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Clinical Application of *Haritaki* (*Terminalia Chebula Retz*.) in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Haritaki is the herb that has been used since ancient times as a long-time staple of the Ayurvedic practice. It is often called as King of Medicine. *Haritaki* is traditionally used as a remedy for all *Vata* disturbances, including constipation, emaciation, flatulence and indigestion. While *Haritaki* is so well known for its *rasayana* property, it is actually *Tridoshashamaka*, as it helps bring balance to all three *Doshas*. As a natural laxative and purgative, it removes undigested food and accumulated toxins from the gastrointestinal tract. It strengthens and nourishes the tissues and supports proper function of the colon, lungs, liver and spleen. *Haritaki* is highly revered in India, as it is believed to increase energy, intelligence and awareness. A narrative review was done in order to explore the properties of *haritaki* from the Ayurvedic texts. The review revealed that not only *haritaki* can be used with the mentioned additives (*anupana*), but many other combinations can be made for different diseased conditions. The review also includes the uses of *haritaki* in wide range of diseases as per the clinical experiences of the author.

KEYWORDS: Haritaki, Terminalia chebula Retz., Clinical application, Bhava prakasha

INRODUCTION

Modern science is using many isolated compounds and as a whole drug with various dosages forms and extracts for numerous activities for external and for internal applications, which is not as per the wholesome approach of Ayurveda. Ayurveda has its own way to modify the action of the drugs through different *kalpanas* and different dosage forms. It is a consideration that Ayurveda drugs don't have any contraindications or hazards effect which is not true. Classical texts have mentioned very few of *dravyas* with their contraindications, *Haritaki* being one of them. *Haritaki* (Terminalia chebula Retz.) being a well-known drug in Ayurveda, is known for its wonderful pharmacological properties. *Haritaki* is magical *dravya* with its various marvellous pharmacological properties and activities. Its synonyms clearly explain its various pharmacological properties like as Pathya, Vijaya, shiva etc. Haritaki is mentioned in *prajasthapan* and *garbhasthapangana* by *Acharyacharaka* and *Ashtang*sanigraha still it is *Varjya* (contraindicated) in *Garbhini* (pregnancy) and *Baala* (infants) which shows that *Haritaki* is useful in treatment of *Bandhyatva* but it is not effective after *shukrashonitasanyoga* (conception). Present review work aims at bringing out different combination of *Haritaki* in different diseased conditions as per the specific *prakriti, dosha, dushya, desha, kaala, Sahapaana and Anupana*.

MATERIALS & METHODS:

Manual searching and collection Materials -



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- Charaka Samhita with chakrapanidatta commentary
- Sushruta Samhita with Dalhana commentary
- AshatangaHrudaya with Arundatta Commentary
- AshatangaSangraha with Arundatta Commentary
- Bhavaprakasha Nighantu with Chunekar Commentary
- Sharandhar Samhita with Dipika Commentary
- Pub Med and Google web search regarding Haritaki

METHODS –

- Type of review- Narrative Review.
- All the collected information from the above sources was collected and presented in an organised manner. Discussion was presented as per the correlation of the clinical experience of the author and the result of the review.

RESULTS

General information about Haritaki through varied texts:

Nirukti of the word *Haritaki* means "which cures the disease". The drug has been described by the mode of various synonyms indicating different morphological characters of the plant. Common synonyms include *Vijaya, Abhaya, Rohini, Divya, Putana, Pathya, Amogha* etc.

Synonyms with their meanings and indicative pharmacological and morphological characters have been mentioned below:

Haritaki — born in the abode of Hari (Lord Shiva) on Himalayas

Vijaya- victorious or conquers all the diseases

Rohini — heals the wounds and ulcers

Amrita — having properties like that of amrita,

Abhya — not fearful of any diseases

Amogha — always beneficial

Kayastha — sustains and maintains the body

Pathya — extremely wholesome because of channel clearing property.

Divya — divine in nature due to varied pharmacological actions.

Prananda — aidinghealthy life

Jiva, Jivanti, Jivanika - life promoting

Shreyasi — conferring prosperity

Chetaki— increasing vitality throughout the body.



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Balyi — gives strength to the body.

Taxonomic description of T. chebula Retz. Includes:

Kingdom: Plantae-Plants;

Subkingdom: Tracheobionta-Vascular plants;

Superdivision: Spermatophyta-seed plants;

Division: Magnoliophyta- flowering plants;

Class: Magnoliopsida-dicotyledons;

Subclass: Rosidae;

Order: Myrtales;

Family: Combretaceae-Indian almond family;

Genus: Terminalia L-tropical almond;

Species: T. chebula (Gaertn) Retz.-myrobalan.

