

# CONCEPT OF KESHA AND ITS DISEASES- AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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Page. No. 19-29

## Abstract

Hair plays a vital role in enhancing personality and significantly influences an individual's self-confidence and psychological well-being. Conditions such as hair fall, premature greying, and dandruff are increasingly common among young adults, often leading to stress and reduced self-esteem. According to Ayurveda, these conditions arise due to the imbalance of Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), along with disturbances in Dhatu and Mala [1,2]. Hair disorders described in classical texts include *Khalitya*, *Palitya*, *Indralupta* (alopecia areata), and *Darunaka* (dandruff), each associated with specific doshic imbalances [2,3].

In Ayurveda, the description of the relationship of Asthi Dhatu with hair varies according to different Acharyas. Acharya Charak and Acharya Sushruta describes hair (Kesha) as a Mala of Asthi Dhatu [4], while Acharya Sharangdhara considers it an Upadhatu [5]. Any product that nourishes or enhances Asthi Dhatu consequently improves the quality and quantity of hair. Thus, hair health is

directly dependent on the proper functioning of Asthi Dhatu and Asthi Dhatvagni [6].

As imbalance of Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala causes hair diseases, various therapeutic approaches in Ayurveda aim to restore balance. These include procedures such as *Siravedha*, *Nasya*, *Lepa*, and regular *Taila Abhyanga*. Preventive strategies emphasize early use of *Rasayana* therapies and *Keshya* drugs to maintain hair health.

This review aims to explore the Ayurvedic understanding of hair disorders, their etiopathogenesis, and therapeutic as well as preventive measures described in classical texts. A holistic Ayurvedic approach focusing on restoring systemic balance and strengthening Asthi Dhatu can significantly contribute to the effective management and prevention of hair disorders, thereby improving overall health and quality of life.

## 1. Introduction:

Ayurveda is not merely a system of healing but a comprehensive science of life that emphasizes the

maintenance of health through a balanced lifestyle and natural principles. It advocates proper *Aahara*, along with adherence to *Dinacharya* and *Ritucharya*, to promote longevity and overall well-being [7,8,9,10]. However, in the present era, rapid urbanization, environmental pollution, sedentary habits, and stress-driven lifestyles have disrupted these fundamental principles, accelerated the process of ageing, and contributed to various health disorders.

Among the visible signs of ageing, changes in hair such as *Khalitya*, *Palitya*, *Darunaka*, and *Indralupta* are increasingly prevalent and significantly affect an individual's appearance and psychological health. In Ayurveda, these conditions are primarily attributed to the vitiation of *Tridosha* (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), along with disturbances in bodily tissues [1,3]. Hair is considered closely associated with *Asthi Dhatu*, and its health reflects the internal equilibrium of the body.

According to modern studies, hair disorders are multifactorial, involving genetic predisposition, hormonal imbalances such as those seen in pregnancy, menopause, PCOS, and thyroid disorders, as well as conditions like type 2 diabetes mellitus and local fungal infections [11,12]. Psychological stress, nutritional deficiencies (Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, serum ferritin, and low hemoglobin levels), and adverse effects of certain medications also play a significant role [12]. Additionally, lifestyle practices such as excessive

hairstyling, use of chemical-based products (shampoos, serums, sprays), and lack of proper hair care further aggravate these conditions. The widespread availability of over-the-counter products, often used without professional guidance, can sometimes lead to harmful effects [11].

Nowadays, with increasing awareness about the side effects of synthetic products, people's inclination is growing toward Ayurveda as a safer and more holistic approach with minimal side effects and the use of natural products. Unlike symptomatic management, Ayurveda focuses on treating the root cause of the disorder by restoring internal balance and promoting systemic health through individualized treatment based on *Prakriti*.

This review aims to analyse the Ayurvedic perspective of common hair disorders, their etiopathogenesis, and to evaluate the therapeutic and preventive approaches described in classical texts in the context of contemporary lifestyle challenges.

## 2. Materials and Methodology

This study is a narrative conceptual review that integrates classical Ayurvedic literature with modern scientific understanding of hair physiology and disorders. A conceptual review is needed at present due to the rising prevalence of hair problems linked to lifestyle changes and the growing interest in holistic approaches, highlighting the need to systematically compile and interpret Ayurvedic concepts in light of current evidence.

