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## Cancer in Ayurvedic Perspective: A Conceptual Review

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### Abstract

Cancer is a major global health challenge characterized by uncontrolled cell growth, invasion and metastasis. While modern oncology explains cancer through genetic and molecular mechanisms. Cancer is a multifactorial disease characterized by uncontrolled cellular proliferation, invasion, and metastasis. Despite significant advances in modern oncology—including surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy—cancer remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Limitations such as adverse effects, recurrence, drug resistance, and compromised quality of life necessitate complementary strategies.

Ayurveda describes cancer-like conditions under the concepts of *Arbuda*, *Granthi* and *Dushta Vrana*. Ayurveda emphasizes a holistic understanding of disease involving *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Srotas* and *Ojas*. This article reviews the Ayurvedic perspective of cancer including its etiological factors(*Nidana*), pathogenesis (*Samprapti*), classification and principles of management (*Chikitsa*). Understanding cancer through *Ayurvedic* principles may contribute to integrative approaches for prevention, supportive care and improved quality of life.

**Keywords** – Cancer, *Arbuda*, *Granthi*, *Samprapti*, Integrative, oncology

## Introduction :

Cancer is one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide. Despite advances in diagnosis and treatment, the disease poses significant physical, psychological and economic challenges. According to the World Health Organization, cancer accounts for nearly 10 million deaths annually worldwide<sup>[1]</sup>. While modern medicine focuses on tumor- centered treatment, traditional systems such as Ayurveda emphasize host resistance, metabolic balance and psychosomatic harmony. *Ayurveda* the ancient Indian system of medicine, provides a holistic view of disease that focuses on maintaining equilibrium of body and mind. Although the term “cancer” is not explicitly mentioned in classical *Ayurvedic* texts, descriptions of *Arbuda*, *Granthi* and *Dushta Vrana* closely resemble neoplastic conditions. *Ayurveda* considers cancer not merely as a localized growth but as a systemic disorder arising from long-standing imbalance in metabolism, tissue nutrition, and immunity.

**Aim** – To study cancer in *Ayurvedic* perspective.

**Concept of *Arbuda* and *Granthi* in *Ayurveda***

***Arbuda*** - A large, round, firm, deep-rooted, immobile swelling arising from muscle tissue with mild pain is called *Arbuda* <sup>[2][3]</sup>.

According to classical texts, *Arbuda* is described as:

- *Mamsa pradoshaja vikara*
- Firm, immobile, deep-rooted swelling
- Painless or mildly painful
- Slow-growing and non-suppurative

*Arbuda* predominantly involves Kapha Dosha, along with vitiation of Vata and Pitta in advanced stages. *Arbuda* is predominantly caused by Kapha

along with involvement of all three *Doshas*, develops gradually over a long period, and does not suppurate<sup>[2][3]</sup>.

***Granthi*** - *Granthi* is described as a rounded, knot-like swelling formed due to the aggregation (*Sanghata*) of vitiated *Doshas* with *Dhatus*.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

*Granthi* refers to nodular or glandular swellings:

- Smaller in size compared to *Arbuda*
- Often encapsulated
- Associated with vitiated *Kapha* and *Vata*

Both conditions reflect abnormal tissue growth and obstruction of bodily channels (*Srotorodha*).

### Etiological Factors (*Nidana*)

*Ayurveda* identifies multiple causative factors contributing to *Arbuda*:

#### *Ahara* (Dietary factors) :

- Excessive intake of *guru* (heavy), *snigdha* (unctuous), *abhisyandi* foods<sup>[6]</sup>
- *Viruddha ahara* (incompatible food combinations)<sup>[6]</sup>
- Processed, stale or chemically adulterated foods, artificial coloured food items

#### *Vihara* (Lifestyle factors)<sup>[6]</sup>

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Day sleep (*Divaswepna*)
- Suppression of natural urges (*Vegadharana*)

#### *Manasika Nidana* (Psychological factors)<sup>[6]</sup>

- Chronic stress (*Chinta*)
- Grief (*Shoka*)
- Fear (*Bhaya*)

### Other Factors

- Chronic inflammation
- Repeated trauma

- Genetic predisposition (conceptually correlated with *Beeja dushti*)<sup>[6]</sup>

### Pathogenesis (*Samprapti*) of Cancer in Ayurveda

The Ayurvedic pathogenesis of cancer can be summarized as follows<sup>[6][7]</sup>:

- Agnimandya*** – impairment of digestive and tissue metabolism
- Ama formation*** – accumulation of toxic metabolic by-products
- Dosha vitiation*** – primarily Kapha with involvement of Vata and Pitta
- Dhatu dushti*** – especially Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, and Meda
- Srotorodha*** – obstruction of microchannels/ strotas
- Ojas kshaya*** – decline in immunity and vitality<sup>[7]</sup>

This progressive imbalance leads to localized abnormal tissue growth manifesting as *Arbuda*.

### Classification of *Arbuda* based on:

- Dosha predominance*** – *Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Sannipataja*
- Dhatu involvement*** – *Mamsarbuda, Medarbuda, Raktarbuda*
- Site*** – External or internal *Arbuda*

### Integrated Conceptual Summary -

| Classical Factor  | Cancer Correlation         |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Kapha dominance   | Uncontrolled tissue growth |
| Agnimandya        | Metabolic dysfunction      |
| Ama               | Chronic inflammation       |
| Mamsa-Meda dushti | Solid tumor formation      |
| Ojas kṣaya        | Immune suppression         |
| Beeja dushti      | Genetic predisposition     |

### Principles of Management -

*Ayurvedic* management focuses on restoring systemic balance rather than targeting the mass alone<sup>[2][4][5]</sup>.

#### ➤ *Shodhana Chikitsa*:

*Panchakarma* therapies such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, etc. can be utilized for eliminating vitiated *Doshas*.

#### ➤ *Shamana Chikitsa*

Use of herbal formulations with:

- Lekhana* (scraping)
- Shothahara* (anti-inflammatory)
- Rasayana* (rejuvenative) properties

#### ➤ *Rasayana Therapy*

- Enhances immunity and tissue strength
- Improves tolerance to disease and other treatment.

#### ➤ *Ahara and Vihara*

- Light, easily digestible, plant-based diet
- Stress management through *Yoga*, *Pranayama*, and meditation

### Role of *Ayurveda* in Integrative Cancer Care-

*Ayurveda* plays an important role in:

- Cancer prevention through lifestyle modification
- Supportive care during chemotherapy and radiotherapy
- Management of side effects like fatigue, nausea, etc.
- Improving quality of life and psychological well-being *Ayurvedic* interventions should be used in coordination with oncologists to ensure safety and efficacy.

## Discussion:

The *Ayurvedic* concept of cancer emphasizes metabolic dysfunction, immune compromise and chronic dosha imbalance. This holistic understanding complements modern oncology, which focuses on molecular and genetic changes. Integrating *Ayurvedic* principles with modern treatment may help in personalized care, symptom management and live long-life.

## Conclusion :

*Ayurveda* emphasizes early metabolic and immune imbalance as the root cause, while modern medicine focuses on molecular and genetic alterations. Cancer in *Ayurveda* is understood as a systemic disorder arising from long-standing derangement of *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, *Agni* and *Ojas*. The concepts of *Arbuda* and *Granthis* provide valuable insights into the natural history of tumor development. While *Ayurveda* does not replace modern oncological treatment, its holistic principles offer significant benefits in prevention, supportive care and improving quality of life.

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## Declaration :

**Conflict of Interest :** None

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