

**URTICARIA: AN AYURVEDIC POINT OF VIEW****Dr. Shubham Maheshwari\*<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Manish Mishra<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Urticaria is a common skin problem but not life threatening. It affects the 15-20% of the total population all over the world. Prevalence is more in women than men. This disease can occur due to allergen result from IgE-dependent release of mast cell mediators like histamine characterised by itchy red papules, fever, headache, vomiting, diarrhoea syncope and anaphylactic shock. According to Ayurveda, inequity in any of the three Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) can be the cause of Twak Vikara (Skin disorders). There are many Twak vikara narrated in Ayurvedic text and Sheeta Pitta (Urticaria) is one of them. It is a Vata Pradhan Tridosha Vyadhi with the involvement of Rasa and

Rakta dhatu. In our Ayurvedic classics Sheeta Pitta is mentioned with Its complete etio-pathogenesis, symptoms, treatment and complications. The present article intends to highlight the empathetic of Sheeta Pitta vis-a-vis Urticaria, etio-pathogenesis, diagnosis and Ayurvedic management Shodhan as well as Shamana chikitsa.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Sheeta Pitta, Urticaria, Shodhan, Shamana, Chikitsa.

**INTRODUCTION**

Urticaria or hives is a common skin disorder of sudden onset eruptions characterized by reddish wheals with intense itching, swelling and other systemic features e.g. headache, fever, nausea, vomiting and pain in abdomen.<sup>[1]</sup> It affects the 15-20% of the total world population.<sup>[2]</sup> Epidemiology of Urticaria is increasing now a days due to industrialization, pollution, chemical agriculture products etc. It is classified into two types according to its duration Acute Urticaria (Less than 6 weeks duration), Chronic Urticaria (More than 6 weeks

duration).<sup>[3]</sup> There is another type of Urticaria explained in modern literature that is Physical Urticaria produced by a physical stimulus such as cold, heat, pressure, vibration, sunlight, water and exercise.

In ancient Ayurvedic classics a similar description available as Sheetapitta.<sup>[4,5,6]</sup> Ayurveda regards allergy as a disorder caused by impaired digestion. Unhealthy diet and life style cause vitiation of digestive fire leading to the production of toxic substance called as Ama which is the root of all disease. This dysfunction is the cause for hyper sensitivity to substance such as dust, pollen etc. and trigger the allergic attacks. The people who do not follow the rules of Swasthavritta and take improper diet, erroneous lifestyle, stress and exposed with various pollutants become victim for several allergic diseases like Sheetapitta (Urticaria). It is a Vata Pradhan Tridoshaja vyadi with the involvement of Rasa and Rakta Dhatu.<sup>[7]</sup> It is characterized by symptoms like Varatee damstravata shotha (wheals), Kandu (itching), Toda (pricking sensation), Chardi (vomiting), Jwara (fever) and Daha (burning sensation).<sup>[8]</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this review study, we have collected information from the available Ayurvedic Samhitas, modern medical Books, reliable journals, publications and citations excluding patent subjects available on Internet are also considered for reference.

### Etiology of Sheetapitta (Causes)

The knowledge of Nidana plays a great role in the diagnosis and management of the disease because Nidana Parivarjana is the major part of the treatment.<sup>[9]</sup> Causative factors mentioned for Sheetapitta can be classified as Aharaja Hetu (Dietary factors), Viharaja Hetu (lifestyle related factors) and Agantuja (others/external factors).

1. **Aharaja Nidana** like Lavana<sup>[10]</sup> and Katu<sup>[11]</sup> Rasa Atisevana (Excessive intake of salt and spicy food), Shukta<sup>[12]</sup> (acidic preparation), Sarshapa Atisevana<sup>[13]</sup> (Excessive use of mustard).
2. **Vihara Nidana** like Sheetamaruta<sup>[14]</sup> (cold air), Varsha<sup>[15]</sup> and Sishira Ritu<sup>[16]</sup> (rainy and cold weather), Sheeta Paneeya Samsparsha<sup>[17]</sup> (cold water contact), Diwaswapna<sup>[18]</sup> (day sleep), Chardi Vegavarodha (suppress the natural urge of nausea and vomiting) and Asamyak Vamana<sup>[19]</sup> (inadequate medicated emesis).

