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Importance of Understanding Constipation (Malavashtambh) In view of Panchabhautik Siddhanta

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Abstract

According to *Ayurveda*, healthy human body represents an equilibrium state among *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni* and *Mala* accompanied with a pleasant *Atma*, *Indriya* and *Mana*. An imbalanced state of all or any of these is considered as pathological condition. The significance of *Mala* is equivalent to that *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Agni*. In *Ayurveda*, the human body and the universe are composed of five elements -Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space collectively known as the *Panchamahabhutas*. Constipation is defined as the incomplete and infrequent evacuation of hard stools. In *Ayurveda*, it can be correlated with *Malavashtambha* due to similarities in causes and symptoms. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts do not recognize *Malavashtambha* as a standalone disease; rather, it is seen as a symptom of various diseases or may appear as a single complaint. The causative factors of *Malavashtambha* can be analyzed based on *Dosha* predominance and their inherent qualities, such as *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, and *Kharatva*, which also help to determine the involvement of predominant *Mahabhuta* in pathogenesis. This review paper aims to explore the *Hetu*, *Samprapti* and *Chikitsa* of *Malavashtambha* through the framework of *Panchabhautik Siddhanta*. Understanding this concept is essential for effective disease prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment.

Key words- Constipation, *Goksheer*, *Malavashtambh*, *Panchmahabhuta*.

Introduction :

Swasthya of an individual depends entirely upon the balanced state of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Mala* accompanied with pleasant *Atma*, *Indriya* and *Mana*.^[1] The significance of *Mala* is equivalent to *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Agni*, this highlights the importance of *Mala* and physical activities associated with them. In *Ayurveda*, the process of digestion is termed as *Avasthapak*, which is classified into three stages based on dominant 'Ras' formed during each stage i.e. *Madhura Avasthapak*, *Amla Avasthapak*, *Katu Avasthapak*. The ingested food undergoes transformation through successive stages of *Avasthapak* and in the end stage i.e. *Katu Avasthapak pind Swaroop Purish mala* is formed, which is *Katuras Pradhan* (pungent) due to dominance of *Vayu Mahabhuta*.^[2] After digestion, food is divided into two components: the *Sara-bhaga* (nutritive essence) and the *Kitta-bhaga* (waste material). The *Sara-bhaga*, also referred as *Ahara-rasa* which is responsible for nourishing the tissue and sustaining body, while the *Kitta-bhag* collectively includes waste products such as *Mala*. According to *Ayurveda* *Malas* are beneficial for maintaining metabolic processes when they are in equilibrium state. For instance *Malaroop pitta* contributes in process of digestion, however when *mala* accumulate excessively they must be eliminated from the body to prevent onset of pathological conditions.^[3] These waste products are broadly classified into two type: 1) *Aahar Mala*—waste products formed during the digestion of food i.e. *Purisha* (feces), *Mutra* (urine), 2) *Dhatu Mala*—waste products generated during tissue metabolism such as *Sweda* (sweat), excreta in ear, nose etc.

These are typically expelled through *Bahirmukha Srotas* (natural body channels and openings). One of the primary waste products *Purisha*, is formed after the complete digestion of food. Due to *Agnimandya* improper digestion occurs, leading to stagnation of improperly digested food which results in frequent or loose stool. In such cases, even a small intake of food or drink may stimulate bowel movements because the digestive system has not properly processed the previous intake. On the other hand, when food intake is insufficient, the formation of stool may be compromised. In such cases, the body may not initiate effective peristaltic movement, leading to constipation. Thus, the formation and elimination of stool are closely linked to the efficiency and balance of the digestive process. *Malavastambha* is a symptom which occurs due to *Vikruti* of *Apan Vayu* (*Pratilom Viguna* of *Apan Vayu*)^[4] and *Purisavaha Srotasa Dushti*.^[5] If stool is not evacuated easily and at the appropriate moment, it begins to accumulate in the rectum, resulting in difficulty or incomplete evacuation. In *Ayurveda*, the obstruction, restriction, or blockage of the normal process of defecation is known as *Malavashtambh*. *Acharya Charaka* mentioned '*Malavastambha*' in terms of '*Vibandha*' or '*Bandha*'. This pathological condition give rise to symptoms such as a feeling of *Gourava* (heaviness), *Agnimandya* (reduced appetite), *Aruchi* (loss of taste sensation), *Anutsah* (lack of enthusiasm), *Alasya* (laziness), and *Daurbalya* (general weakness). Classical *Ayurvedic* texts do not recognize *Malavashtambha* as a standalone disease; rather, it is seen as a symptom associated with various diseases or may present as isolated

