

Review Article

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“ROLE OF RASASHASTRA AND BHAISHAJYA KALPANA IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE AND MODERN PHARMACEUTICS”

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Rasashastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana (RSBK), integral branches of Ayurveda, emphasize the use of herbo-mineral formulations through precise pharmaceutical techniques like *shodhana* (purification) and *marana* (calcination). Their safety, efficacy, and unique pharmaceutics align remarkably with modern pharmaceutical sciences. Despite concerns about heavy metals, evidence suggests that traditional methods render formulations safe and effective. **Methods:** A comprehensive literature review was conducted through PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, and classical Ayurvedic texts. Articles from 2000–2023, including clinical, experimental, and review studies, were included, focusing on safety, efficacy, nanomedicine parallels, and integrative applications of RSBK. Exclusion criteria involved anecdotal reports and poorly documented studies. **Results:** RSBK formulations demonstrated therapeutic benefits across chronic diseases, metabolic syndromes, and immune disorders. Bhasmas were shown to possess nanoparticle dimensions, explaining their bioavailability and pharmacological effects. Comparative studies revealed synergy between herbo-mineral combinations and modern drugs. However, gaps remain in standardization, toxicological profiling, and global regulatory acceptance. **Discussion:** RSBK principles share parallels with modern pharmaceutics, particularly in detoxification, stability, and drug delivery. Evidence supports their potential role in integrative medicine by complementing allopathic treatments. Regulatory concerns, lack of pharmacovigilance, and insufficient clinical trials limit global acceptance. **Conclusion:** With robust validation, GMP adherence, and interdisciplinary collaboration, RSBK can significantly contribute to integrative medicine and modern pharmaceutics, offering safe, effective, and holistic therapeutic options.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Bhaishajya Kalpana, Integrative medicine, Modern pharmaceutics, Rasashastra

INTRODUCTION

Rasashastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana (RSBK) represent the pharmaceutics and pharmaceutical branch of Ayurveda, dealing with herbo-mineral formulations, purification techniques, and dosage form innovations^[1-2]. The ancient texts describe meticulous procedures for ensuring the safety and efficacy of metallic and mineral-based formulations. These preparations, known as *rasa aushadhis*, have been used for centuries in treating chronic and refractory diseases^[3-4].

In the modern era, pharmaceutical sciences focus on safety, stability, bioavailability, and advanced delivery systems^[5]. Interestingly, RSBK demonstrates remarkable conceptual similarities to nanomedicine, targeted delivery, and controlled release formulations. Recent analytical studies have confirmed that bhasmas contain nanoparticles, supporting their rapid absorption and clinical effectiveness. Thus, RSBK serves as a bridge between traditional knowledge and modern pharmaceutics^[6-8].

The aim of this review is to evaluate the role of RSBK in integrative medicine and modern pharmaceutics by examining its safety, efficacy, and scientific basis. The objectives include summarizing traditional evidence, assessing modern research, identifying regulatory challenges, and highlighting opportunities for future integration^[9-10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review is based on a systematic literature search conducted between January 2000 and July 2023. Databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and AYUSH Research Portal were searched using keywords: "Rasashastra," "Bhaishajya Kalpana," "Ayurvedic pharmaceutics," "herbo-mineral formulations," and "nanomedicine." Classical Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Rasa Ratna Samuccaya*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were also reviewed^[11-12].

Inclusion criteria:^[13]

- Experimental, clinical, and review studies on RSBK formulations.
- Studies focusing on safety, toxicity, pharmacological action, or modern pharmaceutical correlations.
- Regulatory and GMP guidelines relevant to Ayurveda.

Exclusion criteria:^[14]

- Anecdotal case reports without scientific validation.
- Non-peer-reviewed publications lacking methodological rigor.

A total of 120 relevant studies were reviewed, with 65 selected for detailed synthesis, covering preclinical, clinical, toxicological, and regulatory dimensions^[15].

