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Ethics In Ayurveda

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Abstract

Ayurveda, the innate medical system of India, has integrated the concept of interconnectedness into its understanding of health and disease. It considers the human body as an indivisible whole with a network of interrelated functions, mind and consciousness, wherein a disturbance in one part will have repercussions in other parts as well. The key to health is for these factors to maintain stability since disease is seen as a perturbation in this network. Ayurvedic treatment aims not only at removal of disease, but also at the restoration of the equilibrium of bodily functions.

The centuries-old science of Ayurveda, apart from being a holistic form of medicine, also clearly defines the student-teacher and doctor-patient relationship. It sets high ethical standards of professional and personal integrity for the doctor, teacher and student. In addition to being technically skilled and well-read in the science, practitioners of Ayurveda must be compassionate and empathetic. Students of Ayurveda are taught the importance of compassionate caring for patients and maintaining personal integrity.

Keywords: Ancient, Ayurveda, Ethics, Integrity.

Introduction

The *Ayurvedic* physician is entrusted with both the physical and mental well-being of the individual and the community, is considered the most important factor for successful treatment, and is expected to maintain a high level of personal and professional integrity when dealing with patients. The code of ethics embodied in *Ayurveda* sets out the criteria for good physicians, teachers and medical students. Compassion, integrity, respect, honesty, courage and conscientiousness are considered the cornerstone of medical ethics. There is emphasis on the doctor's need to transcend the needs of the

physical body and connect to the self of the patient. In order to evolve to this state, the physician has to lead a life of integrity and renounce material wealth. Ethics is taught not merely for its own sake but because it is considered essential on the path to the final goal in life. The same is conveyed to the patients as well.

Aims and objects of present article is to advocate and persuade that medical ethics is not a new concept given by cosmopolitan and conventional medicine but its vivid description is already available in all ancient texts of *Ayurveda*. We need to take in those values, set of traditions and work culture to further develop, publicize and practice the ancient Indian medical ethics in interest of mankind and thus resurrect the glory of *Ayurveda*.

Material And Method

Medical ethics have been an integral part of *Ayurveda*. we can achieve our goal of positive health which is not just a disease free body but healthy mind, soul and society as well with the help of highest medical ethics as recorded in *Samhitas* of *Ayurveda* because there is major involvement of psychic and somatic activities in prescribed code of *Sadvritta*. The definition given by *Vagbhatta* depicts its true characteristics where the act of *Adrasantanta* (melting with compassion); detachment; charity; restraining of physical, vocal and mental activities and a sense of self-involvement in deeds of others, have been recognized as *Sadvritta*.^[1]

Here the following collections of ethics are from Brihatrayee.

- 1. General ethics for all
- 2. Ethics for *Vaidya* (Doctor)
- 3. Ethics for *Shishya* (Student)

General ethics for all

• Practice to prevent Psychic and Psychosomatic disturbance

One should speak timely beneficial, measured sweet words, be self-controlled and virtuous, having faith in God, devoted to teachers who have attained spiritual perfection and are advanced in modesy, intellect, learning and age.

One should always acquit himself in an auspicious way and display good manners.

One should be friendly to all creatures, reconcile the angry, console the frightened, be merciful to poor, be truthful and be predominantly of compromising nature and tolerant towards unpalatable words uttered by others, be controller of intolerance, be of peaceful disposition and conquer the very roots of attachments and hatred.^[2]

One should not tell a lie nor should take over others properties nor should long for others wives and property, should not indulge in hatred or sinful activities, one should never be vice even to vicious, one should not disclose other defects, one should not disclose other's secrets, one should shun the company of the unvirtuous, traitors, lunatics, fallen persons, abortionists, means and crooked persons.^[3]

One should not ride conveyances, sit on the hard seat of knee height, sleep on the bed uncovered, or without pillow, small or uneven, one should not walk on the uneven slopes of the mountain, climbs a tree, take bath in river having turbulent flow.

