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# An Insightful Analysis of Trichological Principles in Ayurveda: A Systematic Review

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## ABSTRACT

In *Ayurveda*, *Kesha*, meaning that which grows on the head, is a crucial indicator of overall health, encompassing aesthetic, functional, and health-related aspects. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the connection between hair, *Prakriti* (body constitution), *Dinacharya* (daily routines), and *Sadvritta* (ethical conduct), offering various treatments for *Kesha Vikaras* (hair disorders). These range from external applications (*Bahya Lepa*) to head oil therapies (*Murdhni Taila*). The study aims to compile references on *Kesha Sharira*, focusing on development, nourishment, *Prakriti*-based characteristics, and hair disorders, as well as to identify *Arishta Lakshana* (fatal signs) and *Duta Lakshana* (messenger signs) related to hair. The research draws information from classical texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Sharangadhara Samhita* along with scientific databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed. The compilation highlights the structural aspects along with the physiological development and nourishment of hair. *Prakriti*-based characteristics influence hair types, with *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* dominance determining hair texture and growth patterns. Significant data includes the identification of *Arishta Lakshana* seen on *Kesha* and how it determines the prognosis in a patient as well as a healthy person. The study also highlights the major disorders like *Kesha Vriddhi* (excessive hair growth) and *Kesha Kshaya* (hair loss), which result from *Dosha* imbalances or other underlying conditions. Treatments like *Snehika Nasya* and *Pracchana* provide effective management for these conditions. In conclusion, addressing *Kesha Vikaras* requires a holistic approach, integrating lifestyle changes, ethical practices, and treatment modalities to restore both physical and mental well-being, enhancing overall quality of life.

**Key words:** *Keshasharira*, *Kesharoga*, *Aristalakshana*, *Dutalakshana*.

## INTRODUCTION

In *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Kesha* is derived from the phrase *Ke Mastake Shete*, meaning that which grows on the head<sup>[1]</sup>, emphasizing the holistic importance of hair. Hair is not merely a physical attribute but a multifaceted entity encompassing aesthetic, functional

and health-related dimensions. According to *Amarakosha*, *Kesha* is referred to by various synonyms, such as *Chikura*, *Kuntala*, *Bala*, *Kacha*, and *Shiroruha*, each highlighting different characteristics. Collectively, these synonyms illustrate the significance of hair as both a marker of physical health and a representation of aesthetic and cultural identity in *Ayurveda*. Hair in *Ayurveda* is closely associated with *Prakriti* (body constitutions), *Dinacharya* (daily routines), and *Sadvrutta* (ethical conduct), and is seen as a key indicator of overall health and well-being. *Ayurveda* mentions a variety of treatments for *Kesha Vikaras* (hair disorders), ranging from *Bahya Lepa* (external applications) to *Murdhni Taila* (head oil therapies). Treatments for conditions like *Kesha Vriddhi* (excessive hair growth) include *Haratala* (Arsenic trisulfide) and *Shami Phala* (*Prosopis cineraria*), while *Kesha Kshaya* (hair loss), especially in Alopecia, is managed with *Hastidanti Masi*, *Bhringaraja* (*Eclipta*

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*alba*), and *Amalaki* (*Phyllanthus emblica*). These modalities aim to restore the physical appearance and vitality of the hair.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To compile references on *Kesha Sharira*, focusing on development, nourishment, *Prakriti*-based characteristics, and hair disorders.
2. To highlight *Arishta Lakshana* (fatal signs) and *Duta Lakshana* (messenger signs) related to hair as described in classical texts.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study draws from classics such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Bhavaprakasha Samhita* and *Sharangadhara Samhita* supplemented by contemporary research accessed from databases like Google Scholar, PubMed, and ResearchGate.

