



## ETHICO-MORAL EXPRESSION OF AYURVEDA

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### Abstract

*Ayurveda* classics are overwhelmed with the ethical and moral stuff. Being an ancient medical science it has its own characteristics on both the backgrounds'. Values related to *Guru-shishya* tradition and their beliefs are one of the significant part of it. Ethics are nothing but the set of directions of right conduct which is to be followed. *Ayurveda* texts prescribes an elaborate code of conduct in every aspect. Essence of ethics is very well-defined and described in the fundamental texts of *Ayurveda* in the form of *Sadvritta*, *Chatushpada*, *Yogya*, *Vaidyavritti* and *Aachara Rasayana* etc. Ethical and moral expression of *Ayurveda* is multidimensional and having depth than any other contemporary medical science. Basic ethico-moral doctrines in *Ayurveda* are very well established and planned to cover every aspect of human life simultaneously it covers social as well as scholastic aspects also. This article envisioned at emphasis of the ancient system of *Ayurveda* education and to search and comprehend the ethico-moral arrangement of this fraternity of medicine.

**Key words-** Ayurveda, tradition, ethico-moral circumstances.

### Introduction

*Acharya* [*Guru*], teacher or preceptor is always admired in Indian system of education since the immemorial time. He is always honored as a God [*Brhma-Vishnu-Mahesh*] moreover envisioned as a supreme *brahma* [*parabrahma*]. India has a glorious heritage of *Guru-Shishya* tradition and it is flourished for thousands of years.

As well *Ayurveda* is an ancient and indigenous system of medicine having divine origin. *Guru-Shishya* tradition is one of the most unique gemstone of this system of medicine. Teaching and learning are the practices involved in it. Teaching is a two way process. It is anticipated that both the factors of this two way course Viz. *Guru* and *shishya* should be very

competent. Plenty of evidences are there in classical texts of *Ayurveda* for the excellence of teacher. In *Ayurveda* along with expectancy of proficient student; teacher's competence is also focused and equivalent significance is given to both of them.

### Aim

- To observe an ancient *Ayurvedic* system of pedagogy.
- To explore & comprehend the ethico-moral arrangement in classical texts of *Ayurveda*.

### Materials and Methods

- Classical texts of *Ayurveda* viz. *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* were referred along with their commentaries for the



references about ancient ethico-moral foundation.

- Literature available on internet regarding modern ethical science was also reviewed.
- All the references were observed, compared and analyzed critically.

In ancient time *Ayurveda* disciples was multifaceted. Along with *Ayurveda* study they are proficient in many other allied sciences like *shiksha* , *kalpa*,*vyakarana*, *jyotishya* ,*chanda* , *darshana* etc. As *Sushruta* have advised that one should always try to acquire knowledge from other allied sciences.

It is documented in *Ayurveda* history that, the students of *Takshashila* and *Nalanda* universities were well versed in many sciences as per the expectancy of *Sushruta*. It is very much relevant and applicable in today's scenario as well. At present *Ayurveda* pupil undergo through the various sciences like philosophy, modern medicine, naturopathy, *rasashashtra*, *sthapatyashashtra* , astrology, research methodology and statistics etc. Knowledge of all these sciences is needed for the disciple in today's modern competitive era too. Therefore it is mandatory that pupil should be proficient with all qualities of ideal disciple [*shishya*]. Prospectus of model disciple described by *Ayurveda* is equally essential in every era.

In the context of *Shishyopanayaniam*, *sushruta* expressed that teacher should ask the pupil that “abstaining from passion, anger, greed, confusion, conceit, egoism, envy, cruelty, backbiting, falsehood, idleness and infamy, you must be pure ,having cut your nails and hairs, in ochre robes, invariably following truth , penance,

celibacy and salutations, you should pursue standing, movement, sleep, sitting, eating and study as permitted by me and should do whatever is favorable and beneficial to me, by behaving otherwise it would unrighteous for you leading to unfruitful learning without brilliance.”

*Charaka* also in context of examination of disciple [*Shishyapariksha*]in *vimana sthana* , presume that a good disciple should have tranquility, generosity, aversion to mean acts, normal condition of eyes, face and nasal ridge, thin, red and clear tongue, absence of any morbidity in teeth,lips and voice, perseverance, freedom from vanity, presence of intellect, power of reasoning and memory, liberal mindedness, having disposition of physician, inquisitiveness for truth, physical perfection, unimpaired senses, modesty and absence of ego, ability to understand the real meaning of things, absence of irritability, absence of addictions, good character ,purity ,conduct, love for study, enthusiasm and sympathetic disposition, devotion to study, uninterrupted taste for the theory and practice of the science, absence of greed and laziness, good will for living beings, obedience to all the instructions of the preceptor and devotion to the preceptor.

More than twenty five qualities are anticipated here for the model disciple. Such type of eligible disciple is necessary because in future such a disciple will grow as a qualified teacher and physician [*Vaidya*].Due to such high profile of eligibility, this profession is highly honored and admired in the society since the ancient time. In this context in *Yuktaseniya* chapter of *Sushrutasamhita*, *sushruta* opined that the physician who is expert in his own specialty but also



acquainted with the ideas of other scriptures and honored by king and other experts as well, stands erect like a national flag.

For the same *Charaka* advised that after the selection of a suitable medical-text [*shashtra*] one should assess the qualities of the preceptor also. A model preceptor should well-grounded in scriptures; equipped with practical knowledge, wise, skillful, whose prescriptions are reliable, who is pious, has all necessary therapeutic equipment, who is having all normal sense organs, who is accustomed with human nature and rationale of treatment, whose knowledge is not overshadowed, who is free from egotism, envy and anger, who is hardworking and is capable of expressing his views with clarity. Only such type of preceptor can infiltrates medical knowledge to a good disciple as the seasonal clouds helps bring about good crop in a fertile land.