Varnacular names of T. chebula Retz. include:

Assamese: shilikha; Bengali: haritaki; English: Chebulic myrobalan; Gujrati: hardi, harde; Hindi: hara; Kannada: alale; Konkani: ordo, hardi; Malayalam: katukka; Manipuri: Manali; Marathi: hirda; Oriya: karadha; Persian: halela; Sanskrit: haritaki; Sindhi: har; Tamil: Kata-K-Kay, Kadukkai; Telegu: Karaka; Urdu: Haejarad.

Habit and Habitat of the plant:

T. chebula is found in the Sub Himalayan tracks from Ravi eastwards to West Bengal and Assam, ascending upto the altitude of 1500 m in the Himalayas. This tree is wild in forests of Northern India, central provinces and Bengal, common in Madras, Mysore and in the southern part of the Bombay presidency.¹Terminalia chebula tree widely grows in the forests of Northern India, Utter Pradesh, and Bengal and is common in Tamil Nadu and in southern Maharashtra. It has been traditionally and medicinally used in Indian system of medicine. Terminalia chebula tree widely grows in the forests of Northern Maharashtra. The fruit of the tree in powder form possesses diverse health benefits and has been used as traditionally and medicine for household remedy against various human ailments since antiquity. It has been traditionally and medicinally used in Indian system of medicine.

Rasa PanchakaofHaritaki:

Rasa (taste) - Except saline all tastes (Rasa) are present

Guna (properties) - Laghu (light), Ruksha (dry)

Virya (potency) – Ushna (Hot)

Vipaka (post digestion effect) - Madhura (Sweet)

Prabhav (benefits) - is helpful to cure *Kustha*, *Gulma*, Udavarta, Pandu, Arsha, *Jwara*, *Premeha*, Anaha etc².



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Types of Haritaki³

There are seven types of *Haritaki* that have been mentioned depending on its existence, which has been enlisted as follows:

- 1. VIJAYA : Available in Vindhya Pradesh, used in all diseases.
- 2. ROHINI : Available inPratish- tanaka, used for effective healing.
- 3. PUTANA : Available in Sindh area, smaller in size with big hard seeds, used for external plastering

4. *AMRITA* : Available in Champa, Bangaladesh area, used as Panchakarma (Detoxification, body purifier).

5. ABHAYA : Available in Champa, Bangladesh area, more effective for Ophthalmic use

6. JIVANTI : Available in Saurastra region of Gujarat, used for all diseased conditions broadly.

7. CHETAKI : Available in Jammu and Himachal Pradesh, More laxative than Others.

Rituharitaki⁴

To attain the vitalizing action of *Haritaki*, Ithas been mentioned to be taken with different *Anupana* (additives) which enhances the effectiveness of *Haritaki* according to season. *RituHaritaki* is as follows:

Ritu	Characteristics of <i>Ritu</i>	Corresponding	Anupanaof Haritakiin accordance with	
		months in		
		contemporarycalendar		
			Ritu	
Shishira	Sheeta, ruksha,	Magha	Pippali	
	vatavardhakaagnivardhaka	(January- February)		
Vasanta	Snigdha, Madhura,	Falguna Chaitra	Madhu	
	Shleshmakara (Madhura-	(March- April)		
	sheeta, guru, snigdha)			
Greeshma	Ruksha, atikatu, pittakara	Vaishakha	Guda	
	(Katu-laghu, ruksha,	(May)		
	ushna, teekshna)			
Pravritta	Ushna, vaashpayukta	Jyeshtha, aashadha	Guda	
		(June-July)		
Varsha	Sheeta, vidahkrit, vatkrit,	Shrawan, Bhadrapada	Saindhava	
	agnimandyakrit.	(August)		
Sharada	Ushna, pittakrit,	Ashwina, kartika	Sharkara	
	madhyamabala	(September- October)		
Hemanta	Sheeta, snigdha, Madhura,	Margsheersha, pausha	Shunthi	
	jatharagnikrita	(November- December)		



Special properties of different forms of *Haritaki* in different dosage forms :

Haritaki if chewed it increases agni (stimulates appetite and increases digestive fire), if it taken in powdered form, it has*malashodhana* effect (laxative effect), boiled *Haritaki* has *sangrahi* effect (anti diarrhoeal effect), fried *Haritaki* pacifies *Tridosha*, *Haritaki* with meals is beneficial for intellectual power and for the better perception from the sense organ and after meals it cures disease due to wrong dietary habits and imbalance in three biological humours (*Tridosha*). Haritaki when taken with *Saindhava* (rock salt) is helpful in alleviating *Kapha*, with *sharkara* helpful in alleviating Pitta, with *ghee* helpful in alleviating *Vata*, and with guda (jaggery) it is helpful in broadly all the conditions.

