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Ayurvedic Understanding of COVID-19 Pandemic and its Management.

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COVID-19 pandemic is not absolutely unexpected and is of sudden occurrence. Nature has warned us several times in the form of calamities, disasters, and several diseases but we have never taken care of it. If we all would have taken care, we might have not been haunted by this horrible pandemic. Ayurveda describes causes behind the epidemics/pandemics and measures to get rid of them. *Adharma* (anti nature and unethical behaviour) is mentioned as the cause of such problems which again is resulted due to *prajñāparādha* (volitional transgression). *Prajñāparādha* is an inappropriate application of intelligence or decisive faculty. *Adharma* then results in *abhiśāpa* (curse) and *abhicāra* (tantric practices or black magic). *Abhicāra* may be understood as malicious practices to produce harmful chemical, biological or other types of weapons. Because of *Adharma*, the support from *devatās* (pro-human celestial or divine forces) is lost, which results in environmental disturbances. (*Caraka samhitā, vimānasthāna* 3/20). The cosmic immunity is disturbed, as a result anti-human forces and creatures get opportunity to produce natural calamities such as epidemics (*Janpadoddhvamsa*). In *Caraka Samhitā* the description is limited to a *janapda* (nation) but when same phenomenon happens globally then it is pandemic which may be named as *jagaduddhvamsa* in Sanskrit. It is mentioned that improper positioning of *nakṣatra* (stars), *graha* (astrological planets), *Candra* (moon) and *Sūrya* (sun); inappropriate changes in quality and movement of wind and abnormal qualities in the seasons are indicators of upcoming epidemic or pandemic (*Caraka samhitā, vimāna Sthāna* 3/4). *Suśruta samhitā*

adds the role of *kṛtyā*, *abhiśāpa*, *rakṣaḥkrodha*. (*Su. sū. 6/19*). *Abhiśāpa* is displeasure of divine forces as discussed earlier which results in loss of support of celestial forces. Usually, *devatās* or deities are natural forces that support us but do not take back anything like sun, water, wind, and earth. These natural forces favor us but if we indulge in *adharma* then their favour is withdrawn. The creatures of the whole universe may be classified into three categories:

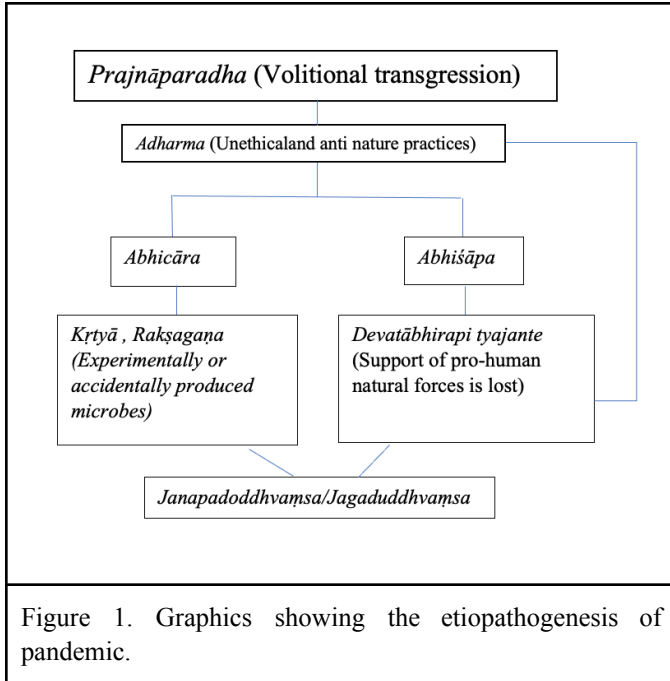
1. Human beings – These are in the center of the universe. According to *Mahābhārata*, human beings are the best creatures of the universe. (*Mahābhārata śāntiparva* 299/20)
2. *Devatās*, *ṛṣis* – These are pro-human beings that are creatures or forces, favorable to human beings.
3. *Rakṣaḥ*, *rākṣasa*, *asuras*, *piśācas* – These are creatures or forces that are not favorable to human beings. All the harmful bacteria, viruses, etc. fall in this category.

