

POTENTIAL CONCEPTS OF RASASHASTRA

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurveda Rasashastra* is one of the specialised branches considered as science of mercury. This branch has its own importance in both pharmaceutical and Therapeutic wing. It consists of different principles and procedures like *sodhana* (purification), *marana* (incineration) etc. And there is a need to know the history and concept behind this branch *Rasashastra*. It is mainly deals with mercury (*rasa*) hence named as *Rasashastra* and along with some other *rasa dravyas* (metals and minerals). This paper highlights Description about concept of *Raseswara darshana* and opinion about concept of *Rasashastra*.

Key words: *Rasashastra, Raseswara darshana, sodhana, marana*

INTRODUCTION

Concept is the crux substance of the practical experience repeatedly occurred relating to one particular topic. Conceptualization undergoes intellectual exercise sometimes. It may be differed before or during the origination. Once accepted as a concept it becomes an instruction. This is commonly referred to as *SIDDHANTA*¹.

“*SIDDHANTHO NAMA PARIKSHAKAIH
BAHUVIDHAM PARIKSHYA HETUBHI-*

*SCHA SADHAITWA STHAPYATE ITI
SIDDHANTAH” (Ch.Vi.8)*

A concept serves as a guideline for future zealots of that particular science. *Rasashastra*, a unique system of medicine has been evolved through innumerable practical experiences of many zealots.

RASASHASTRA is based on a unique philosophical thought system. The philosophy followed by practitioners of this system is called

RASESVARA DARSANA (MERCURIAL SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY). The famous treatises of this science like *Rasahridayatantra*, *Rasarnava*, *Rasa prakasha sudhakara* etc., give the details of this philosophy.

Rasesvara darsana is given as a separate chapter in the book *SARVADARSANASANGRAHA* by *SAYANA* and *MADHAVA*. The emancipation or liberation, *moksha* or *mukti* as named in Indian philosophy, means the state of no return achieved after death, i.e., liberating the soul from births and deaths, as per the version of all philosophical schools of thought of India. But according to *Rasesvara darsana*, liberation should be attained during one's life time itself, i.e. - negating death forever. This is known as *JIVANMUKTI*² (Lively Liberation). Ultimately by refusing death, one is also liberating the self from chain of birth and death. Those who have attained this, are called "SIDDHAS", specifically *Rasasiddha* as they attain the state of lively liberation with the help of *Rasa*, (Mercury). According to them the liberation, attained after death is useless, as mean creatures can also achieve this. Human incarnation is the best of all in the process of evolution. Therefore to show the uniqueness of the race of human beings, man should strive for attaining the *moksha* or liberation during one's life time itself. It is said in *Rasarnava*, that attaining liberation after death is useless and it can be achieved even by a donkey.

The way of attaining *jivanamukti* has been detailed in the text of *Rasahridayatantra*³. Man should always strive for liberation not minding about impermanent factors like prosperity, physical pleasures etc Liberation comes from

knowledge. Knowledge is achieved only through relentless exercise. Such exercise can only be performed when the man has good health and stability of the body. Such stability is called *pindasthairiyata* or *sthiradeha*. The evidence of attaining such state is denying old-age, disease and death. This stage is not achieved by taking the drugs of herbal origin. By their nature, herbs etc., are perishable. Such perishable ones cannot make the body imperishable. Herbs get absorbed in *NAGA* (lead), the *swarna* gets absorbed in *PARADA* (Mercury). This means, these are more powerful in the consecutive order. As the seers who devote themselves to Lord Siva attain his abode – gold etc., metals which are amalgamated in the mercury – that has already taken the extract of mica attains the qualities of nectar. Only by taking such mercury, man will be able to deny death and decay. With a body that can be free from birth and death cycle alone,

The responsibility of those who want to attain lively – liberation is to strive for the same with the help of *HARAGAUURISSTIRASA*, a divine medicine made up of processed *parada*, *Gandhaka* and *Abhraka*⁴.

The result caused by performing one hundred *asvamedha* rituals, donating one crore of cows and one thousand gold-coins and by taking a sacred dip in all the rivers and sacred places is equal to that which is caused by mere, seeing Mercury. Taking mercury inside in the form of medicine, touching it, giving away mercury in donation, meditating about mercury and worshipping are the five types of *RASAPUJA*, (the mercury- worship). If one worships *rasa* in the form of *linga* the personified form of lord Siva, he will get the result of worshipping all the

lingas of heaven, earth and the underneath world. If one consumes mercury, he will get rid of the result of bad deeds of even previous incarnations and he will be relieved of all the diseases. According to lord Siva, one will get the result of performing hundred rituals by digesting Mica in Mercury. One who does blasphemy of mercury will reach the hell. The physicians will get the result of *TULA DANA* (donating gold and money equal to one's weight) and performing one hundred *asva-medhas* by dispensing processed mercury to the patients⁵.

