

AN AYURVEDIC UNDERSTANDING OF CROHN'S DISEASE

Deepika T. K.¹, Siddayya Aradhyamath², Sanjay³

¹Final Year PG Scholar, Dep. of Shalya Tantra;

²Professor and Head Dept of Shalya Tantra;

³Panchakarma Specialist;

JSS Ayurveda Medical College, Mysore, Karnataka, India

Email: drdeepika68@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Crohn's disease is one of the inflammatory bowel diseases. It can involve the inflammation of any part of the digestive tract. Signs and symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhoea, fever and weight loss. Surprisingly, till date there is no medication or surgical procedure that can cure Crohn's disease in the contemporary system of medicine nor is the exact cause of crohn's traced out. Ayurveda, the time tested science believes that disequilibrium of *doshas* and *mandagni* to be the prime reason for causation of any disease. When CD is analysed with the eyes of Ayurveda the involvement of *annavaha -pureeshavaha srotas* and deranged *agni* is very much evident along with its symptoms showing close relation to *atisaara* and *grahani*.

Keywords: Crohn's disease, *Annavaha srotas*, *Pureeshavaha srotas*, *Mandagni*, *Atisaara*, *Grahani*

INTRODUCTION

Crohn's disease is a chronic transmural inflammatory disease of the gastrointestinal tract of unknown origin¹. Most commonly the ileum is involved but rarely the other parts of the GIT like colon, jejunum, stomach, duodenum, oesophagus can get involved². Infectious agents, Immunological factors, genetic factors and smoking are proposed as potential cause of Crohn's disease. While crohn's is an immune-related disease, it doesn't appear to be an autoimmune disorder. The exact underlying immune problem is not clear; however it may be an immune deficiency state³. Its prevalence is 50/1,00,000. The ratio of males and females with CD is approximately 1. The equal sex ratio does speak against a marked oc-

cupational or hormonal influence on the disease. CD has its greatest onset in the adolescent and young adult years, between 15- 25⁴. It has historically been more common in developed countries⁵.

According to Ayurveda the understanding of any unknown *vyadhi* can be done by assessing its *samut-thana* (etiology) and *staana* (site of manifestation) . An ayurvedic analysis based on the etiology, site of manifestation, signs and symptoms of Crohns disease definitely shows the involvement of both *Annava-ha srotas* and *Pureeshavaha srotas*.

MATERIALS

Ayurvedic classical texts and commentaries (*Briha-*

trayee) and relevant contemporary texts along with online resources and journals were reviewed during this work.

METHOD

Literary data collected was compared and analysed on Classical background to find similarities and expected clinical approach in accordance to contemporary Science.

LITERARY REVIEW

MODERN

The etiology of Crohn's is unknown but a familial and infective nature is thought of. Diet and food allergies are also said to be linked with crohn's disease, smoking is another prime cause that is linked to crohn's disease as for relapse and exacerbations⁶. The most common clinical features of Crohn's includes abdominal pain and diarrhoea initially, there is also asymptomatic period in between. Diarrhoea is usually less severe without blood, pus or mucous. Mild fever, weight loss, lethargy, bleeding which is usually chronic but occasionally massive can occur. Perianal diseases with fissure, fistula and abscess can occur in 25% with small bowel crohn's whereas extra-intestinal manifestations occur in 30% of Crohn's disease. The disease can present as an acute one or chronic one⁷. The acute presentation mimics acute appendicitis with severe diarrhoea. The chronic presentation involves 3 stages the first is characterised with mild diarrhoea, colicky pain, fever, anemia and tender, firm mass in right iliac fossa. In the second stage there is either acute or chronic intestinal obstruction due to cicatrisation with narrowing and the third stage is characterised by fistula formation.

AYURVEDIC REVIEW

Annavaha srotas and *Pureeshavaha srotas*- The *nidanans*⁸ for causing *Annavaha srotodushiti* are *atimatra bhojana*, *akala bhojana*, *ahita bhojana* and *vigunata* of *agni* (bio- fire). The *lakshanas*⁹ of *annavaha* include *anannabhilasha* (loss of appetite), *aro-*

chaka (tastelessness), *avipaka* (indigestion) and *chardi*.

Pureeshavaha srotas- The reason for *dooshana* of *pureeshavaha srotas*¹⁰ includes *sandhaarana* (*vega dharana*) *adhyashana* (ingestion of food before the digestion of previously consumed food) *durbala agni* (weak bio- fire) and *krisha* (emaciated). The *lakshanas*¹¹ that shows the involvement of *Pureeshavaha srotas* are either *krichra*, *alpalpa*, *sashabda -shoola yukta*, *ati drava*, *ati grathitha* or *athi bahu mala pravritti*.

