

# Kuṣṭharoga in Gaḍurapurāṇam and Carakasamhitā

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**Abstract:** Ayurveda has considered all the skin diseases under a common head known as kuṣṭharoga. The term kuṣṭha, in English known as leprosy, literally means discoloration, disgrace, disfiguration of the normal skin texture. Amarakośa, the lexicographical work defines the term kuṣṭha as vyādhiḥ kuṣṭham pāribhāvyaṁ vyāpyaṁ pākalamutpalaṁ/ śamkhinī corapuṣṭī syātkeśinyatha vitunnakaḥ/<sup>i</sup> Ayurveda states that skin made up of seven layers against the modern thinking of three layers i.e. epidermis, dermis and hypo dermis. According to Śūsrutasamhitā, tvacā or skin has seven layers viz. avabhāṣiṇī, lohita, sveta, tāmra, vedinī, rohiṇī and māmsadhara. These layers, when get affected by imbalanced doṣas i.e. vital energetic forces of body; give rise to different skin diseases.<sup>ii</sup> A number of Ayurvedic treatises deal with the diseases of skin along with its healing system viz. Carakasamhitā, Bhaiṣajyaratnāvalī, Ātreyasamhitā etc. On the other hand, the second hymn of first anuvāk of first chapter of Atharvaveda has dealt with kuṣṭharoga and discussed regarding its symptoms and ailments. Besides these, Gaḍurapurāṇam also gives us an exhaustive discussion on kuṣṭharoga. The aim of this paper is to discuss about kuṣṭharoga regarding its types, symptoms and ailments on the basis of Carakasamhitā and Gaḍurapurāṇam.

**Keywords:** Kuṣṭharoga, Gaḍurapurāṇam, Carakasamhitā

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has considered all the skin diseases under a common head known as kuṣṭharoga. The term kuṣṭha, in English known as leprosy, literally means discoloration, disgrace, disfiguration of the normal skin texture. Amarakośa, the lexicographical work defines the term kuṣṭha as vyādhiḥ kuṣṭham pāribhāvyaṁ vyāpyaṁ pākalamutpalaṁ/ śamkhinī corapuṣṭī syātkeśinyatha vitunnakaḥ/<sup>iii</sup> Ayurveda states that skin made up of seven layers against the modern thinking of three layers i.e. epidermis, dermis and hypo dermis. According to Śūsrutasamhitā, tvacā or skin has seven layers viz. avabhāṣiṇī, lohita, sveta, tāmra, vedinī, rohiṇī and māmsadhara. These layers, when get affected by imbalanced doṣas i.e. vital energetic forces of body; give rise to different skin diseases.<sup>iv</sup> A number of Ayurvedic treatises deal with the diseases of skin along with its healing system viz. Carakasamhitā, Bhaiṣajyaratnāvalī, Ātreyasamhitā etc. On the other hand, the second hymn of first anuvāk of first chapter of Atharvaveda has dealt with kuṣṭharoga and discussed regarding its symptoms and ailments. Besides these, Gaḍurapurāṇam also gives us an exhaustive discussion on kuṣṭharoga. The aim of this paper is to discuss about kuṣṭharoga regarding its types, symptoms and ailments on the basis of Carakasamhitā and Gaḍurapurāṇam.

## 2. TYPES OF KUṢṬHAROGA:

The skin diseases are of many types. Both the works Carakasamhitā and Gaḍurapurāṇam divide kuṣṭharoga mainly in seven types. According to Carakasamhitā kuṣṭharoga can be divided into either seven or eighteen or many types.<sup>v</sup> But this work has only dealt with seven types which are as follows:

- i) Kāpālakuṣṭham,
- ii) Auḍumbarakuṣṭham ,
- iii) Maṇḍalakuṣṭham
- iv) Rṣyajihvakuṣṭham

- v) *Puṇḍarīkakuṣṭham* ,
- vi) *Sidhmakuṣṭham*
- vii) *Kākaṇakakuṣṭham*

On the other hand, *Gaḍurapurāṇam*<sup>vi</sup> also divides *kuṣṭharoga* into seven types. But these seven divisions are named after its' causes viz. *vātaja*, *pittaja*, *kaphaja*, *vātapittaja*, *vātaśleṣmaja*, *pittaśleṣmaja* and *sannipātaja*. Again, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* states different names of *kuṣṭharoga* which are appeared due to these seven causes-

