

# MEDICAL ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT OF PHYSICIAN AS IN CLASSICAL TEXT OF AYURVEDA

## Abstract

India has a rich tradition of medical ethics dating back to ancient times. Ayurveda the Indian system of medicine is sacred knowledge, science of life which emphasizes the balance and well-being state of Mana (mind), Sharira (body), Aatma (soul), and Indriya (sense organs). In Ayurveda, there is a strong emphasis on ethical conduct and moral standards for medical practitioners. Code of conduct laid down in Ayurveda set the foundation for the medical community and prescribed the principles for medical practice. According to Ayurveda medical practitioners (Vaidyas), were obligated to adhere to certain moral standards and ethics. They were expected to have a compassionate outlook and follow the prescribed code of conduct. In addition to ethical conduct, Ayurveda also emphasizes the importance of a good teacher-disciple relationship and the qualities of a good physician. The code of conduct in Ayurveda includes guidelines for behavior with patients and their relatives. The manners of the physician of the healing arts was expected to be conventional to the highest ideals of personal and professional life. . The appearance, dress, speech, and manners of medical practitioners were also expected to be above reproach. They should have good moral character and high sense of responsibility. Acharya Charaka, an influential figure in Ayurveda, emphasized the high ideals of medical practice code of conduct and the responsibilities of doctors. He introduced the Charaka oath, which was to be taken by students before starting their medical education. This oath outlined the principles and ethics that should guide medical practitioners. In cases of ignorance, misconduct, or ethical violations in medical practice, the ancient texts of Ayurveda suggest severe punishments, including the death penalty.

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Overall, the high standards and principles of medical practice in ancient India, as outlined in Ayurveda, reflect the emphasis on ethical conduct, responsibility, and good moral character among medical practitioners.

**Keywords:** Classical text of Ayurveda, Ayurveda Physician, Medical ethics, Code of conduct, Charak oath

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ethics signifies the science of moral values. Medical Ethics is a specialized branch of ethics that focuses on analyzing the practice of clinical medicine and related scientific research.

The branch of Ayurveda which deals with the study of laws, rules and code of conduct which must be followed by physician (Vaidyas) in relation to medical practice, is called as **Vidhi Vaidyak (Medical Jurisprudence)**. The principles of medical ethics are based on a set of values that physicians can refer to in cases of ethical confusion or conflict [1].

When we go through ancient manuscripts, particularly Ayurveda classical texts, we can see that the principles of medical ethics were well-organized, advanced and in full bloom, in its form, functioning, structure, and in its practical approach. Our Aacharyas (Ancient Vaidyas and Sages) took every aspect of the profession seriously, and established medical ethics guidelines and principles that were implemented effectively with a right spirit. The Charak Samhita in particular elaborates on the code of conduct and lays down the foundational principles for the medical community to follow. Overall, medical ethics remains a crucial aspect of the practice of medicine and continues to guide physicians in making ethical decisions related to their profession [2].

Vaiya(Physician), Dravya(Medicine), Upsthata(Medical Attendant) and Aatur (Patient) is the Chikitsa Chatuspad (basic four pillars)of Chikitsa karm(Treatment).Chikitsak(physician) is foremost important pillar. Ayurveda text elaborates the qualities and medical ethics for each of them [3].

### **Ayurveda**

The word Ayurveda is composed of two words Ayu and Veda. Ayu-life, Veda-sacred knowledge. It is balance of mind, body and soul. “Ayurveda is sacred knowledge, science of life”

Ayurveda believes in Dharma. Dharma means righteous conduct covering all aspects of life essential for the sustenance and welfare of the individual and society. Ethics of medical practice has been described from ancient time by Dharmshastra like- Veda, Smruties, Arthashastra. The classical texts of Ayurveda are a precious source of knowledge that elaborate on the code of conduct and set the principles for medical practice as the foundation of the medical community. The ancient Vaidyas, or medical practitioners, upheld high moral standards and ethics and followed the prescribed code of conduct with a compassionate outlook. These texts provide comprehensive insights into the principles and practices of Ayurveda [4].

## II. CLASSICAL TEXTS OF AYURVEDA

**The Vedas** are the oldest written document known to mankind, There are four Vedas: **Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda** and Ayurveda developed significantly during the Vedic period. Ayurveda is a branch of the Atharvaved [5].

