

Hygiene and Health: Ancient Methods and Modern Approaches

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Abstract

The progression of hygiene techniques from traditional medicinal systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) to modern methods is examined in this article. It highlights the philosophical underpinnings of these conventional systems and their holistic view of health, emphasizing the significance of environmental, nutritional, and personal cleanliness. The importance of traditional hygiene practices in preventing sickness and promoting good health is discussed in the study. This article shows how well it works to combine ancient practices with contemporary hygiene techniques by analyzing historical settings and modern scientific findings. It also discusses obstacles to this integration and suggests improving policy support, research, and public awareness. In the end, the paper promotes a holistic view of health that harmonizes traditional knowledge with contemporary medical procedures.

Keywords: Hygiene; Ayurveda; Yoga; Naturopathy; Unani; Siddha; Homeopathy.

INTRODUCTION

Hygiene is a vital component of health and well-being that cuts across all eras and cultures. Throughout history, different societies have established their own customs around cleanliness, which are firmly based on their comprehension of well-being, illness, and human anatomy. These traditions' evolutionary history offers important insights into how people have tried to stay healthy and avoid getting sick.

An all-encompassing approach to cleanliness is encompassed in the rich traditions of ancient healing systems like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy. According to these systems, being healthy is a condition of harmony and balance among the body, mind, and surroundings rather than just the absence of disease. It is critical to acknowledge the lasting importance of these antiquated practices and their possible contributions to new health paradigms as modern medicine develop.

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This article examines the philosophical and historical underpinnings of ancient hygiene systems, contrasts them with contemporary hygiene practices, and talks about combining the best elements of both. This essay aims to offer a thorough grasp of hygiene as an essential aspect of health by analyzing the efficacy of these activities in illness prevention and health promotion.

OBJECTIVES

1. Present a summary of the history and principles of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Systems of Alternative Medicines.
2. Highlight ways of personal, dietary, environmental hygiene in each of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.
3. Compare common hygiene practices of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Naturopathy with modern approaches.
4. Find the possibility of integrating ancient hygiene methods with modern practices.
5. Raise awareness of hygiene practices in preserving health and preventing disease in ancient and alternative systems of medicines.

Descriptive Research Design: Selected Literature Review Design

The current study evaluates the literature on the personal, dietary, and environmental hygiene practices of contemporary medicine as well as on each of traditional and alternative systems of medicines, viz. Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. This is done in order to achieve the aforementioned objectives.

2.0: Ancient Hygiene Methods for Health and Wellness in AYUSH, the Alternative Systems of Medicines Practiced in India

Here, AYUSH denotes Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Alternative Systems of Medicines practiced in India.

2.1 Ayurvedic System of Medicine

2.1.1: Overview and Theory: Referred to as the "science of life," Ayurveda is a long-standing Indian medical system that has been practised for over 5,000 years. It is founded on the idea that the three doshas-Pitta, or fire, Vata, or air, and Kapha, or earth and water-should be in balance (Lad, 1984).¹

Ayurveda promotes a comprehensive approach to health by highlighting the interdependence of the body, mind, and spirit.

2.1.2 Methods of Personal Hygiene: Several essential personal hygiene routines for preserving health are incorporated into Ayurveda as follows:

- **Oil Pulling:** To eliminate impurities and enhance dental health, this traditional treatment is swishing oil around the mouth. The procedure is said to improve general well-being and oral cleanliness, and sesame or coconut oil is typically utilized (Lad, 1984).¹
- **Nasal washing (Nasya):** To unclog nasal passages and enhance respiratory health, Ayurvedic scriptures advise nasal washing with saline solutions or herbal oils (Lad).¹ Sinus infections and other respiratory problems can be avoided with this approach.
- **Bathing:** It is recommended to take a regular bath in water infused with herbs. This practice not only helps to purify the body but also to calm the mind and enhance emotional health (Lad, 1984).¹

