



SIGNIFICANCE OF "KOSHTHA" AND "AAMASAYA" OF AYURVEDIC AND VEDIC LITERATURE IN PRESENT ERA

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ABSTRACT In *Ayurvedic* medicine, *Koshtha* and *Amasaya* represent foundational concepts of gastrointestinal physiology, digestion, and systemic health. While *Koshtha* encompasses the entire alimentary enclosure—from stomach to large intestine—*Amasaya* refers specifically to the stomach as the seat of initial digestion (*Jatharagni*) and *Pitta* regulation. This paper aims to synthesize classical *Ayurvedic* and *Vedic* literature to elucidate the functional significance of *Koshtha* and *Amasaya*, map their roles to modern embryological structures (foregut/midgut/hindgut), and explore their relationship with the enteric nervous system and metabolic pathophysiology.

KEYWORDS : *Koshtha*, *Amasaya*, *Jatharagni*, *Dosha*, gut–brain axis, *Ayurveda*, gastrointestinal physiology.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of *Koshtha* and *Aamashaya* are not only central to *Ayurvedic* classical texts such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, but are also referenced in a functional and philosophical context in the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, and *Upanishads*. This wide-ranging textual presence underscores their critical role in the understanding of human physiology and pathology from an *Ayurvedic* perspective.

Koshtha: A Functional Overview

In *Ayurveda*, *Koshtha* refers to the functional state of the gastrointestinal tract, particularly concerning the digestion and assimilation of food. Its significance extends across:

- Dietary assimilation (*Ahara Grahana*)
- Dosha dynamics (*Dosha Avastha*)
- Therapeutic planning (*Chikitsa Siddhanta*)

This makes *Koshtha* an essential diagnostic and therapeutic consideration in *Ayurvedic* medicine.

Practical Interpretations Of Koshtha

Koshtha is contextually associated with several anatomical and physiological entities:

- *Aamasaya* (stomach)
- *Mahanani* (large intestine or colon)
- *Mahasrotas* (the principal channels of food transport and transformation)

The reference to *Mahasrotas* as part of *Koshtha* reflects its systemic role in nutrient distribution, while terms like *Aashaya*—seen in descriptions of various *Srotas* (bodily channels)—highlight its functional zoning within the body.

From these associations, it can be inferred that *Koshtha* may be equated with '*Mahashaya*', representing the broader functional space where food is held, digested (*Apakwa*), and subsequently absorbed (*Pakwa*). Therefore, it may be regarded as '*Annasthana*' or '*Amashaya*', the seat of food transformation. This reinforces its functional and clinical importance in *Ayurvedic* physiology.

Types of Koshtha¹

1. Role of Koshtha in Digestive Function

According to *Ayurveda*, the functional nature of an individual's *Koshtha* determines the efficiency of digestion and assimilation of food. Based on the ease or difficulty of gastrointestinal processing, *Koshtha* is classified into three types:

- *Mridu Koshtha* (Soft Bowel): Characterized by rapid and easy digestion. Even mild purgative therapies produce immediate effects.
- *Madhyama Koshtha* (Moderate Bowel): Denotes balanced digestive function with normal stool consistency and timing.
- *Krura Koshtha* (Hard Bowel): Marked by delayed digestion and a tendency toward constipation.

2. Relation of Koshtha to Dosha Dominance (Prakriti)²

Koshtha is closely associated with an individual's *prakriti*—the constitutional predominance of the three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*):

- *Vata*-predominant individuals typically exhibit *Krura Koshtha*, leading to irregular or hard bowel movements.
- *Pitta*-dominant individuals tend to have *Madhyama Koshtha*, reflecting balanced digestion.
- *Kapha*-predominant individuals are generally associated with *Mridu Koshtha*, marked by soft and frequent stools.

3. Therapeutic Relevance of Koshtha³

Koshtha plays a critical role in clinical decision-making in *Ayurveda*. It influences:

- The selection and intensity of *Panchakarma* procedures such as *Virechana* (purgation), *Vamana* (emesis), and *Basti* (enema).
- The dosage and potency of internal medications.
- The overall treatment protocol is tailored for the patient.

4. Scriptural References to Koshtha in Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads

References to *Koshtha* are not confined to *Ayurvedic* texts; they are also present in *Vedic* and post-*Vedic* literature, reflecting its significance beyond clinical medicine.

- The *Atharva Veda* contains references to *Annavaḥ Srotas* (channels responsible for food transport) and digestion, indicating an early understanding of gastrointestinal physiology.
- The *Upanishads* describe the role of internal spaces and pathways (e.g., *Srotas*) in the movement of *Prana* (vital energy), suggesting the spiritual and physiological importance of *Koshtha*.
- In the *Puranas*, descriptions of bodily purification through ascetic practices (*Tapas*) and enjoyment (*Bhoga*) often allude to internal physiological processes related to digestion and elimination, again tying back to the functional essence of *Koshtha*.

