

From Ancient Roots to Global Reach: The Evolving Landscape of Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT: Ayurveda, the traditional and ancient system of medicine, was originated over 3,000 years ago in the Indian subcontinent and over the time it has evolved from localized healing practices to a globally recognized wellness practice. Ayurveda has gained a global recognition for its holistic approach to health and well-being. With the increase in demand for natural and integrative healthcare, Ayurveda is expanding beyond its traditional roots and entered into international markets. This paper tries to explore the historical journey of Ayurveda, its current global scenario, evaluate its acceptance and adaptation in different regions, identify major challenges, and prospects. Emphasis is placed on the historical roots, contemporary growth, challenges, and future opportunities of Ayurveda, supported by quantitative data, market analyses, international market trends, and integration with modern healthcare systems.

KEYWORDS: traditional medicine, tridosha theory, therapeutic potential, sustainable healthcare

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, derived from the Sanskrit words "*Ayus*" means life and "*Veda*" means science or knowledge. So, Ayurveda, means "the science of life. It represents a comprehensive, natural and holistic health care system practiced in India for over 5,000 years. Unlike modern bio-medicine, Ayurveda emphasizes balance in body systems, mind and spirit through diet, herbal treatments, yogic breathing and lifestyle changes. In recent decades, there has been a significant rise in global interest toward traditional medicine, particularly Ayurveda, due to increasing awareness about preventive healthcare, lifestyle diseases, and the limitations of allopathic medicine. At present, the global scenario of Ayurveda is at a transformative juncture. Historically practiced in India, the principles of Ayurveda have transcended cultural and geographical boundaries, influencing global health and wellness trends. Its future will depend on harmonizing traditional wisdom with scientific rigor, policy support, and global collaboration.

World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized Ayurveda as a traditional system of medicine. Several countries such as Srilanka, Nepal, Brazil, USA, Germany, France, Malayasia, Russia, Australia, and UAE have integrated Ayurvedic principles into wellness programs and in medical research. All India Institute of Ayurveda and international universities are in continuous endeavour for conducting research to validate Ayurvedic practices scientifically, especially in the areas of pharmacology, oncology, and lifestyle disorders. Ministry of AYUSH is leading in regulating and promoting Ayurveda throughout the India. The countries across Europe, Asia, and the Americas are slowly developing regulatory frameworks to ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of Ayurvedic products. The global interest in Ayurveda is gradually growing and this reflects a broader trend towards holistic and integrative health practices.

Presently, the global market for Ayurveda is experiencing a rapid growth. In 2023 the global Ayurveda market was valued at over USD 14 billion and it is projected to exceed USD 75 billion by 2030. All these global successes of Ayurveda are mainly driven by increasing wellness awareness and demand for natural products. For a greater success and deeper penetration and integration of Ayurveda into mainstream healthcare systems, it has to overcome the hurdles including standardization of products, scientific validation.

2. HISTORICAL ROOTS AND PRINCIPLES

Ayurveda was originated in the Indian subcontinent. The origins of Ayurveda can be traced back to ancient Indian scriptures known as the Vedas (1500-500 BCE), especially the **Rigveda** and **Atharvaveda** which contain hymns and verses on healing, herbs, and disease prevention. It was considered as a divine science revealed by Brahma. Gradually, in **the classical period, 500 BCE to 500 CE**, often known as the **Golden Age** of Ayurvedic scholarship, it evolved as a specialized branch of knowledge and is documented in classical texts like the *Charaka Samhita*, which focuses on internal medicine (*Kaya Chikitsa*), attributed to the sage **Charak**,

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Sushruta Samhita, that Centers on surgery (*Shalya Tantra*), attributed to **Sushruta**, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha*, works by **Vagbhata**, summarizing and synthesizing previous knowledge. In the **Post-Classical and Medieval Periods, 500 – 1500 CE**, Ayurveda continued to evolve, integrating influences from **Buddhism**, **Jainism**, and later **Islamic medicine (Unani)**. Medical universities like **Takshashila** and **Nalanda** flourished, supporting Ayurvedic scholarship. This period experienced the development of new branches: Pediatrics, Toxicology, Psychiatry. In the **Colonial Period, from 1600s to 1947**, British colonial rule led to a decline in Ayurveda, with Western medicine being promoted. Still, many practitioners preserved the tradition in rural areas. But after India's independence, i.e. **Post-1947, which are often termed as Modern Revival** Ayurveda regained national importance. Over centuries it has been systematized into a comprehensive medical system encompassing diagnostics, therapeutics, and preventive care. The Indian government established the **Ministry of AYUSH** (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) in 2014 to support and regulate traditional medicine. Institutions like the National Institute of Ayurveda in Jaipur have been pivotal in preserving and propagating Ayurvedic knowledge.

