

A LITERARY REVIEW OF SUSRUTOKTA SURSADI GANA

¹Rajesh Kumar Prajapati, ²Savita Prajapati,

Assistant Professor in Dept of Kaumarbhritya, Veena Vadini Ayurveda College and Hospital Bhopal MP
Assistant Professor in Dept of Dravyaguna, Veena Vadini Ayurveda College and Hospital Bhopal MP.

Corresponding Author:-aprajapati285@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.46607/iamj1012102024>

(Published Online: October 2024)

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Article Received: 08/09/2024 - Peer Reviewed: 29/09/2024 - Accepted for Publication: 13/10/2024.

**ABSTRACT**

The group of herbs is described as *Gana* in *Samhita* and *Vargas* in *Nighantu*. *Surasadi Gana* is the eighth group out of thirty-seven mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*. This group contains 22 Herbs and has *Katu Rasa* (pungent) and *Ushna Veerya* (hot potency), having potency to pacify *Kapha* and are indicated in *Kasa* (cough), *Shwasa* (asthma), *Pratishyaya* (cold), *Kushtha* (skin disorders), *Krimi* (worm/ infection) and *Vrana* (wound). Despite the Herbs from *Surasadi Gana* having many indications in *Ayurveda*, the specific action is on the respiratory tract disorders.

Keywords: *Surasadi, Gana, Shwasa, Krimi.*

INTRODUCTION

In the ancient treatises of Ayurveda, grouping herbs into *Vargas* or *Ganas* was a significant classification based on their pharmacological properties and dietary usage. This classification, which had the same meaning etymologically, was an essential contribution of *Acharya Sushruta*, who mentioned 37 gana of herbs. Each group includes herbs with similar pharmacolog-

ical properties. Despite the multiple indications for each group, *Acharya Sushruta* named the group based on its first herb ingredient, which is considered the prime in the list. For example- *Aragvadhadi*, *Varunadi*¹ etc.

The *Surasadi Gana*, the eighth group out of 37 mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*, is a treasure trove of 22

potent herbs. These include *Surasa*, *Shweta surasa*, *Phaninjaka*, *Arjaka*, *Bhustruna*, *Sugandhaka*, *Sumukha*, *Kalamala*, *Kutheraka*, *Kasamarda*, *Kshavaka*, *Kharapushpa*, *Vidanga*, *Kataphala*, *Surasi*, *Nirgundi*, *Kulahala*, *Undurukarnika*, *Phanji*, *Prachibala*, *Kakamachi* and *Vishamushtika*. This group pacifies *Kapha* and is indicated in cough, asthma, cold, skin disorders, worms/infections, wounds, etc.² Out of 22, 8 to 9 herbs are usually known as *Tulsi* varieties or appear to be different species of the Labiateae family with similar usage or purpose. This article makes a significant effort to express the utility and importance of these selected herbs, each with its unique properties and potential.

MATERIAL & METHOD:

Most of the *Dravya* from this *Gana* are either in a state of controversy or doubtful identity. Eight to nine herbs are said to be varieties of *Tulsi* or appear to be different species of the Lamiaceae (Labiatae) family. These are mentioned to be used for similar utility or in the same contexts. The ongoing efforts to identify and clarify the botanical identity of these 22 drugs of this *gana* are crucial in advancing our understanding of *Ayurveda*.

1. *Surasa*

2. *Shweta Surasa's* Etymological meaning of *Surasa* suggests it has abundant juice and is extracted easily (*Amarakosha*). *Acharya Sushruta's* inclusion of the phrase *Surasa* before *Shweta Surasa* in *Surasadi Gana* clarifies that it should be *Krishna Surasa* (black variety) and botanically identified as *Ocimum tenuiflorum* Linn. *Tulsi* is not found in *Vedic Samhita* or *Brihatrayi*, but the commentators *Chakrapani* and *Arunadatta* accepted *Surasa* as *Tulsi*.

Ocimum sanctum Linn. of Lamiaceae (Labiatae) is known as *Tulsi*, an erect, much-branched, softly hairy annual herb. It is found throughout India and in kitchen gardens, such as holy basil.³ The *Tulsi* plant has green leaves, known as *Sri-Tulsi*, and purple leaves, known as *Krishna Tulsi*. It has antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, abortifacient, antispasmodic, anti-cataract, antipyretic, gastric anti-ulcer activity, anti-inflammatory, antimutagenic, anti-tumour, anti-

genotoxic, anti-coagulase, nematocidal, larvicidal, antioxidant, anticancer, hypotensive properties.⁴

