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Review Article

AN OVERVIEW ON THE AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF VICHARCHIKA IN CONTEXT OF ECZEMA

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1. ABSTRACT

Introduction-Eczema is a common dermatological condition characterized by itching, rashes, dry patches, and in some cases, secondary infections. It falls under the broad category of dermatitis, which includes several disorders that cause skin inflammation and irritation. Among its variants, atopic dermatitis (atopic eczema) is the most frequently observed. In Ayurveda, eczema is identified as Vicharchika, a condition marked by severe itching, the presence of blisters or boils, discoloration of skin, dryness, roughness, oozing, and occasionally bleeding. Vicharchika is distressing not only due to its physical symptoms but also because it affects an individual's appearance, leading to social and psychological discomfort. Although it can occur at any age, it is especially prevalent in children. Contributing factors include occupational hazards, environmental triggers, mental stress, irregular dietary habits, excessive consumption of junk food, suppression of natural urges, emotional disturbances, and the frequent use of chemical-based cosmetics. The combination of a polluted environment and modern stressful lifestyles have further increased its incidence in society. **Material & Methods-**The study of Vicharchika (eczema) was conducted through references from the Bṛhatrayā, Laghutrayā, their commentaries, and other authoritative Ayurvedic texts. **Results-**According to Ayurvedic Acharyas, Vicharchika is classified under Rakta Pradoshaja Vikara and Kustha Tridoṣaja. The term Rakta Pradoshaja indicates the involvement of Rakta and Pitta doṣas, which are considered primary in the manifestation of all Kustha rogas. Vicharchika is specifically described as one of the Kṣudra Kusthas, a chronic skin disorder discussed across classical Ayurvedic texts. **Conclusion-**Both Kustha and Kṣudra Kustha represent broad clinical entities in Ayurveda, with well-defined management principles. Under contemporary medical understanding, Vicharchika corresponds to eczema. Its management requires prolonged, consistent

treatment involving both systemic and topical measures, aimed at suppression of symptoms, correction of *doṣa* imbalance, and prevention of recurrence.

KEYWORDS: *Vicharchika*, Eczema, *Kushta*, *Kṣudra Roga*,

INTRODUCTION:

The skin, being the largest organ of the body, not only serves as a protective covering but also reflects the overall physical, mental, and psychological state of an individual.¹ Apart from its protective role, the skin also participates in excretion and metabolism. In Ayurveda, skin disorders are addressed under the branch of *Kushta Roga*, often referred to as *Ayurvedic dermatology*. Among these, *Kushta* is classified as one of the *Aṣṭamahāgata* (eight major diseases) and further categorized into *Sādhya Kushta* (curable) and *Kṣudra Kushta* (minor forms). The defining features of *Kushta* include *Kandu* (itching), *Srava* (discharge), *Pidika* (eruption), and *Shyavavarna* (discoloration). It is considered a *Kapha-dominant Rakta Pradoshaja Vikara*, yet all *Kushta* are fundamentally *Tridoṣaja* in nature.² In *Vicharchika* specifically, symptoms can be attributed to different *doṣas*: *Kapha* produces itching (*kandu*), *Pitta* causes discharge (*srava*), and *Vata* manifests as discoloration (*shyava varna*). Different Acharyas have described varying predominance of *doṣas*—some highlighting *Kapha*, others *Pitta*, or *Vata-Pitta* dominance—indicating that the disease presents in multiple symptom complexes. Clinically, *Vicharchika* closely resembles eczema in modern dermatology. The condition is becoming increasingly prevalent due to rapid urban lifestyles, exposure to chemical additives, industrial and occupational hazards, and environmental stressors, particularly in developing nations. Skin diseases often impose not just physical discomfort but also social stigma, leading to fear of contact, loss of self-esteem, and impaired quality of life. Eczema, also referred to as atopic dermatitis, is marked by dry, itchy skin, erythematous patches, and scaling. Its acute stage presents with pruritus, erythema, edema, papules, vesicles, and oozing, while the chronic phase is characterized by scaling, dryness, hyperpigmentation, lichenification, and excoriations (scratch marks). Both genetic predisposition and environmental factors significantly influence its clinical manifestation. Ayurveda emphasizes the elimination of vitiated *doṣas* and restoration of balance between *doṣa* and *dhātu* as the primary principle in the management of *Vicharchika*, thereby addressing not just symptoms but also the root cause of the disorder.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

- **Eczema**

Severe itching, redness, oozing, and scaly rashes are the hallmarks of eczema, an inflammatory, non-contagious skin disorder. Blisters and skin colour changes are possible side effects of these uncomfortable symptoms. Eczema fluctuates throughout time. Exposure to several factors, including dust mites and pet dander, can exacerbate the condition, which causes extremely dry and sensitive skin.³

- **Vicharchika**

According to Ayurveda, *Vicharchika* is *Rakta Pradoshaja Vikara*, involving three *Doshas*, with *Kapha*

being the dominant Dosha. Despite being Kshudra Kushtha, it has a chronic course and a propensity for aggravations. From an allopathic perspective, vicharchika and eczema can be connected. Eczema is a type of dermatitis, or inflammation of the upper layers of the skin.⁴

- **Etymology of the Word Vicharchika**

The word *Vicharchika* is derived from *sanskrit* origin “*charch adhyane*” by using the prefix “*Vee*” to it. The word *adhyane* has two syllables “*Adhi*” which means “above” and “*ayane*” means to spread out.

