



Understanding *Vatashaya*: A Critical Conceptual Review.

Dr. Buranoddin Kudachi

Assistant Professor, Department of Rachana Sharir

Dr. BNM Rural Ayurvedic Medical College, Hospital, PG & Research Center Vijayapur

ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Vatashaya is an important *Ayurvedic* concept described in relation to the functional and anatomical aspects of the human body. *Ayurveda* emphasizes the role of *Vata Dosha*, particularly its physiological functions in regulating movement, nerve impulses, circulation, respiration, elimination, and other vital activities. The term *Vatashaya* can be understood in the context of the sites or functional domains associated with *Vata* and its physiological activities. A proper understanding of *Vatashaya* is essential for interpreting the classical concepts of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Srotas*, and their interrelationship.

Materials and Methods:

A conceptual review was carried out using classical *Ayurvedic* literature, including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with relevant contemporary literature. References to *Vata*, its sites, functions, and associated anatomical and physiological concepts were critically analyzed and correlated with modern perspectives wherever appropriate.

Results:

The review indicates that *Vata* is considered the principal regulator of movement and coordination of various physiological processes. Its association with specific anatomical sites and functional systems provides a comprehensive framework for understanding normal physiology and disease manifestation. *Vatashaya* may therefore be interpreted as an important conceptual basis for understanding the localization and functional expression of *Vata* in the body.

Discussion:

The *Ayurvedic* concept of *Vatashaya* provides a holistic approach to understanding the distribution and physiological significance of *Vata*. Systematic evaluation of this concept along with modern anatomical and physiological knowledge may contribute to a better understanding of *Ayurvedic* principles and their clinical application.

Keywords: *Vatashaya*, *Vata Dosha*, *Ayurveda*, *Dosha*, *Ayurvedic* physiology, *Srotas*.

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine that explains health and disease through the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* and their interaction with the structural and functional components of the body. Among the three *Doshas*, *Vata Dosha* occupies a unique and fundamental position because it is responsible for movement, regulation and coordination of numerous physiological activities. Classical *Ayurvedic* literature attributes to *Vata* functions such as initiation of movements, regulation of mental activities, coordination of sensory

functions, stimulation of *Agni*, transportation of substances, elimination of waste products and maintenance of the integrity and continuity of bodily structures.^{1,2} Thus, understanding the sites and functional domains of *Vata* is essential for interpreting *Ayurvedic* physiology and pathology.

The term *Vatashaya* is derived from the words *Vata* and *Ashaya*. *Ashaya* broadly denotes a receptacle, abode, cavity or anatomical location in which a particular substance or *Dosha* is predominantly situated. *Acharya Sushruta* describes the body as containing several *Ashayas*, including *Vatashaya*, *Pittashaya*, *Shleshmashaya*, *Raktashaya*, *Amashaya*, *Pakvashaya* and *Mutrashaya*; in females, *Garbhashaya* is additionally described.³ This classification indicates that the concept of *Ashaya* represents an important component of *Ayurvedic* structural anatomy and provides a framework for understanding the localization of physiological substances and *Doshas*.

Vatashaya, therefore, can be understood as the abode or receptacle associated with *Vata*. However, its precise anatomical identification has been a subject of discussion among *Ayurvedic* scholars because the classical *Samhitas* describe the sites of *Vata* from different perspectives. *Acharya Charaka* specifically states that *Basti*, *Purishadhana*, *Kati*, *Sakthi*, *Pada*, *Asthi*, *Pakvashaya*, *Shrotra* and *Sparshanendriya* are sites of *Vata* and emphasizes *Pakvashaya* as the principal site of *Vata*.⁴ *Ashtanga Hridaya* also identifies *Pakvashaya* among the important sites of *Vata*, while *Acharya Sushruta* provides a somewhat different enumeration of *Vata* sites.^{1,5} Such variations suggest that *Vata* should not necessarily be restricted to a single anatomical organ; rather, its localization may be considered in relation to its different physiological functions and subdivisions.

The special importance of *Pakvashaya* in relation to *Vata* is emphasized in *Ayurvedic* physiology and therapeutics. *Pakvashaya* is considered the principal seat of *Vata*, and disturbances occurring in this region are closely associated with the manifestation and progression of *Vata* disorders. The predominance of *Vata* in the lower part of the body and its association with functions such as propulsion, movement and elimination further strengthen the functional importance of this region.^{1,4} The classical concept also provides a rationale for *Basti Karma*, which is regarded as one of the principal therapeutic measures for disorders involving *Vata*. Understanding the relationship between *Vatashaya*, *Pakvashaya* and *Vata Sthana* is therefore relevant not only from an anatomical perspective but also from a clinical and therapeutic standpoint.

