



REVIEW ARTICLE

Unveiling treasures in Ashtavaidya tradition: Patola Kera Ghrutham; A therapeutic review in the purview of Pediatric skin diseases

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Abstract

Kerala Ayurveda is renowned for its *Ashtavaidya* tradition, which represents a continuous, clinical and textually grounded medical lineage. The *Ashtavaidya* tradition of Kerala Ayurveda has preserved numerous *Anubhoota Yogas* developed through sustained clinical experience and classical wisdom. *Patola Kera Ghrutham* is one such formulation, derived from the classical *Patoladi gana* described in *Ashtangahridaya* and widely used in the management of dermatological disorders, particularly in children. This review critically analyzes *Patola Kera Ghrutham* with respect to its textual basis, pharmacological attributes of individual ingredients, method of preparation, and observed clinical utility in various conditions, with special emphasis on pediatric and sensitive skin disorders. The formulation comprises *Patola*, *Katurohini*, *Chandana*, *Madhusrava*, *Guduchi*, and *Patha* processed in coconut milk. This combination with a coconut based lipid medium enhances palatability, patient compliance, skin nourishment, and therapeutic applicability, especially in pediatric patients. The ingredients possess anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, antimicrobial, antioxidant, hepatoprotective, and wound-healing properties. Traditional clinical experience indicates its utility in *kapha-pittaja* skin disorders, pediatric dermatoses, pruritic conditions, toxicological manifestations, and inflammatory skin diseases. *Patola Kera Ghrutham* represents a valuable *Anubhoota Yoga* of the *Ashtavaidya* tradition with promising applications in dermatological practice. Further clinical studies are warranted to establish its safety and efficacy.

Introduction

Kerala is globally recognized for its rich and living tradition of Ayurveda, where classical knowledge continues to be preserved through hereditary physician lineages. Among these, the *Ashtavaidya* tradition occupies a unique position due to its uninterrupted transmission of clinical wisdom, strict adherence to classical texts, and reliance on experiential validation. According to this tradition, initially eighteen upper caste families of Kerala were designated as *Ashtavaidyas*. The *Ashtavaidyas* represent the Brahmin scholar physicians who were masters of the eight branches (*Ashtanga*) of Ayurveda mentioned in classical texts. Each *Ashtavaidya* family developed its own therapeutic specialties and its specific methods of transmission.^[1] They are traditionally and now academically trained through prolonged learning under senior family physicians, ensuring mastery over both textual *sastra* (knowledge) and

prayoga (clinical application). Their preservation of traditional methodologies in addition to safeguarding classical formulations, *Ashtavaidyas* have contributed significantly through *Anubhoota yogas* (formulations validated by clinical experience), which are formulations developed or modified based on repeated clinical success while remaining rooted in classical principles.

Among these for effective disease management, especially in pediatric patients, elderly individuals, and those with poor tolerance to standard formulations, *Ashtavaidyas* often repurpose classical combinations into value added formulations. Such adaptations improve palatability, compliance, and safety without compromising therapeutic efficacy.

Patola Kera Ghrutham is one such *Anubhoota yoga*, formulated by repurposing the classical *Patoladi gana* described in *Ashtangahridaya* (*Sutrasthana*, *Shodhanadigana sangraheeyam adhyaya*)^[2]. A similar formulation is also mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* (*Sutrasthana*, *Dravyasangraheeyam adhyaya*), with the inclusion of an extra drug *Kuchandana* (*Caesalpinia sappan*).^[3] This formulation has been extensively used in the management of dermatological disorders, particularly those of *Kapha-pitta* predominance.

Skin and subcutaneous diseases are among the leading contributors to nonfatal health outcomes globally, accounting for over 42 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) worldwide. This burden is particularly concerning in pediatric populations, where dermatologic conditions can affect long-term physical and psychosocial health outcomes.^[4] The major skin diseases affecting children include atopic dermatitis, bacterial, viral and fungal infection, psoriasis, vitiligo, urticaria, acne etc. Most of them present with itching, rashes, redness, scaling, skin discoloration, papules, vesicles, crusting, dryness, and recurrent skin infections. In these manifestations, a potent formulation with therapeutically effective ingredients may provide significant clinical benefits, facilitating symptom relief and disease control in a safe, effective, and pediatric-friendly manner. *Patola Kera ghrutham* is designed in such a way so that it can be used effectively in children with enhanced compliance, and ease of administration.

