

Review on Traditional System of Medicine

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Abstract: *Traditional systems of medicine represent the collective wisdom, healing practices, and cultural heritage developed over centuries across diverse civilizations. Systems such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Yoga and Naturopathy, and Homeopathy emphasize a holistic approach to health, focusing on the balance of bodily elements, preventive care, lifestyle modification, and natural therapeutic interventions. These systems rely on medicinal plants, minerals, physical therapies, and individualized treatment plans to restore harmony within the body and mind. In recent years, traditional medicine has gained global recognition due to its integrative approach, cost-effectiveness, and potential in managing chronic and lifestyle-related disorders. Scientific validation and standardization efforts continue to strengthen its relevance in modern healthcare. This abstract provides an overview of the foundational principles, therapeutic methods, and growing significance of traditional medicine in contemporary health systems.*

Keywords: Traditional system of medicine, Ayurveda, yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional system of medicine includes health and well being practices based on cultures, history and experience. which can involve the use of plant, animal and mineral based remedies to prevent, diagnose and treat illnesses. Ex. Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, homeopathy.

Ayurveda is the oldest and most organized traditional medical system in India, believed to date back to around 6000 BC. It is still widely practiced today and includes both disease prevention and treatment. (1) The Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita (written between 100– 500 BC) are two of the oldest known Hindu texts that describe about 700 medicinal plants and explain their uses and effects. (2) In South India, the Siddha system of medicine developed, which is thought to have started around 3000–2000 BC. (3) The Unani system was first developed by Hippocrates and later expanded by Galen. It was brought to India by Arabs and Persians in the 11th century. (4) It is also known as indigenous system of medicine.

AYUSH

A- Ayurveda

Y- Yoga and naturopathy U- Unani

S- Siddha

H- Homeopathy

Traditional remedies play a significant role to avoid the common ailments like skin diseases, injuries, fever, high BP, dehydration, liver disease, diabetes etc. in rural areas of West Bengal. (5) Similarly in the Meghalaya the traditional remedies play an important role in the prevention/treatment/management of common diseases. (6).





Fig no.1 Traditional system of medicine

1. Ayurveda

1.1 Introduction

Ayurveda comes from the Sanskrit words "ayus" and "veda." "Ayus" means life, and "veda" means knowledge or science. So, Ayurveda together means "the knowledge of life" or "the science of life."

According to the ancient Ayurvedic scholar Charaka, "ayu" includes the mind, body, senses, and soul. Ayurveda is a detailed and holistic medical system and is considered one of the oldest healthcare systems, developed in India thousands of years ago.(7)

1.2 History of Ayurveda

Ayurveda has a very long history, going back to the 2nd century BC. Its roots come from two ancient Hindu philosophical schools—Vaisheshika and Nyaya. It is also connected to the Samkhya system, a well-known framework that explains how the world was created. All of these schools developed around the same time.(8)

1.3 Basic principle of Ayurveda



Basic principal of ayurveda





Fig.2 Panchmahabhutas of Ayurveda

Ayurveda says that the whole universe is made up of five basic elements: Vayu (Air), Jala (Water), Aakash (Space), Prithvi (Earth), and Teja (Fire). These are called the Pancha Mahabhoota.

In the human body, these elements combine to form three basic energies, known as the Tridoshas:

Vata

Pitta

Kapha

These doshas control all the basic functions of the body, and each dosha also has five sub-doshas that help in different activities.

Ayurveda also explains that the body is made of seven tissues (Saptadhatu): Rasa (plasma), Rakta (blood), Mamsa (muscle), Meda (fat), Asthi (bone), Majja (bone marrow), and Shukra (reproductive tissue).

The body also produces three waste products (Malas): Purisha (faeces), Mutra (urine), and Sweda (sweat). Each dosha has specific functions:

Vata controls movement, nerve signals, waste removal, and electrolyte balance. It increases with dryness.

Pitta controls digestion, body temperature, vision, and hunger and thirst.

Kapha increases with sweet and oily foods and provides lubrication to the joints for smooth movement. (9) For good health, the three doshas and all body components must stay in balance. Any imbalance leads to illness or disease. (10)

The body is believed to be composed of seven types of tissues called as "Sapta Dhatus"

Considering the bodily constitution, pathological history, the

Dosha characteristics, life style and environmental conditions in an

individual's routine life style, Ayurveda has many treatment strategies for promoting well-being to individuals. (19,20)

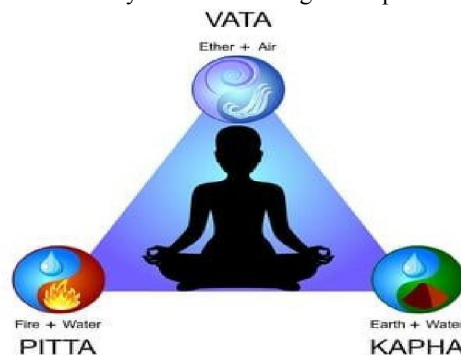


Fig.3 Tridoshas of ayurveda

The Rakta Dhatu resembles the blood and regulates the circulation of blood cells. The Mamsa Dhatu (Muscle tissue) provides supports in the form of skeletal muscles for the Meda Dhatu (adipose fat).



