



Contribution of Odisha to the Āyurveda

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Abstract - Odisha, with its rich cultural heritage and deep-rooted connection to the Odishan Knowledge System, has played a significant role in preserving and advancing Āyurveda, one of India's ancient medical traditions. This paper examines Odisha's contributions through historical manuscripts, contemporary empirical studies, consumer perceptions, therapeutic applications, and untapped potentials in medicinal plants and wellness initiatives. Drawing from palm-leaf manuscripts in the Orissa State Museum, which document over 600 works on topics like diagnosis, treatment, and pharmacology, the study highlights how regional literature has sustained Āyurvedic knowledge. Empirical research reveals that Āyurveda is widely used in Odisha for chronic disorders, particularly among urban, upper-caste, and middle-aged populations, driven by trust in its efficacy and minimal side effects. Surveys in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack show strong consumer confidence in long-term benefits and natural healing methods. Therapeutic insights from institutions like Gopabandhu Āyurveda Mahavidyalaya emphasize management of lifestyle disorders through *dinacaryā*, *ṛtucaryā*, and *rasāyana* therapies. Finally, Odisha's biodiversity, especially in Gandhamardan hills, offers entrepreneurial prospects for wellness centers, aligning with national goals like Ayushman Bhārat. This synthesis underscores Odisha's integral link to the broader Āyurvedic tradition, advocating for preservation and integration to foster sustainable health practices. The paper calls for establishing a National Institute of Āyurveda to harness these resources.

Keywords: Āyurveda, Odisha, palm-leaf manuscripts, consumer perception, lifestyle disorders, medicinal plants, Odishan Knowledge System.

1. INTRODUCTION

Āyurveda, often called the "science of life," has been a cornerstone of Indian healing for over 5,000 years, rooted in Vedic teachings that emphasize balance among body, mind, and spirit through concepts like the *doṣas* *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha* (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023). In this vast tradition, regional contributions have been vital, preserving knowledge through local scripts, practices, and adaptations. Odisha stands out as a key player, blending its unique cultural fabric the Odishan Knowledge System with pan-Indian Āyurvedic principles. This system encompasses folklore, manuscripts, and community healing passed down through generations, reflecting Odisha's historical role as a hub for scholars, traders, and physicians who traveled widely, exchanging ideas on astrology, literature, and medicine (Prem Kishore et al., 1990).

Odisha's contributions to Āyurveda are multifaceted. Ancient palm-leaf manuscripts, written in Sanskrit using Oriya script, hold treasures on diagnosis, pharmacology, and iatrochemistry, many housed in the Orissa State Museum in Bhubaneswar. These texts, numbering around 600, illustrate how Odisha safeguarded Āyurvedic literature amid national losses, where only a fraction survives in published form (Prem Kishore et al., 1990). Modern studies further reveal growing acceptance: empirical data shows Āyurveda as a preferred alternative for chronic ailments, with demographic patterns favoring urban joint families (Patnaik & Bal, 2023). Consumer surveys in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack highlight perceptions of minimal side effects and natural healing, fueling entrepreneurial prospects in wellness centers



(Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023).

Therapeutically, Odisha's institutions like Gopabandhu Āyurveda Mahavidyalaya in Puri apply classical methods such as *nidan parivarjanam* (avoiding causes) and *pañcakarma* to lifestyle disorders like diabetes and hypertension, which stem from sedentary habits and poor diet (Hui, 2024). Ecologically, Odisha's biodiversity, particularly in Gandhamardan hills, supports medicinal plant cultivation, echoing ancient texts like *Caraka Saṁhitā* (Kumar, 2021). Yet, challenges persist: many manuscripts remain uncatalogued, and potentials like a proposed National Institute of Āyurveda are unrealized.

This paper explores these threads, connecting Odisha's historical depth to contemporary relevance. By weaving the Odishan Knowledge System marked by community wisdom and regional adaptations into Āyurveda's narrative, it argues for Odisha's pivotal role in sustaining this holistic science. The discussion analyzes literature, usage patterns, perceptions, therapies, and future opportunities, grounded in verified sources, to illuminate how Odisha enriches India's medical pluralism.

