

Concept of Kuṣṭha Vyādhi in Ayurveda – Hetu Vichāra:-AN AYURVED / MODERN SCIENCE

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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).

Keywords: Viruddha Aahara , Maha Kushtha, Kshudra Kushtha

1. Introduction

Skin diseases represent a significant burden on global health, affecting quality of life, social acceptance, and psychological well-being. Both **Ayurveda** and **modern medicine** recognize the multifactorial etiology of dermatological disorders, though their conceptual frameworks and terminologies differ considerably.

In **Ayurveda**, skin diseases are primarily discussed under the broad heading of **Kuṣṭha Vyādhi**, which encompasses a wide spectrum of disorders ranging from minor discolorations to severe chronic conditions. Classical texts such as *Charaka Saṃhitā*, *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, and *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya* describe

Kuṣṭha as **Tridoṣaja Vyādhi** involving *doṣa*, *dūṣya* (tissues), *srotas* (channels), and aggravated by factors such as **improper diet (Viruddhahāra)**, **lifestyle incompatibilities**, **suppression of natural urges**, **unhygienic habits**, and **genetic predisposition (Sahaja Nidāna)**. Kuṣṭha is further categorized into *Mahākuṣṭha* (major, severe forms) and *Kṣudrakuṣṭha* (minor forms), emphasizing not only clinical manifestations but also the underlying systemic imbalance.

In contrast, **modern dermatology** explains skin diseases through **pathophysiological mechanisms** involving infection (bacterial, viral, fungal, parasitic), inflammation (autoimmune disorders such as psoriasis and vitiligo), metabolic disturbances, genetic mutations, allergic reactions, and environmental triggers. Factors such as **climate**, **nutrition**, **occupational hazards**, **stress**, and **pollution** play a crucial role in disease manifestation. Unlike the Ayurvedic holistic approach, modern medicine focuses on **immunological, biochemical, and microbial** bases of disease, supported by diagnostic tools like histopathology, serology, and molecular testing.

Thus, while both systems acknowledge that skin diseases are **multifactorial in origin**, Ayurveda emphasizes **causal factors linked to diet, lifestyle, and doṣic imbalance**, whereas modern medicine highlights **microbiological, immunological, genetic, and environmental causes**. A comparative study of these causative factors not only bridges the traditional and contemporary understanding but also provides a more integrative approach to the prevention and management of skin diseases.

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।

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

त्वचःकुर्वन्तिवैवर्ण्यदुष्टाःकुष्ठमुशन्तितत्
कालेनोपेक्षितं यस्मात्सर्वं कुष्णाति तद्वपुः॥

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

Etiology of kushtha vyadhi :-

1. Non-compliance of the prescribed rules with regard to the order of resorting to hot and cold regimens and intake of nourishing and depleting diets;
2. Continuous intake of honey, pendium, fish, lakuca, (Artocarpus lakoocha roxb.) radish and kakamācī (Solanum nigrum linn.) in large quantity while suffering from indigestion.
3. Intake of cilacima (?) fish with milk,
4. Intake of food mostly containing häyanaka, Yavāka (A type of Hordeum vulgare Linn.) Cināka, Uddalaka and korādusa along with milk, curd, butter milk, kola, kulattha, marisa, atasi kusuribha and unctuous substances,
5. Excessive indulgence in cohabitation, physical exercise and exposure to heat after taking the above mentioned food to one's satisfaction.
6. Entering into cold water immediately after one is afflicted with fear, exhaustion and grief.
- 7 Intake of such food as would cause burning sensation without vomiting out the undigested food (in the stomach).
8. Suppression of the urge for emesis and
- 9 Excessive oleation.(charak samhita nidan 5/6)
 1. Intake of mutually contradictory food and drinks which are liquid, unctuous and heavy,
 2. Suppression of the urge for vomiting and other natural urges,
 3. Performance of physical exercise in excessive heat and after taking very heavy meal.
 4. Transgression of the prescribed order with reference to heat and cold as well as fasting and intake of food
 5. Use of cold water immediately after exposure to the scorching sun, exertion or exposure to frightening situation,
 6. Intake of uncooked food and, intake of food before the previous meal is digested.
 7. Transgression of the procedure of pathcakarma (Vamana or emetic therapy, Virecana or purgation therapy, nirutha or medicated enema prepared of oil and nasya or inhalation therapy).
 8. Excessive intake of food preparations of freshly harvested grains, curd, fish, salt an sour substances,

9. Excessive intake of marisa (phaseolus mungo limn.) mulaka (radish) pastry, tila (Sesame seeds) milk jaggery

10. Performance of sexual act in the state of indigestion,

11. Sleep during day time, and

12. Insult to bramhins, and preceptors and other sinful acts.(charak samhita chikitsa 7/4,5,6,7.)

Causes of Skin Diseases – Modern Science

Skin diseases have **multifactorial causes**. Broadly, they are grouped as follows:

1. Genetic / Hereditary Factors

- **Mutations** in genes controlling skin structure & immunity.
- Examples: Psoriasis, Atopic dermatitis, Epidermolysis bullosa, Ichthyosis.
- Family history is a strong risk factor.