## DISCUSSION

### *Rachanatmaka* understanding of *Kesha*

1. *Kesha Abhivyakti* (hair development) begins in the sixth month, according to *Acharya Vagbhata*<sup>[2]</sup>, while *Acharya Charaka* mentions 'Sarva Bhava Apyayate' that is all bodily elements, including hair, develop by the seventh month.<sup>[3]</sup>
2. *Kesha* is classified as *Pitraja Bhava* (paternal qualities)<sup>[4]</sup> with *Parthiva Guna*<sup>[5]</sup> (earth element).
3. *Acharya Charaka* specifies the number of *Kesha*, *Loma*, and *Smashru* (beard/mustache) in the body as 29,956, derived from hair follicles.<sup>[6]</sup>

### *Kriyatmaka* understanding of *Kesha*

The nourishment of *Kesha* is derived from the *Kitta Bhaga* (waste part) of *Ahara Rasa* (nutrient fluid)<sup>[7]</sup>, specifically from the *Kitta Bhaga* of *Asthi Dhatu* (bone tissue). This connection underscores how *Asthi Pradoshaja Vikaras* (bone tissue disorders) affect *Kesha*, *Loma* (body hair), and *Smashru* (beard/mustache).<sup>[8]</sup>

The characteristics of *Kesha* are influenced by *Dosha* predominance in the body (*Prakriti*)<sup>[9]</sup>

- a) *Vatala Purusha*: Dry, sparse hair.
- b) *Pittala Purusha*: Prone to early graying and balding.
- c) *Shleshmala Purusha*: Thick, curly, strong hair.

### *Kesha Vikaras* (*Rogatmaka* understanding of *Kesha*)

Any *Vyadhi* (disease) in Ayurveda is understood to arise from an imbalance in *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* within the body. Similarly, *Kesha Vikaras* (hair disorders) primarily manifest through two *Samprapti* (pathogenic processes), namely *Kesha Vriddhi* (excessive hair growth) and *Kesha Kshaya* (hair loss).

#### I. *Kesha Vriddhi* (Excessive Hair Growth):

1. *Atiloma*<sup>[10]</sup> - A genetic condition characterized by excessive hair growth, primarily affecting physical appearance without any underlying health concern.
2. *Prameha Purvarupa*<sup>[11]</sup> - In the premonitory stage of *Prameha* (diabetes), increased hair growth is observed as a symptom.
3. *Rajyakshma Purvarupa*<sup>[12]</sup> - In the premonitory stage of *Rajyakshma* (tuberculosis), excessive hair growth (*Kesha Abhivruddhi*) is a notable sign.

#### II. *Kesha Kshaya* (Hair Loss):

1. *Aloma*<sup>[13]</sup> - A genetic condition where hair loss occurs, again affecting physical appearance rather than indicating deeper pathology.
2. *Asthi Kshaya*<sup>[14]</sup> - Degeneration or depletion of *Asthi Dhatu* (bone tissue) can lead to *Kesha Prapatana* (hair fall), linking bone health directly with hair vitality.

#### I. Primary *Kesha* Disorders:

1. *Darunaka*<sup>[15]</sup>: *Vata* and *Kapha* imbalances causing hair loss and itching.
2. *Indralupta*<sup>[16]</sup>: *Pitta* and *Vata* imbalance obstructing hair follicles, causing hair fall.
3. *Khalitya*<sup>[17]</sup>: Hair loss due to *Teja* and *Anila* burning the scalp.
4. *Palitya*<sup>[18]</sup>: Premature greying due to *Pitta* acting on the scalp.

5. *Malaja Krimi*<sup>[19]</sup>: Acharya Charaka describes two types of parasites, *Yuka* (lice) and *Pipilika* (nits), which infest the *Kesha* (scalp hair), *Loma* (body hair), and *Shmashru* (beard/mustache), leading to *Kandu* (itching) in these areas. The treatment involves manual removal of the parasites, combined with specific therapeutic measures to eradicate lice and prevent re-infestation.

