



Review Article

## VARAHIKANDA AS A FIFTH MEDHYA RASAYANA W.S.R TO INDU

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### ABSTRACT

Traditional medicine is a group of different medical practices being practiced in 170 countries around the globe according to World Health Organisation. Ayurveda system of medicine also comes under traditional medicine according to WHO. Knowledge of Ayurveda is passed on from generation to generation through observation and practices over centuries. Various controversies arise in identification of some herbs mentioned in Ayurvedic texts and at the same time some important Karma of a known medicinal substance becomes obliterated due to ignorance. Medhya rasayana is a very famous concept first given in Charaka Samhita Rasayana adhikara followed by Vagabhata in Ashtanga sangraha and Ashtanga hridaya. It consists of four intellect promoting herbs viz., Mandukaparni, yashtimadhu, Guduchi and Shankhapushpi. A term Sahamulapushpi that appears in the original verse is understood in different manner by different Acharyas. Indu the commentator of Ashtanga hridaya commented Sahamulapushpi as a synonym of Varahikanda and counted it as fifth Medhya rasayana drug. Varahikanda is a famous Balya herb that is botanically identified as (Dioscorea bulbifera L.) of the family Dioscoreaceae. References of the drug are mentioned in Brihatrayi and it has been discussed widely in Nighantus as well. Varahikanda has mainly Balya (strength promoting), Vrushya (aphrodisiac), Rasayana (rejuvenative) properties. This review mainly emphasises on the Medhya aspect of Rasayana that is an unexplored area in the field of Ayurveda.

### INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda the health science is a puzzle that is built on Ashta anga, eight parts namely Kaya, Bala, Graha, Urdhwanga, Shalya, Damshttra, Jara and Vrisha. Each particular part deals with specific disease condition or diseased condition. In this Jara chikitsa otherwise known as Rasayana chikitsa is of prime importance in present scenario as the world is behind the science of cosmetics, geriatrics, intelligence etc all of which fall under the umbrella of Rasayana chikitsa. Medhya rasayana is a very famous concept first given in Charaka Samhita Rasayana adhikara.<sup>[1]</sup> Intelligence or Medha is one such factor that develops along with the age and diminishes as a person goes to his end part of his life.

As pointed in Sharangadhara Samhita, Medha or intelligence power diminishes after forty years of age<sup>[2]</sup>. In this world of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the intelligence which is an innate factor of an individual is of utmost need that needs to be cherished throughout the life as it is a diminishing factor in everyone's life. Sushruta Samhita dealing with Medha has dedicated a separate chapter named Medhayushkameeya adhyaya which deals with factors that elevate or enhances Medha. Hence this can be uplifted or maintained by use of herbs and other sources and also by one's own practices that he/she undertakes in daily routine. Here Varahikanda, which is an unexplored plant in the field of Medhya rasayana has to be dealt because of its qualities and actions that influences Medha. Moreover Indu the commentator of Ashtanga hridaya commentate on the term Sahamulapushpi as Varahikanda considering it as fifth Medhya rasayana drug<sup>[3]</sup>.

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Materials:** Classical Ayurveda text books, Ayurveda textbooks, published articles.

**Method:** Critical review

### **Guna, karma of Varahikanda in Brihatrayi and various Nighantus – An overview**

In *Brihatrayi* especially in *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, the *Guna karma* of *Varahikanda* is mentioned as *Shleshmaghna*, *Katu* in *Rasa* and *Vipaka*, *Balya*, *Vrishya*, *Rasayana* [4] and *Pindaalu* is commented as *Varahi* according to *Hemadri* commentator of *Ashtanga Hridaya* and explains it's *Guna karma* like *Vata-kaphahara*, *Pittavardhana*, *Katu* in *Rasa* and *Vipaka*, *Ushna guna* [5].

In *Nighantus*, we get plenty of information regarding *Varahikanda* with its *Guna karma* as *Katu* and *Tikta rasa* according to *Bhavaprakasha* [6] and *Raja Nighantu* where as *Katu rasa* according to *Dhanvantari Nighantu* [7] where as *Vipaka* opinion is same according to all the three texts as *Katu vipaka*. Its *Karma* is mainly said as *Kusthahara*, *Krimihara*, *Rasayana* by all three texts.

### **Concept of Medhya Rasayana**

The drugs that are benefit for *Rasadi dhatus* are said to possess *Rasayana* property [8]. In Ayurveda, there is a concept of *Medhya rasayana* which is explained in *Charaka* and *Ashtanga* texts. The drugs that are beneficial to the intelligence or that are *Hita* for the smooth functioning of the intelligence (*Medha*) are known as *Medhya* drugs. Four drugs are explained to have potent *Medhya* action namely *Yashtimadhu*, *Guduchi*, *Mandukaparni* and *Shankhapushpi*. These drugs have *Medhya* action when they are used in particular *Kalpna* like *Svarasa* of *Mandukaparni*, *Ksheera Kalpna* of *Yashtimadhu*, *Rasa* of *Guduchi* and *Kalka* of *Shankhapushpi*. Even in these four, *Shankhapushpi* is said to be *Pravara Medhya* drug.

