

PRINCIPLES, METHODS AND IMPORTANCE OF LITERARY RESEARCH IN THE HISTORY OF AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has been a developing science since prehistoric era, and it has made significant progress through the ages. The development of Ayurveda was restricted from the 17th century onwards and it remained static since then. The beginning of this century provided new inspiration for its revival. However, the development of Ayurveda received necessary support only after independence. There has been active initiative and effort for the development of Ayurveda in general and research in particular. The emphasis on research methodology has also been given and literary research work in Ayurveda will certainly enrich Ayurveda, bringing out the latent potentialities that are lying dormant and unexplored in its vast literature.

Ayurveda has been a developing science since prehistoric era and it has made significant progress through the ages. Beginning from the scattered references in Vedic literature, it was systematised and well presented in the form of Samhitas like Charaka, Sushruta and Ashtangahridaya, and later followed by creation of Madhava Nidana, Sharangadhara and Chakradatta etc., reflecting the contemporary developments in society, literature and science. The development of Ayurveda was restricted from the 17th century onwards and it remained static since then.

The beginning of this century provided new inspiration for its revival. The institutions for training personnel in Ayurveda were established, which helped in emergence of systematic Ayurvedic education in our country. But, inspite of this development, the research in Ayurveda could not make any significant progress. However, the development of Ayurveda received necessary support only after independence.

Various committees appointed by the State and Central Governments, have all from time to time invariably

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made recommendations and stressed the importance of research in various branches of Ayurveda, with a view to ensure its growth and development. Accordingly research on fundamental doctrines of Ayurveda, literary research, clinical research, drug research, research on dietetics and research on psychological aspects were indentified as broad categories of research in Ayurveda. The Udupa Committee (1958) further examined the scope of research priorities under clinical, literary, chemical, botanical, pharmacognostical and basic principles. In this way though areas and methods for research were indentified by the various committees, still the need for further discussion on the research methodology has been felt. As such a special session on the subject was arranged by CCRIMH in 1973 and then a seminar was held at Patna in 1976, under the auspices of the Council of State Boards, and Faculties of Indian Medicine for the discussion on various aspects of Ayurvedic research. One of the subjects for discussion at this seminar was "Literary Research and Collection of source materials".

Thus, there has been active initiative and effort for the development of Ayurveda in general and research in particular, since the continuity of the development of Ayurveda can only be maintained through constant research. The emphasis on research methodology

has also been given and literary research has been recognised as an important aspect of any research programme. The literary research involves the revival and publication of ancient classical literature; collection, compilation and documentation of subject-wise references relating to drugs and diseases from ancient classical literature, lexicographic works, contemporary literature and allied modern sciences. These are the few aspects of literary research work in Ayurveda which will certainly enrich Ayurveda, bringing out the latent potentialities that are lying dormant and unexplored in its vast literature.

Principles of Literary Research :

Like any research work, the literary research work in Ayurveda has also to be based on certain principles such as :

1. Honesty and straight forwardness;
2. Accuracy and exactness in matters of facts;
3. A cautious dealing with the facts without indulging in too hasty comparisons;
4. Rejection of the theory, found to be inconsistent with the facts;
5. Diffusion of truth for the benefit of mankind;
6. Old literature not to be discarded, thinking it useless;
7. Importance to all subjects must be given;

8. In the absence of any definite record of indisputable evidences with regard to the chronology relating to the compilation of any ancient important Ayurvedic treatise, it has to be tried to adhere to the least controversial dates after a careful consideration of the balance of reliable evidences.

Doubt and modesty also have often paved added stimuli to further enquiry and discovery of truth.

Methodology of Literary Research :

Following methods can be adopted for literary research in Ayurveda.

1. CRITICAL STUDY OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE, METHODICAL COLLECTION OF VARIOUS REFERENCES, THEIR PROPER CLASSIFICATIONS AND SUBJECTWISE COMPILATIONS OF THE MATERIAL IN THE FORMS OF MONOGRAPHS, REFERENCE BOOKS AND TEXT BOOKS ETC.

The available Ayurvedic literature needs deep study and compilations on various diseases and their remedies, which would provide rich and ready material to research-workers. Books on technical and scientific terminology, dictionaries and reference-books need to be prepared. There is an urgent need of bringing out Ayurvedic classics with commentaries by famous authors. Preparations of standard text-books for students at all levels and in all subjects is also needed.

