

Exploring Koshtha and Koshthanga according to Sushruta and their
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The concepts of Koshtha (digestive tract) and Koshthanga (viscera and associated organs) are fundamental in Ayurveda, particularly in the teachings of Acharya Sushruta. Koshtha refers to the gastrointestinal system responsible for digestion, absorption, and excretion, while Koshthanga includes vital organs such as the stomach, intestines, liver, pancreas, and spleen, which contribute to metabolic and physiological processes. Sushruta classifies Koshtha into three types - Mridu (soft), Madhya (moderate), and Krura (hard) - based on the dominance of Doshas and individual Prakriti, influencing digestion, bowel habits, and disease susceptibility.[1] Modern medical science correlates Koshtha with the gastrointestinal tract (GIT), including its structure and function. Disorders related to gut motility, digestive enzyme secretion, and microbiota balance, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), dyspepsia, and constipation, can be understood through Ayurvedic Koshtha assessment. Similarly, Koshthanga can be compared with the anatomical and functional significance of visceral organs, including the liver's detoxification role, pancreatic enzyme secretion, and intestinal absorption functions. Sushruta's emphasis on maintaining Agni (digestive fire) aligns with modern concepts of metabolism, gut-brain interaction, and the role of diet in overall health. By integrating Ayurvedic principles such as Ahara-Vihara (dietary and lifestyle modifications), Agni Deepana (digestive fire stimulation), and Panchakarma (detoxification therapies) with modern gastroenterology, a holistic approach to digestive health and disease prevention can be developed. This review explores the clinical relevance of Koshtha and Koshthanga, highlighting their significance in both Ayurvedic and modern medical perspectives.

Keywords: Koshtha, Koshthanga, Ayurveda, Digestion, Gastrointestinal Health, Modern Medicine

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Introduction

In Ayurveda, the terms *Koshtha* and *Koshthanga* hold significant importance in understanding the physiological and pathological aspects of the human body. *Sushruta*, the renowned ancient surgeon, has elaborated on these concepts in the *Sushruta Samhita*, providing insights into their anatomical and functional relevance. This article examines the concepts of *Koshtha* and *Koshthanga* described by *Sushruta* and relates them to current medical knowledge.

Definition of *Koshtha* according to *Sushruta*

स्थानान्यामाग्नपक्वानामूत्रस्यरुधिरस्यच॥
हृदुण्डुकःफुफ्फुसश्चकोष्ठइत्यभिधीयते॥(सु.चि.2/12)

Acharya Sushruta describes the *Koshtha* as a cavity or region that contains the following organs:-

Amasaya, *Agnyaashaya*, *Pakvasaya*, *Mutrashaya*, *Rudhirashaya*, *Hridaya*, *Unduka*, *Phuphusa*. [2]

The term *Koshtha* refers to the body cavity that houses vital organs responsible for digestion, metabolism, and other essential bodily functions.

Sushruta defines *Koshtha* as the region that contains the primary structures involved in nourishment and elimination, broadly including the gastrointestinal tract and associated organs.

Types of *Koshtha*

तत्रमृदुः, कूरो, मध्यमइतित्रिविधःकोष्ठोभवति।
तत्रबहुपित्तोमृदुः, बहुवातश्लेष्माकूरः, समदोषोमध्यमः॥(सु.-
चि.33/21)

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Koshtha* is classified based on the predominance of *Doshas*:

1. *Mridu Koshtha* (Soft Bowel) - *Pitta* dominance, resulting in frequent and loose bowel movements.
2. *Krura Koshtha* (Hard Bowel) - Dominated by *Vata* & *Kapha*, leading to dryness, hard stools, and constipation.
3. *Madhya Koshtha* (Balanced Bowel) - *Tridosha* balance (Sama Doshas), leading to normal digestion and bowel habits. [3]

This classification has clinical relevance in predicting a person's response to medications, dietary habits, and disease susceptibility.

