



Review Article

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## AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF INFECTIONS, ROLE OF *PRAKRITI* AND *DOSHA* IN DISEASE PREVALENCE

Dr Vikas Jain<sup>1</sup>, Dr Supriya Gautam<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor and HOD, Dept of Kriya Sharir, Sri Sai Institute of Ayurvedic Research and Medicine, Bhopal (Mp) India.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept of Kriya Sharir, Sri Sai Institute of Ayurvedic Research and Medicine, Bhopal (Mp) India.

<sup>3</sup>Professor And Hod, PG Dept of Kriya Sharir, Madan Mohan Malviya Govt Ayurved College, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India.

### Abstract

Ayurveda, recognized as the 'Indian system of medicine,' pertaining to the preservation of health and the treatment of diseases. Ayurveda retains its efficacy and continues to demonstrate its remarkable potential in various health conditions including infectious diseases. Diseases can broadly be categorized into two groups: communicable and non-communicable. Communicable diseases, also known as infectious or transmissible diseases, possess the characteristic of being transferable from one individual to another. In Ayurveda, infectious diseases are understood as *Aupasargika Roga* or *Sansargaja Roga*. A distinctive characteristic of such diseases is described as *Sankramanti Naraannaram* (spreads from one human to another human). These infectious diseases are caused by the presence and proliferation of pathogenic biological agents such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi in the human or animal host. The prevalence and pathological progression of such diseases merely depends upon the inherent constitution (*Prakriti*) of host.

**Key-Words:** *Ayurveda, Prakriti, Infections, Aupasargika Roga, Sansargaja Roga*

## Introduction

*Upasarga* is a term that implies contact causing trouble or affliction, ultimately results in diseases. This term of disease can be correlated with the concept of infection and infectious diseases. Contact with infected individuals or materials can lead to the transmission of the same disease to healthy individuals. In these diseases, microorganisms cause transmission of pathological events among healthy individuals. They can range in severity from asymptomatic to severe and potentially fatal. The modes of transmission mentioned in Ayurveda include physical contact, inhalation of respiratory droplets, sharing objects, sleeping and sitting nearby, etc [1-4]. Examples of infectious diseases are depicted in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Examples of communicable disease according to Ayurveda**

In Ayurveda, emphasis is placed on personal hygiene as a priority in the management protocol. Subsequent medicinal treatment depends on the dominance of specific *Doshas* in the particular disease manifestation.

### ***Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi***

Additionally, Ayurveda recognizes *Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi*, which refers to diseases that affect or afflict entire communities, countries, or nations simultaneously, irrespective of differences in constitutional traits, dietary patterns, physical strength,

congeniality, psyche, or age. The description provided aligns closely with the concept of epidemic and pandemic diseases, where a particular pathogen is responsible for causing similar illnesses in numerous individuals within a specific geographical area or on a large scale across the world. The vitiated state of natural elements results in pathological changes and increased susceptibility to epidemic diseases. *Adharma* or *Apachaar* heightens human vulnerability to various negative influences, including *Rakshogana* [4-7].

### ***Aagantuja Vyaadhi***

*Aagantuja Vyaadhi* refers to diseases caused primarily by external factors, this categorization contrasts with *Nija Vyaadhi*, which denotes diseases arising from bodily causes due to disturbances in homeostasis, often stemming from *Apathya Nimittaja*. On other hand infectious diseases like Tuberculosis and Chickenpox are categorized as *Aagantuja Vyaadhi* caused by pathogens. *Aagantuja Vyaadhi* involves the introduction of microorganisms such as bacteria or viruses, into the human body leading to illness. *Aagantuja* disease as well as *Nija Vyaadhi* causes imbalance of three *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*).

### **Infectious Diseases and *Dosha***

*Kapha*, *Pitta*, and *Vata* are three *Dosha* related with the pathogenesis of diseases, in case of infection these *Dosha* also play vital role in symptomatic manifestation and progression of disease. The imbalance of *Kapha* mainly manifests as respiratory infections, nasal secretion and feeling of heaviness in body. Similarly the infections associated with *Pitta* imbalance may results diarrhea or dysentery. The imbalance state of *Vata* can become part of respiratory as well as stomach infections.

The infectious diseases cause depletion as well as aggravation of *Dosha* leading to the pathological initiation of infectious disease inside the body. When the *Doshas* are diminished below their optimal levels, it can lead to imbalances and subsequent disease manifestation. Similarly when the *Doshas* become aggravated or elevated beyond their normal limits, it can disrupt the body's equilibrium and contribute to the development of disease. Increased state of *Vata Dosha* due to the infections include symptoms of emaciation, black discoloration

(skin infection), distention of abdomen and constipation (GI infection) etc. Increased state of *Pitta* in case of gastric or liver infection include yellow discoloration of feces, urine, burning sensation and GI upset, etc. Increased state of *Kapha Dosha* mainly in respiratory infection causes excess salivation, feeling of heaviness; dyspnea and coughing, etc. On other hand decreased state of *Kapha dosha* can suppress immunity, making the individual more susceptible towards the infectious diseases [7-9].

