

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# A Bird's Eye View on *Rasaoushadhis* in *Panchakarma*

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### ABSTRACT

*Panchakarma*, an inevitable part of Ayurveda, is a combination of 5 *Shodhana* procedures, namely *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Vasthi*, *Nasya*, and *Rakthamoksha*. In addition to the above-mentioned *Pradhana Karmas*, *Poorva Karmas* such as *Snehana* and *Swedana* and *Upakarmas* such as *Kavala*, *Pratisarana*, and *Dhoomapana* are also a part of *Panchakarma*. These *Shodhana* procedures eliminate toxins in the body and make three *doshas* in equilibrium. Usually, *Sthavara* and *Jangama Dravyas* are utilized for *Panchakarma* procedures. In the current scenario, the utility and application of *Panchakarma* therapies are getting importance around the globe. There is a wide range of formulations explained in Ayurvedic classics for conducting *Panchakarma* therapies, but it is observable and evident that few formulations for *Panchakarma* contain *Rasaoushadhis*. These are not much explained in *Brihatthrayees*. However, the Ayurveda classics having focus to *Rasa Shastra* such as *Rasaratnasamuchchaya*, *Rasatarangini*, *Rasendrachoodamani*, and Ayurveda *Prakasha* explain the inclusion of *Rasoushadhis* in *Panchakarma* formulations. *Rasoushadhis* are a group of medicines having metals and minerals, which are considered to be highly potent and fast acting. *Sphatika*, *Anjana*, *Parada*, *Gandhaka*, *Thutta*, *Shilajathu*, *Loha*, *Kasisa*, and *Tankanaetcare* are some of the examples having classical references in *Panchakarma* procedures. So here, an attempt is made to compile and evaluate some of the formulations with *Rasoushadhis* that are used in various *Panchakarma* procedures. Mode of action can also be explained in terms of their *Rasapanchaka*, *Veerya*, *Dosha Karma*, and other *Karmas*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Panchakarma*, a cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* medicine, is a comprehensive detoxification and rejuvenation therapy designed to cleanse the body and restore balance. It consists of five primary procedures. It is preceded by a preparatory phase (*Purvakarma*) and followed by a post-treatment regimen (*Paschat karma*).<sup>[1]</sup> *Purvakarma* (preparatory phase) is the initial phase, which prepares the body for the main purification procedures. It mainly includes *Snehana* (oleation) and *Swedana* (sudation).<sup>[2]</sup> *Pradhanakarma* (main purification procedures) are *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis), *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation), *Vasti* (therapeutic enema), *Nasya* (nasal administration), and *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting).<sup>[3]</sup> These procedures aim to eliminate toxins (*Ama*) and balance the three *doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) that govern human physiology.<sup>[4]</sup> *Rasoushadhis* are a class of Ayurvedic medicines prepared from minerals and metals, renowned for their potent and rapid action

in treating various diseases. In *Samhitas*, the references about the use of *rasa* drugs as medicine are not available in detail. However, books such as *Rasaratnasamuchchaya* and *Rasatarangini* etc clearly emphasize the importance of *rasaoushadhis*. These mineral drugs are not used widely for *Panchakarma*. During the preparatory phase (*Purvakarma*), *Rasoushadhi* aid in internal and external oleation, ensuring the body is adequately primed for the main procedures. In the main procedures (*Pradhanakarma*), they play a crucial role in mobilizing and expelling deep-seated toxins, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of therapies such as *Vamana*, *Virechana*, and *Vasti*. Post-therapy (*Paschatkarma*), *Rasoushadhi* support the body's rejuvenation and maintenance, helping to sustain the balance and vitality achieved through *Panchakarma*. Their integration into *Panchakarma* therapy enhances its efficacy manifold. Some examples regarding the use of *Rasaoushadhis* in *Panchakarma* have been discussed here mentioned in Table 1.

## 2. PROPERTIES OF RASA DRAVYAS

*Shilajathu* is included in *Maharasa*<sup>[5]</sup> and is identified as asphaltum punjabianum. It is an exudate coming out of the mountains of

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Himalaya on being heated through the intense sun heat during summer. It is mainly of 2 types, *Gomutra Shilajathu* and *Karpura Shilajathu*.<sup>[6]</sup> The impure *Shilajathu* produces many diseases for internal use; hence, it should be purified. *Shilajathu* purifies simply by washing with *Kshara-Amla Dravya* and *Gomutra*.<sup>[7]</sup>