- **Nidana of Vicharchika⁵**

The etiological factors of *vicharchika* differ amongst authors because, according to Sushruta, Pitta is the dominant dosha, while Charka and Vagbhatta acknowledge *Kapha*'s dominance. However, Charka states that no single dosha can ever cause a kushtha. Eighteen different types of *kushthas* are produced by *sapta dravyas sangraha* (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha and Twak, Rakta, Mamsa, and Ambu*). As a result, the *nidanas* of *vicharchika* can be divided into three groups:

1. *Aharaj* 2. *Viharaj* 3. *Acharaj*

- **Aaharaj Nidana**

- ✓ Intake of Chilchim fish with milk
- ✓ Intake of Mulaka and Lasuna with milk
- ✓ Use of Mulaka with Guda
- ✓ Excessive use of alcohol with milk
- ✓ Intake of food mostly containing Yavaka, Uddalaka along with Ksheera, Dadhi and Takra, Kola, Kulatha, Masha, Atasi, Kusumbha and Sneha
- ✓ Continuous intake of Gramya, Audaka and Anupa Mamsa with milk
- ✓ Use of fish, citrus and milk together
- ✓ Excessive use of Navanna, Dadhi, Matsya, Amla, Lavana, Tila, Milk, Guda.
- ✓ Intake of food during indigestion
- ✓ Asatmaya Ahara

- **Viharaja Nidana**

- ✓ Physical exercise, sunbath after intake of heavy meal.
- ✓ Sexual intercourse after indigestion, after Snehapaan and Vaman.
- ✓ Sudden changes from cold to heat or heat to cold without judiciously following the rules of gradual changes.
- ✓ Suppression of the urges of emesis.
- ✓ Adharniya Vega Vidharan.
- ✓ Panchakarma Apcharana like improper administration of Snehapan therapy.

- **Achara Nidana**

- ✓ Acts insulting Brahmans, teachers and other respectable persons
- ✓ Indulgence in sinful activities
- ✓ Use of money or material acquired by unfaired means.

• Etiology of Eczema

Eczema sufferers have a defective barrier that leads to a number of issues. For the best possible skin hydration, the cells that comprise our skin are crucial. People who have eczema frequently have dry skin because their skin barrier is compromised. Skin that is dry can result from water evaporating from the skin more readily. Additionally, eczema sufferers are more prone to infection. Because of the malfunction, harmful substances can permeate the skin more easily. Fragrances and allergens tend to aggravate the skin of people with atopic dermatitis, who also tend to have a distorted inflammatory immune response.⁶

• Purvarupa of Vicharchika

Although the text does not provide an illustration of the premonitory sign and symptoms of *vicharchika*, since it is one of the *kshudra kushtha roga*, one can interpret the premonitory syndrome of the *kushtha vyadhi as vicharchika's* symptoms. They are called *paridaha/Daha*, *pariharsha*, *gaurava*, *shwayathu*, *visarpana*, *asweda*, *swedadhikya*, *atislakshnata*, *vaivarnyata*, *toda*, *suptata*, and *ushmayana*.

• Rupa of Vicharchika^{7,8,9,10,11}

The following Table provides a summary of the indications and symptoms of Vicharchika as reported by various Acharyas.

Table no 1. Rupa of Vicharchika

Sr.no.	Rupa	CS	SS	AH	AS	BS	KS	MN	BP
1.	Kandu	+	+	+	+			+	+
2.	Pidika	+		+	+			+	+
3.	Shyava	+		+	+			+	+
4.	Srava	+		+	+	+	+	+	+
5.	Raji		+			+			
6.	Ruja		+				+		
7.	Rukshata		+						
8.	Rakta					+	+		
9.	Praklina					+			
10.	Vrana						+		
11.	Paka						+		

- **Symptoms of Eczema**

- A red rash or red patches of skin, especially inside the folds of the elbows and knees
- Itching
- Dry skin, which can crack and possibly bleed
- The location of eczema may change with age. In infants and young children, eczema is usually located on the cheeks, outside of the elbows and on the knees. In older children and adults, eczema is typically on the hands and feet, the arms and on the back of knees. Symptoms can be painful, including blisters, and the skin may change color. The itch associated with eczema can be severe, often interrupting sleep. Scratching of the skin may lead to an infection. Infants with eczema may rub against bedding or other things to relieve the itch.¹²

