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Role Of Ayurveda in Prevention of Communicable Diseases

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ABSTRACT:

Infectious or communicable diseases can be defined as an illness caused by another living agent, or its products, that can spread from one person to another, can cause emergency situation. Ayurveda has given practical explanation about the communicable diseases in various contexts which are applicable in day-to-day life in their prevention, and cure. The modes of transmission of the Communicable diseases, relative modes of prevention, and maintenance of health with *Dinacharya* & *Ritucharya* (daily practice & Seasonal practice) are well illustrated in classics. Various modes of transmission of the communicable diseases by Touch, Inhalation, Sharing Fomites, Polluted water, Air, Soil have been explained in Ayurveda along with the symptoms seen normally which follow cough, dyspnea, vomiting, rhinorrhoea, headache, fever etc. Infectious agents are plentiful, mutate rapidly, and can become resistant to drugs if not destroyed completely. Low vaccination rates, poor nutrition, age (young and elderly), and immunosuppression, Overcrowding, poor regional design and hygiene due to poverty, Polluted drinking water, rapid climate changes, and natural disasters, can lead to conditions that allow easier transmission of disease. The first and foremost aim of Ayurveda is Prevention of diseases and next is the cure of manifested diseases for which avoidance of the causative factors is the first line of management. There are minor diversions in the management of such infective conditions in Ayurveda such as *Sadvritta* (good conduct), *Rasayana* etc which can be effective method of prevention of communicable diseases.

Keywords: Communicable Diseases, *Janapadodhvansa*, *Svasthavritta*, *Sadvritta*, *Aupasargika vyadhi*.

INTRODUCTION

The human civilization has progressed and developed to the extent of leading to a sophisticated life with latest gadgets evolved through science and technology. Humans

have always been overpowering the lower class of living beings and ruling the world. But the diseases in the form of communicable or non-communicable have always been a threat for human existence and among these two,



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communicable diseases often go out of control due to contagious infection and rapid transmission. At present, due to the biotechnology, it is possible to control many infectious diseases like tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus etc. with the help of vaccinations and antimicrobial treatment, but the same is not effective against the emergence of a newer pathogen. For example, the current pandemic COVID-19, has taken lives of huge population even in developed countries with best health services. COVID-19 being a noble virus which is contagious and quickly spreads causing genetic mutation, the medical fraternity faced difficulty to control and manage it and therefore, the world has again looked back towards the traditional medicine and Ayurveda has emerged as a good substitute for prevention and control.

The Communicable diseases, epidemics and pandemics have been explained in Ayurveda as *Aupasargika roga*¹, *Janapadodhvansa*² and *Maraka*³ or *Janamara*⁴. Along with the explanation, the preventive measures and the treatment of those occurred are also well explained in Classics. When a disease is very fast spreading and difficult to control, *Sthana Parityaga*⁵ (leaving the place or staying in self isolation) has been explained in Ayurveda as a measure to prevent the healthy individuals from getting infected. Various measures of *Vayu Shuddhi*, *Jala Shodhana* etc have been well explained to prevent the spread of Air-borne and Water-borne diseases respectively in community level while for personal health protection and prevention, the use of *Rasayana*⁶ (for upliftment of *Ojas*⁷ and thus *Vyadhikshamatva*⁸), Concept of *Dinacharya*⁹, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*¹⁰, *Sadvritta*¹¹, *Swasthavritta*, *Adharaneeya vega*¹² etc have been explained.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This Literary review is attempted to highlight and correlate the Preventive aspect of communicable diseases described in Ayurveda Classics and modern preventive measures.

Communicable Diseases

A communicable (or infectious) disease is an illness due to the transmission of a specific infectious agent (or its toxic products) from an infected person, animal or inanimate source to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly.¹³ They lead to around 14.7 million deaths worldwide (26% of global mortality) annually.¹⁴ Overcrowding, poor regional design and hygiene due to poverty, polluted water, unsafe food, rapid climatic changes, and natural disasters, can lead to favorable conditions for easier transmission of

disease. An infectious agent may be transmitted from its natural reservoir to a susceptible host in different ways such as- Direct (direct contact, Droplet spread) and Indirect (Airborne, Vehicle borne or Vector borne).

Janapadodhvansa refers to a similar scenario where a large population of a particular area is afflicted with similar set of symptoms and illness which is probably highly infectious or communicable. Contamination of *Vayu* (Air), *Jala* (Water), *Desha* (Soil or place) and *Kala* (Climatic changes/ seasonal) are considered as the very responsible factors for *Janapadodhvansha*. The main cause of *Janapadodhvansha* is said *Adharma*¹⁵ which can be taken as a sin to self (*Pragnyaparadha* (committing some mistakes with ones knowledge) , *Vegasandharana* (controlling the natural urges), not following *Dinacharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta* etc) or to others (*Dashavidha papakarma* to other persons or animals or to the planet i.e. improper waste management leading to pollution and thus leading to various diseases.). Pertaining to the large number of casualties, Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Bhela termed *Janapadodhvansha* as *Maraka* and *Janamara* respectively. As a consequence of contamination of air, the symptoms like *Kasa*, *Swasa* (Respiratory symptoms), *Vamathu* (GI symptoms), *Pratishyaya* (Allergic symptoms) and *Jvara* (fever/hyperpyrexia) are explained by Acharya Sushruta. Acharya Sushruta has also introduced the concept of *Aupasargika roga* as those diseases which are spread from person to person by repeated close contact, Droplet transmission, eating together (Salivary secretion), sharing bed (Sexual Transmission), Sharing clothes, Jewelry, Cosmetic products (Fomite borne).¹¹ The diseases *Kustha* (Skin diseases), *Jvara*, *Shosha* and *Netra-abhishyanda* (contagious group of eye diseases) come under this category. Acharya Vagbhata coins the term *Sanchari Roga* for diseases with similar mode of transmission and gives example of eye and skin ailments.¹⁶

