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A conceptual study on an Ayurvedic perspective in prevention and management of COVID-19 with reference to Charak Samhita

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This paper correlates the vastly detailed concepts of *Janpadodhwansa* and COVID-19 from *Charak Samhita* to the novel coronavirus. The aim of this paper is to draw the attention of the experts toward the similarities between coronavirus and *Ayurvedic* preventive measures, in hopes of finding some more effective measures of prevention as well as cure for the ongoing pandemic. The descriptions of *Janpadodhwansa* are scattered in different *Ayurvedic* classics which reveals the rich knowledge of the *Ayurveda* developed since the time immemorial. **Aim & Objective:** To review the well documented concept of the *Ayurveda* about *Janpadodhwansa* and its preventive and supportive management as in present era of COVID-19 pandemic. **Materials & Methods:** A brief description was given about *Adharma* and immunity. The concept of pandemic/epidemic is explained with the term "*Janpadodhwans*." Literary study of COVID-19 through the perception of classical disquisition like *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* of *Ayurveda* with the available commentaries, with modern correlation was done. **Conclusion:** It was deduced that every disease changes its mode of onset and course of progression with changing climatic conditions and timeline peculiarities. The diseases are not identical, but the author hopes that the similarities drawn can be of use to better understand the whole spectra of diseases that have come and those that have yet to come.

Key words: *Janpadodhwansa*, *Adharma*, COVID-19, Pandemic, *Hetu-Viparitchikitsa*, *Vyadhi-Viparitchikitsa*

INTRODUCTION

The humans are facing an unforeseen pandemic of Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19 or 2019-nCoV) since 2019. A pandemic usually affects a large proportion of the population, occurring over a wide geographic area such as a section of a nation, the entire nation, a continent or the world.^[1] Various civilization,

life-styles and sciences had tried their best to deal with COVID-19. WHO has been working towards collaborating all prevalent medical sciences for attainment of good health for each and every individual from the present situation of SARS COVID-19. *Ayurveda* is one of the popular science and Indian system of medicine which means the science of healthy life, prevention from diseases and as well as management of occurred disease^[2] highly progressive skill related to *Ayurveda* on medicine is preserved in Indian scriptures and the knowledge was conveyed from generation to generation. *Ayurveda* is one of the prevalent science in which pandemic is described under a broader term as '*Janpadodhwamsa*'^[3] (*Janmaar*, *Maraka*). Brief description about such diseases causing epidemic is available in *Ayurvedic* scriptures (*Brahtrayi*, *Kashyap Samhita*, *Bhela Samhita* etc. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a communicable viral disease, caused by a new strain of

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coronavirus, which differs considerably in genetic structure. Most of the theory of *Ayurveda* about *Janpadodhwamsa* is found similar to current theories of pandemic. While SARS-CoV-2 compares with *Janpadodhwamsa*, it shows analogy in concepts like aetiology, pathophysiology, modes of transmission, principles of prevention of outbreaks and control measures of COVID-19 and it can be compared with *Hetu-Viparitchikitsa* & *Vyadhi-Viparitchikitsa*. The concept of pandemic/epidemic is explained with the term "*Janpadodhwans*." This concept says many things about today's condition of the world. The main and foremost cause was said to be "*Adharm*." Most importantly, emphasis was given upon "immunity." As far as the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 syndrome are concerned, astonishing similarity could be seen with "*Rajyakshma*" described in the text

The communicable diseases are mentioned under *Janpadodhwamsa*. *Acharaya Charaka* dedicated a whole chapter to this topic. The chapter explains how a single epidemic disease inflicts the persons differ in dissimilar entities like constitution, lifestyles, diet, genetic inheritance, strength, suitability, mind and age simultaneously, there are other common factors due to derangement of which the diseases having similar period and symptoms arise and destroy the community. The climate, air, water and land can become a common medium through which the same disease can affect a large human settlement.

Deterioration in quality of *Vayu* (air), *Udaka* (water), *Desha* (land) and *Kala* (season) and are more lethal in their consecutively increasing order.^[5] The causes of disease is mainly *Asadharan hetu* (individual factors) and *Sadharan Hetu* (factors relating to community). In the *Sadharan Hetus* related to community are emphasised.^[6] The root cause of *Janpadodhwamsa* is '*Adharma*' or misdeeds performed by *Pragyapradha* (intellectual error) due to *Rajas* & *Tamas* predominance so that *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (restraint) and *Smriti* (memory) are deranged resulting in greed, selfishness, tendency to harm people, jealousy, & anger.^[7] In the present scenario *Adharma* is termed as, all those activities contributing to destruction of Air, Water, Land etc.

Disturbance of air due to industrial pollution, military activity related pollution, automobile and aviation sector related pollution. Disturbance to Ecology of water bodies: Unregulated damming, pollution of water bodies sources, sand mining from river beds, contamination of ocean beds.

