



Evaluating the Impact of Ayurvedic Alimentary Protocols (*Pathya-Apathya*) on the Gut-Skin Axis in the Management of *Kustha* (Skin Disorders)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ayurveda emphasizes the prescription of *Pathya* and *Apathya* as an essential responsibility of the Vaidya for achieving *Rogaharana* and *Swasthya rakshana*. *Pathya* acts as a *Prakriti-sthapana Upaya*, maintaining physiological balance, while *Apathya* functions as a *Nidana* responsible for disease initiation and progression. Ayurvedic alimentary protocols may influence gut microbiota, digestion (*Agni*), and systemic metabolism, thereby contributing to improved skin health.

Materials and Methods: This article is based on a literary review of Ayurvedic texts including *Brihatrayi*, *Bhela Samhita*, *Vangasena*, *Basavarajiya*, *Yogaratanakar* and relevant *Nighantus*.

Results and Discussion: Ayurveda considers *Pathya–Apathya* a scientific dietary and lifestyle approach in disease management. *Kustha Roga* is *Tridoshaja Vyadhi* predominantly *Pitta-Kapha Pradhana*; hence, *Pathya Ahara-Vihara* focus on *Pitta-Kapha Shamana* using *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, *Shita* or *Ushna Virya*. *Pathya Ahara Vihara* plays an important role in checking pathology at minute level, whereas *Apathya Ahara Vihara* aggravates *Doshas* and worsens the condition. Avoidance of *Apathya*, especially *Viruddhahara* and *Abhishyandi Ahara*, possibly reduces systemic inflammatory responses associated with chronic skin disorders.

Conclusion: *Pathya–Apathya* forms an integral therapeutic component in *Kustha Roga*, where appropriate diet and lifestyle alone can act as effective *Chikitsa* by pacifying *Doshas* and preventing *Ama* formation and recurrence.

KEYWORDS: *Pathya*, *Apathya*, *Kustha*, Ayurveda, *Ahara -Vihara*, Lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes the holistic maintenance of health and management of disease through a balanced integration of *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle) and *Aushadha* (medication). Among the *Traya Upastambha*¹,

Ahara is regarded as the foremost pillar for the maintenance of health as well as the prevention and treatment of disease. The concept of *Pathya–Apathya* forms an integral part of Ayurvedic therapeutics and plays a significant role in both the prevention and management of diseases.

In treatment, proper management depends not only on medicines but also on a controlled diet and lifestyle. Even vastly effective medicines may not work if unwholesome practices are continued, while following *Pathya* can help stop the disease from progressing.² Therefore, *Pathya–Apathya* is considered both a supportive and an independent method of treatment. ***Pathya and Apathya***

In Monier-Williams, "पथ्य" means :-

Belonging to way, Suitable, Fit, Proper, Wholesome

पथ्यं पथोऽनपेतं यद्यच्चोक्तं मनसः प्रियम् |

यच्चाप्रियमपथ्यं च नियतं तन्न लक्षयेत || Ch.Su.25/45

The *Aahara-Vihara* which is beneficial and nutritional to the body and also give the happiness to the mind is known as *Pathya* and opposite to that is known as *Apathya*.³

Pathya refers to those dietary and lifestyle practices that are wholesome, disease-alleviating and conducive to the proper functioning of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni* and *Srotas*. In contrast, *Apathya* denotes unwholesome factors that aggravate the disease process and hinder recovery. Ayurveda recognizes that improper diet and lifestyle are primary etiological factors in the manifestation of most diseases; therefore, correction of these through appropriate *Pathya* is considered essential for successful treatment.

Therefore, the concept of *Pathya-Apathya* in Ayurvedic diseases is fundamental rather than merely supportive, as it affects disease origin, progression, prognosis, and recurrence. Proper understanding and application of disease-specific *Pathya-Apathya* improve treatment outcomes, reduce complications, and support long-term health.