2.1.3 Environmental Hygiene: Living in balance with the natural world is emphasized in Ayurveda. This entails utilizing natural materials, staying away from pollution, and keeping a tidy and comfortable home. Both physical and emotional health benefits from a clean environment (Lad, 1984).¹

2.1.4 Dietary Hygiene: Food hygiene is very important in Ayurveda. The program encourages eating fresh, in-season, properly prepared meals that suit each person's constitution. Eating mindfully in a tidy and peaceful setting improves digestion and general well-being (Lad, 1984).¹

2.2.0: Yoga Therapy

2.2.1 Philosophical Foundations: Yoga is a holistic approach to physical, mental, and spiritual well-being that has its roots in ancient Indian philosophy. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras emphasize the significance of purity (Shaucha) as a necessary condition for living a balanced existence (Satchidananda, 2002).²

2.2.2 Personal Hygiene Activities: Yoga places emphasis on several hygiene activities, including:

Daily Hygiene: It is recommended that practitioners take daily baths and wear clean clothes in order to preserve personal hygiene. This promotes mental clarity in addition to bodily

wellness (Satchidananda, 2002).²

Breathing techniques: According to Satchidananda, techniques like alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana) and skull-shining breath (Kapalabhati) cleanse the respiratory system and enhance mental clarity.²

- **Shatkarmas (Six Cleansing of Hatha Yoga):** Hatha Yoga texts like Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, Gherand Samhita, Hatharatnavali, etc., recommend these six purification techniques for the individuals either are overweight or suffering from imbalance of *Tridoshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*). Gusain (2019s)^{3&4} asserted that shatkarmas comprises six internal body cleansing techniques from the head to the lower abdomen (large intestine) and techniques of mental hygiene. Out of them, the four techniques are meant cleansing internal body as: for Neti for cleansing the nasal and sinus areas; Dhauti for cleansing the lungs and stomach; Basti for cleansing the large intestine, Nauli for detoxifying and activating the pancreases and small intestine. The two techniques are used mental/emotional hygiene are Kapalabhati (active-exhalation and passive inhalations) and Trataka (candle flame gazing).

2.2.3 Environmental Hygiene: When practising yoga, a tidy and tranquil space is essential. This entails clearing out personal belongings and preserving a calm environment that promotes relaxation and meditation (Hewitt, 2004).⁵

2.2.4 Dietary hygiene: Fresh, healthful, and nutritious foods are the hallmarks of a Sattvic diet, which is encouraged by Yoga. A diet like this promotes mental and physical well-being and is consistent with the idea of moral purity (Hewitt).⁵

2.3.0: Naturopathy System of Medicine

2.3.1 Historical and Philosophical Background: Natural healing methods and holistic ideologies had an impact on the development of naturopathy in the 19th century (Linlahr, 1914).⁶ Based on age-old practises such as Greek and Ayurvedic medicine, it highlights the body's inherent capacity for healing (Lust, 1928).⁷ Science and faith were combined by pioneers like Benedict Lust, who promoted natural remedies to re-establish balance and wellness via nutrition and lifestyle (D'Ambrosio, 2016).⁸

2.3.2 Personal Hygiene: Personal hygiene was considered vital to sustaining health in

early naturopathic treatments. Regular bathing was utilized for both cleaning and regeneration, frequently combined with the administration of herbal remedies. Ancient Greeks employed a technique called hydrotherapy, which is still applied in modern naturopathy, to purify and restore the body's natural equilibrium through the use of water (Wootan, 2019).⁹ Similar to modern naturopathic care, oil massages, a mainstay of Ayurvedic hygiene, helped preserve body homeostasis and healthy skin (Stone).¹⁰

2.3.3 Environmental Hygiene: The cleanliness of the surroundings was also stressed in naturopathic traditions. A harmonious and healthy atmosphere was guaranteed by the use of natural ingredients, such as herbs, to filter the air, together with the maintenance of clean living areas (Shelton, 1935).¹¹ This emphasis on environmental purity is still present in modern naturopathy, which promotes the use of natural cleaning products and toxic-free living environments.

