

LEPROSY (KUṢṬHA): A CRITICAL AYURVEDIC REVIEW WITH THERAPEUTIC COMPARISON TO MODERN MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT

Leprosy (Hansen's disease) is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, affecting the skin, peripheral nerves, and mucosa. Ayurveda describes this condition under *Kushta Roga*, a broad category of dermatological disorders involving systemic imbalance of *Tridosha* and *Dhatu*s. This review integrates classical Ayurvedic concepts with modern biomedical understanding, highlighting etiology, classification, clinical features, and management. Additionally, it presents a comparative analysis of Ayurvedic and allopathic treatments, emphasizing the scope for integrative approaches in improving patient outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda describes this condition under *Kushta Roga*, a broad category of dermatological disorders involving systemic imbalance of *Tridosha* and *Dhatu*s.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leprosy remains a significant health concern in developing countries. The World Health Organization recommends multidrug therapy (MDT) as the standard treatment, which has significantly reduced disease prevalence.

Ayurveda considers *Kushta* a *Tridoshaja Vyadhi* (disease involving all three Doshas) with deeper tissue involvement. The detailed description of symptoms such as *Supti* (anesthesia)

and *Vaivarnya* (discoloration) shows close resemblance to Hansen's disease.

2. Ayurvedic Concept of Kushta

2.1 Definition

As per *Charaka Samhita (Chikitsa Sthana 7/4)*:

Kushta results from vitiation of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* along with involvement of *Twak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika*.

3. Etiology (Nidana)

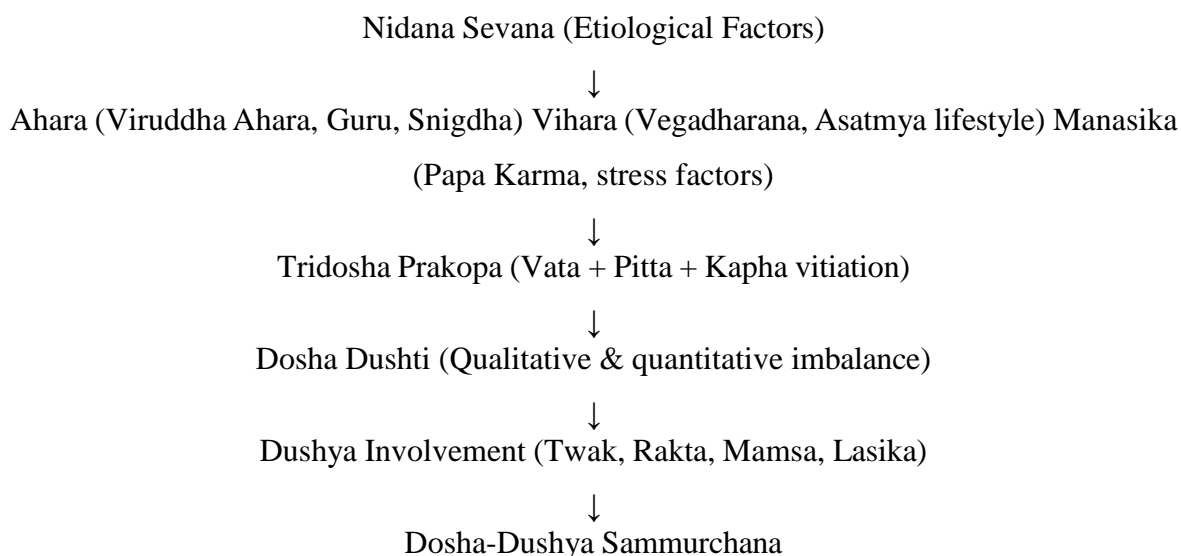
- *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet)
- Excess oily and heavy foods
- Suppression of natural urges
- Psychological and ethical misconduct

