

AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF ECZEMA (VICHARCHIKA) IN CHILDREN - A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The skin is the largest organ of the body. The skin protects us from microbes and the element, helps regulate the body temperature and permits the sensations of touch, heat and cold. Now a day environmental pollution, mental *vicharchika* stress and modern life styles leads to accumulation of toxin in the body and exerts their effect in the form of various chronic disorders like which can be compared to Eczema. Progression of the disease is due to disturbed life, faulty dietary habits. The modern science has greatly advanced, particularly in dermatology but there is no specific medicament for sure cure of eczema but symptomatic treatments like topical use of steroid are used

but they produce serious side effects and recurrence. But Ayurveda believes that all *Dosha* in balance is essential for well being. Ayurveda offers treatment for the symptoms of *Vicharchika* (Eczema).

KEYWORDS: *Vicharchika*, Eczema, Balanced *Dosha*.

INTRODUCTION

Skin is the outermost covering of the body which acts as a protective barrier. But most of time, it is exposed to many factors, which can damage it and may cause the many disorder like *Vicharchika* (Eczema). Eczema is skin condition caused due to inflammation of skin.^[1] This is characterized by itching, lichenification, dryness, pain, discoloration. It is most irritative disease and the patient always experience the physical, emotional and socio-economic embarrassment in the society. Eczema is chronic skin disease and in Ayurveda it is

mentioned under the heading of *Kshudra kushta*. The clinical feature of *Vicharchika* like *kandu*, *pidika*, *Shavavarnata*, *Srava*, *Rukshta*, *Daha*, *Raji* and *Vedana* are very similar to the features of eczema.

The existing treatment in modern science for Eczema consists of reassurance, elimination of predisposing causes and palliative measures. It is also said that no specific medication can cure eczema, though few drugs give symptomatic relief only.^[2] Modern dermatology employs systemic and local administration of steroids for the management of eczema.^[3] Despite an initial response, maintenance therapies with small doses of systemic and topical glucocorticoids usually produce hazardous ill effects.^[4] Similarly electrotherapy, ultraviolet therapy, hydrotherapy, X-ray therapy, etc. Are having their own limitations and these therapies are neither popular nor much responding. Ayurveda believes that All *Dosha* in balance is essential for well- being and offers broad line of treatment for the symptom of eczema. Ayurveda offers treatment for the root of eczema by cleansing vitiated *Dosha* and balancing the *Dosha* and *Dhatus*. So to manage this condition, snehan therapy, *abhyantara snehan* was planned. *Abhyantara sneha* in the form of *shamana sneha* acts by normalizing the aggravated doshas, both of pitta and vata kapha pradhana conditions, without expelling them and without disturbing the normal doshas.^[5]

ECZEMA

Disease Review

Eczema or dermatitis is a pattern of inflammatory response of the skin which is the resultant of delayed type hypersensitivity mediated by memory T lymphocytes in the skin.^[6] The clinical lesions may be acute (wet and edematous) or chronic (dry, thickened, and scaly), depending on the persistence of the insult.^[7] The term eczema is broadly applied to a range of persistent or recurring skin rashes characterized by redness, skin edema, itching and dryness, with possible crusting, flaking, blistering, cracking, oozing or bleeding. Areas of temporary skin discoloration sometimes characterize healed lesions, though scarring is rare.^[8] Long-standing eczema is often dry and is characterized by thickened, scaling skin with hyperpigmentation and visible criss. The eczemas are a disparate group of diseases, but unified by the presence of itch and, in the acute stages, of oedema (spongiosis) in the epidermis. In early disease the stratum corneum remains intact, so the eczema appears as a red, smooth, oedematous plaque. With worsening disease the oedema becomes more severe, tense blisters appear on the plaques or they may weep plasma.^[9]

Vicharchika An Ayurvedic Interpretation

Ayurvedically, eczema is considered to be a type of *Kushtha*, which is a disease of the skin. It is also known as a type of *Twak Roga*, which also signifies that it is a skin disease, as “*Twak*” translates to skin and “*Roga*” translates to pain. Eczema is widely considered to be specific type of *Kushtha* known as *Vicharchika*, a skin condition with a complex pathology, varying presentations, and numerous treatments within the context of Ayurveda. As described in terms of *nidana*, *purva rupa*, *rupa*, *samprapti*, and *chikitsa*, *Vicharchika* can most certainly be correlated with the modern interpretation of eczema or atopic dermatitis.

