ISSN:3139-0935(Online)

Intemed: International Journal of Research in Integrated Medical Sciences (IJ-RIMS)

journal homepage: www.intemed.in
Vol.:2 | Issue: 2| February-2026

Article History: Received: 22-02-2026 Accepted: 27-02-2026 Published:28-02-2026

Review Article

Standardization Protocols for Bhasma Preparation: Need and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Bhasma preparations constitute an important class of herbo-mineral formulations in Ayurveda and are extensively used in *Rasashastra* therapeutics. Despite their clinical significance, concerns regarding safety, reproducibility, and quality control have necessitated scientific standardization. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe elaborate procedures including *shodhana*, *marana*, *jarana*, and *amritikarana* for detoxification and incineration of metals and minerals. However, variations in raw materials, processing parameters, heating patterns, and equipment introduce variability in the final product. Modern regulatory requirements demand validated protocols incorporating physicochemical, spectroscopic, and toxicological evaluation. This review critically examines the need for standardization in *bhasma* preparation, classical guidelines, modern analytical advancements, regulatory perspectives, and prevailing challenges. The integration of traditional wisdom with contemporary scientific tools is essential to ensure safety, efficacy, and global acceptability of Ayurvedic metallic formulations (1–4).

Keywords: Bhasma, Rasashastra, standardization, shodhana, marana, quality control, heavy metals

1. Introduction

Bhasma refers to calcined metallic and mineral preparations used therapeutically in Ayurveda. Classical texts of *Rasashastra* describe systematic pharmaceutical procedures to transform raw metals into bio-assimilable and non-toxic therapeutic forms (1,2). These preparations are considered potent due to their minute particle size and enhanced bioavailability (3).

However, in recent decades, concerns regarding heavy metal toxicity and inconsistent manufacturing practices have raised questions about quality assurance (4,5). Regulatory authorities and global markets demand reproducibility, safety validation, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for herbo-mineral formulations (6). Therefore, establishing standardized protocols for *bhasma* preparation is both a scientific and regulatory necessity.

2. Materials and Methods

A narrative critical review was undertaken. Classical references from *Rasaratna Samuccaya*, *Rasa Tarangini*, *Rasendra Sara Sangraha*, and *Charaka Samhita* were examined (1,7–9). Modern scientific literature was reviewed from peer-reviewed journals indexed in PubMed, Scopus, and AYUSH research databases focusing on physicochemical analysis, nanotechnology studies, toxicity assessment, and regulatory guidelines (4–6,10–12).

Classical Framework of Bhasma Preparation

Shodhana (Purification and Detoxification)

Shodhana aims to remove physical and chemical impurities and reduce toxicity (7). Procedures include heating and quenching metals in herbal decoctions, oils, cow urine, or other media (8). This step modifies physicochemical properties and enhances brittleness for subsequent incineration (13).

Marana (Incineration)

Marana involves repeated calcination cycles using controlled heating patterns (*puta*) to convert metals into fine ash form (1,9). Classical tests such as *rekhapurnata*, *varitaratva*, and *nishchandratva* assess fineness and completion of incineration (14).

Amritikarana and *Jarana*

Certain metals undergo additional procedures like *amritikarana* to improve therapeutic safety and reduce residual toxicity (2,15). These processes aim to render metals biocompatible.

Need for Standardization

Safety Concerns

Improper preparation can result in residual toxicity due to incomplete transformation of metals (4). Studies have reported variability in metal oxidation states and particle size depending on preparation techniques (10,16).

Reproducibility and Batch Consistency

Traditional heating methods using cow-dung cakes lack precise temperature control (17). Variability in temperature and duration influences crystal structure and bioavailability (18). Modern electric muffle furnaces offer improved control but require validation to maintain classical authenticity (19).

Regulatory Requirements

The Ministry of AYUSH and WHO guidelines emphasize Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and quality assurance for herbo-mineral formulations (6,20). Standardization is essential for global acceptance and export compliance.

Modern Analytical Approaches in Standardization

Physicochemical Evaluation

Parameters such as loss on drying, total ash, acid insoluble ash, and pH provide preliminary quality indicators (21).

Spectroscopic and Instrumental Analysis

Advanced techniques including X-ray diffraction (XRD), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) are used to assess particle size, crystalline structure, and elemental composition (10,22,23).

Nanoparticle characterization studies have demonstrated that properly prepared *bhasma* often exhibit nano-scale particle dimensions (24).

Toxicological Evaluation

Acute and chronic toxicity studies are necessary to confirm safety (12). Animal studies and cytotoxicity assays provide supportive safety data (25).

Challenges in Standardization

1. **Raw Material Variability:** Geological differences affect mineral composition (16).
2. **Lack of Uniform SOPs:** Classical texts provide qualitative guidelines but lack quantitative parameters (7).
3. **Equipment Differences:** Traditional vs. modern furnaces produce variable thermal profiles (17).
4. **Interdisciplinary Gap:** Limited collaboration between Ayurvedic scholars and materials scientists (26).
5. **Regulatory Ambiguity:** Differing international standards for heavy metal limits (20).

Discussion

Standardization of *bhasma* preparation requires integration of classical validation tests with modern analytical techniques. While traditional parameters ensure compliance with Ayurvedic pharmaceutics, modern tools provide measurable and reproducible quality indicators (10,21).

Scientific validation of nano-characteristics has strengthened the hypothesis that *marana* converts metals into organometallic or oxide forms with altered bioavailability (24). However, excessive modernization without understanding classical principles may distort traditional methodologies (26).

Future Directions

• Development of validated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
• Establishment of pharmacopeial monographs for major *bhasma*
• Multi-center reproducibility studies
• Integration of nanotechnology research
• International harmonization of safety standards

Conclusion

Standardization of *bhasma* preparation is essential for ensuring safety, reproducibility, and global acceptance of Ayurvedic herbo-mineral medicines. Classical pharmaceutical procedures provide a strong foundation, but incorporation of modern analytical and regulatory frameworks is necessary to meet contemporary quality

standards. Collaborative interdisciplinary research can bridge traditional knowledge with modern science, ensuring sustainable advancement of *Rasashastra* pharmaceutics.

Funding sources
None.

Conflict of interest:
None.

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