

## General Article



### Prof. Dr. Paneenazhikath Narayana Vasudeva Kurup: Frontiersman of Ayurveda

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#### ABSTRACT:

The Globalization of Ayurvedic practice has gained momentum over the past three decades, largely driven by personalities associated with Ayurveda, such as Prof. Dr. Paneenazhikath Narayana Vasudeva Kurup (Dr. P.N.V. KURUP). He is an expert in Ayurveda and has been instrumental in promoting, propagating, and elevating its status nationally and internationally. He has published several articles and a book, A Handbook of Indian Medicinal Plants, on the traditional Indian Medicine System. His pivotal role in integrating Ayurveda with contemporary scientific paradigms, particularly in analysis and advancement, is highly regarded in Panchakarma and throughout Ayurveda. He was the key person who fully understood the importance of post-graduation courses in Ayurveda and served as the teacher for the first batch of post-graduation courses in Gujarat Ayurved University (GAU), Jamnagar. He was the frontiersman in the globalization of Ayurveda at the international level, and for this, he understood the importance of English translation of Ayurveda books. He also established the Indian Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences at GAU, Jamnagar, and was the one and only Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) Commissioner of Ayurveda. The present study unfolds Dr. P.N.V. Kurup's scientific accomplishments, advances in the literature, and the resolution of scientific quandaries under his mentorship, as well as his professional journey, research publications, and the array of awards and recognitions received.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Dr. P.N.V. Kurup, Globalization, Panchakarma

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, which is a heritage of India that originated more than 5000 years ago, is currently receiving worldwide attention and acceptance largely as an alternative medicine. Dr. P.N.V. Kurup was an esteemed Ayurvedic physician, Ayurvedic doctor to the President and Prime Minister, Vice Chancellor of GAU, Jamnagar, and an immaculate example of the globalization of Ayurveda, a writer and researcher.

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

The data on glimpses into the life of Dr. P.N.V. Kurup were primarily collected through interviews, online sources, and newspaper clippings.

**Education:** Dr. Paneenazhikath Narayana Vasudeva Kurup, a prominent Ayurvedic physician, was born on December 26, 1925, in Perinad, Kollam, Kerala. He was motivated to pursue Ayurveda by his family, a devout believer in the tradition, and his studies encompassed economics, wherein he obtained a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree from the University of Travancore. However, his keen interest in traditional Indian medicine led him to pursue tradition into Ayurvedic studies,

**Table 1: Educational journey of Dr. P.N.V. Kurup**

S.N.	Name of the degree	Name of the College/University	Year
1	Under Graduation in Ayurveda (Vaidya Kalanidhi course)	Govt. Ayurveda College, Trivandrum	1946
2	Postgraduation in Kayachikitsa	Post Graduate Research and Training Center in Ayurveda, Jamnagar (now GAU, Jamnagar)	1959

**About the Family:** Dr. P.N.V. Kurup, an eminent scholar in Ayurveda, was born on December 25, 1925, in Perinad, Kollam, Kerala. His wife, Saraswathio, was a homemaker and deeply devoted to his husband. He has two daughters, Vani Kurup (Medical literature editor) and Smitha Kurup (Molecular biologist, England). They are living a very happy life with a good socio-economic condition. Dr. P.N.V. Kurup is in a crucial period at the terminal phase of his life. He was

laying the foundation for his distinguished career in this domain.

He pursued formal Ayurvedic education (Vaidya Kalanidhi course) at the Government (Govt.) Ayurveda College, Trivandrum, where he gained a strong foundational understanding of classical principles and clinical practices in 1946. To further refine his expertise, he undertook postgraduate training at the Postgraduate Research and Training Center in Ayurveda, Jamnagar (now Gau), specializing in Kayachikitsa (internal medicine) and Panchkarma (therapeutic detoxification and rejuvenation therapies) in 1959.

