

## Review Article

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## “KAYACHIKITSA IN PANDEMICS: LESSONS FROM JWARA CHIKITSA”

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Pandemics have historically posed major threats to global health, often manifesting as febrile illnesses with systemic complications. Ayurveda, particularly through the lens of *Jwara Chikitsa* (management of fevers) described in Kayachikitsa, provides comprehensive insights into the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of epidemic fevers (*Janapadodhwamsa Jwara*). These classical frameworks remain relevant for understanding and managing modern pandemics such as influenza, SARS, and COVID-19. **Methods:** A structured literature search was conducted using PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar for studies published between 2000–2024. Classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*) were analyzed for descriptions of *Jwara*, *Janapadodhwamsa*, and *Vyadhiutpatti*. Inclusion criteria encompassed conceptual articles, clinical studies, systematic reviews, and experimental research evaluating Ayurvedic interventions in epidemic or pandemic conditions. **Results:** Classical descriptions of *Jwara* include its classification, pathogenesis, and management strategies, with special emphasis on restoring *Agni*, protecting *Ojas*, and preventing complications. *Janapadodhwamsa* (epidemics) is attributed to vitiation of air, water, place, and season, correlating with modern environmental and infectious theories. Rasayana therapy, dietetics, quarantine (*upashaya*), and strengthening immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*) are emphasized. Modern studies show efficacy of Rasayana herbs (Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu) and interventions such as yoga and pranayama in reducing severity and complications of viral pandemics. Integrative clinical trials during COVID-19 demonstrated improved recovery and quality of life with Ayurvedic support. **Discussion:** Ayurveda’s *Jwara Chikitsa* offers preventive, promotive, and therapeutic strategies highly relevant to pandemics. Its emphasis on immunity, lifestyle, and holistic care complements biomedical approaches. However, robust clinical validation and integrative healthcare models are needed for wider acceptance. **Conclusion:** Lessons from *Jwara Chikitsa* highlight Ayurveda’s enduring relevance in pandemic preparedness and management, offering preventive strategies, immunomodulation, and holistic care that can complement modern medicine.

**KEYWORDS:** Agni, Ayurveda, immunity, *Jwara Chikitsa*, pandemics

## KAYACHIKITSA IN PANDEMICS: LESSONS FROM *JWARA CHIKITSA*

Kayachikitsa in Pandemics: Lessons from *Jwara Chikitsa*

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Pandemics have historically posed major threats to global health, often manifesting as febrile illnesses with systemic complications. Ayurveda, particularly through the lens of *Jwara Chikitsa* (management of fevers) described in Kayachikitsa, provides comprehensive insights into the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of epidemic fevers (*Janapadodhwamsa Jwara*). These classical frameworks remain relevant for understanding and managing modern pandemics such as influenza, SARS, and COVID-19. **Methods:** A structured literature search was conducted using PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar for studies published between 2000–2024. Classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*) were analyzed for descriptions of *Jwara*, *Janapadodhwamsa*, and *Vyadhiutpatti*. Inclusion criteria encompassed conceptual articles, clinical studies, systematic reviews, and experimental research evaluating Ayurvedic interventions in epidemic or pandemic conditions. **Results:** Classical descriptions of *Jwara* include its classification, pathogenesis, and management strategies, with special emphasis on restoring *Agni*, protecting *Ojas*, and preventing complications. *Janapadodhwamsa* (epidemics) is attributed to vitiation of air, water, place, and season, correlating with modern environmental and infectious theories. Rasayana therapy, dietetics, quarantine (*upashaya*), and strengthening immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*) are emphasized. Modern studies show efficacy of Rasayana herbs (Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu) and interventions such as yoga and pranayama in reducing severity and complications of viral pandemics. Integrative clinical trials during COVID-19 demonstrated improved recovery and quality of life with Ayurvedic support. **Discussion:** Ayurveda's *Jwara Chikitsa* offers preventive, promotive, and therapeutic strategies highly relevant to pandemics. Its emphasis on immunity, lifestyle, and holistic care complements biomedical approaches. However, robust clinical validation and integrative healthcare models are needed for wider acceptance. **Conclusion:** Lessons from *Jwara Chikitsa* highlight Ayurveda's enduring relevance in pandemic preparedness and management, offering preventive strategies, immunomodulation, and holistic care that can complement modern medicine.

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### INTRODUCTION

Pandemics have been recurrent threats in human history, causing widespread morbidity and mortality<sup>[1]</sup>. Febrile illnesses, whether due to bacterial, viral, or parasitic agents, remain central clinical features of pandemics. The recent COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of preventive strategies, immune modulation, and integrative

healthcare approaches<sup>[2-3]</sup>.

