

VYADHIKSHAMATVA IN CHILDREN: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The quality of a child's early experiences (*Balya - avastha*) make a critical difference as their brain develop providing either strong or weak foundations for learning, health and behavior. Children are in constant danger of developing infections due to underdeveloped immune system. Immunity in *Ayurveda* is known by the word *Vyadhikshamatva*. *Ayurveda* presents the concepts of *Vyadhikshamatva* along with the fundamental concept related to the nutrition as well as *Dhatu Parinama*. The resistance against disease is achieved by the superior vital essence of all *dhatu*s (tissues) called *Ojas*. *Ojas* is responsible for good health, better immunity, longevity and intelligence. Therefore the emphasis is made by maintaining the

health by improving the immunity against the manifested disease and strengthening the immune system in a natural way by numerous herbal dravyas, formulations, *lehan karma*, *suvarnaprashana samskar* etc. This article is an effort to present *Vyadhikshamatva* in children according to classical texts of *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: *Vyadhikshamatva*, Immunity, *Ojas*, *Bala*, *Lehankarma*, *Ayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes not only on treating diseases but also by maintenance of health by improving one's immunity of the body. *Vyadhikshamatva* is the power of resistance i.e. *Bala* (strength) against the manifested disease. Strength or *Vyadhikshamatva* provides stability and growth of muscles, facilitate to perform all activities without any impediment.

Bala (strength) provides ability in external (work control at spinal level) and internal (work level at brain level) sense organs to perform their functions.

Vyadhikshamatva was first elucidated by *Chakrapani Datta* a commentator of *Charak Samhita* in *Charak Sutrasthana* Chapter 28.

NIRUKTI^[1]

The term *Vyadhikshamatva* is made of two words.

Vyadhi + *Kshamatva*.

- *Vyadhi* (*Vyadh Tadne*) - Disease
- *Kshamatva* (*Kshamus sahane*) – Resistance

DEFINITION

Chakrapani Datta elaborated the term in two facets:

- *Vyadhibalavirodhitvam*: It is the capacity to put away or resist the power (severity) of the disease.
- *Vyadhiutpadakpratibandhakatva*: The counterattacking strength of the body to inhibit the occurrence and re - occurrence of the disease.

According to *Acharya Charaka* a person who is dependent on the *hitakara ahara rasa* or beneficial diet, does not develop disease. There are many causes such as *ahitkra ahara rasa*, abnormal changes of *Kala* (seasons), *Pragyapradh* (willful transgression of proper understanding) and unaccustomed contact of sound, sight, touch, smell and taste are responsible for producing disease inspite of person indulged in *hitakara ahara rasa*. For a child, developing a mature immune system is crucial to good health throughout all stages of life. The first way is nutrition.

Infants of less than one year of age rely on breast milk for their antibodies. Breastfeeding is recommended for at least twelve months of age and exclusively for at least the first six months. To promote health of infant *Acharya Kashyapa* describe a special formulation by the name *Lehana* in which drug is mixed with *madhu* (honey) and *sarpi* (clarified butter) quantity equal to *Vidanga phala*. *Acharya Kashyapa* is the only *Acharya* who explained *Phalaprashan Samskara* (feeding fruit juices to baby) prior to the introduction of solid food, so as to make the gastrointestinal tract accustomed to it. By seven or eight months, babies must be provided

with a variety of different food groups. The protein, fat, carbohydrates and even minerals and vitamins in solid form are very important in promoting the health and immune system.

SYNONYMS^[2]

- *Ojas*: The essence of all bodily tissue
- *Bala*: the strength
- *Shleshma*: The *Kapha* in its normal state (*Prakrita Kapha*)

OJAS^[3]

According to *Acharya Charaka* the *Ojas* appeared foremost in the human body. *Ojas* has been considered vital in the defence mechanism of the body. It resides in the *hridaya* (heart) known as *Para Ojas*, but also *vyapata* (circulates all over the body) known as *Apara Ojas* which maintain healthy status of an individual. If *Para Ojas* is lost there is no existence of life.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR OJOKSHAYA^[4]

Ojas undergoes decrease by anger, hunger, worry, grief and exertion. With such decrease, the person becomes distressed, debilitated, worried, hampered performance of the sense organs, develops bad complexion.