Materials and methods

A narrative review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts, published scientific literature on the constituent drugs, and traditional clinical knowledge documented within the *Ashtavaidya* tradition. The formulation, its reference, composition of ingredients, method of preparation, pharmacodynamic properties, and mode of administration were critically analyzed. The collected information was critically analyzed to evaluate the probable therapeutic role of *Patola Kera Ghrutham* in pediatric dermatological disorders.

Reference of the Patoladi gana

- *Ashtanga Hridaya* - *Sutrasthana*, 15th Chapter (*Shodhanadigana sangraheeyam*)^[2]
- *Sushruta Samhita* - *Sutrasthana* (*Dravyasangraheeyam-Patoladi yoga* with an additional drug *Kuchandana*)^[3]

Here in the *yoga Patola Kera Ghrutham*, *Patoladi gana* from *Ashtanga Hridaya* is used, the composition of which is given in Table 1.

Method of preparation

The formulation is an *Anubhoota Yoga* developed based on traditional clinical experience and empirical knowledge. The ingredients were taken in equal proportions and powdered separately. The powdered drugs were then mixed uniformly to prepare the *kalka* (herbal paste). Fresh coconut milk was extracted from mature coconuts and used as the processing medium. The prepared *kalka* was added to the coconut milk and heated over a mild flame with continuous stirring. The heating process was carried out intermittently over five consecutive days until the preparation attained the characteristic *Khara paka* ((Hard/scorched stage- final phases of boiling medicinal herbal oils), indicated by the complete evaporation of moisture and the attainment of the desired consistency ensuring optimal extraction and stability. The resultant preparation was filtered while warm to remove residual plant material, cooled to room temperature, and stored in airtight containers under suitable conditions until further use. In the traditional method of preparation, each ingredient was used in an equal quantity of one *pala* (approximately 48 g), and fresh coconut milk extracted from 50 mature coconuts was employed as the processing medium.

Table 1 Composition of Patola Kera Ghrutham

Sl. No	Ingredients	Botanical Name	Family	Part Used	Quantity
1.	<i>Patola</i> ^[5]	<i>Trichosanthes dioica</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	Whole plant	1 part
2.	<i>Katurohini</i> ^[6]	<i>Picrorhiza kurroa</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	Root, Underground stem	1 part
3.	<i>Chandana</i> ^[7]	<i>Santalum album</i>	<i>Santalaceae</i>	Heartwood	1 part
4.	<i>Madhusrava</i> ^[8]	<i>Marsdenia tenacissima</i>	<i>Asclepiadaceae</i>	Root	1 part
5.	<i>Guduchi</i> ^[9]	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>	<i>Menispermaceae</i>	Stem, aerial roots	1 part
6.	<i>Patha</i> ^[10]	<i>Cissampelos pareira</i>	<i>Spermaceti</i>	Rhizome	1 part

Table 2- Pharmacodynamic property of Patola Kera Ghrutham

Drugs	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Karma
Patola ^[5]	Tiktha Katu	Laghu Snigdha	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Pittahara, jwaraghna, varnya kandughna, kushta hara, vranaghna
Katurohini ^[6]	Tiktha Katu	Laghu Rooksha	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Pittahara, bhedini, hradya, jwaraghna, kushta hara
Chandana ^[7]	Tiktha, Madhura	Laghu Rooksha	Seetha	Katu	Kapha-Pittahara, dahaghna, varnya, krimighna, raktaprasadana
Madhusrava ^[8]	Tiktha Madhura Kashaya	Guru Rooksha Sara	Ushna	Katu	Tridosahara, vishahara, jwara, kushtaghna, kandughna, krimihara
Gudoochi ^[9]	Katu, Tiktha Kashaya	Laghu, Guru, Snigdha	Ushna	Madhura	Tridosahara, rasayana balya, kushtaghna, jwarahara
Patha ^[10]	Tiktha Katu	Laghu Theeksha	Ushna	Katu	Vata-Kaphahara, jwaraghna, vranaghna, kandughna, visha hara, kushtahara
Nalikera ^[11]	Madhura	Guru	Seetha	Madhura	Vata-Pittahara, Dahaghna, Trishna

The formulation predominantly exhibits *tikta-katu rasa*, *laghu-ruksha guna*, and *ushna veerya*, *katu vipaka* making it effective in *Kaphapitta shamana*, *Raktaprasadana*, *kushtaghna*, *kandughna* actions. Coconut milk acts as an excellent lipid medium facilitating deep tissue penetration and skin nourishment.

