WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH
SJIF Impact Factor 8.453
Volume 14, Issue 13, 240-251. Review Article ISSN 2277–7105

PRASHASTA BHESHAJA: THE IDEAL DRUG IN AYURVEDIC PHARMACOLOGY

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Article Received on
7 May 2025

Revised on 27 May 2025
Accepted on 16 June 2025

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202513-37317

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurvedic* philosophy, the efficacy of treatment is deeply rooted in the selection of optimal medicinal substances, known as *Prashasta Bheshaja*. The term "*Prashasta Bheshaja Lakshana*" refers to the characteristics that define an ideal medicinal substance. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts, particularly the *Charaka Samhita*, outline specific criteria for identifying such ideal drugs. These criteria include: Abundance (*Bahuta*): The substance should be readily available and in sufficient quantity. Suitability (*Yogyatva*): It should be appropriate and effective for therapeutic use. Multiple Applications (*Anekartha*): The substance should have the potential for various therapeutic applications. Potency (*Prabhava*): It should possess significant therapeutic efficacy. These attributes ensure that the selected medicinal substances are effective, safe, and versatile in treating various ailments. The emphasis on such characteristics underscores the importance of meticulous selection and evaluation of drugs in *Ayurvedic* practice. This article delves into the detailed attributes of *Prashasta Bheshaja Lakshana*, highlighting their significance in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of *Ayurvedic* drugs.

KEYWORDS: *Prashast bheshaja, Bheshaja Lakshana, Ideal Ayurvedic Drug.*

Prashasta Bheshaja: The Ideal Drug in *Ayurvedic* Pharmacology

INTRODUCTION

In *Ayurveda*, the success of treatment depends not only on the choice of therapy but also on the selection of the correct drug. The term "*Prashasta Bheshaja*" refers to an ideal or approved drug— one that is both therapeutically effective and inherently suited for medicinal use. Classical texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* place great emphasis on drug evaluation by detailing methods for "*Bheshaja Pareeksha Vidhi*" (drug examination) that ensure only substances meeting strict criteria are used in therapy.

भेषज- तदेवयुक्तं भेषजं यद् आरोग्याय कल्पते॥[1]

(च .सू.1/134)

According to *Charak- Bheshaja* means the substance which helps to bring back the body into normalcy (healthy state).

औषध- ओसोनामरसः, सअस्यांधीयतेयत्तद्औषधिः ओसाद्आरोग्यम् आधत्तेतस्मात् ओषधीः औषधः।[2]

(का .सं. खि. 3/27)

According to *Kashayap samhita- Osa* is *rasa*, which lends the health. That which holds *rasa* & gives health is called *aushadha*.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ayurvedic literature such as *Samhita*, textbook, lexicons and other modern sciences books and papers studied for the information and latest updates on *prashast bheshaja.*

OBSERVATION AND RESULT

Prashasta Bheshaja Lakshana

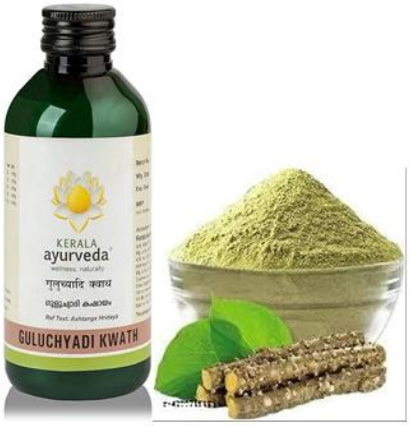
A) According to *Acharya Vagbhata*

1)बहुकल्पं बहुगुणं संपन्नं योग्यं औषधम्।[3]

(1. ह्र. सु.1/28 आयुष्कामीयअध्याय)

According to *Ayurvedic* philosophy, a *Prashasta Bheshaja* must meet several criteria.

