

# A Critical Review Of Herbs Of *Varnya Mahakashaya*

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## ABSTRACT:-

The ancient Indian system of medicine is also known as *Ayurveda*. It helps to cure diseases from their roots. This traditional science of India treats not only disease of a patient but also maintain the health of a normal person. *Ayurvedic* herbs play an important role in a holistic approach to health and wellness as well as beauty purpose. In present time, beauty means a-lot to people. Cosmetics and their products sold out frequently in all over world. In today's time, people are aware about their skin. Chemicals used by different companies in their product for skin care which cause side effect on skin after some time. So now people are keenly interested on *ayurvedic* herbs for their skin care usage. *Acharya Charka* explain "fifty *mahakashaya* - each containing a group of 10 herbs" with reference to their pharmacological action. Among the fifty *mahakashaya*, *Varnaya mahakashaya* is well known for the herbs used in cosmetology in modern era. *Varnya mahakashaya* includes *shwet chandan*, *tung (nagkeshar)*, *manjishtha*, *padmak*, *sariva*, *ushir*, *yashtimadhu*, *shyam durva*, *shwet durva*, *payasya*. These plants possess *Madhura*, *tikta*, *kasaya rasa* (sweet-bitter-astringent taste), *sheeta virya* Cold potency), *Madhura vipaka* (sweet post-digestive effect) in nature.

**KEYWORDS:-** *Varnya*, *mahakashaya*, *Charaka samhita*, *rasa-guna-virya-vipaka*, cosmetic, beauty.

## INTRODUCTION

In this world every person has their own identity by face. It is the important part of the body. People always try to protect their skin from harmful substances, so in today's time, cosmetic plays an important role in glowing of skin. In present time a lot of cosmetic products present in the market. But not all products are good. They are made up of harmful chemicals which may cause certain ill-effects on face/skin. *Ayurveda* mentioned lot of herbs in its treatise. These *Ayurvedic* herbs give natural care to skin as well as protect skin from side effects caused by chemicals present in beauty products. In *Charaka Samhita*, *Acharya Charaka* describes 50 *mahakashaya* in 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of *charak sutra-sthana*. *Varnaya* (complexion-improving) stands for *varnya* (complexion) of skin. *Varnya mahakashaya* consists of ten herbal drugs which are used externally as well as internally in different ways. Herbs in *Varnya mahakashaya* includes *shwet chandan*, *tung (nagkeshar)*, *manjishtha*, *padmak*, *sariva*, *ushir*, *yashtimadhu*, *shyam durva*, *shwet durva*, *payasya*. This literary review will throw a light on traditional data and scientific analysis along with *panchbhoutikatwa* (proto-elemental structural composition) of these herbs for their *varnya karma* (complexion improving) narrated in *Charak Samhita*.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study literary view of *Varnya Mahakashaya* of *Charak Samhita*.
2. To review herbs of *varnya mahakashaya* with reference to *ayurvedic* pharmacodynamics.
3. To evaluate *Varnya dravyas* of *Charak Samhita* in cosmetology.
4. To assess herbs of *varnya mahakashaya* for their *Panchbhoutikatwa* (5-protoelemental structure).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS :-

*Varnya mahakashaya* contain ten drugs i.e *Chandan*, *Nagkeshar*, *Padmak*, *Ushir*, *Yastimadhu*, *Manjistha*, *Sariva*, *Payashya*, *Sita* and *Lata*.

**Table No. 1 - Introduction to herbs of *Varnaya mahakashaya*:-**

S.No.	Name	Botanical Name	Family	English Name
1.	CHANDAN <sup>[1,2]</sup>	Santalum album	Santalaceae	Sandal wood
2.	TUNG (Naagkeshar) <sup>[1,3]</sup>	Mesua ferrea	Guttiferae	Cobras saffron
3.	PADMAKA <sup>[1,4]</sup>	Prunus cerasoides	Rosaceae	Biyd cherry
4.	USHIR <sup>[1,5]</sup>	Vetiveria zizanioidis	Graminae	Cuscus grass
5.	MADHUKA <sup>[1,6]</sup>	Glycyrrhiza glabra	Papilionateae	Liquorice root
6.	MANJISTHA <sup>[1,7]</sup>	Rubia cordifolia	Rubiaceae	Indian maddar
7.	SARIVA <sup>[1,8]</sup>	Hemidesmus indicus	Asclepidaceae	Indian sarasa parilla

