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# Golden days ahead for Unani

The government has prepared a draft Vision 2010 document for encouraging the growth of the ancient Unani system of medicine and associated plantation and conservation of herbal medicinal plants. The document seeks to globalize the Indian Unani medicines and create a niche for them in the world market.

## Industry overview

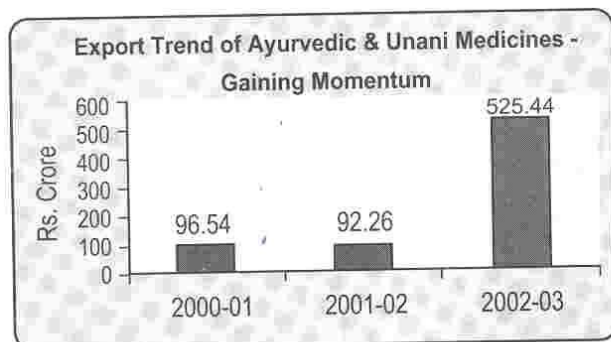
Medicinal plants have been a major source of cure of human diseases since time immemorial. Though the antibiotics have been introduced since 1940s, 80 per cent of the population today depends on home-grown medicinal plants and the drugs.

The medicinal plant value is about Rs 5,000 crore in India and it is estimated that the country exports about Rs 550 crore worth of herbal drugs. But with the rich and diverse botanical resources in the country, this is not an impressive export performance considering the worldwide herbal market worth US\$60 billion. Hence, the government has geared up to promote the growth of the ancient Unani and herbal medicinal plants.

Market	Annual Growth Rates
Global Traditional Medicine Market	7-15%
Global plant-based drug industry	10-15%
Chemical-based drug industry	3-5%

## Unani - The past

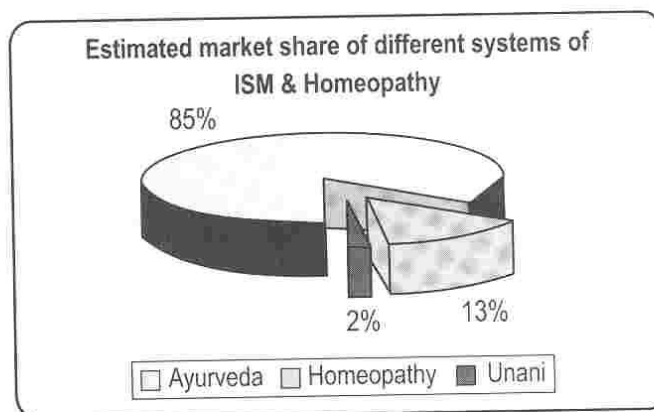
Unani medicine which is based on the Greece philosophy was introduced in India in 1351 AD by Arabs. It soon got acceptance by the masses due to its efficacy and non-toxicity. Post independence, Government of India has taken various steps to enhance and maintain uniformity in the standards of drugs. At present, Unani is a part of Indian System of Medicine (ISM).



Source: Cygnus Business Research

Thus, the Unani medicines of India are unique in some ways. Many Muslim-populated countries of Asia and Africa are good destinations for Indian Unani medicines.

## Government initiatives



Source: Cygnus Estimates, 2004

Despite being the sixth mega biodiversity hot spot in the world and origin of traditional systems of herbal medicines, India's export of herbal medicine is minuscule when compared to China. Hence, our government believes that India has the potential to emerge as a world leader in herbal medicines.

Government feels Unani can create a niche of its own, apart from Ayurvedic and other herbal medicines; though its present market share is minuscule at 2 per cent. As a result government is targeting to globalize Unani medicine from India and create a niche for it in the world market. The government is also keen on plantation, conservation and sustainable use of herbs. The government, through the National Medicinal Plant Board, has decided to encourage cultivation of medicinal plants for their sustainable use.

## Outlook

Unani medicine, with a meager slice of market share of ISM and Homeopathy, is gaining popularity. Craze among people for a slim body and fair skin is growing considerably. Hence, the Indian herbal industry needs to bank on the global opportunities and have a competitive edge over others through quality control mechanism.