



Review Article

A REVIEW ON PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION OF *GANDHAKA RASAYANA* - AN AYURVEDIC HERBO-MINERAL FORMULATION WITH MULTIFACETED ACTION

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ABSTRACT

As per ancient Ayurvedic scholars for getting a desirable outcome of any medication, it should be precisely analysed before prescribing to the patient. There are numbers of classical formulations successfully practiced by Ayurvedic physicians for treating various ailments but in maximum cases there is lack of data regarding their details mechanism of action. Such one multidrug classical formulation is *Gandhaka rasayana* which is widely practiced Ayurvedic formulation. *Gandhaka rasayana* have been used in Ayurvedic *Rasashastra* to treat various types of diseases related to *Tvak, Mandhagni*, various *Srotas*. It is a time tested formulation used by Ayurvedic practitioners for correcting *Kushta, Indralupta, Vatarakta, Palitya, Dushta vrana, Arumsika* etc. Modern scientific world needs explanation and logic behind the mode of action of *Gandhaka rasayana* with respective to each particular disease. This review is an attempt to explain multiple mode of action of *Gandhaka rasayana* in various diseases on analysing properties of ingredients. Analysis of mode of action gives deep insight about use of formulation with a better understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Gandhaka rasayana is a *Kharaliya rasayana* and common herbo-mineral preparation prepared by *Shuddha gandhaka* (Sulphur) *Bhavana* done with 12 herbal drugs in a serial manner for eight times each. *Gandhaka Rasayana* stands apart as a remedy which is extensively used in skin diseases. Other than its role as a *Rasayana* (rejuvenating) drug, it is widely used in broad spectrum to treat various clinical conditions such as *Kushta, Vatarakta, Prameha, Dushtavrana, Grahani, Indralupta, Kshudra roga* etc. *Gandhaka rasayana* consists of *Shudha gandhaka* (purified sulphur) which is levigated with *Godugdha* (cow's milk), *Chaturjata, Triphala, Guduchi, Shunti, Bringaraja* and *Ardraka* (ginger) respectively for 8 times each. The *Bhavana* (levigation) process which is a *Samskara*

augments the properties of *Gandhaka*, the phytoconstituents and trace elements incorporated from the *Bhavana dravyas* widens the therapeutic index of *Gandhaka rasayana*.^[1]

Different formulations of *Gandhaka rasayana* preparations in various texts are mentioned under the same nomenclature. Although *Gandhaka rasayana* has not been mentioned in *Bruhatrayee* but external use of *Gandhaka* as *Lepa* or *Avachurnana* along with other *Kushtaghna dravyas* have been mentioned in *Kushta chikitsa*. Acharya Charaka in *Kushta chikitsa* describes use of *Gandhaka choorna* with *Amalaka swarasa* or *Jati swarasa*, which can ward of 17 types of *Kushta* which is best *Kushtaghna yoga*.^[2]

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Table 1: Showing various references of Gandhaka rasayana

S.no	Textual reference	Rogadhikara	Various Dravyas used for Bhavana as per text
1	<i>Bruhat nighantu ratnakara, Vaidya</i> ^[3]	<i>Shoola</i>	<i>Triphala, Gandhaka choorna and Loha Bhasma</i> are mixed. No <i>Bhavana</i> is done
2	<i>Ayurveda prakasha</i> , ^[4] <i>Bruhat Nighantu ratnakara (Vatavyadi), Bruhath yog taragni and yogaratnakara (Rasayana) Vai.Ra (Vajikaran)</i>	<i>Vatavyadhi, Vajikarana rasayana</i>	<i>Godugdha, Chaturjataka, Guduchi, Triphala, Shunti, Bhrungaraj, Ardraka.</i> The same ingredients are used in all texts. Eight <i>Bhavanas</i> of each <i>Dravya</i> are given to <i>Shoditha gandhaka</i>
3	<i>Brihatyog tarangani</i> ^[5]	-	<i>Ajaksheera, Ikshu swarasa, Guduchi swarasa, Madhu, Gokshura, Varahikhanda, Yastimadhu, Kushta, Bhrungaraj, Tulasi bhavana. Bhavana</i> is give 10 days each. <i>Choorna</i> such as <i>Pippali, Pippalimoola, Lavanga, Nagakesar, Triphala, Kamalabheeja</i> are added
4	<i>Vangasena</i> ^[6]	<i>Rasayana</i>	<i>Krushnabhrak and Maricha</i> are added and then the mixture is mixed with <i>Tila taila</i> this paste is applied on a cloth which is lit and the resulting liquid is collected in the bottle
5	<i>Vangasen</i> ^[7]	<i>Rasayana</i>	<i>Shuddha gandaka</i> mixed with <i>Tikshna loha</i> and <i>Ghruta kumari bhavana</i> for 21 days by <i>Suryapak vidhi</i>

