

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION



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The Indian and Italian cultures have a long tradition of mutual contact starting from the Roman era, a relationship witnessed by archaeological finds in Italy of Indian artifacts and in India of Roman evidence. The dissemination of Ayurveda to the Italian public is therefore favoured by common collective memories.

It is not uncommon to find elements typical of Ayurveda both as a way of life and prevention and as therapeutic remedies in popular traditions in Italy. This is without mentioning the Italian language that, deriving from Latin, has deep roots in Sanskrit. In fact, many of the words in use in the Italian language have Sanskrit roots. We can therefore say that Italian culture is predisposed to accept the Indian system of thought and Ayurveda. In fact, Ayurveda has become very popular, especially in the last few years, and the public demand for both therapies and training is constantly growing. However, Ayurveda is not yet recognized as an official medical system by the Italian Government.

In the last 20 years, thanks to the commitment of expert professionals and the contribution of important institutions, a stronger image of Ayurveda and its medical system has been established, allowing greater legitimacy and visibility.

Since 2002, Ayurveda has been recognized as a "medical act" by the National Federation of Medical and Dental Orders (FNOMCeO), which is the official regulatory body for medical deontology. This position reiterates that doctors, surgeons, and dentists are the only people qualified to practice Ayurveda. Medical doctors should be trained and made experts in Ayurveda through rigorous and specific training courses.

In 2009, Ayurvedic Medicine was included in the new government plan for Continuous Medical Education (ECM), and in 2012 The Course of Ayurveda



for Doctors of the School Ayurvedic Point was accredited as ECM. This is a key step because it officially certifies the importance of Ayurveda in the continuous formation and professional updating of medical doctors.

Another step towards the growth of Ayurveda in Italy is the collaborative openings undertaken by the Universities on the subject, especially during the 2005-2017 period, such as the course "Advanced Training in Sociology of Health and Non-Conventional Medicines" at the University of Bologna or the Master in "Health Systems, Traditional and Non-Conventional Medicines", Faculty of Sociology in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine, University of Milan Bicocca, which included teachings in Ayurveda.

In 2018, the first elective course of "Introduction to Ayurveda" at the Faculty of Medicine of the State University of Milan was started. This is an event of historic importance, as for the first time in Italy and maybe in Europe, a course in Ayurveda, even if a small one, can be officially part of the curriculum of studies of Conventional Medicine. The course, addressed to 5th and 6th-year medical students, is now in its fifth year and has had considerable success with an increasing number of students every year.

Regarding the profession of Therapist in Ayurveda in Italy, there has always existed great confusion about its true role, fed by the widespread diffusion of the so-called "Ayurvedic massage" practiced in SPAs and beauty institutes, which has very little to do with the professional functions of an Ayurvedic Therapist. It was therefore a moment of great importance in 2019 when, after six years of work with UNI, the Italian Institute for Standardization, the profession of Technician (Therapist) in Ayurveda has been established and is, therefore, officially acknowledged and protected by the Italian government under Law 4/2013. The recognition is subject to certification by FAC, a body recognized by ACCREDIA, the sole national accreditation body appointed by the Italian government under the vigilance of the Ministry of Economic Development. This has been a decisive step in the acknowledgment of Ayurveda in Italy.

Education in Ayurveda, the experience of Ayurvedic Point

Ayurvedic Point (AP) is an institution founded in 2001, which includes an educational as well as a clinical and research division. It has always been a key player in the spread and advancement of Ayurveda in Italy. Lacking proper legislation, AP has always sought to obtain recognition and accreditation to guarantee the quality of its activities. Since 2007 AP has been awarded with the ISO 9001 quality certification for its teaching activities. Moreover, besides the already mentioned ECM qualification for the AP Course for Medical Doctors, the AP Course for Technicians is accredi-

ed as a Qualified Course for Technician in Ayurveda as per the UNI norm 11756:2019, a required condition to access to the Professional Certification. Moreover, the School Ayurvedic Point itself has been acknowledged as a 2nd Level Qualified Training Institution for Technicians in Ayurveda (UNI 11756:2019 - FAC Certificata).

The Ayurvedic Point School of Ayurveda comprises two distinct quadrennial courses: one post-graduate for physicians and a professional one for Technicians in Ayurveda, both elaborated according to a common integrated study plan which follows the guidelines of the 'Benchmark for Training in Ayurveda' published by the WHO. The teaching structure of the School is completed by a program of in-depth Clinical Stages in India held at the Ayurveda Research and Education Institute of SNA Oushadhasala, Thrissur, Kerala, India.

In the 20 years of Ayurvedic Point's School activity, over 350 students have received a Diploma of higher education, almost 600 students have been educated in India at the Ayurveda Research and Education Institute of SNA Oushadhasala, Thrissur, Kerala, and over 2800 people have received a formal education in Ayurveda ■



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