



Review Article

Teaching learning process in ancient ayurvedic text - Charak Samhita

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ABSTRACT

The word Ayurveda consists of two words 'Ayu' means life and 'Veda' means knowledge. Therefore the word Ayurveda, means knowledge of life i.e. study of life. In Ayurveda the teaching and learning was based on "Gurukula" system of education. A "Gurukula" was a place where a teacher (Guru) and students lived together. There were three ways for obtaining the knowledge i.e. Adhyayanam (Study/learning), Adhyapanam (teaching) and Tadvid Sambhasha (discussions) with the learned persons. Ayurveda suggest that in order to get expertise in any subject one should have the basic knowledge of the concepts. Other teaching and learning methods should be adopted which help to acquire more and accurate knowledge in that subject while practical training should be provided for application of that knowledge. Study of a single science gives only limited understanding, therefore one should also get knowledge of other sciences. To explain different concepts in Ayurveda Acharya Charak has given various methods of teaching and learning. The Roots of most of the current teaching methodology resides in ancient teaching and learning skills. Hence here is an attempt to review various teaching, learning methods used in Charak Samhita.

Key Messages: Teaching learning process is very well applied in Charak Samhita. It is the very first school of Ayurveda with various techniques and scholarly approach of subjects to students. Charak Samhita develops its own teaching learning process. It is the most important text in the field of Ayurveda Teaching Learning Process.

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1. Introduction

Charaka Samhita is one of the major treatises of *Ayurved*. *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hrudayam* and *Ashtanga Sangraha* are the pillars of *Ayurved*. These are called as *Bruhatrayee* of *Ayurved*. Among these three major treatises, *Charak Samhita* holds an important place in the view of Pedagogy and in Teaching Learning Process. The art of teaching is a continuous quality improvement learning process which was followed in ancient days. Acharya Charak and Sushruta have mentioned many sets of teaching and learning methodologies which prove to be acceptable

even in today.¹ The Era of *Charak Samhita* is considered to be 1000 BC. *Charak Samhita's* original title was '*Agnivesh Tantra*'. *Maharshi Atreya* was an eminent physician and a great scholar. He had six disciples. It was the time of *Gurukul Paddhati*. Disciples used to reside with teacher (Guru) and learn there to acquire knowledge. Teaching and learning of Ayurveda in ancient times was based on Guru- Shishya Parampara (Teacher Disciple Tradition). The Disciple used to learn directly from the teacher about the particular subject under his close supervision as a family member. Both theoretical and practical or clinical knowledge was imparted to the scholar and once the Guru got satisfied with his knowledge and experience then only

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he was given permission to practice his knowledge in the society. In a study Guru Shishya Parampara as a method of teaching has been found to be highly effective in current era also.² Hence as per the tradition, disciples of *Maharshi Atreya* were residing with him and he was inculcating the seeds of a good physician in them. While teaching, he used various techniques. Out of *Maharshi Atreya's* disciples *Agnivesh* wrote down the notes of teacher's teachings. All others also did the same but *Agnivesha's Tantra* became very popular and famous. Physicians find it very useful and for almost 800 years *Agnivesh tantra* was in practice. In 2nd century BC *Agnivesh Tantra* was redacted by *Acharya Charak*. He elaborated it and changed its title to *Charak Samhita*. By just changing the name the popularity and usefulness of *Agnivesh tantra* did not decrease rather it became an elaborated edition. It was used by physicians for again up to 4th century A.D. in the same format. In 4th century A.D. *Maharshi Drudhabala* redacted it and reformed the last chapters of *Chikitsasthan, Kalpasthan and Siddhisthan*. Hence, *Charak Samhita* is completed in three different stages by three different people and in three different geographical, societal, historical ways. *Charak Samhita* is redacted again and again but original teachings of *Maharshi Atreya* remained intact. This is the specialty of *Charak Samhita*. As *Charak Samhita* is a teaching and learning process itself, it is the base of pedagogy of *Ayurved*. To acquire knowledge *Charak Samhita* advises *Adhyayan* (Study/learning), *Adhyapan* (Teaching) and *Tadvidsambhasha* (Discussion). *Maharshi Atreya* used various techniques, practices to deliver knowledge among his disciples.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. Aim

To review various teaching learning methods used in *Charak Samhita* to teach *Ayurveda*.

2.2. Objectives

To understand knowledge acquiring modes of *Charak Samhita*.

3. Materials and Methods

A review of *Charak Samhita* is carried out to understand teaching learning process of *Charak Samhita*. Teaching learning processes mentioned in *Charak Samhita* are correlated with the TPL of pedagogy. It is a review of various teaching techniques used in *Charak Samhita*.

4. Discussion

4.1. Teaching learning methods

To acquire knowledge *Charak Samhita* advises *Adhyayan* (Study/learning), *Adhyapan* (Teaching) and *Tadvidsambhasha* (Discussion). As this study is related to teaching practices, one of the three knowledge acquiring pillars Study (*Adhyayan*) is not taken into consideration here because it is a process of an individual. Teaching and discussion are taken into consideration.

