

Adaptability in Lepa Combinations: An Ayurvedic Perspective

Dr Lakshmi. R. S¹, Dr Arpana. P. V², Dr Sri Nagesh. K. A³

¹Final year PG Scholar, Department of PG studies in Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhanta, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Bengaluru.

²Associate Professor, Department of PG studies in Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhanta, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Bengaluru.

³Professor and HOD, Department of PG studies in Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhanta, Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science and Research Hospital, Bengaluru.

Abstract

Lepa are topical preparations which are applied on the skin for both curative purpose and as daily regimen. *Ayurveda* explains about the different types of therapies; *antahparimarjana* (internal cleansing), *baahyaparimaarjana* (external cleansing) and shastra *pranidhaana* (surgical procedures).¹ Based on various conditions in both diseased and healthy person, various permutations and combinations of *lepa* can be done for significant therapeutic effect. The powder used can be coarse or fine in nature; liquid medium for triturating the powder can be either water or alcoholic or unctuous etc, in nature. Even though different types of *lepa*, *lepa dravyas* and *drava dravyas* have been suggested, it is up to the rationality and logic of physicians to make effective combinations of the same. *Ayurveda* has not named every diseased condition but has put forward diverse possibilities of dosha involvements in manifestation of the same. Hence, this article covers the possibilities of variations that can be made in different *lepas* in unnamed disease conditions also.

Keywords: *Lepa*, *bahiparimarjana*, topical medicament, *Ayurveda*.

Introduction

In *Ayurveda*, *lepa* is one of the *bahih parimaarjana chikitsa*¹ (external application of medicaments), which is being used in *swastha* as a daily regimen and in the *aatura* as a treatment procedure. *Lepa* can be understood as any topical medicament applied on the body; while specifically in *Ayurveda*, *lepa* is considered as paste of medicaments applied on the body. Fresh drugs or dried drugs are used as *lepa dravyas*. To bring it to the consistency of a paste any liquid media is mixed with the powdered dry drug or pounded wet drug. Based on the condition in which the *lepa* is applied the thickness and the *dravya* used varies. Different types of *lepa* have been explained by different Acharyas in different conditions. The application of the same has been scattered throughout the Samhitas by different Acharyas. This article is put down to comprehend *lepa* and its effective application as a mode of treatment.

Aim and objectives

Aim : To comprehend the application of *lepa* and discuss the possibilities and variations that can be made in the same.

Objectives :

1. To review and compile concept of *lepa* according to different *acharyas*.
2. To generate potential variations in different *lepa* combinations in unidentified disease conditions.

Materials and methodology**Materials : Literature review**

- **Primary source :** *Bruhathrayee* and *Laghuthrayee*.
- **Secondary source :** *Sanskrit* dictionaries like *Shabdakalpadruma*, *Vaachaspathya* and *Amarakosha*, related articles, relevant works on *lepa kalpana*.

Methodology

All the available literature on *lepa* was reviewed and critically analysed for its effectiveness in application as a mode of treatment.

Review of literature

Acharya Charaka explains three types of treatments for shareerika dosha as *antah parimaarjana* (internal therapies), *bahi parimaarjana* (external therapies) and *shastrapranidhaana*¹ (surgical procedures). *Bahih parimaarjana* has been explained as the type of treatment which takes the aid of *spashanendriya* in alleviating the *doshas*. This includes *abhyanga*, *sweda*, *pradeha*, *parisheka*, *unmardana* etc¹.

Aalepa has been mentioned as the primary *upakrama in vrana*, and *pradhaanatama chikitsa in shopha* by *Acharya Sushruta*³. *Acharya Dalhana* comments that among all the *upakramas* of *bahiranta pramaarjana*, *aalepa* is the most important one, as it can be applied directly to the target area, superior among all topical applications as it subsides the ailment rapidly³. *Acharya Vagbhata* quotes *lepa* and *parisheka* subside the vitiated doshas just like water puts the fire out⁴. The concept behind the *lepa* is *samanya* and *vishesha*.

