



Our fight against mixopathy is democratic

-DR. J.A. JAYALAL
NATIONAL PRESIDENT, IMA



IMA HAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE CENTRAL GOVT'S COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE. BUT THERE ARE MORE THAN COUPLE OF ISSUES THAT HAVE LED TO A HEAD-ON FIGHT BETWEEN IMA AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. IMA NATIONAL PRESIDENT DR. J.A. JAYALAL TALKED ABOUT ALL THESE ISSUES IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DOCSTAR.

People in the government have been saying that there is nothing called "mixopathy" and that it is just a coinage. What do you have to say about it?

First and foremost, IMA does not have any agenda against Ayurveda. We respect it as a traditional system of medicine. So far as mixopathy is concerned, it is being advocated by those who want everything to be brought under a single umbrella system. People who promote the idea of "one nation, one election" think that "one nation, one system of medicine" can also be implemented. They forget the fact that an integrated approach of medical care is entirely different than a mixed system. In an integrated system, each system of medicine is meant for different ailments. It is a great idea to utilize each system separately but to think of mixing all the systems and even allowing an expert of a certain system to prescribe or practice the medicines and procedures of other systems could cause chaos.

There is no harm if we come up with health care centers where modern system of

medicine is used to treat certain ailments and Ayurveda or Naturopathy is used to treat others. But we should not mix all the systems. One person cannot study and master all the systems. It would be better if we could focus on developing all the systems separately and then bring experts from all the systems to work in sync.

Have you been able to put your thoughts across the table?

IMA is the largest organization of doctors in the country. We believe in following a system. Therefore, we have written (several times) to seek an appointment with the Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan. So far, we have not received any confirmation. IMA looks forward to discussing this issue with Dr. Harsh Vardhan in detail.

What is the basic flaw in the idea?

The problem starts from the very vague idea of what's going to be our national education policy. The people who have propagated the mixing of medicine systems are not doctors. They believe that anyone from Ayurveda system can join modern medicine and vice-



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versa. In November, the Central government issued a notification which authorizes post graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to be trained to perform 39 surgical procedures.

A student of modern medicine needs to complete her/his MBBS in five years. Then she/he has to qualify NEET (PG) and then complete MS in three more years. On the other hand, a graduate in Ayurveda needs just two years to become a surgeon.

The other side claims that Ayurveda experts have been performing surgeries over centuries. How do you react to such a claim?

No one can deny the fact that Ayurveda has a very rich history. My point is that if they are using their own anesthesia and surgical procedures then there is no problem. But we cannot support a fragmented approach. We should not allow experts from one system of medicine to use medicines and procedures of another system.

Where do you think this idea came from?

I would like to believe that the idea originated from a desire to promote Ayurveda. IMA does not have a problem with the core idea. We are simply against





mixing all the systems of medicines together. Some people in our country believe that modern medicine is a western system, and therefore it should not entertain the respect and popularity that it does. These people fail to understand that modern medicine is used globally. It is not just a western system anymore. Experts from different parts of the world have been contributing to its development. It has become a globally practiced and accepted medicine system backed by proven scientific data. I would like to see Ayurveda being developed and promoted across the globe. But that should be done scientifically and ethically. We cannot simply mix Ayurveda with the modern medicine and make tall claims.

Ayurveda doctors are qualified doctors. Do you have an apprehension about their qualification?

No, I do not have an apprehension about qualified Ayurveda doctors. But we have to keep a few points in mind. We have more than 400 Ayurveda medical colleges in the country. These colleges produce 25 to 30 thousand Ayurveda doctors

every year. I would want an honest reply to my question when I ask: How many of them chose Ayurveda as their first option. My observation tells me that most of them chose Ayurveda simply because they did not get admission in MBBS. I am not saying no one takes Ayurveda as their first option but they are just exceptions.

What objection do you have if the government wants to utilize such a huge force of health care workers?

We do not have a problem if the government really wants to utilize their skills. They can be of great help to strengthen the health care system of our country. But we have to look deeper. Does the government really want to use their skills? If yes, then why doesn't the government give them jobs in hospitals, CHCs and PHCs? Why are lacs of Ayurveda doctors left jobless? Why are hundreds of CHCs and PHCs in our country left without a single doctor? We need to understand that there is another angle of the story. There are people who want to increase the number of admissions in

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Ayurveda medical colleges. But this is not how it should be done. This will not help Ayurveda grow. The best way to help Ayurveda doctors is to give them jobs, empower them to serve the society by paying them well, strengthening the infrastructure of Ayurveda medical colleges and hospitals.

What strategies has IMA been using during its movement against the government's plan?

Doctors across the country have been registering their opposition of the government's plan. All the local units have carried out demonstrations against mixopathy. We have also gone to the honorable Supreme Court. A petition was filed in December 2020. The Court has issued notice and asked the parties to file replies. IMA has circulated an online petition. Our target is to get at least one lac online signatures against the government's plan. A symbolic physical signature campaign is also going on.

