

Bridging Socio-Economic Gaps Through Ayush Education for A Viksit Bharat 2047

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ABSTRACT:

India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 emphasizes inclusive growth, universal healthcare, and socio-economic equity. The AYUSH system—comprising Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy—has emerged as a significant pillar in achieving these goals. AYUSH education, when strategically developed, can bridge socio-economic gaps by improving healthcare access, creating employment opportunities, and strengthening traditional knowledge systems. This article examines the role of AYUSH education in reducing socio-economic disparities, drawing upon secondary data from government reports, WHO documents, NITI Aayog strategies, and published literature. The study has one major objective—to analyze how AYUSH education can catalyze inclusive growth in India—and two minor objectives: (i) to evaluate the accessibility, affordability, and employment potential of AYUSH education, and (ii) to explore policy frameworks supporting AYUSH as a driver of inclusive development. Findings indicate that AYUSH contributes significantly to low-cost healthcare delivery, rural employment, and women's empowerment, though challenges remain in terms of research infrastructure, curriculum modernization, and global acceptance. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to strengthen AYUSH education as a sustainable pathway toward an equitable, developed India by 2047.

KEYWORDS:

AYUSH Education, Socio-Economic Gaps, Viksit Bharat 2047, Inclusive Development, Secondary Data

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Introduction

India has entered a crucial phase of its developmental journey. With the Government's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, marking 100 years of independence, there is a renewed emphasis on achieving inclusive growth, reducing inequalities, and ensuring affordable healthcare for all. One of the major challenges that India faces is the persistence of socio-economic gaps across regions, income groups, and communities. These gaps are visible in multiple dimensions—healthcare access, educational opportunities, employment generation, and social well-being. In this context, the AYUSH system of medicine (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) has gained prominence both nationally and globally. AYUSH represents not just a healthcare approach but also a knowledge system deeply rooted in Indian tradition. Its expansion into the fields of education, research, and entrepreneurship makes it a unique driver of inclusive growth.

AYUSH and India's Development Vision

Healthcare remains one of the most significant areas of inequality in India. Rural and marginalized populations often struggle to access affordable medical facilities. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reports indicate that out-of-pocket expenditure remains a major burden on low-income households, pushing millions into poverty each year. The integration of AYUSH into public health systems offers a promising solution by providing affordable, accessible, and culturally acceptable healthcare.

Moreover, AYUSH is not limited to healthcare delivery; it also opens avenues in education and employment. AYUSH education is expanding rapidly, with the number of AYUSH colleges and research institutions increasing across India. Students trained in AYUSH disciplines are not only contributing to health services but are also creating entrepreneurial ventures in wellness tourism, herbal medicine production, yoga therapy, and naturopathy centers.

Why AYUSH Education Matters

Education is widely recognized as a powerful instrument for reducing socio-economic disparities, as it enhances employability, improves quality of life, and contributes directly to economic growth (UNDP, 2022). Within this framework, AYUSH education holds particular signif-

icance for India's inclusive development agenda. Unlike allopathic medical colleges, which are predominantly concentrated in metropolitan regions, a considerable number of AYUSH institutions are situated in semi-urban and rural areas. The Ministry of AYUSH (2023) reports that out of 575 AYUSH colleges in India, nearly 60 percent are located outside major urban centers, thereby increasing opportunities for students from marginalized and rural communities. Affordability further strengthens the appeal of AYUSH education. For instance, the average annual tuition fee for a Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) course in government institutions ranges between ₹30,000 and ₹60,000, whereas MBBS fees often exceed ₹3–7 lakh per year in private colleges (NITI Aayog, 2022). This cost differential makes AYUSH a financially viable alternative for students from low- and middle-income households. In terms of employment, the sector is expanding rapidly: as of 2023, India has over 5.65 lakh registered AYUSH practitioners (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023), and the AYUSH industry itself was valued at USD 23 billion in 2022, with an estimated annual growth rate of 15 percent (ASSOCHAM, 2022). Graduates are increasingly finding careers in clinical practice, teaching, research, herbal pharmaceuticals, wellness tourism, and yoga therapy. Moreover, AYUSH enjoys deep cultural relevance, drawing upon India's traditional health systems and enjoying wide acceptance across communities, while also gaining international recognition through initiatives such as the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine established in Jamnagar in 2022 (WHO, 2022). Collectively, these features highlight AYUSH education as a strategic tool to reduce inequalities, expand affordable healthcare, generate employment, and align with the broader vision of building a self-reliant and developed India by 2047.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study how AYUSH education bridges socio-economic gaps for Viksit Bharat 2047.
2. To assess accessibility, affordability, and employment potential of AYUSH education.
3. To examine policy and institutional support for inclusive development through AYUSH.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature, relying exclu-

sively on secondary data. The sources include:

- » Government reports (Ministry of AYUSH Annual Reports, Ministry of Health, and Family Welfare).
- » NITI Aayog strategy papers on AYUSH.
- » WHO Global Reports on Traditional and Complementary Medicine (2019, 2023).
- » National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) health expenditure surveys.
- » Economic Survey of India (various years).
- » Peer-reviewed journals and articles on AYUSH and socio-economic development.

