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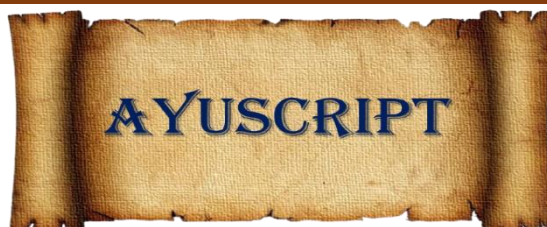
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International Journal for Empirical Research in Ayurveda

Preventive Aspects of Skin Disorders with Special Reference to Kushtha (Twak Vikara): An Ayurvedic and Contemporary Review Sahasrabudhe S.

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ABSTRACT:

Skin disorders constitute a major proportion of global disease burden, affecting individuals physically, psychologically, and socially. In Ayurveda, all dermatological disorders are comprehensively described under the broad umbrella of *Kushtha*, which includes both *Mahakushtha* and *Kshudra Kushtha*. Unlike the symptomatic and often suppressive approach of modern dermatology, Ayurveda places strong emphasis on prevention through regulation of diet (*Ahara*), lifestyle (*Vihara*), ethical conduct (*Achara Rasayana*), seasonal regimen (*Ritucharya*), daily regimen (*Dinacharya*), and avoidance of etiological factors (*Nidana Parivarjana*). Classical Ayurvedic texts highlight that *Kushtha* is a *Tridoshaja Vyadhi* with predominant involvement of *Rakta*, *Rasa*, *Mamsa* and *Lasika*, and is listed among *Ashta Mahagada*, emphasizing its chronicity and recurrence. This review aims to critically analyze the preventive aspects of skin disorders with special reference to *Kushtha*, correlating Ayurvedic principles with modern preventive dermatology. Literary material was collected from classical Ayurvedic texts, contemporary Ayurvedic journals, and modern dermatological literature. Preventive strategies such as dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, psychosocial balance, seasonal adaptation, and detoxification measures are discussed in detail. The review concludes that Ayurveda offers a robust, holistic, and sustainable preventive framework for skin disorders, which is highly relevant in the present era of lifestyle-induced dermatoses.

Key words:

Kushtha, Skin disorders, Prevention, *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Twak Vikara*

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Introduction:

Skin is the largest organ of the human body and serves as a protective barrier against physical, chemical, and biological insults. It plays a vital role in thermoregulation, sensation, immunity, and maintenance of internal homeostasis. Due to its visibility, skin health significantly influences an individual's psychological well-being, self-esteem, and social interactions. The global prevalence of skin disorders ranges from 20–30% of the general population, making dermatological diseases a major public health concern. In modern medicine, skin disorders are classified based on etiology such as infectious, inflammatory, autoimmune, allergic, genetic, and neoplastic conditions. Despite advancements in pharmacotherapy, many chronic skin disorders such as psoriasis, eczema, vitiligo, acne, and dermatitis show recurrent or relapsing patterns. Long-term use of corticosteroids, immunosuppressants, and biological agents often leads to adverse effects, emphasizing the need for preventive and holistic approaches. Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, offers a comprehensive understanding of skin health under the concept of *Twak*. *Twak* is considered the seat of *Sparshanendriya* and is closely related to *Bhrajaka Pitta*, *Rakta Dhatu*, and *Swedavaha Srotas*. Classical texts describe that derangement of internal homeostasis manifests externally through changes in skin color, texture, sensation, and integrity. All skin disorders in Ayurveda are described under the broad heading of *Kushtha*. The term *Kushtha* is derived from the root “Kush” meaning “that which destroys or disfigures,” indicating the chronic, recurrent, and socially stigmatizing nature of these disorders. Acharya Charaka describes *Kushtha* as a *Tridoshaja Vyadhi* involving *Tvak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika*. *Kushtha* is classified into *Mahakushtha* (seven major types) and *Kshudra Kushtha* (eleven minor types) based on severity, depth of tissue involvement, and symptomatology.

