



Is there any Lesson that the World Must Take from India to Manage an Epidemic?

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Editorial

It is an unmissable note that India with around four times the population of developed nations as USA has only recorded half the number of covid deaths. It is worthwhile to understand as to how did this developing nation from the eastern hemisphere tackle COVID? When COVID-19 emerged as the global health crisis in December 25th, 2019 and posed as the biggest challenge with the virus spreading at an alarming rate that impacted us socially and economically the Indian Government was busy preparing to address the crisis through multitudinous measures. Being home to the pioneer vaccine manufacturers as Serum Institute that supplies to 170 countries and 65% population in the world, India very clearly knew that vaccines shall take at least a year to hit the markets. Also, although India was the biggest manufacturer of HCQ proposed by the WHO and the western world to be administered to covid patients on humanitarian basis it had a huge challenge of taking care of a population of 1.7 billion i.e., nearly 1/7th of the world who lived within her boundaries. The Indian government hence under its AYUSH (Traditional & Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing namely- Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) ministry shall have no choice but to prepare its citizens' immunity to fight this strange respiratory illness and also address it by employing India's time-tested medicinal preparations from pre-Vedic times- Ayurveda medicine.

Of course, it created a huge uproar among the allopath's, media, scientific community and all those who were unaware of the science latent in ayurvedic medicine not only in the world but also in India. Common man in the world is open to any system of medicine as far as he gets relief. We cannot deny that there is an exaggerated imagined competition among doctors belonging to different fields due to misunderstanding of every other medical system's strength and weaknesses. The indigenous system of medicine Ayurveda- has been taking care of the Indian subcontinent since medical records of existence of Indian civilization existed since at least 3,500 years ago (contested by Dr. K. Nishteshwar- a leading ayurveda physician and author who report it could have existed 10,000 years ago based on the Indian almanac) until western medical system popularly termed as allopathy was introduced into India by the British invasion.

India's doctor-population ratio at 1:854 is reported to be better than the World Health Organization's standard of 1:1000 as the ratio includes both registered allopathic doctors and AYUSH doctors, as on January 01st, 2020, there are more than 12 lakh Allopathy Doctors and 7,12,132 registered AYUSH doctors/practitioners including Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Naturopathy Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy. These systems of medical practitioners are governed by the Ministry of AYUSH in India.

Ayurveda documented epidemics/pandemics under the context of *Janapadodhwamsa* (illnesses those devastate human settlements) in its ancient texts *Susrutha Samhita* and *Caraka Samhita*. Similarly, infectious diseases have been considered under *Sankramika rogas*. Pollution of air, water, climate, improper disposal of waste, indulgence in unhealthy and unwholesome activities, mental stress, failure of judgment and misunderstanding of environmental situation is deemed responsible for the spread of diseases on such a large scale resulting in *Janapadodhwamsa* or epidemics like COVID.

The Indian government's move in going ahead with issuing guidelines to AYUSH doctors to treat COVID in conjunction with WHO guidelines in June 2020 shall go down in the pages of global medical history as an unforgettable moment, as India opened up its treasure trove of unheard medical systems to the world for managing unknown epidemics whereas countries around the globe

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launched researches through allopathic system of medicine alone. These Guidelines incorporated advisories and information that were the key players in the management of Coronavirus Pandemic at the grassroot level for individuals having mild symptoms of COVID-19. Individuals having moderate or severe symptoms were advised to go for informed treatment options. A task force comprising of re known experts from AYUSH Institutions like All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Delhi Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN), and other national research organizations was created.

“Ayush Sanjivani” mobile application for understanding the measures adopted by public for enhancing immunity through herbs as *Curcuma longa* and keeping themselves healthy in COVID-19 situation was launched. Data analyzed is being studied for designing preventive protocols through Ayush Systems. As per the ministry, a cross-sectional analysis of the responses received from approximately 1.47 crore respondents through this application highlighted that 85.1% of the respondents reported the use of AYUSH measures for prevention of COVID, among which 89.8% of respondents agreed to have been benefitted from the practice of AYUSH advisory while 79.1% of the users responded that the AYUSH measures gave an overall feeling of good health. On the other hand, 63.4% of people reported improvement in parameters of well-being like sleep, appetite, bowel habits, stamina, and mental well-being.