Koshthanga - Components of *Koshtha*

Koshthanga denotes the internal organs that are located within the *Koshtha* cavity. As per *Sushruta Samhita*, the following major structures are considered *Koshthangas*;

1. *Amashaya* - The organ that holds improperly or partially digested food - where the initial phase of digestion occurs - can be identified as the stomach or the upper section of the digestive tract, extending from the mouth to the stomach. [4]

2. *Agni-Ashaya* - Site of fire, though the *Pittasthan* (place of *Pitta*) i.e., The whole digestive tract, responsible for the digestion of food, should be regarded as the seat of *Agni* - manifested in the body as *Pitta*. These include the stomach, small intestine, pancreas, liver, and others, with the pancreas being primarily regarded as the seat of [5]

3. *Pakwashaya* - The fifth *Kala* is called *Prisadhara* and being situated in the *Koshtha* (abdomen) serves to separate faecal refuse in (*Pakvasaya*) lower gut. [6] Organ accommodating digested food, Intestines (While primarily referring to the large intestine, the term *Pakwashaya* can also encompass both the small and large intestines, covering the region from the end of the stomach to the anal opening) can be referred to as *Pakwashaya*.

4. *Mutrashaya* - *Mutrashaya* mainly refers to the urinary bladder, which stores urine, but the term can also include the entire urinary system, extending from the kidneys to the bladder. [7]

5. *Raktashaya* - The organs responsible for blood formation, with the liver and spleen identified as *Rudhirashaya* or [8]

6. *Hrudaya* - The organ related to the circulation of blood, i.e., The heart is responsible for distributing blood, oxygen, and essential nutrients to all parts of the body. [9]

7. *Unduka* - The *Unduka* can be identified as the cecum, or the initial part of the large intestine, which receives digested food and initiates the process of stool formation. [10]

8. *Phuphusa* - The organ or organs related to the respiratory mechanism, the Lungs. [11]

This can be supported by the fact that *Sushruta* provides select examples of the organs within the *Koshtha* rather than listing all of them.

Hrudaya and *Phuphusa* - the heart and lungs - are among the organs mentioned, and they are the principal structures located within the *Uro-guha*, or chest cavity. *Sushruta* also identifies structures such as *Agnyashaya*, *Amashaya*, *Pakwashaya*, *Rudhirashaya*, *Mutrashaya*, *Hrudaya*, and *Unduka*.

Clinical Correlation with Modern Medicine

From a modern anatomical perspective, *Koshtha* represents the abdominal and thoracic cavities housing the digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and excretory organs. The functional attributes described in *Ayurveda* closely correlate with modern physiological concepts:-

Amasaya and *Pakvasaya* correspond to the stomach and intestines, respectively, where digestion and nutrient absorption occur.

Agnyashaya - Stomach, Small intestine, Pancreas, Liver etc., we should mainly consider Pancreas as the site of *Agni*.

Mutrashaya - the urinary bladder, crucial for waste elimination.

Rudhirashaya - *Yakrit* and *Pleeha* are the liver and spleen, vital for detoxification and hematological functions.

Hridaya - aligns with the heart, responsible for pumping blood throughout the body.

Unduka - The organ then receives the digested food and starts forming the stools, the Cecum or the beginning part of the large intestine should be considered as *Unduka*.

Phuphusa - matches the lungs, facilitating gas exchange.

Discussion

Concept of *Koshtha* & *Koshthanga* in *Ayurveda*, as elaborated by *Sushruta*, plays crucial role in understanding the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the human body. This discussion aims to explore the significance of these concepts in *Ayurveda* and their relevance in modern medical science.

Koshtha - Its Functional and Anatomical Importance

Sushruta describes *Koshtha* as abdominal & thoracic cavities, which house vital organs responsible for digestion, metabolism, circulation, and elimination.

The classification of *Koshtha* into *Krura* (Hard), *Mridu* (Soft), and *Madhya* (Balanced) highlights individual variations in bowel habits, which can be clinically correlated with digestive health, motility disorders, and response to treatments.

Clinical Correlation

Krura Koshtha (*Vata* Dominance) - Correlates with chronic constipation, dry stools, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS-C).

