

ACNE VULGARIS IN AYURVEDA- A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Acne vulgaris is one of the most prevalent skin disorder found in adolescent age group around the world. In Ayurvedic texts, disease has been described by the name of *Mukhad ik* or *Yuv npi ik*. No description of the disease is present in Ayurvedic text *Caraka Samhit* but *c rya Su ruta* in *Su ruta Samhit* has described the disease under *K udraRoga* chapter. *Kapha*, *V ta* and *Rakta* are vitiated during the pathogenesis of the disease and form *Imal* thorns like lesion over face. Although described in short, symptoms resemble very closely with the modern acne vulgaris description. Regarding the treatment, *Abhyanga*, *Vamana*, *Nasya*, *Raktamok ana* are indicated for the management of the disease. Various *Lepana* drugs are also mentioned in different Ayurvedic texts for the treatment.

Keywords: Acne Vulgaris, *Mukhad ik*, *Yuv npi ik*, *Ayurveda*, *K udraRoga*

INTRODUCTION

Acne vulgaris is one of the most commonly seen diseases in adolescence. It is a chronic inflammatory disease of pilo-sebaceous units characterized by the development of comedones in forms of papules, pustules and less commonly nodules.

Approximately 95% to 100% of adolescent boys and 83% to 85% of adolescent girls aged 16 to 17 years are afflicted with this disease.¹

Although, Acne itself is not life threatening, it causes a severe distress to the human psyche. This disease causes a severe psychosocial burden in the patients, displaying the stigma on their skin for the world to see and criticize on a daily basis. Between 30% and 50% of adolescent experience psychological difficulties associated with acne, including concern about their body image, embarrassment, social impairment, anxiety, frustration, anger, depres-

sion, and poor self-esteem². Acne not only causes emotional distress, but also the anxiety evoked by acne aggravates the skin condition, thereby creating a vicious cycle.³

In *yurveda*, a very similar description is given is by *yurvedic* stalwarts by the name of *Mukhad ik*, due to its nature of deteriorating the beauty of one's face. As the disease is seen in adolescent age group, *Yuv npi ik* term is also given by the *c rya*s.

Su ruta Samhit is the first *yurveda* text to explain *Mukhad ik*. This disease is mentioned in most of the texts as *K udra-roga*. *c rya* *Su ruta* have mentioned the vitiation of *V yu*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* in the pathology of the disease⁴. *c rya* *V gbhatta* has mentioned the role of *Meda* in the pathology of *Mukhad ik* which resembles the modern theory of sebum involvement in the pathogenesis of acne.

In this paper, all the etiological factors, pathogenesis and treatment modalities mentioned in the Ayurvedic texts are reviewed in a systematic way.

METHODOLOGY

References were collected from the classical Ayurvedic texts including the *Bruhatray grantha* i.e. *Caraka Samhit*, *Su ruta Samhit*, *A t nga H udaya*.

LITERARY REVIEW

Description of the disease:-

In *Caraka Samhit* [1000 B.C.], there is no description of any disease by the name of *Mukhad ik* / *Yuv npi ik*. Although in *Sutra Sth na Tristren na Adhy ya*, *Pi ik* is described as *B hya Marg rita Roga*.⁵In

Tri oth ya Adhy ya, *c rya Caraka* has mentioned that the vitiated *Pitta* in *Tvaka & Rakta* produces a reddish *otha* called *Pi ik*.⁶

In *Su ruta Samhit* (1000-1500 B.C.), *K udraroga Nid na Adhy ya* there is description of *Mukhad ik* under *K udra-roga*⁴ which correlates with the modern acne vulgaris description.

In *A t nga Sangraha* (6th Century), a description similar to *Su ruta Samhit* is present, by the name of *Yuv npi ik*.⁷

In *A t nga H udaya* (7th Century), *Mukhad ik*⁸ is described with symptomatology similar to Acne Vulgaris.

In *H rita Samhit* (1000 B.C.), description of *Mukhad ik* same as that of *Su ruta* is found. *M dhava Nid na* (7th Century) also followed *Acharya Su ruta* for disease description under *K udra Roga*.⁹

In *r gadhara Samhit* : (13th century), *Vaktra-Snigdhat & Pi ik* mentioned at last as the mala of *ukra Dh tu*.¹⁰ A short description of *Yuv npi ik* is also given¹¹ while describing the *K udra-roga*.

