

Therapeutic Insights on Langhana Chikitsa from Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana

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Abstract—This article provides an in-depth analysis of *Langhana Chikitsa* with special reference to the *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*. *Langhana*, classified as one of the prime therapeutic measures in *Ayurveda*, is intended to reduce excess *Doshas*, alleviate heaviness, stimulate *Agni*, and eliminate *Ama* from the body. Drawing upon classical *Ayurvedic* literature, especially the systematic descriptions given by *Acharya Charaka*, this article explores the philosophical background, methods, and clinical significance of *Langhana*. *Charaka* outlines ten major types of *Langhana*, including fasting, light diet, exercise, digestive stimulation, and exposure to natural elements, each selected according to the patient's constitution, strength, disease stage, and *Dosha* predominance.

This article highlights how *Langhana* is particularly effective in conditions associated with *Kapha*, *Meda*, *Ama*, and *Srotorodha* (channel obstruction). The analysis also connects traditional *Ayurvedic* concepts with modern understandings of metabolic regulation, detoxification, and the therapeutic benefits of fasting. By examining both classical principles and contemporary parallels, the article demonstrates the continued relevance of *Langhana* in the management of lifestyle disorders, metabolic syndromes, and digestive imbalances. Overall, this article reaffirms *Charaka's* emphasis on *Langhana* as a foundational, safe, and scientifically relatable therapeutic approach for restoring health and maintaining physiological balance.

Index Terms—*Langhana*, *Srotorodha*, *Kapha*, *Meda*, *Ama*, *Agni*

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a holistic healing system that focuses on treating a person as a whole addressing the body, mind, and spirit. Because of this, all *Ayurvedic* therapies are designed to support well-being on these three levels. To manage various diseases, *Ayurveda*, as a holistic science, aims to heal the body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, its therapies are designed to benefit all three levels. Among the *Shat Upakrama* (six therapeutic measures) described by *Acharya Charaka*, *Langhana* is a key therapy *Ayurveda* outlines several treatment methods. One of the important therapies mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* among the *Shat Upakrama* (six types of treatments) is called *Langhana* [1]. The term *Langhana*, derived from *Laghu*—meaning lightness reflects its primary intention of reducing the burden of aggravated *Doshas*, stimulating *Agni*, and eliminating *Ama* from the body.

Acharya Charaka defines *Langhana* as

यत् किञ्चिल्लाघवकरं देहे तल्लङ्घनं स्मृतम् ॥ १॥ च. सू. २२/१[2]

indicating that any measure producing lightness in the body qualifies as *Langhana*.

Similarly, *Ashtanga Hridaya* explains it as

लङ्घनं लाघवाय यत् देहस्य ॥ २॥ अ. ह. सू. १४/२[3]

reinforcing its essence as a therapy that induces lightness.

In the *Chikitsa Sthana* of the *Charaka Samhita*, *Acharya Charaka* systematically outlines ten distinct forms of *Langhana*. These methods are particularly effective in conditions involving *Kapha*, *Meda*, *Ama*,

and *Strotorodha*, where reducing heaviness and clearing bodily channels is essential.

Understanding the role of *Langhana Chikitsa* through the lens of *Charaka Samhita* not only reveals its classical significance but also underscores its continued relevance in managing lifestyle disorders, metabolic syndromes, and digestive disturbances in the modern era. By bridging ancient *Ayurvedic* wisdom with contemporary perspectives on detoxification and metabolic regulation, *Langhana* emerges as a safe, foundational, and scientifically relatable therapeutic approach.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Acharya Charaka defines *Langhana* as anything that brings lightness to the body.

In the same way, the author of *Ashtanga Hridaya* explains it as which also means that any method that lightens the body falls under *Langhana* therapy.

Types of *Langhana* Therapy in *Ayurveda*

Classification by *Charaka*

Acharya Charaka, in *SutraSthana*, describes 10 types of *Langhana* aimed at inducing lightness and reducing the burden of aggravated *Doshas*.

