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Review Article

SONITHASTHAPANA MAHAKASHAYA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ITS AYURVEDIC AND PHARMACOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Mahakashaya refers to a systematic grouping of medicinal substances described by Acharya Charaka. *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* is one among the fifty *Mahakashayas*, comprising ten drugs-*Madhu, Madhuka, Rudhira, Mocharasa, Mrtkapala, Lodhra, Gairika, Priyangu*, *Sarkara*, and *Laja*-primarily indicated in the maintenance and restoration of the normal state of *Rakta*. The concept of *Sonithasthapana* has been interpreted by various commentators to encompass a broader spectrum of actions, which may be correlated with haemalterative, haemostatic, and haematinic activities. The present review focuses on *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* with respect to its classical references, constituent drugs, pharmacodynamic attributes including *Rasa, Guna, Virya*, and *Vipaka*, and its probable therapeutic role in *Rakta*-related disorders. A comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, authoritative commentaries, *Nighantus*, and relevant contemporary literature was undertaken. Analysis reveals that the majority of the constituent drugs predominantly possess *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa, Sheeta Virya*, and *Pitta-Shamaka* properties, thereby contributing to *Rakta Prasadana* through alleviation of *Rakta-Pitta* vitiation. The *Kashaya Rasa* and *Grahi* properties of several drugs facilitate *Rakta Stambhana* by supporting haemostatic and coagulative actions, while *Madhura Rasa* and nourishing properties may support the maintenance and restoration of *Rakta* following *Rakta Kshaya*. Thus, *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* represents a rational and multidimensional Ayurvedic therapeutic group with potential roles in blood purification, haemostasis, and restoration of *Rakta*. Further experimental and clinical studies are warranted to establish its efficacy, safety, and evidence-based therapeutic applications in various *Rakta*-related disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Rakta is one among the *Dhatus* described in Ayurveda[2] and is regarded as an essential tissue associated with the sustenance of life, maintenance of complexion, and nourishment of the body. The term *Rakta* is derived from the Sanskrit root "*Rañj*," denoting the imparting of colour or luster. Ayurvedic texts describe *Rakta* as a distinct *Dhatu* with characteristic properties, formation, physiological functions, and pathological states. It is formed from the nutritive portion of *Rasa Dhatu* through the action of *Rañjaka Pitta* and is closely associated with *Yakṛt* and *Plīha*[3]. The maintenance of *Rakta* in its normal state, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is considered essential for physiological equilibrium, whereas its vitiation or depletion may result in various pathological manifestations, including *Raktapitta*, *Kuṣṭha, Visarpa, Pidaka*, and disorders associated with *Rakta-vaha Srotas*[4]. Therefore, preservation, purification, and restoration of *Rakta* hold significant importance in Ayurvedic therapeutics.

In the context of therapeutic management, the *Mahakashayas* described by Acharya Charaka represent a rational classification of drugs based on their predominant therapeutic actions. Among the fifty *Mahakashayas, Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* comprises ten drugs, namely *Madhu, Madhuka*, *Rudhira, Mocharasa, Mrtkapala, Lodhra, Gairika, Priyangu, Sarkara*, and *Laja*, which are collectively

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indicated for restoring and maintaining the normal state of *Rakta*[1].

The term *Sonithasthapana* has been interpreted differently by various classical commentators. Chakrapani explains it as the restoration of vitiated *Rakta* to its normal state after eliminating its impurities[5], whereas Dalhana emphasizes its role in arresting excessive bleeding[6]. Indu interprets *Rudhirasamsthapana* as promoting the increase and stability of *Rakta*[7]. Thus, the concept of *Sonithasthapana* encompasses a broader therapeutic spectrum involving *Rakta Prasadana, Rakta Stambhana*, and *Rakta Vardhana.*

The constituent drugs of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* exhibit diverse pharmacodynamic properties. A predominance of *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* along with predominantly *Sheeta Virya* contributes to *Pitta Shamana* and *Rakta Prasadana*[8]. The *Kashaya Rasa* and *Grahi* properties of several drugs support *Rakta Stambhana*[9], whereas *Madhura* and nourishing drugs may contribute to the restoration and replenishment of *Rakta* following blood loss[10]. Contemporary pharmacological studies have also demonstrated haemostatic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, and wound-healing activities among several constituent drugs, providing supportive evidence for their traditional therapeutic applications.

