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Vicharchika (Eczema) in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Review Integrating Modern Dermatology

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Abstract: *Vicharchika, classified under Kshudra Kushtha in Ayurveda, is a chronic, relapsing dermatological disorder that shows close resemblance to eczema in modern medicine. It is characterized by Kandu (intense itching), Pidika (eruptions), Bahusrava (oozing), Shyava/Aruna Varna (discoloration), and Raji (lichenification), reflecting both acute and chronic stages of skin involvement. According to Ayurvedic principles, Vicharchika is a Kapha-Pitta Pradhana Tridoshaja Vyadhi involving Rakta, Mamsa, and Lasika, with etiological factors such as Viruddha Ahara, improper lifestyle, and the influence of Dushi Visha (latent toxins) as described in Agadatantra.*

Modern dermatology explains eczema as a multifactorial condition involving genetic predisposition (filaggrin mutation), immune dysregulation (Th2 dominance), impaired skin barrier, and environmental triggers. A strong clinicopathological correlation exists between Vicharchika and eczema, particularly in terms of pruritus, exudation, papulovesicular lesions, chronic relapsing course, and lichenification. Unlike other Kshudra Kushtha, Vicharchika uniquely demonstrates this complete spectrum, making it the most appropriate Ayurvedic counterpart of eczema.

This integrative review highlights the convergence of Ayurvedic and modern concepts, emphasizing a holistic understanding of disease pathogenesis. While modern medicine focuses on immunological control and symptomatic management, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive approach through Nidana Parivarjana, Shodhana, Shamana, and detoxification strategies. Such an integrative perspective provides a broader framework for understanding and managing chronic skin disorders like eczema effectively.

Keywords: Vicharchika, Kshudra Kushtha, Eczema, Kushtha

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes health as a balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, along with proper Agni, Dhatu, and Srotas function. Skin (Twak) reflects internal health, particularly Rakta Dhatu. All skin disorders are classified under Kushtha Roga, of which Vicharchika is a Kshudra Kushtha.

Vicharchika [1] is one of the most commonly encountered dermatological conditions described in Ayurveda under the broad heading of Kushtha Roga. It is classified as a Kshudra Kushtha and is characterized by symptoms such as Kandu (intense itching), Pidika (eruptions), Bahusrava (oozing), Shyava/Aruna Varna (discoloration), and Raji (lichenification). The disease is chronic in nature, marked by frequent exacerbations and remissions, significantly affecting the patient's quality of life.

From an Ayurvedic standpoint, Vicharchika is a Kapha-Pitta Pradhana Tridoshaja Vyadhi [2] with predominant involvement of Rakta, Mamsa, and Lasika. The etiological factors (Nidana) such as Viruddha Ahara [3], excessive

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intake of Guru, Snigdha, Amla, Lavana Ahara, and faulty lifestyle practices lead to vitiation of Doshas. These vitiated Doshas, in association with Dushi Visha [4] (latent toxins, as explained in Agadatantra), localize in the skin (Twak) and manifest as Vicharchika.

In modern dermatology, Vicharchika closely correlates with eczema, especially atopic dermatitis and contact dermatitis. Eczema [5] is defined as a chronic, relapsing inflammatory skin disorder characterized by pruritus, erythema, vesiculation, oozing, crusting, and lichenification. It affects individuals of all age groups but is particularly common in children.

The pathogenesis of eczema involves a complex interplay of genetic predisposition (such as filaggrin gene mutations), immune dysregulation (predominantly Th2-mediated response), impaired skin barrier function, and environmental triggers like allergens, irritants, and microbial colonization. These factors lead to increased trans-epidermal water loss, enhanced penetration of allergens, and chronic inflammation.

Vicharchika can be understood as a multifactorial disorder where both internal systemic derangements and external environmental factors play crucial roles. Ayurveda provides a holistic framework that not only explains the disease process but also emphasizes root cause elimination and systemic purification, whereas modern dermatology focuses on immunological control and symptomatic relief.

