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

INTRODUCTION

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 Ashtangsanigraha 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 –
• 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 — aiding healthy life
Jiva, Jivanti, Jivanika - life promoting
Shreyasi — conferring prosperity
Chetaki — increasing vitality throughout the body.
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; Gujarati: 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 up to 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. *Terminalia 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 India, Utter Pradesh, and Bengal and is common in Tamil Nadu and in southern Maharashtra. The fruit of the tree in powder form possesses diverse health benefits and has been used as traditional medicine for household remedy against various human ailments since antiquity. It has been traditionally and medicinally used in Indian system of medicine.

**Rasa PanchakoaofHaritaki:**

*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, Udvarta, Pandu, Arsha, Jwara, Premeha, Anaha* etc.²
Types of *Haritaki*\(^3\)

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

1. **VIIAYA** : Available in Vindhya Pradesh, used in all diseases.
2. **ROHINI** : Available in Pratish- 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, Bangladesh 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.

**RituHaritaki**\(^4\)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritu</th>
<th>Characteristics of Ritu</th>
<th>Corresponding months in contemporary calendar</th>
<th>Anupana of Haritakiin accordance with Ritu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shishira</td>
<td>Sheeta, ruksha, vatavardhakaagnivardhaka</td>
<td>Magha (January-February)</td>
<td>Pippali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasanta</td>
<td>Snigdha, Madhura, Shleshmakara (Madhurasheeta, guru, snigdha)</td>
<td>Falguna Chaitra (March- April)</td>
<td>Madhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeshma</td>
<td>Ruksha, atikatu, pittakara (Katu-laghu, ruksha, ushna, teekshna)</td>
<td>Vaishakha (May)</td>
<td>Guda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pravritta</td>
<td>Ushna, vaashpayukta</td>
<td>Jyestha, aashadha (June-July)</td>
<td>Guda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varsha</td>
<td>Sheeta, vidahkrit, vatkrit, agnimandayakrit.</td>
<td>Shrawan, Bhadrapada (August)</td>
<td>Saindhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharada</td>
<td>Ushna, pittakrit, madhyamabala</td>
<td>Ashwina, kartika (September- October)</td>
<td>Sharkara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemanta</td>
<td>Sheeta, snigdha, Madhura, jatharagnikrita</td>
<td>Margsheersha, pausha (November- December)</td>
<td>Shunthi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 hasmalashodhana 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

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 health⁵), 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 nerve 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
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*. *Aadanakala* 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Ritu</th>
<th>Rituguna</th>
<th>Anupanaguna</th>
<th>Dosha condition in the body</th>
<th>Haritaki + Anupana Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varsha</td>
<td>Sheeta,</td>
<td>Saindhava Rasa-lavana, veerya-sheeta,</td>
<td>Pitta vridhidue to amla bhava Vatavridhidue to sheetaruksha</td>
<td>Pitta sanchayapratishedha, haritakirukshaushnaguna shaman bysaindhava. Effect on Koshtha – kledapuravaka sara andvatashamana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ruksha</td>
<td>vipakamadhur aGuna-laghu, snidha</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Effect on Koshtha – snigdhakledapurvakaruksh anapratisshedha</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sharada</td>
<td>Ushna,</td>
<td>Sharkara Rasa-madhura Veerya-sheeta,</td>
<td>Vatashamana, pitta prakopedue tokleda, dravaguna; agnimandyaand</td>
<td>Sara gunavridhi, increased Pitta virechana, avasishtha pitta shamana. Effect on Koshtha- rechanapurvakasarak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pittakara</td>
<td>Vipaka-Madhura Guna-dhatu</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Effect on Shakha-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Topic of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hemanta Snigdha, Manda, Mridu Balahraas</td>
<td>Madhura rasa vipaka, snigdhaaushanyapratishedhupavraka.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Kashaya pradhanapanchrasa, 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 aanahaprashtyanadrug 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 grahiare 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, shulaprashtmana 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 anulomanaas well asrutoshadhanna.

- **Haritaki** when coupled with *gaumutra*, results into anulomana as well as tridoshashamana. Gaumutra because of its teekshnaguna is used in extreme conditions of tridoshaprapakopa. When added to haritaki, the combination removes the amalgam for all santarpanothavyadhi through the coupled teekshna 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 rukhatwa of vata, but also helps nirapadaanulomana at both koshthav and shakha level.
• *Haritaki* when combined with *guda* (jaggery), becomes anulomana with sarvadoshaprashmana effect. *Guda* has *snigdhaguna* and *yogawaahi* property which makes the *haritakito* 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 anulomanaas well as *sransana* action in the body. Hence this combination becomes the drug of choice inmridu 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 sanchita dosha.

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, brihaneya, 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, brihaneeeya* 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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