Nirukti :

Bahih parimaarjana

- *Bahih* means *baahyam* or external.
- The word *maarjana* means ‘*maarsht*’⁵

According to *Shabdakalpadruma*,

लिप् + करणे ल्युट् - “लिम्पत्यनेनेति”⁶

Generally, the word *lepa* means ‘to smear’, ‘to anoint’, ‘to besmear’ etc.

Synonyms :

आलेपस्य च नामानि लिप्ते लेपश्च लेपनम्⁷

- *Lepana*, *Lepa*, *Lipta*, *Aalepa*, *Pradeha*

Method of preparation of lepa

- In case of fresh drugs, the selected wet drug is cleaned from foreign particles and taken in a clean mortar and pounded to fine paste with a pestle.
- In case of dry drugs, they are finely powdered and filtered with the help of a sieve. Then with the suggested *drava dravya*, it is triturated to obtain a well ground paste.

Types of *lepa*

<i>Charaka Samhitha</i>	<i>Susrutha Samhitha</i>	<i>Ashtanga Hrudaya</i>	<i>Ashtanga Sangraha</i>	<i>Sharangadhara Samhitha</i>
32 <i>pradeha</i>	<i>Pradeha</i> <i>Pralepa</i> <i>Alepa</i>	<i>Mukhalepa</i> <i>Doshaha</i> <i>Vishaha</i> <i>Varnakrut</i> <i>Sheeta</i> <i>Ushna</i> <i>Heena</i> <i>Madhyama</i> <i>Uttama</i>	<i>Mukhalepa</i> <i>Doshaghna</i> <i>Vishaghna</i> <i>Varnya</i> <i>Lepa</i> <i>Snaihika</i> <i>Nirvapana</i> <i>Savarneekarana</i> <i>Prasadana</i> <i>Stambana</i> <i>Vilaayana</i> <i>Pachana</i> <i>Peedana</i> <i>Shodhana</i> <i>Ropana</i>	<i>Mukhalepa</i> <i>Doshagna</i> <i>Vishagna</i> <i>Varnyakara</i>

Acharya Charaka has enlisted 32 *churna pradeha* which can be adopted to any modes of *bahih parimarjana chikitsa*.

Sushruta has explained the *lepa* on the basis of thickness

1. ***Pralepa***⁸ can be (cold), (thin), *vishoshi*(causes dryness) or *avishoshi* (does not cause dryness) and improves *rakta* and *pitta*.
2. ***Pradeha***⁸ can be either hot or cold, *bahalo*, *abahu*, *vishoshi*, *vata shleshma prashamaka*, *shodhana*, healing in nature and cures swelling and pain.
3. ***Aalepa***⁸ should neither be too thick nor too thin in nature and is used in open wounds, to check the discharge and eliminates slough, pus and thus cleans the wound.

Ashtanga Hrudaya classifies *mukha lepa* -

On the basis of the intended action of the *lepa*⁹

1. *Doshaha* - *lepa* should be 1/4 of an *angula*
2. *Vishaha* - *lepa* should be 1/3 of an *angula*
3. *Varnakara* - *lepa* should be 1/2 of an *angula*

On the basis of the *dosha* involved¹⁰

1. *Ushna* – *vata kaphaja* disorders *lepa* should be warm
2. *Ati Sheeta* – *pittaghna*, *vishaghna* & *varnya lepa*s should be very cold.

On the basis of the thickness of *lepa*¹¹

1. *Heena* - *lepa* should be 1/4 of an *angula*
2. *Madhyama* - *lepa* should be 1/3 of an *angula*
3. *Uttama* - *lepa* should be 1/2 of an *angula*

Ashtanga Sangraha classifies¹²

10 types of *lepa* on the basis of intended action –

Snaihika, Nirvapana, Prasadana, Stambhana, Vilayana, Pachana, Peedana, Shodhana, Ropana and *Savarneekarana*.