From the perspective of modern anatomy, *Pakvashaya* is commonly correlated predominantly with the large intestine, particularly the colon, although such correlations should be regarded as interpretative rather than exact one to one anatomical equivalences. Contemporary studies have attempted to examine the classical designation of *Pakvashaya* as the principal *Vata Sthana* in relation to colonic motility, enteric nervous regulation and physiological functions of the large intestine.⁶ The large intestine has important roles in the movement of intestinal contents, absorption of water and electrolytes, formation and storage of fecal matter and defecation. These functions provide useful areas for comparative study with the *Ayurvedic* understanding of *Vata*, particularly its role in movement and elimination.

The concept of *Vatashaya* is consequently significant for understanding the anatomical, physiological and pathological dimensions of *Vata Dosha*. A systematic analysis of classical references from *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, together with later *Ayurvedic* texts, can help clarify the terminology, enumeration and functional significance of *Vatashaya*. Recent reviews have also highlighted that the exact anatomical identity of *Vatashaya* is not uniformly specified in the classical literature and that *Pakvashaya* is most consistently identified as the principal location of *Vata*.⁷

Therefore, the present review aims to critically examine the concept of *Vatashaya* in *Ayurveda*, with particular emphasis on its definition, classical references, anatomical location, relationship with *Vata Dosha*, physiological significance and possible correlation with modern anatomical concepts. Such an analysis may contribute to a clearer understanding of this classical *Ayurvedic* concept and provide a foundation for further clinical and anatomical research.

Table No. 1 Enumeration of *Ashaya* according to different *Acharyas*.

<i>Ashaya</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Astanga</i>	<i>Kashyapa</i>	<i>Sharangadhara</i>
<i>Vatashaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Pittashaya</i>	✓	✓	-	-
<i>Shleshmashaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Raktashaya</i>	✓	✓	-	✓
<i>Amashaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Pakvashaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	-
<i>Mutrashaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Garbhaya</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Agnyashaya</i>	-	-	-	✓
<i>Malashaya</i>	-	-	✓	✓
<i>Krimishaya</i>	-	-	✓	-
<i>Sthanyashaya</i>	-	-	-	✓

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:**Aim:**

To conduct a conceptual study of *Vatashaya* in *Ayurveda* by critically reviewing its classical description, anatomical location, functional significance, and relationship with *Vata Dosha*.

Objectives:

1. To review the classical references and descriptions of *Vatashaya* mentioned in major *Ayurvedic* texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*.
2. To analyze the anatomical and physiological significance of *Vatashaya*, particularly its relationship with *Vata Dosha* and *Pakvashaya*, based on *Ayurvedic* principles.
3. To explore the possible correlation of *Vatashaya* with contemporary anatomical and physiological concepts and assess its relevance in understanding *Vata*-related disorders.

Material and Methods:

The primary source materials consisted of classical *Ayurvedic Samhitas*, particularly *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Relevant commentaries and other authoritative *Ayurvedic* texts were also referred to for clarification and interpretation of the concept.

Contemporary textbooks, review articles, and relevant scientific literature concerning anatomy and physiology were consulted to explore the possible modern correlation of *Vatashaya*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**1. Concept of *Ashaya* in *Ayurveda***

The term *Ashaya* is an important concept of *Ayurvedic* anatomy (*Rachana Sharira*) and physiology (*Kriya Sharira*). The word *Ashaya* denotes a place, receptacle, abode or anatomical space in which a particular substance or functional entity predominantly resides. According to the classical description of *Acharya Sushruta*, seven *Ashayas* are described in the male body—*Vatashaya*, *Pittashaya*, *Shleshmashaya*, *Raktashaya*, *Amashaya*, *Pakvashaya* and *Mutrashaya*—with *Garbhashaya* being described additionally in females.⁹ The classification of *Ashaya* indicates that *Ayurveda* viewed certain bodily spaces not merely as structural organs but as important functional locations associated with *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* and other bodily constituents.

Acharya Sushruta's description places *Vatashaya* first among the *Ashayas* and defines it as the receptacle or abode of *Vata*.⁹ This is significant because *Vata* is regarded as the principle responsible for movement and coordination of physiological processes throughout the body. Thus, *Vatashaya* may be understood not simply

as an isolated anatomical structure but as a conceptual location in which the functional activities of *Vata* are particularly expressed.

2. Etymology and Definition of *Vatashaya*

Vatashaya is a compound term consisting of *Vata* + *Ashaya*. *Vata* represents the *Dosha* responsible primarily for movement, while *Ashaya* refers to a site, receptacle or abode. Therefore, *Vatashaya* can broadly be interpreted as the site or abode of *Vata Dosha*.

A conceptual study of *Ashaya* explains *Vatashaya* as the site in the body where *Vata* predominantly resides. The same literature emphasizes that *Ashaya* should not necessarily be interpreted as a single modern anatomical organ; rather, it represents a functional site in which a particular constituent performs or regulates physiological activities.¹⁰ This interpretation is particularly relevant to *Vatashaya* because *Vata* has functions distributed throughout the body.

3. *Vatashaya* According to *Sushruta Samhita*

Acharya Sushruta provides one of the most systematic descriptions of *Ashaya* in *Sharira Sthana*. The seven *Ashayas* are described as *Vatashaya*, *Pittashaya*, *Shleshmashaya*, *Raktashaya*, *Amashaya*, *Pakwashaya* and *Mutrashaya*, with *Garbhashaya* additionally present in females.⁹ The classical description establishes *Vatashaya* as the receptacle of *Vata*.

The concept of *Ashaya* in *Sushruta samhita* is important from an anatomical perspective because it describes bodily cavities or viscera according to the substances or functional principles associated with them. Modern interpretations have attempted to correlate these descriptions with anatomical structures; however, such correlations are interpretative and should not be considered exact one to one equivalents.¹⁰

4. *Vatashaya* and *Vata Dosha*

Vata is considered the most important among the *Tridoshas* because movement and coordination are essential for the activities of *Pitta* and *Kapha* as well as for various physiological processes. *Vata* possesses the qualities (*Guna*) of *Ruksha*, *Laghu*, *Sheeta*, *Khara*, *Sukshma* and *Chala*.¹¹ Among these, *Chala* represents mobility and is particularly important in understanding its physiological action.

The functions attributed to *Vata* include initiation and regulation of movement, transportation of substances, sensory and motor activities, respiration, elimination of urine and feces, and coordination of various bodily functions. Therefore, although *Vata* has specific principal sites, its functional influence extends throughout the body.

The concept of *Vatashaya* should consequently be understood in relation to both localization and function. Its localization provides a site where *Vata* is predominantly expressed, whereas its functional nature explains why *Vata* related physiological and pathological changes can occur in multiple systems.

5. *Vata Sthana* and *Vatashaya*

The classical texts describe several sites of *Vata*. *Acharya Charaka* states that *Basti*, *Purishadhana*, *Kati*, *Sakthi*, *Pada*, *Asthi* and *Pakwashaya* are important sites of *Vata* and specifically identifies *Pakwashaya* as an especially important site.¹² *Chakrapani's* interpretation identifies *Purishadhana* with *Pakwashaya*, further emphasizing the relationship between *Vata* and the largeintestinal region.

A comparison of the classical descriptions demonstrates some variation in the enumeration of *Vata Sthana*. A recent review comparing *Acharya Charaka*, *Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya Vagbhata* noted that the texts differ in their listing of specific sites, although *Pakwashaya* is repeatedly emphasized as a principal site of *Vata*.¹³ Such differences may arise from variations in textual perspective and from the distinction between the anatomical site of residence and the functional sites through which *Vata* operates.

6. Pakwashaya as the Principal Site of Vata

Pakwashaya occupies a central position in understanding *Vatashaya*. *Acharya Charaka* specifically identifies *Pakwashaya* as the special or principal site of *Vata*.¹² *Ashtanga Hridaya* also recognizes *Pakwashaya* among the important *Vata Sthana*.¹⁴

The predominance of *Vata* in *Pakwashaya* can be understood through its physiological functions. *Pakwashaya* represents the terminal portion of the digestive tract and is associated with the movement, concentration and elimination of intestinal contents. These functions correspond conceptually with the major characteristics of *Vata*, particularly *Gati* (movement), *Chala* (mobility), and regulation of elimination.

A recent critical review of *Pakwashaya* as the *Sthana* of *Vata* reported that the designation is supported by textual descriptions as well as functional similarities with modern physiology of the large intestine, particularly intestinal motility, neural regulation, water handling and fecal elimination.¹³

7. Anatomical Interpretation of Vatashaya

The precise anatomical identification of *Vatashaya* remains a subject of scholarly discussion. Some *Ayurvedic* scholars interpret *Vatashaya* predominantly through the concept of *Pakwashaya*, while other interpretations have included structures or regions associated with the broader functions of *Vata*.

An analytical study of *Vatashaya* reported that classical literature and later *Ayurvedic* interpretations describe different possible locations associated with *Vatashaya* and attempted correlations with modern anatomy.¹⁵ Such variations demonstrate that *Vatashaya* should not automatically be equated with a single modern anatomical organ.

