Concept of Dermatological Disorders in Ayurveda

Satyapal Singh1* P.S. Byadgi2 N.P. Rai3

1Research Scholar, 3Professor & Head, Department of Kayachikitsa, Faculty of Ayurveda, I.M.S., B.H.U., Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India.

2Assistant Professor, Department of Roga Nidana, Faculty of Ayurveda, I.M.S., B.H.U., Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India.

* Corresponding author
E-MAIL- spmairti@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The objectives of the present review article include to discuss different aspects of Kushtha Roga (dermatological disorders in Ayurveda) i.e. etiopathogenesis, classification, clinical features and management etc. The authentic subject material has been reviewed from different Ayurveda literature. Different research and review article were searched in different journals. The subject material has also been searched on the internet. Kushtha is one of the most chronic disorders as described in Ayurveda. Most of the Ayurvedic texts categorise the Kushtha Roga into two groups, Mahakushtha and Kshudrakushtha which further divided in to seven types and eleven types respectively. Ayurveda described a wide range of etiological factors for dermatological disorders including its psychosocial aspect. Acharya Charaka, the author of foremost Ayurvedic classic on internal medicine, the Charaka Samhita clearly mentioned that there is a strong relationship exists between Tvacha (skin) and Mann (psyche/mind). Therefore, more than a cosmetic nuisance the skin disorders lead to different psychological ailments which impair the quality of life in the patients. The etio-pathogenesis involves the Sapta Dravya (seven factors), Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Tvacha, Rakta Mansa and Ambu/Lasika, which are responsible for manifestation of a wide range of dermatological disorders. Ayurvedic system of medicine described the psychosomatic approach of management for dermatological disorders including the pharmacological and non-pharmacological measures.

KEYWORDS

Kushtha Roga, Dermatological disorders, Sapta Dravya, Tvacha, Mann, Psychosomatic.

INTRODUCTION

Word Kushtha means a pathological condition which despises the skin. Skin is an important organ of communication with the external world. It is one of the five Gyanendriyas which responsible for Sparsha Gyan or touch sensation. Majority of the dermatological disorders have been described under the umbrella of Kushtha [1].

The skin is the largest organ of the body, having a surface area of 1.8 m² and measuring approximately 18% of body weight. It reveals both the normal and pathological state of an individual. Important function of skin includes protection from many physical, chemical & environmental insults, thermal regulation, energy
storage, vitamin D formation, excretion of important metabolic products and constitutes the most extensive sense organ of the body for the perception of the tactile, thermal & painful stimuli, etc. [2].

Most of the dermatological disorders are mentally agonising and have negative impact on quality of life. Here it is important to remember the citation of Acharya Charaka regarding the relationship between the Tvacha and Mann. Tvacha is considered as ‘Chetah Samvayi’ i.e the skin has an eternal relationship with Mann (psyche/mind). Therefore, more than a cosmetic nuisance, dermatological disorders produce anxiety, depression and other psychological problems that affect the quality of life. Patients of skin disorder always experience physical, emotional & socio-economic embarrassment in the society, which further leads to aggravation of symptoms of existing disease. Normally 10 - 15% of the general practitioners work is with skin disorders and it is the second commonest cause of loss of work [3].

Ayurveda is the science and art of healing that deals with all aspects of an individual. In Ayurveda, psychological factors have been given equal importance as physical & physiological factors in the etiopathogenesis of various dermatological disorders. Kushtha Roga is also considered as a Papakarma Vyadhi (a disease due to sinful activities) and a Kulaja Vikara (a hereditary disorder) in Ayurvedic system of medicine [4,5].

NIDANA (ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS)

Ayurvedic system of medicine described a wide range of etiological factors for dermatological disorders. The etiological factors include physical, physiological, psychological, psychosocial, hereditary and Papakarma (sinful activities) aspect. These can be classified into Sannikrishta Nidana and Vipkrishta Nidana as follows-

Sannikrishta Nidana

Saptko Dravya Sangraha i.e. seven Dravyas or factors involved in the pathogenesis of Kushtha are considered as Sannikrishta Nidana. The Sapt Dravya includes three Doshas viz. Vata, Pitta and Kapha and four Dushyas viz. Tvaka (Rasa), Rakta, Mansa and Ambu or Lasika [6].