Lepa prayoga in different Ritu:

Ritu	Lepa
Acc: to Acharya Charaka;	
1. Hemanta	Thick lepa of aguru. ¹³
2. Greeshma	Lepa of chandana. ¹⁴
3. Vasanta	Chandana and aguru lepa. ¹⁵
Acc: to Ashtanga Hrdya¹⁶;	
1. Hemanta	Kolamajja, vrshaanmoola, shaabaram, gaurasarshapa.
2. Sisira	Simhimoola, krishna tila, darvi twak, nistusha yava
3. Vasanta	Darbhamoola, hima, ushira, sirisa, tandula.
4. Greeshma	Kumuda, Utpala, kahlaara, durva, madhuka, Chandana
5. Varsha	Kaaliyaka, tila, ushira, jatamamsi, tagara, padmaka
6. Sarat	Talisa, gundra, pundrahu, yashtimadhu, asana, kasa, nata, aguru

As part of *dinacharya*, *Acharya Susruta* has mentioned a *mukhalepa* which has to be applied after *snana*, which imparts strength to the eyes, cheeks and face, removes freckles and boils, thus making the face similar to lotus.¹⁷

The treatment of ulcerous wound includes *vimlapana*, *avasechana*, *upanaha*, *padanakriya*, *shodhana*, *ropana* and *vaikrtapaha*; out of which *vimlapana* includes *bahya parimarjana* methods like *lepa*, *parisheka*, *abhyanga* etc *lepa* form is used in *vimlapana* and *ropana* procedures¹⁸.

Another application of *lepa* has been described in swelling, where it is suggested that¹⁹:

Type of lepa	Dosa dominance
Unctuous, <i>amla</i> , <i>lavana</i> , <i>ushna</i>	In <i>vataja shopha</i>
<i>Sheetala</i> , mixed with milk	In <i>pittaja shopha</i>
<i>Ushna</i> , mixed with excessive quantity of milk or <i>mutra</i>	In <i>kaphaja shopha</i>

For the treatment of *shopha*, *sapta upakramas* have been suggested, out of which *pachana* and *darana* involves application of *lepa*²⁰:

Upakrama	Dravyas used for lepa
<i>Vimlapana</i>	<p>For vataja sophia – <i>Pralepa</i> of <i>matulunga</i>, <i>agnimantha</i>, <i>bhadradaru</i>, <i>mahaushadha</i>, <i>rasna</i>.</p> <p>For pittaja, raktaja, vishaja and agantuja sophia – <i>Durva</i>, <i>nalamura</i>, <i>madhuka</i>, <i>chandana</i>, <i>shitala gana dravya</i>.</p> <p>For kaphaja sophia -</p>

	<i>Ajagandha, ashwagandha, sarala, ajashrngi.</i> For sannipataja sophia – Combination of all the formerly mentioned <i>dravyas</i> .
<i>Pachana</i>	<i>Shana, mulaka, shigru phala, tila, sarshapa, atasi</i> and other <i>ushna dravyas</i> .
<i>Darana</i>	<i>Chirabilva, agnika, danti, chitraka, hayamaraka, faeces of kapota or grdhra</i> or any <i>kshara vargas</i> .

Rules for *lepa* application²¹

1. *Lepa* should be applied in the *pratiloma* direction.
2. *Lepa* should be removed before getting dried up completely.
3. *Lepa* should be done in daytime for diseases of *pitta, rakta, abhighaata* and *savisha*;
4. *Lepa* which has dried up, should not be used.
5. *Lepa* should not be applied in several layers.
6. *Lepa* should not be reused.
7. *Alepa* is effective in *avidagdha sophia*.
8. *Lepa* is done for *shodhana* purpose in *marma pradesha*.
9. When *Sneha* is used for *lepana*,
 - a. In *vataja* disorder – *Sneha* is to be added 1/4th part of *kalka*.
 - b. In *pittaja* disorder- *Sneha* is to be added 1/6th part of *kalka*.
 - c. In *kaphaja* disorder – *Sneha* is to be added 1/8th part of *kalka*.
10. The thickness of the *lepa* should be similar to the thickness of a buffalo skin.
11. *Alepa* should not be applied at night.
12. When *lepa* is applied, avoid day sleep, talking, heat rays of sun or other heat sources, sadness and anger.

Why application of *lepa* contraindicated at night?²²

Local applications done at night may obstruct the transfer of body heat which escapes through the skin pores. Exceptions - *apakva sotha, gambhira sotha* and *raktaja* and *sleshmaja sotha*.

Contra indications of mukhalepa (Ashtanga Hrudaya)²³

1. Person suffering from Rhinitis, indigestion, lock jaw, loss of appetite,
2. One who has been given *nasya*.
3. One who had sleepless night.

