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Kushtha in Ayurveda a comprehensive study

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ABSTRACT

The skin is the most visible and presentable part of the body, playing a significant role in one's personality. It acts as a mirror, reflecting internal health conditions. As the largest organ of the body, the skin covers a surface area of about 1.8 square meters and accounts for approximately 18% of total body weight. Skin diseases, while manifesting physically, often lead to significant psychological distress, causing discomfort, disfigurement, disability, and in some cases, even death. Changes in skin color are frequently indicative of homeostatic imbalances within the body. The health of the skin is influenced by a variety of interrelated factors, including nutrition, hygiene, circulation, age, immunity, genetic predispositions, psychological state, and medication use. In modern society, the prevalence of fast food consumption and irregular sleep patterns has contributed to the emergence of "Viruddha Aahara Janya Vyadhi," or diseases caused by incompatible dietary habits. As a result, a significant portion of the population experiences skin problems. The skin is considered a combination of the five great elements (*Pancha Mahabhutas*), with *Vayu* (air) being the most significant. *Sparsh Pareeksha* (examination by touch) is also included as one of the eight diagnostic tools in *Ashtavidha Pareeksha*. Common skin conditions like eczema, acne, blisters, melanoma, age spots, and pemphigus are discussed under the broader category of *Kushtha* in Ayurvedic literature. All forms of *Kushtha* are classified into two categories: *Maha Kushthas* (major skin diseases) and *Kshudra Kushthas* (minor skin diseases).

Key words: *Viruddha Aahara Janya Vyadhi, Maha Kushtha, Kshudra Kushtha*

INTRODUCTION

The word *Kushtha* is derived from the word "*Kus Nishkarshane*" by adding the suffix "*Tka*" to it.^[1]

The meaning of "*Kush*" is to tear, extract, pull or draw out.

Thus, the word *Kushtha* means that which destroys

with certainty & also which comes out from the inner part to the outer part.

Definition

1. कुष्णात्यङ्गम् ।

One which causes despise or despicable situations.

2. कुष्णाति निशेषेण विलेखनं कान्तिऽङ्गप्रत्यानि धातूपधात्वनीति कुष्ठम्।

Discolouration is produced over *Twacha* after *Doshik* vitiation, hence called *Kushtha*. From these definitions one can conclude as: When the derangement is not cared, then a disease is formed inside the body which manifests itself on the skin & makes it *Kutsit* or contemptible by vitiating *Rasadi Sapta Dhatus*. The whole body becomes despised & hence called as *Kushtha*.

3. कुष्णाति शरीरस्थ शोणितं विकृते।

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Vitiated *Rakta* leads to the destruction of body; hence it is called as *Kushtha*.

4. त्वचः कुर्वन्ति वैवर्ण्यं दुष्टः कुष्ठमुशन्ति तत् ।

5. कालेनोपेक्षितं यस्मात्सर्वं कुष्णाति तद्वपुः ॥^[2]

One which produces discolouration over skin region is said to be *Kushtha*. During the lapse of time, it makes the entire body look ugly.

Kushtha Nidan/ Hetu

As per Ayurveda, *Acharaya* have not explained separate *Nidana Kushtha*. But some common causes of *Kushtha* is well explained in *Ayurveda*. *Kushtha* (skin diseases) is caused by the vitiation of *doshas* etc., in persons indulging in unwholesome regimens as follows:-

Aharaja Nidana^[3-5]

1. *Virodhi Anna Pana* and *Snigdha Guru Pana*: Intake of incompatible combinations such as milk with fish, such bad food combinations. Drinks which are unctuous and heavy to digest.
2. Haphazard intake of foods with hot and cold properties and fasting.
3. Intake of excess food, uncooked food and intake of food before the previous meal is digested.
4. Excessive intake of foods of freshly harvested grains, curd, fish, salt and sour substances.
5. Excessive intake of *Masha* (black gram), *Mulaka* (radish), pastry, *Tila* (sesame seeds) and Jaggery.

Viharaj Nidana

1. Suppression of the urge for vomiting and other natural urges.
2. Doing physical exercise in excessive heat and after a heavy meal.
3. Use of cold water immediately after exposure to scorching sun, heat, exertion or exposure to frightening situation.
4. Improper administration of *Panchakarma* therapies.
5. Performance of sexual act while suffering with indigestion.

6. Sleep during day time.

Kushtha Samprapti (Pathogenesis)^[6]

The three vitiated *Doshas* viz *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* in turn vitiate the *Twak* (Skin or *Rasa Dhātu*) *Rakta* (Blood), *Mamsa* (Muscle tissue) and *Ambu* (Lymph or plasma part of blood tissue). These taken together, constitute the seven fold pathogenic substance of *Kushtha*. These are together called *Kushtha Dravya Sangraha*.

All the 18 types of *Kushtha* (skin diseases) are caused by the above seven factors. *Kushtha* is never caused by the vitiation of only one of the above-mentioned pathogenic substances. All of them are necessarily involved in the causation of the disease. The process beginning with the vitiation of *Doshas*, due to specific *Nidana* and which lead to the full-fledged manifestation of the disease after the *Dosha Dushya Sammurchana* is called *Samprapti*. The knowledge of *Samprapti* helps the physician to understand the specific features of a disease, like the involvement of particular *Dosha*.

According to *Acharya Charaka Nidana Sevana* leads to *Prakopa of Tridosha* and thus the vitiated *Doshas* will get *Ashraya in Twak, Rakta, Mamsa* and *Ambu* causing the *Shaithalyatha* in these *Dhatus* leading to the Manifestation of *Kushtha Roga* further in *Chikitsa sthana* he has explained that the *Vatadi Doshas* get *Prakopa* and does *Dushana* of *Twak, Rakta, Mamsa* and *Ambu* leading to seven or eleven types of *Mahakushtha* and *Kshudrakushtha* respectively.

दोषाणां सञ्चितानां तु त्वङ्मांसास्रचारिणाम् ।

तु प्रदूषणं हि सर्वेषां कुष्ठमित्यभिधीयते ॥^[7]

After the vitiation, all the *Doshas* accumulates and wander in *Twacha, Mamsa, Lasika* and *Rakta* and produce a condition known as *Kushtha*.

Kushtha classification

Almost all the skin disorders come under the broad term "*Kushtha*". In *Charaka Samhita*, *Kushtha* is divided into two categories viz. *Mahakushtha* and *Kshudrakushtha*. There is no clearcut explanation for

this division but commentators have tried to solve this query.

Chakrapani explained that *Kshudrakushtha* has *Alpa* (less) *Dosha* and *Lakshanas* in comparison to *Mahakushtha*. So, it is known as *Kshudrakushtha*.^[8]

Gayadas mentioned that there is *Alpa Dosha* in *Kshudrakushtha* in comparison to *Mahakushtha*.

Kanthadatta has added that the quick (*Shighra*) involvement of *Dosha* to succeeding *Dhatu* results in *Mahakushtha* which may not be the feature in *Kshudrakushtha*.^[9]

While *Maha Kushtha* starts with major involvement of *Doshas*, penetrate the *Gambhira* (deeper) *Dhatu*^[10] resulting in excessive symptoms and involvement of major body area, so require urgent and major medicaments.

The difference between *Maha Kushtha* and *Kshudra Kushtha*

SN	Maha Kushtha	Kshudra Kushtha
1.	Bahu Dosha Arambhavata	Alpa Dosha Arambhavata
2.	Bahu Lakshana	Alpa Lakshana
3.	Excessive discomfort	Less discomfort
4.	Excess tendency to penetrate deeper <i>Dhatu</i> rapidly	Less tendency to penetrate in deeper <i>Dhatu</i>
5.	Maha chikitsa	Alpa Chikitsa
6.	Chronic	Less chronic
7.	Loss of skin functions like <i>Sparshagnata</i> .	Less functional deformities of skin.

Classification of *Kushtha* according to different *Acharyas*.

Maha Kushtha

S N	Types of Kushtha	CH	SU	AH	AS	KS	BH	MN	BP
1.	Kapala	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

2.	Audumb ara	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3.	Mandala	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
4.	Rishyajih va	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
5.	Pundarik a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
6.	Sidhma	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
7.	Kakanak a	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
8.	Dadru	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
9.	Aruna	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-

Kshudra Kushtha

SN	Types of Kushtha	CH	SU	AH	AS	KS	BH	MN	BP
1.	Ekakushtha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2.	Kitibha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3.	Charmadala	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
4.	Pama	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
5.	Vicharchika	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
6.	Charmakhya	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
7.	Vipadika	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
8.	Alasaka	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
9.	Dadru	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+
10.	Visphotaka	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
11.	Shataru	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
12.	Sidhma	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
13.	Sthularushka	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
14.	Mahakustha	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

15.	Visarpa	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
16.	Parisarpa	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
17.	Raksha	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
18.	Shvitra	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
19.	Vishaja	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-

Acharya Kashyapa^[11] has mentioned classification of Kushtha on the basis of prognosis

Prognosis	Type of Kushtha
Sadhya	Sidhma, Vicharchika, Pama, Dadru, Kitibha, Kapala, Sthularushka, Mandala, Vishaja.
Asadhya	Pundarika, Shvitra, Rishyajihva, Shataru, Audumbaru, Kakanaka, Charmadala, Ekakushtha, Vipadika

On the basis of prognosis Acharya Charaka has mentioned Kakanaka Kushtha as Asadhya while Sushruth Acharya has mentioned Kakanaka and Pundarika as Asadhya.

