

CRITICAL STUDY OF THE ASAVAISHTA PREPARATIONS OF BRHATIRAYEE

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ABSTRACT: This study deals with Asavarishta preparations of the Ayurvedic System of medicine and scans various classical texts to find out the different types of constituents required for their preparation along with their proportions, the method of preparation, the time required to complete the process, the fermentations pots, the fermenting materials, the place and time (season) of fermentation etc. with a view to develop certain common norms for their preparation.

INTRODUCTION

‘Asavas’ and ‘Aristhas’ are the most important Ayurvedic preparations, prepared through fermentation process. In Ayurvedic system of medicine these are very popular since the time of ‘Brhatrayee’. In Ayurveda ‘Brhatrayee’ is considered the most authentic and popular literature and consists of three most important texts, viz. – ‘Caraka Samhita’, ‘Susruta Samhita’, ‘Astanga Samgraha’ and ‘Hridaya’. Of the three first two texts (i.e. ‘Caraka’ and ‘Susruta Samhita’) belong to a comparatively earlier period i.e. these may be placed somewhere between 600 B.C. to 300 B.C and represent two different disciplines i.e Kayachikitsa (medicine) and ‘Salya Tantra’ (Surgery) respectively. The third text of this group belongs to a little latter period i.e. 500 A.D to 700 A.D. These are not the original texts

rather these are compiled on the basis of the ideas and the materials of the first two texts.

Thus, historically it may be said that the “Caraka Samhita”. And the Astanga Sangraha’ and ‘Hridaya’ are the latest texts of this series. Hence the subject matters dealt within these texts also have the historical importance.

It is important to mention here that in the texts of ‘Brhatrayee’ there is a detailed description of fermented preparations and their technology alongwith other aspects of Ayurveda. There are number of fermented preparations in which “Asavaristhas’ are the most important from therapeutic point of view. In addition to this, ‘Asavaristhas’ are also considered superior to the other types of preparation in the sense that these are more palatable better absorbed and quick effective, because of higher drug concentration, sweet taste and liquid form.

Further these could be preserved for a longer period than the other herbal preparations due to the presence of the self generated alcohol.

It may further be pointed out that there are three kinds of drugs from the point of view of their sources of origin i.e 'Jangama', 'Audbhid' and 'Parthiva'. Of these more or less all the three types are found used in the 'Asavaristha' preparations.

The present study is undertaken to collect various details regarding the fermentation process and of its technology, being adopted in the ancient times i.e during the period of 'Brhatrayee'. And whether there is a systematic chronological development of the technology or it remained static during the span of more than 1200 years.

In this study all the references concerning to 'Asavaristha yogas' have been collected from the texts of 'Brhatrayee' and were studied critically to find out the different types of constituents required for their preparation alongwith their proportions, the method of preparation, the time required to complete the process, the fermentation pots, the fermenting materials, the place and time required to complete the process, the fermentation pots, the fermenting materials, the place and time (season) of fermentation etc. The efforts were also made to explore the possibility of drawing conclusions on the basis of the descriptions available in these texts with regard to the preparations of fermented nature (Asavaristhas) with a view to evolve some common principles for their preparation.

MATERIALS & METHODS:

Fermented preparations (Asavaristhas) and their Technology

1. Caraka Samhita:

In this text considerable details regarding the fermented preparations and their technology are available viz.,

(a) In 'Caraka' Sutra 15th chapter, there is a mention of Siddu, Sura, Sauviraka and Tusodaka etc. fermented preparations.

(b) In 'Caraka' Sutra 25th chapter, there is a mention of the definition of the term 'Asava', viz., 'Esam Asavanam Asutatvat Asava Sangna' 'Cakrapani' explains the term 'Asutatvat' as- 'Sandhanarupatvat' which means due to the involvement of 'Sandhana' (fermentation) process these are known as 'Asavas'. It is further mentioned in the same chapter that there are nine 'Yonies' (source-materials) of 'Asavas' i.e. the 'Asavas' are prepared from the following nine sources, such as – Dhanya, Phala, Mula, Sara, Puspa, Kanda, Patra, Tvak and Sarkara. It is also mentioned in the 'Caraka Samhita' that eighty four 'Asavas' could be prepared from these sources.

