

TRIVIDHĀ EṢAṆĀ — THREE PURSUITS OF HUMAN LIFE: AN ĀYURVEDIC VIEW

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Abstract

Āyurveda is not only a health-related śāstra but a science of behavior and ethics covering every aspect of human psychology. In Caraka saṁhitā, trividhā eṣaṇā, three main human desires are elicited that are also applicable to today's era: prāṇaiṣaṇā (desire for a healthy life), dhanaiṣaṇā (desire for wealth) and paralokaiṣaṇā (desire for a superior world after death). These three truly indicate human behavior and psychology and if one is able to fulfil these desires, health and inner peace will be maintained.

Introduction

Eṣaṇā is a part of human nature. Each individual on this earth has a different inclination according to their upbringing and ambitions. Ācārya Caraka has described such types of desires in Sūtrasthāna, chapter 11, i.e. Tristraiṣaniya adhyāya. Cakrapāṇi comments on word eṣaṇā:

इष्यते अविष्यते साध्यते अनयेति एषणा। (1)

“Whatever is desired or invented for the better life of oneself is called eṣaṇā.”

There are three types of eṣaṇā described in Caraka saṁhitā i.e. prāṇaiṣaṇā, dhanaiṣaṇā and paralokaiṣaṇā.

- *Prāṇaiṣaṇā*: desire for a healthy and happy life is nothing but *prāṇaiṣaṇā*.
- *Dhanaiṣaṇā*: *dhana* – physical property, without which there is nothing to enjoy in life. Desire of wealth is considered *dhanaiṣaṇā*.
- *Paralokaiṣaṇā*: for the purpose of getting a better life if reincarnation occurs in this world, or, in the absence of reincarnation, the desiring of a better-*para* world, otherwise known as heaven. By believing in life after death and in obtaining a superior life after the present one, the concept of *paralokaiṣaṇā* is established.

Prāṇaiṣaṇā

प्राणो जीवितं, तत साध्यते दीर्घत्वेन रोगानुपहतत्वेन चानयेति प्राणैषणा²- चक्रपाणि (2)

“ *Prāṇa* means Life. Eradicating diseases is *Prāṇaiṣaṇā*.”

Prāṇaiśaṇā is considered as the foremost *eṣaṇā*.

The reason behind this is प्राण परित्यागे हि सर्वत्यागः

(3) “Whatever desires are there, are in a living human being. After death, there is no desire.”

For fulfilment of this *eṣaṇā*, two ways have been described i.e. स्वस्थस्य स्वस्थवृत्तानुवृत्ति and आतुरस्य विकारप्रशमने अप्रमादः (4)

“The first way is to maintain one’s health and the second to cure any disease without delay.”

These both can be correlated with the preventive and curative purpose of medical science.

Svastha means healthy. *Āchārya* Suśruta defines *svastha* as:

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः ।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥ (5).

This means that when the *doṣas*, i.e. *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are in equilibrium, when the *agni* (i.e. digestive power as well as metabolic power) are proper, when the *dhātus* (the basic varieties of tissues which compose the human body) are present, when the *mala* (waste matter) are in proper equilibrium and well-functioning; when the mind and the soul are in a peaceful and pleasant condition, then the person is healthy.

For the achievement of first goal, *dinacaryā* and *ṛtucaryā* are described by *āchāryas*, which includes a specific schedule of regimen (diet and lifestyle) to be followed daily and according to the season. The

main purpose of such a regimen is to make one’s life healthy and to avoid seasonal disease.

The second goal is to cure/subside disease for which *cikitsā sūtra* (treatment principles) are mentioned, including *pathyāpathya*.

Two categories of human behavior are observed in this world. The first is one that controls its *indriyas* and consume only those *bhāvas*/things which are beneficial to its *śarira* (body) and *man* (mind). On the other hand, some human beings do not have control of their *indriyas* and they keep on indulging in things unsuitable for them. The second category may also be aware of the *sātmya* (good for an individual’s health) and *asātmya* (harmful for an individual’s health) *bhāvas*, but their situation is like Duryodhana who quotes in *Mahābhārata* that,

जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्तिः जानामि अधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ॥

“I know what *dharma* is but I cannot apply it, I also know what *adharma* is but I cannot withdraw from it.”

In *Āyurveda*, *prajñāparādha* is considered as one of the *Trividha hetu* of *roga*.

कालबुद्धिः इन्द्रियाणां योगो मिथ्या न चाति च।द्वयाश्रयाणां व्याधिनां त्रिविधो हेतुसंग्रहः ॥ (6).

The text above explains that there are three main reasons for diseases manifesting in the body or mind (psychosomatic disease). 1. Season (*kāla*): excessive rain in the rainy season, *atiyogā*; shortage

of rain in rainy season, *ayogā*; rain in summer/other than the rainy season, *mithyayogā*. 2. Excessive/lack or inappropriate uses of *indriyās*, -*shabda*, *sparsha*, *rūpa*, *rasa*, *gandha* i.e. sensation of hearing, touch, watching, taste and odour. 3. Excessive/lack or inappropriate use of *buddhi* (intellect) which ultimately leads to consumption of *asātmya sevana* (things which unsuitable to a person).