8.	PAYASYA <sup>[1,9]</sup>	Ipomoea digitata	Convolvulaceae	Giant potato
9.	SWETA DURVA <sup>[1,10]</sup>	Cynodon dactylon	Poaceae	Creeping Dhub grass
10.	❖ SHAYAMA DURVA <sup>[1]</sup>	Unknown		

- ❖ Various types of *Durva* have been described by *Narahari*. They are included in *Shalmalyaadi* group of drugs. *Acharya Yadavji* finds it to be non-controversial drug and identifies it as *Cynodon dactylon* pers. Of *Graminae* order *Nadakarni* calls it *Shweta durva*. He names *Cynodon linearis* as *Neeldurva*. *Balwant Singh & K.C. Chunekar* accept *Shakulaadani* as *Gandadurva* and forward the case of *Alternanthera sessilis* of *Amarantaceae* order to be *Shakulaadane*. *Valli durva* is a variety of *durva* & a creeper like *durva*. It is also called *Maalaadurva* by *Umesh Chandra Gupta*, author of *Vaidyaka Shabdasinghu*. But *Shayama durva* remained unknown or un-identified as it is not discussed in ancient treatises. <sup>[11]</sup>

**Table No. 2 - Properties and Action of herbs-** <sup>[24]</sup>

S.No.	Sanskrit Name	Guna	Rasa	Virya	Vipaka	Dosha karma	Main karma
1.	CHANDAN	Laghu, ruksa	Tikta, Madhura	Sheeta	Katu	Kaphahara, pittahara	Hrdya, durgandhahara, krimighna, varnya, dahaprashana.
2.	TUNG (Naagkeshar)	Ruksha, Laghu	Kasaya, tikta	Usna	Katu	Kaphahara	Varnya, urdhvajatrugarog ahara, vastivatamayghna.
3.	PADMAKA	Laghu	Kasaya, Tikta	Sheeta	Katu	Vatala	Garbhasthapana, ruchya
4.	USHIR	Laghu, snigdha	Madhura, tikta	Sheeta	Madhura	Kaphapittahara, vataghna	Pachna, stambhna, dabaklanti-hara
5.	MADHUKA	Guru, snigdha	Madhura	Sheeta	Madhura	Vatapittajit	Varnya, vrsya, caksusya, balya, raktaprasadana
6.	MANJISTHA	Guru.	Madhura, tikta.	Usna	Katu	Kaphapitta samaka	Varnya, vrsya, krimighna, sothaghna, kusthaghna, rasayana, shonitsathapana, artvajanana, stambhna.
7.	SARIVA	Guru, snigdha	Madhura	Sheeta	Madhura	Tridosanasana	Raktasodhaka, visaghna, deepana, amanasana, jwarahara.
8.	PAYASYA	Guru, snigdha	Madhura	Sheeta	Madhura	Vatapittahara	Varnya, Vrana, balya, stanyavikara, svarya, vrsya, jivaniya.
9.	SWETA DURVA	Laghu	Madhura, kasaya, tikta	Sheeta	Madhura	Kaphapittahara	Rucya, sramsana.