In this way human beings, pro-humans and anti-humans are the creatures in which the whole world can be classified.

On the basis of commentaries and interpretations from Sanskrit dictionaries *kṛtyā* and *rakṣaḥ* may be understood as accidental or experimental production of malefic creatures (microbes) such as virus in the laboratory. (*Dalhaṇa's* commentary on *su. sū. 6/19*).

Clinical presentation of covid-19 is very similar to that what is described in *Suśruta samhitā* which includes *kāsa* (cough), *śvāsa* (breathlessness), *vamathu* (vomiting), *pratiśyāya* (rhinitis), *śiroruk* (headache) and *jvara* (fever).

Etiopathogenesis of pandemic:



Why Ayurveda?

Though conventional medicine is said to be highly advanced but is not sufficient enough to manage this pandemic alone. Ayurveda being the first knowledge system; which has described epidemics several millennia back can act effectively against the disease. It describes the fundamental etiopathogenesis, not the intermediate one. In Ayurveda, the virus is not the fundamental factor, but it is the intermediate one. In this scenario fundamental etiopathogenesis is something different. Ayurveda having its own holistic approach tends to provide the ultimate solution above temporary or intermediate one. We have faced dozens of covid like diseases in the past which we dealt with using multiple approaches, but again new types of viruses emerge which require better and faster solutions. If we try to kill an organism using certain measures, newer organisms that develop are already immune to those measures, as a result we are not able to destroy them. Ayurvedic approach is not microbe oriented but is host oriented; thus it can be more effective to any kind of novel diseases. According to Sir Louis Pasteur, who is known as the father of microbiology, “Germ is not important, body is important.”

Origin of word virus

Word virus originated from the Sanskrit word *viṣa*. In old Persian/Avestan language it is *vīša*, in Greek it is *iōç* and in Latin it became *vīrus*, from that *virulentu* came which means poisonous. So, the word virus which means poisonous has its origin in *viṣa*. The word corona came from its appearance as it looks like a solar corona under electron microscope. Also, corona means crown. In this way the term coronavirus was coined by researchers in 1968. *Cakrapāṇi* in his commentary on *Ca. śā.1/121* mentions ‘*saviṣakrimi*’ to explain the word ‘*bhūta*’. ‘*Saviṣakrimi*’ or simply ‘*viṣakrimi*’ may be an appropriate equivalent word for virus.

How to predict an upcoming epidemic or a pandemic?

In our classics, two ways are described to predict such situations to manage them timely, viz. :

1. Malefic astrological situations which are described in our classics.
2. Inauspicious signs (omens) seen in the surroundings, such as in bed, vehicles, household equipment etc. (*su. sū. 6/19*)

Many of us may consider the above things as illogical but they are scientific. These signs which are considered occult, are actual science which should be explored by the Ayurveda people.

Possible nomenclature of covid-19 in Ayurveda:

Caraka Saṃhitā does not emphasize upon nomenclature of a disease. It mentions that one should not be interested in naming the disease but curing it. However, on the basis of following references, it may be named as ‘*āgantuja vātakapholbaṇa sānnipātika (viṣama) jvara*’ in Ayurveda.

