

Role of *Virechana* (Therapeutic Purgation) in the Management of *Ekakushtha* (Psoriasis) -A Case Study

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Abstract

Psoriasis is considered as a type of *Kushtha* (skin diseases) and may be well correlated to various varieties of *Kushtha*, among them *Eka-kushta*, *Kitibha* are the commonest due to the resemblance of signs and symptoms. Here, *Ekakushtha* is accepted as Psoriasis because the description and characteristic features of it are co-related with the description of Psoriasis than any other type of *Kushtha*. Effective therapeutic agents for the treatment of Psoriasis in contemporary medicine may have long-term toxic side effects, which makes an alternative system of medicine a good choice because it overcomes the said limitations. The mainstay of treatment in *Ayurveda* for *Kushtha* is *shodhana* (bio purification), which eliminates the vitiated *doshas*. *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) is a less stressful procedure than *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) and has less possibility of complications. So, the present work has been undertaken to study the role of *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) in the management of psoriasis- A case study. After treatment patients recovered symptomatically, the itching and scaling were relieved completely, burning was very mild and intermittent. But, there was mild improvement in nail changes. So, it is concluded that *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) was effective and showed considerable improvement in the patient of Psoriasis.

Keywords

Psoriasis, Ekakushtha, therapeutic purgation, Virechana



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INTRODUCTION

In *Ayurveda*, almost all skin diseases can be taken under generalized term “*Kushtha*”. Psoriasis is considered as type of *Kushtha* (skin diseases) and may be well correlated to various varieties of *Kushtha* among them *Ekakushtha*, *Kitibha* are the commonest due to the resemblance of signs and symptom. Here, *Ekakushtha* is accepted as Psoriasis because the description and characteristic features of it are co-related with description of Psoriasis than any other type of *Kushtha*.

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory condition of the skin characterized by disfiguring, silvery scaling, and erythematous plaques that may be painful or often severely pruritic and may cause significant QOL (quality of life) issues¹. Plaque psoriasis is the most common form of the disease and appears as raised, red patches covered with a silvery white build-up of dead skin cells. These patches or plaques most often show up on the scalp, knees, elbows and lower back. They are often itchy and painful, and they can crack and bleed².

Treating various types of *Kushtha* is a challenge due to involvement of three *doshas*³, incurability and recurrence of nature attracts the researchers to find out a suitable solution⁴ for *Kushtha*. It has even become a challenge to different medical system including *Ayurveda*⁵. Today, modern medical science has lots of facilities and upgraded technologies for

treatment of patient but still many diseases are in progressive phase in the society. Psoriasis is one such kind of disorders affecting approximately 2% of the population².

Effective therapeutic agents in contemporary medicine are limited in number and may have long-term toxic side effects, which makes alternative system of medicine a good choice because it overcomes the said limitations. All *Acharya* have emphasized on *Shodhana* therapy in the management of all *Kushtha* (bio purification)⁶, which eliminates the vitiated *doshas*. *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) is a specific modality for the elimination of *Pitta Dosh*⁷ but it is also effective upon *Vata* and *Kapha Dosh* as well as *Rakta*. It is less stressful procedure than *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) and has less possibility of complications. So, *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) was selected for the *Shodhana* in this case.

CASE STUDY

Particulars of Patient:

Age and sex: 35 years Male Habitat: Rural

Religion: Muslim Socio economic condition: Lower class

Occupation: Driver

Chief Complaints:

1) Erythematous patches on back, hands, legs and scalp since last 10 years.

2) Silvery scaling on back, hands, legs and scalp since last 10 years.

3) Itching and burning on back, both hands and legs and scalp since 10 years.

4) Nail Psoriasis (psoriatic onychodystrophy) in fingernails of upper and lower extremities since 6 last years.

History of Present Illness: A patient approached to OPD (Out-patient department) at Shree Gulabkunverba Ayurveda Hospital (SGAH), Jamnagar on 14/8/15 with above mentioned chief complaints. The lesions were initially observed behind the ears and gradually spread over the scalp. Within a couple of days it extended over back and on both hands and legs (from knee to foot). Changes in fingernails such as pitting, onycholysis, subungual hyperkeratosis were also found

For the above said complaints patient has taken medicines from various dermatologists and was given oral systemic and local corticosteroids but patient didn't found any relief, then he consulted S.G.A.H., Jamnagar for better treatment and after proper counselling and examination he was admitted in IPD (in patient department), *Kayachikitsa* dept., S.G.A.H. for purpose of bio purification in the form of *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation).

Onset of disease: Gradual

Precipitating Factors: Cold weather and emotional stress

Personal History

1. **Bathing:** Not daily, just after direct exposure to sun light

2. **Clothing:** Unclean, tight clothes

3. **Hygienic condition:** Poor

4. **Addiction:** Tobacco Chewing, Smoking (since 20 years)

5. **History of allergies:** Not reported

6. **Appetite:** Less

7. **Bowel:** Constipated

8. **Urine:** Normal

Dietary history:

Type of diet: habit of mixed diet (vegetarian and non-vegetarian), frequent use of sour, salty, pungent (pickles, jam and sauce etc) and fermented foods, curd, incompatible diet such as fruit salad (combination of milk with citrus fruits i.e., grapes, pomegranate, apple, banana etc.), milk combine with fish, sour and salty foods, radish, onion.

