

CANCER: WHAT AYURVEDA THINKS**Dr. Bhushan Kawle^{1*} and Dr. Bharat Kadlaskar²**

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the oldest Indian indigenous medicine system of plant drugs is known from very early times for preventing or suppressing various diseases using natural drugs. Cancer is one of the most dreaded diseases of the 20th century and spreading further with continuance and increasing incidence in 21st century. In the United States, as the leading cause of death, it accounts for 25% of all the deaths in humans presently. It is considered as an adversary of modernization and advanced pattern of socio-cultural life dominated by Western medicine. The science of Ayurveda is supposed to add a step on to the curative aspects of cancers that have resemblance with clinical entities of *arbuda* and *granthi* mentioned in Sushruta samhita. Charaka and Sushruta samhitas, two well-known Ayurvedic classics, describe cancer as inflammatory or non-inflammatory swelling and mention them as either *Granthi* (minor neoplasm) or *Arbuda* (major neoplasm).

KEYWORDS: Cancer, Arbuda, Granthi.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda as it means in Sanskrit – Ayus (life) and Veda (knowledge) is often translated as science of life and is a 5000 years old system of Indian medicine. It emphasizes prevention of disease, rejuvenation of body systems and extension of lifespan. It has been successful from very early times in using these natural drugs and preventing or suppressing various tumours using various lines of treatment. A recent survey of the global incidence of cancer shows that the age adjusted cancer incidence in the united states is above 300 cases per 100,000 population, whereas that in Asian countries is less than 100 cases per 10,000. Also although

the incidence of cancer of the prostate, lung, breast and colon is highest in western countries, it is lowest in Eastern countries.^[1]

The word Cancer is derived from the Greek meaning 'CRAB' which was used in Medical sciences for long time as mere technical term 'CANKER' applied to eroding ulcers. This medical use of synonym was inspired by large number of prominent veins surrounding a growth suggesting a picture like claws of a crab. W. R. Belt suggested that the terminology of cancer is used for its adherence with such obstinacy to the part i.e. like a crab and cannot be separated from each other.^[2]

CLASSIFICATION^[3]

Ayurvedic classification of neoplasm depends on various clinical symptoms in relation to Tridoshas.

- Group I

Diseases that can be named as clear malignancy, which includes arbuda and granthi, e.g. mamsarbuda (melanoma) and raktarbuda (leukaemia), mukharbuda (oral cancer), etc.

- Group II

Diseases that can be considered as cancer, such as incurable ulcers with e.g. tridosaj gulmas (abdominal tumours like carcinomas of the stomach and liver or lymphomas).

- Group III

Diseases with the possibility of malignancy, e.g. Visarpa (erysipelas), asadhya kamala (incurable jaundice) and nadi vrana (sinusitis).

According to Sushruta, the fundamental cause of major neoplasm is the pathogens that affect all parts of the body. He called the sixth layer of the skin as '*Rohini*,' (epithelium) and pathogenic injuries to this layer in muscular tissues and blood vessels caused by lifestyle errors, unhealthy foods, poor hygiene and bad habits results in the derangement of doshas, which leads to the manifestation of tumours. Excess of water or fat in the corpus of the tumour and the stability and rigid confinement of the doshas in a particular place were described as reasons for the non-infectious and non-suppurative nature of these abnormal growths. Cancer in each person differs according to the person's exposure to pathogens and genetic constitutions which make each of them to react differently to the same diet.^[4]

The factors responsible for the vitiation of doshas are^[5]

1. Vata Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive intake of bitter, pungent, astringent,
- b. Dry foods and stressful conditions.

2. Pitta Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive intake of sour, salty
- b. Fried foods and excessive anger.

3. Kapha Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive intake of sweet.
- b. Oily food and sedentary nature.

4. Rakta Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive intake of acid or alkali containing foods.
- b. Fried and roasted foods,
- c. Alcoholic beverages and sour fruits.

Excessive anger or severe emotional upset, sunbathing or working under scorching sun or near fire and hot conditions, etc. are some other causes.

5. Mamsa Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive use of exudative foods like meat, fish, yoghurt, milk and cream.
- b. Behaviors leading to exudation like sleeping during the day and overeating are some of the causes for pathogens invading the fatty tissues.

6. Medo Aggravating Factors

- a. Excessive intake of oily foods, sweets,
- b. Alcohol and lazy attitude.

According to Ayurvedic principles, Agni or Pitta, which is present in each and every cell, is responsible for digestion and metabolism in human body. The decrease in agni is inversely proportional to the related tissue and therefore in arbuda, the decreased state of dhatwagni (deranged metabolism) will result in excessive tissue growth.^[6]

Vata can be correlated with the anabolic phase of growth whereas kapha to the catabolic phase. Cancer originates due to a metabolic crisis, i.e. aggravation of vata forces and

suppression of kapha forces, both interacting with one another resulting in proliferation. However, the abnormal cancerous growth at a specific organ (Ekadesavridhi) is managed by compensation from other parts of the body (Anyasthaniyakshaya), e.g. body weight loss (cachexia). Sushruta has proposed six stages in the pathogenesis of all diseases but his concept suits more to the pathology of the tumour than pathogenesis itself.^[7]

1. **Sanchaya:** Early stages of localized neoplastic changes.
2. **Prakopa:** Transformation of primary growths into metastatic tumours.
3. **Prasara:** Metastasis.
4. **Sthana Samsraya:** Complete metastasis and secondary growth.
5. **Vyakti:** Clinical signs and symptoms are expressed.
6. **Bheda:** The stage where differentiation of growth occurs on the basis of histopathology.

PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT^[8]

Acharya Charaka, described effective treatment for cancer, focusing on the principle of detoxification and rejuvenation. Treatment involves.

1. Shamana Chikitsa (treatment using oral medicines).
2. Shodhana Chikitsa (detoxification through Panchakarma therapy).
3. Rasayana Chikitsa (immunotherapy, rejuvenation or Kayakalpa).
4. Diet and life style management.
5. Satvavajaya (counseling).
6. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (divine therapy), Yoga and Pranayama are also suggested as per the need and condition of the patient.

Other modes of treatment include Dhatwagni Chikitsa, Vyadhipratyanik Chikitsa and Lakshanik Chikitsa.

Herbs Having Anti-Cancer Properties^[9]

Andrographis paniculata, Annona atemoya/muricata, Phyllanthus niruri/amarus, Piper longum, Podophyllum hexandrum Linn. (Podophyllin), Tinospora cordifolia, Semecarpus anacardium.

CONCLUSION

The Ayurvedic system of medicine is based on the basic principles of nature and its elements after a careful and thorough study of human physiology. This is the first system to emphasize health as the perfect state of physical, psychological, social and spiritual component of a

human being. Ayurvedic treatments can be safely combined with chemotherapy and radiotherapy procedures to minimize the side effects. Even in surgical treatment, this treatment can be started immediately to prevent metastasis and further healing. Early detection, early medical or surgical interventions are believed to be the key factors in combating cancer effectively. Similarly early stage Ayurvedic treatment as a co-therapy yields best possible results.

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