

GENERAL MEDICINE IN ATHARVAVEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO YAKṢMA (CONSUMPTION/TUBERCULOSIS)

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ABSTRACT

The Atharvaveda (AV) is by all accounts a curious compendium of medicine in its various stages of evolution and contains the most primitive as well as some of the most highly developed stages of therapy. In AV the word Brahma was used in the sense of Physician. The name Atharvaṇ is almost synonymous with Bheṣaja or medicine. The AV represents the charm system of the Āyurveda of the Vedic age. The refrain of AV is that, charms and amulets are more efficacious than herbs and medicines. Kāyaçikitsa (general medicine) is one of the eight branches of Āyurveda, which has exhaustive mention in the AV and helps to establish the continuity of medical tradition in the Vedic period. Hence some scholars had mentioned Āyurveda as Upaveda or Upāṅga of AV. AV mentions a large number of diseases both major and minor some where in clear terms and some where vaguely. The term used in AV for disease is Yakṣma. Classification of the diseases based on a etiological factors is not found in AV. Thus this article depicts the views expressed in AV i.e. regarding causative factors, classification and number of medical disorders with special reference to Yakṣma (Consumption).

Introduction:

The fourth and last Veda of Hindu literature the Atharvaveda contains medical information in its various stages of evolution and contains the most primitive as well as some of the most highly developed stages of therapy. AV mentions a large number of diseases both major and minor. AV is also known as 'Bhaiṣajyaveda' because its hymns represent Āyurveda of Vedic period and the name Atharvaṇ is almost synonymous with Bheṣaja i.e. medicine. Aetiological factors, origin, method of treatment of diseases especially the "Yakṣma (consumption)" are being discussed in this article.

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I Aetiological factors and origin of diseases

a) Krimi and kṛmi (worms, germs & insects) as causative factors

There are two distinct words Krimi and Kṛmi mentioned in AV. Kṛmi means insect and whereas Krimi means worm/germ (V.23.3,6), which multiplies, enters human bodies and they are visible or invisible. For example,

1. Trisēṣṇam – Round worms or thread worms – V.23.9
2. Aglaṇḍūn – Ascaris (?) – (II.32.2-3)
3. Śalunān – A type of oxyuris -
4. Kururu – Thigh borer (Thread worm) – II.31.2

According to AV some germs are everywhere i.e. in trees, mountains, waters and in living beings (II.31.4). Some of them are parasites of man. For example,

1. Śīṛṣanyam – Which causes mania and lunacy
2. Pārṣṭeyam – The germ which can cause disease in ribs.

In one stanza AV describes the parasite with a floating head (having three projections round the mouth), which is colourless (V.23.9). The description resembles the description of the roundworm or the threadworm. AV also mentions germs found in eyes, nose and teeth (V.23.3).

b) Witchcraft as the cause of disease:

AV believes human sorcery causes diseases (I.28, IV.28.V.30.2) and evil eye produces diseases where as witchcraft cures them (II.7, VI.96.2,3 refer to Śapatha as the cause). There is one more reference to evil eye, which causes disease (XIX .35.3).

c) Bhūtas (demons) as causes of disease :

According to AV and its hymns, magic and witchcraft form the most important subject. Like wise a disease is caused by demon (a disease itself is a demon). AV believes that particular demon causes a particular disease. The same idea has been taken by Āyurveda. Now Bhūtavidya is one of the branches of Āyurveda and it establishes direct connection with AV. There are number of demons listed in AV. Viz.

Alimśa	Dvayavin
Amivā	Gandharva
Anupalala	Karuṇa
Apsarasa	Kakubha
Arāya	Khalaja etc.
Aśveṣa	

Viskanda & Samskanda are also thought to be demons. Four main groups of demons are mentioned in AV viz.

Group	Nature	Reference
1. Piśāca	Preys on flesh	V.29.5
2. Rākṣasa	Steals away the senses, catches joints	II.9.1
3. Atrin	Preys on flesh	II.32.3
4. Kaṇva	Preys on foetus in the womb	II.25.3

In addition to above Gandharva (IV.37.11) and Apsarasas are also have been mentioned. Apsarasas bewilder the mind (II.25; IV.37; XIX.36.6) and causes insanity. According to AV there were also some benevolent spirits which fought with the evil one for example, Pinga which preserves the babe at birth (VIII.6.25) and chases the amorous Gandharvas away. AV also believes that lightning stroke as a cause of disease (I.13).

d) Heredity and infection as causes of diseases

AV at one place refers that sin committed by parents and is in all probability hinting at the origin of the disease by heredity (V.30.2-3).