## II. Secondary Kesha Disorders:

1. *Asthi Pradoshaja Vikara*<sup>[20]</sup>: When the *Asthi Dhatu* (bone tissue) becomes vitiated, it's by-product, *Kesha* (hair), is also adversely affected, leading to hair-related disorders as a manifestation of deeper tissue imbalance.
2. *Prameha Purvarupa*: In the initial stages of *Prameha Samprapti*, there is the appearance of *Jatilibhava* (Matting) of *Kesha*<sup>[21]</sup>.
3. *Asadhya Lakshana* of *Jwara*<sup>[22]</sup>: In the advanced, incurable stages of *Jwara* (fever), one of the ominous signs is the appearance of *Kesha Simanta* (parting of hair), indicating a poor prognosis.
4. *Pushpaghni Jataharini*<sup>[23]</sup>: As described by Acharya Kashyapa, this condition is characterized by weight gain (*Sthula*) and excessive hair growth (*Loma*) on the chin (*Ganda*) in females. This condition bears resemblance to Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), where hirsutism is a prominent clinical feature.

### Arishta Lakshana (fatal signs) of Kesha

Assessing *Arishta Lakshana* is crucial for a physician in determining whether to pursue treatment or shift focus towards palliative care. The identification of these fatal signs serves as the key to diagnosing *Asadhya Vyadhi* (incurable diseases)<sup>[24]</sup>. According to Acharya Charaka, if a physician attempts to treat an incurable disease, they risk losing their *Artha* (wealth), *Vidya* (knowledge), and *Yasha* (reputation).<sup>[25]</sup>

### Arishta Lakshana is categorized into two types<sup>[26]</sup>

1. *Purusha Ashrita*: These are patient-specific signs, evaluated based on the individual's *Prakriti* (physiological state) and *Vikriti* (pathological changes).

2. *Purusha Anashrita*: These are *Duta Lakshanas* (messenger signs), examined through *Aptopadesha* (trusted reports) and *Yukti* (logical reasoning).

This classification aids the physician in making informed decisions about the prognosis and treatment course.

#### 1. Purusha Ashrita Arishta Lakshana:

- a) Loss of sensation in the *Keshabhumi* (scalp) when pulling hair indicates impending death within 6 days.<sup>[27]</sup>
- b) *Jatta Baddha* (matted hair) on *Pakshma* (eyelashes) suggests death within 3 days (chronically ill) or 6 days (healthy).<sup>[28]</sup>
- c) Sudden appearance of *Simanta* (parting) or *Avarta* (whorls) on the scalp and eyebrows is fatal within 3-6 days.<sup>[29]</sup>
- d) Shiny, greasy scalp without oil application is a fatal sign.<sup>[30]</sup>

#### 2. Purusha Anashrita Arishta Lakshana (Duta Lakshana):

- a) If the patient's attendant or *Duta* (messenger) approaches the physician while engaging in *Asashta Cheshta* (inauspicious actions) such as touching the scalp or body hair, it is considered an *Ashubha Lakshana* (inauspicious sign), and the physician should refrain from treating the patient.<sup>[31]</sup>
- b) If the *Duta* arrives when the physician has their hair left unbound or disheveled, it is also regarded as an *Ashubha Lakshana*, indicating that treatment should not be pursued for the patient.<sup>[32]</sup>
- c) When the physician first approaches the patient, and the attendant is seen cleaning scalp or body hair, or removing unclean items from the area, this is an ominous sign for the patient's life. Such actions are not only inauspicious but may also reflect poor care, which can significantly affect the prognosis and the overall well-being of the patient.<sup>[33]</sup>

**Treatment in Kesha Vikaras (Hair Disorders)**

1. *Snehika Nasya* (nasal administration of medicated oils) helps in preventing *Kesha Prapatana* (hairfall) by nourishing the scalp and strengthening hair roots.<sup>[34]</sup>
2. *Dhuma Pana* (medicated smoke inhalation) is effective in *Kesha Dridhikarana* (strengthening of hair), promoting overall hair health and preventing premature hair loss.<sup>[35]</sup>
3. *Pracchana* (therapeutic bloodletting) is considered the prime treatment for *Indralupta* (alopecia), helping to stimulate hair re-growth by addressing localized *Dosha* imbalances at the hair follicles.<sup>[36]</sup>

