

Exploring the Fundamental Pathway of Kushtha: From Agnimandya to Rasa Dushti

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Abstract

Ayurveda emphasizes Agni as the foundation of all metabolic and transformative processes in the body. The quality of Rasa Dhatu, the first and foremost nourishing tissue, is directly dependent on the strength of Jatharagni and Rasa Dhatvagni. When Agni becomes impaired, improper digestion and incomplete transformation of Ahara Rasa occur, resulting in Ama formation and defective Rasa Dhatu [1,2]. This vitiated Rasa circulates throughout the body, [3] obstructing Srotas and disturbing the equilibrium of Doshas, particularly Pitta and Kapha. Such pathological changes form the root cause of Kushtha (skin diseases). Therefore, correcting Agni is a primary therapeutic strategy to purify Rasa Dhatu, re-establish proper tissue metabolism, clear Srotas, and ultimately manage a wide spectrum of dermatological disorders. Correction and nourishment of Rasa Dhatu forms the fundamental line of treatment in Kushtha, as imbalance of Rasa leads to

impaired Twak (skin) function and contributes to the pathogenesis of all types of Kushtha. Rasa-dushti being the earliest pathological event in Kushtha [4,5], its correction becomes the basic principle of treatment,

Keywords – Kushtha, Agnimandya, Rasa dushti, Skin disease, Rakta

Introduction

Kushtha, described elaborately in the Brihatrayi, encompasses a wide spectrum of skin diseases classified into Mahakushtha and Kshudrakushtha [1]. Despite diverse clinical presentations, Ayurveda identifies a common pathological foundation: the vitiation of Tridosha along with impairment of Rasa and Rakta [2]. Kushtha is one of the most complex and multidimensional clinical conditions described in Ayurveda, affecting not only the skin but also deeper tissues, systemic functions, and psycho-social well-being. Acharya Charaka and Sushruta both emphasize that the origin of Kushtha is deeply rooted in Agnimandya [1,2], the

impairment of digestive and metabolic fire, which leads to improper transformation of food and subsequent vitiation of bodily tissues. The earliest tissue to undergo pathological change is Rasa Dhatu, the primary carrier of nutrition.

The classical dictum “Agnimandya mulaṃ vyadhi mulaṃ” underscores that diminished Agni creates the milieu for disease formation. When Agni is impaired, Ama is produced, circulation becomes sluggish, nutritional supply becomes defective, and Rasa Dhatu becomes vitiated (Rasa Dushti). This deranged Rasa becomes an ideal substrate for the involvement of doshas, leading to dosha-dushya sammurchana and Dhatu-level pathology that ultimately manifests as Kuṣṭha^[4,5].

Understanding this fundamental pathway is crucial for practitioners, as it highlights that the management of Kuṣṭha must begin with correcting Agni and restoring Rasa Dhatu integrity, rather than merely treating external symptoms^[6,7].

Aim:

To evaluate the significance of Rasa Dhatu correction as the primary line of treatment in the management of Kushtha.

Objectives:

To evaluate the role of agni in correcting rasa dhatu and treatment of kushtha

To propose a conceptual framework establishing Agni correction as a foundational approach in Kushtha chikitsa.

To analyse classical Ayurvedic references describing the role of Rasa Dhatu in the pathogenesis of Kushtha.

Review of Literature

1. Agni

Agni is responsible for digestion, metabolism, assimilation, transformation, strength, immunity, complexion, and life processes^[1,3]. It is classified into:

Jatharagni

Bhutagnis

Dhatvagnis

Kuṣṭha pathogenesis specifically highlights the involvement of Jatharagni and Rasa Dhatvagni^[2,3].

2. Agnimandya: The Root Cause of Disease
Agnimandya occurs due to:

Viruddhahara

Guru, Snigdha, Ati-matra food intake

Stress, night awakening

Ajirṇa and chronic illness^[1,3,5]

When Agni is impaired, digestion becomes incomplete, leading to Ama, a toxic, sticky byproduct obstructing channels and disturbing Dhatu metabolism^[2,4].

3. Rasa Dhatu and its Functions

Rasa Dhatu is responsible for:

Nutrition to all Dhatus

Snehana (lubrication)

Ojas formation

Maintenance of skin glow and immunity

Circulation and vitality^[3,4]

Any derangement in the quality of Rasa directly reflects on the skin (twak)^[1,5].

4. Rasa Duṣṭi

Rasa Dushti occurs due to:

Amotpatti

Vyana Vayu dysfunction

Srotorodha

Dosha involvement (mainly Kapha and Pitta)^[3,4]

Classical Rasa Dushti lakṣaṇas include:

Alasya

Gaurava

Indigestion

Dull complexion

Loss of enthusiasm

Skin dryness or itching^[1,3]

These early changes set the stage for deeper Dhatu involvement.

