

Concept of Treatment of Infectious Disease in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, though lacking a dedicated chapter on infectious diseases, identifies conditions equivalent to communicable illnesses under accounts of sankramika roga, aupasargika vyadhi, and krimi roga. These categories encompass microbial and parasitic agents and recognize transmission via contact, shared eating or sleeping, fomites, and inhalation. According to classical understanding, external pathogens initiate disease only after disrupting the body's internal doshas; thus, pathogenesis is viewed through the six-stage (ṣaṭkriyakala) model, emphasizing imbalance in doshas, dhatus, and malas. Treatment focuses on three primary strategies: purificatory expulsion therapies (such as emesis, purgation, enema, nasal cleansing or bloodletting), the use of heat and bitter quality herbs to impede pathogen proliferation by altering host terrain, and prevention by avoiding causative exposure. In sum, Ayurveda acknowledges microbial causation but prioritizes restoring internal equilibrium and strengthening the host over directly targeting pathogens, offering a host centric alternative paradigm in traditional medical theory.

Keywords: Sankramika Roga, Krimi Vyadhi, Infectious Disease

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the most ancient system of medicine pertaining to human civilization. Ayurveda does not have a specific text or specific chapters in the text which deals exclusively with the concept of infectious disease and its management but there is concept of Saankraamika roga, Aagantuja roga, and concept of Krimi which is nearer or similar to concept of infectious disease in contemporary science. The principles described for management of Aagantuja roga, Krimi roga, and Saankraamika roga can be compiled analysed and interpreted in light of modern theory of management of infectious disease.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE – Infectious disease, also known as transmissible disease or communicable disease, is illness resulting from an infection.

CAUSE- it is caused by infectious agents including viruses, viroids, bacteria, mites, fleas and other macro parasites such as tapeworms. Host can fight infectious disease using their immune system. Mammalian hosts react to infections with an innate response, often involving inflammation, followed by an adaptive response.

MANAGEMENT – Specific medications used to treat infections include

- Antibiotics

Antivirals

- Antifungals
- Antiprotozoals
- Anthelmintics.

CONCEPT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN AYURVEDA –

There is no separate chapter has dedicated to infectious disease, but concept of *aaagantuja vyadhi*, concept of *krimi* and its treatment are very near or similar to infectious disease. According to ayurveda disease is altered or vitiated state of doshas.¹ Alteration in the body elements occurs due to various internal and external factors. External factor directly leads to manifestation of disease followed by involvement of dosha. Thus, the etiological factors of the disease may be in relation to food, routine, external factors like air, water, trauma or microbes, disease occurs only after *doshik* vitiation. Thus, even in microbial diseases too doshas are important for occurrence of disease and its management. Acharya Susruta explains in *kustha nidana* that disease like *kustha*, *jwara*, *shosha*, *netraabhisya* are come under *aupsargika roga*.² The cause of such diseases are:

All forms of contact

Eating together

Sleeping together

Sharing and using of other clothes, ornaments, etc.

प्रसंगाद् गात्रसंस्पर्शान्निस्वासात्सहभोजनात् ।

सहशय्याऽऽसनाच्चापि वस्त्रमाल्यानुलेपनात् ॥

कुष्ठं ज्वरश्च शोषश्च नेत्राभिष्यन्द एव च ।

औपसर्गिकरोगाश्च संक्रामन्ति नरान्नरम् ॥ (सु सं नि ५/३३-३४)

While classifying disease Acharya Susruta has classified the disease in four types³

Aaagantuja

Shaaririka

Maansika

Swabhaavika

Where *aaagantuja vyadhi* includes communicable or infectious and traumatic disease. Charak Samhita describes role of *vayu*, *udaka*, *desha* and *kala* are the four factor responsible for *janpadodhwansha*.⁴ These are the two direct reference of ayurveda about infectious disease. This is the description which justify that, the role of microorganism and knowledge of concept of infection was known to ayurveda and it is not only a contribution of western science of medicine. Charaka Samhita while describing *vishma jwara* he describes that depending on localization and involvement of dhatus fever rises after particular interval only. More-over it is advocated that body's immunity system is more important than infective organism. Simile has given that seed has soaked in earth flourishes only in correct season like-wise *vyadhi* manifest after dosha *dushya samurchhana* or when the dhatus become weak. *Bala* of *vyadhi* again depend on *bala* of *nidana*, *dosha* and *dushya*.⁴

PATHOGENESIS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN AYURVEDA –

No separate description for pathogenesis of infectious disease has described in ayurveda they are understood with the reference to general description of disease. Concept of *shadkriya kala*⁵ explains about origin, progression and development of disease. Stages of pathogenesis are referred as the stages of arresting the progression of disease and hence are termed as the stage of treatment. These stages involve vitiating condition of *dosha*, *dhatu* and *malas*. This means that though the knowledge of concept of infection is not poor to ayurveda scholars emphasized more on the status of doshas or body's immune system in manifestation of infective disease also.

