



DESCRIPTION OF GENERAL MEDICINE IN AYURVEDA SAMHITAS: A REVIEW

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Article Received on 17/08/2021

Article Revised on 07/9/2021

Article Accepted on 27/09/2021

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is science of rationale and documented treatises related to the healthy well being and amongst many treatises *Samhitas* are ranked first to elaborate various theories and principles of Ayurveda. Ayurveda *Samhitas* presented many experiments and observations based on the concepts related to the health and diseases. *Charaksamhita* one of the most important compendia of Ayurveda contains 120 chapters distributed into 8 sections (*Sthana*) and some of them related to the *Dravyas* (medicines) used in Ayurveda for various therapeutic purposes. These Ayurveda *Samhitas* described classification of drugs and fundamental principles of Ayurveda therapeutics. The first four chapters of *Sutrasthana* out of thirty were described as *Aushadhachatushka* (*Bheshajachatushka*) and these chapters mainly dealt with important Ayurveda drugs. With reference to uses of medicines *Charaka* mentioned that a single drug can be used in various diseases depending upon dosage, time of administration and condition of the patient, etc. Ayurveda and modern medical science classified medicinal agents on the basis of their morphology, pharmacological action, methods of preparation, therapeutic uses and sources of origin, etc. *Charaka* has classified medicinal substances into various groups i.e.; *Mahakashaya*, *Moolini* and *Phalini*, etc. while *Sushruta* has classified medicinal agents into different *Gana*.

KEY-WORDS: *Ayurveda, Samhitas, Kayachikitsa, Medicines.*

INTRODUCTION

Kayachikitsa is one of the vital aspects of Ayurveda that deals with the treatment of general diseases. This branch suggests utilization of medicines along with modification in *Ahara-Vihara* and patient counseling to maintain equilibrium of body constituents. The theories of *Kaya chikitsa* helps in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of general diseases. The scripts of *Kaya chikitsa* found in many Ayurveda compendia including *Charaka Samhita*. This branch offers several medicines for the treatment of thyroid disorders, reproductive disorders, mental

disorders, diabetes, skin ailments, gynecological problems, digestive ailments and arthritis, etc. This ancient branch utilizes several medicines for therapeutic purposes obtained from plant, mineral, animal and other sources. Ayurveda drugs classified on the basis of their preparation or formulation as depicted in **Figure 1** and classified accordingly in various ancient text. The descriptions of these medicines found in various Ayurveda texts and Ayurveda *Samhitas* contributed significantly in this regards.^[1-5]



Figure 1: Preparations or formulations of Ayurveda drugs, classified in traditional text.

Classification on the basis of source

The chapter related to drugs is *Aushadhi sukta (12/75-101)*, the agents described on the basis of their sources i.e.; vegetable source, animal source and mineral source, etc., under vegetable source classification of *Udbhid, vriksha, vanaspati, pushpavati* and *prasoovari*, etc. is mentioned. Substances from food grains (*Anna*) also mentioned as *Yava, Vrihi, Masha, Masure, Godhuma, Mudga, Tila, Shyamaka, Nivara* and *Priyangu*, etc.

Animal sources of drugs also mentioned as materials obtained from domestic animals (inhabiting villages) and materials obtained from animals inhabiting jungles. Similarly drugs obtained from watery animals (*Naranya*) and birds also described in Ayurveda *Samhitas*. As regards mineral source

The substances obtained from mineral origin also mentioned as *Ashma, Mrittika, Hiranya, Ayas, Loha, Sikta, Seesa, Trapu* and *Shyama*, etc. These substances, their preparation and uses mainly described under the heading of *Rasashastra*. This stream of Ayurveda described various processing (*Shodhana* and *Marana*, etc.) of mineral and metal based drugs for therapeutic purposes.^[4-7]

The mineral and metal-based drugs specially categorizes in Siddha system as follows

1. *Uppu (Lavanam)* are drugs that can dissolved in water and observe decrepitated when put into the fire.
2. *Pashanam* are water insoluble drugs but give off vapors when put in to fire
3. *Upasam* are similar to *Pashanam* in chemical behavior but offers different actions.
4. *Ratnas* and *Uparatnas* are drugs based on the precious characteristics.
5. *Loham* is metals and metal alloys, not dissolve in water, melt in fire and solidify on cooling.
6. *Rasam* is soft, exhibits phenomena of sublimation in fire and changes into crystals or powders.
7. *Gandhakam* is insoluble in water and burns off in fire.

Description in ancient Ayurveda texts

Charaka has classified medicinal substances into various groups i.e.; *Mahakashaya, Moolini* and *Phalini*, etc. *Charaka Samhita* not involve word *Laghupanchamula*, but the drugs of *Laghupanchamula* are mentioned here as single group i.e., *Shvayathuhara Mahakashaya*, these drugs are *Brihati, Kantakarika, Prishniparni, Gokshura* and *Shalaparni*. In *Charaka Samhita Vidarigandha, Prishniparni, Brihati* and *Kantakarika* are mentioned under *Angamardaprashamana Mahakashaya*.

