AN OUTLINE OF COMMUNICABLE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CHARAK SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

The diseases can be categorized into two domains namely, communicable and non-communicable diseases. While all communicable diseases are infectious, not all infections are communicable. The pathology branch of contemporary medicine is largely based on this categorization. It has been a common conception that Ayurveda doesn’t endorse germ theory of diseases at all. This is not a complete truth as the great treatises of Ayurveda have touched upon the concept of Agantuja Vyadhi. The term Agantuja is implied in broad spectrum under which external trauma and organisms such as parasites, viruses, bacteria, fungi all are been incorporated. In the present paper, an effort has been made to compile and review these aspects from Charak Samhita. It has clearly attributed pathophysiology of diseases to intrinsic factors such as Dosha, Dhatu, Agni and Srotas. Still, in certain places, references of involvement of extrinsic factors can be seen.

Keywords: Communicable diseases, Infectious disease, Agantu Vyadhi

INTRODUCTION

The diseases can be categorized into two domains namely, communicable and non-communicable diseases. A communicable disease is an illness due to a specific infectious (biological) agent or its toxic products capable of being directly or indirectly transmitted from man to man, from animal to man, from animal to animal, or from the environment (through air, water, food, etc.) to man.¹ An infectious disease is a disease caused by a micro-organism and therefore potentially infinitely transferable to new individuals. While all communicable diseases are infectious, not all infections are communicable. Tetanus, for example, can cause an infection, but a person with tetanus can't spread it to other people. A communicable disease on the other hand is an infectious disease that is contagious and which can be transmitted from one source to another by infectious bacteria or viral organisms. The pathology branch of contemporary medicine is largely based on this categorization. The antibiotics were considered to be super medicine as they had potential to curb the ever-increasing realm of communicable and infectious diseases. The last few decades though, have witnessed advent of drug resistant organisms or superbugs. Thus, the medical science world-
have been mentioned. Bahya Krimi includes Yuka (lice) and Pipilika (eggs of lice) that dwell on the body surface and are produced from external impurities. There are six Krimi that inhabit in blood (Raktaja) viz. Keshada, Lomada, Lomadwipa, Saurasa, Audumbara and Jantumata. Seven Krimi live in Kapha-specific body locations (Shleshmaja) viz., Antrada, Udaraveshta, Hridayada, Churu, Darbhapushpa, Sauagandhika and Mahaguda and five Krimi originate from faeces (Purishaja) viz. Kakeruka, Makeruka, Leliha, Sashulaka and Sausurada. These are extensively discussed along with treatment in Vyadhita Rupiya Vimana Adhyaya of Vimana Sthana.7

In the Jwara Nidana chapter of Nidana Sthana, Agantu Jwara has been elaborated.8 It is stated that, it is caused by Abhighata (trauma), Abhishanga, Kama etc, Abhichara (association with evil) and Abhishapa (wrath of the wise and the elders). In the Chakrapani commentary, he states that, apart from these, Bhutabishanga (Contact with invisible organisms) can also be included in causes.9 This clearly indicates inclusion of infectious pathogens in pathophysiology of Agantu Jwara. The viewpoint of Chakrapani is in tune with Acharya Charaka’s elaboration of treatment of Agantu Jwara in Jwara Chikitsa Adhyaya.10 Also, in the same chapter, association of Tritiyaka and Chaturthaka type of Vishama Jwara with Agantu or extraneous factors such as Bhuta (evil spirits including germs) has been denoted.11 Charaka commands that usual protocol of treatment for Jwara should be abandoned here as special case. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa has been indicated in treatment of Abhicharaja and Abishangaja Jwara.

Unclean (Ashuchis) food has been enlisted as a causative factor for formation of Ama in Trividha Kukshiya Vimana Adhyaya.12 Along with other causative factors it can give rise to diseases such as Visuchika (choleretic diarrhea), Alasaka (intestinal torpor), Ajirna (indigestion) and Amadosha (vitiating of undigested food). It is to be noted that diseases like Kushtha, Visarpa, Rajayakshma etc, which are comparable to notable communicable diseases like leprosy & other skin dis-

Conceptual Study-
The oldest and most revered treatise of Ayurveda, Charak Samhita, has clearly attributed pathophysiology of diseases to intrinsic factors such as Dosha, Dhatu, Agni and Srotas. Still, in certain places, references of involvement of extrinsic factors can be seen. In the Ashtodariya chapter, it has been mentioned that, all the endogenous diseases (Nija Vyadhi) occur invariably due to the vitiation of Vata, Pitta and Kapha.5 Acharya Charaka explains that, as a bird cannot infringe upon its own shadow even by flying throughout the day, in the same way all the diseases are produced by disturbances in equilibrium in Dhatu and cannot occur without vitiation of Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Further it adds that, exogenous diseases are exception to this as they can be produced without involvement of Dosha.5 According to Charaka, exogenous diseases may occur as secondary development after endogenous and similarly endogenous diseases may further progress as exogenous diseases. Thus, one should carefully analyze primary causes and secondary complications before starting treatment.5