Table 2: Showing Rasapanchaka of Ingredients used in Gandhaka Rasayana

S.no	Ingredient	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshagnata	Karya
1	<i>Gandhaka</i> ^[8]	<i>Madhura (R.R.S) Katu, Tikta (A.P)</i>		<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	-	<i>Amanashaka, Vishahara, Krumighna, Shodaka, Janthujith</i>
2	<i>Sarkara</i> ^[9]	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatapittaghna</i>	<i>Dahanashaka</i>
	<i>Bhavana</i>						
1	<i>Godugdha</i> ^[10]	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Snigdha, Guru</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatapittaghna</i>	<i>Ojovardhaka</i>
2	<i>Dalchini</i> ^[11]	<i>Katu, Tikta, Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Teekshna</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavataghna</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana, Vataanolomana</i>
3	<i>Ela</i> ^[12]	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Tridoshagna</i>	<i>Rochaka, Deepana</i>
4	<i>Tvakpatra</i> ^[13]	<i>Katu, Tikta, Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Teekshna</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavataghna</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana, Vatanulomana</i>
5	<i>Nagakesar</i> ^[14]	<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphapittaghna</i>	<i>Vishaghna</i>
6	<i>Guduchi</i> ^[15]	<i>Tikta, Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Tridosha shamaka</i>	<i>Rasayana, Dahaghna</i>
7	<i>Haritaki</i> ^[16]	<i>Kashaya pradana</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Tridoshagna</i>	<i>Deepana, Pachana, Anulomana</i>

8	<i>Vibhitakai</i> ^[17]	<i>Kashaya, Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Kaphavataghna</i>	<i>Bhedana, Keshya, Chakshushya</i>
9	<i>Amalaki</i> ^[18]	<i>Amla Pradhana</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Tridoshaghna</i>	<i>Rochaka, Sara, Chakshushya</i>
10	<i>Shunti</i> ^[19]	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu, Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatakaphagna</i>	<i>Grahi, Vrushya</i>
11	<i>Ardraka</i> ^[20]	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu, Snigdha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vatakaphagna</i>	<i>Deepana, Amapachana, Vrushya</i>
12	<i>Bhrungaraj</i> ^[21]	<i>Tikta, Katu</i>	<i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavataghna</i>	<i>Vishaghna, Rasayana, Balya, Chakshushya</i>

