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Malaria, dengue and other associated fevers in the light of Atharvaveda: A study in medicine

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Introduction

At present times Malaria, Dengue and the other associated fevers have taken the form of epidemics in various towns of vulnerable India. Western scientists had discovered the information related to the fever 250 years ago. The scientists with the help of lab and other modern technologies had discovered the fever like Malaria and Dengue etc some years ago. But thousand of years ago since today the ancient sages without having any recourse to lab or any other modern technology had prescribed the causes and remedies of fevers. For the sages nature would act as a lab. Vedic hermits were not only philosophers but also scientists. In the field of Ayurveda and medical science Atharvaveda is the ultimate source of remedies.

Today it has been proved that stagnant fresh or dirty water gives birth to various kinds of fever. In this context the sage Atharva in his Atharvaveda says –

“Yadi śoko yadi vā·bhiśoko yadi vā rājño varuṇasyasi putraḥ |
hūḍurnāmāsi haritasya deva sa nah saṁvidvān pari vṛṁgdhi takman ||” [1]

In the above lines the words “rājño varuṇasyasi putraḥ” literally mean fever is the offspring of Varuṇa, that is Varuṇa is the source of diseases in general and fever in particular. Varuṇa is the God of water in Vedic Mythology. Thus it is clear from the lines, that the aquatic realm of Varuṇa is responsible for the widespread occurrence of diseases. Malaria causing mosquito's mostly breed and lay eggs in stagnant water.

Medical science says that fever increases the body temperature of a person above the normal body temperature. The great sage Atharva had said and recorded the same thousands of years ago. Sage Atharva has elaborated on the different kind of fever in Atharvaveda.

Malaria and similar diseases take the form of an epidemic in tropical and sub-tropical regions. These areas always have a steady supply of rain water, a humid temperature and the foliage supports the breeding of mosquitos and other germ bearing parasites. Such an environment is optimum for the growth of several fever carrying vectors. Atharva Veda has already foreshadowed this thousands of years earlier-

“oko asya mūjavanta oko asya mahāvṛṣāḥ |
yāvajjātastakmastāvānāsi balhikeśu nyocarah ||” [2]

75% of the human body consists of water. A fever uses this system to spread across the organs of the body and dehydrate the person. It is also responsible for pain in the joints and the entire body. This kind of fever causes the body temperature to rise exceedingly and harms every organ system. It even harms the seat of life. This is what seer Atharva had observed-

“Yadagnirāpo adahat pavīśya yatrākṛṇvan dharmadhṛto namāmsi.” [3]

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¹ Atharvaveda 1.25.3

² Atharva veda-5.22.5

³ Ibid-1.25.1

Malaria and such fevers upon entering the body increase the blood circulation in the body. Due to such an event the aqueous portions of our organs burn up- “agniḥ āpaḥ adahat.”^[4]

The fluidic portions of the human body are responsible for the sustenance of life. In upaniṣada- “āpomayaḥ”. The effects of Malaria and such fevers make the body more prone to jaundice- “haritasya deva.”^[5] The takman of Atharva Veda stands for Malaria at present time.

In Atharva Veda various kinds of fevers have been named:

1. hūḍu- it is a kind of fever accompanied by shivering of the body.
2. śītaḥ- this kind of fever is started because of catching the cold. This is a very common type of fever.
3. Anyedyuḥ- in this kind of fever the body temperature rises every alternative day.
4. Ubhayadyuḥ- this fever is the same as Anyedyuḥ, except that the body temperature rises every two days.
5. Tritīyakaḥ- same as the above but with a repetition period of three days.
6. takmāḥ- this fever brings about a lot of suffering.
7. archiḥ- in this kind of fever the body temperature rises extremely affecting the whole body.
8. śochiḥ- in this kind of fever the body becomes very sick.
9. iṣiḥ- in this kind of fever the feeling in our organs system is decreased.
10. Abhiśokaḥ- this fever is accompanied by pains and aches throughout the body.

Atharva also talks about sadandīḥ, tritīyakaḥ and vi-tritīyakaḥ. Some seasonal fever are mentioned in Atharva Veda-

1. Graiṣmaḥ- this fever occurs in the summer.
2. varṣikaḥ- this fever occurs in the monsoons.
3. śāraḍaḥ- this fever occurs in the autumn. It has two sub-parts-i) śīta- this is the fever that results from a cold.

ii)- ruraḥ- this fever results in the suffering of the person.

In the 7th kāṇḍa of Atharva Veda 9 kinds of fevers have been identified- ruraḥ, cyavanah, nodanah, dhriṣṇu, śītaḥ, purvakritvan, anyedyuḥ, ubhayadyuḥ, avrtah. The seers talks about some fevers in Veda. Out of them some fevers carry the resemblance with dengue. That's why it is necessary to come forward to do research on this matter.

Saṅyam, brahmacarya etc are ways which can be adopted to prevent fevers.

1. Yajña- offering of soma into the Agni can prevent fevers.
2. Adharāṅ parehi- a healthy digestive system and a clear colon also prevent fever.
3. śakam- the people who eat green leafy vegetables have better immunity and are less prone to fevers than non-vegetarians who only eat meat.
4. Sage Atharva had asked people to prevent this kinds of fevers by cleaning the place around ones house. He had particularly stressed on cleaning stagnant water and weed around ones house.

To summaries, the Vedic sages had predicted the symptoms, reasons and remedies of fevers thousands of years before modern medical science could. The Atharvaveda is regarded as a Mahauṣadhi, a cure of staggering proportions. If the Atharvaveda is brought in front of the scientific community,

the Atharvaveda would be considered as the first and foremost book on the studies of fever, in the history of medical sciences. Therefore it is the benefit that we gain from the Atharva Veda that the ideas and thoughts of the Vedic seers are for the welfare of every human beings on the earth. In the country like India where death by fever is rampant the loving and soothing words of the seers impart the message to the whole world to live in peace and happiness- “sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ, sarve santu nirāmayāḥ”.

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⁴ Atharva veda-1.25.1

⁵ Ibid-1.25.2