(c) In 'Charaka' Cikitsa, 24th Chapter – there is a mention of 'Madatyayaroga' and of its cikitsa (treatment) which indicate that during that period alcoholic preparations are frequently prepared and used. And as a result of this the persons using it in excess become the victims of 'Madatyaya roga' and need its treatment.

Besides this, in Caraka Cikitsa there are twenty six 'Asavaristha yogas' which have been recommended for the treatment of various diseases. Further in kalpasthana also there are four 'Asavaristha yogas' thus total goes to thirty.

As regards the Technology a few terms have been found used in Caraka Samhita in context of different 'Asavaristha yogas' viz. – 'Kumbhe Masasthitam Jatam', 'Ghrta Kumbhastham Paksat jatam' 'Masardhastham', 'Yavapalle Nidha-payet', 'Yavesu Dasartram tad grisme dwih Sisire Sthitam', 'Kumbhe Madhuma pralipite', 'Vaihayase Sthapitamadasahat', 'Vyaktamla Katukam Jatam', 'Ghrta bhavite pralipite Kumbhe', 'Sarkaragurn dhupite etc.

These references indicate many things that are involved in the preparation technique of these preparations, viz. It need specific type of pots i.e. the pot made of mud should be anointed or smeared with ghee. In some cases medicinal paste is also recommended for anointing these pots. These should be well cleaned before use. In some cases only 'Snigdha ghata' is mentioned while in other cases honey is recommended for anointing alongwith medicinal paste and ghee. Fumigation of pot is also advised.

2. Regarding the place it is mentioned that the pot filled with material should either be kept under the sky or inside the mass or heap of barley corn or paddy.
3. Regarding the duration three four terms have been used viz., Dasartram or Dasaham, i.e 10 days, Paksam or Masardham i.e. 15 days and Masam i.e. one month, not only this it is further mentioned that in winter this limit

should be taken as twice or double to the original (summer) limit.

As regards the signs of the completion of process the texts have mentioned these as 'Jata rasam' or in some cases 'Vyaktamla Katukam – Jatam' which means the preparation should develop a specific type of taste and when that is developed the preparation may be taken as complete. In case of takraristha 'Caraka' has mentioned that its taste should predominantly be Amla (sour) and Katuka pungent). In this way many details regarding the technology are available in this text.

2. Susruta Samhita

Here also many details regarding fermented preparations are available.

- a) In 'Susruta' Sutra 44th chapter, there is a mention of the term 'Aristha' viz., - 'Aristho Dravya Samyoga Samskaradadhiko gunaih' i.e 'Aristha' contains more better properties and effects than any other preparations because of the 'Dravya Samyoga' (combination of different types of drugs) and the 'Samskara' (special processing). While commenting on this 'Dalhana' mentioned that in 'Aristhas' there is a predominance of 'dravyas' (drugs) where as in 'Asavas' drava (liquid) is more important. Thus, 'Dalhana', the commentator of 'Susruta' was the first scholar to describe the difference between the 'Asavas & Aristhas', the fermented preparations of therapeutic importance.
- b) In 'Susruta' Sutra 45th chapter there is a description of 'Medya Varga' which included twenty seven types of fermented preparations and 'Asavas' and 'Aristhas' are also there. This text, for the first time, had

classified the fermented preparations in 'Madya' and 'Sukta' groups on the basis of their alcoholic and acidic contents.

In this text, twenty one 'Asavaristha yoga' are mentioned but the detailed description, regarding the contents and the method of preparation, is found only for six 'Asavaristha yogas'.

ASTANGA SAMAGRAHA HRDAYA:

Here also some details regarding the fermented preparations and fermentation technology are available.

3) Astanga Samgraha

In 'Astanga Samgraha' Sutra 6th Chapter, there is a description of five 'Madyakaras' (sources of alcoholic preparations), such as Draksa, Iksu, Madhu, 'Sali and Sasthi'. All these are either rich in their sugar or in carbohydrate contents which are highly essential for the production of alcohol – during fermentation process, this is definitely a new addition of the text in the knowledge regarding the subject and may be taken as the outcome of deep scientific thinking of the author.

In this text there is a description of seventeen 'Asavaristha yogas'.