“SIDDHE RASE KARISYAMI NIRDARI-DYAMIDAM JAGAT”

I will make this world devoid of poverty through *rasasiddhi* (Achievement through mercury) – this sacred uttering will make one, null of the bad deeds like even Brahmahatya⁶. Mercury, when subjected to *Murchana*, alleviates the diseases; when bound into a solid form (*Bandhana*) - it bestows emancipation and when it is killed (when brought into the form of *Bhasma* through incineration process), makes the body immortal. These are the unique qualities of mercury alone⁷. The one who endeavors to bind mercury is a blessed one because at that moment itself, he determines to make this world devoid of disease and death. One wonders as to how Mercury is administered into the body to achieve the state of immortality. It is obvious that mercury is not administered as it is, in its original state. The *rasaacharyas* opine that certain procedures are to be followed to make the mercury fit for administering it into the body, by which

all the physical and chemical impurities of mercury are mitigated.

The numbers of these procedures are 18⁸

1. *Svedana* (sweating)
2. *Mardana* (grinding)
3. *Murchana* (swooning)
4. *Utthapana* (rising)
5. *Patana* (causing to fall)
6. *Rodhana* (activating)
7. *Niyamana* (controlling)
8. *Dipana* (appetizing)
9. *Abhraka bhaksamana* (giving the morsels of mica - extract)
10. *Charana* (masticating)
11. *Garbha druti* (internal liquefaction)
12. *Bahya druti* (external liquefaction)
13. *Jarana* (digestion)
14. *Ranjana* (colouring)
15. *Sarana* (intensifying the colouring process)
16. *Samkramana* (penetration)
17. *Vedha* (boring)
18. *Sarira yoga* or *Bhaksana* (administering on the body)

There is a controversy regarding the order and the number of these procedures. Out of these 18, first 16 procedures make mercury devoid of all the impurities and make it efficacious enough to transform the body to immortality. The 17th procedure is called *Vedha*, This is test for mercury to confirm whether it has really attained perfect state or not- when such mercury is brought into contact with lower metals like iron and copper etc... These should transmuted into higher metals i.e. Gold.

Then only it is confirmed that such processed mercury is capable of transmuting the mortal cells of the body into immortal ones, and the

mercury is further administered on the body for attainment of lively liberation. This stage of testing the efficacy of mercury, it is mistook by many that it was meant for alchemical processes only. *Rasashastra* is not to be understood as a means of alchemical processes alone, the main objective of this science being lively liberation through stable body attained with the help of processed mercury.

Either due to aversion towards animal experimentation or ignorance of the procedure, the scientists of the *Rasashastra* preferred metallic tests, to confirm the efficacy of processed mercury. Deha, the body is compared with *loha*, the metal and that is why it is first tried on metal and then on the human body⁹. Since it is used on the *dhatu*, the metal, this conformation test and allied procedures are called *Dhatuvada*. The procedure of administering the processed mercury on the body is known as *Dehavada* and the whole exercise is called *Rasavada*.

The procedures of mercury after the 8th one are very difficult to follow and those who cannot understand the intricacies have started making negative propaganda among the public. Even the modern science is not in a position to digest the mercurial transmutation theory. Till about 100 years ago it was believed that conversion of metals is an impossible reality, but in 1898 by the experiments conducted by the curie- couple, some doubts regarding this aspect have arisen. Later Rutherford confirmed that due to radioactivity one element can be changed into another. Many sages of Indian origin had proved this beyond doubt.

Gorakshanatha of NATHA *sampradaya*, *Nityanatha* of DAKSINA *sampradaya* and none other than NAGARJUNA and many zealots of *Rasashastra* have achieved this work.

Those who attained liberation had aimed at liberation alone, and those who had strived for making gold alone could not achieve either gold or emancipation- ending up with heavy losses and difficulties. The seers who could achieve lively liberation had mentioned about the processes in a rudimentary manner. The novice has to establish his own technique to achieve the main goal with the guidelines given by such stalwarts. The blessings of such gurus are must in this pursuit.

According to modern school of thought, transmutation of metals is almost impossible and so is transformation of body from mortality to immortality. In the subject of alchemy there used to be innumerable experiments in china, Egypt, Arabia etc the objective behind all these experiments was undoubtedly transmutation of lower metals to higher metals. A large percentage of these were unsuccessful. In 6th century A.D. Paracelsus found that the chemicals used in the efforts of alchemy could be used as remedies for various diseases. From then onwards the *Rasavada* is turned into *vaidyavada*. In modern medicine such knowledge is called IATRO-CHEMISTRY. Even in the Indian system the oxides, extracts etc... prepared for the purpose of alchemy, were used on various diseases successfully after futile efforts in metallic transmutation. Hence, the saying "VADA BHRASHTO VAIDYA SRETHAH" which means, "the one who failed in alchemy makes a good physician", has come into vogue.

