

An International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Allied Systems

Review Article

YAKRUT KARMA IN POST-COVID SEQUELAE: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

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Article info

Article History:

Received: 18-09-2025 Accepted: 23-10-2025 Published: 30-11-2025

KEYWORDS:

Rasa Rakta Dushti, Yakrut Karma, Long COVID, Liver health.

ABSTRACT

Post-COVID syndrome presents with a wide range of persistent symptoms, including fever, fatigue, hypertension, anorexia, digestive ailments, body aches, nausea, and malnutrition. According to Ayurveda, all these manifestations closely resemble the classical symptoms of Rasa Dhatu Dushti. When the quality of Rasa is compromised, its successive transformation into Rakta Dhatu is hindered, predisposing to disturbances in the blood tissue and related metabolic domains, with the Yakrut presenting as the primary site of dysfunction. This review analyses post-COVID sequelae in the framework of Yakrut Karma and Rasa-Rakta Dhatu Dushti, investigating how persistent changes in Rasa Dushti after COVID can result in underlying Rakta Dushti, which ultimately presents as liver damage. Modern clinical findings such as higher liver enzyme levels, metabolic disturbances, and persistent inflammation correlate with the Ayurvedic overview of impaired Yakrut Karma, indicating altered liver function and metabolism. An effort has been undertaken to connect recent scientific evidence with traditional interpretations of *Dhatu* imbalance, highlighting the importance of Ayurveda in assessing liver health following COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing a burning disaster because of COVID-19, which the WHO has labelled an emergency. Since the start, a lot of work has been done to screen for the prevalence and patterns of COVID-19 symptoms, but more research is still needed to fully understand the post-COVID state. Millions of people have been infected, with nearly 7 million deaths as of July 10, 2023[1], and the number of "long-haulers" is rising quickly. Understanding the diversity of post-COVID situations is therefore essential. This viral infection may cause the liver to become unstable, which indicates that the body is at its highest level of awareness. According to Ayurvedic Samhitas, the liver is described under the term Yakrut. It serves as the hub for the metabolism of nutrients (carbohydrates, lipids, and proteins) and the excretion of waste metabolites, detoxifving and eliminating foreign contaminants, and

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performing constant maintenance of the body's health. The significance of liver function, or Yakrut Karma, in sustaining health in the post-COVID state is thus emphasized. Avurveda describes epidemics in the context of Janapadodhwamsa, highlighting pollution of Vayu, Udaka, Desha, and Kala as the cause of the large-scale disease spread.[2] However, the attack of "Bhootas" also has a substantial effect on the pathology of these Vikaras, which can be understood with the concept of microbes (viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms.[3] These microorganisms are observed as external causative agents that produce Agantuja Vyadhi. Hence, microbial diseases like COVID-19 can be grouped under Bhutabhishanga Vyadhi in Ayurveda.[4] LONG COVID is a general term used for people who have recovered from COVID-19 but still exhibit symptoms for longer than would be expected. It is a pathologic entity involving persistent physical, medical, and cognitive repercussions following infection, leading to severely worsened quality of life. The most common symptoms reported include fatigue, dyspnea, hair loss, arthralgia, attention deficit, palpitations, smell and taste dysfunctions, gastrointestinal and cardiac issues, and cough.[5] In Ayurveda, these can be correlated with Rasa Vaha

Srotho Dushti. Ayurveda defines the liver (Yakrut) as the seat of Rakta Dhatu. COVID-19, taken as Vata-Kapha Jwara or Sannipata Jwara, leads to Rasa Dhatu Pradoshaja Vikara, thereby altering the normal development and functioning of Rakta Dhatu and contributing to hepatic damage, the principal site of Rakta Dhatu formation.

METHOD

A thorough review of Ayurvedic classical texts, including the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with contemporary scientific literature, journals, recent publications, and internet sources (PubMed, Research Gate, etc) was undertaken to explore concepts of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, and *Yakrut Karma* in relation to hepatic involvement during post-COVID syndrome.

