



Review Article

A REVIEW ON *CHITRAKA* WITH ITS MEDICINAL PROPERTIES W.S.R TO ITS *AMA PACHAN* AND *AGNI DEEPANA* ACTION

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ABSTRACT

If we talk about Ayurveda, Science of life, the concept of *Ama* is unique. *Ama* is a Sanskrit word that translates literally to mean things like "unripe" "uncooked" "raw" "immature" or "undigested. Essentially, it is a form of un-metabolized waste that cannot be utilized by the body. To some degree, the formation of small amounts of *Ama* is a normal part of the digestive process, provided it is efficiently removed. But when it is not regularly cleared and eliminated, *Ama* becomes hugely problematic. In fact, *Ama* is said to be the root cause of all disease, and *Amaya*, a Sanskrit word for disease literally means "that which is born out of *Ama*. The connection between *Ama* and the disease process makes perfect sense because the qualities of *Ama* are in direct opposition to those of Agni. Strong Agni is essential to the maintenance of proper health. In other words, when Agni is compromised and when *Ama* accumulates, our health suffers, and the two situations are mutually reinforcing. In Ayurveda, the concept of *Agni*, is of central importance. In fact, the strength of *Agni* in the body is among the most critical factors in determining overall health. By contrast, *Ama* is a toxic, disease causing substance that forms as a result of impaired *Agni*, and that, in turn, destroys *Agni*. In this way, impaired *Agni* and the creation of *Ama* routinely enter into a vicious and self-perpetuating cycle. Unfortunately, the accumulation of *Ama* is extremely detrimental to our health; it can lead to all kinds of imbalances and is a causative factor in any number of diseases. *Ama pachan* and *Agni Deepana* is the best concept to improve all health issues, for this the wonderful drug *Chitraka* is mentioned in our Ayurvedic texts. Here in this article we are going to discuss about *Chitrak* & its medicinal aspect as mentioned in Ayurvedic texts.

KEYWORDS: *Ama*, un-metabolized, *Amaya*, *Agni*.

INTRODUCTION

Chitraka a well recognized and reputed plant to treat number of disease as it has proven effect in *Ama pachan* and *Agni deepana*. The word *Chitrak* gives us a unique resemblance to the leopard as it tears accumulated lumps like.¹ *Chitrak* is one of the powerful digestive and carminative herbs of Ayurveda. It is used in most of Ayurvedic medicines for indigestion. The white variety of *Chitrak*, *Plumbago zeylanica* L, commonly known as lead wort. It is an oldest herb that was used in Ayurveda for several disorders over thousands of years. It grows wild in India and also refined commercially There is no uniformity in literature that states *P. zeylanica* is herb or shrub. It is a perennial bushy shrub but in some of the works it is also defined as herb^{2,3}. While some has given the class of shrub⁴. *P. zeylanica* plant accomplishes a height of about 0.5–2 m. Leaves are dark green in colour with the thickness of 1.5 inch and distance of leave is roughly up to 3 inch. The leaves are alternate, simple, ovate or ovate-lanceolate, elliptical or oblong and they consume hairy margin. The stipules are inattentive and petiole is thin with a tallness of approx. 0-5 mm. The inflorescence is of terminal raceme-type, flowers are white in colour with the stalk measurement of 4 to 12 inch, the diameter of the flower is ½ to ¾ inch, these are existent in bunches or clusters. They are bisexual, regular, pentamerous, pedicellate and pleasant fragrancd. The flowers come

round the year and pollination process is completed with the help of insects. The mucilaginous glands supports the plant to trap the insects on it. White flowered is innate to South Asia. It is dispersed in tropical and subtropical countries of the world. Budding in deciduous woodland, savannahs, scrublands from sea level up to 2000 m altitude^{5, 6}. In India it is sprinkled in central India to West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh to some parts of South India. The plant also enjoys regional names:

Table 1: Showing vernacular names^{7, 8}

Hindi	<i>Chita</i>
Telugu	<i>Chitramulamu</i>
English	Leadwort
Bengali	<i>Chita</i>
Marathi	<i>Chitramula</i>
Gujrati	<i>Chitro</i>
Tamil	<i>Chittiri</i>
Malyalam	<i>Vellakotuveri</i>
Punjabi	<i>Chitra</i>

Synonyms

Table 2: Showing synonyms^{9, 10}

<i>Agnika & Analnama</i>	Due to its fiery hot nature
<i>Dipaka</i>	Due to <i>Ushna veerya</i> it stimulates digestive fire

Jarana	Digests food
Daruna	Due to <i>Tiksna</i> property it is <i>Bhedana</i>
Citraka, Dvipi, Pathina, Vyala	Tears accumulated lumps like leopard
Agni	Denotes its digestive property
Citraka	Signifies tearing action

Botanical description ¹¹⁻¹⁴**Table 3: Showing Botanical description of Chitraka**

Kingdom	Plantae
Subkingdom	Tracheobionta
Super division	Spermatophyte
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Magnoliopsida
Subclass	Caryophyllidae
Order	Plumbaginales
family	plumbaginaceae
Genus	<i>Plumbago</i>
Species	<i>zeylanica</i>

Binomial name : *Plumbago zeylanica* Linn.

Classical Categorization: ¹⁵

Caraka: *Dipaniya mahakashaya*¹⁶, *Sulaprasamana mahakashaya*¹⁷, *Arsoghna mahakashaya*¹⁸, *Lekhaniya mahakashaya*¹⁹

Susuruta: *Pippalyadi gana*²⁰, *Mustadi gana*²¹, *Amlakyadi gana*²², *Varunadi Gana*²³, *Aragvadhadi Gana*²⁴.

Vagbhata: *Pippalyadi gana*²⁵, *Mustadi gana*²⁶, *Varunadi Gana*²⁷, *Aragvadhadi Gana*²⁸.

Sharangdhar nighantu: Acharya Sharangdhar mentioned that those *Dravya* which are used for digestion of unripe food i.e., *Ama rasa* and to initiate the digestive fire termed as *Deepana- Pachan dravya*, example is *Chitraka*²⁹.

Varieties: *Vagbhata* quoted three varieties viz., *Sveta*, *Pita* & *Asita citraka*. Usually we come across the following three varieties: *P. zeylanica* (White); *P. rosea* L. (red) and *P. capensis* (blue)³⁰.

P.V. Sharma described the later two varieties as *P. indica* Linn. and *P. Auriculata* Linn.³¹

In *Raja nighantu* the second variety of *Citraka* i.e., *Rakta citraka* is denoted as *kalah*.³²

Distribution ^{30, 31}

It is a plant that grows all over the year; this plant grows up to the height of 3 to 6 feet & sometimes cultivated.

Botanical Description ³³

- Leaves: Its leaves are dark green in colour, ovate in shape, are about 2 to 3 inches in length and are 1 to 1.5 inches wide.
- Flowers: Flowers are white in colour with five petals.
- Root: Its root is light brown in colour from outside and is white from inside.
- Fruit: Capsule, Oblong, Pointed; pericarp thin below, thick and hardened above.

Part Used ^{34, 35}

Root Bark

Dosage ³⁶

Powder: 0.5 – 2 g.

Decoction: 25-50ml.

Physical Properties³⁷

Ras (Taste) : *Katu* (Bitter)

Guna (Properties) : *Laghu* (light), *Tikshan* (Which penetrates very fast).

Viraya (Action) : *Ushna* (Hotness)

Vipaka (Post digestive effect) : *Katu* (Bitter)

Dosha : It pacifies *Kapha* (Cough), and *Vata* (Vayu) predominately, but it also acts as a *Tridosh Ghan*, that is the one which helps in maintain all the basic constituents of our body.

