



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



A conceptual study on role of Ayurveda in communicable diseases

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2022, 14(03), 220–222

Publication history: Received on 02 May 2022; revised on 04 June 2022; accepted on 06 June 2022

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2022.14.3.0533>

Abstract

Health is never an issue until someone gets sick, it is the reality in current situation. Because of improper diet, lack of exercise, stress, low quality of food grains & global warming overall health status of individuals is poor & they are getting easily prone to communicable diseases. H1N1 influenza, Ebola are the recent examples. They are big challenges & creating a burden over health care system. Ayurveda though an ancient medical science has clearly described such communicable diseases & their cause, mode of transmission, prevention as well as cure. Charaka has quoted *Janapadodhwansa*, (mass destruction) & its four reasons as *Dushitavayu* (Air), *Jala* (Water), *Kala* (Time), and *Desha* (Region). Sushruta has already mentioned *Aupsargika Rogas* (Communicable Diseases) i.e. *Kushtha* (Skin diseases), *Jwara* (Fever) etc. & their mode of transmission. Prevention as well as cure of disease is goal of Ayurveda. Through maintenance of *Dincharaya*, *Rutucharya*, *Sadvritta*, person's physical and mental health is secured. With the help of *Panchakarma*, *Aushadha*, & *Rasayana* these diseases can be cured. In this literary work effort has made to find how Ayurveda can help to face growing challenge of communicable diseases.

Keywords: Janpadodhwansa; Aupsargik; Rasayana; Panchakarma; Sadvrittapalana

1. Introduction

Due to advancement of science and research life span of human being has been increased but simultaneously threat of communicable disease is increasing day by day. Communicable disease [1]. spread from person to another or from an animal to a person. The spread often happens via air borne viruses or bacteria, but also through blood or other bodily fluids. It may also spread easily due to large population, crowd, unhygienic conditions and low immunological status of individual. H1N1 Influenza, Ebola virus are the recent example of such diseases. Because of its contagious nature, a large number of individuals are getting infected at the same time thus creating great strain over public health.

Ayurveda though being an ancient life science clearly mentions about such disease conditions. A detailed Chapter on *Janapadodhwansa* [2]. in Charaka Samhita Vimansthana Third Adhyaya explains epidemic disease and its etiological factors. In Sushruta Samhita *Kushtha Nidana Adhyaya*, there is a good description on mode of transfer of disease. They are called *Aupsargik Rogas* (Communicable diseases) [3]. From these references we come to know that in ancient time also there were such epidemics. A detailed regimen for such diseases is also described in Charaka Samhita as use of *Panchakarma* and *Rasayana* along with *Sadvrittapalana*.

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2. Review of literature

2.1. Charaka Samhita Vimansthana Third Adhyaya

Acharya Charaka has described the term Janapadodhwansa [2] meaning destruction of a population living in an area. It is similar with epidemics. People having different Prakruti, Sarata and Ahara but some factors like air, region are common to them and vitiation of these factors leads to disease production and death which is termed as Janapadodhwansa.

Charaka Samhita Vimanasthana Adhyaya No. 3, Shoka No. 6

Janapadodhwansa occurs due to vitiation of Vayu, Jala, Desha, Kala. They are nothing but modes by which infectious diseases spread.

Acharya Charaka has mentioned Adharma [4] as the root cause of Janapadodhwansa. Not following one's duty to a community is termed as Adharma. Pradnyaparadha [5] is also included in it. Not following Dincharya (Daily Regimen), Ritucharya (Seasonal Regimen), Vegavidharana (suppression of urges), Papkarma (sins) is included in Adharma. All these things are responsible for hampering immunity of an individual. Thus not directly but surely Adharma is responsible for Janapadodhwansa.

2.2. Sushruta Samhita Nidansthana Adhyaya Fourth Kushtha Nidana Adhyaya

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned Aupasargik Rogas [3] in Kushthanidana. They are contagious diseases which spread through direct contact or contaminated objects of patient.

Sushruta Nidanasthana Adhyaya No.5, Shloka No. 33, 34.

By physical contact, expired air, eating with others in same plate, sharing bed (Sexual contact also) using clothes, garlands and paste (Anulepa or Cosmetics) infectious diseases spread from person to person. Meaning of Prasanga is excessively and frequently performed according to Acharya Dalhana.

2.3. Ayurvedic Management of communicable disease

Some diseases are incurable if Arishtalakshana (Fatal Signs) are present, while others even without such signs are incurable because of certain Purvajanmakrut Karma (Fatal Past Deeds). Ayurveda emphasizes on treatment of Sadhyavyadhis only. Thus treatment of those who don't show the fatal signs is mentioned in the following quotation.

Charaka Vimansthana Adhyaya No.3, Shloka No. 13, 14

2.3.1. Karma Panchavidham (Appropriate use of Panchakarma) (1)

Vamana, Virachana, Niruhabasti, Anuvasanbasti and Shirovirechana are Panchakarma [6] described by Acharya Charaka Acharya, Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhata included Raktmokshana among Shodhanupkramas [7] Depending upon Doshabala, Vyadhibala appropriate remedy from above should be selected and implemented.

2.3.2. Rasayanam Viddhi Vata Upyoga (Use of Rasayana) (1)

According to Acharya Charaka treatment is of two types [8].

Promotive- It is of two type

- Which provides strength and immunity to healthy person - Rasayana (Rejuvenation) The Rasayana is of two types. i.e., Kutipraveshik and Vatatapika. In case of communicable disease vatatapik Rasayana can be used. It has minimal precautions and can be easily used in day to day life. In Charak Samhita Chikitsasthana Adhyaya No. 1, various Rasayana and their indications, benefits have been mentioned. Out of which Chyavanprasha, Triphala Rasayana etc. will prove helpful.
- Which promotes Sexual Vigor - Vajeekarana (Aphrodisiacs)

Curative treatment which cures the disease of suffering people.

2.3.3. *Achara Rasayana and Sadvrittapalana.*

Charaka Samhita Vimanasthana Adhaya No. 3, Shloka No. 13, 14

These rules and regulations help in maintenance of mental and spiritual wellbeing of a person. Truth, sympathy, respecting elders and teachers, helping needy people, eating nutritious and Satvikaahar e.g., Milk, Ghee etc. in daily food. Properly following these rules will benefit the person in the same way as that of consuming Rasayana. Hence it is called Achara Rasayana [9, 10]. Along with this regimen treatment of symptoms as per mentioned in Chikitsasthana can be done.

3. Conclusion

From the above discussion we can conclude that ancient *Acharyas* had knowledge of communicable diseases that's why a thorough description is given in *Samhitas* regarding them. Treatment of patients not showing fatal signs is given as *Panchakarma* and use of *Rasayana* as mainstream treatment. Thus, by improving immunity of individuals spread of communicable diseases can be controlled. Further research should be done in order to implement Ayurveda against infectious diseases, in public health for worldwide acceptance of Ayurveda.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

I express gratitude to the Department of Kayachikitsa and Hospital Authority for giving me this opportunity to study this particular research topic: A conceptual study on role of Ayurveda in communicable diseases. Special thanks to Secretary of Maharashtra Arogya Mandal's Secretary, Hon'ble Mr. Anil Gujar, Hon'ble Principal Dr. Nilesh Phule and Faculty members Dr. Yogesh Kotangle, Dr. Vijayalaxmi Patil, Dr. Ritesh Damle, Dr. Kiran Ubhe for co-operating throughout the research study. Many thanks to my colleagues, as we got to learn many new things while reviewing the research articles and our knowledge regarding the subject has been increased.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest regarding the publication of manuscript.

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