Ayurveda Scholars such as Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, Kashyap, Bhel, and others documented their knowledge by creating Sanskrit manuscripts, known as Samhitas. This science- Ayurveda, is subject to constant rethinking and refinement, which is why it continues to develop and improve today.

The three major Ayurveda texts known as Bruhtrayi (the great three authors ) include Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata. **Laghutrayi** (The minor three authors) Sharngadhara, Bhavamishra, Madhava.

Charak Samhita by Acharya Charaka - contains extensive knowledge about leading a healthy and long life and is primarily related to medicine. Acharya Charaka is often referred to as the Father of Medicine.

Sushruta Samhita by Acharya Sushruta - This text is the first ancient document that mentions surgery in addition to medicine. Acharya Sushruta is considered the Father of Surgery.

1. **Ashtanga Hridaya/Asthang Sangraha** by Acharya Vagbhata - Acharya Vagbhata wrote these texts based on the Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas, outlining their main parts and correcting any shortcomings.
2. **Lagutrai** three short Ayurveda treatises or minor three authors, contributed to Ayurvedic knowledge.
3. **Madhava Nidana from Madhava-kara** - This work delves into the pathogenesis of diseases.
4. **Bhavaprakasa from Bhav Mishra** -Describes the properties and uses of all the herbs mentioned in Ayurveda
5. **Sharangdhar samhita from Sharandhara**- Provides information on various medicinal formulas, including units of measurement, measuring instruments and methods of preparation of medicines.

Additionally, there is the pharmaceutical branch of Ayurveda known as **Rasa Shastra**, which deals with the description and therapeutic use of metals, minerals, plants, and animal products. Some texts in this branch include Rasa Ratnasamuchaya, Rasendra Chudamani, Bhishyajya Ratnavali, and Bharat Bhyashyajya Ratnakar.

6. **Nighantu** - In later periods, after 500 AD, many texts called Nighantu were written. They are related to the use of herbal products as part of medicinal formulas.

Some famous texts in this group are: Bhavprakash Nighantu, Yog Ratnakar, Kashyap Samhita, Bhel Samhita, Harita Samhita etc

These classical Ayurveda texts provide a comprehensive understanding of Ayurvedic principles, practices, and treatments, shedding light on the rich heritage and wisdom of Indian medicine [6,7].

### III.MEDICAL ETHICS AS IN CLASSICAL TEXT OF AYURVEDA

Classical text of Ayurveda categorised the physician as : the right ones ( True physician ) and the wrong ones (False physician- quack) as per ethical and moral values they adopt.

Acharya Charak mentioned there are three kinds of Vaidyas (physician)- **Chadmachara, Siddhasadhita, True (Genuine physicians)**

- 1. Chadmachara-(Pseudo physicians)** - The impostors in physician's robes- Those who by parading their medical paraphernalia(belongings) i.e. physician's box containing certain drugs, books, models, smattering of medical texts and knowing looks acquire the title of physician, are the first kind, viz., the ignoramuses(know-nothing) and impostors. They are simply counterfeits.
- 2. Siddhasadhita (Feigned physicians)** - the vain-glorious pretenders- Those who by laying claim to association with persons of established wealth, fame, knowledge and success, while they themselves have none of these things, arrogate (assume) to themselves the designation of physicians, are the vain- glorious pretenders.
- 3. True (Genuine physicians) -those endowed with the true virtue of the healer-** Those who have thorough knowledge of Ayurveda shastra, as well as knowledge of other sciences (shastras), those who are a proficient in administration of therapies, and expert in preparation of medicines. Who is well known because of his professional skills, who has capacity to bring out happiness in patient's life by removing his all pains, such physician is called as Saviors of life (*jivitabhisar*). Such persons possess all qualities of *Vaidya* and hence they are true physicians[8].

