

## Rasa Hridaya Tantra - A Critical Analysis

### Review article

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### Abstract

*Rasa Shastra* is an important branch of *Ayurveda* developed for achieving alchemical and therapeutic benefits from Mercury and other minerals and metals. Texts during and just following the period of *Acharya Nagarjuna* reveals that, the practice of metals and minerals for alchemical purpose were more developed than their use in therapeutics. But gradually with the passing of time alchemical use of materials decreases and their use in therapeutics take over. *Rasa Hridaya Tantra* is a unique text among a huge number of *rasa* literatures, which gives elaborate description of 18 special mercurial processing techniques (*Astadasa parada Samskara*). This manuscript is presented with a guideline, how to make Mercury competent for transmuting base metals into a noble one and to produce therapeutic benefits with them. This book serves as an important reference text for the researchers of traditional system of medicines for designing and development of new drugs, out of mineral sources, following the transmuting property of Mercury.

**Key Words:** Alchemy, Metals, Minerals, *Sanskara*, Mercury, *Avabodha*.

### Introduction:

Human beings have instinctual habits to discover new things from unexplored field. In this sequence the knowledge of therapeutic and alchemical use of metals and minerals come out and serve the society. Since *Vedic* period, the therapeutic uses of mineral materials are known to the society. In *Atharva Veda*, methods of treatment have been classified in to four groups, viz. (a) *Athervani* (b) *Angirasi* (c) *Daivi* and (d) *Manushi*. The third variety i.e. *Daivi chikitsa* has been

explained in the subsequent *Rasa* texts to be dealing with metallic, including mercurial preparations for the preservations as well as promotion of positive health and to cure the diseases. No any descriptions of metallic transformation of base metal into noble metal are available in the text before 4<sup>th</sup> Cen. AD. A significant reference of Alchemy is only made available as *Rasa viddha suvarna* in the *Artha Shastra* of Kautilya during the 4<sup>th</sup> Cen.AD. Nagarjuna, the important profounder of Indian alchemy in 7-8 century A.D. did great effort to make mercury suitable for preparation of noble metals like gold and silver from ordinary metals. *Rasa Hridaya Tantra* is the most ancient available *Rasa* text of post Nagarjuna period. 18 special processing techniques of Mercury, use of specially processed Mercury in metallic

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transformation and use of metals/minerals including Mercury for making the body strong and disease free are the subject matter of this text. After analyzing the said text critically, it is observed that the text *Rasa Hridaya Tantra* is mainly based on *Lohavada* although the author has also accepted the importance of metals and minerals in metabolic transformation i.e. in *Dehavada*.

#### **About Author:**

In 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. *Acharya Govinda Bhagavatpada*, the preceptor of *Sankaracharya*, the illustrious profounder of *Advaita Vedanta*, authored this *Rasa Hridaya Tantra* which provides elaborative description of the processing of Mercury both for *loha siddhi* (metallic transformation i.e. formation of noble metal from the base metal) and *deha siddhi* (metabolic transformation i.e. make the body strong and healthy which leads to salvation). His father was *Sri Sumano Vishnu* and grandfather was *Sri Magal Vishnu* (1). *Acharya Govinda Bhagavatpada* was *Raja vaidya* of *Sri Madan*, king of *Kirata*. On request of king this text was composed by him. This text was published by *Krishna Gopal Ayurveda Bhawan, Dharmartha Trust, Ajmer, Rajasthan* in 1952. Before this, it was published twice in *Sanskrit*. But presently both editions are not available.

#### **Subject Matter of Rasa Hridaya Tantra:**

After going through the subject matter of *Rasa Hridaya Tantra*, it is found that the whole text is completed in 19 specific chapters known as *Avabodha*. The whole book is mainly based on the 18 specialized processing techniques of Mercury i.e. *Samskara*. However it is more of a text of *Alchemy* than *medical treatise*.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Avabodha:**

- This chapter starts with invocation of Lord Shiva, Properties of *murchhita*, *baddha* and *mrita*

*Parada*, along with Importance of *Rasa Siddha*, significance of *deha-siddhi* for strong and stable body.

- Superiority of *Parada* over other *rasayana* drugs. Importance of strong and stable body to achieve salvation, and necessity of *abhraka satva jarana* in *Parada* for strong and stable body are described at the end of this chapter.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Avabodha:**

- Description, procedure and significance of *Ashta-dasha samskara*, importance of *deepan samskara* for making *Parada grasartha* (able to accept mineral/metals in liquid form for complete digestion) are found in this chapter. While describing the significance of *grasartha parada* the author has the opinion that only *grasartha parada* can ingest silver or gold for *sweta* or *peeta karma*.

