The Role of the Iranian Traditional Medicine in the Development of Impoverished Areas in Iran

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ABSTRACT

Since the School of Traditional Medicine of Iran has rooted in over ten thousand years, it still has the potentials to be fully appreciated and applied. Due to this fact, it can contribute to the development of our country, especially in the impoverished regions. In Traditional Medicine of Iran, six vital principles (Setteye Zarurieyeh) to survive and sustenance of life are water, air, eating, drinking, body movement and immobility and psychological motion and immobility (joy and anger- Aaraze nafsanieh), sleep and wakefulness, retention (Ehtebas) and excretion (Estefragh). Among them, taking the first three principles in to great consideration can have a significant influence on the growth and development of the impoverished areas. The Traditional Medicine of Iran, with its practical and applied approaches, can pave the way for the development of clean and healthy air, appropriate housing, good nutrition, and proper physical activities and it can lead to a healthy lifestyle through supplying Setteye Zarurieyeh of life essentials. Thus, a physically and mentally healthy person can play an important role in the progress of the society consistent with the Iranian- Islamic culture along with sustainable and dynamic development. Also the Iranian Traditional Medicine, by drawing on its simple and inexpensive solutions, can be of great help in the management and treatment of diseases. The underdeveloped regions can prioritize growing of effective and inexpensive medicinal herbs to minimize the people’s medical care expenses so that the officials dedicate this budget surplus to the production and health sector. Significantly important step to achieve mentioned goals is promoting public education which requires individual’s cooperation along with financial and nonfinancial assistance of estate organizations.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, one of the issues discussed in the country has been the status of traditional medicine in the field of public health. With the history of over ten thousand years and the support of many centuries of experience in medicine, this field warrants a reasonable use of its potentials and its rich background [1]. Recognizing the special potentials of traditional medicine and the correct utilization of them could underlie the development and self-sufficiency of the country in the field of health services, especially in underdeveloped areas. During human kind history, it is clear that humans have always tried to improve their social as well as individual life. These improvements have been hailed as happiness, progress, revolution, and development [2].

In the modern era, especially during the twentieth century, the development in the social, cultural, political, and economic domains have been the focus of attention along with the national and international programs for the implementation of the above models. However, it ought to be noted that the development of these models in the late twentieth century led to major changes mostly in environmental concerns which was in conflict to the primary purpose of improving people’s livelihood. Global warming, environmental changes, and increasing of unemployment were all among the side effects of the implementation of such programs. Hence, in the latest version of the global programs ‘sustainable development’ is of paramount importance [3].

Although there are many definitions and even vagueness of the concept of sustainable development [4], according to the Brundtland Commission report; Our Common Future which first appeared in 1987: sustainable...
development means "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [5].

Many nations are now pursuing a policy of ‘sustainable development’, but the interpretation of this concept, as well as practical implementation, pose special difficulties [6] Even some researchers believe that no consensus has yet emerged, on the relationship between economic growth and welfare or ecological or social sustainability [7].

The discussion of sustainable development has frequently proved confusing. Some writers are concerned with the sustainability of the natural resource base, others with present or future levels of production and consumption. Similarly, there are marked differences of opinion over the way in which sustainable development might be achieved [8].

Some scientists concern for human development in the present with that in the future. In arguing for sustainable human development, it appeals to the notion of ethical “universalism”—an elementary demand for impartiality of claims—applied within and between generations. Economic sustainability is often seen as a matter of intergenerational equity, but the specification of what is to be sustained is not always straightforward [9].

In last decade, environmental issues have entered into policy design, particularly development and growth policies. Natural resources are considered necessary production inputs and environmental quality is considered a welfare determinant. The integration of environmental issues into economic growth and development theories and empirics is currently widely analyzed in the literature [10].

2. Results:

Traditional systems can be used to improve various aspects of development, including the development of human capital, environment, social life and economy in order that it proves beneficial in response to concerns about the health of the environment for the present and future of humankind [11].

