

RELEVANCE OF 'SHISHYOPANAYANEEYA ADHYAYA' OF ASHTANGA SAMGRAHA SOOTRASTHANA IN COMPREHENSIVE AND ETHICAL MEDICAL EDUCATION

¹*Dr. Vidyanand Mohan MD (Ay.), ²Dr. Aparna Nandakumar MD (Ay.), ³Dr. Aneesh E.G MD (Ay.) and Dr. Abitha Edathadathil MD (Ay.)

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Samhita and Siddhanta, Faculty of Ayurveda, Gokul Global University, Sidhpur, Gujarat.

²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Rasashastra and Bhaishajyakalpana, Faculty of Ayurveda, Gokul Global University, Sidhpur, Gujarat.

³PhD Scholar, Dept. of Panchakarma, IPGTRA Jamnagar, Gujarat.

⁴Assistant Professor, Dept. of Panchakarma, Vishnu Ayurveda College, Shoranur, Kerala.

Article Received on
10 March 2020,

Revised on 31 March 2020,
Accepted on 21 April 2020

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20205-17444

***Corresponding Author**
Dr. Vidyanand Mohan
MD (Ay.)

Assistant Professor, Dept. of
Samhita and Siddhanta,
Faculty of Ayurveda, Gokul
Global University, Sidhpur,
Gujarat.

ABSTRACT

Medical education is always considered as a sector which requires adeptness. It exemplifies the divine touch of God in the aspirants who are going to relieve sufferings of human beings in the form of physical and mental ailments. The aspirants should get involved in the medical schools by investing hardships to acquire the sacred knowledge of medicine. It is equally important to develop self-discipline, dedication, perseverance and empathy by every medico who wilfully selected this profession. In present era qualification to earn medical education is determined based on either subject merit or financial thrust of the student. *Ayurveda*, the indigenous medical science is having a unique way in selection of student for learning medical science and it always upholds the diligence of medical students backed by good ethical

conducts. *Acharya Vagbhata* gives a detailed description about fitness of a student for medical education and also highlights about the necessity of comprehensive and ethical way of upbringing a competent medical practitioner. The name given for this chapter is '*Shishyopanayaneeya*' which falls under *Sootrasthana* of *Ashtanga Samgraha*. In present days '*Shishyopanayana Ceremony*' is conducted as an initiation to learn *Ayurveda* for the new comers and unfortunately the ceremony gets winded up with mere performance of

rituals. Thus an attempt is made to analyze the desired qualities of students fit for medical education as per *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Shishyopanayana*, Medical Education.

INTRODUCTION

Shishyopanayaneeya is the second *Adhyaya* (chapter) of *Sootrasthana* (Section of aphorisms) of *Ashtanga Samgraha*. ‘*Upanayana*’ is one among the ‘*Shodasha Samskara*’ which is performed during childhood before the initiation of Vedic studies. During older days students were initiated for learning by preceptors in traditional *Gurukula* and it is totally different from the contemporary educational system.

Studies of *Ayurveda* were also started formally from a learned preceptor during older days. *Shishyopanayaneeya Adhyaya* gives account on desired qualities of a student who enters into *Ayurveda*. This indigenous medical science of India paves base for empowering comprehensive medical education with remarkable ethical values.

DISCUSSION

Acharya enlists the qualities of disciple in the beginning of this chapter. “A disciple should have respect towards the preceptor and he has to possess keen interest in gathering scientific knowledge. He should be devoid of faults and is to be proficient with sharp intellect and memory. Unimpaired sense organs are appreciated for a disciple and he is advised to follow *Brahmacharya* (abstinence from sex). Albeit he is endowed with courage, good conducts, stability, gentle talks, shyness, purity and a good family background he should be closely observed by the preceptor for a period of six months.”^[1]

Inclusion of these much desired qualities for a medical aspirant may look odd in the present era. One can trace out the good intentions behind the description of desired qualities of medical student as per *Acharya Vagbhata* in this chapter. A mutual trust is to be well established between the teacher and the student and the latter should always be obliged to the former. The selfless devotion from the student encourages the teacher to belight the student’s path with the ‘light of knowledge’. Traditional Indian educational system is built on the base of this sacred ‘preceptor-disciple fellowship’.

