

A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ASAVA AND ARISTA FORMULATIONS MENTIONED IN *KUSTHA CHIKITSA* W. S. R TO THE *BRUHATTRAYI*

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ABSTRACT

Kustha in Ayurveda refers to a group of chronic skin disorders characterised by tridosha involvement, with predominance of Vata and Kapha and vitiation of *rakta*, *mamsa* and *lasika*. It is considered a *Bahu-Dosaja* and *Chirakari* disease, requiring long-term and systemic management through shodhan, shaman and rasayana therapies. Asava and Arista are fermented formulations (*Sandhana Kalpana*) valued for their quick absorption, enhanced bioavailability and sustained therapeutic action due to its *vyavayi* & *vikasi* Guna. In *Kustha Chikitsa*, they aid in *Agnidipana*, *Amapacana*, *Raktaprasadana*, and *Srotosodhana*, making them especially useful in chronic and metabolically associated skin disorders. The *Brhatrayi*—*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtang Hridaya*—provide foundational insights into the role of Asava and Arista in *Kustha Chikitsa*. The *Sushruta Samhita* provides detailed descriptions of Asava and Arista preparations under

Mahakustha Chikitsa. Specific formulations, including complex Arista prepared from drugs such as *Karanja*, *Chavya*, *Chitraka*, *Devadaru*, *Sariva*, and *Triphala*, are indicated for *Kustha* and associated disorders. *Palash Bhasmasava* and Asava prepared using *Tiladi Kshara*, *Salasaradi* and *Nyagrodhadi gana* are mentioned for *Kustha*. In contrast, *Astang Hridaya*

does not describe any Asava or Arista formulations in Kustha Chikitsa. The Charaka Samhita mentions *Kanakabindvarista*, *Madhvasava*, and *Triphalasava* for the management of Kustha, with the notable absence of *Madhuka pushpa* in fermentation. Among the Brhatrayi, the Sushruta Samhita offers the most comprehensive information of Asava and Arista in Kustha Chikitsa, whereas Charaka Samhita provides selective therapeutic references and Vagbhata doesn't mention anything. This review highlights the classical rationale for using fermented formulations in Kustha and their relevance in chronic dermatological conditions.

KEYWORDS: Sandhana Kalpana, Charak, Sushrut, Vagbhat, Sharangdhar, Kushta, Asava, Arishta, Tiladi Kshaar, Kanakabindvarista, Madhvasava, and Triphalasava.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the traditional medical science of India that focuses on keeping the body, mind, and spirit in balance. It aims to prevent disease and promote health through proper diet, lifestyle, and medicines. Rasashastra is a specified branch of Ayurveda which deals with the preparation and therapeutic use of minerals, metals, and other inorganic substances. Bhaishajya Kalpana is the branch of Ayurveda that deals with preparing and processing medicines so that they become safe, effective and easy for the body to use.

One important group of Ayurvedic medicines is called Sandhana Kalpana, which includes fermented preparations. These medicines are made through natural fermentation, which improves their strength, absorption and shelf life. The main fermented preparations are Asava and Arishta. Asava is usually made from fresh herbal juice or cold infusions, while Arishta is made from herbal decoctions. Sweet substances like jaggery or honey are added to help fermentation, producing a mild amount of alcohol that improves the medicine's action in the body.

Kustha is a group of chronic skin diseases described in Ayurveda. It involves all three doshas—vata, pitta and kapha with special disturbance of the blood and skin tissues. Because Kustha is long-lasting and difficult to treat, it requires cleansing therapies (shodhana), calming treatments (shamana), and rejuvenation (rasayana). The Brhatrayi-Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtang Hridaya, provide foundational insights into the role of Asava and Arista in Kustha Chikitsa. They help improve digestion, remove toxins, purify the blood and clear channels in the body. Their fermented nature helps the medicine absorb quickly and reach deeper tissues, which is important for stubborn skin diseases. Among the Brhatrayi, the

Sushruta Samhita offers the most comprehensive information of Asava and Arista in Kustha Cikitsa, whereas Charaka Samhita provides selective therapeutic references and Vagbhata doesn't mention anything. This review highlights the classical rationale for using fermented formulations in Kustha and their relevance in chronic dermatological conditions.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ayurvedic Perspective on Kushtha

In Ayurveda, Kushtha refers to a group of skin diseases that cause visible deformity or disturbance in skin texture and function. These conditions are discussed extensively in classical Ayurvedic texts. Kushtha involves the vitiation of all three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), along with the impairment of twak (skin), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscle tissue), and lasika (lymph). Ideally, all seven dhatus in turn get involved in Kushtha. Kushta is included in Brhatrayi as Astamahagada.