- i) *Kāpāla kuṣṭham* ,
- ii) *Audumbarakuṣṭham*
- iii) *Maṇḍala kuṣṭham*
- iv) *Vicarccikākuṣṭham*
- v) *Ṛṣyajihvakuṣṭham* ,
- vi) *Carmakuṣṭham* ,
- vii) *Kiṭimakuṣṭham* ,
- viii) *Sidhmakuṣṭham* ,
- ix) *Alasakuṣṭham* ,
- x) *Vipādikākuṣṭham* ,
- xi) *Dadrukuṣṭham* ,
- xii) *Śatāruṣikuṣṭham* ,
- xiii) *Puṇḍarīkakuṣṭham* ,
- xiv) *Visphoṭakuṣṭham* ,
- xv) *Pāmākuṣṭham* and
- xvi) *Carmadalakuṣṭham*

Moreover, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* says that *Puṇḍarīka*, *Ṛṣyajihva* etc. seven types of skin diseases are called *mahakuṣṭha*.<sup>vii</sup> But this *Puranam* has not clarified the other five mahakuṣṭhas. It is to be noted here that *Atharvaveda*, the oldest literary source on medical science, has only mentioned two divisions of skin disease viz. *asthija* and *tanūja*; in the following verse:

*asthijasya kilāsasya tanūjasya ca yat tvaci/  
dūṣyā kṛtasya brahmaṇa lakṣma śvetamanīnaśam//<sup>viii</sup>*

### 3. CAUSES OF KUṢṬHAROGA:

When the vitiated doṣas cause the abnormal colour or complexion of the skin and produces the degeneration of tissue then this skin disorder is known as *kuṣṭharoga*. *Gaḍurapurāṇam* states that *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are the vital causes of all kinds of skin diseases - *sarveṣvapi tridoṣeṣu vyapadeśohadhikastataḥ//<sup>ix</sup>* . *Kuṣṭharoga* possesses when these three doṣas remaining in nerves affect the dhatus viz. skin, muscles, rasa, blood etc. of body.<sup>x</sup> Because of the *nidāna*, all the doṣas i.e., *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are imbalanced. If the *vātadoṣa* is prominent above *pitta* and *kapha* then the rasa is vitiated and it affects the skin only. Then, if *pittadoṣa* is prominent above the other two, then the *raktadhātu* is vitiated and this affects the blood. Again, if *kaphadoṣa* is prominent than the other two then *medadhātu* is vitiated and it affects muscles. *Gaḍurapurāṇam* mentions the causes of different *kuṣṭharogas* in the following way<sup>xi</sup>-

<b>Kuṣṭharogas</b>	<b>Causes</b>
<i>Kāpāla</i>	<i>vāta</i>
<i>Audumbara</i>	<i>pitta</i>
<i>Maṇḍala</i>	<i>kapha</i>
<i>Vicarccikā</i> and <i>Ṛṣyajihva</i> ,	<i>vāta</i> and <i>pitta</i>
<i>Carma</i> , <i>Kiṭima</i> , <i>Sidhma</i> , <i>Alasa</i> and <i>Vipādikā</i>	<i>vāta</i> and <i>śleṣmā</i>
<i>Dadru</i> , <i>Śatāruṣi</i> , <i>Puṇḍarīka</i> , <i>Visphoṭa</i> , <i>Pāmā</i> and <i>Carmadala</i>	<i>pitta</i> and <i>śleṣmā</i>

*Carakasamhitā* also gives the causes of skin diseases and says that *kuṣṭha* is caused by the morbidity of seven dravyas or factors- *sapta dravyāṇi kuṣṭhānām prakṛtirvikṛtimāpannāni bhavanti*<sup>xii</sup> They are the three doṣas viz. *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* which get vitiated by causative factors and four dhātus of the body, viz. *tvak* (skin), *māmsa* (muscle), *śoṇita* (blood) and *lasīkā* (lymph), which get vitiated by the morbid dhātus. Thus according to *Carakasamhitā* the seven types of *kuṣṭhas* are produced by the seven morbid dhātus which include three doṣas and therefore, *kuṣṭharoga* caused spreads to the entire body after its manifestation. *Carakasamhitā* gives the same causes of the *Kāpāla*, *Auḍumbara*, *Maṇḍala*, *Rṣyajihva* and *Puṇḍarīka* *kuṣṭharogas* as *Gaḍurapurāṇam*. Another two skin diseases, which are part of seven types of skin diseases given by Caraka, are *Sidhma* and *Kākaṇaka*. Caraka states that the former skin disorder arises due to *śleṣmā* and *vāta*. Then, *Kākaṇakakuṣṭham* arises due to the involvement of all the three doṣas.

