

Gandhashastra: A Book Review

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Submission: 21.07.2023

Acceptance: 06.08.2023

Publication: 31.08.2023

https://www.doi.org/10.63778/PDEASIJRAAS-ARJCPL/2023_83116

Introduction

Gandha (smell) is one of the five senses, the most important characteristic of the nose (Gandh Indriya). Smelling extends into the realm of sensory impressions and sense knowledge, influencing external experiences in the soul. Sugandha (aroma) is a unique phenomenon that provides immense pleasure and satisfaction. Gandha dravyas (aromatic substances) are the primary source of volatile and essential oils. In today's era, due to their impressive ingredients and therapeutic riches, herbal medicines are highly popular in cosmetics. Gandha Shastra (the science of fragrances) encompasses various aromatic substances, procedures for fragrance creation, and their documentation, evolving over time.

In ancient Indian culture, Gandhashastra was one of the 64 kalas (art forms). References to cosmetics and perfumes are found from the Vedic period to the present, with their commercial

importance gradually recognized in ancient India. The context of Gandhashastra primarily focused on the worship of gods and ritual sacrifices, with modern applications in personal adornment. Aromatic oils and powders are mentioned in Ayurveda for Vajikaran (aphrodisiac therapy), Vaat vyadhi (diseases caused by vitiated Vata Dosha), and cosmetic purposes. Since ancient times, particularly in the Medieval Ages, a specialized community was renowned for processing Gandha Dravyas, contributing to a flourishing cosmetics and perfume industry in trade and marketing.

Through this book, Dr. Sanket Ponkshe unveils a vast treasure of Gandhashastra knowledge, based on the Gandhasara manuscripts evaluated by Gandhasar Nighantu by Acharya Gangadhar. The book covers all aspects of Gandhashastra, combining excellent knowledge, remedies, procedures, and aromatic medicinal knowledge with Ayurvedic principles related to Gandha Dravya and various Gandha karmas (aroma therapies). The original Gandhasara script, written in the 12th century, was edited by Dr. R. T. Vyas of Baroda. Dr. Ponkshe's book, based on his PhD thesis on Gandhasara, is structured into three main chapters with a total of 603 verses, authored by Gangadhar, who begins each chapter with Shivstuti (praise of Lord Shiva).

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1: Paribhasha (Terminology)

This chapter details six procedures (shadkarma) related to Gandha Dravya: Bhavana, Pachana, Bodhana, Dhupana, Vasana, and Vedhan. The Pachana procedure involves heating medicines to achieve the desired aroma in Sugandhikalpa. Bodhana allows experiencing multiple smells simultaneously from one preparation. Vedhan adds liquid aromas, such as Kapur and Kasturi, to liquid Bodhan Dravya. Dhupana is categorized into Shar, Tivra, and Madhya types for different seasons. Vasana preserves fragrances with flowers to produce floral aromas. Additionally, Shuddhikaran (purification) of aromatic medicines is discussed, with Dhupa Shuddhikaran being essential for every Kalpa. The chapter also explains three qualities of Gandha Dravya: Mitra (compatible), Shatru (incompatible), and Udasin (neutral), with mixing ratios to achieve high-quality aromatic combinations. Substitution of Gandha Dravya, such as Javadi Kasturi for original Kasturi due to its scarcity, is highlighted. The qualities of a *Gandhadnya* (perfumery expert) are outlined, emphasizing awareness of body components and the preferences of the individual for whom the fragrance is crafted.

Chapter 2:

Gandhodakadinanagandhopayogiprakaranam

This chapter provides information on various flavorings, including Gandhodak (aroma water), Gandhataila (aroma oil), Mrugraj, Mukhvaas, Parijaat (scented mouth freshener), Udvartan (scrub powder), Snana jala (bath water), Patavaas, Dhoopa, Varti, Jalavaas, Deepavarti, Uddhulanam, Niryas, Syanda, Kusumadi Druti, Gandhasankraman, and Krutrim Dravyani (artificial aromatic substances). These are prepared in specific proportions using the Bhutasankhya padhati, a method rooted in Indian culture where numbers are denoted symbolically (e.g., Chandra for one). Over 50 varieties of Dhoopa are described, with unique names like Chandramo and Shivvallabh glorifying Lord Shiva. Specific fragrances like Sarswat Dhoop for focus, Janmohan for attraction, and Hastivashikaran Dhoop for controlling elephants are mentioned, alongside the artificial creation of Kasturi.

Chapter 3: Ashtavarga

This chapter categorizes aromatics into eight classes (Ashtavarga) based on the plant part used: Patravarga (leaves), Pushpavarga (flowers), Moolavarga (roots), and others. Jeev Varga includes substances from living sources, such as Kasturi from musk deer and honey from bees. Quality criteria for aromatics, such as heavy, aromatic, pale amber sandalwood with soft dough, are provided to ensure optimal collection.

Additional Features

The books cover features an attractive silver container for fragrances, with colored photographs of aromatic plants. Nine tabular appendices list Sanskrit, English, and Marathi names, along with Sanskrit synonyms of aromatic substances. The summary traces the use of fragrances from early human communities to the present. Technical terminologies align with Ayurvedic terms, though instruments like Dolayantra differ slightly from their Ayurvedic counterparts while retaining the same principles. From a botanical perspective, some plant names, such as Surpushpika interpreted as Dhavada (*Anogeissus latifolia* Wall. Ex. Bedd), may morphologically align with Kutaj pushpa. The *Sushrut Samhita* recommends studying related sciences to better understand Ayurveda, and Gandhashastra is closely related. This book can aid in developing natural aromatic preparations using modern instruments, benefiting the perfume and aromatic industries.

Book Details

● **Book Name:** Gandhashastra

● **Price:** 330 INR

● **Pages:** 211

● **Year:** 2023

Publisher: Prasad Prakashan, Pune, India

● **Language:** Marathi

Citation

Madhura B. Phadtare, Ila S. Bhor, Satosh D. Bhor, Gandhashastra: A Book Review,

PDEAS Int. J. R. Ayu. & A. Sc., 5(2); Aug 2023, p. 5961.

Conflicts of Interest

Dr. M. B. Phadtare is an editorial board member but was not involved in the peer review process.

Funding

None.

Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Figure No. 1: Gandhashastra Book cover page

