

A Literary Review on Mode of Action of Chitrakadi Taila in Kitibh Kushtha

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Abstract: *Kitibha Kushtha*, classified under *Kshudra Kushtha* in *Ayurveda*, is characterized by symptoms such as *Shyava varna*, *Khara sparsha*, *Rukshata*, *Kandu*, and *Pidika*, closely resembling psoriasis in modern medicine. It results from *Tridosha* vitiation, primarily *Vata* and *Kapha*, leading to *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika dushti* with *Margavarodha* in *Twacha*. *Chitrakadi Taila*, described in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*, contains potent ingredients like *Chitraka*, *Danti*, and *Koshataki* in *Katu Taila*, possessing *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Snigdha*, and *Lekhana* properties. The review integrates classical references and modern pharmacological findings, highlighting the formulation's anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, detoxifying, and *Raktashodhaka* actions. Its phytoconstituents, including plumbagin, sinigrin, and flavonoids, support improved circulation, toxin elimination, and doshic balance, offering symptomatic relief and prevention of recurrence in *Kitibha Kushtha*. This synthesis underscores the therapeutic relevance of *Chitrakadi Taila* as a safe and effective approach for chronic skin disorders.

Keywords: Kushtha, Kitibhb Kushtha, Chitrakadi Taila, Psoriasis

I. INTRODUCTION

Skin, the largest organ of the human body, serves as a protective barrier against harmful physical, chemical, and biological agents. Beyond its protective role, healthy skin supports personal aesthetics and confidence.^[1] Any disturbance in its structure or function can lead to discomfort, visible deformities, and psychosocial stress. Skin diseases are common in clinical practice and often arise from a combination of poor hygiene, unbalanced diet, lack of physical activity, environmental exposure, and mental stress.^[2]

In *Ayurveda*, most skin disorders are classified under the term *Kushta*, which encompasses a wide range of *Twak Vikaras*. The root cause is often the vitiation of *Tridosha*—especially due to *Mithyahara* (improper diet), *Mithya Vihara* (unwholesome lifestyle), and *Manasika Nidana* (mental stress)—which leads to the affliction of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika dhatus*.^[3] The classical reference “*Kushnati Shareerasya Shonitam Vikrute*” highlights that *Rakta Dushti* plays a primary role in the pathogenesis of *Kushta*.^[4]

Kitibha Kushta is described as a *Kshudra Kushta* in both *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi*. It is predominantly caused by aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha* doshas, presenting with *Shyava Varna* (blackish-brown discoloration), *Khara Sparsha* (roughness), *Parushata* (dryness), *Ruksha Pidika* (rough eruptions), and *Kandu* (itching).^[5] *Acharya Vagbhata* adds *Snigdha* and *Krishna* lesions, while *Acharya Sushruta* mentions variations like *Ugrakandu* and *Vrutta* lesions.^[6] In modern dermatology, *Kitibha Kushta* closely resembles psoriasis, a chronic, non-infectious, immune-mediated disorder marked by rapid epidermal turnover, erythematous plaques, silvery scales, and recurrent exacerbations.^[7] Although modern treatment offers steroids and topical agents, recurrence and adverse effects remain major challenges.

Ayurveda advocates a two-step management—*Shodhana* (purification) followed by *Shamana* (pacification). For *Raktaja Vikara*, *Virechana* is the prime *Shodhana Karma*, eliminating doshas from their root. After *Shodhana*, herbal formulations are used for residual dosha pacification and tissue repair.^[8] One such formulation is *Chitrakadi Taila*, mentioned in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* under *Kshudra Roga Adhikara*. Prepared with potent drugs like *Chitraka Mula*, *Danti Mula*, and *Kushataki* in *Katu Taila*, it is indicated in *Kushta* for its deep penetration, dosha-pacifying action, and skin-healing potential.^[9]



Given the chronic and recurrent nature of *Kitibha Kushta/Psoriasis*, studying the mode of action of *Chitrakadi Taila* offers valuable insights for developing effective, safe, and integrative treatment strategies.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Relevant classical Ayurvedic texts, Nighantus, and contemporary research articles were reviewed to compile data on the *mode of action of Chitrakadi Taila* in *Kitibha Kushtha*. The literature search included published journals, pharmacological studies, and authoritative commentaries to integrate Ayurvedic concepts with modern scientific evidence.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Skin Disorders in Ayurveda and Modern Perspective

Skin, the largest organ of the human body, constitutes approximately 16% of body weight and covers a surface area of 1.2–2.2 m². It is derived from both ectodermal and mesodermal layers and serves as the primary barrier against harmful physical, chemical, and biological agents. Beyond its protective role, healthy skin is important for personal aesthetics and psychosocial well-being. Any disturbance in its structure or function leads to visible deformities, discomfort, and often significant emotional stress.^[10]