Vipkrishta Nidana

Such types of etiological factors are not involved directly in the pathogenesis, but they aggravate the actual causative factor (Sannikrishta Nidana) and thus play an important role in pathogenesis of the disease. These are further categorizes into three groups Adibala Pravratta or Kulaja (hereditary), Poorva Janmakrata and Janmottarakalaja.

Kulaja Nidana: Kushtha is considered as Adibala Pravratta Vyadhi (a hereditary disorder). Acharya Sushruta clearly mentioned that if, the male and female gametes are vitiated with Kushtha than it results into the birth of a Kushthi child i.e. the newborn baby also suffers from a particular dermatological disorder [7].

Poorva Janmakrata: According to Sushruta if the person suffered from Kushtha in his previous life and if he takes rebirth then he develops Kushtha in his present life also [8].

Janmottarakalaja: The etiological factors in present life can be categorizes into three groups, Aharaja (diet & dietetic patterns), Viharaja (lifestyle related) and Mansika (psychological).
Aharaja Nidana

These Nidanas include the intake of excess Guru (heavy in digestion), liquid, Snigdha Ahara, Mithya Ahara, Viruddha Ahara etc. Taking excessive Guru and Snigdha Ahara produces Dushti in Rasavaha Srotas [9]. Acharya Charak has also described ‘Gurubhojanam Durvipakakaranam’ [10]. Guru Ahara also leads Dusti of Mamsavaha Srotas [11]. Excessive Drava (liquid) leads to Dushti of Raktavaha Srotas [12].

The Viruddha Ahara leads to impairment in Agni (digestive power). The vitiated Agni does not digest even the Laghu Ahara (food substance easy to digest), resulting in state of indigestion. The indigested food materials turns sour and acts like a poison, which is termed as Amavisha [13]. Tridosha gets provoked by such type of Amavisha [14]. In general, food substances and activities (Vihara) which are similar in quality to bio-humors (Doshas) and deleterious to the body elements (Dhatus) vitiate the body channels (Srotas). The vitiation results in Srotodushti i.e. malfunctioning of Srotas. The stages of Srotodushti are Atipravratti, Sanga, Siragranthi and Vimarga Gaman [15].

Intake of milk and fish together considered as Veerya Viruddha (contrary to potency). Milk and fish together leads to vitiation of Rakta (blood) and Srotorodha (obstruction of body channels) and formation of Ama [16]. Vitiated Rakta is considered an important factor involved in the etio-pathogenesis of dermatological disorders. Ama may generate immunological reaction which is mainstay in the etio-pathogenesis of many dermatological disorders. Both milk and fish are the rich source of protein and the combination may generate new type of protein molecules, which may exhibit molecular mimicry and generate auto-immunity [17].

Viharaja Nidana

Viharaja Nidanas are suppression of natural urges, excessive sun exposure, exposure to air conditioned, work place contradicting with hot and humid environment, over exertion and over exercises, day sleep, late night sleep and complications of Panchakarma therapy [18].

Mansika Nidana

Ayurveda described several factors like Chinta (worry), Shoka (sorrow), Bhaya (fear), abusing deities and teachers, different type of sinful activities and other forms of anti-rituals and anti-social activities which have a negative impact on the psyche/mind. This negative impact on mind leads to stress which in turn directly or indirectly plays a major role in the manifestation and or aggravation of dermatological disorders. Psychosocial stress and the related psychological factors are major culprits in the manifestation and or exacerbation of many dermatological disorders. Till date several studies suggested that most of the dermatological disorders are chronic inflammatory, immunogenic and psychosomatic in nature [19].