The spread of diseases through infection is expressed by the AV as sores and pustules fly away as the eagle from the nest (VI.83.1). The germ of Yakṣma (consumption) arising from excessive cohabitation, flies like a bird from one place to the other and enters the body of a man (VII.76.4).

Seasonal variations were also mentioned as causes of diseases, epidemic of Takman (fever) is at a high level in the rainy season hence it is known as Varṣika; it is known as Graiṣma and Śārada because it occurs in summer and autumn seasons respectively (V.22.13). Takman which occurs throughout the year is known as ‘Hāyana’ (XIX.39.10).

e) Doṣas (humours) as the causes of diseases

AV refers to Tridoṣa (Vāta, Pitta & Kapha) theory in the context of treatment of Yakṣma (I.12.3). Diseases are believed to be caused by cloud (water), wind and lightening (fire or heat) examples are Āsrāva (diabetes insipidus) is caused by wind (VI.44.2) and Takman (fever) is originated by Agni (fire) (VI.20.1). It seems AV recognizes only four types of Vāyu Viz. Prāṇa, Apāna, Vyāna and Samāna (X.2.13). Amongst them Prāṇa, means breathing-in and Apāna means breathing-out. Hence they are also requested not to leave the body, but to bear the limbs till old age (III.11.6). The idea of Triguṇas is also found in the AV (X.8.43). There is a prayer to Prāṇa vāyu and Apāna vāyu to protect the man from death (II.16.1).

f) Role of Gods in the development of diseases

AV believes that gods inflict diseases. They send diseases as punishment for sins committed by sinners. Gods like Rudra, Soma, Varuṇa, Vāstoṣpati, Āditya, Mārut etc have the power of causing diseases as one of their numerous attributes. For example,

Disease	God involved	Reference
1. Takman (fever)	Son of Varuṇa	I.25.3; VI.96.2
2. Jalodara (Ascites)	Varuṇa	I.25.3; VI.96.2

According to AV Rudra is the best physician, he possesses healing remedies, he is the first divine physician, he can cause the diseases and performs the cure as well. AV also treats lightning strokes as causes of diseases.

II. Diagnosis of diseases

The word for disease in the AV is ‘Yakṣma’. The word ‘Roga’ also occasionally appears (I.2.4; II.3.3; III.28.5; VI.44.1,2; 120.3; IX.8.1-5, 21, 22). There was no strict criteria mentioned in AV for diagnosis of diseases. Atharvaṇ knew about a number of

diseases through their symptoms. A large number of symptoms were given to Takman or of any other disease and those were found common to a large number of diseases. From this we can draw the inference that there was no clear cut diagnosis, no definite relation between cause and effect established between a disease and its superficial symptoms.

Every disease is generally thought of as caused by enemy, witchcraft or gods. In some cases the symptoms given clearly bring home to us the disease with its real nature. For example Jalodara (ascites) was connected to Varuṇa. He inflicts this disease as a punishment to one who tells lies (I.10.3).

The hymns are prayers, addressed to the gods or the diseases or to the remedies. Through which one can know the cause of the disease, symptoms of the disease and remedy as well. The following are some examples.

a) Hymns addressed to Gods

	God/Goddess	Disease/Condition	Reference
a)	Rudra	Against Akṣata	VI.57
b)	Rudra	Against Internal Pain	VI.90
c)	Garutman	Against Viṣa	IV.6
d)	Saraśwathi	Against Krimi in children	V.23
e)	Agni, Soma & Varuṇa	Against Takman	V.22
f)	Indra, Parjanya	Against Āsrāva	I.2

b) Hymns addressed to diseases

	Diseases	Reference
a)	Apachit	VI. 83; VII. 76. 1,2
b)	Jayanya	VII. 76. 3, 4, 5
c)	Takman	V. 22. 2, 6, 7
d)	Balāsa	VI. 14
e)	Kāsa	VI. 105

c) Hymns addressed to remedies (medicines)

<i>Drug</i>	<i>Disease</i>	<i>Reference</i>
a) Rohiṇi	For the healing of fracture	IV.12
b) Silāci	For the healing of wounds	V.5
c) Pippali	For the cure of Kṣipta	VI.109
d) Kuṣṭha	For the cure of Takman	V.4
e) Viśāṇaka	For the cure of Āsrāva	VI.44

III Classification of disease

AV mentions a large number of diseases both minor and major, known and unknown in clear terms or vaguely. AV at IX.8.1-21 refers a large number of diseases, for example, Śīrṣāmaya (diseases of head) diseases of heart, rectum, back, other parts of the body, blood, bones etc. Regarding the number of diseases AV also mentions that there are one hundred deaths / diseases (I.30.3 ; III.11.1 & VIII.2.27). Yakṣma is the regular Atharvaṇ term for disease.