**In another context** -Physicians **are** of two kinds- **Pranabhisara:** Saviors of life and destroyers of diseases **Rogabhisara** : Votaries (loyalist) of disease and destroyers of life

- **Pranabhisara Vaidya (Physician)-** life saver- The physician who Born in noble families, Clean and thorough Knowledge of theory and vast practical experience, skillful, Clever, whose medicinal prescriptions and surgical operations are infallible, Practical knowledge of treatment and medicine preparation, Self-controlled- Full control on the senses, Well behaved, Sacred, Who have all necessary equipment and accessories. Having well-functioning organs. Who are acquainted with natural manifestations and those who have presence of mind. Expert in treatment by use of Shastra, Kshar, Agni. Who has complete knowledge of origin of diseases and patient's health, He should be compassionate towards all creatures and should have natural cordial feelings and love them like parents, brother and family members.
- **Rogabhisara Vaidya (Physician)** - life destroyers, Opposite to Pranabhisara, the pseudo – physician, who instead of taking away the disease take away the life itself- Like thorns they torches the people. They move from one street to another in search of livelihood in the garb of physicians and take the life of the patients. Once they here about somebody's sickness, they would surround him and start enumerating their own qualities loudly so that the patient could listen to them In case a physician is already

attending on him they try to find fault again and again with the attending physician. They win over the friends of the patient by pleasing manner, back-biting and flattering. They also propagate that they are interested in a nominal remuneration only. After they succeed in winning over the patient, they look at him again and again skillfully. Trying to cover their ignorance. They are not able to alleviate the disease, they proclaim that the patient lacked in proper equipment, attendance and self-control means he scares to do the further treatment. When he knows that the patient is about to die they immediately run away to some other place in some other name and garb. He tries to run away from group of knowledgeable person. If he has partial clinical knowledge he always tries to express in front of people. He don't like any question to be asked regarding Ayurveda. Generally he don't have any Guru [Teacher], disciple [Shishya] and colleague [9].

#### IV. APUJYA VAIDYA (KUVAIDHYA) (A QUACK PHYSICIAN)

The Physician who only knows about science but who is not perfect theoretically or practically. Scared by seeing the patient and greedy. A quack physician (*murkh vaidya*) may cure a few persons by chance and assumes himself to be a Vaidya but he is likely to kill hundreds of patients. Vaidya who is incompatible, negligent towards his responsibilities was punished by king (government) by death penalty in ancient time [10].

The physician behave like stupid, who have adopted this medical profession just for the sake of a living, only for money they are like serpents that have gorged on air. Who is ignorant, egoistic, hot tempered and impatient. It is better to die than to be treated by a physician ignorant of medical knowledge. It is totally wrong to be treated by ignorant physician (*murkh vaidya*). Because in medical science the condition of **murkh vaidya** is like a blind person moving with the help of his hands or like a boat being driven by the wind [11].

1. **Qualities of Vaidya (physician)** : In classical text qualities of Vaidya have been mentioned considering limitations of professional conduct –
  - Physician should have clear grasp theoretical knowledge,
  - Wide practical experience,
  - Cautiousness and
  - Purity of body and mind.

These four are the important qualities of physician [12].

2. **Qualities of best physician** : 1. Knowledge, 2. Critical approach, 3. Science, 4. Good memory, 5. Promptness, 6. Skill of treatment. The physician who has above six qualities can cure any disease and never fail in treatment and can be called as excellent physician [13].

In **Ashtang Sangraha** Vaidya is called as **Bhishak**- one who has been given permission to do medical practice (Chikitsa karma) by his Guru.

- **Abhedya**: One who never share the secrets, especially confidential about the patient and his family.