**Unique Formulations for Kesha Vikaras**

1. For *Kesha Vriddhi*: *Lomashatana Yoga (Harataladi Yoga)* for hair reduction.<sup>[37]</sup>
2. *Shamiphala*: Used in *Kesha Vriddhi* conditions for hair loss.<sup>[38]</sup>
3. For *Indralupta*: *Hastidanti Masi* stimulates hair regrowth.<sup>[39]</sup>
4. *Ekamulika Prayoga* (Single-Herb Applications):
  - a) *Bhringaraja (Eclipta alba)*<sup>[40]</sup> and *Nili (Indigofera tinctoria)*<sup>[41]</sup> act as natural hair dyes, causing *Krishnikarana* (darkening).
  - b) *Madayantika (Lawsonia inermis)*<sup>[42]</sup> with coconut oil prevents premature greying since it is widely used as a colouring agent.
  - c) *Kaidarya (Murraya koengii) Taila*<sup>[43]</sup> used as *Shiro Abhyanga* (head massage) improves hair texture, shine, and strength.
  - d) *Amalaki (Phyllanthus embelica)*, a proven *Rasayana*, is beneficial for hair loss and premature greying.

**Pathya and Apathya****Pathya (Favorable Practices):**

1. *Madhura Rasa* (sweet taste) is regarded as *Keshya* (beneficial for hair) due to its *Snigdha* (unctuous) and *Mrudu* (soft) properties, which contribute to *Kesha Dridhikarana* (strengthening of hair).<sup>[44]</sup>

2. *Nitya Taila Prayoga* (regular application of oil) nourishes and protects the hair, enhancing its vitality and thus preventing damage.

**Apathya (Unfavorable Practices):**

1. Excessive consumption of *Kshara* (alkaline substances) and *Lavana Ahara* (salty food) leads to hair loss and brittleness, as these are classified as *Na Ati Upayoga Dravyas* (substances not recommended for regular use).<sup>[45]</sup>
2. *Ati Shiro Abhyanga* (excessive head massage) should be avoided. Oil application should focus on nourishing the hair follicles, not over-stimulating them.

**Sadvrutta (Ethical Conduct) related to Kesha:**

1. Avoid inappropriate foods that are harmful to *Kesha* health, such as those that aggravate *Vata* or *Pitta Dosha*, which can lead to hair damage or loss.
2. *Kshaura Karma* (hair trimming) should be performed regularly, ideally every five days or following the *Tri-Pakshika* (15-days) cycle to maintain healthy hair growth and prevent excessive growth or entanglement.<sup>[46]</sup>
3. *Kesha Prasadhana* (combing of hair) should be done regularly to remove tangles, improve circulation, and stimulate hair follicles, promoting healthy hair growth.<sup>[47]</sup>
4. Regular head baths (*Snana*) are essential for maintaining scalp hygiene and keeping hair clean, strengthening it against damage and disorders.

**CONCLUSION**

*Kesha Vikaras* profoundly affects individuals beyond mere physical appearance, they significantly influence psychological well-being. The condition of one's hair reflects overall health, and understanding whether these disorders are primary - arising from *Dosha* imbalances - or secondary - resulting from other underlying conditions - is essential for effective treatment. This differentiation allows practitioners to customize interventions that target root causes rather than simply alleviating symptoms.

*Ayurveda* advocates a holistic approach, integrating dietary adjustments, and lifestyle changes along with treatment modalities to restore balance. For example, employing *Snehika Nasya* can help prevent hair loss, while regular hair care practices, such as consistent combing and head baths, not only promote hair health but also enhance psychological comfort.

Ultimately, addressing *Kesha Vikaras* encompasses more than improving aesthetics; it involves fostering mental health and self-esteem. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of these disorders and implementing comprehensive treatment strategies, practitioners can support individuals in achieving healthy hair alongside emotional and psychological balance, thus enhancing their overall quality of life. This holistic perspective underscores the interconnection of physical and mental health in *Ayurveda*.

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