In modern medicine, dermatological disorders, including psoriasis, are considered multifactorial in origin, with genetic predisposition, immune dysregulation, and environmental triggers playing major roles. Psoriasis, a chronic, immune-mediated skin disease, is characterized by accelerated epidermal turnover (3–4 days compared to the normal 28 days), well-defined erythematous plaques, silvery scales, and signs such as *Auspitz* and the *candle-grease phenomenon*. Histopathologically, psoriatic skin shows hyperkeratosis, parakeratosis, elongated rete ridges, dilated dermal capillaries, and increased metabolic activity in keratinocytes. Modern therapies, while effective in controlling symptoms, often fail to prevent recurrence and may produce significant adverse effects with prolonged use.^[11]

2. Kushta in Ayurveda

In *Ayurveda*, most skin disorders are categorized under the broad term *Kushta*, which includes various *Twak Vikaras*. The condition is described as *Tridoshaja* in nature, meaning that all three doshas—*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*—are involved, along with the affliction of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika* dhatus. Nidana (etiology) of *Kushta* includes: *Mithyahara* (improper dietary habits) such as consumption of incompatible food combinations (*Viruddha Ahara*) like milk with fish, excessive intake of *guru*, *snigdha*, and *drava* dravyas, and eating before previous meals are digested. *Mithya Vihara* (unwholesome lifestyle) including suppression of natural urges (especially vomiting), day sleep, excessive heat exposure, sexual intercourse immediately after meals, and sudden exposure to temperature extremes. *Manasika Nidana* (psychological factors) such as stress, fear, and emotional instability.

Kushta is further classified into *Mahakushta* (seven major types) and *Kshudra Kushta* (eleven minor types). Regardless of classification, it is never caused by a single dosha (*na caika doshajam kinchit*).^[12]

Kushta originates from vitiation of *Tridosha* along with *Tvak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Ambu*—together termed the *Sapta Dravya Sangraha*. The imbalance affects skin's color, texture, and sensation, producing deformities and chronic lesions. Unlike *Visarpa*, which spreads rapidly and penetrates deeper, *Kushta* progresses slowly and is generally confined to skin layers.

3. Kitibha Kushta: Ayurvedic and Modern Correlation^[13]

Kitibha Kushta is classified under *Kshudra Kushta* in both the *Brihatrayi* (Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata) and *Laghutrayi*. It is predominantly caused by aggravated *Vata* and *Kapha* doshas.

Lakshana according to classical texts:

Charaka: *Shyava Varna* (blackish-brown discoloration), *Khara Sparsha* (rough texture), *Parushata* (dryness).

Vagbhata: Adds *Kandu* (itching) and *Rukshata*.

Sushruta: Mentions *Snigdha*, *Krishna*, *Ugrakandu*, *Vrutta*, and *Ghana* lesions.



Modern correlation: Kitibha Kushta parallels psoriasis—a chronic, non-infectious inflammatory dermatosis characterized by coin-shaped lesions, erythematous plaques with silvery scales, and a tendency for recurrence.

4. Principles of Management in Ayurveda

Ayurveda follows a two-stage treatment protocol:

Shodhana (purification) – For *Raktaja Vikara*, *Virechana* is considered the most effective therapy, as it eliminates vitiated doshas from the root.

Shamana (palliation) – After purification, formulations are used for residual dosha pacification and tissue repair.

Kushtha Chikitsa also includes *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) in localized lesions, topical applications, and internal medications.

5. Chitrakadi Taila

Chitrakadi Taila, mentioned in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* under *Kshudra Roga Adhikara*, is a medicated oil indicated for *Kushta*, *Dadru*, and related conditions. It combines potent herbal roots and seeds in *Katu Taila* (mustard oil), known for deep tissue penetration (*Sukshma Yogavahi*) and its capacity to carry active phytochemicals to the site of pathology.

The pharmacodynamic attributes (*Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka*, *Karma*) of the ingredients are as follows^[14]:

Dravya	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Karma
Chitraka Moola (<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i>)	Katu	Laghu, Ruksha, Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	<i>Sothahara</i> , <i>Dipana</i> , <i>Pachana</i> , <i>Kaphavatahara</i> , <i>Kushtaghna</i> , antimicrobial, keratolytic
Danti Moola (<i>Baliospermum montanum</i>)	Kashaya, Tikta, Madhura	Guru	Ushna	Katu	<i>Kaphahara</i> , <i>Raktadosahara</i> , <i>Sodhaka</i> , <i>Vikasi</i> , <i>Kushtaghna</i> , purgative, detoxifying
Koshataki (<i>Luffa acutangula</i>)	Tikta, Katu, Alpa Kashaya	Tikshna, Laghu	Sheeta	Katu	<i>Kaphapittaghna</i> , <i>Malavisodhani</i> , <i>Vamanopaga</i> , <i>Tridosahara</i> , blood purifier, anti-pruritic
Katu Taila (Mustard oil)	Katu	Tikshna, Laghu, Snigdha	Ushna	Katu	<i>Kaphavatahara</i> , <i>Kandughna</i> , <i>Tvachya</i> , improves drug penetration, rubefacient, antimicrobial

IV. DISCUSSION

The pathogenesis (*Samprapti*) of *Kitibha Kushtha* reveals a clear sequential progression from *Nidana sevana* to disease manifestation. The patient's history of excessive intake of *Dadhi*, *Guru Ahara*, *Atimamsa*, and *Viruddha Ahara*, along with exposure to *Sheeta Maruta*, *Krodha*, and *Shoka*, reflects a combination of *Aharaja*, *Viharaja*, and *Manasika* causative factors. These factors disrupt *Agni Vyapara*, leading to *Tridosha Vikruti* in association with *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika* dhatus. The vitiated *Ahara Rasa* undergoes *Margavarodha* in *Twacha*, producing *Pidika* with *Kandu* and *Daha* throughout the body, ultimately resulting in *Kitibha Kushtha*.