Hence there is no any alternative for the teacher. The best teacher is one who is capable to remove the darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge. Hence *Charaka* concluded that *Acharya* or preceptor is the best among those who provides scriptural knowledge.

*Sushruta* also has clearly prescribed teacher's own conduct towards the pupil. He had signified that teacher should not possess any peculiar or prejudice mind for the disciples.

In above context, he is particularly concentrated on the biased attitude of teacher. Because some times in spite of well behavior of disciple; if teacher is finding the faults in student [*Anyathadarshi*] then that teacher will be

sinful and his learning will be unfruitful as per *sushruta*.

In another perspective, *Lord Divodasa* welcomes his six disciples knowing their eligibility and treated them like his son by calling them *Vasta*. *Dalhana* commented on this in his *Nibandhsangraha* commentary. Here the word *vatsa* symbolizes dual connotations. First denotation suggests that teacher's approach towards disciple should be like his own son and secondly teacher should not be biased among the students. This incident establishes the foundation of impartial attitude towards the disciple.

*Charaka* enlisted and acknowledged all above talents of teacher along with one of the most important quality that is, '*Shishya Vatsalam Adhyapakam*'. It means one should affectionately disposed towards his disciples. It is exactly analogous to the *Sushruta's* '*Vasta*' vocation.

In ancient times, knowledge is succeeded through *Guru-Shishya* tradition in *Gurukulas*. Due to the modern age gradually, the *Gurukulas* are transformed into institutions. Actually institutions should be superior to the traditional *Gurukula* system because institutional set up is fairly huge having all necessary facilities and availability of more than one teacher who are specialized or competent in their respective subject.

Hence it is very much needful in today's institutional set up to acquire such type of excellence of teacher which is envisioned by classical texts. It is necessary to remind by every teacher that a *Guru* is not merely a communicator of information or textual knowledge rather a teacher is really needed for pragmatic education, skill, and life experience with moral ethics. All this anticipations are having additional



significance in case of *Ayurvedic* education where a learner has to become a competent professional to handle a highly humanistic profession i.e. medicine and health care.

As this health science belongs to the human beings, besides the criteria for selection of *Acharya* [teacher], process of selection of science, criteria of selection of disciple are also deliberately detailed in classical *Ayurveda* texts. Hence the *Guru* [*Vaidya*] and students both should be having excellent qualities. They should be competent on intellectual, social and ethical ground.

In this regard, the dwell responsibility has to be shouldered by *Ayurveda* teachers' viz. as a *Vaidya* and as a *Guru*. Though both the role are interlinked; one has to make a balance of both the associations. One has to take care of both the fronts viz. first is as a teacher-disciple relationship and another is as a doctor-patient association. Hence *Ayurveda* classics has directed the ethics for both the roles. Classics had guided for the ideal doctor-patient relationship through the observation of *chaturvidha vaidya vrutti*, *chikitsa chatushpada*, qualities of *chikitsa prabhritiya vaidya*, general and ethical code of conducts like *aachar-rasayana* and *sadvritta*, rules for treating the diseases as per their prognosis etc. Simultaneously examination of science [*Shashtrapariksha*] before taking the admission, criteria of selection of disciple, duties of *Guru*, process of learning and teaching, importance of seminars and conferences, their methodology, types, ancient and classical methodology of research etc. are also deliberated by classics to attain expertise.

Simultaneously *Ayurveda* classics offer many guidelines on good medical practices like qualities of patient and physician are mentioned in the form of four limbs of treatment [*Chatushpada*], as excellence of *chashushpada* is the key towards success in the treatment. The pedagogy in terms of *adhyayana* and *adhyapana vidhi* enlightens the procedure of medical education and rules for setting subsequent practices. *Sadvritta* and *Chaturvidha vaidya vrutti* are other mile stones which elaborate set of rules for professional good conduct. *Acharyas* of *Ayurveda* also guides the physician how to interact and behave with the patient in terms of the codes of conduct towards the patient.

### Discussion

*Acharya charaka* has postulated clearly the ethics of this divine medical science is not only for making money or for fulfilling the personal desires rather it is envisioned for the humanity and compassion towards the living beings. The medical profession has to be motivated by compassion for living beings (*Bhutadaya*). He who practices not for money or for notion but out of compassion for living beings is the best among all physicians.

If *Ayurveda* bioethics are compare with the western bioethics, the main difference is ; modern physicians requires informed consent and dictates the patient's medical situation truthfully however *Charaka* infers that speaking truthfully about the disease is not absolute, if by doing so, one might harm the diseased or the others. Thus *Ayurveda* ethics advise preference to the physician, whether to speak the truth or not. This is the fundamental ethical expression of *Ayurveda's* basic morals. Hence in *Ayurveda*, ethic of trust still holds good to a large extent, while in



modern medicine ethic of right is predominant.

### **Conclusion**

Though there are no separate sections on ethics in *Ayurveda* classics, but the flavor of ethical essence runs throughout the text, which indicates, how the base of ethics is significant.

The foundation of basic doctrines of bioethics in *Ayurveda* through the ethical code for *Guru-shishya* and doctor-patient relation are multifaceted as compared to

the bioethics of modern medical science. Contemporary medical sciences which are existing in society have their own established ethics and methodologies for doctor patient relationship but they are lacking in this ethical expression and *Guru-Shishya* custom. The respect and magnitude about *Guru* is not that much highlighted there like *Ayurveda*. They are having their own set of bioethics but the glory and faith in this relation is lacking.

### References -

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