

A NARRATIVE AND CRITICAL REVIEWARTICLE ON PSYCHO- ERMATOLOGY IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Psycho-dermatology is an approaching branch in medicine. It covers the aspects of how the body and mind interact in relation to the formation and progression of skin disease. Studies have shown the psychological burden an individual faces while suffering from skin diseases. This has led to the psychological perspective along with cutaneous/dermatological perspective in treating the skin disease. Ayurveda, being an ancient science, has also explained about psycho-dermatological aspects in skin diseases. There are different drugs and treatment protocols that need to be studied and reviewed in *Ayurvedic Samhitas* which works as both *Twachya* (cutaneous) aspect and *Medhya* (Psychological) aspect. This study gives a brief narrative regarding the psycho-dermatological concept in Ayurveda as well as an idea of managing such conditions through Ayurvedic science.

KEYWORDS: Psycho-dermatology, Ayurveda, Skin-mind.

INTRODUCTION

Psycho-dermatology is based on the complex interplay between neurological, immunological, cutaneous and endocrine systems, known alternatively as the NICE network, NICS, and by other similar acronyms.^[1] Psycho-dermatology is a new discipline which deals with the interaction between skin and mind since psycho-dermatological disorders significantly affect the emotional sphere and psychological functioning of patients.^[2]

Although a similar concept is seen explained in Ancient Ayurveda *samhitas* where psychological factors are said to be the cause for certain dermatological manifestations. The involvement of both Body and the Mind in the disease

manifestation makes it chronic and needs a prolonged treatment to tackle it. Once the patient gets manifested with some skin disorder, he/she will fall into physical, psychological, socio-economic burden. Under standing Ayurvedic approach in psycho-dermatological conditions might address these concerns added with lower or no side- effects.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

Conceptual and Critical review of Psycho-dermatology in Ayurveda.

- To understand the relationship between skin and mind.
- To understand the treatment protocols in the management of psycho-dermatological conditions through Ayurveda.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- *Bruhatrayees –CharakaSamhita, SushrutaSamhita, AshtangaHrudaya.*
- Journalsand articles.

Relationship Between Twak And Manas

Ayurveda explains regarding different types of *Ayu* or Life. Among which Healthy life (*Swasthayu*) is one. *Aswasthayu*^[3] is the combination of *Sharira*(body), *Indriya*(Senseorgans), *Satwa*(Manas) and *Atma*(Soul) in normalcy and any disturbances in any one factor or combination, may lead to diseases. Hence each factor has its own importance. A disease manifests in both *sharira* and *manas*.^[4] *Sattva* or *Manas* plays an important role in maintaining the healthy state of skin as *Manas*(Mind) and *Twacha*(Skin) are in inseparable relationship.^[5]

Twacha is a seat for *Vatadosha* and *vata* is a controller and stimulator of mind and has an inseparable relation with skin.^[6] Hence, any disturbances in mental status cause derangement of *vata* leading to skin diseases and vice versa (Fig.01). Skin diseases are considered to be major cause of chronic suffering^[7] as they affect both body as well as mind.^[8]

Dosha Vs Twak Manifestations Vs Mental Status

As said in Ayurveda, *Dosha*, *dhatu* and *malas* are the basic principles of Human body.^[9] Their normalcy and abnormality is the cause for health and disease respectively. *Doshas* play an important role in causing the diseases and the yare responsible for the vitiation of *dhatu* and *malas* too. The Table number 1 and 2 shows the some skin and mental conditions due to normal and abnormal function of *doshas* respectively as explained by *Acharya Charaka*^[10] and *Acharya Sushruta*.^[11]

Table 1: Normal functions of doshas in relation to Manas and twak.

Sl.No.	Dosha	Skin condition	Mental condition
01	Vata Dosha	Normal formation of <i>Dhatu</i> (<i>Rasa Dhatu</i>)	Enthusiasm
02	Pitta Dosha	Normal colour, production of <i>ojus</i> , lustre	Intelligence
03	Kapha Dosha	Unctousness, Firmness	Patience, Absence of greed

Table 2: Abnormal functions of doshas in relation to Manas and twak.

