



“Panchakarma as a Transformative Medical and Wellness Tourism Experience-A Golden Boon for Global Health and Sustainable Healing and Economical Growth”

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Abstract:

Human health is impacted by globalization and the increase in the volume and pace of international trade in goods and services. *Ayurveda* deals elaborately with measures for healthful living during the entire span of life and its various phases. Besides, dealing with principles for maintenance of health, it has also developed a wide range of therapeutic measures to combat illness and holistic approach towards health and diseases, lifestyle, using medications, diet and their fewer side effect.

Medical tourism is a niche tourism developed by the competing tourism promoting countries in order to attract people travelling with the prime purpose of getting healthcare. Health tourism is not only beneficial for the foreigners, but our country can also be benefitted financially. It will also help to spread the importance of *Ayurveda* worldwide. The physician can extend a helping hand in globalization of *Ayurveda* by being in their own motherland. Patients from industrialized nations seek health tourism because of high quality treatment at low cost. *Panchakarma* therapy is considered as a complete holistic approach to the elimination of the root cause of each and every chronic disease. The *Doshas* which are removed by *Langhana* and *Pachana* Dravya they can get aggravated sometimes, but the doshas which are removed by *Samshodhana* procedures they cannot get vitiated again.

Panchakarma, emphasizes holistic health by maintaining equilibrium among the *Tridoshas*, promoting proper *Agni* function, balancing *Dhatus*, ensuring efficient evacuation of *Trimalas*, and nurturing a balanced state of mind and also has immense potential in the context of tackling the lifestyle disorders. *Panchakarma* of *Ayurveda* are purificatory measures which cleanses the toxins from the cellular level and also prevents the production as well as the deposition of toxin in the body. It also rejuvenates the body cells

Keywords: Tourism, Lifestyle Disorder, *Panchakarma*, Detox.

Introduction:

India, having one of the richest and most diverse heritages in the world is not an exception to this global trend. *Ayurveda* is the world's most ancient methodical medical knowledge system. *Ayurveda* due to its holistic approach using lifestyle medication, healthy diet, less side effects, has attracted a large population in different countries around the world. There is a growing demand for natural products in the international market. Global awareness on this traditional system has increased manifold over the past few decades, leading to the acceptance of such medicine systems.

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Panchakarma primarily consists of a purification procedure that uses many methods to get rid of our body's vitiated *Doshas*, or humours. It is a part of traditional *Panchakarma* and involves *Vaman* (therapeutic emesis), *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation), *Basti* (medicated enema), *Nasya* (errhine), and *Raktamokshana* (blood-letting). Some preparatory procedures such as *Pachana* (digestive), *Snehana* (Oleation), and *Swedana* (sudation) should be carried out. This preparatory step is meant to transfer vitiated *dosha* from the body's *shakha* (periphery) to the *koshtha* (gastrointestinal tract). With the aid of these purifying procedures, *doshas* are eliminated from the body through the closest path once they enter the *koshtha*. There is another type of *Panchakarma* called *Kerliya Panchakarma* in addition to this classical *Panchakarma*¹. It is a special kind of treatment where external treatments are prioritised. Examples of *Keraliya Panchakarma* are *Navarakizhi* (*Pinda Sweda*), *Elakizhi* (*Snigdha Patra Sweda*), *Narangakizhi* (*Jambeera Pinda Sweda*), *Podikizhi* (*Churna Pinda Sweda*), *Pizhichil* (*Sarvanga Dhara*), *Talapothichil* (*Taladhara*), *Chavuti Thirumal* (*Padaghat*), etc². India's natural legacy is *Ayurveda*, with *Panchakarma* emerging as one of its main treatment modalities on a daily basis³.

Nowadays, more people are experiencing the negative effects of stress and anxiety as a result of their busy schedules, competitive environments, and suppression of their natural urges. These conditions include poor digestion, sleep deprivation, allergies, heart disease, diabetes, chronic fatigue, cancer, and osteoporosis⁴. By removing these metabolic pollutants from the body, *Panchakarma* enables tissues and channels to mend permanently⁵. Lifestyle disorders are fast rising problem in India. *Ayurveda* as science of life is a part of culture of Indian lifestyle. But westernization of our culture is giving rise to lifestyle disorders like *Madhumeha*, *Raktacchapa*, *Hridaya Roga*, *Pakshaghata* etc. The term *Ayurveda* means science of life which has prescribed healthy lifestyle. *Acharya Vagbhata* has explained these lifestyles in *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha* in *Dinacharya Adhyaya* [7,8]. *Panchakarma* is a specialized modality of *Ayurveda*, which eliminates excess *Dosha* from *Shareera*⁹.

