



The Relevance of The Ethical Code for Ayurveda Practice.

Dr. VAIBHAV DADU

Lecturer, Department of basic principles, Govt. Akhandanand Ayurved College, Ahmedabad

ABSTRACT

The practice of medicine has been regarded as one of the noblest profession in India. The terms like the Praanacharya for the well versed physician are in vogue since long that suggests the highest regard for the medical practitioner which carries the burden of responsibility of maintaining the dignity on the shoulders of the practitioner. The expectations of the society from a practitioner sometimes outdo the capacities of the latter. This expectation - performance gap leads to the friction between the practitioner and the society. Coupled to this, the problem exacerbates when the practitioners don't follow their 'Medical ethics'. Medical ethics has a long history varying among various cultures and organizations. The Indian system of Medicine known commonly as Ayurveda with its Hindu philosophical background sets highest of standards for a practitioner ranging from the issues of dressing to the moral conduct et. al. A sincere effort has been made here to decode the ethical code of the Ayurveda medicine and its relevance in the present day.

KEYWORDS : Ayurveda, ethics, moral conduct, dharma, secrecy, personality, discipline.

Introduction:

Ayurveda is the well known traditional Indian system of medicine evolved and developed with the background of Indian philosophy and therefore, postulated the high standards of Ethics or the Code of Conduct for a physician. The Ethics is one of the three branches of the Philosophy, the other two being the Epistemology that deals with the study of the means of investigation and the Ontology which is the science of existence. These ethics incorporate all the issues related to the medical practice. The imparting of health and curing the ailment is considered noble in Ayurveda system of medicine. This righteous code of practice is well knit in Ayurveda as it is said to be promulgated by the seers who were unbiased and had the only target of providing the health care to the needy.

The Decoding of the ethical values in Ayurveda compendia:

The principles related to the ethical issues have been postulated in the Ayurveda compendia mainly the Charaka and the Sushruta Samhita. The major ethical issues mentioned in these texts can be studied under following heads-

The principles of Merit (*dharma*) - The concept of the *dharma* i.e. the upright conduct has originated from the Vaisheshika school of Indian Philosophy which defines *dharma* as the path to moral and spiritual development. (*Vaisheshika darshana* chapter I, verse 3). The physician according to Ayurveda should be following the *dharma* in word and action. The doctor or the physician attains a new life known as *dwija* (*Charaka Samhita Chikitsaa Sthaana Chapter I, part IV, verse 53*) on being trained in the medicine as the know -

how of the practice of medicine is not by chance but by the thorough training and learning along with the nobility of the bestowing of health to the people in pain. This capacity to eradicate the suffering and misery of the needy is the great asset that defines a physician. Therefore, the physician should practice his profession in a virtuous and upright manner beneficial to the mankind. The physician should treat the patients compassionately as his children and family welfare and not for the wealth or mere satisfaction of the worldly desires. There is no gift greater than the gift of life which is imparted by the physician (*Charaka Samhita Chikitsaa Sthaana Chapter I, part IV, verse 52-62*). Also, the *Charaka Samhita* proposes the four points of the doctor patient relationship among which is the relation of 'friendship' i.e. *Maitri* meaning the regard for the patient as similar to the physician (*Ibid* chapter IX, verse 26). This ethical code of Ayurveda medicine is even more relevant today as a number of the aspiring and practising physicians are following the unethical ways of earning as a quid pro quo from the drug companies, referrals and the laboratories. These unethical practices are forbidden in present day medical ethics in the context of 'Vendor relationships' (*Medical ethics- Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*) that also includes the receipt of gift from a company or individual in the form of cash or kind. It is widely accepted in Ayurveda and other books on the moral code that the practice

of medicine shall never go waste as it bestows the fruits of satisfaction along with the money and fame.

Principles and values of patient health care: The system of Ayurveda propagates the '*Aarogya*' or the attainment of health of the patient as the ethical code. The physician therefore, has been compared with the *Ishwaasa* meaning Archer, as the archer sets his target and focuses to its achievement, the physician sets the target of mitigating the misery of the patient (*Charaka Samhita Vimaana Sthaana Chapter VIII, verse 42*). This cure should be of 'Pure' variety that envisages the treatment of the ailment but without generation of the new disease hitherto absent. The treatment that cures the one but leads to the other ailment is prohibited as the 'Impure' (*Ashtang hridayam Sootra Sthaana chapter XIII, verse 16*). The principles of health care include the examination of the disease and diseased prior to the treatment modalities. The clear prognosis of the disease shall be done and the disease incurable or fatal has to be communicated to the attendants of the patient. This code dealing with the benefit of the patient as the sole motto is also adopted in the contemporary code of medical ethics in the term of 'beneficence' - a practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient (*Salus aegroti supremalex.*) and 'Non - maleficence' - first, do no harm (*primum non nocere*). (*Medical ethics- Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*)