Ayurveda has been recognized by WHO as a traditional system of medicine. The WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia adopted a resolution in 2003 urging the establishment of a regional task force to review and facilitate the development of national and regional strategies for traditional medicine. Gradually, it has been integrated into health systems and wellness programs worldwide.

As far as the principles of Ayurveda is concerned, Ayurveda is based on Tridosha Theory which believed that 'health is a balance of three bodily humors of doshas: **Vata (air/space)**, **Pitta (fire/water)**, and **Kapha (earth/water)**, and emphasizes the harmony of these three doshas, mental and spiritual well-being, and individualized treatment. Historically, Ayurveda influenced other Asian traditional medical systems such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Unani. Ayurveda believes in **Pancha Mahabhutas**. **According to Ayurveda** the five great elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—constitute all matter. The physiological basis of Ayurvedic theory are the **Dhatus**, i.e., concepts of tissues, **Malas**, i.e. waste products, and **Agni**, the digestive fire form. Ayurveda has inspired systems like **Traditional Chinese Medicine** and **Greek Unani**. Today, it's practiced worldwide and often integrated with modern wellness, yoga, and diet.

3. GLOBAL EXPANSION OF AYURVEDA

The global Ayurveda market has witnessed significant growth. In 2023, the market size was estimated at USD 14.4 billion, with projections to reach USD 76.91 billion by 2030, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.2%¹. Regional Insights reflects the fact that **Asia Pacific is dominating the market**, driven by traditional practices and increasing health awareness, **North America is emerging** as a significant market due to rising demand for natural and organic products.

In the United States, Ayurveda is practiced in various wellness centers as a form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). While not officially recognized as a system of medicine, Ayurveda is included in research initiatives by institutions like the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Institutions like the National Ayurvedic Medical Association (NAMA) support training and certification.²

In South America, Brazil recognizes Ayurveda as one of its 29 integrative health practices. The Brazilian Ministry of Health has included Ayurveda in its national health policies, and research collaborations with Indian institutions are underway to explore its applications in treating conditions like cancer and psychological disorders³.

In Europe, countries like Germany, France, and Switzerland have shown interest in Ayurveda. In **Europe** Germany, the UK, and Switzerland are key centers, where Ayurveda is practiced alongside homeopathy and naturopathy. Institutions such as the Rosenberg European Academy of Ayurveda in Germany and the Atreya Ayurveda School in France offer educational programs in Ayurveda. Research collaborations between India and these countries aim to explore the scientific basis and therapeutic potential of Ayurvedic practices⁴. Russia has shown interest in Ayurveda, with institutions like the Institute of Oriental Medicine at the People's Friendship University offering courses in Ayurvedic medicine. Research collaborations between Russian and Indian institutions focus on exploring the therapeutic applications of Ayurveda⁵. In the UK, Ayurveda is integrated into the National Health Policy as part of complementary and alternative medicine. Research initiatives explore the efficacy and safety of Ayurvedic treatments, and some practitioners are recognized under regulatory frameworks.⁶

¹ [grandviewresearch.com](https://www.grandviewresearch.com)

² fr.wikipedia.org

^{3, 4, 5} journals.lww.com

⁶ [deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com)

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In the **Asia-Pacific**, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand incorporated Ayurveda in public health, often blending with local practices. Sri Lanka has a rich Ayurvedic tradition, with Ayurveda being widely practiced and recognized. The government established the Ministry of Indigenous Medicine in 1980 to regulate and promote Ayurvedic practices. Institutions like the Institute of Indigenous Medicine at the University of Colombo offer degrees in Ayurvedic medicine. In Nepal, Ayurveda is a prominent form of traditional medicine. The Nepal Ayurvedic Medical Council, established in 1988, regulates Ayurvedic education and practice. The country has several Ayurvedic colleges offering programs like Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS). The UAE has established a Department of Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicine under its Ministry of Health. Ayurveda is recognized as a medical system, and licensed practitioners are authorized to practice⁷. Malaysia officially recognizes and regulates Ayurveda through laws and frameworks like the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Act of 2016. Ayurvedic treatments, including Panchakarma, are available in public hospitals, and practitioners are regulated by the government.⁸

These countries have adopted Ayurveda in various capacities, from official recognition and regulation to integration into wellness programs and medical research. The growing global interest in Ayurveda reflects a broader trend towards holistic and integrative health practices.

As the birthplace of Ayurveda, India has deeply integrated it into its healthcare system. The Ministry of AYUSH oversees the promotion and regulation of Ayurveda, along with Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy. India has established institutions like the Institute of Indigenous Medicine and the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka to advance Ayurvedic education and research.