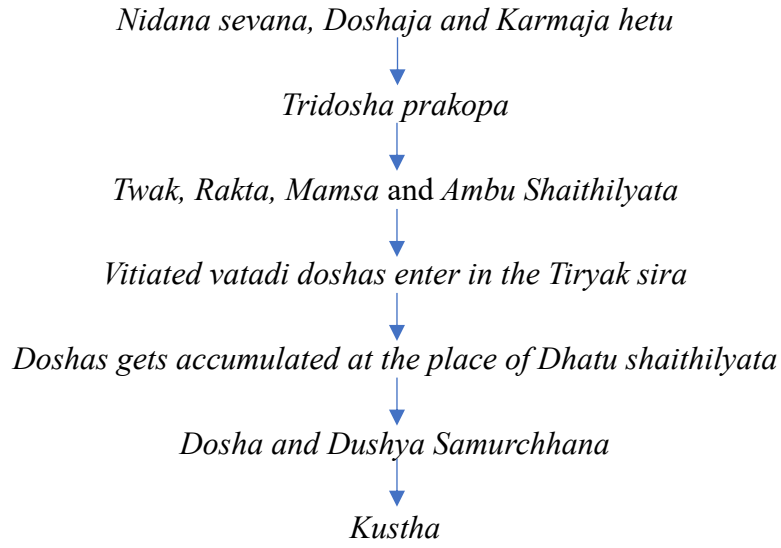
Kustha is a broad group of skin disorders described in Ayurveda, encompassing almost all dermatological conditions. It is considered a *Tridoshaja* disease with predominant involvement of *Twak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa* and *Lasika* as *Dushya*. *Kustha* arises due to the vitiation of *Doshas* caused by improper dietary habits, lifestyle factors and unethical conduct (*Mithya Ahara Vihara*), leading to chronic and recurrent manifestations. Classical texts classify *Kustha* into *Maha Kustha* and *Kṣudra Kustha*, highlighting its varied clinical presentation and severity. Due to its chronic nature, tendency to relapse, and significant impact on physical and psychological well-being, *Kustha* remains an important subject in Ayurvedic clinical practice.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Data for the review were collected from classical Ayurvedic texts including *Brihatrayi*, *Bhela Samhita*, *Basavarajiya*, *Yoga ratnakar* and relevant *Chikitsa grantha*. Commentaries of eminent Acharyas were also consulted to ensure authentic interpretation. In addition, available review articles, research papers and journals related to the topic were referred for supportive evidence.

Observation :

Samparapti of Kustha⁴:-



Pathya-Apathya Ahara, Vihara and Aushadh from various texts :-

Table no. 1 – Pathya Ahara Vihara and Aushadh from different texts

	Chakradatta ⁵	Ashtanga Sangraha ⁶	Harita ⁷	Bhela ⁸	Vaidhya chintamani ⁹	Basavrajya ¹⁰	Bhaishajya Ratnavali ¹¹	Vrunda Madhav ¹²	Gada nigraha ¹³
<i>Ahara</i>									
<i>Yava</i>					+	+	+	+	+
<i>Godhuma</i>					+	+	+	+	+
<i>Shali</i>	+		+		+	+	+	+	+
<i>Kodrava</i>								+	+
<i>Mudga</i>	+		+		+	+	+	+	+
<i>Adhaki</i>			+		+	+	+		+
<i>Masura</i>					+	+	+		+
<i>Madhu</i>					+		+		
<i>Patola</i>			+		+	+	+		+
<i>Rasona</i>					+		+		
<i>Aashadh phala</i>					+		+		
<i>Vetragra</i>					+		+		
<i>Koshataki</i>			+		+		+		
<i>Laghu anna</i>					+		+		
<i>Tikta shak</i>	+				+	+		+	+
<i>Jangala mamsa</i>	+				+	+	+	+	+
<i>Hingu</i>						+			
<i>Shyamak</i>				+		+			
<i>Makustha</i>				+					

<i>Chanak</i>				+					
<i>Purana Ghrita</i>					+		+		
<i>Sarpi pana</i>							+		
<i>Purana Anna</i>	+								
<i>Aushadh yojita Madhya</i>									+
<i>Bakuchi churna yukta Dadhi</i>									+
Vihara									
<i>Nicha roma nakha</i>								+	
<i>Nitya aushadh sevan</i>								+	
<i>Vrat</i>		+							
<i>Dwij guru puja</i>		+							
Aushadha									
<i>Sarpi lepa</i>					+		+		
<i>Palash</i>					+				
<i>Vatankura</i>					+				
<i>Punarnava</i>					+		+		
<i>Brihati phala</i>					+	+	+		
<i>Kakmachi</i>					+		+		
<i>Nimba patra</i>					+	+	+		+
<i>Hilmochika</i>					+		+		
<i>Meshashringi</i>					+		+		
<i>Chakramarda</i>					+		+		
<i>Bhallataka phala</i>					+		+		+
<i>Taal phala(pakwa)</i>					+		+		
<i>Khadir</i>					+	+	+		+
<i>Chitraka</i>					+		+		
<i>Triphala</i>					+	+	+		+
<i>Jatiphala</i>					+		+		
<i>Nagpushpa(Nagkesar)</i>					+		+		
<i>Kumkum</i>					+	+	+		
<i>Karanja taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Tila taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Sarshap taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Shaal</i>					+				
<i>Nimba taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Saral taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Devdaru taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Shinshapa taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Kasturi</i>					+	+	+		
<i>Gandhsaar</i>					+	+	+		
<i>Ingudi taila</i>					+		+		
<i>Agaru taila</i>					+		+		

