

AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH FOR WELLNESS: AN ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL OF AYURVEDA DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The integrative approach for wellness has become an arena where integrating the indigenous practice with the dominant bio-medical system has activated a transformation process. Further, a debate characterized by fundamental dichotomies of health/wellness is there to find an approach in agreement with holistic wellness. The limitations of protocol-driven medical science and avoiding the patient behind the patient have again compelled us during this pandemic to explore holistic health.

This paper presents an analysis and explores the feasibility of Ayurveda as an integrative system to wellness and tests the Ayurveda concept of holistic wellness against three such dichotomies: 'health' vs wellness, 'body' vs 'mind,' and 'curative vs. preventive,' where the current medical model can be said to represent the first elements in the three dichotomies.

Keeping the current Covid-19 pandemic as a critical incident, researchers tried to justify that the synergistic confluence will act as a complementary/supportive knowledge in humanity's struggle against the pandemic. For synergistic confluence of Ayurveda and medical Science, the scientist's temperament and evidence-based medical science approach should be applied to validate the principles and therapies of Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS

Holistic Wellness, Ayurveda, Synergistic Confluence, Integrative approach of Wellness, Covid-19 Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19, pandemic compelled us to ponder over the essence of life. The crisis has prompted the foundations and settled ways of living life and remedies for managing the situation. Further, it has aggravated the need to relook, reassess, and reappraise the prevalent customs and systems, as specific ways of crisis management are no longer appropriate for sustaining our very existence.

In this context, highly qualified practitioners from bio-medical science are trying to address the pandemic through an evidence-based medical approach. A systematic approach wherein the best available research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values are reviewed for problem-solving. As a result, the knowledge generated by the bio-medical system is reliable as well as reproducible, which provides the substantial groundwork for identifying new health technologies/treatments that have led to longevity and quality of human life.

The scientific community's efforts to fight against COVID are mechanical as they are protocol-driven and algorithmic.[1] However, to manage a crisis of this magnitude, we need to develop a holistic approach involving social, psychological, medical, physiological, administrative, and even integrative intelligence for the human victory over the virus. [2] Here the researchers are not defying the truth that medical science has not collected a comprehensive repository of knowledge about the impact of COVID-19 on human life. Still, the efforts are embedded in physiological nourishment, i.e., body only. A holistic view that stimulates body, mind, and spirit is not yet emphasized while evolving measures to manage this crisis. At this juncture, when the high intensity of psychological distress directed by the pandemic is all-pervasive, [3] we need to recalibrate our ways to manage the crisis. The psychological distress generated during the crisis can potentially enhance the vulnerability to viral upper respiratory infections. [4] This requires a rational approach to find ways to minimize pain to improve immunity so that chances of infection can be reduced. [5]

Medical science is an evidence-based curative approach and more inclined towards the elimination of diseases. Medical science focuses on diseases, diagnostics, and medicines rather than the patient as a person in the treatment process. The body is merely appreciated in science rather than the complete perspective necessarily being comprised of body, mind, and spirit. It is appropriate to mention here that the absence of disease is no guarantee of health. Human helplessness has created a need for an integrative approach where along with evidence-based functioning, experience-based systems like Ayurveda, Yoga can also be adopted.

The underlying meaning of Ayurveda is "knowledge (Veda) of life (ayur)."It is an Indian system of life sciences that is based on predictive and personalized medicine.

While advocating this health and wellness wisdom of ancient India, we have no intention to degrade reductive medical science; instead, we promote the synergistic confluence of these two sciences. Integrative intelligence is helpful for disease prevention and curative care. The COVID pandemic is an opportunity to explore this integrative approach to fulfil our unmet needs and unresolved challenges. Further, the integrative approach postulates the active involvement of individuals in maintaining health which is always required to minimize the passive dependence on medical treatments. [7]

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To strengthen the advocacy that Ayurveda is based on holistic wellness principles.
2. To explore the possibility of synergistic confluence of medical science and indigenous Ayurvedic practices.
3. To reinforce the perspective that the indigenous system can support the effort of medical science against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Building on this background, the current research reviewed the existing literature to understand the possibility of synergistic confluence of medical science and indigenous Ayurvedic practices. Though both medical science and indigenous Ayurveda differ epistemologically, their philosophies are not significantly different.