2. Infections (Microbial causes)

- **Bacterial** → Staphylococcus, Streptococcus (impetigo, cellulitis, boils).
- **Viral** → Herpes simplex, Varicella-zoster (chickenpox, shingles), HPV (warts).
- **Fungal** → Dermatophytes (ringworm), Candida (thrush, intertrigo).
- **Parasitic** → Scabies (mites), Leishmaniasis, Lice infestation.

3. Immune-mediated / Autoimmune causes

- When the immune system attacks skin cells.
- Examples: Psoriasis, Vitiligo, Lupus erythematosus, Pemphigus vulgaris, Alopecia areata.

4. Allergic / Hypersensitivity reactions

- Triggered by allergens (foods, drugs, chemicals, cosmetics, metals).
- Examples: Urticaria (hives), Contact dermatitis (nickel, detergents), Atopic eczema.

5. Nutritional Deficiencies

- **Vitamin A deficiency** → Xerosis, follicular hyperkeratosis.
- **Vitamin B complex deficiency** → Glossitis, angular cheilitis, pellagra dermatitis.
- **Vitamin C deficiency** → Scurvy (skin fragility, hemorrhage).
- **Vitamin D deficiency** → Rickets with skin changes.
- **Zinc deficiency** → Acrodermatitis enteropathica.

6. Environmental & Lifestyle Causes

- **Excessive sun exposure (UV radiation)** → Sunburn, photoaging, skin cancer.
- **Pollution & toxins** → Acne aggravation, eczema, premature aging.
- **Poor hygiene** → Fungal & bacterial infections.
- **Unhealthy diet** (high sugar, dairy, junk food) → acne & inflammatory conditions.

7. Psychological / Stress-related causes

- Stress alters **neuroendocrine-immune balance**.
- Leads to worsening of **psoriasis, eczema, urticaria, acne**.
- Known as **psychodermatology** link.

8. Systemic Diseases affecting Skin

- **Diabetes** → recurrent infections, diabetic dermopathy.
- **Thyroid disorders** → dry skin, myxedema, hair loss.
- **Liver disease** → jaundice, pruritus.
- **Kidney disease** → uremic pruritus, pallor.

9. Drug-induced / Iatrogenic Causes

- **Antibiotics, NSAIDs, Anticonvulsants** → Stevens-Johnson syndrome, rashes.
- **Steroid misuse** → thinning, striae, acneiform eruptions.
- **Chemotherapy / immunotherapy** → alopecia, pigmentation changes.

Common Causes of Skin Diseases (Ayurveda vs Modern Science)

Category	Ayurveda (Kuşṭha Hetu)	Modern Science	Common Understanding
Food / Diet	Viruddha Āhāra (incompatible food), excess curd, fish, heavy/oily foods	Food allergies, high sugar/junk food, dairy aggravating acne	Wrong food combinations, poor diet quality, metabolic imbalance
Lifestyle	Mithyā vihāra (day sleep, excessive indulgence, poor hygiene, irregular habits)	Poor hygiene, pollution, irregular lifestyle, sun exposure	Lifestyle errors weaken immunity & disturb metabolism
Mind / Stress	Krodha (anger), Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), Chinta (anxiety)	Psychodermatology: stress aggravates psoriasis, eczema, acne	Mental stress triggers or worsens skin diseases

Category	Ayurveda (Kuşṭha Hetu)	Modern Science	Common Understanding
Immunity / Doṣa	Tridoṣa prakopa + Doṣa– Duṣya sammūrcchana (Rasa, Rakta, Māmsa, Meda)	Autoimmune diseases (psoriasis, vitiligo, lupus)	Immunological imbalance central to pathology
Environment	Excessive heat, water exposure, wrong regimen	UV radiation, toxins, climate, pollution	Environment directly harms skin health
Genetic / Karma	Ācārāja Hetu (Adharma, Papa karma – karmic/ancestral)	Genetic predisposition, inherited mutations	“Predisposing factors” acknowledged in both, though explained differently
Nutrition	Ahara doṣa, malnutrition of rasa dhātu	Vitamin/mineral deficiencies (A, B, C, D, Zinc)	Deficient diet → skin vulnerability
Drug/External	Overuse of abhiṣyandi, guru āhāra	Drug reactions, steroid misuse	Exogenous factors aggravate disease

Conclusion: -

- ✓ Follow all rules & regulations of dietary components.
- ✓ Avoid viruddha ahar
- ✓ Do proper and perfect panchakarma procedures (mentioned in Granthas)

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