



Editorial

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Current status of Unani medicine in India

Athar Parvez Ansari¹, Noman Anwar¹, K. Kibiruddin Ahmed¹

¹ Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine (NABH & NABL Accredited), Central Council for Research in Medicine, Ministry of Ayush, Govt. of India, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

The voyage of Unani medicine is too long and memorable.^[1] It is originated in Greece and systemically established in Middle East region^[2] based on doctrines of Hippocrates (460-370 BC) and Galen (131-210 AD)^[3]. Around 1000 years ago, this system of medicine was introduced in India by Muslims.^[4] Since then, this traditional system of healing has been deep rooted in the Indian soil and has been accepted by masses.^[3] Now, it is officially recognized and practised under the patronage of the Ministry of Ayush, Govt. of India.^[5] Apart from India, Unani medicine has also become part of the mainstream of the health care system of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Iran, United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia. The acceptance and demand of Unani medicine is growing worldwide due to its holistic approach to the prevention, promotion, and cure of diseases.^[6] During 13th to 17th centuries, the scholars of Unani medicine integrated the medicinal plants of India into Unani science. Few prominent families, such as the Sharifi family of Delhi, the Azizi family of Lucknow and the Nizams of Hyderabad, contributed too much to the development of Unani medicine in British India. Since independence, the Unani system, along with other traditional medicines, especially Ayurveda, has been growing at large in India. The educational institutions in the Unani system of medicine were established throughout the country. The first academic institute in the Unani system was started at the Oriental College of Lahore in 1872 in British India. Another institute, namely the Ayurvedic and Tibbi College, Delhi, was established in 1886. The foundation stones of Takmil-ut-Tibb College of Lucknow and Unani Medical College of Allahabad were laid down in 1902 and 1904, respectively. In 1882, Hakim Ajmal Khan (1868-1927 AD) laid the foundation stone of Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College in Delhi.^[7] Other academic intuitions, such as the Government Tibbi College of Patna, Ajmal Khan Tibbia College of Aligarh, Jamia Tibbia of Delhi, and Nizamia Tibbia College of Hyderabad, were established in 1926, 1927, 1935, and 1938, respectively.^[8] At present, the education system of Unani medicine in India is governed by the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), an independent regulatory body functioning under the patronage of Govt. of India.^[3] At present, 46 Unani colleges facilitate five and a half years of undergraduate Unani medical education by the name of Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS) throughout India.^[9] The important subjects, such as fundamentals of Unani medicine, Unani pharmacology, Unani pharmacy, regimental therapy, history of Unani medicine, anatomy, physiology, pathology, medicine, surgery, clinical methods, paediatrics, gynaecology, obstetrics, ophthalmology, etc., with the integration of modern medicine, are imparted in the syllabus of the BUMS course.^[3] The postgraduate course i.e. MD or MS in various disciplines of Unani medicine like *Mu'āljāt* (Medicine), *'Ilm al-Adwiya* (Unani Pharmacology), *Tahaffuzi wa Samaji Tib* (Preventive and Social Medicine), *'Ilm al-Qabālat wa Amrād-i-Niswān* (Obstetrics and Gynaecology), *'Ilm al-Saidla* (Unani Pharmacy), *Kulliyat* (Fundamentals of Unani medicine), *'Ilāj bi'l Tadbīr* (Regimental therapy), *'Ilm al-Jarāḥat* (Surgery), *Amrād-i-Jild wa Tazeeniyāt* (Skin and Cosmetology), *Mahiyāt al-Amrād* (Unani Pathology), etc.,^[10] are running at various reputed Unani institutions. A two-year Diploma in Unani Pharmacy course is also being run by Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi.^[11] The National Institute of Unani Medicine, Bengaluru, Karnataka, with the affiliation of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Karnataka, is imparting the PhD programme in two disciplines of Unani medicine i.e. *Mu'āljāt* and *'Ilm al-Adwiya*.^[10]

According to Unani philosophy, the human body is constituted with seven elementary components, such as *arkān* (elements), *mizāj* (temperament), *akhlāt* (humours), *a'da'* (organs), *rūh* (pneuma), *quwā'* (faculties), and *afā'l* (functions).^[12] The whole-body fluids contain four humours, like *dam* (blood), *balghām* (phlegm), *safrā* (yellow bile), and *sawdā* (black bile). These humours are associated with four temperamental qualities, such as hot-moist, cold-moist, hot-dry, and cold-dry, respectively. Any derangement in the humours and their temperamental qualities may cause diseases. Hence, the core intention of Unani medicine is to maintain humoral and temperamental equilibrium by assisting *tabī'at mudabbir-i-badan* (*medicatrix naturae*). This is considered to be the natural healer of the human body, which offers self-preservation and reinstates any imbalance in the composition of humour and other bodily constituents. Four modes of Unani treatment, such as *'Ilāj bi'l Tadbīr* (regimental therapy), *'Ilāj bi'l Ghizā* (dietotherapy), *'Ilāj bi'l Dawā* (pharmacotherapy) and *'Ilāj bi'l Yad* (surgery), are employed for the treatment of diseases.^[5] The holistic and personalized approach to the prevention and treatment of