Data were collected from classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Sharangadhara Samhita*, along with modern textbooks and peer-reviewed articles. The information was organized thematically under key areas like *Keshotpatti*, *Kesha Poshan*, *Tridosha* involvement, and major hair disorders.

The study follows a qualitative approach with structured analysis to ensure clarity and reproducibility; however, it does not include quantitative or statistical evaluation.

### 3. Review of Literature:

#### A. Keshotpatti

- Ayurveda describes the human body as composed of seven *Dhatu*s: *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, and *Shukra*. Sequential nourishment occurs through *Dhatvagni* as explained by *Kedari Kulya Nyaya* [13].
- Hair (*Kesha*) is formed during *Asthi Dhatu* metabolism. Acharya Charaka considers it as a *Mala* (waste product) of *Asthi Dhatu* [4], whereas Acharya Sharangadhara describes it as an *Upadhatu* of *Majja Dhatu* [5].
- According to Acharya Sushruta, hair is categorized under *Pitruja Bhava*, indicating hereditary influence [14].
- Hair is considered *Parthiva Dravya*, dominated by *Prithvi Mahabhuta* [15].

- Modern science defines hair as a modified epidermal appendage formed through keratinization. It originates in *Romakoopa* within the dermis and covers most of the body except the palms and soles. Growth occurs in three distinct phases: 1. Anagen – active growth phase. 2. Catagen – transition phase. 3. Telogen – resting and shedding phase [16]

#### B. Keshotpatti Kaal -

- Hair develops in the 6th month and in 7th month of intrauterine life according to Acharya Acharya Vagbhata and Acharya Acharya Charak respectively. [17]
- The hair growth cycle includes:
  - o Anagen (growth phase) - typically lasting 2-7 years. There are around 100,000 hairs on a healthy scalp, and 80- 90% of these total hair follicles are continually in the anagen phase of hair production. [16]
  - o Catagen (transition phase) - the follicles go dormant for 2- 3 weeks also in this stage the detachment of hair from its root starts. In this phase the hair follicle stops growing and gets converted to a club hair, an essential prognostic indicator in assessing hair pathology. [16]
  - o Telogen (resting phase)- typically lasts for about 3-4 months where the hair follicle goes into a

dormant resting phase and the hair shaft is shed off. 8-10% of total hair are always in telogen phase. [16]

- These phases correlate with Kapha, Pitta, and Vata respectively.

#### C. Kesha Poshan-

- According to Acharya Acharya Charaka- Ingested food is processed by Agni to create Ahara rasa (assimilable nutrition fluid). This Rasa is divided into two parts: Sara Bhaga (The essential nutrient portion used for tissue building.) and Kitta/Mala Bhaga (The excretory or waste portion.) The Kitta Bhaga is specifically responsible for forming and nourishing waste-related structures, including sweat, urine, nails, and hair. This process provides the necessary sustenance for the Romakooopa of the scalp (Kesh), beard (Shmashru), and body (Loma). This distribution follows the Kedari Kulya Nyaya, where nutrients flow sequentially to nourish different parts of the body ecosystem. [13]

- According to Acharya Acharya Sushruta- Rather than focusing primarily on the Mala bhaga, Acharya Sushruta emphasizes the role of the Dhamanis. He posits that Kesha (hair) receives its specific nutrition from the terminal ends of these Dhamanis. These channels supply the necessary nutrients directly to the Romakooopa (Romakooopa) to support growth and maintenance. [18]

#### D. Kesha and Tridosha Concept

Several considerations can be made to establish a relationship between the Tridosha and the modern concept of trichology. According to the Aadi, Madhya, Anta concept and Utpatti, Sthiti, and Laya concept of Tridosha, the root, shaft and tip of a hair strand could be correlated with Kapha, Pitta and Vata dominancy. By this relationship between hair sections and Tridosha, one can easily plan for treatment accordingly.

