

RASAYANA AND YOGA: AN ADJUVANT TO PALLIATIVE CARE OF CANCER

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ABSTRACT

The Cancer is such a disease, which is very complicated in nature with complexity at every level- anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, molecular biology and gene expression. So treating such disease is a big challenge. Numerous techniques are employed to combat these diseases, including surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, interferon therapy, hormone therapy, and blood transfusion. But the remedies that are currently in use are either only for reducing the immediate complications associated with these diseases or for slowing down the proliferation of the diseases. Thus the mortality and morbidity rates are more in a cancer person. Ayurveda which is not only a system of medicine but a way of life, this focus on healing the body, mind and spirit with variety of healing modalities including nutrition herbs *Rasayana* therapy and *Yoga* therapy. In recent researches also shows that use of yoga has been evaluated in many studies looking at cancer. Some benefits seen in symptoms like insomnia, Fatigue, Loss of Appetite, Pain, Stress.

Keywords: Cancer, Ayurveda, Yoga therapy, *Rasayana*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is Science of life. We know that Cancer is one of the most dreaded disease of 20th century and spreading further with continuance and increasing incidence in 21st century. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts have several references to cancer. Some terms used to describe the condition are general while others are much more specific. According to Ayurveda, there are various diseases entities which resembles new growths for purpose of the malignant nature

of the disease. The description of *Granthi* and *arbuda* come nearest to cancer than any other disease.

Patients who present with cancer have three basic options for treatment. The first and most conventional treatments utilize chemotherapy, surgery and radiation. Second are a wide range of alternative therapies and third is combined approach. Conventional treatments for cancer have varying success rates. For some

cancer when caught early conventional medicine can do to affect a cure even if it is caught early. A majority of the present day disease are reported to be due to the shift in the balance of pro-oxidant and the antioxidant homeostatic phenomenon in the body. Pro-oxidant condition dominates either due to the poor scavenging in the body caused by depletion of the dietary antioxidants.

The ancient *Ayurvedic* physicians understood the delicate cellular mechanisms of body and the deterioration of the functional efficiency of the body tissues. These ancient *Ayurvedic* masters had thus developed the certain dietary and therapeutic measures to arrest or delay ageing and rejuvenating whole functional dynamics of the body organs. This revitalization and rejuvenation is known as the *Rasayan Chikitsa*.

Rasayana (rejuvenation) is a therapy through which one can achieve the aim of *Ayurveda*. It not only helps maintaining health, it also enhance the bala (strength) thus developing the vyadhikshamatwa (immunity) bala (strength) a person depends on vyadhikshamatwa (immunity), *Rasayana* boosts *ojas* (life span) and immunity system. Yoga is basically a preventive life science and dealing with all life style disorders. It helps to patients understanding their conditions, finding the root cause of the problem and creating a healthy opportunity for them to change themselves.

The change in life style of man has resulted in the enormous upsurge of chronic diseases like heart disease, Stroke, Diabetes mellitus, cancer etc. leading to mortality and morbidity. The reduction of load of chronic disease through healing promotion is very essential for the welfare of the society. Yoga acts through psych-immune- modulator pathway.

AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF CANCER:

Charak and *Sushrut samhitas*, are two well known *Ayurvedic* classics, described cancer as in inflammatory or non-inflammatory swelling and mention them in either *Granthi* (minor neoplasm) or *Arbuda* (major neoplasm). Whatever the sign and symptoms are mentioned by *acharyas* are totally based on observation. Cancer in each person differs according to the person's exposure to pathogens and genetic constitution which make each of them to react differently to the same diet. The factors responsible for the vitiation of *doshas* are like excessive intake of bitter, pungent, dry foods, aggravating *Vata*, excessive intake of sour, salty food aggravates *Pitta dosha*, excessive intake of sweet oily aggravating *Kapha* and excessive anger or severe emotional upset aggravating *rakta*. Pathogenesis of Cancer in *Ayurveda* describes different stages of tumor genesis as chronic inflammatory and intractable diseases with the possibility of developing malignancy, precancerous growth or probable malignancy, *Granthi* (benign glandular swelling), and *Arbuda* (definite malignancy). *Sushruta* have mentioned 6 types of *Arbuda* like *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Khaphaja*, *Raktaja*, *Mamsaja*, *Medoja*.

SIGN AND SYMPTOMS OF ARBUDA:

Vrinttam, *sthiram*, *mandrujam*, *mahantama*, *unalpa-moolam*, *chiravruddhi*, *apakam* these are the symptoms which is mentioned by *sushruta* (Su.Ni.13/20). In the modern era also these symptoms we are getting in the case of benign and malignant stage of carcinoma.