4. Astanga Hrdaya

In this text there is a mention of number of alcohol containing preparations in the context of 'Ritucarya' I.e-In Hemanta ritu Gauda, Accha Sura & Sura. In Vasanta ritu Asava, Aristha, Sidhu and Mardwika and in Varsa ritu Madhwaristha etc. have been mentioned and recommended for use.

In this text only eight 'Asavaristha yogas' are found mentioned. Thus, in both the latter texts total twenty five 'Asavaristha yogas' are found described.

If all the 'Asavaristha yogas' of 'Brhatrayee' are combined then the total number of such yogas comes to seventy six (Appendix I). Of these twenty six are 'Asavayogas' the detailed study of these 'Asava' and 'Aristha yogas' further revealed that during that period these have not been differentiated on the basis of their method of preparation i.e on the basis of boiling or without boiling. As there are many 'Asava Yogas' which are prepared by boiling and many 'Aristha yogas' prepared without boiling. The 'Asavas' and 'Aristhas' prepared by boiling and without boiling and mentioned in the texts of Brhatrayee' are shown in the following table

TABLE NO. 1

Table showing the ‘Asavas’ and ‘Aristhas’ of Brhatrayee prepared by boiling and without boiling.

Sl. No.	Number of Asavas/Aristhas		Caraka	Susruta	Astanga Sangraha	Astanga Hrdaya
1.	‘Asavas’ prepared by boiling	16	9	1	3	3
2.	‘Asavas’ prepared without boiling	8	1	6	1	X
3.	‘Aristhas’ prepared by boiling	31	13	4	10	4
4.	‘Aristhas’ prepared without boiling	21	7	10	3	1
	Total	76	30	21	17	8

FERMENTATION PROCESS AND ITS DETAILS:

The review of the literature connected ‘Brhatrayee’ suggests that the fermentation process involves follows points, viz.,

1. Constituent materials
2. Sandhana process
3. Fermenting pots and their preparation
4. Suitable place and time
5. Duration of fermentation

Hence the details of each are being discussed as follows:

A) Constituent materials:

The critical study of the material on ‘Asavaristhas’ reveal the following

constituents are necessary for preparing ‘Asavas’ and ‘Aristhas’ viz---

1. Medicinal drugs
2. Liquids
3. Sweet substances
4. Praksepa dravyas including fragrant drugs.

1. Medicinal Drugs

For preparing ‘Asavas’ and ‘Aristhas’ it is seen that all the three types of drugs (i.e herbal, mineral and animal origin) are found used in some way or other. Of the three types though, the herbal drugs are abundantly used for these preparations, the other types are also not uncommon. In herbal drugs ‘Caraka’ has advised to use the following parts of the drugs for the Asavaristha preparations i.e. Roots, fruits,

seeds, flowers, leaves, stem bark, hard wood, gum/resin etc, In addition to above 'Susruta' has recommended the use of an ash of certain drugs also for this purpose. In this context 'Palasa bhasma' and 'Tilanala bhasma' deserve mention.

In mineral drugs there is a mention of 'Loha Curna' (iron powder) to be used in some preparations. As regards animal products the 'Ghee' and 'Madhu' deserve mention. 'Ghee' is generally used to anoint the vessel or pot to be used for this purpose while 'Madhu' is used as a sweat substance and also for anointing of pots in number of preparations.

2 Liquids

In liquids, though many liquids are recommended the water is the commonest of all. In other liquids plant juice, fruit juice, decoctions, butter milk, curd water, gomutra, kanji and dhanyamla etc, deserve mention. Of these water, decoctions and juices are more commonly used liquids than the others (i.e. acidic and alkaline). In some cases two or three liquids together are also found used. As regards their proportion, nothing definite could be said on the basis of the descriptions of the texts of 'Brhatrayee' group.

11 preparations. It may also be mentioned here that all the three main sweet substances (i.e. 'Guda', 'Madhu' and 'Sarkara') are used either separately or in combination also. In some cases all the three sweet substances are found used together. It may further be pointed out that honey is also used as 'Lepana dravya' in some preparations.

3. Sweet substances:

In sweet substances 'Guda' (jaggery), 'Sarkara' (sugar), 'Phanata', 'Sitopala', 'Matsyandika' & Khanda sita (types of jaggery & sugar) are found used in Asavaristhas'. These are generally obtained from herbal sources. In addition to these honey is also found used either alone or alongwith 'guda' and/or 'Sarkara' which is generally obtained from the animal source, 'Draksa and Madhuka puspa' are also found used in some cases though, these are not purely the 'Madhura dravyas' (sweet substances).

