

## UNDERSTANDING PSORIASIS THROUGH THE LENS OF VYADHIKSHAMATVA

<sup>1</sup>\*Dr. Mayank Singh, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Shuchi Dubey and <sup>3</sup>Dr. Vivek Sharma

<sup>1</sup>MD Scholar, Dept. of Kriya Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Ayurveda Institute, Bhopal  
M.P.

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Dept. of Kriya Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Ayurveda Institute, Bhopal  
M.P.

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, Pt. Khushilal Sharma Govt. Ayurveda Institute,  
Bhopal M.P.

Article Received on  
16 May 2025,

Revised on 05 June 2025,  
Accepted on 25 June 2025

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202513-37456



\*Corresponding Author

**Dr. Mayank Singh**

MD Scholar, Dept. of Kriya  
Sharir, Pt. Khushilal Sharma  
Govt. Ayurveda Institute,  
Bhopal M.P.

### ABSTRACT

Psoriasis is more than a skin condition it affects self-confidence, daily activities, and emotional well-being. Many people living with psoriasis experience visible rashes, itching, and discomfort, but they also carry the invisible burden of stress, isolation, and frustration. Modern medicine explains psoriasis as an autoimmune disorder, where the body's own immune system becomes overactive and mistakenly attacks the skin. Treatments are often focused on controlling symptoms through medication and topical applications. *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of healing, offers a different and more holistic way of looking at this condition. It views health not just as the absence of disease, but as a state of balance within the body, mind, and spirit. In this tradition, *Vyadhikshamatva*, our body's natural resistance to illness plays a central role in staying healthy. When this inner strength is weakened, due to stress, poor diet, digestive problems, or an unhealthy

lifestyle, the body becomes more vulnerable to diseases like *Kushtha*, a category of skin disorders that includes conditions similar to psoriasis. This paper explores how we can understand psoriasis more deeply through the *Ayurvedic* lens of *Vyadhikshamatva*. It combines ancient wisdom and modern science to show how supporting the body's natural balance, through diet, lifestyle, emotional health, and mindful living, can lead to more

meaningful and lasting healing. Instead of just treating the skin, we look at healing the whole person.

**KEYWORDS:** Psoriasis, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Ayurveda*, natural immunity, skin health, holistic healing, emotional well-being, *Kushtha*, balance, integrative care.

## INTRODUCTION

Psoriasis affects around 2-3% of the global population and typically presents as red, thick, scaly patches on the skin, sometimes involving the nails and joints.<sup>[1]</sup> It is characterized by an abnormal and excessive growth of skin cells, leading to improper keratinization. While significant advancements have been made in understanding the disease, the exact sequence of events that leads to this abnormal skin cell behavior is still not fully understood. Several abnormalities seen in psoriasis, such as increased levels of cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP), epidermal growth factor receptor binding, protein kinase C, and transforming growth factor- $\alpha$  (TGF- $\alpha$ ), all suggest a disruption in T cell function. The most widely accepted theory today is that psoriasis is an immune-mediated inflammatory skin disease, typically seen in genetically predisposed individuals who are exposed to specific environmental triggers. This view has been supported by the effectiveness of immunomodulatory treatments in managing psoriasis.<sup>[2-4]</sup>

The concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* in *Ayurveda* is essentially the same as immunity. In *Ayurvedic* terms, *Vyadhi* refers to disease, while *Kshamatva* means the body's inherent ability to prevent the onset of disease or reduce its severity, helping the body withstand illness once it occurs. *Ayurvedic* texts elaborate on *Vyadhikshamatva*, emphasizing that it largely depends on the *Bala* (strength) of the body, which is categorized into three types: *Sahaja* (constitutional strength), *Kalaja* (temporal strength), and *Yuktikrita* (acquired strength).

