

Healthy Living: Ayurvedic Approaches to Prevention and Wellness

Akhilesh Kumar Verma

Registrar, Ayurvedic Evam Unani, Tibbi Chikitsa Paddhati Board, UP, Lucknow.

Abstract

Ayurveda, an ancient life science, has long been hailed as an effective tool in healthcare, emphasizing prevention over cure. Within its treatises, Ayurveda introduces unique concepts like Janapadodhwamsa, which denotes the destruction or annihilation of communities. This concept is known by different names across various texts: Acharya Charaka termed it Janapadodhwamsa, Acharya Sushruta referred to it as Maraka, and Acharya Bhela called it Janamaar. Central to this concept are four factors essential for all living beings: Vayu (air), Jala (water), Desha (land), and Kaala (season). Among these, Kaala (season) holds significant importance and any abnormal alteration in these factors can greatly impact individuals, communities, or environments. Janapadodhwamsa is attributed to the vitiation of these common factors, with Adharma (immorality) cited as its primary cause, rooted in Pragyaparadha (delinquency of wisdom).

Recognizing the significance of Janapadodhwamsa, Ayurvedic texts, particularly CharakaSamhita, devote entire chapters to delineating its onset, causes, distinct features, and management. These texts elaborate on its causative agents and prescribe methods of prevention. To address Janapadodhwamsa, Ayurveda recommends the utilization of Rasayana therapy, Panchkarma procedures, SadvritPaalan (observance of righteous conduct), and Aachara Rasayana (behavioral therapy) as part of its management strategy.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Janapadodhwamsa, immunity, vyadhikshamatwa, prevention, wellness

INTRODUCTION

widespread suffering and loss of life can indeed be correlated with the concept of Janapadodhwamsa in Ayurveda. While traditionally, Janapadodhwamsa has been associated with epidemics, its relevance extends to encompass environmental pollution and natural disasters as well. The features associated with Janapadodhwamsa often align more closely with characteristics of natural calamities.

Ayurveda defines health as a state of equilibrium among Dosha, Dhatu, Mala, and Agni, along with the well-being of the mind, sense organs, and soul. Disease, on the other hand, arises from their disequilibrium or abnormal state. Health is influenced by various factors both within the individual and externally within the society they inhabit. Environmental changes significantly impact an individual's health, and the lack of environmental hygiene can lead to the widespread manifestation of diseases.

Statistics from organizations like the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction highlight the immense toll natural disasters have taken on human lives and well-being. Similarly, the State of Global Air reports indicate the staggering impact of air pollution on global mortality rates, with a significant portion of deaths occurring in India due to various ailments linked to long-term exposure to polluted air.

Ayurveda attributes disease causation to factors such as Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga (misuse of senses), Prajnaparadha (misuse of intellect), and Kala/Parinama (seasonal variation). Diseases are classified as Nija (endogenous) and Agantuja (exogenous), which parallel non-communicable and communicable diseases, respectively. Agantuja Vyadhi, or diseases arising from external factors, can be likened to Janapadodhwamsa.

Ayurveda offers treatment principles for both Nija and Agantuja Vyadhi, including those related to Janapadodhwamsa, which encompass the management of natural calamities, epidemics, and pandemic diseases. The concept of Janapadodhwamsa encompasses diseases with similar signs and symptoms affecting numerous individuals within a specific geographical area, often resulting in the destruction of lives and the affected region itself.

Origin Of Janapadodhwamsa

Acharya Charaka identifies the foremost reason for Janapadodhwamsa as Adharma, which signifies immorality or lack of righteousness among people. Adharma encompasses unethical and non-harmonious practices within communities and individuals. The root cause of Adharma is attributed to Pragyaparadha, which refers to a delinquency of wisdom.

Pragyaparadha, literally meaning the misdemeanor of intellect, arises from a derangement of Dhee (intellect), Dhriti (patience), and Smriti (memory). When these faculties are disturbed, they lead to inauspicious actions, causing the vitiation of all Doshas (bioenergies) according to Ayurveda. Pragyaparadha is considered a primary cause not only for physical diseases but also for mental and exogenous diseases.