Analysis of individual drugs

Patola (*Trichosanthes dioica*)^[12, 13]

Classically described under *truptighna* and *trishna nigravana mahakashaya* by Charaka and included in *patoladi gana* and *aragwadadi gana* by Susruta and *Vagbhata*, as well as in *tikta skandha*. It is widely utilized in the management of *Kapha* and *Pitta* disorders. It is a rich source of vitamins A and C and contains essential minerals such as magnesium, sodium, potassium, copper, and sulphur. Phytochemical investigations have identified the presence of bioactive constituents including cucurbitacins, saponins, tannins, peptides, triterpenes, alkaloids, glycosides, flavonoids, carbohydrates, fixed oils, steroids, and phenolic compounds. Experimental studies have demonstrated diverse pharmacological activities, including anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant, wound-healing, hepatoprotective, and anti-dermatitic effects. These properties support its traditional use in the management of various dermatological disorders, febrile conditions, burning sensation, and other inflammatory skin diseases.

Katurohini (*Picrorhiza kurroa*)^[14]

Classified under *bhedaniya*, *lekhaniya*, *sanyashodhana*, and *tikta skandha* by Charaka, *Susruta* and *Vagbhata* have included it in *patoladi*, *pippalyadi*, and *mustadi gana*. The drug is renowned for its therapeutic utility in disorders involving *Pitta* and *Rakta*. Phytochemical studies have identified more than 65 secondary metabolites, including picrosides, cucurbitacins, D-mannitol, kutkiol, apocynin, kutkin, glycosides, iridoids, and vanillic acid. Experimental and clinical investigations have demonstrated a wide range of pharmacological activities,

such as hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, anticholestatic, immunomodulatory, antifungal, antioxidant, and antimicrobial effects. These properties substantiate its traditional use in the management of skin diseases, particularly those associated with systemic toxicity, impaired liver function, and inflammatory conditions.

Chandana (*Santalum album*)^[15]

Classified under *varnya*, *kandughna*, *vishagna*, *trushnanigrahana*, *dahaprasamana*, *angamardaprasamana* by Charaka, *Vagbada* under *thikta skanda*, *patoladi gana* and *Susruta* under *patoladi*, *guluchyadi*, *salasaradi*, *sarivadi*, *priywangwadi gana*. Phytochemical investigations have identified the presence of bioactive constituents including tannins, terpenes, alpha & beta santalol, santenon, bergamotals etc. Experimental and clinical studies have demonstrated a wide range of pharmacological activities, such as hepatoprotective, anti-bacterial, antifungal, antiviral, anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, antiscabetic, antiseptic and diuretic properties. Thus its properties support in the management of skin conditions, burning sensation especially its cooling and moisturizing effects helpful in *Paithika* dermatoses.

Madhusrava (*Marsdenia tenacissima*)^[16]

Described under *truptighna*, *sanyashodhana mahakashaya*, and *tikta skandha* by Charaka. *Susruta* has included it in *aragwadadi* and *patoladi gana*, while *Vagbhata* classifies it under *tikta skandha* and *vatsakadi gana*. Phytochemical investigations have identified the presence of several bioactive constituents, including tannins, glycosides, alkaloids, conduritrol, scopoletin, succinic (amber) acid, and related secondary metabolites. Experimental studies have demonstrated a broad spectrum of pharmacological activities, such as anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antibacterial, laxative, and antitumor effects. These biological properties support its traditional therapeutic application in inflammatory disorders, skin diseases, and conditions requiring detoxification and restoration of systemic homeostasis.

Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*)^[17]

Classically described under *vayasthapana*, *dahaprashamana*, *trishnanigrahana*, *truptighna*, and *stanyashodana mahakashaya* by Charaka. Sushruta has included it under *guduchyadi*, *patoladi*, and *aragwadhadi gana*, while Vagbhata describes it under *guduchyadi*, *patoladi*, and *aragwadhadi gana*. It contains a wide range of bioactive constituents, including terpenoids, alkaloids, lignans, steroids, tinosporic acid, berberine, tinosporaside, palmatine, and jatrorrhizine. Experimental studies have demonstrated immunomodulatory, anticancer, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antitoxic, and antipyretic activities. In Ayurveda, Guduchi is renowned for its *rasayana*, *balya*, *agnidipana*, *dahahara*, *jwarahara*, and *krimihara* properties.