- **Anuddhat:** One who is not egoistic, arrogant. He should be of serious and calm nature.
  - **Stabhadh :** Should do his duties with patience and proper thinking.
  - **Sunrut:** Should be truth speaking and polite.
  - **Priyadarshan:** Should have attractive personality-cheerful and well dressed.
  - **Bahushrut:** Should have observed and listened various medical subjects and should be practical.
  - **Kalvedi:** Should know the importance of time, should be able to take time-wise decision. **8. Dhynatgranth:** Who have read many books regarding medical science.
  - **Arthshastravit :** Who have not only read the books but understood its meaning deeply and should have acquired practical skills.
  - Who treats **orphan** patients as his son.
  - **Guruna samanudhynat:** After being expert in theoretical and practical medical knowledge, should have got permission of practice from his Guru (mentor) [14].
  - **Shadangadhar Samhita** mentioned along with knowledge physician should be doubtless-and should treat patient with courage [15].
  - **Chaturvidha Vaidyavrutti (Attitude of physician)** – 1.Friendship (towards all) 2. Compassion for the ailing, 3. Devotion to curable patients and 4. Should feel detached towards the incurable and dying patient [16].
  - Sixteen qualities of Chikitsa Chatushapad - Bhishak, Dravya, Upsthata, Rogi are Four basic pillar of treatment.
  - **Bhishak (Physician):** 1.Daksha (Skill), 2.Thirhattashastrath(Has Taught Medical Knowledge by teacher), 3.Drushtakarma(Extensive Practical Experience), 4. Shuchi(Clean)
  - **Dravya (Drug) :** 1.Bahukalpa(Multiple Preparation), 2.Bahuguna(Many Properties), 3.Sampanna(Potency), 4.Yogyatva(Sutability)
  - **Upsthata (Medical Attendant):** 1. Anurakta(Affection for patient), 2.Shuchi(Clean), 3.Daksha(Skill), 4.Budhiman(Knowledge of Nursing)
  - **Rogi (Patient) :** 1.Aadhya(Wealthy), 2.Bhishakvshya(Obedient), 3.Dhyapak(Ability of Expression), 4.Satyavan(Tolerant) [17].
- 3. Responsibilities of Vaidya** -Prime responsibility of Vaidya is to provide services to human being by preventing healthy persons from diseases and curing the diseases of patients. It is the moral responsibility of the physician to look after the health of whole society. He also has responsibility of informing about contagious diseases to health department of Government. As the remaining three factors (i.e. Drugs, attendant and patient) of treatment depend on quality of the physician, a physician should always try to enrich his own qualities and always try to update previous knowledge. And being administrative officer he should give proper directions to his nursing staff (paricharika) and should advice them to maintain discipline. Should be alert while preparing medicine special precautions must be taken while preparing medicine by poisonous drugs[18].

According to **Yogratnakar** physician should never be negligent towards the disease, he should treat the patient in first stage of disease and should treat the patient after getting relief, till get totally cured[19].

4. **Duties of Vaidya to his patient-** The prime responsibility of physician is that he should treat all the patients as his son. He should always take efforts by religious nature in order to reduce the pain of patient because this is the supreme duty of physician [20]. Should treat Brahmin, Guru, Poor persons, Friends, Sages, orphans as his own brothers by his medicines. But should not do the treatment of Sinful persons (who trap and kill the birds and animals), and must not attempt treatment of a patient whose death is certain or who has an incurable disease or if he has not the necessary facilities for treatment. Vaidya who follows above rules can achieve friend, Dharma, Money, Kama [21].
5. **Vaidya Sadvrittam (Code of Conduct Of Physician):** Sadvritta define as Sad means good and Vritta means behavior. The meaning of Sadvrittam in Ayurveda is high and healthy mental status. In Charak samhita, Acharya Charak state the importance of following Sadvritta for a person, the person who follows the entire code of good conduct, enjoy a healthy life and can achieve healthy inner peace. Sadvritta give the detail knowledge about “what to do?” “What should not to do?” and also “how to live?” Sharira and Mana influence each other. Specially mana always influences physical activities. By following Sadvrittam, Satva Guna becomes predominant in mana and effect of Raja and Tama is reduced. So generation of psychological disorders can be minimized. So it becomes necessary for Vaidya to follow Sadvritta himself and motivate the society to follow the same.

Modern science defines code of conduct as A **code of conduct** is a set of rules outlining the social norms, religious rules and responsibilities of, and or proper practices for an individual. Ethics is the understanding of moral values. The Code of conduct based on moral values as enunciated by a recognized association should collectively comprise of code of ethics.

**Medical Code of Ethics** is document establishing the ethical rules of behavior of Physician, defining the priorities of their professional work, showing the principles in the relations with patients, other physicians and the rest of community. Summarizing all we can illustrate the **Do's and Don'ts** to be followed by Vaidya when following Sadvrittam (Code of good conduct) - One should persistently follow the path of Brahmacharya, Knowledge, Charity, Friendship, Compassion, Happiness, detachment and piece. Vaidya (physician) must visit the patient only when invited and with pure intention. He should examine female patient in the presence of her husband, relative or attendant. He should not self-praise and do not self advertise. While defending himself the Vaidya must avoid harsh words and use ethical language.