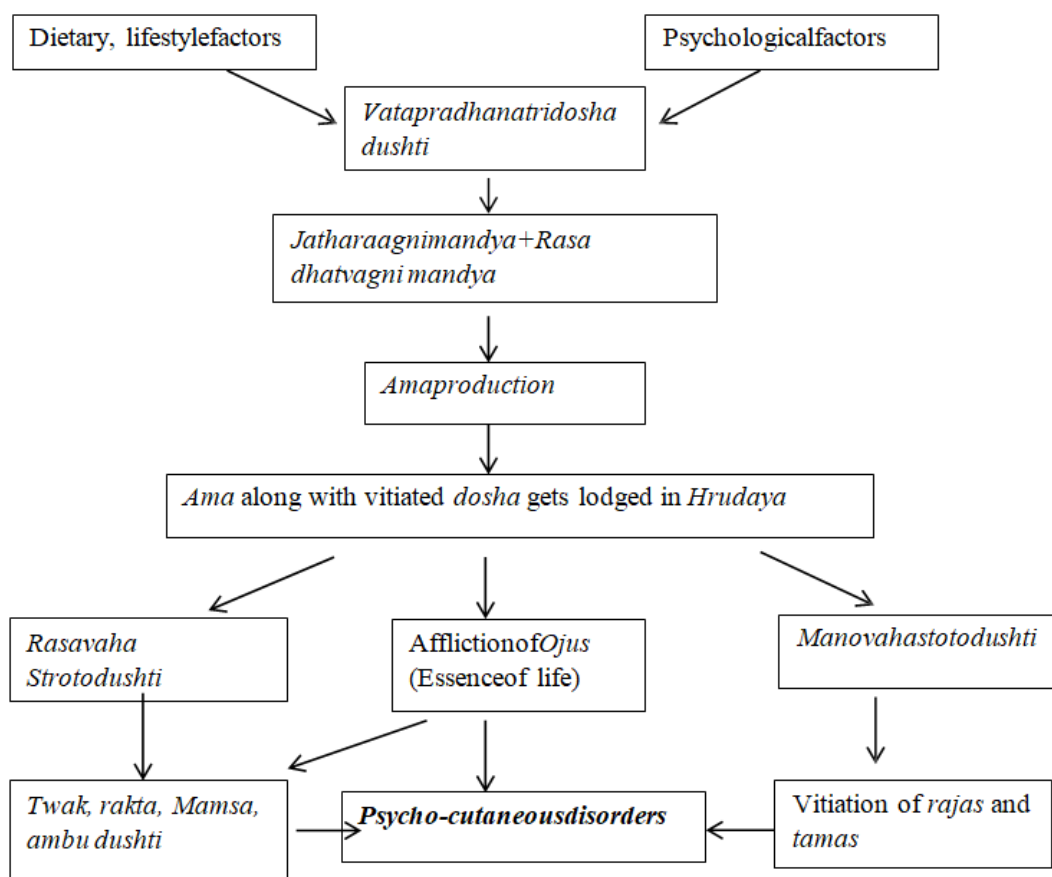
Sl.No.	Dosha	Skin condition	Mental condition
01	Vata Dosha	Affects complexion	Disturbs functions of mind. Give rise to fear, grief, confusion, anxiety and excessive delirium.
02	Pitta Dosha	Abnormal complexion and clarity of skin	Fear, Anger and confusion
03	Kapha Dosha	Laxity or loss of firmness if skin	Ignorance and confusion

Hence, it shows the importance of maintaining of equilibrium of *doshas* to attain healthy skin and healthy mind. Likewise, psychological factors affect wellbeing of *strotas*, which provides proper nourishment to the respective *dhatu*s and is concerned with healthyskin. (Table no. 3)

Table 3: Psychological causes for *strotodushiti*.

Sl.No.	Psychological factors as cause	<i>Strotodushiti</i> ^[12] (Vitiated channels)
01	Excessive thinking	<i>Rasavaha strotodushiti</i>
02	Fear	<i>Ambuvaha strotodushiti</i>
03	Anger, Sadness and fear	<i>Swedavaha strotodushiti</i>

Pathogenesis of Psychodermatological Disorders^[13]



Ayurveda mentions *Mandagni* (lower digestive capacity) as the main cause of diseases occurring in the body.^[14] *Mandagni* occurs due to impairment in life style and dietary factors and due to psychological factors. A 2011 study published in the Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology found that exposure to stress results in alterations of the brain-gut axis. Common gastrointestinal symptoms due to stress are heartburn, indigestion, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, constipation and associated lower abdominal pain. Thus shows that *Manasika* (mental) factors also contribute to *Mandagni*. This *mandagni* (lower digestive capacity) does not digest the ingested food properly and produces *Ama* (Toxic by-products) which gets lodged in *Hrudaya*.