complaint.^[6] Constipation is defined as the incomplete and infrequent evacuation of hard stools.^[7] Constipation can be correlated with *Malavastambha* as both terminologies have similar features like *Purish Nigraha* (obstruction of stool), *Pakvashay shool* (pain in abdomen), *Parikartika* (pain during defecation) etc. according to ayurveda constipation may occur at any age, but it is more common among individuals who resist the natural urge of defecation. This voluntary suppression of urge leads of vitiation of *Vaat* particularly *Apan Vayu*, which disrupts the normal formation of stool and its evacuation. *Ayurveda* is a science of not only how to cure diseases but also how to improve our health. Today, *Ayurveda* has established itself as a main alternative medical science. The classical *Ayurvedic* therapy is based on *Tridosha Siddhanta*. Human body and the nature are both created from the *Panchamahabhutas*. These five elements are: *Prithvi* (solid matter), *Aap* (water), *Tej* (fire), *Vayu* (air), *Akash* (space). This paper aims to explore the etiological factors, pathogenesis, and therapeutic principles of *Malavashtambha*, integrating these with the applied perspectives of the *Panchabhautik Siddhanta*.

Aim and Objective:

The aim of this paper is to explore the *Hetu*, *Samprapti* and *Chikitsa* of *Malavashtambha* through the framework of *Panchabhautik Siddhanta*.

Material and Method:

1. Literary study is done from *Ayurvedic Samhitas* and various articles related to *Malavashtambha* and *Panchamahabhuta*.

2. From *Samhitas* and related articles data is collected and correlation between *Malavashtambh*, constipation and its *Panchbhautikatva* is analysed by *Yukti Pramana* (Logical reference).

Review Of Literature :

Synonyms of *Purish Mala* – *Kitta, Mala, Purisha, Shakruta, Shauch, Varchas, Vishta, Varchas*.

Sthan of *Purish Mala*-

Acharya Sushrut, explained seven *Kala* out of which *Purishdhara Kala* is identified as fifth *Kala*.^[8] Regarding the origin, position and extent of *Mulasthan* of *Purishvaha Srotas* there is a slight difference in opinion of *Acharya Charak* and *Acharya Sushrut*.

1. According to *Charaka*- *Mulasthan* of *Purishvaha Srotas* are *Pakwashaya* and *Sthulaguda*.^[9] Here *Pakwashaya* is correlated with colon and rectum i.e part of large intestine and *Sthulaguda* is correlated with external segment of *Guda* i.e anal canal.^[10] Which are primarily responsible for accumulation and evacuation of feces.

2. According to *Sushrut*- *Purishvaha Srotas Mulasthan* are two in number and their *Mulasthan* is *Pakwashaya* and *Guda*. Here *Pakwashaya* is considered as the portion of intestine present below the umbilicus and *Guda* refer to rectum and anal canal.^[11]

3. According to *Ashtang Sangraha*-

Mulasthan of *Purishvaha Srotas* are *Pakwashaya* and *Sthulantra*.^[12] Here also as per *Indu Tika* *Pakwashaya* is considered as the portion of intestine present below the umbilicus and *Guda* refer to rectum and anal canal.^[13]

Hetu of Malavashtambh:**Aharaj Hetu-**

1. *Vishamashan-* Inappropriate food Consumption, regardless of the time of day.
2. *Lnaghana-* Prolonged fasting.
3. *Guru Ahara-* Excessive intake of heavy food to digest, such as milk, butter, cheese, meat, dessert etc.
4. *Laghu Ahara* - Intake of light and easy to digest food, even if there is heavy or excess hunger. It includes food such as *Mudga, Yava, Takra*, old rice, green gram etc.
5. *Ruksha Ahara* - Dry our rough quality diet which increases *Vaat Dosha*, such as *Yava, Kulith*, cereals, millets, popcorn etc.
6. *Picchil Ahara* - Mucilaginous, oily or cohesive quality food, such as *Bhindi*, curd etc.
7. *Adhayshana-* Consumption of meal, even if previously taken meal is not digested completely.

Viharaj Hetu-

1. *Ratri jagrana-* Staying awake at night (not sleeping during natural sleeping hours).
2. *Divaswap-* Day time sleeping.
3. *Ativayam-* Heavy exercise.
4. *Avyayam-* Laziness.
5. *Atimaitihuna-* Frequent sexual activities.
6. *Vegvidharana-* Suppression of natural urges, such as thrust, urine, faeces evacuation.
7. *Manasik Chinta-* Mental stress.
8. *Vyagrata-* Mental restlessness, distraction, lack of self-consciousness.
9. *Agni Mandya-* reduced appetite.

These are the *Hetus* which causes *Malavashtambha*, among which *Agni Mandya* is

the first major *Hetu* which occurs due to the *Prakupit Vata*.^[14]

Samprapti of Malavashtambh -

Hetu sevana such as intake of *Katu-rasatmak, Ruksha* and *Shushka Ahara*, along with *Vishamashana*, excessive exertion, and similar *Vata*-provoking factors leads to *Vata Prakopa*. As a result of vitiated *Vata, Agnivaishamy*a develops, which in turn causes the formation of *Aama Dosha*. Continuous consumption of *Ruksha Ahara* and the associated reduction in *Shleshma Guna* further produces *Sarvadehika Vata Prakopa*. This aggravated *Vata* particularly affects *Apana Vayu*, leading to its *Dushti*. The presence of *Aama Dosha* causes stagnation of *Mala* in the *Pakvashaya*, and due to the dominance of *Ruksha Guna*, the *Mala* becomes dry, hard, and difficult to expel. This results in an increase in *Purisha Avarodha*, ultimately culminating in the development of *Malavashtambha*.

Samanya Lakshana of Malavashtamb -

Hrulas, Amaloudgar, Udarshula, Udardaha, Urovidha, Shirshula, Anidra, Utsaha Hani, Aalasya, Raga, frequent *Malappravriti, Sakashta malappravriti, Adhmana Shithil* or *Grathit mala pravriti*.

Chikitsa Sidhhanta-**Goksheer Guna (Cow's Milk) -**

Madhura, Sheeta, Mrudu, Snigdha, Bahala, Shlakshana, Guru, Manda, Prassanna.^[15]

Role of *Goksheer*: *Goksheer* is rich in *Aap Mahabhuta* and possesses qualities such as *Madhura rasa* (sweet), *Sheeta* (cool), *Mridu* (soft), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Bahala* (thick), *Shlakshana* (smooth), *Guru* (heavy), and *Manda* (slow) *Guna*.

As per *Charakacharya*, “*Drava Anna Pana Matra Yatha Agni Bala Anurupa*” means solid, liquid both type of food should be taken according to strength of digestive fire.^[16]

According to *Vagbhata*, “*Prasthaḥ pana-matra*” i.e maximum quantity of liquid food is 1 *Prastha* ≈ 768ml (approximately).^[17] In daily practice, consuming the full dose of milk at one time may not be feasible. Therefore, taking half to one glass of lukewarm milk, i.e., approximately 120–250 ml, is recommended.