Thus, according to 'Brhatrayee' following sweet substances are found recommended for preparing 'Asavaristhas'

1. Guda, 2. Ksaudra, 3. Phanita, 4. Sarkara, 5. Sitopala, 6. Matsyandika, 7. Khanda sita and 8. Madhu.

It is important to mention here that, of these 'Guda' is most commonly used sweet substance i.e. out of 76, Asavaristha yogas, it is recommended in 33 cases. Honey stands next to 'guda' i.e. it is recommended in 23 cases. Sugar and its kinds come next to honey i.e. these are found used in

As regards their proportion no defining proportion of the sweet substance could be fixed on the basis of the descriptions of the texts of 'Brhatrayee.' The minimum and maximum percentage found mentioned in different texts is shown in the following table.

It is evident from the table no2 that according to 'Brhatrayee' the minimum

percentage recommended is 20% while maximum percentage is upto 40% which

have been mentioned in Caraka and Susruta Samhitas respectively.

TABLE NO.2

Table showing the minimum and maximum proportion of the sweet substances as mentioned in the texts of Brhatrayee.

Sl. No	Name of texts	PROPORTION OF SWEET SUBSTANCES	
		Minimum%	Maximum %
1	Caraka Samhita	20	150
2	Susruta Samhita	39	400
3	Astanga Sangraha	21.9	156.25
4	Astanga Hrdaya	39	156

4. Praksepa Dravyas:

The 'Praksepa dravyas' are also the important constituents of this preparation but these are not necessarily found recommended for all the preparations of 'Asavaristha' group. As it is noticed that in the preparations mentioned by 'Caraka' preparations. In 'Susruta' these are used only in 6 yogas while in 'Astanga Sangraha' only 10 preparations are such which contain 'Praksepa dravyas' and in 'Astanga Hrdaya' only 4 preparatios consist 'Paksepa dravya'. Thus out of 76 only 32 'Asavaristha yogas' contain 'Praksepa dravyas'.

The 'Dhatakupusa'. Which is also considered as one of the 'Praksepa dravyas' was for the first time, recommended by 'Astanga Sangraha-kara' for adding in the preparations of 'Asavaristhas'. In 'Praksepa dravyas' mostly the 'Sugandhi-dravlyas' (fragrant drugs) are included but other drugs

are not uncommon. According to the texts of 'Brhatrayee' no definite proportion can be fixed for 'Praksepa dravyas' also.

(B) Sandhana Process:

Mix all the constituent materials properly in the liquids. It should than be filled in the well prepared and recommended containers and be kept in suitable place recommended for the purpose for a specified time limit to allow the alcoholic fermentation to start with and to go on smoothly. At the end i.e when the fermentation is stopped and the necessary organoleptics are developed the fermented liquid should be filtered and be kept for some time to allow the sediments to settle down in the bottom. Now collect the supernatant clear fluid for use.

(C) Sandhana Patras (Containers for fermentations)

For containers numbers of terms have been found used in 'Brhatrayee', viz --- Bhandas, Kalasa, Kumbha Ghata Bhajana, patra, Ghrta Bhavita Patra, Madhulipta patra, Lohapatra, tamrabhajana, Drdha bhandas, suci bhajana etc.

These terms indicate four things, viz,

1. These should either be made of earth or metals such as iron and copper.
2. These should be prepared specifically for the purpose viz., 'Ghrta bhavita, Madhulipta and fumigation.
3. These should be well cleaned and disinfected i.e by applying certain pastes and fumigation.
4. These should also be strong enough to stand long duration.

Now –a-days wooden and plastic containers are also being used for preparing Asavaristhas.

TYPES OF CONTAINERS

In ancient times only earthen and or metallic pots were found recommended.

PREPARATION OF THE CONTAINERS

These containers need some kind of preparations before these are being used for fermentation .

A) BHAVANA /LEPANA PASTING /ANOINTING

A few terms, appeared in 'Brhatrayee', indicate that these should either be anointed with ghee or pasted with honey or with some

other medicinal pastes. This is done with a view to either minimise the porosity of the earthen pots or to strengthen or disinfect them before their actual use in the fermentation process. In fermentation process also.