His scholarly contributions and dedication to the advancement of Ayurveda were recognized through the conferment of a Doctor of Literature (D.Litt) by GAU, Jamnagar. He and Dr. C.P Shukla were the teachers of the first batch of the post-graduation course (at that time, the course name was High Proficiency in Ayurveda (HPA) at GAU), and taught renowned personalities like Prof. Hari Shankar Sharma, Dr. Veni Madhav Shastri, and Dr. S.K. Mishra.

suffering from dementia in his last days in his last days but his wife had taken care of him during this period.

**Career:** After successful completion of the Vaidya Kalanidhi course from Govt. Ayurvedic College, Thiruvananthapuram, where he started his private practice in 1946. He started his career as a medical officer in the rural dispensary under the Govt. of Kerala in 1953. He served the Post Graduate Training center in Ayurveda at Jamnagar as Senior Physician, Professor, and Head of the Department (Dept.) of Panchakarma (1960-

64). He treated and cured Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962, describing it as the success of Panchakarma treatment. Dr. Kurup set up India's earliest Department of Panchakarma in 1960 and trained over 100 postgraduates. He contributed to the establishment of the Indian Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences, an institute under the university that offers education in Ayurvedic pharmaceutical studies in 1999. [1]

**Dr. P.N.V. Kurup- as an Academician:** He joined the Govt. of Gujarat as Director of Ayurveda (1964-66), during which period he established several hospitals and dispensaries in different parts of the state to meet the medical and healthcare needs of the population, in addition to teaching colleges during his tenure. He was also involved in the preparation of an Act for establishing the GA, Jamnagar, in 1967. He was a member of the Syndicate's Secretary of the university. During this period, he was also the Additional Secretary of the Central Board of Shuddha Ayurveda Education. The Govt. of India was responsible for bringing out a plan of studies and a standard curriculum for Ayurveda education in Ayurvedic colleges.

**Dr. P.N.V. Kurup-Milestone works as an advisor:** Dr. Kurup took over as Advisor to the Indian Systems of Medicine, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, under Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) selection from 1967 to 1980, marking a milestone in the development of Ayurveda. Another milestone during his period of Advisorship was the establishment of the many institutions and bodies, such as Central Council of Indian Medicine [2], on the analogy of the Medical Council of India (MCI) intending to streamline standards of education and bring out a uniform pattern all over the country and also lay down norms for teaching institutes in terms of space, resources, manpower, inpatient strength based on the student's strength; the council also looks into the regulation of the practice of Indian medicine in India, Central Council for Research in Indian

Medicine and Homeopathy (1970-71) (subsequently, the three Central Councils for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, Unani and Homeopathy), to formulate the methods of research and to establish Institutes, Centers/Units for carrying out research in the aspects of Ayurveda and Siddha like literature and the history, clinical medicine and drug research was an important step in the realm of research. [3] He was the ex officio Director for the Central Council for Research in Indian Medicine and Homeopathy and the Indian Medical Pharmaceutical Corporation, and he also established several central and regional research institutions and units under the research councils in different parts of India. National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA) and The Indian Medical Pharmaceutical Corporation, with a view to streamlining standards in teaching, practice, research, as well as production of quality drugs. His untiring efforts and farsightedness made him the only AYUSH Commissioner of Ayurveda and the most senior bureaucrat in the field.

Dr. Kurup had been the Honorary Ayurvedic Consultant to the President of India during the '70s and also the Ayurvedic Consultant to the Central Govt. Employees. He had been instrumental in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetic Act in All India basis for Indian Systems of Medicine which was a notable development to safeguard from misuse of drugs and to encourage rational drug use and also Indian Medicine Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd., Mohan, Govt. of India for manufacturing quality drugs and formulations for meeting the needs of hospitals and dispensaries of the Govt. of India and other states. He has been nominated as the Vice President of the Governing Body of the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha by the Govt of India.

