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Tenets of epidemiology (*Janpadodhwansa*) in Ayurveda

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Abstract

Ayurveda is the Wisdom of Life (*Ayu*- Life; *Veda*- Wisdom). The laurel of Ayurveda is that it's not a compendium with list of diseases and medications only. A vertical scan through the *Ayurvedic* literatures reveals that; there is an array of tenets endorsed very exquisitely regarding every aspect of life. The most basic principle of Ayurveda is *Samyata* i.e. balance. The balance among the constituents of body i.e. *Dosha*, *Dhatus* and *Malas*; and in the same fashion balance between the body and nature / universe is equally necessary. As per *Ayurveda* theory; our body and whole universe is a conflation of the same entities and influence each other too; unison required between the nature / universe and the self for proper functioning of the both. All natural disasters, calamities or epidemic, pandemic diseases are resultant of disturbance in that unison between inside and out. To accomplish that balance many fundamental principles are described in Ayurveda. As for as epidemiology is concerned, a separate chapter has been given for this other principles like concept of causation of diseases, classification of diseases, concept of communicable diseases and their transmission described in piecemeal should be compiled, analyzed and interpreted in the light of modern concept of epidemiology; this will be helpful in contemplating the breaking of chain.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, *Janpadodhwansa*, epidemiology, *Adharma*, *Pragyaparadha*

1. Introduction

Ayurveda is the most ancient medical science; expounded with full of compassion and for the service of mankind^[1]. The most basic principle of Ayurveda is *Samyata* i.e. balance^[2]. The balance among the constituents of body i.e. *Dosha*, *Dhatus* and *Malas*;^[3] and in the same fashion balance between the body and nature / universe is equally necessary. As per *Ayurveda* theory; our body and whole universe is a conflation of the same entities and influence each other too; unison required between the nature / universe and the self for proper functioning of the both^[4]. All natural disasters, calamities or epidemic, pandemic diseases are resultant of disturbance in that unison between inside and out. To accomplish that balance many fundamental principles are described in Ayurveda. These principles start with waking up in *Brahma Muhurta*^[5] (very early morning) and going to bed at night^[6]. Importance of *Aahar* (food), rules regarding taking meal, bath, exercise and hygiene practice, what kind of precautions we have to follow while going outside, what to shun and what to adopt, how to behave and many more rules about ethics etc. are endorsed under the topic *Traya – Upstambh (Aahar, Nidra, Brahmcharya)*, *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Achar Rasayan* etc. As far as epidemiology is concerned, a separate chapter has been given for this where in nutshell determinants, sign and symptoms, severity, spreading, treatment and prevention everything regarding epidemiology is described. Along with this chapter, other principles like concept of causation of diseases, classification of diseases, concept of communicable diseases and their transmission described in piecemeal should be compiled, analyzed and interpreted in the light of modern concept of epidemiology; this will be helpful in contemplating the breaking of chain. This is how we can accomplish the main objective of *Ayurveda* i.e. escorting the health of healthy individuals and recuperating the sick ones^[7].

2. Epidemiology

Definition of epidemiology is “the study of the distribution and determinants of health related states or events in specified populations, and the application of this study to control of

health problems.” There are too many theories in modern science to understand the concept of disease causation. Epidemiological triad is a simplified way to understand the chain of epidemiology. This is made up of host, agent and environment.

i. Host

This is an individual who suffers also called intrinsic factor. Many factors related with person determines how much the individual be affected from the particular disease like individual's exposure susceptibility, or response to a causative agent, age, race, sex, marital status, life style, daily regimen (eating habit, sleep etc.), chronic illness, addiction, socioeconomic status, nutritional and immunological status, genetic composition, psychological makeup etc.

ii. Agent

Agent is the term given to; which is responsible for the causation of disease. These may be viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites or other microbes in case of communicable or infectious diseases; whereas for non - infectious diseases physical or chemical factors are responsible.

iii. Environmental factor

This is an extrinsic factor; affects the agent either being hostile or friendly for that, and determines the opportunity for the exposure. Physical factors are geology, topography, climate etc. biological factors like arthropods that transmit the agent and socioeconomic factors such as income, crowding, sanitation and the availability of health services comes under this [8].

3. Description of Epidemics in Ayurveda

It is described under the name *Janpadodhwansa* [9].

i. Etiological factor

Adharma and *Pragyaparadha* are the root cause of *Janpadodhwansa* [10]. Due to *Pragyaparadha* (intellectual error) ones do *Adharma* (unrighteous acts) in both present and previous lives causing derangement / pollution of air etc. *inflicts* epidemics. Four determinants of epidemics described in Ayurveda are – *Vayu* (Air), *Udak* (Water), *Desh* (location) and *Kala* (seasons) [11].