Classification of the diseases into various groups is not found in AV as in Āraka and Suśruta Saṁhitās, because during the Vedic period pathology and diagnosis, therapeutics and toxicological aspects were not clearly settled. Jolly, the author of Indian Medicine and others have admitted a close relation between the Vedic and latter names of diseases (except of course, Takman)

AV deals prominently with the following diseases.

	Disease	Equivalent	Reference
1.	Akṣiroga	Eye diseases	VI. 16
2.	Amīva	Feminine demon causing malnutrition	VIII.8.2,28; XIX.44.7
3.	Apachit	Scrofula	VI.25; 57,83; VII.74, 76, 12
4.	Āsrāva	Polyurea	I.2; II.3; VI.44
5.	Asthibhagna	Fracture of bone	IV. 12
6.	Balāsa	Skin disease	VI. 14; VI.127
7.	Grāhi	Epilepsy	VI.112; 113

8.	Harimā	Chlorosis	I.22
9.	Hṛdhyota	Heart disease	I.22
10	Jalodara	Ascites	I.10; VII.83; VI.22, 24,96
11	Jayānya	Tuberculosis	VII.76.3,4,5
12	Kāsa	Cough	VI. 105
13	Kilāsa (Kuṣṭha)	Skin disorder (Leucoderma)	I.23, 24
14	Krimi	Worminfestation	II.31.1
15	Kṣetriya (?)	Demon causing internal disease	II.8, 10, III.7
16	Kṣipta	---	VI 109
17	Mūtrāvarodha	Urinary obstruction	I.3
18	Rudhiraśrāva	Bleeding	I.17; VI.127, IX.8.1, XII.4.4
19	Śīrṣakti	Headache	IV.12
20	Śleṣma	Phlegm	I.12,12,VI.105
21	Śūla	Pain	VI.90
22	Takman	Fever	I.25, V.22, VI.20, VII.116,
23	Tṛṣṇa	Thirst	II.29
24	Unmāda	Insanity	VI. 111
25	Viṣkandha	Tetanus (?)	I.16. II.4. 4; III.9; V.30.8,9; IX.8.5, 13-19, 21,22; XIX.44.1-2
26	Yakṣma	Consumption (Tuberculosis)	VIII.7.15; XII.2.1

In addition to above the following diseases are also mentioned in AV but are treated as minor diseases due to their severity. They are,

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|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Ajnātayakṣma | 2. Akṣata | 3. Alaji | 4. Angabheda |
| 5. Angajwara | 6. Apva | 7. Jambha | 8. Karṇaśūla |
| 9. Lohita | 10. Pālita | 11. Pāman | 12. Papayakṣma |
| 13. Pratyāmaya | 14. Udyuga | 15. Vidradha | 16. Viśalpāka |
| 17. Viśārika | 18. Viśūcika | | |

IV Practice of medicine

The Atharvaṇ priest was the medical practitioner with par excellence. He knows the names of the plants and their properties. Priest was the chief character on the Atharvan stage. There are details and professional exhortation of a medical man in AV (V.30). The best physician was he who cured the disease and prepared the medicine. According to AV the physician as such was the potential amulet (II.9.5). About a patient AV tells “He hath attained attainments, he hath attained the strong hold of the living for, a hundred physicians are his, also a thousand plants (II.9.3).

“Śatham Hyasya Bhiṣajah, Sahasramuta Vīrudhāh” – II.9.3.

All together, in the AV many diseases, medicines, origin of diseases and specific medicines for particular diseases were given.

Prognosis of the diseases has also been discussed in AV as Adbhutāni and Ariṣṭāni. It has not only mentioned such medical Ariṣṭas as ‘Delirium’ in Takman, ‘Excessive urine-secretion’ in diabetes but has also given a number of Adbhūtāni which foretell death of a person. For example, Hymn no: XIX. 33.1-3 is a performance where evil influence over a person on whom stars seem to fall is mitigated; and hymn number XX.8.1 is a “Śakuna Śānti”. Many of such pariṣiṣṭas of the AV are entirely devoted to the treatment of Ariṣṭās and Adbhūtās and even the Śāntikalpa attached to AV does the same thing for the medical and non-medical benefit of a person.