Major Chemical Constituents³³

1. Plumbagin
2. 3 - Chloroplumbagin
3. Plumbagic Acid
4. Isozeylinone
5. Glucose
6. Fructose
7. Aspartic Acid
8. Hydroxyprolin

About Ama dosha and Agni ³⁸

Ama is fairly easy to clear from the digestive tract, but once it spreads into the deeper tissues, it becomes much more difficult to eliminate. As *Ama* accumulates in the body, it inevitably clogs the channels of the body (*Srotamsi*) and disrupts tissue nutrition. This alone is problematic, but *Ama* can disturb physiological processes at the cellular level as well. When *Ama* finds its way into the deeper tissues, it coats and clogs individual cell membranes inhibiting cellular communication and weakening the immune response. This eventually leads to a loss of intelligence at the cellular level, which can cause much more serious diseases such as autoimmune disorders, or cancer.

Signs & Symptoms of Ama

Generalized signs and symptoms of *Ama* in the body include:

- Clogging of the channels (may cause symptoms like sinus congestion, lymph congestion, constipation, fibrocystic changes, etc.)
- Fatigue
- Heaviness
- Abnormal flow of *Vata* (there are many ways this can manifest in the body, but examples include excess upward moving energy causing heartburn or excess downward moving energy causing diarrhoea)
- Indigestion
- Stagnation
- Abnormal taste, muted taste, or poor appetite
- Sexual debility
- Mental confusion
- Feeling unclean

Depending on where *Ama* is in the body, it can cause more specific signs and symptoms such as a thick coating on the tongue, all kinds of congestion, loss of strength, dull eyes, skin blemishes, fevers, excess weight, poor circulation, oedema and swelling, stiffness or inhibited movement, soreness at the roots of the hair, or generalized aches and pains. In the digestive tract, *Ama*

tends to cause changes taste perception, loss of appetite, indigestion, malabsorption, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, bloating, gas, constipation, diarrhea, sticky stools, or itching at the anus. *Ama* is also often responsible for foul smelling breath, mucus, urine, and stools. Mentally and emotionally, *Ama* leads to a distinct lack of energy and enthusiasm, low self esteem, anxiety, worry, depression, fear of the unknown, a foggy mind, and unclear thinking.

Modern diseases that are a direct result of *Ama* accumulation include:

Atherosclerosis	Candida albicans overgrowths
Elevated blood sugar	Blood urea
Late-onset diabetes	Gout
Some types of depression	Gall stones
Rheumatoid factor	Kidney stones
Elevated Immunoglobulin E	Increased liver enzymes
Helicopylori bacteria	Glaucoma
Leukocytosis	Fevers
Excess red blood cell count	Bacterial infections
Excess platelet count	Tumors

Causes of *Ama*

There are any number of reasons that *Ama* can begin to accumulate in the body, but impaired *Agni* is always a piece of the puzzle. And because *Ama* itself disturbs *Agni*, it can sometimes be difficult to tease out which came first. In reality, it doesn't matter. Habits that disrupt *Agni* can often be implicated in the formation of *Ama*. Likewise, habits that contribute to the formation of *Ama* will disturb *Agni*. Here are some examples of such habits:

- A poor diet, which might involve
- Overeating or emotional eating
- Improper food combinations
- Especially heavy food
- Fried food
- Excess amounts of cold or raw foods
- Highly processed or sugary foods
- An excess of the sweet, sour, or salty tastes

A detrimental lifestyle (e.g. high stress, excess or inadequate sleep, lack of routine, excessive or inadequate exercise, etc.).

1. Irregular eating habits
2. Sleeping or eating before food is digested
3. Sleeping during the day (for some constitutions)
4. Lack of exercise
5. Repressed or unresolved emotions

The qualities of *Agni* and *Ama* illustrate their perfect opposition to one another.