चतुष्प्रकारा संशुद्धिः पिपासा मारुतातपौ ।

पाचनानुपवासश्च व्यायामश्चेति लङ्घनम् ॥१८॥ च. सू. २२/१८^[4]

Chatushprakara Samshuddhi (Four types of purification)

- *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis)
- *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation)
- *Niruha Basti* (medicated enema using decoctions)
- *Nasya* (nasal administration of purificatory drugs)
- 2. *Pipasa* – Thirst control
- 3. *Maruta* – Exposure to wind
- 4. *Atapa* – Exposure to sunlight
- 5. *Pachana* – Use of digestive medicines (without emesis or purgation)
- 6. *Upavasa* – Fasting
- 7. *Vyayama* – Physical exercise

Classification by *Vagbhata*

Acharya Vagbhata simplified this classification into two broad categories^[5]

1. *Shodhana* (Purificatory *Langhana*)
This type involves complete cleansing of the body using techniques such as
 - *Vamana*

- *Virechana*
- *Niruha Basti*
- *Nasya* (also called *Murdha Virechana*)
- *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting for detoxification)
- 2. *Shamana* (Palliative *Langhana*):
This includes milder therapies aimed at pacifying the *Doshas* without deep cleansing. Techniques include:
 - Fasting
 - Use of digestive medicines (*Pachana*)
 - Exercise
 - Sun and wind exposure, etc.

These therapies are chosen based on the individual's strength, condition, and nature of the disease.

10 Types of *Langhana* Therapy –

1. *Vamana* (Therapeutic Emesis)

Defined as the procedure that eliminates vitiated *Doshas* through the upper route (*Urdhwabhaga*), primarily via the mouth. *Chakrapani* notes that this action brings lightness to the body.

2. *Virechana* (Therapeutic Purgation)

Eliminates *Doshas* through the lower route (*Adhobhaga*), especially via the rectum. According to *Chakrapani*, it removes *Pitta*, *Kapha*, and *Vata* sequentially, restoring balance.

3. *Niruha Basti* (Decoction Enema)

Administration of herbal decoctions through the rectum to expel *Vata Dosha*. Unlike *Anuvasana Basti*, which nourishes, *Niruha* serves as a cleansing procedure.

4. *Shirovirechana* / *Nasya* (Nasal Purification)

Involves administering medicated oils or decoctions through the nasal route to expel morbid *Kapha* from the head region.

5. *Pipasa* (Thirst Control)

Conscious restraint from drinking water. This improves *Agni* (digestive fire) and reduces internal moisture (*Kleda*), thereby balancing *Doshas*.

6. *Maruta* (Air Exposure)

Controlled exposure to fresh, clean air, especially from healthy directions like the west. It stimulates digestion and reduces *Ama*. Cold winds, however, are less effective.

7. *Atapa* (Sun Exposure)

Therapeutic exposure to sunlight, considered one of the 10 types of *Niragni Swedana* (non-fire-based sweating therapies). Primarily helps reduce *Kapha*.

8. *Pachana* (Digestive Therapy)

Use of herbs that digest *Ama* (toxins) without increasing digestive fire (*Agni*). It's useful in conditions where toxins are present but digestive strength is not severely impaired.

9. *Upavasa* (Fasting)

Abstaining from food even in the presence of hunger. It's used to reduce *Ama* and induce lightness, but should be done under guidance.

10. *Vyayama* (Exercise)

Physical activity performed up to half of one's strength (*Ardhashakti*) is considered beneficial. It is also a form of *Niragni Swedana* and helps reduce fat, increase strength, and boost *Agni*.

Properties (*Gunas*) of *Langhana Dravyas* (As per *Acharya Charaka*)^[6]

Acharya Charaka describes several inherent qualities of substances used in *Langhana* therapy, all of which contribute to inducing lightness and eliminating toxins from the body by clearing bodily channels.

1. *Laghu* (Light)

- Substances that are inherently light in nature.
- Easily digestible and reduce the burden on the digestive system.
- Promote clarity, agility, and metabolic efficiency.

2. *Teekshna* (Sharp/Penetrating)

- Possess penetrating action, enabling them to reach deep and subtle channels.
- Break down blockages and facilitate elimination of accumulated *Doshas*.

