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REVIEW OF *TRIPHALA:* AN *AYURVEDIC* HERBAL COMBINATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RATIO OF ITS CONSTITUENTS

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient science and *Triphala* is one of the most famous and common *Ayurvedic* herbal combinations. It has thousands of uses mentioned in the *Ayurvedic* classical texts – *Brihattrayee (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtangahridayam)* and *Laghutrayee (Sharangadhara Samhita, Bhavaprakasha* and *Yogaratnakara)*. It is popularly considered as the combination of *Haritaki* (Terminalia chebula), *Bibheetaka* (Terminalia bellirica) and *Amalaki* (Emblica officinalis) in the ratio 1:1:1 by weight. Though a lot of research work is already done on its uses, there is a great need to explore *Triphala* as a combination with respect to the ratio of weight of its contents. The study will help in better understanding of *Triphala* and the rationale behind adding its three ingredients. This study is a literary study which is an honest effort towards that direction. The study consists of collection of references from *Brihattrayee* and *Laghutrayee* which comment about the ratio of the three constituents of *Triphala*. In *Brihattrayee*, all three contents are taken in equal amounts by weight with an exception whereas in *Laghutrayee* the ratio is altered in some formulations. References where the 1:1:1 ratio by weight is altered are the golden opportunity towards understanding the *Samyoga* (Combination) of *Triphala* or the logic behind its formation.

KEYWORDS: *Triphala, Ayurveda, Samyoga,* Terminalia chebula, Terminalia bellirica, Emblica officinalis.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian science. It is called the science of life. The objective of *Ayurveda* is maintaining the health of healthy person and preventing the occurrence of any disease.[1] *Ayurveda* has its own definition of health.[2] For attaining health, many herbal combinations are used. *Mishraka Ganas* is an integral part of all such combinations. A *Mishraka Gana* is a *Samyoga* of herbs or substances which are used together in order to perform certain task. They are mentioned in the *Sushruta Samhita*.[3] *Samyoga* is the unique concept used in *Ayurveda*. *Dravya Samyoga* means the combination of two or more substances or herbs with the intention of modifying their actions when they are used separately.[4]

Triphala is a very well-known *Mishraka Gana*. Though thousands of Research Projects are done on *Triphala* there is still need to study and understand *Triphala* as a combination. According to the Ayurvedic Formulary of India, it is a mixture of *Haritaki* (Terminalia chebula), *Bibheetaka* (Terminalia bellirica) and *Amalaki* (Emblica officinalis) in the equal proportion i.e. 1:1:1 ratio by weight.

The definition of *Triphala* is given by *Suchrutacharya* for the first time.[5] *Amarakosha,* the ancient Indian thesaurus defines *Triphala* as the *Samahara* of three fruits.[6] *Samahara* means, all three fruits are taken in equal amounts or ratio. If the current *Ayurvedic* Drug Market is considered, majority of clinicians either purchase the *Triphala* powder from the market or they prepare it by adding powders of its constituents in the equal proportion by weight. The powders should be of deseeded fruits which is very rare in case of market preparations of *Triphala* powder.

There are certain uses of *Triphala* in *Samhita* in which the ratio of its three constituents is altered by re-adding a content to it. Such uses of *Triphala* provide golden opportunity to understand the *Samyoga* in *Triphala* and actions of its constituents in detail. The focus of this article is to study and highlight some of such uses of *Triphala* where the 1:1:1 ratio of contents of *Triphala* is altered.

MATERIAL

- *Charaka Samhita* with *Chakrapani* Commentary
- *Sushruta Samhita* with *Dahlana* Commentary
- *Ashtangahrudayam* with *Hemadri* and *Arunadatta* Commentary
- *Sharamgadhara Samhita* with *Adhamalla* Commentary
- *Bhavaprakasha Samhita*
- *Yogaratnakara*

Authentic Versions of above texts are selected for the collection of references.

METHODOLOGY

- References of *Triphala* are collected from *Brihattrayee* and *Laghutrayee*
- References of *Triphala* with its altered ratio or which comment about its constitution are compiled.
- Results are presented based on observations.