One of the important issues in the underdeveloped areas is the development of human capital [5]. Enjoying physical and mental health is an important aspect of human development. It is so significant that the World Health Organization has declared that their motto is "Healthy human is the basis of sustainable development."[12]

The Iranian Traditional Medicine (ITM) can play an important role in promoting human development parameters by providing useful and viable guidelines. The solutions in this system are presented separately in two sectors of health and remedy [13]. Health and maintaining general health in ITM is so important that in this school doctors should educate healthy people regarding ways to prevent diseases before treating them."Hedayatol Mostalemin fi Teb" is one of the earliest books in the ITM which was written (in Fourth century AH) [14].

'Rabi ibn Ahmad Akhaveyn' defines medicine in his book as follows: "medicine is a profession to maintain human health or to restore it after a disease through the tandem use of theory and practice" [14].Later other scholars used the same definition to define medicine [13, 15, 16]. Based on the above evidence, maintaining health and preventing diseases are among the fundamental elements of this school [17, 18].

There are six essential elements to establish and sustain life: 1 - the weather and what it is related to it 2 - Rules Governing Food & Beverages 3 - body motion 4 - Sleep-related topics and wakefulness 5 - mental Health, 6 - retention and vomiting [13, 15-17].

In ITM books there is a very detailed count of thesis six principal factors [13, 15]. It seems that applying these six principles can be highly effective in deprived areas in terms of promoting health. In this paper the first three principles that is the weather, food and drink, movement and immobility, will be discussed.

A- The weather:

The most important principle is having access to a healthy climate. Today factories, various environmental pollutants, emissions from vehicles, dust have resulted in the pollution of water and air.

Traditional medicine emphasizes on clean air as one of the conditions necessary for maintaining good health, making the urgent need to solve this problem more revealing. Although air pollution is a relatively speaking, new phenomenon in today's world, the harmful effects of air pollution can be, at least partially, reduced through the application of traditional medicine teachings [13, 15].

Almost all of the traditional measures proposed in order to remove toxins from the body can be effective in this regard. For instance, avoiding all factors that cause constipation and reduce waste disposal from the intestines is one of these measures. Of course in the past the removal of airborne infectious agents was a major concern for most physicians in epidemics. A variety of measures such as fumigation of vinegar in the environment have been recommended [19].

Today, we can evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of these methods by examining their impact on the incidence of respiratory diseases or epidemics. In case traditional medicine measures are well known, they can be of great help to resolve these problems [13].
Another issue pertaining climate people’s domicile or the place they live in. housing is housing. If the temperament of people in each area is determined, construction materials commensurate with the requirements of that area will be used [13].

Scholars believe that the materials used in the construction of houses can impact the weather in that region. In addition, considering this criterion can move architecture and urban planning from their dull and imitative state and young engineers, inspired by these measures, can propose more dynamic, lively and at the same time ethnically-oriented projects.

To achieve a complete understanding of this important factor along with a full appreciation of spaces, the inner truth of everything as well as its the outer existence should be recognized [20]. In the past, this approach has been dominant in societies because "in the human imagination, feeling and reality, life and the soul cannot be separated [21].

Given the fact that “culture in any society is embodiment and reflection of its underlying philosophical thoughts” [22]. Iranian –Islamic culture has incorporated a system and organization consistent with the nature, the region, and different ethnic groups. In this system “Each activity has always been part of the ongoing activities that serve to maintain the whole system [23].

In such a system the towns and villages have been instances of people’s harmony with their surrounding and their temperaments. This can in turn lead to an ethically-oriented architecture not architecture devoid of space, nature, temperament, and soul.

Folk architecture, which is referred to as popular architecture in some books, enjoys such features as vibrancy, life, self-organizing, diversity, harmony with the context, time, location and the physical and mental health”. A lively pattern naturally releases its internal forces; it is self-protecting and self- and its inner forces constantly support it [23]. The above parameters can cause dynamic motion in space, society and the inner emotions (happiness, etc.) along with the physical health.

B-Food and Beverage:

Eating and drinking are among the important factors in the milieu of ITM [13, 15, 17]. By drawing upon different promotional techniques, the valuable teachings of this school of medicine can be appreciated by the public.