In addition to Pragyaparadha, Acharya Charaka also associates Lobha (greed) as a factor contributing to Adharma. Furthermore, Bhutasangha (contact with organisms) leading to Abhishapa (curse) is described as another manifestation of Adharma. Greed, along with affronting and anger, is listed as etiological factors for the occurrence of major diseases.

Acharya Sushruta mentions that the reason behind Maraka, or destruction, can be attributed to Adrishta, which denotes invisible or idiopathic causes. Dalhana, a commentator on Sushruta Samhita, explains that such causes of Maraka can stem from the immorality prevalent within the population of a particular area. Sometimes, variations in seasons (RituVyapad) may also occur due to reasons like curses or resentment from supernatural beings (Rakshakrodha).

Therefore, the concept of Janapadodhwamsa encompasses not only physical epidemics but also moral and environmental factors that contribute to widespread destruction and suffering within communities. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of righteousness and wisdom in maintaining individual and collective well-being.

Features Of Janapadodhwamsa,

As described in Ayurvedic texts, encompass various aspects related to the destruction or annihilation of communities. These features highlight the multifaceted nature of Janapadodhwamsa and its impact on society and the environment. Here are some key features:

Epidemics and Natural Disasters: Janapadodhwamsa often manifests through epidemics and natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences. These calamities lead to widespread suffering, loss of life, and disruption of societal structures.

Environmental Pollution: Ayurveda recognizes the significance of environmental factors in causing Janapadodhwamsa. Pollution of air, water, and land due to human activities can contribute to the deterioration of public health and the environment, leading to the decline of communities.

Adharma (Immorality): Adharma, or immorality, is considered a fundamental cause of Janapadodhwamsa. Unethical practices, disregard for moral principles, and disharmony within communities contribute to the destabilization and eventual destruction of society.

Pragyaparadha (Delinquency of Wisdom): Pragyaparadha, characterized by a derangement of intellect, patience, and memory, is identified as a root cause of Adharma and subsequently, Janapadodhwamsa. Ignorance, arrogance, and neglect of spiritual and ethical values can lead to societal downfall.

Greed and Anger: The texts mention greed (Lobha) and anger (Kopa) as contributing factors to Adharma and the onset of Janapadodhwamsa. These negative emotions fuel conflict, exploitation, and discord within communities, leading to their deterioration.

Seasonal Variations: Janapadodhwamsa acknowledges the influence of seasonal variations (RituVyapad) on the health and well-being of communities. Changes in climate patterns, coupled with environmental degradation, can exacerbate the vulnerability of populations to diseases and disasters.

Disease Manifestations: Janapadodhwamsa encompasses diseases that affect large populations within specific geographical areas. These diseases may exhibit similar signs and symptoms, indicating their widespread impact on public health and societal stability.

Behavioral and Spiritual Wellness: Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of behavioral therapy (Aachara Rasayana) and adherence to righteous conduct (SadvritPaalan) in mitigating the effects of Janapadodhwamsa. Cultivating virtues such as compassion, honesty, and self-discipline is essential for promoting individual and collective well-being.

Overall, Janapadodhwamsa reflects the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and moral factors in shaping the health and resilience of communities. By addressing the underlying causes of Adharma and promoting harmony with nature and ethical living, Ayurveda offers insights into preventing and managing Janapadodhwamsa for the greater good of humanity.

Natural disaster

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources". Disaster to be a result of the combination of many factors such as the exposure to hazards, the conditions of vulnerability that are present, and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences. Disaster impacts may include loss of life, injuries, disease and other negative effects on human physical, mental and social well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of services, social

and economic disruption and environmental degradation. Causes of disaster has been divided into two, Natural and manmade.