*Corresponding author:
Dr. Athar Parvez Ansari

Regional Research Institute of
Unani Medicine (NABH & NABL
Accredited), Central Council for
Research in Medicine, Ministry of
Ayush, Govt. of India, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India
Email: aatharparvez@gmail.com

diseases is the major strength of Unani system of medicine. This old-age traditional system of medicine plays a pivotal role in providing effective treatment for different neurological, cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, liver, musculoskeletal, psychiatric, endocrine, metabolic, genito-urinary, lifestyle, skin disorders, etc.^[13]

In 1946, the Ministry of Health, Government of India, placed much emphasis on the research and practice of Ayurveda and Unani medicine.^[7] Presently, research in Unani medicine is usually undertaken by academic institutions running post-graduate and post-doctoral courses, government and non-government Unani research organizations, Unani pharmaceutical industries, and research institutions of allied sciences. The major research organization in India is the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM),^[3] an apex research body functioning under the patronage of the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, established in March 1978. The main focused areas of research at CCRUM are clinical research, drug standardization research, survey and cultivation of medicinal plants, pre-clinical and literary research, which are conducted by its 23 peripheral research institutions across the nation. Moreover, the CCRUM also conducts clinical and pre-clinical research with the collaboration of reputed national and international research institutions. Over time, the CCRUM has made significant achievements in clinical research, standardization and quality assurance of Unani drugs, revival of classical texts and old manuscripts, and cultivation and conservation of Unani medicinal plants.^[14] The CCRUM received patents for eight Unani formulations, which are used in bronchial asthma, haemorrhage, fever, coryza, rheumatoid arthritis, constipation, worm infestations, etc. Forty-three applications for seeking patents are under consideration of the Indian patent office. In clinical research, significant outcomes have been recorded on vitiligo, rheumatoid arthritis, filariasis, bronchial asthma, sinusitis, infective hepatitis, eczema, psoriasis, etc.^[15] Apart from these, significant outcomes of clinical research have also been recorded on allergic rhinitis,^[16] psoriasis,^[17] sexual dysfunctions,^[18] osteoarthritis,^[19] diabetes,^[20] hepatitis,^[21] etc. A total of 2692 research papers are available at the Ayush Research Portal, Ministry of Ayush, Govt. of India. Among them, 478 research publications are on clinical research, 218 papers are on pre-clinical research, 1263 papers are on drug research and 733 research works are on fundamental research.^[22] Certain modern dosage forms, like nanogel, emulgel, toothpaste, eye drops, etc., have also been introduced in Unani medicine. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), with the collaboration of the Ministry of Ayush, established the Indian Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) to prevent and protect ancient texts of Indian Systems of Medicine like Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy through translation of classical texts of these systems into five international languages, namely English, Japanese, French, German, and Spanish. Till date, more than 3.6 lakh formulations/ practices have been transcribed into the TKDL database.^[23]

The Unani system of medicine, along with other Indian indigenous systems of medicine, is also mainstreaming in the National Health Policy through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), which has now been renamed as the National Health Mission (NHM).^[24] The Unani health professionals provide their services at peripheral health institutions, primary health centres (PHCs), and community health

centres (CHCs).^[25] It is estimated that around 52,000 registered Unani medical professionals, 1621 Unani dispensaries, and 259 Unani hospitals are available in India.^[3] Major pharmaceutical industries of Unani medicine in India are Hamdard Laboratories, Dawakhana Tibbiya College, Aligarh, Dehlvi Remedies Pvt. Ltd., New Shama Laboratories, Pvt. Ltd., Rex Remedies, Hakeem Baqai Medicare Pvt. Ltd., Tayyebi Dawakhana, etc. The annual turnover of Hamdard Laboratories was 650 crore in 2019-20.^[26] The pharmacies functioning under state and central governments are Indian Medical Practitioners Co-operative Pharmacy and Stores Ltd. (IMPCOS), Indian Medicine Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd. (IMPCL), Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine (RRIUM), Chennai, National Research Institute of Unani Medicine for Skin Diseases (NRIUMSD), Hyderabad, NIUM, Bengaluru, etc. The CCRUM operates two GMP-certified pharmacies at its peripheral institutes, namely RRIUM, Chennai, and NRIUMSD, Hyderabad. From the above commentary, it is concluded that the Unani system of medicine in India has significantly developed in various aspects, including education, research, health delivery, pharmaceutical industries, etc. However, much focus is needed in the research field for the further development of the Unani system of medicine.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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ORCID ID

Athar Parvez Ansari: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5755-3525>

Noman Anwar: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0327-0033>

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