

Ashtavargam Kashaya: Multi facet Review

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Abstract

Ashtavargam Kashaya is one among the many formulations for vata vyadhi which has varied actions at cellular and tissue levels. It is important to develop future possible applications of a formulation in different dimensions with respect to the disease and treatment. Being a decoction of 8 herbal drugs, its contents can be omitted/replaced depending upon the disease condition. Validating those traditional therapeutic medicines is essential for the world wide acceptance and their efficacy. Here is an attempt to describe how ashtavargam kashaya is being used to treat diseases traditionally, highlighting the logic and wisdom.

Key words

Ashtavargam, Bala, Sahachara, Paralysis

Introduction

Ashtavargam kashaya is a polyherbal decoction mentioned in Sahasrayogam kashaya prakaranam indicated for all types of vata vyadhis and it is also known as Balasahacharadi kashaya.

Ashtavargam Kashaya¹ contains bala (*Sida cordifolia*), sahachara (*Barleria prionitis*), eranda (*Ricinus communis*), shunti (*Zingiber officinale*), rasna (*Alpinia officinarum*), suradruma (*Cedrus deodara*), nirgundi (*Vitex negundo*), and lasuna (*Allium sativum*). For the preparation of kashaya, each ingredient is taken in an equal ratio and boiled with 16 parts of water and reduced to 1/4th².

Even though there are 80 types of nanatmaja rogas of vata, Ashtavargam Kashaya is impulsively prescribed for paralysis by Ayurveda practitioners. In this past, if a patient was diagnosed with paralysis, Ashtavaidyas in Kerala followed a protocol which involved gandharvahasthadi kashaya with rock salt, jaggery in the morning, and ashtavargam kashaya with gorochanadi gutika which contain rudraksha (*elaeocarpus ganitrus*) as an adjuvant in the evening. If there is an association of ama, the kashaya can be given with vyoshadi guggulu (navaga guggulu). The kashaya has properties like kaphavata hara, vatanulomana, avaranavatahara, deepana, srothoshodhana, lekhanam, and kaphamedohara.

There are multiple causes cited in the etiology of a disease. Changes in lifestyle has a major role in disease pathogenesis,

resulting in the first-line protocol becoming ineffective. This above protocol would have shown effective results in the past but now ceased to be sufficient. Paralysis is a disease related to the nervous system caused by damage of nerves and spinal cord that control muscles causing complete or partial loss of muscle function. The most common causes of paralysis are stroke, head injuries, spinal cord injuries, and multiple sclerosis³.

Phytoconstituents of ingredients and action

The ingredients of Ashtavargam Kashaya possess various active constituents that can be effective in vata vyadhi. Each ingredient has a key role in strengthening the action of kashaya. Phenolic compounds are the most common water soluble antioxidant compounds in plants⁴. The free radical scavenging role of the phenolic compounds is attributed to their unique pharmacological actions⁹.

Bala (*Sida cordifolia*) has analgesic activity, antioxidants property, vasicinone¹⁰ will act on the respective site relaxing the tense and cramped muscles. It also reduces inflammation. Sahachara (*Barleria prionitis*) contains iridoid glycoside (barlerin)¹¹ which is useful in reducing inflammations. Eranda (*ricinus communis*) has high antioxidant activity due to the presence of flavonoids in their extracts¹², shunti (*Zingiber officinale*) contains calcium, phosphorus, iron, gingerol, and Vit-A, B and C. Zingiberene¹³ and Camphene are the active constituents that act as a laxative, aphrodisiac, and anti-inflammatory. Rasna (*Alpinia galanga*) contains galangin¹⁴ as a major constituent which shows powerful anti-inflammatory action. Nirgundi, (*Vitex negundo*)

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contains alkaloid nishindin and flavanoids¹⁵ which are known to be reduces pain and inflammation. Devadaru (Cedrus deodara) contains oleo resins like turpentine, cholesterol, deodoron, cedrol, and cederene¹⁶ which help in relieving inflammation, insomnia, rheumatism, and purifying the blood. Lasuna (Allium sativum) has flavonoids like Quercetin¹⁷ which has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects which might help reduce inflammation, control blood sugar, and helps to prevent heart disease.

Traditional usages and modifications

According to M. K. Kunjiraman Vaidyan in his Balachikitsa grantha mentioned a formulation which is very similar to Ashtavargam Kashaya²⁶. In traditional practice, the kashaya is found beneficial with eranda thaila even in poliomyelitis condition.

*Korandamullisuradharu kurunthuvatti
Erandamoolikarinochielarathachukkam
Nerashtavargamithukondupachichapeyam
Sairerandathailamaghilaanilabaadha theerkum
!! Balachikitsa Grantha !!*

The combination of ashtavargam kashaya and eranda thaila will relieve vata vimarga gamana (vata invades the downward, sideward and upward portion of the body), and restore the cell damages. Eranda (Ricinus communis) is having laxative, antioxidant, and anti inflammatory activities. The responsible chemical constituents of antioxidant activity in castor oil are methyl ricinoleate, ricinoleic acid, 12 octadecadienoic acid and methyl ester stem¹⁸

In Ashtavargam kashaya, the ingredients like sahachara (Barleria prionitis), devadaru (Cedrus deodara), shunti (Zingiber officinale) are also found in the composition of sahacharadi kashaya¹⁹ which describes 'drutha vilambithago bhavathi chaya' hence ashtavargam kashaya can also be substituted for Sahacharadi kashaya in similar clinical conditions.