Proficiency in intellect and memory is inevitable for a medical student mainly because of the reason that he is going to deal with ‘human lives’. *Brahmacharya* is advised for the student

who wishes to learn *Ayurveda*. In fact *Brahmacharya* is to be followed by all students irrespective of their disciplines. Mere abstinence from sexual intercourse doesn't impart *Brahmacharya* in its broader aspect. It includes withdrawal from sexual pleasures by means of thinking, talking, activities (masturbation), etc. Irrational usage of modern technologies gives rise to wrong information in young generations which usually ends up in the world of perverted sexual fantasies. A medical student is bound to maintain an ethical approach towards the patient and he is not supposed to break the patient's trust during close associations. Thus the practice of *Brahmacharya* finds significance for a medical student.

Acharya highlights that the disciple should be devoid of any faults. This can be read along with efficiency of sense organs which is essential for keen observation in medical profession. *Acharya* might also be indicating his disciple who should be blameless or free from all guilt which is crucial for a medico since his entry to the medical school. Courage and good ethical conducts are desired qualities for a medical practitioner and it should be present since he starts learning the medicine. Acharya Indu interprets the quality of stability (*Sthira*) as the state of steadiness.^[2] This can be further interpreted as firmness in his words and ability in decision making. Gently talk by the student reflects the positivity in the speech which would be dignified in future clinical practice.

Description of shyness as one among the desired quality for a medical student may look funny. Shyness in present context doesn't convey its usual meaning of 'being disinclined to familiar approach'. It can be interpreted as carefulness or prudence which is essential for a medical student. Total lack of shyness may results in hard and fast acts from medicos which may harm the patients. Shyness also reflects the obedience of disciple towards his master. Purity not only emphasizes physical hygiene but it has got extended application in speech and thoughts as well. Good family background doesn't imply the birth of the student in a well off family. It insinuates the modern proverb- "Charity begins at home". A student always reciprocates the way he was brought up and the family is having pivotal role in character development of the student. It also decides conduct fitness of prospective students.

Even if the desired qualities are present, a preceptor is advised to observe the prospective students for a term of six months. This close observation by the preceptor would be helpful in conducting overall assessment of desired qualities of disciple and his eligibility to receive the medical knowledge.

Acharya further elaborates the mode of conduct by the disciple. “A disciple is advised to wear apparels which lie inferior to that of preceptor and he is supposed to treat the preceptor like a king. The disciple should sleep only after the preceptor’s sleep and should wake up before that of his preceptor. He is strictly prohibited from uttering preceptor’s name without honour gestures and is advised- not to imitate the preceptor.”^[3]”

Down the ages, students are instructed to wear simple dresses. This is helpful in reinforcing modesty in student community and also exemplifies equality in students with different socio-economic backgrounds. Introduction of uniform dresses effectively fulfils this purpose in present era. This difference in dressing will be helpful to distinguish students from teachers. In medical schools white apron is mandatory for students and it is always different from the apron of faculty members.

A king will always be served best by his assistants. Similarly the disciples are advised to treat their preceptor in most caressing manner. Resolving and elaborating the disciple’s queries by the Godly preceptor with lucid narrations are hallmarks of Ayurvedic literatures. This practice evidently proves the delight of preceptor towards the inquisitive disciple. Thus industrious students are advised to devote themselves sincerely and selflessly to their teachers. This also cultivates humility which is essential for progress in the process of learning.

The pattern of sleep instructed alludes about dedication of the students towards teachers and the importance of refraining themselves from the comfort zone. Calling the master by name or imitating them in their absence clearly indicates lack of respect and breach of discipline from student’s part. Thus these are advised to be avoided.