From a therapeutic perspective, the intervention aimed to break this pathogenic chain at multiple levels—digestive correction, detoxification, dosha pacification, and local symptom alleviation. In this regard, *Chitrakadi Taila* presents a multifaceted approach grounded in both Ayurvedic principles and modern pharmacological understanding.

Role of Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*)

Chitraka possesses *Ushna Virya* and *Katu Rasa*, which stimulate *Agni* and boost circulation, aiding in the removal of *Ama* and morbid doshas from peripheral tissues. This directly addresses *Margavarodha* in *Twacha*. The plant's *Shothahara*, *Kushtahara*, and *Grahi* actions help reduce inflammation, manage excessive moisture, and restore normal skin texture.



Phytochemically, *P. zeylanica* contains a range of bioactive compounds including plumbagin (major constituent, ~1% in whole plant, higher in root), biplumbagin, chloroplumbagin, coumarins, triterpenoids, steroids, and anthraquinones. Plumbagin exhibits strong antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and immunomodulatory effects, protecting skin from microbial invasion, free radical damage, and toxin-induced injury. This aligns with the Ayurvedic concept of *Raktashodhana* and *Dosha Shamana* in *Kushtha Chikitsa*.^[15]

Role of Danti (*Baliospermum montanum*)

Danti, with its *Katu-Tikta Rasa*, *Tikshna-Sara-Vikashi Guna*, and *Ushna Virya*, acts as a potent *Shodhana Dravya*. Its *Virechana* property assists in eliminating vitiated doshas, especially *Kapha* and *Vata*, from their root. Although traditionally used internally for purgation, its incorporation in external formulations enhances local penetration and detoxification of obstructed channels (*Srotoshodhana*).

Classical texts such as *Kaiyadeva Nighantu* attribute *Vikashi Guna* to Danti, which is critical in breaking stagnation within skin tissues. Modern pharmacology supports its antimicrobial, anticancer, hepatoprotective, and anti-inflammatory effects, complementing its traditional indications in *Kushtha*, *Pandu*, and other *Raktaja* disorders.^[16]

Role of Koshataki (*Luffa acutangula*)

Koshataki exhibits *Tikta-Katu Rasa*, *Laghu* and *Tikshna Guna*, and *Sheeta Virya*, providing a balancing action by countering inflammatory heat while promoting *Kapha-Pitta* pacification. Its *Vamanopaga* property in classical usage suggests its role in expelling accumulated toxins. Pharmacological studies highlight its antimicrobial, antiparasitic, antioxidant, and immunomodulatory potential, directly relevant to chronic inflammatory skin conditions.^[17]

Role of Katu Taila (Mustard Oil)

Mustard oil, the *Sneha Dravya* in Chitrakadi Taila, has *Ushna*, *Snigdha*, and *Tikshna* qualities, counteracting *Vata*-induced dryness (*Rukshata*) and rigidity while enhancing drug penetration into deeper skin layers. Its *Lekhana* effect helps remove excessive scales characteristic of *Kitibha Kushtha*. Modern evidence attributes its antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant actions to compounds such as sinigrin and allyl isothiocyanate, which reduce local infection risk and inflammatory response.^[18]

Integrated Mode of Action in Samprapti Vighatana

The combination of Chitraka, Danti, Koshataki, and Katu Taila creates a synergistic effect:

Agni Deepana & Pachana – Restores digestive fire and prevents further *Ama* formation (*Chitraka*, *Danti*).

Srotoshodhana & Margavishodhana – Clears blocked channels in *Twacha*, alleviating itching and scaling (*Chitraka*, *Danti*, *Koshataki*).

Raktashodhana & Anti-inflammatory Action – Purifies blood and reduces inflammatory lesions (*Plumbagin*, *Mustard oil bioactives*).

Vata-Kapha Shamana – Balances dominant doshas in *Kitibha Kushtha*, improving lesion texture and color.

The use of Chitrakadi Taila addressed both the root cause and symptomatic expression of *Kitibha Kushtha*. The *Ushna-Tikshna* nature improves local circulation and skin metabolism, while the phytochemical richness ensures antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory protection. The formulation aligns with the classical *Samprapti Vighatana* model, targeting multiple pathogenic stages from *Agni Vyapara Vikruti* to *Margavarodha* in *Twacha*.

V. CONCLUSION

Chitrakadi Taila, with its *Ushna*, *Tikshna* and *Snigdha* properties along with bioactive compounds like plumbagin and sinigrin, helps in *Agni Deepana*, *Raktashodhana* and reducing inflammation in *Kitibha Kushtha*. It alleviates symptoms, corrects doshic imbalance, and supports long-term skin health by preventing recurrence.



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