### 3. Agantuja Nidana (Other Causes) like Keeta Damsha.<sup>[20]</sup> (insect bite), Krimi (Vahya).<sup>[21]</sup>

In modern medicine, causes responsible for Urticaria are food allergens (such as cow's milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, fish, nuts, shell fish),<sup>[22]</sup> Drug reaction (like salicylates, indomethacin, aspirin, NSAIDs), antigen sensitivity (pollen, food, helminths), blood transfusion reactions and vasculitis.<sup>[23]</sup>

#### Poorvarupa (Prodromal Symptoms)

In six step cycle of disease evolution i.e., Satha kriyakala, the poorvarupa appears in the fourth stage that is Sthana Sanshraya stage. Poorvarupa are the sign and symptoms seen just before the disease developed. Thirst (Pipasa), anorexia (Aruchi), nausea (Hrillasha), bodyache (Dehasada), heaviness in the body (Anga gaorava), redness in eye (Raktalochana) are the poorvarupas of Sheetapitta.<sup>[24]</sup>

#### Symptoms

Symptoms are manifest in the Vyaktavastha, fifth stage of pathogenesis (Kriyakala). The symptoms of Sheetapitta includes an inflammatory condition in skin resemble like wasp bite (Varateedastra Samsthanah Shotah) with other symptoms like itching (Kandu), pricking sensation (Toda), Vomiting (Chardi), Fever (Jwara) and burning sensation (Vidaha).<sup>[25]</sup>

#### Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

In aspect of modern medicine, this disease result from IgE – dependent release of mediators from sensitized basophils and mast cells upon contact with an offending antigen.<sup>[26]</sup> When the person is coming to the contact or exposure to the allergens, the antigen specific IgE antibodies bind to the high affinity receptor which are located on the surfaces of the mast cells and basophils. The mast cells are activated, then they release histamine and other vasoactive substances from mast cell and basophils in the superficial dermis which increased the capillary permeability and develop oedema.

The knowledge of Samprapti not only helps in the understanding the specific features of a disease but also useful in help to decide the line of treatment. Due to Shita marutadi nidana (cold air and weather) vitiated Vayu and Kapha are mixed with Pitta<sup>[27]</sup> and gets into the Amashaya (stomach), afflicts Agni and Rasa, Rakta dhatu. This vitiated dosha and dhatu blocks the channels associated with Rasa and Rakta, adversely affecting the digestive processes and spreads internally and externally than result into Sheetapitta.

## Diagnosis

According to the modern science as well as Ayurveda, diagnosis is based on the symptoms of Sheetaapitta (Urticaria), history taking and physical examination. The history should include –

- Any physical stimuli which aggravate the Urticaria
- Careful history of drug intake.
- Some test can be performed to identify the urticaria like-
  - ✓ **Prick Test** – To identify the drug induced Urticaria.
  - ✓ **Stool Examination** – To rule out parasitic infection.
  - ✓ **Provocation Test** – Drug induced or urticaria due to inhalants
  - ✓ **Local application of heat** – To confirm heat urticaria.
  - ✓ **Pressure Challenge on shoulder** - To rule out the pressure urticaria.

## Chikitsa (Treatment)

In modern medicine, oral H<sub>1</sub> receptor blocking Antihistamines, Mast cell stabilisers such as Montelukast and Systemic glucocorticoids are widely prescribed for the treatment of Urticaria.

Conventional medicines for allergies only treat the symptoms. The root cause is the vitiation of Doshas and Ayurveda helps in dealing with allergies in a holistic way. The basic principle of Ayurvedic treatment is maintaining the equilibrium of Tridosha and its can be done by Nidan parivarjana, Samsodhana and Samshamana.

**1. Shodhana (Purification treatment):** Shodhana Chikitsa refers to an Ayurvedic detoxification therapy that is used to remove excess Doshas and Ama (toxins) from the body. In reference to the Sheetaapitta, there are three karmas explained by our Acharya that is Vaman, Virechana and Raktamokshana.

**Vamana (Emesis):** Vamana Karma also known as therapeutic emesis is one of the five Pradhana Karmas of Panchakarma. It is the act of eliminating the vitiated Kapha through the oral route. It can be done by Patol Nimb kwatha<sup>[28]</sup>, Patol Patra Arishtaka Vara Kwath<sup>[29]</sup> and Patol Nimb with Vasa.<sup>[30]</sup>

**Virechana (Purgation):** Virechana is the Panchakarma therapy where purgation is induced by drugs for elimination of excessive Pitta Dosha from the body. Virechana with yoga of

Triphala + guggulu + pippali,<sup>[31]</sup> Triphala + madhu + navkarshika kwatha,<sup>[32]</sup> Triphala kwath with Eranda Tail.<sup>[33]</sup> can be used in Sheetapitta.

**Raktamokshana (Blood letting therapy)**- It is a method to eliminate the toxins from the blood. It is the best Shodhan karma for Rakta dusti and Rakta pradoshaja vikara. It can be performed by after Mahatiktaka Ghrutapana.<sup>[34]</sup>

**2. Shamana Chikitsa (Alleviating treatment)**- It is described for Sheetapitta under two division

**A) Bahya shamana (External application)**- There are many formulations that have been given in our Ayurvedic classics. Some are included in table 1.