V Method of treatment

According AV method of treatment was very simple. There are medicinal charms in which some symptoms are occasionally given, the disease is either mentioned or not mentioned, its cause is vaguely supposed to be some enemy - witchcraft or the wrath of some god or some such, thing And some plants are mentioned which are to be used as an amulet or employed otherwise. For example, Anjana plant was used as ointment, amulet for bathing and in a drink (XIX.45.4).

AV also discusses some non pharmacological methods in the treatment of diseases. For example, Harima (jaundice) and Hṛdhyot (heart disease) depart, when sun rises (I.22.1). Which indicates, sunrays are helpful in treating these diseases. In addition, ‘amulet, agni (fire), water etc are considered useful non-pharmacological items for these diseases. The sun dispels diseases and sickness and there were references in AV regarding

the germ killing power of sun rays (II.32.1 & V.23.6). In this context we should recall the fact that Sun was the father of the divine physicians, Aświns AV is primarily a charm system in which the charm system was systematically accompanied by an 'Amulet'. Thus there were number of charms to cure number of diseases.

AV considers amulet as a living force better than a thousand medicines like Jangīḍa (XIX.34.7). Agni (fire) was thought of as the best physician (I.28.1) and he makes men strong and he also knows immortality. He cures all diseases and confers long life. (V.28.1).

In AV water gets first place as a curative medicine (medicinal water to be understood). Water gives strength, it is remedial, it expels diseases (I.4;5;6; III.7.5; VI.91.3).

AV is seen recommending only one plant to be used with charm for one disease. There are special hymns dedicated to the praise of herbs like Jangīḍa (*Oroxylum indicum* Vent), Kuṣṭha (*Saussurea lappa* C.B. Clarke), Rohiṇi, Apāmārga (*Achyranthes aspera* Linn.) etc.

Atharvaṇ medical practices are of semi religious nature in which fire is kindled and oblations are offered. Even in them a distinction is made as "Pauṣṭikavidhi" (beneficial rites) and Ghoravidhi (witchcraft rites). The latter of course, are undertaken to chase away the demons of diseases. Symbolism is the soul of these quasi-religious medical performances. Here the shooting of the arrow stands for the release of the checked wine; the loosening of the joints stands for the loosening of the foetus in the womb; the turban of the 'Munja grass' if put down means in depositing of the disease (head ache); the diseases can be transferred to birds and frogs; the Kṣetrīya can be buried in the fields; the burning of the chaff burns up the diseases; the shaking of the pebbles chases away the demon of diseases.

In the beginning the AV and Āyurveda (the medical tradition of the Vedic age) cured diseases by charms and incantations together; with the use of a single medicinal plant. Later on in addition to charm method the drug method was introduced. The charm system was the holier of the two and hence the drug system was the secular part.

Conditions like Krimi (worm infestation) (II.31; 32, V.23), heat stroke (VI.52) are treated during Atharvaṇ time. Where as for growth of hair also there is one treatment mentioned in AV (VI.136;137). There were number of references available in AV for the

cure of all types of diseases (II.9.33; III.31; IV.13; 28; V.9; 30; 91; VI.26; 85; IX.8 etc)

Preventive aspects of medicine i.e. for longer life span several hymns were also ascribed (I.30,35; II.9,13, 28, 29; III.1; V,30; VI.41.53; VIII.2)

VI Agadatantra (Toxicology)

AV contains many charms against poison of snakes, scorpions, insects, plants and arrows. At one place, AV mentions that there is poison in fire, in the sun, in the earth and in the plants. Where as poisonous plants are found in mountains. According to AV ants like 'Upajikā' (termites or white ants) and particularly water excreted by them is an effective antidote. As mentioned above there are references about some poisonous snakes, plants and antidotes (IV.6;7; V.13; VI.12; VI.56; VI.100; VII.88.8; X.4). For example,

Snakes like Kasarnīla, Śvitra, Asita, Ratharvī, Pṛdaku, Aghāśva, Svaja, Adyāvanta, Tiraśchirāji, Darvī, Karikrata, etc are poisonous. Some of them live in grass and poison of the snakes is either in their top, middle or bottom. There are references about scorpions. Kankaparvan, Sarkota, Vṛśchika and Babhru were the terms used for scorpion in the AV. Its poison is in its tail (VII.56.8) Kandaviṣa seems to be some poisonous root (X.4.22). There was a clear reference regarding the usage of the poisoned arrow in AV (IV.6.5).

