

REVIEW ARTICLE

Krimi Roga Chikitsa in Ayurveda – A Review

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ABSTRACT

The Ayurvedic system of medicine, one of the oldest in existence, holds a vast repository of knowledge on health and disease management. In Ayurveda, all ancient scholars (*Acharyas*) have mentioned the term “*Krimi*,” and most have elaborated on its classification, causes, symptoms, and treatment. Ayurvedic physicians possessed a deep understanding of *Krimi* and *Krimiroga*, which broadly refers to worms and microorganisms in modern scientific terms. The concept of *Krimi* dates back to the *Vedic* period. *Krimis* are primarily categorized into two types – *Bahya* (external) and *Abhyantara* (internal). The internal *Krimis* are further divided into *Raktaja*, *Kaphaja* (or *Shleshmaja*), and *Purishaja* types. *Acharya Charaka* proposed a threefold approach to the treatment of *Krimiroga*, namely *Apakarshana* (removal of the parasites), *Prakritivighata* (restoration of the balance of body constituents), and *Nidanparivarjana* (avoidance of causative factors). Among the therapeutic procedures, *Samshodhana* (purification therapy) is regarded as the fundamental treatment modality for *Krimiroga* in Ayurveda.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the term “*Krimi*” is used in a broad sense to encompass all types of worms and microorganisms, comparable to the concepts of protozoa, helminths, and ectoparasites in modern science. The concept of *Krimi* is ancient, with references found as early as the *Vedic* period. Ayurvedic texts describe both visible and invisible organisms – macro and micro – in nature that affect living as well as non-living entities within the biosphere.

Unlike modern medical science, where helminthology and microbiology are distinct disciplines, Ayurveda uses the single term *Krimi* to refer to all such organisms. All *Acharyas* of Ayurveda have discussed *Krimi*, providing detailed information about their classification, causes, symptoms, and treatments. Ayurvedic physicians had a profound understanding of *Krimis* and *Krimirogas*, identifying 20 types of *Krimis* that inhabit different parts of the body, each varying in shape, size, and location. Among these, *Shleshmaja* and *Purishaja Krimis* primarily reside in the gastrointestinal tract, causing both localized and systemic symptoms.

The *Acharyas* offered insightful descriptions of *Krimis*, emphasizing that they dwell in specific regions of the body and can lead to a variety of diseases. Interestingly, Ayurveda also recognized the existence of beneficial and harmful microorganisms, a concept similar to that of modern microbiology. The texts mention *Sahaja Krimi* (or *Avaikarika Krimi*), referring to non-pathogenic organisms that coexist naturally in the body.

To completely eliminate *Krimiroga*, Ayurveda recommends a combination of therapeutic measures – *Samshodhana* (purification therapy), *Prakriti Vighata* (alteration of the habitat or environment unfavorable to *Krimi*), and *Nidana Parivarjana* (avoidance of causative factors). *Samshodhana* helps remove *Krimi* from the root, but if any ova or cysts remain in the gastrointestinal tract, *Prakriti Vighata* and *Nidana Parivarjana* prevent their regrowth and recurrence. However, since *Samshodhana* is generally not suitable for children, Ayurvedic physicians recommend *Samshamana* therapy (palliative treatment) using appropriate *Krimighna* (anti-parasitic) herbs and formulations described in the classical texts.

1.1. Aim

To critically review and compile classical Ayurvedic literature on *Krimi Roga* with a focus on its etiopathogenesis, classification, clinical features, and therapeutic principles, and to highlight the relevance and applicability of Ayurvedic management strategies in clinical practice.