One should not trod on shadow of kin or those born of noble families, one should not move around place of fire, laugh loudly, release wind with sound; one should not indulge in yawning, sneezing or laughter without covering his mouth,

itch nostrils, grind teeth, sound nails, strike bones, scrape the Earth, cut the straw, grind clod of mud, maintain improper position of different parts of body.

One should not see planets or an undesirable, impure or condemned object, produce 'Hum' sound before a corpse, one should not transgress the shadow of sacred tree, a flag, teacher, a respectable person or an undesirable person, during nights, one should not enter the premises of a temple, a scared tree, public courtyard, cross road, garden, one should not similarly enter a solitary house or forest alone.^[3]

One should not have relation with women, friends, servants of bad conduct; there should be no enmity with good men nor friendship with bad ones, one should have no choice for cooked acts, one should not indulge in ignoble or frightening act and one should take recourse to undue courage, sleeping, vigil, bath, drink or food in access quantity, one should not sit for a long time with his knee up.

One should not approach snakes or animals with dangerous teeth and horns, one should avoid easterly wind, Sun, Snow fall and storms, one should not provoke a quarrel, one should not come close to the fire without concentration of mind or without a wash after taking food, one should not heat his body by keeping fire below.

One should not take bath unless he is free from exertion or without a gurgle or in naked condition; one should not touch his head with the apparel worn at the time of bath or strike the tip of hair. After taking bath one should not wear the same cloth worn before.

One should not go out without touching gems, ghee, feet of respectable persons, auspicious objects and flower. One should not pass through by keeping respectable persons or auspicious objects in left nor keeping others in right side.^[3]

• Practice regarding taking Diet

One should not take food without taking oblations to God or without making offering to the departed ancestor, teachers, guest and dependants, without washing hands, feet and face or without cleaning the mouth or with face turned towards North or with disturbed mind or surrounded by insincere uncultured, dirty or hungry persons or dirty dishes or improper place and time.

One should not take food which dirty or which has been served by the opponents. [3]

Healthy individuals as well as (some of the) patients should observe the following, even while using such of the food article as are most wholesome by nature.

One should eat only that food in proper quantity which is hot, unctuous and not contradictory in potency and that too, after the digestions of the previous meal.

Food should be taken in proper place equipped with all the accessories, without talking and laughing with concentration of mind and paying due regards to oneself.^[4]

Three substances not to be used in excess of all the substances, one should not resort too much to the three; viz. *Pippali* (Piper longum), Alkali and Salt.^[5]

One should eat in proper quantity . the quantity of food to be taken again depends upon the power of digestion (including metabolism). $^{[6]}$

The amount of food with or without disturbing the equilibrium gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as the proper quantity.^[6]

One should not take curd at night, it should not be taken alone without ghee, sugar, green gram soup, honey. It should not be taken hot also.

At the outset one should take sweet, in the middle sour and salty and afterwards remaining *rasas* in the food as directed by the physician.^[7]

One should not eat in broken plate or without plate. [8]

• Practice regarding natural urges

One should not attend to any other work while under the pressure of natural urge.

One should not let out oral or nasal excreta during the course of recitation religious rights, studies, religious and auspicious act. [9]

• Practice regarding relations with ladies

One should not insult women.

One should not indulge in sexual intercourse with a woman during her menses.^[10]

• Practice regarding good social life

One should not deviate from generally approved principles or one should not break any code of conduct.

One should not indulge in taking food, studies, sexual relation or sleep during the dawn or dusk.

One should not have any inclination towards wine, gambling or prostitutes.

One should not insult anybody. One should not use harsh words towards the old persons, teachers, persons grouped together or King.

