



Review Article

APPLIED ASPECTS OF ETHICS ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The Ayurvedic literature mentioned the importance of ethics to attain *Yash* in *Chikitsa* by a physician and protect himself from any litigation. The main objective of this article is to collect and review the ideology of ethics mentioned in Ayurvedic *Samhitas* and to establish their correlation with contemporary literature. All the data source including literature: *Bruhatrayi*, all available Ayurvedic classics, contemporary available texts, journals and research paper. All the available literature related to ethics was reviewed and understanding the concept of ethics by classical authors and their interpretation according to ethics in modern medical science. The better understanding of literature on ethics leads to the conclusion that the ethics mentioned in Ayurvedic literature correlates with the ethics of modern era.

INTRODUCTION

The Ethics are the values that dictates a person's behaviour and conducts. The ancient literature described the *Dharma* (purpose), *Artha* (work and finance) *Kama* (pleasure and relationships) and *Moksh* (connection with the inner spirit and liberation from worldly attachment)^[1]. These are the principles which drive a person forward to lead a happy and healthy life. The motto of Ayurveda believes to promote the health of healthy and to eradicate the disease of diseased^[2]. Ayurveda emphasised that the health can be achieved by following right conducts by a person which is described under the heading *Sadvritta* and *Achaar rasayan*.^[3] Conducts regarding what to do and what to not, which food to be taken, behaviour towards women, to obey respected persons, conducts regarding academics, social life, maintain mental wellbeing and conducts regarding work are mentioned which will results in *Arogya* (health) and *Indriyajaya* (control over senses)^[4]. *Acharya Charaka* mentioned rules and regulations, responsibilities and duties of a

physician and the privileges of a physician famous as *Charaka's* oath^[5] which form the basis of medical ethics described by ancient literature.

Acharya Charaka described *Chikitsa Chatushpad* which includes *Bhishaj* (physician), *Dravya* (drug), *Upstahta* (nursing staff) and *Rogi* (patient)^[6]. One who study and acquire knowledge is called *Vaidya*. *Acharyas* have mentioned various *Vaidyas* on the basis of their qualities.

Types of *Vaidya* as described by *Acharya Charka*– *Pranabhisar Vaidya*, *Rogabhisar Vaidya*.^[7] A physician who has the knowledge of *Praana*, sense organs, has complete knowledge of literature, soul and knows the pathology of disease is known as the saviour of lives (*Pranabhisara*)^[8].

Four qualities of *Pranabhisar Vaidya* are knowledge of scriptures, experience of practical knowledge, application of therapeutics and understanding capability^[9]. Opposite to this are the pseudo-physician who instead of taking away the diseases, take away the life itself. They are like thorns to the society and dressed like physician roam around the world due to negligence of the rulers.^[10]

Those who come to be known as physicians simply by virtue of the exhibition of the physician's box containing certain drugs, medical books, by bluffing and posing as a physician. They are ignorant of science

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of medicine. They are simply counterfeits. This type of physician is considered as *Rogabhisara* also^[11].

Qualities of *Vaidya* as mentioned in ancient literature are *Shruteprayavdatavam* (high-quality knowledge), *Drushtkarma* (practical skills), *Dakshyam* (expert) and *Shocham* (ethical), these are the four qualities of a physician.^[12]

Vidya (learning), *Vitarka* (rationality) *Vijanana* (specific knowledge), *Smriti* (memory), *Tatparta* (devotion) and *Kriya* (action) are six optimum qualities of a physician deserves to hold the honourable epithet "*Vaidya*" to himself.^[13]

Acharya Sushruta described *Shaurya* (fearlessness), *Ashukriya* (prompt action), *Sastrataiksnaya* (sharpness of instruments), *Asveda* (absence of perspiration), *Avepathu* (absence of trembling) and *Asammoha* (not confusing).^[14]

The relation of patient and physician is well explained as *Vaidya Vritti*.^[15] Doctor should have kind and gentle behaviour and sympathetic towards his patient, should affectionately treat the curable disease and abandon the untreatable disease. Except *Pranabhisar Vaidya* all other *Vaidya* are considered as *Apujya* (rejected) *Vaidya*.

Acharya Sushruta's idea of ethics explains following points:

The personality of a physician: The physician should be neatly dressed with simple but tidy and descent clothes, his hair and nail in order and confident look and gait.^[16]

Registered Practitioner: a practitioner should be registered under law. He should seek permission from king after getting knowledge theoretical as well as practical^[17].

Maintain secrecy: He must look after a patient like his own son. Must maintain the confidentiality of the patient and do not disclose his secrets to another person.^[18]

Informed consent: The physician must take a well-informed consent from the patient or his/her guardian before doing any procedure. Examples quoted can be seen in the context of *Moodhagarbha* and *Ashmari chiitsa prakarna*^[19].

