

Psycho dermal Aspects of Skin Disorders and Role of *Rasayana* Therapy for its Management

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Abstract

Ayurveda is a precise and comprehensive tool for healing physical and psychological wellbeing and promoting optimal health, energy and vitality. Everyone today is beauty conscious as beauty has moved one step ahead in social and personal level. Beauty aspect is not just limited to females or younger generations, but it has been expanded to all the age groups in males and females both. In *Ayurveda* and contemporary science stress is found as one of the major aggravating factors for various diseases including skin disorders. Persons with the skin disorder always experience physical, mental and socioeconomic embarrassment which further causes aggravation of preexisting diseases. In *Ayurveda*, *Rasayana chikitsa* is described as a multi angled approach, for taking care, nourishing body, mind & spirit and boosting immunity and thus helps to keep the body and mind in their

best level. In this way, the present review has made a humble effort to clearly understand psychodermal aspects of skin disorders and how it affect patient's quality of life, along with its appropriate management through *rasayana* therapy.

Keywords – *Psychodermatology, Rasayana, kusta roga*, skin diseases.

Introduction

Ayurveda has defined the health as a combined state of *Sharira* (body), *Indriya* (senses), *Mana* (psyche) and *Atma* (soul).[1] In Ayurvedic texts, skin is described as one of the five '*Gyanendriyas*', an organ which is responsible for *Sparsha 'Gyan'* or touch sensation. Therefore, it plays a major role in the physical and mental well being of an individual. Sense perceptions of the sensory organs are produced as a result of the combination of the sense faculties, their objects, the mind and the soul. So, any imbalance in the mind

through psychological stress affects the skin and may be resulted into skin diseases.[2] It has been known since antiquity in *Ayurveda* that a connection exists between the skin and mind. *Ayurveda* described several factors like *chinta*, *shoka*, *bhaya*, abusing deities and teachers, different type of sinful activities and other forms of antirituals and antisocial activities which have a negative impact on the psyche/mind. This negative impact on mind leads to stress which in turn directly or indirectly plays a major role in the manifestation and aggravation of skin diseases (*Kushtha rogas*).[3]

The first recorded case of psychodermatosis dates back to 1700 B.C., when the physicians to the prince of Persia speculated that prince's psoriasis was caused by anxiety over succeeding his father to the throne.[4] Psychological factors have traditionally been associated with the onset, development and persistence of skin disease [5]. In present era stress and low immunity plays a major role in manifestation of different diseases, including skin diseases (*kushtha roga*), Psychodermatology covers all aspects of how the mind and body interact in relation to the onset, formation and progression of skin disease.

Etiopathological Consideration

Acharya *Charak* has described the skin (*Tvachaa*) as '*Chetah Samvaayi*' i.e. the skin has an eternal relationship with *Manas* (psyche/mind). Therefore, any mental stress due to any cause has a direct impact on the skin. [6] Acharya *Charak* has described '*Vipraan Gurun Gharshayataam*' as the etiological factor of *Kushtha* (skin diseases in *Ayurveda*).[7] It means that behavioural

misconduct or verbal sinful activities like abusing teachers, deities etc or other verbal antisocial activities directly or indirectly produces psychogenic stress which is mainstay in the pathogenesis of most of the skin diseases. Most of the authors in *Ayurveda* considered *Kushtha roga* (skin diseases) as *Paapkarmaja Vyaadhi* (a disease due to sinful activities).[8] Both *Charak* and *Sushruta* have described the skin disease as most chronic disorder. Some forms of psychogenic stress like *Bhaya*, *shoka* etc cause *Swedavaha Srotodushti*, which is considered as an etiological factor of *Kushtha roga* (skin diseases). Another form of psychogenic stress, *Chinta* causes *Dushti of Raktavaha Srotas* which is also considered as an etiological factor of *Kushtha roga* (skin diseases).

Ayurvedic and Contemporary view, regarding role of stress in skin disorders

Available classical literature and articles were reviewed to find out the *Ayurvedic* and Contemporary view, regarding role of stress in skin disorders. It has been found that depression scores among psoriasis patients and the severity of skin disorders correlates directly with the severity of depression [9]. Higher anxiety and depressive symptoms have been reported in the patients with atopic dermatitis. The anxiety may be a feature of an underlying depressive illness [10]. Incidence of these diseases towards advanced age is more which may be correlated with comparatively more possibility of increasing stress in advanced age. In all groups of the skin diseases, chronicity was found high and almost double than acute stage of the diseases because of psychological factors like anxiety and tension were found more

in all above groups. Lesions in exposed part of the body may be responsible for stress.