In particular, the relationship between *Vatashaya* and *Pakwashaya* requires careful consideration. *Pakwashaya* is a specific anatomical-functional concept within *Ayurveda* and is repeatedly described as the principal *Vata Sthana*, whereas *Vatashaya* is the broader designation of the abode of *Vata*. Therefore, *Pakwashaya* may be considered the most important anatomical functional expression of *Vatashaya* rather than necessarily being the complete equivalent of the term *Vatashaya*.

8. Correlation with Modern Anatomy and Physiology

From the contemporary anatomical perspective, *Pakwashaya* is commonly correlated predominantly with the large intestine/colon, although this correlation remains interpretative.¹³ The large intestine performs important functions including absorption of water and electrolytes, storage and propulsion of fecal material, and defecation.

The motor activity of the colon provides an interesting functional comparison with *Vata*. Colonic propulsion, segmentation and mass movements involve coordinated neuromuscular activity. The enteric nervous system, together with autonomic regulation, plays a major role in controlling intestinal motility.¹³ These physiological activities may be conceptually compared with the *Ayurvedic* description of *Vata* as the principle governing movement.

Similarly, the colon's role in water absorption contributes to the formation and consolidation of feces. Disturbances in intestinal motility and water handling may result in constipation and altered bowel habits. These functional observations provide a possible contemporary physiological framework for understanding why *Pakwashaya* has been considered a major site of *Vata*.

However, it is important to emphasize that *Vata* should not be equated directly with the nervous system, enteric nervous system or any single modern physiological mechanism. Such correlations are explanatory models rather than established anatomical equivalences.

9. Vatashaya and Apana Vayu

Among the five subdivisions of *Vata*, *Apana Vayu* has particular relevance to the lower gastrointestinal and pelvic regions. It is responsible for functions such as elimination of feces, urine and reproductive products. Its

principal region of activity is described in the lower part of the body, including the pelvic and gastrointestinal areas.

The relationship between *Apana Vayu* and *Pakwashaya* further strengthens the functional significance of the latter as a *Vata*-dominant region. Disturbance of *Apana Vayu* can affect normal bowel evacuation and other elimination processes. Therefore, understanding *Vatashaya* requires consideration of both the general functions of *Vata* and the specific actions of *Apana Vayu*.

10. *Vatashaya* in Relation to *Vata Vikriti*

Since *Pakwashaya* is considered a principal site of *Vata*, pathological changes in this region are important in the manifestation of *Vata* disorders. Classical descriptions of *Pakvashaya-gata Vata* include symptoms such as abdominal pain, intestinal sounds, flatulence, constipation and discomfort in the pelvic or lumbar region.¹⁶

A recent review of *Pakvashyagata Vata* describes manifestations including *Antrakujana*, *Shula*, *Atopa*, difficulty in passing feces, *Aanaha* and *Trika-pradesha Vedana*, demonstrating the clinical importance of *Vata* disturbance in the *Pakwashaya* region.¹⁶ These manifestations may be understood through the combined effects of altered intestinal motility, gas accumulation, impaired evacuation and disturbed *Apana Vayu*.

The clinical importance of this relationship is also reflected in *Ayurvedic* therapeutics. *Basti Karma* is considered a principal therapeutic modality for *Vata* disorders and is particularly associated with the lower gastrointestinal and pelvic region. The classical emphasis on *Basti* in *Vata* disorders provides further support for the functional importance attributed to *Pakwashaya* and the broader concept of *Vatashaya*.

11. *Vatashaya* and *Basti Chikitsa*

The classical principle of *Basti* therapy is closely related to the management of *Vata*. *Basti* is traditionally regarded as one of the most important therapeutic measures for *Vata* disorders. The relationship between *Basti* and *Vatashaya/Pakwashaya* has been interpreted in terms of the predominance of *Vata* in the lower gastrointestinal region.

From a contemporary perspective, attempts have been made to understand the effects of rectal administration in relation to local and systemic physiological responses. Nevertheless, the classical concept of *Basti* is broader than simple local drug administration, and modern mechanisms should not be assumed to fully explain the *Ayurvedic* therapeutic principle.

12. Functional Interpretation of *Vatashaya*

The literature suggests that *Vatashaya* can be interpreted at two complementary levels:

1. Anatomical level:

It represents a site or region associated predominantly with *Vata*, with *Pakwashaya* being particularly important.

2. Functional level:

It represents a domain in which movement, propulsion, transportation, elimination and regulation—functions characteristic of *Vata*—are prominently expressed.

