

Life-Saving Techniques in Nepalese Culture against Pandemic

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Abstract

Our ancestors were suffered from different kinds of the pandemic in the past. Like big natural disasters, big pandemic originated in each century killed millions of people on the earth. Our forefathers were familiar with such pandemics. Therefore, they developed the techniques of saving the lives of people inside the culture. Such techniques are popular as social rules, which were necessary to follow by the people of the society. For example, management of separate house for the kitchen and separate guest rooms is more scientific to control such pandemic. In the same way habits of cleaning hands, legs, and face after traveling outside the home relates to health as well as cultural behavior. The system of keeping a distance from other people is also culturally taught. Respecting people with joining hands or doing Namaste instead of shaking hands is our culture, which is very popular in the present pandemic period. Our forefathers developed such techniques and saved the lives of many people in the big pandemics period. Therefore, we need to explore such cultural habits and rules and follow them for the sake of saving lives in the present pandemic period.

Keywords: Pandemic, infection, smallpox, plague, isolation, quarantine

Introduction

Our life is full of risks and uncertain. Nobody knows the future of a person. There are different kinds of diseases which are popular in human society. Medical science is actively doing its work to prevent us from such diseases. With general diseases, people are being suffered from new borne diseases each year. Large numbers of people die from pandemic each year. We can find the history of pandemic spread in every century. Many people died from the effect of such pandemic in the past. Some pandemics affected people's health for a year and others for more than 10 years. Corona infection is also a pandemic, which is spreading all over the world today. Millions of people are infected by the Coronavirus and some of them are passing their lives. Therefore, we have to explore the life-saving techniques of culture which are developed from our ancestors. It is only a way to save us from infections like coronavirus.

Methodology

This is empirical research work. Both primary and secondary data are used in this work. Primary data was collected from the field with the help of the interview schedule. In the same way, secondary data were collected from published materials. Both types of information were compared, analyzed and a conclusion is drawn. Therefore, this research work is completed in the scientific method.

History of Pandemic

In the world

Different kinds of pandemics spread in the world each year and millions of people were badly affected by such pandemics. Like natural disasters, pandemics were also spread in each 80-100 years in the past. They affected a large number of people for some years and were controlled themselves. For example, Athens plague (430 BC), Cyprian plague (541 AD), Black death (1346 AD), American plague (1511 AD), Great plague (1720 AD), and Spanish flu (1918 AD) affected the people and millions of people were killed from these pandemics. The effect of some pandemic remained for a year and the rest of the others affected people for many years.

In Nepal

The history of the pandemic in Nepal is very long. We can find the history of spreading smallpox in 1385 BS. It affected people's health badly. Nearly 100 people died per day in Kathmandu valley from the effect of that pandemic. The pandemic was active for the whole year. We cannot count the death number of people outside the valley from the effect of that pandemic. In the same way, the pandemic of smallpox was active for 4 times between 1729 to 1792 BS. Many people were killed by this pandemic in Nepal. Some kings and members of the royal family also died from such pandemics. For example, Jagat Prakash Malla, the king of Bhaktapur died from the infection of smallpox in 1729 BS. Similarly, a daughter of King Pratap Malla (Kathmandu) and Loka Prakash Malla the king of Patan died from the infection of smallpox in 1736 BS.

The plague of 1772 BS spreading in Nepal, affected the health of people badly up to 1779 BS for 7 years in Kathmandu valley. Thousands of people died from the effect of this pandemic. According to a historical document, 18714 people died from this pandemic. This number of the death case relates only to Kathmandu valley. We cannot count the death number

outside the valley of this period. Kumari of Kathmandu valley also died from the effect of this pandemic. In between 1855 and 1872 BS, the pandemic of smallpox spread in Kathmandu valley once again. Many people were killed from the effect of this pandemic too. We do not have accurate records of all pandemic occurred in the past. Some pandemics were controlled within a year and others affected the people for more years. In this way, many more pandemics affected the people in the historical period. Such a pandemic affected the people badly and controlled itself within a period. Many people lost their lives from such pandemics.

Lifesaving technique

Our ancestors were familiar with different kinds of pandemics. Therefore, they developed the techniques of controlling them. They handed over such techniques to the further generations. Such techniques are still alive in our society due to our cultural efforts. We learned them from our forefathers. They have taught the way of remaining safe from a different kind of pandemic. In the latter years, we are consuming a different kind of new inventions and adopting new techniques for an easy life. Innovations and productions have made our life easier. However, modern inventions are not always capable to save our life from the pandemics like Covid-19. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the lifesaving cultural techniques developed from our ancestors. The lifesaving cultural techniques to keep safe from the pandemic are as follows.