<i>Chandan</i>					+				
<i>Kshar karma</i>					+		+		
<i>Go, khar, ushra, ashva, mahish mutra</i>					+		+		
<i>Priyangu</i>						+			+
<i>Tikta Dravya</i>					+		+		

Vaidhya Chintamani and Bhaishajya Ratnavali have described a more extensive and detailed list of *Pathya* compared to other classical texts. Also, they have described *Ashadh phala* i.e. fruits that mature in the month of *Ashadh* like *Karkati*, *Trapus* etc. Certain *Aushadha dravya* have also been included among the *Pathya* recommendations. Ashtanga Sangraha and Vrinda madhava have described *Vihara* in *Kustha*. *Shali* and *Mudga* are mentioned in almost all texts as *Pathya* in *Kustha Roga*. Certain *Taila* have also been mentioned as *Pathya*. External Application of *Sarpi* has been mentioned. In *Gada Nigraha*, *Bakuchi Churna* mixed with *Dadhi* is described.

Table no. 2 - Apathya Ahara Vihara and Aushadh in different texts

Dravya	Sushruta	Chakradatta	Harita	Bhela	Vaidhya chintamani	Basavrajya	Yoga Ratnakar¹⁴	Bhaishajya Ratnavali	Vrunda Madhav	Gada nigraha
Ahara										
<i>Amla</i>			+		+	+	+	+		+
<i>Lavana</i>					+	+	+			+
<i>Ushna</i>					+					
<i>Vidahi</i>			+					+		
<i>Vistambhi</i>								+		
<i>Vatala</i>			+							
<i>Dadhi</i>					+	+	+	+		+
<i>Dugdha</i>					+	+	+	+		+
<i>Guda</i>					+	+	+	+		+
<i>Tila</i>					+	+	+	+		+
<i>Masha</i>					+	+	+	+		+
<i>Soopa</i>						+				
<i>Tikshna</i>							+			
<i>Maricha</i>							+			
<i>Moolak</i>								+		
<i>Ikshu rasa</i>					+					
<i>Ikshu janya padarth</i>								+		
<i>Drava anna</i>								+		
<i>Guru anna</i>								+		
<i>Anupa mamsa</i>					+		+	+		+

<i>Mamsa</i>	+	+							+	
<i>Madhya</i>					+				+	
<i>Sura</i>	+	+							+	
<i>Viruddha Anna pana</i>									+	
<i>Sahyadri & Vindhya jala</i>									+	
Vihara										
<i>Swedana</i>					+				+	
<i>Vyavaya</i>	+	+			+				+	
<i>Vaman vegadharan</i>					+					
<i>Vega dharan</i>									+	
<i>Vyayama</i>					+				+	
<i>Papkarma</i>									+	
<i>Krutaghnabhav</i>									+	
<i>Guru ninda</i>									+	
<i>Diwaswapna</i>									+	
<i>Vishamashana</i>									+	

Among the classical texts Bhaishajya Ratnavali has mentioned the maximum number of *Apathya Ahara* and *Vihara* for *Kustha Roga*. *Amla*, *Lavana dravya*, *Dadhi*, *Dugdha*, *Guda*, *Masha*, *Tila* have mentioned as *Apathya* in almost all texts. Bhaishajya ratnavali have mentioned *Sahyadri* and *Vindhya Jala* as *Apathya Ahara*. In *Harita Samhita*, *Vatala Ahara* considered as *Apathya* for *Kustha*.

Table no. 3 *Raspanchak*^{15,16,17,18} of *Pathya Ahara*

Ahara Dravya	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Doshagnata
Yava <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.	<i>Kashay, Madhura</i>	<i>Guru, Ruksha, Picchila</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kapha Pitta hara</i>
Godhuma <i>Triticum aestivum</i> Lam.	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Guru, Snigdha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vata Pitta hara, Kapha kara</i>
Shali <i>Oryza sativa</i> L.	<i>Madhura, Kashay</i>	<i>Laghu, Snigdha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Pitta hara, Kinchit Vata Kapha kara</i>
Kodrava <i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> L.	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatala, Kapha Pitta hara</i>
Mudga <i>Phaseolus radiatus</i> L.	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kapha Pitta hara, Vata kara</i>
Adhaki <i>Cajanus indicus</i> Spreng.	<i>Kashay, Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Pitta Kapha hara, Vata kara</i>