*Yuktikrita* Bala refers to acquired immunity, which helps the body defend itself against foreign substances or pathogens. Another important *Ayurvedic* concept related to immunity is *Ojus*, essential for the body's defense mechanisms. Based on these ideas, this article aims to explore the role of *Vyadhikshamatva* in *Ayurveda* through a review of ancient texts, providing insights that could be valuable in improving human health and resilience in the face of disease.<sup>[5-6]</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a conceptual review article based on classical *Ayurvedic* texts (such as the *Charaka Samhita*) and modern scientific research related to psoriasis. It includes a critical evaluation of the *Ayurvedic* concepts of *Vyadhikshamatva* and their relevance in understanding and managing psoriasis. The study also incorporates references from contemporary dermatological literature to bridge traditional insights with modern perspectives.

### Psoriasis and immune strength

Psoriasis is a chronic, inflammatory, and immune-mediated skin disorder characterized by hyperproliferation of keratinocytes, vascular dilation, and infiltration of immune cells into the epidermis and dermis. It affects approximately 2–3% of the global population and has a profound impact on the quality of life due to its visible skin manifestations and association with systemic comorbidities such as psoriatic arthritis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, and depression.<sup>[7]</sup>

The hallmark of Psoriasis is the rapid turnover of skin cells, where new cells are produced every 3–5 days instead of the normal 28-day cycle, resulting in thick, scaly plaques primarily on the scalp, elbows, knees, and lower back. These lesions are often itchy, painful, and prone to bleeding. The disease follows a relapsing and remitting course and is influenced by genetic, immunological, and environmental factors.

Immunologically, Psoriasis is driven by an aberrant activation of the innate and adaptive immune system, particularly involving T-helper 1 (Th1) and T-helper 17 (Th17) cells. These immune cells release cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- $\alpha$ ), interleukin-17 (IL-17), and interleukin-23 (IL-23), which perpetuate inflammation and keratinocyte proliferation.<sup>[8]</sup> Genetic studies have identified several susceptibility loci (e.g., HLA-C\*06:02) associated with the disease, confirming its autoimmune nature.

Various triggers can exacerbate the condition, including stress, infections (especially streptococcal infections), skin trauma (Koebner phenomenon), alcohol, smoking, and certain medications (e.g., beta-blockers, lithium). The chronic nature of the disease and its visible symptoms often result in social stigma, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem among patients.

Modern treatment approaches include topical therapies (corticosteroids, vitamin D analogs), phototherapy, systemic agents (methotrexate, cyclosporine), and biologics targeting specific

immune pathways (e.g., TNF inhibitors, IL-17 blockers). However, long-term use of these therapies may carry adverse effects, and relapses are common once treatment is discontinued.

Due to its complex pathogenesis and chronic relapsing nature, Psoriasis is increasingly being explored through integrative approaches that consider not just the symptomatic relief but also the underlying systemic imbalances. *Ayurveda* offers a unique perspective, viewing Psoriasis under the umbrella of *Kushtha* and linking it with disturbances in *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and immune strength or *Vyadhikshamatva*.

### ***Vyadhikshamatva*: Gatekeeper in Psoriatic Defense**

The term *Vyadhikshamatva* in Sanskrit is derived from two words: *Vyadhi* (disease) and *Kshamatva* (the ability to suppress or overcome). In *Ayurveda*, *Vyadhi* refers to a disruption in the equilibrium of the body's functional components *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*), *Dhatus* (tissues), and *Malas* (waste products). *Kshamatva* signifies the body's capacity to resist or counter such disruptions. Hence, *Vyadhikshamatva* broadly translates to the body's innate ability to prevent disease onset or to limit its progression.