Both *atisara* and *grahani* shows the involvement of *Annavaha* and *pureeshavaha srotas*. *Atisara*¹² - the *nidanans* of *atisara* include *guru*, *snigdha*, *viruddha ashana*, *asatmya bhojana*, *satmya* and *ritu viparyaya*, *atyambu pana*, *atimadya paana*, *krimi dosha* etc. 6 types of *Atisara* have been mentioned which includes *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Kaphaja*, *Sannipataja*, *Shokaja* and *Bhayaja*. There is mentioning of other types of *atisara* like *aamaja*, *pakvaja*, *Raktaja* that are all included as *avastas* of *doshaja* variety itself. *Sushruta* has mentioned *raktaja atisara*¹³ as progression of *pittatisara* with *lakshanas* such as *jwara*, *shoola*, *trishna*, *daaha* and *guda paaka*. Separate *lakshanas* of *aamatisara*¹⁴ and *pakwatisara*¹⁵ is also mentioned. *Chikitsa in atisara*- It is always important to differentiate *aama* and *pakwa atisara* for planning the *chikitsa*¹⁶. In *aamaja atisara*, initially *Langhana* should be carried out and later *pachana aushadis* are to be administered, whereas in *pakvatisara*, *stambana*¹⁷ should be done.

*Grahani*¹⁸- The *lakshanas* include *atisrushta vibaddha drava mala pravritti* (hard or watery stools with increased frequency), *krusha* (lean), *trishna* (thirst), *asthi parva ruk* (pain in the bones and small joints), *chardi* (vomiting), *jwara* (fever), *arochaka* (anorexia), *shuna paada kara* (swelling in hands and feet) *loha-aama gandhi* and *tikta amla udgara* (odour of *loha* and *aama* along with bitter and sour belching). *Chikitsa*- The *chikitsa* for *grahani* includes *deepana*, *pachana*, *sangrahana*, *arishta*

prayoga, sneha prayoga, takra prayoga etc. based on different *avasthas*.

DISCUSSION

It is undeniable that in this modern era the changing diet and lifestyle has brought with it a revolution of ill effects. Ayurveda considers *mandagni* as the prime cause for all *vyadhis*. Improper diet is said to be one of the major cause in crohn's apart from the family predisposition. *Agni* is the one which breaks down the *aahara* and makes it a component of the *shareera*; if the consumed *aahara* itself is not proper

it will definitely vitiate the *agni*. This *dooshitha agni* leads to *dosha dooshana*. The *dushta dosha* causes abnormalities in the *srotas*. In crohn's disease this *dushta dosha* will majorly affect the *annavaha* and *pureeshavaha srotas* leading to its clinical manifestations. Both *annavaha* and *pureeshavaha sroto dushti lakshanas* are seen in crohn's. The diseases affecting this *srotas* i.e *atisaara* and *grahani* have certain similarities to that of CD. The *nidana* of *Atisara* includes *ritu viparyaya* which can be correlated to the environmental factors and *krimi dosha* that can be compared to the infectious origin.

Table 1: The symptoms can be correlated to the conditions of *Atisara* and *Grahani* to a certain extent

Crohn's – signs and symptoms	Presence of <i>lakshana</i> in <i>Atisara</i>	Presence of <i>lakshana</i> in <i>Grahani</i>
Diarrhoea with or without blood/ mucous	+	+
Fever	+ (<i>pittaja</i> and <i>raktaja</i>)	+
Pain in abdomen	+ (<i>shoola</i> in <i>Raktaja atisara</i>)	+
Weight loss	-	+ (<i>krisha</i>)
Persistent vomiting and nausea(in small bowel obstructions)	-	+
Perianal diseases	+ (<i>parikartika</i> in <i>vataja</i>)	+
Extra intestinal manifestations	-	+ (<i>asthi ruk, parva bheda</i>)

The *chikitsa* should be focusing on the *avastha* of the *vyadhi*. If there is *aama avastha sangrahana* should never be done. *Langhana* is the most appropriate choice. Based on the *lakshanas*, the appropriate *langhana vidhi* (*vamana/ virechana/ upavasa*) should be planned. And later *pachana aushadis* can be given. If it is in *pakva avastha* then *stambhana chikitsa* should be given or else it weakens the *grahani avayava*.

CONCLUSION

An ayurvedic understanding of Crohn's can be done by the basis of involvement of *srotas* and the *doshas*. This will be a very comprehensive view. Another way of correlating the disease will be to the *lakshanas* of either *atisara* or *grahani* depending on each case as the symptoms of Crohn's disease differ from person to person. Its treatment should be planned

judiciously based on the presentation of the disease especially on the *aama* and *pakva avastha*.

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