According to the Charaka Samhita

Charaka explains Kushta as a tridoshaja skin disorder caused by the combined vitiation of vata, pitta, and kapha, along with disturbance of rakta, mamsa, and lasika dhatus. He describes 18 types of Kushta, divided into mahakushta and kshudra kushta. Charaka gives importance to dietary and behavioural causes such as consuming incompatible foods, excessive oily or heavy foods, suppression of natural urges, and immoral or stressful activities. Treatment includes shodhana (virechana, vamana, raktamokshana), shamana, and rasayana therapy. Charaka also mentions formulations like Kanakabindvarishta, Madhvasava, and Triphalasava for managing Kushta.

According to the Sushruta Samhita

Sushruta provides a very detailed explanation of Kushta, with strong focus on raktadosha and involvement of deeper tissues (dhatus). He also classifies Kushta into 7 mahakushta and 11 kshudrakushta, similar to Charaka but with more surgical and structural detail. Sushruta highlights causes such as eating impure food, sinful acts and improper lifestyle habits, which disturb both doshas and dhatus. Sushruta is the only one among the Brihatrayi who explains Asava and Arishta preparations directly under Kushta Chikitsa, including formulations prepared from Karanja, Chitraka, *Trilavana*, *Triphala*, and *Tiladi Kshara*. He describes *Palasha Bhasmasava* and several Arishta combinations specifically for Mahakushta.

According to the Ashtanga Hrudaya

Vagbhata presents Kushta in a simplified yet comprehensive manner, combining the essence of Charaka and Sushruta. He also recognises 18 types of Kushta and states that the disease affects both skin and deeper tissues, making it difficult to cure. He emphasises causative factors like unwholesome diet, poor hygiene, suppressing urges, excess exercise, and mental stress. While Vagbhata gives detailed treatment strategies including shodhana, shamana, and external therapies, he does not describe any specific Asava or Arishta formulations for Kushta.

OVERVIEW OF ASAVA & ARISHTA

Asava and Arishta belong to Sandhana Kalpana, the group of fermented Ayurvedic medicines. Fermentation improves the strength, absorption and therapeutic action of herbal preparations. These formulations contain a self-generated mild alcohol (usually 5-10%), which acts as both an extractant and a preservative.

Historical Development of Asava and Arista

Alcohol-based preparations such as Sura were already used for humans during the Vedic period. By the Samhita period, the pharmaceutical and therapeutic aspects of fermented products were described in detail. The Charaka Samhita mentions around 30 types of Asava and Arishta for treating various diseases. Acharya Sushruta describes 21 types of Asava and Arishta along with 46 varieties of alcoholic preparations (madya). In Sushrut Sutra Sthana, chapter 44, the term Arishta is specifically mentioned. Dalhana, the well-known commentator of Sushrut, was the first to clearly explain the difference between Asava and Arishta. According to him, Arishta is named for the predominance of solid herbal drugs (dravya), while Asava is identified by the predominance of the liquid medium (drava).

In the Ashtanga Hridaya, Vagbhata mentions several alcohol-containing preparations in the context of Ritucharya. During Hemant ritu, *Gauda*, *Accha Sura*, and *Sura* are recommended; in Vasanta ritu, Asava, Arishta, Sidhu, and Madwika are advised; and in Varsha ritu, *Madhwarishta* is mentioned for use. Vagbhata is also the first to mention the use of Dhataki puspa (*Woodfordia fruticosa*) along with other fermentation-supporting ingredients.

In the Sharangadhara Samhita, Acharya Sharangadhara discusses Asava and Arishta in the 10th chapter of Madhyama Khanda. He classifies them based on their method of preparation formulations fermented without decoction are called Asava, while those fermented after

preparing a decoction are called Arishta. He further lists other fermented products such as *Sidhu, Sura, Varuni, Sukta, Madhusukta, Gudasukta, Sukta and Kanjika* along with 13 varieties of Asava and Arishta.

