

A LITERARY REVIEW OF LANGHANA THERAPY

Dr. Suman Meena, Dr. Anshika Gupta, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Meena, Dr. Vidula Gujjarwar

BAMS from NIA, Jaipur, Rajasthan in year 2015 now pursuing MD in Roga Nidana Evum Vikriti Vigyan batch (2017-2020) from Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, Khera dabar, Najafgarh, New Delhi-73.

sumanmina90@gmail.com

Corresponding author, GGSIP University, Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurveda Charak Sansthan, M.D. Scholar (Roga nidana evum Vikriti Vigyan) New Delhi, India, PH-07048913248

anshi.gupta18@gmail.com

DSRRAUniversity, M.M.M Govt. Ayurved College, Lecturer (Kaya Chikitsa) Hindaun City Rajasthan, India, PH-09602143223

dr.pradeepjareda@gmail.com

GGSIP University, Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurveda Charak Sansthan, HOD (Roga nidana evum Vikriti Vigyan), Director principal New Delhi, India, PH-09990174348

Shreemahalaxmi1969@gmail.com

Abstract: Each medical system has its own principles of diagnosing a disease and hence the management approach. Ayurveda sights health as a equilibrium state of doshas and dhatus (body element), the derangement of which either in the form of undernourishment or over nourishment affects the homeostasis and result in diseases. Management of such a derangement is based on substituting the depleted component and removal of those accumulated in excess. Ayurveda the ancient science of life describes various types of treatments in context of healthy individual and also diseased one. Amongst them shadvidhokrama bears a lot of significance in today's life. Shadvidhokrama means union of six types of treatments principles, viz Langhana, Bruhana, Rukshana-Snehana, Swedana-Stambhana. Out of these six therapies Ayurveda advocates two basic treatment principle which are termed as brumhana and Langhana upkarma. Management of all the disease occurs mainly in or around these two principle. Among the two, langhana upakarma is the one supported in conditions which arise due to atibrumhana or santarpana. The purpose of this therapy is to make the body light by relieving heaviness. Usually lightness is a quality of vata dosha. Heaviness due to kapha. Alike, whenever there is a kapha dosha increase the obstruction of the body channels by kapha dosha, or perhaps the additional kapha association with pitta dosha then the langhana treatment principle is adopted. Elaborate description is available in all the classical text of Ayurveda regarding upakarma in general and langhana upakarma in particular but the information is widely scattered. The purpose of this paper is provide a systematic compilation of langhana therapy for easier application of the concept.

Keywords: Apatarpana, Autophagy, Langhana, Upkarma.

1. Introduction

Ayurveda describe mainly four types of pathologies i.e atipravritti (excessive elimination), sanga (obstruction), sira granthi (tumor) and vimarga gamana (improperly directed circulation). A disease could be of any of these four pathology types, but its affliction could manifest in different forms depending upon unique body constitution of the patient and combination of dosha, dhatu, and mala etc. To tackle such afflictions, Acharya Charak, describe six types of therapeutic measure: langhana (reduction), brimhana (nourishing), rukshana (drying), stambhana (styptic), snehana (oleation), and swedana (sudation)¹. The whole treatment protocols of Āyurveda are included under two main principles of treatment as described by ācārya vāgbhāṭa. Santarpana and apatarpana are the two main protocols of management which are also known as laṅghana and brūhana respectively².

2. LANGHANA NIRUKTI

“langhah + lyut” (Śabdakalpadruma, Part 4, Page No.203)

“laghi gatau, laghi shoshanea” (Amarakoṣa 1/1/64)

“Laṅghana” word derived from laṅgha dhātu and lyut pratyaya.

Laṅgha dhātu indicates gati or śoṣaṇa (to soak).

3. LANGHANA DEFINITION

“Yat kinchillaghavkaram dehe tallanghanam smrtam” | (Ca. Sū. 22/9)

“Langhanam laghavay tat” | (A.H.Sū.14/2)

The procedures or a substance which create lightness in the body are called langhana.

4. SYNONYMS:

Anaśana, apatarpaṇa, laghubhojana and upavāsa are the synonyms of laṅghana. Laṅghana as upavāsa found in samhita.³

5. PHARMACO-THERAPEUTIC PROPERTIES BEHIND LANGHANA

The substances that carry out function of langhana have the following properties⁴; Acharya Charaka states them as follows: Laghu(light): herbs or medicines, diet which predominantly have lightness as its quality. Teekshna (sharp): the purpose of langhana is to open channels or blockages hence medicines or remedies with sharpness are chosen which enter the minute channels and eliminate the morbid matter and open the channels.

