

UNDERSTANDING RUKSHANA KARMA IN AYURVEDA: MECHANISMS, INDICATIONS, AND THERAPEUTIC INSIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, dyslipidemia, obesity, anxiety, and depression, largely due to sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet, and stress, there is a growing need for preventive and corrective measures. Ayurveda classifies many of these conditions under *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi*, which are best managed through *Apatarpana Chikitsa*. Among the six therapeutic approaches described by Acharya Charaka in *Shadvidhopakrama*, *Rukshana* plays a pivotal role in inducing *Apatarpana* both internally and externally. Rooted in the concept of dryness (*Rukshata*), *Rukshana* employs drugs and practices with properties such as dryness, lightness, roughness, and hot potency, dominated by Vayu, Tejas, and Prithvi Mahabhutas. Herbs from *Lekhaniya Mahakashaya* like Musta, Haridra, Katuki, and Chitraka, as well as dietary regimens like *Takra* and *Madhu*, form the therapeutic

basis of *Rukshana*. This therapy is indicated in conditions like *Sthoulya*, *Prameha*, *Amavata*, *Urusthambha*, and Kapha-related disorders, and is implemented through modalities including *Udvartana*, *Ruksha Sweda*, *Takrapana*, and various formulations. Proper administration yields benefits such as improved digestion, lightness, and enhanced metabolism, whereas overuse or underuse may lead to adverse outcomes. In Panchakarma, *Rukshana* serves as an

essential preparatory procedure before *Snehana* and *Shodhana*. Thus, *Rukshana* stands as a crucial Ayurvedic intervention in managing lifestyle disorders and promoting holistic health.

KEYWORDS: Rukshana, Apatarpana, Langhana, Shadvidhopakrama, Upakram.

INTRODUCTION

With accelerated urbanization and change in daily habits in the past two decades we come across a rapid surge in Non communicable diseases like Diabetes, CVD, Dyslipidemia, obesity, anxiety, depression etc. The primary causes for these include unhealthy dietary pattern (food rich in sugars and fats, processed food), lack of physical activity, prolonged screen time and sedentary occupations. Chronic stress, substance abuse, and environmental pollution often aggravate the risk. When keenly assessed for *nidana* and *lakshanas* most of these diseases fall under the category of *Santarpana janya vyadhi*. And the treatment for these quoted in *Ayurveda* is *Apatarpana chikitsa*. The concept of *Shadvidhopakrama*, described by *Aacharya Charaka*, represents six basic methods to restore *Doshic* balance and health. Three of which are *Apatarpana* and the remaining three are *Santarpana* measures. Among these, *Rukshana* is frequently employed by to induce *Apatarpana* via internal (*Antahparimarjana*) and external (*Bahirparimarjana*) purification.^[1] *Acharya Vagbhata* has consolidated these six approaches into two broader categories: *Brimhana* (nourishing) and *Langhana* (reducing), the two primary Methods under which the six measures (*Brimhana*, *langhana*, *snehana*, *rukshana* *swedana* and *sthambana*) fall under.

Nirukti: According to ancient lexicons like *Shabdakalpadruma*, the term *Ruksha* is a quality which is devoid of *sneha* i.e. absence of smoothness and oiliness.^[2] The processes (internal and external) which induce *rukshata* and *Kharata* in body are called *rukshana*.

Rukshana Dravya^[3]: The *Guna* of *Rukshana dravya* typically are.

- Dry (*Ruksha*)
- Light (*Laghu*)
- Rough (*Khara*)
- Hot (*Ushna*)
- Stable (*Sthira*)
- Non-slimy (*Apicchila*)

Panchabhoutika composition of rukshana dravyas: *Rukshana dravya* are Predominant of *Vayu, Teja, and Prithvi mahabhutas*.

Tastes (rasa) associated with rukshana dravya: Among the six tastes (*Shadrasa*), *Kashaya* (astringent), *Katu* (pungent), and *Tikta* (bitter) contribute to inducing *Rukshana*. *Kashaya* is the most potent *Rukshaka*, followed by *Katu*, and then *Tikta*.^[4]

FUNCTIONAL ATTRIBUTES AND THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS

Dietary and lifestyle factors supporting rukshana

Ahara (foods) with *Rukshana* properties include.

- Barley (*Yava*), Mustard (*Sarshapa*), Oil cake (*Pinyaka*), Honey (*Madhu*), and Buttermilk (*Takra*).

Vihara (habits) supporting dryness are.

- Regular alcohol intake (*Madhya*), Exercise (*Vyayama*), Sexual activity (*Vyavaya*), Emotional stress (*Shoka, Chinta*)^[5]

Rukshana dravyas and formulations

Numerous herbs possess *Ruksha guna*, such as *Triphala, Madhu, Musta, Haridra, Vacha, Chitraka, Jiraka, Shigru, Bilwa, Shunti, Pippalimula, Ela, Vidanga, Katuki*.

