

AYURVEDIC ASPECT OF CADAVER PRESERVATION AND DISSECTION

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ABSTRACT

Dissecting the human body is the most essential part of practically understanding the subject anatomy. *Acharya shushruta*, often known as the father of surgery had done attempts to preserve the dead body for further studies about the whole bodily structures. Embalming is the process of preserving a body to delay the natural breakdown of cells which begins when a person is dead. In earlier times the dead body was preserved to make the deceased suitable for public and private viewing as part of the funeral ceremony or to keep them preserved for medical purposes in anatomical laboratories. But *acharya shushruta* had given the preservation techniques with the only purpose of studying and describing anatomical structures of human body, this shows that in

those times as well he was very much aware about the importance of practical knowledge in medical studies. In this article we will be discussing about the importance of cadaver preservation and how finely *acharya shushruta* had described the preservation process.

KEYWORDS: *Embalming*, anatomy, dissection.

INTRODUCTION

Acharya shushrut had mentioned the process of preserving the cadaver and thereafter using it for dissection. The cadaver being dissected must be preserved first to avoid any nuisance while dissecting and to avoid any decomposition to the body. To understand the '*sharir*' it has been categorized under two categories- 1.by dissection, 2.by theory. According to the dissection aspect the body has been divided into the following-

- Upper and lower extremities
- Thorax

- Abdomen
- Neck
- Head
- Organs

According to the theory aspect the study of body has been described under the following branches of anatomy-

- Systemic anatomy
- Regional anatomy
- Surface anatomy
- Embryology
- Histology
- Comparative anatomy
- Applied anatomy.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To understand the process and importance of '*shav sanrakshan*' i.e. cadaver preservation.
- To understand the process and importance of '*shavachchhedan*' i.e. dissection.
- To establish the fact that the methods used by *acharya shushruta* in earlier times were also as relevant as the modern methods.
- To focus on *acharya shushruta*'s motive behind the thought of dissection.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Acharya shushruta mentioned that our body can only be finely understood by *shalya gyan* that contains the division of systems and their related organs.

Shav sanrakshan vidhi

It is important to preserve the cadaver before dissecting. History presents many examples of cadaver preservation-

- The body of *raja Dashrath* was preserved in *taildroni* for two years.
- *Acharya mishr* had preserved many cadavers of rulers and honorable personalities by applying lep over their bodies
- The pyramids of Egypt are famous worldwide for the cadavers are being preserved here.

Acharya shushruta mentioned some points to be considered while inspecting the cadaver to be preserved-

- *Samastagatram*- the cadaver must have all body parts in natural condition
- *Avishopahatam*-the deceased must not had died due to any poison action
- *Adirgyavyadhi peeditam*- any chronic disease must not be the cause of the death of the deceased
- *Avarshashatikam*-the deceased must not be of the age above 100 years.

Preparation of the dead body

- *Nishrushtant pureesh*-the faces along with the whole intestine must be removed to prevent decomposition process by the microbes present in the intestine.
- *Avaghantyamaapygayam*- the body must be kept in still water so that it continuously comes in contact with the water which in turn will make the skin of cadaver softer and moist for dissection
- *Nibadham*- the body must be kept tied in still water. Any one of the mentioned below can be used to tie and cover the body -
 - *Munj*-Saccharum munja
 - *Valkal*- nyagrodha i.e. ficus bengalensis
 - *Udumbar* i.e. ficus glomerata
 - *Ashvath* i.e. ficus religiosa
 - *Pareesh* i.e. thespesia populnea
 - *Plaksh* i.e. ficus lacor
 - *Kusha*- Desmostachya bipinnata
 - *Shana*- Crotalaria juncea
- *Aprakashdeshe kothayet*- the body should be kept in hidden dark place and allowed to become soft. The exact meaning by this sentence is that choose a place out of the reach of the people.
- *Panjarastham*- the dead body must be kept protect inside the cage underwater so that it is not attacked by any of the aquatic animals.

Shavahchedan

The dead body if kept as such after death will undergo major changes such as cadaver lividity, rigor mortis, cooling, putrefaction etc. to avoid these changes the body was being soaked underwater and was wrapped by the above mentioned parts of plants. *Acharya*

shushruta had mentioned that approximately after seven days the swollen body must be taken out of the water, remove the cage, remove the wrapped layers one by one and with the help of a brush remove the skin over the body slowly by rubbing. *Acharya shushruta* has specified the material that should be used in making a brush and called it a '*kurch*'. The following things can be used to make brush-

- *Usher*(*Vetiveria zizaniodes*)
- *Bala*(hairs)
- *Venu*(*Bambusa vulgaris*)
- *Valkal*(inner barks of trees)

This is how all the internal structures are exposed one by one in this method. According to modern this method can be compared to blunt dissection.

DISCUSSION

The preservation and dissection of dead body as described by *acharya shushruta* is really fine and is no less than the modern techniques but as now a day's many factors are involved such as water pollution, mythological aspect of dead body, emotional attachment to the deceased, and the nuisance that may be created due to preservation of dead body in public areas though rarely visited, we have started opting the various modern techniques that justify all the aspects and are more easier to be performed also it is noted that the modern techniques allow cadavers to be preserved over a long period of time. But this definitely does not mean that the ayurvedic methods were not relevant.

CONCLUSION

Here we conclude that *acharya shushruta* had focused on the importance of practical knowledge of body along with theoretical knowledge. The importance of dissection can be interpreted as –

- To count the number of organs and structures of body
- To understand the basic anatomy of organs
- To see any deformity caused
- To be a successful surgeon
- To understand the normal physiology of body
- To be a good practitioner in all terms.

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