Further, keeping the current pandemic as a critical incident, researchers tried to justify that the synergistic confluence can act as a complementary/supportive knowledge to the medical science. Finally, to provide evidence to our advocacy that Ayurveda is based on holistic wellness principles, the impact of Ayurveda's interventions, including immunity boosting measures for self-care during the COVID-19 crisis was reviewed.

The approach of Ayurveda comes from the indigenous practices adopted by Indian communities, and it is ongoing, creating a solid premise of experience-based healing therapy. We begin by arguing that the curative approach is not sufficient for wellbeing and then tried to elaborate that Ayurveda has tremendous potential for synergistic confluence.

METHODOLOGY

Ayurveda's philosophy and theories are advocated through a literature review as a holistic approach to wellness. In our advocacy, we do not make any extreme position, either bio-medical or Ayurveda; instead, we suggested that synergistic confluence of Ayurveda and biomedical systems may be possible through integrative approaches for holistic wellness. Individually, they are not the complete package for health, but their synergistic confluence can help the world suffering from incurable diseases and illness.

To strengthen our perspective regarding the potential impact of Ayurveda on psycho and physical immunity, taking COVID as a critical incident, different initiatives

taken by state governments and practitioners who have a firm conviction for Ayurveda and followed the guidelines of the Indian government during the pandemic was reviewed. Finally, we discuss ways to progress for the synergistic confluence of Ayurveda with bio-medical science by collecting wisdom from this pandemic. The presented data is collected from several published reports, Ayurveda's classical scriptures, and books on Ayurveda, one of the indigenous sciences of life. The methodological approach combines the concepts and philosophy of Ayurveda with as many different sources as possible: written sources, scriptures, and discussions.

Holistic wellness and the dichotomies of health-wellness, body-mind and cure vs care as constructed

Wellness is considered the holistic integration of the energies of body, mind, and spirit where the body is stimulated, the reason is engaged, and nature is cherished rather than physical health.

Nurturing physical, intellectual, emotional, vocational, financial, social, spiritual, and environmental mutually supporting dimensions is a must for holistic wellness, as neglect of any of these can affect individuals' wellbeing. In contrast to holistic wellness, the therapeutic approach of the healthy body is defined only in mechanistic terms. [8] Therefore, it prompts that mechanized and engineered interventions can sort out health issues. [9] Thus, illness is caused by specific conditions and organisms, for which remedial action is proposed both regulatory and eliminating the illness in a particular manner. [10] This way, it is postulated the health and disease are directed by physical, chemical, and biological laws. So, the cause-effect is established in the linear relationship between the body as a system and its interaction with discrete entities. [11]

In a contrary sense holistic wellness recognizes the integrated impact of body, mind, and spirit on health, which in principle differs from the dichotomies of health-illness and body-mind as constructed in medical science. Under holistic wellness and the predictive and preventive approach, it is essential to follow personalized and participatory medicine for complete wellness. The systems approach can help demystify diseases and democratizing health care [12], but holistic wellness is a proactive approach to eliminating illness.

In the contemporary context, when medical science struggles to sort out the puzzle of Covid-19, the alternative/complementary/integrative systems needs to be explored. In this context, keeping the principle of holistic wellness in premise, this paper explores the feasibility of Ayurveda as an integrative system for welfare.

This paper tests the Ayurveda concept of holistic wellness against three such dichotomies: health vs wellness, body vs mind, and curative vs. preventive, where the current medical model can be said to represent the first elements in the three dichotomies.