<i>Agni</i> is	<i>Ama</i> is
Hot	Cold
Sharp	Dull
Light	Heavy
Dry	Oily, Viscous, and Wet
Subtle	Gross
Clear	Sticky, Slimy
Spreading	Stable, Stagnant
Fragrant	Foul Smelling

In Ayurveda, removing the cause of an imbalance is always one of the first steps in the line of treatment. Herbal support is often indicated when the *Agni* is strong enough to produce an appetite, but not strong enough to completely digest the food, resulting in the formation of *ama*.⁴ The bitter and astringent tastes are a powerful combination because the bitter taste dries and drains *Ama*, while the pungent taste destroys and digests it. This is a common flavor combination in herbs and formulas widely used to digest *Ama*.

Ayurveda reveres a surprising number of herbs for their ability to digest and eliminate *Ama*. *Citraka* is one among them to digest *Ama* and stimulate digestive fire.

Therapeutic potential³⁹

1. *Grahaniroga*

- a) *Chitrakadya gudika*⁴⁰
- b) *Citraka ghrta*⁴¹

2. Piles

- a) Paste of *Citraka* mixed with *Sunthi* and sour gruel is applied to haemorrhoids.⁴²
- b) Bark of *Citraka* is pasted with in a jar. Curd or buttermilk prepared in the same, on intake, destroys piles.⁴³
- c) One who takes root of *Citraka* or *Musali* or *Krsna cirabilva* pounded with cow's urine, does not suffer from piles.

3. Diarrhoea

After taking *Pippali* with honey, *Citraka* with buttermilk or only tender fruits of *Bilva* one is freed from diarrhoea.⁴⁴

4. *Udararoga*

*Citrakaghrta*⁴⁵

5. Oedema

- a) *Citrakaghrta*⁴⁶
- b) Regular local application of the warm paste of *Citraka* and *Devadaru* or *Sarsapa* and *Sigru* pounded with urine is useful.

6. Cough

*Citrakadi leha*⁴⁷

7. Hoarseness of voice

Goat's ghee processed with *Yavaksara* and *Ajamoda* or *Citraka* and *Amalaka* or *Devadaru* and *Citraka* mixed with honey is beneficial.⁴⁸

8. *Prameha*

Decoction of *Citraka* is useful in *sukrameha*.⁴⁹

9. Wind in stomach

*Saddharana Yoga*⁵⁰

10. *As Rasayana*

Citraka rasayana.⁵¹

11. *Kustha*

Kustha is alleviated by taking *Haridra* 40 gm with urine for a month. In similar way, *Citraka* finely powdered or *Pippali* should be taken with urine.⁵²

12. *Vitiligo*

Cow's urine mixed with *Citraka*, *Trikatu* and honey should be kept in a jar of ghee for a fortnight. The patient should thereafter take it.⁵³

13. *Aneamia*

One suffering from *aneamia*, should take roots of *Bala* and *Citraka* 10 gm with warm water or seeds of *Sigru* mixed with equal salt keeping on milk diet.⁵⁴

14. Filaria

Application of *Citraka* or *Devadaru* as paste is useful.⁵⁵

15. Abscess

Cirabilva, *Bhallataka*, *Danti*, *Citraka*, *Karavira* and excrete of pigeon, heron and vulture act as tearing agents for abscess.⁵⁶

16. Obesity

Intake of *Citraka* root with honey keeping on wholesome diet is useful.

CONCLUSION

This review clearly shows the importance of *Citraka* as a useful medicinal plants. *Citraka* is used from the ancient times as an important herb to treat number of disease due to its *Ama pachan* and *Agni deepana* properties mentioned by Acharya Sharangdhar. This review encapsulates about the morphology of the plant along with its chemical composition, propagation, therapeutic use. It includes a short review on *Ama dosha* and Agni, as they play a important role in maintaining the equilibrium of the body and *Citraka* is best among *Ama Pachan* & *Agni deepana* actions.

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