The drugs used for the above purposes are as follows:

Ghrta, Madhu, Pippali, Pippali mula, cavya, citraka, Priyandu, kamala, agaru, candana, kustha, marica, vidanga and Rala. Of these Ghrta, Madhu and Pippali are the commonest.

B) DHUPANA (FUMIGATION)

In some cases 'Dhupana' of the containers is also indicated by all the texts and for this sarkara, Agaru, Rala, Candana and Guda are recommended. This is done either to disinfect or to perfume the containers before use.

C) SANDHANA STHALA (PLACE FOR FERMENTATION)

There are a few terms, described in the context of 'Asavaristha' preparations, which specifically indicate about the suitability of the place for fermentation, viz., 'Yavarashi' 'Dhanya madhya' 'Tusa madhya', 'Yavapalla' and 'Sugupta sthana' etc.

These indicate that the fermenting pots should be kept in these places i.e. inside the mess or heap of barley corn or paddy which may either contribute for the safety of the pot or for the prevention of the effect of

temperature variation as it seems that the ancient scholar are aware that the variation in the temperature is most likely to effect the fermentation process. Hence, they evolved above technique to prevent the effect of temperature variation by making the full use of the available facilities and the knowledge at their command.

D) SANDHANA AVADHI (DURATION OF FERMENTATION)

This study has further revealed that the ancient scholars seem to have given due consideration on this point also i.e. how much time would be required for completion of the fermentation process. The literary review revealed that it varies from season to season and preparation to preparation. According to the texts the minimum time limit is of 'seven days' while its maximum time limit is about 'six months'. As regards the different texts there seems to be difference of opinion on this point, viz., in 'Caraka Samhita' the minimum time limit is of 'seven days' which has been followed by 'Samhita' and 'Astanga Sangraha Kara' also, but in 'Astanga Hrdaya' it is of '15

days'. As regards the maximum time limit 'Caraka' mentioned it as '11/2 month', 'Susruta' 4 months', 'Astanga Sangraha' 6 months and 'Astanga Hrdaya' 'one month' and "Astanga Hrdaya' 'one month'. Further there are some Yogas (preparations) in which 'iron' is advised to be added, in all such cases the maximum time limit advised is 'till the metal dissolve completely in the solution' as all the texts have used the term 'Aloha Samksayat' for this which means till the whole metal is lost or dissolved or goes into the solution completely

It may further be mentioned in this connection that where iron is recommended to be used it should be used in powder form only which is done by heating the thin sheets of iron in the strong heat and then dipped in the specified decoctions for several times. No other metal except iron is found recommended for this purpose.

The minimum and the maximum time limit described in different texts for completion of fermentation process is shown in the following table.

TABLE NO.3

Table showing the minimum and maximum time limit for fermentation mentioned in the texts of Brhatrayee.

Sl. No	Name of the texts	Time limit minimum	Time limit maximum
1	Caraka Samhita	7 days	45 days (11/2 months)
2	Susruta Samhita	7 days	120 days (4 months)
3	Astanga Sangraha	7 days	180 days (6 months)
4	Astanga Hrdaya	15 days	30 days (1 month)

Conclusion

1. Initially fermented preparations have been found divided in two groups on the basis of the presence of alcoholic and acidic contents produced as a result of fermentation process i.e Madya and Sukta Vargas.
2. According to 'Susruta' 'Asava' is that in which there is the predominance of Drava' (liquid) while in 'Aristha' there is a predominance of 'Dravyas' (drugs).
3. 'Asavaristha' preparations consist liquids, medicinal powders, sweet substances and Praksepa dravyas as their important constituents.
4. No definite proportion of these constituents could be worked out on the basis of the present study of the texts of 'Brhatrayee'
5. Further it is mentioned in these texts that the fermentation process is quick in summer and delayed in winter. It need minimum seven days and may be extended upto six months.
6. The fermenting pots are made of either earth or metal and should be pasted and fumigated first with the drugs recommended and then be used for fermentation
7. The ancient scholars used to control the effect of temp. variation by using the heap of paddy of barley corn for placing the fermenting pots.

