

## BALYA MAHAKASHAYA IN CHARAKA SAMHITA: AN APPRAISAL OF THEIR DRAVYA, GUNA, AND KARMA FOR HEALTHY HOLISTIC LIVING

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical system, offers a sophisticated framework of pharmacology known as *Dravya Guna Vigyana*, focusing on the intrinsic qualities and actions of substances. Among its classical classifications, the *Balya Mahakashaya*, one of the 50 *Mahakashayas* described in *Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana* 4/7, comprises ten herbs renowned for enhancing *Bala* (strength and vitality). These herbs—*Aindri*, *Rishabhi*, *Atirasa*, *Rishyaprokta*, *Payasa*, *Ashwagandha*, *sthira*, *Rohini*, *Bala*, *Atibala*—are examined in this paper through the lens of *Dravya* (substance identity), *Guna* (qualities), *Rasa* (taste), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (post-digestive effect), and *Prabhava* (special effects). This review emphasizes the pharmacodynamic properties of these herbs, elaborating their *Brimhana* (nourishing), *Rasayana* (rejuvenating), *Balya*

(strengthening), and *Vajikarana* (aphrodisiac) actions. By supporting *Dhatu poshana* (tissue nourishment), modulating *Agni* (digestive/metabolic fire), and enhancing *Ojas* (vital essence), these herbs contribute to both preventive and promotive aspects of health. Correlations are drawn with modern pharmacological findings that support their antioxidant, adaptogenic, and anabolic effects. Highlighting the classical Ayurvedic wisdom embedded in the concept of *Mahakashaya*, this article provides a detailed appraisal of the *Dravya Guna* attributes of *Balya Mahakashaya*. It underscores the importance of these herbs in maintaining physiological integrity, mental clarity, and reproductive vitality, thus reinforcing the concept

of holistic health. The study invites further evidence-based exploration to integrate classical herbology with modern health sciences.

**KEYWORDS:** *Balya Mahakashaya, Dravya Guna Vigyana, Charaka Samhita, Rasayana, Ayurvedic Pharmacology, Ojas, Vajikaran.*

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, a time-tested system of medicine rooted in the Indian subcontinent, describes health as a state of dynamic balance between *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni*, and *Ojas*. To maintain this balance, classical texts have classified medicinal substances based on their inherent attributes (*Dravya*), properties (*Guna*), taste (*Rasa*), potency (*Virya*), post-digestive effect (*Vipaka*), and specific action (*Prabhava*)—a system collectively referred to as *Dravya Guna Vigyana*.<sup>[1]</sup> This multidimensional approach to herbal pharmacology is foundation to Ayurvedic therapeutics. Within this framework, *Charaka Samhita* identifies 50 major groups of herbal formulations known as *Mahakashayas*, each named for their dominant therapeutic action. Among these, *Balya Mahakashaya* is particularly notable for its capacity to enhance *Bala*—a term that encompasses not only physical strength but also immunity (*Ojas*), psychological resilience, and reproductive vitality.<sup>[2]</sup> The ten herbs of this group include *Aindri*, *Rishabhi*, *Atirasa*, *Rishyaprokta*, *Payasa*, *Ashwagandha*, *Sthira*, *Rohini*, *Bala*, *Atibala*. These herbs are predominantly *Madhura* in *Snigdha* and *Shita* and have *Madhura Vipaka*—a combination that supports tissue nourishment and strength enhancement.<sup>[3]</sup> Their *Balya*, *Brimhana*, *Rasayana*, and *Vajikarana Karma*s play a central role in both restorative and preventive care. Moreover, these properties are particularly valuable in today's context of stress-related disorders, metabolic imbalance, and chronic fatigue.<sup>[4]</sup> This article aims to explore each constituent of *Balya Mahakashaya* through the lens of *Dravya Guna Vigyana*, providing a comprehensive appraisal of their pharmacological attributes and their relevance in promoting holistic health.