A) Bahukalpam- Bahukalpam means Possible to prepare different formulations e.g *Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia*) *Guduchi Powder, Guduchi Kwatha, Guduchi* Extract, *Guduchi Ghanvati* e.g. *Guduchi- Tinospora Cordifolia.*



B) Bahugunam- Bahugunam means drugs Should possess maximum qualities. e.g. *Terminalia chebula-Rasayan, Anuloman, Vranaropak, Medhya, Tridosha-shamak, Bruhan, Chakshushya, Vrishya, Deepan, Vividh Rog shamak e.g. shwas, kas, premeh, arsh, ashmiri, kushtha, grahani, vibandh* etc.

Terminalia chebula- Haritaki

C)Sampannam- means Fruits should be Fresh, Round, Shiny, Pest-free, Ripe, Clean.

Emblica officinalis- Amalaki

Punica granatum- Dadim

D) Yogya- Yogya means drug should be fit to administer in particular condition

त्या त्या स्थितीला योग्य

भल्लातक- विशेष प्रयोग - कफवातज रोग

उष्ण, तीक्ष्ण पित्तवर्धक[4]

C/I - पित्तज रोग

एरंड - साम वातव्याधी (आमवात)

उष्ण वीर्य

Semicarpus anacardium

Ricinus communis

B) According to *Acharaya Charaka*

बहुता तत्र योग्यत्वमनेकविधकल्पना|

सम्पच्चेतिचतुष्कोऽयंद्रव्याणांगुणउच्यते।।[5]

(च.सू.9/7 खुड्डाकचतुष्पाद.)

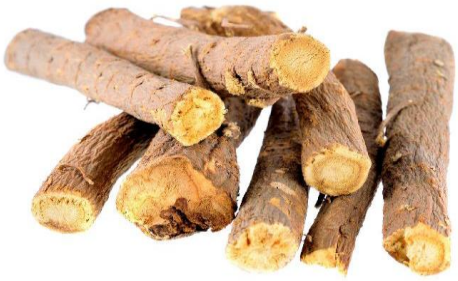
1) Abundance (*Bahuta*): The drug should be readily available in nature, ensuring a continuous sustainable supply.

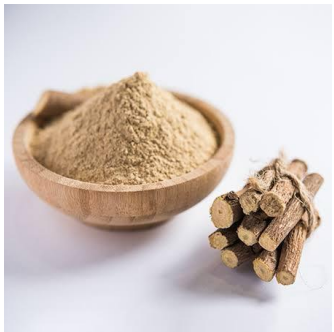
2) Suitability (*Yogyatva*): It must be appropriate for therapeutic use and align with the patient's constitution (*Prakriti*) as well as the nature of the disease.

Bilwa- Aegle marmelos.

Bal Bilva- Bitter, pungent, astringent.[6]
hot, digestive, absorbent, Diarrhea, dysentery, diarrhea
Pakva bilva- Sweet, *Guru*, farewell,
Vishtambi, fragrant, *Anulomik Vibandh, Arsh, Adhman*, indigestion

3) Versatility in Formulation (*AnekvidhaKalpana*): An ideal drug should lend itself to various types of formulations (such as decoctions, powders, or medicated ghee) to tailor its action. e.g. *Yashtimadhu - Glycerrhiza glabra.*





4) Inherent Potential (*Sampat*): The drug is expected to exhibit strong inherent properties—expressed in its taste (*rasa*), qualities (*guna*), potency (*virya*), post-digestive effect (*vipaka*), and specific action (*prabhava*)—that together make it effective in correcting imbalances in the body. Drug should be potent qualitatively.

Aloe Vera- Kumari

Rasa Panchaka[7]

1. *Rasa (Taste):Tikta (Bitter), Kashaya (Astringent) (some texts mention slight Madhura as secondary)*
2. *Guna (Qualities):Laghu (Light), Snigdha (Unctuous/Oily), Sara (Mobile)*
3. *Virya (Potency):Ushna (Hot)*
4. *Vipaka (Post-digestive effect):Katu (Pungent)*
5. *Prabhava (Special action).*

- *Stree Roga Nashaka (Effective in female reproductive disorders)*
- *Yakrit Uttejaka (Liver stimulant)*
- *Virechana (Mild purgative action)*

