



Ayurvedic perspective of lehana and its immunomodulating effect in children

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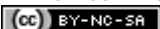
ABSTRACT

Lehana is one such traditional formulation mentioned in Ayurvedic classics that have been used to build up immunity, promote health, enhance growth and development by providing sufficient nutrition, protecting from various infections along with improving intellect and speech in children. Different *Acharyas* described several *Lehana* formulations for use in *Balyaawastha*. The immune system is a network of cells, proteins, tissues and organs that defends the body against infection. It is relatively immature at birth hence newborn are at greater risk of illness due to an immature immune system. So during this period our attempt should be specified to prevention of diseases and to enhance physical, mental and social well-being of children. In Ayurvedic texts immunity has been explained in terms of *Vyadhikshamatva* which is a state of equilibrium of *Kapha*, *Bala*, and *Oja*. Different therapies like *Rasayan*, *Lehana*, and *Samskaras* etc. are focused to modulate the immunity or increase the *Vyadhikshamatva* in children. Healthy state can be achieved by fine tuning of immune-regulatory mechanisms with the help of *Lehana*. The main aim of this article is to describe literary view of *Lehana* and its health benefits in children.

Keywords: *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Oja*, *Lehana*, *Rasayan*.

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INTRODUCTION

LEHANA (Electuary): The term *Lehana* means to lick. '*LihyateAnenItiLehayam*' the act of licking or lapping up with the tongue. It depicts administration of various herbal drugs mixed with *honey* and *Ghrita*; because it increases the palatability of the drug taken with it and can be

easily taken up. This process is called *Lehana* and can be given as supplementary feeds to children. All Acharyas explain *Lehana* but detailed explanation of *Lehana* is available in *Kashyapasamhita*, which suggests that *Lehana* is not only restricted for physical and mental health, but also act as supplementary food.¹

Factors	Indications	Contraindications
Stanya	Children of mothers who have absent, deficient or vitiated milk. Children who are not satisfied with breast feeds and keep on crying.	Children who is receiving heavy milk.
Maata	Children born to mothers who have faced difficult labor. Mothers are severe ill.	Who is fed by mother consuming all six <i>Rasa</i> .
Agni	Children who have good digestion.	Child with poor digestion, anorexia.
Nidra	Children who do not sleep at night.	Child with sleepiness.
Mala	Children who passes less urine and stool.	Child having diarrhea or vomiting.
Dosha & Roga	Child with <i>vata</i> and <i>pitta</i> predominance.	Children suffering from <i>Pandu</i> , <i>Kamla</i> , <i>Visarpa</i> , <i>Graharoga</i> , <i>Udarroga</i> etc.

Purposes of Lehana:

"SukhamDukhamHimBalanamDrishyateLehanas hrayam".¹

It states that happiness (health) and sorrows (disease) of children are dependent on *Lehana*.

- Promote health, strength (immunity) and complexion.
- To enhances growth and development by providing sufficient nutrition.
- Protect from various infections along with improving intellect and speech (delayed milestone).

Various compound formulations described by different Acharyas:²

Acharya Sushruta (4 <i>Lehana</i> Yoga)	Swarna bhasma+Kushtha+vacha+Madhu& Ghrita. Swarna bhasma+Arkapushpi+Vacha+Madhu& Ghrita. Swarna bhasma+Shankhapushpi+Matasyaksha+Madhu& Ghrita. Swarna bhasma+Kaidarya+Shweta doorva+Madhu & Ghrita.
Acharya Kashyapa	Swarna Prashana, Samvardhan Ghrita, Abhaya Ghrita, Single drugs like Brahmi, Mandukparni, Danti, Chitraka etc.
Acharya Vagbhata	Ashtang Ghrita, Saraswat Ghrita, Vachadi Ghrita.
Acharya Charaka	Kalyanak Ghrita, Panchgavya Ghrita, Brahmi Ghrita.

The term immunity refers to the defense mechanism that protects an individual against invasion by an infection. This discriminatory ability provides protection from the infective, autoimmune and malignant disorders. When looking at infections, most microbes are identified as foreign by immune system and so our body gets protected from them.³It is relatively immature at birth hence newborn are at greater risk of illness due to an immature immune system. So during this period our attempt should be specified to prevention of diseases and to enhance physical, mental and social well-being of children.