3. *Vishada* (Clear/Non-slimy)

- Help remove stickiness or slimy nature (*Abhishyanda*) from the body.
- Cleanse obstructed channels by absorbing excess moisture and mucus.

4. *Ushna* (Hot)

- Hot in potency; stimulate digestion and metabolism.
- Counteract *Kapha* and *Ama*, both of which are heavy and cold in nature.

5. *Rooksha* (Dry)

- Promote dryness, which helps absorb excess *Kleda* (moisture) and reduce heaviness.
- Useful in balancing *Kapha* and reducing oiliness and mucous accumulation.

6. *Sookshma* (Subtle/Minute)

- Fine in quality, allowing easy penetration into subtle channels.
- Reach deep tissues and organs to facilitate internal cleansing.

7. *Khara* (Rough)

- Scraping nature that removes adhesions or accumulated material in channels.
- Useful in dislodging deeply rooted toxins and *Doshas*.

8. *Sara* (Mobile/Flowing)

- Promote free movement of *Doshas*, fluids, and nutrients in their proper directions.
- Help in restoring the flow of *Vata* and clearing stagnation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative, textual approach by critically reviewing *Charaka Samhita*, *Chikitsa Sthana* to identify and extract all references related to *Langhana Chikitsa*. Relevant *Shlokas* describing *Langhana*, its indications, mechanisms, and relation to *Ama*, *Agni*, and *Dosha* status were analyzed using classical Ayurvedic interpretative principles and supported by commentaries such as *Chakrapani*. Concepts were organized through thematic and disease-wise analysis, particularly in contexts like *Jwara*, *Atisara*, *Shotha*, and *Prameha*. Secondary Ayurvedic literature was consulted to enhance conceptual clarity. The findings were synthesized to understand the therapeutic rationale and overall role of *Langhana Chikitsa* within *Charaka's chikitsa* framework.

IV. OBJECTIVE

1. Explain the concept and types of *Langhana Chikitsa*.
2. Study the reason and purpose of using *Langhana* in different diseases.
3. Describe its application in disease that mentioned in *Charaka Chikitsa Sthana*.

4. Show how *Langhana* helps to remove *Ama*, balance *Doshas*, and improve *Agni* (digestion).
5. Highlight its importance as a basic and preventive treatment in *Ayurveda* according to *Acharya Charaka*.

Role of *Langhana Chikitsa* in *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*

This section elaborates on the clinical applications of *Langhana Chikitsa*, emphasizing its rationale, indications, and importance as highlighted by *Acharya Charaka* in different disease.

JWARA

In *Jwara*, fasting (*Langhana*) is prescribed as the first line of treatment, except in those fevers that arise from depletion of body tissues, aggravated *Vata*, fear, anger, passion, grief, or exhaustion. Fasting is the first treatment recommended in most fevers, as it helps ignite digestive fire and clears metabolic toxins (*Ama*). Most fevers caused by toxins, poor digestion, or accumulation of *Kapha* and *Pitta*. These are usually the *Sama* fevers where the body feels heavy, digestion is weak, and there is coating on the tongue. In such cases, fasting helps the digestive fire (*Agni*) to recover and clears toxins from the body. This corresponds to resting the digestive system when metabolism is low.^[7]

When the morbid *Doshas* are destroyed by fasting (*Langhana*) and the digestive fire (*Agni*) becomes rekindled, the person becomes free from fever (*Vijwaratva*), feels lightness of the body, and also experiences a return of natural hunger. However, fasting should be performed only to the extent that it does not harm the vital energy that is, it should not cause excessive depletion of strength.

In acute fever (*Taruna Jwara*), where the morbid *Doshas* are still undigested (*Avipakva*), the appropriate digestive measures (*Pachana*) are fasting (*Langhana*), sudation (*Swedana*), regulated time (*Kala*), thin gruel (*Yavagu*), and bitter-tasting preparations (*Tikta Rasa*). to manage early-stage (acute) fevers those that appear suddenly and in which the body's metabolic system is still sluggish, and the toxins are not yet digested or *Langhana* (Fasting) allows the digestive fire (*Agni*) to rekindle and helps digest the early toxins

When food that has been eaten is not digested, or is digested with great difficulty, or when only light food is digested, then, in order to protect and strengthen the digestive fire, the regimen beginning with fasting and related measures is beneficial. When digestion is weak, eating less heals faster. Protect the digestive fire first, health follows from it.