Ayurvedic Classification

Both the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita classify skin diseases into two categories: the *Mahakushthas* (Major) and *Kshudra* (Minor). There are seven *Mahakushtha* and eleven *Kshudra Kushtham*, for a total of eighteen *Kushtham*. The *Mahakusht Kushtham* include those that are considered variations of leprosy, while the *Kshudra Kushtham* comprise all other skin conditions.^[10,11] The names and individual definitions vary depending on the author, but the quantity of conditions remains mostly consistent among Ayurvedic texts. It is generally agreed by most Ayurvedic scholars that *Vicharchika*, a minor *Kushtha*, most closely resembles the modern interpretation of eczema or atopic dermatitis, although there are some who consider *Pama* to be eczema as well. Although it is among the minor *Kushtham*, *Vicharchika* it is a chronic and involved condition.

The Kshudra kushtas are listed as follows, according to both Charaka and Sushruta. Although each lists varies slightly, *Vicharchika* is listed in both:

Charaka's Eleven Minor <i>Kushtham</i> ^[12]	Sushruta's Eleven Minor <i>Kushtham</i> ^[13]
<i>Ekakusths</i>	<i>Aruna</i>
<i>Carmalkhya</i>	<i>Sthumlarushkam</i>
<i>Kitibha</i>	<i>Mahakushtam</i>
<i>Vipadika</i>	<i>EkaAkushtam</i>
<i>Alasaka</i>	<i>Charmadalam</i>
<i>Dadru</i>	<i>Visarpah</i>
<i>Carmadala</i>	<i>Sidhma</i>
<i>Pama</i>	<i>Vicharchika</i>
<i>Visphota</i>	<i>Kitima</i>
<i>Sataru</i>	<i>Pama</i>
<i>Vicharchika</i>	<i>Rasaka</i>

Purva Rupa (Prodromal Symptoms)

As enumerated in the Charaka Samhita, the prodromal symptoms include: Loss of touch sensation Excessive or no perspiration Deranged complexion Appearance of rashes, horripilation (goose bumps), itching, piercing pain, exertion, exhaustion, and excessive pain in wounds.^[14]

Rupa (Symptoms)

In modern Ayurvedic literature, *Vicharchika* is characterized by the following symptoms, which correspond with commonly known symptoms of eczema:

Ati Kandu (Excessive itching): Varying from mild to severe, interfering with work and sleep.

Bahu Sraava (Edema and pustules): Characterized by superficial inflammatory edema of epidermis associated with vesicle formation (common in wet eczema).

Rukshata (Roughness): Chronic lesions of eczema may be dry and rough.

Shyava Pidika (Redness and pustules): In chronic cases of eczema, integument (skin) appears thickened and is hyp pigmented.

Raji (Lichenification, thickening): Due to scratching in chronic cases of eczema, the skin becomes, thick, hyperpigmented with visible crisscross ridges.^[15]

The *Sushruta Samhita* defines *Vicharchika* as “excessive pain and itching, giving rise to extremely dry, crack like marks on the body^[16].” This definition certainly describes one of the many presentations of eczema, as we know it. The *Charaka Samhita* depicts *Vicharchika* in a slightly different way. “It consists of pimples which are itchy, blackish, and with excessive discharge^[17].” Both seem to be describing a condition in which both *vata* and *kapha* are involved in the pathology. Sushruta’s description appears to reveal both *vata* and *kapha* vitiation, with dryness and cracking due to the *vata*, and the itching due to *kapha*. Charaka’s definition however, clearly favors *kapha* as the primary vitiated dosha. In fact, Charaka specifically labels *Vicharchika* as a *Kapha* imbalance, but the blackish coloring to the lesions indicates that *vata* must also be a factor.