MANAGEMENT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN AYURVEDA –

Goal of ayurveda is to ensure complete and comprehensive health and all literature is all about maintenance of the status of equilibrium of body tissues. Ayurveda provides three fold comprehensive management modalities for disease is believed in ayurveda that infective agents producing bodily disease also effects psychic. Thus, even in infective pathologies too three fold management of ayurveda has definite role to play. *Daivvyapaashrya* and *satvavajaya* the methods of psycho-spiritual healing practices help in correcting disturbed state of psychic which in turn help in potentiating body's immune system. *Yukti vyapaashrya chikitsa* is considered to be more important as certain specific measure against disease are carried out, including purification-medications, surgical intervention etc. In *yukti vyapaashrya chikitsa* charaka describes unique three fold management for the disease especially occurring due to any infections. Charaka describes in three different modalities in management of *krimi*.⁶

Apakarshana

Prakriti vighata

Nidana parivarjana

Apakarshana- It is the process of removal of disease producing *krimi* out of body using various therapeutic purificatory process like *vamana*, *virechana*, *nasya*, *rakta mokshna*. These processes are to be done in accordance to the feasibility of these processes i.e after proper examination of *ama*, *pachaymaana* and *nirama* stages. This may be employed depending on clinical presentation of disease, easy removal of dosha etc.⁷

Prakriti vighata - It is a very unique medicament described by Charaka that uses the drugs which stops growth of disease producing microbes by creating an unfavourable condition of growth of these organisms. In *prakriti vighata* drugs having, *katu*, *tikta*, *kashya*, *kshra*, *ushna* etc are utilized which decreases kapha and malas on which these micro-organism lodge, flourish and leading to disease. Increase in number of micro-organism is very important step in infective diseases, as increased number of the microbes will increase toxin load thus disease progress and if this chain is blocked at this level, disease even though occurs will be mild form, requires less medication.⁸

Nidanaparivarjana – it is most efficient method of managing the disease condition. It is considered to be the first and foremost method of management. Stopping or preventing the cause decreases the possibility of getting disease. To understand and effectively using *nidana parivarjana*, it is required that the knowledge of invasion, factors responsible for disease must be known, and all necessary steps are to be followed for reducing chances of contacts so that one is not exposed to disease producing microbes and does not indulge the same.⁹

Acharya Vagbhata while explaining the treatment of *vishma jwara*, he clearly tells that while treating the *vishma jwara* with *anubandha* of *aagantuja* too we have to *sadhrana chikitsa* of *jwara* only.¹⁰

अयमेव विधिः कार्यो विषमेऽपि यथायथम् ।

ज्वरे विभज्य वातादीन् यश्चानन्तरमुच्यते ॥ (अ.ह. चि. १/१५०)

In *apasmara nidana* acharya Charaka explains if there is *anubandha* of *aagantu* then also *sadharana chikitsa* should be followed.¹¹

यदा दोषनिमित्तस्य भवत्यागन्तुर्नव्यः ।

तदा साधारणं कर्म प्रवदन्ति भिषग्विदः ॥ (च नि ८/१४)

2. DISCUSSION

Why importance has given to dosha only

आगन्तुर्नवेति निजं विकारं निजस्तथाऽऽगन्तुमपि प्रवृद्धः ।

तत्रानुबन्धं प्रकृतिं च सम्यग् ज्ञात्वा ततः कर्म समारभेत ॥ (च सु १९/७)

Acharya Charka explains that *aaagantuja vyadhi* after certain time get converted into *nija vyadhi* , and *nija vyadhi* if not treated properly can get converted into *aaagantuja vyadhi* .So, *chikitsa* should only be given after understanding *prakriti* and *aagantu* only.¹²

आगन्तुर्हि व्यथापूर्वं समुत्पन्नो जघन्यं वातपित्तश्लेष्मणां वैषम्यमापादयति ;

निजे तु वातपित्तश्लेष्माणः पूर्वं वैषम्यमापद्यन्ते जघन्यं व्यथामभिनिर्व्वयन्ति ॥ (च सु २०/७)

in other concept he says *aagantu vyadhi* gives pain first then dosha gets vitiated where as in *nija vyadhi* first dosha gets vitiated and produce *vyadhi*.¹³

So, in all kind of *vyadhi* there is role of *dosha*, without involvement of *dosha* there can't be possibility of *vyadhi*. So, in all *chikitsa siddhanta* more importance has given to “*dhatu saamyata*”.¹⁴

3. CONCLUSION

Though the concept of infection and infective organisms “*bhootas*” were well known but more importance was given to dosha vitiation for manifestation of disease.

So, the treatment principle aims for *dhatu samyata* and does not concentrate on killing of infective organisms.

In the present study attempt has been made to understand these concepts in light of infectious disease management with contemporary science.

However, being a classical medical doctrine, it has its own concepts and principles that cannot be accurately compared with concepts of contemporary science..

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