Providing proper health care: Sterilization of equipment is prerequisite to perform any surgery and a surgeon should arrange beforehand all the items needed and also attendants who are affectionate, firm and strong. And post operatively adhere to the regimen diet.^[20]

Transparency: Prognosis about disease which are curable should be got cured, those tend to persist should be controlled and those which are incurable should not be treated^[21].

Consultation and Referral: The medical ethics limits a physician to exercise his expertise within limits of individual proficiency. Examples quoted in *Udar roga chikitsa*^[22] where patient is referred to the *Dhanwantri sampradya* for management.

Special conducts regarding female patients: *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned to avoid close sitting and staying with females, also avoid joking with them and avoid taking anything from them except meals^[23].

Acharya Sushruta described an informed consent to be taken from her or her guardian before doing surgery. She must be given *Ashwasan* (fully convinced) before performing surgery^[24].

Also, he said that a female patient must be surrounded by close persons in the *Sutikgar*^[25] for giving *Ashwasan* (to make her comfortable).

Perform medical termination of pregnancy when the mother is suffering from an intolerable disease for her benefit only^[26].

Also, *Acharyas* have mentioned the concept of *Vaya pariksha*, marriageable age and the reproductive age of a male and female which needs consideration as the age plays an important role in various ethical concerns leading to medicolegal issues^[27].

Acharya Vagabhatta described *Dashvidh Paap Karma*^[28] which can be categorised into the *Kaayika* (physical), *Vaachika* (vocal) and *Maansika* (psychological). These *Paap Karmas* are very much synonymous with the misdeeds in modern times. The fundamentals of *Dharma Artha Kaama Moksh* is thus essential and *Sadvritta* needs to be followed to become a civilized person, a physician should consider these words.

DISCUSSION

Acharya Charaka explains the understanding of the total nature of a thing does not arise from a fragmentary knowledge of it^[29], so is the concept of *Acharya Sushruta*. The ethics are well explained in the Ayurvedic literature. The modern era supports four basic principle^[30] -Beneficence (the duty 'to do good'), Non-maleficence (the duty 'to not do bad'), Autonomy (respect for the patient's right to self-determination), Justice (to treat all people equally and equitably). Ancient *Acharyas* have also justified these principles - beneficence (taking informed consent, making diagnose and reaching a decision whether it is curable or not). Non-maleficence (the practitioner should be registered under law, special conducts to be followed while treating a female patient), autonomy (the patient must fully trust the physician and treatment given by him), justice (physician must do full justice by providing better treatment facilities to patient, making decision in time and referral on time).

The modern science while explaining the duties of a medical practitioner described -Duty as the obligation to act or refrain from acting in such a way that a patient's medical condition is appropriately diagnosed and managed so that a patient is not exposed to an unreasonable risk of injury^[31]. The modern science

describes various duties of medical practitioner which in turn can be justified with duties of *Vaidya*. Understanding of facts suggests what modern science says is not different from what ancient *Acharyas* mentioned in literature.

Classical Concepts of Ethics	Contemporary Concepts of Ethics
<i>Charaka's</i> oath described the responsibilities, duties of a physician.	Hippocratic oath is an oath of ethics historically taken by the physicians. Declaration of Geneva and International Code of Medical Ethics is the upgraded form of Hippocratic oath. ^[44]
Various <i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned particular qualities which a physician should possess while treating patients.	A physician owns a sense of duty of care towards his patient while exercising a reasonable degree of skill and knowledge while examining the patient or either giving advice telephonically to the patient. ^[45]
<i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned to treat the patient like his own son. They have also mentioned that a physician must not feel hesitant to take the consultation of another physician if he has any doubt while treating the patient. ^[32]	A Physician is under an obligation to treat the patient as long as it requires attention and cannot abandon patient without proper explanation to him and may refer to other competent authority for their good but with proper information. ^[46]
<i>Acharyas</i> have explained in the context of properties of <i>Aushadh</i> that it works as a <i>Amrita</i> when used in adequate quantity and turns into poison when used in inadequate quantities. They have clearly indicated that the life of the patient is in the hands of physician. One must be fully responsible while prescribing any drug to the patient. ^[33]	The physician is held responsible for any damage happen to patient due to wrong prescription. The patient must be provided with proper medicines. ^[47]
<i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned various <i>Kala</i> of <i>Aushadh</i> for various diseases and emphasised on the <i>Matra</i> of <i>Aushadh</i> for various age groups. <i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned that adult drug dosage is different from paediatric drug dosage hence it is very clear that <i>Acharyas</i> were very much aware of the importance of proper use of medicine. ^[34]	The time of administration of the drug with proper dosage must be explained by the doctor to the patient and their attendants. ^[48]
<i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned about the <i>Samyakyoga</i> , <i>Atiyoga</i> and <i>Heenyoga</i> while doing the procedures is another way of indicating and explaining the warning signs to the patient. <i>Acharyas</i> have beautifully described the symptoms and signs due to these. It is another example of the excellence of ancient literature. ^[35]	A Physician has to warn patient about the dangers involved while using a medicine which could affect the persons functional ability. ^[49]
<i>Acharyas</i> have highlighted the importance of the <i>Upcharak</i> . <i>Gyeta</i> (nursing knowledge) <i>Dakshyam</i> (skillful), <i>Shocham</i> (pure) and <i>Anurag</i> (sympathetic) towards the patient. ^[36]	Those who are incapable of taking care of themselves should be treated with utmost care. ^[50]
<i>Acharyas</i> were well aware about the importance of informed consent and they have mentioned to take the consent before any operation. Also, in the context of <i>Moodgarbh</i> , the clear indication is given if the pain becomes intolerable to the patient, then the pregnancy will be terminated. ^[37]	The physician should inform the patient about the pros and cons of the treatment or operation and proceed further with his consent. ^[51]

