



ii. rasa - Definition, Types of rasa śodhana prakāra and saṃskāra

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In **Āyurvedic Rasaśāstra**, the term **Rasa** primarily denotes **Parada (mercury)**—the foundation of many **Rasauśadhis** (alchemical formulations). Rigorous purification (**śodhana**) and transformation (**saṃskāra**) methods aim to remove mercury's doṣas (impurities/toxins) and enhance its therapeutic efficacy, rendering it safe for medicinal or alchemical use. Below is a comprehensive discussion of:

1. Rasa (Parada): Definition, synonyms, and properties,
2. Types of Rasa-doṣas and their effects,
3. Śodhana (purification) processes,
4. Saṃskāra – advanced transformations bestowing potency.

1. Rasa (Parada): Definition and Synonyms

“रसनात् सर्वं धातूनां रस इत्यभिधीयते ।।
तम् अधिकृत्य कृतं शास्त्रं रसशास्त्रं (R.R.S.)”

(Translation: “Because it (mercury) can permeate and affect all dhātus (tissues), it is called Rasa. The discipline focusing on it is Rasaśāstra.”)

1.1 Parada (Mercury) Basics

- **Symbol:** Hg
- **Atomic Number:** 80
- **Atomic Weight:** 200.6
- **Melting Point:** −35.87 °C (approx. −36 °C)
- **Boiling Point:** 357.25 °C
- **Specific Gravity:** ~13.6
- **Freezing Point:** ~−36 °C

1.2 Synonyms of Mercury

Rasa, Rasendra, Sūta, Jaitra, Amṛta, Rasāyana, Divya Rasa, Siddha Dhātu, Daiva, Chāmara, Mahāvahni, Khechara, Chāpalā, Dhūrāktha, Skandha, Trinetra, Harabīja, Śivapriyā, Retaḥ, Pakṣī, Śaśi Hema Nidhi—reflecting its high regard in classical texts.

1.3 Significance

- Revered as “**Parada**,” Mercury is the cornerstone for **Rasauśadhi**—capable of rasāyana effects (rejuvenation), provided doṣas are removed and it undergoes correct saṃskāra.
- Often referred to as *Śivapriya* (“dear to Lord Śiva”), indicating its spiritual and therapeutic prominence in Rasaśāstra traditions.

2. Types of Rasa Doṣas and Effects

“शोधनं दोषहरणं संस्कारश्च बलतेजसोऽभिवर्धनम् ॥”

(Meaning: Śodhana removes doṣas, while Saṃskāra augments mercury's strength and brilliance.)

2.1 Classification of Mercury's Doṣas (total 12: 7 + 3 + 2)

1. Naisargika (3)

- **Visha, Vahni, Mala**
- Inherent contaminants as per R.R.S.

2. Yaugika (2)

- **Nāga** (lead), **Vaṅga** (tin)
- Mixed or alloyed with mercury, removable by **tiryak-pātana** (lateral distillation).

3. Kañcuka (7)

- A.k.a. *aupapādika doṣa*, includes **bhoomija** (parpati), **giriya** (pāṭanī), **variya** (bhedinī), **nāgaja** (drāvī, **malakārī**), **vaṅgaja** (andhakārī, dhvāṅkṣī).
- **R.R.S.** states:
“पपटी पाटनी भेदी द्रावी मलकारी तथा ।
अन्धकारी तथा ध्वांक्षी विज्ञेयाः सप्तकंचुकः ॥” (R.R.S.)
- Additional references: different enumerations in *Rasakaḷpa*, *Anandha Kanda*, *Rasaprakāśa Sudhākara*, etc.

2.2 Doṣa-wise Effects

| Doṣa | Effect |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Visha | Marana (fatal) |
| Vahni | Santāpa (intense burning) |
| Mala | Murchā (fainting) |
| Nāga | Jāḍatva / Vrana (lesions) |
| Vaṅga | Ādhmāna, Kuṣṭha |
| Bhoomija | Kuṣṭha |
| Giriya | Jāḍatva / Viṣphoṭa |
| Variya | Vāta Roga (wind disorders) |
| Chāpalya | Śukra-kṣaya (loss of semen/virility) |
| Asahyāgni | Moha (delirium) |

(Minor variations appear across texts in naming or grouping. The principle remains that each doṣa, if unremoved, yields specific pathologies in the user.)

3. Rasa Śodhana (Purification)

1. Concept

- Mercury requires **śodhana** to remove superficial toxins (doṣas), making it safe and workable for further transformations.
- Typically involves **chemical, herbal, or heat-based** processes.

2. General or Sāmānya Śodhana

- E.g., Rasa + *Sudhā* (lime) for 3 days, then ground with *rasana* (garlic) + *lavana* to black color, subsequent washing.
- If done thoroughly, yields a lustrous, purified mercury free of external scum.

3. Example Media

- *Triphala*, *Chitraka*, *Kumārī* (Aloe) juice, *Aragvadhaphala majjā*, etc. used singly or in combination.
- The classical **khalva yantra** or *dolā yantra* are apparatus for trituration or boiling, respectively.

4. Mercury Saṃskāra: Transformative Processes

“शोधनं दोषहरणं, संस्कारश्च बलतेजसोऽभिवर्धनम् ।”

After doṣas are eliminated, additional steps, known as **saṃskāras**, refine Mercury's *guṇas* (properties) and make it suitable for *rasāyana* usage.

4.1 Number of Saṃskāras

- Varies in texts:
 - **Rasaratna Samuccaya**: 8 or 18
 - **Rasendra Cūḍāmaṇi**: 8-16
 - **Rasopaniṣat**: 16

- Some references mention **18 +1 (19)** with *anuvāsana*.
- A commonly taught set is **Aṣṭa (8) Saṃskāra** or up to **16/18** expansions.

4.2 Outline of Key Saṃskāras

The “**18+1 Parad Sanskar**” refers to a traditional series of processes in Rasa Shastra (Ayurvedic alchemy) through which mercury (called *Parad* in Sanskrit) is systematically purified and prepared for therapeutic or alchemical use. These steps are described in classical texts to remove impurities and make mercury safe, potent, and spiritually suitable for internal or medicinal applications. Below is an overview of each of the 18+1 steps, rendered in English:

- 1. स्वेदन (Swedana)**
 - *Meaning:* Steaming or heating.
 - *Purpose:* Mercury is subjected to controlled heating or steaming with specific herbal decoctions or mediums. This helps loosen impurities and prepare mercury for the subsequent processes.
- 2. मर्दन (Mardana)**
 - *Meaning:* Grinding or trituration.
 - *Purpose:* Mercury is thoroughly ground with herbs, minerals, or certain alkaline materials. Mardana aids in breaking down any residual impurities and helps incorporate beneficial substances.
- 3. मूर्च्छन (Mūrccchana)**
 - *Meaning:* Immobilizing or stunning.
 - *Purpose:* The mercury is mixed with specific herbal or mineral agents to “stun” and bind toxic components so they can be removed. It stabilizes mercury so it doesn’t escape as vapor and readies it for deeper purification.
- 4. उत्थापन (Uttāpāna)**
 - *Meaning:* Elevation or uplifting.
 - *Purpose:* A process where mercury is treated in a way that metaphorically “raises” its quality. Ingredients are added so that mercury becomes lighter, more refined, and ready for further processes.
- 5. पातन (Pātana)**
 - *Meaning:* Sublimation or distillation.
 - *Purpose:* Mercury is heated to vaporize and recondense, thereby eliminating impurities. Pātana often involves special apparatus to collect purified mercury.
- 6. बोधन (Bodhana)**
 - *Meaning:* Awakening or reactivation.
 - *Purpose:* The purified mercury is “awakened” by blending it with activating substances. This re-energizes mercury’s alchemical qualities and ensures it remains potent.
- 7. नियमन (Niyamana)**
 - *Meaning:* Regulation or controlling.
 - *Purpose:* The focus here is on keeping mercury in a stable and controllable state, ensuring it remains in proper form (especially preventing re-toxification or volatility).
- 8. दीपन (Dīpana)**
 - *Meaning:* Kindling or igniting.
 - *Purpose:* Mercury’s potency is enhanced by “igniting” its medicinal or alchemical power, often using herbal juices or minerals that act as catalysts for transformation.
- 9. गगनभक्षण (Gaganabhakshana)**
 - *Meaning:* “Consuming the sky,” often referred to as the process in which mercury is made to “eat” or absorb certain materials like mica (Abhraka) or other substances symbolically associated with the sky.
 - *Purpose:* Enhances mercury’s capacity to assimilate and integrate specific mineral or metallic qualities, thus increasing its medicinal or transformative potential.
- 10. चारण (Chāraṇa)**
 - *Meaning:* Grazing or assimilation.
 - *Purpose:* Mercury is systematically fed with certain herbal extracts and minerals to strengthen its therapeutic qualities. It “grazes” through these materials, absorbing beneficial properties.
- 11. गर्भद्रुती (Garbhadruṭi)**
 - *Meaning:* Internal liquefaction or internal fusion.