We are also planning to seek support from lacs of medical students. They are the future of modern medicine in the country. Their careers are also going to be impacted by mixopathy. We are going to ask them (and their parents also) to join our peaceful protest. At the same time, we are talking to seniors from different professions. We are organizing webinars wherein we invite intellectuals to speak on the issue of mixopathy and how it is going to ruin all the systems of medicine in the country. We have even invited senior professors of Ayurveda in such webinars. They too agree with our point of view. I can assure each and every member of IMA that we will continue our peaceful protest and will do everything that is possible within the legal framework.

There is another issue on which IMA has raised its objection i.e. the government's data on the number of doctors who have died due to COVID-19?

It is clearly a case of apathy. The government has failed to acknowledge the contribution of doctors during the pandemic. They told in the Rajya Sabha that only 162 doctors have died due to COVID-19. We have given them the names of 734 doctors. 431 were general practitioners and 25 were below 35 years of age.



The government has a huge machinery. It should not be difficult for the government to verify our data. We have given them the names, addresses and even the photographs of our fellow doctors who lost their lives serving the society during the pandemic. The government could have verified the data in no time but it chose to look the other way. We are not asking for money. We just want their martyrdom to be recognized.



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Why do you think the government has not been able to recognize the doctors' contribution during the pandemic?

I think showering flowers on doctors and nurses is not enough. We need to respect and recognize the frontline workers' contribution in the real sense.

I believe that we have witnessed such apathy only because of the fact that there is no national cadre of doctors in the country. Therefore, IMA has raised the demand of creating such a cadre. This cadre would be the right body to decide on issues pertaining to the doctor fraternity and the health care system of the country.

IMA raised objections on Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Wardhan's presence in the re-launch ceremony of Coronil? What do you want to say about it?

First of all, let me repeat that we are not against Ayurveda. But in the said program, a blatant lie was propagated in the name of the World Health Organization. Someone even chose to call doctors as terrorists. All this happened in the presence of our Health Minister Dr. Harsh Wardhan. He is a doctor himself. He knows pretty well that India has lost more than 1.5 lac people due to the pandemic. His presence in that event and his choice of not speaking against the false claims could cause confusion and chaos. So, we are only talking about the code of ethics. We have the right to ask our colleague, who happens to be the Health Minister of the country, a couple of questions about the issue. I don't think there is anything wrong with that.

Delhi Medical Association (DMA) has given strong statements in support of Dr. Harsh Wardhan. What is your take on that?

DMA is one of the many state units. They have said what they felt like. We have also issued our official statement. I do not want to take this issue any further.

You stand on many issues contradicts with those of the party in power in the Center. A lot of doctors have political inclinations and aspirations. How do you think it could impact IMA as an association?

There is nothing wrong if doctors have political inclinations. I think 99 percent of doctors are inclined towards one political party or the other. You need to understand that we are not against any government. We were the first organization to support the vaccination drive. In fact, we have even said that IMA's infrastructure can be used to make the vaccination drive even more effective. What we want to talk about is the medical code of ethics. That is where we cannot compromise.

What is going to be IMA's next step to stop mixopathy?

We will continue our fight against mixopathy. It is our democratic right and we will do everything within our democratic rights to stop mixopathy from ruining the country's healthcare system. We are sure that IMA will get support from all the sections of the society. As I told you earlier, we have even got support from some very senior professors of Ayurveda. We want to make clear that IMA is not against Ayurveda.

WHAT DOCTORS THINK ABOUT MIXOPATHY?

On March 14, IMA's Mumbai West Branch organized a virtual live program titled 'Intellectual Meet on Mixopathy'. State President Dr. Rashmikant Sanghavi welcomed everyone to the meeting. National President Dr. J.A. Jayalal formally inaugurated the meeting. A look at the titles of the talks by distinguished guests would give you an idea about how strongly do doctors oppose the central government's notification which authorizes post graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to be trained to perform 39 surgical procedures.

Here's the list of those titles:

MYSTIC DIMENTIONS OF MIXOPATHY

A SURGICAL SLAUGHTER

ILLEGAL & UNAUTHORIZED TRESPASS

A BLATANT MOCKERY

GARBED INCOMPETENCE

THREAT TO HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT

LICENSE TO RUINAGE

BANKRUPTCY AT ITS PEAK

A CITIZEN'S DILEMMA: MIXOPATHY, BUT WHERE IS THE SYMPATHY?

You are a busy doctor and an academician too. The position of the IMA National President demands a lot. All this activism must also be very demanding.

What is your mantra to keep the pressure away?

I believe in myself. I believe in God. And I believe in my team. I know that I cannot do anything alone. I know it is going to be a tough task but I am sure that IMA will definitely win this fight. We are all together in this fight. We will do everything within the limits of our democratic rights and we will surely win in the end. ■