The global Ayurveda market was valued at over USD 6 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow steadily due to increasing wellness tourism, demand for herbal cosmetics, and rising chronic disease rates. Major Ayurvedic brands like Patanjali, Dabur, and Himalaya have also expanded internationally. India's export of Ayurvedic and herbal products has shown remarkable growth, with exports increasing from USD 479.6 million in FY21 to USD 606.2 million in FY23⁹.

4. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND VALIDATION OF AYURVEDS

Although rooted in tradition, in recent decades, Ayurveda has been integrated into wellness, lifestyle, and even clinical settings in many countries, including the USA, Germany, Australia, and the UK. Yoga and Ayurvedic nutrition have particularly contributed to its popularity. But the problem lies in the fact that different countries classify Ayurvedic products differently — as food supplements, herbal medicines, or CAM. Ayurveda is increasingly being viewed as a complement rather than an alternative to biomedicine. This inconsistency complicates international trade and recognition. Adulteration, contamination, and lack of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) have led to skepticism in some countries.

So, for Ayurveda, to be globally accepted in modern medical systems, scientific validation is crucial. Research is ongoing to validate Ayurvedic principles, formulations, and therapeutic techniques. Studies on turmeric (curcumin), ashwagandha, and triphala have shown promising results. International bodies and governments have begun supporting research. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has acknowledged traditional medicine systems, including Ayurveda, and released benchmarks for training and practice. Institutions like **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)** and **Ministry of AYUSH (India)** are collaborating with global universities and research centers to promote integrative health research. Countries like the **USA, Germany, and Japan** have centers for complementary and integrative medicine studying Ayurvedic approaches. Institutions like the All India Institute of Ayurveda have expanded partnerships to over 15 international and 35 national organizations, fostering collaborative research programs¹⁰. However, methodological challenges remain, such as standardizing formulations and aligning holistic diagnostics with biomedical research protocols.

Integrative health models in countries like the U.S. and Germany are beginning to include Ayurvedic dietary counseling, Panchakarma, and herbal supplementation. Collaborations between Ayurvedic institutes and biomedical research centers are growing, although more rigorous clinical trials are required.

Global practitioners often lack standardized training, which leads to variable quality of practice. Although India offers BAMS (Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery), equivalent international accreditation is rare. The lack of standardized practices and quality control mechanisms poses challenges to the global acceptance of Ayurvedic products. Regulatory frameworks are evolving, but inconsistencies remain across regions. While anecdotal evidence supports Ayurvedic efficacy, there is a need for

⁷ [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, journals.lww.com](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/journals/lww.com)

⁸ pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

⁹ grandviewresearch.com

¹⁰ thetimes.co.uk/mordorintelligence.com

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rigorous clinical trials to substantiate claims. The scientific community calls for more evidence-based studies to validate traditional practices¹¹.

5. FUTURE OUTLOOK

The future of Ayurveda on the global stage depends on **increased research funding and scientific validation, clear regulatory standards across countries, public-private partnerships in herbal product development, integration into public healthcare for chronic disease prevention and wellness, digital Ayurveda**, through AI-driven diagnostics and personalized wellness platforms. With global trends shifting toward holistic and preventive health, Ayurveda has a significant opportunity to contribute to sustainable healthcare worldwide.

Ayurveda has become a cornerstone of wellness tourism. In 2021, the global wellness tourism industry was valued at \$850.55 billion and is expected to grow to \$2.1 trillion by 2030¹².

The advent of digital health platforms offers opportunities to disseminate Ayurvedic knowledge and services globally. Mobile applications and tele-medicine are bridging geographical gaps. Online platforms now offer **Ayurveda consultations**, courses, and health programs, making it accessible to a global audience. **AI and data science** are being used to personalize Ayurvedic treatments based on an individual's body type (*prakriti*), lifestyle, and health conditions.

8. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is poised to play a crucial role in the future of global healthcare. While it faces challenges such as scientific validation, regulatory hurdles, and standardization, the growing demand for natural and personalized medicine provides a fertile ground for its global expansion. A synergistic model that integrates Ayurveda with modern medical systems can lead to a more holistic and inclusive approach to global health.

Ayurveda's journey from ancient practices to a global wellness phenomenon underscores its enduring relevance. While challenges in standardization and scientific validation exist, the opportunities for growth in wellness tourism, digital platforms, and international markets are substantial. With continued research and global collaboration, Ayurveda can achieve its potential as a cornerstone of global health and wellness.

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¹¹ [thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk)

¹² [thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk)