THE ROLE OF AAHARA IN KUSTHA

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INTRODUCTION

The health is the foundation of a happy life. Skin is the mirror of one's health since it constitutes the first line of defence. It is one of the largest organs of the body. People around the world spent handful amount of money on skincare products. Diseases of skin accounts for great deal of misery, sufferings and economic loss. Ayurveda has described skin diseases under the heading of Kustha unlike its literal translation in English. Kustha is a disease characterized by any discoloration or deformation of skin ¹. Simple skin infections like ringworm, fungal infections, eczema etc. are becoming common now a day.

Change in lifestyle is mainly responsible for these outbursts. Instead of using expensive topical treatments for skin ailments, overall health of body is the absolute cure of skin disorders. This can be mainly achieved by maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle. In the prognosis of Kustha, aahara plays an important role. So the elaborate evaluation of role of aahara in Kustha needs to be reviewed.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To study the concept of skin diseases in ayurveda.
- To study the role of aahara in the skin diseases.
- To establish the importance of aahara as the causative factor and treatment of skin disorders.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Textual material available in ayurveda samhitas and commentaries, modern text and related websites have also been searched.

REVIEW OF KUSTHA

According to ayurveda, Kustha is disease recognised by discoloration or deformity of skin. It is similar to Visarpa (Herpes) except the tendency of spreading and severe burning sensation. Also Visarpa is Raktadushtipradhana while Kustha is always Tridoshaja.² Due to Tridoshaja...
Dushti, the prognosis of all types Kushtha is chronic.

Ayurveda has explained 18 types of Kushtha with further classification of Mahakushtha – 7 and Kshudra Kushtha – 11. Total remission of the disease is possible in the initial stage. As the doshasdushti increases due to continuous exposure to causative factors, the diseases becomes Asadhya (incurable).

NIDANA OF KUSTHA (ETIOLOGY)
The etiological factors of Kushtha can be categorized under following groups

**aaharaj hetu (dietary factors)**
The first and the foremost hetu of Kushtha mentioned in all the Samhitas is aaharaj nidana. Mithya Aahara ⁵ / Virodhi Anna ⁶ constitute the major cause of Kushtha. Viruddha Aahara (Dietetic incompatibilities) is described in detail as the cause of Kushtha.

**viharaj hetu (habitual factors)**
Proper follow up of Dincharya, Rutucharya, Aachar Rasayana , Ahara Vidhi Vidhana and Panchkarma is important for maintenance of health. Viharaj Hetu results in immediate aggravation and vitiation of Tridosha.

**vishesh hetu (exclusive factors)**
These causes are different from Aaharaj, Viharaj and Manasik nidana. The difference is they cannot be explained with logical reasoning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aaharaj Hetu</th>
<th>Viharaj Hetu</th>
<th>Aagantuj Hetu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sheetoshna Vyatasat</strong> ( intermittent consumption of hot and cold stuffs)</td>
<td><em>Ati Vyavaya</em> (excessive indulgence in sex), <em>Ati Vyayam</em> (Excessive exertion) and <em>Ati Santapa</em> (excess heat or temper) after excess eating of Incompatible food/ <em>Snehapana</em> (oleation) and <em>Vamana</em> (Emesis therapy)</td>
<td><em>Vipran</em>, <em>Guru Gharshayatan</em> (Disrespect of priest, sage or teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aptarman aaharaa</strong> ( Emaciating diet)</td>
<td>Entry in cold water after <em>Bhaya</em> (Frightening), <em>Shram</em> (Exertion) and <em>Santapa</em> (heat)</td>
<td><em>Paap karma</em> (Wrong deeds or immoral behaviour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous, excess and simultaneous consumption of Madhu, Phanit, Matsya, Lakuch, Mulak and Kakmachi in spite of indigestion</strong></td>
<td><em>Chhardi Vega Dharan</em> (Stopping vomiting) &amp; <em>Vega Vidharana</em> (restricting natural urges)</td>
<td><em>Purva Janmakrit Karma</em> (Deeds of previous life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous, excess consumption of Virodhi Anna</strong> (foods with opposite potencies), <em>Drava</em> (Liquids), <em>Snigdha</em> (Unctuous) and <em>Guru dravya</em> (Heavy meal)</td>
<td><em>Sneha Atisevana</em> (Excessive use of oils)</td>
<td><em>Sadhu Ninda evam Vadh</em> (accusing or murder of Sage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eating in spite of indigestion</strong></td>
<td>Swimming/ Bathing in cold water coming from hot sun</td>
<td><em>Anyesu Aaharaana</em> (Money launder-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵ Mithya Aahara: Foods that are slightly inappropriate.
⁶ Virodhi Anna: Foods that are completely incompatible.
Consumption of **Navanna** (newly grown cereals), **Dadhi** (yoghurt), **Ati lavana** (salty), **Ati Amla Dravya** (Sour) **Masha** (black gram), **Mulaka** (Raddish), **Tila** (Sesame), **Kshir** (milk), **Guda** (jaggary), and **Pishtanna** (starchy food)  

**Viruddh, Asatmya, Ajeerna and Ahita Aahara (Incompatible diet)**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aaharaaj Hetu</th>
<th>Divaswapna (Sleeping during day time)</th>
<th>Praktan (Destiny)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**SAMPRAPTI OF KUSTHA**  
According to ayurveda, the seven important factors (**Saptako Dravya Samgraha**) related to **Kustha** are three **doshas** - **Vata**, **Pitta**, **Kapha** and four **Dushya** – **Twacha** (Skin), **Rakta dhatu** (Blood), **Mamsa dhatu** (Muscle Tissue) and **Ambu/Lasika** (Lymph). 

