

THE EMINENCE OF LAKSHMIPATHI

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ABSTRACT

After the demise of Pandit. D. Gopalacharlu, Dr. Achanta Lakshmipathi took the task of development of Ayurveda. Of the 84 years of his life, Dr. Lakshmipathi spent about 50 years for the cause of Ayurveda. He endeavoured continuously for the advancement of Ayurveda. He strived to take the principles of Ayurveda to the village level. Some incidents are narrated in this article to illustrate his nobility, organisational skill and leadership qualities and serenity and dedication.

[Ayurvedamahopadhyaya Dr. Veturi Shankara Shastry is a well-known physician, scholar and historian of Ayurveda. He published number of medical works of Andhra region lying scattered in different libraries of manuscripts. His contribution to the history of Ayurveda in general and medical tradition of Andhra in particular is unparalleled. Dr. Shastry is the disciple of Lakshmipathi and had worked with him from his student days till the demise of Dr. Lakshmipathi. In connection with the birth centenary of Dr. Achanta Lakshmipathi, an article by Dr. Shastry is published here, as he is the last among the living associates of Dr. Lakshmipathi—Editor]

Human body is the means for the performance of *dharma*. *Dharma* endows one with wisdom. As such, man in the interest of his welfare, should look after his body without any neglect—*Mahabharata*.

Leaving everything else, look after your body, since in its absence, all its attributes become void. —*Charaka*.

Living upto these ideals, Dr. Achanta Lakshmipathi spent his eighty-four serene years and passed away on the 4th of June, 1964. Of the 84 years of his life, about fifty years were dedicated to the promotion of Ayurveda. His reputation attained such a status as to make his name synonymous with Ayurveda.

When Pandit Gopalacharlu, the great Ayurvedic Physician and a legend in his lifetime died in 1920, the mantle fell on the shoulders of Dr. Lakshmipathi in crusading for Ayurveda. When these two effulgent bodies had disappeared from the vast expanse of Ayurveda, it appeared that the universe of Indian Medicine was steeped in inky darkness. For

my part, whenever I undertake any work for the promotion of Ayurveda, I feel the presence of these two great stalwarts before me. I believe that the reason for this is the close association I have had as a student of Ayurveda with Pt. Gopalacharlu for two years and with Dr. Lakshmipathi for three years. I consider this as my good fortune. Almost all my contemporaries, who had the rare privilege to study under the guidance of these great teachers, have passed away.

I consider 1900 A. D. as the beginning of the modern era in the history of Indian medicine. In this modern era these two stalwarts have made history. They may be even deemed as epoch makers in Ayurveda.

When Lakshmipathi was alive it was possible to describe his physical frame visible to the naked eye— that he had a well-proportioned physique, that he weighed many pounds and that he had muscle power. Such descriptions were no doubt made. But after he passed away, I can only recall the supremacy of his great soul. It is difficult to put in so many words the feelings that crowd my mind when I think of Dr. Lakshmipathi and his greatness. It is simply beyond my imagination.

It is of course easy to praise Lakshmipathi as an outstanding physician and as a great promoter of Ayurveda. But when attempt is made to say about the supremacy of his soul, words fail me. He was as serene as the sea, as expansive as the sky and as patient as Mother Earth. He diffused the moonbeams of knowledge and his fame was all-pervading. Visionaries with their imaginative power can understand anything to the limit of their thinking capacity. It becomes only a matter of self realisation. Lakshmipathi was a man of Himalayan stature.

It is customary among Indians to pay homage to great men in various ways. The object of centenary celebrations is to consider them as ideal persons and to tread the path shown by them in discharging our duties. We can receive their messages. Their works are before us. The institutions established by them are involved in implementing the work. Their circle of scholars is spreading far and wide. What remains to be done is to put their aims and messages into living practice and demonstrate that way our devotion to them. My appeal is that it should be done in such a way as to be light-bearing and long lasting.

Not only in Andhra Pradesh but in the entire Bharat the initiative for resuscitation of Ayurveda was undertaken only by Pandit Gopalacharlu. He was the very incarnation of Dhanwantari to revive and rehabilitate Ayurveda.

Even before Gopalacharlu's demise, Lakshmipathi played the main role as his companion in promoting the movement of Ayurveda. After his death Lakshmipathi filled the void. Whether it is because of friendship with Gopalacharlu or because of his tutelage, Lakshmipathi imbibed all the qualities of Gopalacharlu and became the leader of Ayurvedic movement, not only in Andhra but also of all India movement and did unparalleled service for about fifty years.

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He used to come to Hyderabad to attend the meetings of the Ayurvedic Board. Whenever he came he would enquire whether I was in the city and if I were available he would send the car to fetch me to the Government Guest House. As long as he was in the city the Government vehicle was placed at his disposal. This amenity was extended only to him and not to others who succeeded him.