According to Vrudha Vaidya, Balasahacharadi kashaya²⁰ contains sahachara (Barleria prionitis)- 6 parts, Bala (Sida cordifolia)- 6 parts, Devadaru (Cedrus deodar)- 4 parts, Shunti (Zingiber officinale)- 2 parts. Ashtavargam Kashya is also having the same name with some modification in the formulation. This formulation is used in weakness of lower limb, where there is association of more stiffness due to aggravated vata dosha.

Nirgundaiyerandadi kashaya²¹ in sarvaroga chikitsaratnam, Vata-vyadhi chikitsaprakaranam has ingredients like nirgundi (Vitex negundo), eranda (Ricinus communis), sahachara (Barleria prionitis), bala (Sida cordifolia), shunti (Zingiber officinale). These ingredients can also be seen in ashtavargam kashaya. This reference also states the combination of kashaya with eranda thaila showing good results in vata vyadhi variants.

*Nirgundaiyerandakoranda
Balavishwai srutham jalam
Peethameranda thailaadyam
Sarvaan vataanapohathi.
!! Sarvaroga Chikitsaratnam !!*

Korandadi kashaya²² in Yogamrutham describes ingredients like eranda (Ricinus communis), bala moolam (Sida cordifolia), shunti (Zingiber officinale) and are suggested to use in ksheerapaka vidhi. It reduces supthi (numbness), angamardha (body pain), vimargagama-na of vayu, and clears the speech. In ksheerapaka, the fat soluble constituents of same drugs may also be achieved. Along with the fat soluble constituents the milk solids may act as adjuvants to the phytoconstituents, contributing to their sustained bio availability.

*Korandanja kurunthottimuradum Chukkam
kashyam pibheth
Ksheeram cherthutharikaalum, kadakilum
melottuvathamayal
Geerum neervarumennum cholka
rasanasthabde Bhavethnasyavum
ksheeram cherthu balasithamadhukaraas-
nasidhathaila bhyanjatha
!! Yogamrutham !!*

Devadarvadi kashaya²⁴ in vaidyamanorama contain devadaru (Cedrus deodara), bala (Sida cordifolia), shunti (Zingiber officinale), eranda (Ricinus communis) which are also found in ashtavargam kashaya hence it can be given in amasopha and allied conditions.

*Devadarubalavishwakerandasaaditham jalam
Payayeth tailamishram thu sarvavataavikaranuth
!! Vaidyamanorama !!*

When there is predominance of ama dosha, vyoshadi guggulu (navaga guggulu) can be used with ashtavargam kashaya.

When there is no or minimum association of ama dosha, danwantharam thaila (chikkanapakam), sahacharadi thaila (chikkanapakam), ksheerabala aavarthi, bala thailam can be given with ashtavargam kashaya as an adjuvant based on specific conditions.

According to the guidance of vrudha vaidya,

when there is an association of pitha dosha, shatavari (*Asperagus racemosus*) can be used instead of lasuna (*Allium sativum*) in ashtavargam kashaya.

Paralysis associated with constipation can be managed by adding abhaya (*Terminalia chebula*) in ashtavargam kashaya instead of lasuna (*Allium sativum*). Abhaya (*Terminalia chebula*)²³ which contain high tannins, gallic acid, and catechin shows anulomana property to relieves constipation.

The ingredients of ashtavargam kashaya are having theekshna and ushna^{4,5,6} guna and is advised in conditions like urusthamba, manya sthamba (lock jaw), akshepaka (convulsions). Pain and swellings⁷ are caused due to aggravated vata. In scriptures, ashtavargam kashaya is referred to be 'Anilapaha' which means it pacifies the aggravated vata dosha.

Ashtavargam Kashaya with Dasamoola has shown good results, in painful conditions of varied etiologies.

Instead of rasona, adaree (*Accacia penneta*) can be added in ashtavargam kashaya which will potentiate its ability to reduce the ailments of lower limbs. Flavonoids in accacia penneta quercetin²⁵ help in reducing pain, inflammation, antihelminthic, and act as a nerve tonic.

Conclusion

Ashtavargam Kashaya is an effective formulation for Vata vyadhis. The present paper in an attempt is made to review how Ashtavargam Kashaya is used for treatment traditionally and the modifications adopted for the specific condition. Generally in majority of vata vyadhis, there is persistent inflammation. Free radicals are generated in the process of phagocytosis. These cytotoxic reactive oxygen species cause oxidative damage to the cells. This may be the resultant degeneration (kashaya avastha) seen in vata vyadhi. Antioxidants are capable of inhibiting the oxidation of such molecules. The phenolic compounds in the kashaya possibly take the role of antioxidants and play a protective role in vatavyadhi which result in the damage of bones and cartilages. The kashaya's ushna theekshna gunas also encourage analgesic and anti inflammatory actions.

It is also observed that, though the ingredients of kashaya are similar they are named differently and the difference can be due to the varied proportions of the ingredients. The drugs chosen are almost similar which indicates its importance in treating vata vyadhi. The permutation and combination of these ingredients may contribute much more in the clinical approach of vata vyadhi. For the better understanding of the related scientific aspects, a detailed phytochemical in vitro and in vivo analysis with clinical trials of Ashtavargam Kashaya is required. In the realm of ayurvedic clinical practice, ashtavargam kashaya stands out as a versatile formulation into multiple indications.

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