

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 *Pratishbandha*” 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 (*sambhitas*), “*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 *Prathama*, *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 Sambhita*, *Susruta Sambhita*, and many more are also discussed with reference to context. The curriculum of

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Table 1: Curriculum at Gurukulam

	<i>Verse to verse teaching</i>	<i>For recitation</i>	<i>Commentary on classics</i>
<i>Prathama</i>	<i>Sootra, Sharir, Nidan sthanas</i> (sections) of AH	AH <i>Sootra sthana</i> chapters 13–17	<i>Madhav Nidana</i> first Chapter with <i>Madhukosha</i> commentary
<i>Dvitiya</i>	<i>Chikitsa, Kalpa-Siddhi and Uttara sthanas</i> of AH	<i>Nidan sthana</i> chapters 11–16	AH <i>Sharir sthana</i> chapter 3 with commentary
<i>Trutiya</i>	Complete AH	AH <i>Sootra sthana</i> chapters 13–17	AH <i>Sootra sthana</i> chapter 1 with commentary

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

The course is limited to 25 students per batch who are selected on the basis of an entrance test and interview which test their potential and urge to learn, understand, and practice Ayurveda. The course is conducted in serene place with natural beauty, away from the city. The program at *Gurukulam* begins on an auspicious day with sacrifices to Bramha to Atreya. A group of 3 teachers stay for 3 days and teach the syllabus allocated to them. Every 4th day, a new team of 3 teachers take charge while the first returns. They teach each and every verse from the allotted portion of the syllabus, its word by word meaning, opinions of different commentators, with the use of different *tantrayukti* and its practical application. As a result, students realize the applicability of classical texts in clinical practice. The presence of 3 practicing *vaidya* teachers at a time, healthy discussions and debates among them on a particular topic helps students understand the subjects in depth. Evenings are devoted to informal discussion. The *vaidya* teachers share their experiences in clinical practice and discuss various issues. Every student gets an opportunity for one to one interaction with the teachers to clear their doubts.

The organizers know the limitations of the programme owing to the short duration of 1 month and being limited to theoretical discussions only. Hence the *Gurukulam* students are asked to attend the clinic of a *Vaidya* teacher

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*”s 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.

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