In Ayurveda, *Jwara* (fever) holds prime importance among diseases, described as *Roga-ratna* (the jewel of diseases) due to its capacity to disrupt both body and mind<sup>[4-5]</sup>. *Charaka Samhita* elaborates on *Jwara Nidana*, *Samprapti*, and *Chikitsa*, emphasizing the role of *Agni* (digestive/metabolic fire) and *Ojas* (vital essence) in pathogenesis and recovery. Epidemics are described as *Janapadodhwamsa Vyadhis*, attributed to ecological imbalances affecting large populations<sup>[6-8]</sup>.

This review aims to explore the principles of *Jwara Chikitsa* in Kayachikitsa, their relevance in pandemic situations, and correlations with modern infectious disease management. The objectives are: (1) to review Ayurvedic concepts of *Jwara* and *Janapadodhwamsa*, (2) to analyze therapeutic approaches described in classical texts, (3) to evaluate evidence from modern research on Ayurvedic interventions in pandemics, and (4) to discuss integrative strategies for pandemic preparedness<sup>[9-10]</sup>.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A systematic search was conducted between January–August 2025 across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, and Google Scholar. Search terms included: *Ayurveda AND pandemic*, *Jwara Chikitsa AND epidemics*, *Janapadodhwamsa*, *Ayurveda AND COVID-19*, and *Ayurveda AND immunity*<sup>[11-12]</sup>.

#### Inclusion criteria:<sup>[13]</sup>

- Classical Ayurvedic references on *Jwara* and epidemics.
- Studies published between 2000–2024.
- Clinical trials, systematic reviews, and observational studies on Ayurvedic interventions in febrile/pandemic illnesses.
- Articles in English.

#### Exclusion criteria:<sup>[14]</sup>

- Non-peer-reviewed articles.
- Case reports with insufficient methodological detail.
- Studies unrelated to fevers, immunity, or epidemics.

From 142 screened articles, 57 met inclusion criteria, supplemented by references from Ayurvedic classics (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*)<sup>[15]</sup>.

### OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

## 1. Jwara in Ayurveda – Conceptual Framework

Ayurvedic texts describe *Jwara* as the foremost disease (*Roga-raja*). It is considered not only a physical disturbance but also a disorder involving mind and spirit. The pathogenesis of *Jwara* involves disturbance of *Doshas*, impairment of *Agni*, and depletion of *Ojas*. *Charaka Samhita* classifies *Jwara* as exogenous (*Agantuja*) or endogenous (*Nija*), acute or chronic, and as an independent disease or symptom of other conditions.

## 2. Janapadodhwamsa – Pandemics in Ayurveda

*Charaka Samhita* introduces *Janapadodhwamsa*, diseases affecting large populations simultaneously due to vitiation of air (*Vayu*), water (*Jala*), place (*Desha*), and season (*Kala*). This correlates with modern understanding of pandemics influenced by ecological disruption, environmental pollution, and climate change. *Jwara* is central to these epidemics. Preventive measures prescribed include environmental purification, ethical conduct, and Rasayana therapy to strengthen immunity.

## 3. Role of Agni and Ojas

In *Jwara*, *Agni* (metabolism/digestion) is weakened, leading to impaired nutrition, immunity, and tissue metabolism. Loss of *Ojas* manifests as weakness, fatigue, and susceptibility to complications. Preservation of *Agni* and *Ojas* is considered the cornerstone of *Jwara Chikitsa*. This aligns with modern findings linking fever with catabolic stress, immune dysregulation, and metabolic imbalance.

## 4. Ayurvedic Management of Jwara

- **Langhana (Fasting):** Initial management emphasizes *Upavasa* (fasting) and light diet to restore *Agni*.
- **Pachana and Deepana:** Use of digestive stimulants like *Trikatu* (ginger, black pepper, long pepper) to kindle *Agni*.
- **Shamana therapy:** Herbal decoctions (*Guduchi*, *Musta*, *Kiratatikta*) are prescribed to reduce fever and toxins.
- **Rasayana therapy:** Immunomodulators such as *Ashwagandha*, *Guduchi*, *Amalaki*, and *Yashtimadhu* enhance recovery.
- **Swasthavritta measures:** Hygiene, dietary regulation, and lifestyle modifications to prevent recurrence.

## 5. Rasayana Therapy and Immunity in Pandemics

- **Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*):** Potent immunomodulator, antipyretic, and hepatoprotective; shown to reduce COVID-19 symptom severity.
- **Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*):** Adaptogen reducing stress, improving immunity and recovery.
- **Amalaki (*Embllica officinalis*):** Rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, supports immune function.
- **Yashtimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*):** Anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties; enhances respiratory health.