Importantly, Ayurveda emphasizes that *Kushtha* is not merely a local skin pathology but a systemic disorder resulting from improper diet (*Viruddha Ahara*), faulty lifestyle (*Mithya Vihara*), suppression of natural urges (*Vegadharana*), psychological stress, and unethical conduct. Hence, prevention occupies a central role in Ayurvedic management of skin disorders.

In the present era, rapid urbanization, altered dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, stress, sleep deprivation, pollution, and indiscriminate use of cosmetics and chemicals have contributed significantly to the rising incidence of skin diseases. These factors closely resemble the classical etiological factors described for *Kushtha*, highlighting the timeless relevance of Ayurvedic preventive principles.

Therefore, this review focuses on the **preventive aspects of skin disorders** with special reference to *Kushtha*, integrating classical Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary understanding of preventive dermatology.

Methodology:

This review is based on a comprehensive literary study of classical Ayurvedic texts, contemporary Ayurvedic research articles, and modern dermatological literature.

Ayurvedic Sources

Primary Ayurvedic texts consulted include:

- *Charaka Samhita*
- *Sushruta Samhita*
- *Ashtanga Hridaya*
- Commentaries such as Chakrapani, Dalhana, and Arunadatta

Secondary Ayurvedic sources include peer-reviewed journals such as:

- Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences (JAIMS)
- International Journal of Ayurveda and AYUSH
- International Journal of Research in Ayurveda and Pharmacy (IJRAP)
- International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)

Modern Sources

Modern dermatology textbooks and review articles were referred to understand:

- Epidemiology of skin disorders
- Preventive dermatology
- Lifestyle and environmental factors in skin health

Inclusion Criteria

- Articles focusing on Kushtha, Twak Vikara, and skin disorders
- Studies discussing preventive, lifestyle, or holistic approaches
- Classical references describing Nidana and preventive measures

Exclusion Criteria

- Purely interventional clinical trials without preventive relevance
- Articles not available in full text

The collected data were systematically analyzed and synthesized to develop a preventive framework for skin disorders based on Ayurvedic principles.

Review of Literature:

Concept of Twak in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, *Twak* (skin) is not merely considered a protective covering of the body but is regarded as a vital organ intricately connected with systemic physiology. Twak is described as an *Upadhatu* of *Mamsa Dhatu* and is considered the seat of *Sparshanendriya* (sense of touch). According to classical Ayurvedic literature, Twak reflects both the internal health status and external environmental influences, thus acting as a mirror of overall bodily homeostasis. Acharya Sushruta Samhita provides a detailed embryological and anatomical description of Twak, explaining that it develops during intrauterine life as a result of the proper transformation (*Paka*) of *Rakta Dhatu*. He describes seven distinct layers of skin, namely *Avabhasini*, *Lohita*, *Shweta*, *Tamra*, *Vedini*, *Rohini*, and *Mamsadhara*, each having a specific thickness and serving as the site for particular skin disorders such as *Sidhma*, *Kilasa*, *Dadru*, *Kushtha*, and *Visarpa*. This layered description highlights the depth-wise involvement of tissues in different dermatological conditions and explains the chronicity and severity of Kushtha when

deeper layers are affected. Twak is primarily nourished by *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu*. Proper circulation and purity of these Dhatus are essential for maintaining normal skin color (*Varna*), texture (*Sparsha*), and moisture (*Snigdhata*). *Bhrajaka Pitta*, located in Twak, governs complexion, temperature regulation, and absorption of topical medications. Any disturbance in *Agni*—especially *Rasagni* and *Raktagni*—leads to improper nourishment of Twak, predisposing an individual to skin disorders. Moreover, unobstructed functioning of *Swedavaha Srotas* is essential for maintaining skin hydration and thermoregulation. Thus, the integrity of Twak depends upon the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, and *Srotas*, and disturbance in any of these components results in Twak Vikara.

