

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEM OF SEX IN AYURVEDA

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7.1. INTRODUCTORY

'There is a vast and fascinating literature, dating from antiquity, on human love-making. By comparison, the medical literature is much smaller.'¹

Sex in the broadest meaning is a subject of fascination from the dawn of the human race. But the

¹Donald W.Hastings M.D. Impotence and Frigidity. First Edition, 1963, Little Brown & Co., Boston, p.1.

medical literature on the subject is comparatively very small even today. It is Freud who had realized the importance of the problem of sex from psychological and medical view-point. In ancient India the subject of sex was scientifically treated by Vast_sayana and others but it was Ayurveda which treated it medically.

An appropriate word for this topic in Sanskrit is the term 'Kama' which means sex in its broad implications. It has been shown in Indian philosophy and in Ayurveda as one of the fourfold principles of human endeavours (Purushar_{th}as). According to it, man has four primary and principal purposes in life and these are Dharma or religious virtue, Artha or Wealth, Kama or Sex or desire in general and these should culminate at last in Moksha or Salvation or final release from human bondage. The highest and final goal or ultimate purpose of human life is salvation and other Purushar_{th}as or life-purposes are means to it. The basis of all these principal efforts is health and it is the foundation on which everything else rests. That is why Charaka stated in the very beginning of his treatise: 'Health is the supreme foundation of Virtue(Dharma), wealth, enjoyment(Kama) and salvation.'²

²Charaka-Samhita: Vol.II,S.A.I, Sl.15,p.4.

It must be made clear here at the start that the word Kama is used in ancient Sanskrit literature with twofold meaning. (1) Desire in general (2) Sex in its broadest sense. The latter meaning is the direct derivation of the former and shows its importance. Sex in its broadest sense was recognized by the ancients. By realizing the predominant place of Kama in the fourfold principal efforts of man, the ancient Indians have shown a deep sense of reality of life. Their sense of reality is fully reflected in Ayurveda and here is seen their pragmatic sense blended with scientific attitude and guided by moral and spiritual values as they have shown the way to sublimate human energy for the highest goal of human salvation. It is interesting to find out how Ayurveda views the problem of sex and how it tries to solve it.

7.2. ANALYSIS OF THE SUBJECT

After the clarification of the basic idea of Kama and its importance, the subject of sex in Ayurveda can be analysed in the following manner:-

- (1) Goals of normal sex-life.
- (2) Abnormalities and mental disorders due to sex -
Repression and indulgence both considered as
causative factors in abnormalities.
- (3) Role of restraint and suppression in sex and mental life.

- (4) The place and possibilities of sublimation.
- (5) Special problems:
 - (a) Impotence and frigidity.
 - (b) Role of heredity in the normal and abnormal.
 - (c) Therapeutic measures suggested in Ayurveda.
- (6) Ayurveda's approach to health.
- (7) Summary.

7.3. GOALS OF NORMAL SEX-LIFE

Ayurveda seems to be quite definite and clear in defining the goals of sexual life. Though the goals are idealistic as far as the advocacy of the utilization of sexual energy and its transformation by sublimation for the ultimate goal of salvation is concerned. The practical side of it however, is not at all ignored. On the contrary, the individual and social needs of procreation are well thought of and it is given a predominant place in stating the goals of normal sex life. It is always the case with Ayurveda that it keeps the individual in the centre and suggests such goals which are quite in harmony with the needs of the individual and the society. At the same time, it keeps in view the higher goals in life towards which the individual and the society have to move. This is particularly so in stating the goals of normal sex life.

Sex has been given due place in Ayurveda but it is described mainly as a means for procreation. The other aspect of sex as a means of enjoyment is not neglected

but even there the ideas of control and purity are the guiding principles. At the very beginning of the eighth chapter in Sharirasthan, Charaka mentions the regimen for a couple of sound health desiring excellent progeny. 'We shall prescribe the regimen that will enable men and women of unimpaired semen, blood and uterus; who desire excellent progeny, to secure their objective.'³

The last three words in this quotation are very important and suggest that the objectivity of sex is procreation. This idea of sex life for procreation permeates the entire field of sexology in India. Charaka repeats often this idea of the use of sex for procreation and that is why he prescribes the union of healthy men and women. 'A very young girl or very old woman, or a woman who is a chronic invalid, or one who is tainted with any other abnormality, should be eschewed as a partner. In the case of the man, too, these same are regarded as faults. Hence a man and woman who are free from all defects should alone unite for procreation.'⁴

Here are seen two ideas well-mixed together. It prescribes on one hand the primary rule of eugenics for healthy procreation and on the other it suggests that union

³Ibid. Vol.III,Sh.A.8,S1.3,p.1117

⁴Ibid. Sh.A.8,S1.6,p.1120.

of the couple is principally meant for procreation.

