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Evaluation of Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya in Charaka Samhita

*¹Dr. Rekha G. Pandey and ²Dr. Priti V. Gahukar

¹HOD & Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Smt. Shantibai Otarmal Jain Ayurvedic Rughnay, Raigad, Maharashtra, India.

²Associate Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Indutai Gaikwad Patil Ayurvedic College, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract

Ayurveda describes treatment as a holistic process that depends upon the harmonious coordination of multiple factors. Charaka Samhita, one of the principal Ayurvedic treatises, elaborates this concept in the ninth chapter of Sutrasthana known as *Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya*. This chapter explains the four fundamental components of treatment—physician, medicine, attendant, and patient—and emphasizes that therapeutic success depends upon the presence of ideal qualities in each of these factors. Among them, the physician is regarded as the most significant pillar due to his knowledge, skill, ethical conduct, and practical experience. The chapter also condemns unscientific medical practice and highlights the moral responsibilities of a physician. The present article aims to critically review the concept of Chatushpada as described in Charaka Samhita and to explore its relevance in contemporary Ayurvedic clinical practice.

Keywords: Chatushpada, Bhishak, Dravya, Rogi, Upasthata, Charaka Samhita.

Introduction

Charaka Samhita, a foundational text of Ayurveda, presents a systematic and scientific approach to health and disease management. The ninth chapter of Sutrasthana, titled *Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya*, briefly yet comprehensively explains the four essential components required for effective treatment ^[1]. These four factors collectively ensure the restoration of equilibrium among Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala, which is the primary objective of Ayurvedic therapeutics ^[1].

Four Fundamental Components of Ayurvedic Treatment

Ayurvedic treatment is based on the coordinated functioning of four indispensable elements:

- Bhishak (Physician)
- Dravya (Medicine)
- Upasthata (Attendant/Nurse)
- Rogi (Patient)

These four factors are collectively responsible for disease management, provided each possesses the requisite qualities described in the classical texts ^[1].

Concept of Health and Disease

Health is defined as the state of equilibrium among Tridosha, Dhatu, and Mala, while disease arises due to disturbance in this balance ^[1]. A person experiencing comfort and well-being is considered healthy, whereas discomfort and suffering indicate disease ^[1, 3].

Definition of Treatment

Treatment refers to the combined effort of the physician, medicine, attendant, and patient, each endowed with appropriate qualities, aimed at restoring the disturbed equilibrium of bodily elements ^[1].

Essential Qualities of the Physician

Ayurveda assigns supreme importance to the physician among the four components of treatment ^[1]. An ideal physician should possess the following four qualities:

- **Shruta Paryavadataatva:** Profound knowledge of classical texts and medical literature ^[1]
- **Bahusho Drushtakarmata:** Extensive clinical experience and practical exposure ^[1].
- **Dakshata:** Skill, efficiency, and professional competence ^[1].
- **Shaucha:** Physical cleanliness and mental purity¹

These attributes enable accurate diagnosis and rational treatment planning ^[1, 2].

Essential Qualities of Medicine

For a medicine to be therapeutically effective, it should possess the following characteristics ^[1]:

- **Bahuta:** Easy availability in sufficient quantity
- **Yogyatva** – Suitability for the specific disease condition
- **Anekavidha Kalpana:** Ability to be prepared in multiple formulations

- **Sampat:** Proper processing ensuring desired pharmacological properties.

Only such medicines can produce optimal therapeutic outcomes ^[1, 4].

Essential Qualities of the Attendant

The attendant plays a vital supportive role in treatment and should possess ^[1]:

- **Upachara-jnata:** Knowledge of patient care and nursing
- **Dakshata:** Discipline and efficiency
- **Anuraga:** Compassion and affection towards the patient
- **Shaucha:** Cleanliness and hygiene

These qualities enhance patient comfort and ensure continuity of care ^[1].

Essential Qualities of the Patient

The success of treatment also depends on the patient, who should possess the following qualities ^[1]:

- **Smriti:** Ability to remember medical instructions
- **Nirdesh Kritva:** Obedience and adherence to prescribed regimen
- **Abhirutva:** Courage and fearlessness
- **Roganam Jnapakatva:** Ability to clearly express symptoms and complaints

Supremacy of the Physician

Although all four factors are essential, Charaka emphasizes that the physician holds the most prominent position in treatment ^[1]. Classical analogies describe the physician as the potter shaping clay or a king leading an army, highlighting his decisive role in therapeutic success ^[1]. Even when other factors remain constant, disease outcomes may vary significantly depending on the physician's competence ^[1, 2].

Condemnation of Quackery

Charaka Samhita strongly condemns unqualified and ignorant medical practice ^[1]. Treatment by an incompetent physician is considered more dangerous than beneficial, as such individuals act without clarity, confidence, or scientific understanding ^[1]. Occasional cures achieved by chance do not justify ignorance, as improper treatment can rapidly worsen patient outcomes ^[1].