Even as of January 8th, 2023, with omicron descendants spreading across the world, while awaiting guidelines from WHO for combating covid regarding vaccines and fresh line of treatment with allopathic medicines, the Indian government has introduced *Ayu raksha kit* and *Bal raksha kits* which are combination of Ayurvedic polyherbal medicines effective in improving immunity for prophylactic care of kids and elders respectively during COVID-19 pandemic. The kits contain polyherbals as *Chyawanprash*, *Samsamani vati*. The AYUSH Ministry states that *Chyawanprash* is a *rasayana* formulation prepared by blending more than 50 herbs to yield a paste- like end product, termed as *Avaleha* (linctus/electuaries/herbal jams). It strengthens the respiratory system. The results of published clinical trials support the prophylaxis potential of *Chyawanprash* as one of the preventive remedies for COVID-19. It has been found effective and safe among high-risk participants like health care workers and other healthy individuals in reducing the incidence of COVID-19. The medicine prepared from aqueous extracts of the stem of *Tinospora cordifolia* named as *Guduchi Ghana vati* or *Samsamani vati* has shown positive effects on the immune status and general well-being of the people during the pandemic. *Guduchi* in *Ayurveda* is mentioned to possess *Rasayana* property which is also explored experimentally in terms of its effect on longevity and the results confirm the effects of *Guduchi* as *Rasayana*. *Guduchi Ghana vati* is found to reverse inflammation and tissue damage caused by the induction of SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Its anti-inflammatory property is also established experimentally. *Anutaila* is a formulation prescribed for *Nasya* (instillation of medicated drops in the nostrils) by Ayurveda physicians for therapeutic as well as prophylactic purposes in different doses. Instilling one to two drops of *anutaila* in both nostrils is advocated as a part of *Dinacharya* (daily routine) for better strength of sensory organs, hair, teeth, facial skin and avoiding the *urdhwa jatrugata rogas* (diseases of head and neck region). The prophylactic efficacy of *Anutaila* was studied against SARS-CoV-2 virus in an *in vivo* study which revealed that intranasal instillation of *Anu* oil is useful in limiting both viral load and severity in SARS-CoV-2 infection. The ingredients of *Ayush Kwath*

such as *Tulsi*, *Marich*, *Sunthi* and *Dalchini* (*ocimum sanctum*, *piper nigrum*, *zingiber officinalis*, *cinnamaonum zeylanicum* respectively) are commonly used and easily available drugs at home. On the basis of the experimental studies conducted on these ingredients, *Ayush Kwath* may collectively show immune-modulatory, antiviral, anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiplatelet, anti-atherosclerotic, hepatoprotective, reno-protective properties and seems to be effective in immunoregulation for controlling viral infections like COVID-19. Pre-clinical efficacy (immuno-modulatory) and safety of AYUSH Kwath has also been demonstrated.

The Indian government has released “Protocol for Ayurveda Practitioners” a guideline for the use of registered Ayurveda Practitioners only. There are four sections covering the whole spectrum of COVID-19 infection management. The draft deals with the symptomatology in these three stages: 1. 1st stage – *Swasa-Kasa* symptoms with *Jwara* (COVID-19 positive or negative with mild symptoms) 2. 2nd stage – *Vata-Kapha pradhan Jwara* (Fever) (COVID-19 positive with specific symptoms at moderate level) 3. 3rd Stage – *Vata-Kaphaja Sannipatika Jwara* (Fever) (COVID-19 positive with severe symptoms with respiratory distress etc.). Patients with hypoxia of SPO₂ lesser than 92 were recommended to be hospitalized in allopathic hospitals by the government as per WHO guidelines. It would be intriguing to the scientists that there are ayurveda doctors who have managed even COVID hypoxia (through ayurveda medicines alone) as low as 60 to 90 without putting the patient on ventilatory support as evident from scientific papers submitted in journals as JAIM.

Protocol for Ayurveda Practitioners contain - Target Groups and management principle. Target Group 1: Quarantine and home isolation subjects without Corona positive test and health workers Target Group 2: Subjects with mild, severe symptomatology, co-morbid and immuno-compromised conditions Target Group 3: Vulnerable subjects (Pregnant & Lactating women, Children, Geriatric subjects) Target Group 4: Post-treatment restorative healthcare treatment preventive treatment symptomatic treatment integrated care (Ayurveda management along with existing medicines under regular observation) treatment for recovery and Rejuvenation 1 2 3 4.

All the standing instructions issued by Health authorities (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, World Health Organization and state and local health authorities) are to be adhered completely and Ayurveda Management may stand as 'ADD ON' to the present contemporary line of management. The medicines recommended in the guidelines are based on Essential Drugs List, Standard Treatment Guidelines, Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India, Ministry of AYUSH Govt. of India along with considerations from other recommendations issued by various health authorities across India. The practicing Vaidya has to have his/her own discretion in selecting medicines based on the stage of the disease, symptom complex and availability of the drugs in their locality. Use of Mask, Hand Sanitization, Social/Physical distancing to break the chain healthy nutritious diet and measures of improving immunity and all other general health care measures are to be advised as per the guidelines issued by health authorities from time to time.

Epidemics like Chikungunya, Dengue, Swine flu have been handled successfully on pure ayurvedic lines of treatment since last few decades in India. While the Western or Allopathic medical research model is based on Newtonian-Darwinian-Germ theory which can be

perfect by itself, scientific community must understand that it is not the only dimension through which we need to perceive the human body. Ancient Indian Medical system as Ayurveda probably on the other hand is based on Quantum Biology and Terrain theory – The condition of the Terrain (Human Body) is important not the Germ. It is the time for scientific world to accept the concept of multiple realities in medicine so that we enable a journey of a new medically pluralistic world in the true sense to fight COVID-19 or any new health challenge. Let all our scientific realities combine towards a collective reality which will help humans evolve through time.

Is this why GCTM- Global Center for Traditional Medicine has been set up by the WHO in India with the headquarters at Jamnagar. In a lighter-deeper scientific vein last year the Prime minister of India Narendra Modi had rechristened Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO chief with a name Thulasi bai- Thulasi being *Ocimum sanctum*/Holy basil- the herb proven effective against SARS COVID virus in various researches in India. Well - One thing is clear dear medical community- Together we have miles to go.