

Does BAMS stand for Bachelor of Ayurveda and Medical Superstitions?

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The *Gazette of India: Extraordinary* published "The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Notification." on February 17, 2022 [1]. This official document of the Government of India is worrying as it institutionalises a world view that has been gradually turning the ancient science of Ayurveda into a pseudoscience.

Table 2 of the Notification enumerates the subjects taught in the first professional Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) course. The names of the subjects are in Sanskrit and their equivalent terms, in English. The way *Padartha Vigyan*, a subject dealing with the philosophical bases of Ayurvedic concepts, has been rendered in English is hugely problematic. According to the notification, this subject deals with the "fundamental principles of Ayurveda and quantum mechanics"!

The detailed syllabus of *Padartha Vigyan* is available on the website of The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine [2]. A cursory glance through the syllabus is enough to see that its aim is to acquaint the student with Indian philosophical systems in their relation to Ayurvedic concepts. The Ayurvedic pioneers, in an endeavour to systematise their medical experience, relied heavily upon the philosophical systems - the *Sankhya* and the *Nyaya-Vaisheshika*, especially [3]. An understanding of these systems is imperative to get a sense of the evolution of Ayurvedic concepts. The study of *Padartha Vigyan* is therefore perfectly necessary and valid.

The subject however has nothing at all to do with quantum physics. The notification's inclusion of quantum mechanics within the purview of *Padartha Vigyan* springs from a presupposition that ancient Indian philosophical literature contains advanced science couched in pithy utterances. This presupposition leads to dangerous pseudoscience. It fossilises outdated medical conjectures contained in ancient texts with the sad hope that as science advances, the truth of those conjectures would be proved! Well-known scholars of Indian philosophy have always denounced this approach. Professor M Hiriyanna, for instance, says it point-blank: "The value of the science contained in the (philosophical) systems cannot be great now when experimental methods of investigation have advanced so much." [4]

However, the fad of "discovering" the ideas of advanced science in ancient Indian philosophical texts continues unabated. It receives support not only from jingoistic propagandists of "Vedic science" in India but also from New Age enthusiasts in the West. The fad has nevertheless been repeatedly called out by well-known scholars and scientists [5]. In fact, even in the specific context of Ayurveda, the emptiness of its claims has been outed by commentators [6].

Brushing aside these commentators as anti-traditional, and uncaringly pursuing a line of thought that is wholly opposed to the evidence-based character of classical Ayurveda is a disservice to this valuable medical heritage. As explained elsewhere, such an approach produces bad science, badly trained professionals, and bad healthcare [3]. BAMS is supposed to mean Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery. May it not degenerate into becoming "Bachelor of Ayurveda and Medical Superstitions"?

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Ethical implications of online healthcare data sharing in the Indian context

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Technology is not only changing the way doctors and patients communicate, but also how physicians interact with other healthcare providers. This interaction has increasingly begun to be over online media such as telemedicine networks/instant messaging apps/social media/emails. The Covid-19 pandemic has further spurred the rapid adoption of these digital healthcare technologies, amplifying the potential risks for data breach of sensitive personal information.

Patient privacy and confidentiality are considered the cornerstones of medical ethics. These encourage the patient to provide the doctor with relevant information which forms the basis for making correct diagnoses and offering treatment. Physicians, in turn, have a moral, ethical and legal obligation to keep all patient information confidential. To this end, the Supreme Court of India, in 2017, ruled that privacy is an intrinsic element of the fundamental right to life and liberty [1].