This does not mean, however, that the idea of sex-enjoyment is absent in Ayurveda. On the contrary, Ayurveda gives in details various medicinal prescriptions to increase virility and get rid of impotency. The ancients Ayurvedists knew well the art of love and that is why they considered a suitable partner as the best virilific of all. Charaka says, 'The best means of stimulating one's manhood(The best agent of virilification) is an exhilarating sexual partner in the wife The woman who is good-looking, young, endowed with auspicious physiognomic marks, amiable and is skilled in fine arts, acts as the best virilific.'⁵ Such a partner should be wife. This is significant and shows the need of the purity and chastity of sex-life.

Thus Charaka emphasizes the primary objective of procreation even while giving prescription of sexual enjoyment. The purpose of virilification is not only enhanced sex-enjoyment but mainly to have a virile progeny. 'The man of self restraint should seek always to maintain his virility by means of virilification, as righteousness, wealth, affection and good repute are dependent on the maintenance of healthy manhood. It, again

⁵Ibid. A.2,Sl.4-7,p.1355-56.

is the means of begetting a son in whom these qualities are based.'⁶

The objective of healthy progeny permeates throughout Charaka's ideas on sex life. Even while prescribing the medicinal preparations for virilification, he brings in this aim of progeny along with the idea of sex pleasure. 'We shall hereafter describe tried virilifying preparations which increase the pleasure of sex union, virility and progeny.'⁷

It seems there is no emphasis on sex for sex's sake in Ayurveda as progeny is a very desired object. It reflects the signs of the times when healthy progeny was a social desideratum. A man without progeny was almost abhorred and was considered like a useless solitary tree. 'Again such a man without progeny is regarded to be not well-established, bare, like a void and possessed of only one sense and as having lived a purposeless life.'⁸
Progeny was not ^{only} welcome in those times but was highly desired to lead a purposeful life. It may be that over and above the current social belief and custom in having progeny, Ayurvedists have considered progeny as a natural result for a successful sexual life. They have considered

⁶ Ibid. C.A.2, S1.23-31, p.1355

⁷ Ibid. C.A.2, S1.23, p.1359.

sex-life inevitably to be purposeful resulting in progeny. Sex-life without a purpose would be meaningless and would not yield real joy as any act without a purpose would not yield any pleasure. This surmise seems to be correct because even while prescribing medicinal preparations for virilification Charaka, without failing, mentions the purpose of progeny. He commends restraint in life and recommends virilification and vitalization to the man of self restraint. They are recommended by Charaka to those only who are pure in mind and body. 'No man who has not rid himself of the evils both of mind and body, beginning with the gross ones, can ever expect to come by the benefits resulting from vitalization.'⁹

Even though there are numerous prescriptions for virilification, and descriptions of enjoyment of sex-life in various ways and means yet the emphasis on restraint is seen throughout Ayurveda.

7.4. ABNORMALITIES DUE TO SEX

Once the goals of normal sex life are defined and understood, it is fruitful to investigate the abnormalities and mental disorders that take place due to sex. Such abnormalities would be either due to repression of sexual urge or over-indulgence in sexual desires. ~~Over~~ indulgence

⁸ Ibid. C.A.2, S1.16-18¹/₂, p.1358

⁹ Ibid. C.A.I, S1.36, p.1348.

in sexual life as a potent cause in not only bodily disturbances but in mental aberrations is the confirmed thesis in Ayurveda. Ayurveda considers sexual desire as a natural urge and its repression as well over indulgence in sexual life lead to disordered states of body and mind. While describing the provoked Vata, it states: 'The Vata becomes provoked by excessive indulgence in dry, light and cold articles, by overuse of emesis, purgation, enemate, and by excessive exercise, by suppression of natural urges, fasting, trauma, sexual indulgence, anxiety, grief depletion of blood, wakingness and faulty posturing.'¹⁰