II. NIDAN PANCHAK

Nidana (Etiological Factors) [6]

All three texts emphasize that Kushtha is heavily triggered by poor lifestyle and dietary choices, particularly:

- **Viruddha Ahara:** Consumption of incompatible food combinations (e.g., eating fish with milk).
- **Adhyashana:** Eating food before the previous meal is fully digested.
- **Vega Dharana:** Suppressing natural bodily urges (like vomiting or urination).
- **Improper Panchakarma:** The incorrect administration of internal cleansing therapies.
- **Environmental irritants and toxins**

Etiopathogenesis (Modern View) [7]

- **Genetic Factors:** Mutation in filaggrin gene → impaired skin barrier
- **Immune Dysfunction**
  - Predominantly Th2-mediated response
  - Increased cytokines (IL-4, IL-5, IL-13)
- **Skin Barrier Defect**
  - Increased transepidermal water loss
  - Increased susceptibility to allergens
- **Environmental Triggers**
  - Dust mites, pollution, chemicals, microbes

Lakshana (Clinical Features) [8]

- Kandu
- Pidika
- Shyava/Aruna Varna
- Bahusrava
- Raji
- Rukshata
-

Clinical Features (Modern)

- Pruritus
- Erythema

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- Vesicles and oozing (acute stage)
- Scaling and lichenification (chronic stage)
- Flexural involvement in adults

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

1. Nidana Sevana → Dosha Prakopa (Kapha-Pitta)
2. Association with Dushi Visha
3. Vitiation of Rakta, Mamsa, Lasika
4. Srotodushti (Rasavaha, Raktavaha)
5. Localization in Twak

III. WHY VICHARCHIKA IS CORRELATED SPECIFICALLY WITH ECZEMA?

In Ayurvedic literature, Vicharchika is described under Kshudra Kushtha, while in modern dermatology, eczema (particularly atopic dermatitis) is a common chronic inflammatory skin disease. Among all Kshudra Kushtha, Vicharchika shows the closest clinical, pathological, and etiological resemblance to eczema. This correlation is not arbitrary but is based on detailed comparison of Lakshana (clinical features), Samprapti (pathogenesis), and Vyadhi Swabhava (disease nature).

1. Cardinal Symptom: Kandu (Pruritus) – Hallmark Similarity

- Ayurveda describes Vicharchika with severe Kandu (itching) as a प्रमुख लक्षण
- Eczema is also defined primarily by intense pruritus This is the most important reason for correlation, as:
- "Itch that rashes" is the hallmark of eczema
- No other Kshudra Kushtha emphasizes itching to this extent

2. Presence of Srava (Oozing Lesions)

- Vicharchika: Bahusrava (profuse discharge)
- Eczema: vesicles → rupture → oozing and crusting

This exudative nature is highly specific:

- Not seen prominently in conditions like psoriasis (Kitibha Kushtha)

3. Pidika (Papulovesicular Lesions)

- Vicharchika: Pidika (small eruptions)
- Eczema: papules and vesicles in acute stage Morphological similarity:
- Both present with small raised lesions progressing to oozing

4. Varna (Discoloration)

- Vicharchika: Shyava/Aruna Varna (hyperpigmented/reddish lesions)
- Eczema: Acute: erythema

Chronic: hyperpigmentation
Matches both acute and chronic stages

5. Raji (Lichenification)

- Vicharchika: Raji (line markings due to thickening)
- Eczema: lichenification due to chronic scratching

Strong correlation with chronic eczema

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6. **Chronic Relapsing Nature**
- Vicharchika: described as Chirakari and Krichra Sadhya
- Eczema: chronic, relapsing disorder

Recurrence is a defining feature in both

7. **Role of External Factors (Nidana vs Triggers)**
- Ayurveda: Viruddha Ahara, environmental exposure
- Modern: allergens, irritants, climate

Both emphasize:
- Diet + environment as causative

8. **Involvement of Rakta and Twak vs Skin Barrier Defect [9]**
- Ayurveda: Rakta Dushti, Twak involvement
- Modern: Skin barrier defect Functional similarity:
- Impaired protection → inflammation

Why NOT Other Kshudra Kushtha?

Disease	Key Features	Why Not Eczema
Kitibha Kushtha [10]	Dry, scaly, rough	No oozing, less itching
Dadru Kushtha [11]	Circular lesions, fungal nature	Different morphology
Charmadala [12]	Thickened skin	Lacks vesiculation & oozing
Pama [13]]	Small eruptions (scabies-like)	Infective, not chronic inflammatory

Only Vicharchika shows:
- Itching + oozing + chronicity + lichenification together

IV. CONCLUSION

Vicharchika is specifically correlated with eczema because it uniquely fulfills all major diagnostic criteria of eczema:
- Severe itching (Kandu)
- Oozing (Srava)
- Papulovesicular lesions (Pidika)
- Lichenification (Raji)
- Chronic relapsing course

No other Kshudra Kushtha demonstrates this complete spectrum. Hence, the correlation between Vicharchika and eczema is clinically, pathologically, and conceptually justified, making it the most appropriate Ayurvedic counterpart of eczema.

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