



Innumerable diseases, Countless medicines and 50 Mahakashayas

Dr.Rismiyas*

Dr.K.Sundaran**

Dr.Jayasree.A***

Final year PG Scholar**PG Dean and HOD*****Principal and Professor**Department of Samhita, Samskrita and Siddhanta, Pankajakasthuri Ayurveda Medical College and PG Centre*

Introduction

Mahakashayas are defined as a group of ten drugs that perform a similar action. The term “mahakashaya” may give an idea that it is some superior form of pharmaceutical preparation that comes under the category of decoction. But it is entirely different. There are innumerable types of diseases that are getting discovered day by day. Similarly innumerable are the treatment methodologies that are getting developed. Complicated are diseases from person to person and from place to place. Similarly complicated are the treatment procedures that also differ according to the type of patient. Practically, one can find that it is possible to create innumerable recipes and formulations with the help of drugs mentioned in Mahakashaya vargas. Both Caraka and Vagbhata acharyas had explained that the aim of mentioning Mahakashayas is only to set an example on how to form combinations of medicinal drugs in a way that they perform a single and similar function. And this combination can be used externally or internally in any form like choorna, decoction etc, depending upon the logic of a physician according to the strength of the patient or severity of the disease.

Dashemani is another term used in Charaka Samhita to denote Mahakashaya. The term “dashemani” denotes the ten drugs forming a particular group. But what is the necessity of such a construction with 10 drugs each in a group? Is there any relevance behind placement of 10 drugs in each group? It is merely for beautifying the arrangement of mahakashayas with an artistic representation of the same. Sangrahakara clearly mentions that there is no need to limit the number of drugs to 10 to make a combination.

The categorization of medicinal plants into 50 groups involving 10 subgroups is undoubtedly a master work. Oshadhi Nigantu of Thayyil Kumarakrishnan describes that such a type of classification can never be found in any other treatise or pharmacological works and this itself is the specialty of Charaka Samhita that makes it the most valuable in treatment (*carakastu cikitsite*).

50 Mahakashayas in 10 kashaya vargas

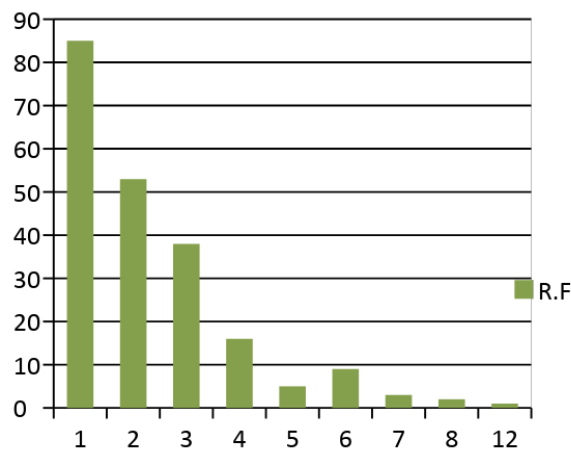
As stated earlier, there are fifty groups of mahakashaya/ dashemani. These are again arranged in ten sub groups called Kashaya varga. Each varga is designed on the basis of sameness in ending syllables. Eg: ending with 'iya' are jivaniya, brimhaniya etc 6 dashemanis, ending with 'yat pratyaya' are balya, varnya etc 4 groups as illustrated below.

