



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MULTIDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES**
ISSN: 2394 9406

“Applied Aspects of Charakokta Mahakashaya: A Comprehensive Review”

Dr. Shubhangi Shahu Sonavane ¹, Dr. Varsha Vinayak Shejale ²

1. PG scholar. Department of Dravyaguna vigyan. Loknete Rajarambapu patil Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital Post Graduate institute and Research centre, Islampur, Sangli, Maharashtra, 415409.
2. Guide and HOD. Department of Dravyaguna vigyan. Loknete Rajarambapu Patil Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Post Graduate institute and Research centre, Islampur, Sangli, Maharashtra, 415409.

Abstract –

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian medical system, emphasizes functional classification of drugs for both preventive and therapeutic care. *Charaka Samhita* uniquely groups medicinal plants into 50 *Mahakashayas* (great clusters of ten herbs each) based on their pharmacological properties. These groupings, described in *Sutrasthana Adhyaya 4*, serve as a clinical decision-making tool for physicians, guiding rational selection of herbs in conditions ranging from metabolic disorders to cognitive decline. This review explores the applied aspects of all 50 *Mahakashays*, their therapeutic indications, integration into classical formulations, and their relevance to modern evidence-based healthcare. Discussion highlights their role in preventive medicine, management of lifestyle diseases, and scope for integrative validation.

Key Words – *Mahakashaya*, preventive medicine, Ayurvedic Pharmacology, Dravya Guṇa Vigyan, Therapeutic Grouping, Clinical Applications Ayurvedic Formulary Pharmacotherapeutic Actions, Evidence-based Ayurveda, Classical Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Charaka, in *Sutrasthana* (4/8-9), outlines 50 *Mahakashayas* as functional pharmacological clusters of 500 drugs, each group reflecting therapeutic specialization. Unlike modern pharmacology, which often classifies agents by receptor binding or chemical class, *Ayurveda* emphasizes observable systemic actions such as “strengthening,” “scraping,” or “promoting health.” This classification reflects the practical wisdom of *Ayurveda*, guiding physicians in drug choice not merely by disease name, but by fundamental pathological states such as depletion, obstruction, excess, or derangement of *doshas*. *Charaka*’s classification goes beyond disease diagnosis; it focuses on correcting fundamental disturbances in *dosha*, *dhatu*, *agni*, *srotas*, and *ojas*. Thus, *Mahakashayas* become clinically relevant tools for designing individualized treatment strategies (*yukti-vyaprasraya chikitsa*). Today, with the increasing global interest in plant-based medicine, personalized therapeutics, immunomodulation, and preventive healthcare, revisiting the *Mahakashayas* framework becomes crucial.

Aim

To evaluate and present the applied pharmacotherapeutic significance of *Charakokta Mahakashayas* in clinical practice.

Objectives

To review classical concepts and textual foundations of *Mahakashayas*.

To compile and interpret therapeutic applications of major *Mahakashayas*.

To explore their pharmacodynamic rationale in the light of *guna-rasa-virya-vipaka* and *karma*.

To highlight modern clinical utility and scope for evidence-based research.

Materials and method

Materials

For the present article on applied aspects of *Mahakashaya*

1. Chakrapanis AD commentary of *Charaka Samhita* Edited by Yadavji Trikamji Acharya.
2. Peer-reviewed research papers, pharmacological studies, and classical commentaries
3. Modern scientific publications exploring actions of classical herbs
4. Online academic databases and herbal pharmacology repositories

Methodology

1. Thematic literature review: textual extraction of *Mahakashayas* and properties.
2. Categorization based on classical actions (*karma*).
3. Correlation with pharmacological and clinical effects.
4. Integrative interpretation for modern practice.

Below is a thematic summary of all *Mahakashayas* with clinical application:

Overview of the 50 *Mahakashayas*

Mahakashaya	Function	Applied Aspects
<i>Jeevaniya</i>	Vitalizers	Immunity, convalescence
<i>Brihaniya</i>	Anabolic	Malnutrition

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<i>Lekhaniya</i>	Anti-obesity	, cachexia Obesity, metabolic syndrome			<i>Vishghna</i>	ids Eradication of toxin	
<i>Ruchya</i>	Appetite improving	Anorexia, digestive weakness			<i>Kasahara</i>	Anti-tussive	Cough, asthma
<i>Balya</i>	Strengthening	Sarcopenia, post-illness recovery			<i>Shwashara</i>	Anti-dyspneic	COPD, asthma
<i>Medhya</i>	Cognitive enhancers	Learning disability, dementia			<i>Shvyathuhara</i>	Relieves inflammation	
<i>Varnya</i>	Skin complexion	Dermatology, pigmentation			<i>Shramhara</i>	Relieves fatigue	
<i>Kanthyा</i>		Throat infection			<i>Jwarahara</i>	Antipyretic	Fever
<i>Hridya</i>	Cardiotonic	Preventive			<i>Dahaprasrama</i>	Pacifying heat	
<i>Sandhaniya</i>	Wound healing	Fracture recovery, ulcers			<i>Sheetaprasama</i>	Pacifying cold	
<i>Dipaniya</i>	Digestive stimulants	Dyspepsia, indigestion			<i>Shoolprasama</i>	Analgesic	
<i>Pachaniya</i>	Carminatives	Flatulence, bloating			<i>Udardprasama</i>	Alleviating allergic rashes	Allergic skin infection, Urticaria
<i>Truptigna</i>	Anti-satiety	Eating disorders			<i>Angamardprashama</i>	Alleviating malaise and fatigue	
<i>Chardinighrahan</i>	Antiemetic	Vomiting, nausea			<i>Stanyajanan</i>	Galactagogue	Lactation failure
<i>Trishnanigrahan</i>	Anti-thirst				<i>Stanyashodhan</i>	Galacto purifiers	Mastitis
<i>Kushtaghna</i>	Anti-dermatosis	Eczema, psoriasis			<i>Shukrajanan</i>	Increased or stimulate production of semen	Semen disorders
<i>Kandughna</i>	Anti-pruritic	Itching, urticaria			<i>Shukrashodhan</i>	Semen purifiers	Oligo/asthenospermia
<i>Krimighna</i>	Anthelmintic	Worm infestations			<i>Purishsangraniya</i>	Reduce frequency and	IBS, chronic diarrhea
<i>Arshoghna</i>	Anti-hemorrhoid	Piles, fistula, fissure					