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

1. Traditional Foundations of RSBK

Rasashastra evolved as a specialized discipline within Ayurveda to enhance the potency and efficacy of formulations. Through elaborate processes such as *shodhana* (purification), *marana* (calcination), and *bhavana* (trituration), toxic raw materials like mercury, arsenic, and lead were transformed into therapeutically safe forms. Bhaishajya Kalpana expanded the repertoire by formulating diverse dosage forms like *churna* (powders), *avaleha* (confections), *asava-arista* (fermented preparations), and *guggulu kalpana*. These innovations ensured patient compliance, stability, and efficacy.

2. Safety and Detoxification Processes

One of the most debated aspects of RSBK is the use of heavy metals. Classical texts emphasize purification processes using herbal juices, cow's urine, milk, and other organic mediums. Modern research validates that these processes reduce toxicity by altering particle size, binding metals with organic ligands, and stabilizing them in biologically safe forms. For example, studies on Swarna bhasma show absence of free metallic gold and presence of gold nanoparticles, which are biocompatible and exhibit immunomodulatory effects.

3. Nanomedicine Parallels

SEM and TEM analyses confirm that most bhasmas consist of nanoparticles in the range of 50–200 nm. This explains their enhanced solubility, cellular uptake, and bioavailability. Nanomedicine today aims to design similar carriers for improved pharmacokinetics. For example, Mukherjee et al. demonstrated that *Abhraka bhasma* contained iron oxide nanoparticles, supporting its hematitic and adaptogenic effects. Thus, RSBK anticipated concepts of nanotechnology centuries ago.

4. Therapeutic Applications

RSBK formulations are widely used in chronic, refractory, and lifestyle-related disorders:

- **Metabolic disorders:** Tamra bhasma and Trivanga bhasma in diabetes and obesity.

- **Autoimmune and inflammatory diseases:** Swarna bhasma as an immunomodulator.
- **Cancer:** Herbo-mineral formulations with Rasasindura show cytotoxic effects against tumor cell lines.
- **Neurological conditions:** Abhraka bhasma and herbal-mineral compounds for epilepsy and cognitive disorders.

Synergistic effects arise when mineral formulations are combined with herbal drugs, enhancing pharmacological activity while reducing required dosages.

5. Integration into Modern Pharmaceutics

Several principles of RSBK mirror modern pharmaceutics:

- *Shodhana* resembles purification and detoxification processes in pharmaceutical chemistry.
- *Marana* parallels calcination and controlled heating used in nanomaterial synthesis.
- *Bhavana* reflects wet grinding techniques for particle size reduction.
- Stability considerations in *avaleha* and *asava* resonate with shelf-life studies in pharmaceutics.

These similarities highlight the potential of RSBK as a complementary framework for developing novel drug delivery systems.

6. Regulatory and Quality Challenges

Despite promising results, global acceptance of RSBK faces hurdles:

- Lack of harmonized pharmacopeial standards.
- Concerns over heavy metal contamination when classical procedures are not strictly followed.
- Inconsistent quality across manufacturers due to inadequate GMP compliance.
- Limited international regulatory frameworks for herbo-mineral drugs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has urged the establishment of stringent quality control and pharmacovigilance systems to ensure global acceptance of such formulations.

7. Pharmacovigilance and Safety Monitoring

Pharmacovigilance in Ayurveda is still nascent compared to modern pharmaceutics. The Ministry of AYUSH in India has initiated programs for adverse drug reaction monitoring in Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani (ASU) drugs. Systematic documentation of

adverse effects and toxicological studies are essential to dispel myths regarding safety and establish global confidence.

8. Future Opportunities

- Development of standardized RSBK-based nanopharmaceuticals.
- Integration with modern therapies for synergistic outcomes in cancer, diabetes, and neurodegenerative diseases.
- Use of omics technologies (proteomics, metabolomics, genomics) for mechanistic insights.
- International collaboration for harmonized guidelines and regulatory approval.

DISCUSSION

The role of Rasashastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana (RSBK) in integrative medicine and modern pharmaceutics represents a confluence of ancient wisdom with contemporary drug development. Historically, RSBK emphasized precise pharmaceutics through shodhana (purification), marana (calcination), and samskara (processing), ensuring safety and enhanced bioavailability. These principles resonate with modern pharmaceutics, where purification, stability, and formulation science are integral to drug development^[16].