How epidemics of one ailment affects a large no. of population in spite of dissimilarities of person's constitution, diet, body, strength, wholesomeness, *Sattwa* (psyche) and age etc. While explaining this *Acharya* told that even though there are dissimilarities but these determinants are common to all individuals lead to manifestation of diseases having same clinical features and annihilate the large community [12].

In these determinants air, water, time and place are indispensable for life in progressive order but in showing harmful effects their descending order is *Kala*, *Desh*, *Jala* and *Vayu*; because time factor can't be avoided, while effects of other factors can be minimized albeit with great efforts. These factors when get vitiated produces ill health [13].

These are few characteristics of vitiated / polluted air

1. Absence of characteristic features in conformity with the season;
2. Over moist, blowing calmly or violently;
3. Excessive dryness, cold, heat, roughness;

4. Excessive clash among each other;
5. Excessive cyclonic in nature;
6. Associated with unwholesome smell, gasses, sand, ashes and smoke etc.

Characteristics of vitiated / polluted water

1. Excessive abnormality in smell, color, taste and touch;
2. Excessive slimy;
3. Reduction in the no. of aquatic organisms
4. Water reservoir also has less amount of water, manifests unpleasantness, and has lost its qualities etc.

Characteristics of vitiated / polluted land

1. Abnormality in its natural color, smell, taste and touch;
2. Excessive stickiness;
3. Troubled by abundance of reptiles, wild animals and other harmful creatures;
4. Unusual fallen, dried, destroyed crops
5. Smoky winds;
6. Absence of religion, truth, modesty, conduct, behavior and other good qualities
7. Frequent occurrence of meteorites, thunderbolts and earthquake;
8. Fierce look and cries in nature etc.

Characteristics of vitiated polluted time /season

The unwholesome time manifests the characteristic features opposite, excessive or deficient of the normal conditions is stated as harmful for mankind [14].

ii. Fore - casts regarding epidemics

As we discussed earlier, we are originated from nature, it provides us all necessities required to be alive. Nature takes care of us like a mother. Acharyas also explained what kind of clue nature gives us if anything is going to happen bad. Like adverse positions or conditions of stars, planets, moon, sun, air, fire and also directions (environment) fore - casts the abnormality in the upcoming seasons. During the epidemics earth ceases to produce drugs / herbs with proper taste, potency, *Vipaka* and specific action of it. Unfortunately, lately we are exploiting nature. We are not that much connected with it. We have lost equilibrium also between nature and us. We are not able to listen to the cry of nature; hence we are paying for that also in the form of epidemics.

iii. Prior preparation for epidemics

Acharya ordered his disciples to collect and preserve the drugs before the befalling of destruction as well as loss of nutrients and earth loses its attributes of producing life - saving drugs.

They also assured it's not difficult to counteract the epidemic diseases, provided we listen to the calling of nature and the drugs are collected, preserved and administered properly [15].

iv. Prevention of epidemics

Having self - control (*Jitatmanam*), who follow religion (*Dharmik*), and who observes *Satvik* behaviour are key to remain unaffected with epidemics. Along with this taking care of nature is also important [16].

To prevent epidemics due to communicable diseases, the concept of *Aupsargic Rogas* of *Acharya Sushrut* should be followed. He has explained avoiding physical contact,

expired air, eating with others by sharing plates, sharing bed, clothes and cosmetics to check the spread of communicable diseases. This will be more vigorous when excessively and frequently these activities are performed ^[17].

4. Management

General treatment protocol for epidemics / *Janpadodhwansa*

Two categories of drugs are used

- Drugs which increases *Vyadhiksamatva* of body
- Drugs having *Vyadhi Hara* property

Above mentioned both kinds of drugs are used in following therapies

- Panchakarma* therapy – it purifies the body.
- Rasayan* therapy – has immunomodulation and rejuvenation properties, increases antioxidants in the body.
- Following *Sadvrita* - he advised to follow code of right conduct.
- He also advised to worship god.
- Achar Rasayan* (behavioural therapy) – to get optimum results of *Rasayan* therapy it is necessary. Without following *Achar Rasayan* adequate results of *Rasayan* therapy can't be achieved ^[18].
- Dhupan karma* (fumigation) – purifies environment and mind. In *Kashayap Samhita Rakshoghana Dhupana* is mentioned to prevent infections & *Dhupan Gana* to destroy *Bhutas* / microbes. Ex. *Guggulu, Nimb, Sarsapa* etc. ^[19]
- Vaad Chikitsa* (sound therapy) – in *Sushrut Samhita*, to nullify the potency of poisons it is advised to apply different kinds of medicated pastes (ex. *Suvarna, kuruvinda, Sariva* mixed with *Pitta* of *Kapil Varna* cow) on various types of instruments and produce sounds from them ^[20].

5. Conclusion

Ayurvedic principles are expounded thousands of years before but they are relevant in the present era too. The need of time is to explore and explain that tenets in modern terminologies to make it understandable and usable for everyone. Do research on that just to unravel the hidden meaning of the complex *Sutras*.

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