In *Yoga-Ratn kara* (1600 A.D.), *K udra-roga Nid na Cikits Adhy ya*, there is a brief description of symptomatology along with treatment of *Yuv npi ik*.¹²

On summarizing, some *c rya* have mentioned the disease by the name of *Mukhad ik* while others have called it *Yuv npi ik*. Following description is found regarding the disease in different *Samhit* :-

शात्मलीकण्टकप्रख्याःकफमारुतशोणितैः |

जायन्तेपिडिकायूनांक्त्रेयामुखदूषिकाः ||⁴

The eruptions like *Imal* thorn, on the face during adolescence caused by vitiated *Kapha*, *V ta* and *Rakta* are known as *Mukhad ik* .

शाल्मलीकण्टकाकाराःपिटिकाःसरुजोघनाः |

मेदोगर्भामुखेयूनांविज्ञेयामुखदूषिकाः ||⁸

The painful and nodular eruptions filled with *Meda* (*sebum*) inside are known as *Mukhad ik* .⁸

यूनामाननंयुवाननं, तस्यपिडिकायुवानपिडिका

मुखंपचन्तेअतएवमुखदूषिकाइति |¹³

According to *c ryaDalhan*, the *Pi ik* which occurs specifically in adolescent age group or *Yuv vasth* (Adolescence)are known as *Yuv npi ik* .

As the disease causes disfigurement of face, therefore in Ayurvedic texts *Mukhad ik* name is given to the disease.

There are no specific etiological factors mentioned regarding the disease in the *yurveda* texts. Only *Kapha*, *V ta* and *Rakta* are said to be involved in the pathology.

1. यूनांवक्त्रे

This explains the site of the disease and the age in which it occurs. Disease occurs in the face i.e. cheeks, chin, nose and forehead.

It is seen in the youth i.e. adolescent age group.

2. शाल्मलीकण्टकप्रख्याः

It explains the shape of the *Pi ik* .

Imal Kantaka has a conical shape. In most of the patients, shape of the *Pi ik* is found to be conical.

3. पिटिकाःसरुजो

This indicates that *Pi ik* of *Mukhad ik* are painful in nature. But in patients it varies from mild tenderness to unbearable pain.

4. घनाः

This explains the consistency of *Pi ik* . The *Pi ik* are thick, hard and indurated. This can be due to the *KaphaDo a* involvement in the disease.

5. मेदोगर्भा

This is specifically said by *c rya V ghatta* which correlates with modern description of acne. It says that the *Pi ik* are filled with *meda*and modern pathology also explains blockage of ducts due to *sebum*.

Other than these symptoms, *Do ika* symptoms like *Kand* (itching), *D ha* (burning), *P ka* (pus formation), *otha* (swelling), *Sr va* (discharge), *Vaivarnyat* (discoloration)are also seen in the disease.

Hypothetical Sampr pti:



Description of the treatment:-

Instead of oral medications, majority of Ayurvedic classical texts have mainly mentioned the *odhana Cikits* (purification processes) and *Lepa* (local face packs) for the disease.

c rya Su ruta has mentioned *Vamanakarma* (Emesis) for *Yuv npi ik* .

यौवनपिडिकास्वेषुविशेषाच्छर्दनहितम्¹⁴

A t ngaSangraha has indicated *Lepana*, (local application of face packs) *Vamana* and *Sir vedha* (bloodletting) for *Yuv npi ik* .

While in *A t nga H udaya*, *Nasya* (errhine therapy) along with *Lepana*, *Vamana* and *Sir vedha* is indicated for the treatment.

अशान्तौवमनंनस्यंललाटेचसिराव्यधः¹⁵

So the treatment can be summarized as:-

Table 1:

<i>Su rutaSamhit</i>	<i>Vamana, Lepana</i>
<i>A t ngaSangraha</i>	<i>Lepana, Vamana, Sir vedha</i>
<i>A t ngaH udaya</i>	<i>Lepana, Vamana, Nasya, Sir vedha</i>
<i>Cakradatta</i>	<i>Sir vedha, Lepana, Vamana, Abhyanga</i>

युवानपिडिकान्यच्छनीलिकाव्यङ्गशर्कराः |

c rya Cakrap i in his text *Cakradatta*, has mentioned *Sir vedha*, *Lepana*, *Vamana* and *Abhyanga* (local massage) along with various *Lepa* like *Sidd rthak diLepa* and *Lodhr diLepa* for the treatment of *Yuv npi ik* .

