

Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya: A group of Rejuvenators

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Abstract

Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya of *Charaka Samhita* is the foremost *Mahakashaya* among fifty *Mahakashaya*. Ten important vegetable drugs are enumerated under this section. It is a well known fact that drugs maintained under *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* have become endangered now a day due to environmental change and unawareness regarding its importance. But *Ayurvedic classic* reflects that these drugs are of great efficacy and potency. However, these drugs treasure various activities but free radical scavenging, antioxidant and rejuvenator properties are well established. Therefore, a comprehensive review of drugs enumerated in *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* is presented in this article which highlights important aspects of *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya*.

Keywords: *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya*, antioxidant.

Introduction

Group based classification of drugs is well reported in *Ayurveda* since *Samhita* period. In original classics of *Ayurveda*, i.e. *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, two separate chapters C.Su.4 and S.Su.38 respectively, are dedicated on the basis of rational grouping.^{1, 2} In *Charaka Samhita*, it is based on the *Karma* (action) of the drugs of entire group. Such fifty *Mahakashaya*, having ten drugs in each are described under each *Mahakashaya*. While in *Sushruta Samhita*, each group named as *gana* is mentioned with its effect on *Dosha* and specific diseases. It is worthy to mention here that the foremost *Mahakashaya* of *Charaka Samhita* begins with *Jeevaneeya* and ends with *Vayahsthapana*, which reflects the fact that the drugs of *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* are useful for longevity of life. *Jeevanam* means life or life span. That which is essential and beneficial for *Jeevana* or Life process is called *Jeevaneeya*. *Charaka* enlists 10 such medicaments which can be used as *Jeevaneeya*. They can be considered for usage either individually or collectively or in permutations and combinations as per the knowledge and recommendation of the physician in charge. The body elements are constantly undergoing wear and tear phenomenon. These medicaments compensate the losses occurring in

the body and replenish the tissues. They also substitute and compensate the energy which is being lost by the body tissues and organs due to continuous functioning. This is like refreshing and re-energizing the system so that the body works with sustained energy and strength. If this loss is not replaced, it may permanently damage the body and also may lead to dangerous consequences leading to death. *Jeevaneeya Dravyas* being very essential in the functioning of the body, in terms of providing energy, sustaining life activities and re-building can be compared to the nutrients. They may be equipped with all the essential ingredients of macro and micro nutrients and in all possibilities, serve the same purpose. *Jeevaneeya Dravyas* are based on their excellence in providing energy and capacity to rebuild structures. On critical observations, it was found that there is use of specific suffix in a group of *Mahakashaya*, which enriches the properties of that particular *Mahakashaya*.

Jeevana + eeya pratyaya = Jeevaneeya

(Life) + (for the benefit)

The *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* signifies
drugs beneficial for life.

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Material and Methods

Comprehensive review of drugs under *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* of *Charaka Samhita* C.Su.4 was done. Each drug mentioned under *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* was reviewed from *Bhavaprakash nighantus*.³ Further, present scientific research work regarding each drug has been gathered. All information was then critically analyzed, discussed and concluded.

Observations:

Aushadha dravya of Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya

Jeevaka, Rhshabhaka, Meda, Mahameda, Kakoli, Ksheerakakoli, Mudgaparni, Mashaparni, Jeevanti and Madhuka.

JEEVAKA

Botanical name: *Malaxis acuminata* D.Don. syn. *Microstylis wallichii* Lindl., syn. *Malaxis wallichii* Deb.

Family: Orchidaceae

A terrestrial herb, up to 25 cm high. Leaves: 3-5, elliptic acuminate, sheathing at base. Flower: deep pink, terminal dense to lax racemes, bracts deflexed. Bulbs of different orchids like *Microstylis muscifera* Ridley, Aliaceae are present in crude drug market by this name.

RHSHABHAKA

Botanical name: *Microstylis muscifera* Ridley

Family: Orchidaceae

Herb, 30–50 cm. Leaves; ovate, lanceolate. Flowers: yellowish green (July–September). *Microstylis wallichii* Lindl., Aliaceae an orchid is being used by this name at present.