**Table No. 3 - Phyto-chemical constituents of herbs.**

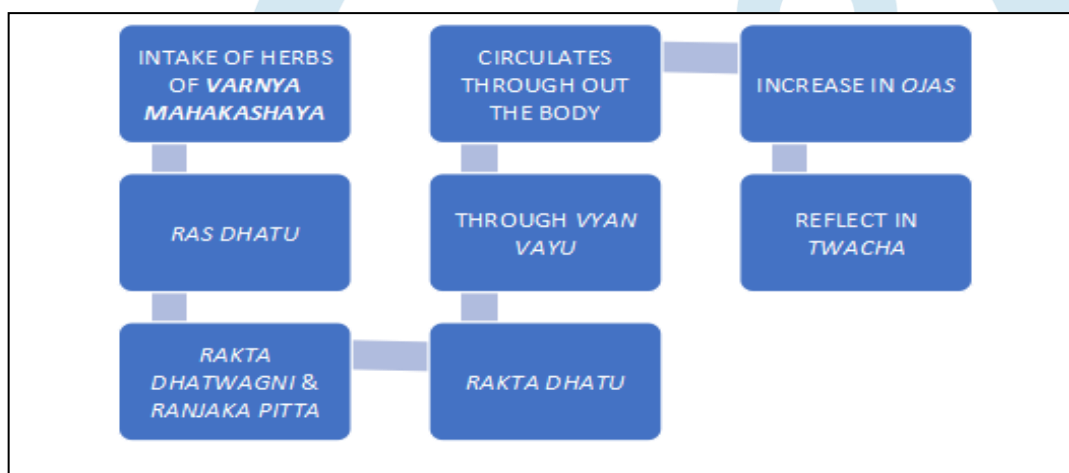
S.No.	Dravya Name	Chemical constituents
1.	CHANDAN <sup>[18]</sup>	Volatile oil (alpha & beta santalol)
2.	TUNG(Naagkeshar) <sup>[14]</sup>	Essential oil & oieo-resin

3.	<i>PADMAKA</i> <sup>[17]</sup>	Flavonoids
4.	<i>USHIR</i> <sup>[19]</sup>	Essential oil
5.	<i>MADHUKA</i> <sup>[21]</sup>	Glycyrrhizin, glycyrrhizic acid, glycyrrhetic acid, asparagine, sugars, resin & starch.
6.	<i>MANJISTHA</i> <sup>[16]</sup>	Glycosides
7.	<i>SARIVA</i> <sup>[13]</sup>	Essential oil, saponin, resin, tannins, sterols & glucosides.
8.	<i>PAYASYA</i> <sup>[20]</sup>	Glycosides, sterols, tannins & fixed oil.
9.	<i>SWETA DURVA</i> <sup>[15]</sup>	Phenolic phytotoxin (ferulic, syringic, vanillic, p-coumaric, p-hydroxybenzoic & o-hydroxyphenil acetic acid), flavonoids.

### Mechanism of action of Varnya Mahakashaya :

(I) There are two mode of action of any drug i.e by external use and by internal use. When we apply herbs of *varnaya mahakshaya* externally then it acts on *bhrajaka pitta* present in skin, which is responsible for the colour of skin. But when we use the same in and as internal usage, it detoxify the blood and improve disorders.

Flow Chart No. 1 - An Ayurvedic Mechanism of Action of herbs of *Varnya Mahakashaya* <sup>[12]</sup>



(II) Sandal wood oil contains anti oxidant that help to maintain the buoyancy and structure of skin cells. Due to essential oil in plants they act as anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, soothing action on face. Glycyrrhizin offers skin lightening and anti-aging benefits. Saponin in plants possess antioxidant effect on the skin and protect it against UV damage. Saponin also act as antiseptic activities. Most of the plants in *varnaya mahakshaya* are anti-oxidant which helps in maintaining the skin's homeostasis.

(III) Table No. 4- *Panchbhautikatwa* (5-proto-elemental structure) of herbs- <sup>[22]</sup>