Contraindication to take *Haritaki* :

The individuals, who are suffering from indigestion, taking dry and spicy food for a long time, physically weak people who have low strength and immunity due to excessive and regular sexual activities, alcohol consumption and intake of poison, in the condition of excessive hunger, thirst and heat stroke; should not use *Haritaki* in any form.

Therapeutic Wonder of *Haritaki*⁵

Haritaki is a benevolent drug for mankind and varied *Gunas* (pharmacological qualities) of *Haritaki* have been very elaborately mentioned by *AcharayaCharaka* in *ChikitsaSthana*. It is (good for general health⁶), eliminates doshas from body, does the *Dipana* (stimulates the power of digestion), & *pachana* (carminative). It is an excellent anti – geriatric and anti-ageing drug. It bestows longevity & nourishment throughout the body. It eradicates all diseases and promotes intellect, sense perception and vitality. It has been mentioned to cure *kushtha, gulm, udavarta, shosha, pandu, mada, arsha*. It also clears various types of obstructions in the channels of circulation through *srotoshodhana* and makes it devoid of the toxic metabolites of undigested food, so much so that it reaches its clearance upto the mental level thereby promoting memory as well as intellect.

Haritaki has been reported to be extensively used in the preparation of many Ayurvedic formulations for the treatment of various infectious diseases of human beings. Haritaki fruits are beneficial for the five senses as they improve their receiving powers. It has laxative, rejuvenate, purgative, astringent and dry properties. The paste gives relief to the eyelids, in case of conjunctivitis. It is used as eyewash, for relief from various eye-infections. It serves as a good astringent for loose gums, bleeding and ulceration in gums. The herb is used in preparing 'Triphala' that is used for hair wash, brush teeth in pyorrhoea. It is a good nervine tonic and helps in nervous weakness and nervous irritability and promotes the receiving power of the five senses. Its fruit pulp increases the oxygen levels of the blood, thereby promoting longevity of tissues. The paste of its fruit is effective in reducing swelling, hastening the healing process and cleansing the wounds and ulcers. Gargling with haritaki decoction helps in stomatitis, oral ulcers and sore throat. It responds well to gastrointestinal ailments, tumours, ascites, piles, enlargement of liverspleen, worms and colitis. Haritaki helps in improving appetite and helps in digestion. Since it is anti-inflammatory and astringent, it is helpful in urethral discharges like spermatorrhea and vaginal discharges like leucorrhoea. Regular consumption of haritaki powder, fried in ghee, promotes longevity and boosts energy. Powdered *haritaki*, mixed with jaggery, works well in gout. Its powder, when mixed with honey and ghee, is an effective remedy for anaemia. Its decoction, when taken along with honey, is of great help in hepatitis and obesity. The herb improves memory and is salutary in dysuria and urinary stones. A half teaspoon of fruit pulp powder when ingested every night followed by a little warm water



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is used for healing ulcers (of both mouth and stomach) and wounds. Gargling with a decoction made from the fruits is very good for fighting oral ulcers, stomatitis and sore throat. *Haritaki* fruit, mixed with dry ginger powder and hot water, is used for treating asthma and hiccups. These fruits are used for fighting many digestive disorders such as flatulence, distension and parasitic infections. A decoction of this fruit is used to fight against hepatitis and obesity. It is useful in skin disorders with discharges, like allergies. It is used to treat chronic fever. On long term use, it is helpful in gaining weight in the emaciated persons and in losing weight in obese persons. When taken with meals it sharpens the intellect, increases strength, stimulates the senses, and expels the urine, stool and other waste materials from the body. It saves the person from the vitiating effects of bodily humours. *Haritaki* reduces the ill effects of fat rich, creamy and oily food. *Haritaki* is the definite aid for persons who habitually overeat. It reduces lipid deposits in the blood and liver. When consumed with honey, it helps reduce cholesterol.

DISCUSSION

1. Discussion on Rituharitaki -

Human beings are invariably affected by various seasonal variations and this has been very well understood by the *Ayurveda Acharyas*. Invariably all the treatment modalities explained in *Ayurveda* have been mentioned in accordance with the *Ritu* (seasonal variation). The herb carrying the maximum pharmacological properties has been mentioned to be taken with different *Anupana* (additives) in accordance with the seasonal variation under the term '*Rituharitaki*'. Whole year has been divided into two divisions namely *Aadanakala* and *visarga kala*. *Aadanakaala* includes *shishira*, *vasanta* and *grishma* wherein the atmosphere lacks *snigdhaguna* thereby making the atmosphere dry. *Visarga kaala* includes *varsha*, *sharada*, *hemanta* wherein the atmosphere has much of *snigdhaguna* thereby making the atmosphere moist. The table below explains the rationale behind the specific *anupana* of *Haritaki* in accordance with the seasonal variation.

