

# Importance Of Naturopathy In India: An Overview

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## ABSTRACT

Modern or conventional health care practices are known to associate with high-cost and long-term side effects. Considering this, people in India are turning towards natural treatment options, commonly known as naturopathy. Naturopathy focuses on the holistic development i.e. physical, mental, and emotional well-being of an individual. It works to stimulate the healing capacity of the body. Being a preventive and curative method, naturopathy aims to remove the root cause of the disease rather than simply working as a restorative method of treatment. Some of the treatment options for naturopathy include food therapy, hydrotherapy, aromatherapy, physiotherapy, yoga, fasting, etc. Naturopathy is basically a cost-effective method of treatment with minimal side effects promoting overall health and the person's ability to cope with health-related issues. The Government of India places a strong emphasis on the need to combine the Indian Systems of Medicine with contemporary medicine to cater to the healthcare needs of people, therefore now is the ideal time for naturopathy to offer a comprehensive healthcare system.

**Keywords:** Naturopathy, hydrotherapy, aromatherapy, physiotherapy, self-healing.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ever increasing costs of health services have put undue pressure on people, especially from developing countries like India. Multiple approaches are available in our health care system and the leading one among all is allopathy. However, recently it has been seen that alternatives like naturopathy are also proving to be equally efficacious. Naturopathy comes with the belief that every individual is healthy and strong at the time of birth and they can continue to stay healthy and fit if they live in accordance to nature i.e. abiding by the natural laws (Kumari, 2019). Naturopathy is endowed with the ability to heal a person from within by removing the root cause of the disease. Naturopathy is of the opinion that a disease is a result of the loss of natural coordination that occurs between mind and body. There are multifarious reasons that may result in the loss of this coordination i.e. physical pressure, mental stress, and emotional trauma, etc. (Cooley et al., 2009). Naturopathy is basically a drugless method of treating patients which

involves natural therapies to stimulate a person’s self-healing capacity. India has a long history of dependence on traditional and herbal medicines but, with the passage of time allopathy quickly ruled over it. However, efforts are now being made to switch to naturopathy, considering its benefits as well as its cost-effectiveness (Wardle, 2013).

### HISTORY AND STATUS OF NATUROPATHY IN INDIA

The roots of naturopathy can be traced to the early civilization when people started finding solace in nature in a quest to find remedies for their sufferings and diseases. Continued observations of nature have completely evolved the concept of naturopathy and its healing process in present times. The history of neuropathy dates back 4000 years ago to the initial stage of human civilization in India as Ayurveda. Naturopathy is also linked with the ancient history of Egypt around 5000 years ago and ancient Greece around 3000 years ago. John Scheel, the German researcher, first used the word "naturopathy" in 1895 (Myers et al., 2020). The German physician Dr. Benedict Lust, who is credited with founding contemporary naturopathy, introduced natural treatments to the United States in the nineteenth century with the idea of improving the patient's vitality to a suitable level of health with no side effects (Steel et al., 2020).

### PRINCIPLES OF NATUROPATHY

Naturopathy works not only as a preventative but also as a restorative and curative method of treatment. Naturopathy puts an emphasis on the following principles when deciding on a particular treatment plan (Lindlahr, 1920; Di Stefano, 2020). Some of these are as follows: -

PRINCIPLES	ACTION
Self-Healing	Naturopathy focuses on therapies that work to stimulate a person’s natural defense mechanism (Hechtman, 2020).
Underlying symptoms	Naturopathy works on the root cause of the disease rather than working on symptoms (Kohli and Kohli, 2014).
Safe treatment	Naturopathy is totally devoid of any harmful side effects as opposed to allopathy (Sarris and Wardle, 2014).
Holistic treatment	Naturopathy focuses on all aspects i.e. mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of an individual (Kühn and Rieger, 2017).
Educating people	Naturopathy puts a great emphasis on educating people about a healthy lifestyle that would not only prevent them from getting any disease but also make their immune system capable enough to fight against all sorts of pathogenic organisms (Fleming and Gutknecht, 2010).