- **Samprapti of Vicharchika**

There is no specific description of the *samprapti* of *vicharchika* in the classics. However, as it's a variant of *kushtha*, it's important to take into account its common *samprapti*. According to Acharya Charak, the *Kustha nidana samprapti* is as follows.¹³ The four *dushyas* (*twak*, *mansa*, *rakta*, and *lasika*) thin out or lose their tone when all three doshas are simultaneously aroused by the numerous causal causes described in the *Kushtha Nidana*. These four insane *dushyas* are where the provoked doshas end up. They get vitiated as a result, which leads to the development of *kushtha*, or skin illness. According to Acharya Charak and Vagbhatta *kapha pradhan tridosha* get vitiated whereas.¹⁴ According to Charaka Samhita, *Tridosha* becomes vitiated concurrently and generates *shaithilya* in the *Twak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Ambu* as a result of different *Nidana Sevana*. Next, *Tridosha* sits in *Shithila Dhatu* and uses *Kustha Roga's Lakshanotpatti* to vitiate them.¹⁵

- **MANAGEMENT**

- The Chikitsa Sutra of Vicharchika is not specifically described in any of the Samhitas. Because Vicharchika always involves more than one Dosha, the Chikitsa will change according to whether or not specific symptoms are present. Treatment should begin with the symptom that is the most severe. While there are comprehensive treatments for all Doshas in the Charaka Samhita, there are none that are especially for Vicharchika.
- The general line of treatment said that since *Tridosha* is the cause of all *kushtha*, treatment should be administered based on the dosha preponderance. Kushtha therapy can be broadly categorized into three main management approaches:
 - ✓ *Shodhana -Bahi Parimarjan, Antaha Parimarjan, Shastra Pranidhana*
 - ✓ *Shamana*
 - ✓ *NidanaParivarjana*

➤ *Shodhana Chikitsa*

- ✓ It is *Tridoshaja Vyadhi, Kushtha*. As a result, treating significant dosha should come before treating *anubandha*. *Shodhan Karma* gave advice while Dosha was strong. Ghrita and Vamana are suggested for *Kushthas* that are *Vata* or *Kapha* dominant, respectively, while *Karma* and *Raktamokshan* should be performed for *Pitta* dominance.
- ✓ One must complete *Raktamokshan* once every six months. One dose of *virechana* is recommended each month. *Vamana* should be taken once every fifteen days.
- ✓ *Snehana*- According to Acharya Vagbhata, *Kushtha* Rogi ought to receive *Snehapan* during the *Purvarupa* stage. The explanation of *Snehapan* dosage is based on each person's ability to process *Sneha* within a given amount of time. Charaka advice *Madhyama Matra*.
- ✓ *Swedana* - *Swedana* is given by *Nadi Sweda* or *Vaspa Sweda* for very short period before *Shodhana*. This liquefies the Doshas.
- ✓ *Basti*- Both the types *Basti* are contraindicated in the general indications but depending upon the situations it can be done.
- ✓ *Raktamokshana*- *Vicharchika*, or dry eczema, is classified as *Pitta Pradhana Kshudra Kushtha* by Acharya Sushruta. The best treatment for *Pitta Pradhana Kushtha* is *Jalaukavacharana*.
- ✓ *Virechana Karma* Ideal for skin conditions involving *Pitta* and *Rakta* According to Acharya Charaka, *safed Nishoth*, *Danti root*, and *triphala* should be used for *Virechana*. The recurrence of the disorders was reduced by using *Kostha Shuddhi*.
- ✓ *Vamana Karma* - *Pitta* and *Kapha* excess effectively treated. Acharya Charaka said that if *Kushtha* impacted the upper body, the patient should undergo *Vamana* by using *Madanphala*, *Mulathi*, and *Parora* leaf along with *Neem* juice.
- ✓ *Nasya* - *Saindhava*, *Danti*, *Maricha*, *Pippali*, and other medications that work well against *Krimi*, *Kushtha*, and *Kapha Prakopaja Vikara* are recommended for use with *Nasya*.
- ✓ *Dhumpana* is indicated in *Kushtha*, *Krimi* and *Kilasa*.
- ✓ *Lepa*- *Lepa* are anti-*Kushtha* topical treatments that work well for illnesses. *Guduchi*, *Turmeric*, *Amla* and *Shatavari* are frequently used to cure *Vicharchika*. Bhavprakash refers to this plant as *kushthaghana*, and its medicated oil is one of the most basic skin-disinfecting and healing remedies.