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1.2. Objectives

1. To explore the classical concept of Krimi Roga as described in major Ayurvedic texts (*Charak, Shusruta & Vagbhata*), including its types, causes, and pathophysiology.
2. To review the general symptoms of Krimi Roga based on Ayurvedic principles.
3. To analyze various therapeutic strategies, such as *Krimighna dravyas*, *Shodhana* therapies, *Shamana* therapies, and dietary-regimen recommendations mentioned for *Krimi Roga*.
4. To provide a comprehensive overview of preventive measures (*Nidana-parivarjana*) for controlling *Krimi Roga*.
5. To discuss the Ayurvedic *Krimi Roga Chikitsa*.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study Design - Exploratory Study

This narrative review of classical Ayurvedic descriptions and treatments of *Krimi Roga* based exclusively on the *Bṛhatrayī* (*Charak, Shusruta & Vagbhata*). The aim was to collect and collate classical definitions, classification (*nidāna/varga*), clinical features (*lakṣaṇa*), and management (*Cikitsa*) of *Krimi* as presented in these texts.

2.2. Sources (Primary Classical Texts)

All data were obtained from the *Bṛhatrayī*, i.e., *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Aṣṭaga-hṛdaya/Aṣṭāṅga-samgraha*, which are accepted as the three principal classical Ayurvedic encyclopedias.

2.3. Inclusion Criteria for Textual Material

- Passages (Sanskrit verses and prose) explicitly mentioning “*krimi*,” “*krimi-roga*,” “*puriṣaja/sahaja/agantuka krimi*,” or treatment procedures indicated for parasitic or worm-like conditions in the above three works.
- Relevant chapters/sections: *Nidana* (causation), *Lakṣaṇa* (symptoms), and *Cikitsa* (therapy) portions in the *Samhitas* and *Aṣṭāṅga* texts.

2.4. Concept of *Krimi* in *Vedic* Literature

In the *Vedic* corpus – comprising the *Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda* – the term “*Krimi*” is used in a broad and multifaceted sense. While references to *Krimi* and *Krimiroga* (diseases caused by *Krimi*) appear in three of the four Vedas, the *Samaveda* does not contain significant mentions of this concept. Among the remaining texts, the *Atharvaveda* provides the most detailed and systematic descriptions.

In the *Atharvaveda*, *Krimis* are described as existing throughout the environment – in trees, water, mountains, and living beings – which indicates a remarkably early recognition of the omnipresence of microscopic life. This ancient perspective aligns conceptually with modern microbiology’s understanding of the natural distribution of microorganisms. The text acknowledges both visible and invisible *Krimis*, some of which are pathogenic (causing disease) and others non-pathogenic.

The *Atharvaveda* categorizes different types of *Krimis* responsible for a range of diseases, including those affecting the eyes, nose, and teeth. In addition, it uses terms such as *Rakshasa, Pisacha*, and *Yatudhana* to denote specific harmful or supernatural-seeming types of *Krimis*, which may reflect attempts to personify or mythologize pathogenic agents whose precise nature was unknown but whose effects were observable.

This detailed classification and recognition of *Krimis* illustrate an early conceptual framework for understanding infectious diseases, revealing the depth of observational knowledge possessed by ancient *Vedic* scholars. It underscores the *Vedic* tradition’s holistic view of health, disease, and the interconnectedness of the environment and human physiology.

2.5. Concept of *Krimi* in *Brihatrayi Samhita*

Descriptions about the classification, pathogenesis, and treatment of *Krimi Roga* have been done by various *Acharyas* from time to time. *Charaka Samhita* mentions the total number of twenty *Krimi*. It has divided *Krimis* into two broad groups and *Vikaraja* (pathogenic) 1, and further as *Drishta* and *Adrishta* in “*Vyadhirupiya Vimana*.” Further classification of *Krimis* is only concerned with *Vikaraja Krimis*, as *Abhyantara* (Internal) and^[1] (External) *Krimi*. *Bahya Krimis* are told of two types, as *Yuka* and *Pippalika*, while *Abhyantara krimi* is further sub-classified into three type, namely, *Purishaja, Shleshmaja*, and *Rakataja*^[2] Detailed description of *Krimi Roga* is mentioned in *Vimana Sthana* with its three-fold *Chikitsa*, i.e., *Apakarshan, Prakriti-Vighata*, and *Nidana Parivarjan*.