As per Bloom's taxonomy there are three learning domains –Cognitive domain (Knowledge), Affective domain (Attitude) and Psychomotor domain (Skill).³ Cognitive domain deals with knowledge and development of intellectual skills, Affective domain deals with moral values, emotions, attitude and Psychomotor domain deals with physical movement, co-ordination and use of the motor skill areas. All these three domains are very important in a student's life.

In teaching process *Charak Samhita* prominently pays attention towards nurturing moral building, generosity, sympathy, empathy in disciples, Because along with a good physician a person should also be a good human. Feelings, attitudes, emotions, dealing with external and internal phenomenon emotionally i.e. control on emotions, enthusiasm and motivation makes a fellow strong, gentle and a good human being.

In Gurukul Paddhati a child would reside with the teacher for almost twelve years. Hence to nurture a child emotionally, psychologically, and professionally was teacher's duty. Hence the teacher would instruct him from very basic manners and etiquettes.

The preceptor should instruct the disciple that you should live with celibacy, maintaining beard and moustaches, always speak truth, do not eat meat, always use intellect promoting diet, do not feel envy, do not possess weapons, should never disobey teacher's instructions except for those words that are hostile to or create malice for king, cause loss of life the word if followed that may cause great unrighteousness or inequity and great loss or misfortune, should surrender to teacher, consider teacher your head, be submissive, always do such actions which are pleasant and beneficial, should move with my permission, without haughtiness, dress carefully, with concentrated mind, humbleness, always remaining vigilant and without envy, once you have joined this *Ayurvedic* stream then for achievement of success in your profession, earning wealth, fame and heaven after death at every moment think first of all about beneficial of all living beings, while treating a patient concentrate the mind on one object that is to bring healthy status to the patient, should never have malice with patient even for a single cause, even psychologically should never think for committing adultery, neither should long for others wealth, should always have appearance and

apparel modest, should not have association of addiction, should not commit sin or be in company of sinners, should always speak soft, clear and pure, consistent with law or just blissful, auspicious or virtuous, truthful, useful and measured words, should constantly make efforts for acquiring excellent knowledge and practical knowledge, should never accept meat being given by the women without permission of her husband or guardian, in spite of knowing incurability of disease and death being near or life being short it should not be disclosed at the place where it can endanger patients or anyone else's life, in spite of having command over one's knowledge should not boast about it, because in spite of being an authority eulogizing oneself irritates others.⁴

Teaching is an art. It is sharing of knowledge and make sure that the respondent received. This process includes various techniques and methods. *Charak Samhita* itself is a book of Teaching Learning Process. It is the very first teaching practice of *Ayurved*. It includes various Teaching and Discussion method to share knowledge.

4.2. Delivering lectures

Charak Samhita is a series of lectures. *Maharshi Atreya* delivered lectures and his six disciples listened to it carefully. Every chapter of it starts with the word *Vyakhya* means to tell, to deliver a thought. While delivering a lecture every speaker/teacher should plan the lecture understanding the context. In *Charak Samhita* each chapter is allotted to a subject and each and every chapter is connected to each other i.e. there is a flow in lectures and connection to avoid any confusion. The sequence of lecture hardly makes any doubt in students. Hence out of eight section of *Charak Samhita* is titled as *Surtasthan*. Sutra is a string which ties things together. Here lectures are tied in such a way.

4.3. Helping students to learn

In lecture pattern of teaching, students should be helped to learn by giving them some examples. *Charak Samhita's* basic principle is *Yatha Pinde Tatha Brahmande* means it teaches students human body by giving examples of Universe. Whatever you find in Universe, you find it in human body and vice versa.

Human being is equal to Universe whatsoever formed entities are in universe the same are in human being and whatsoever entities are in human being those are in the universe.⁵

Names of some diseases are from the view of examples like *Grudhrasi* (patient walks like vulture), *Dandalasak* (body becomes hard as a stick), *Dhanusthambha* (body bends like a bow).

While explaining Pandemic, symptoms examples of bad weather, water, soil and temperament of people is put

forward to students.⁶

4.4. Handouts

Handouts are very important to gain knowledge. *Aptopadesh* is said to be the first source of knowledge. It includes words of teachers and worthy books. *Aptopadesh* is praised at number of places. Help of other sciences is also advised to understand any disease or a topic.⁷

4.5. Giving time for notes

Maharshi Atreya's six disciples had their own notes which later became famous *Samhitas*. *Charak Samhita*, *Bhel Samhita*, *Harit Samhita* are examples of it.

4.5.1. Mini quiz or asking questions

Asking questions to students during lecture is the practice to indulge them in lecture and to avoid their diversion from studies. *Acharya* does the same in his lectures in the form of discussions.