So the causes of Vata-provocation are many and among them suppression of natural urges as well as over-indulgence in sex are counted as primary and predominant causes. But these two extreme activities of suppression and over-indulgence in sex are not merely important causes in somatic disorders like Vata-provocation but in mental abnormalities, and disorders also. Charaka says that five types of insanities take place due to various psychosomatic causes and among them sexual indulgence is a prominent one: 'Those who are crazed with the severity of disease, or those whose minds have been impaired by the attacks of lust anger, greed, excitement, fear, infatuation, fatigue,

¹⁰ Ibid. Vol.II, N.A.1, Sl.19, p.625.

grief, anxiety, regret and the like... in such persons the mind, having been impaired and the understanding impaired, the exacerbated humour getting further provoked reaching the heart (the brain) and blocking the channels of sensory communication, brings about insanity.'¹¹ There is no hesitation in this statement in describing sexual indulgence or lust as the one of the basic causes of insanity. The culmination and final confirmation is reached when Charaka categorically states that lust is one of the three primary causes of insanity: 'As regards the motive in the insanity-causing agents for inducing insanity it is threefold, viz. cruelty, lust and the extortion of worship.'¹² So lust is pinned as one of the three primary causes of insanity. But the insanity due to over-indulgence in sex-life is curable according to Charaka. 'The other two, where the incentive of maddening agents is lust or the desire for worship are curable.'¹³

Ayurveda strikes a new note in its findings of the causes of insanity and it is not merely the repression of the sexual urge but over-indulgence in sex is also an important cause in mental disorders. Today, it is generally believed that repression is the cause of mental disorders- as far as sexual abnormalities and perversities are concerned.

¹¹ Ibid. N.A.7, Sl.4, p.708

¹² Ibid. N.A.7, Sl.15, p.718

¹³ Ibid.

This is entirely due to the wide-spread general impression created by the Freudian psychoanalytic findings. But Charaka emphasises the other side of the problem and unreservedly emphasises the other aspect of sex life and that is lust and over-indulgence. It too creates mental disorders. The increasing cases of mental disorders in modern Europe and America would lead to believe this Ayurvedic diagnosis of mental abnormalities because there are very little chances of abnormalities due to repression in the very free societies of these countries. On the contrary, there are many chances and cases of over-indulgence in sex-life in those countries and that can be primary cause of the increasing number of the cases of mental disorders in these countries. Taking up the cue from Ayurveda, it is worthwhile to investigate the problem of increasing delinquency in these and other countries from the Ayurvedic view-point of ensuring whether the real cause in a number of cases is over-indulgence in sexual behaviour. If this cause would be found correct in at least a few cases, this Ayurvedic analysis of mental disorders would be approved even today.

But Ayurveda itself does not need such confirmation. It is sure of its findings. That is why it shows the reason of its pragmatic statement. It has found that by over-

indulgence man loses the vital fluid in the form of semen. He not only loses the valuable semen but wastes nervous energy. This twofold waste results in a great loss to the body and mind. Charaka gives a vivid description of the twofold loss thus: 'When a man, being excessively libidinous as a result of over-eroticism, indulges in sex-act inordinately, then by reason of such excessive indulgence, his seminal secretion becomes depleted. If even after such seminal depletion, his mind does not turn away from women, then, during the sexual act which he achieves by sheer extravagance of his desire, there is no flow of semen, his body having been totally drained of this vital fluid... Since there is no seminal fluid left in him, the blood, driven along willy-nilly by Vata, flows out of the seminal ducts.'^{13A} This needs to be elaborated. It is seen in the previous chapter that Vata is equated to nervous energy in Ayurveda. It is Vata that ejects semen and in rare cases as described above it ultimately throws out blood in the absence of semen. So in sexual act man does not lose merely the vital fluid but the vital nervous energy which according to Ayurveda is the moving force in the human organism.

When there is such a double loss in the human body, it would certainly affect the body as well as the mind of man.

^{13A} Ibid. N.A.6, Sl.8(2), p.698.

When there is such a double loss in the human body, it would certainly affect the body as well as the mind of man. Vata being the nerve force, its inordinate loss would certainly affect the mind which directly depends on nervous energy. So from the view-point of modern physiology also, the argument of Charaka seems to be quite logical. This logical finding of Charaka seems to be found correct if put to modern tests of present-day psychology. It is a sound contribution of Ayurveda in the field of psychiatry.