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Avabodha:**

- In 3<sup>rd</sup> *Avabodha* importance of *Abhraka jarana* is advocated before *sweta* or *peeta karma* and also it is said, that *Parada* attains more thermo stability after *abhraka jarana* than compared with stability attained by fomentation of *Parada* with *amla*, *kshara* and *lavana varga*.
- Here it is described that *abhraka* should be triturated with *vasana drugs* (drugs containing volatile oils) or *sandhana* drugs before going to *charana* of *abhraka* in *Parada*.
- *Abhraka bhasma* is used for *grasa* of *Parada* and its amount may be equal, double, four, eight, sixteen or thirty two times of *parada*. Other than this *Sudha Naga* or *Vanga* are used for *rasa karma (grasa)* after processed with *aranala*.

- In the context of *charana* two types of *charana* i.e. *samukha* & *nirmukha* are described along with the three characteristics of *charana* i.e. *Grasa*, *pisti* and *garbha*.
- *Tapta lauha khalva* is recommended for *mardana* and *dola yantra* is used for *charana* of *abhraka* in *parada*.
- In this chapter author gave an important conclusion by admitting that *Abhraka satva* alone cannot be consumed by Mercury. Hence a *dwandwa* of *Abhraka* and *Makshika satva* is must and only can be accepted (digested) by Mercury.
- Importance of *Gandhaka* in *Ranjana karma*, Making *Parada* capable for *Jarana* of *beej* i.e. *swarna* & *raja* and *pakchhachhedana* (making parade stable) of *Parada* are described towards the end of the chapter.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- This chapter is mainly deal with *Abhraka*. Amongst the 4 varieties of *Abhraka* i.e. *Krishna*, *Rakta*, *Peeta* and *Sweta*, *Krishna abhraka* is considered suitable for *satvapatan* and *lohavada* (extraction of *satwa* i.e. metallic part for using as *beej* in mercurial processing). The author also described the acceptable features for *krishnabhraka* i.e. it remains un-reacted on heat and considered the best for *rasayana karma* and *loha karma*.
- Also it is told that *Abhraka satva* is ingested by *Parada* instead of *Abhraka bhasma*, through the process of *jarana* and only *Abhraka satva* can make mercury thermastable ( making mercury stable at room temperature i.e. *Paksha chhinna Parada* or losing the fluidity property of *parada*)

- *Satvapatana* of *Abhraka*: *Swedana* in *swarasa* or *kwath* of *suryavartadi drugs* then *bhavana* with drugs of *Panhagavya* and then subjected to fire.
- 7 methods of preparation of *Abhraka satva* for *charana* in Mercury is described *suryavartadiyoga*, *panchgavya* etc. are used for the purpose.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- 5<sup>th</sup> Avabodha is a small one here the description of different drutis along with their Importance in *jarana* Sanskara, necessity of *makshika savta* in *garbha druti* is found.
- Use of *shodhita Swarna*, *shodhita Rajat*, along with *Vanga* and *Yashada bhasma* in *garbhadruti* or *vahyadruti* following 18 methods of *Swarna beej* & 2 methods of *Rajat beej* preparation suitable for *garbhadruti* are described.

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- The name of this chapter is *Jarana*. Characteristics of optimum *jarana*, Description of *dandadhari Parada* use of *dola Yantra* and *Kachhapa yantra grassa* (Ingestion) in *Jarana* Process.
- It is said that after *grass* of 1/64 part of *Abhraka*, *Parada* become *dandadhari* and ingestion of 1/16 part of *abhraka*, *Parada* can be cut by knife.
- Here Description of *Parada* and *Abhraka jirna Parada* is found and also it is advised that *beej* (*swarna*, *rajata* etc...) *Jarana* should be followed by *Abhraka jarana*.

#### 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- In these chapters of *Bida-vidhana* and *Rasa-Ranjana* 4 types of *bida*, 17 Types of *Rasa Ranjaka* and the

quantitative ratio of *bida* with respect to *parada* (1/8 part of *Parada*) are described.

- Importance of *beeja*, objective assessment criteria for *Abhrakajeerna parada* with respect to color i.e. resembles like colour of *Abhraka Satva* is described. Also it is said that *Abhraka satva* is 8 times more potent than *Abhraka bhasma*, *Abhraka druti* is 8 times more potent than *Abhraka satva*, *Abhraka beej Jarana* is 8 times more potent than *Abhraka druti*.