Hence, *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* represents a unique and multidimensional therapeutic group with potential applications in disorders involving vitiated *Rakta* and excessive blood loss. A critical analysis of its classical concepts, constituent drugs, pharmacodynamic properties, and contemporary pharmacological evidence is essential to understand its probable mode of action and therapeutic potential. Therefore, the present study aims to critically review *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* with special emphasis on its classical references, drug composition, *Rasapanchaka*, therapeutic actions, and its relevance in the management of *Rakta*-related disorders.

Table 1: Sanskrit name, botanical name, family, and part used of the drug ingredients of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* [11]

S.No.	Sanskrit Name	Scientific Name	Family	Part Used
1	*Madhu*	*Apis cerana* / *Apis* spp.	Apidae	Honey
2	*Madhuka (Yashtimadhu)*	*Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.	Fabaceae	Root and stolon
3	*Rudhira (Kunkuma)*	*Crocus sativus* Linn.	Iridaceae	Dried style and stigma
4	*Mocharasa (Salmali)*	*Bombax ceiba* Linn.	Bombacaceae	Exudate
5	*Mrtkapala*	Earthen pot pieces	-	Pieces of broken earthen pot
6	*Lodhra*	*Symplocos racemosa* Roxb.	Symplocaceae	Stem bark
7	*Gairika*	Red Ochre (Fe_2O_3)	-	Powder
8	*Priyangu*	*Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl	Verbenaceae	Flowers and fruits
9	*Sarkara* (sugar)	*Saccharum officinarum* Linn.	Poaceae	Crystallized sugar from sugarcane juice
10	*Laja* (parched grain)	*Oryza sativa* Linn.	Poaceae	Parched grain

Table 2: *Rasapanchaka* of each ingredient in *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* [11]

Drug	*Rasa*	*Guna*	*Veerya*	*Vipaka*	*Doshakarma*
Madhu	*Madhura, Kashaya*	*Laghu, Ruksha, Picchila, Sukshma*	*Seetha*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pittahara, Alpa Vatakara*
Madhuka (Yashtimadhu)	*Madhura*	*Guru, Snigdha*	*Seetha*	*Madhura*	*Vata-Pittahara*
Rudhira (Kunkuma)	*Katu, Tikta*	*Snigdha*	*Ushna*	*Katu*	*Tridoshahara, Vata-Kaphahara*
Mocharasa (Salmali)	*Madhura, Kashaya*	*Laghu, Snigdha, Picchila*	*Seetha*	*Madhura*	*Pitta-Vatahara*
Mrtkapala	-	-	-	-	-
Lodhra	*Kasaya,thiktha*	*Laghu, Rukhsa*	*Seetha*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pittahara*
Gairika	*Madhura, Kashaya*	*Snigdha, Vishada*	*Seetha*	*Madhura*	*Pittahara*
Priyangu	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Ruksha, Guru*	*Seetha*	*Katu*	*Pitta-Vatahara*

Sarkara	*Madhura*	*Guru, Snigdha*	*Seetha*	*Madhura*	*Vata-Pitta-Raktahara*
Laja	*Madhura*	*Laghu, Ruksha*	*Seetha*	*Madhura*	*Pitta-Kaphahara*

Table 4: Pharmacological actions of each ingredient of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*