Philosophical And Scriptural References

In *Atharva Veda*, early references to digestion and *Annavaḥ Srotas* suggest an understanding of physiological pathways linked to *Koshtha*. The *Upanishads* metaphorically describe the body's inner workings—including digestion and vitality (*Prana*)—through concepts like *Aashaya* and *Pachaka Agni*, aligning with the *Ayurvedic* framework.

Such cross-textual consistency between *Ayurveda* and *Vedic* literature signifies a holistic integration of bodily function, spiritual understanding, and therapeutic science. Hence, the concept of *Koshtha* transcends mere anatomical boundaries and reflects a deeper functional, energetic, and clinical entity in the body.

Significance Of Aamasaya

Following the understanding of *Koshtha*, attention is drawn toward the *Aamasaya* (stomach), which holds a pivotal place in *Ayurvedic* physiology.

Location⁴

The location of the stomach has been described by ancient scholars in various ways. It is generally stated to be situated between the navel (umbilicus) and the nipples of the body. Moreover, detailed references to the structure and function of the stomach are extensively found in classical medical texts.

Described as the seat of *Pitta* and primary site of digestion.

Functionally includes the stomach and proximal small intestine.

Associated with *Annavaha Srotas* and *Ama* formation when *Agni* is impaired.

In classical *Ayurvedic* texts, the *Amasaya* is identified as the primary site of *Pitta Dosha* and is also described as the seat of *Jatharagni*, the principal digestive fire. This digestive fire is responsible for the initial breakdown and transformation of food, marking *Amasaya* as a central organ in the process of digestion and metabolism.

Acharya Chakrapani, in his commentary on classical *Ayurvedic* texts, has delineated the structure of the stomach (*Amasaya*) into two anatomical divisions⁵:

1. The '*Urdhva Amasaya*' (upper portion), which primarily stores ingested food.
2. The '*Adho Amasaya*' (lower portion), where initial digestion begins.

From the above-mentioned concept, it can be inferred that the process of digestion primarily begins in the lower part of the stomach (*Adho Amasaya*), as described in *Ayurvedic* texts. This notion appears to bear a certain similarity to the modern scientific understanding of digestion. According to gastrointestinal embryology, the digestive tract is derived from three major regions: the foregut, midgut, and hindgut. Each of these segments plays a specific role in the digestive process, functioning in coordination with the enteric nervous system (ENS)

Gastrointestinal embryology⁶**Foregut:**

- Esophagus, stomach, liver, pancreas, proximal duodenum.
- Supplied by the coeliac trunk.
- Functional role of the foregut is Ingestion, enzymatic digestion

Midgut:

- Duodenum (distal to bile duct), jejunum, ileum, cecum, appendix, ascending colon, proximal 2/3 of transverse colon.
- Supplied by the superior mesenteric artery.
- The midgut is primarily responsible for digestion and absorption—functions closely aligned with the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Amasaya* as the seat of *Jatharagni* and *Pitta*.

Hindgut:

- Distal 1/3 of transverse colon, descending colon, sigmoid colon, rectum, upper anal canal.
- Supplied by the Inferior mesenteric artery.
- *Amasaya* aligns most closely with the *foregut and proximal midgut*—especially the stomach and upper small intestine, where enzymatic digestion and *Agni* activity are most intense.

Enteric nervous system⁷

The ENS is a vast network of neurons and glia embedded in the gut wall, often called the “second brain”. The enteric nervous system is capable of working independently of the central nervous system.

When it needs to communicate with the brain, it communicates through the vagus nerve and the gut Brain axis. Like the nervous system itself, the enteric nervous system synthesizes serotonin, dopamine, opioids for pain, etc. It monitors acidity, promotes bowel movement, and monitors our defense levels.

It Comprises Two Main Plexuses:

1. Myenteric (Auerbach's) Plexus –It extends throughout the entire gastrointestinal tract, from the esophagus to the rectum. It controls gut motility; located between longitudinal and circular muscle layers.

2. Submucosal (Meissner's) Plexus –It extends along the entire length of the digestive system, from the esophagus to the anus, but is most prominent in the small and large intestines. It regulates secretion and blood flow; found in the submucosa.

MATERIAL AND METHODS**Literature Review:**

By reviewing literature, *Brihattrayi* (*Charaka Samhita*, *Shushruta Samhita*, *Astanghardiyam*, *Laghutrayi* (*Madhava Nidana*, *Sharangdhar Samhita*, and *Bhavyaprakash*) many commentaries it is found that the digestion process that explain in the *Ayurveda* is quite similar to that explain in the modern sciences.

Many research journals, and dissertation had been published on various scientific platform such as *shodhaganga*, *shodhagangotri*, etc.