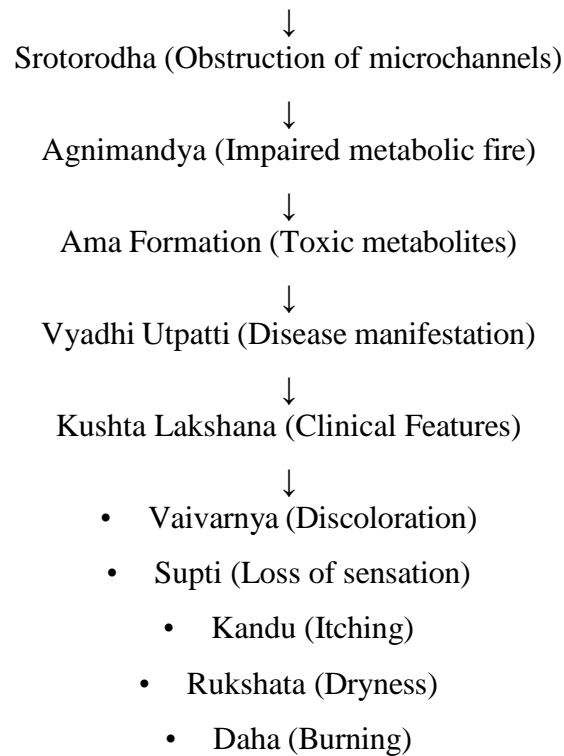
References: Charaka Samhita Nidana Sthana 5; Sushruta Samhita Nidana Sthana 5

Components of Samprapti

- *Dosha: Tridosha (predominantly Kapha-Pitta)*
- *Dushya: Twak, Rakta, Mamsa, Lasika*
- *Agni: Mandagni*
- *Srotas: Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Mamsavaha*
- *Udbhava Sthana: Amashaya*
- *Adhithana: Twak (skin)*

Samprapti





4. Clinical Features

- Hypopigmented patches
- Loss of sensation (*Supti*)
- Dryness, itching
- Thickened skin

5. Ayurvedic Management

5.1 Shodhana (Bio-purification)

- Vamana
- Virechana
- Raktamokshana

5.2 Shamana (Palliative Treatment)

Important Ayurvedic Drugs

- **Khadira** (*Acacia catechu*)
- **Nimba** (*Azadirachta indica*)
- **Bakuchi** (*Psoralea corylifolia*)
- **Haridra** (*Curcuma longa*)
- **Guduchi** (*Tinospora cordifolia*)

Classical Formulations

- Mahamanjishthadi Kwatha
- Khadirarishta
- Arogyavardhini Vati
- Panchatikta Ghrita

5.3 Rasayana Therapy

- Amalaki (*Embllica officinalis*)
- Chyawanprash

5.4 External Therapies

- Lepa (herbal paste)
- Medicated oils (e.g., Nimbadi Taila)

6. Allopathic (Modern) Treatment

The World Health Organization recommends **Multidrug Therapy (MDT)**:

6.1 Standard MDT Regimen Paucibacillary (PB) Leprosy

- Rifampicin
- Dapsone

Multibacillary (MB) Leprosy

- Rifampicin
- Dapsone
- Clofazimine

6.2 Management of Complications

- Corticosteroids for inflammation
- Thalidomide (in severe reactions)
- Physiotherapy for deformities

7. Comparative Analysis: Ayurveda vs Allopathy

Aspect	Ayurveda	Allopathy
Concept	Tridosha imbalance	Infectious disease (<i>Mycobacterium leprae</i>)
Approach	Holistic (body, diet, lifestyle)	Targeted antimicrobial therapy
Treatment	Panchakarma, herbal drugs	MDT (antibiotics)
Focus	Detoxification & immunity	Bacterial eradication
Duration	Long-term individualized	Fixed duration (6–12 months)

Side Effects	Minimal (if properly administered)	Drug-related side effects possible
Prevention	Diet & lifestyle regulation	Early diagnosis & treatment

8. Integrative Approach

Combining Ayurveda and allopathy may offer better outcomes:

- MDT ensures bacterial clearance
- Ayurvedic therapy improves immunity and skin healing
- Panchakarma may help in detoxification
- Rasayana supports long-term recovery

9. DISCUSSION

Ayurveda provides a systemic understanding of Kushta, emphasizing internal imbalance and tissue involvement. Modern medicine focuses on microbial causation and eradication. Herbal drugs like *Azadirachta indica* and *Curcuma longa* show antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties, supporting their traditional use.

An integrative model could be beneficial, especially in chronic and rehabilitative stages.

10. CONCLUSION

Kushta (leprosy) is a multifactorial disease with both infectious and systemic dimensions. While MDT remains the cornerstone of treatment, Ayurvedic therapies offer valuable supportive care. Scientific validation of integrative approaches could enhance treatment outcomes and quality of life.

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