#### E. Diseases of Hair in Ayurvedic Classics

##### (a). Khalitya -

- Modern correlation: Alopecia influenced by genetic, hormonal, and autoimmune factors.
- In Ayurveda, hair loss is termed Khalitya. It is classified under Kshudraroga or Urdhvajatrugata roga. [2]
- Acharya Sushruta: Vidagdha Pitta and Vata reach the Romakooopa, causing hair to fall. Subsequently, Kapha and Rakta obstruct the follicles, preventing regrowth. [3]
- Acharya Charaka: Excessive Tejas (heat/Pitta) combines with Vata and other Doshas to reach the scalp, causing Dahana of the Romakooopa. [2]
- Acharya Vagbhatta: Categorizes it under Kapalagata Roga and describes it as a gradual loss of hair. [19]

- Conclusion: Khalitya involves all three Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and Rakta (blood).

Nidan Parivarjana- The primary principle is avoiding causative factors (*Hetu*), especially for those with a Pitta Prakriti. Mainly the causative factors are- Atilavansevena, Atiksharsevena, Ati-atapasevena, Avsaada.[20]

#### Shodhana Chikitsa-

1. Nasya: Considered the gateway to the head. It nourishes hair roots and clears scalp channels. Formulations: Anu tailam, Yashtimadhukadhya tailam.
2. Pracchana & Viddha Karma: to clear obstructed follicles and improve the absorption of topical Lepas.
3. Jalauka Avacharan: Used to eliminate vitiated Pitta and Rakta from specific bald patches.
4. Virechana: The best therapy for Pitta-dominant disorders. It cleanses the system and has shown high success in treating Indralupta.

#### Shamana & Samshamana-

1. Rasayana- Acts as an immunomodulator and anti-aging therapy to increase the Anagen phase. Examples: Amalaki Rasayana, Brahma Rasayana, Narasimha Rasayana.

2. Abhyanga- for nourishment and scalp health. Examples: Bhringaraj tailam, Nilikadi tailam, Karanjadi tailam.
3. Lepa- Applied to the scalp to stimulate growth. Examples: Gunja lepa, Hastidanta masi lepa, Dhatura lepa.
4. Internal Medications- Prescribed based on specific Dosha involvement. Formulations: Sanjeevani Vati, Aarogya Vardhini Vati, Sutshekhar Rasa, Ashwagandha Arishta, and various Ghritas.

Lifestyle, Diet & Yoga  
Dietary Recommendations: As per Ayurvedic texts diet should be according to Dosha imbalance to get back the equilibrium and the Pathya Ahara indicated in that specific disease.

Yoga & Pranayama: Sarvangasana, Shirsasana, Vajrasana, and Uttanasana. These increase blood flow to the scalp. Kapalabhati and Anuloma Viloma for stress reduction and systemic balance.

#### (b). Palitya -

- Acharya Charaka: - Categorized under Urdhwa Jatrugata Rogas and explained in Trimarmiya Chikitsa. Pathogenesis: Body heat (Tejas) in association with Vata and other Doshas scorches the hair roots. Partial scorching leads to Palitya, while full scorching leads to Khalitya. Predominant Doshas: Vata and Pitta. [2]

• Acharya Sushruta: Categorized under Kshudra Rogaadhikara. Predominant Dosha: Opines that Pitta is primarily responsible. [3]

• Acharya Vagbhatta: Categorized under Shiro Kapalagata Rogas. Pathogenesis: Body heat moves to the head, mixes with Doshas, and "ripens" the hair. Acharya Vagbhat has given doshanusar lakshanas of Palitya. [19]

The Agni and Pitta of the body having recourse to the head owing to overwork and fatigue, and excessive emotional conditions like Chinta, Shoka and Krodha tend to make the hair prematurely grey as these cause the vitiation of Pitta dosha. On the basis of different Doshas these Lakshana are found in the Palitya: [19]

Table 1- Symptoms based on Dosha Dominance:[19]

Dosha	Lakshana
Vataja	Hair is split, ash-coloured, rough, and dry.
Pittaja	Burning sensation in the scalp; hair appears yellowish.
Kaphaja	Scalp is unctuous (oily); hair is thick and white.
Tridoshaja	A mixture of all the features mentioned above.

