keeping this fact in view the Government is encouraging a pluralistic approach in health care where every medical system is allowed to grow on the basis of its evident strength.

## AYURVEDA

The word Ayurveda derived from *AYU* and *VEDA*. *AYU* means life *VEDA* means science or knowledge. Ayurveda means the science of life. Charaka defines "That science is designated as Ayurveda which deals with advantage and disadvantage as well as happy and unhappy states of life along with what is good and bad for life, its measurement and the life itself (Charaka Sutra 1 - 4)" Ayurveda embraces all living things, human and

Non-human. It is divided into three main branches viz., Nara Ayurveda dealing with human life, Satva Ayurveda the science dealing with animal life and its diseases, Vriksha Ayurveda the science dealing with plant life, its growth and diseases. It is amply clear that Ayurveda is not only a system of medicine but also a way of life for complete positive health and spiritual attainments.

## YOGA

The term Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root 'YUJ', meaning 'to join' or 'to yoke' or 'to unite'. As per Yogic scriptures the practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body, Man & Nature. The aim of Yoga is Self-Realization, to overcome all kinds of sufferings leading to 'the state of liberation'. This is one of the oldest sciences of the world, which originated in India. Yoga is very useful for preserving and maintaining one's physical and mental health and also for 'spiritual evolution'. The practice of Yoga is believed to have started with the very dawn of civilization.

## NATUROPATHY

Naturopathy advocates aiding human system to remove the cause of disease i.e. toxins by expelling the unwanted and unused matters from human body for curing diseases. Nature is the greatest healer. The human body itself has the healing power to prevent itself from disease and regain health if unhealthy. In Naturopathy, it is not the disease but the entire body of the patient which is caused and is renewed. Some important treatments of naturopathy are: Mud pack, Mud Bath, Spinal Bath, Spinal Spray Bath, Steam Bath, Sauna Bath, Sun Bath, Wet Sheet Pack, Chest Pack, Abdomen Pack, Magnet Therapy, Acupuncture, Acupressure, Reflexology, Physiotherapy Treatments - Exercise Therapy and Electro Therapy. Naturopathic doctors treat their patients holistically i.e. taking into consideration their individual biochemistry, bio mechanics and emotional predispositions.

## UNANI

**Unani-tibb** or **Unani Medicine** is a form of traditional medicine practiced in Middle- East and South-Asian countries. It refers to a tradition of Greco-Arabic medicine, which is based on the teachings of Greek physician Hippocrates and Roman physician Galen and developed into an elaborate medical system in middle age era. It originated in Greece almost 2500 years back, which is herbo-animo- mineral in origin (Approximately 90% herbal, 4-5% animal and 5-6 % mineral). Unani physicians give prime importance to diet and the state of digestion in a person, in both health and disease. Specific dietary regimens are recommended while treating patients according to their temperament. In

India the system has been developed scientifically, nurtured and systematically integrated into healthcare delivery system over the years.

## SIDDHA

The word Siddha has its origin in the Tamil word Siddhi which means "an object to be attained" or "perfection" or "heavenly bliss". Siddha medicine is claimed to revitalize and rejuvenate dysfunctional organs that cause the disease. Kayakarpam, a special combination of medicine and life style, Varmam therapy, Vaasi (Pranayamam) and Muppu the universal Salt are the specialities of Siddha system of medicine. Thus this system connects both spiritual and physical and treats the person as a whole i.e. it concentrates the physical, psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing of an individual.

## HOMEOPATHY

The word 'Homeopathy' is derived from two Greek words *hómoios* (similar) and *páthos* (suffering). This means in Homeopathy natural diseases are treated with substances that produce effects similar to the suffering. Homeopathy can be defined as a "dynamic, holistic and vitalistic system of individualistic drug therapeutics, based on the law of similars, potentially capable to cure diseases that are curable and relieves symptoms of incurable nature".

## CONCLUSION

These systems are based on definite medical philosophies and represent a way of healthy living with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health. The basic approach of all these systems on health, disease and treatment are holistic. The knowledge and qualification of practitioners have a direct bearing on patient safety. However, in many developing countries, traditional medicine knowledge and skills have been transferred from generation to generation orally, making it difficult to identify qualified practitioners. To restore the belief of masses in traditional medicine there is need to have qualified practitioners, quick and accurate diagnosis and dissemination of the vast literature available in our vedas on traditional medicine.

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