S.	Ritu	Ritugun	Anupanaguna	Dosha	Haritaki+Anupana
No.		a		conditionin the	Outcome
				body	
1	Varsha	Sheeta,	Saindhava	Pitta vridhidue	Pitta sanchayapratishedha,
		ruksha	Rasa- lavana,	to <i>amla bhava</i>	haritakirukshaushnaguna
			veerya- sheeta,	Vatavridhidue to	shaman bysaindhava.
			vipakamadhur	sheetaruksha	Effect on Koshtha –
			aGuna- laghu,		kledapuravaka sara
			snidha		and vatas hamana
					Effect on shakha-
					snigdhakledapurvakaruksh
					anapratishedha
2	Sharada	Ushna,	Sharkara	Vatashamana,	Sara gunavridhi, increased
		pittakara	Rasa-madhura	pitta	Pitta virechana, avasishtha
			Veerya-sheeta	<i>prakopa</i> due	pitta shamana.
			Vipaka-	to <i>kleda</i> ,	Effect on Koshtha-
			Madhura	dravaguna;	rechanapurvakasarak
			Guna- dhatu	agnimandyaand	Effect on Shakha-



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3	Hemanta	Snigdha, Sheeta	balakara, manda, mridu Shunthi Rasa- Katu Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Madhura Guna- Laghu, Snigdha.	balahraas KaphaSanchaya	Madhura rasa vipaka, snigdhaaushanyapratished hapurvaka. Atideepana, gamitwavardhana, stambhanashana Effect on koshtha- Anulomana Effect on shakha- Dhatu poshanadue to teekshoshnasnigdhagunain
4	Shishira	AtiSheet a and Ruksha	Pippali Rasa- Katu Veerya-ushna Vipaka- Madhura Guna-Laghu, Ushna, Teekshna, Snigdha, Kleda	Vataincreases due to Kaphasanchaya andsheetaruksha guna	combination ShaityaPratishedha, stambhanashana, raukshayanashana. Effect on koshtha- Anulomanasaukrya Effect on shakha- Rasayana karma, stambhanashanapurvaka
5	Vasanta	Snigdha, Madhura , Madhya maRuksh a	Madhu Rasa- madhura Kashaya Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Mudhura Guna- Laghu, Ruksha, Chedana, Lekhana, Yogavaahi	Kaphavargeeya Kledaincreases andKaphaprako padue toUshnaandsnig dhaguna.	Paichilyanashanadue to aided rukshaguna, Effect on koshtha- paichhilyanashanapurvaka anulomana. Effect on shakha- paichhilyanashanapurvaka dhatuprasadana.
6	Greeshm a	AtiRuksh a	Guda Rasa- Madhura Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Madhura Guna- Guru Snigdha	Vatasanchayaan dKaphaShaman a	Vatasanchayapratishedha Effect on koshtha- rukshanapratishedhapurva kaanulomana Effect on shakha- snehanapurvakasantarpana



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7	Pravritta	Ushna, Vaashpa yukta	Guda Rasa- Madhura Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Madhura Guna- Guru, Snigdha, Vishada	Ruksha, Ushna	Pitta sanchayapratishedha, haritakirukshaushnaguna shaman by saindhava. Effect on Koshtha – kledapuravaka sara andvatashamana Effect on shakha- snigdhakledapurvakaruksh anapratishedha
			Vishada		anapratishedha

2) Discussion on various other combinations (Anupana/sahapaana) of Haritaki

Based on the above results as obtained after the review, more combinations were reviewed for *Anulomana* action and used successfully clinically, as mentioned below:

- Haritaki which is Kashayapradhanapancharasa, madhuravipaka, laghu, rukshaguna, and ushnavirya. Pippalimula is katu rasa, katuvipaka, laghu, teekshna, rukshaguna, and ushnavirya. The conditions of Aanaha require Anulomanachikitsa thereby preventing the diseases of mahamarma. Pippalimula is prime aanahaprashmanadrug as mentioned in charaka Samhita and aanaha/udavarta is the main etiology behind trimarma diseases. Haritaki when coupled with **pippalimula**, help prevent the diseases of trimarmai. eshira, hridya and basti. Pippalimula is the drug of choice as an adjuvant with haritaki for such conditions owing to its anulomana, deepana and pachana property.
- *Haritaki* being *Kashaya pradhanapanchrasa, madhuravipaka, laghu, rukshaguna and ushnavirya.* The properties of *shunthi* such as *deepana, pachana* and *grahi*are useful in the conditions of increased *kleda*, when coupled with *haritaki*.It also stimulates *Vatakaphaghna* action thereby completing *anulomana* action of haritaki. Both the drugs exert *vrishya* effect through *vishudhadhatuparinamana* in long run when used in combination.
- *Haritaki* when combined with *yavani* which is bestowed with the properties like *deepana*, *pachana*, *vatanulomana*, *shulaprashmana* and *snigdhaguna* aids the *anulomana* action of *haritaki* in the conditions of *gulma* and *aadhmana*. Addition of *yavani* helps clear the *srotosangha* and *aavaranbhedana* thereby completing the *anulomana* as well as*srotoshodhana*.
- *Haritaki* when coupled with *gaumutra*, results into *anulomana* as well as *tridoshashamana*. *Gaumutra* because of its *teekshnaguna* is used in extreme conditions of *tridoshaprakopa*. When added to *haritaki*, the combination removes the amalgam for all *santarpanothavyadhi* through the coupled *teekshana* action of *gaumutra*.
- *Haritaki* when combined with *saindhava* exerts *stotoshodhana* action due to the *kledan* property of *saindhava*, thereby clearing the channels, in the conditions of extreme dryness caused by *vata*. *Saindhava* when combined with *haritaki*, not only balances *rukshatwa* of *vata*, but also helps *nirapadaanulomana* at both *koshthav* and *shakha* level.



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- *Haritaki* when combined with **guda** (*jaggery*), *becomes anulomana with sarvadoshaprashmana* effect. *Guda* has *snigdhaguna* and *yogawaahi* property which makes the *haritaki*to carry its *anulomana* action smoothly without any *dhatu apkarshana*.
- *Haritaki* when given with the combination of *sharkara*, yields specific action on *pitta prakriti* individuals. The *ushnaguna* of *haritaki* is balanced by *sheetaguna* of *sharkara* which becomes drug of choice for *pitta prabalya* conditions.
- *Haritaki* when given with the combination of *draksha*, increases the *anulomana*as well as *sransana* action in the body. Hence this combination becomes the drug of choice in*mridu prakriti* individuals. *Sara guna* of *draksha* aids smooth *rechana* in the body thereby excreting *sanchita mala* too. The overall *anulomana* and *sransana* action of the combination, helps excrete the long standing *sanchita mala* and *sransana*.

3) Discussion of pharmacological properties of Haritaki

Haritaki has been mentioned to have multiple system effect accounting to its various references across the lexicons. It is *Kashaya pradhanapancharasa* along with *Ushnavirya*, which makes it not only *Deepana* but also *Anulomana*. It is specialised with efficient *kledashodhana* property, which removes the amalgam for any kind of further *srotorodha*. The diseases hence produced due to *srotorodha* are cured, and *dhatu parinaman* is regulated. The properties like *medhya, brihaneeya, aayushya, kaas, shwas, premeha, kushtha, vishamjwara, krimi* hence come to the drug naturally because the drug is efficient *kledavishodhaka*. *Haritaki* having *sukshmaguna*, removes all the toxins from the body, clears the channels being called as *pathya*, hence finds its suitability as *chakshushya, rasayana, brihaneeya* etc. The drug being the best *anulomana* as per *sharangdhara* finds its efficient role in conditions like *mutrakrichha, gulma, kamla, arsha, udara, grahni, chardi and yakrit* etc.*Haritaki* is a potent drug in digestion of *Aama* (undigested metabolites), does proper *sara kittavibhajana* at the cellular level and hence is the drug of choice in cluster of diseases.

CONCLUSION

Haritaki is a broadspectrum drug in Ayurveda pharmacopoeia carrying varied pharmacological properties. Being a potent *Anulomana* drug, it not only is the drug of choice in GI System disorders, but also becomes a synergetic drug in reversing varied system pathologies. The synonym *Pathya* given to it accounts to its varied pharmacological properties, action on almost all systems of the body, clearing the channels throughout the body, aiding *Aayu* by its *Rasayana* property. The prior mention of the drug in *Bhavprakash Nighantu*, and *Charakachikitsasthana* are well known supportive evidences exhibiting the special status of the drug. Young *Vaidyas* and clinicians are therefore encouraged to analyse and include the drug in their clinical practice for its wide variety of clinical actions.

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