In intermittent fever (*Vishama Jwara*), when there is predominance of *Kapha* (*Kaphottara* stage) *Vamana* therapeutic emesis (induced vomiting), *Pachana* use of digestive measures, *Ruksha Annapana* intake of dry, light food and drink, *ViLanghana* complete fasting, and *Kashaya Ushna* administration of warm astringent decoctions. In intermittent or malaria-like fevers with *Kapha* dominance, vomiting, fasting, light dry diet, and warm bitter decoctions are useful. However, treatment must match both the stage of disease and the patient's strength using rational physical methods and, if needed, supportive mental/spiritual therapies.

The same sequence of treatment as described previously beginning with fasting (*Langhana*) and warm therapies (*Ushana Upachara*) should again be applied here as before. The treatment should begin with fasting (*Langhana*) and warm measures (*Ushana Upachara*)

the same general regimen used in earlier fever stages. This helps rekindle digestive fire and clear remaining toxins (*Ama*), which are the root cause of recurrent fever.

RAKTAPTITA

Generally, in individuals whose bodies are burdened with *Ama Doshas* (undigested toxins), the *Pitta* and *Rakta* (blood) become excessively vitiated and rise. Therefore, in the initial stage of the disease, *Langhana* (therapeutic fasting) should be administered to digest the *Ama*. In the condition of *Raktapitta* there is usually an increase of *Ama* (toxic waste due to indigestion), leading to the aggravation and uprising of *Pitta* and *Rakta*. Hence, *Langhana* is advised at the beginning to promote digestion of the *Ama*.^[8]

GULMA

If a *Gulma* is of *Kapha* origin (caused by cold, heavy, and unctuous diet and lifestyle), and if the patient is not fit for emesis (*Vamana*) and has low digestive fire (*Agni*), then *Langhana* (fasting or lightening therapy) should be done first.^[9]

When the digestive fire (*Jatharagni*) is weak, the *Gulma* (abdominal tumor or lump) increases, and when the digestive fire is strong, the *Gulma* subsides. Therefore, a person suffering from *Gulma* should neither indulge in excessive nourishment (heavy or satisfying food) nor in excessive fasting. This verse emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in digestion for individuals suffering from *Gulma*. A weak digestive fire leads to the accumulation of undigested food, causing worsening of the condition. On the other hand, a strong digestive fire helps in pacifying it. Hence, neither overeating nor extreme fasting is advisable; moderation is key.

PRAMEHA

The cleansing therapies applied at the proper time such as emesis (*Vamana*) and other procedures cured the *Kaphaj Prameha*. Purgation (*Virecana*) conquers the *Pitta* origin disorders (*Pittaja Prameha*).^[10]

When purification therapies are applied at the suitable time, the *Kapha* type *Pramehas* get destroyed. *Kaphaja Prameha* is caused by *Santarpana* (over-nourishment) *Charaka* clearly states that *Kapha* disorders arise from excessive eating heavy, oily, sweet foods, lack of exercise. All these lead to *Kapha* and *Meda* (fat) increase. *Langhana* is the opposite of *Santarpana*, so it directly corrects the cause.

SHOTH

When *Shotha* (swelling) is caused due to improperly digested *Ama* (toxins from undigested food), it should first be treated with *Langhana* (fasting or lightening therapies) and *Pachana* (digestive medicines).^[11]

ARSHA

If *Pitta* and *Kapha* are predominant in *Raktarsha* (bleeding piles), it should be treated with *Shodhana* (purificatory therapies such as *Vamana* and *Virechana*). If there is bleeding from the piles, it should not be suppressed or forcibly stopped. Alternatively, treatment can also be done with *Langhana* (lightening therapies like fasting). An unwise physician, who prematurely stops the natural flow of blood and *Doshas* (vitiated humors) along with *Vata* during the early stages of piles, ends up obstructing the blood and *Vata*, which then leads to the manifestation of numerous other diseases.^[12]