Sansargaja Nidana

Kushtha is considered as Sansargaja Vyadhi (communicable or infective disease) [20].

Pathogenesis (Samprapti) of Kushtha

Different types of Hetus (etiological factors) leads to vitiation of Doshas which spread throughout the body and vitiate Dhatus and thus help in the manifestation of Kushtha Roga. The whole process is known as Samprapti [21]. Acharya Charaka described the seven Dravyas, involved in the Samprapti [22], which are Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Tvaka, Rakta, Mansa and Lasika (Ambu). Charaka has emphasized the dual part played
by *Nidana*, i.e. simultaneous vitiation of *Tridosha* and also *Shaithilyata* in the *Dhatus* such as *Twak, Rakta, Mansa* and *Lasika*. Thus, the vitiated *Tridoshas* gain momentum to vitiate *Shithila Dhatus* and hence the disease *Kushtha* gets manifested [23,24].

Nidana Sevana

\[\xrightarrow{}\] Tridosha Prakopa

\[\xrightarrow{}\] Twak, Rakta, Mamsa and Ambu Shaithilyata

Further Vitiation of Doshas occurs

\[\xrightarrow{}\] Doshas gets accumulated at the place of Dhatu Shaithilyata

\[\xrightarrow{}\] Dosha and Dushya Samurchhana

Kushtha

Dia.1. Schematic presentation of the pathogenesis of *Kushtha*

Acharya Sushruta described that *Doshaja* and *Karmaja Hetus* leads to aggravation of *Pitta* and *Kapha* which inturn produces *Avarana* of *Vata* and thus aggravation of *Vata*. Vitiacted *Vata* enters into the *Tiryaka Siras* with two other vitiated *Doshas* and their spread leads further vitiation. Thereafter it reaches to *Bahya Rogamarga* (*Tvaka, Rakta, Mansa* and *Lasika*) and spread throughout the body, producing *Mandala* (rounded skin lesion) at the gathering site of *Doshas*. If the *Doshas* are not treated properly at this stage, they enter into the deeper *Dhatus* of the body and produce complications [25, 26].

**CLASSIFICATION OF KUSHTHA**

The *Kushtha* is generally described as *Tridoshaja Vyadhi* but type of the *Kushtha* depends upon predominance of particular *Dosha*. Acharya Charak mentioned that *Kushtha* may be seven, eighteen or innumerable (*Aparisankhyeya*) types [27]. But almost all authors including Charaka divided *Kushtha* into two categories, *Mahakushtha* and *Kshudra Kushtha*, which further classified into seven types and eleven types respectively. As per the view point of Charaka, *Mahakushtha* includes *Kapal Kushtha, Udumber, Mandala, Rishyajivha, Pundarika* and *Kakanaka* and *Kshudrakushtha* includes *Ekakushtha, Charma*.
Kushtha, Kitibha, Vipadika, Alasaka, Dadrumandala, Charmadala, Pama, Vishphota, Shataru and Vicharchika [28].

**Basis of classification for Kushtha as Mahakushtha and Kshudrakushtha**

Basis of classification includes [29-31]

- *Dosha Arambhata*
- *Uttarottar Dhatu Anupraveshata*
- *Lakshanas* (Clinical features)
- *Chikitsa* (Treatment)

Table.1. Showing difference between *Kshudrakushtha* and *Mahakushtha*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mahakushtha</th>
<th>Kshudrakushtha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Bahu Dosha Arambhata</em></td>
<td>Alpa Dosha Arambhata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bahu Lakshana</em></td>
<td>Alpa Lakshana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive discomfort</td>
<td>Less discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penetrates into deeper <em>Dhatu</em></td>
<td>Less tendency to penetrate in deeper <em>Dhatu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mahat Chikitsa</em></td>
<td>Alpa Chikitsa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On the basis of Dosha predominance**

On the basis of *Dosha* predominance *Kushtha* can be grouped into three categories [32]