In the same chapter, twenty types of Krimi are elaborated which cause diseases.6 Krimi are first classified into Bahya, Raktaja, Shleshmaja and Purishaja and then among these four groups twenty types of Krimi
eases, cellulitis, tuberculosis respectively have not been identified to have any causative extrinsic factor. Probably, the answer to this enigma lies in concept of Vyadhikshamatva put forward by Charaka in Vividhashitapeetiya Adhyaya of Sutrasthana. It is stated that, all the bodies are not capable of preventing disease. Individuals, who are excessively obese, emaciated, whose muscles, blood, bones are depleted, who are very weak physically, who are habituated to consuming unwholesome food, who take in inadequate quantities of food, and who have very weak mind cannot withstand diseases. This concept has been further elaborated in Chakrapani commentary. It says that Vyadhikshamatva or resistance to diseases is of two types- one which obliterates the disease progress and another one which doesn’t let the disease to evolve in first place. This description well suits the concept of acquired immunity as well as innate immunity. It is also seen that not all persons infected with pathogens manifest the signs and symptoms of disease. In such cases, the pathogens are either destroyed by immune system or remain constrained like latent tuberculosis.

As it narrates individualistic approach towards diseases, Charak Samhita also refers to epidemics in Janapadodwansaniya Vimana Adhyaya. Epidemics have potential to bring destruction of all people, no matter how different they are from one another. Since, individual differences have no impact on air, water, land and season, which are common factor to every living being. These four factors can be attributed to modes of spread of infection described in modern science. Imprudent conduct and unjust actions are said to be root cause of this devastation. It can be derived that immunity gets lowered due to these and body is prone to various infections. The details suggest epidemics by communicable diseases though not clearly mentioned so. Panchakarma, Rasayana Chikitsa and Sadvritta or good conduct are included in the treatment regime of such diseases.

**DISCUSSION**

As it has already been explained, all communicable diseases are infectious, not all infections are communicable. According to Ayurveda, there are basically two types of diseases namely, Nija (Endogenous) and Agantuja (Exogenous) diseases.

Ayurveda refers that the Doshas get aggravated by exogenous or endogenous causes, which further spread in body by the using improper foods and activities. It vitiates Kosthagni (Metabolic enzymes) which leads to improper digestion production of Ama (toxin) and their minute Srotas (body channels) this is called Srotodushti (Disequilibrium in channels). When the Rasadhatu (plasma and lymph) containing Ama (toxin) and aggravated Doshas, reaches the place where Kha-Vaigunya (movement tendency towards empty space) has taken place, it being unable to get into the minute channels, gets obstructed, stagnates/accumulates there and gives rise to such diseases caused by exogenous causes. If the “Exogenous – diseases” get ignored then it may turn into Nija Vyadhi- “Endogenous chronic disease” and affects the immune system. Diminution of natural immunity makes the person susceptible to all infections. Therefore, Ayurveda advocates enhancing the immunity against the diseases.

Different examples of infectious diseases and communicable diseases are found in Charak Samhita. Charaka Samhita while describing the Vishama Jwara, describes that depending on localization and involvement of Dhatu (Body Tissues) fever (temperature) rises after a particular interval only. Moreover, it is advocated that body’s immunity system is of more importance than the infective organisms. It is mentioned that Bija (seeds) soaked in Bhoomi (land) flourishes only in correct time (atmosphere), and Doshas vitiates (micro-organism ought to vitiate Doshas) Dhatus if Dhatus Bala (immunity) depleted and in correct time.

The description of various Krimi as per their residing places in body is elaborative. These can be correlated to worm infestations, parasites as well as vectors for different diseases. A detailed observation reveals a
great deal of similarity between diseases caused due to aforementioned types of organisms and Krīmi. Charaka Samhita describes in detail – the concept of Vikaravighatabhavabhava in Prameha Nidana - the role of amalgamation of causative factors, Doshas and Dushyas in occurrence and nonoccurrence of disease. If these factors amalgamate by massive exposure or indulgence of etiological factors (massive microbial load), during very short period and depleted strength of Dhatus leads to occurrence of disease with gigantic presentation of disease and symptom. If the case occurs disease even if produced will be with mild to mildest form only or mere induce an immune response in body thus no disease occurs.18

Along with this, description of epidemical diseases as Janapadodhwansa, elaborates the factual inevitability to count destruction potential of them. Thus, necessity to tackle them was also established.

**CONCLUSION**

Thus, it can be summarized that, Ayurveda, especially Charaka Samhita doesn’t disallow the role of extrinsic factors in pathophysiology of diseases. It asserts importance of maintaining equilibrium of Dosha for health. Still, due diligence has been given towards other external causative factors wherever necessary. The line of difference between communicable diseases and infectious diseases can be well perceived in description of such kind of diseases in Charaka Samhita. As, Charak Samhita has primary aim of disease prevention, it proposes concepts of Vyadhikshamatva and Janapadodhwansa to gain knowledge and prevent such diseases.

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