

Bronchial Asthma: An Ayurvedic View

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Abstract

Prevalence of Bronchial asthma is increasing globally; According to W.H.O statistics, bronchial asthma affects 300 million people; and 255,000 people died of asthma in 2005. Asthma prevalence increases globally by 50% every decade, especially children are affected by this disease. In *Ayurveda* it is known as *Tamaka-swasa*, a type of *Swasa* having *Vata* and *Kapha* dominancy and involvement of *Prana*, *Udaka* and *Anna-vaha Srotasa*. It can be treated upto a wide extent by following some dietary regulations, *Shodhan* and *Shaman Chikitsa* and by doing regular *Pranayama* and meditation.

Keywords

Bronchial asthma, W.H.O., *Tamak swasa*, *Shodhan*, *Shaman*, *Pranayama*



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INTRODUCTION

Bronchial asthma is chronic airway disorder by which individuals of all age group are affected and it has become a common health problem at global level. The prevalence of asthma is increasing worldwide, especially in children. In *Ayurveda* it is considered as *Tamaka Swasa* which is included under one of the five types of *Swasa* disease.

MATERIALS

All the description related to *Tamak Swasa* available in *Charaka samhita* and *Vagbhat Samhita* is collected and reviewed.

ETIOLOGY

Etiological factors are various material and conditions which increase *Vata* and *Kapha Dosh* i.e. coming in contact with air containing dust, irritant gases, pollen grains, smoke, continue using of cold water and residing in cold and damp places, regular consumption of dry and astringent foods and irregular dietary habits, exposure to extreme temperature, excessive sexual indulgence in adults, excessive fasting, grief, anxieties and general debility may all precipitate an attack¹. Regular intake of beans (lablab bean),

black gram, sesame oil and its preparations, irritant heavy and spicy food and *Kapha* producing diet may also play important role in development of *Tamaka Swasa*². Persons having *Pratishyaya*, *Atisara*, *Jwara*, *Raktapitta*, *Ama dosha* (*Alsaka* & *visuchika*), *Pandu* and *Visha Sevan* (poisoning) may lead to *Tamaka Swasa*³.

Samprapti (pathogenesis)

According to *Ayurvedic* system of medicine pathogenesis of asthma is a result of abnormal interaction between *Vata* and *Kapha dosha*⁴. Vitiated *Vata* due to obstruction by *Kapha* starts to move in all direction and disturbs the channels of respiration (*Pranvaha Srotasa*), food (*Annavaha srotasa*) and water (*Udakavaha Srotasa*) which produce dyspnea originating from stomach⁴.

Symptoms of Tamaka swasa

As increased *Vata* travels in upward direction in passage, it causes increase of *Kapha* and seizes the head and the neck. There is pain in the chest and flanks, a noisy cough, an increase in breathing effort, and wheezing (*ghur-ghur* sound). An acute attack may lead to delusions, loss of appetite, nasal discharge, and thirst. With increasing intensity of bouts, the patient may

become unconscious. The patient finds relief for a few moments after expectoration of sputum, breathes with great difficulty while lying down, and find comfort while sitting. The patient's eyes are wide open, and he or she perspires from the forehead, suffers dryness of mouth, gets bouts of dyspnea (often with shivering), and desires additional warmth. The disease greatly increases on cloudy days and in rain, cold or direct breeze and other factors that may cause an increase of *Kapha*. *Tamaka Swasa* has been classified into two varieties one is *Vata Pradhan Tamaka Swasa* and second one is *Sleshma Pradhana Tamaka Swasa*. The indicators of the former are highly painful breathing with high frequency of noisy sounds, little expectoration, difficulty in expectoration, and insomnia. The latter is characterised by high vibrating noise in throat while breathing, coryza, easy and copious expectoration, and painful fast breathing⁵.

Clinical course and prognosis

According to *Ayurveda Tamaka Swasa* is *Yapya* i.e., controllable⁶, it is completely curable only in the conditions in which disease is of short duration in strong healthy and young individuals and if the disease severity is mild⁶.

Management

Management of *Tamaka Swasa* in *Ayurveda* is by advising a healthy life style and diet that are contrary to the cause of the disease and disease itself. As there is an involvement of *Vata* and *Kapha* imbalance, the therapy is directed at correcting this imbalance. In addition there are some therapies for controlling the acute symptoms. The text recommends that the patients should be given sudation and steaming therapy (*Svedana*) after anointing their bodies with oils processed with salt⁷. With this method, the solidified phlegm (*Kapha*) adhering inside the channels gets liquefied and comes into the alimentary tract. The channels become soft and *Vata* attains its normal downward. The drugs, diet, and practices that aggravate the disease should be avoided. These include dust, smoke, residing in cold places, excessive use of cold water, seasonal changes, excessive walking, excessive use of dry foods, astringent food, irregular dietary habits, indigestion, trauma to vital organs, and habitual use of *lablab*-bean, black gram, *tila* paste, and other *Kapha*-producing articles.

Diet

Foods and drinks that restore the normal course of *Vata* are useful in treating asthma. If the *Vata* is greatly excited, syrup made up

from old tamarind pulp is helpful. Sugar candy with lemon (*Citrus medica*) juice is beneficial. Light foods should be eaten at night. Heavy and rich foods, which are difficult to digest, foods that are dry, curds, fish, and chillies should all be avoided.

Lifestyle

Staying awake at night, exercising, labour, exposing oneself to the heat of the sun or fire, and anxieties, grief, wrath, and everything that disturbs peace of mind should be avoided. A healthy lifestyle would have a preventive role.

Breathing exercises

Breathing exercises, particularly *Pranayam*, reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms, improve exercise tolerance, and enhance lung function⁸.

Meditation

Meditation helps in reducing the stress and may check recurrence. *Sahaja Yoga* is an Indian system of meditation based on traditional *Yogic* principles, which may be used for therapeutic purposes. Clinical trials of this therapy in patients with asthma have found evidence of improvement in lung function and reduced frequency of exacerbations⁹.

Useful Ayurvedic formulations:

- *Muktadi Churna*

- *Talisadi Churna*
- *Sitopaladi Churna*
- *Shringyadi Churna*
- *Swas kuthar rasa*
- *Swas rogantak vati*
- *Kanakaswsa*

CONCLUSION

Bronchial asthma or *Tamaka swasa* is disease of *Pranvaha srotasa* having *Vata* and *Kapha* dominancy. Person having bronchial asthma must avoid dust, pollen grains, cold water and cold places. Patient of asthma should take healthy diet and must follow a healthy behavioural regimen. Bronchial asthma is a complex disease but it can be easily managed by *Ayurveda*.

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