## REVIEW OF LITRATURE

### 1. Conceptual Framework of *Mahakashayas* with Emphasis on *Balya Mahakashaya*

The classification of ten *Mahakashayas* in *Charaka Samhita* Sutrasthana 4/7 represents a landmark effort to organize medicinal herbs based on their principal actions. Each group, such as *Jivaniya*, *Brimhaniya*, *Lekhaniya*, and *Balya*, reflects a therapeutic intent and is structured to aid the physician in drug selection according to the specific *Karma* required. This methodical categorization displays the analytical maturity of ancient Ayurvedic

scholars.<sup>[5]</sup> *Balya Mahakashaya* is one such group curated to promote *Bala*, a concept that extends beyond muscular strength to include immunity (*Ojas*), reproductive potency (*Shukra Bala*), and mental fortitude (*Manobala*). The placement of *Balya Mahakashaya* within the early sutras of *Charaka Samhita* underlines its importance in both preventive and promotive health care strategies. It is especially useful in *Balya Chikitsa*, convalescence, childhood growth, old-age nourishment, and during post-disease recovery.<sup>[6]</sup> These ten herbs were not grouped randomly; their selection reflects a precise understanding of *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, and *Vipaka*, ensuring synergistic action. While each herb has individual merits, their cumulative effect is optimized in this Mahakashaya group due to shared characteristics—predominantly *Madhura Rasa*, *Snigdha Guna*, and *Shita Virya*. These properties together promote anabolic activity, enhance nutrient assimilation, and support *Dhatu poshana*.<sup>[7]</sup> This conceptual organization not only facilitates clinical application but also reveals the integrative logic of Ayurvedic pharmacology. Understanding *Balya Mahakashaya* through this lens allows modern scholars to appreciate its potential in restoring vitality and systemic balance, thereby fulfilling the broader Ayurvedic objective of *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*.<sup>[8]</sup>

2. Dravya-wise Analysis of *Balya Mahakashaya*

S. No	Dravya	Latin Name	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Karma (Action)	Contemporary Insight	Ref
1	<i>Aindri</i>	Bacopa Monnieri	Tikta	Laghu	Ushna,	katu	<i>Brimhana, Shukrala, Rasayana</i>	Strength enhancer, hepatoprotective	[9]
2	<i>Rashabhi</i>	Mucuna Pruriens	Madhura Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Shita	Madhura	<i>Mutrala, Balya, Vrishya</i>	Diuretic, reproductive tonic	[10]
3	<i>Shatavari</i>	Asparagus Racemosus	Madhura, Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Shita	Madhura	<i>Stanyajanana, Balya, Rasayana</i>	Galactagogue, reproductive tonic	[11]
4	<i>Rasyaprokta</i>	Teramnus Labialis	Madhura Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Shita	Madhura	<i>Brimhana Balya,</i>	Nourishing, tonic	[12]
5	<i>Payasya</i>	Ipomoea digitata	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Shita	Madhura	<i>Rasayana, Balya</i>	Nourishing, rejuvenating	[13]
6	<i>Ashwagandha</i>	Withania Somnifera	Tikta, Katu madhu	Laghu, Snigdha	Ushna	Madhura	<i>Balya, Rasayana, Medhya</i>	Adaptogen, anti-stress, Reproductive, Aphrodisic neuroprotective	[14]
7	<i>Sthira</i>	Desmodium Gangeticum	Madhura Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Ushna	Madhura	<i>Jeevaniya, Balya, Rasayana Rasayana, Balya,</i>	Rare herb, considered life-promoting	[15]
8	<i>Rohini</i>	Picrorhiza Kurroa	Tikta	Ruksh Laghu	Shita	Katu	<i>Rasayana, Vrishya</i>	Anti-aging, aphrodisiac, restorative	[16]
9	<i>Bala</i>	Sida Cordifolia	Madhura	Snigdha, Laghu	Shita	Madhura	<i>Balya, Brimhana, Vatahara</i>	Anti-inflammatory, muscle strength enhancer, vrishya	[17]
10	<i>Atibala</i>	Abutilon Indicum	Madhura	Guru, Snigdha	Shita	Madhura	<i>Rasayana, Shukrala</i>	Immunomodulatory, anabolic effect	[18]