A critical comparison reveals that bhasma preparations share parallels with nanomedicine. Studies using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) have confirmed the nano-range particle size of certain bhasmas, which accounts for their rapid absorption and therapeutic efficacy. This aligns with modern nanopharmaceutical goals of enhancing solubility, targeting, and controlled release. The recognition of this similarity provides a robust platform for integrating RSBK principles into mainstream drug delivery systems^[17].

From the integrative medicine perspective, RSBK formulations provide unique therapeutic potential in conditions like cancer, metabolic disorders, and autoimmune diseases. For instance, Tamra bhasma and Swarna bhasma have demonstrated immunomodulatory and cytoprotective properties, while herbal-mineral combinations offer synergistic effects unmatched by single-molecule drugs. Integrating such formulations with evidence-based allopathic regimens may improve outcomes, reduce side effects, and promote holistic healing. However, rigorous clinical validation remains a necessity to

achieve credibility within the global medical community^[17].

Despite the promise, several challenges hinder the widespread acceptance of RSBK. Regulatory concerns, particularly regarding heavy metal toxicity, remain a major barrier. While traditional processes claim detoxification and safe transformation of metals, skepticism persists without reproducible toxicological data. Moreover, global pharmacopeias lack harmonized standards for quality control, resulting in variability across preparations. This limits international acceptance and poses safety concerns when non-standardized products enter markets^[18].

Pharmacovigilance is another critical gap. Unlike modern pharmaceutics, where adverse event reporting is standardized, Ayurveda still lacks comprehensive pharmacovigilance systems for herbo-mineral drugs. Encouragingly, initiatives from the Ministry of AYUSH, India, have begun integrating pharmacovigilance frameworks, but broader global participation is required^[18].

Future prospects lie in collaborative research between Ayurvedic scholars, pharmacologists, and pharmaceutical scientists. Advanced tools like spectroscopy, metabolomics, and nanotechnology can validate and optimize RSBK formulations. Integrating Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and adopting globally recognized guidelines such as ICH-Q10 for quality management can enhance credibility. Furthermore, interdisciplinary clinical trials that combine Ayurveda with conventional therapies can showcase integrative benefits^[19].

In summary, RSBK has significant relevance for both integrative medicine and modern pharmaceutics. While safety and regulatory concerns remain, addressing these through evidence-based approaches, pharmacovigilance, and harmonization of standards can pave the way for global acceptance. The integration of RSBK into modern pharmaceutics is not merely an opportunity but a necessity in the evolving paradigm of holistic, patient-centered healthcare^[20].

CONCLUSION

Rasashastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana (RSBK) hold immense promise in bridging Ayurveda with modern pharmaceutics and integrative medicine. The pharmaceutics principles of detoxification, processing, and transformation mirror modern pharmaceutical goals of safety, efficacy, and

stability. With evidence pointing to parallels between bhasmas and nanoparticles, RSBK may serve as a precursor to advanced drug delivery systems. Furthermore, the holistic synergy of herbo-mineral formulations offers unique therapeutic advantages, particularly in chronic and complex diseases where modern pharmacology often faces limitations.

Despite these strengths, challenges persist. Global skepticism regarding safety, especially concerning heavy metals, lack of standardized protocols, and insufficient pharmacovigilance hinder widespread acceptance. Addressing these requires robust scientific validation through toxicological studies, clinical trials, and harmonized regulatory frameworks. Integration of GMP, adoption of international quality standards, and proactive pharmacovigilance will ensure safety, reproducibility, and credibility.

The way forward lies in interdisciplinary collaboration between Ayurveda, pharmacology, and pharmaceutical sciences. Leveraging modern analytical tools to validate ancient processes, designing integrative clinical trials, and aligning with global pharmaceutics guidelines will unlock the true potential of RSBK.

In conclusion, RSBK offers a unique opportunity to merge traditional wisdom with modern science. With appropriate validation and standardization, it can play a pivotal role in advancing integrative medicine and shaping the future of pharmaceutics globally.

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