In Ayurvedic texts immunity has been explained in terms of *Vyadhikshamatva* which is a state of equilibrium of *Kapha*, *Bala*, and *Oja*.

ChakrapaniDatta while commenting on *CharakSamhita* gave his view in terms of *Vyadhikshamatva* and explained the term in two divisions:⁴

Vyadhi-balvirodhitvam: Strength to resist the progress of disease and

Vyadhi-utpadakpratibandhakatva: The resisting power of the body competent enough to prevent the occurrence and re-occurrence of disease.⁴Thus it is clear that concept of immunity was familiar at that time and has been analyzed in detail in the form of *Vyadhikshamatva* in various Ayurvedic texts. There are mainly three synonyms of *Vyadhikshamatva* in Ayurveda; *Shleshma*, *Bala* and *Ojas*.

1. **Shleshma:** *Shleshma* in normal state (*prakritaawastha*) is called as *Bala* or *Ojas* and in abnormal state called *Mala* (waste) and *Papma* (diseases). *Shleshma* or *Kapha* is one of the *Tridosha*; Function of normal state of *Kapha* is similar to *Ojas* such as it provides compactness, stability, heaviness, immunity, resistance, courage and gracelessness.⁵
2. **Bala:** *Bala* imparts firm integrity to the muscles, improves the voice and complexion, and helps the person to perform his natural functions (external and internal) normally. There are mainly three types of *Bala* – *Sahaj*, *Kalaj* and *Yuktikrita*.⁶
 - i. **Sahaj Bala (Natural):** constitutional strength present since birth. It depends on the healthiness of *shukra*(sperms) and *artava* (ovum). If the genetic makeup of both the parents is healthy similar health status is acquired by the children.
 - ii. **Kalaj Bala (Periodic):** Temporal strength is the one which is based on division of seasons and age of the person. The *Bala* will be highest at the end of *Visarga* and beginning of *Aadanakala* while it will

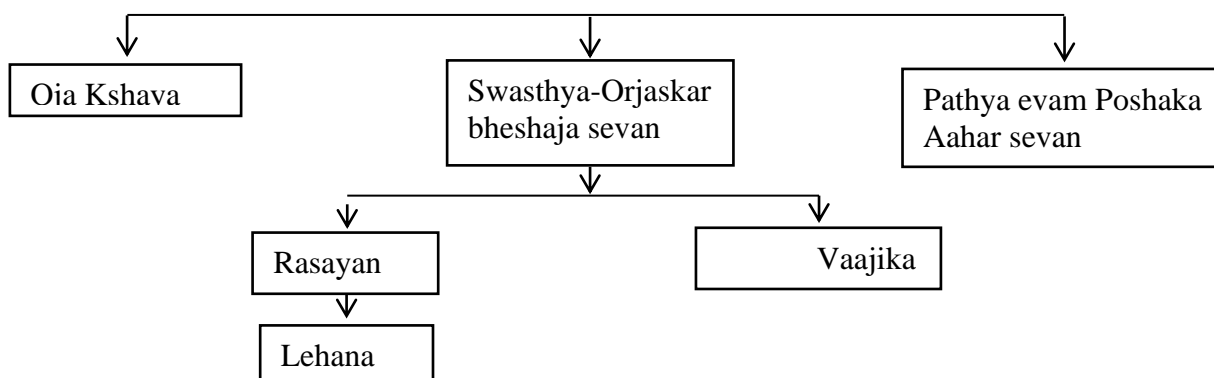
be lowest at beginning of *Visarga* and end of *Adanakala*. Similarly as per age it will be *Alpa* (minimum) in child and old age, *Uttama* (maximum) in young age.

- iii. **Yuktikrita Bala (Acquired):** Acquired strength is the one which is achieved by focusing on proper diet and physical activities. One can increase; sustain his immunity by methodical approach in his lifestyle, *Ahara* requirements by following rules and regulations of diet. Regular use of *Rasayan*, *Lehana* or practice of *Vyayama*, *Yoga* and *Pranayama* helps to enhance the immunity.

3. **Ojas:** The main factor of *Bala* in Ayurveda is “*Oja*”.