Disturbance to Land Ecology by rapid urbanization and huge constructional activity with non-ecofriendly materials, destruction and over exploitation of mountains, forests & ecosystems. Destruction of other life forms like plants, animals, birds and displacement from their natural habitats. Usage of Non-biodegradable toxic substances like pesticides, plastics etc. Activities of this type deteriorate and disturb the balancing forces of nature and gives rise to abnormal air currents like floods, cyclones, extreme weather conditions, non-seasonal rains, etc. Destruction of Australian forests, destruction of Amazon wild forests due to wild fire, extreme weathers, non-seasonal rains experienced around Europe, Australia, India etc. can be taken as warnings signs (*Aristas*). Also sinful acts may be in the form of wars, germs. Disappearance of modesty and good conduct, wrong initiation of actions, use of unwholesome things though already known as such, movement in wrong place and time, avoidance of the code of noble conduct.^[8]

All these factors not only influence the individual, but also the society and leading to *Janpadodhwamsa*. Currently available evidence for COVID-19 suggests that the causative virus has a zoonotic source closely related to batorigin SARS-like corona virus but lab creation is being investigated. Hence, in this article, a brief *Ayurvedic* evaluation related to health promotion, preventive and supportive aspects from the COVID-19 is being presented.

The concept of pandemic/epidemic is explained with the term "*Janpadodhwans*." This concept says many things about today's condition of the world. The main and foremost cause was said to be "*Adharm*." Most importantly, emphasis was given upon "immunity." As far as the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 syndrome are concerned, astonishing similarity could be seen with "*Rajyakshma*" described in the text

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this paper, a few studies were read on the internet to gain an insight about the COVID-19 disease and its probable impacts on the human body. For understanding about *Janpadodhwans* and principle of *Adharm*, as well as immunity, *Charak Samhita* was explored for contemporary analysis. Standard textbooks of epidemiology were used for the study. Information is collected through pub-med, WHO reports, and some modern textbooks.

Overview

We shall look at the concept of “*Janpadodhwans*” in *Charak Samhita*. While answering a question of *Agnivesh* (Disciple of *Punarvasu Atreya*), asking how people with different body constitutions, eating habits, lifestyles, etc., could get affected with the same diseases. *Atreya* said that it is due to the contamination of vital resources given to us by nature, namely, *Vaayu*, *Udak*, *Desh*, and *Kaal*.^[9] The mentor emphasized that, in the increasing order, *Vaayu*, *Udak*, *Desh*, and *Kaal* are more and more powerful components of *Janpadodhwans* (destruction of a large population at one time).^[10] The reason behind the disaster was said to be “*Adharm*,”^[11] where *Adharm* was, by necessity, vaguely defined as the act of not fulfilling the duties that someone or something is bound to, lest they fall, which happens mostly at the state and society level according to *Atreya* in the literature in the case of *Janpadodhwans*. The simple reason behind it being called *Adharm* is that an appropriately functioning state and society, which by definition, fulfils its duties, can see danger coming, and prepare for it, which is something that many countries have managed this year with COVID-19.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent COVID-19 pandemic COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation^[12] (WHO). After the initial outbreak in Wuhan and China, Italy was hit first in Europe and the impact has been enormous. Spain declared a state of emergency on March 14, 2020.

Corona Virus – An Overview

Morphology: Coronaviruses are enveloped; club shaped or crown like peplomer spikes looks like of solar corona. It belongs to Corona viridae family of RNA viruses in the Nidovirales order. There are 7 recognized Coronaviruses that are known to cause human infections; most of them belong to Betocoronavirus except the first two which belong to Alphacoronavirus.^[13]

1. Human coronavirus 229E
2. Human coronavirus NL63 (New Haven Coronavirus)
3. Human coronavirus OC43
4. Human coronavirus HKU1
5. SARS-CoV (Severe Acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus)
6. MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus).
7. SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 (Corona Virus disease 2019)

Mode of Transmission

The incubation period has been estimated to be 2 to 7 days generally. COVID-19 spread by coughing, sneezing and direct or indirect contact of mucous membranes of nose, eyes or mouth with respiratory droplets or fomites.^[14] As like the contemporary science the mode of infection is described in ayurvedic literature.^[15]

Modes Interpretation

1. *Prasangaata*- By social gathering
2. *Gaatrasansparshanaata*- By physical contact
3. *Nishwaasaat*- By droplet infection in contact of breath/exhaled air
4. *Saha Bhojanaata*- By sharing common meal, by sharing utensils
5. *Vastra-Malaa Anulepanata*- By sharing clothes, towel, cosmetics and cosmetics.
6. *Saha Shaiya-Asana*- By sharing bed, seat and any other mode of physical contact

Prevention

The preventive measures to control SARS are proper detection and protective measures which include general identification and isolation of suspected SARS cases at hospitals and homes. Simple sanitary measures such as hand-washing/sanitisation after touching patients use of well-fitted appropriate masks and introduction of infection control measures. Exit screening of international travellers. Early diagnosis and accurate reporting and sharing of information with other authorities and/or governments. As like the contemporary science the preventive measures are described in Ayurveda literature.^[16]

Preventive measures and Current interpretation in reference to COVID-19 according to Samhitas-