RESULT

Post-COVID sequelae: clinical overview

Following the respiratory system, the liver is identified as one of the organs most susceptible to COVID-19. Clinical evidence reveals that 15 to 53 percent of patients have some degree of liver involvement, commonly manifested as lymphatic portal inflammation. vascular congestion. hepatocyte haemorrhage. and death.[6] Studies uncovered that 6 to 16.7 percent of COVID-19 patients experienced jaundice[7] and a peak TBIL (Total Bilirubin) value indicating a significant systemic inflammation.[8] Jaundice can be correlated with Kamala, which is described as a Rakta-pradushtitha Vyadhi characterized primarily by Agnimandya (diminished digestive and metabolic activity). Vitiation of Agni forms the fundamental basis for the pathogenesis of a disease. The symptoms of COVID-19, such as a moderate to high fever (Iwara), nausea (Hrullasa), dysgeusia (Aasya Vairasya), anorexia (Arochakam), dyspepsia (Avipakata), laziness (Alasyam), heaviness (Gourava), etc., are identical to the Sama Lakshanas described in Charaka Chikitsa Sthana.[9] Ama, caused by Agni Kshaya and partial digestion of Rasa Dhatu, could be considered as the primary source of inflammatory cytokines or as an energy source for COVID-19 viruses.[10] Dhatupaka follows Agni Dushti. Increased prothrombin time, SGOT, SGPT, LDH, and D-dimer in COVID-19 can be linked to Rasa and Rakta Dhatupaka.

Post-COVID Rasa Dhatu Dushti

One way to conceptualize infectious diseases like COVID-19 is as communicable diseases, also known as *Sankramaka Roga* or *Aupasargika Roga*. [11] Based on its clinical presentations, COVID-19 can be correlated with *Bhutabhishangaja Jwara*, *Vata-Kaphaja Jwara*, and *Sannipatika Jwara*. *Prana Vaha Sroto Dushti* contributes to COVID-19 symptoms like *Shwasa*, *Kasa*,

Pratishyaya, and Shirograha and have been linked with Abhyantara roga marga.[12][13] Santapa, apravartanam, Parva-bheda, Mukhashosha, Tandra etc., are brought upon by Rasa Vaha Sroto Dushti. The pathophysiology of COVID-19 illness thus involves Srotas. Acharva Charaka Rasapradoshaja Vikaras analogous to the patterns observed in COVID-19: Ashraddha (disinclination for food), Aruchi (anorexia), Aasyavairasya (tastelessness of mouth), Arasagyata (ageusia/hypogeusia/loss of taste), Hrillasa (nausea), Gaurava (heaviness), Tandra (drowsiness/lassitude), Angamarda (generalized body ache), Jwara (fever), Tama (black out/fainting), Pandu (pallor), Srotasaam Rodha (obstruction to Srotas), Klaibya (impotence), Saada (exhaustion/ tiredness to body), Krishangata (emaciated or thin body), Nashoagneya (loss of Agni), and Ayathakalam Valipalita (premature appearance of wrinkles and grey hairs)[14]. The symptoms of kapha Heena Pitha Madhya Vataadhika jwara, also called Sammohaka Sannipata *Jwara* closely resemble COVID-19 manifestations.[15] Vata-Kaphaja Iwara presenting with characteristic phenotypic expressions such as Sheetako (colds), Gaurav (generalized heaviness), Tandra (laziness), Staimityam (excess chills), Parvanam Bheda (arthralgia /joint pain), Shirograha (headache), Pratishyaya (running nose and/or nose block), and Madhya-vega Santapa (mild fever). reflects COVID-19 symptomology. [16]