The new type of tourism is now focusing on peace, sustainability, and spirituality on a global scale, creating a multimillion-dollar industry. In 2015, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, developed special rules for the promotion of wellness tourism in India after considering the potential of this business¹⁰.

Objectives

1. To understand the importance of *Panchakarma* in the field of tourism
2. Find the factors that boost the *Panchakarma* tourism in India
3. Make appropriate suggestions for improvement of *Panchakarma* in the tourism sector.

Review Of Literature

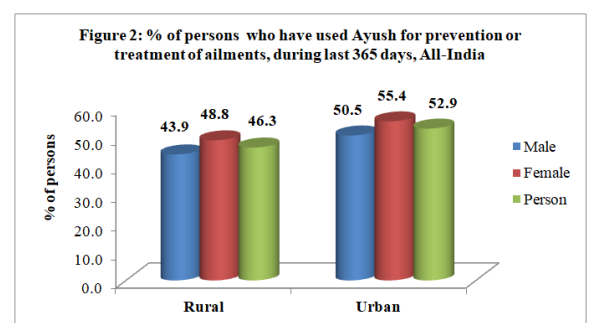
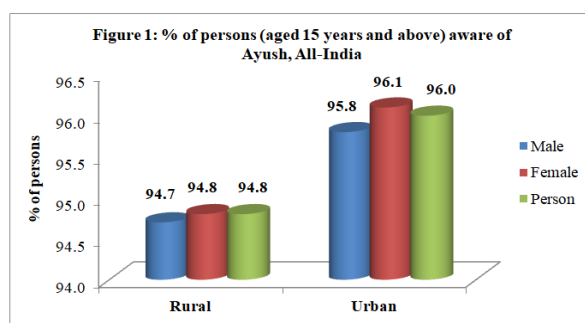
Medical tourism¹¹ may be defined as 'activities related to travel and hosting a foreign tourist who stays at least one night at the destination region for the purpose of maintaining, improving or restoring health through medical intervention' broadly classified into following three categories: Medical Treatment (Treatment for curative purposes), Wellness & Rejuvenation (focused on rejuvenation or for aesthetic reasons), Cures through Traditional Systems of Medicine- AYUSH (*Ayurveda*, *Yoga* & *Naturopathy*, *Unani*, *Siddha* and *Homeopathy*).

Medical tourism is now often referred to as Medical Value Travel (MVT).

Wellness tourism¹¹ is travel associated with the goal of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being and includes the pursuit of physical, mental, spiritual or environmental 'wellness' while traveling for either leisure or business."It is two types- Primary wellness traveller (primarily motivated by wellness), Secondary wellness traveller (Participates in wellness experiences while taking any type of trip).

Medical Value Travel and Wellness Tourism-a Global opportunity¹¹: The global medical value travel market size is in the range of USD 60-80 Billion and some 14 million people travel across the borders for medical tourism. India has been ranked 10th in Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21 out of 46 destinations of the world by Medical Tourism Association. As per estimates by Global Wellness Tourism, India ranked 7th position in 2017 with 56 million trips in wellness tourism and total revenue of USD 16.3 Balon. All-India survey on 'AYUSH' was conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) from July 2022 to June 2023

- Awareness of AYUSH: In rural India, around 95% of males and females (aged 15 and above) are knowledgeable, while in urban 96%.
- About 79% of households in rural India and about 80% in urban India have at least one member aware about medicinal plants and home medicines.
- Around 24% of the households (in both rural and urban India) have at least one member aware about folk medicine or local health tradition.



Use of Ayush: Around 46% of rural and 53% of urban individuals used AYUSH for prevention or treatment of ailments in the past 365 days.