2.3.4 Dietary hygiene: Fresh, natural, and well-balanced food choices were encouraged by early naturopathic beliefs, which emphasized the importance of diet in health. For example, in order to support the body's natural cleansing and balance, Ayurvedic dietary practices promoted the consumption of unprocessed, pure foods and promoted the use of clean food preparation techniques. These ideas are still fundamental to modern naturopathy, which emphasizes the link between good eating habits and general health.

2.4.0: Unani System of Medicine

2.4.1 Philosophical Background: The goal of Unani medicine, which was founded in the Arab culture and is based on Greek medical ideas, is to preserve *Tabiyat*, or natural equilibrium, through food and lifestyle choices (Iqbal, 2010).¹²

2.4.2 Personal Hygiene Habits: Unani highlights the significance of maintaining personal hygiene by implementing habits like:

- **Daily Bathing:** Taking regular baths with natural ingredients promotes general cleanliness and the health of the skin (Iqbal, 2010).¹²
- **Oral hygiene:** To preserve dental health and avoid oral health problems, it is advised to use Miswak, a natural toothbrush (Iqbal, 2010).¹²

2.4.3 Environmental Hygiene: In Unani medicine, a clean environment is crucial. To avoid sickness, this entails maintaining clean air and water, maintaining good

sanitation, and getting rid of garbage (Iqbal, 2010).¹²

2.4.4 Nutritional Hygiene: Unani promotes eating food that is clean and cooked to perfection. It highlights how crucial it is to eat a balanced diet that is specific to each person's needs and constitution (Iqbal, 2010).¹²

2.5.0: Siddha System of Medicine

2.5.1 Overview and Philosophy: One of the oldest healing traditions is Siddha medicine, which comes from South India. It highlights the interdependence of the self and the universe, emphasizing the harmony of the body's humours (Vatham, Pitham, Kapham) (Rajendran, 2018).¹³ In order to preserve health, Siddha medicine incorporates mental, spiritual, and physical activities.

2.5.2 Practices of Personal Hygiene: Among the Siddha hygiene practices are:

- **Herbal Baths:** It is said that soaking in a bath loaded with medicinal herbs will cleanse the body and stimulate the mind. This practice improves general well-being in addition to promoting hygiene. (Rajendran, 2018).¹³
- **Body Massage:** Regular body massages with herbal oils support healthy skin and aid in detoxifying (Rajendran, 2018).¹³

2.5.3 Environmental Hygiene: Clean living is emphasized in Siddha practices. This involves keeping personal areas clean and utilizing natural materials in dwellings (Rajendran, 2018).¹³

2.5.4 Dietary Hygiene: Siddha places a strong emphasis on eating healthfully cooked, freshly prepared meals that include therapeutic plants. Maintaining equilibrium requires a diet specific to each person's body constitution (Rajendran, 2018).¹³

2.6.0 Homeopathy System of Medicine

2.6.1 Historical and Philosophical Background: The theory that "like cures like" is the foundation of homeopathy, which was created in the late 1700s by German physician Samuel Hahnemann. It suggests that a drug that produces symptoms in a healthy individual can treat those same symptoms in a sick person at extremely low dosages. A concept that links to conventional approaches of environmental, dietary, and personal cleanliness for the promotion of health, homeopathy also stresses the importance of maintaining both internal and exterior hygiene in order to bolster the body's natural defences (Hahnemann, 1996).¹⁴

2.6.2 Personal Hygiene: According to homeopathy, keeping oneself clean is crucial to preserving vitality and promoting the body's ability to heal itself. Hahnemann himself promoted frequent bathing, wearing clean clothes, and

avoiding negative environmental influences. In addition to emphasizing interior purity, homeopathic treatments use small but effective dosages of naturally occurring chemicals to promote bodily equilibrium (Coulter, 1982).¹⁵ A distinguishing feature of homeopathic practice and hygiene is its emphasis on gentle, non-invasive personal care.

