



## A STUDY OF ALTERNATE HEALING SYSTEMS: NATUROPATHY

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### ABSTRACT

Health and well-being are fundamental in enhancing the quality of life of the individual. Naturopathy is a way of maintaining good health and works as preventive as well as curative technique to either eradicate a disease or maintain well-being. Naturopathy aims at enhancing the overall wellbeing of the body and most of the techniques in it are aimed at enhancing the body's self-healing tendencies. Principles of naturopathic techniques include focus on healing power of the nature, health workers as teachers, treatment of cause of illness, preventive treatment, and focus on overall well-being of the person. In this paper all the naturopathic approaches like herbal medicine, messages etc. will be discussed in depth. There are various techniques of naturopathy such as Ayurveda, Unani medicine, Yoga and meditation, Chromo therapy etc. will also be discussed in depth in the paper. Naturopathy can be effective in curing various ailments such as various forms of allergies, arthritis, digestive problems, depression and other mental issues, infertility and reduced immunity.

**Keywords:** Naturopathy, well-being, Ayurveda, chromo therapy.

### INTRODUCTION

Naturopathy is a technique of primary health care medicine which encompasses the traditional medical treatments with the modern-day treatments of ad-

vanced science and research. It is a vivid process that is inclusive of human health and wellbeing by emphasizing on immunity building, disease prevention, natu-

ral healing and healthy diet. The treatments can take the form of diet regulation, nutrition check, hydrotherapy, homeopathy, Ayurveda, few pharmaceuticals and some minor surgeries.

The main aim of any naturopathic treatment is not only to cure an illness but also enhances the overall health of the mind and the body. Another important aspect of naturopathy is that it can be customized as per the need and symptoms of an individual patient. The treatment can vary from disease to disease and person to person<sup>1</sup>. The complete wellbeing of an individual is achieved through the efforts of naturopathic treatments that integrate the wellness of physical, emotional and psychological aspects of human health. Naturopathy is a system that follows a holistic approach towards the treatment of any disease in the human body. It works with variety of treatments ranging from herbal therapies to medicinal treatments because it functions on the principle that the human body has the capacity to heal itself. The body only needs some assistance from the external sources to speed up the healing process. It contrasts the conventional medicine system which majorly focuses on the symptoms of any disease and its cure<sup>2</sup>. However, naturopathy integrates various aspects of human health and aims to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the individual. Due to this reason the focus of naturopathic treatment is to build strong immune system that has the ability to fight against any infection that might potentially lead to illness. Naturopathy therefore promotes healthy diet, exercise, yoga and meditation rather than completely depending on medicines only<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Principles of naturopathic medicine<sup>4-6</sup>:**

**1. Healing Power of Nature** – It is a known fact that any living being on this planet is capable of healing. The healing process starts as soon as a individual suffers from a illness or an injury. Human cells are capable of regenerating themselves to heal and rejuvenate from time to time. Hence, the task of the physician or any medical practitioner is to aid in that natural healing process of human beings.

- 2. Health workers as Teachers** – This principle emphasizes on the importance of making the patient or any individual aware about their health conditions. This is the task of the health worker to educate them so that they are able to make appropriate decisions regarding their health. It is believed that ultimately it the individual's own lifestyle decisions that make-up the overall health.
- 3. Prevention and Wellness** – According to this principle of naturopathy it is emphasized that any health condition must be prevented rather than being cured after getting affected by it. Hence it is advisable that overall wellness should be kept in mind and prevention should be the first step towards healthy life. One should not wait for the disease to get worse rather take preventive measures beforehand to tackle the problem.
- 4. Treat the Cause** – This principle states that in order to cure any disease completely and in less amount of time, the root cause should be known in the first place. Simply by reducing the symptoms one cannot cure the disease completely. Hence, the cause must be identified and cured as soon as possible.
- 5. Treat the Whole Person** – According to this principle, the naturopathic treatment considers the treatment of one disease as the treatment of the entire body of an individual. Since one single disease somehow affects other organs of the body as well, therefore the overall wellbeing and treatment of the individual is of utmost importance.

**Naturopathic Approaches<sup>7-10</sup>:** Following are some of the approaches that can be used under naturopathic treatments -

**Dietary Advice** – Following a proper balanced diet is an efficient way of keeping one's body and mind healthy. There are many diseases that result due to lack of proper diet in the body. Hence it must be kept in mind that in order to have a healthy body there should be intake of adequate amount of healthy diet suitable for each individual depending upon the age, weight or any health complications.

**Herbal Remedies** – Another way of approaching healthy body or curing a disease is through herbal

remedies. For many years traditional medical practitioners used medicinal herbs as a source for treating various major and minor diseases like cold and cough, tuberculosis, diarrhea etc.

