

PSYCHO-SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN AYURVEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HEALTH AND DISEASE

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ABSTRACT

As Ayurveda is a science of living beings which based on the philosophical background, has conceived all dimension of environment in relation to health and disease. The concept of Hitayu and Ahitayu is totally related with social affairs. Similarly the concept of Sadvr tta, Acara Rasayan, and Dharniya vega etc.) which are described in length in Ayurvedic classics are meant for social harmony because without that the personal, social and physical environment cannot be made healthy. Besides the physical component of environment, psychosocial components are also described in details in Ayurvedic Samhitas. Charaka has given much emphasis to those positive and negative components which are responsible directly or indirectly for maintaining health and producing disorders in human beings.

In present scenario term environment implies all the external factors living and non-living, material and non material, which surround man. It includes not only the water, air and soil that form our environment but also the social and economic conditions under which we live. For descriptive purpose, environment has been divided into three components, all closely related i.e. (i) Physical (ii) Biological and (iii) Psychosocial.

The most important contribution of Ayurveda in the field of environment is, its vast literature regarding the code of good conducts such as Hitayu and Ahitay, Dharniya Vega, Sadvr tta, Acara Rasayan etc., which may help in promoting and maintaining a peaceful psycho-social environment.

Concept of Janpadodhwamsa (epidemic) described in Ayurvedic classics shows that, during that time also the environmental component produces a remarkable harm to the society if they get polluted.

Review of Literature

Sadvrita (Code of Good Conduct)

Term 'Sadvrita' has to be given for all such types of good conduct, which are responsible for developing a healthy psychosocial environment. Right of the way (preference to go first) should be given to the sick, the aged, women, for those carrying heavy loads and to the brahmanas etc. One should not cross rivers by swimming, go near huge fire, climb dangerous hills or trees, should not enter the house of others if prevented, not wake those who are sleeping and not make the movement with the hands, voice, feet and eyes.

Afternoons should be spent in the company of persons, who are liked, good and helpful. Engaging himself in reading stories dealing with the three qualities with dharma predominating. One should not associate with persons who are hated by the society and the king and those who are atheists.

Person should remain calm and composed, do all activities after careful consideration. Be humble, intelligent, enthusiastic and treating all equally. Not doing mean acts, possess good character and worship those who are to be worshipped.

Vagbhata mentioned the ten sinful (unrighteous) activities, which should be avoided. These activities are- Himsa (cruelty), asteya (stealing) anyathakama (unlawful sex), paisunya (backbiting, carrying tales), parusa vacana (abusive words), antra vacana, sambhinnalapa (speech causing separation), vyapada (quarrel), abhidyā (jealousy) and dragviparyaya (Misunderstanding). These ten sins pertaining to the body, speech and mind should be avoided.

Acarya Vagbhata also described the sukhayu and hitayu. According to him the life of person which is endowed with health, wealth, learning and practice of dharma kriyas for long years is known and sukhayu (happy life) which is also hitaya.

All these sadvr tta (code of right conduct) as described by Acarya Vagbhata should be followed by every person because they are not only for maintaining and managing the health of individuals but also of the community. In ancient time, a river which was the source of water for one or more villages could be polluted by wrong

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use and could cause many epidemic diseases. Likewise, the social behaviour of individuals would lead to disharmony and cruelty between communities and states. Taking all these factors into consideration, the learned sages regulated the behaviour of individuals thereby ensuring community health also. All these codes of good conduct also described in sutra sthana of Astanga Hardaya.

Concept of Hitayu and Ahitayu

In Hitayu and Ahitayu, it is stated there that the life is said as Hitayu (beneficial) if the person is well wisher of all the creatures, abstains from taking other's possession, truth speaking, calm, taking steps after examining the situation, free from carelessness, observing the three examining the situation, free from carelessness, observing the three categories (virtue, wealth and enjoyment) without their mutual conflict, worshipping the worthy persons, devoted to knowledge, keeping company of the elderly persons; has controlled well the impulses of attachment, aversions, envy, intoxication and conceit; engaged in various types of gifts, constantly devoted to penance, knowledge and peace; has knowledge of and devotion to adhyatma, keeping eye to both the worlds and is endowed with memory and intelligence.

