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# Role of Ayurveda in the Prevention of Communicable Diseases

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Infectious or communicable diseases can be defined as illness caused by another living agent or its products that spread from person to person and can be a cause of emergency. Ayurveda do believe in microorganisms i.e., *Krimi*, but emphasized more on body's response and occurrence of disease i.e. *Vyadhikshamatwa*. Communicable diseases well described by *Acharya Sushrut* termed *Aupasargika Roga* for epidemic condition, spread through contacts. *Acharya Charak* coined *Janapadodhvansa Roga* for pandemic conditions involving rapid outbreak on large scale. Because of improper diet, lack of exercise, stress, fast food, junk food & global warming overall health status of individuals is poor and they are prone to communicable diseases like Covid 19, H1N1 Influenza creating a burden over health care system. **Aims & Objectives:** To spread the awareness about Ayurvedic approach towards preventing communicable diseases. And to study the role of *Ahara* and *Vihara* in prevention of communicable diseases. **Result & Conclusion:** A healthy and long peaceful life devoid of any disease is the main aim of Ayurveda through implementation of *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta* is important for physical and mental health. With the help of *Shodhan (Panchakarma)*, *Shamana (Aushadha)* & *Rasayana* these diseases can be cured. In this literary work, efforts have been made to find out how Ayurveda can help to prevent communicable diseases.

**Key words:** *Aupsargik, Janapadodhwansa, Communicable, Vyadhikshamatwa*

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, infectious diseases are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in both developed and developing countries. *Ayurveda* has given practical explanation about the communicable diseases in various contexts which are applicable in day-to-day life in their prevention and management. The different modes of prevention of the Communicable diseases can be achieved with the maintenance of health by *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*. The epidemics and pandemics have been explained in *Ayurveda* as *Aupasargika Roga*,<sup>[1]</sup> *Janapadodhvansa*<sup>[2]</sup> and *Maraka*<sup>[3]</sup> or *Janamara*.<sup>[4]</sup> Classical texts also explain the preventive measures and management of those occurred diseases. *Sthana Parityaga*<sup>[5]</sup> (leaving the place or staying in self-isolation) has been explained in *Ayurveda* as a measure to prevent the healthy individuals from getting infected when a disease is very fast spreading and difficult to control. 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*,<sup>[6]</sup> (*ojas*) strengthening<sup>[7]</sup> and thus *Vyadhikshamatva*<sup>[8]</sup> Concept of *Dinacharya*,<sup>[9]</sup> *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*,<sup>[10]</sup> *Sadvritta*,<sup>[11]</sup> *Swasthavritta*, *Adharaneeya Vega*<sup>[12]</sup> etc. have been explained.

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**Ayurvedic Pathogenesis of Communicable Diseases:**

*Ayurveda* defines health as the equilibrium of three body humors (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*), digestive fire (*Agni*), all body tissues (*Dhatus*), waste products (*Malas*) with pleasantly disposed and satisfied mind, senses and spirit.<sup>[13]</sup> If any of these components either increase or decrease that is unhealthy or a disease condition. Furthermore, the *Oja* (the fine essence of all *Dhatus*) or immunity is the important factor to maintain the healthy state. According to *Charaka* depletion of immunity is the prevalence of communicable diseases,<sup>[14]</sup> He also said that, if anyone have vitiated body humors, body tissues and depletion of immunity those are more susceptible to diseases. Later on, the *Ayurveda* also accepts the macro and microorganism as an *Aguntuja Hetu* (exogenous factor) that vitiate the body humors which affect body tissue and leads diseases if immunity is depleted. So, in *Ayurveda* it is strongly recommended that the transmission of diseases from one person to another depends upon the strength of immunity. Therefore, person with low immunity have more chances to get affected by different communicable diseases.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This Literary review is attempted to highlight the Preventive aspect of communicable diseases described in *Ayurveda* Classics. **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 *Janapadodhvansa*. The main cause of *Janapadodhvansa* is said to be *Adharma*<sup>[15]</sup> which can be taken as a sin to self (*Pragnyaparadha* (committing some mistakes with one's 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 *Janapadodhvansa* as *Maraka* and *Janamara* respectively. *Acharya Sushruta* has also introduced the concept of *Aupasargika Roga* as those diseases which 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).<sup>[16]</sup> 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.<sup>[17]</sup>