Ideal Ayurvedic Physician

A true Ayurvedic physician is one who remains devoted to continuous learning, thoroughly understands disease pathology, and applies treatment judiciously through clinical experience ^[1]. Such a physician is described as *Pranabhisara Vaidya*, meaning the saviour of life ^[1].

Qualities of a Royal Physician

A physician fit to serve royalty should possess comprehensive knowledge of:

- **Hetu:** Etiological factors
- **Linga:** Clinical features
- **Prashamana:** Therapeutic measures
- **Apunarbhava:** Preventive strategies for recurrence

Mastery of these aspects qualifies a physician for royal service ^[1, 10]. Ethical use of knowledge is emphasized, as tools like scriptures or weapons may cause benefit or harm depending on their application ^[11].

Additional Attributes of the Physician

A physician endowed with education (*Vidya*), analytical reasoning (*Vitarka*), specialized knowledge (*Vijnana*), memory (*Smriti*), perseverance (*Tatparata*), and practical skill (*Kriya*) can successfully manage even complex diseases ^[1, 12]. Such a physician contributes to the well-being of society at large.

Ethical Disciplines for Physicians

Charaka prescribes four ethical principles for physicians¹:

- **Maitri:** Friendly disposition
- **Karunya:** Compassion towards patients
- **Shakte Preeti:** Focus on curable diseases
- **Upeksha:** Detachment from incurable conditions

These principles guide ethical and rational clinical practice¹.

Discussion

Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya of Charaka Samhita presents a concise yet profound framework for understanding the fundamentals of Ayurvedic therapeutics. The concept of Chatushpada emphasizes that successful treatment is not dependent on a single factor but is the outcome of harmonious coordination among four essential components—Bhishak (physician), Dravya (medicine), Upasthata (attendant), and Rogi (patient). Each of these components is assigned equal importance in principle; however, Charaka clearly establishes the physician as the central and decisive factor in the process of treatment ^[1].

The discussion of health and disease in this Adhyaya reflects the classical Ayurvedic view that swasthya is the state of equilibrium of Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala, while disease manifests due to their imbalance ^[1]. This holistic definition remains relevant even in contemporary healthcare, as it integrates physical, mental, and functional aspects of health. The physician's role is not limited to prescribing medicines but extends to restoring this equilibrium through proper assessment, rational thinking, and ethical conduct ^[1, 2].

Charaka's detailed description of the qualities of an ideal physician highlights the importance of both theoretical knowledge (*Shruta Paryavatadatata*) and practical experience (*Bahusho Drushtakarmata*). These qualities ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate therapeutic decision-making. In the modern context, this can be correlated with evidence-based practice combined with clinical expertise. The emphasis on *Shaucha* (cleanliness and purity of mind) further reflects Ayurveda's ethical and spiritual approach to medicine, which is often overlooked in present-day practice ^[1].

The qualities of Dravya (medicine) discussed in this chapter underline the importance of availability, suitability, proper formulation, and therapeutic efficacy ^[1, 3]. This principle aligns with the Ayurvedic concept that a medicine should be selected based not only on disease but also on the patient's constitution, strength, and digestive capacity. Similarly, the role of Upasthata (attendant) signifies the importance of nursing care, compassion, and hygiene, which are now recognized as integral components of patient-centred care ^[1].

The description of Rogi (patient) qualities indicates that patient compliance, courage, memory, and clear communication are crucial for therapeutic success ^[1]. This highlights the participatory role of the patient in Ayurveda, where treatment is a collaborative process rather than a passive intervention. Such an approach is highly relevant in managing chronic and lifestyle-related disorders prevalent in modern society.

Charaka's strong condemnation of quackery reflects his emphasis on rational, ethical, and knowledge-based medical practice [1]. The warning against ignorant physicians underscores the potential harm caused by unscientific treatment, a concern that remains highly relevant in the present era of misinformation and unregulated medical practices.

The concept of the royal physician and the six additional qualities of a Vaidya further reinforce the need for comprehensive understanding of etiology, symptomatology, treatment, and prevention of diseases [1, 10, 12]. The ethical principles prescribed for physicians—*Maitri*, *Karunya*, *Shakte Preeti*, and *Upeksha*—serve as timeless guidelines for professional conduct and clinical judgement [1].

Overall, Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya provides a holistic, ethical, and scientific foundation for Ayurvedic practice. Its principles not only guide effective treatment but also shape the physician's character, responsibility, and approach towards patients. The relevance of this Adhyaya extends beyond classical times and continues to offer valuable insights for contemporary Ayurvedic education and clinical practice.

Conclusion

Khuddaka Chatushpada Adhyaya concisely explains the four pillars of Ayurvedic therapeutics along with their essential qualities. Among them, the physician holds paramount importance due to his knowledge, experience, and ethical conduct. The chapter also highlights moral responsibility, professional discipline, and intellectual clarity as key elements of successful treatment. Thus, this Adhyaya serves as a timeless guide for both clinical excellence and ethical medical practice in Ayurveda [1].

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