Masura <i>Lens culinaris</i> Medic.	<i>Madhura,</i> <i>Kashay</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Kapha Pitta hara,</i> <i>Vata kara</i>
Madhu	<i>Madhura,</i> <i>Kashay</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	-	<i>Kapha Pitta hara,</i> <i>Vata kara</i>
Patola <i>Trichosanthes dioica</i> Roxb.	<i>Tikta</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Tridoshahara</i>
Rasona <i>Allium sativum</i> L.	<i>Amla varjit</i> <i>Shadrassa</i>	<i>Guru,</i> <i>Snigdha,</i> <i>Tikshna</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Pitta vardhak,</i> <i>Vata</i> <i>Kapha hara</i>
Koshataki <i>Luffa acutangula</i> Roxb.	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Kapha Vata kara,</i> <i>Pitta hara</i>
Jangal mamsa	<i>Madhura,</i> <i>Kashay</i>	<i>Laghu</i>	-	-	<i>Pitta Kapha hara,</i> <i>Kinchit Vata kara</i>
Hingu <i>Ferula narthex</i> Boiss.	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Tikshna</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Vata Kapha hara,</i> <i>Pitta kopan</i>
Shyamak <i>Echinochloa frumentacea</i>	<i>Madhura,</i> <i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatala,</i> <i>Kapha Pitta hara</i>
Makustha <i>Phaseolus aconitifolius</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Pitta Kapha hara</i> <i>Vatala</i>
Chanak <i>Cicer arietinum</i> L.	<i>Kashay,</i> <i>Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu,</i> <i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	-	<i>Pitta Kapha hara</i> <i>Vatala</i>
Purana ghrita	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Guru</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vata Pitta hara,</i> <i>Kapha Vardhan</i>

The presented table highlights that most *Ahara Dravyas* are dominated by *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa*, with *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna*, indicating their lightness and drying nature, which makes them particularly useful in *Kapha* and *Pitta Kustha*. *Shita Virya* is predominant in items like *Shali*, *Mudga* and *Adhaki* contributing to *Pitta shamana*, whereas *Ushna Virya dravyas* such as *Rasona* and *Hingu* are effective in alleviating *Vata* and *Kapha* but may provoke *Pitta*. *Kodrava* and *Shyamak*, having *Ushna Virya* and *Ruksha Guna*, are *Vatala* yet *Kapha-Pitta hara*, showing selective doshic action. Pulses like *Masura* and *Chanak* predominantly pacify *Kapha* and *Pitta* but tend to increase *Vata* due to their *Ruksha* property. Overall, the data reflects that the majority of these dietary substances are *Kapha-Pitta hara* with a tendency to aggravate *Vata*, emphasizing the importance of proper dietary planning according to individual *Prakriti* and disease condition.

DISCUSSION

Vaidhya Chintamani and Bhaishajya Ratnavali provide the most comprehensive descriptions of *Pathya* among the classical texts. They include *Ashadha Phala* such as *Karkati* and *Trapusa*, along with certain *Aushadha Dravya*, under *Pathya* recommendations. Ashtanga Sangraha and Vrinda Madhava describe *Vihara* specific to *Kustha*, while *Shali* and *Mudga* are consistently mentioned as *Pathya* across most texts. Certain *Taila* was also considered *Pathya*. Bhaishajya Ratnavali lists the maximum number of *Apathya Ahara* and *Vihara* for *Kustha Roga*. *Amla* and *Lavana Dravya*, *Dadhi*, *Dugdha*, *Guda*, *Masha*, and *Tila* are commonly described as *Apathya*. These *Ahara Dravya* exhibits properties such as *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, *Shita* or

Ushna virya and *Kapha-Pitta shamana*¹⁹, which are highly beneficial in *Kustha*. *Aushadh dravya* mentioned in *Pathya* have role in *Dosha shamana*, *Agni Deepana* & *Ama Pachana*, *Srotas shodhana*, *Rakta prasadana*. In Ayurveda, *Pathya–Apathya* plays a decisive role in reducing *Kustha* by influencing *Dosha* balance, *Agni*, *Dhatu* nourishment, and *Srotasa* purification.