4.6. Differentiate between must to know, nice to know

A speaker must know what and when to be delivered during lecture. Must to know and nice to know portion must be planned accordingly. In *Charak Samhita's* every chapter the first verse states the topic of lecture and last verse summarizes the lectures. Last verse is a quick summary of topics of lecture. In every lecture initially must to know topics are delivered, then to explain the topic help of other topics, principles are used. Hence as compared to *Ashtang Hruday* and *Ashtang Sangrah Charaka's* chapters include more and wide information. In the flow of lecture to make the topic understand *Acharya* also explains related topics. For example- in fifth chapter of *surtasthan*, the lecture starts with the topic *Matrashitiya* and summarizes with a verse 'All this is explained in this chapter.'⁸

4.7. Teaching techniques

Use of any modern teaching media is an out of question for *Charak Samhita*. During lecture *Acharya* used to give examples, put forward some principles, some *Nyayas* to make the topic understand. He visited different places along with his students to demonstrate them various *Aushadhis*, to experience them different climates, to show them various region related diseases, local fruits, grains, medicines. This was the actual teaching media of that time. At that time they emphasized more on experimental and practical learning.

4.8. Opening of lecture

To start a lecture in a way that will create interest in students is the key of any lecture. *Charak Samhita* has a beautiful start of every lecture. *Acharya* starts lecture with announcing the topic and lecture's first verse starts with that

word of topic. It creates interest and has a great value in concern with the literature.

4.9. Encouraging students

Encouraging students boosts up their confidence and makes them interested in topic. Some words like *Saoumya*, *Vatsa* are the encouraging words used by *Maharshi Atreya* for his students.

4.10. Let students ask questions

Students ask questions to teacher when they feel free to ask. Fear of teacher or topic makes them least interested in subject. In *Charak* we find question and answer series of student and teacher, rather some chapters are the questions of *Agnivesh* and their responses from *Acharya Atreya*.

4.11. Field trip

Acharya Charaka has advised to get practical knowledge of plants from people living in forests which are again example of field trip method of teaching.

4.12. Brain storming

This is one of the three methods to acquire knowledge as per *Ayurveda*. A healthy discussion makes the topic more clear and some principles are put forward. In *Charak Samhita* we find such healthy, brainstorming sessions of discussions on various topics like *Vat Dosh*, foetus, evolution of life, *Rasanishpatti*, food etc. There is a vast difference in dialogue and debate. *Charak Samhita* has both. This is healthy debate which draws some conclusion. Rules and regulations of debate are explained in *Vimansthan* of *Charak Samhita* in detail.

5. Discussion method

Discussion method has been used as different *Sambhasha* parishad like discussion about number of *Rasa* (taste) in chapter 26 of *Sutra Sthana* of *Charak Samhita*.

5.1. Medical education

In *Rogbhishgjitya* adhaya of *Vimanstana* *Acharya Charak* has explained selection of a treatise, characteristics of ideal teacher, characteristics of ideal student and his duty during academia, four types of conversations in a conference are narrated. Discussion techniques and guidelines for developing conference presentation skill are in detail. The ideal preceptor, ideal medical treatise and ideal students are considered as basic pillars for proper propagation of medical knowledge.

While explaining qualities of a physician *Acharya* state-Excellence in theoretical knowledge, extensive practical knowledge, dexterity and cleanliness these are four qualities

of physician.

The person considering himself a physician cures one whose lifespan is certain but kills thousands whose life span is uncertain. Hence the one devoted to study of scriptures, their exact interpretations and explanations, having inclination of mind to act and having observed practical work is called *Pranabhisar Vaidya*.

The one who possesses knowledge, rationality or reasoning or critical analysis, deep insight beyond the scripture or in allied Sciences, good memory, swiftness or promptness and action that is execution of decision are the six qualities of a good physician. Knowledge, innate clear and pure wisdom, insight of practical work, continuous practice, accomplishment and dependence on experienced senior preceptor, possession of even one out of all these, this is sufficient to justify use of epithet *Vaidya*, the one who possesses knowledge extra. All these auspicious qualities deserve to carry honorable epithet of *Vaidya* who provides happiness to all sentiments.⁹ This is the actual practical approach mentioned in *Charak Samhita*.

6. Conclusion

Adhyayan (learning/study) and *Adhyapan* (teaching) and *Tdvidsambhasha* (discussion) are important aspect in teaching learning progress. It helps students to improve knowledge, decision making skill, co-ordination, interest in topic and also to improve the level of confidence that helped them in clinical classes. Newer teaching learning techniques like delivering lecture, helping students to learn, hand-outs, notes, mini quiz, brain storming activities were also conducted in ancient era. Education pattern of *Ayurveda* is basically differ as its anatomy, physiology and other subjects contains its own *Siddhant* (Basic Concepts) e.g. *Tridosha*, *Panchmahabhuta*, *Prakriti*. It is essential for *Ayurveda* fraternity to develop its own teaching learning skill. It is also necessary to take help of other teaching learning methodologies to explain basics of *Ayurveda* without affecting its fundamental principles.

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.


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