

A LITERARY REVIEW OF LEPA CHIKITSA w.s.r. TO CHATURVINSHATI
UPAKRAMA

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ABSTRACT :

Ayurveda is an ancient science in Indian system of medicine. The foundation of *Ayurveda* is based on eight clinical branches (*Ashtang Ayurveda*). Among these branches *Agadatantra* is one of the clinical branch in which treatment of various poison is described. A general principle of treatment of poisoning is explained in *Ayurvedic Samhitas* like *Charaka*, *Sushruta* and *Vagbhata*. In *Charaka samhita*, twenty four *Visha Upakrama* is mentioned which can be used as general principles of treatment of poisoning. In Modern Medicine general principles of treatment of poisoning is mentioned in the Toxicology. These basic principles are Resuscitation, Removal of unabsorbed poison, use of antidotes, elimination of absorbed poison, symptomatic treatment and general health of patient. *Vishaghna lepas* are chief contribution of *Ayurveda* which dealt under *Agada tantra* to treat various poisonous and unknown poisonous conditions and in conditions like *Dhoosivisha* and *Garavisha*. *Ayurveda* emphasized on both internal and external remedies to normalize *Avasthika* and *Sthanika vikaras*. *Lepas* have first importance to cure *sthanika vikaras* and to prevent further spreading of diseases.

What's Already known? : Various articles published on *lepa chikitsa*, correlation with modern concept and its mode of action.

What study add? : In this article, further effort has been made to evaluate the importance, mode of application and their action of *Vishaghna Lepa*.

Key words: *Vishaghna Lepa* , *Dhoosivisha*, *Garavisha*, *chaturvinshati upakrama*.

INTRODUCTION: The goal of medicine is to prevent disease, restore health and reduce suffering. Sufferings can be both external and internal; the external sufferings may be in the form of pain, rashes, inflammation, various skin lesions etc. Understanding and appropriately treating these external sufferings is an important component of this goal. In contemporary science analgesics are given in the form of topical applications, is said to provide the therapeutic benefits by reaching the local tissue with minimal side effects. A general principle of treatment of poisoning is explained in *Charaka samhita*, *Sushruta samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* &

Ashtanga Hridaya. *Charaka samhita* has mentioned manifestation and treatment of *Sthavara visha* (Inanimate poison) *vega* and *Jangama visha* (animate poison) *vega* commonly together. But *Sushruta samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* describes *sthavara visha vega* its manifestation and treatment at one place and *Jangama visha vega* its manifestation and treatment in *sarpavisha* (snake poison). *Charaka samhita* has explained *Chaturvimshati Upakrama*¹ (Twenty four modalities) of treatment of poisoning which is also used in different *visha vega* and its treatment. So these twenty four modalities

of treatment of poisoning described in *Charaka* can be used as unique immortal principles of *Ayurveda*. In *Ayurveda* the topical applications are known as *Lepas* and this comes under the broad heading of *Bahiparimarjana Chikitsa*². Skin is the largest protective barrier in the body which prevents invasion of microorganisms, toxins and foreign substances in the body. The main area of *Bahiparimarjana Chikitsa* is *Twak* and the treatments like *Lepa*, *Abhyanga*, *Swedana*, *Parisheka*, *Unmardana* etc. according to disease are known as *Bahi-parimarjana Chikitsa*². The *Vishaghna lepas* are those which nullifies the harmful or poison effects from the *sthavara, jangama and krutrima visha*. The term 'Dooshivisha' is of much importance now a day as it implies latent or residual poisons. In all *vishachikitsa Lepas* are considered as first and prime treatment aspect, so in this article an effort is made to explore those *lepas* which are explained under *visha Chikitsa* and their use and precaution's while using them.

AIMS & OBJECTS:

1. To study general principles of treatment of poisoning in *Ayurveda* with special reference to *Chaturvimshati Upakrama* (Twenty four modalities) of *Charaka*
2. To study *lepa* concept in detail
3. Draw a conclusion from the study

Definition of Lepa:

The medicines that are in the form of a paste and used for external application are called as *lepas*³.

Types of Lepa:

*Sushrutha*⁴ - *Pralepa, Pradeha, Alepa*.
*Sharangadhara*⁵ - *Doshagna, Vishaghna and Varnya*

both categories *lepas* into 3 separate varieties and *Vagbhat Snaihika*⁶, *Nirvapana, Prasadana, Stambana, Vilayana, Pachana, Peedana, Shodana, shoshana and Savarneekarana*.

Vishaghna Lepa: *Acharya Sharanghadhar* entitled the name *Vishaghna lepa*. That which nullifies the poisonous effect is called *Vishaghna Lepa*, and it is one among *Chaturvimshati upakrama* according to *Charaka*. *Susruta* and *Vagbhat* also had given prime importance. In any exposure to *Sthavar or Jangama visha, Doshas* get vitiated and that will be neutralized by *vishaghna lepas*. *Vishaghna lepa* is said to be *sheetal* in nature. *Acharya Charaka* while discussing the treatment of *Kushta* tells about importance of *Agada (Vishaghna) yogas* as if the spot (lesion) which is stony hard, rough, stable and old then one can use *Agadyogas*'s in form of *Lepa, Paana, Anjana and Nasya*⁷.

General method of preparation⁸: The drugs are first made into a fine powder and then mixed with some liquid media like water / cow's urine/ oil /ghee /*swarasa* /decoction etc. to obtain the paste form. This paste is applied over the skin.

Doshagna lepa- Here, the powder has to be mixed with *Aranala* (fermented gruel) as the media.

Visaghna lepa- Here, Ghee mixed with hot water should be used as the media.

Varnya lepa- Here, lemon juice/ milk should be used as the media.