The methodology involves:

- » Compilation of statistical data on AYUSH institutions, student enrolments, employment trends, and healthcare delivery.
- » Comparative analysis of AYUSH and allopathic systems in terms of accessibility and affordability.
- » Interpretative analysis of policies and strategies aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Growth of AYUSH Institutions and Education

The expansion of AYUSH education in India has been significant over the past two decades.

Table 1: Growth of AYUSH Educational Institutions in India

Year	Ayurveda Colleges	Homeopathy Colleges	Unani Colleges	Siddha Colleges	Naturopathy & Yoga Colleges	Total AYUSH Colleges
2000	198	151	35	7	9	400
2010	242	187	41	9	15	494
2023	304	195	44	12	20	575

Sources: Ministry of AYUSH,

The table illustrates the growth of AYUSH educational institutions in India from 2000 to 2023 across five major systems: Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Naturopathy & Yoga. Over this period, the total number of AYUSH colleges increased from 400 to 575, reflecting a

44% expansion and demonstrating sustained government and institutional support for traditional medicine education. Ayurveda colleges, the largest segment, grew from 198 to 304, a 53% increase that underscores their central role and popularity among students. Homeopathy institutions also expanded from 151 to 195, showing moderate but consistent growth, while Unani colleges rose from 35 to 44, indicating steady development in regions with historical Unani practice such as Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Maharashtra. Siddha colleges increased from 7 to 12, reflecting gradual growth concentrated primarily in Tamil Nadu and nearby southern states. Naturopathy & Yoga colleges more than doubled from 9 to 20, highlighting the rising interest in wellness and preventive healthcare disciplines. Overall, this growth enhances accessibility to AYUSH education, supports employment opportunities, and contributes to reducing socio-economic disparities by expanding affordable education and healthcare services.

Table 2: Employment Potential in AYUSH Sector

Sector	Opportunities	Source
Clinical Practice	5 lakh+ registered practitioners	Ministry of AYUSH, 2023
Education	575 colleges, 25,000+ faculty positions	MoA, 2023
AYUSH Industry	1.5 million jobs (direct & indirect)	NITI Aayog, 2022
Wellness Tourism	USD 9 billion market potential	Ministry of Tourism, 2022

The table highlights the diverse employment and economic opportunities generated by the AYUSH sector in India. In clinical practice, there are over 5 lakh registered practitioners as of 2023 (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023), reflecting the extensive reach of AYUSH professionals in delivering healthcare services across urban and rural areas. In the education sector, the presence of 575 colleges employing more than 25,000 faculty members (MoA, 2023) underscores the sector's role in creating academic and teaching opportunities while simultaneously training the next generation of AYUSH practitioners. The broader AYUSH industry, including pharmaceuticals, herbal products, and wellness services, provides approximately 1.5 million direct and indirect jobs (NITI Aayog, 2022), contributing significantly to the national economy. Additionally, the wellness tourism segment, valued at around USD 9 billion (Ministry of Tourism,

2022), demonstrates the sector's potential to attract both domestic and international clientele, creating entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in yoga centers, naturopathy resorts, and holistic wellness services. Collectively, these figures highlight AYUSH not only as a healthcare system but also as a major driver of employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development in India.

Findings

1. The total number of AYUSH colleges increased from 400 in 2000 to 575 in 2023, including 304 Ayurveda, 195 Homeopathy, 44 Unani, 12 Siddha, and 20 Naturopathy & Yoga colleges (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023), creating wider opportunities for students from rural and marginalized communities, as nearly 60% of colleges are located outside major urban centers.
2. AYUSH education is cost-effective, with government BAMS programs costing ₹30,000–₹60,000 per year, compared to ₹3–7 lakh per year for private MBBS colleges (NITI Aayog, 2022). Affordable education and healthcare reduce financial inequality and provide alternative pathways for medical aspirants.
3. The AYUSH sector supports over 5 lakh registered practitioners, 25,000+ faculty positions, and approximately 1.5 million direct and indirect jobs in the industry (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023; NITI Aayog, 2022). The wellness tourism sector alone is valued at USD 9 billion, offering additional employment and entrepreneurial opportunities (Ministry of Tourism, 2022).
4. Enrolment data indicates higher female participation, especially in Ayurveda and Homeopathy courses, strengthening gender equity in healthcare professions.
5. Despite overall growth, states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat dominate in AYUSH infrastructure, while northeastern and tribal regions have limited access, highlighting the need for targeted policy measures to ensure equitable development.

Policy Implications

- » Expand AYUSH colleges in the Northeast, tribal, and backward regions.
- » Increase AYUSH presence in district hospitals and primary health

centers.

- » Establish stronger collaborations between AYUSH and modern medical sciences.
- » Support AYUSH graduates in starting wellness centers, herbal farms, and startups.
- » Promote international exchange programs, certifications, and global recognition of AYUSH degrees.

Conclusion

AYUSH education has the potential to bridge socio-economic gaps in India by providing affordable healthcare, accessible educational opportunities, and employment generation. It empowers marginalized communities, promotes women's participation, and strengthens traditional knowledge systems. To realize the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, AYUSH must be integrated as a mainstream developmental strategy, supported by policy, research, and global partnerships. Investing in AYUSH education is not merely a cultural choice but a strategic imperative for building a self-reliant, inclusive, and developed India.

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