5. Kushtha: Samprapti Overview

According to Charaka, Sushruta, and Aṣṭāṅga Hṛidaya, Kuṣṭha is characterized by:

Tridosha involvement

Seven major and eleven minor Kushthas

Rasa and Rakta Dushti predominance

Chronic and recurrent nature ^[6]

Pathogenesis (Samprapti)

Improper dietary habits, incompatible food combinations (Viruddha Ahara), faulty regimen, psychological stress, and environmental factors lead to Agnimandya, resulting in formation of Ama and subsequent Rasa Dushti. This vitiated Rasa circulates through the Srotasas, giving rise to early pathological changes that later progress into various types of Kushtha ^[1,3,5]

Agnimandya → Ama formation → Srotorodha → Rasa Dhatu Dushti → Dosha aggravation → Dushya involvement (Rasa, Rakta) → Twak Dushti → Kuṣṭha

A) Agnimandya

The first pathogenesis occurs at the level of Agni. Improper digestion leads to a toxin accumulation known as Ama.

B) Ama formation

Ama circulates within the Rasa Dhatu causing:

Stickiness

Heaviness

Channel obstruction

This impairs nutrient delivery to tissues.

C) Rasa Dushti

Vitiated Rasa becomes improperly formed (Apakva Rasa). This defective Rasa is unable to nourish subsequent Dhatus, especially Rakta Dhatu, which is closely connected to skin health.

D) Dosha–Dushya Sammurchana

Doshas mix with vitiated Rasa and Rakta, creating the pathological environment for Kuṣṭha.

E) Sthanasamshraya

The defective Rasa-Rakta accumulates in Twak, Rakta, Mamsa, and Lasika, the primary dushyas of Kuṣṭha.

F) Vyakti (Manifestation)

This results in visible symptoms:

Discoloration

Scaling

Roughness

Oozing

Itching

Thickened skin

Discussion

Kushtha, a group of chronic dermatological disorders described in Ayurveda, is understood to originate from the vitiation of Tridosha along with deeper involvement of Dushyas, particularly Rasa Dhatu and Rakta Dhatu. Among these, Rasa Dhatu plays a pivotal role, as it is the first dhatu to undergo dushti following impaired Agni and improper Ahara–Vihara. Since Twak is considered a derivative of Rasa, any qualitative or quantitative disturbance in Rasa directly manifests over the skin.

Rasa Dhatu, being the first tissue formed post-digestion, directly reflects the state of Agni. If Agni is compromised:

Rasa becomes improperly formed

Subsequent tissues suffer nutritional deficiency

Immune function declines

Skin becomes susceptible to diseases

Thus, Ayurveda places paramount importance on correcting Agni to prevent and treat Kuṣṭha. This approach aligns with today's understanding of metabolic disorders, inflammation, gut-skin axis, and immune dysfunction ^[5,10].

The sequential involvement of Dhatus—starting from Rasa and progressing to Rakta, Mamsa, and Lasika—explains why

Kuṣṭha becomes chronic and multi-systemic if left untreated.

6. Treatment Principles

6.1 Agni Deepana and Paachana ^[1,3,7]

Trikatu

Panchakola

Guduchi

Musta

Chitrak

Hingvastaka

These improve digestion, clear Ama, and restore metabolic balance.

6.2 Rasa Dhatu Prasadana

Amalaki

Guduchi

Sariva

Manjistha

Yashtimadhu

These herbs purify and strengthen Rasa and Rakta Dhatus.

6.3 Shodhana Therapy

Depending on dosha dominance:

Vamana for Kapha-dominant Kuṣṭha

Virechana for Pitta-dominant Kuṣṭha

Raktamokshana for Rakta-dushti

Basti for overall detoxification

6.4 Rasayana Therapy ^[8]

Improves immunity, complexion, and Dhatu quality:

Amalaki Rasayana

Guduchi Rasayana

Khadiradi Rasayana

Mahatiktaka Ghrita

6.5 Pathya and Apathya

Avoid:

Viruddha Ahara

Dadhi, matsya, gomamsa combination

Heavy, oily, fast food

Stress, night awakening

Prefer:

Light, digestible food

Old rice, green gram

Tikta dravya

Warm water

Proper sleep, routine

Conclusion

Kuṣṭha is a multifactorial disorder originating at the level of Agni. Agnimandya leads to Ama formation, which triggers Rasa Dhatu Dushti—the foundational step in the samprapti of Kuṣṭha. Vitiated Rasa combined with aggravated doṣhas results in Twak and Rakta Dushti and the eventual manifestation of Kuṣṭha.

Classical texts emphasize that Rasa Dushti forms the earliest pathological event in the progression of Kushtha and therefore its correction becomes the foundational principle of management. Therapeutic strategies such as Langhana, Deepana–Pachana, Srotoshodhana, Rasayana interventions, and Rasa-prasadak formulations are advocated to restore the purity and flow of Rasa Dhatu. This article reviews the Ayurvedic understanding of Rasa Dhatu in the pathogenesis of Kushtha and highlights its correction as an essential and primary therapeutic approach for achieving sustainable clinical outcomes.

Holistic management requires a root-cause approach:

Correct Agni

Purify Rasa

Prevent Dhatu-level progression

Use Shodhana and Rasayana appropriately
Hence, correcting Rasa Dhatu—by improving Agni, clearing Ama, purifying Srotasas, and nourishing the dhatus forms the most essential and preliminary line of treatment.

Understanding this fundamental pathway helps in designing effective therapeutic strategies and emphasizes the importance of metabolic correction for sustainable skin health.

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