The Principles of personality development: The noble job of physician demands the issues pertaining to the development and maintenance of personality. The physician should be neatly dressed with simple but tidy and descent clothes, his hair and nail in order and confident look and gait (*Sushrut Samhita Sootra Sthaana chapter X, verse 3*). Also, the physician should possess good unambiguous communication skills (*Sushrut Samhita Sootra Sthaana chapter IV, verse 4*) that convince the patient about the doctor's sincerity and trustworthiness. This acts as a bond of reliability between the two. The doctor should not boast about his capabilities and not indulge in pomp and unnecessary discussion with the patient (*Charak Samhita Sootra Sthaana chapter XXIX, verse 7*). This issue of the personality development is taken care of in the present day scenario not only in the medicine but all the professions. The communication skills however, play an important part of the medical profession with many repercussions studied here, under the secrecy contract.

The Secrecy contract: This is a very important issue that generally disturbs the patient- doctor relationship. The physician should not disclose the disease related or personnel information of the patient to any one else unless deemed to be necessary in the interests of the patient. The clause of confidentiality should be respected by the physician. The confidentiality in the conversations between the doctor and patient known as the patient- physician privilege (*Medical ethics- Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*)

should not be breached. The confidentiality clause has been even legally mandated in some countries.

The Social discipline: The *Ayurveda* envisages the rules of social behaviour of the physician. The physician should be very careful in his social behaviour or when he/she visits a patient's house. The male visiting doctor shall not visit a house with only the female and should avoid any irrelevant leisure talk with the attendants. The visiting physician shall ensure that he doesn't accept any item to eat or drink provided by the lone attendant. The sexual relationships should not be maintained with the patients or their attendants (*Charaka Samhita Vimaana Sthaana Chapter VIII, verse 13*). The friendly behaviour should be maintained with the patient and the attendants. The *Charaka Samhita* also mentions the *Sadvritta* i.e. the social and personal discipline which should be strictly followed by the physician along with the desire of longevity.

The respect for the law and its abidance: The physician should gain permission from the respected controlling authorities prior to the start of the practice. The physician shall have a respect for the extant law regarding his profession and ensure that he/she doesn't indulge in any activity which is anti lawful. The *Ayurveda* lists the category of the persons seeking medical attention who have to be denied the treatment. These patients are those who are anti social i.e. law breakers or wanted criminals or those who are antagonistic to the physician or do not trust the doctor and also those who consider themselves as the best physician (*Ashtang hridayam Sootra Sthaana chapter I, verse 34-35*). These persons are to be denied the treatment as they are likely to falsely implicate the physician as their associates rendering the physician liable to be prosecuted in the court of law. This matter is conspicuously present in the modern medico-legal laws in the country that protects the interests of the physician and the patient. Similarly, it is the duty of the physician to report such a case to the law maintaining authorities so that the culprits are booked and justice is served.

Conclusion:

An attempt has been made here to bring to light the standards of ethics that have been a part of the Indian medicine since long. The medical ethics described in *Ayurveda* cover all the aspects of a valued medical practitioner in tandem with the nobility of the profession and meeting the expectations from the society. Albeit, the ethical issues mentioned in the *Ayurveda* compendia have been mostly related to the Indian philosophy, their utility and importance in present day medical practice becomes all the more relevant with the growing distrust between the patient and the doctor. The following of these basic ethics with the necessary modifications, if any with relation to the change of times and culture shall ensure the re-establishment of the glory associated with the Medical Practice.

REFERENCES

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/medical_ethics, Medical ethics- Wikipaedia, the free encyclopaedia.html || Kunte Moreswar Anna, Navare Krishna Shastri (2002), *Ashtaang Hridayam*, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi. || Murthy Srikanth K.R., (2004), *Illustrated Sushruta samhita*, Vol-I, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi Publication. || Sengupta Narendranath, Sengupta Balaichandra (2005), *Charaka Samhita Vol - I & III*, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi. || Sharma Priyavrit (2005), *Sushruta samhita with commentary of Dalhana*, Vol-I, eighth edition, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi Publication. || Sharma R.K. and Dash Bhagwan (2005), *Charaka Samhita Vol - I*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi Publication. || Sharma Umashankar (2004), *Sarvadarshana Sangraha*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi Publication. |