Fig - 1 and 2 representing *Rasapanchaka* of overall drugs and their composition

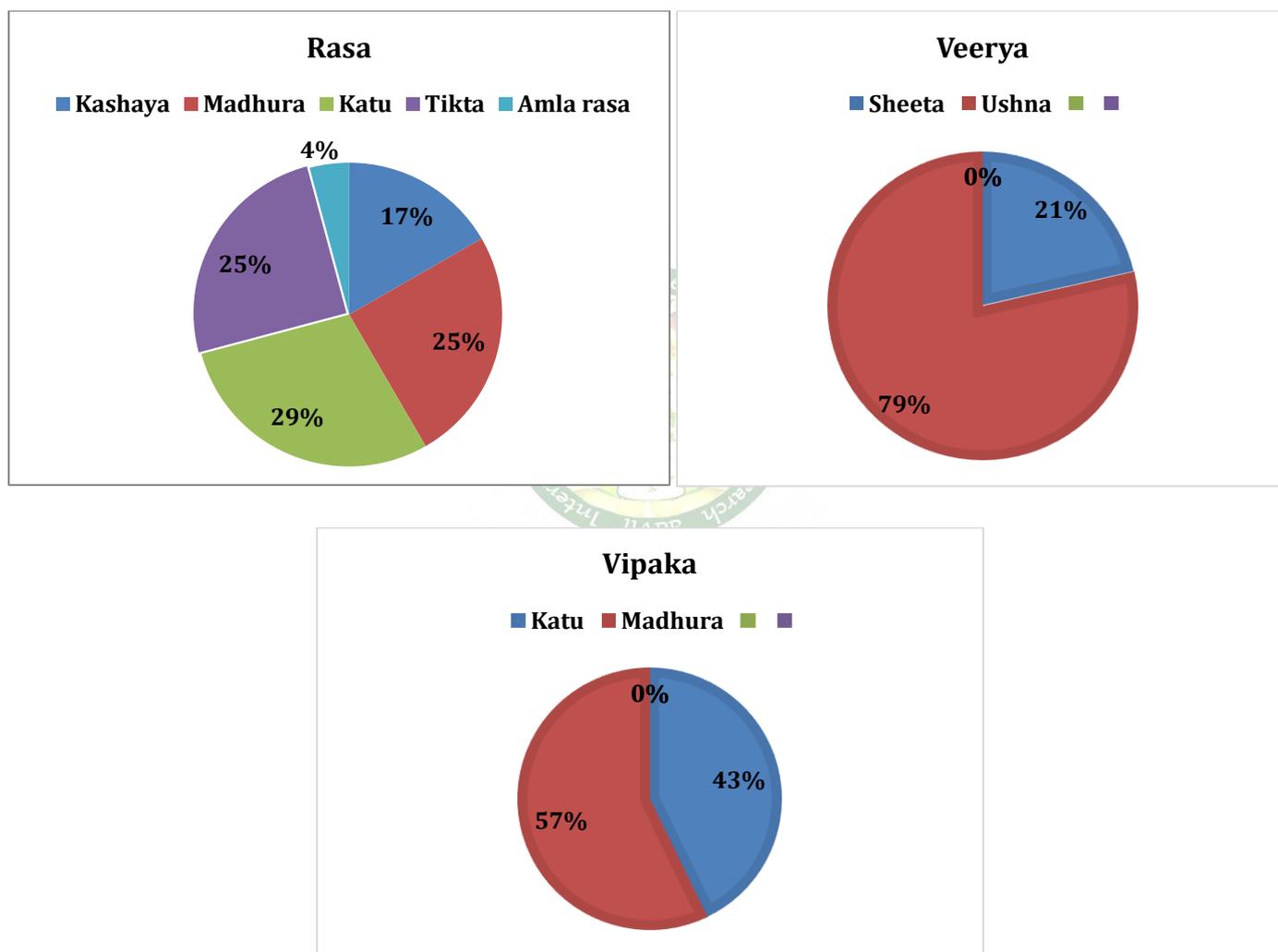


Fig - 1

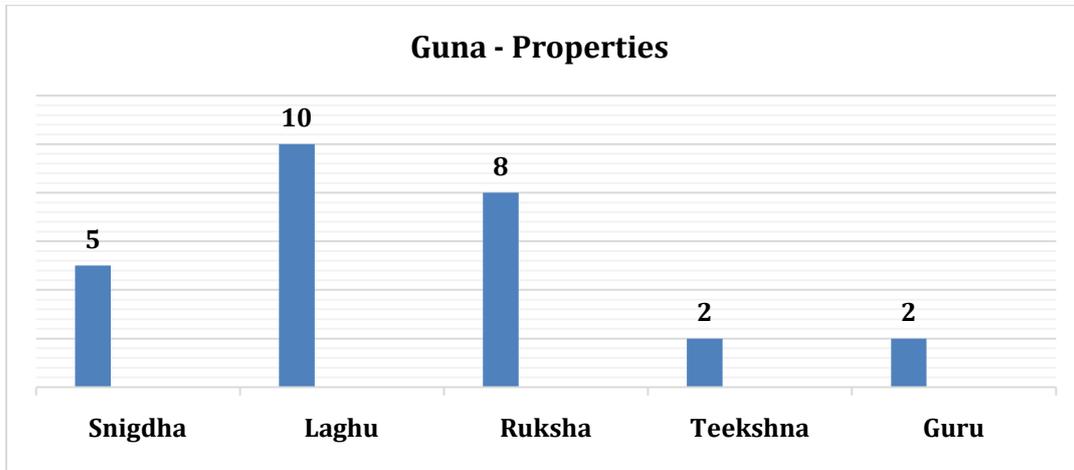


Fig - 2

Among the 14 ingredients 5 drugs possess *Snigdha guna*, 10 drugs possess *Laghu guna*, 8 drugs possess *Ruksha guna*, 2 drugs possess *Teekshna guna*, 2 drugs possess *Guru guna*.

Analysis of Rasapanchaka: After reviewing the table of contents, it is possible to make some inference about the *Kalpa*.

Rasa - Katu, Kashaya rasa pradhana

Guna - Laghu, Aruksha (neither too *Ruksha* nor too *Snigdha*)

Veerya - Ushna

Vipaka - Madhura

Doshagnata - Tridoshaghna

Rogamarga - Specifically effective on Bahya marga.

Dhatu mala - Rasa, Rakta, Meda, Mamsa, Lasika, Mala, Pitta

Phalashruti of Gandhaka rasayana: Intake of *Gandhaka rasayana* in one *Karsha matra* increases *veerya* (potency). Nourishes and strengthens the body and gastric fire (*Jataragni*). When consumed for two months, it destroys *Kushta*, *Kandu* and severe *Visha dosha*. It helps to cure *Atisara*, *Raktasrava* along with *Grahanishoola*. *Gandhaka rasayana* is *Santatidayak* and imparts black colour to the hair for this purpose it is to be consumed for six months.^[22]

