

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION OF ACUPUNCTURE IN INDIA

SOWED SUPERIOR SEED OF INTEGRATED MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT

Acupuncture, though originated in oriental countries in the ancient times but, its philosophical understanding is amazingly wide open to the modern medical science. Historically, records are there regarding its Indian origin. However, acupuncture practised today in Indian sub-continent mainly shows Chinese origin and its introduction to India was pioneered by Dr. B.K. Basu, the first Indian who learned Chinese acupuncture from mainland China during 1959. It is interesting enough to note that though acupuncture is successfully practised in India in a rejuvenated form for the last few decades but due to lack of proper Governmental support this thereby suffers from under utilization and under development. While WHO suggested for its wider application and development through concerted Governmental efforts.

Introduction

Acupuncture originated in prehistoric ages and evolved into its present form in the succeeding centuries. The wealth of records on acupuncture, both in East and in the West, belong to this prescientific era. But scientific investigation of acupuncture has proved to be worth elusive.¹

Study reveals the controversy regarding its origin but predominant practice of Chinese acupuncture throughout the world has attracted the scientific

community to study its history and philosophical dimensions in the context of further meaningful development and application in different socio-medical setup.

Origin of Acupuncture Various School of thoughts

Generally known to us that acupuncture was originated in ancient China². But there is controversy in this respect. Several records are there which justify that acupuncture has been practised in

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ancient Egypt, Persia, India etc. There was vedic therapeutic methods of needling in India date back to the ancient period. Many Chinese travellers had come to India and written extensively about the local treatment practices. Some of the Indian erudites even said that people learnt acupuncture from Indian experts in Takshashila University (circa 100 B.C). It has been said that ayurvedic texts consisted of acupuncture principles lost due to the then unfavourable circumstances in India. Research reports stated that Buddhism also utilized acupuncture and ayurveda, which were subsequently taught to Tibetans. The Buddha was reportedly responsible for writing various texts on Indian medicine, which today the Tibetan Buddhists jealously guard. There are four Shastras or texts written by Buddha, in which the Fourth Shastra indeed explains that Tibet received acupuncture and medicine from India. The Indian Buddhist medicine centres around restoring and developing balance between the three humours called Wind (Vata), Bile (Pitta) and Phlegm (Kapha). Experienced Tibetan physicians have used the system for more than thousand years. The Fourth Shastra of Buddha dealt with acupuncture, moxibustion,

surgery and so forth^{3,4}. However, in International Medical scenerio the dominance Chinese acupuncture and indomitable interest of the people regarding its efficacy have forced the researchers to look into the depth of this healing practice.

Chinese Acupuncture: Passage to India

Reports indicated that during 6th century, through the process of cultural exchange between China and other countries, acupuncture and moxibustion were disseminated to South-East Asia and the continent of India. Actually Mi Yun from Dun Huang of Gansu province introduced the therapeutic methods and prescriptions of Hua, Tuo, the great man of Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture, to Daochang state of North India². But report regarding its subsequent cultivation in India is obscure. After a long gap of several centuries, again we note the reintroduction of Chinese acupuncture in India in the middle of 20th century through normalization of India-China relation.⁵

Rejuvenation of Acupuncture in India: Historical role of Dr.B.K.Basu

Through the pioneering role of Dr. Bijoy Kr. Basu in 1959 Chinese acupuncture was reintroduced in India. Dr.

Basu was a member of the historic Indian Medical Mission to China (1938-1942)⁵. It was interesting to note that though he was a student of modern western medicine but had taken sincere attempt in the development of this oriental healing art in his motherland. Dr. Basu was equally interested to realize the inherent values of this Chinese classical therapeutic modality. So during his activity we note that he not only practised acupuncture as a therapy but also tried to inculcate some unique human and social values in medical practice which are essential functional component of any successful therapy.

In the advancement of acupuncture in India as usual he had given stress on acupuncture training for both health workers and qualified doctors. It is fact that in the development of acupuncture health worker he was moved with the concept of barefoot doctor of China.⁵ Through his continuous inspiration and active guidance medicos and health workers of different social service organizations like Peoples' Relief Committee, Dr. Dwarakanath Kotnis Memorial Committee etc. undergone training in acupuncture. Dr. Basu's noble mission interrupted in 1986 with his demise.