2.6.3 Environmental Hygiene: Homeopathy also emphasizes how crucial a hygienic and peaceful environment is. Hahnemann promoted ventilated, toxin-free environments to promote general health because he thought that environmental cleanliness helped prevent "miasms," or influences that cause sickness (Winston, 1999).¹⁶ In line with conventional methods of environmental hygiene, contemporary homeopathic practitioners still place a strong emphasis on avoiding environmental pollutants, keeping the air and water pure, and ensuring natural light.

2.6.4 Dietary Hygiene: Another essential component of homeopathic health is dietary cleanliness. Hahnemann advised patients to stay away from stimulants and processed foods that can upset the body's equilibrium in favour of fresh, wholesome, and uncomplicated foods. Like historical dietary hygiene practices, homeopathic philosophy emphasizes that food should promote the body's natural equilibrium by ingesting natural, pure, and minimally processed foods (Vithoulkas, 1980).¹⁷

3. Modern Hygiene Approaches

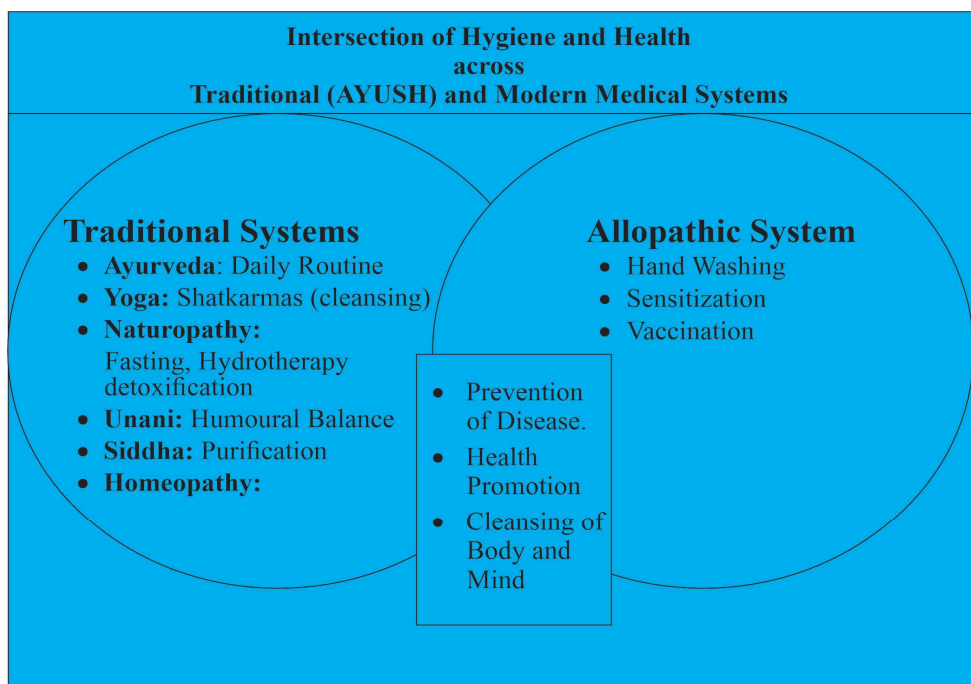
Various hygiene techniques have been established by modern medicine with the goal of preventing diseases and promoting health. Even while the methods used in these practices vary, they frequently follow the same ideas as older systems.

3.1 Taking Care of Your Hands: One of the best strategies to stop the transmission of illnesses is to practice good hand hygiene. To lessen the spread of germs, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends routine hand washing with soap and water or the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers.¹⁸ This procedure is consistent with conventional systems' emphasis on cleanliness.

3.2 Environmental Sanitation: Access to clean water, waste management, and sanitation are promoted by contemporary public health campaigns. Maintaining clean environments is essential to avoiding infectious infections. These methods are in line with Siddha, Unani, and Ayurvedic environmental hygiene concepts.

3.3 Hygiene of Food: In today’s health systems, food hygiene regulations, including safe food handling and preparation, are essential. The goals of these guidelines are to guarantee nutritional safety and prevent foodborne infections. Ancient systems’ emphasis on clean, fresh food goes well with contemporary nutrition recommendations.