The drugs mentioned in *Lehkaniya Mahakashaya* (*Musta Kushta, Haridra, Daruharidra, Vacha, Ativisha, katuki, Chitraka, Chirabilwa, Haimavati*^[6]) posses *rukshaya guna* predominantly and can be used for the purpose of *rukshana karma* in diseases like *sthoulya, Medo roga* etc.^[7] *Takrapana* is also an excellent means of inducing *Rukshana*.

Table No: Properties of Lekhaniya Mahakashaya dravya.

Sl. No.	Dravya	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshaghanata
1.	<i>Musta</i>	<i>Katu, Tikta, Kashaya</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapa Pitta Shamaka</i>
2.	<i>Kushta,</i>	<i>Tikta, Katu, Madhura</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu tikshana ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>
3.	<i>Haridra,</i>	<i>Katu, Madhura</i>	<i>Anushna sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, teekshna, snigdha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>
4.	<i>Daruharidra,</i>	<i>Tikta kashaya</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha pitta shamaka.</i>
5.	<i>Vacha,</i>	<i>Katu tikta</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu teekshna</i>	<i>Kapha vata shamaka.</i>

6.	<i>Ativisha,</i>	<i>Katu tikta</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>
7.	<i>Katuki,</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha pitta shamaka.</i>
8.	<i>Chitraka,</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>
9.	<i>Chirabilwa,</i>	<i>Tikta kashaya</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>
10.	<i>Haimavati</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu ruksha</i>	<i>Kapha Vata shamaka.</i>

Table No: properties of *Takra*.^[8]

RASA	GUNA	VEERYA	VIPAKA	KARMA
Kashaya (Astringent)	Laghu(Light)	Ushna (Hot)	Katu (Pungent)	Deepana – Improves digestion
Amla (Sour) – if not completely washed	Ruksha (Dry)			Pachana – Aids in digestion of Ama (toxins)
	Deepana (Appetizer)			Tridoshaghna – Balances all three doshas, especially Kapha and Vata
	Pachana (Digestive)			Grahani – Effective in managing malabsorption syndrome
				Shoolahara – Relieves abdominal pain
				Agnivardhaka – Stimulates Agni (digestive fire)
				Arshohara – Useful in hemorrhoids
				Shothahara – Reduces inflammation

RUKSHANA YOGYA – INDICATIONS

Rukshana is advised in.

- *In Medo roga, Mamsala, Bhuri Shleshmala (Vikrita Kapha vriddhi lakshanas) purusha* before administering *Snehana*.^[9]
- *Bahudosha*
- *Srotodushti* (channel obstruction)
- *Urusthambha, Prameha, Adhyavata, Kushta, Shvasa, Aamavata, Pandu, Kandu, Alasya, Sthoulya* (obesity)
- In cases of *Kleda* and *Dosha Sanchaya* (accumulated doshas)^[10]

SAMYAK, ATIYOGA & AYOGA OF RUKSHANA^[11]

- *Ayoga* (underuse): No therapeutic benefit; worsening of disease symptoms.
- *Atiyoga* (overuse): Excessive dryness, fatigue, indigestion, thirst, weakness of senses, and general debility.
- *Samyak Yoga* (proper use): Lightness, improved digestion, freshness, perspiration, increase in appetite and thirst, appearance of nirama lakshanas.

ADMINISTRATION of Rukshana**1. Internal (*Abhyantara*)**

- *Kashaya*: Amrutottara, Nimbadi, Triphala Kashaya, Vidangadi kwatha,
- *Arishta*: Takrarishta, Abhayarishta
- *Churna*: Panchakola, Triphala, Agnimantha, shunti, panchakola
- *Guggulu* : Navaka guggulu, Triphala guggulu
- *Takra Paana*
- *Honey*
- *Shilajatu*

2. External (*Bahya*)

- *Udvartana*: Helps in Vilayana of Kapha and Meda, Removes kleda from Twacha and induces Rukshana.^[12]
- *Swedana*: Fomentation using heat or steam, especially dry (*Ruksha Sweda*) mitigates *Kapha* and reduces *Aama*, *kleda* brings about *srotoshodana* due to its *ushna teekshna guna*.
- *Valuka Sweda*, *Ishtika Choorna Sweda*, *Dhanyamla Dhaara*.