Health versus wellness dichotomy

In biomedical science, health is accepted as the absence of illness, injury, disease, and health care, ensuring to regain the state where there is no illness. On the contrary, in indigenous studies, wellbeing is not just physical health, but preventative health care which is more important. Further, in indigenous discussions 'substantial knowledge often has been trivialized in favor of more scientific, objective ways of knowing'. [13]

World Health Organization in 1946 states that –health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity – lending itself well to the focus of holistic wellness (WHO 1946). This definition favours the view that the indigenous definition and measurement of the health of communities can be referred to while focusing on holistic wellness.

Body versus mind dichotomy

Under biomedical philosophy, the body is taken as a machine. That is why it is defined as a functional, mechanical, physical, and systematic thing. Elaborating on the body as a machine, [14] identified three critical dimensions, being the body is the sum of its parts means it can be reducible to organ, tissue, and cells. Like machines, it can be understood from the outside without emphasizing emotions and mood. Third, the body is not guided by values. From this narrative, the disinterest of biomedical science is apparent towards the spirit or mind.

Indigenous management defines the mind as a controller over the five sense organs and works as a motor organ-enabling activities through speech and other organs. The body is represented as a realm of molecules, while the mind is a field of thoughts. That's why indigenous management postulates that whatever affects the brain has its effect on memory and vice-versa. It implies that

wellness can't be achieved just by adopting the functional/bodily measures rather, a holistic approach assimilating body, mind, and spirit is needed. [15]

Curative versus preventive dichotomy

Curative medicine is a branch of medical science aiming to restore and maintain health once individuals fall ill. In contrast, Preventative medicine is a proactive approach that ensures that people do not fall sick in the first place. Therefore, preventive medicine targets the disease-free state, a proactive approach, while curative medicine targets the diseased state, a reactive one.

Most of the prevalent disease of this century, like lifestyle disorders, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Cancer, Corona, take a longer duration to aggravate before changing into life-threatening conditions. Therefore, preventive strategies make better sense for them.[16] It is not advocated here that treatments should be avoided, or preventive strategies are enough for eradicating disease; instead, early diagnosis and prevention are needed, which can be accessed through indigenous methods.

Holistic wellness, according to Ayurveda.

The underlying meaning of Ayurveda is "knowledge (Veda) of life (ayur)."It is an Indian system of life sciences that is based on predictive and personalized medicine. Based on the severity, stage, and subtype of the disease, pathogenesis, etiological factors, clinical features, therapeutic modalities can be described under Ayurveda. [17] This is different from medical science as an individualized approach and is followed with a thorough examination of the deceased individual. In addition, Ayurveda proliferates the gifts of nature in maintaining healthy and happy living. [18]

Healthcare-related quality standards, as well as all regulatory procedures, are well documented in Ayurveda. Ayurveda's extensive knowledge base on preventive care derives from the concepts of 'Dinacharya' (daily regimes) and 'Ritucharya' (seasonal systems) to maintain a healthy life. This refers to seasonal changes rendering the body profoundly vulnerable to one or different disorders if the body is not synchronized with the weather, which makes up the external environment. As adjustments are the key to endurance, the information on Ritucharya (routine for different seasons) is, therefore, significant. Further, Ayurveda emphasizes 'Samadosha' (balances of psychological elements), 'Samadhatu' (balances of tissues), 'Sama-indriya' (balance of sensory organs)

'Prasannatma' (nurturing soul),' Samagnischa' (proper production of energies), 'Malakriya' (proper elimination of waste). [19]

Integrative approach considering body, mind, and spirit for managing wellness

The logical and reasonable synthesis of Ayurveda (rooted in scientific and rational concepts of the Indian philosophy) defines health as fulfilling continuous physical, mental, and spiritual happiness by striking a balance between psyche, spirit, and physical system. It elaborates those relationships need to be nurtured with fellow creatures and nature as a whole, including the universe and ourselves. Charaka Samhita describes wellbeing as a 'disease-free state' to be followed for the accomplishment of 'virtue, wealth and gratification'. [20]