Sushruta goes on to classify *Vicharchika* as a *pitta* driven condition, which indicates that heat and redness are present, and Charaka clearly states, “All types of *Kushhta* are caused by the three *doshas* together, so predominance or minimal role of each *dosha* must be determined from the respective symptoms.^[18]” All three *doshas* are involved in the formation of this condition, therefore, symptoms can be present relating to each *dosha*.

Nidana (Etiology)

The Sushruta Samhita lists the etiology of *Kushtha* in general: “Improper diet or conduct, especially the ingestion of improper, unwholesome, indigestible, or uncongenial food; physical exercise or sexual intercourse immediately after partaking of any oleaginous (greasy) substance, or after vomiting; constant use of milk in combination with the meat of any domestic, aquatic, or amphibious animal; a cold water bath after an exposure to heat; and repression of any natural urges.^[19]”

Samprapti

Acharya's have described the *Samprapti* for *Kushtha* in general, is taken as follow *Vicharchika* also. According to Charak samhita due to various *Nidan sevana*, *Tridosha* gets vitiated simultaneously & produce *Shaithilya* in the *Twak*, *Mamsa*, *Rakta* and *Ambu*. Then *Tridosha* gets seated in *Shithilya dhatu* and vitiating them with *Lakshanotpatti* of *Kushtha Roga*.^[20]

The pathogenesis involved in the manifestation of *Kushtha Roga* in general and *Vicharchika* in particular is vitiation of *Tridosha* predominantly of *Kapha Dosha*.

Line of treatment

As *always* involves more than one *Dosha*, the *Chikitsa* will be based on the presence of particular symptoms. The most aggravated symptom should be treated first. The *Ayurveda* classics advocate several line of conservative treatment for *Kushtha* disease specially *Vicharchika*. Also the disease which doesn't respond to the various medical treatment are definitely of blood vitiated disorders as per *Ayurvedic* understanding. Among the *Shodhana karmas* (purificatory treatments), bloodletting is considered as the best treatment for skin diseases.

The Charak Samhita offers detailed treatment for each *Dosha* although none specifically For *Vicharchika*. In cases of *Vata* predominant *Kushtha*, ghee is prescribed. For *Pitta*

predominant *Kushtha virechena* (purgation) followed by *Rakta mokshna* (bloodletting), and for *Kapha* predominant *Kushtha*, *Vamana* (therapeutic vomiting) is utilized.^[21]

Sushrut acharya put forward *Doshanusari* (according to *Doshas*) bloodletting Therapy. Acharya Sushruta categorized *Vicharchika* (dry eczema) as *Pitta pradhan Kshudra kushtha*. Two types of treatment are advised for *Kushtha*, *Shodhan* and *Shamana* Therapy.^[22] For *Piita pradhana*, in the *Kshudra kushtha*, *Jalauka vacharana* (bloodletting by leech) is the Ideal treatment.

Raktamokshan

Acharya Sushruta says *Rakta mokshanas* the most effective therapy in half of the body ailments. A study on the use of *Rakta mokshna*, specifically utilizing *Jalauka* (leeches), indicated a dramatic improvement of the symptoms of *Vicharchika*. Blood-letting by making use of leeches has found to be very is effective in reliving the signs and symptoms of Eczema. Thus leech therapy proved to be an effective, time saving, affordable and acceptable treatment in skin diseases, especially in Eczema. According to Acharya Sushruta, if a person regularly undergoes bloodletting, he can develop resistance against all types of skin diseases.^[38] Blood-letting is one of the ancient and important para-surgical procedures described in *Ayurveda* for treatment of various diseases. Various methods are employed for blood-letting such as the use *Shringa* (horn), *Jalauka* (leech), *Alabu* (gourd), *Prachhana* (scarification) and *Siravyadha* (vein puncture). Among them, leech therapy (blood-letting using leech) has gained greater attention globally, because of its medicinal values it possesses. Being a disease caused due to vitiated blood, the same blood-letting therapy using leeches can be advocated in case of Eczema also. The Acharya Sushruta empha sized the *Guna* of *Shring* as *Madhura* (Sweet), *Snigdha* (Oily) and *Ushna* (Hot) which made it *Vata ghana* in nature.^[23]

