

Expert Views

“Ayurpathy”: Misconceived and unwarranted

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Sir,

Dr. C.K. Katiyar,^[1] quoting Dr. C.P. Khare^[2] has floated a new word “Ayurpathy” to define a particular segment of Ayurveda trying to complete the so-called dichotomy of thoughts in Ayurveda which in my consideration is unwarranted. Such an effort will not serve any good purpose; rather will add great confusion and unhealthy fragmentation of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is Ayurveda in totality; it need not be fragmented into traditional Ayurveda and modern Ayurveda. Any knowledge-base that is developed further and gets modernized does not need to be truncated from its roots. The so-called conventional modern medicine too has drastically changed from its original form during the last two centuries. But modern medicine encompasses the entire process of its evolution during 200 years. Similarly, the classical Newtonian physics is very different than the so-called modern physics, which is now evolving through Quantum physics and Nanoscience.^[3,4] But nobody feels the need for segmenting this process of evolution and growth of science, except for the purpose of historical considerations, never for scientific and professional purposes.^[5,6]

Dr. Katiyar has floated the idea at such a time when the word “Pathy” is no more acceptable to any branch of medicine. Even modern medical doctors don’t like to be called Allopaths. It is already a dismissed term. Furthermore, I don’t agree with Dr. Katiyar’s perception that Ayurveda is suffering with the dichotomy of thoughts. There was some such kind of dichotomy 50 years ago on the issue of “Pure” Ayurveda and “Integrated” Ayurveda. But the continued dialogue of last 50 years drastically filled the gaps and the main stream Ayurveda has rejected both extreme views. Everybody in Ayurveda now believes in the need for research in Ayurveda and its scientific validation, of course in tune with its principles and approaches. Even the leading purists of their time, such as Padmavibhushan Vd. BD Triguna Ji, Padmashri Dr. P.K. Warier or late Acharya Priyavrata Sharma seem to believe in science and its appropriate application in revival and development of Ayurveda. Similarly modern scientists, who initially insisted on rigorous scientific testing of Ayurveda irrespective of its principles and approaches, are now talking of reverse pharmacology and systems biology approach and observational studies in clinical trials without any more insistence on rigid RCTs, respecting the holistic approach of Ayurveda. I don’t visualize any worth considering dichotomy of thought, and hence proposing a designated segmentation of Ayurveda seems to be a misconception and is in reverse gear and is unwarranted.

Dr. Katiyar refers to Drug and Cosmetic Act and a recent gazette notification of the Department of AYUSH exempting

classical Ayurvedic medicines from mandatory safety and efficacy studies besides a field survey report on Ayurvedic education recently published by Patwardhan *et al.*,^[7] to justify his proposal out of context. It may be mentioned here that even European Union has proposed similar provisions for registration of long-term in-use herbal formulations in the UK. The basic reality which Katiyar has not noticed is that certain provisions in Drug and Cosmetic Act were made to legalize the ongoing traditional practice of Ayurveda in the hands of lakhs of registered Ayurvedic practitioners who could not wait for new research. The profession was supposed to continue to use classical Ayurvedic medicines on the basis of the textual and experience-based evidence till better validated treatment modalities are available. This was the most positive approach and was in public interest. Science and scientific development was never denied in the past nor can be denied in future, which is very obvious from the coming up IMR Ayurvedic Research Policy of the Government of India where the commitment of scientific evaluation of even the classical formulations of Ayurveda has been placed on first priority.^[8] Similarly, Patwardhan’s report on present scenario of Ayurvedic education in India refers to the mismanagement and huge neglect of Ayurvedic sector by the State, warranting the need of immediate attention of Government of India to strengthen the AYUSH sector at all levels. It does not suggest to disrupt it. Patwardhan has drawn our attention to the neglect of the system, not to any conflict of thought.

Hence it cannot be considered a wise step to divide Ayurveda in two segments in the name of science and modernity versus tradition. There is no contradiction between Ayurveda and science. Every segment of Ayurveda is to be updated, strengthened, and modernized to suit the contemporary needs leading to its mainstreaming, including its theories and approaches as well as its therapeutics. The important issue is to revive and develop Ayurveda with the appropriate help of scientific research and validation in tune of its unique holistic characters for which it is respected world over. Modern science and technology has to mould its approaches and tools to study Ayurveda as it is.^[9,10] There is no question of any dichotomy, whole Ayurveda is to be developed into an acceptable system of health care. It is ridiculous to think that a segment of Ayurveda be left as a pure traditional discipline without any effort to develop it, and another segment be uprooted and transformed to globalize it with another new name. It could be a marketing strategy but cannot be considered a scientific development strategy. I cannot understand the psychology of attempting to coin a new name “Ayurpathy” in place of Ayurveda particularly

at a time when it has already become globally known and people are talking of symbiosis of systems breaking all barriers in the interest of growth of science and human health. I am afraid, the move proposed by Dr. Katiyar may prove to be a de-mainstreaming step at a time when the people of this country as well as the Government of India are committed to the “mission mainstreaming” of Ayurveda.

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