Since the land of Iran enjoys diverse cultural backgrounds, there are accordingly different customs and eating habits which are quite common and sometimes inappropriate and detrimental to physical and mental health. Recognizing the diversity of eating habits and temperaments or tastes, the improper eating habits can gradually be replaced with healthy diets. However, due to the gradual nature of these habits, any changes in such personal habits should be gradual as well [13, 15, 17].

Iran is a country of four seasons. This diversity of climate can be a potential for development of agriculture and the use of it young human resources, particularly in the impoverished and underdeveloped areas. For example Kahnooj, known as the India of Iran, is located in Kerman in southeastern of Iran. Kahnooj with its fertile soil is one of the most important agricultural areas. [24]. People in this region can be familiar with the products which are beneficial for health; they can also take advantage of soil fertility, and cultivate a variety of crops which can in turn be conducive to their physical and mental well-being.

An important point is protecting food against a variety of pests from planting to the harvesting season. Unfortunately, due to lack of knowledge, farmers use a variety of pesticides, which is a very common cause of contamination of crops, soil and water [25]. Traditional medicine has some approaches in this regard to prevent such damage to the environment as well as crops [26].

C - Body Motion and Immobility:

Another principle to maintain health is physical motion and immobility. Traditional medicine sports books this issue is of great importance [15].

Traditional medicine in the sports sector would suggest sports and exercises which can be done with minimum costs. Therefore, promoting these sports in all parts of the country, particularly in deprived areas, is quite accessible and practical. These sports can help people maintain their general health and vitality and consequently reduce the incidence of disease and health care costs. Moreover, another advantage of this policy is that the cost savings in this area can be used in the production sectors [15, 27].

Most books on ITM underscore the necessity to do regular fitness exercises. Walking is one of these exercises which are of two kinds of slow and fast. It is quite beneficial for the whole body In general and for the legs in particular. Walking can be done both individually and in teams. It can have beneficial effects on the promotion of solidarity and friendship among people in addition to its valuable effects on a person’s physical and mental health

Another aspect of human development is the proper treatment of patients. In this area, in addition to the crucial role of effective and safe treatment, it is also necessary to manage health care costs, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Treatment in the ITM is divided into three sections: 1 - Change in the establishment of six
principles in a patient's life which is called “Tadbir”. In this section, the doctor has dietary recommendations, changes in physical activity levels, sleep and waking states, and emotional states at his/her disposal to help treat the patient. These therapies are often simple and inexpensive, yet highly effective in the patient’s recovery. In addition to the necessary medical recommendations listed in section 1, herbal, mineral and animal medicines are also used by doctors – In this part intervention such as phlebotomy or bloodletting is done for the patient if it is deemed necessary on the part of doctors [13, 15].

Extensive use of herbs is regarded as one of the main components of the therapeutic potentials of this medicine, especially in economic and social development. Given the diversity of climates in Iran each region is specialized in growing its own herbs based on its own temperament. People in deprived areas can take advantage of these potentials and embark on growing suitable medicinal herbs according to each region’s particular climate and soil conditions, thus producing the raw materials for herbal medicines. Establishing herbal medicine fields herbs can help create job opportunities in underdeveloped as well as contributing to resolving unemployment problem and encouraging of exports. Moreover, small businesses can be set up near these fields in order to prepare and pack these herbal medicines at low costs. These measures can provide consumers with inexpensive and affordable herbal drugs.

3. Conclusion:

Unlike the mainstream beliefs about ITM which confine this medicine to treating certain illnesses with certain drugs. The School of ITM does have potentials for the development of the country in different areas. Regarding the fact that the ITM is a holistic medicine with simple, inexpensive health solutions, we can make practical use of its full potentials which will be conducive to the development of the country especially in the underdeveloped regions.

The first requirement to achieve this goal is promoting education with its primary focus on implementing general health maintenance plans by specialist in this field through education general practitioners along with other health officials. The next step would be educating non-health professionals in areas of general health maintenance. Mass media like television and radio can be of great help in this regard. Government officials should also dedicate part of their funds to promoting traditional medicine teachings, especially in the fields of general health maintenance and prevention against diseases. Considering everything, one can conclude that achieving the above-mentioned goals requires solidarity among people as well as cooperation on the part of officials and different walks of people.

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