

MEDICINAL THERAPIES IN VEDA

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Abstract

Veda are one of the most ancient literatures of the world and the area of literature of Veda is very vast. There are four Veda viz. R̥g veda, Yajur veda, Sama veda and Atharva veda. In Veda detailed description of disease, drug and therapies are also found. These are the foundation of our medical science and therefore Ayurveda is also considered an upa veda of Atharva veda. In vaidik period treatment is based on nature (prakṛti). Prakṛti include pañca-mahabhuta along with plant based remedies and also minerals. The etiology of diseases considered based upon direct inspection as well as daiva prakopa (idiopathic). Hence yajna, mantra, mani etc. are also included in treatment of diseases. There were mainly two types of therapy. They are Aushadha therapy (based on drugs) and Natural therapy (treatment through panca tatva or any element of panca tatva). The article reviews all such information and suggests that this knowledge can be judiciously used to enrich the healing process through both drug and nature therapy.

Key Words: Veda; Pañcamaha bhuta; Aushadha therapy; Natural therapy; Mantra; Mani.

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INTRODUCTION

It is universally accepted principle that human being and diseases were born simultaneously. In Veda detailed description of disease, drug and therapies are found. In this way Veda is foundation of our medical science. The entire knowledge of Ayurveda is derived from vaidik literature. Those drugs which are mentioned in vaidik literature became the base for further advancement of medical science. Researchers are going on with vaidik drugs for the cure of modern disease. By means of keen observation one can see that the vaidik medical science is not only drug based treatment modality but also has the holistic approach of disease cure including chanting of mantra and other procedure of daivavyapasraya chikitsa. So vaidik system of medicine is termed as magico-religious-medical treatment system. In vaidik period treatment is based on nature (prakṛti). Prakṛti include pañcamaha bhuta along with plant based remedies and also minerals. Hence plant based remedies play an important role in vaidik system of medicine because all parts of plants have medicinal properties. No plant of this earth is useless from medical point of view. Vaidik system of medicine is the root of Ayurveda and Ayurveda is the science of all aspects of life.

Introduction of Veda

Veda is one of the most ancient literatures of the world. Veda is non decaying and continuously flowing source of knowledge. The area of vaidik literature is vast and descriptive. The main source of Ayurveda is Rig veda and Atharva veda. Along with drugs there are number of mantra which deals with diseases, drugs and therapies.

Basically there are four Veda. They are Rig veda, Yajur veda, Sama veda and Atharva veda.

Rig veda

It is the most ancient literature. Fundamental ideas of philosophy and nature have important place in Rig veda.

Yajur veda

This is base of vaidik karmakaṇḍa. The aims of its mantra are related with yajna and other related activity.

Sama veda

It is related with singing.

Atharva veda

Most of the mantra of this Veda is related with disease cure. Ayurveda is considered as subdivision of Atharva veda, because it included drugs, therapies and other procedure of living a long life.^[1]

Aims of vaidik medical science are to avoid the causes of death and diseases, to achieve long life, to achieve holistic thoughts and behavior, to achieve happy and healthy life and to remove evil spirits.^{[2][3]}

Treatments in Vaidik period

Many types of therapies are mentioned in Veda. Some are in detail and some in brief. It covers both physical and psychological level of treatment. In vaidik period internal treatment was performed with drugs and psychological with mantra etc. The etiology of diseases is considered based upon direct inspection as well as daiva prakopa (idiopathic). Hence yajna, mantra, mani etc. are also included in treatment of diseases.

Types of therapies in vaidik period

There are many types of therapies mentioned in that period but they are mainly classified in

two types. They are Auśhadha therapy and Natural therapy.

Aushadha therapy

It is based on drugs. There are one hundred and seven types of plant species mentioned, which grow in three different seasons.^[4] The diseased can be healed by planned and rational use of drug.^[4]

Sama veda reflect the concept of potency of drugs by using term sath bala (self confidence) and shastra bala (with the help if drugs and instruments). Drug that are able to treat different diseases are named as Bhaiśajya or Subhaiśajya.^[6] Drugs are life savers and main source of treatment. It states that drugs those received potency from Soma (moon) are able to perform hundreds of function, which are prepared by Brhaspati, cure our pains and diseases.^[7]

Types of aushadha

There are mainly two types of drugs. They are Vaanaspati and Ośadhi.

Word vaanaspati is applied for big and tall trees and word ośadhi is applied for shrubs and herbs.

In Rgveda ośadhi are classified in to three types. They are Divya (from god), Parthiva (from earth) and Jaliya (Aquatic).^[8] Oushadha are four in numbers according to Yajur veda. They are Phalini (Plants with fruit), Aphala (Plants without fruits), Apuśpa (Plants without flowers) and Pushpini (Plants with flowers).^[9]

Oushadha are four in numbers according to Atharva veda. They are Atharvani, Angirasi, Daivi and Manusi.^[10]

Atharvani

These are related with Rishi Atharva. In this context vitality and will power is also considered as drugs. Psychotherapy is included in this category.

Angirasi

These are related with Rishi Angiras and applied as Daiva-vyapashrya cikitsa.

Daivi

These are applied as naturopathy or pancha tatva chikitsa.

Manusi

In this category those drugs which are prepared by human beings like Curṇa, Avaleha, Vatī etc were included. It is used as main line of treatment in vedic period.

Natural therapy

Treatment through pañca-tatva or any element of pañca-tatva is known as natural therapy. Natural elements are helpful in treatment of various diseases. Natural therapy includes solar, water, vata (air), agni (fire) and soil therapy etc.