Ayurvedic principle of three-body humours (TriDosas) viz- Vata (the energy of movement) Pitta (the energy of digestion and metabolism) Kapha (the energy of lubrication) are the bases on which treatment is defined combining diet, herbal remedies, detoxification, whenever disequilibrium exists between the physical, mental and spiritual energy than this disequilibrium generates imbalanced Agni which brings illness [19]. Ayurveda advocates that personal indulgence for monitoring, managing, and maintenance is required for nutritional status.

Effective interventions that are natural and less invasive

The fundamental precept of Ayurveda talks about the relationship between the microcosm (Pind) and the macrocosm (Brahmand). It elaborates that both the 'being' (Pind) and cosmos/outside world (Brahmand) interacts, and the cosmos influences the being. In simple words, that is a unity between macrocosm and microcosm. This dictum is extended on the ontological basis of the five-element theory (Panchamahabhuta). [21] On these lines, Ayurvedic approach emphasizes health promotion by interconnecting the environment and personal's characteristics. It can be postulated that everybody has the potential of self-healing by knowing the state of his or her body, mind, and spirit. [19]

Ayurveda promotes the usage of materials as medicines that are readily available in Indian households. Simple, self-driven, but effective health practices- such as lukewarm water, drinking Kadha (Decoction) during sickness, scraping the tongue, gazing at a flame to improve

eyesight, gargling for maintaining the health of the throat - are natural and less invasive interventions.

Further, to withstand the agents causing diseases, the most natural healing therapy, 'Yoga' and Dhyana (meditation), has been prescribed to enhance physical strength, emotional resilience and control the nervous system.

The Trayadosa Agni - Thirteen types of digestive fires like Jatharagni (gastric fire) are narrated in Ayurveda. Ayurveda highlights that the malfunctioning of these fire (Agni) causes most of the diseases. This is how in a natural way, body functioning is explained, which stresses that several diseases can be controlled by systematically managing over 'Ahar' (Food), 'Achar' (Routines), 'Vichar' (Thoughts) and 'Vihar' (Recreation)' [22]

Individualized approach: addresses the person's unique conditions, needs and circumstances.

Ayurveda differentiates every individual from others based on Prakriti (Constitution). That is why each patient will not get the same treatment in Ayurveda though having a similar disease. Ayurveda accepts that each personality consists of TriGunas (three fundamental universal energies):-that is Satva (power of balance), Rajas (power of fire or motivation), and Tamas (energy of rest or slothfulness), and all individuals have mixed amounts of the three, the predominant Guna (energy) determines an individual's Mansa Prakriti (Mental Constitution). In equilibrium, the three Gunas (energies) preserve the mind (indirectly the body) and different types of mental disorders. [23]

Knowing this classification of personality helps to understand the responses of patients in pathological and stressful situations. Dietary prescription to the patients is also natural to prescribe based on Satvik (food which is usually fresh, seasonal and locally grown like fruits, vegetables, leaves, grains, cereals, milk, honey) Rajsik, and Tamsik Prakriti.

Even the Ayurvedic classification of body tissues, which is done under the principle of SaptaDhatu (Seven types of body tissues), is very helpful in understanding the anatomy of the body and the related causes of disease. [24]

Prevention reduces the need for treatment:

Ayurveda propounded the theory of PancaMahabhutas (Five essential elements) viz.-Akasha (space), Vayu (air), Teja or Agni (fire), Jala (water) and Prithvi (earth). This theory

helps the physicians understand the body's essential elements to detect illness, which further helps to identify the real cause of the disease. [25]. Ayurveda stresses mind, body, and spirit wellness, and all these are interconnected, but the spirit has the power to govern the other. The knowledge of Ayurveda empowers individuals to understand a person and generates energy to establish the equilibrium of body, mind, and spirit as per the individual's Prakriti (constitution). The prescribed non-pharmacological approaches from yoga, meditation, and lifestyle play a significant role in treating mental and physiological disease and suggest ways to prevent diseases and protect health. [26]