One day myself and he had gone to the residence of Dr. B. Ramakrishna Rao. Dr. Rao was preparing to leave for Kerala as he was appointed as Governor of that State. Then Dr. Lakshmipathi was probably the principal of the Ayurvedic College at Trivandrum. When they both were having a talk, a friend of Dr. Rao came there. In the course of conversation the gentleman referring to Lakshmipathi said in jest "did you accept the Principalship of the college to demolish Ayurveda?" Lakshmipathi gave a repartee smiling "when the British Empire on which the Sun never set could not destroy Ayurveda how could I?" I became a little explosive at that time but I restrained myself. While returning I said that it would have been better if he had given a more fitting reply. Then Lakshmipathi observed that if I wanted to imbibe the spirit of Ayurveda I should re-read the chapter on daily conduct in Vagbhata's *sutrasthana*. He made me recollect the following verse :

न कञ्चिदात्मनः शत्रुं नात्मानं कस्यचिद्रिपुं ।
प्रकाशयेन्नावमानं न च निःस्नेहतां प्रभोः ॥

What magnanimity and what serenity! I was astonished and could not give any reply.

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Lakshmipathi organised the All India Ayurvedic Conference that was held at Vijayawada in 1944. Many great Ayurvedic Pandits from North India attended the Conference. Their staple food was not rice. They had to be served with *chapatis*. Those were the days of rationing and sufficient quantity of wheat was not available. More than the number of physicians expected came from North India. *Chapatis* had to be prepared in a few hours. People in the kitchen were nonplussed with vacant looks. Immediately Dr. Lakshmipathi left in a rickshaw, met the Sub-

Collector, obtained the permit for a bag of wheat flour and had seen to it that there was no inconvenience to the guests and that *chapatis* were served to all. By evening a merchant who had regard for Lakshmipathi supplied a bag of wheat flour. How to account for all this? Since Lakshmipathi was a calm and unperturbed person he could tide over the crisis. His influence and his organisational ability were of very high order.

I shall have to narrate another anecdote in this connection. Sri. V. T. V. Ramanujaswamy went on a fast on the ground that lapses had occurred in the manner the conference was organised and conducted. Some of his followers with the support of the press launched a campaign in a big way. A day or two had passed like this. Lakshmipathi met Ramanujaswamy and told him that owing to heavy work and oversight some lapses might have occurred and that he should not magnify them and launch an agitation, when all of them were sincere about service to Ayurveda. He thus satisfied Ramanujaswamy, gave him fruit juice and made him break the fast. What is evident from this is that though both were leaders in promoting the cause of Ayurveda, their attitudes were different. Lakshmipathi's heart was replete with love; he was full of sweetness and light.

In 1941 an Ayurvedic training camp was organised at Avadi. I was asked to present a paper on Andhra Medical Tradition. Myself and friends like Desiraju Narayan Rao, Valluri Subba Rao and I. V. Sharma discussed day long about medical practices, treatises and their authors in the Andhra region and established their uniqueness. We also established that the examination of eight items (or places) was originally propounded by Andhras. Lakshmipathi got the abstracts of these papers, translated into Hindi and sent them for publication in Hindi journals. The purpose was to proclaim the proficiency of Andhra medical lore to the people in the north. All this was done overnight. What an organisational flair and patriotic fervour!

Whatever paper he had written and whatever he read in English, Lakshmipathi used to send them to me for translation into Telugu. He felt that I could ably translate them consistent with his ideas. I have with me some of the papers yet to be translated. It is a collection of papers on important topics which have to be published some day. My only misgiving is whether any one will undertake this task.

The All India Ayurvedic Conference was held in Trivandrum under the Presidentship of Pt. Shiv Sharma. Lakshmipathi and myself wanted to travel together from Madras to that Conference. As I was indisposed I informed Lakshmipathi that I would not be able to make it. My condition was such that I could not even walk thirty paces. I had palpitation, no

appetite and no sleep. Lakshmi pathi insisted that I should go with him. I avoided him. He traced where I was staying, came there and took me to his residence. After some rest he led me by hand and brought me to the road saying that we would go to Egmore Railway Station for reservation of tickets and return. The car was waiting for us. He instructed the chauffeur to keep the car in the garage and said to me that we would walk the distance. We attended to the reservation of tickets and other work and walked home again. The next day we were to board the train. At 9 o'clock in the night the personal effects were sent by car beforehand and both of us started walking. The journey was smooth and comfortable. We spent the time in the train by studying *indriyasthana* of Charakasamhita with commentary. We had seen through the Conference at Trivandrum and drove to Kanyakumari by car. We returned to Madras after a comfortable journey.

After our return, Dr. Lakshmi pathi asked me as to how was my illness. I told him that I had submitted it to my master. He said the disease was not due to imbalance in the elements, but was more due to psychological upset; and that was the purpose in making me read Charaka's *indriyasthana* in the train. I thought probably this was what was meant by entry into the soul of the afflicted.

