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# One medicine: The need for a common conceptual framework

Antonio Morandi

Addressing the communication issue and potential contact between biomedicine, aka modern medicine, and traditional medicine is becoming increasingly important. However, the challenges in this partnership are significant and may initially seem impossible. Establishing communication is essential, but so is exchanging various representations of reality. Compared to Biomedicine, traditional knowledge systems such as Āyurveda and Yoga have significantly different epistemologies; the difference is not just technical but also pertains to how one thinks and acquires knowledge. It goes beyond simple terminology translation. Thus, the knowledge base of Āyurveda needs to be reformulated to build efficacious communication with other systems of medicine. However, this process must be implemented without any epistemological distortion. Biomedicine's exclusive and reductionist nature tends to explain the principles of Āyurveda or Yoga following its canons and rules, attempting to tie unknown notions in a one-to-one relationship with what is already understood. This behavior, however, prevents accurate comprehension and may cause an excessive reduction and distortion of Āyurveda and Yogic concepts, finally resulting in their extreme simplification, if not outright delegitimization. Biomedicine attempts to comprehend the role of Āyurveda through mere assessment of the pharmacological effects of therapeutic herbs utilized in treatment, which promulgates the notion that the pharmacological effect of every

medicinal plant employed in Āyurveda is the sole element describing Āyurveda's knowledge and theoretical essence. However, in actuality, the Āyurveda medicinal product or formulation itself does not encompass the logic that guides Āyurveda treatment principles. The epistemic core of Āyurveda considers the complex situation in which that particular formulation or herb is used and how and why. Āyurveda cannot be merely reduced to a therapeutic intervention such as a medicinal plant, therapy, or procedure.

Āyurveda's epistemology applies to anything because it may be used in various contexts and ways. In Italy, in our School of Āyurveda, "Ayurvedic Point", modern physicians, in addition to training in traditional Āyurveda, also receive specific teaching on how to use modern synthetic drugs with the ayurvedic perspective and logic. Using constitutional analysis, Prakṛti, also in modern medicine, can provide the key to targeted and personalized therapeutic choices. This enables innovative therapeutic strategies that greatly benefit the patient and society. The same holds for Yoga, whose efficacy is mainly assessed by Biomedicine by evaluating how āsana affects physical performance. Studies that reveal the impact on immunological function, mental balance, spiritual growth, or other aspects not directly related to physical fitness are either viewed with suspicion or not considered. Biomedicine often disregards results from Yoga and Āyurveda that do not immediately and directly coincide with its recognized frameworks. This mode of action is because when results are based on a mechanism of action unknown to Biomedicine and based on an epistemology very different from its

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own, they turn out to be an incomprehensible Black-Box. According to the Biomedicine viewpoint, something can only be considered “true” if the mechanism of action is fully understood. The results presented are deemed “irrelevant” even if they are evident unless framed in a well-known model. Āyurveda and Yoga are capable of obtaining and showing outstanding scientific results. Still, contemporary biomedicine may find it inadequate because the mechanism of action cannot be attributed to any established concept or model.

Indeed, an intense and complex transcultural cultural operation is required to make this Black-Box accessible and understandable to biomedicine while maintaining its epistemic integrity. A common conceptual framework must be established so that different schools of thought can interact and produce joint operations, research endeavors, and educational and training components. As the Prime Minister of India has reiterated, the generation of the evidence base to support traditional systems of medicine through research is vital, considering the growing interest in Ayurveda and Indian traditional medicine globally. The essential issue is how to create a reliable system of communication between such disparate knowledge systems to exchange and transmit the intricacy of their logic and cognition. Āyurveda is a very complex system of knowledge based on the concept of a reality formed and defined by deeply interconnected relationships. This vision appears opposed to the reality considered by Biomedicine based on defined and separate objects. However, this apparent incompatibility is not so because the two opposing systems describe hierarchically different aspects of the same reality. Therefore, the solution to the communication problem lies in establishing a connecting system between the two descriptive hierarchies of reality. A cultural endeavor of this size unquestionably requires careful planning and structuring.

In this regard, we proposed the novel “Collaborative Medicine and Science” concept, or Co.M.S., to address this issue. The Co.M.S. framework suggests three different tasks for contextualizing Āyurveda or other Traditional Knowledge Systems: (1) Rephrasing and contextualizing the Ayurvedic epistemic underpinnings, (2) modeling Āyurveda, and (3) localizing Āyurveda. The Co.M.S. system employs a collaborative strategy built on an intercultural translation process. Without question, Co.M.S.’s most significant accomplishment is the first point or the reformulation of core epistemological ideas into comprehensible language for Modern Medicine and Science. This route necessitates analyzing the similarities

among the Knowledge Systems while ignoring their disparities.

The straightforward but essential idea is that, despite their differences, the diverse Knowledge systems all depict the same fundamental reality. They reflect various ways of looking at things, just like the Darśana System does for Indian culture. The description of reality is the Knowledge Systems’ Minimum Common Denominator. Thus, the first point of contact between the two knowledge systems appears to be Physics, the scientific field that investigates and describes the nature of reality.

It is exciting and intriguing to note that in this aspect, Āyurveda’s description of the real through its qualities and connections appears to be based directly on Physics. Instead, BioMedicine manipulates items by using molecules and atoms to depict reality, making it appear more based on Chemistry. This distinction provides the key to creating a communication interface and is crucial to comprehend the differences between the two thought systems. Thus, most of the reformulation process will involve translating the fundamentals of Āyurveda into Physics and math. Guṇa, Doṣa, and Agni are examples of fundamental ideas of Āyurveda that can be defined only in terms of Physics, not certainly with Chemistry. The reformulation process forms the basis for developing the following two tasks, modeling, and localization.

To achieve effective results that can constitute a fundamental change in scientific thinking and have a practical impact both in the field of medicine and, more broadly, in science, the comparison of the two knowledge systems must result in a synergy rather than a fusion. A fusion would only lead to confusion and a disastrous loss of one or both systems’ epistemological, cultural, and historical identities. The ideal outcome would be creating a network of conceptual links that would permit the smooth running of both systems separately while allowing them to draw on one another as needed to create and develop new strengths. Medicine will undergo a significant paradigm change, moving from a complex system of numerous independent medical systems to an inferentially interconnected network of medicines or one medicine.

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