Faulty dietary pattern: Patient is used to take food in the state of indigestion, use of hot and cold food articles at the same time.

History related to lifestyle: On counselling, it was observed that patient was used to indulge in faulty life style such as awakening at night, drinking of cold water/ cold water bath just after sun exposure, day sleep just after meal.

Moreover, suppression of natural urges (defecation, urination) is very common issue observed in the patient.

Family History: Family members are not having similar complaints in past or present.

Past History: No history of any major systemic illness.

Psychological History: Tension, Irritability, Anxiety

Physical examinations:

Vitals: Blood pressure - 120/78 mm of Hg

Weight-70 kg

Pulse rate - 76/minute

Height -5.9”

R.R. - 22/minute

Temperature: Normal

Systemic examination:

1. R.S. (Respiratory System): Clear, No abnormality detected (NAD)
2. G.I.T. (Gastro Intestinal Tract): Patient complaints of flatulence, belching and constipation.
3. C.V.S. (Cardio Vascular System): NAD
4. Locomotor System: No Abnormality detected
5. Skin examination:

Character of lesion:

1. **Colour of lesion:** shiny, rich red

2. **Shape:** coin shaped, oval
3. **Border:** well demarcated
4. **Size:** big plaques of the size of the palm of a hand
5. **Surface:** rough
6. **Site of onset:** behind the ears
7. **Pattern of lesion:** symmetrical
8. **Variety of lesion:** plaque type of variety
9. **Sensation:** normal
10. **Diagnostic Sign (Auspitz Sign):** positive

Treatment given:

The patient was administered classical *Virechana Karma* (therapeutic purgation therapy) and during this period all oral medicines were stopped. The details of the procedures of purgation are described below:

Method of *Virechana* Procedure (therapeutic purgation)

The *Virechana* process comprises of three stages *Purva Karma* (initial procedure), *Pradhana Karma* (main procedure) and *Pashchat Karma* (post procedure) which are as follows.

Table 1 Procedure of *Virechana Karma*

Sr. no.	Name of procedure	Dose	Time of administration
Purvakarma (Initial procedure): total duration 11 days			
1	Dipana (stomachic)- Pachana (digestant) (for 1 st to 3 rd day) (drugs which kindle digestive fire and digestant)	1. <i>Amapachana Vati</i> * Hot water boiled with <i>Shunthi</i>	2 Tab. for drinking thrice a day whole day
2	Abhyantara Snehana (4 th to 9 th day) followed by Luke warm water (Internal oleation therapy)	<i>Panchatikta Ghrita</i> ** followed by hot water	in increasing order (starting from 30 ml till 180 ml) At morning (7:00 am every day)
3	Bahya Snehana (massage over whole body) (10 th and 11 th day)	<i>Nimba Oil</i>	S.Q. At morning (between 9:00-10:00 am)
	Bashpa Swedana (fomentation by using vapour to whole body) (10 th and 11 th day)	<i>Dashamula</i> *** decoction	till symptoms of proper fomentation observed At morning (between 9:00-10:00 am)
Pradhana Karma (Main procedure- Purgation therapy): on 12th day			
1	Bahya Snehana (massage over whole body) and Bashpa Swedana (fomentation done by using vapour to whole body)	<i>Nimba oil and Dashamula</i> decoction	S.Q. At 9:00 am
2	Administration of Virechana Yoga (Purgative medicine)	<i>Trivrita Avaleha</i> **** <i>Draksha Phanta</i>	200 gm 150 ml 10:00 am on empty stomach
Pashchata Karma (Post procedure of dietetics and behavioural restriction): 12 th to 16 th days			
	Recommended Diet	Morning	Evening
1	1 st day (<i>Virechana</i>)	-	<i>Peya</i> (thin rice gruel)
2	2 nd day	<i>Peya</i> (thin rice gruel)	<i>Vilepi</i> (thick rice gruel)
3	3 rd day	<i>Vilepi</i> (thick rice gruel)	<i>Vilepi</i> (thick rice gruel)
4	4 th day	<i>Akrita Yusha</i> (green gram soup)	<i>Akrita Yusha</i> (green gram soup)
5	5 th day	<i>Krita Yusha</i> (fried soup of green gram)	<i>Krita Yusha</i> (fried soup of green gram)
	Summary of Virechana	Total duration taken for Virechana Karma: 16 days	
		Total no. of Vega: 17	
		Type of Purification: Madhyama (Moderate purification)	

S.Q. - Sufficient quantity

Chitraka mula, Triphala, Trikatu, Ajamoda, Jiraka dwaya, Hingu, Saindhava, Nimbu and dadima Swarasa* Ghee medicated with paste and decoction of *Panchatikta (Nimba, Patola, Vasa, Guduchi, Kantakari)**** *Bilva, Agnimantha, Shyonaka, Patla, Gambhari, Shaliparni, Prishniparni, Bruhati, Kantakari, Gokshura******Trivrita Churna, kalka and Kashaya, Twaka, tejapatra, Maricha, Sharkara, Madhu*