Examples for *lepas* -

Type of <i>lepa</i>	Examples
<i>Vishaha</i>	<i>Pinyaka lepa in vatika keeta visha</i>
<i>Doshaha</i>	<i>Madhushigru beeja and dhanyamla</i>
<i>Varnyakara</i>	<i>Rodhradi gana</i>

Examples of special *lepas* mentioned in *Sarangadhara Samhita*:

- *Doshagna lepa*²⁴ – *Punarnava, devadaru, shundi, Siddhartha, shigru, aaranaala*.
- *Dashanga lepa*²⁵ – *sirisa, madhuyashti, tagara, raktachandana, ela, jatamaamsi, haridra, daruharidra, kushta, vaalaka, ghee*.

- *Dahartinashaka lepa*²⁶ – *vibheetaka phala majja*.
- *Keetaghna lepa*²⁷ – *langali, ativisha, alabu, jalini, mulakabija, dhanyaambu*.
- *Lepa in indralupta*²⁸ – *brhati swarasa* and honey.
- *Lepa in Darunaka*²⁹ – *khakhasa bija* and milk.
- *Lepa in Palita*³⁰ – *triphalaka powder, loha powder, dadima twak powder, bisa powder, bringaraja powder, goat's milk*.
- *Lepa to remove unwanted hair*³¹ – *shankha churna, haritaala, manashila, swarjika ksara, water*.
- *Dhrdeekarana of yoni*³² in aged women- *plaksha phala, udumbara phala* and *tila taila*.
- In *linga vrddhi, stana vrddhi*³³ – *maricha, saindhava lavana, krishna, tagara, brhati phala, apamarga, tila, kushta, yava, masha, aswagandha* and honey.
- *Vasheekarana lepa*³⁴ – *vaca, sauvarchala, kushta, haridra, daruharidra* and *marica*.

Few examples of *Drava dravyas* used in *lepa* preparation

Dhanyamla– used in *vatakapthottara* condition- *vatarakta chikitsa*.

- *Madhushigru* seeds etc are made into paste with *dhanyamla*, in conditions of excessive vitiation of *vatakaptha* in *vatashonita*.³⁵
- *Amla kanjika* or fermented rice water is used in preparing *kolakulathadi pradeha*, advised in *vata* related diseases.³⁶

Mutra –

- *Gomutra* is mixed with *kukkuta purisha, gunja* etc and used as an *alepa* formulation in *arshas*.³⁷
- In *kaphaja visarpa, gomutra* is to make *kalka* of *ajagandha* etc.
- In *udara, devadaru, palaasha, arka* etc with *gomutra* are used to make *pradeha*.
- Cow's urine is used in making *pradeha* in *kushta*.³⁸
- *Lepa* made with goat's urine is said to be most effective in *arsha chikitsa*.³⁹

Sneha dravyas –

- Ghee is used to make *durvaadi kalka* in treatment of *visarpa chikitsa*- as it is ulcer healing.⁴⁰

Based on the *Dravya*, the types of *lepa* can be derived from *sthavara, jangama* and *parthiva dravyas*

- *Sthavara* – includes the herbal drugs used either in fresh or dried form.
- *Jangama* – includes the products obtained from animals like, *majja, vasa, ksheera, rakta, mutra, pitta* etc.
- *Parthiva* – includes the *dravyas* of mineral origin like *manashila, mrit, gandhaka, makshika* etc. eg- *makshika dhatu* as *lepa* in *kushta chikitsa*.⁴¹

Mode of action of *lepa*⁴²

The *tiryag dhamanis* (vessels moving other than in upward and downward directions) which ends at the skin, absorb the *lepa* with the help of the *virya* of respective drugs and circulate throughout the body. *Acharya Dalhana* explains that *bhrajaka pitta* located in the skin, transforms the *abhyangadi* application into absorbable form, with the aid of *virya*.