When evaluated using the GLIM (Global Leadership Initiative on Malnutrition) criteria, COVID-19 survivors were found to have malnutrition associated with dysgeusia and loss of appetite.[17] weight loss was documented Acute 58% hospitalization, with reporting decreased appetite, 49% experiencing early satiety, and 73% identified as being at high risk for developing sarcopenia.[18] A meta-analysis of 24.410 confirmed COVID-19 patients reported cases of fever, fatigue, myalgia, diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, stomach discomfort, arthralgia, hyposmia, and hypogeusia.[19] Seventy-five percent showed a significantly increased DNA Fragmentation Index (DFI) along with decreased sperm concentration, count, and motility.[20] Infertility has been linked to anti-Mullerian hormone deficiency in the post-COVID phase, which lowers ovarian reserve.[21] Excessive hair loss was observed within two to three months of infection, with telogen effluvium suggested as the potential cause.[22] COVID in acute and post-illness phases is associated with anxiety, depression, memory loss, insomnia, and other mental health issues, which may contribute to premature hair loss and greying.[23] These study outcomes collectively suggest derangement of Rasa dhatu and its related Srotas.

Progression: Rasa Dushti to Rakta Dushti

The Saptha Dhatus (tissues), namely Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Medas, Asthi, Majja, and Sukra promote overall bodily stability. In Charaka Samhitha, Grahani Chikitsa. Acharva explained the process transformation of these nourishing portions of the digested food as similar to a rotating wheel. Rakta is produced from Rasa. After Rakta, Mamsa is formed. After Mamsa, Medas is formed, and then Asthi is formed. From Asthi, Majia is formed, and then Sukra from Majja. [24] The seven Dhatus are metabolized or transformed into two kinds of products known as *Sara* (nutrients) and Kitta (wastes), which is the function of seven specific entities known as *Dhatvagni*. The entire sequence of transformation and metabolism of *Dhatus* is interdependent. Hence, it can be understood that any vitiation in the Rasa dhatu can hinder the proper formation of Rakta Dhatu. The nourishment fluid formed, known as Rasa, undergoes transformation by the *Ushma* (heat) of pitta and gets converted into the red colored tissue known as Rakta.[25] The process of dhatu formation thus begins with the digestion and absorption of food, leading to the formation of Rasa dhatu. Rasa is then transformed into Rakta, followed by Mamsa, Medas, Asthi, Majja, and finally Sukra/ Arthava. Each Dhatu nourishes the subsequent one in a continuous cycle. This transformation process is vital for maintaining health and ensuring that each tissue receives proper nourishment. Any disruption or imbalance in this sequence can lead to various health issues. In COVID-19, Rasa Vaha Srotho Dusthi and Rasa Dhatu Dushyam can thus contribute to an imbalance in the Rakta Dhatu, leading to a cascade of events affecting its quality.

Acharya Susrutha has described Mamsa Dhatu as the seat of *Raktadhara kala*, particularly in the blood vessels (Sira) and the haemopoietic organs like the liver (Yakrut) and spleen (Pleeha).[26] It is considered analogous to the endothelium, the inner lining of blood vessels.[27] The binding of SARS-CoV-2 to vascular ACE2 receptors initiates a severe inflammatory response, disrupting endothelial haemostasis. An uncontrolled release of cytokines in COVID-19(IL-6, IL-1 β , TNF- α) activates platelets, promoting clot formation and leading to thrombocytopenia.[28] Increased fibrinogen, Factor VIII, and von Willebrand factor (vWF) trigger hypercoagulability.[29] The accumulation of angiotensin II exacerbates endothelial injury, ultimately leading to arterial blood pressure. [30] Shortened PT (prothrombin time) and APTT (Activated Partial Thromboplastin Time) can lead to complications and even death.[31] These are visible indicators of deteriorating Rakta Dhatu. Acharya Charaka describes Kustha, Visarpa, Pidika, Nilika, Vyanga, Piplava, Tilakalaka, Dadru, Carmadala, Switra, Pama, Kotha, and Asramandala

among the *Rakta Pradoshaja Vikaras* (diseases of *Raktha Dathu Dushti*), demonstrating cutaneous signs brought on by the vitiated blood. Urticarial rash, vesicular rash, maculopapular and morbilliform eruptions, chilblain-like lesions, livedoid, and petechial lesions were prevalent among COVID-19 patients.^[32] In rare cases, there have been reports of oral thrush, vitiligo-like hypopigmentation, pigmented purpuric dermatosis, and the reactivation or exacerbation of pre-existing skin conditions.^[33]