Thus, *Manas*, *Rasa* and *ojus* gets vitiating as they are seated in *Hrudaya*, leading to psycho-dermatological conditions.

Psycho-Dermatological Conditions In Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, *Acharyas* have explained various skin manifestations and conditions that are caused due to *Manasika nidanas* (Mental dysfunctions). As mentioned above in Table no. 1 and 2, there is association of Mind and Skin in relation to *tridosha* when in abnormal conditions. Skin abnormalities are also seen in *rakta pradoshaja vikaras* mentioned as *Kushta* (Skin diseases) and *Vaivarnyata* (Discoloration of skin) where *krodha* and other such psychological factors are a cause.^[15] This shows the association of *Manas* in the manifestation of skin disorders. Association of Skin diseases and Mind leads to chronic suffering as the association is two ways as shown in Fig. 01.

The following table shows some examples of skin diseases/conditions caused due to the involvement of mind (Table No. 4)

Table 4: Abnormal skin manifestations due to psychological factors.

Sl.No.	SkinCondition	Manasika Nidana (Psychologicalfactor)
01	Vyanga(Melasma) ^[16]	Krodha (Anger), Ayasa (Mentalfatigue)
02	Neelika ^[17]	Krodha (Anger) Ayasa (Mentalfatigue)
03	Kushta ^[18] (Skindiseases)	Drinking cold water when in fear(Bhaya)
04	Vaivarnya ^[19] (HyperorHypo-pigmentation)	Krodha (Anger)

The above table (Table No. 4) shows abnormal skin conditions caused due to *Manasika nidanas* (Psychological factors). The association between skin and mind is inseparable and bi- directional as due to skin conditions or diseases; individuals psyche has a huge impact. It creates a social stigma and the individual is burdened psychologically. A cross-sectional multi-centric study was conducted in 13 European countries for assessing the psychological burden of skin diseases which showed Clinical depression was present in 10.1% patients, Clinical anxiety was present in 17.2% and Suicidal ideation was reported by 12.7% of all patients. The association with depression and anxiety was highest for patients with psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, hand eczema, and leg ulcers. These results identify a major additional burden of skin disease and have important clinical implications.^[20]

Ayurvedic Management In Psycho-Dermatological Conditions

The cause for psycho-dermatological associations according to Ayurveda can be summarized as – Due to imbalances in *shareerika doshas* and impairment of psychological factors (*Manasikadoshas*).The first line of treatment according to Ayurveda is eradication or regulation of causes(*Nidanaparivarjana*).^[21] Hence psychodermatological conditions could be managed by addressing these causes.

1. Equilibrium of *Shareerika Doshas-Doshasin* balanced state is health. The normalcy in *doshas* is achieved by using continuous uses of similar and dissimilar factors in the form of *rasa, guna, virya, vipaka, panchabhoutik twa* etc. in relation to that of *doshas* possible by *samana-vishesha siddhanta*.

The concept of *rasa* (Taste) is distinctive. The relation of *rasa* and *doshas* and its qualities in relation to psyche and skin^[22] is given in Table no.5.

Table No. 5: Relation of Rasa VsDosh VsSkin and Mind.