General treatment of janapadodhwamsa

One does not suffer from these diseases even if all 4 vitiated factors are at work if people are assured with proper medicaments which are already collected and processed. Use of Panchakarma, proper administration of Rasayana therapies is advised in the effective management of Janapadodhwamsa (communicable diseases). The herbs used for the medicine preparation should be collected prior to the onset on diseases in that particular area. Along with this Satyabhuta (Truthfulness), Bhoote Daya (compassion for living beings), Dana (charity), Bali (scarifies), Devatarchana (prayer to the gods), Sadvritta Anuvritti (good deeds), protection of the self by Mantra etc are very effective, Shivanaamupsevnam (devotion towards God), “Sevanambrahmcharyasyatathevbhramchaarinaam” service to those observing brahmacharya (celibacy) and following it, Samkatha Dharmshastranam (discussion on religious scriptures), Samkatha Maharishinaam (befriending great sages), Jeetatmananam (who have self control), Dharmika (who follow religion), who are Satvika and who are learned people. These therapies, which when adopted during spread of communicable diseases (Janapadodhwamsa), can easily save the lives of individuals provided the death of the individuals is not pre-determined (Yesham Na Mrityu Saamnyamiti). In the situation of Maraka, Acharya Sushruta has also suggested to utilise medicines that has been collected before the onset of diseases and to use pure water.

DHOOPANA KARMA (FUMIGATION)

In ancient time and even today Yagya are done for the welfare of the mass population as it resulted in mass hygiene. It is also mentioned in Janapadodhwamsa in Ayurvedic literatures. In Kashyap Samhita, Raksoghana Dhupana is mentioned for protection from infections and Gana Dhupana for all diseases originating from Bhuta (microbes). In Charaka and Sushruta Samhita different type of Dravyas i.e. drugs are mentioned in different diseases that are used for Dhoopana Karma. Like, Guggulu (Commiphora mukul), Nimba (Azadirachta indica), Vacha (Acorus Calamus), Kutha (Saussurea lappa), Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Sarsapa (Brassica campestris), Yava (Hordeum vulgare) with Ghrita. In Sushruta Samhita, Rakshoghna Dravya are mentioned like Sarsapa, Nimba, Lavana with Ghrita fumigation with them to be done twice a day for 10 days. Microbes are destroyed by Raksoghana drugs.

VAAD CHIKITSA (SOUND THERAPY)

Acharya Sushruta said that if food is contaminated with poison, then different symptoms arise due to that poison and to treat them apply different pastes on various types of instruments and produce sound from them.

तारः सुतारः ससुरे नरगोपः सवैश्रतल्लुयः कुरुविन्दभागः ॥

िपिने युक्तः किपलानवयने वाद्यप्रलपे िविहतः प्रस्तः ।

वाद्यस्य बर्दने िहया िनतनार्विषा िणघोराण्यपया िनसिनता । च. िव. 3/13-14

Equal parts of each of these contents Taar (Silver), Sutaar (Mercury), Suvarna (Gold), Saariva and Kuruvind (A kind of Precious stone or Mustai. cyperus) total of above four dravya, these should be mixed with Pitta of cow of Kapila Varna (color). This paste should be applied on sound producing instruments. As from the sound of instruments GhorVisha will be destroyed.

NASYA

Ayurveda recommends the application of medicated oils such as anuTaila, shadbindutaila in the nostrils. This may protect the respiratory tract from pathogen entry. This procedure known as nasya is well described in Ayurveda. Application of pure sesame oil was found to be effective for the treatment of dry nasal mucosa. Similar to Kavala and mouth Gandusha, nasal oil application possibly forms a biofilm and can help as a barrier to the entry of the virus particles.

OTHER TREATMENTS

Steam inhalation and hot fomentation (with aromatic oils such as menthol) provide satisfactory clinical relief in nasal and throat congestion, bronchoconstriction, headache, and sinusitis. Its role in improving nasal conditioning, improving nasal mucus velocity, and reducing congestion and inflammation has been reported in several clinical studies. Ayurveda advocates several non-pharmacological measures that are critical to overall health, including diet, sleep, mental relaxation, lifestyle behavior, and Yoga. Several studies have endorsed the role of pranayama (Yoga breathing techniques), asanas(postures), and yogic kriyaprocedures in improving lung health and exercise tolerance. The recommended daily diet includes fresh hot soups of vegetables (radish, trigonella leaves, drum stick vegetable pods) and pulses (lentils, green gram/mung beans, chickpeas) seasoned with spices such as Mulaka (Zingiberofficinale), Lahsun (Allium sativum), Ajwaain (Cuminumcyminum), and Sharshapa (Brassica nigra).