Kushtha: Classification and Pathogenesis

In Ayurvedic nosology, all dermatological disorders are classified under the broad term *Kushtha*. Acharya Charaka Samhita states that Kushtha is invariably a *Tridoshaja Vyadhi*, meaning that all three Doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—are involved in its pathogenesis, although one Dosha may predominate clinically. This Tridoshic involvement explains the varied presentation, chronicity, and recurrent nature of skin disorders.

According to Charaka, the vitiated Doshas simultaneously contaminate *Twak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika*, collectively referred to as *Sapta Dravya Sangraha* in Kushtha Samprapti. The Dosha-Dusya *Sammurchana* (pathological interaction) leads to obstruction of microchannels (*Srotorodha*), impaired tissue metabolism, and accumulation of toxins, ultimately manifesting as discoloration, scaling, itching, burning sensation, pain, discharge, and deformity of the skin.

Based on severity, tissue involvement, and clinical features, Kushtha is classified into:

- Mahakushtha (seven major types), characterized by deeper Dhatu involvement, severe symptoms, chronicity, and poor prognosis.

- Kshudra Kushtha (eleven minor types), involving relatively superficial tissues with milder manifestations.

The chronic and relapsing nature of Kushtha is attributed to repeated exposure to etiological factors and incomplete elimination of vitiated Doshas, thereby emphasizing the importance of prevention over mere symptomatic treatment.

Etiological Factors (Nidana) of Kushtha

Ayurvedic classics describe Kushtha as a *Nidanabahula Vyadhi*, indicating the multiplicity of causative factors. These Nidanas are broadly categorized into *Aharaja*, *Viharaja*, and *Manasika* factors.

Aharaja Nidana (Dietary Factors)

Improper dietary habits play a central role in the pathogenesis of Kushtha. Consumption of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food combinations), such as fish with milk, excess intake of sour (*Amla*), salty (*Lavana*), heavy (*Guru*), oily (*Snigdha*) foods, curd, jaggery, and fermented items, leads to vitiation of Doshas—particularly *Pitta* and *Kapha*. These dietary indiscretions result in *Rakta Dushti*, impaired digestion, and accumulation of *Ama*, which serves as a key pathological factor in skin disorders.

Viharaja Nidana (Lifestyle Factors)

Faulty lifestyle practices such as *Divaswapna* (day sleep), *Ratri Jagarana* (night awakening), excessive physical exertion, suppression of natural urges (*Vegadharana*), and improper personal hygiene disturb the normal circadian rhythm and Dosha balance. These practices aggravate *Kapha* and *Vata*, impair *Agni*, and obstruct *Swedavaha Srotas*, thereby facilitating the manifestation of Kushtha.

Manasika Nidana (Psychological Factors)

Ayurveda strongly emphasizes the psychosomatic origin of skin disorders. Mental stress, anger (*Krodha*), grief (*Shoka*), fear (*Bhaya*), and unethical or sinful activities (*Papakarma*) vitiate *Manodoshas* (Rajas and Tamas), which in

turn disturb bodily Doshas, particularly *Pitta* and *Vata*. Modern psychodermatological studies also support this concept, highlighting stress as a major triggering and exacerbating factor in chronic skin disorders such as psoriasis and eczema.

Preventive Aspects in Ayurveda

Nidana Parivarjana

Avoidance of causative factors is considered the foremost preventive strategy. Classical texts emphasize that without Nidana Parivarjana, no treatment can be successful.

Dinacharya

Daily regimens such as Abhyanga, Snana, proper sleep, and hygiene help maintain skin integrity and immunity.

Ritucharya

Seasonal regimens help prevent Dosha accumulation and aggravation, thereby reducing seasonal exacerbations of skin disorders.

Ahara Vidhi

Consumption of fresh, wholesome, compatible food in proper quantity supports healthy skin. Tikta and Kashaya Rasa are particularly beneficial in Kushtha prevention.

Achara Rasayana

Ethical conduct, mental discipline, and stress management play a crucial role in preventing psychosomatic skin disorders.