*Sphatika* is an *Uparasa*<sup>[8]</sup> drug and its chemical name is Alum. It has synonyms such as *Tuvari* and *Kamkshi*. It is mainly of 2 types: *Fataki* and *Fullika*.<sup>[9]</sup> It is purified by heating till the water gets evaporated.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Loha* is included in *Dhatu varga*<sup>[11]</sup> and its chemical name is iron. It is mainly of 3 types: *Munda loha*, *Teekshna loha*, and *Kanta loha*.<sup>[12]</sup> Its important ores include hematite, limonite, magnetite, siderite, etc. For the *Shodhana* (purification of iron), it should be heated to red hot and quenched into *Taila*, *Takra*, *Gomutra*, *Kanjika*, and *Kulatha Kashaya* seven times each.<sup>[13]</sup>

*Thutta* is included in *Maharasa*<sup>[5]</sup> and its chemical name is Copper Sulfate. Its synonyms include *Mayura*, *Sasyaka*, etc. It is purified by *Bhavana* in any of the *Amla Dravya*.<sup>[14]</sup>

*Kampillaka* is a drug included in *Sadhararasa Varga*.<sup>[15]</sup> It is a herbal drug with Botanical name *Mallotus philippinensis*. Although it is a vegetable drug, because of its usefulness in mercurial operations, the same has been included under *Sadharana Rasa* group.

*Kasisa* is an *Uparasa*<sup>[8]</sup> drug with chemical name Ferrous Sulfate. It is mainly of 2 types, *Baluka kasisa* and *Pushpa Kasisa*. It is purified by *Dolayantra Swedana* or *Bhavana* in *Bringaraja Swarasa*.<sup>[16]</sup>

*Parada*, otherwise Mercury, stands in the prime position among *Rasadravayas*, it is claimed to be related to Lord Shiva. The common ores of mercury are cinnabar, calomel, etc. The synonyms include *Rasa*, *Suta*, *Rudraretus*, etc. The important types are *Rasa*, *Rasendra*, *Suta*, *Parada*, and *Misraka*. There are a number of purificatory procedures explained, of this, distillation is the most recommended procedure.

*Gandhaka* is a *Uparasa* drug.<sup>[8]</sup> Its chemical name is sulfur. Its synonyms include *Sulvari*, *Pamari*, *Gouri Pushpabhava*, etc. It is mainly of 4 types: *Sarakta*, *Pita*, *Sweta*, and *Krishna*.<sup>[17]</sup> It is purified by *Dalana* process using *Ghrutha* and *Goksheera*.<sup>[18]</sup>

*Tankana* which is known as Borax otherwise sodium borate is a *rasa dravya* described under *ksharavarga*. It is purified by heated until the moisture is completely removed and gets white powder.<sup>[19]</sup>

*Manashila* is an *Uparasa*<sup>[8]</sup> drug and its chemical name is Arsenic disulfide ( $As_2S_2$ ). Realgar occurs as a bright red in crustations and coating on other substances as compact and granular masses and as crystals implanted on other minerals. It is mainly of 3 types: *Syamangi*, *Kana Viraka*, and *Khandakya*. It is purified by *Bhavana* in *Ardraka Swarasa* for 7 times.<sup>[20]</sup>

### 3. PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION

References of various *rasa* drugs explained for panchakarma preparatory, main and subprocedures have been listed in Table 2. Their probable mode of action with respect to their *guna*, *karma*, *prabhava*, etc., accounts for their importance in the respective yoga.

*Vasthyamayanthaka Gritha* is a ghee formulation, explained in *Sahasrayoga*, and is commonly used in urogenital conditions for *snehapana* (both for *Achapana* and *Vicharana*). It is useful in all diseases of *Mutravaha Srothas*. The *rasa* drug included in this formulation is *Shilajathu*. *Dosha Prabhava* is *Kaphahara* and

*Vyadhi Prabhava* includes *Vasthiruja*, *Prameha*, *Muthrakrichra*, *Asmari*, *Shopha*, *Udara*, etc. Hence, it is highly relevant in the yoga *Vasthyamayanthakam ghrita* as it has affinity toward *Mutravaha*, *Shuklavaha*, and *Mahasrotas*.<sup>[31]</sup>

*Mahavajraka taila* is a yoga explained in *Ashtanga Hridaya*, for external application in *Kushta*. *Sphatika* is an ingredient in it. *Sphatika* is called as *Vishanashini* and *Sarvakushtaharini*.<sup>[32]</sup>

*Loha* is used as *Pindaswedadravya* or *Prastharaswedadravya* according to *Charaka*. It is categorized under *Saagni Sweda*. Since fire or heat derived from the fire is used for providing sudation, in this treatment, it is considered as *Saagni Sweda*. *Loha* with the *karma Vata-Kapha Shamana* help in *Swedana*.<sup>[33]</sup>

*Thutta* is a *Vamana Dravya* explained in classics whose properties highlight “*Vamaka*.”<sup>[34]</sup>

*Kampillaka* is a drug included in *Sadharana rasa varga*. Its *karma* (actions) include *Rechaka* (purgative), *Vitbhedi* (Remove stools), and *Ama pachaka*.<sup>[20]</sup> Hence, it is *Virechana* (purgative) action that has been described in the properties itself. It even has the synonym of *Rechya*.