6. **Do's :** Act with patience. Be cheerful. Destroy the causes of anger and jealousy. Be truthful and calm. Speak positively as per time. Give support to feared persons. Provide help to patient fallen in catastrophe. Wear clean cloths. Worship God, Cow, Brahmin, Guru, Siddhas, Sages, Old people, Acharya, Should believe in the existence of God (Aastik). Maintain proper hair style, Maintain stock of necessary medicines.
7. **Don'ts:** Do not lie, Don't be disturb minded, Avoid atiyoga, ayoga, and mithayoga of Indriya. Don't be angry, Don't be fearful, Don't be egoistic even after being expert in field. Don't be greedy, Do not break the rules. Do not disclose other's defects and secrets. Do not commit sin. Don't be alcoholic. Don't be talkative. Thus by following Sadvrit-



tam Vaidya (physian) can cultivate good traits in society. Vaidya who follows Sadvrittam himself become honorable in society. He becomes well known by achieving great success in the field. So every Vaidya (physician) must follow Sadvrittam [22].

Unlike in the present days, in ancient India, professional oath was delivered to the student at the beginning of the training. Acharya Charaka introduced the oath for physician several centuries before the Hippocratic oath came into existence. In fact, Hippocratic followed the principles laid down in Charaka oath. As per the injunctions in it, a student has to renounce lust, anger, ignorance, vanity, selfishness, envy, rudeness, miserliness, falsehood, sloth and such other acts that would bring the professional to disgrace. The students take the oath in the presence of the sacred fire. The oath contains dedication and high moral principles required and expected of a physician. It is thus conceivable that the Hippocratic oath was influenced by the Charaka Oath and ancient Indian teachings and practices.

- 8. Charak's Oath** - Charak- father of Medicine, around 6th century B.C. enunciated the guiding principle of medical ethics. Charak not only outlined how the student was to get his training under the direct control of his preceptor but also prescribed for professional norms and conduct rules for him."According to this, the teacher would instruct his disciples in presence of sacred fire, Brahmans and physicians : Thou shalt from envy, not cause another's death, and prey for the welfare of all creatures. Day and night, thou shall be engaged in the relief of patients; thou shalt not desert a patient, commit adultery, be modest in thy attire and appearance, not be drunkard or sinful, not associate with abettors of crimes. Thou shall whilst entering the patient's house, be accompanied by a person known to be the patient. The peculiar customs of patient's household shall not be made public and should not divulge any professional secrecy" [23].

In ancient medical law punishment had been told for Physician not following the Sadvritta. The Laws of Manu stated that physicians would be penalized for improper treatment. The first medical law recorded was the Code of Hammurabi, which said "If a physician makes a large incision with the operating knife, and kill him, his hands shall be cut off" [24].

## V. CONCLUSION

Doing a medical practice considered as sacred work. Society expects high values from medical practitioners. Ayurved Samhitas briefly describes about Medical practitioner's eligibility, knowledge and their necessity. Practice of medicine by unqualified person had been strongly condemned. Sushruta, the famous surgeon wrote, "Only the union of medicine and surgery constitutes the complete Vaidya (doctor). The vaidya who lacks knowledge theoretical, practical in one of these is like a bird only with one wing. Vagbhata's Ashtanga samagraha indicated that an efficient doctor is friendly towards all, compassionate to the patients, happy when he sees healthy people, and com-posed when he finds that his patient is un-likely to be saved his good conduct is what distinguishes him.

In such an era, the code of medical ethics provides a suitable framework defining a doctor's relationship in professional, social and le-gal aspects. Physicians in those days had a very high professional status. They stood high in the social strata.

Finally the advice given by Charaka, may be pertinent for the doctors even today. He who practices not for money nor for caprice, but out of compassion for the living beings is best among all physicians, free ailments, may all good occur to all people, and may no one be troubled with misery.

However, there are concerns about the erosion of long-held value systems in the medical world. Technological advances and the commercialization of healthcare have sometimes overshadowed ethical values. The entry of the private sector into the medical field, along with the commercialization of medical education, has further complicated matters. Present-day medical education may be lacking in ethical values and moral standards.

Medical negligence and misconduct cases increasing day by day and doctors are in fear of consumer protection act, only solution is to follow medical ethics and code of conduct of Ayurveda. There is a lot to learn from our ancient heritage. It is an ideal for us to imbibe these values and put them into practice.

These concerns highlight the need to examine and address the ethical issues facing the medical profession. Upholding the values of compassion, integrity, and patient-centered care is crucial in ensuring that the sacred nature of medical practice is preserved and that the well-being of patients remains the primary focus. It is essential to promote an ethical and morally upright approach in both medical practice and education.

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