Uses: Seminal weakness, burning and emaciation.

MEDA

Botanical name: *Polygonatum verticillatum* L. All. syn. - *Convallaria verticillata* L.; *Evallaria verticillata* Necker

Family: Aliaceae

Botanical description: *Polygonatum verticillatum* is a perennial growing to 0.45-1.2m. Leaves: four to eight in a whorl. Flowers: two to three in a bunch, in the axils of the leaves, greenish-white.

The fruits are red when ripe and remain hanging after the leaves have fallen. The flowers are hermaphrodite.

Phytochemistry: Digitalis glucoside⁴ Steroidal saponin, Ethanol (55%).⁵ At present, *Polygonatum verticillatum* Allioni, Aliaceae and *P.cirrhifolium* Royle. are sold in market as meda.

MAHAMEDA

Botanical name: *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle

Family: Aliaceae

In market, an orchid *Habenaria intermedia* D.Don, Orchidaceae has been sold by this name.

Phytochemistry: Steroidal saponins, lectins, polysaccharides⁶

KAKOLI

Botanical name: *Roscoeia procera* Wall. Syn- *Roscoeia purpurea* *Fritillaria roylei* Hook.f

Family: Zingiberaceae

Botanical description: *Roscoeia procera* is a large plant, forming clumps of thick, fleshy leaves from where fat stems arise topped by one or two purple hooded flowers in summer.

Fritillaria roylei Hook.f

Common name: Himalayan fritillary.

Family: Aliaceae.

Botany: Bulb growing to 0.6m. The flowers are hermaphrodite, Market drug which is being used at present is probably *Roscoeia procera* Wall. (Zingiberaceae). Other orchids reported as being used are- *Fritillaria roylei* Hook.f⁷.

Phytochemistry: Alkaloids: peimine, peiminine, peimisine, peimiphine, peimidine and peimitidine, neutral principle: propeimin and sterol,⁹ sipeimine¹⁰.

KSHEERAKAKOLI

Botanical name: *Lilium polyphyllum* D.Don.

Family: Aliaceae

English name: White lily. Herb: 30–90 cm, Leaves: narrow, lanceolate. Flowers: pendulous, creamish white, speckled pink (June–July). *Roscoeia*

alpinia, Zingiberaceae and some other orchids are being sold in the market by this name.

Uses: Seminal weakness.¹¹

MUDGAPARNI

Botanical name: *Phaseolus trilobus* Ait.

Family: Fabaceae in Kerala *Vigna pilosa* Baker. and two other species of *Vigna* are used.

Properties: Hepatoprotective and antioxidant.¹²

MASHAPARNI

Botanical name: *Teramnus labialis* Spreng.

Family: Fabaceae

Phaseolus sublobatus Roxb. is used in Kerala instead of this. *P. dalzellii* Goens T. Cooke and *P. calcaratus* Roxb. are also in use.

Phytochemistry: Seeds of *T. labialis* yielded a water-soluble galactomannan. Bioassay-guided fractionation of aqueous and alcoholic extract of *T. labialis*, yielded fraxidin as the major active constituent.¹³

Uses: Rheumatism, tuberculosis and nerve disorders.

JEEVANTI

Botanical name: *Leptadenia reticulata* W. & A.

Family: Asclepiadaceae

Botanical Description: Twining climber with yellowish, corky, deeply cracked bark. Leaves:

ovate-lanceolate, base cordate. Flowers: greenish-white, in cymes. Follicle: woody, turgid.

Variety: *Dendrobium macraei* Lindl. is said as 'Swarnajeevantee' which is mostly found in Bengal. DalhaE has also pointed out that some take *Jeevantee* as *Swarnajeevantee*.

MADHUKA

Botanical name: *Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.