Clinical trials during COVID-19 showed improved symptom resolution and reduced hospitalization when these herbs were used as adjunct therapy.

## 6. Preventive Aspects – Swasthavritta in Pandemics

Ayurveda emphasizes preventive lifestyle:

- *Dinacharya* (daily regimen): Personal hygiene, balanced diet, and exercise.
- *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen): Adjusting diet and habits as per seasonal changes.
- *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct): Maintaining mental stability and social harmony.
- Quarantine (*Vyapashraya Chikitsa*): Isolation of affected individuals to prevent spread, aligning with modern public health.

## 7. Yoga and Pranayama in Pandemic Care

Mind-body practices were recommended during COVID-19 for reducing stress, improving respiratory capacity, and enhancing immunity. Practices like *Anulom Vilom* and *Bhramari* pranayama improve lung function and reduce anxiety, serving as supportive care in pandemics.

## 8. Modern Research Evidence

- Integrative trials combining Ayurvedic formulations with standard care during COVID-19 demonstrated faster recovery and reduced complications.
- Studies on Rasayana herbs show immunomodulatory, antiviral, and antioxidant properties.
- Systematic reviews highlight yoga's role in reducing stress, improving lung function, and enhancing quality of life in pandemic survivors.

## DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic framework of *Jwara Chikitsa* provides a holistic approach to pandemics. The conceptualization of *Janapadodhwamsa* due to vitiation of ecological factors parallels modern understanding of pandemics caused by environmental degradation, zoonotic transmission, and globalization<sup>[16]</sup>.

Classical management strategies—fasting, light diet, digestive stimulants, and Rasayana therapy—focus on preserving *Agni* and *Ojas*, which correlate with maintaining metabolic homeostasis and immunity. Modern immunology emphasizes the role of innate immunity, cytokine regulation, and adaptive responses, all of which resonate with Ayurvedic concepts of *Vyadhikshamatva*<sup>[17]</sup>.

Rasayana therapy demonstrates significant potential in pandemic management. Clinical and experimental evidence supports Guduchi, Ashwagandha, and Amalaki for immunomodulation, stress reduction, and antiviral effects. During COVID-19, adjunct use of these herbs was associated with improved recovery rates and reduced post-viral fatigue. However, challenges remain in standardization, dosage determination, and large-scale validation<sup>[18]</sup>. Preventive regimens in Ayurveda, including *Swasthavritta*, emphasize hygiene, diet, and mental well-being, aligning with modern preventive medicine. The concept of isolation of infected individuals resonates with quarantine measures practiced in pandemics. Moreover, yoga and pranayama provide evidence-based mind-body interventions that reduce psychological stress and improve respiratory function, thereby enhancing recovery<sup>[19]</sup>.

Despite encouraging findings, limitations include heterogeneity of study designs, small sample sizes, and lack of rigorous randomized trials. Integration of Ayurvedic interventions into mainstream pandemic care requires well-designed clinical trials, regulatory frameworks, and public health policies. Collaborative research between Ayurvedic scholars and biomedical scientists can strengthen evidence and ensure safe, effective integration<sup>[20]</sup>.

Future prospects lie in developing personalized pandemic care models using Ayurvedic principles of *Prakriti* (constitution), integrating Rasayana herbs as immunoadjuvants, and promoting lifestyle regimens for resilience. Ayurveda's holistic framework can

serve as a complementary pillar to biomedicine in pandemic preparedness and response.

## CONCLUSION

Ayurveda's *Jwara Chikitsa* offers timeless lessons for pandemic care. Its emphasis on correcting *Agni*, preserving *Ojas*, and strengthening *Vyadhikshamatva* reflects a holistic approach addressing both prevention and management. The concept of *Janapadodhwamsa* highlights environmental and ecological dimensions of pandemics, underscoring the need for sustainable living and preventive strategies.

Rasayana herbs like Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Amalaki, and Yashtimadhu demonstrate immunomodulatory and antiviral potential, validated by modern studies. Preventive regimens such as *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, and hygiene practices align closely with public health measures like quarantine, sanitation, and vaccination. Yoga and pranayama further enhance resilience by improving respiratory function and reducing stress.

Modern research during COVID-19 supports integrative models where Ayurvedic interventions complement standard care, improving recovery and reducing complications. However, more high-quality, large-scale trials are required to establish standard guidelines.

In conclusion, *Jwara Chikitsa* within *Kayachikitsa* provides a valuable framework for pandemic preparedness and management. Integrating its preventive and therapeutic wisdom with modern scientific evidence can strengthen public health systems, improve patient outcomes, and contribute to holistic global healthcare strategies.

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