Discussion:

The *Aharaj* and *Viharaj* causes of constipation are primarily associated with *Vata*-provoking factors such as: late-night awakening, consumption of light, dry, and rough food, excessive physical exertion and frequent sexual activity. These factors result in dryness and roughness of stool, leading to difficult and incomplete evacuation. Such symptoms clearly indicate the predominance of the *Vayu Mahabhuta*. Additionally, low fluid intake results in stool hardness, pointing towards the deficiency of the *Aap Mahabhuta*. According to classical texts, hardness is characteristic feature of *Prithvi Mahabhuta*, one of the signs in *Malavashtambha* is hardness of stool, making it evident the involvement of these elements in diet of patients. Thus, derangement of *Vayu*, *Aap*, and *Prithvi Mahabhutas* play a key role in the manifestation of *Malavashtambha*.

According to *Panchabhautik Chikitsa* analysis, constipation is a symptom caused by elemental imbalance, specifically increased *Vayu* and decreased *Aap*. A more sophisticated and customized treatment model can be created by

comprehending how each *Mahabhuta* affects intestinal physiology. Restoring the elemental harmony that controls digestion, absorption, motility, and evacuation is the goal of a *Panchabhutik Chikitsa* rather than just treating symptoms alone.

Role of Goksheer: *Goksheer* is rich in *Aap Mahabhuta* and possesses *Madhura*, *Sheeta*, *Mridu*, *Snigdha*, *Bahala*, *Shlakshana*, *Guru*, and *Manda* qualities. Night-time consumption of *Goksheer* helps in soft evacuation (*Mriduvirechana*), which breaks the pathogenesis of *Malavashtambha* by increasing fluid content, reducing stool hardness, and balancing aggravated *Vata* and *Prithvi Mahabhuta*.

Ingestion of lukewarm cow milk may lead to stimulation of oral thermal and taste receptors, which activates the brainstem and enhances vagal efferent output. This vagal stimulation subsequently activates the enteric nervous system. The presence of milk components such as proteins, fats, and lactose is detected in the gastrointestinal tract, triggering the release of gastrointestinal hormones including gastrin, cholecystokinin (CCK), and motilin. These hormonal responses promote contraction of gastrointestinal smooth muscle, resulting in increased peristaltic activity. Simultaneously, milk-induced stimulation leads to 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) release, which further activates enteric nervous system reflexes and enhances colonic motility, thereby facilitating bowel movement.

In *Panchabhautik Chikitsa*, the selection of *Ayurvedic* medicines is not limited to traditional parameters such as *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, and *Vipaka*.

Instead, it also emphasizes evaluating the proportion and dominance of the ingredient. So, water, lactose, proteins are one of the key ingredients of cow's milk, its effect also shows increased motility of the intestine.

Conclusion:

Malavashtambha, when analyzed through the lens of *Panchabhautik Chikitsa*, is understood to arise primarily from imbalances specifically the aggravation of *Vayu Mahabhuta* and deficiency of *Aap Mahabhuta*, along with contributory involvement of *Prithvi Mahabhuta*. *Vata*-provoking dietary and lifestyle habits result in dryness, roughness, and hardness of stools, ultimately leading to difficult and incomplete evacuation. Therefore, management must aim not only to relieve symptoms but to restore elemental equilibrium of gastrointestinal physiology.

In this context, *Goksheer* serves as an effective therapeutic agent because of its *Aap*-dominant nature and qualities like *Snigdha*, *Mridu*, *Bahala*, and *Shlakshana*, which collectively enhance fluidity, soften stools, and pacify aggravated *Vata*. Its night-time administration assists in promoting *Mriduvirechana*, thereby breaking the pathogenesis of constipation by increasing moisture content and reducing stool hardness. Thus, restoring the balance of *Vayu*, *Aap*, and *Prithvi Mahabhutas* forms the cornerstone of therapy in *Malavashtambha*.

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