The infections can also affects *Gati* of *Dosha* leading to the several health issues depending upon the involvement of *Dosha*. *Marma-Sandhiasthi Gati* refers to the movement of *Doshas* to joints and bones. The irregularity in this movement can lead to musculoskeletal and joint issues which mainly seen in Malaria and *Jwara*. *Kostha gati* involves the movements of *Doshas* inside the gastrointestinal tract; irregularity in this movement can result in digestive disorders including stomach infections, diarrhea and dysentery, etc. *Shakha Gati* refers to the movements of *Doshas* to peripheral body parts, irregularities in *Shakha gati* may manifest as localized symptoms affecting specific body regions i.e.; aggravation of *Kapha* in respiratory tract during viral infection associated with respiratory system.

### **Infectious Diseases and *Deha Prakriti***

*Deha Prakriti* is a concept from Ayurveda, determined by the balance of the three *Doshas*: *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Each person's *Deha Prakriti* influences their physical, mental, and emotional characteristics, as well as their susceptibility to various diseases, including infectious diseases. In Ayurveda, infectious diseases are understood to occur when there is an imbalance in the *Doshas*, leading to a weakened immune system and susceptibility to pathogens. Individuals with different *Deha Prakritis* may have varying levels of susceptibility to infectious diseases. For example, someone with a *Pitta*-dominant constitution may be more prone to inflammatory conditions, while a *Kapha*-dominant individual might be more susceptible to conditions related to congestion and stagnation. Ayurveda recognizes that individuals with different constitutional types may present symptoms differently when they

contract an infectious disease. For instance, a *Vata*-dominant person might experience symptoms like dry cough and rapid heartbeat, while a *Kapha*-dominant individual might have symptoms such as congestion and lethargy. Some common correlation of *Deha Prakriti*, *Dosha* and infectious diseases are as follows:

- ✓ *Masurika* is disease caused by the consumption of unhygienic food, this condition involve symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose and cough. The *Kapha* predominant person considered susceptible for this condition.
- ✓ *Oastha Prakopa* characterized by chapped lips and which mainly occurs when person remain susceptible for *Kapha dosha* aggravation.
- ✓ *Galashundika* believed to result from prolonged *Kasa* may somewhat resemble elongated uvula in modern medicine, which can occur due to bacterial or viral infections associated with common cough and cold. Both conditions involve throat irritation and respiratory symptoms.
- ✓ *Tundikeri* a condition affecting the throat area, caused by microorganisms involves vitiation of *Pitta* and *Kapha*.
- ✓ *Atisara* characterized by abdominal discomfort/diarrhea which occurs due to the consumption of unhygienic diet and contaminated water, person with weak *Pitta Prakriti* mainly get affected by such types of conditions.
- ✓ *Visham Jwar* characterized by irregular or intermittent fever due to *Dosha* imbalances, the disease involves vitiation of *Vata* (painful symptoms) which arises due to the external infections [8-10].

Ayurvedic treatment of infectious diseases considers the individual's *Deha Prakriti* when determining the appropriate course of action. Treatments for a *Vata* imbalance might include warming herbs while treatments for a *Pitta* imbalance might focus on calming therapies. *Deha Prakriti* can also guide preventive measures to reduce the risk of infectious diseases. By maintaining balance in the *Doshas* through diet, lifestyle, and herbal remedies, individuals can strengthen their immune systems and reduce susceptibility to pathogens.

## COVID-19 and *Doshic Prakriti*

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and similar infectious diseases can be attributed to various factors including susceptible tendency for *Kapha Prakopa*, or aggravation of *Kapha dosha*, thus person with *Kapha-Vata Prakriti* get afflicted easily with such types of conditions. Many of the symptoms observed in COVID-19 align with *Saama Kapha Pradhana*, indicating an imbalance in the *Kapha dosha*. The pathogenesis of resemble *Shwasanaka Sannipatika Jwara*, which resulting from the vitiation of all *Doshas* [11, 12].

## Conclusion

Contagious diseases such as *Kustha*, *Jwara*, *Shosha* and *Netrabhishyanda* can spread through direct or indirect contact. Diseases, such as *Masurika*, *Oastha Prakopa*, *Upakusha*, *Galashundika*, *Tundikeri* and *Atisara* involves specific *Dosha* vitiation and arises due to the susceptibility of particular *Doshic Prakriti*. *Doshavikriti* and *Agantuj* play major role in the prevalence of infectious diseases, underscoring the importance of addressing both internal imbalances and external influences in disease management. *Deha Prakriti* influences an individual's susceptibility to infectious diseases, their symptom presentation, and the most effective treatment and preventive measures according to Ayurvedic principles.

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