The Asthi Dhatu comprises the bones of the body and the Majja Dhatu is made up of the bone marrow and fluids required for the oleation of the bones and their functioning.

The Shukra Dhatu is responsible for functions of the reproductive organs of the body.(11)

Ayurveda uses a special cleansing treatment called Panchakarma. This therapy helps remove toxins from the body, improves overall health, and increases longevity.

The word Panchakarma means “five actions,” and each action is used to purify different parts of the body.



Fig.4 Panchakarma

Ayurveda uses a special cleansing treatment called Panchakarma. This therapy helps remove toxins from the body, improves overall health, and increases longevity.

The word Panchakarma means “five actions,” and each action is used to purify different parts of the body.

The five karmas are:

1. Virechan – A cleansing method that removes toxins through controlled purgation using herbal powders, pastes, or decoctions.
2. Vaman – A procedure that induces therapeutic vomiting with the help of specific medicines to clear excess mucus and toxins.
3. Basti – Medicated enemas prepared with herbal oils or decoctions to cleanse the colon and balance bodily functions.
4. Rakta Moksha – A blood purification technique used to remove impurities from the blood.
5. Nasya – Administration of herbal oils, fumes, or decoctions through the nose to cleanse and treat conditions related to the head and neck.(12)

1.4 Treatment in Ayurveda:

Ayurveda has eight different techniques to diagnose illness, namely Nadi (pulse), Mootra (urine), Mala (stool), Jihva (tongue), Shabda (speech), Sparsha (touch), Druk (vision), and Aakruti (appearance). The treatments are carried out using plant based products procured from roots, leaves, fruits, bark, or seeds.(13)

Formulation Example:-

1) Solid dosage forms:

Churna, Vati, Guggulu, Bhasma, Pishati, Satva, Lavana

2) Liquid dosage forms:-

Kashaya, Hima, Phanta, Swarasa, Arishta, Asava,

3) Semi-solid dosage forms :-

Avaleha, Lepa, Kalka, Rasakriya(13)



2. Yoga and naturopathy system

2.1 Introduction

Yoga started in ancient India. It uses different therapies and checks a person's health by reading the pulse and understanding their Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) balance. Based on this, it recommends meditation, exercises, and lifestyle changes to help people stay calm and healthy. (14-16). Yoga postures (Asanas) are used in many medical and non-medical situations to help treat physical and emotional problems..

Naturopathy also called naturopathic medicine, began in Germany in the 19th century and is now used in many countries. It is not an ancient medical system, but some traditional medicine practitioners use it along with their main system. Naturopathy focuses on healing using the natural powers of the body, along with both traditional and modern methods. Treatments used in this system include homeopathy, herbal medicines, and water-based therapies (hydrotherapy).(17).

Yoga and naturopathy are commonly used as lifestyle treatments for many health problems. These include problems related to the bones and muscles, metabolism, immunity, nerves, skin, heart, and lungs. Both yoga and naturopathy focus on treating the person as a whole and giving patient-centered care.

The main treatment methods used in yoga and naturopathy include hydrotherapy (water- based treatments), fasting, diet therapy, yoga practices, mud therapy, sunlight therapy, color therapy, magnet therapy, physiotherapy, ozone therapy, acupressure, and acupuncture.(18)

2.2 Principal of yoga naturopathy

Yoga is based on ancient Indian balancing body–mind–spirit. The main principles are:

1. Holistic Approach

Yoga considers the human being as a combination of body, mind, emotions, and soul.

2. Balance & Harmony

Health is achieved when all parts of life (physical, mental, spiritual) are balanced.

3. Self-discipline

Regular practice of Asana, Pranayama, Meditation, and a healthy lifestyle.

4. Correct Breathing

Breath control (Pranayama) is the key to energy flow and mental calmness.

5. Relaxation

Deep relaxation releases physical and mental stress (Shavasana, Yoga Nidra).