Solar therapy

Treatment through sun rays and sun light is known as solar therapy. It has an important role in natural therapy. Veda described bactericidal properties of sun light. Rīg veda described sun as sociśkesam^[11] which means healthiness and happiness in life. That's why sun is known as soul of world.^[12] In Rīg veda the sun is prayed for treatment of heart diseases and jaundice.^[13] Sama veda showed the relationship of long life with sun rays.^[14]

Atharva veda described the rising sun having the power of destroying harmful agents like bacteria, virus etc.^[15] Elsewhere sun is denoted curing agent for heart diseases and jaundice.^[16] Sun can treat neurological diseases and body ache. Atharva veda enlisted treatment for some of the medical diseases like, neurological diseases, ear problems, anemia, blindness, pain, fever, bone diseases, vata diseases (neurological disorders), poisonous effect etc.^[17] Atharvaveda indicate treatment with high, medium and low frequency of sun rays.^[18]

Water therapy

Treatment by water is known as water therapy. Many facts are shown of water therapy in Veda. Water is denoted as mine of drugs in Rig veda.^[19] Water has the properties of treatment for various kinds of diseases. Water is the base of life so it is necessary to maintain it balance in body. Water can wash out disease producing agent from body.^[20]

Yajur veda described water is good for eye problems and is energetic.^[21] Up till now in day to day practices most of the eye problems are removed by rinsing eye with water.

Atharva veda says water is the medicine of heart diseases.^[22] Water is foremost among all doctors.^[23] Water is best for health.^[24] Water has the energetic properties like ghee.^[25] In Atharva veda rain water is termed as satvr̥ṣya (100 times more aphrodisiac).^[26]

Vata therapy or vital therapy

In Veda detailed description is present for yoga and vital therapy. Treatment of diseases by vata and yoga is described in various places.

Two types of vata are mentioned in Rig veda and both of them provide health and energy to human being and removes mala dosha.^[27] Two

types of current winds are there one starts from sea and one from earth. One of them provide energy for life and the another removes the bacteria and waste of body.^[28]

Hence vata is equivalent to Amrita (nectar) is life saving and best medicine.^[29] Pure air is healthy for life.

One of the main elements of vata therapy is pranayama. Pranayama improves vital capacity which cures diseases and improves immune system.^[30] It is well known that polluted air produce diseases if air is fresh there will be end of diseases. It is not true for today's environment.

Agni or Heat therapy

Treatment by heat is known as Agni therapy. It occupies special place in natural therapy. There are various kind of Agni therapy like application of heat to various part of body, consumption of elements which have agneya (heat) properties or massage, fumigation with bactericidal and statics like neem (*Azadirachta indica*), gugglu (*Commiphora mukul*), guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*) etc. Burning of medicinal plants in yajna is helpful in purification of atmosphere and prevention of diseases. Rig veda described Agni as visvabheshaja (cures all diseases).^[31] Yajur veda described Agni as medicine for winter diseases.^[32] Atharva veda accepted Agni as medicine of all kinds of diseases.^[33]

Agni can treat diseases by poisonous agents for example the area of snake bite is treated by burning the part by red heat iron.^[34] It is described elsewhere that tuberculosis and idiopathic diseases can be treated by yajna karma.^[35] Short life span, near death can be treated by havan (sacra fire).^[36] Yajna are done at interaction of two seasons because this period is favorable for diseases.

Soil therapy

Soil is an important part of pancamaha bhuta. Soil therapy is mainly used in modern naturopathy. All types of physical and chemical elements and minerals are present in soil so external application of soil is good for health. Atharva veda described valmika soil with haemostatic properties and it can also treat acne.^[37]

Touch therapy

Many examples of touch therapy are found in Veda. It is similar to modern hypnotism and mesmerism. In this therapy the therapist firstly ensure the patient and explain him the therapy and touch the diseased area with chanting of mantra.^[38]

Psychotherapy

It is an independent therapy it is not depend on drugs. This therapy improves psychology and will power. Improved will power of patients helps in self treatment of diseases.^[39]

Shiva sankalpa sukta of Yajurveda describes intrinsic power of human which proves the psychotherapy.^[40] This therapy emphasizes on holistic thought and purity of mana (mind).

Mantra therapy (Chanting)

In this therapy along with drug, chanting of mantras is in practice. Through chanting of mantra micro sound waves are produced which along with sun power and air enter in body and affects health.

Mani dharana therapy (Wearing ornaments)

For the treatment of diseases and to achieve the different aims this therapy includes wearing of Mani. Mani is developed from medicinal elements and power is improved by

chanting of mantra. The names of Mani were given on the basis of their source of origin like Udumbar Mani is produce from Audumber (*Ficus glomerulata*). The use of different Mani for cure of different diseases like Anjana Mani, this Mani is helpful in increasing life span of human being and peace in life. This Mani cures the diseases like jaundice, body ache, erysipelas etc.^[41] Udumbar Mani gives energy to human being.^[42] Other Manis are Darbh Mani, Parn Mani, Pata Mani, Asrit Mani etc. They all have own special effects and karmas.

CONCLUSION

Detailed and keen observational descriptions of various types of therapies are found in Veda. In vaidik period treatment is related with drugs and religious and holistic activity like yajna, chanting of mantra etc. because is that era it was believed that etiology of diseases considered upon direct inspection as well as daiva prakopa. In vaidik period psychotherapy and natural therapy were in practice more than drug therapy. Pançamaha bhuta theory was the main basis of natural therapy. The vedic knowledge thus can enrich the natural therapies practiced now a days.

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