3. *Phanijjaka*

Phanijjaka is the third plant mentioned in sequence. *Acharya Agnivesha* accepted it as *Marava*, and *Arunadatta* considered it *Marichaka* or *Tikshna Gandha*.⁵ Most synonyms, like *Maru*, *Marudbhava*, *Maruttaka*, etc., suggest a dryland plant or one that needs less water for its growth. The commentators, viz. *Dalhana*, *Arunadatta*, and *Hemadri* commented on it as *Teekshna Gandha Parnaas*, i.e., leaves with a strong aroma. *Origanum majorana* Linn. is one such aromatic solid Labiateae drug. It is a fragrant herb found in the garden throughout India. It is of two types based on flower colour, white commonly used as medicine and black for worshipping Lord Shiva. It is indicated in amenorrhea, colds, wounds, liver disorders, and infectious conditions.⁶

4. *Arjaka*:

Arjika is synonymous with *Barbari*, called *Vantulsi* locally and is of three types- *Krushna*, *Shweta*,⁷ and *Vatapatra*. According to *Dalhana*, it is a white variety of *Kutheraka*, similar to *Barbari*,⁸ with short flowering shoots and small leaves without any aroma.⁹ Etymologically, *Arjaka* denotes the one that generates appetite or one that brings a pleasant feeling.¹⁰ It can be correlated with *Orthosiphon pallidus* Royle.

5. *Bhustruna*:

Bhutika, *Bhustruna*, *Sugandhaka*, and *Jambira* are believed to be applied to aromatic plants other than grasses.¹¹ *Bhustruna* (*bhu+struna*) means grass on ground level with spreading aroma or of its branches. PV Sharma and CP Khare identified it as *Hyptis suaveolens* Poit. It is known as *Bhunsari* and *Ganga Tulsi*. Most probably, it is *Tumbaru* of *Dalhana*.¹²

6. *Sugandhaka*:

Dalhana has affirmed *Sugandhaka* as *Dronapushpi*; it (*Leucas cephalotes* Spreng) is an aromatic, annual, hairy pubescent herb belonging to the Lamiaceae family. This is found in the rainy season, and the whole plant is used for medicine.¹³ It has antipyretic, expectorant, depurative, antihelminthic, carminative, and digestive action.¹⁴

7. *Sumukha*:

It is *Rajika*, *Brassica Juncea* Linn. *Sumukha* belongs to the Cruciferae family. It is an annual growing perennial erect herb. The seed is beneficial for urinary discharge, helminthiasis, skin disease, fever, piles, and stomachache, and it is also suitable for gout and rheumatism.¹⁵

8. *Kalamala*:

Kalamala is known as *Krushna Mallika* or *Barbarika* by *Dalhana*. It is also known as *Krushnarjaka*.¹⁶ It may be concluded that the *Ocimum Basilicum* Linn. belongs to Lamiaceae. This herb is found in the aired region of India. Whole plants and seeds are used for medicine and are indicated in diarrhoea, scorpion bites, wounds, etc.¹⁷

9. *Kutheraka*:

Chakrapani says *Kutheraka* is a *Parnaas* (a labiatae drug), and *Dalhana* marked it *Shweta Kutheraka*¹⁸ or *Shweta Parnaas*. *Ocimum Canum* Sims is correlated as *Kutheraka* by some recent authors of *Dravyaguna*.

10. *Kasamarda*:

Kasamarda, as the name suggests, is the best remedy in *Kasa*, and it was popularly used in the period of Brihatrayees. *Cassia Occidentalis* Linn. is the authenticated source of *Kasamarda*.¹⁹

11. *Kshavaka*:

Kshavaka is similar to *Phanijjaka* and produces sneezing, so it is named *Chhikkika* by *Dalhana* and *Arunadatta*. *Centepeda Minima* Linn. is an annual procumbent shrub that belongs to the Asteraceae family and is used for *Atisara* and *Visuchika*.²⁰

12. *Kharpushpa*:

Dalhana considers *Kharpushpa* a variety of *Kshavaka* or *Marubaka*, whereas *Hemadri* considers it only *Marubaka*, which can be correlated with *Origanum Majorana* Linn.²¹

13. *Vidanga*:

Vidanga (*Embelia ribes* Burm.f.) is a large scandent shrub that belongs to the *Myrsinaceae* family. It is the best for helminthiasis; hence, *Krimighna* and *Jantunashana*²² are the synonyms. This is useful in fever, dental, caries, asthma, and bronchitis, and leaves are helpful in skin, throat, and mouth problems.

14. *Kayaphala*:

Kayaphala is an evergreen tree found in the Himalayan range. Though the name is *Kataphala Bark*, it is used for medicine. *Myrica Esculenta* Buch. Ham is *Kataphala* belongs to the *Myrsinaceae* family. Though the name is *Kataphala*, the bark is used for medicine, and in high doses, it produces vomiting.²³ It is indicated in fever, asthma, bronchitis, ulcers, and carminative.