Number of Foreign Tourist Visits to all States/ UTs in India during 2013-2023 as per- India Tourism Data Compendium Key Highlights 2024

Year	Foreign Tourist Visits (in Million)	Annual Growth (%)
2013	19.95	9.24
2014	22.33	11.94
2015	23.33	4.44
2016	24.71	5.95
2017	26.89	8.79
2018	28.87	7.31
2019	31.41	8.86
2020	7.17	-77.17
2021	1.05	-85.29
2022	8.58	714.26
2023	19.25	124.11

Foreigner's Interest Over Ayurveda

The boundaries and opportunities of *Ayurvedic* tourism have undoubtedly expanded with the recognition of *Ayurvedic* healing on a national and worldwide level. The '*Panchakarma*' process offers a methodical approach to detoxification; therefore, it is advisable for those who are afflicted to participate in one of its curative facilities in order to benefit from its beneficial approaches. India is home to a vast array of treatment facilities that are equipped to handle a wide range of illnesses, from minor ones like hair loss to more serious ones like diabetes, hypertension, and even heart issues. The population of today's stressed-out world is turning to *Ayurvedic* and naturopathic medicine for comfort and calming relief. In these wellness clinics, therapeutic massages using essential oils—one of *Ayurveda*'s most effective methods for relieving stress and anxiety—are also used as part of the therapeutic process. Although one can also massage themselves, the professional method used in health centres not only provides relief but also educates on the standard approach to be used. Consequently, this is giving *Ayurvedic* tourism the push it needs¹³. The popularity of relaxation therapy and effective beauty regimens around the world has expanded the potential applications of *Ayurvedic* tourism¹⁴. The main reason behind this was the holistic approach of *Ayurveda*, humanitarian approach, simplicity of the procedures, cure of chronic & incurable disease, safer and non-toxic herbal resources. In 1977 at Alma Ata WHO has also stressed for the revival *Ayurveda* and other TSMs to solve the health care problems of concerned countries. Up to 1980s propagation of *Ayurveda* in foreign countries was limited to the level of lectures and personal visits of Vaidyas to deliver lectures and provide treatments, which created inquisitiveness about *Ayurveda*.

Benefits of Health Tourism For the tourists:

- People from industrialized nations seek health tourism because of high costs of treatment in their home country.
- Health tourism destinations provide high quality treatment at low cost.
- People get an opportunity to visit a new country and enjoy its tourism products during the recuperative period.
- Wealthy patients from third world countries also choose for health tourism as they get better service and care from the health tourism provider.
- Some health tourism destinations provide alternative medicines and traditional form of treatments. Patients wish to take alternative medicines like *Ayurveda*, Yoga through health tourism.

For the country:

- High quality treatment at a fraction of the cost, in comparison to western countries, makes India an ideal healthcare destination for highly specialized medical care.
- India is a reliable destination to get high quality of ancient treatment like authentic *Ayurveda*, Yoga etc, which are highly on demand.
- The use of non-toxic, harmless herbs resources, the waiting time for treatment in India is much lower compared to other countries.
- Country can be benefitted by increase in the number of foreign visitors.
- This will also help to raise the finances, which will lead towards country's development.

For Ayurveda:

- Classical form of *Ayurveda* can be practiced by the physicians.
- Through the tourists from various countries the knowledge of *Ayurveda* can be propagated globally.

SWOT Analysis of Ayurvedic Tourism

1. Strengths

- State of the Art Medical Facilities
- Reputed Healthcare Professionals
- Financial Savings
- Fast track appointments

- Traditional Healthcare Therapies – AYUSH
- Accreditation of Hospitals
- Diversity of tourism products and experiences

2. Weaknesses

- Lack of Government regulations for MVT sector
- Lack of a nodal body to spearhead Medical Value Travel
- No campaign for India as a MVT destination
- Lack of awareness about NABH accreditation at international level
- Lack of uniform pricing policies across the Hospitals
- Customer perception as unhygienic country
- Lack of Medical Insurance Portability

3. Opportunities

- Fast- paced lifestyle increases demand for wellness tourism and alternative cures.
- Increased demand for healthcare services from countries with aging population (USA, UK).
- Demand from countries with underdeveloped healthcare facilities.

4. Threats

- Brand recognition of alternate medicinal systems like Chinese, Latin & South American, African etc. rising.
- Non documentation of traditional skills might lead to dissipation of knowledge.
- Sector might become irrelevant to the issues of health care for want of innovation/ R&D.
- Lack of quality control measures is another crucial factor that keeps away the West from recognizing our medicinal product.
- Another major issue is the nonavailability of certain raw drugs.

Recent Trends of Ayurvedic Tourism

It has been observed that the present competitive scenario and the techno-centric lifestyle gradually affecting the psychosocial wellbeing of the genex globatarians. The increasing level of stress and anxiety, imbalance diet and wrong food habits, and dissolution of societal and traditional value system have resulted in disequilibrium in the social-ecosystem (Fontanari and Kern, 2003) wherein people go for health and leisure tourism.