Table2- Ayurvedic Hair Colouring Plants- Ayurveda suggests natural alternatives to chemical dyes to avoid allergic reactions:

Sanskrit Name	Botanical Name	Useful Part	Reference
Japa	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i>	Flower	Bh.pr.Ni. 5/58
Neeli	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i>	Leaf and Flower juice	Bh.pr.Ni. 4/208
Bhringraj	<i>Eclipta alba</i>	Whole plant	Bh.pr.Ni. 4/241
Haritaki	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	Fruit	Bh.Ra. 60/69
Vibhitaki	<i>Terminalia bellerica</i>	Bark	Bh.Ra. 60/69
Aamlaki	<i>Emblica officinalis</i>	Fruit	Bh.Ra. 60/69

Chikitsa-

1. Nasya: Considered the superior treatment for Palitya. Medicated oils include: Vidarigandha taila, Sahacharadi taila, Bhringaraj taila, Nimba taila, Maha nila taila, and Prapondaraki taila.

2. Lepa: Specific formulations like *Dugdhika-karavira yoga* and *Tiladi yoga*.

3. Kwatha: *Loha yoga* is suggested for washing hair.

4. Other Procedures- Shirovasti, Shiroabhyanga, Dhoompan.

(c). Darunaka -

Modern correlation: seborrheic dermatitis.

- Vagbhatta & Sharangadhara: Classified as Kapalaroga.[19]

- Acharya Sushruta, Bhavaprakasha, Madhavanidana, Yogaratnakara, Bhaishajya Ratnavali, & Chakradatta: Classified as Kshudraroga.

- Acharya Acharya Sushruta: Characterized by the scalp becoming Daruna (scaly) and Ruksha with Kandu. Primarily due to vitiated Vata and Kapha. [3]

- Videha's Observation: Notes that Pitta and Rakta are also associated with the condition.

- General Pathogenesis: Due to Kapha and Pitta provocation, the scalp becomes hard, rough, and itchy. Dead tissue sheds from the scalp as flakes.

- According to Ashtang Hridaya- the cardinal symptoms are: Shiropradeshi Kandu, Rukshata, Shirotwaka Sphutanam, Keshachyuti. [19]

Shaman Chikitsa-

1. Shiro Abhyanga- it balances Vata and Kapha. Recommended oils: Malatyadi taila, Bhringaraja taila, Prapoundareeka taila, Gunja taila.

2. Snehan & Swedan: Considered the best remedies for softening the scalp and clearing flakes.

3. Shiro Lepana- Lepa of Priyal seeds, Yasti, Kushta, Masha, Sarshapa, and Madhu, Lepa of Mango seeds, unripened Haritaki, and Milk, Khakhasabeejadi (Afeem beej) lepa, Kodrava palaala siddha mashi lepa.

4. Shiroprakshalana - Washing the hair with Ksharambu or an alkaline solution of Kodrava weeds.

Shodhana Chikitsa -

1. Siramokshana: Performed after proper Snehan and Swedan of the head. Conducted via Siravyadha in the Lalata region.
2. Nasya: Administration of Prapoundarika taila. Avapida Nasya is also utilized.

(d). Indralupta-

- Indralupta is a cosmetic condition characterized by patchy hair loss on the scalp or body. It is clinically equated to Alopecia Areata, an autoimmune disorder.
- Samprapti - While the modern view focuses on immune-mediated hair follicle destruction, Ayurveda attributes it to the blockage of Romakoopa.
- Acharya Sushruta & Acharya Vagbhata- Pitta enters the Romakoopa Vata causes hair to fall out Kapha & Rakta block the follicles, preventing new growth. [3,19]

- Acharya Madhava - Bhrajaka Pitta and Vata lead to hair loss; subsequently, Kapha and Rakta create an obstruction. He considers all four factors involved and the disease nature as Anitya. [21]
- Acharya Charaka - Tejas (Pitta), involving other Doshas, reaches the scalp. Vitiated Rakta and Kapha then block the Romakoopa.[2]
- Chikitsa- Modern Treatment: Topical or injectable corticosteroids. Whereas Ayurvedic treatment focuses on removing the Avarodha caused by Kapha and Rakta so that the Vata-Pitta disturbance can be pacified and hair can regrow through internal and external therapies.

#### 1. Shodhana Chikitsa-

- Nasya: Use of *Anu Taila*, *Yastimadhu Taila*, or *Jeevaniya Siddha Taila*.
- *Sira Vyadhana* or *Prachhanna* to remove localized vitiated blood.

