



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine

journal homepage: <http://elsevier.com/locate/jaim>

Initiative

The Hungarian initiative for Ayurveda: European Institute of Ayurvedic Sciences

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 September 2017

Received in revised form

13 December 2017

Accepted 15 December 2017

Available online 28 February 2018

1. Introduction

Hungary has a rich tradition of local herbal medicines and thermal spas. The Hungarian proverb 'Füben faban orvosság, means 'There is medicine in weeds and trees'. This resonates with Sanskrit quote by of *Jeevaka 'nasti moolam anaushdham'*, which means 'There is no plant which is not medicine'. Historical records between 9th to 13th centuries reveal that Hungarian folk medicine tradition used plants for health benefits. The first Hungarian pharmacopoeia published in 1879 and Dr. Ervin Baktay's book 'India' published in 1931 prominently refers to Ayurveda. However, during the last six decades, Ayurveda has not got much recognition in Hungary.

2. Current status of Ayurveda in Hungary

A former Hungarian diplomat who worked in India for long time, established a company 'Garuda Trade Limited' in 1990 to market Ayurvedic products in Hungary. He organized series of lectures by Ayurvedic scholars with support from Dabur India Ltd. Later in 1996, he founded the Hungarian Ayurveda Medical Foundation and envisaged a 30 year program for promotion of Ayurveda in Hungary [1].

The Ayurveda medical system was officially recognized as part of Naturopathy in 1997 by the Hungarian Government [2,3]. This regulation allowed trained Hungarian medical doctors to practice Ayurveda medicine. Earlier, Traditional Chinese Medicine and

Homoeopathy were introduced in Hungarian universities at Szeged, Pecs, Miskolc and Debrecen, but Ayurveda was not much known. As an effort to popularize Ayurveda, many copies of Indian Materia Medica were distributed to Hungarian government officials, hospitals, medical universities and scientific centers. CAM centers of the Faculty of Public Health of different Hungarian universities at Szeged, Pecs, Miskolc, Nyiregyhaza started offering short courses on Ayurveda. Private organizations like Maharishi College from the Netherlands also started few courses and training programs. Indian government facilitated training courses on Ayurveda massage and beauty treatments for experts from Hungarian thermal spas. The Indian Embassy organized series of lectures under the theme 'Ayurveda for All' to promote interest amongst doctors, medical workers, vets, students and common people.

The first international conference on Ayurveda organized in 2001 at Budapest, was attended by over 500 participants from India and 14 European countries. The Governments of India and Hungary prepared an ambitious plan of co-operation in 2008 to promote Ayurveda not only in Hungary but also in the central and eastern Europe [4].

The Government of India established AYUSH center at the Indian Embassy of Budapest in January 2014 [5]. Ayurvedic consultations are offered to public at the AYUSH clinic at Embassy. AYUSH days are celebrated twice in a year. The Indian Embassy of Budapest has taken substantial efforts to promote Ayurveda by organizing various events, interviews of Ayurvedic *vaidyas* on Hungarian television, commissioning articles on Ayurveda, Yoga and nutrition in local newspapers. All this has helped to increase visibility of Ayurveda in Hungary.

In 2014 a conference 'Ayurveda in the spirit of Integrative Medicine' was organised by Traditional Indian Medicine for the Public Health in Hungary Foundation (TIMPHHF). It was founded by the former Prime Minister of Hungary, H.E. Dr. Peter Medgyessy to address health issues like alcoholism, depression and ageing in the Hungarian population by complementing Ayurveda to conventional system of European medicine. A Secretarial delegation consisting of officials and experts from Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Central Councils and national institutes witnessed signing of MoU for establishment of Ayurveda Chair at the University of Debrecen [4]. Renowned Ayurveda scholar Dr Madhav Singh Baghel was appointed as first Chair

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Peer review under responsibility of Transdisciplinary University, Bangalore.

Professor. This initiated an exciting phase of systematic promotion of Ayurveda in Hungary.

3. Status of clinical practice

Hungarian conventional medical system is very well established and covered under social security system of the country. However, it faces a challenge due to the increasing burden of ageing population suffering from geriatric diseases along with non-communicable diseases (NCD). Alcoholism, depression at the beginning of early middle age, changing food habits of younger generations, late onset of parenting leading to infertility issues are some of the reasons for local medical community to search Ayurveda and other oriental medicines for answers. Long delays to access the doctors and diagnostic tests due to shortage of skilled human resource are reason for commoners to approach Ayurveda and other complementary systems.

Since the early nineties, Ayurvedic clinical practice in Hungary is associated with the Yoga schools, organizations like ISKON or Maharishi Ayurveda Foundation. It mainly consists of advice related to diet and lifestyle management. Ayurvedic consultations are offered through visiting *vaidyas* from various parts of India. The patients are treated for skin diseases, allergies, arthritis, cancer and many chronic complaints using locally available food supplements and products purchased on internet.