Shodhana and Shamana as Preventive Tools

Periodic Panchakarma procedures like Virechana and Raktamokshana are advised for individuals prone to skin disorders.

Discussion:

The Ayurvedic concept of prevention in skin disorders is remarkably holistic and multidimensional. Unlike modern preventive dermatology, which focuses mainly on sun protection, hygiene, and allergen avoidance, Ayurveda addresses the root causes at dietary, lifestyle, psychological, and behavioral levels. Modern research increasingly acknowledges the role of the gut-skin axis, immune dysregulation, stress, and

inflammation in skin diseases, which parallels the Ayurvedic concept of *Agni Dushti*, *Rakta Dushti*, and *Manasika Nidana*. Preventive strategies such as dietary regulation, stress reduction, and seasonal adaptation are now being emphasized even in contemporary medicine. The recurrence and chronicity of skin disorders can be effectively reduced by integrating Ayurvedic preventive principles into daily life. Thus, Ayurveda offers a sustainable and cost-effective preventive dermatology model.

Conclusion:

Skin disorders pose a significant challenge due to their chronic, recurrent, and psychosocial impact. Ayurveda provides a comprehensive preventive framework for skin health through the concept of *Kushtha*. Preventive measures such as *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Ahara Vidhi*, *Achara Rasayana*, and periodic detoxification play a pivotal role in maintaining skin integrity and preventing disease manifestation. This review highlights that *Kushtha* is not merely a dermatological condition but a systemic disorder rooted in lifestyle and behavioral factors. The preventive wisdom of Ayurveda is highly relevant in the modern era of lifestyle-induced skin disorders. Integration of these principles with contemporary dermatology can pave the way for a holistic, patient-centered approach to skin health.

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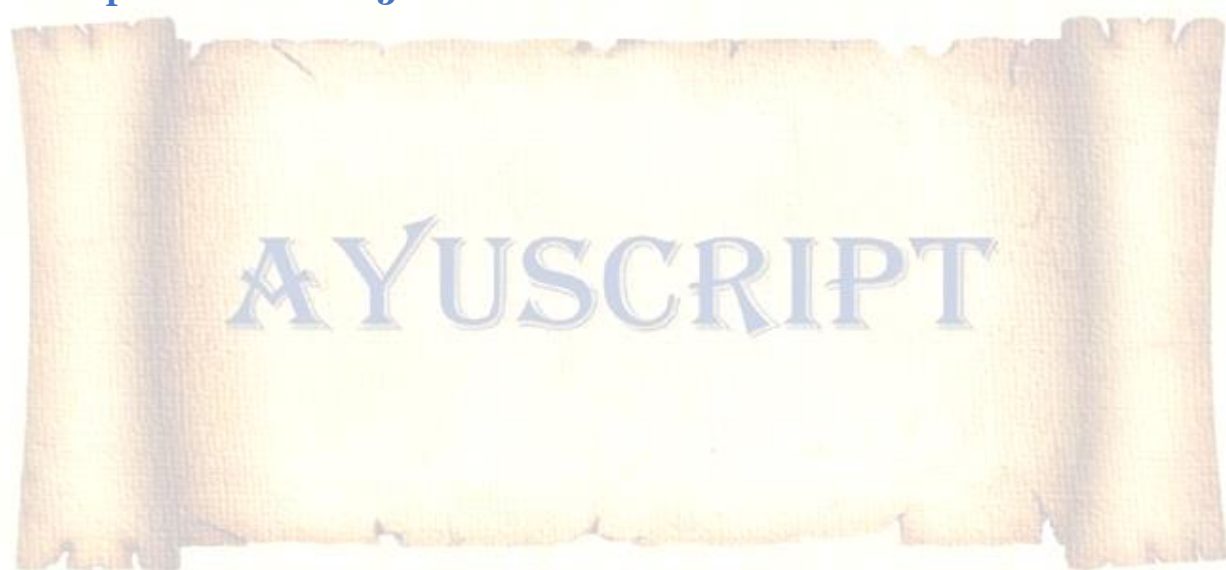
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