#### 4. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF KUṢṬHAROGAS:

Caraka deals with an exhaustive discussion on the signs and symptoms of skin disorders. Caraka at first discusses the premonitory symptoms of *kuṣṭharoga* which are as follows<sup>xiii</sup> -

a) *asvedanamatisvedanam*- no sweating or more sweating, b) *pārūṣyamatiślakṣaṇatā*- having rough edges, thin and slightly elevated in purity. c) *vaivarṇyam*- discoloration of the skin, d) *kaṇḍūh*- severe itching, e) *nistodaḥ*- prickling sensation, f) *sutātā*- there is excessive numbness in body, g) *paridāhaḥ*- burning sensation, h) *pariharṣo lomaharṣaḥ*- they are covered with horrent hairs with excessive pains. i) *ūṣāyaṇam*- less of discharge of pus and serous exudation.

The signs and symptoms of seven *kuṣṭharogas*, given by Caraka, are as follows<sup>xiv</sup>

1. *Kāpālakuṣṭham*: *Kāpāla* type of *kuṣṭha* is dry, red in colour, rough skin surface, uneven shape, with rough edges, thin, slightly elevated at the periphery. This type of skin disorder is characterized by numbness. The effected skin patches are covered erect hairs and are associated with severe pain. There is less itching, burning sensation, pus discharge and serous exudation in this *Kāpālakuṣṭham*. It occurs instantaneously. It is infected with germs and appears like pieces of earthen pot with black or red colour.
2. *Auḍumbarakuṣṭham*: This *kuṣṭha* is coppery in colour and associated with hair of coppery colour. It is very thick and associated with pus, blood and serous exudation in large quantity. This skin disorder is also associated with itching, sticky exudation, sloughing burning sensation and suppuration. *Auḍumbara*'s causation, manifestation, and ulceration are instantaneous.
3. *Maṇḍalakuṣṭham*: *Maṇḍala* type of *kuṣṭha* is white and red in colour and is covered with white hairs in large colour. It is associated with excessive sticky exudation and itching and infested with numerous germs. *Maṇḍalakuṣṭha*'s causation, manifestation and ulceration are sluggish and it is round in shape.
4. *Rṣyajihvakūṣṭham* : This type of *kuṣṭha* is rough and reddish in colour and dark brown in the centre as well as in the periphery. It is of blue, yellow and coppery shade. There is less of itching, sticky exudation and germs in this skin disorder. *Rṣyajihva* is associated with excessive burning sensation, cutting and piercing pain and suppuration. In this disease one suffers from pain as if inflicted with bristles.
5. *Puṇḍarīkakūṣṭham*: It is of white and red shade. This type of *kuṣṭha*'s border is red and is covered with red lines and vessels. There is swelling and discharge of thick blood, pus and serum in excessive quantity. *Puṇḍarīka* is characterized by itching, germ, infestation, burning, sensation and suppuration. It appears like the petals of lotus flower.
6. *Sidhmakuṣṭham*: *Sidhmakuṣṭham* is rough and reddish in colour, in the periphery it is fissured and in the centre it is smooth. It appears in large number and there is less of pain, itching, burning sensation, pus and serous discharge. This type of *kuṣṭha*'s causation of

ulceration is sluggish and there is less of germs infestation. It appears like flower of *alābu*.

7. *Kākaṇakakuṣṭham* : *Kākaṇaka* is of *Kākantika* in colour in the beginning. Subsequently, symptoms of all types of *kuṣṭhas* are manifested in *Kākaṇakakuṣṭham*. Therefore, characteristics of all types of *kuṣṭhas* are found in *Kākaṇaka*.

In *Gaḍurapurāṇam* also we come across the symptoms of the above mentioned *kuṣṭharogas* in a concise way. Besides the above mentioned skin diseases, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* provides us the symptoms of *Vicarccikā*, *Carma*, *Kiṭima*, *Vipādikā*, *Dadru* and *Pāmā* which are as follows<sup>xv</sup>

1. *Vicarccikākuṣṭham*: It is characterized by blackish brown eruption, itching sensation and excessive exudation. .
2. *Carmakuṣṭham*: In this skin disorder, the skin over the patch becomes thick like the skin of the elephant.
3. *Kiṭimakuṣṭham*: It is blackish brown in colour. *Kiṭima* is also rough and hard in touch like a scar tissue.
4. *Vipādikākuṣṭham* : It cracks in palms and soles of feet as well as excruciating pain.
5. *Dadrukuṣṭham*: It is characterized by itching sensation, redness, pimples and circular patches with elevated edges.
6. *Pāmākuṣṭham* : This skin disease is characterized by excessive itching, boils, eruptions, which are white, reddish or blackish brown in colour.