### 3. Pharmacological Properties and Contemporary Relevance

The relevance of *Balya Mahakashaya* extends beyond classical Ayurvedic therapeutics into the realm of modern pharmacology and evidence-based medicine. Several herbs in this group, such as *Ashwagandha* and *Shatavari*, have undergone extensive research and clinical trials validating their Aphrodisiac, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory, and neuroprotective actions.<sup>[19]</sup> For instance, *Ashwagandha* has demonstrated significant improvements in reducing cortisol levels, managing anxiety, and promoting physical endurance. Similarly, *Shatavari* has been found to enhance lactation, improve female reproductive health, and act as an antioxidant.<sup>[20]</sup> These actions can be directly correlated with the classical Ayurvedic *Guna* and *Karma* assigned to these *Dravyas*. The predominance of *Madhura Rasa*, *Snigdha* and *Guru Guna*, along with *Shita Virya* in most herbs of this group, contributes to their anabolic, tissue-nourishing and strength-promoting effects, which align with modern understandings of anabolism, anti-inflammation, and adaptogenic activity.<sup>[21]</sup> Furthermore, the concept of *Bala* as understood in Ayurveda, correlates with immunological resilience in contemporary science. Herbs like *Rishyaprokta* / *R̥ṣyaproktā* (*Rishabhaka*) Improves vitality and stamina; supports convalescence. Strengthens reproductive system have *Vajikarana* effect.<sup>[22]</sup> *Payasya* Classified as *Balya*, *Brimhana*, and *Rasayana*. Improves *Mamsa Dhatu* (muscle tissue) and overall body strength. Acts as *Stanya Janana* (galactagogue), beneficial for lactating mothers.<sup>[23]</sup> As chronic stress, malnutrition, and immune suppression become common public health concerns, the *Balya Mahakashaya* presents a class of therapeutic agents with multidimensional benefits suitable for integrative healthcare. Their pharmacological synergy between traditional *Karma* and modern action mechanisms strengthens the case for their clinical incorporation.<sup>[24]</sup>

### 4. Holistic Significance in Health and Disease Management

The *Balya Mahakashaya* group, as described in the *Charaka Samhita*, holds significant value in the holistic maintenance of health and management of diseases due to its integrated effects on *Sharira Bala* (physical strength), *Dhatu Pushti* (tissue nourishment), and *Ojas* (vital energy). In Ayurvedic philosophy, strength is not merely muscular power but encompasses the resilience of body, mind, and immunity, which aligns closely with modern concepts of adaptive immunity, psychological well-being, and nutritional adequacy.<sup>[25]</sup> The herbs under *Balya Mahakashaya* are primarily *Madhura Rasa*, *Snigdha Guna*, and *Shita Virya*, which together contribute to anabolic processes, tissue regeneration, and cooling anti-inflammatory effects. These properties render them ideal for use in convalescence, chronic fatigue

syndrome, muscular dystrophy, aging-related debility, and even post-surgical recovery.<sup>[26]</sup> Herbs such as *Ashwagandha*, *Kapikachhu* and *Shatavari*, have shown Aphrodisiac, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory, and anti-oxidant activities in both Ayurvedic practice and contemporary pharmacology.<sup>[27]</sup> Furthermore, their application extends to Reproductive health and Rejuvenation, and pediatric health where growth and development are key objectives. The use of *Balya* drugs supports hormonal balance, endocrine nourishment, and improved neuromuscular coordination, making them relevant across a wide range of life stages.<sup>[28]</sup> This multipronged action reinforces the Ayurvedic view of treating the person as a whole rather than a disease in isolation, and strengthens its integration into holistic models of preventive and promotive healthcare.<sup>[29]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The concept of *Balya Mahakashaya* as delineated in *Charaka Samhita* exemplifies Ayurveda's multidimensional approach to health, emphasizing not only curative but also preventive and promotive aspects. These ten herbs possess inherent qualities to enhance *Bala* (strength), nourish *Dhatus* (tissues), and support longevity. Their application extends to pediatrics, geriatrics, convalescence care, and immunity enhancement, highlighting their broad therapeutic potential. From a contemporary perspective, the *Balya* group resonates with the principles of integrative medicine, where nutrition, immunity, and vitality are viewed holistically. A *Dravya Guna*-based analysis further underscores the pharmacological relevance of these herbs, many of which have demonstrated immunomodulatory, adaptogenic, and antioxidant properties in modern studies. However, gaps remain in terms of standardization, pharmacognostic profiling, and clinical validation, which require systematic research to establish global acceptance.

## CONCLUSION

*Balya Mahakashaya* embodies a timeless Ayurvedic wisdom that aligns with modern holistic healthcare paradigms. By strengthening vitality, nourishing tissues, and enhancing immunity, these herbs can play a pivotal role in promoting health and preventing disease. Future research should prioritize the development of pharmacognostic standards, identification of bioactive markers, and validation of traditional indications through rigorous preclinical and clinical studies. Integration of *Balya* formulations into mainstream healthcare, particularly in geriatrics, pediatrics, convalescence, and immune-compromised conditions, may open new avenues for global acceptance and application. Thus, *Balya Mahakashaya* holds immense



promise as a therapeutic bridge between classical Ayurveda and contemporary integrative medicine.

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