This functional interpretation is particularly useful because *Vata* is not confined to one anatomical structure. A recent integrative review proposed that *Vata Sthana* may be better understood in terms of functional dominance rather than fixed structural localization, emphasizing neural activity, mechanosensitivity, pressure-dependent transport and neuromuscular coordination.¹⁷

13. Contemporary Literature on *Vatashaya*

Recent publications have specifically attempted to analyze *Vatashaya* using classical references and modern anatomical correlations. Gautam and Kushwah conducted an analytical study of *Vatashaya* using classical *Ayurvedic* texts and contemporary anatomical perspectives. Their review highlights the importance of *Ashaya* as a functional site and discusses different possible anatomical interpretations of *Vatashaya*.¹⁵

Similarly, Biradar and Holla critically reviewed *Pakwashaya* as the *Sthana* of *Vata* and emphasized the convergence of classical textual descriptions with modern concepts of colonic motility, neural regulation, water handling and fecal elimination.¹³

Sharma and Mehta reviewed *Pakvashyagata Vata*, describing the clinical manifestations of *Vata* aggravation in the large-intestinal region and emphasizing the importance of this concept in understanding *Vata*-related gastrointestinal manifestations.¹⁶

These studies indicate growing interest in examining the classical concept of *Vatashaya* through an integrative anatomical and physiological framework. However, most available literature remains conceptual or narrative in nature, and further systematic research is needed.

14. Critical Appraisal of Existing Literature

The available literature demonstrates that *Vatashaya* is a multidimensional *Ayurvedic* concept involving anatomical localization, physiological function and clinical significance. Classical texts consistently establish *Vatashaya* as an abode of *Vata*, while *Pakwashaya* is repeatedly identified as an important or principal *Vata Sthana*.

However, variations exist in the description and interpretation of *Vata Sthana* among different *Samhitas*. Furthermore, modern anatomical correlations vary among authors. Some interpretations emphasize the large intestine, whereas others consider broader regions or functional systems. Therefore, equating *Vatashaya* exclusively with one modern organ may oversimplify the classical concept.

The contemporary literature also suggests functional parallels between *Vata* and gastrointestinal motility, neural regulation and elimination. Nevertheless, these parallels should be presented as conceptual correlations rather than definitive scientific equivalences.

DISCUSSION:

The concept of *Vatashaya* represents an important aspect of *Ayurvedic* anatomy and physiology, particularly in understanding the localization and functional predominance of *Vata Dosha*. The term denotes the abode or receptacle of *Vata*, while *Pakwashaya* is consistently described in the classical literature as one of the principal sites of *Vata*. This association can be understood on the basis of the predominant functions of *Vata*, such as movement, propulsion, transportation and elimination.

Classical descriptions indicate that *Vata* is not confined to a single anatomical structure but operates throughout the body. Therefore, *Vatashaya* should be interpreted as a functional as well as anatomical concept, rather than being equated directly with one modern organ. The close association of *Pakwashaya* with *Vata* may be explained by its role in intestinal motility and evacuation. In contemporary anatomy, *Pakwashaya* is broadly correlated with the large intestine, which is involved in propulsion of intestinal contents, water absorption and fecal elimination. These functions provide a possible physiological correlation with the actions attributed to *Vata*, particularly *Apana Vayu*.

The variations in the description of *Vata Sthana* among different classical texts suggest that the concept has both localized and systemic dimensions. Clinically, the importance of *Vatashaya* is reflected in the understanding of *Vata*-related gastrointestinal manifestations and the therapeutic significance of *Basti Karma* in *Vata* disorders.

Thus, *Vatashaya* can be considered a multidimensional concept integrating *Ayurvedic* anatomy, physiology and pathology. Modern anatomical and physiological correlations may help in interpreting the concept, although such correlations should be regarded as conceptual rather than definitive one to one equivalences. Further interdisciplinary research is required to validate and clarify the anatomical and physiological significance of *Vatashaya*.

CONCLUSION:

Vatashaya is an important *Ayurvedic* concept that represents the principal site or abode of *Vata Dosha* and helps explain its anatomical localization and functional predominance. The classical descriptions indicate a

close relationship between *Vatashaya*, *Pakwashaya*, and the functions of *Vata*, particularly movement, propulsion, and elimination. Although *Pakwashaya* may be broadly correlated with the large intestine in contemporary anatomy, such correlation should be considered conceptual rather than an exact anatomical equivalence. Thus, the concept of *Vatashaya* provides an integrated understanding of *Vata* physiology and its clinical significance, particularly in *Vata*-related disorders and the therapeutic application of *Basti*. Further interdisciplinary studies may help elucidate its anatomical and physiological implications.

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