RESULTS

A] *Brihattrayee*

When all references of *Triphala* are collected and observed, it was found that in *Brihattrayee* the constitution of *Triphala* is always maintained constant i.e. 1:1:1 by weight. It is not altered when all three contents of *Triphala* are mixed with other herbs. The only exception is of *Amrutadi Guggulu* by *Acharya Vagbhata* in *Bhagandara Pratishedha (Uttaratantra).* In this preparation contents are taken in the increasing order of their weight *(Kramavruddha Pramana).* The Eight Contents of this combination include three contents of *Triphala.* Hence, they are taken as,

- *Haritaki* – 5 parts by weight,
- *Bibheetaka* – 6 parts by weight
- *Amalaki* – 7 parts by weight

It alters the 1:1:1 ratio of contents (by weight).

In some cases if a typical *Dosha* pacifying action is required, one or more of three contents of *Triphala* are added later to the formulation along with three contents. For example, *Mahanila Taila* from the *Trimarmiya* Chapter of *Charaka Samhita* for *Netraroga*. In this combination, for the preparation of the oil, all three contents are used as *Kalka* or the substrate for the

preparation whereas *Amalaki Svarasa* (Juice) is used as a liquid for the preparation of oil. The oil used here is of *Bibheetaka* for the *Sneha-Siddhi* (Oil Preparation). So, in addition to the *Triphala* which is present in the *Kalka*, its ingredients are separately used in the preparation. If the *Phalashruti* of the combination is studied, the use of *Bibheetaka* can be justified for its *Keshya* action (Promoting Growth and providing Nourishment to hairs) which is evident as this combination shows the anti-balding action. Also the *Amalaki* juice here acts as a *Rasayana* which makes the combination *Ayuvardhaka* as mentioned in its *Phalashruti*.

The list of all such combinations can be summarised as

Table No: 1 *Charaka Samhita* combinations

Name of the Combination	*Adhikara* (Indication)	Content of *Triphala* Added
Haritakyadi Yoga	*Rasayana*	*Amalaki*
Drakshadi Ghruta	*Pittaja Gulma*	*Haritaki, Amalaki*
Mahatiktaka Ghruta	*Kushtha*	*Amalaki*
Mahanila Taila	*Netraroga -Trimarmiya*	*Amalaki, Bibheetaka*
Virechana Yoga	*Shyamatrivruta Kalpa*	*Amalaki*

Table No: 2 *Sushruta Samhita* combinations

Name of the Combination	*Adhikara* (Indication)	Content of *Triphala* Added
Mahataiktaka Ghruta	*Kushtha*	*Amalaki*
Neeli Taila	*Palita – Mishrakachikitsa*	All three Contents
Saireyakadi Taila	*Mishrakachikitsa*	*Bibheetaka*
Triphaladi Ghruta	*Jvara*	*Amalaki*
Patoladi Ghruta	*Jvara*	*Amalaki*
Kalyanaka Guda	*Kasa*	*Amalaki*

Table No: 3 *Ashtangahridayam* combinations

Name of the Combination	*Adhikara* (Indication)	Content of *Triphala* Added
Triphaladi Sneha	*Snehavidhi*	*Haritaki*
Drakshadi Ghruta	*Vidradhi*	*Amalaki, Haritaki*
Mahatiktaka Ghruta	*Kushtha*	*Amalaki*
Mustadi Yoga	*Vatarakta – Kaphaja*	*Amalaki*
Kalyanaka Guda	*Virechana Kalpa*	*Amalaki*
Triphala Anjana	*Arma*	All three Contents
Mahatriphala Ghruta	*Timira*	All three Contents
Triphala Ghruta	*Timira*	All three Contents, *Amalaki*

B] *Laghutrayee*

Sharamgadhara Samhita

When *Laghutrayee* is analysed for the *Triphala Pramana*, *Sharamgadhara Samhita* defines *Triphala* as – *1 Haritaki, 2 Bibheetaka, 4 Amalaki* by number constitutes the *Triphala*.

The *Dhatryadi Lepa* from the *Palitya Chikitsa,* has *Amalaki* – 3 Fruits, *Haritaki* – 2 Fruits and *Bibheetaka* – 1 Fruit. As the *Pitta* pacifying action is required in this combination, emphasis is given on *Amalaki*.