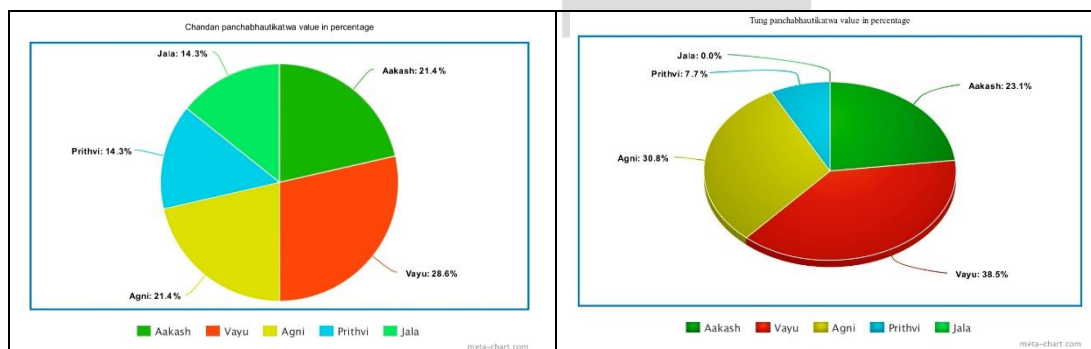
S.No.	Plant name	Guna	Rasa	Virya	Vipaka	Total
1.	CHANDAN	<i>Laghu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash. <i>Ruksa</i> -vayu, agni.	<i>Tikta</i> -vayu, aakash. <i>Madhura</i> -Prithvi, jala.	<i>Sheeta</i> -Prithvi, jala.	<i>Katu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash.	<i>Aakash</i> -3 <i>Vayu</i> -4 <i>Agni</i> -3 <i>Prithvi</i> -2 <i>Jala</i> -2
2.	TUNG (Naagkeshar)	<i>Ruksa</i> -vayu, agni. <i>Laghu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash.	<i>kasaya</i> -Prithvi, vayu <i>tikta</i> -vayu, aakash	<i>Usna</i> -agni.	<i>Katu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash.	<i>Aakash</i> -3 <i>Vayu</i> -5 <i>Agni</i> -4 <i>Prithvi</i> -1 <i>Jala</i> -0
3.	PADMAKA	<i>Laghu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash.	<i>kasaya</i> -Prithvi, vayu <i>Tikta</i> -vayu, aakash	<i>Sheeta</i> -Prithvi, jala.	<i>Katu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash.	<i>Aakash</i> -3 <i>Vayu</i> -4 <i>Agni</i> -2 <i>Prithvi</i> -2 <i>Jala</i> -1
4.	USHIR	<i>Laghu</i> -vayu, agni, aakash. <i>Snigdha</i> -Jala	<i>Madhura</i> -Prithvi, jala.,	<i>Sheeta</i> -Prithvi, jala.	<i>Madhura</i> -Prithvi, jala.	<i>Aakash</i> -2 <i>Vayu</i> -2 <i>Agni</i> -1

			<i>tikta-vayu, Aakash</i>			<i>Prithvi-3 Jala- 4</i>
5.	MADHUKA	<i>Guru- Prithvi, jala. Snigdha- Jala</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Sheeta- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Aakash-0 Vayu-0 Agni-0 Prithvi-4 Jala- 5</i>
6.	MANJISTHA	<i>Guru- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>  <i>Tikta- vayu, aakash</i>	<i>Usna- agni.</i>	<i>Katu- vayu, agni, aakash.</i>	<i>Aakash-2 Vayu- 2 Agni- 2 Prithvi-2 Jala- 2</i>
7.	SARIVA	<i>Guru- Prithvi, jala. Snigdha- Jala</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Sheeta- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Aakash- 0 Vayu-0 Agni-0 Prithvi- 4 Jala- 5</i>
8.	PAYASYA	<i>Guru- Prithvi, jala. Snigdha- Jala</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Sheeta- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Aakash-0 Vayu- 0 Agni- 0 Prithvi- 4 Jala- 5</i>
9.	SWETA DURVA	<i>Laghu- vayu, agni, aakash.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>  <i>kasaya- Prithvi, vayu</i>  <i>Tikta- vayu, aakash</i>	<i>Sheeta- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Madhura- Prithvi, jala.</i>	<i>Aakash-2 Vayu- 3 Agni- 1 Prithvi- 4 Jala- 3</i>
						<i>Aakash- 15 Vayu- 20 Agni- 13 Prithvi- 26 Jala- 27</i>