The essence (*Saar*) of *SaptaDhatus* from *Rasa* to *Shukra* is called *Oja* and it is the seat for strength and hence called *Bala*. It resides in the heart but also circulates all over the body and maintains healthy status of the person. It is viscous, *Somatmaka*, clear and slight reddish yellow in color. By *Ojakshaya* or loss death will occur and by its presence body sure to survive.⁷

Methods of Bala Vriddhi⁸



Different therapies like *Rasayan*, *Lehana*, and *Samskaras* etc. are focused to modulate the immunity or increase the *Vyadhikshamatva* in children.

Benefits of Lehana:

- Children are more vulnerable to infections. There are so many traditional measures available to combat it and protect from the hostile environment in which drug is mixed with *Madhu* or *Ghrita* are given. The process is called *Lehana*. As per Ayurveda and modern, pediatric medicines must be palatable, tasty and *avaleha* (*lehana*) is the tastiest of all Ayurvedic preparations.

- Acharya Sushuruta described 4 different formulations which combined with *Swarna Bhasma* provides general immunity, body resistance; enhance intellect, helpful in growth and development. *Swarna bhasma* showed a **stimulatory effect on peritoneal macrophages, which may be helpful to fight against infections. Thus used for raising the non-specific immunity.** It is an effective antioxidant and antibacterial agent. It also helps in increasing the efficacy of other drugs.
- *Acharya Kashyapa* mentioned the procedure of ‘*Swarnaprashana*’ as pure

Swarna should be taken and rubbed on a clean stone with little water. *Madhu* and *Ghrita*s added to it and then licked to the child result in promotes health, growth, strength (immunity) and complexion. It is being widely promoted in the form of '*Swarnabinduprashana*'. Giving this for one month child become excessively intelligent and increased resistance to diseases. **This clearly indicates the immunity enhancing property of *Swarnaprashana*, using this for six months continuously child will be able to retain whatever he listens.**

- '*AbhayaGhrita*' provides protection against *rakshasa*, *pishacha*, *matraka* (infectious diseases) which are common in children.
- Single drugs were selected as per the *prakriti*/ characteristic/ need of the individual child may be used separately or with *Madhu* and *Ghrita* to enhance intellect because growth of the brain and nervous system is very rapid in the first few years of the life.
- '*Brahmi*' help to improves cognition and concentration also increase serotonin level that promotes relaxation, '*Mandukparni*' act as an anticonvulsant, anxiolytic and also increases cognitive ability, '*Chitraka*' having cardio tonic, Hepato-protective and neuro-protective properties. It has also shown anti-bacterial activity and hence it is useful in prophylaxis against infections which may interfere with general growth and development. '*Danti*' is a known purgative in Ayurveda. **It stimulates cell mediated immune system by increasing neutrophils functions. It promotes locomotion, phagocytosis and intracellular killing functions of**

neutrophils. Thus it acts as a potent immunity modulator.

- '*SamwardhanGhrita*' prevents from diseases "*nirvyadhivardhate*" and promotes rapid growth in children. Lame, deaf, dumb and mentally retarded child shows marked improvement i.e., useful in cases of delayed milestones.
- *Lehas* described by *AcharyaCharaka* like '*KalyanakGhrita*' is useful in epilepsy, insanity, fever etc. '*PanchgavyaGhrita*' used for treating *Apasmara*, *Grahroga*, *Gulma*, *Unmad* and *Jvara*.
- This also provides essential calorific nutrients, macro-micronutrients to the growing child. Child requires daily supplementation as he spends his energy in playing and other activities.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a healthy person and cure the disease of diseased. It is quite obvious that to achieve the first goal, immune system should be maintained at higher levels. Prevention of disease in healthy person is directly related to healthy immune system. So basically the concept of *Swastha* in Ayurveda is definitely focused on immune system. *Vyadhikshamatva* is described in Ayurveda and this concept is considered equivalent to immunity. *Lehana* is one such traditional formulation mentioned in Ayurvedic classics that have been used to build up immunity or increase the *Vyadhikshamatva* in children, promote health, enhance growth and development by providing sufficient nutrition, protecting from various infections along with improving intellect and speech in children.

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