Discussion

When we consider the term '*lepa*', the literal meaning is 'smeared on', which means that it can be smeared on a localised part or the whole body. Taking this into consideration, any kind of topical application can

be placed under *lepa*. Single drug or combination of drugs can be used as *lepa*. *Lepa* is anything which is made into *kalka* (paste) form and used for topical application. *Kalka* is made with *ardra* (wet) or *shushka* (dry) *dravya/dravyas* mixed with any *drava dravya* and thus applied as *lepa*.

Comparison of lepa with other topical applications -

- *Malahara* is different from *lepa* on the basis of the ingredients (base of bee wax, oil and powder of *kajjali/tankana/gandhaka* etc.) used and also it is applied in *Anuloma* direction.
- *Upanaha* is different from *lepa*, as it involves *bandhana* and also different time period for which it should be applied. *Upanaha* is one of *swedana* procedure and *lepa* is not.
- *Avachurnana* is different from *lepa* as there is only dusting of the *churna* on the body and there is no involvement of *kalka*.
- *Poochu* of *Siddha* medicine has similar preparatory methods.
- The ointments, liniments, gels etc of allopathy have a different base for medicine preparation, specific direction of application is not there and the duration of application is also different.

Understanding the probable mode of action of lepa

Contemplating the theory of *srotamayapurusha*, which states that the whole body is porous, we can understand that the *tiryak dhamanis* which branch out into hundreds and thousands of channels or vessels, end at root of hair follicles in the skin. This can be considered as pathway for the *doshas* to enable the absorption and metabolism of the drugs applied on the skin. The application of *lepa* in opposite direction also aids the *lepa* to remain in the applied area due to the presence of the hair follicles. Thus, allowing the internal heat to get trapped by the *lepa* and helping in increasing the temperature beneath the skin and aids the pilosebaceous glands and the capillaries to dilate allowing easy and faster absorption of the medicament. Hence, the reason why *lepa* should be applied in the opposite direction of the hair follicles. The *virya* of applied drug is absorbed through the root of hair follicles present on the skin. The *bhrajaka pitta* in the skin helps in the *pachana* of the applied drug. The *Sukshma*(minuteness) and *chala* (moving) characteristics of *vata* aids in easy transportation and absorption of the *virya* of the drug through the skin. The absorbed *virya* of the drug may act locally or circulate throughout the body by the fast-moving characteristics of *vyana vata*

Kalka form of lepa

Kalka is that which has been triturated to a paste. The fresh and dry drugs are ground to powder or paste, for easy absorption. Reducing the drugs into smaller pieces or grinding it into powder, helps in covering larger surface area of action for each particle of the drug. That is, larger the pieces, smaller surface area covered and smaller the pieces, larger surface area covered. By this, more chemical constituents come in contact with the area of *lepa* application. The size of a sweat pore ranges from 66 microns – 287 microns⁴³ depending on the site of the pore. The size of the fine powder particle is approximated to be less than 100 microns⁴⁴. From this it is understood that if the size of the particles is 100 microns or less than 100 microns, chances are there for it to get absorbed into underlying structures and vessels. This enables easy and effective action of *lepa* in all condition.

Consistency of kalka for lepa

The application of *ushna lepa* in *vata kaphaja* disease is understood by the *vishesha siddhanta* where

drugs with opposite qualities are used. Similarly, in *rakta pitta pradoshaja vyadhis*, *sita lepa* is used. When *Chandanadi lepa* which is cooling in nature, is applied in *slakshna*(fine) and *ghana*(thick) form, it closes the pores of the skin and helps in retaining the heat within the skin layers and also to reach deeper levels of skin, thus providing warmth. In case of *Agaruvadi lepa* which is warming in nature, is applied in *aslakshna*(coarse) and *tanu*(thin) form, does not completely cover the pores of the skin and allows the heat to escape, thus providing a cooling effect. Here, we can understand that irrespective of the *virya* of the *lepa* applied, depending upon the size of the *lepa* particles, ie, coarse or fine, variations can be made in the *lepa* depending upon the condition.

Discussion on rules for *lepa* application

Lepa should be removed before getting dried up completely, else dried up *lepa* can cause dryness and wrinkles. *Lepa* should not be applied at night in swellings as the cool temperature of night will obstruct heat of the swelling and eventually give rise to other abnormalities. Overlapping layers of *lepa* should not be advised as it can increase the thickness of *lepa* thereby producing increased heat, pain and burning sensation in the body. Similarly, if *lepa* is reused, due to absence of useful chemical constituents, it will be ineffective. Thickness of the *pradeha* (and not the entire *lepa* types) should be similar to thickness of buffalo skin, which is approximately 0.65cm in thickness.