शिराव्यधैःप्रलेपैश्चजयेदभ्यञ्जनेस्तथा¹⁶

वमनंचनिहन्त्याशुपिडिकांयौवनोद्भवाम्¹⁷

c rya r gadhara has described various *Lepa* for the treatment of *Yuv npi ik* .¹⁸

In *YogaRatn kara*, Treatment mentioned is similar to *Cakradatta* i.e. *Siravedha*, *Pralepa*, *Abhyanga*.¹⁹

DISCUSSION

There are no specific etiological factors mentioned regarding the disease in the *yurveda* texts. Only *Kapha*, *v ta* and *Rakta* are said to be involved in the pathology. *c rya* Caraka has stated involvement of vitiated *Pitta* along with *Rakta* in pathophysiology of *Pi ik* ⁶. So involvement of *Pitta* can also be considered here.

As *Medogarbh* (filling *Meda* inside the *Pi ik*) is one of the symptoms of the disease, the causative factors which vitiate *Meda* can also be incorporated as *Nid na* of *Mukhad ik*.

In *Bh vap ka a*, *Svabh va*²⁰ is mentioned as the cause of the disease. In support of this context, it should be noted that *c rya* Caraka has stated that during the first half of childhood stage *Dh tu* are in *Aparipakv vasth* (immature phase), while in second half of childhood stage where adolescent (*T runya*) phase is started, *Dh tu* gradually increases (*Vivardham na*)²¹, which may cause an instability and can give rise to certain ailments which occurs due to *Svabh va* of *Dh tu* variation.

c rya r gadhara has quoted that *Vaktra-Snigdhat* and *Yuv npi ik* are *ukra Dh tu*'s waste product (*Mala*)²² which also supports the *Svabh va* theory because during above said age *ukra Dh tu* starts to appear.

Thus all the etiological factors which vitiate *V ta*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Do a* along with the vitiation of *Rasa*, *Rakta* and *Meda Dh tu* can be considered as the culprit for causing the disease.

yurveda texts have described the *V ta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* as the chief culprit *Do a* responsible for the disease, although *Rakta-ja/Pittaja* symptoms are found to be more pronounced in the patients.

As *Pi ik* is the chief complaint found in the patients, which is a *Rakta-Du ti Lak ana*.²³

c rya V ghatta has given a term *Medogarbh Pi ik* which can be assumed to be a lesion with whitish tinge or a lesion filled with *Meda* like substance i.e. sebum. This can be correlated with the modern description of acne lesion. i.e a closed comedone filled with sebum or a pustule.

c rya Su ruta has described the *Pi ik* like *Imal-Kantaka*. As *Imal-Kantaka* suggests a *Pi ik* with semi-solid/solid consistency which correlates it with acne lesion- papule or nodule.

A *Imal-Kantaka* like *Pi ik* is suggestive of a lesion filled with *P ya* (pus) but in *Apakv vasth*, which shows involvement of *Kapha* as *c rya Su ruta* has told that *P ya* is not possible without *Kapha*²⁴. Thus, this lesion can be correlated with papule (if small) or nodule (if large). And when this *Pi ik* becomes *pakva* due to the involvement of *Pitta*, as *c rya Su ruta* has mentioned that *P kais* not possible without *Pitta*, this can be correlated with a pustule (if small) or cyst (if large).

Other than *Pi ik* and *Ruj*²⁸ no other signs or symptoms of *Mukhad ik* are found in the *yurveda* texts while modern medical science has explained few associated symptoms found in the disease like itching, discoloration, pain, swelling, discharge etc. As *yurveda* advocates the use of *Yukti* in undescribed condi-

tions, all these symptoms are obvious due to the involvement of vitiated *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* in the disease. As per Ayurvedic theory, vitiation of *Vata* causes *Ruj* (pain), water discharge and scar formation while vitiation of *Pitta* causes *Paka* (Inflammation) and *Daha* (Burning sensation) causes Blackish discoloration (*Yava Varna*) of skin occurs due to vitiated *Vata*.²⁵ Discoloration is also caused by vitiated *Pitta* because *Pitta* is responsible for imparting different colors to the skin.²⁶ Vitiation of *Kapha* can lead to the formation of *Pya* (Pus formation), *Otha* (Swelling), *Kleda/Snigdhat* (Oiliness), *Ghana Srva* (thick discharge) and *Kanda* (Itching). All these symptoms correlate *Mukhadik* with Acne vulgaris.