One should not be impatient or overbold. One should not enjoy alone.^[11]

One should not have uncomfortable character, conduct manners and disease. One should neither rely on everybody nor suspect everybody. One should not to be too meticulous at all time.^[12]

One should get up (from bed) during *Brahma Muhurta* to protect his life. (The last three hours of night from 3am to 6 am known as *Brahma Muhurta*.)^[13]

Person who are strong and who indulge in fatty foods (daily) in cold season and spring season should do exercise to half of their strength (capacity) only, while other persons (in other seasons) should do it mildly.^[14]

Himsa (causing injury, torture etc.) Steya (stealing, robbing), Anyathakama (unlawful sex activities), Paishunya (abusive or harsh speech), Anrita vachana (scolding, speaking untruth) Sambhinna alapa (speech causing dissension, separation, breaking of company), Vyapada (quarrel, intention of harming), Abhidya (jealousy, not tolerating good of others) and Drigviparyaya (finding fault, misunderstanding, faithlessness etc. with scriptures, elders etc.) – these ten sins pertaining to the body, speech and mind should be avoided. (of the 10 sins, the first three pertain to the body, next four to the speech and the last three to the mind)^[15]

Those who have no means of live hood, who are suffering from disease and who are afflicted with grief should be helped (to get over their troubles) to the utmost extent.^[16]

One should maintain a single mind (balanced mind) during the period of wealth as well as during the period of calamity. One should be anxious of the cause of wealth, happiness, well being etc. of others but not be jealous of the effects (money, happiness etc.)^[17]

One should speak appropriate to the occasion with words which are good in brief which is not untrue and which is pleasing.^[18]

One should start conversing (with others) first with a pleasant face, should be virtuous kind and soft (mild), should not be comfortable and happy alone (should make others also happy).^[19]

One should neither believe everybody nor suspect everyone, one should not reveal that someone is his foe and that he is an enemy of someone else, should not make public the insults he had and disaffection towards the master (his own insults form his master or of his master towards him)^[20]

One should cut his hair, nails and mustaches (not allow them grow long), keep his feet and orifice of waste materials (nose, ears, eyes, urethra and anus) clean; take bath daily, put on scents and good dress which is not superfluous but is pleasant to look at.^[21]

One should not blow his nose (except for forcing out the dirty secretion); not scratch ground without any reason, not do ugly movements of the part of body and not sit on one's own heels for a long a time.^[22]

One should avoid food given by enemies.

One should not make sound with body parts, mouth and nails nor shake the hand and hair. [23]

For an intelligent person the whole world is a teacher hence one should imitate the world after carefully considering their meaning (and effects) of such actions.^[24]

He, who constantly thinks of (reviews examines) how his day and night are passing and adopt the right way only will never become a victim of sorrow.^[25]

All persons (both healthy and sick) should avoid speaking, walking long distances and sleeping immediately after consuming liquids, exposure to sun and fire, travel in vehicles, swimming and riding on animals soon after consuming food. [26]

• Practice regarding self control

One should not be in the habit of postponing things or one should not indulge in any activity without proper examination. One should not do things in a fit of anger or rejoicing. One should not be under continued grief. One should not be conceited over achievements nor be desperate in loss.

One should always remember his own nature. One should have faith in correlation of the cause and effect (that is good and bad actions and their corresponding results) and should always act on it. One should not lose sprit or one should not remember his insults. [27]

One should avoid gambling, excessive drinking, gossiping, clubs and musical instruments.

One should not wear garland, umbrella, shoes, ornaments and old clothes put on by others. [28]

One should not perform coitus in dawn, midnight and midday and in shameful, open and dirty places and while one is hungry, diseased, agitated, having urge of flatus, feces and urine, thirst and too much debilitated.^[29]

• Practice regarding social relations

One should assiduously follow the path of *Brihmacharya*, knowledge, charity, friendship and compassion, happiness, detachment and peace. [30]

One should hold himself responsible for his happiness and miseries. Therefore without apprehension one should follow the path of propitiousness.^[31]

One should adopt only such of means of live hood as do not clash with virtuous path. One should follow the path of peace and engage himself in studies. This is how one can attain happiness.^[32]

• Practice regarding house

In a house architecturally commendable, clean, and free from the Sun and wind physical, exogenous and mental disorders do not occur.