The plants useful as antidotes for snake poison were Soma, Taudī, Ghṛtāchī Durbha grass, Aśvaivara, Paruṣavara, Śweta, Paidva etc. (X.4. 1-24). AV also mentions water treatment for poison (VI.12). Cure of poison of scorpion sting, sting of poisonous insects etc has been dealt in AV with the use of Madhula plant and water produced by Upajikā ants (VII.56). Thus the treatment for poison has been mentioned in AV at number of places, for example IV.6,7 ; V.13; VI.12.52,56, 88,90,93, 100; VII.56; 88 X.4.

VII Rasāyana (rejuvenation therapy)

Originally 'Rasa' means water only. Vedic texts consistently use 'Rasa' in the sense of water. 'Āpām rasah' is a frequently appearing phrase in the Atharvaṇ (IV.4.5). Similarly in the AV there was frequent praise of water and its virtues such as conferring luster, putting away old age, resisting of diseases and bringing of immortality are emphasized. (I.4.4; I.5.4; I.6.2; III.7.5.). Waters contain medicine, they are immortalizing, they cure all diseases, they do away with deformities, they make body and skin healthy (I.4.5, 6;33, III.7.13; IV.33; VI.22; 23;24). AV tells us indirectly that water contains

nectar, the mythological divine drink which makes gods unageing and immortal.

Thus in the vedic age water was regarded as Rasāyana and it is said to fulfil all the functions of the later Rasāyana Viz. conferring of immortality and dispelling of diseases. AV feels that water is as skilled physician (VI.24.2; III.7) and even the herbs are medicinal because they are products of water (VIII.7.3). But references of clearcut definition, of Rasāyana, drugs & procedures for Rasāyana are not found in AV as mentioned in Āyurveda.

VIII Vājīkaraṇa (aphrodisiac therapy)

The AV contains special charms to promote virility (IV.4;VI.72, 101; VII. 90). AV recommends juice of Vṛṣa, which creates an urge, enhances semen and protects man. Ucchūṣma / Kapikacchu (*Mucuna prurita* Hook) as highly efficacious and potent for nourishing semen (aphrodisiac). Due to the mention of Ucchūṣma as aphrodisiac, it may be inferred that the Vedic people knew the use of aphrodisiacs. Too much use of aphrodisiacs brought about impotency and the Atharvaṇ perhaps knew it (VI.138.2) Vājīkaraṇa and Klībatva are the ultimate results of the proper and excessive usage of Vājīkaraṇa drugs respectively. But definition, principles etc. were not referred clearly in AV.

Yakṣma (consumption / tuberculosis)

AV mentions that it is the general internal disease found both in humans and cattles(VIII.7.15; XII.2.1)It is characterized by entering and possessing each and every part of the body (VI.85.1; IX.8.7,9). It causes disintegration of the limbs, fever in the limbs, pain in heart and in all parts of the body (V.30.8,9; IX.8.5, 13-19,21,22). Majority of writers on Vedic literature believe that Yakṣma referred to a class of diseases whose principal characteristics were those of consumption. Yakṣma is the general term used for a disease in AV. R.Muller, considers that, in the eyes of the Vedic people, Yakṣma was simply a demon or external force who, when entering the body, caused malady. It appears from the point of view of the ancient Indian that Muller is quite correct; but one cannot overlook the similarities between the description of Yakṣma and those of consumption, or more generally, those of any disease which brings about a general condition of bodily decay. The hymns or charms of AV speak of many Yakṣmas, which are classified as speaking like a child and like an adult, suggesting that their victims were both children and adults (IX.8.10-12; XIX.36.3). Specifically, there is the “Ajnātayakṣma” (unknown

Yakṣma) and the “Rājayakṣma” (Royal Yakṣma or Yakṣma of kings or king among the diseases) (VI.127.3; III.11.1; XI.3.39; XII.5.22). In one important verse it is mentioned that, the Yakṣmas have their origin in the relatives of the bride and to follow the wedding procession (XIV.2.10) and more particularly Yakṣma is said to be divinely sent and caused by sin (VIII.7.3). There is reference in AV that, the Yakṣma can attack the stomach, lungs, navel and heart (IX.8.12).

