

SCRUTINY OF SUBSTITUENTS OF ASHTAVARGA DRAVYAS: RELEVANCE, OBTAINABILITY, AND EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

Groping drugs are common in Ayurveda. Throughout Ayurveda classics, we find many references for the grouping of drugs. This is done based on their utility. Acharya Sushruta used ganas based on the name of the first drug, Charaka used desaimani based on their karma. We could find various other common examples in mishragana like trikatu, trigata, chaturgata, panchakola, shadushana. Ashtavarga is one among them. It was in practice since the origin of Ayurved. Nowadays the identity and availability of these drugs are questionable. Since some of these drugs are not available, in Nighantu Kala our Acharya has given suitable substitutes for them. This is an attempt to evaluate the substitutes told by Bhavamishra and those used in recent practice.

KEYWORDS: Ashtavarga, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu.

INTRODUCTION

Ashtavarga is formed out of two words, Ashta which means eight, and Varga which means Group.^[1] That is a group of eight drugs. These drugs are commonly found around the Himalayan ranges. Charaka Samhita has references of using Ashtavarga dravya. Agnivesha has mentioned the use of 5 Ashtavarga drugs in the making of Chyavanaprash which is an important Ayurveda formulation.^[2]

Ashtavarga drugs are^[3]

1. Jeevaka
2. Rishabhaka
3. Meda
4. Mahameda
5. Kakoli
6. Kshirakakoli
7. Rddhi
8. Vriddhi

Table No: 1: The properties of Ashtavarga are.^[4]

Rasa	Madhura
Guna	Guru
Veerya	Seeta
Karma	Brihmana, Sukrala
Rogagnatha	Bhagnasanthanakruth (heals fracture), Kamabala (increase sexual desire), Bala vardhana (Increase strength), Trit (Thirst), Daha (Burning Sensation), Jwara (Pyrexia)
Doshagnatha	Vata, Pitta, Rakta Vikaras

Table No. 2: Substitutes as per Bhavaprakash.^[5]

Sl no	Drugs	Botanical name	Substitute	Botanical name
1.	Jeevaka	<i>Microstylis wallichii</i> Lindl	Vidarikanda	<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> DC
2.	Rishabhaka	<i>Microstylis musifera</i> Ridley		
3.	Meda	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> Linn	Satavari	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Wild
4.	Mahameda	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> Royle		
5.	Kakoli	<i>Rosea procera</i> Wall <i>Fritillaria roylei</i> Hook.f.	Ashvagandha	<i>Withania somnifera</i> Dunal
6.	Ksirakakoli	<i>Nomocharis oxypetala</i> Royle <i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D.Don		

7.	Rddhi	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D.Don	Varahikanda	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i> Linn
8.	Vrddhi	<i>Habernaria</i> species		<i>Dioscorea sativa</i> Linn

Table No. 3: Properties of Ashtavarga and its Substitutes as per Bhavaprakash.

No.	Drug	Substitute	Properties
1.	Jivaka & Rishabhaka	Vidarikanda ^[6]	Rasa: Madhura Guna: Guru, Sheeta Verya: Seeta Karma: Sukrala, Brihmana Rasayan Rogagnatha: Pitta, Asra, Pavana, Daha Vikaras
2.	Meda & Mahameda	Satavari ^[7]	Rasa: Madhura Guna: Guru Veerya: Seeta Karma: Stanya, Brihmana, sukrala, Vrushya Rogagnatha: Vata, Pitta, Rakta vikaras
3.	Kakoli & Ksheerakakoli	Ashwagandha ^[8]	Rasa: Madhura, Tikta, Kashaya Guna: Guru, Veerya: Seeta Karma: Bruhmana, Balya, Rasayana, Atisukrala Rogagnatha: Shotha, Jwara, Switra, Daha, Vata, Rakta and Pitta Vikaras
4.	Rddhi & Vrddhi	Varahikanda ^[9]	Rasa: Madhura, Tikta Guna: Guru Verya: Seeta Karma: Sukrala, Garbhada, Vrushya, Swarya, varnya, Rasayana, Tridoshajith, Bruhmana Rogagnatha: Kushta, Prameha, Murcha, Kshatakasa, Krimi, Rakta and Pitta vikaras

Table No. 4: Some of the commonly used Substitutes.

Sl no	Drugs	Botanical name	Substitute ^[10]	Botanical name
1.	Jeevaka	<i>Microstylis wallichii</i> Lindl	Guduchi	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> Willd ^[11]
2.	Rishabhaka	<i>Microstylis musifera</i> Ridley	Vamsalochan	<i>Bambusa aurundinacea</i> Retz. Willd ^[12]
3.	Meda	<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i> Linn	Salama misri	<i>Orchis latifolia</i> Linn ^[13]
4.	Mahameda	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> Royle	Prasarini	<i>Paederia foetida</i> Linn ^[14]
5.	Kakoli	<i>Rosea procera</i> Wall <i>Fritillaria roylei</i> Hook.f.	Kali musali	<i>Curcilio orchioides</i> Gaertn ^[15]
6.	Ksirakakoli	<i>Nomocharis oxypetala</i> Royle <i>Lilium polyphyllum</i> D.Don	Sweta musli	<i>Asparagus adscendens</i> Roxb ^[16]
7.	Rddhi	<i>Habenaria intermedia</i> D.Don	Bala bija	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn ^[17]
8.	Vrddhi	<i>Habernaria</i> species	Mahabala,	<i>Sida rhombifolia</i> Linn ^[18]

DISCUSSION

Ashtavarga dravyas are used from the time of Acharya Agnivesha and it is mentioned in Charaka Samhita. With time availability of these drugs has diminished or the identification of original Ashtavarga drugs became difficult. This might have lead Acharya Bhavamishra to mention the Ashtavarga and its substitute in

Bhavaprakasha Nighantu. Some of the recent vaidyas have started using other drugs instead of those prathinidhi dravyas told by Bhavaprakasha. Substituting a drug is based on its properties. So if two drugs are having almost the same properties its substitution can be done based on vaidyas Yukti.

Is it ok to uses these substitutes?

When we compare the properties of substitute drugs with that of Ashtavarga, they are madhura rasa (sweet), guru guna (heavy), and seeta veerya (cold potency). While considering the karma of Ashtavrga which is bruhmana and sukrala, all the four substitute drugs are bruhman (Roborant) and sukrala. When considering the roghagnatha they are divided among the drugs. Some are jwaragha, dahaghan, and trutshna nigrahana, while others are effective in increasing Kambala and sandana karma. In doshagnatha, all the drugs are effective against Vata, rakta, and pitta vikaras. So while considering the Ayurveda properties of substitute drugs, they are common with Ashtavarga. Hence these substitutes can be used in place Ashtavarga.

CONCLUSION

The substitution of drugs is not a new topic. Since Vedic Kala, it was in practice. In Vedic Kala the plants used for yagnas (prayer) were substituted if it's not available. When we do substitution on medicinal plants, we should be concerned about the properties of the plant. Nowadays we have the facility to test the chemical constituents present in each plant. So before substituting any plant a proper pharmacognostic and analytical study can be done.

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