Impact of Ayurvedic Tourism

The impacts are both positive and negative in nature. Just like a coin has two sides, so do the impacts too. The quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential to tourism and its relationship with the environment is complex. The negative impacts of tourism development can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which it depends.

Contribution of Ayurvedic Tourism

Consumers of *Ayurveda* tourism are diverse and the international tourists coming to India is also increasing year by year. *Ayurveda* is popular in UK, France, Spain, Italy, Germany and few Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE. However, the largest number of tourists coming to India for *Ayurveda* is from Germany. The growth rate of tourists flocking for *Ayurveda* is increasing every year at the rate of around 20-25 per cent. Tourists are mainly concerned about the ever-decreasing herbal resources in the state. Majority of the tourists are found to be coming from England and USA to Kerala and between the age group of 40-60.

Policy Recommendations of Tourism Industry

The National Tourism Policy (1982)

In November 1982, a tourism policy was formulated and presented to the Parliament. The objective of the policy was to so develop tourism that it-

- Becomes a unifying force nationally and internationally fostering a better understanding.
- Helps preserving Indian Heritage and culture and projecting the same to the world
- Brings socio-economic benefits in terms of employment, income generation, revenue generation, foreign exchange etc.
- Gives direction and opportunity to the youth of the country to understand the aspirations and view point of others and helps in developing national integration.
- Offers opportunities to the youth of the country, not only for employment but also for taking up activities for nation-building and character-building like sports, adventure activities etc.

Some of the crucial recommendations in the report were: -

- I. The need for re-arranging the existing organizational structure of the Department of Tourism and the need for an apex body called the National Tourism Board.
- II. The setting up of a standing committee of Tourism Ministers for an integrated approach to tourism development and also to effectively associate the state governments.
- III. To ensure implementation of the recommendation, a National Policy needs to be evolved, supported by a comprehensive legislation. iv) Tourism needs to be integrated into overall plans of the country and into area development plans. These recommendations are fundamental to any substantial tourism development strategy for the country.

New National tourism policy

In 2002, Government of India launched an international marketing campaign named as "Incredible India" to promote tourism in India to global audience. In 2009, the Ministry of tourism launched a campaign titled, "Athiti Devo Bhava" targeting the local population to educate them regarding good behaviour and etiquette while dealing with foreign tourist. This campaign aimed at creating awareness about effect of tourism and sensitizing Indians about preservation of Indian heritage, culture, cleanliness and hospitality.

Accessibility of Panchakarma tourism:

When people travel abroad for business or for pleasure, instead of getting unwind they may suffer from after travel effect i.e. jet lag, missing sleep, disrupted exercise routine etc. Now there is growing movement to change travel to include healthy activities and options: *Panchkarma* tourism. It is a one stop destination which will provide medical as well as wellness facilities along with travel. People get world class facilities with low-cost medical care, no wait list, high quality treatment and high savings. Medical tourism or health care tourism is fast growing multibillion-dollar industry around the world. It is an economic activity that entails trade in services and represents the mixing of two of the largest world industries: Tourism and Medicine

Speciality of Panchakarma:

The *Doshas* which are removed by *Langhana* and *Pachana Dravya* they can be aggravated sometimes, but the *Doshas* which are removed by *Sanshodhana* procedures they cannot occur again. Hence for e.g.: Likes roots of trees which are to be completely destroyed neither they occur again, in same way *Doshas* should remove completely from its roots neither they will occur again. Hence *Panchakarma* treatment is best among other types of *Chikitsa*¹⁴.

Panchakarma in Lifestyle Disorders

The factors involved in *Ayurveda* pathogenesis of lifestyle disorders, they are mainly vitiated *Kapha Dosha*, *Dushita Rasadhatu*, *Agnidushti* and *Amapradosha*. Mainly diseases are due to *Sanchaya Pradhana* and *Santarpanajanya Avastha*¹⁵. Different *Panchakarma* procedures help to prevent diseases which occurs due to lifestyle changes. Lifestyle disorders can be prevented by following *Rutu Shodhana* / *Panchakarma* prescribed by *Ayurveda*.