Acupuncturists and Acupuncture Training in Modern India

In 70's we mark the renewed interest of western medical world in acupuncture. Several research findings on fundamental aspects of acupuncture appeared in the scientific literatures. Particularly some important research propositions and findings of pain research like 'gate control theory', 'endorphin-enkephalin theory' of acupuncture analgesia and above all the favourable theoretical paradigm of modern physics regarding complex systems and possible correlations with philosophical understanding of Traditional Medicine gave major boost to the international medical community and inevitably the India counterpart for acupuncture. In due course, besides socially motivated acupuncture health worker, various medical graduates became interested in acupuncture and started to practice of it as a system of therapy or as an adjunct to other therapeutic modalities.⁵

In India, acupuncture is practised mainly by medical graduates and trained health workers. A major contradiction emerged in this field of practice. Most of the acupuncture trained medical graduates are of the opinion that if we allow the trained acupuncture heal-

th workers to practice acupuncture without having medical graduation, unwanted complications may develop in the treatment of patients. On the contrary, some doctors and institutions are of the opinion that as acupuncture is mainly based on Traditional Chinese Medical Philosophy, for its practitioners, actual knowledge in acupuncture, basic medicine and a basic health concept are essential. They opine that graduation in modern medical science should not be the prerequisite for becoming an acupuncture practitioner. In this context, if we make a comparative analysis regarding the role of modern doctors and acupuncture health workers in the popularisation of acupuncture in India, significant presence of the health workers may be visible. This important social fact has to be recognized by the scientific community. But people have already accepted as they are getting necessary service from these workers. In this regard we may quote the important proposition of WHO on practice of acupuncture. WHO considered that acupuncture, it practised by well trained individuals, be they physicians or other health professionals should be safe and efficacious for the management of well defined conditions. It is also particularly cost effec-

tive if controlled by Government.⁶

In India acupuncture neither fully supported nor recognized by the Government. So the country lacks any comprehensive basic infrastructural facility for proper training in acupuncture. Very few organizations are delivering preliminary and basic acupuncture training for the learners. The framework and dimensions of these training are not properly standardized. Only recently a qualitative change in Government attitude for the development of acupuncture has been noticed. Government of India in early 90's taken positive steps for mutual exchange of knowledge in the field of traditional medicine including yoga and acupuncture in between India and China.

Inner Dynamics of Philosophical Understanding of Different Acupuncturists

Through the evaluation of inner dynamics of development of acupuncture in India we have revealed that there is a philosophical difference amongst the acupuncture practitioners. A good number of Indian acupuncturists practice acupuncture mainly based on its analgesic property. So they fail to utilize fuller potential of this healing art based on the philosophy of traditional

chinese medicine (TCM) whereas, though small in number, the believers of TCM follow the philosophical dimensions of acupuncture therapy and continuous endeavour is there to utilize and develop it as a potential therapeutic system.

Again it is interesting to note that a significant concept is emerging from the second group of practitioners that acupuncture also can play vital complementary role along with modern medicine mainstreamed. Apart from these, another group of practitioners are there who propagate acupuncture as an alternative therapy. But their actual approach is hazy and full of ambiguity.

Institutional and Peoples' acceptance of Acupuncture in India

Culturally our people favour to adopt any form of traditional medical system. So in case of acupuncture, which possesses so much philosophical similarity with Indian ayurvedic system as well as historical traces of common origin, a large section of Indian society has spontaneously accepted it as a system of therapy. This fact has been reflected by the growing interest of the youth to learn it as a powerful media of social service as well for professional practice. In our country thousands of acupuncturists are

now practising acupuncture successfully in different social setup for the treatment of various chronic and acute disease conditions. Gradually they are finding their actual niche in the field of medical practice and people are also finding their friends in the struggle for the development of a cheap ecofriendly efficient holistic medical system.