**Dr. P.N.V. Kurup- As a consultant at the World Health Organization (WHO):** Dr. P.N.V. Kurup (1980-1990) worked as a consultant for Traditional Systems of Medicine at the WHO. During his tenure, he toured many countries, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, and

helped to develop their traditional systems of medicine and integrate them with primary health care. As Chief Technical Advisor to the UNDP WHO Project on the development of Traditional Medicine in Sri Lanka, he developed a standard curriculum for Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha systems of Medicine for adoption by Traditional Medicine Colleges and improved the working of their Pharmaceutical Corporation and Research Organizations through his knowledge. Dr. Kurup gives training to traditional practitioners in Primary Health Care and various activities of traditional medicine, and he also has a model curriculum developed and enforced by way of training the Trainers as well as the Trainees. During his tenure, he helped in the development of standards and quality control for Ayurvedic preparations and the establishment of a Model Herbal Farm (Govt. set up herbal farm clusters for improving quality of drugs and promotion of exports, cultivation of medical plants, and effective marketing of herbal products) [4]. Dr. Kurup was associated with various Universities in India, like Banaras Hindu University and the Gujarat University, as a Member of the Ayurvedic Faculties/Board of Studies and also functioned as a Member Secretary of various Committees constituted by the Govt. of India, State Govts, and Universities, and Expert Members in various Organizations and Service Commissions, and Statutory Bodies. He has also contributed to several articles [5-7] and chapters in books published in scientific journals by national and international organizations. [8-10] and delivered speeches in various seminars in India and abroad, and he participated and delivered a guest lecture on Ayurveda Practice in India: its Past, Present, and Future Contribution to Human Health Development in a WHO seminar in Kobe, Japan, in 1999. Dr Kurup. chaired a session at the 3rd International Conference on Ayurveda in New York, USA, in 2000, and he delivered a lecture on the Regional Situation of Traditional Medicine in the Southeast Asia Region in Kobe, Japan, in 2003.

**Dr. PNV. Kurup- as the Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Ayurved University (GAU), Jamnagar:** April 3, 1998, was a Red-Letter Day for GAU when Dr. Kurup took up the reins of the university and joined as Vice Chancellor. During his six-year term till April 3, 2004, his extraordinary management skills led the University to attain international status with collaborations from eleven institutions from Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Argentina, Israel, and the USA. He established four new Institutes: the International Center for Ayurvedic Studies, the Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Institute of Ayurvedic Medicinal Plant Sciences, and the Maharishi Patanjali Institute of Naturopathy, Yoga & Physiotherapy. The University was granted the status of a Center of Excellence by the Gujarat Govt. He initiated the process of globalization of Ayurveda by changing the medium of instruction to English and organizing a number of international and national seminars, and introducing courses for foreign students and introduced short-term courses in Ayurveda for modern medicine graduates as well as new courses in Ayurvedic pharmacy (diploma, graduate and postgraduate), medicinal plants (postgraduate), yoga and nature cure, under the newly established International Centre for Ayurvedic Studies, Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences, Institute of Medicinal Plant Sciences, and Maharishi Patanjali Institute for Yoga, Naturopathy Education and Research. The newly started courses under these institutes were the Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (B.A.M.S.) [English medium], D. Pharm, and B. Pharm. & M. Pharm in Ayurveda, M.Sc. (Medicinal Plants), Diploma in Yoga & Nature-cure, for foreigners, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), and NRI-sponsored candidates. Further Ordinances were passed for two new courses, viz. Ayurvedic Nursing and Ayurvedic Veterinary Science. Dr. Kurup was instrumental in launching the Ayurvedic Medical Kit for the treatment of common ailments, which is very popular among the public.

The project- Tri-garbha-kuti, Kuti-praveshik Rasayana (in this method of Rasayana therapy, the individual undergoing treatment is required to reside in a specially designed cottage, known as Trigarbha Kuti, for the entire duration of the treatment) [11] was also sanctioned during the tenure of Dr. Kurup at Jamnagar, which is still present at GAU, Jamnagar, as a symbol of Ayurveda Rasayana therapy and he also successfully initiated many health care centers near the Jamnagar district of Gujarat as vice-chancellor of GAU, Jamnagar.

**Dr. P.N.V. Kurup- Globalization of Ayurveda:** The process of globalization of Ayurveda was initiated under the leadership of Dr. Kurup with the successful organization of four International Seminars on Ayurveda in 2000, 2001, 2002 & 2003, and twelve national seminars and workshops during 1998-2004. Dr. Kurup has been instrumental in the policy decision on Ayurvedic education in English, under which, in the 1st stage, the teaching of basic medical sciences in English subjects has been initiated. The GAU has virtually achieved the status of an International University with 11 Ayurvedic Institutions operating in Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany. Argentina, Israel, and the USA have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GAU for collaboration in the field of Education and Research in Ayurveda. He also developed courses in Ayurveda for Indians and foreign students.