- *Vataja*
- *Pittaja* and
- *Kaphaja*

**On the basis of Dhatugatatva**

*Kushtha* can be classified into seven categories on the basis of penetration in the particular *Dhatu*, which is as follows [33]-

1. *Rasagata*
2. *Raktagata*
3. *Mansagata*
4. *Medagata*
5. *Asthigata*
6. *Majjagata* and
7. *Shukragata*

**CLINICAL FEATURES**

Clinical features depend on the severity and type of particular *Kushtha*. The clinical features of different types of *Kushtha* are as follows [34-37]-
**Kapala Kushta:** It is reddish black in colour like reddish black earthenware, irregular and associated with dryness and pain.

**Udumber Kushta:** It is associated with burning, itching, pain and redness. The hairs are greyish or greyish white in colour at the site. It is just like fruit of ficus in colour.

**Mandala:** It is characterizes by stable, rounded and indurated plaques attached with each others. It is white or red in colour and difficult to treat.

**Rishyajivha:** Characterizes by hard skin lesions which are similar to tongue of Rishya (a special type of beer) in shape. The colour is reddish black in centre and red in periphery and associated with pain. It is also associated with Krimi (probably primary or secondary infection).

**Pundarika:** The lesions of Pundarika are indurated and associated with burning sensation. It is similar to the colour of the red lotus. Pundarika is also associated with pustulization and Krimi.

**Sidhma:** The lesions are usually localizes to chest and similar to the flower of Alabu (gourd) in colour. The lesions release powder on rubbing and associated with mild pain and burning.

**Kakanaka:** It is similar to the Kakanantika in colour (red and black). It is never pustulizes and associated with severe pain or discomfort.

**Ek-kushtha:** Characterizes by large scaly plaques. Scales are similar to the fish scales.

**Charma Kushta:** Its lesion covers a vast area. The skin becomes very thick like elephant skin.

**Kitibha Kushta:** Characterizes by reddish black and rough skin lesions associated with severe itching. The lesions are round in shape and occasionally associated with secretions.

**Vipadika:** There is cracking of palms and soles which is associated with severe pain. Acharya Sushruta described the cracking of only soles which is associated with burning, pain and itching.

**Alasaka:** The skin lesions are red in colour and associated with itching.

**Dadrumandala:** It is characterizes by nodular lesion associated with erythema and itching.

**Charmadala:** The skin lesions of Charmadala are red in colour and blasts or skin cracked with pain and associated with itching and paraesthesia.

**Pama:** It is characterizes by nodular skin lesions which are white or reddish black in colour and associated with severe itching.

**Visphota:** White or red colour nodular lesions with thin skin.

**Shataru:** Characterizes by red or reddish black skin lesions and associated with burning and ulcerations (multiple ulcers).

**Vicharchika:** Vicharchika is characterizes by blackish nodular lesions associated with itching and secretions.

Clinical features of *Kushta* according to the *Dosha* predominance are as follows
Vataja Kushtha
Skin lesions are rough, dry, reddish black and associated with pain. Vataja Kushtha is also characterizes by stretching of skin, numbness, anhydrosis, swelling and hoarseness of voice.

Pittaja Kushtha
It is associated with burning, erythema, secretions and blister formation. Also characterizes by pustulisation, removal of dead tissues from fingers, nose, ears etc. and super infections.

Kaphaja Kushtha
Skin lesions are cold and dense and associated with itching, secretions, discolouration and heaviness of the body.

The clinical presentation of Kushtha according to the penetration in the particular Dhatu is summarizes as follows-

Tvakagata or Rasagata Kushtha
Characterizes by loss of sensation, excess sweating, mild itching, discolouration and dryness.

Raktagata Kushtha
It is characterizes by numbness, goose flesh, excess sweating, itching and pus formation.

Mansagata Kushtha
Characterizes by general body swelling, appearance of stable nodules, pricking pain and cracking of skin.

Medagata Kushtha
Medogata Kushtha is associated with Durgandha, Malavraddhi, pus formation, super infection and general bodyache.