Acne vulgaris is the most common dermatological condition encountered in adolescents. It affects almost 85% of people 12–24 years of age. It commonly affects young people during the time when they are undergoing maximum psychological, social and physical changes. Anxiety and depression were found more in the patients of Acne. In this age, consciousness towards face appearance is more and psychological factors like what's about to happen in the future, worried thoughts, or a belief that something could go wrong affect them more due to hormonal changes. In Acne, female ratio was slight higher, while in all rest diseases, male ratio was higher. In all the groups, maximum patients were from middle socio- economical class.[11] Chronic sleep disturbance can be seen as an unspecific state of chronic stress, which affects immune functions and general health. Disturbed sleep was found in between 28 to 41% of the patients while insomnia was found in between 5 to 27% [12]. In a study of 369 patients with psoriasis, 35% were reported that their condition affected their careers, 20% reported that they were substantially impaired in performing their work [13]. Overeating, smoking, alcohol and other bad habits are adopted by the people knowingly or unknowingly to cope with stress.[14] Psychological Stress is a very important factor to be taken in consideration as precipitating or aggravating factor in different skin conditions. Age, chronicity, site of lesions and mental

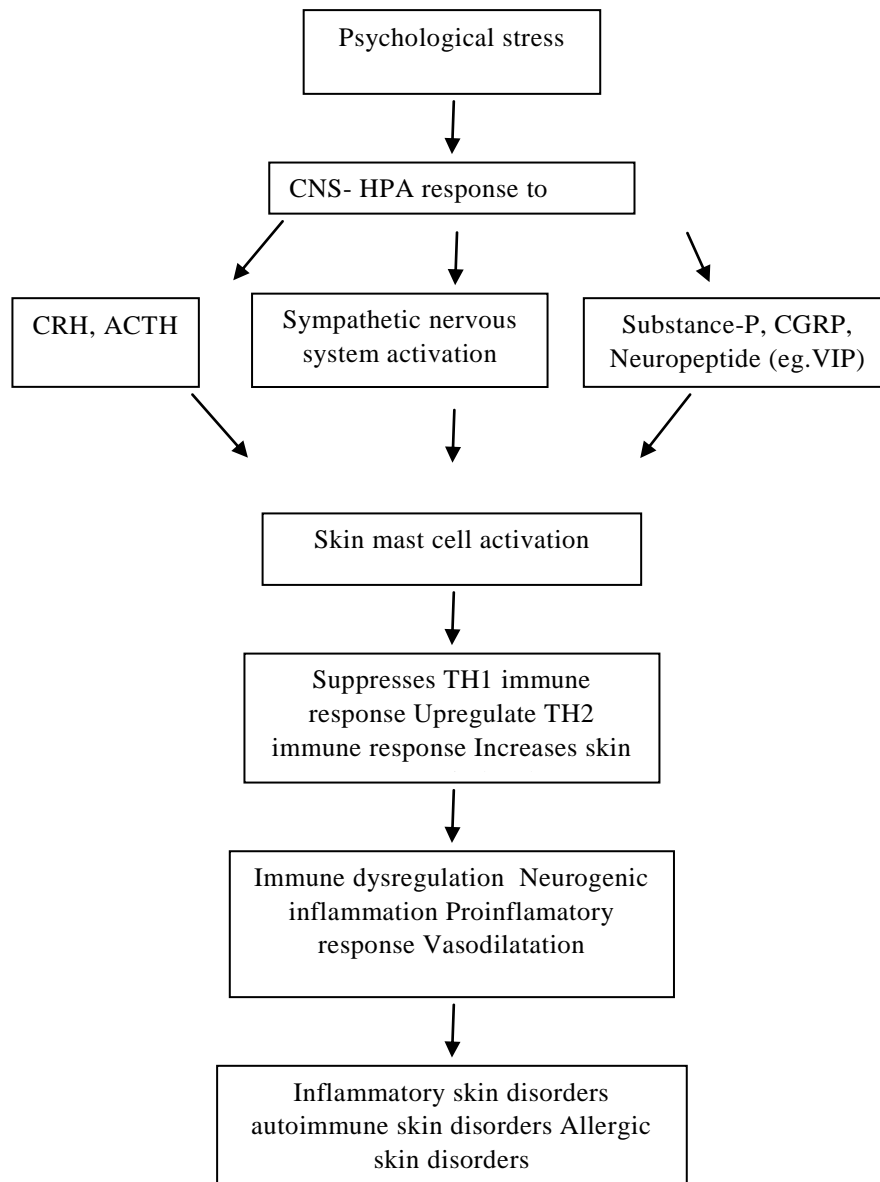
strength are found as stress affecting factors; while sleep and addiction were found as stress affected factors.