Family: Fabaceae

Botanical Description: Perennial herb and undershrub distributed in subtropical and warm temperate regions of the world. Found in Baramulla, Srinagar, Dehradun and Delhi in India. Leaves: multifoliate. Flowers: in axillary spikes, lavender to violet in color. The dried, peeled or unpeeled underground stems and roots constitute the drug known as *Liquorice*. Other varieties are- *G. glabra* var. *typica* Regel & Hard -Spanish liquorice. *G. glabra* var. *Glanduliflora* Waldst & Kit -Russian liquorice. *G. glabra* var. *violaceae* Boiss -Iraq liquorice.

Pratinidhi Dravya of Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya

It is worthy to mention here that most of the drugs enumerated under *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya* are now a day listed under endangered plant. Moreover, it is very difficult for a person to procure their genuine drugs from Himalayan habitat. Therefore the tradition of suitable substitutes had started.

Drugs	Bhavaprakasha Nighantu
<i>Jeevaka</i>	<i>Vidari</i> (<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> DC.)
<i>Rhishabhaka</i>	<i>Vidari</i> (<i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> DC.)
<i>Meda</i>	<i>Shatavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd.)
<i>Mahameda</i>	<i>Shatavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd.)
<i>Kakoli</i>	<i>Ashvagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i> Dunal.)
<i>Ksheerakakoli</i>	<i>Ashvagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i> Dunal.)

Table 1. Pratinidhi Dravya of *Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya*

S. No.	Name	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshakarma
1.	Jeevaka	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
2.	Rhshabhaka	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
3.	Meda	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	P-R-V ↓
4.	Mahameda	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	P-R-V ↓
5.	Kakoli	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
6.	Ksheerakakoli	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
7.	Mudgaparni	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	Tridosha ↓
8.	Mashaparni	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
9.	Jeevanti	Madhura	Laghu, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓
10.	Madhuka	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhura	V-P↓

V=Vata,P=Pitta,K=Kapha,R=Rakta, ↓=Decrease

Table 2. Properties and Actions of the Dravya of Jivaneeya Mahakashaya

Discussion

Ten vegetable drugs are mentioned in *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya*. Among them, eight drugs are enumerated as *Asthavarga* in *Nighantu* period. Natural habitat of most of the herbs (major source of the drugs present in *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya*) is the Himalayan range, which coupled with their short life span makes their availability difficult, eventually bringing into existence the tradition of *Pratinidhi dravya*. Dravya of *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya* are predominantly of *madhura rasa*, *madhur vipaka*, *sheeta veerya* and *guru snigdha guna*. *Jeevaneeya karma* of these drugs seems to be due to *Dravyaguna prabhava*. Further, the properties of drugs in *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya* is similar to the *Oja*, therefore these drugs also help to enrich *Oja* which is said to be the vital essence of life. *Jeevaneeya karma* of some of the drugs is evident by researches showing them as a very good *Rasayana* with rejuvenating and health-promoting properties. Further, these drugs are useful in promoting body fat, healing fractures, and seminal weakness, and have also reported to restore health immediately and work as antioxidants in the body.

Conclusion

Acharya Charaka has enumerated *Mahakashaya* to give direction for rational grouping. Though he has included ten drugs in each group, but has also

given freedom to include new drugs in *Mahakashaya* according to need. In ancient times, all living beings were very near to the nature, therefore they were well acquainted with plant drugs. But with passage of time urbanization has changed the scenario and now due to destruction of forests, the plants have become less known and endangered. The drugs of *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya* enhance *Oja* thereby increasing vitality and strength. Because of this beneficial effect, those drugs can be used to promote health i.e. "*Swasthasya swasthya rakshnam*", which is the foremost aim of *Ayurveda*. Thus, proper use of drugs of *Jeevaneeya mahakashaya* would help to live a long and healthy life, and to combat the challenges posed by frightening diseases of present and future. All the drugs of this *mahakashaya* have not been evaluated scientifically till date, only a few researches were conducted on the drugs of this group. Therefore, studies regarding phytochemicals and pharmacological properties are the need of time.

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