Ashtanga Sangraha and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, supposed to have compiled the *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas* and explain the *Nidana* (causes), Classification, and *Lakshanās* (symptoms)^[3] of *Krimi* in *Nidana Sthana*^[4] and treatment of the *Krimi* in *Chikitsa Sthana*, respectively.^[5,6]

2.6. Classification of *Krimi* – According to *Brihatrayi*

While most classical Ayurvedic scholars agree on the existence of twenty types of *Krimis*, there is some variation in their views regarding the specific locations of these organisms within the body. The internal (*Abhyantara*) *Krimis* are commonly divided into three main categories:

- *Raktaja* (arising from blood),
- *Kaphaja or Shleshmaja* (originating from Kapha/mucus), and
- *Purishaja* (originating from feces).

However, the exact number of *Krimis* within each of these subcategories differs among various authors. These variations are typically summarized and compared in tabular form [Tables 1-5].

2.7. General Symptoms of *Krimi Roga*

Almost all Ayurvedic texts – with the exception of the *Charaka Samhita* – describe a common set of signs and symptoms associated with *Krimi* infestations. These include fever, pale or discolored skin, abdominal cramps, cardiac discomfort, fatigue, dizziness, loss of appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, and gurgling sounds in the intestines.

Additional clinical manifestations observed in individuals affected by *Krimi* may include sudden collapse, a general sense of weakness, and difficulty in breathing (dyspnea).^[9,10]

The condition known as *Krimija Pandu* (a form of anemia caused by *Krimi*) is mentioned in the *Charaka Samhita* as well as other classical Ayurvedic texts. Moreover, certain Ayurvedic scriptures also provide details of specific symptoms that arise from particular types of *Krimi*, highlighting variations in clinical presentations based on the nature of the infestation.

3. CHIKITSA OF KRIMI ROGA

Treatment of *Koshtagata Krimi* – According to *Acharya Charaka*

Acharya Charaka outlines three fundamental approaches for managing *Koshtagata Krimi* (intestinal parasites).^[11]

- *Apakarshana* - Physical removal through procedures such as *Vamana* and other *Panchakarma* therapies.
- *Prakriti Vighata* - Disrupting the pathogenesis and natural habitat of the *Krimi*.
- *Nidana Parivarjana* - Avoidance of the causative factors responsible for *Krimi Roga*.

1. *Apakarshana* (elimination)

The term *Apakarshana* refers to forcibly removing or expelling accumulated *doshas*, *malas* (waste), and *Krimi* clusters from the body. This can involve both manual and instrumental methods, especially in the case of external *Krimi* (*Bahya Krimi*). Internal parasites (Abhyantara *Krimi*), however, require specific elimination therapies such as:

i. *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis)

Vamana involves expelling vitiated *doshas* through the upper gastrointestinal tract. Since the *Amashaya* (stomach) is the primary site of *Kapha*, and certain *Kapha*-related disorders (*Kaphaja Krimi*) originate there, *Vamana* is used to remove them from the body.

ii. *Virechana* (purgation therapy)

This procedure targets the elimination of vitiated *doshas* via the lower gastrointestinal tract. The herbs used are both *Krimighna* (anti-parasitic) and purgative, helping to kill or immobilize the intestinal worms. The resulting peristaltic action aids in expelling the parasites from the gut.

iii. *Shirovirechana* (nasal cleansing therapy)

Also known as *Nasya*, this procedure expels vitiated *doshas* lodged in the head region, particularly the sinuses. Medicines with pungent (*katu*) and bitter (*tikta*) tastes and hot potency (*ushna guna*) stimulate the nasal mucosa, promoting secretion and expulsion of toxins and *Krimis* from the upper body.

iv. *Asthapani Basti* (decoction enema)

This is a specialized method to eliminate parasites from the large intestine. The medicinal decoction directly targets the site of *Krimi* infestation. Among the three types of *Basti* -*Anuvasana Basti* (oil-based enema), *Asthapani Basti* (decoction enema), *Uttara Basti* (urethral/vaginal enema) *Asthapani Basti* is preferred for *Krimi Roga*, as its *Kashaya Dravya* (astringent ingredients) possess *Karshana Guna* (anti-parasitic properties) that inhibit the growth and activity of *Krimis*. In contrast, oleated preparations used in *Anuvasana Basti* may actually nourish or support the parasites, making them less suitable for this condition.