7.5. ROLE OF REPRESSION AND RESTRAINT IN MENTAL LIFE

As sexual indulgence is damaging both to body and mind, the idea of restraint in sex life is considered necessary at every step in Ayurveda. It always means self-control in sex. But Ayurveda never confuses restraint and repression. On the contrary it definitely advises not to repress it but to restraint it. It urges not to repress natural urges including seminal outflow: 'A wise person should not suppress the natural urges for urine, faces, semen, vomiting, sneezing, yawning, hunger, thirst, tears, sleep and deep breath after exertion.'¹⁴ Ayurveda thus emphatically condemned repression and suppression of natural urges because it leads to diseased states: 'Listen,

¹⁴ Ibid. S.A.7, Sl. 3-4, p.106

as I describe one by one for the purpose of treatment, the various diseases which are born of the suppression of these urges.¹⁵

The repression of seminal urge leads to certain diseases: 'Pain in the phallus and tests, body-ache, cardiac pain, and retention of urine result from the suppression of the urge for seminal discharge.'¹⁶

These signs are physical no doubt but they are significant enough to suggest that there are a psychic causes behind them. The cures of those diseased states due to suppression of seminal urge are also indicated by Charaka. 'In this condition, inunction, immersion-bath, madira - wine, flesh of cocks, sali rice, milk, evacuative enema and sexual intercourse are recommended.'¹⁷ Charaka advises explicitly not to suppress any of the natural urges and provides cures which would remove suppression completely. Thus Ayurveda is against all suppression of natural urges as it leads to diseased states of the body and mind. But this does not mean that restraint is not necessary. On the contrary Charaka emphasises the control of all evil and rash impulses. 'Those who are desirous of their welfare both in this and other world should on the other hand restrain the rash and evil impulses of the

¹⁵Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.5, p.106

¹⁶Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.10, p.107

¹⁷Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.11, p.108.

mind, speech and body.'¹⁸

Thus Charaka advises to control greed, attachment, anger and other mental impulses and harsh untrue and extravagant speech. As for sex-urge he admonishes not to fall prey to adultery: 'One should control the impulses for all such activities of the body as are injurious to others i.e. adultery, theft, inflicting pain etc.'¹⁹ The fruits of self-control according to Charaka are very many and alluring too. 'Being free from the sins relating to the activities of the mind, speech and body, the happy man of righteous nature enjoys and acquires spiritual merit, wealth and sense pleasures.'²⁰

The last phrase in the above quotation 'Sense-pleasures' is very significant. It suggests that sense-pleasures, accrue to the self-controlled man. Not by enjoyment of sense-pleasures by physical contact alone does one get them but by self-control does he get real and lasting sense-pleasures. This is the purport of this phrase 'sense-pleasures' in connection with self-control. Self-control acquires not only sense-pleasures more but he gets spiritual merit. Charaka here suggests that the merits of self-control are manifold and brings not only

¹⁸ Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.7,26,p.111

¹⁹ Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.29,p.111-112

²⁰ Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.30,p.112.

physical but spiritual happiness along with the happiness in this world and the next. This is in short a pointer to sublimation of sex and other urges.

But before passing to the subject of sublimation, it is necessary to compare the idea of suppression and control in modern psychology. It is well known now that Freud is the chief protagonist of repression theory. There can be no direct comparison with the idea of repression of seminal urge in Ayurveda with the unaware repression of sexual urges, impulses and emotions described by Freud. Freud although against all repressions of sexual and other urges does not rule but self-control. He too wants to create the power of self-control in the patient suffering on account of self-repression by his method of talking cure and wants to bring the repressed feelings to the conscious level. The modern methods of the psycho-analytic schools are quite novel no doubt but their aim is to create the capacity of conscious self-control in the patient. So as far as this fact is concerned, Ayurveda and modern psychology sail in the same boat through their respective methods and approaches are quite unique in themselves. This idea of conscious self-control should be well balanced according to Havelock Ellis: 'We are far from Nature, when

in the days now passing away, we made the sexual act a duty with or without, throwing in sentiment and romance but we are equally far away if we make it a routine or an amusement.²¹

7.6. THE PLACE AND POSSIBILITIES OF SUBLIMATION

The idea of self-control and due emphasis on it by Ayurveda leads one to the concept of sublimation. The correct word for sublimation is Brahmacharya. It is translated as continence also. It is the soul of Chastity. By Brahmacharya one can attain complete sublimation or one can say that Brahmacharya and sublimation are equivalent terms suggesting a state of living on higher or spiritual level. The verbal meaning of Brahmacharya is living in accordance with Brahmic or spiritual level by transmutation of sexual energy. The purpose of the word 'sublimation' also ultimately comes to mean living on a higher plane by means of transmutation of sexual energy. So, in short, Brahmacharya and sublimation though verbally do not mean the same thing but their purpose is almost the same and that is transmutation of sex energy.