## **NATUROPATHIC TECHNIQUES**

All naturopathy techniques take account of certain assessment methods for examination before going for any particular treatment method. It includes examining the body's movement and movement of the iris in both the eyes also termed kinesiology and Iridology respectively. Blood, hair, stool, and urine analysis is also done to know the underlying cause of the health-related issues and thereby select an appropriate naturopathic technique (Hall et al., 2008; Salles and Silva, 2008; Mantle and Tiran, 2009; Rose et al., 2015; Carter et al., 2019).

**Food and Nutrition** – Naturopathy considers food as medicine. A balanced diet is a key promoting factor for improved health. Good food reduces the risk of diseases and also boosts the immune response. Naturopathy focuses on having seasonal foods in their natural form (Stange, 2006).

**Natural Therapies**- Naturopathy makes use of natural agents in the form of therapy as treatment methods. Some of them are as follows: -

- Hydrotherapy makes use of water to treat people. It is of two types i.e. Balneotherapy which is known to treat diseases by bathing usually as spas. The other type is Thalassotherapy in which treatment is done using seawater and seascapes (Charlier and Chaineux, 2009; Wangchuk et al., 2020).
- Homeopathy - This therapeutic method of treatment was developed more than 200 years ago by the German physician, Samuel Hahnemann. In this form of treatment, medicines are made from plants, animals, and minerals and are given to patients in extremely diluted concentrations (Ernst, 2002).
- Herbal Medicine – This is the primary health care for a majority of the population. In this, medicines are basically prepared from plants and their extracts (Tilburt and Kaptchuk, 2008).
- Aromatherapy and Mud therapy – Aromatherapy makes use of natural oils that promotes the physical as well as the emotional well-being of an individual. Mud is used as therapy because of its special property to absorb and ameliorate the toxins from the body. It is largely used nowadays for skin diseases (Rastogi, 2012a; Lakhan et al., 2016).
- Physical Medicine- It involves physiotherapy, yoga, and acupuncture, to keep the body fit and strong. Physiotherapy focuses on exercise to treat bone and tissue dysfunction. Yoga is an ancient Hindu practice that includes some meditation practices aimed at regulating and stimulating the mind and body function. In acupuncture, the patient is treated by placing needles on specific acupoints to stimulate the functional response of cells, tissues, and organs, thus relieving the patient from pain and other health-related problems (Choi et al., 2012; Mishra et al., 2020).

## **CURRENT STATUS OF NATUROPATHY IN INDIA**

Naturopathy is gaining popularity worldwide, considering its benefits with no side effects as opposed to conventional medicines as well as the economic pressure of recent health care services. Naturopathy is being practiced both in rural as well as urban areas. Recently, Government is taking initiatives to promote naturopathy and led to the set-up of two Government organizations under the Ministry of Health & Family

Welfare, the Department of AYUSH, and The Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN) (Brahmankar and Singh, 2017).

The goal is to run a scientific study in the area of yoga and naturopathy and to determine the effectiveness of these modalities in treating a range of illness problems. The organization takes all efforts to assist financially as well as to encourage all research activities relating to naturopathy (Rastogi, 2012b).

## CONCLUSION

Naturopathy is primarily a holistic approach to treatment i.e. rather than working on a specific factor, it focuses on physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and environmental factors and stimulates the body to go into self-correction mode. Naturopathy has enormous potential when it comes to treating different medical situations, but for varied reasons, it isn't being properly exploited. The science of naturopathy is well established and its roots date back to early civilization. Recently, the Government of India has laid much emphasis on integrating modern science with naturopathy for ameliorating the prevailing diseased conditions. However, sincere efforts and policies are needed in the field of naturopathy so as to provide its preventive, curative, and restorative health benefits to maximum people in near future.

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