Classification of Kushtha according to Harita Samhita:-

In 42nd chapter of Trutiya Sthana of Harita Samhita, counting types of Kushtha, Harita has mentioned 18 types of Kushtha but described only 16 types of Kushtha as follows:

Kapalika, Visarpaka, Lohitamandala, Bahuvrana, Audumbara, Hastibala, Vaipadika, Khasa Dadru, Kina, Charmadala, Vicharchika, Mandalaka, Gojihvaka, Vishphotak, Sidhma

Classification on the basis of Doshaja predominance

Dosha	Name of Kushtha (Charaka and Vagbhata)
Vata	Kapala
Pitta	Audumbara
Kapha	Mandala, Vicharchika
Vata-Kapha	Sidhma, Ekakushtha, Alasaka, Charmakhya, Kitibha, Vipadika

Vata-Pitta	Rishyajihva
Kapha-Pitta	Pundarika, Charmadal, Dadru, Pama, Vishphotaka, Shataru
Tridosha	Kakana

Classification on the basis of Doshic predominance (Sushrutha)^[12]

Dosha	Name of Kushtha
Vata	Aruna, Parisarpa
Pitta	Rishyajihva, Audumbara, Charmadala, Visarpa, Kapala Vicharchika, Kitibha, Kakana, Pama
Kapha	Pundarika, Dadru, Sthularushka, Ekakushtha, Sidhma, Raksha Mahakustha

Premonitory sign and symptoms (Poorva Roopa)

- Sparsagyatva is a loss of touch sensitivity in the vicinity of a skin lesion
- Ati Sweda or Nava - Excessive perspiration or a lack of feeling
- Loma Harsha, Kandu, Todo, Shrama and Klam - stinging pain, physical tiredness, and mental and emotional lethargy.
- Skin patches (Kotha) that are elevated and discolored.
- Shoolam - excessive discomfort in the areas with ulcers.
- Vrana Adhikam these ulcers appeared instantly and persisted over time.
- Daha, Suptangato - a burning feeling, and numbness.

Symptoms according to Dosha Bahulya

Acharyas have also mentioned symptoms according to the predominance Dosha in Kushtha. It is also useful in the diagnosis and management of the disease.

1. According to Acharya Charaka and Sushruta

Predominant Dosh	Symptoms (Charaka)	Symptoms (Sushruta)
Vata	Raukshya, Sosha, Toda, P Shula, Samkochana, Ayama, S Parushya, Kharabhava, Harsha, Syava-Arunatva	Tvaka Samkocha, Svap. Sweda, Shopha, Bheda, Kaunya, Svaropghata
Pitta	Daha, Raga, Parisrava, Paka, Visragandha, Kleda Angapatana	Paka, Avadarana, Anguli Patana, Karna Bhangha, Nasa Akshiraga, Satvotpattaya
Kapha	Shvaitya, Shaitya Kandu, Sthairyra, Utseedha, Gaurava, Sneha Kleda,	Kandu Varnabheda, Shopha, Strava, Gaurava

2. According to Kashyapa (Kushtha Chikitsadhyaya)

Predominant Dosh	Symptoms
Vata	Syava, Aruna, Kandu, Chimachimayana, Kharatva, Parushya, Sanstambh, Ayam.
Pitta	Daha, Vedana, Jvara, Vidbheda, Ushayana, Paka, Strava, Kotha, Kshiprotthana, Sheeta Madhura Kashaya Sarpiranushaya
Kapha	Shveta, Pandu, Ghanotsedha, Guru, Staimitya, Stambha, Mahaparigraha, Sheetaditaranushaya Agnisada,

3. According to Harita (Trutiya sthana, 42nd chapter)

Predominant Dosh	Symptoms
Vata	Toda, Vepathu
Pitta	Shosha, Bhroma, Daha, Trushna
Kapha	Kathina, Sheetala, Netra 1-Nakshesu-Vapush

DISCUSSION

Kushtha, traditionally recognized as one of the most chronic disorders, is notoriously difficult to treat. It was classified as one of the *Asthamahagadas* the eight

most severe diseases by ancient *Ayurvedic* scholars. This classification holds true even today, as *Kushtha* continues to be a significant health challenge despite advancements in modern medicine.

Charaka, one of the principal contributors to *Ayurveda*, emphasized the profound connection between the skin and the mind (*Mann*). This link suggests that psychological stress, whether direct or indirect, can negatively impact an individual's health. Such stress can either trigger the onset of skin conditions or exacerbate existing ones.

In addition to psychological factors, environmental influences, dietary habits, and lifestyle choices are also critical in the development and persistence of skin disorders like *Kushtha*. The holistic approach of *Ayurveda*, which includes dietary management, herbal remedies, and stress-relief practices, aims to address both the physical and psychological aspects of these conditions. This approach remains relevant as we continue to understand the complex interplay between the mind, body, and environment in the manifestation of chronic skin diseases.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda is undoubtedly a science of life. The principles outlined in *Ayurvedic* classics for leading a healthy and fulfilling life are not only easy to understand but also highly beneficial for people in all aspects of daily living. Maintaining awareness of skin health is crucial. Avoiding unhealthy habits is essential for preserving skin health, while following a proper seasonal regimen and balanced diet can significantly enhance overall well-being. When the body's *Doshas* become imbalanced and manifest externally, it can lead to skin disorders such as *Kushtha*, highlighting the importance of internal harmony for maintaining healthy skin.

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