Patho- physiology of skin diseases according to Ayurveda

Various psychological factors (*Manasika Bhava*) have been mentioned in *Ayurveda* classics and their effects on *Dosha* causing elevation (*Vrudhdhi*) or decrease (*Kshaya*) are described. *Vata* gets vitiated by *Kama* (sexual urges), *Shoka* (sadness) and *Bhaya* (fear) while *Pitta* by *Krodha* (anger).[15] Anxieties and tension of an anxious person leads to vitiation of *Rasavaha Strotasa* (biological channels of the body for fluid transportation).[16] All three *Doshas*; i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* along with four *Dhatu*s i.e. *Twacha* (skin), *Rakta* (blood), *Mamsa* (muscles) and *Lasika* (body fluid) are found involved in pathogenesis of all Skin diseases.[17] Thus, psychological factors spoil the *Dosha* and vitiated *Dosha* spoils the *Dhatu* and then together they generate the skin diseases.

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of the various factors originating from stress and leading to various types of skin diseases through the activation of the HPA axis and PNS which may affect the skin directly or through modulation of the immune system.[18]

VIP = Vasoactive intestinal polypeptide,
 CGRP = Calcitonin gene related peptide
 HPA = Hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis , CRH= Corticotropin-releasing hormone
 ACTH = Adrenocorticotrophic hormone