After minimum four setting of leech application with seven days interval, Patient experiences relief of symptoms significantly such as erythema, edema, oozing, excoriation, etc. Also, relief of symptom provided a better quality of life these patients.^[24]

Virechan karmas

Virechana (systemic purification by giving purgative drug) is better for the skin diseases where *Pitta* and *Rakta* are mainly involved. According to Charak procedure of *Virechan* should be done by the use of *safed nishoth*, *Danti* root, *Triphala*. The role of *Virechan* karma

or purgation as a treatment for *Vicharchika* has also shown to be highly valuable for this condition.

Lepas

Lepas are topical treatment commonly used to address symptoms on the *Vicharchika*. Common herbs used in *Lepa* for *Vicharchika* include Haritaki and vidanga. Commonly used for the treatment of *Vicharchika* are Guduchi, Tumeric, and Amla, Shatavari, Nimba is the herb described as *Kushthgna* by Bhavaprakash and its medicated oil is one of the best healing and disinfectant agents for skin diseases.

Vaman

It is the first of the five principle therapies in *Pancha karma*. *Vamana* is considered to be the effective treatment for both *Pitta* and *Kapha* excess. Acharya Charak says that if *Kustha* affected the upper part of the body, the patient should be subjected to the procedure of *Vaman* by the use of *Madanphal*, *Mulathi*, *Parora* leaf mixed with the juice of Neem.

Shaman chikitsa

When a full *Shodana chikitsa* (i.e. *Panchkarma*) is not possible due to weakened *Ojas* than *Vicharchika* treated by *Shaman chikitsa*. In the *Ayurvedic* text described many formulated *Yog*.

Vishtailam

Karanj, *Haridra*, *Daruharidra*, *Arka*, *Taggar*, *Karveer*, *Vaca*, *Kustha*, *Aphota*, *Raktachandan*, *Jati*, *Saptparna*, *Manjistha*, *Saindhav* each 20gm and *Vatsnabh* 40gm with these oil 640ml is cooked along with four times cow urine it is very effective in *Vicharchika*.

Durvadhtailam

Oil is cooked with four times juice of *Durva*, it destroys *Vicharchika*.

Pathya-Apathya

Rice varieties along with the *Sastika* variety of it, the meats of the animals and birds, various preparations of the cooked *Yava*- a patient of the *Kustha* should be practicing consuming these always. The meat of the animals of the country side, the marshy area and the aquatic area, sugarcane, sesame, ghee, wine, curds and milk, the habit of the sleeping by day, taking sour fruits, indulgence in sex, various preparation of flour-all of these excessively aggravate *Kapha*, *Pitta* as well as *Rakta*. *Susruta* addressed "patient with skin disorder should avoid the

use of meat, fat, milk, curd, oil, eatables prepared from corn flour, sours, incompatible foods and overeating, uncooked foods or that which cause indigestion, foods which cause burning sensation during digestion and which increase moisture inside the tissue”.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary view of *Vicharchika* it can be included as eczema. Long period of treatment in form of suppressive and symptomatic (topical and systemic) are necessary in both therapies. In *Ayurved kushtha* and *Kshudra Kustha* are broad concept with pointed principle of management. All aspect of treatment also describe in *vicharchika* eg. *Pathya* and *Apathya* (diet). Various drugs for systemic and local purpose in many form of drugs preparation egtablets, *Lepas*, *Rasayan* preparation, oil, qwath (decotion)etc. and special modalities for bio purification (*Panchkarma*) as also described. It means *Ayurvedic* management will be an effective and acceptable treatment in skin diseases, especially in Eczema.

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