While doing <i>Shalya karma</i> , <i>Acharya Sushruta</i> in <i>Sutra Sthan</i> emphasised on the instructions to be followed preoperatively like to remain nil per orally before operation in <i>Moodhgarbh</i> , <i>Udarroga</i> , <i>Arsha</i> , <i>Ashmari</i> , <i>Bhagandar</i> , <i>Mukhroga</i> and the importance of well-informed consent. Preoperative preparation of the operation theatre as well as of the patient. Preoperative and post operative care and the diet regimen. ^[38]	The surgeon must explain the nature and extent of the operation and obtain his consent. He must be aware of the newer technologies and must follow the standard sterilization techniques. The physician must explain the do's and don't to the patient preoperatively and postoperatively. ^[52]
Many references can be found where <i>Acharayas</i> mentioned to refer the patient to <i>Dhanwantri Sampradaya</i> . These references are clear indication that <i>Acharyas</i> have emphasised to take the consultation of another physician in case of any serious condition. ^[39]	An expert opinion is mandatory if a patient wishes further consultation. A doctor must call another specialist in an emergency situation for the benefit of patient. ^[53]
The <i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned to take care of his patient as his own son. It is another way of understanding the concept of patient and doctor relationship. Maintaining their secrecy is the prime concern of a physician. <i>Acharyas</i> were well aware of this. ^[40]	The doctor- patient relationship is based on the trust and confidentiality. He must not disclose any information regarding his patient to other without his will. ^[54]
<i>Acharyas</i> have mentioned the qualities of <i>Rogi</i> as <i>Samriti</i> , <i>Nirdeshkari</i> , <i>Abhiru</i> and <i>Gyapktvam</i> which is in no way different from the modern facts. ^[41]	The patient must feel free to share his problem with the physician and must not hide anything about the disease from the doctor. ^[55]
There are many references of <i>Rogabhisar vaidya</i> , <i>Chadmachara vaidya (Pratirupak)</i> , <i>Sidhisadhit vaidya</i> . They do not give life but take the life of a patient. These explains the concept of Medical negligence in the ancient times. They are also related to the class of <i>Kuvaidya</i> which is due to the fault of a king (law). ^[42]	Medical malpractice occurs when a doctor does not provide the appropriate treatment to the patient or neglect any serious situation or due to ignorance misdiagnose a disease. ^[56]
Those <i>Vaidya</i> who have practical knowledge but does not have the knowledge of <i>Shastra</i> is liable to be punished by the King. ^[43]	Section 304A- Causing Death by Negligence: Whoever causes the death of any person by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide shall be punished with imprisoned of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine or with both. ^[57]

Legal Protection is provided to doctors under IPC Section.87 to 93-

IPC Section 87-Act not intended and not known to be likely to cause death or grievous hurt, done by consent.^[58]

IPC Section 88- Act not intended to cause death, done by consent in good faith for person's benefit.^[59]

IPC Section 89-Act done in good faith for benefit of child or insane person, by or by consent of guardian.^[60]

IPC Section 90-Consent known to be given under fear or misconception.^[61]

IPC Section 91-Exclusion of acts which are offences independently of harm cause.^[62]

IPC Section 92-Act done in good faith for benefit of a person without consent.^[63]

CONCLUSION

An understanding of concepts of ethics made us explore that while *Acharya Sushruta's* ideas are more related while doing surgeries whereas *Acharaya Charak* emphasised on the social conducts and right conducts to be followed to become a better person. However, *Acharya Vagbhatta's* concept of *Dashvidha paapkarma* is a mere reflection of the consequences which is liable to happen as a result of disobedience of the right conducts. The ancient literature emphasised on becoming a better human being by following the right conducts. Along with this the literature also highlighted the importance of ethics in medical profession. The physician is given the due importance, his qualities and responsibilities has been described. *Acharyas* mentioned being a *Vaidya* is the most-noblest profession as he is the giver of life^[64] and he must not indulge himself in any maleficent act that made him put into any kind of litigation and the ethics are the

principles which must be followed so as to achieve *Siddhi* in *Chikitsa*^[65].

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