Symptoms of benign tumor grow slowly don't invade and metastasize. These are the well differentiated. *Vrinttam* (round), *sthiram* (immoveable), *mandaruja* (slightly painful), *mahant* (big size), *unalpa moolam* (deep seated), *chirvruddhi*

(slowly increasing) and *apakam* (non-suppurating) are the classical symptoms of benign growth. Benign tumor have minimal tendency to invade surrounding tissues. It is almost like well differentiated from the surrounding tissues. *Sushruta* have mentioned *adhyarbuda*, *dwirarbuda*, this type of *Arbudas* can be correlated with malignant stage of cancer or metastasis of cancer. Malignant cancer has rapid growth it have the property to invade surrounding tissues and capacity of rapid metastasis.

SAMPRAPTI AND CAUSES OF ARBUDA (ETIOLOGY)

Etiopathogenesis of *Arbuda* is based on *doshic* theory. Human body is made up of *Tridosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), it is believed that equilibrium of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* ensure good health. If any of the factors of *tridosha* gets vitiated due to the changed dietary habit and life style, body becomes diseased. Though vitiated “*Dosa*” are responsible for the development of *Arbuda*, almost all *Ayurvedic* texts have given maximum importance to *Kapha*. *Susruta* has mentioned that due to excess of *Kapha* *Arbuda* does not suppurate (S. N. 19/15), which is considered to be the common and important factor for any growth in the body. Thus, it seems justified to postulate that excess of vitiated *Kapha* in the body might be responsible for the precipitation of cancer.

FREE RADICALS AND THEIR ROLE IN CANCER

Free radicals are natural by products of our own metabolism. These are electrically charged molecules that attack our cells, tearing through cellular membranes to react and create havoc with the nucleic acids, proteins, and enzymes present

in the body attacks by free radicals. Collectively known as oxidative stress, are capable of causing cells to lose their structure, function and can eventually destroy them.

They are continuously produced by our body by using of oxygen such as in respiration and some cell-mediated immune functions. They are also generated through environmental pollutants, cigarette smoke, automobile exhaust, radiation, air-pollution, pesticides, etc. Normally the antioxidant defense systems in the body can only protect the body when the amount of the free radicals in within the normal physiological level. Free radicals may be designated as sharks that damage molecules in cell membranes.

The tumor cells are spread through the bone marrow or lymphoid tissues and circulate in the blood. DNA damage plays a very important role in carcinogenesis and any agent, which is capable of chemically modifying DNA could be carcinogenic. Behavioral or psychological factors such as chronic stress may influence occurrence or progression of cancer through several mechanisms:

1. Influence of stress on natural killer cells
2. Poorer repair of damaged DNA
3. Modulation of apoptosis

The Ayurvedic Approach To Healing

The physical level: *Ayurveda* approaches the patient on several levels of causes including physical emotional and spiritual. The most superficial level is approaching the symptom, which is the tumor itself. *Rasayana* herbs can be taken internally or applied over the tumors as paste, acting directly on the cancer and supporting a deeper healing when used in accordance with patient's *vikriti*.

The practitioner must also decide if the patient requires tonification or purification therapy. Strong patients with *Ama* require purification therapies in accordance with their *prakruti* and *vikruti*. Purification therapies reduce *Ama* along with excess *Dosha* by cleansing the *srotas* and the suitable *Nadis* of the body. *Prana* can flow freely and support the healing process.

Purification is a reducing therapy, reducing the *dhatu*s of the body as well as the *dhatu*s. Since this weakens the body, it should be only performed in patients who are strong enough. Purification therapy can be similarly viewed as cytotoxic, meaning it destroys cells. When applied properly, cellular destruction is directed primarily toward the cancerous cells. Patients who are weak should undergo strengthening or tonification therapy. These therapies attempt to build up the strength (*ojas*) of patient. These therapies are not for destroying cancer cells.

In addition to the management of *Ama* and *Ojas* the most important system of the body to manage is the digestive system supports the healing of all tissues of the body.

The mental level: The role of the mind in healing must be emphasized as mental disturbance are a more stable cause than the physical imbalance in the *Doshas*. Many studies have indicated that positive thinking activates the immune system and supports healing. Yet positive thinking is not easy to sustain.

Mental and emotional challenges produce blockages in the flow of energy in the physical body. The physical body is capable of manifesting what the mind imagines. Unhealthy imaginings appears first in the astral body (dream body) and can eventually manifest in the physical body as

disease. In addition to the internal use of these *Rasayana herbs*, *Shirodhara* can help produce inner silence while tonifying the mind. *Nasya* supports mental purification.

For patients with a more *Tamasic* nature this path of healing is very difficult. Hence mental purification is the process of removing their negative feelings.

The Spiritual level: Our spirit is essentially pure, perfect and is not truly in need of healing. However our spirit is bound to the cycle of birth and death through the karma generated by the actions of our ego.