Charaka has given a very predominant place to self-control, as seen above. Self-control is the soul of

²¹Havelock Ellis: The Psychology of Sex. (A Manual for Students), Second Edition, 1933, Ray Richard R. Smith, New York, p.345.

sublimation or Brahmacharya. So Brahmacharya is considered as one of the three main sub-supports of life: 'First as regards the three sub-supports; they are food, sleep and continence. The body being sustained by the right use of these three sub-supports, grows in strength complexion, and development, and endures for the full pre-ordained span of life.'²²

Brahmacharya besides supporting life, elevates and brings not only wordly happiness but spiritual merit as is seen above. The physical sign of sublimation of sex and other urges is the increase of ojas.²³

There cannot be any direct comparison with concept of Brahmacharya with the modern growing concept of sublimation, still however there is much of common between the two concepts to a great extent. Dr. Alexis Carrel, the author of 'Man the Unknown,' writes : 'Others sacrifice the reproduction and even preservation of life to following exclusively their spiritual or imaginative impulses.'²⁴

This description of sublimation resembles Brahmacharya in Ayurveda. But it is well clarified in these words of Carrel: 'When the spirit rises in us under the impulse of the will, like the sap in the tree under the spring, it

²²Charaka-samhita: S.A.21, Sl.35,p.172

²³Sushruta-Samhita: A.S.A.15,p.

²⁴Dr. Alexis Carrel. Reflections on Life. Wilco Publication, p.77.

appears simultaneously as intelligence, judgment, self mastery and moral beauty.'²⁵

But this is a highly optimistic view on sublimation and perhaps is considered exceptional. In the scientific field of the psychology of sex, sublimation is not considered easy. There are different views on sublimation in modern psychology. Its generally accepted meaning is transformation of the sexual impulse into some higher psychic activity. Hirschfield speaks of 'Sexual equivalents' and is cautious in accepting sublimation. Edward Glover talks of 'Metapsychology' and accepts the possibility of sublimation.'²⁶

But the generally accepted idea about sublimation in modern times is stated by Havelock Ellis: 'So that, on the one hand, the possibility of sublimation, its value, and its far reaching significance must always be held in mind, on the other hand it must always be remembered that even in the process of sublimation, a portion of the sexual impulse will be left, either to be dispersed in wholesome but more primitive ways or else seek a channel in neurotic transformations.'²⁷

This is a balanced and scientific view point on the much discussed and sometimes confused subject of sublimation.

²⁵Ibid. p.76

²⁶Havelock Ellis. Psychology of Sex, Second Edition, 1933, New York, p.360.

²⁷Ibid. p.366

It is true as far as the common experience is taken into consideration but there is a sublime way for transmutation of physical and psychic energy which is put forth by Indian science of Yoga and Ayurveda too mentions it in the case of Yogis. 'Both in Yoga (a state of meditation) and final liberation, there is no existence of sensation; in final liberation there is absolute cessation, while Yoga leads to that liberation.'²⁸ In such a state of firm establishment in Yoga, there is complete sublimation. This is the concept of perfect sublimation in Ayurveda as an ideal to be cherished. Only a few can achieve it but it can be achieved by human being is the thesis of Ayurveda along with other system of thought in India.

7.7. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

(1) Impotence and Frigidity

Ayurveda has given some thought to some special problems like impotence, heredity and therapeutic measures for mental disorders. It is worthwhile to discuss the same one by one.