2. COLLECTION AND STUDY OF RARE AYURVEDIC MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR EDITING :

There has been revival of interest in ancient Indian literature from the end of 18th century when British orientalist like Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal. It took another half-a-century for European and Indian scholars to realise the great value of Sanskrit manuscripts which will then had been sadly neglected, allowed to be destroyed by insects or vagaries of weather or thrown out as debris or even sometimes used to make a fire. In the middle of the last century when the East India Company or the British Government or their officers like Mckenzie, Taylor, Brown began to send out search parties for the salvage of gradually deteriorating and disappearing manuscripts, pioneering work as done by Rajendra Lal Maitra, Haraprasada Shastry, Burnell, and other scholars. Caland, Cordier, Hoernle and Jolly gave special attention to medical manuscripts and reviewed the discovery of new manuscripts or monographs on medical literature. The publication of Bower Manuscript, Bhela Samhita, Kashyapa Samhita, Kalyana Karaka, Shodhala Nighantu and Shabdachandrika etc. was a great step towards creation of a wider scope for Ayurveda. It is high time that the Government of India, the State Governments, the Universities, the National Academy and the

National Institute of Sciences give high priority not only to the care and preservation of Sanskrit Medical Manuscripts or Medical Manuscripts of other Indian languages but also to their study by competent scholars versed both in Ayurveda and Sanskrit, with a view to prepare descriptive catalogue emphasising the special features of the book with reference to historical value or practice of medicine. Besides, there must be an intensive search from village level to the State level for the manuscripts scattered in different areas particularly in the underdeveloped backward areas, agency tracts, old centres of culture now deserted. This search has to be done not merely through official agencies or circulars, advertisements but mainly through field workers, personal visits or personal appeals to modernised descendents of old families which patronised learning or which produced learned men. It is in this manner that Sarfoji built up a magnificent library at Tanjore which has unique manuscripts. In cases where some families are not prepared to part with their manuscripts arrangements have to be made for getting them copied or microfilmed.

As a first step for a study of medical manuscripts relating to India a list of all medical manuscripts scattered all over India must be prepared and later to be supplemented with the list of medical manuscripts in the

various libraries in other countries on the basis of available printed catalogues of manuscripts, reports on the search for manuscripts, epigraphical reports etc. and lists of manuscripts in smaller public and private libraries and universities.

As a second step in this direction, a descriptive catalogue of certain selected medical manuscripts is to be prepared to help the research workers.

Thus, the informations gathered are to be analysed, arranged and published under respective heads and also translated into English and other regional languages to enable a larger number of scholars to undertake research and to utilise the new source materials till now unexplored. In this way a good deal of valuable literature can be compiled with regard to the date and place of writers of medicine, types of original sanskrit treatises, popular compilations copied in different parts of India in various epochs of history, the popularity, or the authority of different medical authors, successive commentaries on great treatises, translations of such treatises and compilations and compendiums in regional languages based on Sanskrit literature. It is in this manner that a correct development of medical literature in India can be postulated on the basis of medical manuscripts in India and abroad.

3. COMPILATION OF MATERIAL ON
AYURVEDA FROM VEDAS
BRAHMANIC LITERATURE AND
MEDIEVAL LITERATURE Etc. AND
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CON-
TEMPORARY SCIENCE OF
MEDICINE IN DIFFERENT COUN-
TRIES :

For the elucidation and study of Ayurveda we are more or less concerned with Vedic and Brahmanic literature, the medieval literature, Buddhistic medical literature, notices of Chinese, Greek and other foreign writers/travellers, contemporary literature and accounts of contemporary events, Chinese and Tibetan records, Greek literature, Egyptian medical papyri containing accounts of medical practice which was contemporaneous with the Vedic medicine and inscriptions on stone and copper plates and natives chronicles etc. All countries near and around India would furnish us with valuable contributions towards a scholar-like knowledge of Ayurveda. Thus, it would be easier for the scholars to undertake research according to comparative method—a method which when utilised will lead to results which will be simply astonishing—results, which then subjected to the critical and scientific methods of modern research, will yield a harvest of scientific findings not imaginable by the workers themselves. The task is certainly not an easy one; it will take years of study and applications, and the cooperation of a host of scientific workers. This will prove to

be a newly-opened mine of scientific enquiry. Alchemical experiments did not secure the philosopher's stone which would turn all base metals into gold, but to the alchemists we owe the science of chemistry which is undoubtedly more precious than what was the subject of their research. Travellers who gathered knowledge of plants were herbalists, but the science of botany had its origin in the rude attempts of such men at classification and description of the vegetable kingdom. In a similar way, we should try to collect folk-medicine as it exists in different countries and we may collect facts about medical practice in different countries for detecting resemblance between such facts or similarity which may exist between apparently dissimilar systems of the healing art. We must try to give a summary of the results achieved by scholars by the comparative study of medical science. This will reveal the impact of other science on the development of Ayurveda. It will also give an account of development of Ayurveda during different periods in different regions.