2. *Prakriti Vighata*

Prakriti Vighata (Disruption of the Causative Environment)

The term *Prakriti* refers to the natural condition or environment that supports the origin and growth (*Utpadaka Karana*) of *Krimis*, while *Vighata* means destruction or disruption (*Vinasha*). Therefore, *Prakriti Vighata* implies destroying or altering the environment that facilitates the development of parasites.

Even after performing *Samshodhana Chikitsa* (purification therapies under *Apakarshana*), although *doshas*, *malas*, and *Krimis* may be expelled from the body, if their supportive environment (*Prakriti*) is not changed, there is a risk of the disease recurring or persisting (*Anubandha*). To prevent this, substances with properties such as pungent (*Katu*), bitter (*Tikta*), astringent (*Kashaya*) taste, and hot potency (*Ushna Guna*) are used, as they inhibit the growth and reproduction of *Krimis*. Since *Kapha* and *Purisha* (stool) are

considered the primary substrates (*Prakriti*) for *Krimis*, *Acharya Charaka* recommends using herbs and formulations that have opposite qualities to those of *Kapha* and *Purisha* to disrupt their favorable environment and ensure complete eradication.^[12]

3.1. *Nidana Parivarjana*

3.1.1. *Nidana Parivarjana* (Avoidance of Causative Factors)

Nidana Parivarjana refers to the elimination or avoidance of the factors that contribute to the origin and growth of *Krimi*. This is considered one of the most essential principles in Ayurveda, as it places equal emphasis on diet (*Ahara*), lifestyle (*Vihara*), and daily habits as it does on direct treatment.

According to classical texts, to prevent *Krimiroga*, recommends a diet containing bitter and pungent foods and alkaline preparations (especially with horse gram) as beneficial – likely referring to their digestive, cleansing, and *kapha*-reducing properties, one must avoid dietary and behavioral habits that aggravate *Kapha*, such as consuming sweet (*Madhura*), unctuous (*Snigdha*) foods, jaggery (*Guda*), curd (*Dadhi*), and milk (*Dugdha*). Inappropriate lifestyle practices, such as sleeping during the day (*Divaswapana*), are also cited as contributing factors. Avoiding these *Kapha*-promoting causes is crucial in both the prevention and management of *Krimi* disorders.^[13]

3.1.2. Formulations for *Krimi Roga Chikitsa*

According *Sushruta Samhita*^[14]

- Administer the fresh juice or paste of *Palasa* seeds to the patient, using rice-water as the *Anupana* (vehicle).
- *Krimighānavaleha* (*Krimi-nāśa* *Avaleha*) - Administer finely powdered donkey dung (*Ashva-shakrit*) or finely powdered *Vidanga* mixed with honey.
- Prepare *pupalika* (small fried cakes) by mixing the fine powder of *Mushikaparni* (*Danti*) leaves with barley flour (mixed with *yava-piṣṭa*). Make a batter with water, cook it like *pupalika* (small pancakes/*paranthas*) for administration
- *Krimighana taila*-The oil prepared using the paste of herbs belonging to the *surasadi* group should be administered internally in a dose of 1–2 tola. Alternatively, food preparation such as laddus made from barley flour mixed with *vidanga* (*Embelia ribes*) powder may be given to the patient.

According to *Acharya Kashyapa Samhita*^[15]

To eliminate parasites (*Krimi*), *Drayas* that are *Tikta*, *Katu*, *Ruksha*, *Mutra* and *Lavana* and procedures such as *Snehana*, *Swedana* should be employed.