The concept of impotence is as old as man himself and the cures of impotence are searched for from times immemorial. Ayurveda very well knows about this defect and so the idea of vitalization and virilification came into existence and gave rise to vitalizing and virilific

²⁸ Charaka-Samhita. Vol.III, Sh.A.I,Sl.137,p.1001.

medications. Ayurveda has given copious cures not only for impotence but for increasing virility in a normal man so that he can enhance his sexual joy and increase progeny. Charaka shows some types of sexual behaviour. Here are some of his descriptions of persons with different sexual capacity and urge. 'Some there are small in size and strength of body but powerful sexually and have numerous progeny. Some are weak by nature, while some are weakened by diseases. There are some who mate with women many times like sparrows, while others, though not mating many times, are given to copious seminal discharge like an elephant. Some men get invigorated by the season, some get steadied by constant practice, some maintain their virility by virilific preparations and some are virile by nature.'²⁹

So virilification is for giving strength to the infirm and for increasing strength to enhance enjoyment. Ayurveda had clear conception of what impotence is and what it means to a man desiring progeny. As seen above it has clear notions about varied type of sexual behaviour. But the idea of frigidity in women seems to be not properly treated in Ayurveda. Time and again virtues of virilification are eulogized in Ayurveda but nowhere is

²⁹ Ibid. Ch.A.II, Sl. 5-7, p.1382.

the concept of frigidity clarified. There may be various reasons for that. It may be due to the prevailing, limited notions about sex-life or due to lack of full opportunity to assess the sexual fault in woman or due to social status of women in those times. But the fact remains that the idea of frigidity seems almost lacking and does not seem to be treated in one form or the other.

Impotence and frigidity as understood now-a-days are modern concepts well developed in the psychology of sex today. The word impotence is generally understood even by a layman in its ordinary sense. In its technical meaning the word is understood only by the doctors or psychologists and students of this science. Even in Ayurveda this modern technical meaning does not seem to have much developed as it is understood today. But the concept of impotence was known to the Ayurvedists as far as its practical meaning was concerned in eugenics. Moreover, the concepts of sex-life then developed only in the medical world and were not spread among the masses as is the case today. Sex was considered sanctimonious. In that sort of cultural atmosphere, sexual ideas could not spread and concepts thereof naturally remain confined to the medical world of therapists. Even the therapists had limited approach to ~~men~~ women. Sushruta has said, 'Physicians should not

indulge in laughter or jokes with women nor stay alongwith them, nor should they accept gifts other than food from women.³⁰

Charaka too enjoins similar instructions. 'Women who are not attended by their husbands or guardians (shall not receive treatment.)'³¹

From this it can be deduced that ideas on sex in Ayurveda are mainly developed particularly keeping in view man. Sections on ceremonies for procuring male child is described in Ayurveda but not female child. Virilification solely deals with the requirements of man and not woman. The virilification section which forms one of the eight branches of the octopartite Ayurveda is devoted solely to helping man and there is no mention of a woman in this process.³²

This is a limitation of Ayurveda in respect of psychological concepts with regard to sex. Even in this limitation the idea of restraint in sex-life seems predominant.

(2) Heredity in the Normal and Abnormal

The factor of heredity is accepted by Ayurveda when it accepted the influence of the father and the mother at the time of the formation of the fetus. This influence

³⁰ Sushruta-Samhita: S.A.10, S1.9, p.1.
³¹ Charaka-Samhita : Vol.I, p.416

³² Ibid. Vol.I, p.416.

is mainly physical and the psychic formation is mainly due to the past actions of the self. 'The inheritance of previous incarnations, being subtle is psychic, but they in turn have their influence on the somatic reaction.'³³

The physical influences are seen in the constitution of man and they make the man equilibrate in vata, pitta and kapha of have predominance of any one of the three. 'From the moment of conception some men are equilibrated as regards the three vata, pitta and kapha and some have a predominance of vata some of pitta and some of kapha.'³⁴

Sushruta also has the same thing to say and considers constitution as the hereditary factor. 'These are the symptoms of the hereditary disposition or constitution formed by the predominant vital habitus formed at the time of the fertilization of the ovum by the sperm.'³⁵

Inheritance in Ayurveda is of two types:(1) Inheritance of one's own previous lives and (2) inheritance from parents or the parentage . Psychic states are mainly due to one's own previous life and actions. Heredity from the parents affects mainly the physical constitution. But as the somatic and psychic conditions interact, it can be interpreted that parental heritage also affects

³³Ibid. Vol.I, p.547

³⁴Ibid. .