Person who follows the properties of hitayu and avoid doing contrary act, make his life beneficial to others and thus take part to establish a calm, happy and non-violent environment.

Concept of Dharniya Vega (Suppressible Urges)

In sutra sthana, Charaka has given the description about dharniya (Suppressive) and adharniya (non-suppressive) vega. Under the heading of dharniya vega, those vega (urges) are described which are deeply related to the behaviour and conduct of human being and by suppressing them, any person prevent himself from doing harmful activities against the society. Charaka stated that- "If one desirous of his well-being during his life time and after, should suppress urges relating to rashness and evil deeds. Suppressible urges are of three types-mental urges oral urges and physical urges."

Suppressible Mental Urges

A wise person should restrain from satisfying the urges relating to greed, grief, anger, vanity, shamelessness,

jealousy, too much of attachment and malice.

Suppressible Oral Urges

One should also restrain from letting loose the urges of speaking extremely harsh words backbiting, lying and use of untimely words.

Suppressible Physical Urges

Violence to others what so ever, urges relating to such physical actions including adultery, theft and persecution are to be restrained. The physical restraint prescribed in the present verse also includes such careless insulting acts like stretching the legs before superiors etc.

In Astanga Hrdaya, concept of dharniya vega has been described. Any person who desirous of happiness here (in this life) and hereafter (life in the other words) should control the urges of greed, envy, hatred, jealousy, love etc. and gain control over his sense organ.

Conduct Related to Social Behaviour

One should not give up the traditional practices excessively nor should one be in habit of breaking rules, one should not move in night and to improper place. One should not eat, study, perform coitus or sleep in dawn and dusk; one should not make friendship with the boys, the old, the greedy, the fools, the afflicted and the eunuchs. One should not have interest in wine, gambling and prostitutes. One should not disclose secrets nor should one insult anybody; one should not be conceited, unskilled, unfriendly and envious. One should not insult the brahmanas nor should one take up the sticks to (beat) the cow; one should not abuse the old, the preceptors, the administrative class and the king, one should not speak too much nor should one turn out kins, persons attached, and that who stood along in difficult times and the person who knows the secrets.

Conduct Related to Psychic Behaviour

One should not be impatient or over-exhilarated; one should not be that who has not supported his attendants, confided in his kins, in happy alone and has unpleasant conduct, behavior and attendance. One should not confide or suspect on all nor should one be critical at all times.

Concept of Acara Rasayan

The codes of conduct mentioned in acara rasayana are the pathway to reach the highest level of moral value. The person who is truthful, free from anger, abstaining from wine and women, non-violent, non-exerting, calm, sweet-

spoken, engaged in Japa (repeating incantations) and cleanliness, perseverant, observing charity, penance; worshipping gods, cow, brahmanas, teacher, preceptor and elders, devoted to love and compassion, observing vigil and sleep in balance, using regularly ghee extracted from milk, knowing the measure of place and time with propriety, unconceited, well-behaved, simple, having senses concentrated to spiritualism, keeping company of elders, positivist, self controlled and devoted to holy scriptures should be regarded as using the rasayana for ever. Such persons make the social environment peaceful and healthy by their behaviour and truthfulness.

CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, the concept of environment has taken in broaden sense and all the components of environment have been described from health and disease point of view and much emphasis has been given to the psychosocial aspect of environment. Effects of normal and polluted air, properties of air according to direction of flow, various types of water and their properties; collection, purification and preservation of water, effects of polluted water on health, all these description emphasized that the ancient Ayurvedic scholars minutely observe the environment and its effect on health and disease.

After going through the whole literature it is concluded that the Ayurvedic vision to live in harmony with

environment is not only in physical perspective but it is far wider and much comprehensive. The ancient sages were definitely well aware about their surroundings with keen observation in relation to maintain the health and a disease free condition. In present era, if these principles are practiced and applied in various aspect of life, may be helpful for the society and the humanity not only at personal, regional and national level but also through the globe.

Thus caraka has given great emphasis on the concept of psycho-social environment and described it under the headings of Hitayu and Ahitayu, Dharniya Vega, Sadvrta and Acara Rasayan etc. It is quite comprehensive and more than enough to protect and established the harmony between all types of environment.

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