15. *Surasi*:

Dalhana identified *Surasi* as *Kapittha sadrusha patra* i.e. *Bilvanasi*. Others identified as a variety of *Nirgundi*. Botanically, it is *Vitex negundo* Linn.²⁴ and belongs to *Verbenaceae*. The leaves are helpful in rheumatism, arthritis, catarrhal fever, cephalalgia, sprains, orchitis, syphilis, inflammations and ulcers. Bark is helpful in odontalgia, verminosis and ophthalmic disorders. The flowers are useful in diarrhoea, cholera, fever, haemorrhages, hepatopathy and cardiac disorders. Leaves and bark are beneficial in scorpion stings. Seeds in the form of *Anjan* are considered helpful in treating eye diseases.

16. *Nirgundi*:

Nirgundi is *Neela Sindhuvara* by *Dalhana*, and botanically, it is *Vitex negundo* Linn

17. *Kulahala*:

Kulahala is identified as *Mundika* by *Dalhana* and *Bhukadamba* by *Arunadatta*. *Sphaeranthus Indicus* Linn. is the source plant of *Kulahala* (*Mundi*) of *Surasadi Gana*. It is an annual spreading herb obtained in winter and used as an intelligence promoter. It is indicated in dysuria, helminthiasis, infection, filariasis, cough, fever, and haemorrhoids. Leaves are used as nervine tonic and flowers for blood purification in skin diseases.²⁵

18. *Undurukarnika*:

Ipomea reniformis Choisy. A procumbent herb belongs to the *Convolvulaceae* family. As the name indicates, the plant has reniform leaves resembling a rat's ear. It is helpful in kidney, bladder, lungs, uterus, abdomen diseases, helminthiasis, and fever.²⁶

19. *Phanji*:

Phanji is known as a synonym of *Bharangi*. *Clerodendrum serratum* Spreng is an herb from the *Verbenaceae* family with white or blue flowers.²⁷ It is

indicated in helminthiasis, cough, asthma, bronchitis, flatulence and dyspepsia. In cephalalgia and ophthalmia, the external application of leaves is very useful. The root is functional in respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases.

20. *Prachibala*:

Dalhana commented that *Prachibala* is *Matsyaksha* or *Kakajangha* or it could be *Gandadurva*. Many texts have supported *Vitex peduncularis* Wall²⁸. as an authenticated source of *Kakajangha*. This is used for *Vishma Jwar*, i.e. black water fever.

21. *Kakamachi*:

Kakamachi is the *Tikta Skandha Gana Dravya*²⁹ and *Solanum nigrum* Linn. It belongs to the Solanaceae family and is an annual, erect, nearly glabrous herb with white flowers found all over India. It is helpful in rheumatism, cough, asthma, bronchitis, wounds, ulcers, flatulence and dyspepsia. Decoction of plants depresses the central nervous system and reflexes of the spinal cord and influences cardiac activity and blood pressure regulation.

22. *Vishamushti*:

Melia azedarach Linn is accepted by many as *Mahanimba*, which is *Vishamushti* of *Surasadi Gana*. Belongs to the Meliaceae family. It is used to treat piles, and traditional healers use its fruits. The root leaf flower and seed are helpful in skin respiratory tract diseases and worm infestation.³⁰

DISCUSSION

Thus, after all these attempts, these 22 plants have been correlated with their particular species. Most classical texts have opined that most of the listed drugs possess *Katu-Tikta Rasa* and *Ushna Veerya*. All drugs of *Surasadi Gana* have been claimed as *Krumighna* in nature.

Apetarakshsi and *Bhutaghni* (which repeal evil or organisms) are synonyms that indicate *Tulsi*'s antimicrobial action. Vrundamadhava (9th -11th AD) has mentioned a maximum number of synonyms of *Tulsi*. In Bruhatrayi, the utilisation of leaves is narrated more than in *Panchanga*.

Bhutakeshi, *Bhutankusha*, *Bhutaghni*, and *Bhutavisha* are synonyms for *Nirgundi*, denoting its antimicrobial

action. *Nirgundi* is the *Neelapushpa* and *Sinduvara* is *Shwetapushpa*. Kashyapa uses *Harenu* for *Nirgundi*. The root of *Nirgundi* is *Vatahara*, and in most references, its leaves are used for *Krumihara*. Dalhana on *Shushruta Samhita* commentary mentions *Dronpushpi* as *Sugandhaka* and *Kutumbaka* and that includes in *Surasadi Gana*. In *Samhita Kala*, it is well known by *Sugandhaka*, *Kutumbaka*, *Chhatra*, and *Kumbhayoni*. Vrundamadhava mentioned it as *Dronapushpi* and indicated it in *Kamala*.

CONCLUSION

All the drugs from the group are indicated for wound, gastrointestinal, respiratory, and skin diseases. Most of them are herbs. Modern research has also proved the actions claimed in classical texts of *Surasadi Gana Dravya*.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URLRajesh Kumar Prajapati & Savita Prajapati: A literary review of Susrutokta Sursadi Gana. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2024 {cited October 2024} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/1872_1876.pdf