Earlier, the NATIONAL ACADEMIC ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS (NAAMI) (Ayu) Institute of Russia had signed the MoU with the Govt. of India, in which GAU was also one of the implementing authorities. WHO organized an International Symposium on Traditional Medicine in Kobe, Japan, on November 6, 1999, at which Dr. Kurup participated and delivered a guest Lecture titled "Ayurveda Practice in India: Its Past, Present, & Future Contribution to Human

Health Development". He also attended the International Meeting on Global Atlas of Traditional Medicine (TRM) and delivered a lecture on the Regional Situation of TRM in Southeast Asia in 2003 in Kobe, Japan. Dr. Kurup chaired one of the sessions in the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Ayurveda during Kobe, on 9.10.2000 in New York, USA, which was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

**Awards:** Additionally, in recognition of his exemplary contributions to Ayurvedic education, research, and practice, he was awarded the prestigious Fellowship of the National Academy of Ayurveda (Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth [RAV]) by the Govt. of India, New Delhi in 1993. Dr. Kurup was felicitated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and awarded the Ram Narayan Vaidya Puraskar, a Cash Prize of Rs. 1 lakh, in May 2000. He was also honored with a Gold Medal Award as Millennium Men of Ayurveda from the Academy of Ayurveda, Vijayawada, in May 2000. In recognition of the contribution to the enrichment of the stock of human knowledge in the area of Sanskrit, particularly in the field of traditional learning. Dr. P.N.V. Kurup has been conferred the degree of Mahamahopadhyaya (Honoris Causa) by Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth (Deemed University) at New Delhi in 2002. The name of Dr. Kurup was announced by the Govt. of India for the award of Padma Shri in the field of medicine on the occasion of the 56th Republic Day on January 26, 2005. In recognition of Prof. Kurup's contribution to the progress of Ayurveda and particularly Traditional Medicine in Asian countries, he was conferred the "Brihatrayee Ratna" award by Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore, in 2007. He also received a lifetime achievement award from the hands of Laxmi Kanta Chawla, former health minister of the Punjab state, by RAV, New Delhi, at the age of 85.

**Table 2: Awards/achievements received by Prof.P.N.V. Kurup**

S.N.	Name of the award	Year	Organization
1	Fellowship of the National Academy of Ayurveda	1993	Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth, New Delhi
2	Rs. 1 lakh as Ram Narayan Vaidya Puraskar	2000	Govt. of India
3	Gold Medal Award as Millennium Men of Ayurveda from the Academy of Ayurveda, Vijayawada	2000	The Academy of Ayurveda, Vijayawada
4	The degree of Mahamahopadhyaya (Honoris Causa)	2002	Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth (Deemed University)
5	Padma Shri in the field of medicine	2005	Govt. of India
6	Brihatrayee Ratna"	2007	Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore
7	Lifetime achievement award	2010	Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth, New Delhi

**Message for Present and future generations:** Ayurveda is not merely a traditional, but a scientific medicine, with diagnostic procedures that are reliable and reproducible, and treatments based on well-established principles and time-tested effects. Dr. P.N.V Kurup's vision was clear: he wanted a well-planned Ayurvedic education system in India (at graduate and postgraduate levels) that makes Ayurvedic Physicians capable of providing health care grounded in Ayurveda, which makes them eligible to be registered in any country globally.

He recommended that the need for integration, like Panchakarma, Ksharasutra, etc., certainly be integrated into other health systems, broadening the choices available to physicians and patients. He also emphasized imparting training in some of the important disciplines like *Vriksha Ayurveda* (a subdivision of Ayurveda that deals with matters related to cultivation of plants) and *Pasu Ayurveda* (Ayurvedic veterinary science), at the undergraduate level these steps have to be initiated to include them as subjects for study at the undergraduate level.