Inquiry-driven: patient and practitioner are partners in the healing process:

This philosophy of 'our health in our hands' is practiced in Ayurveda, which advocates that all the diseases can be considered as the result of 'mithya,' 'ahara,' and 'vihara' follow. These three vitiate Agni, are from which conditions are derived. If an individual practices yogic posture and incorporates meditation in their daily routine, it will help strengthen inner strength to handle health challenges. [27] Ayurveda also counts the psyche of the patients and allows them to participate actively in the healing process. [28]

Ayurveda does not consider individuals a system consisting of organs but a well-coordinated network of relationships that define the functions. Eventually, the roles become impaired; that is why the Ayurvedic concepts are more appropriate for wellness. The individualized approach is emphasized in Ayurveda, enabling individuals to recognize their bodily strength, limitations and continuous self-assessment to give them an accurate picture of their immunity strength. Further, every purpose results from the mutual efforts of several parameters in the body ranging from structures biochemistry, electrical and magnetic, mental and emotional, and physiological parameters. This shows that the functional model of Ayurveda is inclusive.

Assessment of Ayurveda Principles during COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 could be a rapidly changing and progressing situation. In this context, Ayurveda has enough potential and possibilities for prevention and an adjunct treatment option for COVID-19.

Based on the Ancient Ayurvedic literature and proved indigenous practices, the Ministry of Ayush, the government of India, recommends certain practices for holistic wellness

(immunity boosting). Similarly, Patanjali research institute, known for its Ayurvedic medicines in collaboration with the National Institute of Medical Science, Jaipur invented the Corona Virus medicine Coronil (a combination of Giloy, Tulsi, and Aswagandha).

Segregating an ailing member of a family as a household chore in a member's demise are still followed across India. These efforts are similar to those we have started taking up as self-isolation measures to prevent the spread of the flu to other family members or within the community if we are afflicted with the COVID-19 virus. [29]

In infectious disease, it is imperative to prevent further progress, which helps control the disease, and various methods can be used for immunity building and recovery. [30] Through Ayurvedic medicines, multiple symptoms associated with COVID-19 like high fever, severe cough, and body pain can be cured, and further progression of these symptoms can be stopped. [30], During COVID-19, un-precedent usage of Ayurveda's medication is an opportunity to explore the possibility of synergistic confluence of Ayurveda and medical science.

Synergistic confluence of Ayurveda and medical science

The current pandemic has created a need to understand health and wellness from different lenses rather than just the reductionist health approach. We need to negate the silos approach and find a more objective, integrative, comprehensive, and holistic approach to wellness.

The limitations of protocol-driven medical science and the avoidance of the person behind the patient have again compelled us during this pandemic to explore new ways for wellness and avoid such pandemics in the future. At the same time, Ayurveda cannot just rest on the glory of ancient indigenous methods but must understand the role of the evidence-based scientific temperament of health and resolve the queries/objections of medical science. The flexible approach of both systems can pave the way for confluence, a massive success for humankind.

Integration through the coherence of philosophies, concepts, and scientific and professional rigours of both systems must be reassessed. The scientist's temperament and evidence-based medical science approach should be applied to validate the principles and therapies of Ayurveda to generate an integrative approach, which will be the complete health solution.

