



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 12, Issue, 05, pp.11526-11528, May, 2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.38679.05.2020>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFECTIOUS DISEASES CAN BE PREVENTED BY PERSONAL EFFORTS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th February, 2020
Received in revised form
24th March, 2020
Accepted 28th April, 2020
Published online 30th May, 2020

Key Words:

Infectious Diseases,
Hygiene, Prevention,
Treatment Procedures.

ABSTRACT

Infectious diseases are not new for the human society. A good number of diseases caused havoc among the people in the past. Many lives were lost due to outbreak of some suddenly starting and quick spreading diseases. As per the evidence available it is seemed that, such type of diseases were considered as curse of the Gods and attack of some evil spirits. Many examples can be cited from the ancient classics of using chanting of some specific verses, offering of some prescribed offers to the lords of the diseases in prescribed methods. For treatment of Rabies (Alarka Bisha) and some psychiatric illness also some such methods are mentioned. The Ayurvedic classics classify the treatment procedures into 3 groups viz. divine therapy (daivavyapashraya), medicine (yuktivyapashraya) and psychotherapy (satwavajaya). In case of the infectious diseases divine therapy and medicine both are advised. Ayurveda gives the guidelines for prevention of the infectious diseases. Personal hygiene, social hygiene, food habits, maintenance of mental peace etc. are the salient features of the ways of prevention of the infectious diseases. Even some selective drugs are advised to use in specific time for prevention of certain infectious diseases. Study, knowledge and implementation of the Ayurvedic methods may be proved to be more beneficial for the human society for prevention of infectious diseases.

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Citation: Dr. Dilip Kumar Goswami. 2020. "Infectious diseases can be prevented by personal efforts", *International Journal of Current Research*, 12, (05), 11526-11528.

INTRODUCTION

Infectious diseases can be considered as the major concern of the human society in present days. Previously, before discovery of the microbes (bacteria, virus, fungi etc.), underlying causes of some diseases were not known and perhaps these diseases were considered as due to sinful acts (PAPAKARMA) committed either in the present life or in the previous life. Leprosy (KUSTHA), Tuberculosis (YAKSHMA) etc. are some such examples. Cure in such diseases was almost impossible as there was no availability of specific drugs to counteract against the causative agents. But, even after discovery of the potent antibiotics it is seen that, in most of the conditions the medical specialists have to face difficult situation due to drug resistance acquired by the causative agents. Hence more emphasis is given on prevention. Now different schemes are being introduced and implemented in Govt. as well as private sectors to prevent the infectious diseases by controlling the growth and multiplication of the causative organisms and preventing the chance of invasion by them into the host body.

The ancient Ayurvedic classics like Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha / Ashtanga Hridaya describe a good number of conducts for the individuals that have markable role in prevention of the infectious diseases. The basic aim of practicing these good conducts can be considered as (1) to increase physical and mental strength which are the source of resistance and (2) to keep oneself away from the causes of disease. Study and analysis of the concept of the Ayurvedic scholars on the methods to prevent the Infectious diseases can be considered as the need of the hour even now, in the era of science.

Aim of the study: This is a literary study to explore the concepts of the Ayurvedic scholars in relation to prevention of the infectious diseases.

METHOD OF STUDY

The study is conducted by consulting the Ayurvedic literatures viz. Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha and Ashtanga Hridaya at Govt. Ayurvedic College, Guwahati, Assam, India library. From the mentioned literatures some important points that can help to prevent infectious diseases are cited.

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OBSERVATION AND RESULT

The study of the literatures revealed the following facts that have important role as tool of prevention of the infectious diseases

The concept of infectious diseases: A group of diseases are considered as “infectious diseases” (Sangkramaka roga) and the method of their spread are also mentioned. It is said that, some types of skin diseases (Kustha), fevers (Jwara), a group of emaciating diseases (Sosha) and some eye diseases (Netrabhisyananda) etc. may spread from one person to another by sexual act (Prasanga), direct contact like touch (Gatrasangsparsha), breath (Nihswasa), sharing of food (Sahabhajana), sharing of bed, seat, cloth, garland, paste etc. (Sahasayya, saha asana, saha bastra, saha malya, saha anulepana etc.) (1). There are some conditions (specially some types of skin diseases) described in the Ayurvedic classics that are always caused by worms (Krimi) some of which are visible and some are invisible (2).

Preventive measures: A number of good conducts to be followed by an individual that can give protection against the infectious diseases are mentioned in short without explanation in different references. Some examples are cited here.

