**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is a well-documented traditional system of Indian Medicine. Rasa Shastra, an offshoot of Ayurveda popular from medieval period, mostly deals with therapeutic utilization of metals and minerals. In traditional system of medicine the Kapardika (Cypraea moneta), have been used as medicine to cure various ailments mainly related with stomach and in the treatment of dyspepsia, jaundice, enlarged spleen, liver, asthma, cough and also reported to be externally used as caustic in various forms of ointments. Kapardika is also included in Sadharan Rasa. Kapardika is the name given to small convolute glossy shells of variegated colours of oblong, oval shape varying in size. Cowries shells were used in many area of medicines i.e. dyspepsia, jaundice, enlarged spleens and liver, asthma and cough. In the present scenario the use of Cowries preparations are single drugs or as ingredients in many Ayurvedic medicines has evoked concerns and debate in the scientific forums in the recent times. The present study was undertaken to review the Ayurvedic as well as modern concept of Kapardika.

**Synonyms**

Kapardika has numerous synonyms like, varat, varatika, kapardaka, kaparda, kapardi, charachar, char etc. The various synonyms of kapardika as explained in different Rasa Sastra texts are given in Table-1.

**Historical Review**

An ancient time, Indians had a special definite and decisive knowledge of Kapardika. According to the text, Kapardika has been possibly considered to be used since mid-evil period. First affirms knowledge of Kapardika was known by the Indus Valley civilization. Ayurvedic texts have adequate knowledge about Kapardika bhasma, its various formulations and its medicinal properties. Mainly in Rasa Sastra texts Kapardika is mentioned in “Sadharan Rasa”. The etymology of Kapardika has mentioned in the text “Amarkosha”.

**Vernacular names of kapardika**

| Arabic - Sadaf | Hindi - Kaudi |
| Bengali - Kadi | Kannada - Kauri |
| Chinese - Shou Mu Li | Latin - Cypraea Moneta |
| English - Cowrie, Marine shell, Covries | Marathi - Kauri |
| French - Porcelainous Ecake | Oriya - Kauri |
| German - Porcelainous Schalen | Persian - Kajak, Khar-mohara, Gosh Mahi |
| Gujarati - Kodi | Sanskrit - Kaparda |

**Description**

Cowries generally belong to the member of mollusks and family of Cypraeidae, they are favourite of collectors because of their beautiful colours. The mantle is usually ornamented with papillae that provide camouflage and assist in respiration. The colour of the mantle some times matched the sponges it feed upon.

**Habitat**

It is found in the Sea. It lives on rocky ground particularly in and about coral roofs. It is found in Sea mainly in India and Pacific Oceans.

**Morphology**

It is small, convolute glossy shells of variegated colours (white, yellow, red) of oblong oval shape varying in size from a tamarind seed to an almond. The upper surface is smooth, shiny and convex. Base is compressed with a cleft in the center which runs longitudinally, toothed on both sides and channelled at each end.

**Varieties**

In Rasa sastra varieties of Kapardika are mentioned on the basis of its weight, size and colour. In the basis of weight, there are three varieties i.e. 1½ Niska, 1 Niska and ½ Niska. Kapardika which is one and half Niska (1½ sana) in weight, is considered as Uttam (best). Kapardika which is one Niska in weight is Madhya (medium). Kapardika which is ¼ Niska in weight is Hina (inferior). According Rasa ratna samucchaya, Kapardika which is having yellowish tinge, has nodules on the back and which is oval in shape, is praised as Kapardika. The Kapardika which is not processing above mentioned qualities considered as Guru and to increase Kapha and Pitta dosa. On the basis of colour, there are three varieties of Kapardika which are".
Marana (Incineration) is a process of Rasa Shastra to make Kapardika mentioned on the basis of colour i.e. Pitta (yellow), Sweta (white) and Dhursa (grey). Out of these Pitta (yellow) colour Kapardika is considered as best. Sweta (white) colour as medium and Dhursa (grey) colour as undesired. According to Ayurveda Prakash, three types of Kapardika are Sweta (white), Rakta (Red) and Pitta (Yellow). Based on structure two types Kapardika are described i.e. Granthi Yukta (with knot) and Granthi Vihina (without knot).

**Physical Properties**
Yellowish in colour, having nods on back surface, heavy in weight and long Vrinta (Peripheri) should not have any Vrana (cut or fissure) on their surface.

**Modern View**
The money cowrie shell or *Cypraea moneta* belongs to the cowrie family. It occurs in areas with warm water temperatures such as the Maldivian Islands. These shells have medium size teeth, not extending across the base. They are heavily margined, with base and margin white and unspotted. In some modern examples a black transverse line crosses the dorsal almost centrally. The cowrie shell is one of the most remarkable primitive currencies ever used before the advent of gold and silver coinage. This shell extended its range far beyond any form of money before or since, spreading from China and India to the Pacific Islands, travelling across and encircling Africa and then penetrating the New World. *Cypraea moneta* Linnaeus, 1758, is an abundant and easily recognized gastropod throughout the Indo-West-Pacific. A number of names distinguishing subspecies and races have been introduced for the money cowry, and it is generally recognized as a highly variable species. Different colours of cowries are dependent on the genetic abnormalities, injury, disease, diet, presence or absence of aluminium and other compounds, the acidity of the soil and water, temperature of water, etc. Genetic factors can for instance lead to albinism, while certain diseases produce unusually large and heavy shells with a calloused, mottled appearance.

**Shodhana (Purification)**
It is the process which removes the impurities to some extent and helps in increasing the therapeutic values of the drugs. The various media and procedures as explained in different Rasa Shastra texts are given in Table 2.

**Marana (Incineration)**
Marana (Incineration) is a process of Rasa Shastra to make Bhasmas out of metals and minerals for internal administration. This process is also known as Bhasmi karana. It is not advisable to use metals and minerals in their natural forms as a medicament. Very few of them can be used as such after Shodhana. Majority of them are subjected to the process of Marana. The various media and procedures as explained in different Rasa Shastra texts are given in Table 3.

**Pharmacological & Therapeutic Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitta</th>
<th>- Katu</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sweta</td>
<td>- Ruksha, Tiksna</td>
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CONCLUSION

Varatika (Cypraea moneta Linn.) were used in many area of medicine. It plays an important role in Ayurvedic medical practice. The usage mentioned in Ayurvedic literatures has to be reviewed. It has been scientifically proved to reassure the facts claimed in the literatures. It is also used as calcium supplement both for human and animal.

REFERENCES

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