| | Kashaya varga | No: | Name of dashemanis involved |
|-----|-----------------------------|------------|---|
| 1. | Ending with iya | 6 | Jivaniya, brimhaniya, lekhaniya, bhedaniya, sandhaniya, deepaniya |
| 2. | Ending with ya | 4 | Balya, varnya, kantya, hridya |
| 3. | Ending with gna | 6 | Triptigna, arshogna, kushtagna, kandugna, krimigna, vishagna |
| 4. | Ending with janana -shodana | 4 | Stanyajanana, stanyashodana, shukrajanana, shukrashodana |
| 5. | Ending with upaga | 7 | Snehopaga, swedopaga, vamanopaga, virechanopaga, asthanopaga, anuvasanopaga, shirovirechanopaga |
| 6. | Ending with nigrhana | 3 | Chardinigrhana, trishnanigrhana, hikknigrhana |
| 7. | Ending with niya | 5 | Pureesha sangrahaniya, pureesha virajaniya, mutra sangrahaniya, mutra virajaniya, mutra virechaniya |
| 8. | Ending with hara | 5 | Kasahara, shwasahara, shothahara, jwarahara, shramahara |
| 9. | Ending with prashamana | 5 | Dahaprashamana, sheetaprashamana, udardaprashamana, angamardaprashamana, shoolaprashamana |
| 10. | Ending with sthapana | 5 | Shonitasthapana, vedanasthapana, samjnasthapana, prajasthapana, vayasthapana |
| | Total - | 50 | |

Such a grouping pattern is for proper interpretation of the intended meaning (Gangadhara-Jalpakaipataru). Here, one can note that each kashaya vargas are displayed in a unique pattern following normal physiology, pathology, reproductive maturation, treatment procedures (panchakarma), pathological conditions etc. Thus it could also be inferred that some strong systematic conceptual basis is involved within this framework which corresponds to the objective of Ayurveda. ie attainment of longevity.

On account of this, there should be 500 medicines altogether. But actually it involves 212 drugs only. This is because of repetition of same drug in two or more dashemani ganas and *yashtimadhu* is the most repeated one. It is mentioned in 12 mahakashayas.

| Repetition | Number of drugs |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Non repeated | 85 |
| Twice repeated | 53 |
| Thrice repeated | 38 |
| In 4 dashemani | 16 |
| In five groups | 5 |
| In Six groups | 9 |
| In Seven ganas | 3 |
| In eight ganas | 2 |



-
- Bar diagram showing repetition frequency of dashemani drugs
-
-
- There are three main attributes to be taken into consideration to understand the concept of drug action as disclosed by Acharya Caraka.
 1. *Kartu samprayuktam* – mode of administration of a drug as prescribed by the physician
 2. *Karana samprayuktam* – methodology on which the drug acts in our body
 3. *Karya samprayuktam* – resultant effect obtained by the drug action.
- Hence it is to be concluded that even though there involves only 212 drugs, they are to be considered as 500 different medicines because there are many actions performed by one drug. This is also in conformity with the basic quality of a medicine – “*bahukalpam bahugunam sampannam योग्यम औषधम्*”. Eg:
 - Hingu – pittakara, vatahara, agnivaradhaka, ruchya, amapachana
 - Madhu – vatahara, kaphahara, medohara, vranaropana etc.
- As such, Mahakashayas can be considered as the key to unlock the pathway of pharmacotherapy because they represent the karma based classification of medicinal plants. In addition to this, it is based on the knowledge of actions of a drug, which a physician can decide the medicine to be selected for treating a disease.

Dashemani, the primary classification of drugs based on Karma

knowledge on action of drugs inside a living organism

Logic for selection of Bheshaja

understanding the particular condition where the drug acts beneficially

inference of its rasapanchaka

identification of drugs with similar properties and action

• What are their actions???

• Jivaniya

That which promotes life span or that which is beneficial for life is jivaniya. It is directly indicated in conditions of Ojakshaya. Eg: fainting after prolonged exposure to sun, weakness after getting afflicted with chronic diseases, pallor, generalized debility etc.

• Brimhaniya

This is the group which promotes the weight and volume of body. It can be given in slim-underweight persons, sports persons to maintain their built and strength, in vatavyadhis, in manasikarogas etc.

• Lekhaniya

This is opposite to Brimhana and brings a decrease to body volume and weight. These drugs are useful in conditions where emaciation or thinness is necessary. Eg: obesity, overgrowths like tumor, polyps etc.

• Bhedaniya

That which eliminates faeces by breaking the mass is Bhedaniya. It can be used in cases of constipation and to induce laxation.