Vishada (clear or pure): helps to clear channels by taking away stickiness.

Ushana (hot): since hot substances are light in nature they are usually used.

Rooksha (dry): dryness brings lightness. Hence substances with rookshaguna are used.

Sookshma(minute): helps the medicine to enter each and every channel of the body and brings lightness.

Khara (rough) and Sara (mobility): relieves the obstruction. eliminates morbid matter from the channels helps to clear channel and ensuring movement of body fluid in normal direction.

6. TYPES OR METHODS OF LANGHANA THERAPY

Acharya Charak mention ten methods of langhana,

Four purification therapies viz.

6.1.Vamana(emesis)-vomiting therapy. It is given when bahu dosha shlesma(kapha)is present.

6.2.Virechana(purgation) given. When pitta dosha is present in excess and disorders related to it accompany.

6.3.Niruh basti(non-unctuous enema)-enema made from decoction of herbal medicines is given in various vaat vyadhis.

6.4.Nasya (nasal drug administration) –Drugs having purifying agents as its main contents are administered through nasal route Six other procedures i.e

6.5.Pipasa (control of thirst),

6.6.Maruta (exposure to wind),

6.7.Aatapa (exposure to sunlight),

6.8.Pachana (application to digestive measure),

6.9.Upawasa(fasting) and

6.10.Vyayama(exercise).⁵

Acharya Vagbhata have classified langhana into two types- Sodhana and Samana; Sodhana is eliminating the vitiated doshas out of the body and it is of five types; Niruha, Vamana, Kayavireka and Sirovireka(purgation of head); Asravisrti (blood- letting). Samana does not eliminate the doshas out, does not affect or aggravate the normal doshas, brings to normalcy the aggravated doshas; this is samana and is of seven types: pacana(digesting), dipana(increasing the digestive fire), producing appetite, thirst; exercise; exposing the body to sunlight and wind; in case of disorders of vata and vata-pitta, the brmhana therapy is langhana only⁶. All above are the various methods of langhana mentioned in different text.

7. INDICATION OF DASHAPRAKARA LANGHANA

Roga, rogi bala and rugnabala are the basis criteria which should be taken into due account before indicating langhana⁷

Table 1:

| Types of langhana indicated | Rugnabala | Rogabala | Roga |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|--|
| 1.Shodhana | Bruhatasharer (balvan) | Balvanarog | Prabhutshlesma-pitta, asra(rakt) mala along with vaat. |
| 2.Pachana | Madhyama bala | Madhyama bala. | Vami,aatisara,vib andha,gaurav,hru drog, visuchika,alasaka , jwara, arochaka. |
| 3.Pipasa, Upwas | Alpabala | Alpa | Vami,aatisara,ga urav, hrudrog,visuchika,alasaka,jwara,arochaka,kaphapit tajanitroga |
| 4.Vyayama, atapa,marutaseva n | Balvan | Madhya bala | Vami,aatisara,vib handa,gaurav,hru drog,visuchika,alasaka,jwara,arochaka,udgara, Kaphapittajanit roga. |

Vamana:

“tatra doshaharanam urdhvabhagam vamana sangyakam “ (Ca.K.1/4)

The process of expelling morbid material through the mouth is called vamana. The vamana dravyas are agni and vāyu mahābhūtas dominant and due to their prabhāva to move upwards the morbid material gets expelled through the mouth. Drugs which are uṣṇa, tīkṣṇa, sūksma, vyāvāyī and vikāsi by virtue of their own strength, reach the heart and circulate through the vessels. Because of their āgneya nature they dissolve the compact doṣas and because of their sharpness they separate the adhered doṣa located in the different channels of the entire body. Thus the vamana dravyas works to remove the doṣa from the urdhva mārga (mouth) of the body.

Virecana:

“adhobhagam virechan sangyakam “(Ca.K.1/4)

The process of expelling morbid material through the adho marga is known as virecana. Since they (Vamana, virecana) expel morbid material from the body, both these processes are also called[by the common term] virecana. The Virechan dravya are pṛthvī and jala mahābhūta dominant and due to their prabhāva they moves to the downwards to expel the morbid material through the downward tract(anus).

Nirūha basti :

The therapy which while moving in the umbilical region, lumber region, sides of the chest and pelvic region churns up the stool including all the other morbid matter located there and appropriately eliminates them with ease after nourishing

the body is called basti⁸ Here the basti does doṣa nirharaṇa by the route of the anus. By the doṣa niraharaṇa the lightness of the body occurs, hence basti is included in the laṅghana. Appropriate elimination of stool, urine and flatus, promotion of appetite and agni, lightness of the āmāśaya, alleviation of disease, restoration of natural health and strength are the benefits of the nirūha basti if it is administrated properly⁹.