The *Dhatryadi Varti* given in *Netrasrava* is another example where equal ratio is altered. It has *Haritaki* – 3 Parts, *Bibheetaka* – 2 Parts and *Amalaki* – 1 Part by weight. The *Ruksha Guna* and *Shoshana* action of *Haritaki* is expected in the *Srava* and the *Kapha* pacifying action of *Haritaki* and *Bibheetaka* is prominent as compared to the *Amalaki*. Hence they are preferred along with *Triphala.* This is the Single Drug Therapy Indication of the *Triphala*.

Bhavaprakasha Samhita

In *Bhavaprakasha Samhita*, *Snehani Vatika* used in the *Netraroga* is also a unique reference where *Amalaki* – 3 Parts, *Bibheetaka* – 2 Parts and *Haritaki* – 1 Part is used. The Preference is given to the *Amalaki* as the *Rasayana* action is expected.

The *Dvitiya Triphaladya Ghruta* Reference from the *Netraroga* also has *100 Karsha Haritaki, 200 Karsha Bibheetaka, 400 Karsha Amalaki* by weight. If the number is considered the ratio becomes 1:1:1 by weight. But the weight is considered in this combination which means the emphasis is given on the use of *Amalaki* in the preparation.

Yogaratnakara

The *Lilavilasa Rasa* used in *Amlapitta* has 1 part *Bibheetaka*, 2 Parts *Amalaki* and 3 Parts *Haritaki* by weight. This combination has a number of other contents. The prediction of the reasoning behind the importance given to the *Haritaki* is a challenging job because the number of other herbs used in this combination is very high. They do have a role in the *Pitta Dosha* pacifying action.

Yogaratnakara being a compilation has references which are taken from other texts. Some examples that are found are as follows:-

1. It has reference of *Loha Yoga* used in *Palitya* of *Sharamgadhara*.
2. Reference of *Pathyadi Varti* appears to be taken from *Sharamgadhara* which considers it as *Dhatryadi Varti* with the indication of *Netra-srava.*
3. *The Dvitiya Triphaladya Ghruta* reference also appears to be taken from *Bhavaprakasha.*

CONCLUSION

- The ratio of Contents of *Triphala* is constant (equal) in *Brihattrayee* with an exception. Whereas it is altered in *Laghutrayee*.
- If there is a need of alteration according to the *Dosha* condition of the body, a content of *Triphala* is added to it. Which can be roughly predicted as -

For *Vata* – *Triphala* + *Haritaki*

For *Pitta* – *Triphala* + *Amalaki*

For *Kapha* – *Triphala* + *Bibheetaka*

- From the analysis of all collected references, when the word *Triphala* is used, as a general rule all three contents (deseeded fruits) should be taken in equal quantities by weight only.

DISCUSSION

As stated in the *Sharamgadhara Samhita*, when contents of *Triphala* are taken by their number and not their weight.

The Ideal average weight of *Haritaki* fruit as given by *Acharya Bhavamishra* is 2 *Karsha* or 20gm Approx. The Ideal Average weight of *Bibheetaka* fruit is 1 *Karsha* or 10gm Approx (Hence, known as *Akshaphala or Karshaphala).* Average weight of *Amalaki* is ½ *Karsha* or 5gm Approx. Hence, when all three are taken 1:2:4 by number is in fact the ratio 1:1:1 by weight only. It is also explained in the *Dipika* commentary by *Adhamalla.*

The question arises whether there is any logic behind considering contents of *Triphala* by their number instead of their weight. When constituents of *Triphala* are selected by their number, automatically there is a limitation on the batch size for its preparation. It means production of *Triphala* powder in a large amount is not possible as manual fruit counting is involved. So this method is maybe prescribed for traditional *Vaidyas* who have a limited requirement of the powder. Also, another advantage is every fruit has to be hand-picked manually in order to count. The raw material testing or its standardisation is achieved automatically by this manual addition of each fruit. Considering the progress of technology before hundreds of years, accurate weighing facilities may not be available in remote locations. In such cases, the selection by their number was a great tool for the easier standardisation.

It indicates that hundreds of years ago, Indian Scientists were looking at smallest entities like fruits very scientifically. The depth of their knowledge, the practicality of their knowledge is evident by these references.

If the current scenario is considered, only *Survari* type of *Haritaki* has the weight of about 20gm. *Amalaki* has various sizes leading to different weights most of them are higher than 5gm. Hence today instead of considering fruits by number, they should be considered by their weight.

References from *Brihattrayee* highlight that whenever the word *Triphala* is used, all of the three contents should be taken in equal quantities by weight only.

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