Spiritual healing is the process of removing our karma and freeing ourselves from suffering and the wheel of rebirth is the greatest journey of all. It is often the difficult and lengthy.

RASAYANA CONCEPT OF AYURVEDA:

Ayurvedic pharmacology classifies medicinal plants into different groups according to their action one of these is the *Rasayana* group. The word *Rasayana* literally means the path that *rasayana* takes (*Rasa*: Plasma, *Ayana*: Path). It is believed, in *Ayurveda* that qualities of the *Rasadhatu* influence the health of other *dhatu*s (tissue) of the body. Hence any medicine that improves the quality of *Rasa* should strengthen or promote the health of all tissues of the body.

Rasayana drugs act inside the human body by modulating the neuro-endocrine immune systems and have been found to be a rich source of antioxidants

These *Rasayana* plants are said to possess the following properties, they prevent ageing reestablish youth, strength life, brain power and prevent disease and increases the resistance of the body.

Rasayana chikitsa is specialized section of Ayurveda, which mainly deals with the preservation and promotion of health by revitalizing the metabolism and enhancing immunity. Rasayana drugs are very rich in powerful antioxidants and good hepatoprotective and immune-modulating agents.

Rasayana as an adjuvant therapy

Rasayana drugs are reported as rejuvenators, nutritional supplements and possess strong antioxidant activity. They have antagonistic actions on the oxidative stressors which giving rise to the formation of different free radicals. Their anti-stress/adaptogenic actions have made the therapeutically for more important. *Rasayana* preparations also increased stem cell proliferation and also prevented free radical induced injury produced by radiation.

According to clinical studies *Rasayana* drugs have shown very impressive effects on protecting body from the side effects like alopecia, nausea, constipation, anorexia and vomiting, thus *Rasayana preparations* are very effective as chemo preventive and radio preventive agents.

Concept of Yoga in Ayurveda

Yoga chikitsa is virtually as old as Yoga itself, indeed the return of mind that feels separated from the universe which exists represents the first Yoga therapy. Chikitsa could be termed as Man's first attempt at until understanding of mind - emotions- physical distress and oldest holistic concept and therapy in the world. Yoga is basically preventive life sciences and helping the patients understand their condition finding the root causes of the problem and creating a healthy opportunity for them to change themselves.

The chronic diseases are spreading very fast as epidemic putting a break for this epidemic is today's need. This can be done by health promotion through healthy diet and of simple, cheap and cost effective measures, proper management and care of the patient. *Yoga, Meditation and Pranayama* are century old, time tested processes, these are known to relax mind and energize the body.

Meditation-

Meditation is an art of doing nothing with eyes closed. Several techniques are available to make one reach meditative state. Meditation can play a useful role for cancer patients. It can relieve the stress and physical and emotional pain. Meditation can be useful to some people in dealing with side effects of treatment and in overcoming the sense of loss of control and to promote health and reduce the risk of recurrence. Meditation has been used to great advantage in caring for terminally ill and dying patients in hospice settings and at home. Healthy persons at higher genetic risk of cancer also may be drawn to meditation to reduce environmental and lifestyle risk factors and to control anxiety and stress.

These measures change the hopeless and helpless attitude to the active fighting spirit. They reduce the stress associated with the diagnosis as well as treatment of cancer. By reducing the stress they may alter the treatment outcome. Meditation can lead to prevention as well as progression of cancer.

Pranayama –

Pranayama is very beneficial in this case for cancer patients as it combines the 'prana' or the breath, with 'yama' which means the extension or control and this is crucial practice in yoga. This is the science

of breathing and involves paying close attention to the way you breathe i.e. inhalation, exhalation and retention or holding of breath. Especially during *rechaka* which involves conscious effort with the help of cerebral cortex of brain.

In some researches it was proven *Sudarshan kriya* and *Pranayam* are highlighted to induce relaxation, increase antioxidant defense and NK cell in the body. *Sudarshan kriya* and *Pranayam* may have a preventive role against cancer. Both may be effective as secondary preventive measures after curative treatment of cancer and in metastatic cancer, *Sudarshan kriya* and *Pranayam* may delay progression of cancer improve survival and quality of life.

CONCLUSION

Cancer is not a single disease rather a syndrome. It is the largest killer disease in world. Due to change of lifestyle and food habits, its prevalence has been increased. The *Ayurvedic* line of supportive therapies is highly beneficial. It helps in reducing the adverse effect of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Ayurveda can be helpful in the management of cancer in many ways such as prophylactic, palliative, curative and supportive. *Ayurvedic* medicines help to improve the quality of life of patients. Stress relieving techniques like *rasayana* therapy, *Sudarshan kriya*, *Pranayam*, meditation have been found to be effective in maintaining both mental and physical health. These techniques can be incorporated in the management of cancer patients to potentiate the effects of conventional treatment.

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