He also brought to attention that there is an urgent need to establish many such institutes to generate the requisite manpower for the Ayurvedic drug manufacturing and dispensing sector and for training in Ayurvedic nursing. This can be facilitated by formulating a national policy that requires the appointment of only qualified persons in the

Ayurvedic manufacturing, dispensing, and drug regulatory sectors.

He highlighted the urgent need to study the impact of changes made in drug formulation and manufacturing processes on the expression of biological activity and therapeutic efficacy, and also pointed out the existence of the "therapeutic gap" in modern medicine. Though tremendous progress has been made in the treatment of many dreaded diseases, remedies are yet to be found for treating diseases like tuberculosis, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), etc. In these areas, TSM drugs and procedures may have beneficial effects.

He suggested there is a need to generate competent manpower with the requisite communication skills to teach the principles and practices of the system, and there is a requirement to start introductory, short, and long-term courses as per requirements in different parts of the world. For achieving this goal, he suggested planning multicenter collaborative studies on internationally acceptable guidelines to prove the safety of Ayurvedic drugs and practices and their therapeutic utility.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Dr. P.N.V Kurup, who is an expert in the field of Ayurveda, has been a pioneer in promoting, propagating, and raising the status of Ayurveda nationally and internationally. He held various high dignitaries such as Prof & Head

Department, GAU, Head of Panchakarma in GAU, Jamnagar, Director of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H), Gujarat State, Adviser of ISM&H, Govt. of India, Consultant Physician to President of India, Director, Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Member Secretary of the Governing Body of Central Council for Research in Indian Medicine and Homeopathy (CCRIMH) & CCRAS, Govt. of India, Vice- Chancellor of GAU, WHO International Consultant. Dr. Kurup set up India's earliest Department of Panchakarma and contributed to the establishment of the Indian Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences, an institute under the university that offers education on Ayurvedic pharmaceutical studies, Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), CCRAS, National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), Jaipur, etc. Dr. P.N.V Kurup changed the medium of instruction to English and introduced many courses for foreign students, thereby facilitating the globalization of Ayurveda.

He has been awarded the Padmashree Award by Govt. of India. He passed away at his residence in New Delhi on April 27, 2018. His death was a significant loss to the world of Ayurveda and the scientific world, and his contribution to Ayurveda remains unforgettable. His exceptional story gives lessons on how a single man could serve Ayurveda so effectively.

#### List of Abbreviations

**AIDS:** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome  
**AYUSH:** Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy  
**BA:** Bachelor of Arts  
**B.A.M.S.:** Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery  
**B.Pharm:** Bachelor of Pharmacy  
**CCIM:** Central Council of Indian Medicine  
**CCRAS:** Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences  
**CCRIMH:** Central Council for Research in Indian Medicine and Homeopathy  
**Dept.:** Department  
**D.Litt.:** Doctor of Literature  
**D.Pharm:** Diploma in Pharmacy  
**GAU:** Gujarat Ayurved University  
**Govt.:** Government

**HPA:** High Proficiency in Ayurveda  
**IMPCL:** Indian Medicine Pharmaceutical Corporation Limited  
**ISM&H:** Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy  
**MCI:** Medical Council of India  
**MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding  
**M.Pharma:** Master of Pharmacy  
**M.Sc.:** Master of Science  
**NAAMI:** National Academic Association of Medical Institutions  
**NIA:** National Institute of Ayurveda  
**NRIs:** Non-Resident Indians  
**RAV:** Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth  
**Rs.:** Rupees  
**S.N.:** Serial Number  
**TRM:** Traditional Medicine  
**TSM:** Traditional System of Medicine  
**UNDP:** United Nations Development Program  
**USA:** United States of America  
**WHO:** World Health Organization

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Data collection and literature search: SM, SR  
Writing – original draft: SM, SR  
Reviewing & Editing: VKL, AK, HP, NS, RNA  
Approval of final manuscript: All authors

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#### Declaration of Generative AI

The authors declare this manuscript was written without the use of generative artificial intelligence tools. All the content, including text generation, data analysis and references was developed and reviewed by the author without assistance from AI technologies.

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