Regarding the treatment, *Caryas* have mentioned *Vamana*, *Nasya* and *Raktamokana* as *odhana* therapy in the treatment of *Mukhadik*.

Both *Carya Su ruta* and *Vgbhatta* have indicated *Vamana Karma* to cure the disease because *Kapha* is one of the main *Doa* involved in the pathogenesis and to remove vitiated *Kapha* from the body, *Vamana* is the best therapeutic modality. While, according to *Carya Vgbhatta*, *Meda* which is the *Dya* involved in the pathogenesis, is also *Kaphasadharmi* (properties similar to *Kapha*). Therefore, *Vamana Karma*, which primarily eliminates *Kapha*, is justified as the treatment.

Carya Vgbhatta has indicated *Nasya Karma* for the treatment of *Mukhadik*. As *Nasya Karma* is preferred in *rdhva-*

Jatrugata Vikra,²⁷ (disease occurring above clavicle) which can be a reason for its indication in *Mukhadik*, a *rdhva-Jatrugata Vikra*.

Carya Vgbhatta and *Cakrapani* have mentioned *Raktamokana* as a treatment for *Mukhadik*. *Carya Caraka* has opined *Raktamokana* in all the *Raktaja* diseases, while *Carya Su ruta* as mentioned it in various *Kudra-Roga* too. *Arundatta* has indicated *Sirvedha* of *Lalata* region²⁸, where frontal and temporal veins are found. As *Rakta* is one of the *Doa/Dya* involved in the formation of *Samprpti* (pathogenesis), its removal is possible only through *Raktamokana*. *Raktamoksana* (bloodletting) is the preferred way of treatment in *Raktaj* disorders as per Ayurvedic texts. *Raktamokana* removes the vitiated blood and clears the *Srot varodha* (blockage in channels), thus breaking the *Samprpti*. There are various methods explained in the *Samhitas* for the *Rakta-odhana*. However, In *Mukhadik*, *Carya* have indicated *Sirvedha* (phlebotomy) as the preferred *Raktamokana* method. But most the patient of the *Mukhadik* used to be of adolescent age group and of female sex, which belongs to *Sukumrapakiti* (tender nature) and *Siravedha* being a *astrakarma* (surgical method) is not easily accepted by them as preferred treatment modality. *Caryas* have also indicated *Jalaukavacрана* (Leech application) for blood letting in *str* (female), *bhru* (frightened) and *Sukumrapakiti* (tender nature or those who can't bear pain). *Carya Su ruta* has even termed *Jalaukavacрана* as "*Parama Sukumra Vidhi*" (most uncomplicated me-

thod) of *Raktamok ana*.²⁹ Therefore, *Jalauk vac rana* being the easiest and almost painless method, can be used as a preferred way of *Raktamok ana* in *Mukhad ik*.

ayurveda texts have mentioned numerous of external medications for *Mukhad ik* and other *k udra-roga*. *Sidd rthak diLepa*, *Lodhr diLepa*, *Imal KantakaLepa*, *Vata-ung diLepa* are few examples. These *Lepa* consists of various *U naV rya* (hot) and *Rakta-Pras daka* (blood cleanser) herbs which helps in pacifying the aggravated *V ta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* after absorption of their *V rya* (potent part) through the *Romak pa* and *ir mukha* present over the skin pores.³⁰

CONCLUSION

Thus from the above data, it can be concluded that although described in few verses in the *Ayurvedic* texts, *Mukhad ik*, has a strong resemblance with *Acne Vulgaris* with *V ta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* along with *Meda* involvement in the etiopathology. And *PanchkarmaChikits* (especially *Vamana*, *Nasya*, and *Raktamok ana*) & various *Lepa* can be used for the treatment of the disease.

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