Apply lukewarm bitter oil (such as mustard oil) mixed with rock salt to the anal region, and then gently foment the area with a finger (i.e., by rubbing to generate warmth). This procedure provides relief and recovery.

- *Vidanga Ghrita* – Adding a small amount of salt to *Vidanga ghrita* is highly effective in destroying intestinal parasites. Just as the thunderbolt (*Vajra*), when hurled, destroys demons, in the same way, when this *Ghrita* is taken with sugar, eradicates all types of worms and parasites.

4. DISCUSSION

It is well established in Ayurveda that the term “*Krimi*” encompasses a broad range of organisms, including both worms and microorganisms. While references to *Krimi* can be traced back to the *Vedic* period, it

was during the *Samhita* period that a more systematic and detailed study emerged—covering aspects such as classification, morphology, pathogenesis, clinical features, and treatment of *Krimi roga*.

Ayurveda classifies Krimis into two main types:

1. *Drishya Krimi* - those that are visible to the naked eye,
2. *Adrishya Krimi* - those that are invisible, identified through inference (*Anumana Pramana*) based on signs and symptoms.

In modern times, *Adrishya Krimi* can be correlated with microorganisms or the larval stages of worms, and their presence can now be confirmed using microscopic examination. On the other hand, *Drishya Krimi* generally refers to adult parasitic worms that are observable without magnification.

Ayurvedic texts describe various types of *Krimis*, including:

- *Raktaja Krimi*
- *Kaphaja Krimi*
- *Purishaja Krimi*

Interestingly, the term “*Adrishya*” meaning *invisible*, is specifically used in the context of *Raktaja Krimi* in classical texts, but not in reference to *Kaphaja* or *Purishaja Krimi*. However, based on current scientific understanding, many microbes residing in the intestines, stomach, and respiratory system – which are not visible to the naked eye – can now be conceptually linked to *Purishaja* and *Kaphaja Krimis* in *Ayurvedic* theory.

Krimi Roga, described extensively in classical Ayurvedic texts, primarily results from the vitiation of *Kapha* and impairment of *Agni*, creating a favorable environment for the growth of internal parasites. *Acharya Charaka* emphasizes a three-fold therapeutic approach – *Apakarshana*, *Prakriti Vighata*, and *Nidana Parivarjana* – which together ensure comprehensive eradication and prevention of recurrence.

Apakarshana includes purification therapies such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Shirovirechana*, and especially *Asthapana Basti*, which physically eliminate parasites from the gastrointestinal tract. These procedures help clear the accumulated *doshas* and directly expel *krimi* clusters.

Prakriti Vighata focuses on disrupting the habitat and biological environment that supports *krimi* survival. Substances with pungent, bitter, astringent tastes and hot potency counter the moist and heavy nature of *Kapha* and *Purisha*, thereby preventing further infestation.

Nidana Parivarjana highlights dietary and lifestyle correction. Avoiding *Kapha*-promoting foods (milk, curd, sweets, unctuous foods) and adopting bitter, pungent, alkaline preparations plays a vital role in long-term management. It aligns with the *Ayurvedic* principle that prevention is equally important as cure.

Classical formulations such as *Palasha* seed preparations, *Vidanga*-based *Avaleha*, *Krimighna Taila* from *Surasadi* herbs, and *Vidanga Ghrita* demonstrate the therapeutic versatility of herbal medicines with *krimighna* (antiparasitic) properties. These formulations work through both *shodhana* (elimination) and *shamana* (pacification) mechanisms.

Overall, the classical approach to *Krimi Roga* integrates detoxification, correction of the internal milieu, and preventive guidelines, providing a holistic and sustainable management strategy that remains relevant even today.