### 9<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- In this *Avabodha* of *beeja-vidhana*, *shodhana* method of different *beeja*, *rasa uparasa dhatu* etc. and materials used for these procedures' are described. Also it is declared that *ashodhita* (≈unpurified) *beeja* causes *Patangi dosha* in *Parada*.
- In this chapter author classified different materials under different groups such as *rasa verga*, *uparasa verga*, *sara loha*, *loha verga*, *puti loha* etc.
- *Vaikranta*, *Kantapashana*, *Sasyaka*, *Makshika*, *Vimala*, *Silajita*, *Hingula* and *Rasaka* are grouped under *Rasa Varga*. *Gandhaka*, *Gairika*, *Kasisa*, *Haratala*, *Manahsila*, *Sphatika*, *Anjana* and *Kankustha* are included under *Uparasa verga*. *Swarna* and *Rajat* is named as *Sara loha*, *Tamra*, *Pittala*, *Tikshna loha*, *Kanta loha*, *Abhraka* and *Munda loha* is included under *loha* and *Naga*, *Vanga* is grouped under *Putiloha*.
- *Abhraka* is considered under *lohaverga*.

### 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- The names of the chapters are *Satva nirgama* and *Beej nirvahana* respectively.
- In these chapters mostly regarding *satva* (metallic essence) and *dwandwa* (compounding of metal) are described.
- Here the author have the opinion that *satva* of any mineral can make *dwandwa* with *satva* of some other material or with some different *dhatu* and the *dwandwa* thus formed can be ingested by *parada* very easily.
- In this context two methods of *makshika satva* extraction are described and *satva* found are copper coloured (*Tamra varna*) as like *sasyak satva* and the process is called *Satvapatana* also it is said that the colour of other minerals are *Louha varna*.
- In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter characteristic features of *Makshika satva* and *Nirvahana* material for transformation of lower metal into *swarna* or *rajata* used should be *naga* (Pb) and *vanga* (Sn) respectively.
- The description of the materials for preparation of *musa* (crucible) like mud, *ajasthi*, *vatsnabha* and *gunja* are the uniqueness of this chapter.

### 12<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- As the name of this chapter, *Dwandwa-melana* signifies here the methods of *dwandwa-melana* (mixing of two different metallic essences two forms a differently active compound/ mineral) with different *dhatu* or with other *satva* is described. Also four *dwandwa-melapaka* formulations are described.
- *Makshika*, *Haratala*, *Kantapashana*, *Manahsila*, *Naga bhasma* etc. are the *dwandwa-*

*melapaka* materials in which *kantapashana* is said to be best one.

### 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- In these chapters of *Sankarbeeja vidhana* and *Rasabeeja nirmana* a total types of 64 types of *sankarbeeja* are described with different *dhatu-dhatu, dhatu-satva*.
- 10 incineration process of *Parada* and 5 methods of *Rasabeeja nirmana* are described along with importance of drugs of *Rasa Niyamaka* (materials which can control the mercury) group in incineration of *Parada*.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- In the 15<sup>th</sup> *Avabodha* i.e. *bahyadruti* chapter, methods of preparing *druti* (liquefaction) of different metals, minerals, gems, minor-gems are described. 4 methods for *Abhraka satva druti*, 2 methods for *Swarna druti*, *Tikshna loha druti*, *Makshika druti* are described.
- Some of the *druti Melapaka Yoga* described are *Krishna Tagar*, *Kasturi*, *Sweta chandan*, *Rasona*, *Hingu*, etc. are mixed with *Parada* and triturated with *Stri artava* and *palash beej* to achieve the *druti*.
- It is told that *parada* becomes *satavedhi* after equal amount of *druti charana-jarana*, *sahastra vedhi* after double amount of *druti charana-jarana*, *laksha-vedhi* after four times of *druti charana-jarana*, *kotivedhi* after six times of *druti charana-jarana*, *dhumavedhi* after 16 or 32 or 64 times of *druti charana-jarana*.

### 16<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- In *sarana* chapter it is said that even after *jarana* and *ranjan*, the potency of mercury is not adequate

for *loha* and *deha siddhi*. To make it adequately potent It is necessary that this mercury, after *ranjana* should undergo *sarana sanskara*.

- For *sarana*, a special type of *beej* called *vajra beej* and oil called *Sarana* oil is described.
- 7 methods of *sarana sanskara* along with method of *sarana* oil preparation are mentioned and 3 types of *Sarana sanskara* are mentioned i.e. *sarana, pratisarana, anusarana*. Also it is said that equal, double, triple quantity of *vajra beej* was used in *sarana, pratisarana and anusarana* respectively.
- Describing the properties of above 3 types of *sarana* it is said that *sarya, prati* and *anusarya Parada* are *satavedhi, sahastravedhi* and *ayutavedhi* respectively. *Jarana* is said to be necessary after each *sarana*.