Dhanaiṣaṇā

After attaining *prāṇaiṣaṇā*, an attempt should be made to achieve *dhanaiṣaṇā*. Nothing is worse in a long life than not having *sāadhanā/dhana* (the tools for a better life). *Ācārya* Caraka has described the following ways to acquire *dhana*, for instance through agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, service to the government or king and all other types of work not condemned by gentlemen/*sajjana* and not harmful to one's health. The one with wealth can live a respectable life without any sense of humiliation.

He has described the necessary virtues of a patient surrounding the four main factors in treatment: 1. *Vaidya* (doctor); 2. *Auśadha* (medicine); 3. *upaśthātā* (caretaker/nurse), 4. *rogī* (patient). The patient should exhibit four virtues *catuspāda sampātta* when being treated:

आढ्यो रोगी भिषग्वश्यो ज्ञापकः सत्त्ववानपि॥ (7).

“The patient should have four virtues 1. आढ्यो affluent; 2. भिषग्वश्यो obedience to the doctor; 3.

ज्ञापकः who is aware of the changes in his body; 4. सत्त्ववान good control over *the indriyas*.”

This means patients must be affluent or rich enough to avail for themselves every mode of treatment that ultimately helps to cure their disease and thus provide *prāṇaiṣaṇā*. However, it is also asserted that *prāṇaiṣaṇā* should not be hampered by *dhanaiṣaṇā*, implying that no work should be done to the detriment of one's health. In the present era, people are so busy making money that they spoil their health. Increased incidence of high blood pressure and diabetes attest to this fact. *Ācārya* Bhela has stated in the context of *dhanopārjana* that

धर्मकामावसंबाध्य तस्मात् वित्तमुपार्जयेत्। ज्वररोगादिका येन निरस्येदापदो बुधः ॥ (*Bhela Samhitā*). [From *Chakrapani commentary in the context of dhanaiṣaṇā, charak sutra 11*]

“The earning of money should be achieved without distracting *dharma* and *kāma* (worldly desires). Such wealth only can be helpful in curing diseases.”

Paralokaiṣaṇā

Whatever we have in this life is a result of our previous deeds in a previous life. In *Āyurveda*, some diseases are described under *karmaja vyādhi* (diseases manifesting as a result of previous deeds, eg. *shwitra*: leucoderma which is believed to have happened as a result of the sins of a previous birth) that are supposed to have due to *pāpakarma* (sins of a previous life). In *Caraka samhitā*, *janapadoddhvamsanīya vimāna*, the reason for

epidemic disease comes also under the umbrella of *adharma* (11).

People believing in *dharmaśāstra* have *paralokaiṣaṇā*. *Para* means superior. The superior can either be achieved through *mokṣa* (salvation) or attained by having a better life from the next birth.

With regard to *paralokaiṣaṇā*, *sādhana* is described as the tool by which one can reach one's goal *dharmaśādhana dvāra* including:

गुरुशुश्रूषामध्ययने व्रतचर्यायां दारक्रियायामपत्योत्पादने
भृत्यभरणे अतिथिपूजायां दाने अनभिध्यायां तपस्यनसूयायां
देहवाङ्मनसे कर्मण्यक्लिष्टे
देहेन्द्रियमनोऽर्थबुद्धयात्मपरीक्षायां मनःसमाधाविति; यानि
चान्यान्यप्येवंविधानि कर्माणि सतामविगर्हितानि स्वर्ग्याणि
वृत्तिपुष्टिकराणि विद्यात्तान्यार्भेत कर्तुः; तथा कुर्वन्निह चैव
यशो लभते प्रेत्य च स्वर्गम्। (12).

“One should, therefore, have faith in religious scriptures, one should attend to the services of the teacher, studies, performance of religious act, marriage, reproduction, maintenance of servants, respect to guests, donations, abstinence from selfish motives, penance, avoidance of backbiting, good physical, verbal and mental acts, introspection with regard to the body, sense faculties, mind objects(of senses), intellect and self and meditation, and other similar acts recommended by virtuous persons which are conducive for doing good in the life, and after death are known as the accepted means of

livelihood. A person, attending to these acts, earns fame in this world and attains heaven after death.”

Conclusion

Āyurveda is a branch of medical science that focuses not only on good health but also teaches us the right way of living. True success in life does not just depend on good health, wealth or values but also the optimized combination of all three parameters. Āyurveda postulates on how to maintain good health. It also prescribes how to live life perfectly and rewardingly. Āyurveda also emphasizes that our life cannot be evaluated solely by health or wealth nor merely by having a strong background of high values and morality. Harmonious fusion of all three, i.e. *prāṇaiṣaṇā*, *dhanaiṣaṇā* and *paralokaiṣaṇā*, can make life worthwhile and pleasantly liveable.

References

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