Gandhaka rasayana helps to cure all ailments, helps to cure those on death and imparts long life. When consumed by mixing *Parada Bhasma* (*Rasasindoor*) and *Swarna Bhasma* it imparts luster, radiance and beauty similar that of a deity.^[23] Enhances *Veerya*, strengthens body as well as *Agni*, useful in 80 types of *Vatavyadhi*, *Kushta*, *Prameha*, *Dusta udar rog*, *Sannipata* as well as *Doshaja jwara*, *Rajayakshma*, *Prameha*, *Pandu*, *Kshaya*, *Shwasa* and *Arshas* are rapidly relieved by this *Rasayana kalpa*. *Gandhaka rasayana* is a *Veeryavruddhikara kalpa*, it helps in enhancing *Sarvadehika sukra* it makes the body strong and gives *Rasayana* effect too. Some *Vaidyas* believes that as *Sthanika shukra* works for procreation, *Sarvadehika shukra* works for producing

new cells and imparting them energy. *Gandhaka rasayana* by acting on *Sarvadehika shukra* produces excellent healthy cells which also helps in wound healing (*Vrana ropana*).^[24] According to *Rasatarangini bhavita gandhaka* along with *Sita* (sugar) taken in a dose of one *Masha Pramana* for one month will cure *Prameha*, *Kushtaroga*, *Dhatukshayajanya koshtaroga*, *Sula*.^[25]