5. CONCLUSION

The concepts of *Krimi* and *Krimi Roga* have been present since the Vedic period, but a more systematic and detailed explanation is found during the *Samhita* period, including the threefold treatment approach for managing *Krimi Roga*. The depth and detail of descriptions have evolved over time, with later texts offering more comprehensive insights into the nature and management of these conditions.

In Ayurvedic literature, the term “*Krimi*” broadly encompasses various microorganisms, including helminths (worms), protozoa, bacteria, and viruses. However, due to the lack of specific identification and detailed classification of individual *Krimis* in the texts, establishing a direct correlation between traditional concepts and modern microbiology is often challenging.

While the classical Ayurvedic approach to managing *Krimi Roga* is described in a step-by-step and methodical manner, its practical application – especially in pediatric cases – can be difficult. Strict adherence to all therapeutic steps, including *Panchakarma* procedures, dietary restrictions, and long-term regimens, may not always be feasible in contemporary clinical settings.

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The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible through databases.

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Table 1: Number of *krimi* according to *Brihatrayi*

Samhita	<i>Bahya Krimi</i> (external)		<i>Abhyantara krimi</i> (internal)		Total Krimi
	<i>Malaja Krimi</i>	<i>Kaphaja</i>	<i>Raktaja</i>	<i>Purishaj</i>	
<i>Charaka Samhita</i> ^[7]	2	7	6	5	20
<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> ^[8]	-	6	7	7	20
<i>Vagbhata</i>	2	7	6	5	20

Table 2: Nomenclature of *Krimi* mentioned in *Brihatrayi* - *Bahya Krimi*

S. No.	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Vagbhata</i>
1	Yuka-	-	Yuka
2	Pipilika	-	Leeksha

Table 3: Nomenclature of *Krimis* mentioned in *Brihatrayi-Shleshmaja Krimi*

S. No.	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Vagbhata</i>
1.	<i>Antrada</i>	<i>Dhanyankuranibha</i>	<i>Antrada</i>
2.	<i>Hridayada</i>	<i>Suchimukha</i>	<i>Hridayada</i>
3.	<i>Udarad</i>	<i>Chipita</i>	<i>Udaravestha</i>
4.	<i>Churu</i>	<i>Pipilika</i>	<i>Kuru (Churu)</i>
5.	<i>Mahaguda</i>	<i>Daruna</i>	<i>Mahakuha</i>
6.	<i>Saugandhika</i>	<i>Darbhapushpa</i>	<i>Sugandha</i>
7.	<i>Darbhakushma</i>		<i>Darbhakusuma</i>

Table 4: Nomenclature of *Krimis* mentioned in *Brihatrayi-Purishaja Krimi*

S. No.	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Vagbhata</i>
1	<i>Kakeruka</i>	<i>Ajwa</i>	<i>Kakeruka</i>
2	<i>Makeruka</i>	<i>Vijya</i>	<i>Makeruka</i>
3	<i>Sausurada</i>	<i>Kipyā</i>	<i>Sausurada</i>
4	<i>Sasulaka</i>	<i>Chipya</i>	<i>Saluna</i>
5	<i>Leliha</i>	<i>Gandupad</i>	<i>Leliha</i>
6		<i>Churu</i>	
7		<i>Dvimukha</i>	

Table 5: Nomenclature of *Krimis* mentioned in *Brihatrayi-Raktaja Krimi*

S. No.	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Vagbhata</i>
1	<i>Keshad</i>	<i>Keshada</i>	<i>Keshada</i>
2	<i>Lomada</i>	<i>Romada</i>	<i>Lomavidhvansa</i>
3	<i>Lomadwipa</i>	<i>Nakhad</i>	<i>Lomadwipa</i>
4	<i>Saurasa</i>	<i>Dantada</i>	<i>Udumbara</i>
5	<i>Udumbara</i>	<i>Kikkisha</i>	<i>Saurasa</i>
6	<i>Jantumatara</i>	<i>Kushthaja</i>	<i>Matraha</i>
7	-	<i>Parisarpaja</i>	-