Mridu Koshtha (*Pitta* Dominance) - Often seen in individuals with hyperacidity, loose stools, and inflammatory bowel conditions.

Madhya Koshtha (Balanced) - Reflects a well-regulated digestion and metabolism, similar to an individual with normal gut microbiota and peristalsis.

Koshthanga - Understanding Organ Function in *Ayurveda*

Term *Koshthanga* refers to organs within *Koshtha* that perform essential functions. These include *Amasaya* (Stomach), *Pakvasaya* (Large Intestine), *Hridaya* (Heart), *Yakrit* (Liver), *Pleeha* (Spleen), *Phuphusa* (Lungs), and *Mutrashaya* (Bladder).

Clinical Relevance

Amasaya and *Pakvasaya* - Related to gastric and intestinal functions, similar to modern concepts of digestion, absorption, and gut health.

Hridaya - Traditionally regarded as the seat of *Ojas*, the heart aligns with modern cardiology in its central role in circulation and sustaining vitality.

Yakrit and *Pleeha* - They exhibit functional similarities to hepatic and splenic systems by participating in blood filtration, detoxification, and immune system modulation.

Phuphusa (Lungs) - Responsible for oxygenation, directly correlating with modern respiratory physiology.

Mutrashaya (Bladder) - Manages fluid excretion, paralleling urinary system functions.

Integrating Ayurvedic and Modern Perspectives

Sushruta's approach to *Koshtha* and *Koshthanga* aligns closely with modern gastrointestinal, cardiopulmonary, and metabolic physiology.

Ayurveda's emphasis on digestion (*Agni*) and waste elimination (*Mala Nirgamana*) is supported by contemporary research on gut health, microbiome balance, and metabolic syndromes.

Clinical Implications

- Personalized Medicine: The *Ayurvedic* classification of *Koshtha* helps in predicting a patient's response to food, medications, and therapies, much like modern pharmacogenomics.
- Preventive Health: The understanding of *Koshthanga* aids in the early diagnosis and prevention of diseases like liver disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic imbalances.
- Approach Holistic: *Ayurveda's* emphasis on diet, lifestyle, and detoxification (*Panchakarma*) can be integrated with modern medical practices for comprehensive patient care.

Conclusion

शरीरचैव शास्त्रे च दृष्टार्थः स्यादद्विशारदः।
दृष्टश्रुताभ्यां सन्देहमवापोह्य चरेत् क्रियाः ॥ (सु.शा.5/63)

The physician will become greatly learned only after observing the body carefully, study of the science, getting rid of doubts by personal observation and study of texts, he should carry on his activities.[13]

Rachna Sharir or Human Anatomy is the basis for any medical science. Understanding the construction of the human body requires knowledge of its fundamental components: cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems. In *Ayurvedic* anatomy, the concept of *Koshtha* offers a detailed understanding of the body's internal cavities and the visceral organs within them. The three *Doshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* - are dynamic forces that move throughout the body. Each *Dosha* is associated with specific tissues and organs where it predominantly resides and governs physiological functions. For instance, organs like the lungs (*Phuphusa*) and stomach (*Amashaya*) serve as principal sites for *Kapha*; the large intestine (*Pakwashaya*) is the primary seat of *Vata*; and organs such as the navel (*Nabhi*), stomach (*Amashaya*), pancreas (*Agnyashaya*), and heart (*Hrudaya*) are key locations for *Pitta*. A thorough understanding of *Koshtha* is essential for comprehending the physiological roles and interactions of these *doshas* within the body.

Sushruta's description of *Koshtha* and *Koshthanga* serves as a foundational concept in *Ayurveda*, providing insights into the body's functional anatomy and its clinical relevance. Understanding these concepts helps *Ayurvedic* practitioners assess digestion, metabolism, and disease pathology, offering a holistic approach to treatment. When correlated with modern medicine, it reinforces the timeless wisdom of *Ayurveda* in understanding human physiology and health management.

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