1. *Sthana Parityaaga*- To migrate from contaminated place to safer zone
2. *Shaantikarma*- Ways to avoid stress and treat of communicable pandemic in humans
3. *Prayaschittam*- To remember the history of travelling and contact of the diagnosed cases to know the possible spread of the infection
4. *Mangala-Japa-Homa-Upahaara*- With a view to avoid the spread of contamination
5. *Yajya*- By means of purifying the atmosphere and to kill the microorganisms
6. *Tapa*- To follow prescribed regimen to improve health and immunity
7. *Baddha-Anjali Namaskara*- Indian method of greeting people to prevent the infection
8. *Aatmagupti*- Isolation or quarantine to prevent the infection

Purification of Air (Vayu)

Purification of Vayu is done by *Dhupan* for which certain medicinal plants having microbial properties like *Gugullu*, *Ativisha*, *Musta*, *Ushir*, *Kushta*, *Neem*, *Vacha*, *Deodara*, *Vidanga* etc. are used. *Dhupan* is used to disinfect the clothes, bedsheets, surrounding atmosphere etc. It acts as a disinfectant and helps to prevent infectious diseases.

Purification of Water (Jala)

Use of water contaminated with urine, stool, insects, leaves, decomposed material, ova/eggs, etc., having bad taste & smell is strictly prohibited in *Ayurveda*. Before using such water, first it should be purified. Highly contaminated water is used after boiling or purified by quenching hot iron rod or by exposure to sun rays. *Nirmalikaran* recommended as a water purifier in *Ayurveda*. Some wormicidal & diuretic drugs like *Musta*, *Dhanyak*, *Vidang* etc. are used to remove the toxins from the body.

Shodhan and Rasayan

Shodhan of the body is done by *Panchakarma* therapy. It helps to remove toxic and infectious substances from the body without causing any side effects. *Rasayana Chikitsa* according to *Ayurveda* nourishes, develops & corrects the vitiated body elements. It is used to improve immunity & build the strength of the body.

DISCUSSION

Above review showed that pandemic could be controlled by *Hetuviparitchikitsa* & *Vyadhiviparitchikitsa*. When compared with COVID-19 pandemic, the control measures taken consist of the purification of air, places, and things in & around the case of COVID-19 with the help of pure disinfectant like sodium hypochlorite & this can be compared with the *Hetuviparitchikista* in ancient *Ayurveda*. Also, the treatment of the COVID-19 consists of symptomatic & supportive treatment. The treatment of the covid-19 is done with the help of drugs like paracetamol, NSAIDS, corticosteroids and some antibiotics etc. which can be compared with *Vyadhiviparitchikitsa* of the ancient *Ayurveda*. Again *Ayurveda* had a concept of *Rasayana Chikitsa* which means boosting of the immunity which can be compared with modern immunomodulator therapy. With a comparative study between *Rajyakshma* and COVID-19, a few things are being highlighted here. First is, COVID-19 disease effects more severally in patients with low immunity. Patients at high risk are either old or have comorbidity. In *Rajyakshma* also, it happens in people weakened with age, or some disease or some other reasons. *Kshaya*

was said to be the most severe form of *Rajyakshma* too.^[17] In the prevention & control of the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation & quarantine plays an important role. The efficacy of *Ayurveda* interventions in mild-to-moderate case of Covid-19 infection in a very short period with complete regression of signs & symptoms. The above treatment was also effective in the symptomatic relief like fever, dyspnoea, anorexia, fatigue, anosmia, and dysgeusia, also in the resolution of viral load. Herbs like *Guduchi*, *Chirayata*, *Kutki*, *Tulsi*, *Godanti (Bhasma)*, *Mriyunjaya Rasa*, *Tribhuvana Kriti Rasa* and *Shamshani Vati* helps to fight infection, flu and cold. *Ayush Kwatha* a combination of four medicinal herbs is recommended by AYUSH ministry also. The treatment is to be personalised, holistic, and purely based on *Ayurvedic* principles. After this study, it can be inferred that *Ayurveda* has vast potential to address Covid-19 and such other pandemics; a large sample-sized, multi-centre randomized and controlled clinical studies are the need of the hour.

CONCLUSION

Cure of a disease matter much more but prevention is always better than cure. One should understand the importance of good diet habits, healthy life style, and daily exercise etc. to acquire immunity. Immunity can be acquired with some herbs and medicines also, by following regimen, proper *Rasayana* therapy etc. Hence, it is necessary to spread awareness among people about health hygiene, boosting the immunity, healthy regimen, which is explained in *Ayurveda*. In the present review article, an attempt has been made to present concept of preventive and supportive therapy specially in current Pandemic COVID 19. Now a day still we are observing that new waves of this virus are spreading in the form of new strains, so it's high time to adopt *Ayurveda* for human wellbeing and prevention of such deadly disease. However, it must also be taken into account that every disease changes its mode of onset and course of progression with changing climatic conditions and timeline peculiarities. The diseases are not identical, but the author hopes that the similarities drawn can be of use to better understand the whole spectra of diseases that have come and those that have yet to come.

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