Chikitsasthana mentioned *Vidarigandha, Brihati, Prishniparni, Nidigdika* and *Shvadmshttra* under the heading of *Vidarigandhadipanchamula*. *Chikitsasthana* also mentioned group alone as such or drugs

of *Brihatpanchamula* including *Mahakalyanaka Ghrita, Dashamuladi Ghrita* and *Mustadi Churna*, etc. indicated for diseases like; *Visarpa, Gulma, Apasmara* and *Kushtha*, etc.

Sushruta has classified medicinal agents into different *Gana*. *Gana* means group of drugs having similar features either in the form of morphology, taste, properties and pharmacological actions, etc. The drugs categorized on the basis of similarity in *Swaroop, Rasa, Guna* and *Karma* is main approach of Ayurveda drug classification. The 37 *Gana* described by *Acharya Sushruta* for categorizing medicinal agents and each *Gana* has different indications.

Kaniya and *Brihatpanchamula* have been described in successive verses of *Sushruta Samhita*. *Trikantaka, Brihatidvaya* and *Prithakaparnyo* are drugs mentioned under the category of *Kaniyapanchamula*. *Cikitsasthana* contains information related to the various dosage forms i.e.; *Kashaya, Kshira, Taila* and *Kvatha*, etc.

Vagbhatta described both *Mahakashaya* and *Gana* for classifying medicinal substances. Drugs acting on *Doshas* also described as *Gana*, here *Vata* pacifying drugs mentioned as *Vaataharaganas, Pitta* alleviating drugs mentioned as *Pittaharaganas* and drugs acts on *Kapha* put in *Kaphaharaganas* category.

Bhadraaaru, Kushtam and *Dasamoolam*, etc. are described here under *Vaataharaganas* category, drugs described under the heading of *Pittaharaganas* are *Doorwaa, Nimba, Vaasaa, Gundraa* and *Priyangu*, etc. while *Aaragwadhaadi Gana, Mushkakaadi Gana, Asanaadi Gana, Vatsakaadi gana* and *Surasaadi gana*, etc. are groups of drugs which ameliorate *Kapha Dosh* and considered as *Kaphaharaganas*.

Similarly ancient Ayurveda text described concept of *Ashnavarga* which is a group of eight drugs, in *Bheshajachatushka* only six drugs are described except *Riddhi* and *Vridhhi*. *Bhavamishra* mentioned that drugs of this group are difficult to acquire hence physician can use their substitutes of same properties. Therefore *Shatavari, Vidarikanda, Ashvagandha* and *Varahikanda* were suggested for *Meda, Jivaka, Kakoli* and *Riddhi*. *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* described *Guduchi* and *Vanshalochna* as substitute for *Jivaka* and *Rishabhaka*. *Bala* and *Mahabala* are suggested as substitute of *Ridhhi* and *Vridhhi*. *Kakoli* is replaced with *Shatavari*, *Ashwagnadha* mentioned for *Meda* and *Mahameda* is replaced with *Anantamoola*.^[6-10]

Description of drugs in Aushadhachatushka

The *Aushadhachatushka (Bheshajachatushka)* deals with collection of useful medicine, classification of material objects, drugs with useful roots (*Moolini*) and fruits (*Phalini*), important *Sneha* and actions of drugs. Here 41 drugs enumerated in first chapter of *Aushadhachatushka*, out of that 16 were of *Moolini* category, 19 of *Phalini*

and 06 drugs for *Virechana-vamana* purpose. There are total 70 herbs are listed in next chapter, out of that 23 drugs mentioned for *Shirovirechana*, 10 drugs for *Vamana*, 17 drugs for *Virechana* and 20 herbs for enema purpose. Twenty eight type of *Yavagu* (gruel) also described as internal medicines along with 45 herbs used in *Yavagu* preparation.

Argvadhya adhyaya contains thirty two types of *Churna* and *Pradeha* found effective for external application, this chapter contains information about drugs used for conditions like *Kushtha*, *Kilasa*, *Indralupta*, *Dadru*, *Bhagandara*, *Kandu*, *Pidaka*, *Kooha*, *Arsha*, *Shopha*, *Vicharchika*, *Raktavata*, *Nirvapana* and *Twakdosha*, etc. This chapter contains information about *Audbhida*, *Jangama* and *Parthiva dravyas*, here 108 *Audbhida*, 5 *Jangama* and 9 *Parthiva dravyas* are reported. Purgative drugs along with their ingredients have also been described here.^[9-12]

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda *Samhitas* described information about many drugs and *Charakasamhita* is one of the most important compendia in this regards. The fourth chapters related to the botanical identity 273 drugs have been elaborated including 250 Vegetable, 6 animal, 12 mineral origin and 5 *Sneha dravyas*. Here 13 herbs are considered as controversial drugs. *Charakasamhita* mentioned pharmacological and pharmaco-therapeutic descriptions of drugs; *Charaka* described essential herbs used for the management of various diseases.

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