Yakrut as the seat of Rakta Dhatu: Ayurvedic insights

Yakrut is classified as a Kostha-gata organ, essential for Rasa to Rakta Dhatu transformation. The liver (Yakrut) and spleen (Pleeha) are referred to as Sonitha Sthana, or the seat of Rakta Dhatu, as they collectively preserve the structural and functional integrity of Rakta Dhatu. Their anomalies are closely associated with haematological disorders described in Avurveda, such as Pandu, Kamala, and Plihodara. The origin of the word 'Yakrut' is from the root term "Yakan", meaning the liver. Yakrut is the combination of two words: "Ya" meaning activity, and "Krit" meaning breakdown.[34] According to Acharya Susrutha, it is of maternal origin and formed from the Rakta Dhatu. The three Bhavapadarthas- Samana Vayu, Dehoshma, and Rakta Dhatu- are involved in the development of Yakrut, Pleeha, and Kloma, according to Acharva Arunadatta. In ancient literature, Yakrut has synonyms such as *Jyotisthana, Raktadhara, and* Raktashava.[35] Together with Pleeha (spleen), it is regarded as the Moola sthana (root) of Raktha Vaha Srothas and the site of Ranjaka Pitta, which imparts color to Rasa to form Rakta. It corresponds to haematopoiesis, carried out by the liver during intrauterine life.

The hepatic bud and septum transversum, which are components of the mesoderm, together form the liver. The mesoderm also produces hemocytoblasts and lymphoblasts, which are the precursors of blood cells. It is evident that the mesoderm, the basic material used to make liver and blood, is the same. The umbilical and vitelline veins pass through the septum transversum during the early stages of embryonic development, providing an ample supply of blood. As the liver tissue develops and encircles the umbilical and vitelline veins, they split apart and change into the liver's sinusoids during foetal development. The umbilical veins form the ductus venosus, which then develops into the ligamentum teres hepatis after birth, while the vitelline sinusoids contribute to the portal vein and other hepatic veins. Rakta dhatu is thus necessary for replenishing and sustaining the liver's functional capacity. Studies have revealed individuals with COVID-19 experience endothelial injuries, coagulation disorders, and inflammatory blood changes that align with the traditional description of *Rakta Dusthi*. Any disturbance in *Rakta Dhatu* due to COVID-19 can inevitably impair hepatic health.

Post-COVID Hepatic Involvement

In the liver, ACE2 receptors are abundantly expressed in cholangiocytes and the endothelium layer of small blood vessels, and in a lesser amount in hepatocytes, making the organ susceptible to COVID-19. Several drugs prescribed to manage COVID-19 and associated symptoms, such as antivirals, antibiotics, acetaminophen, corticosteroids, and anti-pyretic, which are metabolized through the liver, may lead to hepatotoxicity. Hypoxia leads to decreased liver artery perfusion and ischemic reperfusion Inflammatory cytokines such as granulocyte macrophage-colony stimulating factor (GM-CSF), monocyte chemoattractant protein-1 (MCP-1), IL-1β, IL-2, IL-6, IL-10, IFN- γ , TNF- α , and IFN- γ -inducible protein 10 (IP-10) are elevated in COVID-19 patients.[36] Heightened liver stiffness and steatosis levels are indicative of hepatic injury. Higher concentrations of ALT, AST, ALP, and GGT point to underlying hepatocellular and cholangiocellular.[37]