6. Proper Diet

Satvik (pure) food: fresh, light, vegetarian, non-processed. Positive Thinking & Meditation

Developing a calm, positive, and peaceful mind.(19)

Treatment yoga

1. Asanas (योगासन)

Improves flexibility Reduces pain Strengthens muscles

2. Pranayama (प्राणायाम)

Improves breathing Reduces stress & BP Balances mind

3. Meditation (ध्यान)

Mental peace Improves focus Reduces anxiety

4. Shatkarmas (शुद्धीकरण क्रिया)

Detoxification Improves digestion & respiration

5. Yogic Diet (योगिक आहार)

Sattvic food Improves health & energy



6. Relaxation Techniques Shavasana Yoga Nidra
 7. Lifestyle Management
- Daily routine Stress control Positive thinking.(20)

TREATMENT OF NATUROPATHY

Naturopathy is a drug-less system of healing. It uses natural elements — water, air, earth sunlight, diet, exercise, and lifestyle — to remove the root cause of disease.

1. Hydrotherapy (Water Treatment)

Uses water in different forms and temperatures

2. Mud Therapy

Natural mud is applied on body parts.

3. Diet Therapy (Food as Medicine)

Focus on natural, easily digestible foods.(20)

3. Siddha system of medicine

3.1 Introduction

Siddha medicine is one of India's two oldest medical systems, the other one being Ayurveda. It is considered the traditional healing system of the ancient Tamil/Dravidian people of South India. More than 2000 years ago, the Tamil medical tradition was simply called Marunthu (meaning "medicine"). Later, it came to be known as Siddha Medicine because of the remarkable contributions made by the Siddhars—wise scholars, saints, and healers who developed this system through their deep knowledge of herbs, minerals, yoga, and spiritual practices.(21)



Fig.5 Siddha system of medicine

3.2 Principal of siddha system

The Siddha system of medicine follows principles similar to Ayurveda, which says that the human body is made of the five basic elements of the universe, known as the Pancha Mahabhootas.

In addition to these elements, Siddha medicine believes that a person's physical, mental, and physiological health is influenced by 96 factors. These factors include things like perception, speech, and pulse diagnosis.

Perception is often used to understand and treat psychosomatic (mind-body) problems. Treatments include the use of minerals, metals, and some plant-based substances. Siddha medicine prepares many of its remedies from plants and minerals in powdered form, using special processes like calcination.

This system gives great importance to the wide-ranging uses of herbs and minerals. For minor health issues, herbal medicines are used first. Siddha theory also states that mercury- based preparations can strengthen the body and protect



it from decay, helping it fight diseases—even though minerals like mercury and sulfur are naturally toxic if used improperly.

Siddha medicines are commonly used to manage chronic and degenerative diseases, including autoimmune conditions.(22)

3.3 Diagnosis

The diagnosis of diseases involves identifying its causes. The physician generally involve checking of- Nadi(pulse),Dhavani(speech), Twakaskin along with speech),Deiham(body),malam(feaces/stool)mutram(urine).

3.4 Treatment

Treatment is based on a diagnostic character of patient.

Siddha system extensively use of drug and vegetable sources as well as mineral origin. Use of metals like gold silver copper sulphur zinc etc. are only seen in siddha system of medicine.

Formulation example

Solid dosage forms:-

Chooranam, Mathirai, Vati, Parpam, Chendooram, Chunnam, Kattu, Kalangu, Karuppu, Pathangam.

Liquid dosage forms:-

Kudineer, Kashayam, Asavam, Arishtam, Rasam, Thailam, Kuzhambu (liquid), Paatham

Semi-solid dosage forms:-

Legiyam, Rasayanam, Mezhu, Kuzhambu (thick), Kalimbu, Panchamirtha (23)

4. Unani system of medicine

4.1 Introduction

The Unani system of medicine is one of the oldest traditional medical systems, known for helping prevent and treat many health problems over the centuries. It is also called Unani Tibb, Arabian medicine, or Islamic medicine. Unani is a traditional method of healing and maintaining health. Although it developed mainly in South Asia, its ideas are based on the teachings of ancient Greek physicians like Hippocrates and Galen.(24)

4.2 Principal of unani system

Unani medicine is based in four basic elements I.e Earth air water and fire. The body has simple and compound organ which got nourishment through for humorous that is blood,phlegm, yellow bite,black bite.

Blood-hot and wet Phlegm-cold and hot

Yellow bite -hot and dry Black bite-cold and dry

According to this system health is a state of body in which there is equilibrium in humours and temperment When the equilibrium of the humorous destrubed then disease is produces.

4.3 Diagnosis

The disease are mainly diagnose with the help of Nadi physical examination of urine and stool

Urine Examination Color, odor, froth, taste (historically),and sediments Indicates internal humor imbalance and organ function.

Stool Examination (Baraz) Color, consistency, mucus, undigested food, worms Helps understand digestive strength and toxin accumulation.