C) According to *Acharya Shushrut*

प्रशस्तदेशसम्भूतंप्रशस्तेऽहनिचउद्धृतम्।

युक्तमात्रंमनस्कान्तंगन्धवर्णरसान्वितम्॥

दोषघ्नमग्लानिकरमविकारीविपर्यये।

समीक्ष्यदत्तंकालेचभेषजंपादउच्यते॥ 5

सु. सू. 34/22 युक्तसेनियअध्याय[8]

- प्रशस्तदेशसम्भूतं- means drug should Grown in good place

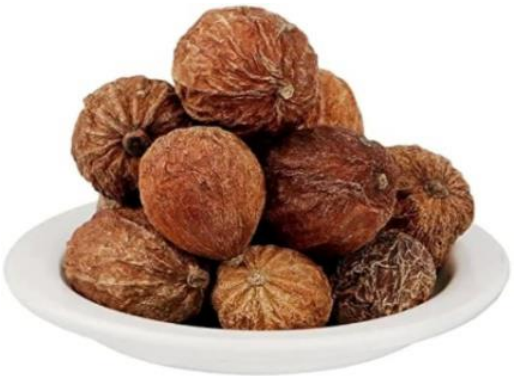
- प्रशस्तेअहनिचउदधृतम्-produced on good day

पथरी; वर्षाभू- *Boerhavia diffusa*

वर्षाऋतौविशेषेणपुनर्भवतीति।[9]

(Its mainly found in rainy season)

Prashaste ahani ch uddhrutam



Randia spinosa- मदनफळ (*Pushya, Ashwini, Mrigashira Nakshatra* collection in spring and summer season 7

- युक्तमात्र- given in proper dose

Following are the points to be considered during *matra nishchiti*[10]

Vaya (वय)- Age

Linga (लिंग)– Gender

Bala (बल)– Strength (physical and immune strength)

Kala (काल)– Time (season, period, or timing of treatment)

Koshta (कोष्ठ)– Bowel nature (digestive strength and bowel habits)

Prakriti (प्रकृति)– Body constitution (individual's inherent nature)

Vyadhi (व्याधि)– Disease (illness or disorder)

Satva (सत्व)– Mental strength (psychological resilience)

Satmya (सात्म्य)– Adaptability (habitual compatibility to diet, environment, or lifestyle)

- गन्धवर्णरसान्वितम्-having proper odour, color and taste

Santalum album.

Curcuma longa

Azadiracta indica

Allium sativum

Rubia cordifolia

Tamarindus indica

- दोषघ्न- means drug which Pacifies *dosha*

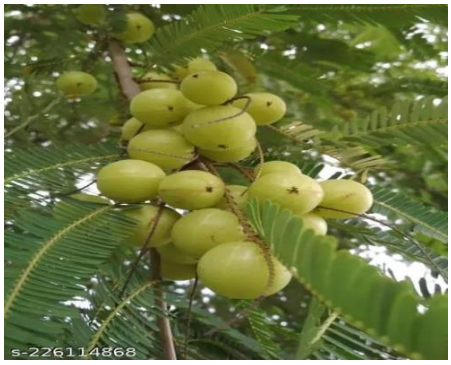
Doshaghnata- Pacifies *dosha*

- अग्लानिकर-which doesn't causes discomfort

Draksha- Vitis vinifera

Kharjur- Phoenix dactyligera

- अविकारी-which doesn't causes any disease



Amalaki – Emblica officinalis

Draksha- Vitis vinifera

Methodology of Drug Evaluation

The classical method for evaluating drugs, known as *Bheshaja Pareeksha Vidhi*, involves several steps.[11]

1. *Edam evam Prakritim* (Nature of the Drug)

The drug is identified by its name, natural order, and botanical characteristics. This involves examining the external morphology and traditional nomenclature.

2. *Evam Gunam* (Properties of the Drug)

A thorough assessment is made of the drug's *rasa* (taste), *guna* (qualities), *virya* (potency), and *vipaka* (post-digestive transformation). These factors determine its overall pharmacodynamic profile.

3. *Evam Prabhavam* (Therapeutic Action)

The unique and specific actions of the drug—its *prabhava*—are studied, which can sometimes be independent of its basic properties.