*Lekhana Vasthi* is a type of *vasthi* indicated in *sleshma-medoroga*.<sup>[35]</sup> The *Kalka* for this *Vasthi* is prepared with the *Dravyas* of *Ushakadigana*. This includes *Kasisa*, *Shilajathu*, and *Thutta*.

*Ushakadigana* as a whole is *Kaphahara* and is *Medovishoshana*.<sup>[36]</sup> Hence, it is highly useful in *Lekhana Vasthi*.

*Kasisa* is *Sleshmanasaka*, *Vata kapha hara* in *Doshaprabhava* and *Medohara*, *Amadamshoshana* in *karma*. The *karma* of *Thutta* includes *lekhana*, *Bhedana*, and *Medohara*. *Shilajathu* is *Kaphahara*. Hence, all these are relevant in *Ushakadigana* for *Lekhana vasthi*.

*Sphatika* has *Rakthasthambhana* property and hence useful in *RakthaSrava* as *Nasya*,<sup>[37]</sup> *Vasthi*,<sup>[38]</sup> and *Kavala*.<sup>[39]</sup>

*Gorasa payas* (milk) is also having *Sthambhana* property,<sup>[40]</sup> so is useful in *raktha pitta* as *nasya* along with *Sphatika*.

*Shwasakuthara rasa* is a *rasa yoga* explained in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*, *Yogaratanakara*, etc. It contains *rasa* drugs such as *Parada*, *Gandaka*, *Tankana*, and *Manashila*. This yoga is explained for *Vata-Kaphaja Swasa*, *Kasa*, and *Swarakshaya* for internal use and *Nasya*.<sup>[41]</sup>

*Parada* is *Yogavahi* and has *Karmas* such as *Rasayana*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Agnikari*, and *Balakara*.

The *karma* of *Gandaka* includes *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Agnikari*, *Rasayana*, etc.

*Tankana* is explained as *Kaphanisraka* and *Vata kapha vikaranuth*.

The *karma* of *Manashila* includes *Sarvarasayanaagrya*, *Vishagni*, and *Bhothagani* (antimicrobial).

All these suggest that *Parada*, *Gandaka*, *Tankana*, and *Manashila* in *Shwasakuthara rasa* are relevant in *Nasya* for conditions of *Swasa* and *Kasa*.

*Manashila* has properties of *kapha vatashamana* and it is also known as *Kasa-kshayaharini* and is used for *Dhoomapana* in conditions of *Kasa*, *Swasa*, and other respiratory conditions.<sup>[42]</sup>

*Icchabhedi rasa* is a *Rasa Yoga* explained in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* for *Virechana*. It is explained in the chapter of *Udara Roga Chikitsa*

as *Virechana* is a main treatment protocol for it. It contains *Parada*, *Gandhaka*, and *Tankana* as *Rasa Dravyas*.<sup>[43]</sup> This is a commonly used *Virechana Yoga* which is having *Teekshna Virechana* property.