##### 5. TREATMENT SYSTEM OF KUṢṬHAROGAS:

The *Cikitsāsthānam* of *Carakasamhitā* imparts us some solutions regarding *Kuṣṭharogas* as given below<sup>xvi</sup>

1. Patient suffering from *Kuṣṭha* dominated by *vāta* is administered with herbal ghee internally.
2. Patient suffering from *Kuṣṭha* dominated by *kapha* is administered with *Vamana* i.e., emetic therapy.
3. Patient suffering from *kuṣṭha* dominated by *pitta* is given *Virecana* i.e., purgation therapy.
4. *Raktamokṣaṇa* i.e., bloodletting therapy is done with a coarse device in case of *kuṣṭha* with mild symptoms.
5. Patient suffering from leprosy with more vitiated *doṣas* is given *Śodhana* therapies for several times, with a lot of care.
6. Excessive elimination of *doṣas* might weaken the patient and the aggravated *vāta* might endanger patient's life instantaneously. After the elimination of *doṣas* the gastrointestinal track (by *Vamana* and *Virecana*) and *Raktamokṣaṇa* from blood, the patient is given *sneha* i.e., oil, ghee etc. to drink.
7. As *vāyu* gets aggravated and the patient becomes weak soon after the elimination therapies which condition will be the administration of *Snehāpana* i.e., oleation therapy.
8. After administration of above therapies, the patient suffering from *kuṣṭha* given treatment as – these therapies are to be repeated again and again, the physician should not administer therapies to eliminate large quantity of morbid *doṣas* at a time. If it is done, then it might weaken the patient and endanger his life. This applies to vitiation of one or more *doṣas*.
9. Oleation therapy is given only after the morbid *doṣas* are eliminated from the body. Without that, administration of oleation therapy might aggravate the disease.

Moreover, *Carakasamhitā* also discusses about the herbs used in above mentioned therapies. On the other hand, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* prescribes some easily applicable remedies for *kuṣṭharogas* which are as follows<sup>xvii</sup> -

1. Patient suffering from *kuṣṭha* should take *ribṛt*, *dastī*, *triphalā*, *manaḥsilā* and *marīca* plants boiling with oil.
2. Every type of *kuṣṭha* patient grinding *guḍa*, *audana* and five *śivā* all together should apply on effected parts of body.
3. Patient suffering from *kuṣṭha* should massage body with oil then apply the seed of *karavī*.
4. One can cure from *kuṣṭha* if applies on body the mixture of *haridrā*, *raktacandana*, *rasnā*, *guḍuci* and *tagara*.
5. One can cure from *Dadrukuṣṭha* if applies on body the mixture of *viḍaṅga*, *kuḍa*, *haridā* and *saṣarpa* with urinal of cow.
6. One can cure from *Dadru*, *Kiṭima* and *Sidhma* *kuṣṭha*s if applies the mixture of *āragvadha* and *āranāla* plants on body.

Besides the above mentioned remedies of *kuṣṭharoga*, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* gives lots of prescription for skin diseases.

From the discussion presented above it can be said that both the treatises viz. *Carakasamhitā* and *Gaḍurapurāṇam* present us an exhaustive discussion on *kuṣṭharoga*. A patient, who suffers from skin disorders, can use these treatises as hand book at time of treatment. *Kuṣṭharoga* is a dangerous disease and therefore, *Gaḍurapurāṇam* has stated that one, who commits sins, suffers from *kuṣṭharoga*.<sup>xviii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> *Amarakośa*, II.126, ed. by Vamanacharya Jhalakikara, Cosmo publication, New Delhi, 2004

<sup>ii</sup> <https://googleweblight.com>

<sup>iii</sup> *Amarakośa*, II.126, ed. by Vamanacharya Jhalakikara, Cosmo publication, New Delhi, 2004

<sup>iv</sup> <https://googleweblight.com>

<sup>v</sup> *sa sapata vidho 'ṣṭādaśavidho 'pi vā bhavati*// *Carakasamhitā*, II.5.4, ed. by Vaidya Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Chaukhambha Publication, Varanasi, 2013

<sup>vi</sup> *Gaḍurapurāṇam*, I.168.6-7, ed. by Acharya Pancanana Tarkaratna, Navabharat Publishers, Kolkata, 1992

<sup>vii</sup> *puṇḍarīkarṣyajihve ca mahākuṣṭhānu sapta tu*, *ibid*, v.10

<sup>viii</sup> *Carakasamhitā*, II.5.4

<sup>ix</sup> *Gaḍurapurāṇam*, I.168.7

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid*, vv. 1-3

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*, vv. 7-9

<sup>xii</sup> *Carakasamhitā*, II.5.3

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*, II.5.7

<sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid*, v.8

<sup>xv</sup> *Gaḍurapurāṇam*, I.168.18-27

<sup>xvi</sup> *Carakasamhitā*, VI.7.39-44

<sup>xvii</sup> *Gaḍurapurāṇam*, I.175.14-27

<sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid*, 168.1