Śirovirecana:

The procedure in which the drug (aushdha) is administered by is nasal route is known as nasya¹⁰. The doṣa which are in the uttamā ga are eliminated by the procedure of śirovirecana. It is thus included in laṅghana. Here vṛddha vāgbhaṭa also prop up the opinion of Acharya Caraka. By the help of nasya all the indriyas will be illuminated and greatly healthen¹¹ Here word catusprakārāh samśuddhi is used by ācārya caraka while describing 10 types of laṅghana which means four kind of śodhana. Amongst pa cakarma, anuvāsana basti is not included. Logic behind it is explained by cakrapāṇi¹² Anuvāsana does the bṛuhaṇa of the body, hence it is not included in the laṅghana.

Pipāsa:

Pipāsa nigrahaṇa means crushing of the thirst or to lower the intake of water. Actually pipāsa arises when body required water for its routine activity. If the urge for water is suppressed, body fulfils the need by taking water from dhātus or from other substances. Thus the watery part of the body is reduced. Reduced jala mahābhūta produces laghutā as jala is gurū by its natural property. Māruta sevana: As per ācārya caraka vāyu has rūkṣa, śīta, laghu sūkṣma, chala, viśada and khara properties. By which it decreases the snigdha, gurū, sthūla, sthira and mṛdu properties of āma and kapha. Hence it results in the lightness of the body

Ātapa sevana:

“vivasvan shoshayatyapi” (Su.Sū.6/8)

Here vivasvāna means sūrya which sucks the kleda or dravta of the pṛthvī, hence the ātapa sevana does the śoṣaṇa of the āma, meda and kapha it is clearly stated in ṛgveda that the sun eradicates all the diseases of heart and skin. Sun light produces the sweat and abolishes all the disease. It reduces meda and increases strength and stability. It also stimulates jatharāgni by enhancing the pitta, it also enhances sweating and thirst etc. Ātapa sevana is indicated in some skin diseases.

Pācana:

“pachayati aamam na vahni kuryad yat tadhvi pachanam” (Śā.Pū.4/1) A pācana dravya performs the digestion of the āhāra but does not increase the agni. The pācana dravyas acts upon only on undigested food materials at level of doṣa, dhātu and malas. Pācana dravyas are consisting of agni and vāyu mahābhūta thus they enter in the āma or undigested food and create ākāśa to make a path for agni to enter to perform its function. Thus the pṛthvī and āpyāṁśa of the body converted into the ākāśa and vāyu by the agni of pācana dravyas leads to lightness of the body.

Upavāsa:

The upavāsa may be taken as complete or partial restriction of food intake¹³ By the complete or partial food restriction, agni which is previously busy with digestion becomes free hence it digests the undigested food which is already present

in the body. Then it digests the sāmā doṣas, dhātus and malas. There is a famous phrase that stop the supplies and enemy will leave the citadel i.e. it is the food which feeds the disease not the patient. The basic cause of all the diseases in human being is wrong feeding which leads to formation of āma due impaired jatharāgni. The value of the fasting as a curative aspect must surely being to be apparent. While describing the function of the jatharāgni ācārya vāgbhaṭa indirectly indicated the mode of action of upavāsa as agni is always remain busy in the digestion of daily consuming food and if it is withdrawn as upavāsa then doṣas which are present in the āmāśaya or the āma at the level of jatharāgni will be digested. Later on when doṣas have been digested then jatharāgni consumes dhātus and eventually life itself.

Vyāyāma:

Such physical action which is desirable and capable of bringing about bodily stability and strength is known as vyāyāma. This has to be practised in moderation. Vyāyāma produces the lightness in the body, it gives the ability to do work, stability, resistant to discomfort and alleviation of doṣas¹⁴. It stimulates the power of the digestion. Due to this karma of the vyāyāma it has been included as one type of Laṅghana.

Dīpana:

“pachet na aamam vahnikruncha dipanam” (Śā.Pū.4/1)

Ācārya vāgbhaṭa has included the dīpana in 12 types of laṅghana. The definition of the dīpana is described by ācārya śār gdhara. Dravya which increases the agni but does not digest the āma is known as a dīpana dravyas. Dravyas used in dipana are vāyaviya in nature, hence increases the agni. Increased agni digests the undigested food and does the śoṣaṇa of the kleda and produces the lightness of the body, hence is included in the types of the laṅghana.