APPENDIX – I

S. No	Asavaristhas of Brhatrayee	Adhikara	References
1.	Abhayaristha		C.Chi. 14/138
2.	"		Su.Chi.6/15
3.	"		A.S.Chi. 10/199
4.	"	Arsa	A.H. Chi. 8/64-67
5.	Amalkaristha	"	A.S.Chi. 10/122
6.	Anantamularishta		Su.Chi. 10/10
7.	Aravadhadi-bhasmasava		Su.Chi. 10/7
8.	Aragvadaristha		C.K. 8/15
9.	"		Su. Chi. 10/7
10.	Astasataristha	Svayathu	A.S. Chi. 19/17
11.	"		C.Chi. 6/46
12.	Bhallatakaristha		
13.	"	Arsa	A.S. Chi. 10/22
14.	Bijakaristha		C.Chi. 16/106
15.	Bijakasararistha	Prameha	A.S. Chi. 18/13
16.	Citrakadyaristha		Su.U. 42/60
17.	Damtuarostja		C.Chi. 14/147
18.	"		Su. Chi. 6/14
19.	"	Arsa	A.S.Chi. 10/22
20.	"	"	A.H.Chi. 8/68-69
21.	Dantyasava		C.Chi.6/45
22.	Dasmularistha	Prameha	A.S.Chi 14/16
23.	Dhatrayaristha	"	C.Chi. 16/111
24.	Duralabhasava	"	C.Chi 15/152
25.	Duralabharistha	Arsa	A.S. 10/21
26.	"	"	A.H.8/70-71
27.	Gandiradyaristha		C.Chi.12/29
28.	Gandiraristha	Pandu	A.S 18/14
29.	Gaudasava		Su.Su. 44/28,30
30.	Gaudaristha		C.Chi. 16/105
31.	Guggulwasava	Arsa	A.S. 10/23
32.	Iksurasasava	"	Su.Su. 45/175
33.	Kanakaristha		C.Chi. 14/168
34.	Kanakabindwaristha		C.Chi.7/76
35.	Khadiraristha		C.Chi.13/188
36.	Lodhrasava	"	C.Chi.6/42
37.	"	Prameha	A.S.14/15
38.	Lodharistha	"	Su.Chi.12/12,19
39.	"	"	A.S.14/17
40.	"	"	A.H.12/29-32
41.	Madhuka		C.Chi. 15/150
42.	Puspasava		A.H.10/51-52
43.	"	Grahani	C.Chi.15/140
44.	Madhukasava	"	A.S. 12/13
45.	"	"	A.H. 10/47-50
46.	Madhwasava	"	C.Chi. 6/41
47.	"	"	C.Chi. 7/74
48.	"	"	Su. Su. 45/174
49.	Madhwaristha		C.Chi. 15/163
50.	Mastwaristha	Pandurog	A.S. 18/15
51.	Mulasava	a	C.Chi.15/156

52	“	Grahani Dosa	A.S. 12/15
53	Mutrasava		Su. Chi. 10/7
54	Nyagrodhadi- Bhaasmasava		Su. Chi. 10/7
55	Nyagrodhady- Aristha		Su. Chi. 10/7
56	Nimbaristha	Kustha	A.S. 21/27
57	Palasabhasma- sava		Su. Chi. 10/7
58	Phalaristha		C.Chi. 14/148
59	Phalatrikadya- ristha		C.Chi. 12/36
60	Pindaristha		Su.Chi. 10/7
61	Pindasava		C.Chi. 15/10
62	Punarnavaristha		C.Chi. 12/34
63	Pippalyadyaristha		Su.Su.45/182
64	Priyangvaristha		S. Chi. 10/10
65	Rodhrasava	Prameha	A.H.12/25-28
66	Salasaradya- Ristha		Su.Chi.10/7
67	Salasaradi- Bhasmasatha		Su.Chi. 10/7
68	Takraristha		C.Chi.15/120
69	“		C.Chi. 14/72
70	“	Grahani Dosa	A.S. 12/5
71	“	Arsa	A.H.8/47
72	Trvrtaristha		C.K. 7/69,71
73	Triphalasava		C.Chi 7/81
74	Tilaksarasava		Su. Chi. 10/7
75	Vrscvadyaristha		Su.Utt.42/46,48

Note- The method of preparation of Lodhrasura resembles with that of Asavaristhas hence the same has been included