

Significance of 'Ahiphena' (Papaver) in 'Rasaushodhi' - a review

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Abstract - Ayurvedic medicine is traditional medicine native to Indian subcontinent. The Concept of using *Visha* (poison) therapeutically is mentioned in *Ayurveda*. But it is used in pure form only after its *Shodhan* as mentioned in *Agadtantra*. *Ras-shastra* is one of the branch of *Ayurveda* which deals with pharmaceuticals especially minerals, metals, precious stones, poisons, herbs and their processing. In *Rasatarangini*, there are mentioned *Visha* as well as *Upavisha*. Out of that *Ahiphena* is one of the most important poisonous drug used for Anesthesia during surgery from ancient time in medicinal formulations. *Ahiphena* botanically known as a Papaver somniferum and commonly referred to as opium poppy, holds significant importance in *rasoushadhi* (herbo-mineral formulation in Ayurveda). It is classified as an *Upavisha* (a mildly poisonous substance) and has potent pharmacological properties including analgesics, sedatives, narcotics and anti-inflammatory effects that's are crucial in *Rasoushadhi* preparations.^{[1][2][3][5]}

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: -

1. To review the pharmacological, toxicological and clinical significance of *Ahiphena* in *Rasaushadhi*.^{[3][5]}
2. To document classical Ayurvedic textual references for *Ahiphena* and establish its uses.^{[4][5]}
3. To describe the *shodhan* procedure (Detoxification protocol) of *Ahiphena* required for safe and efficacious use.^{[3][6]}
4. To evaluate and discuss evidence regarding its therapeutic outcomes and risks.^{[1][3][6][7]}

INTRODUCTION: - *Ahiphena* is derived from the latex of Papaver somniferum and contains pharmacologically active alkaloids such as morphine and codeine. Traditionally included as an *Upavisha*, its use is sanctioned only after standardized purification. In detailed *Ayurvedic* pharmacopeia as a potent *Kapha vat shamaka*, with *Rasaushadhi* formulations leveraging its analgesic, sedative, anti-diarrheal, and anti-tussive effect.^{[1][2][3][5]}

Literary Review and Ayurvedic Textual Reference:

- According to Ayurveda, Every *Visha* made up of one of these 10 *Guna* (qualities) which are as follows,

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1) <i>Laghu</i> (Light) | 2) <i>Ruksha</i> (Rough) | 3) <i>Ashu</i> (Quick Acting) | 4) <i>Vishadam</i> (Non-Slimy) | 5) <i>Vyavayi</i> (Quickly absorbed) |
| 6) <i>Tikshnam</i> (sharp) | 7) <i>Vikashi</i> (Depressant) | 8) <i>Shukshmam</i> (Minute) | 9) <i>Ushna</i> (Hot) | 10) <i>Anirdeshya</i> rasa (Undefinable Taste) |

Every *Visha* possesses the *Guna* (qualities) mention as above but depending upon the Drug which possess all 10 Qualities of *visha* is said to be very fetal and deadly poisonous. As explained the drug with above properties is light so need not to be digested, rough, quick acting, non-slimy, quick absorbing, Sharply penetrating, depressing all systems making looseness all over the body, minute so moves fast, hot so need not to be digested, which do not have any specific taste so the drug which is like this is very much likely to be fatal can kill any one as soon entered in body by any mean. So severity of poisonous depends upon how many *guna* (qualities) the drug have.

- The Major *Ayurvedic* compendium Shri *Bhavprakash Nighantu* includes *Ahiphena* under "Haritkyadi Varga", with its use specified for *Vat-Kafa* Disorders, pain and as an Aphrodisiac.^[4]
- *Raj Nighantu* lists it among *Vyavayi Dravyas* (fast Spreading Substances); *Sharangdhara Samhita* Records its preparation and use especially after *shodhana*.^[4]

Rasa Panchaka of Ahiphena (Ayurvedic Properties): -

- ❖ *Rasa* (Taste) – *Tikta* (Bitter) in its latex form, *madhur* (sweet) in *Kashaya* (astringent) in seeds.^[4]
- ❖ *Guna* (Qualities): - *Ruksha* (Dry), *Laghu* (Light), & *Guru* (Heavy). Depending on the part used.^[4]

- ❖ *Virya* (Potancy) – *Ushna* (Hot) in latex, *Sheet* (Cold) in seeds.^[4]
- ❖ *Vipaka* (Post Digestive Effect) – *Katu* (Pungent), or *Madhura* (Sweet)^[4]
- ❖ *Doshaghnata*: - *kapha Vatghnata*, *pittaprapakopam*.^[4]
- ❖ *Karma* (Actions) : - *Grahi* (Anti-diarrheal), *shoshan karma*, *Shotha hara* (Anti-inflammatory), *nidra janana* (Sedative), *kasaghna* (Anti-tussive), *Stambhana vatanuloman* (Carminative), narcotic, etc. 2 *Ahiphena* (*Papaver somniferum*) – IFAA Ayurveda 3. Review on Toxicological aspect of *Ahiphena* (*Papaver*).^[4]
- ❖ Latex form is used in *Rasoushadhi* for its strong analgesic and sedative effects only after shodhan process to use for therapeutic purposes.