According to **Bhel**, **Pitta** becomes aggravated excessively in body. In turn it vitiates **Raktadhatu**, **Mamsa dhatu** and **Twacha**.

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**Ndana Sevana**

- Aaharaaj Hetu
- Viharaj Hetu
- Vishesh Hetu

**Pitta Dosha in the body gets obstructed by Kapha**

- Aggravation of Vata

- Consequent accumulation and vitiation of all the three doshas
Vitiated doshas reach Rakta dhatu via Sira resulting in its vitiation

( Raktavaha Srotodushti)

Rakta – Mamsa Nirodh or obstruction by three types of doshas

18 types of Kustha ( Bahya Kustha)

Kalen Upekshit Kustha (Untreated Kustha)

Twak, Rakta, Mamsa Lasika Kotha, Kleda (Putrification)

Swedaj Krimi Utpatti

Bhakshana of Twachadi dhatu by Krimi

Consequent vitiation of Rasa, Rakta dhatu etc.

Aabhyantar / Dhatugata Kustha ( Complicated form with deformity)

**DISCUSSION**

The *nidana* and *samprapti* of Kustha mainly associated with *aahara*. *Aahara* is called *Prana*[^9] i.e. life depends on it. Ayurveda has detailed description regarding *Aahara*. *Tridosha* are considered as the basic entity responsible for diseased condition of body. *Tridosha* are considered as *Tri Sthambha*[^10] (Pillars) while *Aahara* is considered as *Trayopstambha*[^11] (Supporting Pillars) of body. The pathogenesis of any disease involves Vitiated *Doshas* and vulnerable *Dhatu*. *Tridosha* are continuously formed during *Avasthapaka* of *Aahara*.[^12] It is these *doshas* which are affected by dietary abuses.

The *Aaharaj Nidana* of Kustha can be classified into

- Related to consumption of *Viruddha Aahara* (Dietary incompatibility)
- Related to *Aahara Vidhi Vidhana* (Eating habits)
• Related to Ashtau Aahara Vidhi Vish-ehsaayatanani (factors to be considered before making meal)

Viruddha aahara refers to diet that vitiates Sharir dhatu and Dosha (Dehadhatu Pratyanik). It is one of the major causes of all kinds of skin diseases. Continuous consumption of viruddha aahara decreases Dhatu Sarta (Vitality) thus making them susceptible to dushit doshas. Also it is Abhishyandi (develops clamminess in body) and vitiates all the three doshas.\(^{13}\)

Thus just by simply avoiding viruddha aahara, one can break down the foundation of Kustha.

Jeerne Ashniyat (eating after previous meal is digested), Virya Aviruddham (Eating food devoid of opposite potencies) and Aatmanam Abhisamiksyana (Taking food in prescribed manner with due regards to one self) are some of the most important rules of Aahara Vidhi Vidhana (dietary rules). Negligence in their practice mainly affects status of Agni \(^{14}\) (Digestive power) which in turns affects Dhatvagni resulting in formation of subnormal dhatu. Also due to Agnimandya the overall pachana prakriya (Conversion process) in the body also slow down affecting Bhrajak Pitta responsible for normal skin.

Ashtau Aahara Vidhi Vish-ehsaayatanamy mainly deals with qualities, processing of food and one's eating habit. These factors are mainly considered in treatment of Kustha. The treatment mainly revolves around use of medicines along with diet. For e.g. Preparation of old and mature grains with Mandukparni (Cen-tella asiatica), Avalguj (Psoralia corylifo-lia), Aattrushaka (Semicarpous anacardium) etc

Pathya aahara for Kustha includes
• Laghu (Light) , Hitakar (nourishing), and Tikta Shaka (Bitter vegetables)

• Foods and Ghrita (ghee) containing Bhallataka, Triphala and Nimba
• Purana Dhanya (aged cereals), Jangal Mamsa , Mudga, Patola
• Avoid Guru (Heavey), Amla (sour), paya (milk), dadhi (yoghurt), Aanupa Matsya (river Fishes), Guda (jaggary) and tila (sesame).\(^{16}\)

Thus the role of aahara is very significant in the pathogenesis and treatment of Kustha. So one should always pay a lot of attention to maintain healthy diet and lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

Kustha in ayurveda unlike in modern science refers to all skin diseases that involves discoloration or any abnormality of skin. We are what we eat. Skin is the outer covering of body. Thus the skin reflects the health of a person. The nidana of Kustha are mainly related aahara and vihara. Aahara is basic factor for the formation of body entities. Aahara and Aachara (Behaviour) are considered as important part of treatment of Kustha. Therefore emphasis should be given to dietary habits for total health.

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