After describing about desired qualities for disciple, *Acharya* briefs about features of an ideal physician. “He should be invincible, prideless, wise, honest, good looking, knowledgeable, adept and proficient in both theoretical and practical aspects. He should be able to look after the destitute patients like his own son. Such physician is allowed to practice medicine by the preceptor and then only he earns the title of *Bhishak* (Doctor/Physician)”.^[4]

These qualities are told for the disciple who is about to complete *Ayurveda* studies from a learned preceptor. After successfully completing the prescribed period of curriculum (4½ years+ 1 year internship in present days) the medical student will be awarded the Medical

Degree along with the title of ‘Doctor’. An overall assessment of above said qualities in students as told by *Acharya Vagbhata* is having its own significance.

Invincibility is measured not based on the physical strength and it implies the proficiency of the student. Learning is a boundless task and it has to be continued throughout the life of a medical practitioner. A physician should strive to learn from all possible resources and also from his fellow beings. It is much essential to stay humble and prideless in order to enrich oneself from the ocean of knowledge and wisdom.

Physician should be wise enough to manage the sensitive situations with deliberations. Awareness of consequences of decision making is crucial for every physician and it determines his name and fame pertaining to his career. This is having key role while dealing with critically ill patients and paediatric cases. *Acharya Indu* underscores about the quality of physician to act slowly and steadily.^[5] It doesn't imply the wrong notion of procrastination but it clarifies the capability of the physician to ponder over all probable consequences while dealing with sick people. Honesty is a golden value that is to be maintained by every medical practitioner.

Physician is advised to be ‘good looking’. It doesn't indicate the makeover of a physician with expensive clothing or ornaments. Decent and gentle outlook of the physician makes him always approachable and comfortable for the patients. A knowledgeable physician will be proficient in his own field along with constant interest in updating allied branches, current affairs, etc. which are indispensable for his existence as an ideal physician. Both theoretical and practical knowledge are essential for a physician. *Acharya Vagbhata* quotes about the physician who is endowed with mere textual knowledge sans practical one. According to him “such physician will gets afraid on facing patients just like the experience of a coward in the battle field”^[6]. Similarly “the physician who arrogantly indulges in therapeutic procedures with inept theoretical knowledge will be condemned by the noble persons and he will be punished by the king”^[7] This shows the importance of both academical and clinical trainings.

“Treating the destitute patient just like his own son” highlights the essential quality of ‘empathy’ in the physician. Such patients usually knock the physician's door as their last resort of hope. Even if the physician is incapable to subdue their plight, still he can render medical advises and console them with available resources. *Acharya* criticizes the greedy

physician who loots money from the poor patients for the treatment provided ^[8]. He praises the physician's divine quality of 'compassion' as the righteous path towards patients.^[9]

Certain code of conducts discussed by *Acharya* in this chapter is concurring with the contemporary norms. "A physician is advised not to reveal the confidential matters related with patients to others. He is not supposed to disclose the complete details of ailments to the patients"^[10] It is instructed to maintain confidentialities related with the patients as 'sacred' in contemporary medical science. Complete disclosure of his ailment may generate panic attacks in patients. One more significant ethical code advised by *Acharya* is to "avoid receiving gift or money from ladies in their guardian's (husband's) absentia". Physician is restrained from spending with ladies in private places and is also advised to avoid chit-chat with them^[11]. These all advises illuminate the relevance of traditional wisdom in upholding the dignity of medical education par excellence.

CONCLUSION

Acharya Vagbhata's insights about the induction and implementation of medical education are highly appreciable for upbringing a skilful, empathetic and well disciplined medical practitioner. The teachings are commendable enough to epitomize the 'ancient wisdom' in modern era.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 11.
2. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.
3. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.
4. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.

5. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.
6. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.
7. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 12.
8. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 15.
9. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: 15.
10. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: P-13.
11. Acharya Vahata or Vriddha Vagbhata, Ashtanga Samgraha with Shashilekha Sanskrit Commentary by Acharya Indu, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, Edition: Reprint, 2012; 965: P-13.