Common Rules of application of Lepa: While applying the *lepas, sneha*'s are said to be added. Their quantity has to be decided as per the *dosha* vitiated⁹. The *Lepa* should not be applied at night time and left

in situ after drying. It must be removed as soon as it dries up, because *lepas* in wet state help to cure the diseases and on drying, they lose their potency and causes the irritation of the skin¹⁰. *Lepas* should be prepared and used fresh. *Lepas* should be applied only once and should not be applied over the previous one¹¹.

Matra of Lepa: *Sushruta* has compared the thickness of *Lepa* to the skin of buffalo, he says that *Pralepa* is thinner and *Pradeha* is thicker to buffalo's skin and in between is consider as *Alepa*. *Acharya Sharangdhara* says as *Doshaghna lepa* -1/4 *angula*, *Vishaghna lepa*-1/3 *angula*, *Varnya lepa*-1/2 *angula*¹² [1 *Angula* = 1.95cm, *yavodarairangul amastasankya*¹⁷].

Possible mode of Action of Lepa: *Lepas* are usually applied against the hair follicular direction, this facilitates the quicker absorption of the drug through *Romakupa* (hair roots), *swedavahini* (sweat glands) and *siramukha* (blood capillaries)¹³. In the Chapter *Dhamani Vyakarana Adhyaya Susruta* explains *Dhamanis* which are *Oordhwagata*, *Adhogata* and *Tiryakgata*. Here he explains four *Tiryakgami Siras*. Out of these four, each divides gradually hundred and thousand times and thus become innumerable: by these the body is covered like network, bound and pervaded their openings are attached to hair follicles which carry sweat and replenish *rasa* inside and outside (“*Swedamabhivahanti Rasamchahitarpayanthi Antharbahishcha.....*”); through them only the *veerya* of *Abhyanga*, *Snana* and *Lepa dravyas* enter the body after being transformed in skin; the same also carry the sensation of touch pleasant¹⁴. The physiochemical properties of

a drug in a topical dosage form affect that drug's transdermal delivery and topical bioavailability. The molecules of the formulation after penetrating through the stratum corneum and into viable epidermis and dermis produces its characteristic pharmacological response through receptors even before the blood and lymph circulations remove it, in which case it may set in a cascade of systemic effects. Though the horny layer is very impermeable to most chemicals, contributing the rate limiting step in trans-dermal absorption because of its high diffusion resistance, providing a small fractional area of 0.1 % only as permeable appendage shunt route. Besides this route the drug molecules may penetrate through the hair follicles and sebaceous glands or through sweat ducts also and thus helps to remove or neutralize the toxins in initial stage only¹⁵.

Precaution for using Vishaghna

Lepta: The use of anti-poisonous formulation is judicious only when the case is definitely of poisoning, as if used in poison less person it may create troubles, hence with all efforts, poison should be diagnosed, as in absence of poison the physician might kill the patient¹⁶. So diagnosis plays important role and this precaution strictly follow when drug has to administered internally remove or neutralize the toxins in initial stage only.

DISCUSSION: *Lepa* is one of the important *bahirparimarjana chikitsa* which subcides vitiated *doshas* locally as well as deeper situated *doshas* in the body and prevents invasion of microorganisms, toxins and foreign substances in the body.

Most of *Vishaghna lepas* are *Tridoshahara* mainly *pittahara* (*Brajakapitta* is situated in

twacha) and due to Ashraya Aashrayibhava they remove a vitiated Doshas from the Rakta and acts as Vishaghna. Ghruta mixed with hot water is best media for Vishaghna lepas. Ghruta an end product of milk, is an ideal substance that has a unique action on the body constituents, it has a beneficial soothing effect on the unctuous chain (Dhaatu Sneha Parampara) of the tissues. And its Sukshmakariguna helps in penetration of drug in deeper level.

Mode of administration Pralepa/ Alepa /Pradeha plays very important role in absorbing a poison. Sushruta has compared the thickness of Lepa to the skin of buffalo, he says that Pralepa is thinner and Pradeha is thicker to buffalo's skin, it means the actual thickness of the skin buffalo may be attributed as the thickness in between both, which will be thickness of Alepa. Acharya Sharangadhara says as Doshaghna lepa 1/4 angula (0.48cm), Vishaghna lepa-1/3 angula (0.65cm), Varnyalepa-1/2 angula (0.97cm).

[1 Angula = 1.95cm, yavodarairangul amastasankya¹⁷]. Lepa in the Pratiloma direction helps the Oushadha to re-main there properly and allows it to enter the romakoopas and thereby potency (veerya) of dravya entering to svedavahinisrotas and make the action of the application quick and effective. Charakacharya explained importance of Agada (Vishaghna) lepa in Kustachikitsa, if the spot which is stony hard, rough, benumbed, stable and old then one can use Agadalepa's in form of Lepa, Paana, Anja and Nasya. By observing all indication of Vishaghna Lepa, lepa's are not only restricted to Twaka vikaras, it supportive to cure diseases involved in most

of other Srotas (indicated in Unmaada, Gulma, Arsha, Mudagarbha, etc....)

CONCLUSION: Vishaghna lepas can also be used in other aliments other than Visharoga. However, causative factor for a disease is important, i.e. history pertaining to Dhooshivisha/ Garavisha is must. All Vishaghna Lepas due to their Guna (property) and veerya (potency) act as Doshaghna Lepa, but all Doshaghna lepas need not be essentially Vishaghna.Lepa done externally through skin is only one example, though the Lepas described in our texts are effective, Vishaghna lepas are less used and less known, Knowledge of different varieties of Lepas available in different forms may help future research scholars and physicians to use it in an appropriate way

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