

## IMMUNOMODULATOR IN AYURVEDA - LEHANA KARMA

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### ABSTRACT

A strong immune system provides a child with the natural defences to fight off disease. A child's growth and development can be influenced by poor immune system. Children are more vulnerable to infection because of underdeveloped immune system. Despite of high advances in immunization, the medical science is yet to reach a full proof mechanism against the virulent organisms. In Ayurveda, concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* is described as a state of equilibrium of *kapha*, *bala* and *oja*. Acharyas have described several such formulations to promote and maintain this equilibrium of *kapha*, *bala* and *Oja* in various texts of Ayurveda. Kashyapa describes special formulation "*Lehana*" to enhance growth and development of children along with provides immunity against infections. The immunomodulatory effect of "*Lehana*" in children will be discussed in the paper.

**Keywords:** *Lehana*, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Oja*

### INTRODUCTION

Infancy and childhood is very delicate and formative period of life. It is the important period of life because foundation of adult life depends on it. Basically, childhood is the period of growth spurts, which is considered to be until 16 years of age, as per Ayurvedic classics. *Acharya* Charaka mentions a period "*Vivardhamana Dhatu Avastha*" from 16 to 30 years of age in which growth and development is observed. According to him, this period comes under *Balyavastha* (childhood).<sup>1</sup> At this time if a method is developed or reintroduce from the treasure of *Ayurveda*, it will be a boon in the field of preventive paediatrics. Immunity depends upon the maintenance of the equilibrium of *Doshas* and the healthiness of tissues and channels. Similarly the strength of the body is related to immunity and it also depends upon

the healthiness of tissues. In *Ayurvedic* texts, immunity has been explained by *Chakrapani* in term of *Vyadhikshamatva*. According to *Ayurveda* *Ojas* is considered as *Bala* or *Prakrita Kapha* attributed to immunity. Specific drug called *Rasayana* in *Ayurveda* acts for prevention of disease and promotion of health by improving immunity or *Vyadhikshamatva*. *Ojas* plays an important role in maintaining the resistance power of the body and it is extract of all *Dhatu*s. So the drug *Rasayana* are responsible to potentiate *Ojas* or intermediate *Dhatu*s directly or by enhancing *Dhatwagnis* or by *Srotoshodhana*. Different therapies like *Rasayana*, *Lehana*, *Orjaskara*, *Jeevniya*, *Balya*, *Sanskaras* etc. are focused to modulate the immunity or increase the *Vyadhikshamatva*.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A methodical collection of data from classical texts of Ayurveda as well as related pharmaco-clinical research articles and dissertation works published PubMed and manual search of bibliographies as the sources.

### LEHANA KARMA

The term *Lehana* means the act of licking or lapping up with the tongue. Children are very susceptible to infections. There are so many traditional measures available to combat it and protect from the hostile environment in which drug is mixed with honey or *Ghrta* are given. The process is called *Lehana*. So it is the ideal way of administering drugs in children because it increases the palatability of the drug taken with it and can be easily taken up. This is the most accepted mode of the drug administration to child.

Different *Acharyas* also described various *lehan* formulations (*balawardhan yogas* or strength promoting formulation) for use in *balyaawastha* (or during childhood period). *Lehana karma*'s purposes:

1. To enhances growth & development by providing sufficient nutrition.
2. Promote health, complexion and strength (immunity).
3. Protect from various infections along with improving intellect and speech (delayed milestone).

**Indication of *Lehana*** - Children receiving inadequate amount of breast milk due to pregnancy of mother, children having increased demand of food, children passing less amount of urine and stool, children: very lean & thin without any organic problems (*Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana, Lehaadhyaya, p.4*)<sup>2</sup>.

**Contraindications of *Lehana*** - Children having improper digestion, lethargic, passing excessive amounts of urine & stool, suffering from various disorders like eye, ENT disorders (*shiroroga*), fever, diarrhea, edema, jaundice, anemia, cardiac problems, rectal disorder, excessive vomiting & nausea, abdominal discomforts, *amaroga* (disorders due to toxic residue that is left behind as a by-product of poor digestion) (*Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana, Lehaadhyaya, p.4*)<sup>3</sup>.

Various compound formulations mentioned by *Acharyas* are as follows:

1. **Acharya Charaka** - *Panchgavya ghrta*<sup>4</sup>, *Brahmi ghrta*<sup>5</sup> etc.
2. **Acharya Sushruta** - has described 4 recipes (containing gold) which provide general immunity, body resistance, helpful in growth & development & enhancing the intelligence.<sup>6</sup>
  - *Svaran bhasm* with *kustha* (*Saussurea lappa*), *vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *madhu* (honey) & *ghrita*.
  - *Svaran bhasm* with paste of *brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *sankhpuspi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), with honey & *ghrita*.
  - *Svaran bhasm*, *arkpushpi*, *vacha*, honey & *ghrita*.
  - *Svaran bhasm*, *khaidarya*, *sweta durva*, *ghrita*.
3. **Acharya Vagbhata** - *Sarshvata ghrta*,<sup>7</sup> combination of *vacha* and *swarna bhasma* with honey and *ghrita*<sup>8</sup> etc.
4. **Acharya Kashyapa** - *Svaran Prasana* - Pure gold (in small quantity) is rubbed in water on a clean stone & given with honey and *ghrita*, to the newborn result in promote health, growth, complexion & strength (immunity), *Panchgavya ghrta*, *Brahmi ghrta*, *Abhaya ghrta*, *Samvardhana ghrta* (effective in children with delayed milestones).<sup>9</sup>

### Methods to Boost up *Vyadhiksamatva*

In Ayurveda texts, various codes of conducts are described for each persons of any age (from conception to old age) to follow in different seasons, during healthy and diseased conditions in terms of dietetic (*ahara*) and mode of life (*vihar*). These are:

1. For outcome of healthy fetus –follow *garbhini masanumasic paricharya*, *punshavana karma*.
2. To promote health of infant- *Lehana Karma*, various *medhya rasayana* (memory enhancing drugs).
3. Following *swasthavritta paripalana* (*Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*).
4. Proper nutritious diet (*satmya ahara*).
5. Regular proper sleep, exercise, yogic *asanas*.
6. Adopting *sodhana* (*Panchkarma*) according to *ritu* in *swasth purush* (healthy person).