Asthhi and Majja Gata Kushtha
Such type of Kushtha is characterizes by redness of eyes, super infected ulcers and hoarseness of voice.

Shukragata Kushtha
It is characterizes by deformities in fingers, reduced movement of body parts, general bodyache and appearance of fast spreading ulcers. It is also characterizes by inheritance of Kushtha Roga to the next generation.

SADHYATA / ASADHYATA (PROGNOSIS)

The Kushtha having involvement of single Dosha, Vata-Kapha predominant Kushtha and Rasagata, Raktagata and Mansagata Kushtha is easily curable. Pitta-Kapha, Vata-Pitta predominant Kushtha and Medagata Kushtha have some bad prognosis and are difficult to cure. The Kushtha Roga with involvement of all three Doshas, the patient is weak and having thirst & burning, associated with Krimi and Asthi, Majja and Shukragata Kushtha have very bad prognosis and are incurable [38,51].
MANAGEMENT

Ayurveda emphasizes on three fold therapeutic management of the diseases viz; Samshodhana (bio-purification), Samshamana (pacification) and Nidana Parivarjana (avoiding causative factors) for almost all types of disorders including dermatological disorders [39].

The type of Samshodhan (as per the view point of Acharya Charaka) used is Vaman (therapeutic emesis) in Kapha predominant and Virechan (therapeutic purgation) & Raktamokshana (therapeutic blood-letting) in Pitta predominant Kushtha [40]. Acharya Sushruta advises the use of Nasya Karma (nasal medication) every third day, Vaman on every fifteenth day, Virechan on every month and Raktamokshana on every six month for the management of Kushtha Roga [41].

The Samshodhan helps to maintain the Dosha and Dhatu Samya i.e to maintain the homeostasis & thus, leads to the repair and regeneration of different body tissues and also modulate the body immunity and cleanses the body channels by eliminating toxins out of the body. Therefore, Samshodhan is very important preventive as well as therapeutic measure for a wide range of disorders including dermatological disorders [42].

The palliative therapy in the form of drugs and diets may not be effective unless the body channels are properly cleansed and toxic materials are eliminated. Samshodhan is believed to purify or cleanse all the body tissues and bring about the harmony of bio-humors (i.e. Vata, Pitta, Kapha, and Raja & Tama) to obtain long-lasting beneficial effects [43].

According to Charaka the principle for the management of Vata predominant Kushtha is Ghrita Pan (oleation therapy). Acharya Charak explained the use of the drugs with predominance of Tikta and Kashaya Rasa for palliation of Kushtha [44].

According to the current concept, the pathogenesis involved in the most of the dermatological disorders is complex interplay between immunologic, genetic and environmental factors. Psychological stress and related factors are major culprits involved in the etio-pathogenesis of dermatological disorders. Most of the drugs described for the management of dermatological disorders in Ayurveda are enriched with Rasayana property. Various studies on Rasayana drugs suggest their following action [45] –

- Immunomodulator
- Adaptogenic
- Antioxidant
- Nootropic and
- Antistress

Therefore, Rasayana drugs are very important for the management of dermatological disorders. Skin health can be restored and maintained by directly targeting the different layers and cells of the skin involved in the process of skin aging & dysfunction and also in the pathogenesis of a disease.

Ahara (diet or dietary supplementation) is very much emphasized in Ayurvedic system of medicine for the prevention as well as management of wide range of disorders including dermatological disorders. The diet rich in Amla, Lavana and Kattu Rasa, milk, curd, jaggery, heavy diet and diet which aggravated Kapha Dosha should be avoided. The recomended diet for the patients of Kushtha Roga includes old wheat, old
barley, pulses like Moonga, Masoor, Arhar, honey, Patola, Neem, garlic, Triphala, old Ghrita and diet rich in Tikta Rasa [46].