GRAHANI

If *Ama* (undigested metabolic waste) is retained in the GIT, it should be eliminated using purgation therapy (*Virechana*) in combination with *Deepana* (digestive fire-enhancing) and *Shodhana* (purificatory) medicines. If the *Ama* contaminated *Rasa* (nutritive fluid) has spread throughout the body, it should be treated by *Langhana* (fasting) and *Pachana* (digestive) medicines to digest and eliminate the *Ama*.^[13]

ATISARA

If the *Doshas* are aggravated to a moderate extent, then one should administer '*Pramathya*' (a decoction or formulation made with digestive and carminative herbs that enhance appetite and digestion). However, if the *Doshas* are mildly aggravated, then fasting (*Langhana*) is considered the best treatment for the patient suffering from diarrhoea.^[14]

In *Kaphaja Atisara* initially, fasting (*Langhana*) and the use of digestive medicines (*Pachana*) are beneficial. Afterward, medicines from the previously mentioned *Deepana* group (which stimulate the digestive fire) that are effective in treating *Ama Atisara* (diarrhea with undigested toxins) should be administered. Once the initial *Kapha* and *Ama* are reduced, medicines from the *Deepana* category (which improve digestive fire) and are specifically useful for *Ama Atisara* should be used to fully eliminate the remaining imbalance and restore digestive health.

CHHARDI

All types of vomiting (*Chardi*) are considered to originate due to the disturbance in the *Amashaya*. Therefore, initially, treatment should begin with *Langhana* (therapeutic fasting). The author begins the treatment explanation for curable types of vomiting with the phrase "*Amashayotkleshabhava*". Since all types of vomiting arise due to the disturbance in the stomach, and diseases that originate from the stomach should be treated with therapies like *Langhana* and other *Kapha* alleviating remedies, therefore *Langhana* is considered the first and most appropriate treatment.^[15]

VISARPA

Observing that the condition of *Granthi-Visarpa* arises as a result of *Raktapitta* (vitiation of blood and *pitta*), the treatment should begin with drying therapies

(*Rukshan*), fasting (*Langhana*), fomentation (*Seka*), and the application of pastes (*Pradeha*) made from the barks of the five *Kshiri* trees (*Panchvalkal*)^[16]

The physician who is knowledgeable about proper timing should further treat the patient with bloodletting or application of leeches, emesis, purgation, and the use of medicated ghee prepared with astringent (*Kashaya*) and bitter (*Tikta*) herbs.

VRANA

A wound caused by an excess of *Kapha* should be treated by applying thick poultices (*Pradeha*) made from substances that are astringent (*Kashaya*), pungent (*Katu*), dry (*Ruksha*), and hot (*Ushna*) in nature. Additionally, the wound should be washed or irrigated with decoctions having similar qualities. The patient should also undergo fasting (*Langhana*) and be administered digestive medicines (*Pachana*) to alleviate the *Kapha* related wound.^[17]

TRIMARMIYA

ANAH

Anaha (distension or obstruction in the abdomen), which arises due to *Ama* (undigested toxins), is characterized by symptoms such as tightness or stiffness in the heart region, headache or heaviness in the head, a sense of heaviness, nasal congestion and obstruction of belching. This condition should be treated with therapeutic emesis (*Vamana*), fasting (*Langhana*), and digestive medicines (*Pachana*) to bring about relief.^[18]

HRIDROGA

In *Tridoshaj Hridrog*, fasting (*Langhana*) should be performed first because the *Ura* (heart) is the chief residing place of *Kapha Dosha*. Hence, even in *Tridoshaj* heart disease, treatment should begin by pacifying *Kapha* through *Langhana* (fasting or lightening). In *Tridoshaj* heart disease, fasting is prescribed first because the heart is a *Kapha* dominant organ. therefore, pacifying *Kapha* through fasting is logical.^[19]

Generally, when the movement of *Vata* becomes obstructed, it becomes aggravated in the stomach. Therefore purification should be performed, along with fasting (*Langhana*) and digestive therapy (*Pachana*). When the natural flow of *Vata* is blocked, it becomes disturbed and accumulates in the stomach, giving rise to diseases such as *Krimija Hridrog* (heart

disease caused by intestinal worms). Hence, in such conditions, therapies like purification, fasting, and digestive treatments are beneficial