*Chakrapani Datta*, in his commentary on the *Charaka Samhita*, explained *Vyadhikshamatva* in two aspects:

1. *Vyadhi-balavirodhitvam* – the power to resist the strength or severity of disease.
2. *Vyadhi-utpadakpratibandhakatva* – the capacity to prevent disease occurrence or recurrence. These principles form the *Ayurvedic* understanding of immunity.<sup>[9-10]</sup>

Classical texts also describe nine conditions that weaken *Vyadhikshamatva*, such as excessive obesity (*Ati-Sthoola*), emaciation (*Ati-Krisha*), weak musculature, poor bone or blood tissue quality, improper or inadequate nutrition, general debility (*Durbalata*), and low mental strength (*Alpa-Satva*).<sup>[11]</sup> When external causative factors challenge the body, a strong *Vyadhikshamatva* helps prevent disease development. This resistance depends on the balance of *Doshas*, well-functioning *Agni* (digestive fire), healthy *Dhatus*, and unblocked *Srotas* (body channels).<sup>[12]</sup> Elements like *Shleshma*, *Bala*, and *Ojas* further contribute to the immune defense.

In relation to skin (*Twacha*), *Ayurveda* considers it a direct reflection of internal balance. Disorders such as *Kustha* (skin diseases), particularly *Ekakushta* (comparable to psoriasis), manifest when *Vyadhikshamatva* is compromised. Modern research supports this view,

linking impaired skin immunity with inflammation, cytokine imbalances, and epidermal dysfunction. Thus, maintaining *Vyadhikshamatva* is crucial for skin health and resistance against chronic dermatoses. *Ayurvedic* approaches like *Rasayana* therapy, appropriate dietary practices, and *Prakriti*-based lifestyle modifications serve as effective strategies to strengthen the body's immunity and prevent diseases like psoriasis.

### Factors responsible for *Vyadhikshamatva*

*Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) is largely dependent on the maintenance of the **equilibrium of the *Doshas*** (bodily humors) and the overall health of the ***Dhatus*** (tissues). One of the key factors in assessing a patient's immunity, as described by *Charaka*, is ***Bala*** (strength). The strength of an individual is closely linked to the health of their *Dhatus*, as these tissues are responsible for protecting the body and enabling it to resist disease. Since ***Bala*** (strength) depends on the health of the *Dhatus*, it can be said that *Vyadhikshamatva* is primarily influenced by two forms of strength: ***Dehabala*** (physical strength) and ***Sattwabala*** (mental strength).

*Charaka* also outlines several factors that contribute to the enhancement of *Bala*, most of which are related to the health of the *Dhatus*. These factors include:

1. **Birth in a region where people are naturally strong.**
2. **Birth at a time when strength is naturally acquired.**
3. **Favorable environmental conditions** (such as a pleasant and moderate climate).
4. **Excellence in the qualities of the sperm and ovum** (which contribute to the overall vitality and strength).
5. **Good physical constitution** (which ensures strong and healthy tissues).
6. **Excellence of *Saatmya*** (the quality of being suited to one's environment, food, and lifestyle).
7. **Excellence of *Manas*** (mental strength, stability, and well-being).

These factors collectively play a role in increasing the body's strength, thereby enhancing its resistance to diseases and contributing to overall immunity.<sup>[13-14]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### *Vyadhikshamatva* and Psoriasis: The Connection

From an *Ayurvedic* perspective, *Vyadhikshamatva* is crucial in understanding the body's ability to resist psoriasis. **Immunity** (*Vyadhikshamatva*) is influenced by several factors,

including the strength and balance of the **Doshas**, the health of the **Dhatus**, and the overall functioning of the body's internal systems.

1. **Bala (Strength):** According to *Ayurveda*, the concept of **Bala** (strength) plays a key role in determining the body's immunity. **Bala** is classified into two categories:

- **Dehabala:** Physical strength, which refers to the health and vitality of the body's tissues.
- **Sattwabala:** Mental strength, which refers to the resilience of the mind to stress, emotional challenges, and external influences.

In the case of psoriasis, both **Dehabala** and **Sattwabala** are relevant. Psoriasis can be triggered or exacerbated by emotional stress, which affects **Sattwabala**. On the physical level, the strength of the **Dhatus** (such as the skin, blood, and muscle tissues) influences the body's ability to resist the disease.