Non-pharmacological therapies

Non-pharmacological therapies for the management of Kushtha Roga includes [47-49]-

- Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa
- Satvavajaya Chikitsa
- Life style modification

Gayadas, the commentator of Sushruta Samhita has been quoted that the two types of treatment modalities viz Yuktiyapashraya and Daivvyapashraya has been mentioned in Ayurveda for the management of Kushtha Roga, as the disease Kushtha is originated due to derangement of Doshas and Paapakarma (sinful activities).

Daivvyapashraya Chikitsa is a divine therapy or psychological therapy. It include chanting Mantras, Aushadhi and Mani Dhaaran (spiritual use of herbs and gems), Mangal Karma (propitiatory), Bali (offering oblations), Homa, Prayashchita (ceremonial penances), Upavasa (fasting), Swastayana (rituals for social well being) etc. All these ritual activities directly or indirectly exert a positive impact on the mind (Manas) and therefore, lead to reduction in stress.

Sattvavajaya in principles is full-fledged Psychotherapy. It is a method of restraining or withdrawal of the mind from unwholesome objects (Arthas). Therefore, it is a therapeutic for mental or emotional stresses and disturbances.

It is well acknowledged that positive and negative impact of lifestyle related factors like discipline of food intake, activity level, sleep, surrounding environment etc. play a major role in health and disease respectively. There are some lifestyle related factors which influence the psychosomatic health of an individual, which are economic and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, surrounding social environment, family environment, sanitation, culture etc. Therefore, modification of these lifestyles related factors are very important for the management of dermatological disorders. Other measures for lifestyle modification or better living in Ayurveda are application of principles of Dincharya, Ritucharya, Achara Rasayana & other forms of non-pharmacological Rasayana, Sadvratta, etc.

Ayurveda described proper application of Tryaupastambha (three subsidiary pillars) of life in daily life for promotion of psychosomatic health and better living. Tryaupastambha includes Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep) and Brahmacharya (celibacy). The whole range of Dincharya, Ritucharya, Sadvritta, Achara Rasayana and Yoga described in the Ayurvedic classics is designed to foster a healthy life style for better living to everyone as a promotive and preventive health care and also for the management of a diseased individual.

KSHUDRAROGA

Some of the dermatological disorders are described under the heading of Kshuraroga in Ayurveda. The word Kshudraroga has two components Kshudra and Roga. Kshudra means Alpa or minor or brief and Roga means disease. Hence, Kshudraroga are minor diseases or described briefly. Nidana (etiology), Lakshan (clinical features) and Chikitsa (treatment) of Kshudraroga are described in Kshudra i.e. in short or brief. Some common examples of Kshudra Roga includes Yovan Pidika (acne), Khaliya (alopecia) etc. [50]
CONCLUSION

Kushtha is one of the oldest known diseases to mankind. It is described as one of the most chronic disease in Ayurvedic system of medicine. Ayurveda described a wide range of dermatological disorders including its classification, etio-pathogenesis, clinical presentation, prevention and management. Skin is an important organ of communication with the external world, seat of S aparshanendriya (organ responsible for touch sensation) and has an eternal relationship with Mann. Therefore, any type of psychosocial stress, directly or indirectly involved in the manifestation and or exacerbation of dermatological disorders. In the present era, stress and altered immunity are the major factors responsible for the manifestation of a wide range of dermatological disorders. The pharmacological and non-pharmacological measures for the management in dermatological disorders as described in Ayurveda are good immuno-modulators and anti-stress agent. Therefore, these measures, when used properly are cost effective and provide management in natural way with no or adverse effects.

REFERENCES

3. Dr. Singh Satyapal. Clinical study of Kitibha Kushtha (psoriasis) and its management with Samshodhan (Virechan) and Samshaman therapy. M.D. (Ay.) thesis. Banaras Hindu University: Varanasi, December 2010
40. Dr. Singh Satyapal, Prof. Rai NP. Role of Samshaman Therapy In a Major Skin Disorder Kitibh Kushtha vis-à-vis Psoriasis. Shodh Drishti 2012; 3(7): 172-177.
52.