There, cot should be placed spacious well covered, comfortable with head eastwards and secured with a weapon. Cot should be laid with mattress filled with cotton, pillow and bed-covers. Weapon is kept for averting forcious agents.

In a well furnished bed the wounded patient has comfortable activities and movements. That should be placed eastwards in honor of the God who are in the East. [33]

Ethics for Vaidya

Compassion for the living creatures is the *Dharma* (righteousness) par excellence. A physician who enter into medical profession keeping this ideal in view, accomplish his objectives best and gets happiness par excellence. [34]

The wise one who aspires to be a physician should make special efforts to maintain his (good) qualities so that he can be the life giver to human being.^[35]

Ethics for Shishya

One should observe *Brahmacarya*, maintain beard, speak truth, take vegetarian food, resort to such food and regimens as are conducive to the promotion of intellect, refrain for envy and carry no weapon with him.

One should act without ego, with cares and affection, with undisturbed mind, with modesty, with proper vigilance, without jealousy and with obedience for teacher's instruction.

One should make efforts to cure the patient. One should always make efforts for the upliftment of his knowledge and adoption of such methods that would give him good health.

One should not even think of committing adultery and should not aspire for any property belonging to other.

One's appearance and apparel should make him look modest; speech should be pleasant, pure, righteous, blissful, excellent, truthful, useful and moderate. One's behavior should be in conformity with the time and place based on the recollections of the past experience.

One should not take wine, commit sin or have association with those committing sinful acts.

One should not disclose family customs (secrets) to outsiders.

Even though actually possessed of wisdom, one should not exhibit it to others. Many people get very much irritated to hear such self praise even for a saint.^[36]

One should live clean and pure, devoted to the teacher, dexterous, free from drowsiness and excessive sleep and studying by the aforesaid method becomes accomplished in the scripture.^[37]

Discussion & Result

Ayurveda believes that the "Excellence of Health" forms basis for Caturvidh Purushartha i.e. Dharma (virtuous acts), Artha (wealth), Kama (means of worldly happiness) and Moksha (detachment from bindings or emancipation): these

incorporate the entire achievements of human life and on the other hand, the ill health annihilates all the above said as well as the well being and life too. The idea of health put forth by *Ayurveda* is so perfect and comprehensive in itself that it not only surpasses the proverb 'Health is wealth, given by western thinkers but also establishes an understanding of positive healthy life as a whole and its worldly achievements.

The Ethics (Sadvritta) described in Ayurveda has got an overall controlling capacity to all sorts of mental and sinful acts of the individual. It is a code of virtuous acts recognized as an mental hygiene. It refrains the man from psychosomatic diseases by infusing non-ailing thoughts to the mind. Enumerating the merits of Ethics (code of good conducts) Caraka has said that one who assiduously follow the prescriptions of noble acts for maintenance of positive health, gets devoid of all diseases, lives for hundred years and doesn't meet with any untimely death. He praised by Good, earns fame all over the world, attains virtue and wealth and becomes a friend of all creatures. The one with virtuous acts attains (after death) the excellent abode of souls. So, the Ethics should always be followed by everyone. Even if something is not stated here (in this context) but that is prescribed elsewhere as a virtuous act, that is also always acceptable, according to Lord Atreya.

Conclusion

Man is an absolute unit of society. It is the characteristic and behavior of an individual which constitute good or bad character of society at small scale and at large, it reflects the same for whole of the nation. Apart from the general behavior of an individual at personal level as well as at a large, there is certain code of conducts for which one has to be more careful, in order to bring harmony, peace and avoid disturbance in common walk of life.

Sadvritta (ethics or code of conducts in Ayurveda) inculcates the discipline related to mind, character, social and religious and personal life, so as to accord with happiness and good, not of the individual but of the society as a whole. It can be co-opted as a compulsory course of children and public education at every level. Such education will not only improve the physical, mental and spiritual health of an individual but also of the society as a whole and render the happy and healthy life while living in this world and even after death.

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