2. Historical Manuscripts: Guardians of Āyurvedic Knowledge in Odisha

Odisha's tryst with Āyurveda dates to ancient times, when its scholars contributed to the evolving *Samhitā* *granthas* comprehensive treatises starting around 1000 BCE. As Vedic and mythological references on diseases and drugs expanded into systematic texts, Odisha emerged as a repository, influenced by its coastal trade routes and scholarly exchanges (Prem Kishore et al., 1990). The Odishan Knowledge System shines here: palm-leaf manuscripts, etched in Oriya script, preserved Sanskrit works amid invasions and migrations that scattered originals elsewhere. At the Orissa State Museum in Bhubaneswar, over 600 such manuscripts await fuller study, covering *chikitsā* (treatment), *roga* (diagnosis), and *auśadha* (pharmacology). This collection underscores Odisha's role in countering the "extinction" of Āyurvedic treatises, with only a small percentage published nationally (Prem Kishore et al., 1990).

A catalog of these titles reveals breadth: under *chikitsā*, works like *Abhinava Cintāmaṇi* (5 palm-leaves) and *Āyurveda Prakāśa* by Mādhav (1 palm-leaf) detail medicinal formulas and dietetics. Prognosis texts such as *Bhāva Prakāśa* (1) and *Bheṣajya Ratnāvalī* (1) address pulse-diagnosis and faith-cures, while pharmacology includes *Līlāvātī Āyurveda* (1) and *Vaidya Kalpataru* (2). Unclassified as "Āyurveda" or "Vaidyaśāstram," many blend paediatrics and iatrochemistry, reflecting regional innovations (Prem Kishore et al., 1990). For instance, *Amṛta Mañjarī* (3) and *Arogya Cintāmaṇi* (5) offer holistic remedies, tying into Odisha's folklore of plant-based healing.

This preservation links directly to the Odishan Knowledge System, where oral traditions and scripts ensured accessibility. Unlike Devanāgarī-dominant publications, Oriya-script texts limited circulation but deepened local roots, fostering medical pluralism. European citations hint at lost works smuggled abroad, yet Odisha's holdings spanning diagnosis to pharmacy affirm its scholarly legacy (Prem Kishore et al., 1990). Cataloging efforts, as urged in these studies, could unlock potentials for modern research, integrating ancient wisdom with today's needs.

3. EMPIRICAL USAGE: ĀYURVEDA AS ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN CONTEMPORARY ODISHA

In modern Odisha, Āyurveda thrives as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), institutionalized under AYUSH since 1995. This shift, culminating in the 2014 Ministry of AYUSH, reflects medical pluralism patients choosing amid biomedicine, Siddha, Unani, and homeopathy driven by allopathy's side effects and costs (Patnaik & Bal, 2023). An empirical study of 80 patients at Government Āyurvedic Hospital, Bhubaneswar (40), and Gopabandhu Āyurveda Mahavidyalaya, Puri (40), reveals patterns: 71.25% aged 18-60, 61.25% male, and higher upper-caste representation seek Āyurveda for chronic disorders like



hypertension and diabetes (Patnaik & Bal, 2023).

Demographically, urban joint-family patients dominate (64.25% urban, majority joint families), with migration and education influencing access. OPD (52) outnumbers IPD (28), indicating preventive use. Factors promoting shift: allopathy dissatisfaction (e.g., side effects) and efficacy trust, especially post-globalization (Tiwari, 2006, as cited in Patnaik & Bal, 2023). Women in rural areas show higher CAM consultation, but Odisha's data tilts urban (Adams et al., 2011, as cited in Patnaik & Bal, 2023). Drawbacks include emergency limitations and high medicine costs; solutions propose generic schemes like Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) for Āyurveda (Patnaik & Bal, 2023). This usage embodies the Odishan Knowledge System: holistic, community-embedded healing. Interviews and focus groups highlight participation patients value doṣa balance for equilibrium yet underscore integration needs for emergencies, aligning Āyurveda with NRHM goals since 2005 (Patnaik & Bal, 2023).

4. CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS: WELLNESS INDUSTRY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PROSPECTS

Odisha's wellness sector, projected globally at \$14.9 billion by 2026 (CAGR 16.14%), mirrors rising natural-product demand (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023). A survey in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack (n=unspecified, Kruskal-Wallis test) assesses perceptions: significant similarity in long-term benefits ($p < 0.05$), but differences in natural healing rankings (Bhubaneswar higher). Minimal side effects show no difference, boosting confidence (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023).