³⁵Ibid.

mainly the physical constitution. But as the somatic and psychic conditions interact, it can be interpreted that parental heritage also affects the whole of the human organism. Though the emphasis is on the actions of one's past life and actions in turn lead the self to such parentage which would inherit a constitution befitting one's previous life. That is why Charaka states clearly that man's normalcy or abnormality is affected among other things by heredity. 'Now the normal condition is determined by heredity, family, climate, season, age and idiosyncrasy. It is the sum of these hereditary, family, climatic, seasonal, periodical and idiosyncratic tendencies that make the individual variation among persons.'³⁶ In this way Ayurveda clarifies the role of heredity in affecting the normal. It does not state clearly what part heredity plays in abnormalities. But indirectly, it accepts its part in affecting abnormal conditions of both body and mind. Heredity affects the constitution as far as it is either with vata, pitta or kapha predominance. This happens at the time of the fertilization of the ovum by the sperm as seen above. The hereditary factor is no doubt very limited in effect but it is accepted by Ayurveda to a certain extent.

³⁶ Ibid. Vol.III, I.A.I, Sl.5, p.1186

to maintain health.

Ayurveda attaches due importance to nourishment alongwith the hereditary factors of mother and father. This view of the hereditary factors has something common with modern concepts of heredity as far as the parental factors are recognised. But the chromosome theory is unique as far as it explains the hereditary factors. But even this theory does not explain every thing as far as the constitution and make-up of man is concerned. Ray tries to explain Ayurvedic theory of heredity in terms of modern theory of chromosomes: 'To the above picture of chromosomes the Ayurvedist may add another factor, that of Vayu, pitta and kapha. When a sperm unites with an egg, we may conceive that alongwith the chromosomes, the vayu, pitta and kapha embedded in them also fuse together. The fusion of the two, the the division of the chromosomes, their subsequent growth to full size in every cell - all these are controlled by the action of the nuclear vayu and with this latter is always associated pitta and kapha. But it is vayu which is the dynamic principle within the cell. We may further conceive that every gene contains a definite proportion of the Tridhatu. The characters inherited by

a child may depend upon the genes embedded in the chromosomes but the ultimate factors controlling the mechanism of inheritance are Vayu, pitta and kapha impregnated in each of the gene itself.³⁷

This is a mere attempt to explain hereditary factors in terms of the old and the new. But this shows that the Tridhatu principle plays its part even in hereditary factors.

There is a similarity of views between the Ayurvedic and modern concept of heredity and that is about the determination of hereditary factors at the time of conception 'The individual inheritance is determined at the time of conception. Because of its complexity, many aspects of human heredity are not fully understood.'³⁸

The aspects which are not understood today by the scientific genetic theories are attempted to be explained by Ayurveda by resorting to the theory of the self and his past actions. It may not be acceptable to the purely scientific pursuit at present but the approach of the Ayurvedists gives a completeness to their thesis, no doubt.

Therapeutic Measures :

The third important special problem is about the

³⁷ D.N.Ray: The Principle of Tridosha in Ayurveda, Calcutta University, p.139.

³⁸ Picunas and Albrecht: Psychology of Human Development, McGraw Hill Book Co., Ltd., 1961, p.38.

therapeutic measures for the prevention and cure of psychic disorders. The serious mental disorders and their therapy are dealt with in the next chapter about the normal and the abnormal. But common mental disorders should be treated here. Ayurveda considers grief, anger, vanity, and such other common disturbances as psychic disorders. 'The psychic disorders such as jealousy, grief, fear, anger, vanity, hatred and such others are also said to be the result of volitional transgression.'³⁹ The list shows that it includes lust also. According to Charaka mental disorders are not due to lust or sex but sexual and other mental disorders are all due to volitional transgression. All actions in contravention to the conscience result in mental disorder of one type or the other. The broad therapeutic measures in all types of disorders are twofold: 'The knowledge of authoritative instruction and its right application are the two factors, necessary for the prevention and cure of diseases.'⁴⁰ This means in short that authentic and scientific knowledge and its actual practice alone can have therapeutic value. In the next step Charaka gives more specific instructions in this connection. 'Avoidance of volitional transgression control of the senses, recollection, knowledge of climate season and the self and

⁴⁰ Ibid. S.A.7, Sl.55, p.119.