**Ayurvedic Management of Communicable Diseases:**

The *Ayurvedic* treatment encompasses the equilibrium of *dosha* (body humors), *Dhatua* (body tissue), *mala* (waste products), *Indriya* (sense organ) and *mana* (mind). Basically *Ayurvedic* systems of medicine followed three types of treatment procedure like *Yukti Vyapaashrya* (rational treatment), *Daivavyapaashrya* (spiritual treatment) and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* (psycho-somatic treatment). Here rational treatment is more applicable because it comprises *Shodhana* (*Ayurvedic* cleansing therapy that is used to remove toxins from the body) and *Shaman Chikitsa* (*Ayurvedic* medicines are used internally and externally to that reduce, suppress, and eliminate disease symptoms). *Charaka* describes three different modalities viz. *Apakarshana* (elimination therapy), *Samprapti Vighatan* (breaking the pathogenesis of diseases) and *Nidaana Parivarjan* (avoid the diseases causing and aggravating factors) in management of micro and macro organisms tend to produce communicable diseases.<sup>[18]</sup> Some other *Ayurvedic* procedures and protocols like *Dincharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Rasayan Chikitsa* (rejuvenation therapy) and *Achar Rasayan* (behavioral therapy) also help to prevent various infectious diseases.<sup>[19]</sup>

**Nidaana Parivarjana Chikitsa**

*Nidan Parivarjan* means to avoid the known causative factors of a particular disease.<sup>[20]</sup> It can be followed by lifestyle modification such as *Dincharya* (daily

regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and *Sadvritta* (rules of good conduct).

#### **Apakarshana Chikitsa**

*Apakarshana* is the process by which the unwanted components removed or eliminated from the body by using a various purificatory process like *Vaman* (therapeutic emesis), *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation), *Basti* (enemas), *Nasya* (nasal instillation) and *Rakta Mokshana* (bloodletting).<sup>[21]</sup> These processes may help to eliminate the toxins or unwanted components from the body.

#### **Samprapti Vighatan Chikitsa**

*Samprapti Vighatan* is the process by which the favorable environment for growth of organisms is destroyed and disease progress is stopped. Basically, *Ayurvedic* pharmacology depends on *Rasa* (taste), *Guna* (attribute/quality), *Virya* (potency), *Vipak* (metabolism), *Prabava* (specific action) and *Karma* (action) of particular drugs. According to *Charaka* those drugs having the taste of *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), *Kashaaya* (astringent) and properties of *Kshar* (alkali), *Ushna* (hot), that aids to decrease the unwanted substances or toxins or foreign bodies<sup>[22]</sup> so that body can produce more defensive activity against the organisms.

#### **Rasayan Chikitsa**

It would be very supportive from the attack of communicable and infectious diseases like COVID-19. *Aacharya Charak* also describes the rejuvenation therapy may be used as prophylactic for communicable disease with minimal precautions.<sup>[23]</sup>

#### **Vyayam**

Exercise is an essential component for promotion of health and curing the disease of a patient. It is the easiest way that keeps the person free from various physical and mental disorders and assistance to rejuvenation and longevity without any medication.<sup>[24]</sup>

#### **Pathya**

According to *Ayurveda*, the wholesome food is referred as the "Greatest Medicine." The wholesome food is the wellbeing of human growth but unwholesome food is

the root of all diseases.<sup>[25]</sup> The wholesome food nourishes the mind, body and soul and proper quantity provides strength, vigor, good complexion and nourishes the tissues.<sup>[26]</sup> The healthy food is based on age, lifestyle, climate, health conditions and body constitution.<sup>[27]</sup> Nutrition has a significant role in supporting the immune system.<sup>[28]</sup>

#### **Satvavajaya Chikitsa**

Basically, mind control therapy includes replacement of emotions, assurance and psycho-shock therapy. Mind control therapy is applied in varying forms in all kinds of diseases, but specially indicated in mental diseases.<sup>[29]</sup> According to *Ayurveda* the mind can control by correction of misconceptions, self-realization, adaptations of prophylactic measures, better inter-person relationships, change negative thoughts, high level of awareness etc.<sup>[30]</sup> Thus, this way mind control therapy can play a significant role in the maintenance of a pleasant state between the body and mind and can use as a prophylaxis of various disease.

### **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.<sup>19</sup> 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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