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	liquidity of stool	
<i>Mutrasangrahiya</i>	Anti-diuretic	Diabetes, Polyuria
<i>Mutravirechaniya</i>	Diuretics	UTI, renal health
<i>Shonitsthapan</i>	Maintain equilibrium of blood by haemostasis	Bleeding disorders
<i>Vedanasthapan</i>	Relieving pain sensation	Neuropathic pain
<i>Sadynasthapan</i>	Regains consciousness	Fainting
<i>Prajasthapan</i>	Helps in conception promoting	Infertility
<i>Vayasthapana</i>	Anti-ageing	Preventive

Applied Aspects in Modern Healthcare

1. Lifestyle disorders – *Lekhaniya, Medoghna, Pramehaghna* Mahakashaya used for obesity, diabetes, dyslipidemia.
2. Geriatrics & longevity – *Rasayana, Jeevaniya, Medhya, Vayasthapana Mahakashaya*

It enhances immunity, slows cellular aging, improves vitality and resilience. These correlate with global interest in anti-aging and immunonutrition therapy.

3. Maternal/child health – *Brihniya Mahakashaya* helps promote fetal and child growth.

Stanyajananiya Mahakashaya promotes lactation.

Stanyashodhaka assists in correcting breast milk disorders.

4. Dermato Disorders-*Kushtaghma, Kandughna* for chronic skin disorders *Udardaprashamana* for allergic urticaria and dermatitis

5. Respiratory Disorders *Kasahara, Shawshara Mahakashaya* for COPD, asthma, chronic cough

6. Mental health – *Medhya* (*Brahmi, Mandukaparni, Yashtimadhu*) showing Nootropic properties

Stress-reducing effects
Improvement in attention, memory, and cognitive performance Clinical data support *Brahmi, Mandukaparni* and *Yashtimadhu*.

7. Integrative potential – Herbs validated: *Ashwagandha* (adaptogen), *Brahmi* (nootropic), *Guggul* (hypolipidemic), *Tinospora* (immunomodulatory).

8. Preventive Medicine – *Balya* and *Rasayana* groups are aligned with modern concepts of immunonutrition and anti-aging interventions.

9. Formulation Science – *Mahakashayas* form the base for classical formulations like *Chyavanprasha* (*Jivaniya*), *Brahmi Ghrita* (*Medhya*), and *Lekhaniya Kashayas*.

Discussion

The *Mahakashaya* system introduced by *Charaka* represents a visionary pharmacotherapeutic framework that predates modern drug classification by thousands of years. Where modern pharmacology classifies drugs by receptor-level mechanisms, *Charaka*'s approach focuses on observable systemic actions and functional attributes of herbs. This provides a more holistic interpretation of

pharmacodynamics, linking physiological actions to *dosha*, *dhatu*, *agni*, and *srotas*. A significant aspect of *Mahakashaya* is their universal applicability: the same drug cluster can be used in a wide spectrum of disorders based on the underlying pathophysiological processes rather than disease labels.

With the rising prevalence of lifestyle disorders, neurodegenerative conditions, metabolic syndrome, psychiatric illnesses, and age-related diseases, the *Mahakashayas* framework becomes a powerful tool for integrative medical practice. Herbs like *Ashwagandha*, *Guduchi*, *Guggulu*, *Brahmi*, and *Shatavari* have been extensively studied, and their actions closely reflect their classical *Mahakashaya* placement.

Another important observation is that *Mahakashayas* form the foundation for many classical formulations—*Chyawanprasha*, *Brahmi Ghrita*, *Triphala Guggulu kalpas*, and various *rasayana* preparations—demonstrating *Charaka*'s integrated approach to medicine and pharmaceutics.

Despite the strength of the *Mahakashaya* system, challenges persist. Lack of standardized identification, phytochemical consistency, dose standardization, and clinical validation limit their global acceptability. However, ongoing clinical trials and pharmacognostic studies increasingly validate these classical concepts.

Overall, *Mahakashaya* provide an intellectually rich, clinically meaningful, and scientifically relevant classification that can guide future research, formulation development, and clinical protocols in Ayurveda and integrative medicine.

Conclusion

Charakokta Mahakashaya serve as an enduring model of rational pharmacological classification. Their applied aspects are directly relevant for preventive and therapeutic medicine, with evidence now emerging to support classical claims. With systematic standardization, pharmacological validation, and integration into modern practice, these 50 *Mahakashayas* could significantly contribute to global health. The integration of *Mahakashayas* with evidence-based research can enhance global acceptance of Ayurveda, bridging traditional wisdom with modern medical science.

The *Mahakashaya* framework demonstrates a systematic pharmacological approach centuries before modern nosology. The applied relevance is evident in functional clustering, holistic coverage, and translational scope supported by emerging pharmacological studies.

Limitations remain in standardization, dosage clarity, and the need for clinical validation through randomized trials.

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IJMHS; Vol. XI, Issue: IV, OCT-DEC 2025

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