Oath taking in the White Coat Ceremony

What is the issue?

The Dean of the Madurai Medical College was removed from the post by the Tamil Nadu government after he made first-year-medical students take the Maharshi Charak Shapath Oath instead of the Hippocratic Oath.

What is the Madurai Medical College incident about?

- Recently, the first-year students at the Madurai Medical College were made to take the Maharshi Charak Shapath from a Sanskrit text, instead of the conventional Hippocratic Oath in English.
- As per reports, the incident took place in the presence of the State Finance Minister and Commercial Taxes Minister.
- The former immediately objected to the oath being taken in Sanskrit and expressed his ire at the move.
- Following the incident, the Tamil Nadu health department removed the dean of the medical college from his post.
- Moreover, state Health Minister has ordered that a departmental inquiry against Rathinavel for allegedly violating rules.

What is Hippocratic Oath?

- The Hippocratic Oath is an ethical code that medical students swear to uphold when they take up the profession.
- It was written by Greek physician Hippocrates and taken by physicians across the world.
- The Hippocratic Oath is administered to medical students when they transition from pre-clinical to clinical subjects, during what is known as the white coat ceremony.
- The oath dictates the obligations of the physician to students of medicine and the duties of pupil to teacher.
- In the oath, the physician pledges
    - to prescribe only beneficial treatments, according to his abilities and judgment
    - to refrain from causing harm or hurt
    - to live an exemplary personal and professional life

The White Coat Ceremony is a rite of passage for medical students. During the ceremony, a white coat is placed on each student's shoulders and often the Hippocratic Oath is recited, signifying their entrance into the medical profession.

What is the controversy over taking the Charak Shapath

oath?

- The Charak Shapath is an oath in honour of Maharshi Charaka, one of the principal contributors to the ancient science of Ayurveda and the author of the medical treatise, 'Charaka Samhita'.
- It was written in Sanskrit and translated into Hindi and English.
- **Proposal for taking Charak Shapath oath-** The controversy over taking the Charak Shapath over the Hippocratic Oath began in February when the National Medical Commission made the suggestion to replace the age-old oath.
- The proposal to move towards Charak Shapath was that Charak belonged to our motherland.
- **Counter arguments**- The Indian Medical Association (IMA) had expressed strong disapproval against this proposal and observed that Charak Shapath would not be suitable for modern medicine practitioners.
- Some experts are of the opinion that the Charak Shapath is regressive in nature as one of the passages says they will treat a woman only in the presence of their male family members.

References

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