Kecit bhūtābhiṣaṅgottham bruvate viṣamajvaram (su.ut. 39)
prāyaśaḥ sannipātena drṣṭaḥ pañcavidhojvaraḥ (ca. ci. 3/74)
abhicārābhisāpābhyāmsiddhānām yaḥ pravartate sannipātajvaro ghoraḥ sa vijñeyaḥ suduḥsahaḥ (ca. ci. 3/118-119)
śāpābhicārādbhūtānāmabhiṣaṅgācca yo jvaraḥ daivavyapāśrayaṃ tatra sarvamauśadhamiṣyate (ca. ci. 3/ 317-318)

Management:

Planning a management of any novel disease on the basis of conventional etiopathogenesis is not an appropriate approach. When a solution is needed through Ayurveda, thinking and planning must be according to Ayurveda, because the approaches in every system are different. Thinking as per conventional approach will not be able to provide an Ayurvedic solution. For example, hay fever, asthma, urticaria and eczema are basically having allergy as a common factor and antiallergic treatments help in treating all of them in conventional medicine. However, it is not the same in Ayurveda. *Śvāsakuṭhāra rasa* is useful in treating asthma (*śvāsa*), but not in urticaria and eczema. Similarly, *mañjiṣṭhādi kvātha* helps in treating eczema but not in asthma. Therefore, simply understanding a novel pathological condition according to its conventional theories is not helpful in designing an ayurvedic management. Ayurvedic approach is holistic, designed to have *sāmya* (equilibrium/ harmony) at every level. For human beings *sāmya* is to be established at two levels:

1. Internal *sāmya* – equilibrium in one's own physical and mental components.
2. External *sāmya* – equilibrium in immediate surroundings like family, friends, society and country and remote surroundings such as world and universe.

This is the responsibility of human beings as they are considered the best among all the creatures of the universe (*Mahābhārata śāntiparva 299/20*).

Practically the management can be divided in two parts:

1. **Āgatabādhācikitsā (treatment of the existing problem)**– Ayurveda is not only about treating diseases by prescription of medicines. This is not only about material based treatment (*yuktivyapāśraya chikitsa*) but also includes non-material measures in the form of *daivavyapāśraya* (supernatural means) and *sattvāvajaya* (pro-psyched measures).

Suśruta saṃhitā recommends *sthānaparityāga* (shifting to unaffected areas), *śāntikarma* (rituals for everything evil), *prāyaścitta* (atonement), *maṅgala* (auspicious activity), *japa* (chanting), *homa* (Fire rituals), *upahāra* (offerings), *ijyā* (oblation, worship), *añjali* (to respect others by joining the hands), *namaskāra* (paying honor to elders), *tapa* (austerity), *dayā* (compassion to all creatures), *dāna* (altruism), *dīkṣā* (devotion or taking

initiation in spiritual practice), following the words of *devatā brāhmaṇa* and *guru*.

Caraka saṃhitā mentions, “*daivavyapāśrayam tatra sarvamauśadhamiṣyate*” (*Ca. ci. 3/318*) which means that *daivavyapāśraya* is wholesome treatment in such conditions. These may be practiced at community or individual level. This method helps in promoting *sattva* and minimizing the ill effects of evil forces.

As for material based treatment (*yuktivyapāśraya chikitsā*) is concerned, one may proceed in following manner:

In mild cases one may start with,

- *Jvaraghna kvātha* – decoction of any *jvaraghna* combination .
- *Yavāgu* (medicated) as food
- *Srta jala* – boiled water in which aromatic drugs like *tulasī* can be added.
- *Yavāni* steam inhalation.

In moderate cases following may be administered,

- *Jvaraghna kvātha*
- *Yavāgu*
- *Srta jala*
- *Yavāni* steam inhalation
- *Tribhuvanakūrtirasa*
- *Sudarśana cūrṇa*

In severe cases following may be used,

- *Jvaraghna kvātha*
- *Yavāgu*
- *Srta jala*
- *Yavāni* steam inhalation
- *Tribhuvanakūrtirasa*
- *Sudarśana cūrṇa*
- *Śvāsakāsacintāmaṇi rasa*
- *Jayamaṅgala rasa*

In our institute we practice all measures inclusive of *daivavyapāśraya*, *yuktivyapāśraya* and *sattvāvajaya*. We witnessed significant outcomes of the measures.