Shodhana (purification) of *Ahiphena*: -

Keep *Ahiphena* in a *kharal* and *mardana* (trichurate) it with *bhawana dravya Aardwrak swarasa* 7 times then the *Ahiphena* gets purified. Now this *Ahiphena* now can be used in other combinations as needed^{[3][6]}.

Modern Review:-

Opium contains near about 33 alkaloids. These are divided mainly in two groups.

- 1) Phenanthrines
 - morphine, codeine, thebaine, etc.
 - Analgesic
- 2) Isoquinilones
 - Papaverine and noscapine
 - have more sedative property than analgesic^[11]

Rasa kalpa of *Ahiphena* : -

- 1) *Vednantakrasa* : -
 - *Ahiphena*, *Ajwan*, *rasa sindoor*
 - Use – *Shoolghna* (Analgesic).
- 2) *Nidrodaya rasa*
 - *Ahiphena*, *vanshalochna*, *rasa sindoor*, *awalachoorna*

- *Bhavna by bhangapatra* (3 *bhavna*)
- Use: - *nidra janana*

3) *Sindoorbhushana rasa*

- Contents: - *Ahiphena*, *swarnabhasma*, *karpoor*, *sindoor*, *elichibhee choorna*, *vanshalochna mardana* in *chitrakakwatha*
- Dose 2 ratti bd.

- used in *atisara*.

4) *Harshodaya vati*: -

- Contents: - *ahifen*, *kausturi*, *karpoorasa*, *mire*, *rasasindoor*, *jaypal choorna*, *keshar*, *hingula*
- *Bhavna*: - *bhanga rasa*,
- Use :- *vajikarana*

5) *Ahiphenasava* : -

- Contents: - *Ahiphena*, *mruta sanjivani soora*
- *Matra* : - 5 to 15 drops.
- Used in *Atisara*

6) *Mangaladaya rasa*: -

- Contents: - *Ahiphena*, *karpoor Ghana*
- dose 1 ratti
- used in – *Pralapa*.

7) *Vednantakmalahara*: -

- Contents : - *bhanga*, *Ahiphena*, *sindoor*.
- *Matra*: - 1 ratti.
- Use – *shoolaghna* (Analgesic)

Discussion: -

Ahiphena is significant for its broad spectrum actions:

- In *Rasaoushadhi Ahiphena* is valued for its post purification use because it is a poison. So having properties of poison after purification helps to make a medicine fast acting, deeper penetration even with small dose works miraculous.
- *Ahiphena* has *kafavat shamaka* properties (pacifying *kafa* and *vat dosha*) in *Ayurveda*. It has dry, hot potency (*Ushna Virya*) and pungent post digestive effect (*vipak*), which helps in balancing *doshas* and treating disorders related to pain, inflammation, and

respiratory issue's. It contains pharmacologically active alkaloids such as morphine and codeine working as an analgesic and sedative^{[1][2][3][5]}.

- In *Rasaoushadhi*, it provides analgesics and sedative action, valuable in managing severe pain nurelga, and insomnia, as specified in formulations like *Nidrodaya rasa* And *Vatebhakshari Rasa*^[7]. The Herbs ability to act as an anti-diarrheal diseases (*Atisara*), as a cough suppressant Anti-tussive and for certain types of gastrointestinal distress due to its astringent and antispasmodic qualities^{[2][5]}.
- But its use requires careful processing (*shodhana*) due to their toxic nature but when used properly. *Ahiphena* contributes significantly to the therapeutic out comes in *Rasoushadhi*.

Observations:-

As per Ayurveda and following prescribed purification and dosing regimens

- *Rasoushadhi* containing *Ahiphena* are efficacious in treating pain (especially chronic and severe), neural and musculoskeletal disorders, refractory diarrhea and cough.^{[1][5][6]}
- Classical reviews and recent studies report symptom control in conditions that do not respond to milder medicines, substantiating its traditional claims.^{[1][6][7]}
- Key risks (additional potential, respiratory depression, GI disturbance are reduced but not entirely eliminated post *shodhana*, necessitating expertise in application.^{[3][7]}

Conclusion:-

Ahiphena, though classified as *upavisha*, is a pivotal agent in *Rasoushadhi*, exemplifying *Ayurveda*'s approach of transforming poisons into medicines through skillful use and purification. It remains one of the primary and sedative agents in *Rasaoushadhi* with proven value in Severe or refractory disease, provided it is administered within strict classical and clinical guidelines.^{[1][3][5][6][7]}

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- *Raj Nighantu*: Mentions as *Vyavayi Dravya* and as an ingredient in select *Rasoushadhi* ^{[1][4]}.
- *Sarnagadhara Samhita*: Records its preparation and use, especially after *shodhana*^{[1][4]}.
- *Rasatarangini* and *Rasaprakash Sudhakar* (medieval *Rasashastra*)—for processing and dosage guidance (reference cross-checked with article reviews)^{[3][6]}.

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