7. Following *achara rasayana*: for promoting mental and spiritual strength.
8. Meditation for spiritual growth.
9. Proper utilization of sense organs with their objects, normal actions and normal seasons are beneficial in the maintenance of good health.
10. *Jeevaniya-Brihigana-Balya-Prazasthapana-Vayasthapna Mahakashaya* as in Charaka.<sup>10</sup>
11. *Rasayana* therapy - It promotes and rejuvenate the physiology of body, produce resistance against disease both physically and mentally.

#### **BENEFITS OF LEHANA KARMA**

1. The like ables are usually in the *Leha* form. Usually the *Lehas* are palatable and easy for consumption. The smaller kids will always have difficulties and are reluctant in taking the medicine in the tablet, *Churna*, or *Kwatha* form. Incomparable to this *Lehana* form with added *Madura* drugs easy to administer.
2. Further the *Lehana* may be routine procedure or the method by which the body supplements are introduced. As we know that growing child requires the extra caloric food as they are busy with playing and other activities throughout. In the meantime the rate of growth and development is very faster in the first few years of life. To meet the demands of the body in toddler and myelination of nervous system there is need of some extra amount of the fats, amino acids and the carbohydrates which is supplied by *Lehana Dravya (in the form of Ghrita, Honey, etc.)*
3. In other sense *Lehana* will have the long standing effect. One should not expect the short term effects in *Lehana*. It is recommended for the daily usage. It should be given daily as micro and the macronutrients are daily utilized by the body. It will have its own effects in physical and neurological development of the child in future. Classics also explain if it is used for one month, two months or six months the better effects will be seen.
4. The *Medhaya Rasayans* are explained with special reference in *Lehana*, may be considering the fact that growth of the brain and the nervous system

is very rapid in the first few years of the life which slows down afterwards as evidences by the Head circumference. So idea may be to produce the rich quality neurons in the initial period, so that child will become extra brilliant in future.

5. As we know that nutritious disorders are quite common in the child hood period due to many reasons like poorly fond of particular food, lack of the breast milk, vitiated breast milk etc. There may be vitamin, micro and macro elemental deficiencies which can be corrected by the daily usage of the *Lehana*.
6. Some of the indications and the contraindication of the *Lehana* suggest that it could be used as a substitute for the mother's milk or the *Dhatris* milk in conditions like lack of breast milk or vitiated breast milk.
7. Some of the indications in certain disease conditions suggest that *Lehana* may be supplementary food along with main stay of treatment.
8. Most of the drugs which are mentioned in the context of the *Lehana* are also the *Rasayana* drugs. The *Rasayana* drugs increase all the *Dhatus* and maintain the somatic growth of body.
9. We don't find any references to compare *Lehana* with vaccination, but continuous *Lehana* may yield vaccination like effect by boosting the immune system and keeping it alert all the time.
10. It is told that the *Lehana* is responsible for the happiness and sorrow in the future of the baby. By keeping this verse in mind we can say *Lehana* is essential in once life time as *Kashyapa* devoted a chapter for this topic.

#### **DISCUSSION**

*Swasthasya Swathya Rakshanam* is the main fundamental principle of *Ayurvedic* treatment in which we can conclude the prevention, use of *Rasayana* drugs, and diet for staying healthy. *Rasayana* is a specialised treatment influencing the fundamental aspects of the organs i.e. *Dhatu*, *Agni* and *Srotamsi*, leading to overall improvement in the

organism, which affords prevention of ageing, resistance against diseases, bodily strength and improvement in mental faculties. The mode of action of *Rasayana Dravyas* can be considered through the following three ways:-

- By improving the nutritional value of the *Rasa Dhatu*, in turn by improving the *Dhatu Poshana* e.g. *Dugdha*, *Ghritha*, etc.
- By improving the *Agni Vyapara (digestion)* in the body, there by responsible for proper *Dhatunirmana (assimilation)* in the body like *Chitraka*, *Bhallataka* etc.
- By *Shrota Shodhana* in the body, this improves *Dhatu Poshana Kriya* (supply of nutritional contents up to the cellular level) like *Guggulu*.

The prescribed procedure include not only drugs but also daily routine including exercise, diet and nutrition beside mental attitude and discipline one of the therapeutic strategies. Ayurvedic medicine is to increase body's natural resistance to the disease causing agent rather than directly neutralizing the agent itself.

## CONCLUSION

Children are more vulnerable to infection because their immune system is less or under developed. During this period our attempt should be specified to prevention of diseases and to enhance physical, mental and social well-being of children. *Ayurveda* provides concept of *Lehana* and *Rasayana* which can help in prevention of recurrent infections and also provides nutritional supplements which are necessary for proper physical and mental growth of a child. If the *Rasayan* and *Lehana* drugs used in appropriate dose with suitable vehicle (*Anupan/Sahapan*) there is no adverse effect reported till now. If the *Rasayana* and *Lehana* concept could be jointly run with National Nutritional Programme and other national programmes for the children .By all means we can get better result by means of their better growth, development and eradication of infective diseases.

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