Probable mode of action of Gandhaka rasayana in various diseases

Kushta: It is widely used in treating skin disease. *Kushta* is usually *Tridoshaja* and difficult to treat it becomes chronic its *Sthana samshraya* (movement of *Doshas*) depends on later *Dhatu*s as in *Jeerna jwara*. In order to do *Sampraptibhagna sharira sodhana* is repeated many times. In *Samanya samprapti* of *Kushta* there is *Prakopa* of *Tridosharasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, and *Lasika*.^[26] The properties of *Suddha gandhaka* are it hampers the ill effects of *Hridroga*, *Kushta*, *Jatra*, *Mrithu*, increase *Agni* and is *Veeryavrudhi*.^[27] Through perspective of *Kushta nidana* and *Samprapti*, *Shoditha gandhaka* is *Agnideepaka*, *Amapachaka*, *Amanashaka*, *Vishahara*, *Soshaka*, *Kruminashaka*. All properties essential to treat *Kushta* are present in *Shuddha gandhaka*. These properties are further augmented by other ingredients of *Gandhaka rasayana*.^[28] *Gandhaka rasayana* relieves discolouration of skin, helps to re-establish natural colour, alleviates *Dooshita kapha* and *Visha*.^[29] Along with *Chaturjataka* other *Kushtaghna* and *Vishaghna Dravya* is *Bhrungraj*. *Nagakeshar* and *Dalchini* both have *Laghu* and *Ruksha guna* helps to do *Pachana* of *Raktagna sosha*. *Nagarakesar* is best *Vishaghna Dravya*. *Dalchini* is *Kandughna*, *Kushtaghna* and act as *Varnya*. *Bhrungraj* has *Rasayana* action along with *Vishagna*, *Krumighna* properties.

By acting on the *Rasa* and *Rakta dhatwagni* it does *Pachana* of *Ama* and *Sodhana* of vitiated *Lasika* etc. It is much useful in *Pitta Pradhana kushta* like *Pama*, *Dadru*, *Charmadal*, *Shataru*, which have reddish discolouration, *Daha*, *Pooyayukta pitika*, *Pooyasrava* etc as prime symptoms especially when *Daha* is

present as a prominent symptom *Gandhaka rasayana* helps to pacify *Daha*. In spite of having *Ushnaveerya* due to its *Madhura vipaka* and presence of *Dahaghna dravyas* like *Amalaka*, *Guduchi*, it acts as *Dahanashak*. *Gandhaka rasayana* not only helps to break *Samprapti* of *Kushta* but also strengthens and enhances *Dhatvagni*. It does *Raktaprasadana*. *Dravyas* in *Gandhaka rasayana* primarily have *Ruksha* and *Laghu guna*, *Ruksha guna* reduce *Kleda*, an important factor in *Kushta samprapti*. In chronic stages, long term use of *Gandhaka rasayana* in low doses act as *Rasayana* (rejuvenator) on skin etc and prevents relapse of disease.

Vatarakta: *Prakopa* of *Vata dosha* and *Rakta dhatu dushti* happens in *Vatarakta* due to *Hetu*. Such vitiated *Vata* when takes shelter of *Dushta rakta* then *Vatarakta* develops use of *Vatashamaka* and *Raktaprasadaka* medicines has to be used in order to treat *Vatarakta*. *Gandhaka rasayana* is an excellent *Raktaprasadaka* pacifies *Pitta* properties such as *Teekshna* etc acts as *Dahagna* and *Vishagna*. Eight *Bhavanas* are given to *Gandhaka* using *Guduchi*, which is *Vyadhipratyanika* in treating *Vatarakta*. It helps to break *Samprapti* of *Vatarakta* by doing *Pachana* of *Dosha* present in the *Rakta*. Being *Rasayana* it provides appropriate nourishment to *Rakta dhatu*. By purifying *Rakta*, it helps to fades off skin discolouration seen in *Uttana vatarakta*.

Mukhadooshika: *Pitika* which develop over face due to *Kapha*, *Vata* and *Rakta dushti*. If a person posses *Pitta prakruti* or there is *Pitta vruddhi* there can be burning sensation or become purulent.^[30] To treat this *Pittashamaka* and *Raktaprasadhana* medicines are adopted. In such cases *Gandhaka rasayana* proves to be much useful along with *Sarivadyasava*, *Chandanasava* etc.

Indralupta and Palitya: *Bhrajaka pitta* in the *Romakupa* gets mixed with aggravated *Vata* which leads to hairfall, *Rakta* and *Kapha* obstructs the *Romakupa* in this region stops new hair growth. Here primarily there is *Raktadushti*, *Gandhaka rasayana* has eight *Bhavanas* with *Bhrungaraja* is considered as a best *Keshya dravya*. *Bhrungaraja* helps *Gandhak rasayan* to work on scalp disorders. According to *Bharatabhaishajya Ratnavali* hair become dark black after three months of regular intake of *Gandhaka rasayana*. Hence it is much useful in *Palitya* which develops due to *Pitta* dominance.

