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Review Article

CHITRAKA – WONDER DRUG OF AYURVEDA

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Abstract

Ayurveda is a science of life describing many herbal remedies for effective management of diseases, which are economic, easily available and using in a day to day life. Ayurveda is the oldest science of health care. The plants provided food, clothing, shelter and medicine. Much of the medicinal use of plants seems to have been developed through observation of wild animals and by trial and error, as time went on each tribe added power of herb in their area to its knowledge base. Acharya Charaka has claimed that Himalayan region is the best habitat for the collection of medicinal plants. The root of Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) a common ingredient in many formulations mentioned in Ayurveda. Chitraka has many important pharmacological actions like *Deepana*, *pachna*, *sothahara*, *Arbudahara* properties. *Acharya Charaka* described the same drug widely in many conditions by two synonyms. Among these synonyms, *chitraka* is repeated for 165 times and *agni* is repeated for 3 times. It is attributed with pharmacological properties i.e. *Tikta rasa*, *Rooksha*, *Laghu*, *Katu vipaka* and *Ushna veerya*.

Key words – Ayurveda, Charaka, Chitraka, Rasa, Vipaka.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurved had long back laid emphasis on prakriti (Constitution and Morphological characters of the drug), Guna (attributes), Desha (Habitat), Ritu (season in which it grows), grahitam (method of collection), nihitam (method of storage and preservation), upaskritam (Pharmaceutical processing), Matra (Posology) to be considered while collecting medicinal plants.¹ Different seasons have been suggested to gather different useful parts of the plant like Moola should be collected in the grishma and shishir rutu, bark should be collected in sharad rutu, sara (Heart wood) should be collected in hemanta rutu². Only that many of the claims have not been scientifically validated. Acharya Charaka has claimed that Himalayan region is the best habitat for the collection of medicinal plants^{3,4} Also it has been mentioned that Plants growing in Northerly direction are to be collected.^{5,6}

The root of Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) a common ingredient in many formulations mentioned in Ayurveda. Chitraka has many important pharmacological actions like Deepana, pachna, sothahara, Arbudahara properties etc.⁷ It is an ingredient in some of the formulations used in arbuda like saureshwar ghrita^{8,9} Nityanandrasa¹⁰. It is also mentioned in Lekhaniya Mahakashaya.¹¹ For the present study arbudahara action was selected as next to heart disease cancer is a major killer of mankind¹². Plumbagin is the active constituent which is present in it and it has been reported to have cytotoxic activity¹³. Ayurvedic literature. Charaka described arbuda in the chapter of shopha i.e inflammatory and non inflammatory swellings. Sushruta provided more information on arbuda, granthi, apachi, gandmala, etc. which are cancer related conditions. Appearance of round immobile, large deep rooted, fast growing and unripe swelling is diagnostic of arbuda.¹⁴

METHODOLOGY

In this article, information regarding the drug “Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*)” is being compiled from related to Ayurveda. The available data are presented in a precise manner about its synonyms, classification, properties, actions,

indications and its use as ingredients in various compound formulations along with its dosage forms and route of administration.

Acharya Charaka described the same drug widely in many conditions by two synonyms. Among these synonyms, chitraka is repeated for 165 times and agni is repeated for 3 times.

Most commonly used synonyms are as follows Chitraka, Dehano, Jwala, Ushna, Chitrango, Vahi, Anila, Krishna, Deepak, Marjara, Hitanga, Kala, Arun, Vyala, Pathi, Daruna, Agni, Jyotishaka, Pali, Pathin, Katu, Pavaka, Dwipi, Sikhi etc

Meanings of Synonyms

Agnika - Agnitulya, ushna sparsha, ushna virya, dahakrit, sphotajanaka

Analanama - Agnitulya, ushna sparsha, ushna virya, dahakrit, sphotajanaka

Ushna - katu rasa paake

Jarna - Stimulates the digestive power

Deepak - Digests food

Daruna - Due to its tikshna property and is bhedna tears accumulated lumps

Dwipi - Like leopard

Pathin - Like leopard

Taxonomical Classification

Kingdom - Plantae (Plants)

Sub-Kingdom - Tracheobionta (vascular plants)

Phylum - Magnoliophyta

Class - Magnoliopsida

Sub-class - Caryophyllidae

Super Order - Plumbaginales

Family - Plumbaginaceae

Genus - *Plumbago* L.

Species - *Plumbago Zeylanica*

Botanical Name : *Plumbago Zeylanica*

Table No. 1: PROPERTIES OF CHITRAKA AS FOUND IN VARIOUS NIGHANTUS

Properties	DN	M.N	K.N	B.P.N	R.N	S.G.N	N.R
Rasa	--	---	Tikta	--	--	--	Katu,tikta
Guna	Ushna	Laghu, ruksha ushna	Laghu, ruksha	Laghu, ruksha, ushna	Ushna	Laghu ruksha,	Laghu, ushna
Virya	Ushna	Ushna	Ushna	Ushna	Ushna	Ushna	Ushna
Vipaka	Katu	Katu	Katu	Katu	Katu	Katu	Katu

Table No. 2: Chitraka indicated in various diseases

Diseases	K.N	D.N	M.P	B.P.N	R.N	S.G.N	N.R	R.V	N.A
Arsha		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Grahani	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Udara	+	+			+		+		+
Sotha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pandu		+							
Kustha	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Krimi	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Kandu					+		+		+
Kasa	+	+				+	+		
Aama							+		
Kshaya		+					+		

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Chitraka is one of the important medicinal herbs having immense medicinal excellence described in almost all literatures of Ayurveda. It is attributed with pharmacological properties i.e Tikta rasa, Rooksha, Laghu, Katu vipaka and Ushna veerya; and useful to combat various disease conditions such as Arsha, Grahni, Arbuda, Aama, Kandu, Kshaya etc. In Ayurveda, it is mentioned as an ingredient of 154 compound formulations which were used in 19 different disease conditions in 8 different dosage forms. Since the drug is used traditionally to treat many health related consequences, there is a need to investigate its biological properties through scientific studies.

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