V. DISCUSSION

Langhana Chikitsa occupies a central position in *Ayurvedic* therapeutics, especially in conditions dominated by *Ama*, *Kapha*, and *Manda Agni*. The analysis of *Charaka Samhita*, *Chikitsa Sthana* clearly illustrates that *Acharya Charaka* considered *Langhana* not only as a preliminary therapeutic intervention but also as an independent modality capable of breaking the pathological chain (*Samprapti Vighatana*). In *Chikitsa Sthana* emphasize that *Langhana* is particularly indicated in individuals with excessive *Kapha* and *Pitta*, abundant body wastes, and mixed *Vata* involvement. *Charaka* specifically highlights that such patients who are strong, corpulent, and endowed with good vitality can tolerate deeper forms of *Langhana*, including exercise, sun exposure, and wind exposure.

Disease-wise, *Charaka* systematically places *Langhana* at the forefront in conditions such as *Jwara*, *Ajeerna*, *Atisara*, *Alasaka*, *Visuchika*, and *Kapha Pitta* oriented gastrointestinal and metabolic disorders. The rationale lies in the *Ayurvedic* understanding that these diseases arise from impaired *Agni*, accumulation of *Ama*, and obstruction of *Strotas*. *Langhana* helps lighten the system, rekindle digestive fire, mobilize obstructed *Doshas*, and restore physiological clarity. For mild-to-moderate diseases, *Charaka* advises graded *Langhana* beginning with *Pachana*, fasting, thirst-restraint, or mild physical activity depending on the patient's *Bala*, disease stage, and season.

The text also makes an important distinction regarding patient strength. For strong individuals, more intensive forms of *Langhana* are recommended, while for those with moderate strength, milder forms sufficient. This reinforces the *Ayurvedic* principle of *Samatva* (balance) and individualized treatment planning. Interestingly, *Charaka* also states that *Langhana* is beneficial not only in *Kapha* dominant states but also in *Vata* disorders during cold seasons, due to the naturally increased strength of individuals in *Hemanta* and *Shishira*. This highlights *Charaka's* nuanced understanding of seasonal physiology and its impact on therapeutic selection.

The commentary by *Chakrapani* further clarifies that the ten types of *Langhana* have varied indications and should be chosen based on disease strength, patient strength, and presence or absence of *Ama*. The interpretative insight supports the clinical applicability of *Langhana* across a broad spectrum of disorders when judiciously selected.

Overall, the discussion reveals that *Langhana Chikitsa* in *Charaka Samhita* is a rational, dynamically graded, and patient-specific therapy. It acts through *Agni Deepana*, *Ama Pachana*, *Kapha Meda Harana*, and *Strotoshodhana*, making it a versatile tool in *Ayurvedic* practice. Its systematic placement within *Chikitsa Sthana* demonstrates that *Acharya Charaka* viewed *Langhana* as a foundational therapeutic approach essential for restoring metabolic balance and preventing disease progression.

VI. CONCLUSION

Langhana Chikitsa holds a vital place in *Ayurvedic* therapeutics and is considered a primary line of treatment by *Acharya Charaka* in the *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*. It aims to remove *Ama* (toxins), balance *Doshas*, and strengthen *Agni* (digestive fire), which are the key factors in maintaining health and preventing disease. *Charaka* emphasizes *Langhana* as the first approach in *Ama*, *Kapha*, and *Meda* dominant conditions such as *Jwara*, *Prameha*, and *Atisar*.

Through methods like fasting, light diet, exercise, and digestive therapies, *Langhana* helps to restore *Laghava* (lightness) and equilibrium in the body. It also serves as a preparatory and preventive therapy, making the body ready for purification and nourishment.

In conclusion, *Langhana Chikitsa* represents the foundation of *Ayurvedic* treatment principles described in the *Chikitsa Sthana* reflecting *Charaka's* deep understanding of metabolic balance, disease prevention, and holistic healing.

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