• Sandhaniya

It binds all body parts, even faeces. The drugs of this group are beneficial to treat wounds, fractures, loose stool etc.

• Deepaniya

Deepaniya is useful to increase the digestive power. It can be given in all diseases associated with agnimandhya. Eg: anorexia, ascitis, edema, inflammatory disorders etc.

• Balya

They are strength promoters and can be given in all conditions where weakness is presented as a clinical feature. Eg: dhatukshaya associated with vatavyadhis, kshayarogas, in sports persons to develop their strength, performance etc.

- Varnya
- It enhances complexion in a person. They can be used as face packs and also to reduce aftermarks occurring as a result of burns, wounds, pimple, surgeries etc.
- Kantya
- This group promotes voice clarity of an individual. Their uses include disorders of vocal cord, throat pain, tonsillitis etc that cause difficulty in sound production.
- Hridya
- That which is pleasing to one's mind and is good for smooth functioning of heart is Hridya. It can cure nausea, vomiting, rasadhatu kshaya etc.
- Triptigna, arshogna, kushtagna, kandugna, krimigna, vishagna
- Triptigna is that which destroys tripti, a disorder of kaphadosha manifested as a sense of fullness or contentment. Similarly Arshogna is that which destroys arshas, kushtagna is that which destroys kushta and so on. Here Arshogna drugs can be used not only in gudaja arshas but also in nasarsha, polyps etc. Simultaneously kandugna dashemani will be beneficial not only in itching conditions but also skin discolorations, eruptions etc.
- Stanyajanana, stanyashodhana, shukrajanana, shukrashodhana
- That which generates stanya/shukra is called stanyajanana/shukrajanana and that which purify stanya and shukra are stanyashodhana and shukrashodhana respectively. It is only in this context; one can find apt medication for breastmilk production, aspermia, azoospermia etc.
- Upaga dashemanis
- The term 'upaga' means helping or aiding. In Chakrapani commentary, the idea is clearly expressed by stating that the drugs of vamanopaga group are to assist the performance of chief vamanadravyas like madanaphala etc. But in contrary to this, the shirovirechanopaga group consists of main navana drugs like apamarga, shigru etc.
- Nigrahana dashemanis
- This varga arrests or holds up chardi, hikka and thrishna as their names indicates. Here, it is to be noted that hikka and trishna are mostly presented clinically along with systemic disorders.
- Virajaniya
- This is the capability to eliminate morbidity causing discoloration of faeces or urine. Drugs of this gana are beneficial in all disorders associated with liver as liver is the major seat of ranjaka pitta that is responsible for color.
- Samgrahaniya
- This action is the power to bind or retend the excretory material within the body. It diminishes the frequency of elimination. Conditions to be given include diarrhea, dysentery etc (purisha sangrahaniya) and diabetes insipidus, prameha, amavata etc (mutra sangrahaniya)
- Mutravirechaniya
- It is that which favors excretion of urine. Beneficial in all types of mutraghata, mutrakrichra, urinary infections.