*Shilajathu*, *Kampillaka*, *Kasisa*, *Thutta*, *Sphatika*, *Parada*, *Gandaka*, *Tankana*, *Manashila*, and *Loha* are some *Rasa* drugs having reference, which after proper *Shodhana* procedure used in *Panchakarma* provides beneficiary results.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Even though there are some references of *Rasaoushadhis* available in the classics, they have to be incorporated judiciously with the procedures of *Panchakarma*. There are references stating the utility of *Rasoushadhis* for *Poorva*, *Pradhana*, and *Paschat karma*. In the *Poorva karma* of *Snehapana*, the references for *Grita/Taila* having *Rasaoushadhis* are very few. For *Svedana Karma*, drugs of *Dhatu Varga*, especially *Loha*, are explained. In *Vamana Karma*, there are few *yogas* containing *Rasa* preparations, but *Anjana* is indicated as *Vasti dravya* for *Jeevadana*, a *Vamana Vyapat*. While discussing the action of *Rasa dravyas*, it is likely to be more useful in *Vamana* as *Vamana dravyas* should be fast acting, *Rasadravyas* also act quickly. The reason for the same has to be sorted out. *Thutta*, which is a *Maharasa*, is explained as both *Vamaka* and *Rechaka*. According to the *Avastha* of *Rogi* and the *Anupana*, it acts as both. *Kampillaka* is a *Rechakadravya*, its single drug *prayoga* has been discussed and included in the *Ayurveda Pharmacopoeia of India* by the Government of India.<sup>[44]</sup> The *Vyapat* (complication) of *Vamana* and *Virechana* have references for the use of *Rasoushadhis* mainly *Anjana*. However, the controversy still exists whether it is *Sthavaradravya Rasanjana* or *Rasadravya Rasanjana*. In *Vasthi*, *Kalka dravyas* have reference for *Rasoushadhis*. *Kasisa*, *Thutta*, *Anjana*, etc., are more commonly explained. *Rasoushadhis* are also explained in *Uttara vasthi* in some emergency conditions. For other *Upakarma* such as *Kavala* and *Dhoomapana* also, many *Rasa dravyas* are explained. *Manashila* is a common drug explained in *Dhoomapana*. While observing the references of *Sphatika*, In the conditions of *Rakthapitta*, whether it is *Urdhwaga* or *Adhoga*, *Sphatika* should have intense action. Because, many single drug references with *Sphatika* has been explained using suitable *dravadravyas* in *Rakthapitta* due to its *Sthambhana* property. There are references for it to use internally, as *Vasthi*, *Nasya*, and *Kavala*, etc., in *Rakthapitta*. *Rasoushadhis*, being very potent, can be utilized in *Panchakarma* with precaution and after proper purification.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

*Rasoushadhis*, even though are not very popularly used in *Panchakarma* procedures, have ample references in classics for its use. Various *Rasa Dravyas* are included in formulations for *Poorvakarmas*, *Pradhana Karama*, and *Paschat karma*. *Rasa* drugs can be wisely used in *Panchakarma* for various chronic diseases and complex disorders and for effective detoxification and rejuvenation. Inclusion of *Rasaoushadhis* in *Panchakarma* formulations requires extensive researches before its practical utilization.

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**Table 1:** SOME RASOUSHADHIS USED IN PANCHAKARMA AND UPAKARMA

Panchakarma procedure	Rasoushadhi	Yoga	Indication
Snehapanam	Shilajathu	VasthyamayanthakamGrita	Vasthi roga, Mootra Vega Avarodhajanyarogas
Abhyanga	Sphatika	Mahavajrakataila	Kushta
Swedana	Loha	Pinda sweda	Vata- Kapha roga
Vamana	Thutha Anjana	Vamana karma As VasthiYoga for complication of Vamana Karma.	Kushta, Krimi, Prameha, Medoroga Jeevadana (Atiyogaof vamana)
Virechanam	Kampillakam  Parada Gandhaka Tankana	Kampillaka as single drug  Icchabhedhi rasa	Vibandha, KrimiRoga, Adhmana, Gulma, Vrana Udara Roga
Vasthi	Ushakadigana; Kasisa, ShilajathuThutha  Sphatika	Lekhana vasthi  Sphatika+water	Kapha Medo roga  Ardra Arsa
Nasya	Parada, Gandhaka, Tankana, Manashila  Sphathika	Shwasakuthara rasa  Sphatika+gopayasa	Swasa, Kasa  UrdwagaRakthapitta
Kavala	Sphatika	Sphatika+water	Mukha Paka
Dhoomapana	Manashila	Manashila, ala, madhuka, mamsi, inguditwak	Kasa

**Table 2:** Rasa Panchaka of Rasa Dravyas

Rasa Dravya	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka
Shilajathu <sup>[21]</sup>	Thiktha, Kashaya	Snigdha, Mridu	Sheetha	Katu
Kampillaka <sup>[22]</sup>	Katu	Ushna	Ushna	
Kasisa <sup>[23]</sup>	Thiktha, Amla, Kashaya, Kshara	Guru, Snigdha	Ushna	
Thutta <sup>[24]</sup>	Katu, Kshara	Lakhu	Ushna	Katu
Sphatika <sup>[25]</sup>	Kashaya, katu	Snigdha, guru	Ushna	
Parada <sup>[26]</sup>	Shadrassa	Guru, Snigdha		
Gandaka <sup>[27]</sup>	Katu, Tiktha	Sara	Ushna	Katu
Tankana <sup>[28]</sup>	Katu	Ruksha	Ushna	
Manashila <sup>[29]</sup>	Tiktha, Katu	Snigdha, guru	Ushna	
Loha <sup>[30]</sup>	Tiktha, Madhura, Kashaya	Guru, Ruksha	Sheeta	