1. **Dosha Shamana (Pacification of Doshas):** *Kustha* is predominantly a *Tridoshaja* disorder with dominance of *Kapha* and *Pitta*²⁰. *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara* possessing *Laghu* (light), *Ruksha* (dry), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent) qualities counteract *Kapha Pitta* vitiation, while *Apathya* substances having *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Amla* and *Lavana* properties aggravate the *Doshas* and worsen the disease.
2. **Agni Deepana and Ama Pachana:** *Mandagni* and *Ama* are key factors in the pathogenesis of *Kustha*. *Pathya* foods having *Ushna Guna* enhance *Jatharagni* and *Dhatvagni*, thereby digesting *Ama* and preventing further *Dosha Dhatu Sammurchana*. *Apathya* diet weakens *Agni*, leading to recurrence and chronicity.
3. **Shodhana of Srotasa (Microchannel cleansing):** *Pathya* items promote *Srotoshodhana*, ensuring proper circulation and nourishment of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa* and *Lasika Dhatus*, which are primarily involved in *Kustha*. *Apathya* habits cause *Srotorodha*, intensifying skin lesions.
4. **Rakta prasadana and Tvak prasadana:** Since *Rakta Dushti* is central in *Kustha*, *Pathya* with *Rakta-shodhaka* and *Prasadaka* properties helps in reducing discoloration, itching, oozing, and scaling, thereby restoring normal skin texture.
5. **Prevention of Relapse:** Regular adherence to *Pathya-Apathya* acts as *Nidana-parivarjana*, preventing repeated *Dosha* aggravation. This explains why strict *Pathya* alone can sometimes arrest disease progression and reduce relapse in *Kustha*.

Overall Impact on *Kustha Samprapti*

Thus, these *Pathya Ahara* collectively help in:

- Reducing *Kapha-Pitta* predominance
- Preventing *Ama* formation
- Correcting *Agni* and *Srotodushti*
- Promoting *Rakta Shuddhi* and *Tvak Prasadana*

Hence, adherence to these *Pathya Ahara* forms a foundational pillar in *Kustha* management, supporting both disease regression and prevention of recurrence.

In modern science, the concept of *Pathya Ahara* can be correlated with the idea of a balanced and health-promoting diet that supports optimal physiological functions, including immune health. Just as contemporary nutrition science emphasizes the importance of nutrient-rich foods in maintaining body systems, *Pathya Ahara* in Ayurveda refers to dietary practices that are wholesome, suitable for the individual, and supportive of digestion and metabolism. Nutrition is much more than just calories or macro- and micronutrients; it plays an active and multifaceted role in supporting immune health. It influences the strength of physical defenses such as the skin and intestinal lining, regulates the composition and function of the gut microbiota, and affects both innate and adaptive immune responses. The quality of our diet shapes how macrophages react to pathogens, how T and B lymphocytes distinguish between self and non-self, and how efficiently the body preserves overall immunological balance.²¹

Among above mentioned *Ahara dravya*, *Yava*, *Godhuma*, *Mudga*, *Patola*, *Rasona*, *Koshataki*, *Makusthak* and *Chanak* possess anti inflammatory activity, while *Shyamak* and *Kodrava* having wound healing activity.

<i>Dravya</i>	<i>Activity</i>	
<i>Yava</i>	Anti inflammatory ²²	Anti oxidant ²³
<i>Godhuma</i>	Anti inflammatory ²⁴	Anti oxidant ²⁵
<i>Mudga</i>	Anti inflammatory ²⁶	Anti oxidant ²⁷
<i>Patola</i>	Anti inflammatory ²⁸	Anti oxidant ²⁹
<i>Rasona</i>	Anti inflammatory ³⁰	Anti oxidant ³¹
<i>Koshataki</i>	Anti inflammatory ³²	Anti oxidant ³³
<i>Makusthak</i>	Anti inflammatory ³⁴	-
<i>Chanak</i>	Anti inflammatory ³⁵	Anti oxidant ³⁶
Shyamak	Wound healing ³⁷	-
Kodrava	Wound healing ³⁸	-

CONCLUSION

Classical Ayurvedic texts have laid special emphasis on *Pathya–Apathya* in *Kustha*, considering its chronic, recurrent nature and strong association with *Viruddha Ahara*, *Guru-Snigdha Ahara* and improper lifestyle practices. Adherence to prescribed *Pathya* helps in *Dosha Shamana*, purification of *Dhatu*, improvement of *Agni* and prevention of relapse, whereas indulgence in *Apathya* leads to persistence and recurrence of the disease. Therefore, *Pathya-Apathya* forms an integral component in the comprehensive management of *Kustha*, accompanying *Shodhana* and *Shamana* therapies and contributing significantly to long-term disease control.

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