Drug	Chemical constituents	Pharmacological action
Madhu (honey)[12]	Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), calcium, iron, zinc, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, selenium, chromium, and manganese	Antibacterial and antioxidant activity
Madhuka (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.)[13]	Glycyrrhizin, glycyrrhetic acid, isoliquiritin, isoflavones	Antibacterial, antithrombotic, hepatoprotective, and anticonvulsant activities
Rudhira (*Crocus sativus* Linn.)[14]	Crocins, safranal, picrocrocin, keto-isophorone, isophorone, glycosidic terpenoids, and crocetin	Cardiotonic, cardioprotective, anti-atherosclerotic, and antihypertensive activities
Mocharasa (*Bombax ceiba* Linn.)[15]	Flavonoids, tannins, saponins, glycosides, and phenolic compounds	Demulcent, styptic, and antibacterial activities
Mrtkapala[16]	—	Haemostatic activity (Rakta Stambhana)
Lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa* Roxb.)[17]	Alkaloids (loturine and colloturine), flavonoids, tannins, saponins, triterpenes, and phytosterols	Haemostatic, anti-inflammatory, styptic, and stomachic activities
Gairika (red ochre / haematite)[18]	Iron oxide (Fe_2O_3)	Haemostatic and wound-healing activity
Priyangu (*Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl)[19]	Flavonoids, tannins, alkaloids, terpenoids, phenolic compounds, caliterpenone, monoacetate, and β-sitosterol	Styptic, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, digestive, and depurative activities
Sarkara (*Saccharum officinarum* Linn.)[20]	Sucrose, glucose, fructose, amino acids, and phenolic compounds	Demulcent, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, laxative, and antioxidant activities
Laja (*Oryza sativa* Linn.)[21]	Oryzenin, arginine, histidine, lysine, tryptophan, phenylalanine, methionine, and leucine	Antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antidiabetic, antimicrobial, and anticancer activities

DISCUSSION

Rakta is considered an essential *Dhatu* responsible for the nourishment and sustenance of the body. In Ayurveda, the normal state of *Rakta* is indispensable for maintaining *Varna* (complexion), *Bala* (strength), and proper functioning of various bodily systems. Vitiation or depletion of *Rakta* may result in a wide range of pathological manifestations, including *Raktapitta*, excessive bleeding, inflammatory conditions, and other disorders involving *Rakta Dushti*. Therefore, maintenance of the normal quantity and quality of *Rakta* is an important therapeutic objective in Ayurvedic practice.

Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya, described by Acharya Charaka among the fifty *Mahakashayas*, represents a unique group of ten drugs primarily indicated for establishing and maintaining the normal state of *Rakta*. The term *Sonithasthapana* has been interpreted in different ways by Ayurvedic commentators. Chakrapani interprets the term in the context of restoring vitiated *Rakta* to its normal state, whereas Dalhana emphasizes its role in *Rakta Stambhana* or arresting excessive bleeding. Indu interprets *Rudhira Samsthapana* as contributing to the increase and stability of *Rakta*. Thus, the concept of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* can be understood as a multidimensional therapeutic approach encompassing *Rakta Prasadana* (purification and normalization of *Rakta), Rakta Stambhana* (haemostasis), and *Rakta Vardhana* (restoration and replenishment of *Rakta*).

The pharmacodynamic analysis of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* reveals the predominance of *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* among its constituent drugs. *Madhura Rasa*, predominantly observed in *Madhu, Madhuka, Sarkara*, and *Laja*, possesses *Pitta-Shamaka* and nourishing properties, thereby contributing to the maintenance and restoration of *Rakta. Madhura Rasa* also supports tissue nourishment and may be particularly beneficial in conditions associated with *Rakta Kshaya* or depletion of blood. The presence of *Madhura Vipaka* in

several ingredients further contributes to *Pitta Shamana* and promotes the restoration of physiological equilibrium.

Kashaya Rasa constitutes another important pharmacodynamic feature of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*. Drugs such as *Lodhra, Priyangu, Mocharasa,* and *Gairika* possess *Kashaya* predominance and are traditionally associated with *Stambhana* and *Grahi* actions. *Kashaya Rasa* produces *Sangrahi* and *Stambhana* effects, which are therapeutically significant in conditions involving excessive bleeding. Therefore, the predominance of *Kashaya Rasa* among several constituents provides a rational basis for the *Rakta Stambhana* action of the *Mahakashaya*.

