

AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO ARSHA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LEPA CHIKITSA

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ABSTRACT

Arsha is a common ano-rectal disorder described in Ayurveda and is correlated with hemorrhoids or piles in modern medicine. It is characterized by swelling of veins in the anal canal associated with pain, bleeding, itching, and discomfort during defecation. Ayurveda considers Arsha as one of the “Ashta Mahagada” due to its chronic and difficult nature. Various treatment modalities such as Shamana Chikitsa, Shodhana Chikitsa, Kshara Karma, Agni Karma, and surgical procedures are described for its management. Among the external therapies, Lepa Chikitsa plays an important role in reducing local inflammation, pain, burning sensation, and swelling. Lepa refers to the external application of medicated herbal paste over the affected area for therapeutic purposes.

This article highlights the Ayurvedic concept of Arsha and emphasizes the role of Lepa Chikitsa in its management.

KEYWORDS: Lepa Refers To The External Application Of Medicated Herbal Paste Over The Affected Area For Therapeutic Purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Arsha is one of the most commonly occurring ano-rectal diseases affecting people due to changing lifestyle, faulty dietary habits, prolonged sitting, constipation, and lack of physical activity. In modern medicine, Arsha can be correlated with hemorrhoids, which are dilated and swollen veins present in the rectal and anal region.

According to Ayurveda, impaired digestive fire (Agnimandya) and vitiation of Doshas lead to

the formation of Arsha. Symptoms such as bleeding per rectum, pain, itching, burning sensation, and prolapse significantly affect the quality of life of patients.

Ayurveda provides both internal and external therapeutic approaches for Arsha management. Among them, Lepa Chikitsa is a simple, economical, and effective external therapy that provides symptomatic relief and promotes healing.

Nidana (Causes of Arsha)

The important causative factors of Arsha include:

- Excessive intake of spicy, oily, heavy, and junk food
- Chronic constipation
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Suppression of natural urges
- Excessive straining during defecation
- Prolonged sitting or standing
- Pregnancy
- Irregular bowel habits
- Low-fiber diet

These factors disturb the balance of Doshas and weaken Agni, ultimately leading to the development of Arsha.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

Due to improper diet and lifestyle, Agnimandya occurs, leading to the production of Ama. This causes vitiation of mainly Vata Dosha along with Pitta and Kapha. The vitiated Doshas affect the Gudavali (anal canal region) and produce swelling of veins and tissues, resulting in Arsha.

Vata causes pain and constipation, Pitta produces bleeding and burning sensation, while Kapha causes heaviness and itching.

Types of Arsha According to Dosha

1. Vataja Arsha
2. Pittaja Arsha
3. Kaphaja Arsha
4. Sannipataja Arsha

According to Origin

- Sahaja Arsha (Congenital)
- Janmottaraja or Acquired Arsha

Signs and Symptoms

Common clinical features of Arsha include:

- Bleeding during defecation
- Pain in anal region
- Burning sensation
- Itching
- Swelling around anus
- Prolapse of hemorrhoidal mass
- Constipation
- Discomfort while sitting

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of Arsha is mainly based on

- Clinical history
- Inspection of anal region
- Digital rectal examination
- Proctoscopy
- Assessment of bleeding and prolapse

Ayurvedic Management of Arsha

Ayurvedic management includes:

1. Nidana Parivarjana

Avoidance of causative factors.

2. Shamana Chikitsa

Use of medicines to pacify Doshas.

3. Shodhana Chikitsa

Purification therapies to eliminate vitiated Doshas.

4. Kshara Karma

Application of alkaline preparation.

5. Agni Karma

Therapeutic cauterization.

6. Surgical Management

Used in severe and complicated cases.

7. External Therapies

Includes Lepa Chikitsa, Sitz bath, and local applications.

Lepa Chikitsa

Definition of Lepa

Lepa is an external application of herbal paste over the affected body part for therapeutic action. The paste is prepared by mixing herbal powders or fresh herbal drugs with suitable liquid media such as water, oil, ghee, or buttermilk.

Lepa helps in reducing inflammation, pain, burning sensation, and swelling.

Importance of Lepa in Arsha

Lepa Chikitsa is beneficial in Arsha because it:

- Reduces local inflammation
- Relieves pain and burning sensation
- Decreases swelling
- Promotes wound healing
- Provides soothing effect
- Improves local circulation

Types of Lepa

1. Pralepa

Thin application with cooling effect.

2. Pradeha

Thick warm application used for pain and swelling.

3. Alepa

Simple smearing over affected region.

Drugs Used in Lepa for Arsha

Commonly used Ayurvedic drugs include

- Haridra (Turmeric)
- Neem
- Triphala
- Yashtimadhu
- Lodhra
- Nirgundi
- Daruharidra
- Dashanga Lepa
- Manjistha

These drugs possess anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, analgesic, and wound-healing properties.

Preparation of Lepa

The selected herbs are cleaned, dried, and powdered finely. The powder is mixed with suitable media such as:

- Ghrita (Ghee)
- Taila (Oil)
- Takra (Buttermilk)
- Water
- Herbal decoctions

A smooth paste is prepared for external application.

Procedure of Lepa Application Step 1: Cleaning of Area

The anal region is cleaned properly with lukewarm water or Triphala decoction.

Step 2: Preparation of Paste Fresh herbal paste is prepared.

Step 3: Application The paste is applied gently over the hemorrhoidal mass.

Step 4: Duration The Lepa is kept for a specific duration until partially dry.

Step 5: Removal The area is washed carefully with lukewarm water.

Mode of Action of Lepa

Lepa acts through local absorption of active herbal constituents through the skin and mucosa.

Its therapeutic actions include.

- Anti-inflammatory action
- Analgesic effect
- Reduction in burning sensation
- Reduction in swelling and edema
- Antimicrobial action
- Promotion of tissue healing

The cooling and soothing properties help particularly in Pittaja Arsha.

Benefits of Lepa Chikitsa

- Non-invasive therapy
- Cost-effective treatment
- Easy to prepare and apply
- Minimal side effects
- Provides quick symptomatic relief
- Can be combined with internal medicines

Limitations of Lepa Chikitsa

- Mainly provides symptomatic relief
- Less effective in advanced prolapsed piles
- Requires proper hygiene and regular application
- Severe cases may require surgical intervention

DISCUSSION

Arsha is becoming increasingly common due to modern lifestyle habits and dietary irregularities. Ayurveda offers holistic management through diet, lifestyle modifications, medicines, and local therapies.

Lepa Chikitsa is an important supportive treatment that provides relief from pain, burning sensation, swelling, and inflammation. Herbal drugs used in Lepa possess significant medicinal properties that aid in local healing and symptomatic management.

Compared to many modern topical treatments, Ayurvedic Lepa preparations are economical and contain natural herbal ingredients. However, further clinical research is necessary to establish standardized formulations and scientific validation.

CONCLUSION

Arsha is a common anorectal disorder that affects the quality of life of patients. Ayurveda provides various effective treatment modalities for its management. Among external therapies, Lepa Chikitsa plays a significant role in reducing pain, inflammation, burning sensation, and swelling.

Due to its simplicity, affordability, and therapeutic benefits, Lepa therapy remains an important part of Ayurvedic management of Arsha. Proper selection of herbs and individualized treatment according to Dosha predominance are essential for better outcomes.

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