Drava Dravya used to prepare *lepa*

The *drava dravya* is mixed into the fine powder to make it into a paste, so that it acts as a transport medium for the chemical constituents to pass through the skin. *Drava dravya* used acts as the medium which enables the powdered drug to release its chemical constituents into the same and seep through the pores of the skin to reach the target area. Through this, it is also understood that *lepa dravya* should be removed after drying up, indicating that there is no further absorption process. *Mutra*, or mostly cow's urine is used widely in *kaphaja* conditions of haemorrhoids, herpes like conditions, ascites etc, where *sthira*, *kathina* and obstructive nature of *dushya* and *doshas* are presented. *Sthira guna* of *kapha* is broken down by the strong action of *mutra*. *Dhanyamla* is mainly used in *vataja* conditions, where due to its hot property, it brings down cold property of *vata dosha*. In *vatarakta* with more of *kapha dushti*, *ushna guna* of *dhanyamla* brings down the cold nature of both *vata* and *kapha*. *Tikshna guna* of *dhanyamla* helps in breaking down *guru* and *sthira gunas* of *kapha dosha*. *Ghrta* used as *drava dravya* in *visarpa* enables bringing down hot, *sara* and sharp properties of *pitta dosha*. *Shlakshna* nature of ghee facilitates healing of affected area.

Understanding the classification of *lepa*

Pralepa is thin application as it is used in *rakta pitta pradoshaja* conditions. If the thickness of *pralepa* is more, it can increase the hotness of that area and lead to further vitiation of the *pitta*. *Pradeha* is thick layered and used in *vata-kaphaja* conditions. The thick layer of the *lepa* helps in retaining the hotness of the affected part, thus aids in subsiding *vata* and *kapha dushti* conditions. *Aalepa* is of intermediate thickness and is used for superficial action on the affected area. *Daurgandhyahara pradeha*(*lepa* which removes bad body odour) acts at the level of *medas* because of thickness of *lepa* which imparts hotness that reaches deeper levels of *dhatu*, hence *pradeha* is suitable for subsiding cold property of *vata* and *kapha*. *Sarivadi lepa* in *visarpa* is applied as *pralepa* as it acts on *pitta* and *rakta* to reduce burning sensation and intense pain.

The classification -**vishagna**, **doshagna** and **varnyakara mukha lepa** is on the basis of the intended action - **doshagna** – **doshahara** drugs used, **vishagna** – **vishahara** drugs used, **varnyakara** – drugs which enhances and restores the normal tone and lustre of skin. In **doshagna lepa** the *virya* of the drug and the *drava dravya* used to make the *kalka* are responsible for the *prakupita doshas* to subside. For example, in pain due to *vata* **vata**kaphaja *vatarakta*, *madhusigru beeja* mixed with *dhanyamla* is used to make the *kalka*, as it is *vata*kaphahara in nature. Thus, action of **doshagna lepa** is understood. *Pinyaka lepa* applied in *vatika keeta visha*, is *vata*hara in nature. The *ushna veerya* of the *pinyaka* increases *pitta dosha* which in turn subsides the vitiated *vata*. Thus, action of **vishagna lepa** can be understood. *Rodhradi gana* is mixed with the appropriate *drava dravya*, based on the *dosha*, which are *dosha shaamaka* and *rakta prasadaka* in nature is used. Thus, action of **varnyakara lepa** is understood.

From these examples, it is understood that **doshahara lepa** are generally either *pralepa* or *pradeha* or *alepa*, based on the *dosha* involved. *Vishagna lepa* are generally *pralepa*. As for *varnyakara lepa*, it is used for *rakta prasadana* and *dosha shamana*. Hence it can be inferred to be either *pralepa* or *alepa*. Here also, if *sotha* is present, then *pradeha* can be used.

Types of lepa acting on layers of skin

When each layer of skin is considered, mode of action of *lepa* used in *mukhalepa* is limited upto the *avabhasini* layer due to the influence of *bhrajaka pitta*.