It is also interesting to note that most modern scientific and medical institutions and agencies of India showing intense scientific interest for the development and standardized application of acupuncture. The premier medical research body ICMR of Government of India has already remarked that the fundamental and applied research on acupuncture is an important area of medical research. ICMR experts are giving more stress on its mechanism of action, immunomodulatory property and on philosophical dimensions. In this plethora of intense social interest eminent medical professionals are also showing their growing interest in this traditional but potential art of healing.

Philosophy Of Acupuncture Seeds of Integrated Medicine

Central to the concepts behind acupuncture is the idea of the body as self

healing that as living beings we are -all naturally full of vitality and are continually, and quite unconsciously, being rebalanced and regenerated from within. Acupuncture sees the body as a self rectifying dynamic whole, a network of interrelating and interacting energies. Their even distribution and flow maintains health, but any interruption depletion or stagnation leads to disease. Acupuncture is a system of medicine which seeks to aid these natural processes, helping the body to correct itself by a realignment or redirection of body vital energy, which the Chinese call "Qi"(Chee).^{1,7}

The Chinese themselves have compared the flow of "Qi" through the meridian system to water irrigating the land, feeding, nourishing and sustaining the substance through which it flows. By needling the points, the "Qi" can be 'tapped' or affected to influence the state of health. In another analogy the Chinese described the body as a musical instrument, constantly resounding with the flow of "Qi" in the meridians, as a flute does with a breath of air. Good health is the equivalent of a pure clear note from this instrument and illness as discord, which can be corrected by

stimulating different points or holes, thus altering the quality of the note., These ideas of tuning and allied ideas of correct frequency, timing and so on to ensure that things run well, are useful analogies for us in the modern world. Interestingly it is not regarded as entirely coincidental that many of the theoretical principles of Modern Physics have a similar basis and 'World view' as acupuncture. Both are looking behind the scenes at the interaction of energies. Acupuncture may be old but its principles are very modern⁶.

From an understanding of the body as an energetic and vibrating whole, comes a new approach to health and disease. Modern western medicine tends to be divisive, often looking at one part of the body without seeing its relation to the whole. Acupuncture draws together all the diverse signs and symptoms of ill health to form a basic pattern of disharmony⁷.

Having determined the dynamic state of the patient in relation to the environment, the Chinese doctor then attempts to restore the balance and harmony. Several therapeutic techniques are used, all designed to stimulate the patients systems in such a way that it will follow its

own natural tendency to return to a balance state. Accordingly, one of the most important principles of the Chinese Medicine is always to give as mild a therapy as possible. The whole process, ideally, is one of ongoing interaction between doctor and patient, with the doctor continually modifying the therapy according to the patients' response. 8

With this evaluation it became evident that though the history of acupuncture in India is lengthy, contradictory and full of events but it has definitely added some new dimensions in the paradigm of new integrated medicine which can revolutionize the ideas of modern medicine vis-a-vis the development of more effective holistic medical system in Indian society.

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भारत में ऐकूपंकचर का परिचयात्मक इतिहास एकीकृत चिकित्सा पद्धति का उत्कृष्ट बीजारोपण

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एस. बसु, एस. पाल एवं जे. चटर्जी

यद्यपि ऐकूपंकचर (सुईचिकित्सा) पद्धति का उद्गम प्राचीन काल में पूरबीय देशों में हुआ किन्तु आश्चर्य है कि इसको दार्शनिक जानकारों आधुनिक चिकित्सा विज्ञान के प्रति व्यापक रूप से खुली है। इसका उद्गम भारत में हुआ, इस विषय में ऐतिहासिक प्रमाण मिलते हैं। तो भी आजकल भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में जो ऐकूपंकचर प्रचलित है उसका उद्गम वास्तव में चीन में हुआ ऐसा माना जाता है। भारत में सर्वप्रथम इसके परिचय का श्रेय डा.बि.के. बसु को जाता है जिन्होंने पहली बार चीन जाकर 1959 में ऐकूपंकचर सीखा था। यथोचित सरकारी सहायता के अभाव में इस चिकित्सा पद्धति का सम्यक उपयोग व विकास नहीं हो रहा जब कि विश्वस्वास्थ्य है संघटन ने सम्यक सरकारी सहायता द्वारा इसके व्यापक उपयोग तथा विकास के लिये सुझाव दिया है।