3.4 Immunizations and the Prevention of Diseases: Vaccination is a major development in contemporary hygiene techniques. The goal of immunization programs is to stop the spread of infectious diseases, which is consistent with the conventional wisdom that emphasizes taking preventative measures to stay healthy.



Medical Systems	Historical Background	Personal Hygiene	Dietary Hygiene	Environmental Hygiene
Allopathy	Rooted in Western scientific research and clinical studies, emerged in the 19th-20th centuries	Focuses on personal cleanliness through washing, sanitizing, and infection control	Focuses on nutrition, balanced diet, and food safety to prevent diseases	Clean environments, sanitation, waste management, and pollution control to prevent diseases
Ayurveda	Over 5000 years old, from ancient Indian traditions	Encourages daily routines (Dinacharya), oil massage, and bathing for health	Emphasizes Sattvic (pure), Rajasic (stimulating), and Tamasic (dulling) foods for balance	Emphasizes living in harmony with nature, clean air, and natural surroundings
Yoga	Originated over 5000 years ago in India as part of Vedic philosophy	Emphasizes physical cleanliness through asanas, breathwork, and meditation practices	Focuses on mindful eating, avoiding overeating, and a balanced diet to maintain vitality	Encourages living in alignment with natural cycles and maintaining clean, peaceful surroundings
Naturopathy	Rooted in ancient Greek traditions, also popular in Europe and North America	Promotes self-care routines, including hydrotherapy, massage, and detoxification	Advocates for a diet rich in natural, unprocessed foods, water, and fasting	Promotes clean living spaces, fresh air, and water, and connection with nature for health
Unani	Based on Greek and Persian medical practices, influenced by Islamic medicine	Advocates for cleanliness through hygiene practices and balanced living	Recommends dietary balance to manage humors, with specific foods for each imbalance	Advocates for natural living environments free from toxins and pollutants

table cont....

Medical Systems	Historical Background	Personal Hygiene	Dietary Hygiene	Environmental Hygiene
Siddha	Rooted in Tamil tradition, practiced in South India	Encourages oil baths, herbal cleanses, and maintaining the balance of internal energies	Recommends foods that purify and balance the body's internal systems	Encourages living in natural surroundings, detoxification, and environmental balance
Homeopathy	Developed in Germany in the 18th century, now practiced worldwide	Recommends hygienic practices based on individual constitution and treatment needs	Advocates for individualized diets based on the person's constitution (genetic and environmental factors)	Focuses on maintaining a clean and harmonious environment for healing, without environmental stressors

DISCUSSION

In all medical systems, sustaining health and preventing disease depend heavily on hygiene. For example, Ayurveda sees hygiene as a holistic discipline that encompasses mental and spiritual well-being in addition to bodily cleanliness. In order to maintain the body's doshas (energy) in balance and ward off disease, daily rituals such as "dinacharya" place a strong emphasis on maintaining good oral hygiene and regular washing (Sharma, 2020).¹⁹ Similar to this, the Siddha system emphasizes both internal and external purification while promoting cleanliness through particular rituals to eliminate pollutants (Raj, 2021).²⁰ Moreover, Unani medicine emphasizes the significance of hygiene, suggesting frequent washing and tidying up to preserve the balance of the body's four humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile, Khan, 2020).²¹ Allopathic medicine, on the other hand, promotes cleanliness as a vital component of infection prevention and illness control through the use of scientific evidence (WHO, 2019).²² The importance of cleanliness in contemporary health care has been further underscored by the introduction of public health measures like immunizations and sanitation systems.

Combining conventional and contemporary methods reveals that scientific study and traditional wisdom agree that maintaining cleanliness is essential to enhancing general health. Through the incorporation of these varied viewpoints, cleanliness can be better understood by society, guaranteeing its position as an essential component of health in all medical procedures.