DISCUSSION

In order to conclude one who desires for healthy and happy life, one has to follow regular preventive principle told in RitucharyaAdhyaya mentioned in Ayurveda for the prevention of diseases. Acharya Charaka has divided the etiological factors into two different categories i.eNiyataHetuand AniyataHetu. The NiyataHetu are factors that affect commonly to all the individuals in a particular-community and include the harmful effects of sun, moon, stars, and planets such as floods, cyclones, landslides, earthquakes, and tsunami. AniyataHetuare factors that include Pragyaparadha(terrorism, War etc.), Shastra Prabhavaja (nuclear weapons, advanced weapons like bio-weapons), Abhisyangaja (effects of pathogens, evil forces and unhygienic condition) and Abhishapaja (curse). These factors may affect the entire community and cause communicable disease known as JanapadodhvamsaRogas. [25] Charaka describes three different methods in management of conditions tend to produce disease i.e Apakarshana, Prakriti Vighata and Nidaana Parivarjana. [26] Acharya Sushruta defined Nidaana Parivarjana Chikitsa as:“Samkshepatah Kriyayogo Nidana Parivarjanam.”Avoiding the causative factors, which are responsible for causation of disease, it is the primary step to prevent pathogenesis. As told earlier to prevent Janapadodhvamsa, the usage of Rasayana therapy, Panchkarma procedures, SadvritPalan (code of right conducts) and AacharaRasayanai.ebehavioural therapy should be used.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda, the ancient system of healthcare, is founded upon the principle of Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam, which emphasizes the maintenance of health in a healthy individual. This fundamental objective underscores the importance of prevention as the most effective strategy for averting Aupsargik Vyadhi, or communicable diseases, which are encompassed within the concept of Janapadodhwamsa. Janapadodhwamsa, as described in Ayurvedic texts, represents the devastation or annihilation of communities due to various factors, including epidemics and natural disasters. To address and prevent

such calamities, Ayurveda prescribes a range of remedies and practices, including Rasayana therapy, Panchkarma procedures, Sadvrit Palan (observance of right conduct), and Aachara Rasayana (behavioral therapy). Additionally, the performance of Homa (Yagya), a sacred fire ritual, is advocated as a preventive measure.

The adoption of Ayurvedic principles of dietetics and lifestyle, along with the utilization of Panchakarma therapies and Rasayana treatments, holds promise in effectively preventing and managing situations such as disease outbreaks. These traditional interventions not only address physical health but also promote mental and spiritual well-being, fostering holistic health and resilience.

Furthermore, while Ayurvedic principles offer valuable insights into preventive and curative healthcare practices, further research studies are warranted to validate and refine the application of Ayurvedic management during epidemic and pandemic conditions. By integrating modern scientific methodologies with traditional knowledge systems, Ayurveda can evolve as a robust and evidence-based approach to healthcare delivery in the face of emerging health challenges.

The concept of Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam underscores the proactive nature of Ayurveda, which seeks to empower individuals to take charge of their health and well-being through conscious lifestyle choices and preventive measures. By prioritizing health promotion and disease prevention, Ayurveda not only alleviates suffering but also fosters a culture of wellness and vitality in society.

In conclusion, Ayurveda's emphasis on preventive healthcare aligns with the overarching goal of safeguarding individual and community health. Through the integration of traditional wisdom and modern scientific inquiry, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive approach to disease prevention and management, thereby enhancing the resilience of individuals and communities in the face of epidemic and pandemic conditions. Continued research and collaboration are essential to further refine and validate Ayurvedic interventions, paving the way for a healthier and more sustainable future for all.

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