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The relevance of Caraka Samhita during the age of Pandemics

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Āyurveda signifies Āyus (life) which relates the eternal health of the body of a person. Senses, limbs, mind and soul are closely connected to life. Āyurveda has greatly influenced the people of India, even from the vedic period. It is believed that Āyurveda originated from Brahma. Āyurveda śāstra has eight limbs.

From Brahmadeva, Āyurvedas has been transferred to Dakṣaprajapati, Aśvinidevas, Indra, Bharadvaja, Purnarvasu and Ātreya. Ātreya gave this āstra to his disciples Agniveśa and Bhēla. Later Bharadvaja and Vagbhada, enriched this śāstra. The great scholars who has worked on this śāstra wrote samhitās on their names, famous sasmhitās like caraka samhita, Sustrutha samhita and Kaśyapasamhita. Caraka samhita is meant from kaya treatment, suśruthasahita for śalya treatment and Kāsyapasamhita for paediatric. Āyurveda does diagnosis and treatment of diseases on the basic of tridōṣa.

Āchārya Caraka is the exponent of Agniveśātāntra. He is believed to be the physician in the court of King Kaniṣka (2nd Century A.D.). It is also believed that Caraka was none other than Patanjali maharṣi who is the owner of Yogaśāstra and Mahābhāṣya.

Caraka samhita, a prominent book which prescribes the Kāyacikilasa, the most important of aṣṭangas, is written in eight fold narrative style. Sūtrastāna, Nidānasthāna, Cikilsāsthāna, Indriyastāna, Śarīrastāna, Vimānasthāna and Siddhistāna. In Nidānasthāna comes Jvarnidāna, Raktachittanidāna, Gulmanidāna, Premehānidāna, Kustanidāna, Śoṣanidāna, Unmādanidāna and in Vimanasthāna comes rasavimāna, trividha kuṣṭyam vimāna, janapadodhvamsavimāna, thrividharōgaviśeṣvijñānīyavimāna, śrōtōvimānīya, Rōgāneekavimāna, Vyādhirūpiyavimāna and rogabhiṣagjathiyavimāna. These are some areas prescribed in Carakasamhita.

The total health of a person is the asset of a healthy society. Hence our Āchāryas provided different schemes to maintain personal and social health.

At the time of the spreading of Corona virus, a new awareness has come to people about the maintainance of personal health and social health for a welfare world. Certain diseases are only hazardous to certain persons only while other pandemics affect a large number in the society causing alarming concern. Corona is the recent threat to the whole humanity. At such times, Carakasamhita

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written by Sage Caraka has great relevance. He had prescribed clear diagnosis and treatment. In the third chapter, Janapadōdhvamsaniya of the Vimānasthāna of Carakasamhita, there are descriptions of contagious diseases spreading through water and air.

Sage Atrēya convinces his disciple Agnivēsa that the quality and potency of medicines change according to the change of seasons. So medicine must be used at the proper time to protect the lives and maintain the total health of the society.

It is seen that people having different nature, food, physical health, similarity, mind and age, die at the same time. The medicines administered to them fail to have the desired result. Why so many people with different nature face the loss of their lives is doubted by Agniveśa Atrēyamuni clarifies his doubt.

Humans are of different characteristics. But they all have some common features. They are water, air, country and time. When these elements are polluted or distorted, then the differently featured humans face destruction simultaneously. Acārya gives reasons for air pollution. Wind is the prime reason. Dust, smoke, soil, steam and wind carrying foul smell may cause pollution of the air. Stagnation due to seasonal changes, high speed wind, humid air, pungent air, hot air, air with water molecules, noisy wind, swirling and crossing winds all these pollute the atmosphere and cause damages to the existence of people. It may be noticed that the observations of Acārya is significant in this modern times. When the air quality in the atmosphere decrease then micro organisms increase and spread through air. Even before we adopt preventive steps the pandemic spread from people to people to people at an alarming speed and so many people die of this air pollution. In India thousands of people die annually in Delhi due to air pollution. Sneezing and coughing of a sick person cause his excretions to mingle with the air and thus many contagious diseases like corona and fluenza are spread through the air.

Equally hazardous is water pollution. Water not potable having foul smell, change of colour, different taste, water that are not used by birds and animals. hard water etc are signs of water pollution which causes great hazards to living beings.