Pralepa is used in *Tilakalaka* and *vyanga*, two common conditions which occur in the second layer, *lohitika*. They are *vata paittika* in nature.

Alepa is used in *Ajagallika*, which is of *kaphashonita* in nature and occurs in *swetha* layer and hence as it is intermediate in thickness, ie, not very thin for *kaphaja* involvement and not very thick for *rakta* involvement. Since *rakta* involvement is there, fine paste cannot be used as it might retain the heat thus causing more vitiation.

Pralepa is used as the *samanya lepa chikitsa* in *visarpa* (occurring in the *vedini* layer), as it is of *paittika* in nature. Fine paste *lepa* should not be used as it can retain heat and cause more vitiation.

Pradeha is used in *shushka arsas* as it is *vata*kaphaja in nature. *Pralepa* is used in *ardra arsas* as it is *raktapittaja* in nature. *Arsas* is the most common disease occurring in the last layer, *mamsadhara*.

Layers of skin	Common diseases occurring	Dosa predominance	Type of lepa to be used
Lohita	Tilakalaka vyanga.	Vata paittika	Pradeha with coarse, ushna virya dravya OR pralepa with fine, sita virya dravya.
Swetha	Ajagallika	Kapha shonita	Pradeha with coarse, ushna virya dravya OR pralepa with fine, sita virya dravya.
Vedini	Visarpa	Paittika	Pralepa with coarse and sita virya dravya.
Mamsad hara	Arsha	Shushka arsas – vatakaphaja. Ardra arsas – raktapittaja	In shushka – pradeha with fine and ushana virya dravya. In ardra – pralepa with coarse and sita virya dravya.

The ten types of *lepa* in *Ashtanga Sangraha* is classified on the basis of their mode of action. **Snaihika lepa** should be done with *sneha bahula* or *kevala sneha dravyas* for subsiding the dryness, roughness and

pain of the affected area. “*sneha bahula*” can be understood as the amount of *sneha* added to the *lepa dravya*. In *vataja* condition $1/4^{\text{th}}$ part *sneha* is added and the *lepa* applied would be *pradeha*. In *pittaja* condition $1/6^{\text{th}}$ part of *sneha* is added and the *lepa* would be *pralepa*. In *kaphaja* condition $1/8^{\text{th}}$ part of *sneha* is added and the *lepa* would be *pradeha*.

Discussion of *lepa* usage in *vrana* and *sopha*

Based on the nature of the *shopha*, *kalka dravyas* have been given. In this scenario also, *pralepa* which are *sheeta* in nature can be used for *pittaja*, *raktaja*, *abhighataja* and *vishaja* type of *shopha*; *pradeha* which are *ushna* in nature can be used for *vataja* and *kaphaja* type *shopha*. In *vimlapana*, *pachana* and *ropana* treatments, *lepa dravya* choosen and thickness of *lepa* applied should be with respect to type of *doshas* involved. In *vimlapana*, suggested *lepa* should be applied in order to soften the area. Since the objective of *lepa* before *vimlapana*, is for softening; it facilitates affected area to be squeezed for bringing out the *shalya* or puss. *Pralepa* has been suggested throughout, but with a variation in the *dravyas* based on *doshas*.

Understanding effectiveness of *dravadravya* through comedogenic value:

According to comedogenic rating enlisted in Beneficial Botanicals⁴⁵ (information collected from Journal of American Academy of Dermatology), comedogenic (tendency to block the pores of the skin) value of:

- Castor oil is 1.
- Sesame oil is 2.
- Bees wax is 2.
- Coconut oil is 4.

Higher the comedogenic value, more the more the retention of heat. Therefore, based on the above, for *vataja* condition, *sneha* which has higher value of comedogenic value and fine paste *lepa* can be used as *pradeha* for better insulation of pores and thus retaining heat within the skin. As for *pittaja* condition, *sneha* which has least/moderate value of comedogenic value and coarse *lepa* can be used as *pralepa*, which does not cause closure of skin pores and thus regulating the temperature of underlying part. In *kaphaja* condition, unctuous *dravya* with moderate comedogenic value and coarse paste *lepa* can be used as *pradeha* or *alepa* to facilitate insulation and also prevent complete closure of pores.