The majority of the ingredients possess *Sheeta Virya*, which plays an important role in *Pitta Shamana* and *Rakta Prasadana*. Since *Rakta* and *Pitta* possess an *Ashraya-Ashrayi* relationship, aggravation of *Pitta* may significantly influence the quality and function of *Rakta*. The *Sheeta Virya* of *Madhuka, Mocharasa*, *Lodhra, Priyangu, Sarkara*, and *Laja* may help pacify aggravated *Pitta* and thereby contribute to the stabilization of vitiated *Rakta*. This property is particularly relevant in disorders characterized by *Ushna, Daha*, inflammation, and bleeding tendencies.

Madhu, one of the important constituents of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*, possesses *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa* along with *Lekhana* and *Ropana* properties. Its antimicrobial and antioxidant activities may support tissue repair and protection against oxidative damage. *Madhuka*, owing to its *Madhura Rasa* and *Sheeta Virya*, contributes to *Pitta Shamana* and tissue nourishment. The presence of anti-inflammatory and protective pharmacological activities further supports its potential role in maintaining the normal state of *Rakta* and associated tissues.

Mocharasa, Lodhra, Priyangu, and *Gairika* are particularly significant in relation to *Rakta Stambhana*. *Mocharasa* is traditionally known for its styptic properties, while *Lodhra* possesses *Kashaya Rasa* and is extensively used in conditions associated with excessive bleeding. *Priyangu* also exhibits *Kashaya* and *Sheeta* properties, supporting *Pitta Shamana* and *Stambhana* actions. *Gairika*, a mineral drug containing iron compounds, is recognized for its haemostatic potential. The combined presence of these drugs suggests a synergistic action in controlling excessive bleeding and restoring physiological stability.

Mrtkapala represents a distinctive constituent of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*. Unlike the herbal ingredients, it is of mineral origin and is traditionally included for its *Stambhana* action. Its inclusion indicates the comprehensive therapeutic approach adopted in Ayurveda, where drugs of herbal, animal, and mineral origin may be combined based on their specific pharmacological properties to achieve a desired therapeutic effect.

Sarkara and *Laja* predominantly possess *Madhura Rasa* and *Sheeta Virya*. These properties are beneficial in pacifying *Pitta* and alleviating conditions associated with heat and burning sensations. Their nourishing and cooling nature may also contribute to the restoration of strength and physiological stability following *Rakta Kshaya*. Thus, these ingredients complement the *Stambhana* action of *Kashaya* predominant drugs by providing *Pitta Shamana* and *Brimhana* effects.

From the perspective of *Rasapanchaka, Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* demonstrates a rational combination of *Madhura, Kashaya*, and *Tikta Rasa* with predominantly *Sheeta Virya. Madhura Rasa* provides nourishment and supports *Rakta Vardhana, Kashaya Rasa* contributes to *Sangrahi* and *Stambhana* actions, while *Tikta Rasa* assists in *Pitta-Kapha Shamana* and *Rakta Prasadana*. The predominance of *Sheeta Virya* further counteracts the *Ushna* and *Tikshna* qualities associated with aggravated *Pitta* and vitiated *Rakta*. Therefore, pharmacodynamic profile of the *Mahakashaya* supports its multidimensional role in maintaining *Rakta* homeostasis.