Sl.No.	Rasa (Taste)	Relationwith dosha	Qualities in relation with skin and mind
01	Madhura (Sweet)	Vatahara Kaphakara	Rudhira-ojovardhana(enhancing the quality of blood and immunity)

			<i>Varnakara</i> (increases complexion) <i>Twachya</i> (Good for skin) <i>Tarpana</i> (Nourishing) <i>Medhya</i> (enhances mental vigour)
02	<i>Tikta</i> (Bitter)	<i>Vataprakopaka Kapha-pittashamaka</i>	<i>Deepana-pachana</i> (Metabolic boosters) <i>Kandu-kushta prashamana</i> (Eliminates itching and skin diseases) <i>Medhya</i> (enhances mental vigour)

It is seen that most of the *Medhya* (Intellect promoting) drugs have predominance of *Madhura-Tiktarasa*, *Snigdha guna*, *sheeta virya* and *Kaphaja prabhava*. Similarly it is seen that (Tableno.5) *Madhura-Tikta rasa* drugs have the properties–*Twachya* (Good for skin) and *Medhya* (Enhances mental vigour) and also have effect on *doshas*, thus addressing the psychological and cutaneous aspect of disease. These *dravyas*, when used in a proper way would help in psycho-dermatological conditions.

These are the examples of certain drugs which have these properties:

- *Yashtimadhu*^[23]–*Varnya, Medhya, rasayani*
 - *Ghrita*^[24]–*Varnya, pittahara, Dahahara, Snigdha, Medhya, yogavahi*
 - *Gomutra*^[25]–*Kushtahara, Medhya*
 - *Guduchi*^[26]–*Rasayani, Agnideepana, Dahahara, Medhya*
2. Impairment of psychological factors: This can be achieved by *Satvavajaya chikitsa*. *Manasika dosha* impairment leads to *Manasika vikaras* (Mental disorders) like *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Mana, harsha*, etc.^[27] which in turn are the causes for certain skin conditions (Tableno.4). As *Shareerika* and *Manasika doshas* are interlinked (tableno. 6), *Satvavajaya chikitsa* can also be applied in Psycho-dermatological diseases.

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Mahabhuta</i>	<i>Triguna</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Teja+Jala</i>	<i>(Satva+raja)+(Satva+Tama)</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Pruthvi +Jala</i>	<i>Tama + (Satva+tama)</i>

Table No 6– Relation between shareerika doshas and Manasa doshas As there is inseparable relationship between the skin, mind and *doshas*, along with *Satvavajaya chikitsa* (Psychotherapy), *Achara Rasayana* can also be applied in psycho-dermatological conditions.

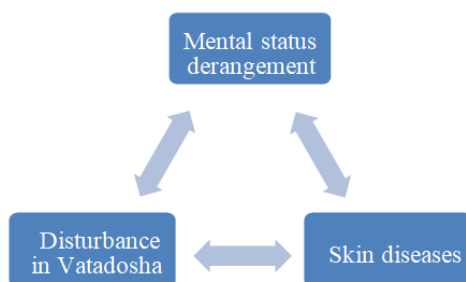


Fig. 01.