According to *Sushruta Samhita* there are three stages of abnormality in *Ojas*^[5]

- *Ojovisramsa*: Symptoms of *Ojovisramsa* are laxity of joints, bodyache, displacement of *doshas* from their seat, tiredness and impairment of performance of action.
- *Ojovyapada*: Symptoms of *Ojovyapada* are heaviness in the body, stiffness in the joints, depression, discoloration, bodyache, drowsiness, excess sleep and non pitting odema.
- *Ojokshaya*: Symptoms of *Ojokshaya* are unconsciousness, depletion of muscle mass i.e. wasting, semi – consciousness, coma and death.

BALA^[6]

Bala provides stability to the growth of muscles, improves the voice and complexion, provides ability to perform natural functions.

Bala (*Vyadhikshamatva*) mentioned as per *Charak Samhita Sutrasthana* are of three types:

- *Sahaja* (Innate, born with, natural) – This is the constitutional strength which is from the birth time from the excellence of *Shukra* (sperm) and *Artava* (ovum).

- *Kalaj Bala* – This strength is gained in favourable times and seasons.

Yauvana Avastha i.e. youth age having the best *Bala*.

Visargakala i.e. *Vasant*, *Sharad* and *Hemant* seasons are having more *Bala*.

- *Yuktikrita Bala* – This is acquired *Bala* obtained from planned and rational use of diet (*Ahara*) and regimen (*Vihara*).

FACTORS PROMOTING VYADHIKSHAMATVA^[7]

- Birth Place (*Balavata purushe deshe janama*)
- Being born at time when people naturally gain strength (*Balavata purushe kale*)
- Favorable time and strength (*Sukhashcha kaal yoga*)
- Excellence of the qualities of sperm and ovum (*Beeja kshetra guna sampat*)
- Nutritious food (*Aahara sampat*)
- Excellent physical Strength (*Shareera sampat*)
- Favorable disposition of race and species (*Saatmya sampat*)
- Excellence of Mind (*Satva sampat*)
- The State of youthfulness (*Yauvan*)
- Regular exercises (*Karma*)
- Optimistic, cheerful, positive disposition (*Samharsh*)

FACTORS AFFECTING VYADHIKSHAMATVA^[8]

- Imbalance in *Dosha* – *Dushya*
- *Ashta Ninditya Purusha*
- *Balakshayakara bhavas*

ENHANCEMENT OF VYADHIKSHAMATVA^[9]

As per *Ayurvedic* Classical texts numerous useful herbal *dravyas*, formulations are being described for the enhancement of *Vyadhikshamatva*. Beginning from the infantile period (*ksheerapa*), 1- 2 years age period (*Ksheerannada*) and age period from 2 -16 years (*Annada avastha*) *Acharya Kashyapa* describe a special formulations by the name *Lehana* which enhances *Vyadhikshamatva* and also fulfill the nutritional requirements, thus minimizing the episodes of infections.

- ***Lehana Karma***

The term *Lehana* means the act of licking or swaddling up with the tongue. The concept of *Lehana Karma* is given by *Acharya Kashyapa* in which drug is mixed with *madhu* (honey) and *sarpi* (clarified butter). It is the ideal way of administering drugs in children as it increases the palatability of the drug and can be easily taken up. This is the most accepted mode of the drug administration to child.

The purpose of *Lehana Karma* is as following

- To enhance growth and development by providing sufficient nutrition.
- Promote health, complexion and strength.
- Protect from various infections along with improving intellect and speech (delayed milestones).

Indications of *Lehana* - Infant receiving inadequate amount of breast milk due to pregnancy of mother, increased demand of food, infant suffering from *vata* and *pitta* disorders, children very lean and thin without any organic problems, children with voracious appetite (due to increase digestive fire), passing less amount of urine and stool. (*Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana, Lehaadhyaya, p-4*).

Contraindication of *Lehana* - Infant who has weak digestive power, lethargic, passing excessive amount of urine and stool, suffering from disorders like eye, ENT disorders (*shiroroga*), fever, diarrhea, odema, jaundice, anemia, cardiac problems, rectal disorder, excessive vomiting and nausea, abdominal discomforts, *amaroga* (disorders due to toxic residue that is left behind as a by-product of poor digestion). (*Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana, Lehaadhyaya, p-4*).