In fact the word alchemy has its origin from Sanskrit language only. The zealot, on looking at a new thing, possesses a question – “what is this?” The Sanskrit form of this question is “Kim idam or “Kim iyam”. The knowledge originated in the form of an answer to this question is known as a “kimiam” science. In due course of time, Arabs called it as kimia science, while Europeans preferred to call it chemistry. When this knowledge was considered as holy one, the Arabs added the prefix – ‘Al’ making it alkemia which has now got the form of “Alchemy”.

SODHANA:

Any process that is adopted to alleviate impurities of the drugs of mercurial kingdom or any material to that matter is called *sodhana* which literally means purification.

“TADEVA SODHANAM KARMA DRA-VYADOSANIVARAKAM”

Grinding along with liquids like juices, decoctions etc or subjecting to the vapours of these liquids etc., are done for removing the impurities of the drugs¹⁰. *Sodhana* or purification is a pre-requisite procedure for all the chemical factors that have either a negative effect on the body or no effect. Certain drugs are administered on the body after purification and certain need further processing like *BHASMIKARANA* (incineration or reducing to ashes), *AMRITIKARANA* (nectarisation or further alleviation of the reminiscent impurities) etc.

Sodhana, the word which literally means purification, is aimed to make the drug fit for therapeutic application. When the drug is passed through this procedure, it is called *shoditha*

(purified). This purity does not mean that the drug remains 99.9% chemically pure after this process. It may contain some organic material also which is used in this process. Therefore a chemically pure drug of mercurial kingdom will not be considered pure until and unless it is subjected to Ayurvedic or Rasasatric purificatory process before it is either processed further or administered in the body for therapeutic purposes. This is of two types- physical purification i.e., physically removing the materials other than the drugs which are added intentionally or by chance, and chemical purification – treating the drugs with various materials that make it devoid of the toxic effects.

MARANA:

The metals and minerals are generally incinerated to reduce them into ashes before administering them into the body. This technique is called *Marana*. The word *MARANA* literally means killing. The implication is that the metal once killed cannot come back to its original metallic state. Since the metal does not get assimilated in its original form, it has to be given a form, as minute as that can be absorbed by the adipose tissue in the body. *Marana* is the best method for this purpose. In the process, the metal loses all its physical properties and possesses therapeutic efficacy. And hence the metals processed thus are devoid of all the untoward side effects or toxic effects. However, the dosage and vehicle etc should also be considered for safe therapeutic application. Therefore the therapy of metals in *Ayurveda* otherwise called mercurial medicine should be viewed safe and effective and not otherwise. Certain drugs like *Gairika* (ochere), *Gandhaka*

(sulphur), *Kasisa* (ferrous sulphate) etc., can be used after purification as the rate of assimilation is faster in the pure form itself. The others like all the metals and some minerals, such as *Abhraka*, *Vaikranta*, *Makshika*, need to undergo the *marana* or the incineration process.

**“SODHITAN LOHADHATVADIN VIMARDYA SVARASADIBHIIH
AGNISAMYOGATO BHASMIKARANAM
MARANAM SMRITAM”**

The purified metals and minerals, when subjected to grinding with juices or decoctions as suggested in the text and reduced to ashes by bringing into contact with fire, this process is called *marana*. This process is also called *putanam* or subjecting to *puta*¹¹ (incineration).

RASABHAISAJYA KALPANA:

After either *ashtasamskaras* or any other purificatory measures that gives same effect as *ashtasamskara*. Mercury is taken for further processing into medicines¹².

Mercurial medicines are basically of two types: *Sagandha rasayoga & Nirgandha rasayoga*

Sagandha rasayogas are generally prepared by first adding sulphur in prescribed quantity to mercury and *kajjali* is obtained by trituration. Later, it is processed as *kharaliya rasayana*, *parpati*, *pottali*, *sindhura* etc... as per therapeutic need.

In the preparation of *Nirgandha rasayoga* i.e. non sulphuric mercuric preparations, processed mercury is added with drugs other than sulphur and processed into *Rasakarpoo-
ra*, *Rasapushpa* and so on.

Non sulphuric mercurial preparations are considered to be fast and the need special attention in processing and administration to the patient.

Concept of concealing the drug during administration to avoid contact with gums and teeth as promulgated in the administration of these non sulphuric mercuric preparations. Since, they are corrosive in nature. The other dosage forms of mercury are safe even for long term usage, since their forms chelation of mercury by sulphur which avoids direct contact of free mercury with the tissues.

CONCLUSION

Mercurial pharmaceuticals is a big ocean. The documented formulations are available in various text books while, innumerable formulations are practiced by traditional *vaidyas* since sages. In view of the gentle, fast and permanent cure provided by mercurial system it becomes the responsibility of the institutions and stalwarts to collect all such material put it to standardization method and make them public.

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