observance of the rules of good conduct - these are laid down as the course of prevention of exogenous diseases.'⁴¹ Here the measures such as the knowledge of the self, recollection and control of the senses draw attention. There is the specific mention of mental and spiritual therapeutic measures. Mental control occupies the central place in Ayurvedic therapy. Mental control is fully possible only by the knowledge of the self. That is why Charaka points out the use of the knowledge of clime and seasons and at the same time the knowledge of the self. Specific emphasis is on the mental control. That is why Charaka specifically states: 'Regarding the three kinds of therapy, they are divine therapy, scientific therapy and mental control.'⁴² This makes it clear that mental control lies between the spiritual and the scientific therapy and is the proper link between them. The work of control is allotted to the mind because it is its proper function according to Ayurvedic psychology. 'The functions of the mind are - direction of the senses, control of itself, reasoning and deliberations. Beyond this is the field of intellect.'⁴³ It follows from

⁴¹Ibid. S.A.7,Sl.53-54,p.118-119.

⁴²Ibid. S.A.11,Sl.54(1),p.182

⁴³Ibid. Sh.A.I,Sl.21,p.975.

this that Ayurvedic therapeutic measures are based on psychological approach throughout. The same is naturally reflected in its approach to mental health.

7.8. AYURVEDA'S APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

Ayurveda's approach to mental and physical health reflects a comprehensive attitude to health and life. On one side it lays down the general idea of physical health and on the other hand in the same breath recommends the right means of mental health. 'He who is given to wholesome food and conduct who has discernment and detachment from sense-pleasures, who is charitable, impartial, truthful and foregiving and who follows the percepts of the sages, lives free from diseases.'⁴⁴ The approach to health is mainly psychological and spiritual though the somatic approach is never neglected. It reflects the main and basic ideas and attitudes accepted even today by psychoanalysts. Truthfulness, detachment, discernment and charitableness are recommended by modern psychologists. This shows that the approach to health of Ayurveda is basically sound. But it goes one step further and gives the spiritual touch to this approach:

'Diseases do not befall a man in whom thought, word and deed are happily blended, the mind is controlled and the understanding is clear, and who is possessed

⁴⁴Ibid.Vol.III, Sh.A.3,Sl.47,p.1020

of knowledge, austerity and absorption in yoga.⁴⁵ These are the primary mental requirements of sound mental health and physical health. It shows that constancy and consistency in thought, word and deed and concentration in the self make a man not only efficient but also healthy in mind and body. The word yoga suggests the self-mastery of man. The self is supreme. In man's life, the self should rule and then only can he be healthy mentally and physically. The self is the master. Under its rule, the disease cannot enter the fort of his personality. 'Like the lord of a city in the affairs of his city, and a charioteer in the management of his chariot, so should a wise man be ever vigilant in the care of his body.'⁴⁶ The simile explains the whole of the approach to Ayurveda to mental and physical health. This attitude now brings us to the problem of the normal and the abnormal in Ayurveda.

7.9. CONTRIBUTION AND SUMMARY

Ayurveda has something original to contribute in the field of the psychology of sex. It definitely suggests that not only suppression of sex but over-indulgence in sex is also the cause of abnormalities. This concept of Charaka and Sushruta is more than proved in the

⁴⁵ Ibid. Sh.A.3, Sl.47, p.1020.

⁴⁶ Ibid. S.A.5, Sl.103, p.91.

the present age when there is full scope of over-indulgence and cases of abnormalities thereof abound in numbers. Ayurveda prescribes the cure of this malady and also the sure cure is self-control and balanced life. It suggests a higher form of controlled life and shows the importance of sublimation. This contribution of Ayurveda is a natural fructification of its concept of health and its balanced approach to health.

SUMMARY

The problem of sex is also treated in Ayurveda in its own style. The broad word for sex in Ayurveda is Kama. It has twofold meaning (1) desire in general and (2) sex in particular. The goals of sex life are well defined in Ayurveda. They are procreation and enjoyment. But even in enjoyment purpose of procreation is not forgotten at all. If this goal is forgotten and man becomes libidinous and lustful, there occurs mental abnormalities. Sexual abnormality leads to mental disorders. It is one of the causes of mental disturbances. That is why Ayurveda lays stress on restraint but does not recommend repression. On the contrary, suppression of natural urges are prohibited as that leads to disorders and diseases. Ayurveda has treated some special problems related to sex. They are impotence, role of heredity

and therapeutic measures of mental health. It has defined a clear and definite approach to mental health in general. The psychological approach is predominant. This question leads to the question of the normal and the abnormal.