## DISCUSSION

### **Critical review of Varahikanda as a Medhya rasayana**

- All the majority texts of *Nighantu* have stressed *Varahikanda* as a *Rasayana dravya* but no *Nighantu* has said it as a *Medhya rasayana*. Even in *brihatrayi* there is no such reference but *Indu* the commentator of *Ashtanga Hridaya* in *Shashilekha* commentary has commented “*Sahamulapushpi*” in the *Shloka* of *Medhya rasayana* in *Rasayana adhyaya* of *Uttarasthana* as *Varahi*[9]. The first important concept is *Sahamulapushpi* as a synonym of *Varahi* which is not given by any *Brihatrayi* or any of the *Nighantus*.
- Even *Arunadatta* in his *Ayurveda rasayana* commentary on *Ashtanga hridaya* has indirectly

said there are five *Medhya rasayana* but *Indu* has directly said there are five *Medhya rasayana*. Commentators of *Charaka Samhita* especially *Chakrapani* says there are four *Medhya rasayana* and the word ‘*Samulapushpi*’ that is a single word that gets related to *Shankhapushpi* in general but *Indu* in *Ashtanga sangraha rasayana adhyaya* says *Saha* and *Mulapushpyah* are two different words. Reference of *Shrikantha* and *Shivadasa* authors in *Pathantara* of *Ashtanga Hridaya* says *Sahamulapushpya* either relates to *Shankhapushpi* or *Guduchi* [10].

- There is mentioning of *Varahikanda rasayana* in *Ashtanga hridaya rasayana adhyaya* where the *phalashruti* is mentioned as *Dhee*, *Medha*, *Vaya*, *Sthairya balaprada*[11]. But the confusion here arises because of *Arunadatta* who comments *Varahi* as *Vridhdadaraka* as *Vridhdadaraka* as mentioned directly as a *Medhya rasayana* in various *Nighantus*. *Vridhdadaraka rasayana prayoga* mentioned in *Ashtanga sangraha rasayana adhyaya* that is not mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya* is indicated in *Apasmara*, *Grahanomadadi roga*.
- One more important concept is the *Kalpna* specific that is to be used of *Varahikanda* for the purpose of *Medhya rasayana*. There are two ideas regarding this, firstly *Arunadatta* comments *Varahikanda* has to be used in the form of *Kalka* like that of *Shankhapushpi* where as *Indu* is of different opinion states that *Rasa Kalpna* of *Varahi* like that of *Guduchi* is to be used.
- These above confusions about terms ‘*Sahamulapushpi*’ and ‘*Samulapushpi*’, *Varahikanda* and *Vridhdadaraka*, *Sahamulapushpi* as a synonym of *Varahi*, *Kalpna* specificity of *Varahi* are on one side and there are no direct references of *Varahi* as a *Medhya rasayana* on the other side, but some indirect references are available. Firstly in *Charaka Samhita*, *Mahapaishachika ghrita* mentioned in *Unmada chikitsa* where *Shukari* is an ingredient that is commented as *Varahikanda*[12]. In *Nivritta santapeeya rasayana adhyaya* of *Sushruta Samhita*, *Varahi* is mentioned as one among the *Ashtadasha soma sama veerya dravya*[13] but not said in *Medhayushkameeya rasayana adhyaya*. From these references, it is observed that *Varahi* has *Prabhava* on *Hridaya* and *Manovaha srotas* there by influencing *Medha*.

## CONCLUSION

By the above discussions and references quoted, *Varahikanda* as a *Medhya rasayana* in the field of Ayurveda that is unexplored is of prime importance that is to be further verified based on experimental and clinical findings, comparative study between

*Varahikanda* and *Vriddadaraka* for *Medhya* action as both of them share common *Guna, Karma* with slight differences in *Guna karma* that is *Varahi* is *Katu* in *Vipaka* where as *Vriddadaraka* is *Madhura* in *Vipaka* but both are *Vata kaphahara*. As *Medha* is an attribute linked to *Pitta dosha* and it is a *Prakrita karma* of *Pitta*, even this comparison between these two drugs are to be done in what aspect they are *Medhya*. Lastly the *Kalpana* in which *Varahi* to be used either *Kalka* or *Rasa*, even this has to explore further for the purpose of therapeutics.

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