

## Critical Analysis on Vicarcikā – A Review

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### ABSTRACT

Skin illnesses are important in Āyurveda, and references to kuṣṭha can be found dating back to the Vedic period. Kuṣṭhais divided into two types: mahākuṣṭha and kṣudrakuṣṭha. Vicarcikā is one of the kṣudrakuṣṭhas, which is primarily kapha dominant and has symptoms such as kanḍu (pruritis), srāva (discharge), piḍakā (vesicles), and śyāva varṇa (discoloration). Vicarcikā is generally accepted to be eczema in modern science based on symptomatology and pathophysiology. Atopic dermatitis, often known as eczema, is a chronic inflammatory skin disorder that usually occurs in the first few years of life. Cracked or scaly discoloured patches, erythema, papules, exudate, and acute itching are all symptoms of atopic dermatitis, which can lead to insomnia and reduced quality of life, as well as psychological distress. There are no satisfactory remedies available in modern science. Antihistamines, oral and corticosteroids, topical immunomodulators, and UV phototherapy are among the most common. Because the disease is persistent and prone to exacerbation, the drugs employed in treatment are not without adverse effects and must typically be used indefinitely. In Āyurveda, various effective therapeutic procedures such as kāya śodhana, siravyadhana, and śamanaśadhās, which incorporate lepās, have been documented.

**KEYWORDS:** Kuṣṭha, Vicarcikā, eczema

### I. INTRODUCTION

The skin is the body's largest and heaviest organ, covering an average of 20 square feet. Aside from acting as a protective barrier, the skin also aids in the regulation of internal temperature and allows people to sense the world through nerve endings. Skin illnesses are relatively frequent nowadays, affecting people of all ages, from children to the elderly, and causing discomfort, disfigurement, incapacity, and, in rare cases, death<sup>i</sup>. They account for 2-3% of all medical problems seen in practice<sup>ii</sup>. In Āyurveda, Kuṣṭha (Skin Diseases) is a term that refers to a variety of skin conditions. All dermatological illnesses are

classified into eighteen Kuṣṭha subgroups. Mahākuṣṭha and KṣudraKuṣṭha are the two types of Kuṣṭha. Vicarcikā (Eczema) is a form of KṣudraKuṣṭha (Minor skin diseases).

### II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As this is a review article, many Ayurvedic texts, published research articles, and internet-based materials were explored for this bit. All of the Bṛhatrayī and commentary on those and some other sāmhitā have been examined. To gather knowledge on the required subject, modern texts and numerous websites were also referred to.

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Eczema** - The Greek word eczema, meaning “to boil over,” vividly describes the appearance of acute eczematous dermatitis one of the most common skin disorders. Based on initiating factors, eczematous dermatitis can be subdivided into the following categories: (1) allergic contact dermatitis, (2) atopic dermatitis, (3) drug-related eczematous dermatitis, (4) photoeczematous dermatitis, and (5) primary irritant dermatitis. The causes of eczema are sometimes broadly separated into “inside” and “outside” types: disease resulting from external application of an antigen (e.g., poison ivy) or a reaction to an internal circulating antigen (which may be derived from ingested food or a drug). Treatment involves a search for offending substances that can be removed from the environment. Topical steroids nonspecifically block the inflammatory response. While such treatments are only palliative and do not cure, they are nevertheless helpful in interrupting acute exacerbations of eczema that can become self-perpetuating if unchecked.<sup>iii</sup>

### Vicarcikā

“Vicār” means to spread and expand in several directions. Vicarcikā, on the other hand, indicates coating, covering, a type of skin eruption, itching, and scab. In a nutshell, it can be defined as a cutaneous eruption that spreads in several directions.<sup>iv</sup> Vicarcikā (Eczema) is characterized in

the Caraka Samhitaas a skin lesion that includes Kanḍu (itching), Śyāvapiḍakā (darkly pigmented eruptions) and Bahusrāva (oozing).<sup>vi</sup> Vicarcikā is a combination of marked linings (Rājyo), intense itching (Atikanḍu), severe pain (Atiruja), and dryness (rūkṣata) in the body, according to Ācāryā Suśruta.<sup>vi</sup>

Like Ācāryā Caraka, Ācāryā Vagbhata mentioned the same lakṣaṇa (Symptoms), but substituted lasīkaḍhya (watery contents of the body) instead of Bahusrāva (oozing).<sup>vii</sup>

### Nidāna

Because the specific etiological variables that cause Vicarcikā are unexplained, the etiological factors that cause Kuṣṭha could be considered as Nidāna of Vicarcikā. The causes can be classified into the following categories:

1. Āhāraja Hetu (Diet-related)
  2. Vihāraja Hetu (regimen related)
  3. Acāraja Hetu (Behavioral misconduct)
1. Āhāraja Hetu (Diet-related): Mithya Āhāra (improper diet) and Viruddha Āhāra (incompatible food) are the two main causes of Kuṣṭha (Skin diseases). Eighteen varieties of Viruddha Āhāra were described by Ācāryā Caraka (incompatible food).<sup>viii</sup> For example, mūli (Radish) with milk, or Chilchima fish with milk. Aṣṭhāra Vidhi Viśeṣāyatana (eight disciplines of eating) is an appropriate manner for consuming Āhāra (meal), whereas Mithya Āhāra (improper diet) includes food consumption during indigestion and excessive

usage of Tila (sesame), Lavaṇa (salt), Dadhi (curd), Guḍa (jaggery) etc.

2. Vihāraja Hetu (Regimen-related causes): Vihāraja hetu includes Vega Vidhāraṇa (Suppression of urges), Mithya Vihāra (improper activities), Pañcakarma-Apacharana (Improper techniques for advocating Pañcakarma). Mithya Vihāra (improper activities) refers to activities such as excessive exercise, exercise after Snehapāna (internal administration of Sneha) and Ācāryā Carakadefined thirteen varieties of Vega Vidhāraṇa (Suppression of Urges), each of which has detrimental side effects on the body, such as suppression of vomiting, mūtra, and purīṣavega. Improper Snehapāna (internal administration of Sneha) during pañcakarma therapy can result in a variety of skin ailments. After Śodhana Karma (Purification), the Pathya-Apathya (Wholesome-Unwholesome) regimen should be followed, and if not, it might result in skin diseases.

3. Achāraja Hetu (Behavioral Misconduct): This is one of the major etiological elements in Kuṣṭha (skin diseases), and it involves insulting respected people such as Brahmins and teachers, engaging in sinful acts, and using money or stuff obtained via unethical ways, among other things.

### Pūrvarūpa

The Pūrvarūpa of Vicarcikā is not depicted in the text, but because it is categorized as a kṣudrakuṣṭha, the Pūrvarūpa of the kuṣṭha can be applied to the Pūrvarūpa of Vicarcikā.

**Table showing Pūrvarūpa (Prodromal symptoms) of Vicarcikā (Eczema)**

S.No.	Pūrvarūpa (Prodromal symptoms)	Ācāryā Caraka	Ācāryā Suśruta	Ācāryā Vāgbhaṭa
1	Asweda (absence of sweating)	+	+	+
2	Atisweda (excessive sweating)	+	+	+
3	Pāruṣya (dryness)	+	+	-
4	Vaivarṇya (Discolouration)	+	+	+
5	Kanḍu (Itching)	+	+	+
6	Paridāha (Burning Sensation)	+	+	+
7	Suptata (Sensation loss)	+	+	+

### Rūpa

In Caraka Samhita and Aṣṭanga Hṛdaya, Vicarcikā is mentioned as a Kapha predominant disease with intense itching, discoloration and excessive oozing from eruptions. Whereas, Ācāryā

Suśrutacategorizes Vicarcikā (Eczema) as a pitta predominant disease with excessive itching and severe pain involving cracks and dryness. The Symptoms of Vicarcikā (Eczema) include:

Table 2 showing Rūpa of Vicarcikā (Eczema)

S.No.	Rūpa	Caraka Samhita	Suśruta Samhita	Aṣṭanga Hṛdaya
1	Kanḍu (Itching)	+	+	+
2	Śyāvata (discoloration)	+	-	+
3	Piḍakā (vesicles)	+	-	+
4	Bahusrāva (excessive oozing)	+	-	+
5	Rājyo (cracked lining)	-	+	-
6	Atiruja (severe pain)	-	+	-
7	Rūkṣata (dryness)	-	+	-

### Samprāpti

Samprāpti Ghaṭaka:

1. Doṣa: Kapha pradhāna tridoṣa (Ch. & Vag.)  
Pitta pradhāna tridoṣa (Su.)
2. Dūṣya: Twak, Rakta, Māmsa, Lasīka
3. Agni: Jathāragnimāndya & Dhātvagnimāndya
4. Srotas: Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Māmsavaha, Swedavaha, Udakavaha
5. Srotodushṭi: Saṅga, Vimārga gamana
6. Udbhava sthāna: Amāshaya
7. Adhisthāna: Twacha
8. Roga mārga: Bahya mārgaja
9. Swabhāva (Prabhava): Chirkari (Chronic)

As particular Samprāpti (pathogenesis) is not explained in Ayurvedic texts, Kuṣṭha Samprāpti (pathogenesis of skin diseases) might be regarded as Vicarcikā Samprāpti (pathogenesis).