Under NIC, Āyurveda falls in pharmaceuticals (21003) and health activities (86901), with 150,000 estimated centers nationwide 10% quality-accredited via AYUSH-NABH collaboration (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023). Ayushman Bhārat aims for 150,000 facilities by 2022, offering primary care, NCD management, and free diagnostics, revitalizing Āyurveda's preventive ethos. Odisha's initiatives medicinal plant boards—promote entrepreneurial ventures, linking consumer trust to economic growth (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023). Tied to Odishan Knowledge System, perceptions favor holistic over symptomatic relief, with surveys showing policy implications: promote centers as startups, enhancing PMBJP access. This data validates Āyurveda's role in Odisha's health pluralism, where regional folklore informs modern wellness.

5. THERAPEUTIC CONTRIBUTIONS: DISORDERS MANAGING LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle disorders diabetes, heart disease, stroke affect Odisha amid urbanization, caused by poor diet, inactivity, and stress (Hui, 2024). Āyurveda's response: nidān parivarjanam, āhāra-vihāra, dinacaryā (daily routines), ṛtucaryā (seasonal), rasāyana (rejuvenation), and vajīkarana (aphrodisiacs). At Gopabandhu, Puri, these manage doṣa imbalances: e.g., pitta excess in hypertension via sattvāvajaya (psychotherapy) and daivavyapāśrayā (spiritual cures) (Hui, 2024).

Top disorders include type II diabetes (overweight-linked), atherosclerosis (plaque buildup), and COPD (smoking-aggravated). Āyurveda prevents via balanced nutrition, countering modern irreversibility claims (Hui, 2024). Literary review draws from Caraka and Suśruta, adapted regionally: improper habits (smoking, alcohol) as causes, remedied by ācāra rasāyana (ethical conduct) and sadvṛtta (good behavior).

Odisha's edge: institutions like Gopabandhu apply pañcakarma for detoxification, embodying Odishan Knowledge System's plant-centric folklore. This positions Odisha as a therapeutic hub, preventing epidemics through environment-diet shifts (Hui, 2024).

6. UNTAPPED POTENTIALS: MEDICINAL PLANTS AND INSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

Odisha's biodiversity Gandhamardan hills as a "reservoir" holds untapped Āyurvedic wealth: aromatic plants with antioxidants, phenols (Kumar, 2021). Texts like Anubhūta Yogamālā by Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Miśra



document local uses, echoing Caraka-Suśruta experiments. Extinction threats (500x natural rate) urge preservation; a proposed National Institute of Āyurveda here could boost R&D, education, and manufacturing (Dabur, Patanjali units) (Kumar, 2021).

Initiatives: "herbal belts" along highways (Peepal, Neem), collaborating with AYUSH. Post-COVID immunity focus amplifies needs, reducing migration via water-rich cultivation (Kumar, 2021). Like China's artemisinin success (Tu Youyou, 2015 Nobel), Odisha could lead natural products chemistry, integrating with drug discovery. Within Odishan Knowledge System, this revives folklore: barks, seeds as drugs, fostering biodiversity and economy. Government push mirroring Gujarat's university could elevate Odisha's global Āyurvedic stature (Kumar, 2021).

The discussion illustrates Odisha's layered contributions: from manuscript vaults to patient bedsides, perceptions to therapies, and ecological riches. Each facet reinforces the Odishan Knowledge System's synergy with Āyurveda, blending ancient preservation with modern application. Challenges like uncatalogued texts and high costs persist, but potentials in wellness and institutes promise vitality.

7. Conclusion

Odisha's contributions to Āyurveda are profound and enduring, weaving the Odishan Knowledge System into India's healing tapestry. From the 600+ palm-leaf manuscripts safeguarding chikitsā and pharmacology (Prem Kishore et al., 1990), to empirical insights on chronic care among urban families (Patnaik & Bal, 2023), Odisha sustains tradition amid change. Consumer trust in natural benefits (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2023) and therapeutic prowess against lifestyle woes (Hui, 2024) highlight practical relevance, while Gandhamardan's flora beckons innovation (Kumar, 2021).

This legacy counters national losses, promoting pluralism under AYUSH. Future steps: catalog manuscripts, expand generics, and establish the National Institute to curb extinctions and spur entrepreneurship. By honoring regional roots, Odisha can lead Āyurveda's global resurgence, fostering health equity and cultural pride.

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