The Role of Dhataki Pushpa and Fermentation Dynamics

A critical technical detail mentioned in the Ashtanga Hridaya (though more generally in Sutrasthana) and elaborated in later commentaries like Dalhana's is the role of Dhataki Pushpa (*Woodfordia fruticosa*). While Vagbhata does not list specific Arishtas for Kushtha, he emphasizes the Yoni (source) of fermentation. The use of Dhataki provides the necessary wild yeast for the process. In Kushtha, where the body's immunity (Vyadhikshamatva) is low, the "probiotic" nature of naturally fermented Sandhana products helps in restoring the gut-skin axis, an observation that aligns with modern dermatological findings regarding the microbiome. The Srotoshodhana (channel-clearing) effect of the self-generated alcohol acts as a Yogavahi it carries the active principles of Kushthaghna (skin-curing) herbs like *Aragvadha or Bakuchi* directly to the site of the lesion.

Therapeutic Actions of Asava & Arishta

Asava and Arishta are valued in Ayurveda for their strong therapeutic actions, which arise from the natural fermentation process that enhances absorption and potency. They help improve digestion and metabolic strength (Agnideepana), remove accumulated toxins from the body (Amapachana), purify the blood (Raktaprasadana), and clear obstructed body channels (Srotoshodhana). Their self-generated mild alcohol allows the medicines to enter deeper tissues quickly. Their aqueous-alcoholic nature promotes better absorption of the drug into target organs, improves extraction of active molecules from the herbs, and enhances overall drug delivery within the body.

Importance of Asava and Arishta

Asava and Arishta hold great importance in Ayurveda because they are naturally fermented medicines that show better absorption, deeper tissue penetration, and longer-lasting therapeutic effects compared to many other formulations. They are considered highly stable formulations because the bioactive compounds produced during fermentation remain preserved in a low concentration of alcohol. Their medicinal properties are believed to improve with age. The constant presence of alcohol may help detoxify certain phytochemicals while enhancing the potency of drugs.

Mechanism of Action of Asava and Arishta in Kushta

Asava and Arishta play an important role by correcting metabolism, reducing inflammation, supporting detoxification, and promoting healthy skin regeneration. Their long shelf life, easy absorption and sustained action make them highly valuable formulations in both acute and chronic therapeutic settings.

Amla Rasa is contraindicated for people with Kushtha. Asava & Arishta formulation consist of amla rasa because of the fermentation process. Still it is used in Kushtha as these preparations also show rapid therapeutic effects even at low doses in skin diseases.

Asava and Arishta are mainly sour (amla) in taste due to the process of fermentation; however, their therapeutic action primarily depends on the ingredients used in their preparation. In general, Asava and Arishta are ushna in guna, yet certain formulations such as *Ushirasava* and *Arivindasava* exhibit pittaghna properties. Similarly, in Kushtha Chikitsa, although excessive intake of amla rasa is contraindicated, its controlled medicinal use is considered beneficial due to its ashukari (fast-acting) nature.

In the Sushrut Samhita, Asava and Arishta are predominantly prepared using ingredients such as karanja, neem, Aragvadha, and triphala. These drugs mainly possess kashaya and tikta rasa and have a specific action on skin disorders. Many of them are also krumighna in nature. Because of these properties, symptoms such as redness and itching are effectively reduced.

Acharya Sushrut, in Chikitsa Sthana Chapters 9 and 10, provides a more "aggressive" pharmaceutical approach. Because Sushrut views Kushtha through the lens of Raktadushti (blood impurity), his Arishta preparations often include Kshara (alkaline substances) and Bhasma. For instance, the use of *Tiladi Kshara* in fermentation is a sophisticated method of increasing the Teekshna (sharp/penetrating) quality of the medicine. This alkalinity helps in dissolving the Sanga (obstruction) within the Lasika (lymphatic) system. Furthermore, Sushrut describes the *Salasaradi Gana*—a group of heartwood trees—as the primary ingredients for his Asavas. These woods are rich in resins and essential oils that are better extracted through the alcohol generated during fermentation than through simple water boiling. This shows a profound understanding of solvent-based extraction long before modern chemistry.