Those inhabiting polluted areas will face

distruction. Every area has a particular nature. If that area turns out to be unnatural, emitting foul smell or intangible, that area must be abandoned. The area will be dangerous, causing diseases. The area where harmful creatures live, is not at all inhabitable, so says the Acārya. The Acārya has a long vision that insects like mosquito, cockroach, fly, rat and owl and animals like jackal and owl are sources of diseases. We can understand the truth from the current incidents. Rats cause plague, mosquitoes cause Dongue fever and housefly causes diarrhoea. Vultures and jackals recide in burial grounds and they eat dead bodies and hence are carriers of mortal diseases. Dogs, Jackals and bats cause rabbies. The place where shrubs and grass grow is not fit for habitats. This kind of place is inhabited by snakes and other creeping creatures. That may be the reason why Acārya opined like that. The place where plants and other creeping plants wither and die is not fit for living. Agriculture is not possible in such places. The place where birds chirp incessantly and dogs bark continuously is also not fir for living. Modern science also agrees that continuous noise causes mental stress.

The place where birds and animals live in fear is also not inhabitable. The reason may be that birds and animals can feel earthquake, tornado and heavy rain before hand than human beings. They feel the natural calamities in advance. It is advisable to choose the area where good people reside. The company of evil people will cause mental tensions which will increase lust and anger. Gradually it will lead to blood pressure and ultimately to severe cardiac problems. The place, where people observing truth and honesty who never do unpleasant things, who are virtuous, live, such place is ideal for living because the place will provide peace, health and increase the span of life. Those places abandoned by people must be avoided. The place where oceans are turbulent and wavy has to be avoided. The countries affected by tsunami and earthquakes teach us the lesson. The place where meteors fall and lightning are frequent and prone to earthquake such place must not be inhabited. It will create mental stress. The place where the sky is overcast with clouds of copper red and white colours also not fit to reside. It will

hide the sun, moon and stars from sight and so many create mental confusion. The people may feel that they are living in a dark place and so may never get mental peace.

The confusion in seasons are also cause for diseases. If a particular R̥tu (season) appears contrary or with bad omens, it appears not auspicious. The Ācārya says that the places having the above said indications are not inhabitable. Water, air, season and place may cause disastrous diseases, yet it can be overcome with medicines. Water is more important than air, place is more important than water, time is more important than place, these must be remembered. Ācārya says medicines must be properly stocked and appropriately used.

After saying about the diseases caused by water and other pollutions, the Ācārya says about the important medicines. Those who are not affected by signs of death and not engaged in acts of death, Pancakarma is the noblest medicine, so says the Ācārya. The medicines prepared under the direction of Ācārya will cure any disease. If the earth is not polluted, the medicines will always guard the health. Observance of truth in mind, word and deed, kindness to all living beings, tendency to donate, tendency to sacrifice, devotion to God, good company and good, service – all these bring peace and happiness. Company with brahmacārins, the observance of moral Science, discourse with ascetics giving care to good people all these will guard and prolong life spans.

The question of Agnivēśa, why air and others get polluted and couples die, Atrēyamuni gives proper reply. It is all due to adharma. The evil observances of Dharma in the previous births are the reasons for the Adharma. The lack of consciousness causes karmadoṣa and Adharma. If people practice Adharma, the whole humanity is doomed. Seasons will change. Draught or flood may occur. Wind will change its course. Earth will loose its structure. Oceans may go dry. The medicinal plants may loose its potency. People will not get any benefits from it. They rather die.

War is the ultimate cause of total destruction. It is originated out of Adharma.

Curse is another reason for disaster, so says Ācārya. Adharma and the fall in dharma will result in the curse of guru. One who disrespects the great and holy people will be put under curse. Many clans and tribes were totally annihilated by the curse of gurus. The observance of adharma is the reason for immature death and such atrocities.

In this time of epidemics and evil practice, our Ācārya have given proper directions how to lead a good life. The lives of people and society may be allowed to function by stopping all devilish propaganda. The elevated philosophy of Carakasamhita may be followed. Each and every person must be sturdily healthy with long life and do service to the society. The advices given in Charaka Samhita will lead the people to happiness. It will give happiness to people and welfare to the world. So this is the noblest medical aid to the whole world. So let Āyurveda bring health and peace to the people of the world.

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