Fig.1 Before treatment



Fig.2 After Purgation procedure (at 16th day)



Fig.3 Before treatment



Fig.4 After Purgation procedure (at 16th day)



Fig.5 Before treatment



Fig.6 After Purgation procedure (at 16th day)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After purgation therapy, the reddish silvery patches and scaling disappeared at the end of *Samsarjana Krama* (dietetics and behavioural restriction) leaving some area of hyperpigmentation over back, upper and lower extremities (**Fig 1-6**). Itching was completely relieved whereas, burning was not completely relieved after *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation). Moreover, control of psoriasis symptoms

improved the mental status of the patient remarkably by reducing psychological symptoms like, tension, irritability and anxiety. But, there was mild improvement in nail changes.

The holistic approach of *Virechana* procedure removes the toxic waste materials from the body and also boosts the immune system and provides substantial relief to the patient.

DISCUSSION

Kushtha is difficult to cure therefore it is called 'Duschikitsya. But by the application of *Shodhana* therapy (bio purification), cure of the disease becomes easier due to removal of the root cause⁸, hence *Shodhana* in the form of *Virechana* is selected in this case.

Mode of action of *Panchatikta Ghrita*: It is specially indicated in classics for *Kushtha*⁹. All the ingredients are having *Kushthaghna* (alleviates skin diseases) property. *Ghrita* is mentioned as *Vatapittashamaka* (pacifying Vata, pitta), *Tvachya* (improves complexion) etc¹⁰ and has a remarkable property to assimilate the properties of other substances when added to it. So, *Panchatikta Ghrita* becomes more effective than *Shuddha Ghrita* (pure ghee).

The role of *Panchatikta Ghrita* as an internal oleation in *Purvakarma* procedure is also supported by several research studies in the management of *Ekakushtha* (psoriasis); among them a clinical study¹¹ done by alva et al. concluded that *Panchatikta ghrita* group provided better relief in the sign and symptoms of *Ekakushtha* in comparison of pure ghee. It revealed that use of *Panchatikta ghrita* can be recommended for *Snehana* as *Purvakarma* for *Virechana* especially for management of *Ekakushtha* (psoriasis). Considering all these points, it has been selected for present work.

Mode of action of *Ushna Jala* (Hot water)

Ushna Jala (Hot water) as an *Anupana* (post prandial drink) is indicated in drinking of four type of *sneha* (fat/ghee)¹². The fat molecules are larger in size and hence are hard to digest. But it should be considered that lipids are hydrophilic in nature and hence, it will have affinity for hot water¹³. The fat molecules will easily dissolve with water molecules and thus gets easily digested without causing any *Snehana Vyapada* (complications due to improper oleation)

Therapeutic effect of *Virechana Karma* (therapeutic purgation):

Dipana (stomachic) - *Pachana* (digestant) medicines enhances the digestive capacity which facilitates the easy digestion of *Sneha* (fat/ghee). *Abhyantara Snehana* in the form of gradual increase of dose of *Sneha* (fat/ghee) is important for loosening the bond between *Dosha* and *Dushya*, thereby helping in breaking the pathogenesis of psoriasis. *Vatashamaka* (pacifying the *vata*), *Dahashamaka* (reduce burning) property of *ghee* decreases scaling and dryness.

External *Snehana* softens morbid *doshas* and localizes them, decreases dryness and scaling, further gradual increase of dose of *Sneha* is important for loosening the bond between *Dosha* and *Dushya*, thereby helping in breaking the pathogenesis of psoriasis. *Bashpa Swedana* liquefies the morbid *doshas* which are being situated in micro channels.

In *Kushtha* the *Rakta Dhatu* is considered as one of the main *Dhatu*. *Pitta Dosha* and *Rakta Dhatu* have *Ashraya-Ashryi bhava* (inter-relationship), hence treatment modality of *Pitta Dosha* and *Rakta Dhatu* complimenting to each other. *Virechana* is most important measure of *Shodhana* for *Kushtha*. Though it is a specific modality for the elimination of *Pitta Dosha* but it is also effective upon *Kapha* and *Rakta* and widely used as a *Shodhana* therapy in routine⁸. The intention of *Samsarjana Krama* is to bring resurgence to impaired *Kosthagni* (digestive fire) and proper bowel functioning. Nutritive and easily assimilable preparations such as *Peya*, *Vilepi*, *Akritayusha*, *Kritayusha* is crucial for better bioavailability and upliftment of the biological system after *Virechana*.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that, *Ayurvedic* bio purification in the form of *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) gives satisfactory answers, as well as it is equally beneficial for the promotion and preservation of health by removing toxic wastes, by balancing morbid humours which gives the healthy and peaceful life to patient of Psoriasis. Moreover, initial procedure, main procedure and post procedure care during *Virechana Karma* (therapeutic purgation) is most important to yield a better outcome.

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