



Ayurveda at the Crossroads of Tradition, Evidence and Global Health

Growing Ayush economy, rising domestic adoption, medical value travel and research are opening new avenues for Ayurveda's global expansion

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Ayurveda is moving from the margins of global health conversations towards the mainstream. India's expanding Ayush economy, growing domestic use of traditional systems and rising interest in wellness and medical value travel are creating new opportunities for Ayurveda, even as the global health community places greater emphasis on traditional medicine, research and evidence.

As India marks the 11th Ayurveda Day on September 23, 2026, the moment is significant. The theme, "Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow", comes at a time when India is seeking to connect its centuries-old knowledge system with modern research, quality standards and international healthcare frameworks. The challenge now is not simply to take Ayurveda to the world, but to build the evidence, credibility and institutional foundations that can support its responsible global growth.

Over the past decade, the Ayush sector has witnessed significant economic expansion, creating a stronger foundation for the growth and wider adoption of Ayurveda. The Ayush market grew from USD 2.85 billion in 2014 to USD 43.4 billion in 2023, while Ayush exports increased from USD 1.09 billion to USD 2.16 billion during the same period. Government initiatives have also focused on strengthening MSMEs and startups, helping create a broader ecosystem for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment in the sector.

The growing domestic acceptance of Ayush systems provides another important foundation for this expansion. The first exclusive All-India Survey on Ayush, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation during July 2022–June 2023, covered 1,81,298 households, including 1,04,195 rural and 77,103 urban households. The survey recorded Ayush awareness levels of 94.8 per cent in rural areas and 96 per cent in urban areas. It also found that 46.3 per cent of rural residents and 52.9 per cent of urban residents had used Ayush for treatment or prevention during the preceding 365 days. Ayurveda emerged as the most commonly used Ayush system for treatment, indicating its substantial domestic base and potential contribution to preventive healthcare and wellness.

India is also seeking to leverage the growing global demand for holistic healthcare through medical value travel. A dedicated Ayush Visa was introduced on July 27, 2023, for foreign nationals seeking treatment under Ayush systems. The Government has also partnered with the India Tourism Development Corporation to identify tourism circuits with potential for Ayurveda and other traditional systems. The global medical value travel market, estimated at USD 115.6 billion in 2022, is projected to reach

approximately USD 286.1 billion by 2030. Ayurveda and other traditional systems can therefore become an important component of India's medical value travel and wellness ecosystem by bringing together healthcare services, wellness offerings and tourism.

A significant policy development in this direction has been the release of NITI Aayog's "Strategic Roadmap for Making Ayurveda Global" in July 2026. Envisioned as a long-term pathway up to 2047, the roadmap focuses on regulation and standards, research, education, international collaboration, exports, branding and medical value travel. It emphasises the need for quality standards, robust infrastructure, credible research, trained professionals, consistent products and regulatory frameworks that can be understood and recognised internationally. The roadmap seeks to create the institutional and quality ecosystem necessary for Ayurveda's responsible expansion and greater confidence in its services and products in international markets.

India's efforts to strengthen Ayurveda are also closely linked with its wider engagement in global traditional, complementary and integrative medicine. The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, adopted by the 78th World Health Assembly in 2025, provides a global framework for strengthening evidence, ensuring safety and regulation, integrating traditional medicine into health systems and optimising its wider cross-sectoral contribution.

India has played a significant role in this global movement. The WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, Gujarat, was established in 2022 with India as its lead investor. India committed an estimated USD 250 million towards its establishment, infrastructure and operations. The Centre focuses on evidence and learning, data and analytics, sustainability and equity, and innovation and technology.

India's role was further reflected in the two WHO Global Summits on Traditional Medicine. The first, held in Gandhinagar in August 2023 and co-hosted by WHO and the Government of India, resulted in the Gujarat Declaration. The second summit, held in New Delhi from December 17–19, 2025, under the theme "Restoring Balance for People and Planet: The Science and Practice of Well-being", addressed issues including evidence, health-system integration, regulation, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, intellectual property and innovation. The summit resulted in the Delhi Declaration and SMART—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound—commitments towards implementation of the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034.

Another important development has been the inclusion of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani in global health classification frameworks. In January 2024, WHO launched Traditional Medicine Module 2 of ICD-11, covering morbidity codes for these systems and enabling their conditions to be documented and reported through an internationally comparable framework. WHO has clarified that such inclusion does not constitute an endorsement of the scientific validity or efficacy of individual traditional medicine practices. Work is also progressing towards the classification of interventions, with India and WHO working on intervention codes for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani.

At the heart of Ayurveda's future development is the generation of credible scientific evidence. The Ministry of Ayush's Ayush Research Portal serves as a Government repository of research on Ayush systems and currently displays more than 43,000 research entries. This growing body of research can contribute to greater scientific understanding of Ayurveda and support the development of credible standards, services and products. At the same time, preserving the distinctive principles and knowledge systems of Ayurveda remains essential to ensuring its responsible and sustainable development.

The emerging picture is therefore one of an Indian traditional health system moving into a new phase of global engagement. A rapidly expanding Ayush economy, growing domestic adoption, new opportunities in medical value travel, stronger international cooperation, global classification frameworks and increasing emphasis on research and quality standards are collectively creating new avenues for Ayurveda.

As the country marks the 11th Ayurveda Day, the focus on “Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow” provides an opportunity to highlight the system’s potential contribution to preventive healthcare, wellbeing and sustainable living. At the same time, its future global journey will increasingly depend on evidence, innovation, quality, professional capacity and responsible globalisation—strengthening Ayurveda’s place in the evolving landscape of health and wellness.

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