(1) Individual resistance is the key factor for prevention of the infectious diseases. Hence effort should be given to increase the physical and mental power (resistance). For the purpose the below mentioned methods are advised to adopt –

For increase of mental power: Faith and respect to the Gods, seniors, teachers and other respectable personalities, some selected animals (like cow), speaking the truth and beneficial things only, avoidance of thinking about other's loss and harm, greed, jealousy etc. These come under “behavioural rejuvenation” (Achara Rasayana) (3).

For increase of physical power: For the purpose to acquire physical power to resist the diseases due to external factors (infectious diseases) a number of measures are advised

- Always use good food that are choosed, collected, preserved, composed, prepared and served in appropriate method (4). Identify the impurity /contamination of the food items (5).
- Drink pure and healthy water only (6). Boiled water is the best drinking water (7). Learn to identify the impure/contaminated water and purify it (8).
- Do appropriate exercise daily (9).
- Follow the daily regimen that guides the daily activities of an individual (Dinacharyya) like leaving bed early in the morning, excretion of the excreta, taking bath, prayer, going out for daily work etc. (10).
- Follow the night regimen which is the guide for the conducts of the individuals during the night (Ratricharyya) like cleaning of the feet, hands etc. prayer, taking dinner, sleep etc. (11).
- Follow the seasonal regimen which will help to maintain the homoeostasis of the anatomical and physiological constituents of the individual (Ritucharyya)(12).

Prevent spread of disease

- Never spit in public place, always cover the mouth and nostrils at the time of yawning, sneezing and coughing (13).

- Never excrete in public place (14).
- Learn the character of polluted air and the methods of it's purification (15).
- Never indulge in sexual act with a female who is not own wife (16).
- Always follow the rules of disciplined and controlled sex. Consider it as a holy act that should be performed with control and discipline (17).

Drugs can be used to increase individual resistance

- Give Gold powder with honey orally just after childbirth (Swarnaprasana)(18).
- Take Milk and Ghee always to increase resistance (19).

DISCUSSION

The observations of the present study reveals that, there are praisable advice in the Ayurvedic classics that can guide the people to acquire resistance against the infectious diseases and also can get knowledge to prevent the spread of such diseases.

Human body and mind are closely related. A weak body cannot bear a strong and healthy mind. Similarly a weak minded person cannot get a strong body. Anxiety, fear, anger etc. produce imbalance in the functions of the body humors resulting in low resistance and vulnerability towards diseases caused by external factors (infectious diseases). There is a natural cycle of change of the environment during the change of time during the day, night and season the determinants of which are the Sun (Suryya), Air (Vayu) and Moon (Soma-Chandrama). These three factors regulate the temperature and speed and character of air and rainfall. Simultaneously there is change in the human body (quality and quantity of the three basic constituents of the body viz. Vata, Pitta and Kafa). This natural change can lead to manifestation of diseases causing weakness and diminished resistance.

Hence it is necessary to remain disease free for an individual. So, the rules in relation to diet and regimen should be practiced by each individual to maintain the appropriate resistance against the external factors of the diseases. The commonest route of spread of the infectious organisms are – food, air and water. To keep oneself protected from the infectious diseases these three media must be pure and organism free. So, examination of these three substances in respect of contamination/pollution and purification, where necessary, is important. Food and water may be contaminated even due to faulty handling by the user (consumer). Hence precaution in this point is also important. Washing of hands, feet, changing of dress, washing of the utensils etc. are some of the examples of such precautions. Sometimes due to the non availability of pure air and water there may be compilation to use them for which the knowledge of purification is important.

Sexually transmitted diseases are causing havoc in the society not only now but also in the ancient times. AIDS which is said to spread mainly through sexual contact is considered to be a burning problem for the modern society. Hence healthy sexual contact is important for which Ayurveda has given important guidelines. Since the surrounding is full of different types of organisms hence no one can avoid exposure. Therefore resistance against the diseases should be tried to develop by food, behavior etc. For the purpose milk, ghee, gold etc. are advised by the Ayurvedic classics.

Summary and conclusion

As summary and conclusion of the study the following points can be noted. Every individual should keep himself cautious about the surrounding environment and should try to keep himself resisted against the disease causing agents moving around and follow prescribed beneficial rules of diet, regimen and behavior. Adequate knowledge should be gathered from the classics with proper understanding. Special attention should be given on air, water and food which can help in protection of the individual from some serious type of diseases, specially the infectious diseases. A detail study, analysis, education and scientific evaluation of the Ayurvedic concepts may be able to provide guidance to the human society even now to prevent a good percentage of infectious diseases.

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