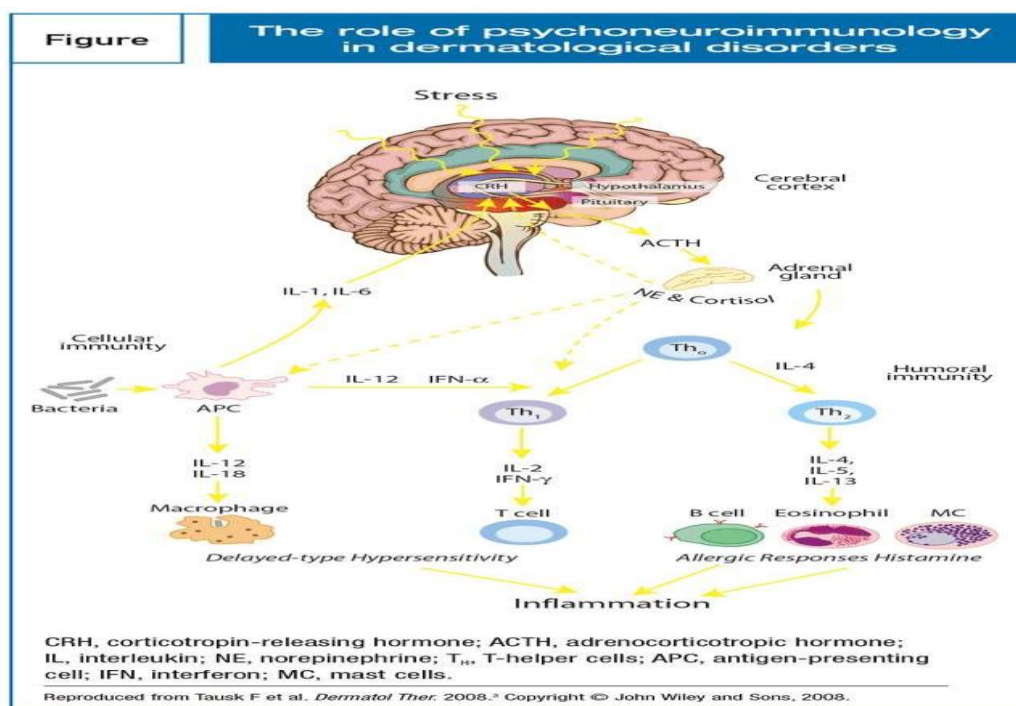


Fig. 02.

DISCUSSION

Psycho-dermatology is a new discipline which deals with the interaction between skin and mind since psycho-dermatological disorders significantly affect the emotional sphere and psychological functioning of patients.^[28] This concept is also explained in *Ayurveda* in scattered manner in relation to certain skin disease conditions where psychological factors are defined as a cause (Table No. 4). This relationship with skin and mind is bi-directional (Fig. 01).

Skin diseases serve as social stigma to the individual causing psychological burden due to its appearance, chronic suffering and adding to it, the socio-economic burden. A cross-sectional study showed the association of depression and anxiety was highest for patients with psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, hand eczema, and leg ulcers.^[29] Hence all these concerns have to be addressed rationally and in a parallel manner.

According to the conventional system of medicine, the possible pathophysiology of psycho-dermatological condition is depicted in Fig. 02, i.e. Nerve terminals in cutaneous sensory nerves release neuropeptides, such as calcitonin gene-related peptide and substance P, which have a variety of effects on local inflammatory response; these affect several psychocutaneous disorders.^[30] According to *Ayurveda*, the skin and mind are interlinked, keeping Vata dosha interlinked. *Twacha* (Skin) is the seat for *Vata dosha* and *Vata dosha* is the controller of *Manas* (Mind). Any impairment in *Vata dosha* (*Shareerika doshas*) causes impairment of *Manasika doshas* leading to skin impairment and impairment in skin causes impact on *Manas*.

Skin and mind are in healthy conditions when *dhatu*s are well nourished by respective *strotas*. When mental factors seem to be abnormal or are vitiated, they tend to vitiate *strotas* (Channels) that carry the nutrients required for proper nourishment of skin and hence vitiate skin (*twak*).

The nutrients come from good food consumed. *Viruddhahara* (Mutually contradictory food), *apathyahara* (Unwholesome food) or unclean food hampers both skin and mind.^[31] Hence good food or *Pathya ahara* also plays an important role in maintaining healthy skin and mind.

Psycho-dermatological conditions could be managed by controlling this imbalance in *shareerika* and *manasika doshas* as *doshas* are the predominant cause of any disease manifestation. *Madhura* and *Tikta rasa dravyas* possess both *Medhya*^[32] and *Twachya* effect (Table no.5) and hence can be used in psycho-dermatological conditions which addresses both psychological and cutaneous aspect of the disease.

Satwavajaya chikitsa (Psychotherapy) and *Achara Rasayana* Can also be practiced. This *Satwavajaya chikitsa* helps in preventing the impairment of intelligence, intellect and memory and controls and restores the mind from desire of unwholesome objects. *Medhya rasayana* plays a major role in controlling the *manasika doshas* causing *manasika vikaras* like *kama, krodha, lobha, ayasa*,^[33] etc. which are the causes for certain cutaneous diseases.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Psycho-dermatology is complex. It involves cutaneous, psychic, neurological, hormonal aspects. Studies have shown psychological burden of skin disease suffering patients including suicidal ideations. *Manas* is required for every task in the body and it plays an important role in maintaining the integrity of *Twacha* (skin), *Agni* (Digestion) and also *Strotas (Body channels)* which are necessary in maintain health. Hence addressing Psychological aspect along with cutaneous aspect in skin disease is crucial. This work also enables the readers for further study in the same aspect and provides ways of Ayurvedic practice in Psycho- dermatological condition management as it would serve in socio-economic aspect with less or no side effects.

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