**Hydrotherapy** – The human body consists of 70% of water. This means that water plays a significant role in the overall health and wellbeing of an individual. Water is said to have many properties which used effectively is capable in curing various diseases of the human body.

**Iridology** – Iridology is the approach through which the iris of the human eye is analyzed to identify any illness or disease present in the body. It is believed that by studying the iris of an individual the medical practitioners can identify many diseases that might be present in the human body.

**Massage** – Massage is an effective approach of naturopathy that helps in curing various health related issues like joint pain, sprain, headache etc. massaging any part of the body increases the flow of blood in that region thereby reducing stress of the nervous system.

**Nutritional Supplements** – Majority of diseases that are found in human body are due to the deficiency of one or more vitamin or protein etc. hence adequate amount of nutrition are essential for maintain a healthy mind and body. In case of unavailability of these nutrients in natural form, their supplements are also recommended by the medical practitioners that are easier to consume and are more accessible in today's time.

**Osteopathy** – It is a manual therapy that involves bones, muscles and tissues to cure diseases by simply manipulating the musculoskeletal framework. This approach is a drug-free approach a focus on the external treatment of the health problems like back pain etc.

#### **Types of naturopathic treatment<sup>11,12</sup>**

**1. Ayurvedic Treatment:** Ayurved is an ancient medicine form developed in India almost 1000 years ago and the wisdom of it is still relevant in modern times. Ayurved works on the principle of bringing the balances between the *Tridoshas* in the body which are *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. According to the dominance of the particular *Dosha*

various ailment could be present in the body of the particular individual. Ayurvedic medicines prepare concoctions from various natural resources plants etc. which are highly medicinal in nature and are given to people with ailment.

- 2. Homeopathy Treatment:** It is an alternate form of medicine developed in Germany by a physician named Samuel Hanhemann in the year 1796. The underlying concepts of homeopathy are largely based on the fact that human body can cure itself if stimulated by a certain medicine and proper healing can be initiated from within the body. The idea of homeopathy is 'like cures like', where the medicine is prepared using natural materials from animals or plants and then diluting it further to prepare the medicine.
- 3. Nutritional Treatment:** Nutrition therapy is the treatment of a chronic medical condition like diabetes mellitus, through changes in diet, by adjusting quantity, quality and methods of nutrient intake. This is done under the guidance of a trained nutritionist. Nutrition, more specifically nutritional science, is the science that studies the physiological process of nutrition, interpreting the nutrients and other substances in food in relation to maintenance, growth, reproduction, health and disease of an organism.
- 4. Yoga and Meditation:** Yoga and meditation works on the overall well-being of the individual. They work on creating a balanced physiology and psychology. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that have series of asanas which are body postures and kriyas which are breath work. These kriyas and asanas are exceptionally well designed to bring about harmony in the body and mind of the person. Meditation also comes under asanas and is a practice of mindfulness which helps person to remain calm and grounded.
- 5. Unani Treatment:** The Unani way of treatment is also a natural method in which various natural plant products are used as medicine to cure various ailments. This medicine system originated in Arabic and Persian cultures by the Islamic communities there. This system is based on the Greek

philosophy of humors in the body which are phlegm, blood and bile etc. For making medicines natural products are used.

6. **Color Treatment:** This treatment is also called chromo therapy. It is based on the concept that all the 7 components of the white light of the sun have different therapeutic effect according to the colors i.e. VIBGYOR (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red). Water and oil exposed to sun for specified hours in colored bottles and colored glasses, are used as devices of Chromo Therapy for treating different disorders.
7. **Sunbath:** Sunbath therapy is a natural way of healing different health problems. Sunlight helps to regulate melatonin production in the body, which is necessary to maintain the circadian rhythms of the body. Melatonin is an essential hormone released by the pineal gland of our brain. This hormone regulates our sleep-wake cycle.
8. **Acupressure:** Acupressure is an ancient healing art that uses the fingers or any blunted objects to press key points called as '**Acu Points**' (Energy stored points) on the surface rhythmically on the skin to stimulate the body's natural self-curative abilities. When these points are pressed, they release muscular tension and promote the circulation of blood and the body's life force to aid healing.