#### 2. Shamana Chikitsa-

- Lepa: Application of *Gunja Lepa* or *Manashiladi Lepa*.
- Shiroabhyanga: *Malatyadi Taila*, *Guduchi Taila*, or *Jatyadi Taila*.

- Shiropichu: *Bringaraj Taila* or *Gunja Taila*.

3. Rasayana Prayoga - To balance the immune system and nourish the hair: *Gandhaka Rasayana*, *Saptamrita Louha*, *Shatavari Rasayana*, *Chyavanprash*.

#### 4. Results-

The review of Ayurvedic literature indicates that Kesha is closely associated with Dhatu metabolism, particularly Asthi Dhatu. Hair disorders such as Khalitya, Palitya, Darunaka, and Indralupta are consistently described with Tridosha involvement, predominantly Vata and Pitta.

The compiled literature shows that Ayurvedic management includes both Shodhana therapies (Nasya, Virechana, Raktamokshana) and Shamana therapies (Lepa, Abhyanga, Rasayana), along with preventive measures like dietary regulation and lifestyle modifications.

Modern scientific evidence identifies multiple contributing factors including hormonal imbalance, oxidative stress, autoimmune mechanisms, and environmental influences. Overall, the findings demonstrate a conceptual overlap between Ayurvedic descriptions and modern understanding of hair disorders.

Vyadhi Naam	Dosha Pradhanya	Chikitsa
Khalitya	Vitiated Vata and Pitta, with obstruction by Kapha and Rakta	1.Shodhana: Nasya, Raktamokshana- Pracchana and Viddha karma, Virechana . 2.Shamana: Lepa, Abhyanga 3.Lifestyle modification and Yoga 4.Rasayana therapy
Palitya	Pitta Dosha aggravation	1.Shodhana: Nasya, Shirovasti 2. Shamana: Lepa, Dhoompana, Shiroabhyanga.
Darunaka	Vata-Kapha imbalance	1.Shodhana- Nasya, Siramokshan. 2.Shamana- Shiroabhyanga, Snehan and Swedan, Shiropakshalan, Shirolepan.
Indralupta	Vitiation of Pitta and Vata, with Kapha-Rakta obstruction	1.Shodhana: Nasya, Sira Vyadhana, Gadh Prachhna. 2.Shamana- Lepa, Shiroabhyanga, Shiropichu. 3.Rasayana

## 5. Discussion-

The Ayurveda approaches hair disorders through a systemic and root-cause-based framework, where disturbances in Dhatu nourishment and Dosha and Mala balance manifest as clinical conditions. In Ayurveda - 13 types of Agni are described, categorized into three main groups: Jatharagni (the main Agni) ,5 Bhutagni (each specific to Pancha Mahabhuta), and 7 Dhatvagni (one Agni of each Dhatu), each playing a crucial role in digestion and metabolism. Healthy state of all Dhatu and its Upadhatu and

Mala is dependent on the Ahara we take and Parkrut state Jatharagni and its 12 moieties- 5 Bhutagni and 7 Dhatvagni.[13]

The association of hair with Asthi Dhatu underscores the importance of internal metabolism i.e. Jatharagni and Asthi Dhtavagni in maintaining hair health. Also, in Charak Samhita – In Dhatu Pradoshaj Vikara following is described- Palitya is given under Rasadhatu Pradoshaj Roga, Kesh-Loma-Nakha-Smashru-Dosha is mentioned under Asthidhatu Pradoshaj Roga. [22]

The predominance of Vata and Pitta in Hair disease pathogenesis can be interpreted in modern terms as functional disturbances such as degeneration, inflammation, and metabolic stress. The Ayurvedic emphasis on Shodhana and Rasayana reflects a strategy aimed at restoring physiological balance and enhancing tissue resilience, rather than focusing solely on local treatment.

Furthermore, the inclusion of Ahara and Vihara highlights the preventive dimension of Ayurveda, which is particularly relevant in the context of lifestyle-induced hair disorders seen today. This integrative perspective supports the potential role of Ayurveda in complementing modern management, while also indicating the need for further scientific validation.

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