Ānāgatabādhāpratiṣedha (Prevention) –

1. ***Svasthanvṛtta*** – It includes the practices to be adopted and to be avoided. There are two measures recommended in morning routines which are worth mentioning in the present context. Regular practice of *nasya* (administration of oils in nostrils) and *ganḍūṣa* (keeping oily material in mouth) are

helpful in inhibiting the entry of pathogens and allergens.

2. *Sadvṛtta* - It includes the ideal behavior to maintain harmony at personal, social, and universal level. These are to antagonize the basic causative factor i.e., *adharmā*.
3. *Rasāyana*- These substances and therapies are meant to enhance the quality of body components, maintaining the equilibrium of *doṣas*, and maintenance of patency of *srotas*. Through these actions they make the body immune to any kind of diseases including the infectious one. However, one cannot get the desired effect of *rasāyanas* without cleansing of body and mind. (*Ca.ci.1-4/36-38*). Thus, it will be an amalgamated effect of all the measures.

Need of holism of Ayurveda in absolute management of covid-19

Holism is a core theme of Ayurveda and Indian philosophies. Usually the word 'Holism' in the context of medicine is used to express a concept of the entirety of the complex of soul, mind and body, but the Ayurvedic approach of holism is different. It is not limited to the above three principles but extends up to the universe. As body, mind and spirit, the components in an individual living being, are inseparable, all the living beings are interrelated, composing life in general as an indivisible phenomenon in the universe. Consequently, if a small fraction of existence is perturbed, the rest of the existence will also suffer. If there is a headache, the heart is not happy. This shows that all the organs are inseparable, and they are linked with each other. Similarly, all entities whether living, or nonliving are interrelated with subtle links which cannot be perceived through the usual senses.

In *Yajurveda* there is mantra: *Yasmintsarvāni bhūtānyātmaivābhūdvi jānataḥ Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvamamupaśyataḥ* (*Yajurveda 40.7*). 'Those, who see all beings as themselves, do not feel infatuation or anguish, for they experience oneness with all these beings.'

This theory can also be taken as *Ekātma vāda*- that one soul is in every living being. All living entities have one common conscious principle. It is just the reflection which gives an impression of multiple souls, but soul is one which is common in every living being.

Newton's third law of motion mentions that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the Vedic law of action (*karma*), often referred to as the natural law of cause and effect, every action brings about equal reaction

of similar qualities. For example, fruits are always according to their seeds. In daily life, this subtle law is said to govern all our actions and their results, even though we might not be conscious about these connections. If this law is to be used for personal welfare and happiness, a simple practical guideline expounded in many Vedic texts that should be followed: *ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṃ na samācāret* (*Padmapurāṇa sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa 19/357-358*) 'The behavior of others, which one does not like to be affected of, one should not apply on others.' This also serves as an ethical principle.

Therefore, if one wants to live, then he/she should let others live.

If unrest is created among other living beings, that will return. For example, if animals are killed, nature creates the means of killing the killers (the human beings). Advents of mad cow disease, swine flu and bird flu are not mere coincidence. This can be the result of the above law of nature. Pain wave theory given by Einstein is worth mentioning here. From this same principle, principle of *Ahimsā* (non-hurting) is originated which is recommended by all classics in relation to *rasāyana* measures.

CONCLUSION

By review of Ayurvedic Classical literature, clinical observations on incidences, prevalence, peoples' reactions, claims and discussion with scientists it can be concluded that Ayurveda helps in understanding covid-19 clearly and also its absolute management. Promotion of Ayurvedic principles of *svasthavṛtta*, *sadvṛtta*, learning to survive using the minimum available resources, protecting nature by avoiding misuse of its valuable gifts, promotion of holistic approach, promotion of *rasāyana*, promotion of periodic *śodhana* is needed to prevent, control and treat the covid-19 and also to manage similar happenings in future.

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