Prevention of Communicable Diseases

The concept of prevention in community medicine is arranged in 3 stages; Primary (actions aimed at avoiding the manifestation of a disease) , Secondary (early detection, screening, investigation and drug therapy) and Tertiary (Rehabilitation as per requirement. The aim of prevention is elimination of causative organism or prevention from its transmission along with reducing susceptibility of host (human) by proper nutrition and vaccination therefore minimizing the effect of any communicable disease.

With the time-tested medicines, Ayurveda aims towards the prevention of any affliction in first hand and then to the

treatment if any.¹⁷ Ayurveda considers *Dhatu Samyata* (homeostasis) as a state of well being and advises one to always work upon it. Concept of *Ojas* and *Vyadhikshamatva* stand similar to that of host immunity as per Ayurveda. *Ojas* is the essence of all the *Dhatus* while *Vyadhikshamatva* is the defense mechanism of body-*Vyadhi Utpada pratibandhakatvam* (first line of defense) and *Vyadhi Bala virodhitvam* (second and third line of defense). *Hitahara-vihara* (proper food and activities), *Rasayana*, *Sarvarasa abhyasa* (taking all tastes), *Hemanta Ritu* (winter season), *Madhya vaya* (Adult age), routinely followed daily and seasonal regimens (*Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya*), *Ritu-anusara Shodhana* etc. are said to enhance ones *Ojas* and *Vyadhikshamatva*.

The idea of *Vikaravighatakara bhava* is about the factors responsible either for non-occurrence of disease, or for the affliction with minor symptoms and sufferings or delayed affliction.¹⁸ Therefore *Nidana parivarjana* (avoidance of cause) is the foremost step in both prevention and management as eliminating organism (control of reservoir), Environmental protection (Safe food and drinking water) and interrupting the chain of transmission (Controlling vector, modifying behaviour and personal hygiene). Once the communicable disease is reported in the locality, Acharya Sushruta advocates the measures like *Sthana parityaga* (leaving the locality or isolating cases) and *Shanti karma* etc for mental, spiritual and social well-being. Acharya Charaka suggests *Panchakarma*, *Rasayana prayoga*, *Sadvritta*, *Achara Rasayana*, *Brahmacharya palana* etc during *Janapadodhvansa* and *Sthana parityaga* as the last approach.

In case of *Aupasargika roga*, *Nidana parivarjana* itself will be the preventive and first line of management as in any other diseases the other being treatment as per disease. Moreover, maintaining personal hygiene through *Snana*, etc., adequate nourishment through (Balanced diet), through *Sadvritta palana*, *Brahmacharya* and *Rasayana sevana* (intake of rejuvenation medications and therapy) in the form of *Ajasrika*, *Naimittika* and *kamya rasayana*, one can prevent and overcome *Aupasargika roga*.

DISCUSSION

The emerging and re-emerging nature of infectious agents have always been a threat to humans. The occurrence of epidemics, pandemics etc is unforeseen therefore we normally are not prepared to take those leading to devastating social and economic disruption. It takes time to discover and develop vaccines and treatment for any noble

infectious diseases but from our end, strengthening the host immunity, and preventing the environmental transmission can be done. *Rasayana* potentiates *ojas* or in other words boosts the immune system, for example, it has been proved through various researches that intake of *Amalki*, *Pippali*, *Haritaki*, *Shilajatu* increases gamma globulins leading to increase in nonspecific resistance.¹⁹ Therefore, use of such *Rasayanausadhis*, implementation of *Yoga* and *Pranayama* into daily regimen and intake of healthy food and drinks need to be done. The appropriate lifestyle right from *Brahma muhurta uttisthet* (early rise from bed) to sleep at second *prahara* of *ratri* (early to bed and early to rise) is extremely beneficial in maintenance of healthy status.

CONCLUSION

The main motive of any branch of medicine is to benefit the mankind. The conventional system of medicine which deals with post affliction has also given a special place for preventive aspect. The holistic science, Ayurveda accepts prevention as the first and cure as the second objective. Ayurveda not only implements pharmacological means but also non pharmacological ways like *Yoga*, *pranayama*, lifestyle improvement, and *Sadvritta* for psychological, spiritual and social well-being. The concepts like *Sutikagara* (post partum ward), *sthanaparityaga* are the ways of self-isolation to break the chain of transmission. Among the four factors responsible for the development and transmission of infectious agent, *Ritu* (the favorable season) may not be under our control but *Kshetra* (Host body) can be made less susceptible by the measures told in Ayurveda. *Ambu*(Reservoir) can be destroyed by *Vayu*, *Jala* etc *Shuddhi* measures and *Beeja* (spores) can be removed by screening, isolating and treating any cases. Ayurveda thus needs to be implemented for “*Swasthasya swasthya Rakshanam, Aturasya vikara prashamanam*”.

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