4.1 Combining Conventional and Contemporary Methods

A more complete health paradigm may result from the fusion of current medical techniques with customary hygiene practices. Through this fusion,

people can take advantage of modern medical discoveries and the wisdom of traditional systems.

4.1.1 Synergistic Methods: Ayurveda and Nutrition: By emphasizing customized nutrition for optimum health, Ayurvedic dietary suggestions can complement contemporary nutritional methods.

4.1.2. Yoga and Mental Health: Research has demonstrated that incorporating yoga poses into contemporary mental health treatments can lower stress and anxiety levels while also improving general well-being (Brown *et al.*, 2018).²³

4.1.3. Herbal medicine and Siddha: Using Siddha's herbal treatments can supplement contemporary pharmaceutical methods by offering natural solutions for a range of medical ailments.

4.1.4. Unani and Holistic Health: By highlighting the significance of lifestyle variables in health promotion, Unani's concepts of balance can complement contemporary holistic health approaches.

5.0 Challenges to Integration

Even with the possible advantages, combining traditional and modern hygiene techniques presents several difficulties:

5.1. Cultural Differences: Due to cultural prejudices, in particular, there may be resistance to implementing traditional methods in contemporary healthcare systems.

5.2. Lack of Scientific Validation: It is difficult for many ancient practices to be accepted in contemporary medical settings because they lack strong scientific validation.

5.3. Regulatory Difficulties: There may be regulatory obstacles to the integration of traditional systems, especially with regard to herbal medications and therapies.

Suggestions for the Integration

In order to successfully incorporate customary hygiene practices into contemporary healthcare systems, the following suggestions can be made:

6.1. Education and Training: To improve their comprehension and support integrative health methods, healthcare professionals should be trained in traditional hygiene practices.

6.2. Research Projects: To validate and advance efficacious techniques, cooperative research projects involving contemporary health scientists and conventional practitioners have to be supported.

6.3. Public Awareness Campaigns: Neighbourhood based initiatives can draw attention to the significance of good hygiene from both conventional and contemporary viewpoints.

6.4. Policy Support: Given their importance in promoting health and preventing illness, health policies should encourage the incorporation of traditional systems into national health frameworks.

7.0: Hygiene Practices' Effectiveness in Preventing Disease and Promoting Health

7.1 Historical Background: The historical background of hygiene techniques in prehistoric societies demonstrates how efficient they were at preventing illness. According to historical sources, infectious disease rates were lower in communities that followed stringent hygiene standards, as those advocated by Ayurveda and Unani (Davis, 2011).²⁴ Overall health and longevity were enhanced by emphasising hygiene, good sanitation, and food habits.

7.2 Current Proof: Empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of hygiene practices adapted from conventional systems has been presented in recent studies:

- **Ayurveda and Immunity:** Studies suggest that Ayurvedic cleansing techniques improve immune response and lower inflammatory markers, which help prevent illness (Patel *et al.*, 2019).²⁵
- **Yoga and Stress Management:** Regular yoga practice has been demonstrated in studies to dramatically lower stress and anxiety levels, improving both physical and mental health (Khalsa, 2006).²⁶
- **Siddha and Traditional medicines:** Studies on Siddha herbal medicines have shown how well they work to cure a variety of illnesses, which supports the incorporation of these remedies into contemporary therapeutic

procedures (Kumar *et al.*, 2018).²⁷

- **Unani Practices for Public Health:** Unani practices that prioritize personal hygiene and the environment have been associated with better public health results, especially in community health settings (Qureshi, 2018).²⁸

CONCLUSION

Throughout history and across cultures, good hygiene has always been essential to overall health. The study of traditional practices like Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Siddha, Unani and Homeopathy emphasizes the age-old significance of cleanliness in preventing illness and promoting good health. The incorporation of ancient traditions offers a comprehensive approach to health that prioritizes both physical and emotional well-being as modern medicine continues to advance. Collaboration between ancient and modern systems can help us better grasp the importance of hygiene in modern culture and how to promote health via it.

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