1. **Namaste System:** Nepali culture has taught us to welcome and respect the guests by joining our two hands. It is called *Namaste*. Our culture does not allow us to shake hands with the guests. It is safe and it does not allow transmitting the diseases through the hands.
2. **Cleaning hands and legs:** Our culture suggests us to clean our hands and legs before entering the home in the case of returning from a trip. This system was introduced for healthy lives. In the same way, the place to clean hands and the legs or the bathroom remains outside the house for the healthy habit.
3. **Separate living and dining room:** Nepalese culture has the system of keeping separate kitchen, living, and dining rooms in the house. In some cases, kitchen houses are made in a separate house from the living house. Only the chef can go into the kitchen. They can enter there only after washing their hands and legs. This is also known as an important habit for the pandemic period.

4. **Separate clothes for eating:** Nepalese culture teaches us to use separate clothes while eating. They are not used on other occasions. It also assists to keep good health for the people.
5. **Wooden seat in the kitchen:** We have a custom of using a wooden seat while taking food. Straw seats and carpets are not allowed in the kitchen. We can easily wash or clean the wooden seats and it remains safe for the health.
6. **Separate seats and dishes:** Our culture has taught us to use separate seats for different people while eating. Father, mother, brother, and sister has been given different points to seat while eating. In the same way, separate pots are given for the different people. One has to use the same pot each time while eating food. The guests are given food in a separate dish than the pots of daily use.
7. **Management of guest rooms:** Nepali culture has taught us to manage separate guest rooms. The guests live and sleep in a separate room, which is not used by the member of the family. This helps the people to remain separate from the guest and remain neat and clean.
8. **Food habits:** Our cultures have taught different food habits, which are related mostly to health. For example, we eat oily food at Makar Samskranti and hot Juicy food in Shrawan Samskranti. We have the festivals of distributing cold drinks and beaten floor in Akshaya Tritiya. In the same way, Shivaratri is related to burning firewood in the road. Glues of herbal plants are used in legs and hands during the time of mud season. This system is now converted as using Mehandi in the month Shrawan. Green objects were preferred to wear in the month Shrawan. All such habits are related to the good health of the people.
9. **Separation:** Our ancestors used to protect themselves from different pandemics by applying the traditional way of life. They used to use a different kind of herbs and practice the system of separation to protect themselves from the pandemic. For example, people infected by TB, Smallpox, and other pandemic were kept in separate places. They could come to the village and contact the family after completely recovering from the infection. Similarly, people did not use to travel outside the home in the pandemic period. They were strongly prohibited to visit other villages in such a situation.
10. **Restriction in movement:** People were restricted to visit other places at the time of the pandemic. The travelers could not visit another village and center in such a situation.

Travel for pilgrimage and trade was banned in such a situation. People used to travel after controlling the pandemic.

11. **Restriction on food:** Different kinds of foods were restricted in different climatic conditions to keep health good for the people. Healthy and nutritious foods are given to the children at the time of the pandemic. People used to remain more conscious of food habits in such a situation.
12. **Herbal treatment:** We had community doctors in the past, who used to cure different diseases. He used to use herbs to control the pandemic. The Vaidya and Tantric used to use Tantra and the herbs both to control the pandemic. In this way, the pandemic was controlled by both psychological and herbal methods.

Nepalese society was based on a joint family system in the past. More than three generations used to live in a family together. The elder members of the family used to stay at home and they used to care for the children and manage the necessary works. Young people used to go outside the home for seeking a job. Children also were given some duties. In this way, the Nepalese family system was systematized well. Every people in the family used to fulfill their duty and they used to protect the other. In the time of the pandemic, they used to take care of the children and the old aged people. So, Nepalese society was well managed and the situation of the pandemic was also managed well.

Our society was fully based on norms and ethics in the past. Old age people were respected and they were fully cared by the family members. They had given the responsibility to decide the social norms and rules. People of the society used to respect their decisions. They used different herbs and other ways to remain safe from different kinds of techniques. A system of isolation and quarantine was identified long ago in our culture. Many people were kept in isolation and quarantine in the medieval period, while they were infected by different pandemics. In 1855 BS smallpox infected people of Kathmandu valley were sent in quarantine up to Tamakoshi in the east and Marsyangdi to the west. Maha Snana Ghar of Pashupati Nath Kshetra was built by Rana Bahadur Shaha as the quarantine to keep queen Kantivati when she was infected from smallpox.

The system of celebrating festivals and doing sacraments was also different at the time of the pandemic. Death sacrament was completed within a day instead of completing it in 45 days. Other kinds of sacraments were also shortened. Culturally, crowded functions were discouraged. Marriage sacraments also were done shortly. In this way, our forefathers managed

the system of sacraments and festivals shortly for the period of the pandemic. This system helped them to protect people from the infection of life taking pandemic.

Conclusion

Nepalese culture is the product of our ancestors. The people follow it from generation to generation. We have a different kind of method to maintain health from the pandemics. Our culture has taught such methods. Therefore, it is necessary to explore such a method from our culture and we need to apply it to remain safe from such pandemics. They are related to a good habit. Doing Namaste, management of separate kitchen, guest house or room bedding and sitting rooms are some examples. We can reduce the rate of Coronavirus infection in the case of applying the cultural safety rule.

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