Rakta mokṣaṇa:

“laghavam vedana shanti vyadhi veg parikshay” (Su.Sū.14/33) Here in the mode of action of the raktavisrāvaṇa it is clearly mentioned that feeling of lightness of the body occurs. It is mainly due to the doṣa niraharaṇa.

8. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF NORMAL AND EXCESSIVE LANGHANA (C. SU. 22/ 34-37)

Proper excretion of flatus, urine and feces, lightness of the body, feeling of purity in heart, erucation, throat and mouth, disappearance of drowsiness and excretion, appearance of sweat and yaste for food, excessive hunger and thirst and contentment- these are the sign and symptoms of proper administration of langhana therapy. Cracking of the skin, malaise, cough, dryness of mouth, loss of appetite, anorexia, thirst, weakness of the ears and eyes, loss of memory, frequent upward movement of vāyu, bradycardia, emaciation of body, loss of the power of digestion and strength – these are the signs and symptoms of excessive administration of langhana therapy.

9. APPROPRIATE TIME OF LANGHANA

Twak doshi, pramehi, atisnigadha, abhishyandi, aatisthool, vaatroggi should be treated with langhana. Though it is stated that vaatroggi is contraindicated for langhana, Acharya Charaka says that it can be done only in shishira ritu¹⁵.

10. IMPORTANCE OF LANGHANA

When langhana is performed it gives the following: feeling of hunger and thirst simultaneously; purity of heart and mind; clearness of belching and throat; diseases lose severity; enthusiasm increases; disappearance of lassitude or stupor¹⁶. Langhana digests aamadosha and increase digestive power and establishes doshas in equilibrium. Langhana leads to decrease in intensity dosha increases digestive fire and brings lightness in the body. Thirst and hunger develop well accordingly. Langhana eliminates:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Aamadosha yukta vaat | 7days |
| Aamadosha yukta pitta | 10 days |
| Aamadosha yukta kapha | 12 days |

In saanipaathavastha of jwara langhana becomes important modality since it leads into Arogyadarshana¹⁷. Few medicines that bring lightness in the body are listed - Amalaki, Mudga, Kulatha, Shunthi, Guduchi, Triphala, Vidanga, lohabhasma, kshara, yavachurna, brihat panchmoola, madhu, madhoodaka etc. As like Ayurveda modern science too states the theory of autophagy which resembles to langhana therapy.

11. AUTOPHAGY

The word autophagy is derived from greek word “auto” meaning self and “phagy” meaning eating. Autophagy is normal physiological process in the body that deals with cell destruction in the body, it maintains homeostasis or normal functioning by protein degradation and turnover of the destroyed cell organelle for new cell formations. During cellular stress the process of autophagy is upscaled and increased, cellular stress is caused when there is deprivation of nutrients or growth factors. Hence autophagy may come up with an alternative source of intracellular building blocks and substrates that may originate energy to enable continuous cell survival. Autophagy reduces damaged organelles, cell membranes and proteins. Failure autophagy is the main reason for accumulation of cell damage and aging¹⁸.

12. CONCLUSION

One of the most important treatment principle in Ayurveda is langhana since it can be used in all types of patients by various means viz, under the title shodhana and shaman. Whenever aamadosha increases in the body it disturbs the level of doshas, blocks the body channels, and leads to heaviness. In such condition langhana is best modality of treatment whereby it helps in removing blockages of channels and brings lightness in body. Langhana is such type of karma, which reactivates the agni in the āma and agnisamyoga in āma condition. In nidānaparivarjana: langhana as upavāsa excludes all type of nidāna sevana which is the first step of chikitsā. It stops the formation of sammūrchanā and directly improves agni and removes āma. In prakṛti vighāta: by its laghu, uṣṇa, rūkṣa guṇas it removes vitiated doṣas from srotasa. Among six types of upakramas, due to āgneya guṇa prādhānya, langhana, rūkṣaṇa and svedana are included under langhana. Langh ana helps in purifying body channels. Increases digestive power and

boosts up hunger and thirst. Like this autophagy is the nutrient starvation in which there is the digestion of internal cell component due to lack of any type of essential nutrient. Fasting, exercise and ketogenic diet are all different ways of autophagy therefore it can be coorelated with langhana therapy. Thus langhana according to Ayurveda and autophagy according to modern science maintain good state of health.

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Author Profile



Dr. Suman Meena completed BAMS from NIA ,Jaipur, Rajasthan in year 2015 now pursuing MD in Roga Nidana Evum Vikriti Vigyan batch (2017-2020) from Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, khera dabar ,Najafgarh, New Delhi-73.