Ācāryā Caraka emphasised the significance of Saptā Dravya, which includes Tridoṣas and Twak, Rakta, Māmsa, and Ambu (Lasīka), since Saptadravya vitiation is a sannikarṣa hetu for Kuṣṭha. Kuṣṭha is the result of the Doṣa-Dūṣyasammūrchanain the Twak.<sup>ix</sup>

According to Ācāryā Suśruta, Tridoṣas will get vitiated as a result of Nidāna sevana. The vitiated Doṣas pass through the Tiryakgata Sira, resulting in doṣa-Dūṣya sammurchana. Once it reaches the Bahya Roga Marga, the symptoms will appear wherever it moves.<sup>x</sup>

According to Ācāryā Vāgbhaṭa, vitiated Vātadi doṣas enter tiryaka sira and cause pathology in Rakta, Māmsa, Tvacha, and Tvakagata Lasīka.

They become more exacerbated or vitiated during samprāpti, resulting in skin discoloration.<sup>xi</sup>

### Chikitsa

The main aim of the physician is to bring back the equilibrium of doṣas that have got vitiated. For this, the first step is nidāna parivarjana (avoiding the causative factors) which will help in samprāpti vighaṭana of the roga. Most of the Ācāryās had prescribed a general line of treatment, based on doṣa predominance. Ghṛtapāna (internal oleation) is recommended in Vātika Kuṣṭha, Vamana (emesis) is recommended in Kaphaja Kuṣṭha, and Virechana (Purgation) is recommended in Pittika Kuṣṭha. Twak (skin) Vikāra is best treated after Śodhana, especially Raktamokshana (bloodletting). Vamana (emesis) should be given once every two weeks (15 days), Virechana (purgation) once a month (30 days), Nasya (nasal therapy) once in three days, and Raktamokshana (bloodletting) once in every six months.<sup>xii</sup> After the body has been cleansed, Śamana Chikitsa (Pacification therapy) is used to pacify the remaining Doṣa, normalize, and maintain the levels of all three Doṣas. As a result, recurrent Śodhana (Purification) is the most important line of treatment in Vicarcikā, followed by Śamana (Pacification) and Rasayana (Rejuvenation). Caraka and other Ācāryās have offered numerous yogas to be employed as śamana yogas, primarily paṭola, nimba, khadira, etc. Bahi parimārga can be used as a method to purify the body by applying several medications to the skin. Lepā, pariṣeka, avacūrṇana, apagarṣana, and

other modes of parimārjana are possible. Thus, after executing śodhana or śamana therapies in kuṣṭhapatients, Carakaand Vāgbhaṭadescribed lepanā (external application) on skin lesions, which provide easy recovery.

#### Pathya-Apathya

Pathya-Apathya (Healthy-Unhealthy) is an important component in the treatment of Vicarcikā (Eczema). Laghu Anna (Light diet), Tikta sāka (bitter vegetables), Nimbha (Margosa Tree), paṭola (Trichosanthes dioica), Triphala, Purāna Dhānya (Old cereals), Jāngala Māmsa(meat of arid animals), Mudga (Green gram, Ghṛta, Bhallātaka (Semecarpus anacardium), pariṣeka(with suitable medication) and Avagāha (Tub bath) of Khadira (Acacia catechu) are the few important pathyāhara. Guru Anna (heavy diet), Dugdha (milk), Dadhi (curd), Amla Rasa (sour in essence), Guda (jaggery), Tila (sesame), Anupa Māmsa(meat of animals living in marshy areas), and Matsya (fish) are all called Apathya (unwholesome).<sup>xiii</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Skin diseases have been increasing in the present era due to lifestyle changes and the increased use of cosmetics. Āyurveda has one of the best and most holistic approaches which offers an opportunity for patients to get rid of a variety of skin diseases that commonly recur, they also have a physical and psychological impact on their life. Of them, the first step is Nidāna Parivarjanai. eavoid disease-causing factors, and avoid the use of local alkaline soaps which can cause dryness or skin irritation, these can be replaced by snana churnas. Similarly, skin damage and irritation caused by increased use of moisturizers can be avoided by the use of Siddha Ghṛta (Medicated ghee) or Taila (Oil). For proper management of Kuṣṭha (skin diseases), Āyurveda plays a very important role, oral as well as topical treatment gives the best results and another important thing is to follow Pathya-Apathya (Wholesome-Unwholesome) regimen. Thus, for the management of Vicarcikā, the best protocol is repeated śodhana, followed by śamana and rasāyana therapies.

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