The word “Jāyānya” mentioned in AV also resembles consumption and it breaks ribs, settles in the lungs, harbours in the back and springs from excessive sexual intercourse (VII.76.3). According to AV the germ of consumption arising from excessive cohabitation, flies like a bird and enters the body of a man. It is of two kinds, chronic and the transient (VII.76.4).

Management of Yakṣma :

The principal cures for a patient afflicted by Yakṣma included the recitation of spells, of which the most efficacious was the hymn II.33., along with use of herbs like Kuṣṭha (*Saussurea lappa* C.B. Clarke)/Cīpudru (*Pinus longifolia* Roxb.?) and Arundhati (*Sida cordifolia* Linn.) (V.4.9; VI.127.1,3; VI.59.2)

One Amulet which is helpful in dispelling the Yakṣma is also mentioned in AV (XII.2.1,2,14). Anjana has the power to remove it from the limbs (XIX.44.1-2). Some of the divinities helpful for eradication of Yakṣma include, Sun, Agni, Sāvitrī, Vāyu and Āditya (V.29.13; IV.25.5; IX.8.22). Charms, blessings of the gods, other plant materials were used to prevent attacks from the Yakṣmas. Varuṇa, (*Crataeva nurvula* Buch) and Śatavara-amulet protects from the Yakṣmas. At one place the scent of the burning Gulgulu plant (*Guggulu-Balsamodendron mukul* Hook Stocks) is said to disperse Yakṣma (VI.85; XIX.19.36; 38)

Charms II.33; VI.85; XIX.36,38 are devoted specially to the removal of Yakṣma. Amongst above charms II.33 appears to have been very popular and very effective. The healer in AV desires that the venom of all Yakṣmas to be discharged with urine and exercises the poison of all the Yakṣmas from the patient (IX.8.10).

AV charms out of the patient, the every head disease; because of that, the Yakṣma flows forth from the ear, from the mouth (IX.8.3). The Yakṣma has also been charmed out of the patient because it can crawl along the two thighs and enter the two Gaviṇikas (ureters ?) (IX.8.7).

Conclusion

It is therefore quite natural for us to look upon the Vedic Saṁhitās as a channel through which this continuous tradition of Indian Medical Science has reached down to the earliest systematizers. Hence it doesn't come as a surprise if the Vedic Saṁhitās contain ample material bearing on diseases and medicines. Therefore we are required to look upon Vedic medicine as a part of the tradition from which very probably Āyurveda was gradually evolved. To conclude, Āyurveda has been rightly referred as Upaveda or Upāṅga of AV by some scholars.

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सारांश

अथर्ववेद में सामान्य (काय) चिकित्सा - यक्ष्म (कन्सम्पशन् / ट्युबर्क्युलोसिस्) का विशेष उल्लेखन

पी.वी.वी. प्रसाद.

अथर्ववेद आयुर्विज्ञान के एक अनोखा संहिता हैं। इस में आयुर्विज्ञान का कई विकास के अवस्थाएँ और सबसे प्राचीन एवं चिकित्सा के बहुत से अवस्थाओं के संदर्भ भी अंतर्विष्ट है। इस वेद ने चिकित्सक के लिए ब्रह्म शब्द का प्रयोग किया है। अथर्वण नाम ही भेषज का पर्याय है। अथर्ववेद वेदकालीन आयुर्वेद की मन्त्र पद्धति के प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। अथर्ववेद के एक श्लोक के अनुसार मन्त्र एवं जन्त्र पौधों और औषधों से ज्यादा क्षमताशाली होते हैं। कायचिकित्सा आयुर्वेद के आठ अंगों में से एक है। इस के विषय पर अथर्ववेद में विस्तार से उल्लेख है। यह समाचार से वैदिककाल के आयुर्विज्ञान के परम्परा का निरन्तरता को स्थापित करने में मदद मिलती है। इसलिए कुछ विद्वानों ने आयुर्वेद को अथर्ववेद का उपवेद या उपांग कहते हैं। अथर्ववेद में बहुत से प्रधान एवं अप्रधान रोगों के विषय पर कही स्पष्ट रूप में कही अस्पष्ट रूप में उल्लेख मिलता है। अथर्ववेद में रोग के लिए यक्ष्म शब्द का प्रयोग किया गया है। परन्तु इस वेद में रोगों की वर्गीकरण निदान को लेकर नहीं किया गया है। इस प्रकार इस लेख में अथर्ववेद की विचारों यानी रोगों का निदान, वर्गीकरण एवं उनकी संख्या, यक्ष्म के विशेष उल्लेख के साथ वर्णन किया गया है।