3. Panchakarma

In the context of *Snehana* Acharya Vagbhata explains in *Sthula* or *Kapha*-predominant individuals, *Rukshana* is recommended to prevent *Sneha Vyapat* and prepare the individual for better *Shodana*.^[9]

Ruksha Virechana and *Ruksha Basti* (*Lekhana Basti*^[13], *Kshara Basti*^[14], *Panchatikta basti*^[15]) are used for diseases like *Pandu*, *Kamala*, *Amavata*, *sthoulya*, *medo roga*, *Prameha*. In nasal conditions, *Ruksha Nasya* is used for *Kaphaja Shiro roga*.^[16]

THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS OF RUKSHANA

- **Obesity (*Sthoulya*) & Metabolic Syndrome:** Corrects the agni, Liquefies and drains stagnant *Meda*, restoring *Vata*, and aiding to formation of prakrita Medo dhatu.
- ***Amavata*:** Post-*Langhana* and *Pachana*, *Rukshana* therapies like *Ruksha Sweda*, *Atapa Sweda*, and *Ruksha Basti* help reduce Aama, corrects agni, reduce joint inflammation and reduces the symptoms.
- ***Urusthambha*:** Best managed through *Ruksha Paana*, *Valuka Sweda*, and *Shoshana* therapies.
- ***Kapha-Vata Avarana*:** Treated with *Langhana*, *Tikshna Sweda*, *Vamana*, and *Rukshana* practices.
- **Hypothyroidism:** Where *Dhatvaagni Mandya*, *Sroto avarodha*, *Vata kapha and meda Dushti*^[17] leads to deranged metabolism, weight gain, and sluggishness, *Rūkṣaṇa* helps restore balance by correcting *agni*, removing *sroto avarodha* and improving metabolism. also as a *poorvrkarma* to *shodhana*.
- **PCOS:** A Rasa Medo vikara, with complex presentations including medo vridhhi^[18], granthi vikara, anartava, needs rukshana prior to snehana and shodana to remove the srotorodha, correct agni and improve metabolism.
- **Respiratory Disorders (Asthma, Bronchitis):** By the intake of Ruksha pradhana dravya there will be reduction in *kapha* (mucus) load.

DISCUSSION

Rukshana is a unique treatment modality offered by *Ayurveda* targeting *Kapha Dosha*, *Aama* and *Medo Dhatu*, which can be adopted as weight management, metabolic correction and as decongestive therapies. It reduces excessive accumulation of fat, fluid and kapha. *Rukshana Dravyas* exhibit properties like *Ruksha*, *Khara*, *Teekshna*, *Laghu*, *Ushna*, and *Kathina*, each contributing to induction of *Rukshana* and *lekhana* action. These substances deplete *Dravamsha*, increase metabolism, enhance cellular energy utilization promote detoxification and decongestion (*Srotoshodana*) and thus achieve the *Kapha Medohara* action.^[19]

Pharmacologically, *Rukshana Dravyas* are characterized by gunas such as *Ruksha* (dry), *Laghu* (light), *Khara* (rough), and *Ushna* (hot), dominated by *Vayu*, *Tejas*, and *Prithvi Mahabhutas*. Classical references to *Lekhaniya Mahakashaya* herbs, including *Musta*, *Katuki*, *Chitraka*, and *Haridra*, highlight their potential in reducing *Meda*, alleviating *Ama*, and restoring *Agni*. Equally significant are dietary interventions like *Takra* and *Madhu*, which

have both digestive and *Kapha-pacifying* effects. Clinically, *Rukshana* has demonstrated therapeutic relevance in disorders such as *Sthoulya (obesity)*, *Prameha (diabetes)*, *Amavata (rheumatoid arthritis)*, and *Urusthambha*. Internal formulations (*Kashaya*, *Arishta*, *Churna*) and external procedures (*Udvartana*, *Ruksha Sweda*, *Valuka Sweda*) offer versatile modes of administration. Importantly, *Rukshana* also serves as a preparatory step before *Snehana* and *Shodhana* in *Panchakarma*, ensuring improved efficacy and preventing complications in Kapha-Meda dominated individuals.

While Acharyas have explained the Samyak, Ayoga and Atiyoga of *Rukshana* we can infer that individualized assessment of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, and disease stage remains central to safe application of *Rukshana*. Also different *Rukshana* modalities can be selected as per the demand.

Ushna Tikshna veerya of the drugs used in *udvartana* are acted upon by *brajaka pitta* open the *rooma koopa* and *sira mukha* which leads to *kapha meda paka*, From a contemporary perspective, the principles of *Rukshana* align with modern dietary regimens promoting calorie restriction, fat metabolism, and detoxification. Procedures such as *Udvartana* can be correlated with physical therapy, rubbing massage which helps in absorption of effusions provide relief of blood stasis and aids in elimination of waste products and lymphatic stimulation^[20], *Lekhana Basti* due to its *teekshna*, *leekhana*, *kapha vata hara guna* causes *shroto shodhana* removes *avarana janya vata prakopa* and *kapha*, because of its *kledahara* and *lekhana* properties it acts as *medhohara* and corrects *agni*.^[21] while *Takra* therapy shows probiotic and digestive benefits. However, scientific validation through development of objective assessment parameters, specific biomarkers along with clinical trials remains limited, necessitating further evidence-based exploration. Thus, *Rukshana Karma* not only preserves its classical relevance but also offers promising integrative potential in addressing present-day lifestyle disorders.

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