2. **Dhatus (Tissues):** The health of the **Dhatus**—particularly the **Rakta Dhātu** (blood) and **Mamsa Dhātu** (muscle tissue)—is critical in understanding psoriasis. Psoriasis involves rapid skin cell turnover, which requires the optimal health of the **Rakta Dhātu** (blood), as it nourishes the skin. If the blood is not healthy, circulation is poor, and the skin is more prone to irritation and disease.

Additionally, the **Mamsa Dhātu**, which forms the structural foundation of the body, must be strong to resist external stressors. If the tissues are weak or imbalanced, the body's immunity is compromised, and conditions like psoriasis may develop or worsen.

3. **Agni (Digestive Fire):** According to *Ayurveda*, **Agni** (digestive fire) is essential for the production of healthy **Dhatus**. A weak or imbalanced **Agni** leads to the formation of **Ama** (toxins), which accumulate in the body and can cause skin issues, including psoriasis. Therefore, maintaining a healthy **Agni** is crucial for both preventing and managing psoriasis.

4. **Srotas (Channels):** The proper functioning of the **Srotas** (channels) in the body is also important for immunity. When the **Srotas** are blocked or not functioning properly, it leads to stagnation, poor circulation, and an inability to eliminate toxins from the body. This can contribute to the progression of psoriasis. Ensuring the patency of the **Srotas** through regular detoxification and lifestyle practices is vital.



### The Role of *Ojas* in Immunity

In *Ayurveda*, *Ojas* represents the subtle, vital essence that is responsible for maintaining the body's strength, vitality, and immunity. It is directly linked to *Bala* and plays a central role in *Vyadhikshamatva*. Healthy *Ojas* ensures that the body is well-equipped to combat disease. In the context of psoriasis, a depletion of *Ojas* can make the body more susceptible to flare-ups and the progression of the disease.

### Managing Psoriasis through *Ayurvedic* Principles

*Ayurveda* offers a holistic approach to managing psoriasis by restoring the balance of the *Doshas*, strengthening the *Dhatus*, and boosting the body's *Vyadhikshamatva*. Some key *Ayurvedic* approaches include:

- 1. Dietary Modifications:** A *Pitta*-pacifying diet, which focuses on cooling, anti-inflammatory foods such as leafy greens, dairy, and whole grains, is essential. Avoiding foods that aggravate *Pitta*, such as spicy, sour, and fried foods, can help reduce psoriasis flare-ups.
- 2. Herbal Remedies:** Herbs like *Neem*, *Turmeric*, *Ashwagandha*, and *Brahmi* are known for their anti-inflammatory, immune-boosting, and detoxifying properties, making them effective in managing psoriasis.
- 3. Detoxification (*Panchakarma*):** *Ayurvedic* detoxification therapies like *Virechana* (purgation) and *Basti* (enema therapy) can help cleanse the body of toxins and balance the *Doshas*, contributing to improved skin health and immunity.
- 4. Stress Management:** Since emotional stress can trigger psoriasis flare-ups, practices like *yoga*, *meditation*, and *pranayama* (breathing exercises) help reduce stress and enhance *Sattwabala*.
- 5. Topical Treatments:** *Ayurvedic* oils and ointments made from *Sesame oil*, *Turmeric*, *Aloe Vera*, and other soothing ingredients can be applied to the skin to reduce inflammation and support healing.

### CONCLUSION

Understanding psoriasis through the lens of *Vyadhikshamatva* offers a comprehensive perspective on the factors that influence its onset and progression. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the importance of balancing the *Doshas*, nourishing the *Dhatus*, and enhancing both *Bala* and

*Ojas* to strengthen immunity. By focusing on dietary, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions, individuals can manage psoriasis more effectively and reduce its impact on daily life. This holistic approach not only addresses the physical symptoms of psoriasis but also nurtures the body's natural defense mechanisms, promoting long-term health and well-being.

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