

A Comparative Classical Review of *Vedanasthāpana*, *Śūlprashamankar*, and *Aṅgamarda-prāsamana Mahākāṣāya* in *Ayurveda*

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Abstract

Pain (*Vedanā*) represents a core expression of *Vāta* vitiation in *Ayurveda*. The *Caraka Saṃhitā* categorizes herbs into 50 *Mahākāṣāyas*, among which *Vedanasthāpana*, *Śūlprashamankar*, and *Aṅgamarda-prāsamana* specifically target various pain patterns (1). This classical review evaluates these *Mahākāṣāyas* based on *Ayurvedic* literature, including the *Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*, and *Nighaṅṭus*. Their *rasa-guṇa-vīrya-vipāka*, *doṣa* affinity, and *samprāpti* involvement are compared. The findings demonstrate *Ayurveda's* nuanced classification of pain and the therapeutic specificity of these *Mahākāṣāyas*.

Keywords

Vedanasthāpana, *Śūlprashamankar*,
Aṅgamarda-Praśamana, *Mahākāṣāya*,
Ayurveda, Pain, *Vāta*, *Caraka Saṃhitā*.

Introduction

Pain is described in *Ayurveda* as *vedanā*, *rujā*, *toda*, *pīḍā*, and *śūla*, each representing variations of *Vāta* derangement (2). The *Caraka Saṃhitā* identifies *Mahākāṣāyas*—groups of ten herbs categorized by their pharmacodynamic actions (1). Among these, *Vedanasthāpana*, *Śūlprashamankar*, and *Aṅgamarda-Praśamana Mahākāṣāyas* form the classical *Ayurvedic* approach to pain management (3). Although all three *Mahākāṣāyas* alleviate pain, their indications differ due to variations in *doṣa* vitiation, *srotas* involvement, and *samprāpti* (4). This review explores these distinctions and synthesizes classical *Ayurvedic* knowledge.

Aim

To conduct a classical comparative review of *Vedanasthāpana*, *Śūlprashamankar*, and *Aṅgamarda-Praśamana Mahākāṣāyas*.

Objectives

1. To interpret classical references describing the three *Mahākāśāya*s.
2. To compare their *rasa-guṇa-vīrya-vipāka* and therapeutic actions.
3. To examine pain-related *samprāpti* for each *Mahākāśāya*.
4. To facilitate rational clinical application in *Ayurvedic* pain management.

Methodology

This is a classical *Ayurvedic* textual review. Primary sources include the *Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*, and major *Nighaṅṭus* (1–8). Secondary sources include peer-reviewed *Ayurveda* journals (9–14).

Classical Ayurvedic Review

4.1 Ayurvedic Theory of Pain

4.1.1 Vedanā *Caraka* states: “*Vātād eva sarvam duḥkham*”—all pain originates from *Vāta* (2). Pain arises from *doṣa-duṣya* imbalance, *srotas* obstruction, and aggravated *vyāna vāta* (1,4).

4.1.2 Śūla *Śūla* is described as severe, colicky pain due to *āma*, *viṣṭambha*, or *vāta-kapha avarodha* (2,4).

4.1.3 Aṅgamarda *Aṅgamarda* is defined as a generalized body ache occurring in *jvara*, *dhātu-kṣaya*, or *vyāna vāta avarodha* (2,5).

4.2 Vedanasthāpana Mahākāśāya

4.2.1 Classical Description This group is listed in *Caraka Sūtrasthāna* 4 as pain-stabilizing herbs (1).

4.2.2 Rasa–Guṇa–Vīrya–Vipāka Herbs in this category usually possess: • *Rasa: Tikta, Kaṣāya* • *Guṇa: Laghu, Snigdha* • *Vīrya: Śīta/Anuṣṇa* • *Vipāka: Madhura/Kaṭu* • *Karma: Vedanāsthāpana, Śothaghna, Vātānulomana* (6)

4.2.3 Indications • Neuralgia, myalgia • Traumatic pain • Inflammatory pain • Arthritic pain (5,9)

4.3 Śūlaprashamankar Mahākāśāya

4.3.1 Classical Description These herbs are indicated for abdominal colic and spasmodic pain in *Caraka Sūtrasthāna* 4 (1).