Patha (*Cissampelos pareira*)^[18]

It is described by Sushruta under *patoladi*, *aragwadhadi*, *pippalyadi*, *brihatyadi*, and *mustadi gana*, while Vagbhata includes it in *patoladi*, *vatsakadi*, *mustadi*, and *aragwadhadi gana*. It contains several bioactive constituents, including alkaloids such as hayatine, hayatinine, menismine, cissamine, and pareirine. Experimental studies have demonstrated immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antibacterial, cardioprotective, antidiarrheal, antidiuretic, and antiulcer activities, supporting its therapeutic use in a variety of inflammatory and systemic disorders.

Kera ghrutham^[19]

Kera Ghrutham (oil extract from coconut milk) is a lipid based preparation rich in medium-chain triglycerides, particularly lauric acid and stearic acid. Lauric acid possesses potent antimicrobial activity, contributing to the therapeutic efficacy of the formulation. Kera Ghrutham is widely utilized in the management of various dermatological conditions, including psoriasis, acne, atopic dermatitis, contact dermatitis, and rosacea. Phytochemical and nutritional analyses have demonstrated the presence of both fat soluble vitamins (A, E, and K) and water soluble vitamins (B1, B2, B3, B12, and C), along with a diverse range of amino acids and essential micro and macro elements. These constituents contribute to its skin protective, nourishing, and moisturizing properties, making it particularly effective in maintaining skin hydration and supporting barrier function.

Prayoga (mode of administration)

Primarily used for external application in various kind of skin ailments. Internal administration is rare and reserved for selected pediatric dermatological conditions like *karappan* (dermatitis), administered with milk as *anupana* (drug carrier).

Discussion

Skin diseases (*Twak vikara*) in Ayurveda are multifactorial in origin, involving the complex interaction of *dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala*, *agni*, and *srotas*. Among these, *Kapha-pitta* predominance with *rakta* involvement forms the core pathology in the majority of inflammatory, pruritic, and erythematous dermatoses.^[20] As mentioned earlier, *Patola Kera Ghrutham* is an *anuboota yoga* developed for use in various dermatological conditions, particularly in children. The drugs of *Patoladi Gana* are known to

be effective in the management of several skin disorders, and its *Kashaya* (decoction) form is widely employed in clinical practice. Because of its *teekshna* nature and poor palatability, its use in pediatric dermatoses is often limited despite its therapeutic indications. Considering these limitations, and based on extensive clinical and practical experience, this formulation was adapted into a *thaila* (oil-based) preparation using coconut milk, making it suitable for both internal and external administration.

The formulation derives its strength from the classical *Patoladi gana*, which is traditionally indicated in *kushta*, *kandu*, *daha*, *jwara*, and *visha* conditions^[2]. Its predominant *tikta-katu rasa*, *laghu-ruksha guna*, *ushna veerya* and *katu vipaka*, effectively addresses this pathological spectrum by pacifying aggravated *Kapha* and *Pitta* while facilitating *Rakta prasadana* and *ama pachana*.

The repurposing of this *gana* into an oil based formulation reflects the *Ashtavaidya* approach of enhancing therapeutic depth while ensuring patient acceptability. The use of *Kera ghrutham* as the lipid medium is particularly significant, as it not only facilitates deeper tissue penetration of the active phytoconstituents but also counter balances the *rooksha* nature of the drugs, thereby preventing excessive dryness which is an important consideration in chronic dermatoses and pediatric practice. From a pharmacological perspective, the constituent drugs exhibit proven anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, antimicrobial, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and hepatoprotective activities. These actions collectively support the management of both primary skin disorders and secondary dermatological manifestations associated with systemic illnesses such as chronic liver disease, chronic kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, and post-toxicological states.

Clinically, *Patola Kera Ghrutham* has shown consistent efficacy in *Paithika* and *Kapha-pittaja* skin conditions, especially where patients exhibit intolerance or *anupashaya* to conventional *thaila* preparations. Apart from the pediatric skin conditions this formulation can also be used in adults for the management of other dermatological disorders such as psoriasis, dermatitis, ichthyosis, and related skin ailments. The formulation also demonstrates versatility through its combinational use with other classical oils such as *Nalpamaradi thailam*, *Nilidaladi kera thailam*, *Dineshavalyadi thailam*, *Dantapala thialam*, etc. in various conditions.

Another aspect is its application in toxicological and drug-induced skin manifestations, where spreading lesions, burning, and itching as it possess *vishaghna* and *raktaprasadana* properties. Furthermore, its role in preventing recurrence and maintaining skin integrity, especially when used as a prophylactic body oil in infants and children, points out its preventive and promotive potential.