In a systematic enquiry into the state of medical science among any ancient race, it may be pointed out that the comparative study of contemporary science of medicine in different countries is often furnished with valuable materials as regards the state of medicine in a country, and this method has been recommended

for cultivation as one of the source of information for a proper estimate and real value of the knowledge contained in the literature of the period. Comparative mythology and comparative philology by scholars in the field of medical science will lead to interesting discoveries, as one and the same idea might have been conceived or the knowledge of one and the same fact might have been acquired almost simultaneously or at slightly different periods of time by people in different countries in a perfectly independent manner. The evolution of human intellect is known to follow more or less the same pattern, everywhere irrespective of any geographical limitations. Thus, history of medicine is a very fascinating subject and covers a very vast field. Henery, E. Sigerist a well known authority on history of medicine, therefore says; "True History is Always contemporary, history, as Benedetto Croce once said, because it is a contemporary interest that drives a man to consult the past. Medical history is not only history but medicine as well. The medical historian while serving truth as historian, is endeavouring to contribute to the progress of medicine."

4. COMPILATION OF BIOGRAPHIES OF GREAT MEN OF AYURVEDA, BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND CATALOGUES OR RARE AND IMPORTANT AVAILABLE LITERATURE OF AYURVEDA.

From the study of biographies of

celebrated medical men, we may form an idea of the different lines adopted by them as their hobby. Medicine is not a mere mechanical training but the training in medicine is a liberal education. It develops man's power in whatever directions these powers are later to be utilised. The study of biographies has been used from time immemorial as an aid to the formation of character by stamping moral impression along with interesting ideas on the minds of students.

5. RESEARCH WORKS AND POST-GRADUATE THESES MUST BE EDITED AND PUBLISHED.

The validity and justification of the Research work and post-graduate theses should pass through the competent Expert Committee before undertaking the final publication. The name of the Committee should be given in the introduction of that work.

6. COMPILATION AND ORGANISATION OF THE LITERATURE OF INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS IN PROPER AND SYSTEMATIC SEQUENCE.

The number of medical works written during different periods is very large. These works contain all the topics or subjects of Ayurveda, or highly special investigations of single topics e.g. medicine, surgery, diagnosis of diseases; description of hundreds of medicinal plants, minerals, animal substances and

thousands of compound preparations with their therapeutic values and dietetics etc. There are also works on the diseases of horses and elephants. It is only from a diligent subject wise or topic wise research into this literature, that we can expect to become acquainted with the knowledge of Ayurveda. It is natural that, we should take keen interest in the revival of our science of medicine.

Literary research thus, with its so vast field is very important for the compilation of history of Ayurveda. The history of medical literature forms a very large part of medical history. If any standard book on history of medicine is opened, it may be seen in some parts as if it were not merely a history of books, but a small part of medical activity through all the

ages. In every department of human culture a survey of its historical development is essential. This is especially as in case of medicine, if we are to appreciate fully its present status and seek some guidance as to its future line of advancement.

The task before us, therefore, today is to integrate and learn with the new scientific ideas. Evaluation of past medical knowledge in the light of modern scientific methods is very essential and is bound to yield good results. Exploration of this literature can give many informations which will prove to be very useful for the progress of Ayurveda in future, as Sir Winston Churchill had once said "The longer you can look back, the further you can look forward".

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सारांश

वाङ्मय अनुसंधान सिद्धान्त, पद्धतियां तथा महत्व आयुर्वेद इतिहास के संदर्भ में

— मोमिन अली

पूर्वऐतिहासिक काल से आयुर्वेद एक विकासशील विज्ञान रहा है तथा समय के साथ २ इसने महत्वपूर्ण प्रगति भी की है। १७ वीं शताब्दी से आयुर्वेद का विकास एक प्रकार से रुक गया था जिसके कारण तब से यह स्थिर रह गया था। इस शताब्दी के प्रारम्भ के साथ इसके पुनरुत्थान के विषय में नयी प्रेरणा जागृत हुई। वास्तव में आयुर्वेद के विकास के लिये आवश्यक प्रोत्साहन स्वतन्त्रता प्राप्ति के पश्चात ही मिला। आयुर्वेद के विकास के लिये सामान्यतया तथा इसमें अनुसन्धान के क्षेत्र में विशेषतः पहल की गई। अनुसन्धान पद्धति पर भी विशेष ध्यान दिया गया तथा वाङ्मय अनुसंधान को किसी भी अनुसन्धान विषयक कार्यक्रम के लिये एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग के रूप में मान्यता प्राप्त हुई। आयुर्वेद के विशाल वाङ्मय में प्रसुप्तावस्था में तथा बिना खोज के पड़े हुए आंतरिक शक्तियों को व्यक्त करके यह वाङ्मय अनुसन्धान कार्य आयुर्वेद को निश्चित रूप से समृद्ध करेगा।