Nirvapan *lepa* will be mostly *pralepa* in nature as it aids in subsiding *pitta dushti* of affected areas by the *madhura* or *kashaya rasa*, *sita* and *snigdha guna*. When this *lepa* is used in *rakta dushita avastha*, it is termed as **prasadana** *lepa* which helps in *rakta prasadana* and hence, *pralepa* in nature. When *lepa* helps in ceasing or reducing the excessive bleeding, it is called as **stambhana** *lepa*, because of their *kashaya* or *katu rasa*, *guru*, *sita*, *sukshma*, *sthira*, *ruksha*, *slakshna* and *manda guna*. Therefore, *stambhana lepa* is primarily *pralepa* in nature. **Vilayana** *lepa* helps in dissolving *gratitha*, *kaphaja* and *medoja vrana*, by the *lavana* or *amla rasa*, *tikshna*, *ushna gunas*. Hence, it is understood to be *pradeha* in nature. **Pachana** *lepa* transforms the *vrana* to *pakavastha* due to the *lavana* or *amla rasa*, *ushna*, *tikshna guna*. Hereby, understood to be *pradeha* in nature. **Peedana** *lepa* helps in squeezing out the pus or vitiated *dushyas* by dilating the opening of the *vrana* and forcing out the pus by the *lavana* or *amla rasa* and *tikshna*, *sukshma* and *ushna gunas*. **Shodhana** *lepa* should be done to clean slough and dead skin from the affected region by the *dravyas* which are *kashaya rasa*, *laghu* and *ruksha*. It can be inferred to be **Ropana** *lepa* which is used to heal the *vrana* by the *madhura*, *kashaya* and *tiktha rasa* and *snigdha*, *sita guna*

pradhana dravyas. Lastly, the *savarneekarana lepa* for bringing back the normal colour of the healed *vrana* by the *tikta*, *lavana* and *katu pradhana rasa dravyas*, *ushna virya*, *sara*, *tikshna guna*.

Extent of action of the *lepa*

Lepa is used for localised action as it is coming under *bahih parimarjana chikitsa*, ie, since there is no interaction with the *jatharagni*, it is understood to be of localised action. The action of *lepa* can extend to different layers of skin. This can be understood by the different types of *vyadhis* mentioned in different layers of *twak*. The *virya* of the drugs applied helps in entering through the *romakooopa* and permeate through different layers of the *twak* based on the requirement. For example, in case of *sidhma*, *manashiladi lepa* is used, where the drug has to reach the third layer of the skin and do the necessary therapeutic action. In case of *vishahara lepas*, its action is both local and overall bodily action. Overall bodily action is probably due to the *virya*, *vipaka* and *prabhava* of the drugs applied, which acts upon the deranged *doshas*. With the help of *virya* of the drug, it reaches the target area and with help of *vipaka*, required action takes place to correct the vitiated *dosas*, thereby the *dushyas* or affected tissues.

Conclusion

Lepa, even though is used as a general term for topical medicament, in *Ayurveda* it is paste of either fresh or dry drugs ground with *drava dravya*. *Lepa* is included under *bahih parimarjana chikitsa* as it has no interaction with *jatharagni*. *Lepa* is prescribed according to the *yukti* of the physician, on the basis of the *doshas* involved. The necessary dravyas are triturated to either a fine paste or coarse paste based on the involvement of doshas and layers. Application of *lepa* in pratiloma direction facilitates the entrapment of internal body heat and thus facilitating easy absorption of medicine, through the dilated capillaries. The types of *lepa* are based on the thickness of the *lepa* and action of the drugs. In all *vata kaphaja* conditions, *pradeha* will be used and in *rakta pitta* conditions, *pralepa* is used. The fine powder used in *lepa* helps in better insulation, while coarse powder reduces too much heat insulation. Hence, they are used in *vatakaphaja* and *raktapitta* conditions respectively. Based on the *yukti* of the *Vaidya*, combinations and permutations of thickness, liquid medium, powder, type of drugs etc can be done in preparing *lepa* for more effective outcome.

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