***Suvarnaprashana*^[10]**

Suvarnaprashana is the method by which *suvaran* along with herbal drugs is administered to neonate for gaining positive qualities of life. The term '*Prashana*' is formed by two words '*Pra*' and '*Ashana*', *Pra* means before while *Ashana* means food. Therefore the *Prashana* may be defined as something given before the food or eating.

Indication of *Suvarnaprashana* – According to *Acharya Kashyapa* pure gold (in small quantity) is rubbed in water on a clean stone and given with *madhu* (honey) and *ghrita* (clarified butter), to the newborn to promote health, growth, complexion and strength. By

feeding the *suvaran* (gold) for one month the child becomes extremely intelligent (*Parammedhavi*) and for six months, the child is able to retain what so ever he/she listens (*Shrutdhara*).

Acharya Sushruta has described 4 formulations (containing *suvaran*) which enhances general immunity, intellectual power and overall growth and development in children.

These are

1. *Suvarna Bhasma* with *Kushta, Vacha, Madhu* and *Ghrita*
2. *Suvarna Bhasma* with the paste of *Brahmi, Shankpushapi, Madhu* and *Ghrita*
3. *Suvarna Bhasma* with *Arakpushapi, Vacha, Madhu* and *Ghrita*
4. *Suvarna Bhasma* with *Kaidarya, Shweta Durva, Ghrita*.^[11]

In *Kashyap Samhita Sutrasthana, Lehaadhyaya, Acharya Kashyapa* mentioned *Lehan Yoga* that contain polyherbal ingredients like *Samvardhan Ghrita, Abhya Ghrita, Samangadhi Leha* etc. which have benefits of *Medha, Ayu, Bala vridhi* thus enhancing the *Vyadhikshamatva* in children.^[12]

In our classical texts several measures are aimed at protecting the newborn baby from various infections as in use of clean clothes, bedding etc. The *Graha* mentioned in *Ayurvedic* texts interpreted as microscopic pathogenic organism. The outcome of invasion of *Graha Rogas* within the child's body leads to *raksha* of the body (Infection leaves back certain immunity). In *Kashyapa Samhita, Kalpasthan, Acharya Kashyapa* mentioned 40 *Dhoopana* formulations for the newborn, growing and diseased child. These *dhoopana* drugs were indicated in various *Graha Rogas* which act as a protective measure as well as enhancing the *Vyadhikshamatva*.^[13]

METHODS TO AMELIORATE VYADHIKSHAMATVA

Various code of conducts (*Sadvritta*) are described from conception till old age.

These are as following

- Antenatal Period (*Garbhini Masanumasik Paricharya*)
- In Infants introduction of *Lehana karma, medhya rasayana*
- *Swasthvritta Paripalana (Dinacharya, Ritucharya)*.
- *Satmya Ahara*

- Adopting *Shodhana* according to *ritu*
- Following *Acharya Rasayana*

According to *Kashyap Samhita, Khilasthana, Chapter 5* verse (6-8), Symptoms of being Healthy (*Aarogya*) is defined as

- Good Appetite
- Easy digestion
- Proper and regular eliminations (*sristha vida, mutra, vata*) out of body
- Feeling of lightness in body, mind and senses
- Good and timely sleep with fresh awakening
- Feeling of well being, good strength (*Bala*) in body and good metabolism.
- Any deviation to above symptoms need to be addressed.^[14]

CONCLUSION

Vyadhikshamatva of a child can be developed from conception till birth by following the above mentioned measures of *Ayurveda*. *Vyadhikshamatva* starts developing and maturing during fetal period by the intake of beneficial diet (*aahar*) and mode of life (*vihar*) by the mother. After birth, the immune system of the new born can be enhanced by the use of *madhu* and *ghrita*. The use of different *Lehana* formulations and *Suvarnaprashana* ameliorate the immunity and minimizes infection episodes. *Rakshakarma* (maintenance of hygiene) is responsible for the proper development of the child. Therefore, *Ayurvedic* concept has the potential to built *Vyadhikshamatva* against several infective diseases and as a result we can promote better growth and development in children.

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