➤ *Shamana Chikitsa*

- ✓ Single drugs: *Haridra, Nimba, Amalki, Khadir, Nimb, Patola, Daruharidra, Kasisa, Musta, Lodhra, Sarjrasa, Vidanga, Manahshila, Hartala, Karaveera* etc.
- ✓ Specific Preparation for Vicharchika *Pathya Churna, Visha Tailam, Durvadh Tailam, Ekvinshati Guguglu, Panchnimb Churna, Edagajadi Lepa, Grihddhumadi Lepa, Aragwadhadi Kwatha, Udaybhaskar Ras, Ras Manikya, Amritankur Loha, Marichadi Taila, Vicharchikari Taila, Neeli Ghrita, Khadir Kwatha, Haridradi Taila, Arka Taila, Lghu And Maha Marichyadi Taila , Ras Manikya, Shadbindu Taila, Vicharchikahar Lepa, Vidangadi Churna, Karanja Taila And Kashmaryadi Lepa* etc are specific preparations mentioned in ayurvedic texts.
- *Nidana Parivarjana*
 - ✓ The term "*Nidana Parivarjana*" refers to avoiding causative elements. This limits the vitiation of Doshas, hence halting the future advancement of the disease. Since *Viruddha Ahara* and *Mithya Ahara Vihara* are mentioned as the primary etiological elements of *Kushtha*, one should stay away from them.

DISCUSSION:

It falls within the category of eczema under the current definition of Vicharchika. We can classify it as eczema based on the modern definition of Vicharchika. Atopic dermatitis, another name for eczema, is a common chronic skin disorder that, if left untreated, can result in recurring infections and a reduced quality of life. This exercise not only discusses the diagnosis and treatment of eczema but also emphasizes the need of interprofessional teams in enhancing patient outcomes. Eczema patients experience a malfunctioning barrier that causes multiple issues. Proper skin hydration is dependent on the cells that make up our skin. Because of the breakdown of the skin barrier, eczema is often accompanied by dry skin. Dehydrated skin might lose more water more quickly. Additionally, eczema patients have a higher risk of illness. This problem facilitates the penetration of harmful chemicals via the skin. Atopic dermatitis patients frequently have skin that is sensitive to allergens and smells, as well as an immune response that is highly inflammatory. Atopic dermatitis affects 2-10% of adults and 15-30% of children at some point in their life. Most people with eczema have a chronic, relapsing course of the disease marked by intermittent flare-ups and remissions. Consequently, it's still difficult to manage the symptoms of persistent eczema. Sixty percent of patients start showing symptoms in the first year of life. Acharya Charaka considered *Vicharchika* to be a *Kapha* dominating disease since *Raji, Arti, and Saruksha* are chronic or later stages of the disease, but *Kandu, Shyava, Pidika, and Bahusrava* are acute. The disease is primarily caused by three factors: *Ahita, Viruddha, and Mithya ahara*. As a result of their vitiation of *Jatharagni*, *Ama* and *Amavisha* are created. Vicharchika is a major disease among the ailments affecting the *Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Mamsavaha, and Swedvaha Srotas* because of its larger and extensive prevalence, chronicity, and acute phase development to grave condition. Two varieties of *Srotodusti*, known as "*Sanga*" and "*Vimarga-gamana*" of Dosha from *Kostha* to *Shakha*, are observed in this disease. *Amavisha*

combines with *Dhatus and Doshas* to form the "*Sanga*," which is the location of the *Kha-vaigunya*. One of the skin conditions that Charaka describes is eczema, for which *Vicharchika* is thought to be the closest name. These two methods necessitate a protracted course of therapy consisting of systemic and topical (suppressive) drugs. In addition to *Pathya* and *Apathya* (diet), the suggested treatment plan for *Vicharchika* includes these two herbs. Purification (Panchkarma), as the traditional text clearly explains. It suggests that skin disorders, including eczema, can be successfully and well-tolerated treated with Ayurvedic care.

CONCLUSION

All Āchāryas classify *Vicharchika* under *Kṣudra Kuṣṭha* as well as *Sādhya Kuṣṭha*. It is also described as a *Rakta Pradoṣaja Vikāra*, involving all three doṣas, with Kapha predominance. At the same time, since *Kuṣṭha* is considered one of the *Aṣṭa Mahāgata* (eight grave disorders), its management poses considerable challenges. In the present era, multiple lifestyle and environmental factors contribute to the rising incidence of *Vicharchika*. These include consumption of fast food, irregular dietary patterns, suppression of natural urges, frequent use of chemical-based cosmetics and products, exposure to pollution, psychological stress, and emotional imbalances. Such factors promote *Santarpaka Nidāna* (over-nourishing diet), which leads to *Āma utpatti* (formation of metabolic toxins), playing a crucial role in the pathogenesis of *Vicharchika*.

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