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Ayurveda and Communicable Diseases

Ashok G. Naikar,¹ Ganapathi Rao,² Panchal Vinayak J.³

¹Associate Professor, ^{2,3}Post Graduate Scholar, PG Dept. of Shalya Tantra, N. K. J. Ayurvedic Medical College and PG Center, Bidar, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

Indian medical heritage flows in two distinctive but mutually complimenting streams. The oral tradition being followed by millions of housewives and thousands of local health practitioners is the practical aspect of codified streams such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani. These oral traditions are head based and take care of the basic health needs of the people using immediately available local resources. Majority of these are plant based remedies, supplemented by animal and mineral products. Many of the practices followed by these local streams can be understood and evaluated by the codified stream such as Ayurveda. These streams are not static, historical scrutiny of their evolution shows the enriching phenomena at all times. Thus we have more than 7000 species of higher and lower plants and hundreds of minerals and animal product used in local health tradition to manage hundreds of disease conditions. A pertinent question that arises here is that in which basis these systems got enriched. Is it just trial error method over a point of time which gave rise to this rich tradition, is it an intuitive knowledge born out of close association with nature. One of the reasons for this attitude can be, that one is always made to believe that the science means that which can be explained by western models of logic and epistemology. The world view being developed and adopted by the dominant western scientific paradigm never fits in to the world view being followed and practiced by the indigenous traditions. This is well accepted by us due to the last 200 yrs of political and cultural domination by western and other alien forces.

Key words: Indian Traditional Medicine, Animal Products, Mineral Products, Communicable Diseases.

INTRODUCTION

A disease produced due to specific infectious agent or its toxic products, capable of being directly or indirectly spread from man to man, animal to animal or from environment to man or animals.

The concept of communicable disease along with the mode of spread has been explained in *Sushruta Samhitha*. *Aupasargika* diseases like obstinate skin

diseases including leprosy, fever, emaciation and conjunctivitis, spread from person to person by contact, touch, respiration, sharing food, sharing bed and seats, using cloths, garlands and unction's used by the person suffering from *Aupasargika* diseases.^[1]

According to the world's most ancient health science i.e. Ayurveda, human body is consists of basic five elements (*Panchamahabhoota*), and these basic five elements plays a very important role in the contribution of *Tridosha*, *Saptadhatus*. There is a need to know *Aupasargika* diseases elaborately.

Panchabhautikatwa^[2]

Ayurveda is the science based on the fact that the whole universe is made out of five elements called *Panchamahabhutas*, they are as follows

- *Prithvi* - Earth - Solidity factor
- *Aap* - Water - Liquidity factor
- *Tejas* - Fire - Heat factor

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Ashok G. Naikar

Associate Professor, PG Dept. of Shalya Tantra, N. K. J. Ayurvedic Medical College and PG Center, Bidar, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: dranaikar@rediffmail.com

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- *Vaayu* - Wind - Movement factor
- *Aakash* - Ether - Forocit factor

Any matter (Macro or Micro) is made out of these five elements, for eg. Water - H₂O, we have *Dhatu* as the predominant element in combination with the other four and so on.

This means the living things - *Jangama* - the moves or grows and the inert *Sthavara* - the static elements like rocks, minerals, metals etc. are made out of the same things but in various combinations. Thus *Charaka* says, *Yaavanto Bhavah Moorthimantam Dehe*,^[3] this world view of *Shad Darshanas Samkhya, Yoga, Vaisheshika, Poorvamimansa* and *Uttar Mimansa* is adopted by *Ayurveda*. Among these six *Darshanas, Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika* school of thoughts are filled with explanation of the *Panchamahabhautik* world. Over period of time two *Darshanas* namely *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika* got merged to form *Nyaya* school of thought which the cause and effect of all phenomenal beings and the need to overcome this world of attachment which is temporal and be perishable (eternal)

Constitutions of Body^[4]

Look at the health and disease concepts according to *Ayurveda* the body is made of *Tridoshas, Saptadhatus, Updhatus, and Malas*. They are as follows

Tridoshas

Vaata - (*Aakash + Vaayu Mahabhota*)

Pitta - (*Agni Mahabhoota*)

Kapha - (*Aap + Jala Mahabhoota*)

These are combination of *Panchamahabootas*, these three factors are responsible for movements, change and mass.

