

Unit 5. Sankramika Jvara and Zoonotic (Kasheruka-Jeeva-Janya) Diseases

Ayurveda, with its profound understanding of health and disease, offers timeless insights into communicating illnesses. This includes concepts that correlate with modern understandings of communicable and zoonotic diseases. The terms **Sankramika Jvara** and **Kasheruka-Jeeva-Janya Vyadhi** encapsulate these ancient yet relevant principles.

Sankramika Jvara: The Concept of Communicable Fevers

Sankramika Roga is the Ayurvedic equivalent of communicable or infectious diseases. The term literally translates to diseases that spread through contact or association. When such a communicable disease manifests with fever as a primary symptom, it's termed **Sankramika Jvara**.

The classical texts of Ayurveda, particularly the *Sushruta Samhita*, describe these as **Aupasargika Roga** (diseases spreading from one person to another).

Acharya Sushruta identified several diseases that could be transmitted and outlined their modes of transmission with remarkable clarity:

प्रसङ्गादगात्रसंस्पर्शात् निःश्वासात् सहभोजनात् ।
सहश्यासनाच्चापि वस्त्रमाल्यानुलेपनात् ॥
कुष्ठं ज्वरश्च शोषश्च नेत्राभिष्यन्द एव च ।
औपसर्गिकरोगाश्च सङ्क्रामन्ति नरान्नरम् ॥ (सुश्रुत संहिता, निदानस्थानम् ५/३३-३४)

Prasaṅgād gātrasaṁsparsāt niḥsvāsāt sahabhojanāt ।
Sahaśyāsanāc cāpi vastramālyānulepanāt ॥
Kuṣṭham jvaraśca śoṣaśca netrābhīṣyanda eva ca ।
Aupasargikarogāśca saṅkrāmanti narānnaram ॥

Translation: "From close contact (*Prasanga*), touch (*Gatrasamsparsa*), breathing the same air (*Nihshvasa*), eating together (*Sahabhojana*), sleeping or sitting together (*Sahaśyayasan*), and sharing clothes, garlands, or pastes (*Vastramalya-anulepana*), diseases like *Kushtha* (skin diseases), *Jvara* (fever), *Shosha* (tuberculosis/wasting diseases), and *Netrabhīṣyanda* (conjunctivitis) spread from one person to another."

This ancient verse details various modes of transmission:

- **Direct Contact:** Touch and sexual contact.
- **Droplet Infection:** Sharing the same air through breathing.
- **Fomite Transmission:** Sharing clothes, utensils, and other personal items.

The concept of **Janapadodhwamsa** (epidemics or pandemics) described by Acharya Charaka also aligns with the large-scale spread of *Sankramika Roga*. He attributed such widespread disease to the vitiation of common environmental factors like air (*Vayu*), water (*Jala*), land (*Desh*), and time/season (*Kala*), often stemming from collective misconduct (*Adharma*) and intellectual error (*Prajnaparadha*).

Zoonotic (Kasheruka-Jeeva-Janya) Diseases: From Animals to Humans

Zoonotic diseases are infections that are naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans. The Ayurvedic term **Kasheruka-Jeeva-Janya Vyadhi** directly corresponds to this concept.

- **Kasheruka-Jeeva:** Refers to vertebrate animals (those with a spinal column).
- **Janya:** Means "born from" or "caused by."
- **Vyadhi:** Means disease.

Thus, *Kasheruka-Jeeva-Janya Vyadhi* are diseases originating from vertebrate animals. While the classical texts may not have used this exact modern term, they acknowledged the role of animals in disease transmission.

The concept of **Krimi** (pathogenic organisms, including parasites and microbes) in Ayurveda provides a framework for understanding the agents of these diseases. Diseases were understood to be caused by external agents (*Agantuja*), which could include bites, stings, or contact with various creatures.

Examples and Relevance

The link between animals and human diseases is a critical aspect of global health today. Many modern infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin.

Zoonotic Disease	Animal Reservoir/Vector Ayurvedic Perspective
Rabies	Dogs, bats, monkeys
Plague	Rodents (rats) and their fleas
Influenza (e.g., Avian Flu, Swine Flu)	Birds, pigs
Dengue/Chikungunya	Mosquitoes (as vectors)
COVID-19	Believed to have originated in bats

The Ayurvedic Approach to Prevention and Management

Ayurveda's strategy for such diseases is holistic and emphasizes:

- Nidana Parivarjana (Avoiding the Cause):** This is the primary principle. It includes maintaining hygiene, avoiding contact with infected individuals, and ensuring the purity of air, water, and food. In the context of zoonotic diseases, it would mean avoiding contact with potentially sick animals and controlling vector populations like mosquitoes.
- Vyadikshamatva (Boosting Immunity):** A strong immune system is the best defense. Ayurveda promotes robust immunity through a proper diet (*Ahara*), lifestyle (*Vihara*), and the use of *Rasayana* (rejuvenating) herbs.
- Prakriti Vighatana (Altering the Internal Environment):** Using herbs and therapies to make the body's internal environment inhospitable to pathogens (*Krimi*).
- Sthana Parityaga (Quarantine/Isolation):** As mentioned in the context of epidemics, leaving a place afflicted by disease or isolating the sick was a recognized preventive measure.

In summary, Ayurveda's concepts of *Sankramika Jvara* and the understanding of diseases arising from animals provide a robust framework that aligns with modern epidemiology. It underscores the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and their shared environment, advocating for prevention and holistic health to combat communicable and zoonotic diseases.