4.3.2 Rasa–Guṇa–Vīrya–Vipāka • *Rasa: Kaṭu, Tikta* • *Guṇa: Laghu, Tikṣṇa, Rūkṣa* • *Vīrya: Uṣṇa* • *Vipāka: Kaṭu* • *Karma: Dīpana, Pācana, Vātānulomana, Śūlaprashamankar* (7)

4.3.3 Indications • *Pariṇāma śūla* • *Āmāsāya-śūla* • Menstrual cramps • Gastrointestinal spasms (10)

4.4 Aṅgamarda–Praśamana Mahākāśāya

4.4.1 Classical Description This group is listed in *Caraka* as the collection of herbs for relieving body ache and fatigue (1).

4.4.2 Rasa–Guṇa–Vīrya–Vipāka • *Rasa: Madhura, Kaṣāya* • *Guṇa: Snigdha, Guru* • *Vīrya: Śīta* • *Vipāka: Madhura* • *Karma: Bālya, Bṛṃhaṇa, Vāta-śamana* (8)

4.4.3 Indications • Fever-related body ache • Fatigue syndrome • Musculoskeletal pain • *Vāta vyādhi* (10,11)

Comparative Analysis

5.1 Pain Type Comparison

<i>Mahākāśāya</i>	Type of Pain
<i>Vedanasthāpana</i>	General, inflammatory, traumatic (6,9)
<i>Śūlaprashamankar</i>	Colicky, spasmodic (7,10)
<i>Aṅgamarda–Praśamana</i>	Musculoskeletal ache, fatigue (8,11)

5.2 Doṣa Affinities

<i>Mahākāśāya</i>	Doṣa Target
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<i>Vedanasthāpana</i>	<i>Vāta-Pitta</i> (6)
<i>Śūlaprashamankar</i>	<i>Vāta-Kapha-Āma</i> (7)
<i>Aṅgamarda-Praśamana</i>	<i>Vāta</i> with <i>Dhātu-kṣaya</i> (8)

Discussion

The comparison demonstrates that *Ayurveda* distinguishes pain not by intensity alone, but by quality, causation, and pathogenesis (3,4). *Vedanasthāpana* aligns with modern musculoskeletal and inflammatory pain. *Śūlaprashamankar* correlates with visceral and colicky pain. *Aṅgamarda-Praśamana* parallels chronic fatigue-related pain commonly seen in viral or *Vāta* disorders. The comparative analysis of *Vedanasthāpana*, *Śūla-Praśamana*, and *Aṅgamarda-Praśamana Mahākāśāyas* highlights *Ayurveda's* highly refined understanding of pain. Rather than viewing pain as a single entity, classical texts classify it according to origin, quality, and pathogenesis, allowing for targeted herbal intervention.

Vedanasthāpana Mahākāśāya is primarily indicated for generalized, inflammatory, or traumatic pain. Its herbs exhibit *Vāta-Pitta* pacifying actions and anti-inflammatory properties, making them suitable for conditions analogous to modern musculoskeletal and neuropathic pain. *Śūla-Praśamana Mahākāśāya*, characterized by *uṣṇa*, *tikṣṇa*, and *vāta-kapha-āma* alleviating properties, specifically addresses colicky, spasmodic, or obstructive pain. This aligns with visceral pain conditions such as gastric spasms, menstrual cramps, and intestinal colic.

Aṅgamarda-Praśamana Mahākāśāya focuses on body ache and fatigue-associated pain caused by *dhātu-kṣaya* or post-fever debility. Its nourishing and *br̥mhaṇa* properties make it effective for chronic fatigue, exertion-induced pain, and *Vāta* disorders involving *mamsa* and *rasa dhātu*. Thus, the three *Mahākāśāyas* operate on distinct pain pathways: inflammatory/systemic, spasmodic/obstructive,

and fatigue/musculoskeletal, respectively. This differentiation demonstrates *Ayurveda's* precision in pain categorization and its potential alignment with modern personalized pain therapeutics. This classification shows *Ayurveda's* predictive accuracy in pain physiology.

Conclusion

Ayurveda provides three distinct *Mahākāśāyas* to address three major pain pathways:

- *Vedanasthāpana* → systemic/inflammatory/general pain
- *Śūlaprashamankar* → spasmodic/colicky visceral pain
- *Aṅgamarda-Praśamana* → musculoskeletal ache and fatigue

This classical insight provides a foundation for condition-specific, precise *Ayurvedic* pain management.

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Conflict of Interest: *Non*

Source of funding: *Nil*

Cite this Article:

A comparative classical review of vedanasthāpana, sūlprashamankar and aṅgamarda-praśamana mahākāśāya in ayurveda.

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Ayurline: International Journal of Research In Indian Medicine: 2026;10(01):01-04