This integration should be unbiased and should be an effort to do the rebalancing of health philosophy. The approach needs to move from reduction to holistic, from prevention to protection and from body to body-mind-spirit. The definition of health determinants needs to be extended from drug to food, lifestyle, and attitude towards life. Environment, Prakriti' and concepts of holistic wellness need to explore for the integrative health approach. To alter the pluralist approach, it is essential that the insights and perceptions contributed by holistic wellness concepts need to be referred to. We need to focus our attention on the attributes of individuals and their context so that a person-centric health approach can be developed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The current pandemic and the limitations of medical science have instigated the need to explore an integrative approach. The discussion under the three paradoxes showed that Ayurveda has enough potential and possibilities to prevent and cure the diseases. [30] In contrast to the medical approach, where the body is considered a composition of cells, tissues, and organs, Ayurveda's approach is more holistic. Ayurveda's principles were compared with the holistic wellness principles, and it was found that they agree with the laws of a holistic wellness approach.

Consequently, we suggested an integrative approach where Ayurveda and evidence-based medical science will help to shift from generalized to person-centric treatment and illness to wellness.

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GLOSSARY

S.NO.		
1.	The Tri Doshas	Three Body Humours
2.	The Trayodosa Agni	Thirteen types of digestive fires
3.	The Tri Gunas	Three Fundamental universal energies
4.	The SaptaDhatus	Seven types of body tissues rasadhātu (plasma), raktadhātu (blood), mamsadhātu (muscle), medadhātu (fat), asthidhātu (bone), majjadhātu (nervous tissue), and shukradhātu (male reproductive tissue) or artavadhātu (female reproductive tissue).
5.	PanchaMahabhutas	Five basic elements Space (Akāśha), Air (Vāyū), Fire (Agni), Water (Jal), Earth (Prithvi)
6.	The Tri Malas	Three types of Body Wastes Faeces (Purisa), Urine (Mutra), Sweat (Sveda)
7.	Sattva	A substance, experience, or mental state infused with the qualities of light, clarity, intelligence, compassion, and wisdom.
8.	Rajas	A substance, experience, or mental state infused with the qualities of kinetic energy, movement, passion, and action.
9.	Tamas	A substance, experience, or mental state infused with the qualities of inertia, darkness, heaviness, slowness, sleepiness, and decay.
10.	Rasayana	A substance that nourishes and tones the entire body; the Ayurvedic practice of rejuvenation therapy (also known as rasayanachikitsa)—a specific process of offering deep nourishment to the cells, tissues, and organs of the body in support of their healing, renewal, and regeneration; this practice is indicated in a number of different situations (e.g., after a deep cleanse like panchakarma) and is believed to enhance immunity, stamina, and longevity.
11.	Vata	It is predominated by the ether and air elements and governs movement and communication; it is light, cold, dry, rough, mobile, subtle, and clear.
12.	Pitta	It is predominated by the fire and water elements, and it governs transformation; it is light, sharp (or penetrating), hot, oily, liquid, and spreading.
13.	Kapha	It is predominated by the earth and water elements and governs structure and cohesiveness; it is heavy, slow, cool, oily, smooth, dense, soft, stable, gross, and cloudy.
14.	Kadha (Decoction)	Decoction is a method of extraction by boiling herbal or plant material to dissolve the chemicals of the material, which may include stems, roots, bark and rhizomes.

15.	ManasPrakriti	The mental constitution; each individual's unique proportion of sattva, rajas, and tamas in the mind; manasprakriti is established at conception, but can change over time, reflecting our capacity to develop more (or less) evolved states of consciousness over the course of our lives.
16.	Prakriti	Constitution: the unique ratio of vata, pitta and kapha established at conception and resulting in a personally unique set of physical, emotional, and mental tendencies, strengths, and vulnerabilities.
17.	Dinacharya	A daily routine: an important part of an Ayurvedic lifestyle that helps to align our bodies with the daily rhythms of nature; the traditional dinacharya includes a wide variety of daily self-care practices including a rich personal hygiene routine, exercise, spiritual practice, meals, and sleep.
18.	Ritucharya (rtucharya)	A seasonal routine: similar to the concept of dinacharya, but also accounting for the cycle of the seasons; rtucharya encourages us to adapt our personal routines to align more closely with the rhythms of the natural world, introducing practices and qualities that naturally promote balance all year long