Vatavyadhi: In *Vatavyadhis* which are *Nirupastambhit* or developed due to *Dhatukshayajanya vataprakopa*, *Gandhaka rasayana* can be used as a *Rasayana* along with other *Vataghna* treatments. If there is *Daha*, pain, burning sensation due to *Kshoba* of *Vatavyadhis* use of *Gandhaka rasayana* is beneficial. It is useful in *Ardhita* (facial palsy) and *Pakshagata* (paralysis) as it acts on nervous system and strengthen the *Vatanadis* (nerves).

In neuralgia there is inflammation, burning sensation and severe pain in affected areas *Gandhaka rasyana* is useful along with *Pittashamaka* and *Dahaghna* medicines due to its *Rasayana* (rejuvenatory) effect in such type of *Daha*.

Prameha: *Kapha* which has increased in quantity i.e., *Bahu* and having *Drava guna* is main *Dosha* in *Prameha* (diabetes) due to *Drava guna* there is raise in *Kleda* in body. *Dhatu shaithilya* is an important constituent in *Samprapti* (pathogenesis) of *Prameha*. Due to excess *Kleda* and *Drava* there is raise in frequency of urination. In *Sthula* and *balawan* patients *Sodhana* and *Lekhana* has to be done along with *Kapha* pacifying treatment in such cases *Gandhaka rasayana* does *Rasayana* effect and helps to reduce the *Dhatu shaithilya*. It increases *Dhatubala* (strength of body tissues) by improving the *Dhatvagni*, (digestive fire) it curtails unwanted *Kleda* and does *Pachana* of *Ama kapha*. *Prameha* patients develop *Pitika*, *Vidradhi*, skin diseases etc excessively increased *Kleda* makes it difficult to pacify such complications in such a state *Gandhaka rasayana* proves to be useful by its *Raktaprasadan*, *Kledaghna* and *Jantughna* action. It is useful in diabetic ulcers *Shoditha gandhaka*, *Triphala* present in *Gandhaka rasayana* does *Kledaghna* and *Vrana ropana karma* (wound healing).

Upadamsha and Phiranga: There is *Raktadushti* in these *Jantujanya* diseases. As *Phiranga* advances it does *Sthanasamshraya* in further *Dhatu*, symptoms associated with it affects *Dhatu*s such as *Mamsa*, *Meda* etc start developing in *Samprapti*. In *Upadamsha sotha*, *Daha*, *Paka*, develops in *Medhra* region in such state *Rakta shuddhikara* treatment is essential which is done by ingredients present in *Gandhaka rasayana*.

Atisara, grahani and Arshas: *Agnimandhya* is the root cause of these three diseases. Strength of *Jataragni* is hampered. *Gandhaka rasayana* is useful in chronic stage of *Atisara* and when there are symptoms like *Saama*, *Picchila-mala pravrutti* in *Grahani*.

In *Arshas* there is *Dusti* of *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa dhatu* as well as *Shaithilya* of anal sphincters. When *pitta* is involves there is burning sensation and swelling in the perianal area. *Gandhaka rasayana* does purification of *Rakta dhatu* along with its *Agnideepan* and *Amapachan* activity. It does *Pachan* of *Dushta sama kapha* and helps to reduce its *Picchila* nature. Helps to heal ulcers developed in intestines. It helps in *Arshas* by doing *Raktaprasadan* and curing *Sthanika mamsa dhatu shaithilya*. *Nagakesar* present in it does *Raktapachana* and *Stambhan*, thus helps to treat *Sravi arshas*.