Ayurveda Tourism in India:

India has emerged to be a big spot for health tourism and marketing *Ayurveda* as a part of it has brought a new definition to vacationing in India itself. *Ayurveda* has secured a lot of global attention. And many *Ayurvedic* centers are on an upsurge today. India is unfolding as a great destination for medical tourism because it has several alluring factors like excellent medical treatment at low cost, easy accessibility, picturesque locations for relaxing holiday, etc. Marketing *Ayurveda* as part of the 'health tourism' has brought a new definition to vacationing in India itself. India has lot of tourists from other countries coming for the rejuvenation promised by yoga and *Ayurveda*. In addition, a nice coalition of top-class medical expertise at attractive prices which is helping more and more Indian health centres to attract foreign patients. Due to its capacity to offer high-quality treatments at reasonable prices, India is quickly becoming a global leader in the medical tourism sector¹⁶. By combining elements of both modern and ancient medical systems, the Indian health care system offers a distinctive range of services. Making plans for Indian health tourism: Indian health service providers may utilise the following marketing techniques to increase their focus on health tourism¹⁷.

Overall Impact of Tourism Sector on the Country¹⁸:

- Generating Income & Employment: *Ayurveda* tourism has emerged as an instrument of income & employment generation, poverty alleviation & sustainable human development. It contributes 6.23 % to the national GDP & 8.78% of the total employment in India. The travel & tourism sector supported 25 million jobs in 2012 directly related to the tourism sector & it will estimate to rise to 31 million by 2023.
- Source of Foreign Exchange Earning
- Promoting *Ayurveda*

Scientific evaluation of panchakarma in lifestyle disorder:

It is scientifically proven that the impact of *Panchakarma* treatment (*Snehan* - sesame oil with essence of lavender oil, *Swedana*- *Dashmoola* and *Basti*- *Gokshura-Haridra-Amalaki* decoction) and diet modification on the reduction of lipid levels (TC, HDL, LDL). This will help to eliminate the toxins from the body and reduce lipid profile^{19,20}. Effect of *Panchakarma* followed by maintenance *Ayurvedic* herbal therapy in forty-two subjects with T2DM, which showed significant reduction in FBG and PPBG by 10.2% and 6.4% respectively after one month of intervention²¹. *Ayurvedic Panchakarma* along with lifestyle modification is successful in restoring the glucose tolerance in type 2 diabetic patients²². The current pharmacological management of osteoarthritis includes the administration of analgesics and NSAID's, but their use neither provides adequate pain relief nor deceleration in disease process. In addition, NSAIDs are associated with adverse effects^{23, 24, 25}. Due to which the use of alternative therapies is on the rise. WHO recommends to include traditional system of medicine in global health care²⁶. Usually, treatment of OA requires treatment of the patient for their entire lifetime; therefore, it should be effective, friendly, safe and cheap. The goal of OA treatment for medical profession is not only control symptoms but also prevent disease progression, minimize disability, and improve quality of life. Researchers claimed that *Ayurveda* treatment outcome is better than or equal to conventional drug for improvement of pain and knee function²⁷. Hence it can be concluded that *Panchakarma* (detoxification technique) has promising relief effect in osteoarthritis²⁸.

Discussion

Health tourism is a golden way to explore *Ayurveda*, and also contributes towards economic growth of the country. *Panchakarma* therapy is considered as a complete holistic approach to the elimination of the root cause of each and every chronic disease. India could take advantage of its fortunate position to take advantage of the worldwide potential in the field of health tourism. The development of health tourism depends heavily on the involvement of the government. For effective patient care, the tourism, health, information, and communication departments must collaborate. By emphasising its holistic treatments and developing and advertising the image of India as a provider of high standard, quality treatments at a reasonable price and making them accessible for succeed in Medical & Wellness Tourism through *Panchakarma*.

Conclusion

Health tourism destinations provide high quality treatment at low cost in India. By being in own country an *Ayurveda* physician can contribute towards globalisation of *Ayurveda* through Medical & Wellness Tourism. Due to its holistic approach and lack of adverse effects, it is highly favoured by medical tourists. *Panchakarma* appeals to tourists not just for health reasons but also for other specific reasons. The range of people using *Ayurvedic* tourism, particularly for *Panchakarma*, is broad, and the number of foreign visitors visiting India is growing daily. Therefore, the government ought to take the lead in promoting *Panchakarma* in every Indian state. The development of a streamlined medical visa application process is necessary to facilitate travel to India. Standardisation of practices and the encouragement of cross-sectoral cooperation are necessary to establish *Panchakarma* as the premier organisation in the field of Medical & Wellness Tourism.

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