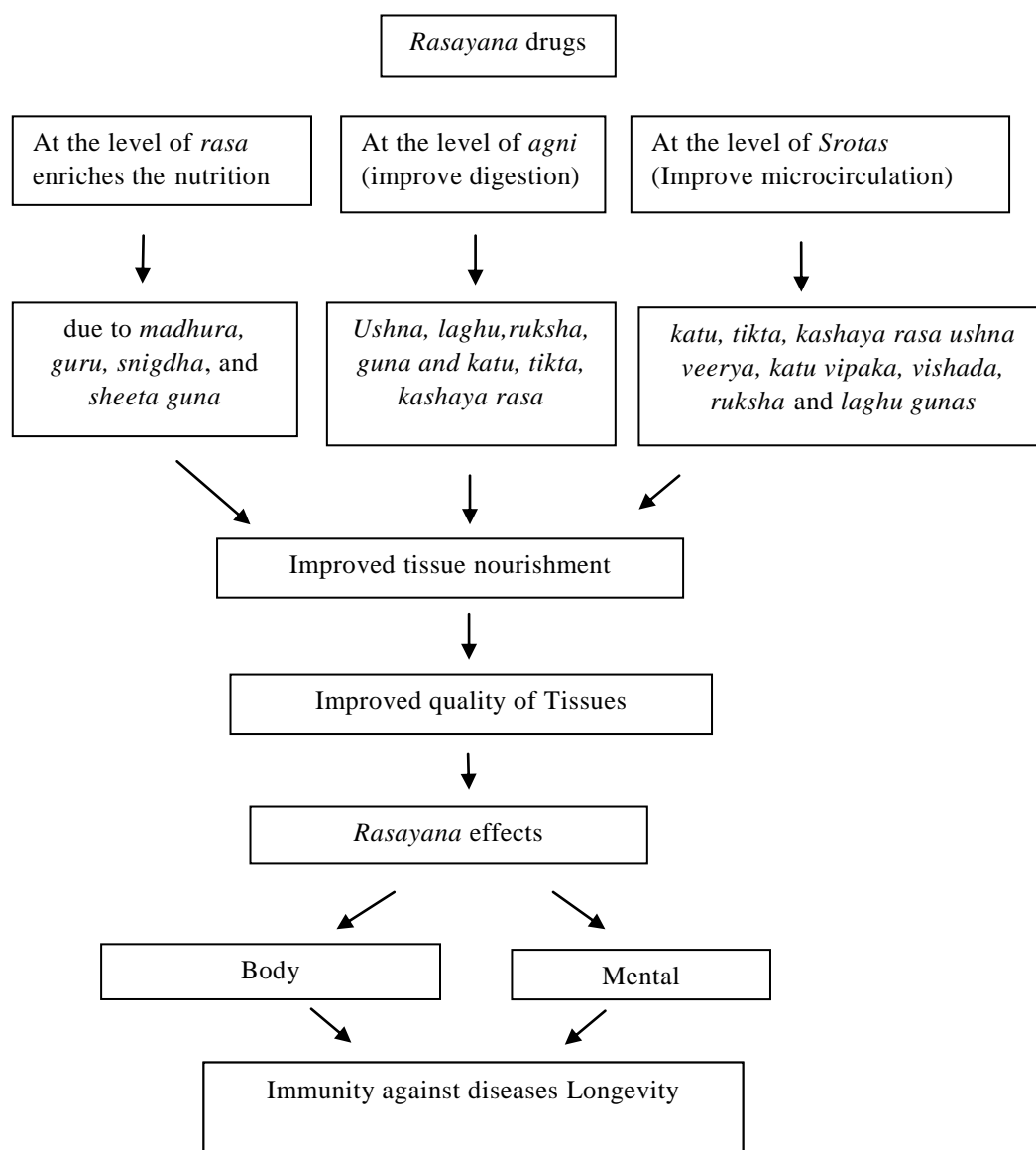


Psychotherapy

Ayurvedic medicines have great importance to keep body and mind free from diseases. The problems of health due to modernization can be solved by increasing resistance against diseases and psychological improvement by implementing *Rasayana* Therapy. This therapy is compared with the ambrosia of gods, and is accepted as a tool to maintain psychosomatic health as

well as salvation. *Rasayana* is a specialized treatment infusing the fundamental aspect of the organs i.e. *dhatu*, *agni* and *srotamsi*, leading to overall improvement in the organism, which affords prevention of ageing, Anti-stress, adaptogenic effects, Nootropic effects, Anti-oxidant effect, resistance against diseases, bodily strength and improvement in mental faculties.[19]

Figure 2: Schematic representation of probable pharmacodynamics of rasayana drugs [20]



Achara Rasayana[21]

Acharya Charaka has mentioned some social and personal conducts by which one can acquire the *Rasayana* effect. *Achara Rasayana* can be considered as a non pharmacological approach to prevent aging by decreasing oxidative stress. These are:

- Always speak the truth
- Do not take alcohol
- Remain calm in every condition

- Abstained from sex and violence
- Consume milk, ghee daily
- Develop intellectual mind

Discussion

The interface between psychiatry and dermatology is multidimensional. More than a cosmetic nuisance, a skin disease produces anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems that affect the patient. The aim of psychotherapy is to reduce subjective feelings of a patient,

the itching and related urge to scratch and to decrease negative emotions such as anger and sadness etc. For this purpose *Rasayana* helps to obtain strength, immunity, *ojas*, vitality, will power and determination and it also strengthens the senses. It seems that *Rasayana* therapy is a comprehensive and specialized regimen capable of producing healthful longevity and improved mental faculties by acting at three levels of the bio - system to promoting nutrition, digestion and metabolism, at the level of *Agni*; at the level of *Srotas* by promoting microcirculation and tissue perfusion and at the level of *Ras* itself by acting as direct nutrition. Thus, the *Rasayana* remedies act essentially on nutrition dynamics and rejuvenate both the body and psyche. Nonpharmacological psychosomatic therapies should also be used which are mentioned in *Ayurveda* such as *Daivavyapashraya chikitsa*, *Satvavajaya chikitsa* and *achara rasayan* which should be now a days can be carried out by a group of psychologist, psychiatrist, behavioral therapist, and also by specially trained social workers.

Conclusion:

Psychodermatology covers all aspects of how the mind and body interact in relation to the onset, formation and progression of skin disease. *Ayurveda* has given more emphasis to this aspect of causation and management. Thus, in the present article we have reviewed the interface between dermatology and psychiatry, including different aspect of causation and mode of management.

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