

# The Position of Iranian Traditional Medicine in the World

By: The Research Team of Dr. Alireza Yargholi's Website

## What Is Iranian Medicine

Iranian medicine is one of the world's schools of medicine with a ten-thousand-year history, and many of its foundations can be found in today's medical sources.

Generally speaking, Iranian medicine is a holistic school that considers all parts of one's being (body and soul), age conditions, geography, etc. in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. In this school, to treat the disease, first, the lifestyle and nutrition of the person are modified, and then medicinal treatments are applied.



### Iranian medicine in ancient times

Traditional Iranian medicine has a long history that can be divided into 3 periods (before Islam).

1. Achaemenid period
2. Parthian period
3. Sasanian period

One of the most important and greatest actions of the Sassanid Dynasty was the establishment of Gondishapur Medical University, where many important medical events took place, such as:

- Collecting Iranian philosophical and medical works from other nations and returning them to Iran,
- Revival of Avestan medicine despite the influence of Greek medicine on it,
- Establishing the world's first scientific conference and organizing scientific and medical debate sessions under the supervision of Jibraeil Darstbad (special physician of the king), and
- Inviting great Greek, Indian, etc. physicians to teach and participate in the discussion sessions of Gondishapur University.

It is to be noted that the two dynasties of the Parthians and the Sasanians played a valuable role in preserving and expanding Iranian medicine, which was destroyed during the rule of the Seleucids. They revived Avestan and Iranian medicine, and in this era, Iranian medicine regained its strength.

Ancient Iran was famous both in terms of knowledge and in terms of having adept physicians such that many laws about physicians and medicine were written in Avesta (Zoroastrian holy book) and there were detailed instructions for health, doctors' rights, and even veterinarians in Iran. Two other prominent features of medicine in ancient times were attention to environmental health and disease prevention.

Medicine during the time of the Samanids (after Islam) and with the emergence of scholars such as Zakariyya Razi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), undoubtedly forms the basis of the greatest ancient medicine of the East and the West.

Reviving the science of medicine and establishing hospitals in the cities of Balkh, Ray, Isfahan, Merv, and Neyshabur, setting up pharmacies, and training physicians with the works of their predecessors were among the measures and the achievements of the Samanid period in the science of medicine.

Among the most important pioneers of Iranian medicine in the Islamic era, mention may be made of Tabari, Zakariyya Razi, Akhawini Bokhari, Majusi Ahvazi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Seyyed Ismail Gorganji, who with their genius, talent, intelligence, and tact made a significant contribution to the development of Iranian medicine.

Although modern medicine has grown and developed widely today, traditional medicine, despite being rooted in tradition, culture, and customs of nations, still maintains its place in many countries.

Iranian people are also traditionally interested in the use of medicinal plants and natural treatment methods, and this has become a





reason for the development of Iranian medicine in this country.

Due to being dissatisfied with modern medical treatments (especially in the field of chronic diseases and side effects of chemical drugs) and also the entry of Iranian medical knowledge into academic and international societies, the tendency towards Iranian traditional medicine is increasing among a large number of people.

Based on the conducted research, in countries such as Germany, France, Britain, Canada, America, Australia, etc., a significant percentage of people are using traditional medicine and complementary medicine services. Therefore, in the last three decades, the World Health Organization has taken up new policies with regard to the expansion of traditional medicine (specific to each country).

Iranian medicine has been used in a wide area of the world (West Asia and parts of Europe) for thousands of years, and many people in these areas continue to benefit from it even today.

These days, this traditional medicine has become completely academic, and currently, 17 universities of medical sciences in the

country have a faculty of Iranian medicine. After completing their MBBS, physicians can get admitted to complete a 5-year specialized course in the fields of Iranian traditional medicine, pharmacology, and pharmaceuticals.

Currently, Iran is one of the most developed countries in the West Asian region in the field of complementary and traditional medicine and has a good position and an old and rich history in these areas.

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made in the direction of recognizing the scientific authority of Iranian medicine in international arenas. Scimago, which is an international site that ranks the countries of the world in various fields of science every year, ranks Iran fourth in the world after China, India, and the United States with regard to complementary and alternative medicine. This is while before traditional Iranian medicine entered the academic field, this position was 13th.

Also, according to the analytical report of Ethno Pharmacology magazine, which is the product of international cooperation among researchers from China, England, Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany, Po-

land, and Austria, Iran ranked fifth in the field of Scientology, the state of knowledge production and the publication of articles in the field of indigenous pharmacology, traditional medicine, and medicinal plants, by contributing 2439 articles (6.3% of the articles) published between the years 2011 and 2018.

It goes without saying that the presence of Iranian traditional medicine in the academic community, has, over a short period of time (less than 2 decades), been able to achieve such valuable achievements for this indigenous and ancient knowledge of the country, and publication of important scientific articles in prestigious international (ISI) journals as well as training physicians and specialists in this field is a matter of honor for this country.

#### Concluding Remarks

It can, therefore, be said that Iranian traditional medicine has always had a special place among complementary medicine in the world, and even today, due to the important and valuable scientific achievements in academic fields, it has a bright future ahead.