**Table 1: formulations used for external application in Sheetapitta.**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Abhyanga</b> (massage)   | Katu taila. <sup>[35]</sup><br>Yavakshar saindhava sarshapa taila. <sup>[36]</sup>          |
| <b>Udvartana</b> (anointment of Taila or Choorna from below upwards)                | Eladigana churna. <sup>[37]</sup><br>Siddhartha rajni tila taila udvartana. <sup>[38]</sup> |
| <b>Lepa</b> (external application of medicament applied opposite to hair follicles) | Durva nisha. <sup>[39]</sup><br>Saindhava, Kushta Choorna mixed with Sarpi. <sup>[40]</sup> |

**A) Abhayantara Shamana Yogas (oral drugs)**

Many abhyantara yogas given in ancient samhitas of Brihatrayee and Laghutrayee for the management of Sheetapitta, some of which are included in table 2.

**Table 2: formulations used for internal administration in Sheetapitta.**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Acharya Charaka. <sup>[41]</sup>         | Udarda Prashamana Mahakashaya  |
| Acharya Sushruta. <sup>[42]</sup>        | Mustadi Churna   |
| Acharya Vagbhatta. <sup>[43]</sup>       | Eladi Gana   |
| Chakradatta. <sup>[44]</sup>             | Ardraka Khanda   |
| Bhavprakash. <sup>[45,46]</sup>          | Navakarshika Guggulu<br>Trikatu Sharkara<br>Yavani Vyosha Yavakshara<br>Aardraka Rasa Purana Guda<br>Yavani Guda<br>Guda Amalaki<br>Nimba Patra Ghrita Amalaki<br>Ardraka khanda |
| Bhaishagya Ratnavali. <sup>[47,48]</sup> | Visarpokta Amritadi Kwatha<br>Agnimantha Moola Ghrita<br>Yashtyadi Kwatha<br>Amratadi Kwath  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Goghrita, Maricha<br>Vardhamana Prayoga Haridra Khanda<br>Brihat Haridra Khanda<br>Shleshmapittantako Rasa<br>Veereshvaro Rasa<br>Sheetapitta Bhanjan Ras<br>Vardhamana Pippali Vardhamana Lasuna<br>Kushathadi Churna<br>Vardhman Lashuna<br>Guduchi Dhamasa Nimba Nisha Kwath |
|--|---|

### Pathyapathaya (Do and Don'ts)

A healthy diet is essential for good health and play a very important role of management of the disease. Vaidya Lobamba Raja specified the importance of pathya by stating that if a patient intake wholesome food, then there is no need of medicine and if a patient continuously consumes unwholesome food, then also there is no need of medicine.<sup>[49]</sup>

**Pathya-** Pathya means the diets and life style which is beneficial to the body. The diets described for cure the disease along with medicine such as old rice (Jeerna shali), forest meat (Jangala mamsa), green gram soup (Mudga yusha), horsegram soup (Kulattha yusha), Karkataka shaka, bitter gourd (Karvellaka shaka), drum stick (Shigru shaka), reddish (Moolaka shaka), Potika shaka, Shalincha shaka, Vatragra phala, pomegranate (Dadima phala), Triphala, honey (Madhu), lukewarm water (Ushnodaka).

**Apathya-** The diets and life style which should be avoided such as dairy products (Ksheera vikarani), suppression of natural urges of vomit (Chhardi Nigraha), artificial sweetners (Ikshu Vikaran), day sleep (Divaswapna), fish (Matsya), Poorva and Daksheena Disha Pavana, marshyland animal meat (Anupa- Audaka Mamsa), bath (Snana), new wine (Naveena Madhya), excessive sun bath (Atapa Sevana), incompatible diet (Virudhahara), sexual activity (Vyavaya), oily sour sweet things (Snigdha, Amla, Madhura Dravya), heavy diet (Guru Annapana).<sup>[50]</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The basic fundamental principal of Ayurveda are Tridoshas and Pancha Mahabhootas and any imbalance due to internal or external factors leads to disease. The continuous metabolic process causes quantified formation of toxic bi-products in the body. Though most of the toxins get emitted naturally by body's excretory system, some will remain in various tissues of the body. The retained toxins cause vitiation of Doshas and Dhatus resulting in the

impairment of systems. In Ayurveda, allergic manifestation is mentioned under the concept of satmya-asatmya. It manifests due to exposure to asatmya ahara-vihara and contact with different poisonous materials (allergens).

There are various modalities & drugs available for the treatment of Sheetapitta in both conventional & Ayurvedic system of medicine. Drugs used for treatment of Urticaria (Sheetapitta) in conventional system of medicine i.e. Antihistaminic, systemic used of corticosteroid etc. have their own side effects, withdrawal symptoms. Recurrence of disease is common in very much cases. Ayurveda has lot of potential in the treatment aspect of allergic condition of the skin. The Sodhana karmas like Vaman, Virechana and Raktamokshan can eliminated the morbid Doshas from the body for permanent cure of the disease along with various Ayurvedic formulations and supportive pathya apathya. If Ayurvedic management is popularised for skin disorders, will minimizes the chances of recurrence of the diseases and promotes positive health.

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