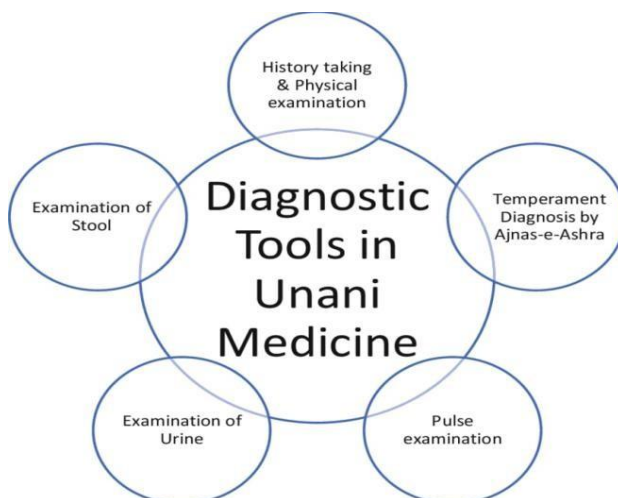


Fig.6 Diagnostic tools in unani medicine

4.4 Treatment

The diagnostic parameters of the Unani system of medicine are the rate, strength, width and depth of the pulse, and the colour, odor, amount of urine and stool

In addition, the deposits in the urine sample are also observed

After confirming the cause of the disease, the Unani physician starts the treatment by recommending the Aghziya (Diets) or Advia (Drugs) that have temperament opposite to the prevailing abnormal temperamental condition of the affected organ/system

Formulation example

Solid dosage forms:-

Habb, Qurs, Safoof, Kushta, Tiryāq, Muqilaat

Liquid dosage forms:-

Sharbat, Arq, Joshaanda, Roghan, Qahwa

Semi-solid dosage forms:-

Majoon, Khamira, Laooq, Marham, Qairrooti (25)

5. Homeopathy system of medicine

5.1 Introduction

Homeopathic medicine system works on the principle of “like cures like.” This means a substance that can cause symptoms in a healthy person can be used in very small, diluted amounts to treat similar symptoms in a sick person. The system of healing was introduced by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician, in the late 18th century. He believed that the body has a natural ability to heal itself and that highly diluted remedies help stimulate this healing process.



Fig no.7 Homeopathy system of medicine



5.2 Principal

Homeopathy is based on the principle of “like cures like,” which means that a substance causing certain symptoms in large doses can be used in very small amounts to treat those same symptoms. The treatment method is guided by the concept of “proving,” where substances are tested on healthy individuals (provers) to understand the symptoms they produce.

Homeopathic remedies are prepared using natural sources such as herbs, minerals, and animal products. These substances are diluted and shaken repeatedly to create different potencies. The potencies are written as 2X, 4X, 6X, and so on, where “X” indicates the level of dilution and potency. (26)

5.3 Diagnosis

Diagnosis in homeopathy is unique and differs from conventional medicine. It focuses on understanding the individual as a whole rather than only identifying the disease. Homeopathic diagnosis is based on symptom similarity, individual constitution, and the mental–emotional state of the patient.

Homeopathy follows the principle of “Totality of Symptoms”, which means the medicine is selected based on the complete picture of the patient’s signs and symptoms.

This includes:

Physical symptoms (location, sensation, modalities) Mental symptoms (anxiety, fear, irritability, moods) Emotional symptoms (stress, grief, anger)

General symptoms (thirst, appetite, sleep, sweating, temperature tolerance)

5.4 Treatment

Some important medicinal plants used in the Homeopathic medicine system include:

- (a) Rhus toxicodendron – commonly used for treating paralysis of the lower limbs and various musculoskeletal pains.
 - (b) Aconitum napellus and Gelsemium sempervirens – both are used in homeopathy for managing different types of paralysis and nervous system disorders.
 - (c) Agaricus muscarius, Cocculus indicus, Solanum dulcamara, and Hypericum perforatum – although poisonous in their natural form, they are safely used in highly diluted homeopathic preparations.
 - (d) Arnica montana, Strychnos nux-vomica (Nux vomica) – well-known plant sources used for pain relief and as an antacid remedy in homeopathic practice.
 - (e) Belladonna (from Atropa belladonna) – used for symptoms such as runny nose, fever, and acute cold conditions.
- (27)

VI. CONCLUSION

Traditional systems of medicine, rooted in centuries of cultural knowledge and holistic healing practices, continue to play a vital role in global healthcare. They emphasize balance, natural remedies, preventive care, and the interconnectedness of mind, body, and environment. While modern scientific validation and standardization are important for ensuring safety and efficacy, traditional medicine remains a valuable complement to contemporary medical systems. By integrating traditional wisdom with modern research, societies can create more comprehensive, accessible, and culturally sensitive healthcare solutions for present and future generations.

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