**Discussion :-**

In *Samhita*, *Acharya Charaka* mentioned ten *dravyas* of *varnya mahakashaya*. *Varnya dravya* maintain skin complexion. These possess *Madhura* (sweet), *tikta* (bitter), *kasaya* (astringent) *rasa* and *sheeta virya* (cold potency). This reduces vitiated *pitta* in our body and detoxify blood in either ways i.e. externally and systemically. Other than skin complexion, *varnya dravyas* have other medicinal uses also like *krimighna* (antelmintics), *sothaghna* (Anti-inflammatory), *kusthaghna* (useful in skin disorders), *rasayana* (anti-oxidant), *shonit-sathapana* (haemostatic), *artvajanana* (emmenagogue).. So, it is concluded that along with maintenance of skin many medicinal uses can be achieved.

**Chart No.1 - Analysis of Panchbhoutikatwa (5-proto-elemental structure) of 10 herbs**



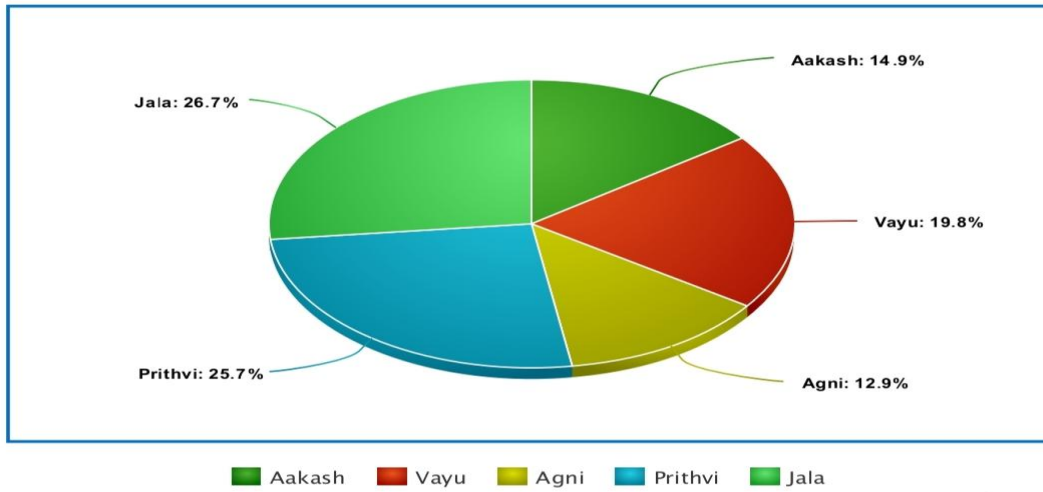


**Conclusion :-**

Ten dravyas of varnya mahakashaya. Varnya dravya maintain skin complexion. These possess *Madhura* (sweet), *tikta* (bitter), *kasaya* (astringent) rasa and *sheeta virya* (cold potency) which not only balances vitiated *pitta* but also detoxifies blood. Also, according to panchbhautiktwa value (5-proto-elemental structure analysis) of all varnaya mahakashaya, herbs are predominant in *jala* and *prithvi mahabhuta*. *Jala mahabhuta* provide *snidgha* (moisturising effect) to the skin where as *Prithvi mahabhuta* gives *shtira* (strengthening effect) to the skin. Moreover, *Vayu mahabhuta* provides *laghuta* (lightness) to the skin, *Aakash mahabhuta* due to *vishadata* enables (clear-off degenerated cells) and provides *mruduta* (softness) to the skin. Lastly, *Agni mahabhuta* provide *roopa* (fairness) to skin.

**Chart No. 2 - Final Assesment of Panchbhoutikatwa (5-proto-elemental structure)-**

Varnya mahakashaya panchabhautikatwa value in percentage



Thus, All the drugs mentioned above are pure herbal and nourishes the skin naturally. They help to pacifying vitiated *pitta dosha* and detoxifying the blood and helps in glowing the skin by the virtue of phytoconstituents as well as their *panchmahabhuta* (proto-elemental structure). Hence, herbs included in *varnya mahakshaya* not only cures the systemic disease underlying in the skin but also best-owes with glorious skin.

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