Considering the pharmacological properties of its ingredients and its long standing clinical use, *Patola Kera Ghrutham* represents a unique *Anubhoota Yoga* developed within the *Ashtavaidya* tradition for the management of dermatological disorders, particularly in the pediatric population. The formulation was designed to enhance acceptability, ease of administration, and therapeutic efficacy while retaining the benefits of the classical *Patoladi* group of drugs. Its promising clinical utility in a variety of skin conditions

warrants further scientific investigation to establish its safety, efficacy, and potential role in contemporary dermatological practice.

Therapeutic uses beyond the books (Practical experiences from various Practitioners)

The practical knowledge about the *Patola Kera Ghrutham* shared by experienced practitioners is very important as this formulation is a validated form designed from years of clinical experience. Some of the insights collected from practitioners are given below,

- In *Karappan* (pediatric dermatitis), administered internally with milk and applied externally, followed by washing using water boiled and cooled with mature *Ashwattha* (*Ficus religiosa*; Arayal) or *Paranthi* (*Thechi*) leaves.
- In post treatment period of jaundice, *Patola Kera Ghrutham* can be administered along with *Arukaladi Thailam* for the excessive heat or warmth of the skin.
- In Atopic dermatitis used as a head oil and body oil, with or without *Karappan Thailam*.
- Effective in *Kapha-Paittika Twak Vikara* associated with oozing, itching, and burning sensation.
- Useful in *visha* (toxicological manifestations) with a spreading nature, such as *Luta visha* (spider poisoning).
- External application in itching and burning sensation associated with diabetic conditions, especially during the *purvarupa* (prodromal) stage with *Kapha-Pitta* predominance.
- External application in post-procedural skin rashes and itching following *upanaha* therapy.
- As a prophylactic baby oil for improving complexion and preventing skin diseases, particularly dermatitis.
- *Miliaria* (*Choodukkuru*) -external application in both children and adults.
- For *Twak Vaivarnyam* (skin discoloration, including hyperpigmentation and hypopigmentation) observed during the post-treatment period.
- Post treatment phase of *Visha Chikitsa* (management of toxicological manifestations) and drug induced toxicities.
- Combined with *Nalpamaradi Kera thailam* for itching associated with PUO(Pruritus of unknown origin).
- Combined with *Dineshavaladyadi thailam* in *Twak Vaivarnyam*(hyperpigmentation of skin) during the second phase of treatment.
- Combined with *Nilidaladi kera thailam* in toxicological manifestations (*visha*).
- *Paittika* skin disorders associated with burning sensation and itching; internal and external administration.
- In patients exhibiting allergy or *anupashaya* (non-responsiveness) to *kera thaila* or other oil-based preparations, *Patola Kera Ghrutham* and *Gopadmajadi kera thailam* are preferred alternatives for internal and external use as its base is coconut milk.

- For dry skin and pruritus secondary to chronic illnesses such as chronic kidney disease (CKD) and chronic liver disease (CLD).
- External application in *Urticaria* presenting with rashes and itching.
- *Erythema toxicum neonatorum* (ETN) with *Pidaka/Visarpa* like manifestations -internal and external administration.

Conclusion

Patola Kera Ghrutham stands as a clinically validated *Anubhoota yoga* of the *Ashtavaidya* tradition, illustrates the dynamic integration of classical textual wisdom with sustained therapeutic experience. Rooted in the *Patoladi gana* of *Ashtangahridaya*, this formulation effectively addresses a wide spectrum of dermatological disorders, particularly those characterized by *Kaphapitta* predominance, burning sensation, itching, erythema, and toxicological involvement.

The formulation's unique combination of *tikta-katu* dominant drugs processed in *Kera ghrutham* ensures both therapeutic potency and patient compliance, making it especially suitable for pediatric use, sensitive skin conditions, and chronic dermatoses. Its demonstrated efficacy in inflammatory, allergic, infectious, metabolic, and drug-induced skin manifestations highlights its broad clinical applicability. The extensive clinical utility observed in *Ashtavaidya* practice emphasizes the need for systematic clinical documentation and scientific evaluation of such traditional formulations. *Patola Kera Ghrutham* represents a valuable therapeutic asset in Ayurvedic dermatology and reinforces the importance of preserving and scientifically exploring *Anubhoota yogas* as part of India's living medical heritage.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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