Kshudra roga - Arumshika: Develops on root of scalp due to *Kapha*, *Rakta* and *Krumi*, *Kledayukta pitikas* with multiple openings are formed on scalp with symptoms such as *Srava*, *Kandu*, *Dahavrana* etc.^[31] *Gandhaka rasayana* is useful due to *Raktaprasadana* and *Krimighna dravya* like *Triphala*, *Guduchi*, *Dalchini*,

Bhrungraj etc. It has good *Jantughna* action. Being *Kledaghana*, it reduces *Kleda* present in the *Rakta*, aids in wound healing. It is useful with other *Raktashodaka* medicines like *Mahamanjishtadi kashaya*, *Khadirarista* etc.

Dushtavrana/Vrana/Vranashotha: Usually treatment of *Vrana* is done by *Shasti upakrama* with external and internal treatments like *Krimighna*, *Vishagna* treatment is given. *Gandhaka rasayana* is very useful in chronic *Vrana*, *Dushta vrana*, *Pooyayukta vrana*. *Triphala* in it works as best *Vranaropaka*. Most ingredients are having *Laghu* and *Ruksha guna*, which reduces *Kleda* in the *Vrana*. It improves *Jataragni* (digestive fire).

Gandhaka by itself is *Jatughna* destroys *Sukshma krimi*, *Jantu* etc from the *Vrana*, reduces weakness developed due to *Vrana*. This *Kalpa* acts as best *Kushtaghna*, *Vishagna*, *Rasayana*, *Kledghna*, helps in faster wound healing. Also used in *Nadivranas* with pus and *Dhushita rakta* and in cases of post surgical wound healing in *Arsha*.

Suppurative diseases: *Vranas* become more purulent due to *Pitta prakopa* in infections where there is rise in *Ushna*, *Teekshna guna* of *Pitta*, *Rakta* becomes *Vidahi* which generates pus in the *Vrana*, *Pitika* etc. It is useful in *Pooyadanta*, *Pootinasa*, *Pootikarna*, *Pooyayukta-mutra* etc. *Gandhaka rasayana* in these conditions are useful as it posses *Pittashamaka*, *Raktaprasadana*, *Krumighna* properties. It helps in *Pooyavrukka* by doing *Raktaprasadana* thus reduces *Dhatupaka* and lowering the possibility by functional deterioration of the kidneys.

DISCUSSION

All the properties of *Gandhaka* are augmented by repeated *Bhavana* process using various herbal drugs. The phytochemical constituents along with trace elements enhance the properties of *Gandhaka* and widens its therapeutic application. *Gandhaka* being one of the most important ingredients in the formulation has *Laghu*, *Ruksha guna* helps in reducing the diseases associated with *Kleda*, does *Raktaprasadana* which pacifies *Pitta dushti* and act as *Vishaghna*. Among the other ingredients *Amalaka*, *Guduchi* act as *Dahanashaka*, *Triphala* does *Kledaghna* and *Vranaropaka* action. *Nagakesara* does *Raktapachana* and *Sthambana* which will be useful in diseases associated with *Daha* and *Srava*.

Most of the *Bhavana dravyas* have *Madhura vipaka*, *rasa* usually works on specific organs but *Vipaka* shows effect all over the body. Thus these drugs work on *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. *Vishaghna*, *Kushtaghna* and *Krumighna* activity of *Gandhaka* are augmented by *Nagakesara*, *Bhrungaraja*, *Dalchini*, *Guduchi*. This *Kalpa* act as best *Rasayana*, *Triphala*, *Guduchi*, *Bhrungaraj* helps to enhance the *Rasayana* action of *Gandhaka*. *Gandhaka rasayana* does

Agnideepana, *Pachana* of *Dushta kapha* which reduce the *Kledaghna lakshana* in a disease due to its *Ruksha guna*.

CONCLUSION

Gandhaka rasayana pays a better way in reduction of symptoms in diseases associated with *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta dusti*. *Gandhaka* exhibits excellent *Rasayana* qualities which does regeneration activity in the body and is useful in chronic diseases. Does *Raktaprasadana*, *Kledaghna*, *Krimihara*, *Vishaghna*, *Kushtaghna*, *Amapachana*, *Agnideepana* activity which helps in overall maintenance of health.

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