- *Purpose:* Mercury is fused internally with other substances, creating a powerful composite. This is a deep blending stage, where mercury's inherent nature is fused with selected compounds.

12. बाह्यद्रुती (Bāhyadrutī)

- *Meaning:* External liquefaction or external fusion.
- *Purpose:* Similar to Garbhadrutī but performed externally. Mercury is subjected to liquefaction with substances applied from the outside, further refining its composition and removing residual impurities.

13. जारणा (Jāraṇā)

- *Meaning:* Incineration or digestion.
- *Purpose:* Mercury is "digested" or calcined with other substances, transforming its nature into a more stable and medicinal form. This step is crucial for ensuring mercury remains safe when used later.

14. पारदरंजन (Pārada Rañjana)

- *Meaning:* Coloring or tinting mercury.
- *Purpose:* Through the incorporation of specific metals, minerals, or herbal extracts, the color of mercury is altered to reflect its new qualities or a higher level of purification and potency.

15. सारण (Sāraṇa)

- *Meaning:* Solidifying or coagulating.
- *Purpose:* Mercury is processed to make it more solid or to achieve a semi-solid state, enhancing its stability. This step helps the alchemist to manipulate mercury in pill form or other stable formats.

16. संक्रमण (Saṃkramaṇa)

- *Meaning:* Transmutation or transformation.
- *Purpose:* Symbolically central to alchemical traditions, this is where mercury begins to exhibit transformative effects on other metals, or it itself is transformed into a higher form, reflecting advanced alchemical potency.

17. वेधकर्म (Vedhakarma)

- *Meaning:* Piercing or penetrating action.
- *Purpose:* Mercury's "piercing" power is tested or enhanced, giving it the ability to penetrate or transform other substances deeply—often demonstrated by turning base metals into more refined states (in alchemical lore).

18. शरीरयोग (Sharīra Yoga)

- *Mentioned in Rasa Ratna Samuccaya (R.R.S).
- *Meaning:* Bodily combination or integration.
- *Purpose:* This represents the union of purified mercury with the "body" of other substances (metallic, mineral, or herbal) to create powerful medicines or alchemical preparations that can act safely in the human body.

19. अनुवासन (Anuvāsana)

- *Mentioned in Ayurveda Prakash (Ā. Pr.).
- *Meaning:* Enema-like introduction or infiltration (in the classical Ayurvedic sense).
- *Purpose:* Sometimes referred to as a final "enema" process or infiltration, emphasizing the subtle administration of mercury-based preparations in the body or the final saturation of mercury with specific therapeutic qualities.

Significance of These Samskaras:

- Each step is believed to progressively remove mercury's toxic properties while infusing it with medicinal or spiritual potency.
- Properly performed, these samskaras transform raw mercury into a safer substance, utilized in various Ayurvedic and alchemical formulations.



4.3 Rationale

- Achieve transformations like *Garbha druti* (internal liquefaction) or *Bāhya druti* (external liquefaction) that support advanced recipes.
- Each step systematically fine-tunes mercury's synergy with other substances, ensuring minimal toxicity, stable and potent rasāyana outcome.

Conclusion

Rasa (Parada) in **Rasaśāstra** stands at the **heart** of Ayurvedic alchemical formulations. Yet raw mercury, laden with **12** doṣas (3 naisargika, 2 yaugika, 7 kañcuka), is profoundly toxic if used unrefined. Through **śodhana** (detoxification) and **saṃskāra** (transformative processes, 8-16-18 steps depending on textual tradition), mercury is purified, stabilized, and endowed with medicinal or alchemical potency. These elaborate, multi-stage protocols reflect Ayurveda's **meticulous** approach to ensuring safety and efficacy in **Rasa** therapies—linking spirituality, practicality, and advanced chemical transformations centuries before modern toxicological methods.