Shri Madhavacharya Gurukulam, Pune: An attempt to strengthen roots of classical Ayurveda

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INTRODUCTION

Allopathy is the mainstream healthcare system adopted by most countries. But the prevalence of use of traditional systems of medicine is increasing even in developed countries. The fact clearly justifies the view that modern medicine is not sufficient enough to meet the healthcare needs of mankind. Limitations of Allopathy in treatment/management of chronic and metabolic diseases and evidence of adverse effects are the main reasons behind, traditional systems like Ayurveda gaining acceptance. In India where Ayurveda has its socio-cultural-religious roots, people are beginning to make Ayurveda their first choice. The emphasis laid on maintenance and promotion of health, a holistic treatment approach toward diseases, a strong philosophical basis has attracted people to Ayurveda. This is in addition to its philosophy which establishes man’s harmonious relationship with nature. Ayurveda has become the only ray of hope in many incurable diseases. Hence it has become essential for the Vaidyas to rise and live up to the high expectations. The visionary Vaidya Madhav Vasudev Kolhatkar,[1] an eminent Ayurveda scholar and “Guru” of many practicing vaidyas in Maharashtra, especially in Pune foresaw the renaissance of Ayurveda. For this, he used to emphasize the need of Ayurveda students to enrich themselves with knowledge. When supply cannot meet demand there is always possibility of deterioration of quality. Vaidya Kolhatkar, throughout his life exerted himself to create a powerful Ayurveda generation enriched with the knowledge of basic principles of genuine Ayurveda.

“Vidyarthimitra Vaidya M. V. Kolhatkar Ayurveda Pratishthana” was established by his students after the sad accidental demise of Vaidya Kolhatkar. The organization is involved in many activities to enrich Ayurveda students. Lectures by practicing vaidyas, seminars, workshops on drug manufacturing and recitation and essay competitions are held regularly to broaden the horizons of practising Vaidyas. Although there is some improvement in the quality of Ayurveda education in India, there is still a vast scope to march on the way shown by Vaidya Kolhatkar. The Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) has adopted the pattern of Ayurveda education (B.A.M.S.) as replica of allopathy (M.B.B.S.) course. The focus of the curriculum designed by CCIM has become subject-wise and examination oriented. Students thus lack exposure to classics, which constitute the knowledgebase of Ayurveda. In order to overcome this shortcoming, and to provoke the students to study Ayurvedic classical texts (samhitas), “Shri Madhavacharya Gurukulam” was established in October 2009 in the name of Vaidya Madhav Kolhatkar. The “Gurukulam” is trying to establish a complementary education system to the existing curriculum. It is a perfect blend of ancient education system and current curriculum as designed by CCIM. The “Gurukulam” conducts residential programs of 1 month duration for undergraduate Ayurveda (B.A.M.S.) students on noncommercial basis. The programs are organized for students of all the 3 academic years during the vacation period between completion of their university examinations and declaration of results.

The programs Pratama, Dvitiya, and Trutiya are organized for students of all the 3 academic years, respectively, and syllabus is mainly targeting Ashtanga Hridayam (AH) [Table 1].

Although the mentioned syllabus is targeted on priority, common cross references in other Ayurvedic classics, such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and many more are also discussed with reference to context. The curriculum of
Table 1: Curriculum at Gurukulam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse to verse teaching</th>
<th>For recitation</th>
<th>Commentary on classics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prathama</td>
<td>Sootra, Sharir, Nidan sthanas (sections) of AH</td>
<td>AH Sootra sthana chapters 13–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dvitiya</td>
<td>Chikitsa, Kalpa-Siddhi and Uttara sthanas of AH</td>
<td>Nidan sthana chapters 11–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trutiya</td>
<td>Complete AH</td>
<td>AH Sootra sthana chapters 13–17</td>
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The syllabus for recitation may change as per need of the batch. Students follow Ayurvedic diet-lifestyle guidelines and morning Yoga session is an integral part. Few days are reserved for excursions of medicinal plants, preparation of Ayurvedic formulations, and special guest lectures. Schedule of the program changes with the university examination dates.

The courses are designed so as to equip the students with a full grasp of Ayurvedic texts with the help of commentaries for the entire year. Only 1 or 2 students attend the clinic of a particular “Vaidya Guru,” and hence get personal attention on the subjects of his interest. This converts the students into “Krutakarma vaidya” as expected of them in classics. These students go on to enter various sectors of Ayurveda, such as education, drug manufacturing, administration, research, and so on, and break the vicious cycle of mediocrity in their respective fields.

Due to limited number of seats, the members of the small group thus formed become very much attached to each other and with the teachers. The entire program of Gurukulam is popular now and is conducted twice a year. So far about 220 students from 8 batches have been benefited from the Gurukulam initiative. Due to overwhelming response of students; there is a tough competition for admission.

Running this kind of Gurukulam is really a tough job. From the beginning of Gurukulam students are charged for accommodation and food only and nothing as a course fee. The concept of the Gurukulam was put forward by Vaidya Dilip Gadgil and the affection towards Vaidya Kolhatkar and the respect for his ideals convinced his disciples about the need. They have been carrying forward the legacy with utmost dedication. It is a team work and cannot be completed unless and until everybody contributes in terms of time, money, energy, and intellect for it. Disciples of Vaidya Kolhatkar, Ayurvedic practitioners all over Maharashtra, participate in this program wholeheartedly without monetary expectations. Efforts like the “Gurukulam” is meant for the training of competent, ethical vaidya soldiers to fulfill healthcare needs of mankind and is its continuing success is a tribute to visionary guru Vaidya Madhav Kolhatkar.

REFERENCE


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