Calendula Center situated on the shores of Lake Balaton in Siófok nearly 80 km away from Budapest is one of the largest private Ayurveda clinic that offers wellness services and treatment consultations [6]. It has Kerala massage, Yoga and a kitchen to provide Ayurvedic diet to the patients. The center has its medicinal plant growing farm and manufacturing unit. The pharmacy has about 2000 plants and 400 formulations and has registered 14 Ayurveda based products for sale in Hungary.

Another prominent clinical facility is the Bio-energy Center in Budapest. It is a well-planned, well-equipped center with consulting rooms, *Panchakarma* therapy rooms, Yoga halls, antenatal care session room, conference hall and cafeteria. Currently, about a dozen medical doctors practice Ayurveda as per Hungarian law. They have formed an association known as Hungarian Ayurveda Scientific Association of Ayurveda. They act as an interface between local community and policy makers.

Under the present law (40/1997 Government Decree and the 11/1997 NM Order) Ayurveda can be practiced by medical doctors only; hence separate registration for Ayurveda practitioners may not be necessary. Ayurveda education to train medical doctors in line with Hungarian model is being proposed by Italian [7] and German organizations. Apart from the medical doctors, there are individuals who practice Yoga and Ayurveda under the cover of therapist with neither proper medical background nor training of Yoga and Ayurveda. They also offer short courses in Ayurveda and *Panchakarma* along with treatments. Such practices pose threat to scientific nature of Ayurveda.

4. Ayurvedic products in Hungary

Ayurvedic products entered Hungary through the company Garuda Trade limited in 1991. In accordance with the Hungarian law at that time, about 100 Ayurvedic medicinal and cosmetic products of companies like Dabur India Ltd, Baidyanath Ltd. Kolkata were registered under the category of food supplements. At present, products of Himalaya Herbal Health Ltd., Maharishi Ayurveda, U. Muniyal and Company, Emami Pharmaceuticals, Arya Vaidya Pharmacy and some others are available in the market as health and food supplements. Product availability suffered a setback due to the EU regulation regarding herbal products. In an

effort to register their concerns to EU regarding the impending implementation of EU regulation of Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (THMPD, 2001/83/EC as amended), a two-day meeting of European and Indian Ayurvedic experts was organized by the Indian Embassy in association with the European Ayurveda Association (EUAA) with the support of the Indian Department AYUSH (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India) in Budapest in 2010 [8]. The meeting was attended by EU officials from Brussels. However, the directive is in force and Hungary strictly adheres to the EU regulation.

Hungary also experienced a bad taste of affairs because the terms Ayurveda, *Ashwagandha* and *Shilajit* were found registered as trademark by a company, in Hungarian Intellectual Property Office (HIPO).

The biggest challenge is to register and market traditional multi-ingredient Ayurvedic products. Along with other European nations like Germany and Italy, Hungary is supporting Non-Conventional Medicine (NCM) or Anthroposophic medicine. To co-ordinate the activities, The Hungarian Ayurveda Medical Foundation recently came up with an initiative called Ayurveda Coordination Centre of Europe (ACCE) [1], which is an online database of Ayurvedic organizations, products, licensing authorities, legal background and customs rules with regard to Ayurvedic products in European countries. Apart from the pharmacy at Calendula Center, no pharmacies manufacture Ayurvedic or herbal products in Hungary.

5. Establishment of Ayurveda Chair

University of Debrecen has already taken some initiatives to offer Ayurvedic courses under the umbrella of CAM. Prof. Dr. Gyorgy Blasko had prepared a comprehensive course structure for the students of UD in 2009. A major breakthrough for officiating and integrating Ayurveda with mainstream medicine began with signing of the MoU for setting up an Ayurveda Chair in the Medical School of University of Debrecen in November 2014, as stated earlier [4].

Ayurveda Chair at University of Debrecen (UD) commenced in 2014, under the able leadership of Dr. M S Baghel to propagate authentic Ayurveda in Hungary. The Chair is expected to work to develop a structure whereby visiting faculty members would be able to come to the school for teaching. The Chair has been instrumental in signing MoU with Gujarat Ayurveda University and National Ayurveda Institute of Jaipur, for the purpose of collaboration regarding academic, research and clinical expertise support.

Dr. Asmita Wele is working as Chair professor from 2017. The Chair has recently initiated credit courses by complying with the requirements of medical education department of UD. Eligibility is set for medical, dental and pharmacy students who have completed pathology and pharmacology subjects in MD course, with a batch size of 25 students. Two batches have completed the course titled 'Introduction to Ayurveda and Integrative Clinical Practice'. The third batch of 50 students is underway.

Like other European countries, medium of instruction of higher education is Magyar (Hungarian). At UD, the medical course is taught in both Magyar and English. Although English is the second language from school; local students face its challenge and hence lectures need to be translated by an interpreter from English to Hungarian. Similarly public lectures are also translated.

The library of the Ayurveda Chair in UD consists of 500 volumes of reference books, journals dedicated to Ayurveda, volumes of Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia and textbooks in English language which are procured from CCRAS. Apart from this Hungarian Ayurveda Medical Foundation, Budapest has a library of over 900 books on Ayurveda and a systematic record of invited lecture series. During 2003 and 2015, a total of 13 postgraduate dissertations were

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