Dr. Yellapragada Subba Rao became a person of world renown. He fell ill when he was studying in the Madras Medical College. Eminent medical men like Dr. Guruswamy Mudaliar examined him and prescribed medicines. They diagnosed it as sprue. It could not be cured with any number of medicines. On some one's advice he came to Dr. Lakshmi pathi. There was no appetite; even liquid diet could not be contained much less digested; a burning sensation in the abdomen; dysentery; uncontrolled purging. The medicine was to take buttermilk whenever required. In a month the disease was cured.

Since then Dr. Subba Rao became an admirer of Ayurveda and an Ayurvedic physician. The library in the Ayurvedic college was at his disposal. Teaching physiology to college students, and himself attending classes for learning Ayurveda was the arrangement that continued.

The method of our study was not one of learning from the text each Sanskrit verse with meaning of each word. It was studying a subject or about a disease thoroughly from the books and having a detailed discussion among ourselves. We used to raise doubts, express our opinions and communicate among ourselves. Dr. Subba Rao had particular interest in filariasis, *arbuda* and anaemia. His devoted aim was to somehow eradicate these diseases. He had contributed some research papers on them. Some of these papers were published in Andhra Medical Journal in

English and in Dhanvanthari in Telugu. We used to show these articles to Dr. Lakshmipathi for his review and get them corrected. Even after leaving for the USA, Dr. Subba Rao used to contribute papers. Some of these papers are with me.

Dr. Lashmipathi set up in 1920 a big pharmaceutical works with a capital investment of Rs. 3 lakhs. He was supplying to the public, medicines required by them and manufactured by modern mechanical devices in the pharmaceutical works. The institution had rapidly grown. Students of Ayurvedic college had their means of livelihood in this factory.

After running this enterprise for some time and acquiring experience in it he discontinued it. This he did because of his conviction that commercial outlook was not what was required for the progress of Ayurveda; that every Ayurvedic physician should acquire the proficiency of preparing medicines by himself so that he would not only know the efficacy of those medicines but also acquire manufacturing skill that would make him an expert in the science of Ayurveda. Besides, he considered imparting knowledge to village physicians as of much more importance. Closing down a promising enterprise, Lakshmipathi launched upon an intensive endeavour of writing books, training village physicians; and health propagation. Is there a greater teacher than experience? It is not given to everyone to abandon a flourishing enterprise which was established with phenomenal effort. Attachment and detachment are means for self development. They are functionally in mutual conflict. Only those who have the realisation of self can master them. Lakshmipathi was a seer of balanced perception.

Lakshmipathi campaigned that instead of increasing the bed strength of hospitals for patients and capacities of medical colleges for admission of students, the best course would be to put an end to the petrified bad practices among the people through health propaganda for preventing diseases. For this purpose he propounded a fighting programme of Five Purities (*Pancha Suddhi Pranalika*) and launched it on a big scale. He said that we had four vices among our enemies, they being ignorance, lack of cleanliness, idleness and immorality; and that to extirpate them we also possess four weapons in one armoury, namely, self-control self-confidence; self-effacement and self-help which could remove the impurities of the mind. Dr. Lakshmipathi said that in this fight one strategy should be to propagate the five purities programme (*Pancha Suddhi Pranalika*) comprising 1. cleanliness of the environment 2. cleanliness of the body 3. purity of food 4. purity of mind and 5. purity of self. The propagation of these five principles was considered by Dr. Lakshmipathi as the functional responsibility of those possessing knowledge of Ayurveda. He said that he had made this campaign his life's mission.

Dr. Lakshmpaihi repeatedly preached that instead of curative medicine the principal duty should be protection of health and for promoting its principles of health should be imparted to people at the village level. He used to show the way by putting the programme into practice. It was his conviction that in the name of good conduct, health training and health protection should be promoted at the village level and that principles do not descend on villages from the ivory towers of universities. This is truth and nothing but the truth. For this purpose he conducted walking tours in villages propagating principles of health with the conviction that the day they are observed in practice, physical and mental ailments would be cured, and that not only bodily health but also the health of the economy would improve leading to peace and prosperity. Dr. Lakshmpathi used to propound them to the people. All the time he dreamt about the resuscitation of villages and the proficiency and career prospects of village physicians.

सारांश

लक्ष्मीपति की महानता

ले० वि. शंकर शास्त्री

पण्डित डी. गोपालाचार्य के निधन के पश्चात् आयुर्वेद के प्रगति का भार डा. आचण्टा लक्ष्मीपति ने अपने स्कन्धों पर लिया। डा. लक्ष्मीपति ने अपनी आयु के ८४ वर्षों में लगभग ५० वर्ष आयुर्वेद के विकास के लिए व्यतीत किया। आयुर्वेद की उन्नति के लिए वे लगातार प्रयत्न करते रहे। आयुर्वेद के सिद्धान्तों को ग्रामीण स्तर तक पहुँचाने के लिए उन्होंने प्रयास किया। इस लेख में उनके उदात्तस्वभाव, आयोजनकुशलता, नेतृत्व के लक्षण, सौम्यता, तथा समर्पणभाव के द्योतक कुछ घटनाओं का वर्णन किया गया है।