### 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- The names of these chapters are *kramana* and *vedha* respectively.
- In *kramana sanskara* mercury becomes capable of entering into each and every atom of the metal. Without *kramana sanskara*, mercury does not convert the base metals into noble one like gold and silver. 7 *kramana* formulations are mentioned in 17<sup>th</sup> chapter.
- In the reference of *vedha sanskara*, It is said here that, due to result of *sarana* and *kramana Parada* may enters into the metals but could not reflects their properties.
- *Hemakristi* of *Rajat* is prepared by repeatedly *avapa* of *Tamra bhasma* in to molten *rajat* and 5 methods of *hemakristi* is mentioned in 18<sup>th</sup> chapter.
- In 18<sup>th</sup> chapter it is described that *Parada* used for *vedha karma* should be *sata, sahastra* or

*kotivedhi*. And definition of *kunta* and *lepavedha* are described.

- Description of 2 methods of *sita swarna vedha* and 3 types of *swarna beej* which are used for methods of potentiating the colour are described.
- 2 methods for *Taravedha*, 1 method for *Ghoshavedha* and 1 method for *ghoshakrita Tamra* are described.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Avabodha:

- *Bhakshana vidhana* makes the body of an individual suitable for the administration of processed mercury for the purpose of rejuvenation and for attaining salvation.
- In this chapter 2 types of *kshetrikarana* formulations are described along with *Rasayana*, *Netra Rasayana*, *Kusthahara*, *Peenasanasaka yoga* are described.
- Description of use of *Arota Parada*, *Parada bhasma* and *kalkbadhha parada* as *Rasayana*. Description of use of Purified *Abhraka*, *Abhraka bhasma* and *Abhraka satva* as *Rasayana*.
- Description of use of congenital and non congenital diet during *Rasayana* therapy Characteristics of *Rasajirna* and 4 formulations to destroy it are found in this chapter.
- Effect of *Rasayana* therapy and description of 4 types of *Vati* (tablets) i.e. *Amar Sundari Gutika*, *Vajrani Gutika*, *Khechari Gutika* and *Mrita Sanjivani Gutika*.

### Characteristics of Rasa Hridaya Tantra:

- The text provides elaborate description of specialized processing of *Parada* for *loha* and *deha siddhi*.
- The text is enriched with treasure trove of Alchemical methods.

- The way of description of the subject matter is quite easier with simple language and expression.
- Materials used in different processing of *Parada* are very well classified in different groups.
- Description and use of different *yantra* and *musha* in context of *Parada* processings.

### Demerits of the Text:

- The text is limited only on *Parada* processings.
- No description of *Paribhasa* is found
- Classification of the materials of *rasa shastra* in different groups like *rasa verga*, *uparasa verga* etc. are found at the middle of the text which seems uncoordinated.
- Therapeutic uses of material other than *Parada* are hardly available.
- Very limited description of *yantra* and *musha* are available in the text.
- The text is hardly having any opinion for the future trend of the system and eccentric about the alchemical use.

### Discussion:

This text was in public at about 9<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD, in that time herbal medicines are predominately used for therapeutics in comparison to medicines of mineral origin. The alchemical processings of metal/minerals centering *parada* (mercury) was the trend of society, rather than its therapeutic use, that has been reflected in the text. This text is dominating with alchemical processings and some few therapeutic processings and indications of *parada* are described towards the later part of the book. In the whole texts many technical terms such as *bid*, *jarana*, *beeja* etc. are used and defined in a dispersive manner but as like texts of 13<sup>th</sup> Cen AD and onwards a special chapter of

*paribhasa* (glossary of technical terms) is not described. Many were also the technical terms used are remain undefined or unclear. In this text 18 *Samskara* of *Parada* are described and stress is given on the alchemical use. In the initial part of the book the author has described many methods for making the *parada* thermostable. And these methodologies with alterations may be used for designing of new drugs of therapeutic importance. After *parada*, *abhraka* and *makshika* are used in this text in a descriptive manner in comparison to other materials, and their combined importance are highlighted for alchemical use which may be thought for therapeutic use and the author have also trying to indicate this slowly. In this text very peculiar process like *dwandwana*, *dwandwa-melapa* are described in the context of *jarana*, the idea can be used to facilitate the synthetic preparation of raw materials, as in today's era in many cases raw materials became rare. Description of different *beeja* and their applications are also found in the text. It can be underlined that the classification of the materials of *rasa shastra* in different groups like *rasa verga*, *uparasa verga* etc. are found at the middle of the text. Descriptions of *druti* are the magnitude of this book. Description of some therapeutic indications at the end of the book justifies that this text is alchemy dominated.

**Conclusion:**

Very systematic description of *Astadasha samskara* of *Parada* (eighteen

specialized processing techniques of Mercury) are described in this text not only aimed for metallic transformation (formation of noble metal from the base metal) but also for metabolic transformation by which body can be strong and healthy which leads to salvation. The book could prove beneficial for the academician, scholars of *Rasa Shastra* as well as the persons engaged in alchemical process of gold preparation.

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