Sushrut Samhita also describes the use of *Palasha Bhasma*, which is ushna in nature, in the

preparation of Asava and Arishta. Bhasma is known for its Kledaghna properties and is especially useful in conditions where oozing is present through the skin. In such cases, these Asava and Arishta formulations are found to be particularly effective.

According to Acharya Charak, *Triphalasava* acts as Raktshodhak, Rasayana; *Madhvasava* acts as Kaph-hara Yogavahi & *Kanakabindvarishta* provides Teekshna shodhan due to presence of *Vidang*, *Aragvadha*. These helps in breaking *Strotorodh*, reduces *kaph-meda dushti* and enhances *Sukshma marga anugamitva*.

Thus, it can be understood that Asava and Arishta acquire the properties of the drugs used in their preparation. The amla rasa is the first rasa perceived by the tongue after administration. The actual therapeutic action of Asava and Arishta is determined by the nature and properties of the ingredients incorporated in the formulation.

RESULT

The present literature review reveals that Asava and Arishta are extensively described in classical Ayurvedic texts as important fermented formulations with significant therapeutic relevance in Kushtha. Among the Brihatrayi, the Sushrut Samhita provides the most detailed and direct references to Asava and Arishta preparations under Kushtha and Mahakushtha Chikitsa. Specific formulations such as *Palasha Bhasmasava*, *Tiladi Kshara Asava*, and various Arishta prepared from *Shalasaradi*, *Nyagrodhadi*, and *Aragvadhadi gana* are clearly indicated for Kushtha.

The Charak Samhita mentions selected Asava and Arishta formulations like *Kanakabindvarishta*, *Madhvasava*, and *Triphalasava* for the management of Kushtha, although detailed preparation methods are not described. In contrast, Ashtanga Hridaya does not mention any specific Asava or Arishta formulations in the context of Kushtha Chikitsa. Overall, the findings highlight that fermented formulations are primarily emphasised in Sushruta Samhita, while Charak offers limited therapeutic references and Vagbhata remains silent on this aspect.

The findings also show that while Asava and Arishta are generally ushna in guna, their action varies depending on the ingredients, as seen in pittaghna formulations like Ushirasava and Arivindasava. Fermented preparations demonstrate rapid therapeutic effects at low doses due to improved extraction and efficient drug delivery. Overall, the results support the classical

rationale for using Asava and Arishta as effective internal medicines in the management of chronic and metabolically associated skin disorders such as Kushtha.

DISCUSSION

Kushtha is described in Ayurveda as a chronic and difficult-to-treat disease involving tridosha vitiation along with impairment of rakta, mamsa, and lasika dhatus. Such complex pathology requires formulations that can act systemically, penetrate deep tissues and remain effective over long durations. Asava and Arista fulfil these requirements due to their fermented nature, mild alcohol content and enhanced bioavailability.

The fermentation process improves extraction of active phytochemicals and facilitates rapid absorption, even at low doses. The constant presence of low concentrations of alcohol not only preserves the formulation but also enhances drug delivery to target tissues. This explains their frequent indication in chronic disorders like Kushtha, where metabolic impairment, toxin accumulation and srotas obstruction are commonly observed. The actions of Asava and Arishta such as improving digestion, removing Ama, purifying blood and clearing channels directly address the underlying pathology of Kushtha.

Although Asava and Arishta are generally amla in rasa as a result of the fermentation process, their therapeutic action cannot be attributed to taste alone. The action of these formulations depends largely on the properties of the drugs used in their preparation. While most Asava and Arishta are ushna in guna, certain formulations show pittaghna effects, indicating that the overall pharmacological activity is ingredient-specific. In the context of Kushtha, excessive intake of amla rasa is considered harmful; however, when used judiciously as medicine, fermented preparations are beneficial due to their ashukari or fast-acting nature.

Comparative analysis of classical texts reveals that while Sushruta Samhita provides detailed pharmaceutical and therapeutic descriptions of Asava and Arishta in Kushtha, Charak Samhita offers selective references without elaboration, and Ashtanga Hridaya does not mention these formulations in this context. This variation reflects differences in therapeutic emphasis rather than a lack of efficacy. Overall, the discussion supports the rational and effective use of Asava and Arishta in Kushtha Chikitsa, particularly in chronic, metabolically associated skin disorders requiring long-term internal medication.

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