### Benefits of naturopathy

The benefits of naturopathy are many and varied, and are used to treat a variety of conditions including:

- A. Allergies; B. Arthritis; C. Depression; E. Digestive problems; F. Infertility; G. Menstrual issues; H. Reduced immunity; I. Skin conditions; and J. Weight Loss & many others

### Development of naturopathy in India

Since the ancient time Indians have used naturopathy as a method of curing innumerable diseases. Various techniques like fasting, *Usahpanam*, *Dugdha Kalpa* and taking holy baths in the sacred rivers like ganga etc. were prevalent in those times. These techniques are still followed in the naturopathic treatments. Not just Indians, even Egyptian and Chinese culture have

also followed these techniques since a long period of time. During the time of 3000 B.C. these cultures adopted various water, sunlight, massage and fasting techniques to enhance overall health of any individual<sup>13</sup>. The process of fasting is followed in such a manner in the Hindu and other cultures that an individual is expected to give their digestive system a break by not consuming food the entire day and have lighter form of meal only once a day. This is done once in a week, once in a fortnight or once in an entire month. Many festivals also emphasize the importance of fasting in various religions. For example – Ekadasi fasting, Maha-shivratri fasting, Ramadan roza's etc.

Due to this reason even in today's time the importance of this system of health and wellbeing cannot be ignored. The initiative is taken by the Government of India also in which they recognized the importance of research for the development of Naturopathic medicinal treatments. Hence the government formed three organizations for the purpose of promoting this medicine system and improve its future application in the field of medicine. These organizations include the following - Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi, an autonomous body which was established in the year 1978. The other two organizations are - National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), Pune and Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), New Delhi.

However, the majority of the growth of the naturopathy as a system of medicine has been possible due to the initiatives taken by many non-governmental bodies and institutions. These bodies popularized the idea of switching towards the naturopathic methods of health and wellbeing<sup>4</sup>. Not only promotion, these bodies have also taken the initiative to integrate the naturopathy treatments with the treatments of modern medical sciences.

In recent times central government and many state governments have started taking up the task of promoting these systems of naturopathy like yoga and meditations etc. People from both governmental and non-governmental bodies have led to the formation of various Naturopathy hospitals across the country which helps in providing the health care services in the most natural ways which not only cures the illness

but also improves the overall health. Out of these institutions and hospitals few are government funded and few functions autonomously with support from the government.

The system of naturopathy has huge potential to take an individual towards healthy living. In present days' time people can benefit from these systems in large proportions if sufficient amount of research and development task is promoted in this field of medicine. Especially in the times like today where due to COVID-19 people are largely suffering from the problem of low immunity. These techniques could be highly useful in enhancing the immune system and also improving the overall physical and mental health of the people in the country. Many people have now started opting these drugless systems to cure even the severe diseases like - Diabetes, Asthma, Coronary Artery Disease (CAD), Arthritis, Depression, Anxiety etc. It can be observed that this system of medicine has always been useful for treating diseases in our country. Now in today's time the integrated methods of naturopathy and modern medical science have open the new doors towards the development of medicine systems which will have the capacity to cure even the most chronic diseases that prevail today. This integration is the sign of a movement towards healthy lifestyle, healthy body as well as a healthy mind that forms the overall wellbeing of the human health and wellness<sup>11</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Health is an overall well-being attribute which results from fit body, mind and emotional quotient of the person. One way to achieve health and well-being is way of Naturopathy. It is a way of maintaining good health and works as preventive as well as curative technique to either eradicate a disease or maintain well-being. Naturopathy aims at enhancing the overall wellbeing of the body and most of the techniques in it are aimed at enhancing the body's self-healing tendencies. Principles of naturopathic techniques include focus on healing power of the nature. Various naturopathic techniques include processes like Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani and Siddha systems of medicine. Yoga

and meditation are also one of the most effective naturopathic treatments. These systems not only establish overall well-being but also help in prevention of various chronic ailments in the body. These systems are rightly being promoted by the government so that these systems are preserved and can be used for the larger well-being of the people.

## CONCLUSION

Through this paper it can be concluded that Naturopathy is a way of maintaining good health and works as preventive as well as curative technique to either eradicate a disease or maintain well-being. Naturopathy aims at enhancing the overall wellbeing of the body and most of the techniques in it are aimed at enhancing the body's self-healing tendencies. Principles of naturopathic techniques include focus on healing power of the nature, health workers as teachers, treatment of cause of illness, preventive treatment, and focus on overall well-being of the person. The naturopathic approaches include herbal medicine, messages, iridology, hydrotherapy etc. There are various techniques of naturopathy such as Ayurveda, Unani medicine, Yoga and meditation, Chromo therapy etc. which use natural products of plants and animals for curing various diseases. Naturopathy can be effective in curing various ailments such as various forms of allergies, arthritis, digestive problems, depression and other mental issues, infertility and reduced immunity. Though these methods are very effective but still more extensive research is needed in this area for better understanding of various naturopathic techniques.

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