Saptadhatus

Rasa - *Chyle and Plasma fluid*

Rakta - *Blood cells*

Mansa - *Mascular tissue*

Meda - *Adipose tissue*

Asthi - *Bone tissue*

Majja - *Bone marrow*

Shukra - *Semen*

Updhatus

Sira, Kandara, Dhamani, etc.

Malas

Purisha - *Stool*

Mootra - *Urine*

Sweda - *Sweat*

Prakruti

The gross aspect of the body is created with these elements in a proportion which is responsible at the time of fertilization of ovum and sperm in the womb. The quality is actually determined by the quality of the paternal and maternal elements of reproduction. So as per the genetic code embedded in the sperm and ovum the fetus grows with a septic psychosomatic character called *Prakruti* or constitution. Based on the *Doshic* combinations these can be seven basic psychophysical constitutions in the new born which is determined at the time of conception.^[7]

Saptaprakruti are *Vaataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Vatapattaja, Vatakaphaja, Kaphapittaja* and *Sannipataja*. Among these seven *Prakrutis* the *Samaprakruti* are equal in proportion and optimum level of functioning is said to be the best. When there are two *Doshas* in predominance that is considered as the worst body type. The *Prakruti* can be considering the health indicator of a person. According to the various *Acharyas* - the definition of health – when the internal environment is in optimum level of functioning and is in equilibrium, the person is said to be in a health state.

Classification of disease^[5]

According to the etiology there are two types of diseases,

1. *Nija*
2. *Agantuja*

Nija is the type of disease which originates by imbalance in the internal environment due to structural or functional cause in the body e.g. *Madhumeha*, *Sandhivata* etc. covers under this category.

Agantuja is the type of disease where an external element is causing the disease from outside and then imbalance the internal environment e.g. *Asthi Bhagna*, *Vrana* and communicable disease comes under this category.

Communicable Disease

Kusta, *Jwara*, *Rajyakshma*, *Netrabhishyanada* and other contagious disease which spread from one person to other by oral route, close contact of the body through breathing, eating together, by sharing the same bed and seating places etc.

Role of krimi (microorganism) in communicable disease

Ayurveda also explain about 20 types of organisms^[6] which multiplies in blood, Intestinal flora etc. it also explains about the action of these organisms in the body.

DISCUSSION

The concept of communicable disease along with the mode of spread has been explained in *Sushruta Samhita*. *Aupasargika* diseases like obstinate skin diseases including leprosy, fever, emaciation and conjunctivitis, spread from person to person by contact, touch, respiration, sharing food, sharing bed and seats, using cloths, garlands and unction's used by the person suffering from *Aupasargika* diseases.^[1] The epidemics according to Ayurveda is due to the vitiation of earth, water and wind. Due to this vitiation the micro-organism are given a space for their growth and multiplication by any or all of these media. Even though Ayurveda consider presence of micro-organism it is given more importance to equilibrium of the internal environment so that these organisms can't multiply. In these situation the *Nidana Parivarjana* or removal of causative factors are most important factors. Which involves purification of air by *Dhoopana*, with *Bhootanashaka Dravyas*

(antimicrobials) etc. like wise cleaning the environment and keeping one's individual is also important in these conditions.

Communicable Diseases prevented by 3 measures;

1. Controlling reservoir or source of infection
2. Interruption in the routes of transmission
3. Immunizing the susceptible host.

CONCLUSION

To keep the instinctual environment in harmony one should follow proper diet, proper sleep and proper sexual life. These are three legs of the tripod that is health. In communicable disease, the body balance is lost because of massive invasion of external micro-organisms. Here as a measure to prevent both instinctual and external environment is cleaned and then such medicines, diet and deeds are advanced which will not allow these organisms to grow or which will bring back the lost balance of these three *Doshas* so the body will fight back the inducing organisms. Early diagnosis, notification, epidemiological investigations, isolation, treatment, quarantine, hygiene and immunization help in the process of control and prevention of diseases.

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