Patients developed progressive cholestatic liver injury that lasted for weeks to months, along with intrahepatic duct dilatation. structuring, irregularity.[38] Mild portal changes, canalicular cholestasis, bile duct damage, and noticeable biliary blockage were observed in liver biopsies. Elevated levels of fibrinogen and D-dimer suggest a hypercoagulable state and significant systemic inflammation. An increased level of Hyaluronic acid, LDH, CRP, ferritin, IL-6, and ESR, and a liver fibrosis index (FIB-4) greater than 3.25 were noticed.[39] Viral particle aggregates were detected cholangiocytes and endothelial cells of hepatic sinusoids.[40] Following recovery from COVID-19, juvenile patients presented with severe necrosis, cholangiolar proliferation, and lymphocytic infiltration.[41] All of the above indicators of liver damage clearly illustrate the avurvedic theory that Rasa Dushti initiates a pathogenic cascade that leads to Rakta Dushti and hepatic dysfunction. The upstream Rasa vitiation marked by defective Dhatu Poshana (impaired tissue nourishment) lays the groundwork Raktha Dushti (endothelial injury, hypercoagulability, and hepatic parenchymal damage), eventually manifesting as structural and functional impairment of the liver (Yakrut).

DISCUSSION

Persistent symptoms and organ-specific impacts have made the post-COVID era a complex clinical entity. Among these, hepatic dysfunction has gained more recognition due to its immune-mediated pathogenesis and viral invasion, as well as the side effects medications. including antibiotics. corticosteroids, and antivirals. Disturbance in Rasa Dhatu, the body's primary fluid, creates circumstances favourable for Rakta Dushti, directly affecting the blood's flow, purity, and functional quality. Cutaneous manifestations, endothelial pathology, mitochondrial dysfunction, massive cytokine production, and thrombosis observed during and after COVID-19 infection vividly demonstrate how Rakta Dushti manifests in tangible. visible wavs. inflammatory markers like CRP and ferritin add scientific weight to this classical viewpoint, as they directly reflect the body's struggle with altered Rakta Dhatu.

According to Ayurveda, Yakrut functions as more than merely an organ; it is the seat of the Rakta Vaha Srotas, where life-giving fluids transform into the blood that nourishes all of our cells, providing our lives their vibrant color. An alteration in the balance between Rasa and Rakta triggers several changes that affect our vitality, such as elevated liver enzymes, fluctuating bilirubin levels, or severe hepatic distress, all indicators of defective Dhatu Poshana and Agni Dushana, which might result in a disordered Yakrut Karma. More than merely a medical diagnosis, the persistent inflammation that many people endure following COVID-19 is an echo of imbalance, which Ayurveda has long identified as Dosha sanchaya and Srotodushti, where the body's vital forces and channels become strained and obstructed. Despite substantial progress understanding post-COVID dysfunction. major gaps remain. Few clinical investigations are linking Ayurvedic concepts, such as Yakrut Karma, to hepatic symptoms following COVID-19 infection. Correlations between modern biomarkers, such as liver enzymes and inflammatory markers, and Ayurvedic parameters, such as Agni (digestive fire), Dosha Satmyata, and Dhatu Poshana, can offer valuable evidence and reconcile traditional and contemporary perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Post-COVID sequelae are emerging as a complex challenge, with hepatic dysfunction as a significant concern affecting long-term health and recovery. Long-term COVID clinical manifestations correspond with *Rasa Dhatu Dushti*, which subsequently develops into *Rakta Dushti*, according to Ayurveda. The liver (*Yakrut*) is the root of *Rakta Vaha*

Srotas and acts as the Agni Sthana (place of digestive fire) because of its vital role in digestion and metabolism, making it highly vulnerable during the post-COVID phase, often leading to hepatic dysfunction. This framework underlines the need for prompt measures to restore Dhatu-satmya and reestablish Yakrut Karma, thereby promoting better long-term recovery.

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Cite this article as:

C Devaki Krishna, Vidula Gujjarwar. Yakrut Karma in Post-Covid Sequelae: An Integrative Review. AYUSHDHARA, 2025;12(5):148-153. https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i5.2310

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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