RESULT

Based on the associations discussed, it becomes evident that *Ayurveda* acknowledges a concept analogous to the Enteric Nervous System (ENS). While modern science defines the ENS as a complex network of neurons governing gastrointestinal function, *Ayurvedic* texts describe a subtle, intrinsic intelligence within the gut—often linked to *Agni* (digestive fire), *Vata dosha*, and the *Manovaha Srotas* (channels of the mind). *Amasaya* aligns most closely with the *foregut and proximal midgut*—especially the stomach and upper small intestine, where enzymatic digestion and *Agni* activity are most intense.

The ENS mirrors *Koshtha's* functional unity, while its regional specialization aligns with *dosic sthanas*:

- *Vata*: Myenteric plexus (motility, peristalsis).
- *Pitta*: Neurotransmitter secretion (serotonin, acetylcholine).
- *Kapha*: Glial cells, mucosal immunity, gut-brain buffering.

The ENS is the *Koshtha's* inner *buddhi*—a self-regulating intelligence that mirrors the *manas-prana-agni* triad.

From these associations, it can be inferred that *Koshtha* may be equated with '*Mahashaya*', representing the broader functional space where food is held, digested (*Apakwa*), and subsequently absorbed (*Pakwa*). Therefore, it may be regarded as '*Annasthana*' or '*Amashaya*', the seat of food transformation. This reinforces its functional and clinical importance in *Ayurvedic* physiology.

Aspect	Kostha	ENS
Central domain	Gastro-intestinal trunk region	Entire gut wall
Digestive regulation	Manages digestion/elimination (qualitatively)	Controls motility, secretion, absorption
Indirect correlation	Stool pattern indicates functional state	ENS activity drives stool movement

DISCUSSION

The present integrative analysis underscores that *Koshtha* and *Amasaya* constitute a sophisticated, functional model of gastrointestinal physiology within *Ayurveda*, with compelling parallels in contemporary biomedical science. *Koshtha*, as a comprehensive digestive enclosure, frames metabolic, absorptive, excretory, and neuro-regulatory processes across a spectrum of organs and channels. Its typology (*Krura*, *Madhyama*, *Mridu*) offers practical diagnostic and therapeutic insights, reflecting *Dosha*-specific metabolic phenotypes. Meanwhile, *Amasaya* represents the metabolic ignition chamber—an organ-level correlate to the foregut/midgut in modern anatomy—where digestive fire (*Jatharagni*) governs enzymatic breakdown and integrity of metabolic pathways.

Classical texts and *Vedic–Upanishadic* references enrich this anatomical/physiological view with energetic and spiritual dimensions, affirming *Koshtha* as a site of *Prana* flow and systemic balance. Moreover, mapping these frameworks to modern enteric neurobiology and embryology reveals convergence in understanding gut motility, secretion, and neurochemical signaling.

Future research should focus on quantitative assessment of *Koshtha* typologies in relation to gut–brain axis biomarkers, enteric neurochemical profiles, and microbiome composition. Such interdisciplinary inquiry may validate therapeutic approaches (e.g., *Panchakarma*, digestive modulators) informed by classical *Ayurvedic* diagnostics, and advance integrated strategies for gastrointestinal and metabolic health.

The concept of *Koshtha*, as derived from both classical *Ayurveda* and *Vedic*-philosophical texts, represents not just a structural entity but a dynamic physiological system. Its linkage to organs like the *Amasaya*, references in *Mahasrotas*, and association with *Anna-vaha*

Srotas all point toward its centrality in digestion, disease pathogenesis, and treatment planning. Recognizing *Koshtha* as *Mahashaya* or *Annashaya* is not only semantically accurate but functionally justified, reflecting its pivotal role in sustaining life and health.

CONCLUSION

Recent interdisciplinary observations suggest notable parallels between the *Ayurvedic* concepts of *Koshtha* and *Amasaya* and the structural-functional domains of gastrointestinal embryology and the enteric nervous system (ENS). Specifically:

Embryological Convergence:

The foregut region, which gives rise to the stomach and proximal intestines, shares a unified vascular and neural supply. This anatomical convergence mirrors the *Ayurvedic* delineation of *dosa*-specific loci—such as *Pitta* predominance in the *Amasaya* and *Vata* in the *Koshtha*. The embryological localization of organ systems thus appears to reflect the *Ayurvedic* mapping of functional zones.

Neurofunctional Analogies With ENS:

The ENS, often termed the "second brain," exhibits region-specific regulatory functions—motility, secretion, absorption, and immune modulation. These differentiated roles resonate with the *Ayurvedic* understanding of *dosa*-based physiological governance. For instance, the ENS's modulation of peristalsis aligns with *Vata*'s kinetic role, while its influence on enzymatic secretion parallels *Pitta*'s transformative function.

These correlations suggest that *Ayurvedic* anatomical constructs may encode early intuitive models of neurogastroenterological organization, warranting further comparative exploration between classical texts and modern biomedical frameworks.

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