The therapeutic actions of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* may not be considered exclusively as a collective property, as its individual constituents possess distinct pharmacodynamic attributes and contribute differently to its overall therapeutic profile. The three major interpretations of *Sonithasthapana*, namely *Rakta Prasadana, Rakta Stambhana*, and *Rakta Vardhana*, are therefore not necessarily applicable to every constituent drug to an equal extent. Drugs such as *Mocharasa, Lodhra, Priyangu, Gairika*, and *Mrtkapala* are predominantly associated with *Rakta Stambhana*, owing to their *Kashaya Rasa, Grahi* or *Stambhana* properties. In contrast, *Madhuka, Sarkara*, and *Laja*, with their *Madhura Rasa, Sheeta Virya*, and nourishing properties, may contribute more prominently to *Pitta Shamana*, nourishment, and restoration of *Rakta*. The presence of *Madhura*, *Kashaya*, and *Tikta Rasa* among different constituents further indicates their differential contributions to *Rakta Vardhana, Rakta Stambhana*, and *Rakta Prasadana*, respectively. Thus, the multidimensional therapeutic action of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* may be understood as the complementary contribution of individual drugs rather than as an identical action of all ten constituents. The combination of *Kashaya* predominant haemostatic drugs with *Madhura* and *Sheeta* drugs provides a balanced therapeutic approach involving control of excessive bleeding, pacification of vitiated *Pitta*, protection of tissues, and restoration of *Rakta*.

From a modern biomedical perspective, haemostasis is a complex physiological process involving vascular constriction, platelet aggregation, coagulation mechanisms, and subsequent tissue repair. Excessive bleeding may occur due to disturbances in any of these mechanisms. Several ingredients of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* possess pharmacological activities such as haemostatic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, and wound-healing effects. These activities provide a possible scientific basis for understanding the traditional concept of *Rakta Stambhana*.

Inflammation and oxidative stress are also closely associated with vascular and tissue damage. The antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities reported in several ingredients, including *Madhu*, *Madhuka, Lodhra, Priyangu*, and *Mocharasa*, may help reduce inflammatory responses and protect tissues from oxidative injury. Their antimicrobial properties may further support wound healing and prevent secondary infections in conditions associated with tissue damage and blood loss.

The presence of *Gairika*, which contains iron compounds, is also noteworthy in the context of *Rakta*-related conditions. Iron is an essential component required for haemoglobin synthesis and erythropoiesis. Although the traditional concept of *Rakta Vardhana* cannot be directly equated with modern haematopoiesis, the inclusion of iron-containing substances provides a possible area for further scientific exploration regarding its role in conditions associated with blood loss and *Rakta Kshaya*.

According to the fundamental principles of Ayurveda, therapeutic combinations can be selected based on the predominance of *Dosha, Dushya*, stage of disease, and strength of the patient. Similarly, the individual drugs of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* may potentially be utilized either independently or in appropriate combinations according to the clinical presentation. However, systematic experimental and clinical studies are required to establish the precise pharmacological mechanisms, safety profile, dosage, and therapeutic efficacy of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* in different *Rakta*-related disorders.

CONCLUSION

Rakta, being an essential *Dhatu* responsible for the maintenance of life, nourishment, complexion, and physiological integrity, plays a crucial role in maintaining overall health. Vitiation or depletion of *Rakta* can lead to various pathological conditions, including excessive bleeding, inflammatory disorders, and manifestations of *Rakta Dushti*. This study provides a critical analysis of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*- a unique therapeutic drug group described among the fifty *Mahakashayas* in the *Shadvirechanshatashritiya Adhyaya* of *Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana*-which remains comparatively underexplored in contemporary Ayurvedic research. By examining its classical interpretations, pharmacodynamic properties, and contemporary pharmacological activities, the present review highlights the multidimensional therapeutic potential of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya* in *Rakta Prasadana*, *Rakta Stambhana*, and *Rakta Vardhana*. The predominance of *Madhura* and *Kashaya Rasa*, along with predominantly *Sheeta Virya*, provides a rational Ayurvedic basis for its *Pitta-Shamana*, haemostatic, and *Rakta*-restorative actions. Furthermore, reported haemostatic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, and wound-healing activities of its constituent drugs support its potential therapeutic relevance in *Rakta*-related disorders. Ultimately, this review serves as a foundational resource for identifying the bioactive constituents and probable mechanisms of action of *Sonithasthapana Mahakashaya*, encouraging further experimental and clinical research and facilitating the evidence-based integration of this classical therapeutic group into contemporary clinical practice.

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