4. *Asmin Deshe Jatam* and *Ritu Eva Grihitam* (Place and Time of Collection)

The habitat (*desha*) and season (*ritu*) in which the drug is collected affect its potency and quality. Ayurveda insists that drugs must be collected from "*Prashasta Desha*" (suitable regions) during their ideal seasonal period.

5. *Nihitam, Upaskrutam,* and *Matra* (Preservation, Processing, and Dosage)

Methods of storage (*nihitam*) and processing (*upaskrutam*) are critical, along with the determination of proper dosage (*matra*), to maintain the drug's efficacy.

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Prashasta Bheshaja* plays a central role in ensuring both the quality and therapeutic effectiveness of *Ayurvedic* treatment. The classical parameters—*Bahuta* (abundance), *Yogyatva* (suitability), *Anekvidha Kalpana* (formulation versatility), and *Sampat* (potency)—provide a multidimensional framework for identifying and utilizing ideal medicinal substances. These attributes are not merely theoretical; they offer a practical approach to selecting the most appropriate drugs in clinical settings.

Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya,* and *Sushruta Samhita* emphasize these traits as foundational to successful therapy. For example, *Bahuta* ensures sustainability and accessibility, critical in both traditional and industrial contexts. *Yogyatva* connects the pharmacological action of the drug with the patient's constitution (*Prakriti*) and disease condition (*Vyadhi),* ensuring individualised treatment. *Anekvidha Kalpana* adds versatility by enabling diverse formulations to suit various modes of administration, while *Sampat* ensures intrinsic strength and efficacy of the drug based on *rasa, guna, virya, vipaka,* and *prabhava*.

In modern contexts, these classical ideas are echoed in quality control parameters such as organoleptic properties, phytochemical screening, and chromatographic profiling. The parallels suggest that ancient *Ayurvedic* wisdom can successfully integrate with modern research protocols to validate and enhance traditional practices.

Furthermore, the *Bheshaja Pareeksha Vidhi* mentioned in classical texts closely resembles modern drug standardization procedures. This shows that *Ayurveda,* though ancient, had a highly evolved and logical method for assessing drug quality—far ahead of its time.

A special note must be made on the concept of *Abhava Pratinidhi Dravya* (substitute drugs), which becomes particularly relevant when original herbs become endangered or unavailable.

Only drugs with similar *rasa*, *virya*, and *prabhava* are considered acceptable substitutes—ensuring that therapeutic integrity is preserved. This is highly important today, especially with the increasing threat of medicinal plant extinction.

Thus, the detailed exploration of *Prashasta Bheshaja Lakshana* not only helps revive classical *Ayurvedic* standards but also provides a bridge to modern herbal pharmacology and quality assurance protocols.

CONCLUSION

Modern research has sought to correlate these classical evaluation parameters with contemporary standards such as organoleptic assessment, chromatographic profiling, and microbial as well as chemical analysis. For example, the article "Substituting Drugs in *Ayurveda* with Special Reference to Botany" discusses how the ideal qualities described for a *Prashasta Bheshaja* guide the rational substitution of drugs when the original material is scarce.

The Role of *Prashasta Bheshaja* in Ensuring Quality

In clinical practice, the use of a *Prashasta Bheshaja* is essential. Not only does it ensure that the medicine has the appropriate therapeutic attributes, but it also provides a benchmark for identifying adulteration or improper substitutions. By using these standards, practitioners can select substitutes (*Abhava Pratinidhi Dravya*) only when they closely mimic the required properties of the ideal drug.

The concept of *Prashasta Bheshaja* encapsulates *Ayurveda's* rigorous approach to drug selection—ensuring that only substances with the right combination of abundance, therapeutic suitability, versatility, and inherent potency are used in treatment. Through methods like *Bheshaja Pareeksha Vidhi*, classical texts provide a comprehensive framework that has guided *Ayurvedic* practice for millennia. Today, as modern standardization techniques are integrated with these ancient methods, the quality and efficacy of *Ayurvedic* medicines continue to be upheld, ensuring that patients receive the best possible care.

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