- Hara dashemani ganas
- They are the curative groups that cure the corresponding diseases as the name indicates. When we concern Shramahara dashemani, it can also be used to improve the performance capacity of athletes in long term run etc.
- Prashamana groups
- They are the relievers that give relief from pathological conditions like daha, sheeta, udarda, angamarda, shoola.
- Shonitasthapana
- These are blood purifiers that can also bring the haemostatic action by nature. It can be successfully employed in internal haemorrhages, bleeding disorders etc.
- Vedanasthapana
- Vedana means sensation and not pain alone. Hence Vedanasthapana means that which stabilizes senses in our body. This group is useful in conditions where sensory nerves are damaged.
- Samjnasthapana
- That which can act at the level of consciousness and can cure the underlying pathology disrupting it is Samjnasthapana. This group is used widely as memory booster and enhancer of sensor motor functions like speech etc.
- Prajasthapana
- This stabilizes the development of foetus in uterus by correcting the factors hampering its growth.
- Vayasthapana
- They can prevent senility and stabilize ageing. It can be used in conditions where rejuvenation or regeneration is necessary.
- **Concept of Mahakashayas**
- Thus Mahakashayas are said by nature and details to show how a group consisting of several drugs performing one function can be constructed so that many more groups may be designed on the same lines like vataprashamana, pittaprashamana, atisarahara, mehahara etc. For eg: one may form a group of haridra, darvi, kataka, amla and others which subside prameha as Mehahara mahakashaya.
- Acharya Caraka, while explaining dashemani has said that there is no limit to their amplification because we can make suitable alterations to suit the peculiar condition of the patient according to availability of drugs. But such alterations could be made only after understanding a medicinal drug through logical inferences on their inherent qualities and therapeutic actions. With a view to guide the disciples of lower intelligence and also to stimulate the geniuses, such grouping designs have been adopted by Caraka Maharishi.
- Draksha, vidari and milk are having properties similar to that of drugs in jivaniya gana. Acharya instructs us to note this similarity and use them accordingly to treat a patient. Draksha may be beneficially used as a jivaniya drug in cases of weakness associated with anemia. But vidari may be more beneficial to cure conditions of weakness related to seminal dysfunction/shukrakshaya. Thus each and every drug has multiplicity in action even though they are arranged into a single group performing one function. These multiplicity or bahugunata of a drug in every dashemani is to be decoded and understood properly for them to get used properly. This is what Acharya Charaka has intended through 50 Mahakashayas.

- Mode of administration is also equally important in order to obtain desired action and it should be the reason for mentioning of Panchavidha Kashaya kalpana prior to Mahakashayas in the same chapter. For example: Karavira is a drug included in kushtagna dashemani. When we go through the Kushta Chikitsadhikarana, it could be seen that karavira (upavisha) is never said to use internally but only for lepana or ghrishtana when skin is hard, numb etc, like Gajacharma. So selection of medicines, creation of combinations and their mode of administration all depends on the knowledge of Dravya Karmukata. One, who gains mastery in this, could successfully become a good physician.

- Ashtanga Sangraha also described 45 Mahakashayas in its Sutrasthana, 15th chapter, Mahakashaya Sangraha; excluding the upaga groups related to pancha shodhana karmas like vamanopaga, virechanopaga etc why because the shodanadravyas have been already mentioned in the previous chapter, Shodanadhi gana sangrahadhyaya. The concept is similar to that in Caraka Samhita, but becomes more vivid and clear in Sangraha. Apart from some minor differences, drugs enumerated in each group are same.

• **Conclusion**

- Mahakashayas favor the symptomatic management of any disease. Various complicated diseases which are untold, unheard and difficult to treat can be managed wisely with thorough knowledge on 50 Mahakashayas. But the fact is that knowledge on action of a dravya in human body could be gained only through practical experiences. What Acharya Charaka has experienced in his practical life has been recorded in the form of Mahakashayas/Dashemani. But Acharya wants us to acquire the ability to recognize the inherent action and therapeutic properties of a drug and thus one should become skilled to treat any pathological condition of a patient, keeping in mind the basic treatment principles of Ayurveda.

- Numerous herbs were identified and discovered after the period of Charaka Samhita. Hence certain popular drugs are seen to be neglected in corresponding Dashemanis.

• **References**

1. Agnivesha, Caraka, Dridabala, Cakrapani, Caraka Samhita Ayurveda Deepika, Edited by Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji Acharya, Published by Chowkhamba Krishnadas academy, Varanasi, 2015. Page 31, 4/8, 19-29.
2. VridhaVagbhata, Indu, Ashtanga Sangraha Shashilekha, Edited by Dr. Shivprasad Sharma, Published by Chowkhamba Sanskrit series, Varanasi. Page 129, 15/2-9.
3. Professor. Priyavrat Sharma, Caraka Samhita Critical Notes, Published by Chowkhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 2006. Page 65-70.