

Ayurveda and the Corona epidemic

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Diseases are innumerable and newer ones keep appearing, and creating new vaccines and tailor-made drugs with limited scope for each new disease, as advocated by Modern Western Medicine (MWM) cannot be a viable strategy. Therefore it would be wise to turn to Ayurveda, which with its strong theoretical base and extensive pharmacopoeia with innumerable drugs, is capable of dealing with a wide range of diseases, old or new, known or unknown. The science of Ayurveda is so structured that the very same principles that are applied in the treatment of known diseases can be readily used to treat new, unknown conditions.

The Ayurvedic approach identifies and treats the disease causing factors (doshas) that reside in the body itself but have gotten vitiated, to bring about cure. Thus it can always deal with any new disease as it appears.

Currently what is on everyone's mind is the Coronavirus disease. Most fevers that have recently become pandemic in nature are supposedly caused by various viruses. At our vaidyasala and clinic, one of the most common diseases we treat is different kinds of fever, whether viral or bacterial. We have had experience in treating chikungunya, dengue, swine flu/H1N1, malaria, typhoid and a variety of fevers and flus of different kinds. There have also been patients afflicted with fevers and other diseases, referred to us by Allopathic practitioners. There are several virus-borne diseases like hepatitis, and herpes etc. which have found easy and effective cure in Ayurveda and Siddha systems.

Ayurveda and Siddha systems possess a large number of well-known medicines to treat fevers accompanied by shortness of breath, chest congestion, cough etc. The choice of medicines would depend crucially on the availability of medicines and the practical experience of each vaidya/practitioner in each region.

The current approach of quarantine etc. at times such as this is what is implied in a famous verse of Sushruta Samhita, which is reproduced below:

प्रसंगाद्गात्रसंस्पर्शान्निश्वासात्सहभोजनात्।
सहशय्यासनाच्चापिवस्त्रमाल्यानुलेपनात्॥
कुष्ठंज्वरश्चशोषश्चनेत्राभिष्यन्दैवच।
औपसर्गिकरोगाश्चसंक्रामन्तिनरान्तरम्॥

“Skin diseases, fever, consumption, conjunctivitis and all contagious diseases spread from person to person, by indulgence in bodily contact, by (coming into contact with another's) breath, eating with others in the same plate, sharing of bed and seat, through (contact with) clothes, ornaments, and cosmetics.”

Ayurveda and Siddha systems are eminently capable of putting together an excellent treatment protocol with a wide variety of medicines for the Coronavirus epidemic, which

from the typical symptoms of fever and respiratory conditions appear to be induced by Kapha (phlegm/mucus) along with other doshas.

PRECAUTIONS: As a matter of precaution, it is essential to avoid all Kapha-inducing food and habits, such as, cold food and drinks, curd, buttermilk, juices, an excess of sweet dishes, cold pastries, and sleep during the day. It is wiser to prevent fever and respiratory conditions by preparing decoctions which include ingredients like pepper, dry ginger, dhaniya and herbs like Tulasi, Amrut (giloy) etc. Many of them possess anti-fever properties apart from preventing Kapha and Vata related infections and fevers. Staying on a light and easy-to-digest diet and not keeping awake late nights are practices which can safeguard one's health.

The Government of Tamilnadu had pioneered an excellent and highly effective scheme of supplying Ayurveda/Siddha medicines through PHCs and government hospitals during the chikungunya epidemic in the state. It is imperative that the Central and State governments do something similar to make available ayurvedic medicines through its public health facilities as the current situation is far more serious.

We read reports that China could contain the rapidly growing epidemic of Coronavirus by effectively making use of its Traditional System of Medicine which is widely available in all its healthcare facilities. We must also take recourse to our time-honoured and time-tested medical systems to revitalize India's health system. It will also make India and Indians more self-reliant in healthcare and medicine.