AYUSHDHARA
ISSN: 2393-9583 (P)/ 2393-9591 (O)
An International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Allied Systems

Case Study

A COMPREHENSIVE CLASSICAL REVIEW OF *KUTAJA* (*Holarrhena Antidysenterica* Wall. EX A.DC.) IN AYURVEDIC LITERATURE

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Article info

Article History:
Received: 25-08-2026
Accepted: 23-09-2026
Published: 02-11-2026

KEYWORDS:
Kutaja, *Holarrhena Anti-dysenterica, Dravyaguna, Atisara, Rasapanchaka, Nighantu, Brihattrayi, Indrayava.*

ABSTRACT

Kutaja (*Holarrhena antidysenterica* Wall. ex A.DC.; family Apocynaceae) is an important Ayurvedic drug, particularly indicated in *Atisara, Pravahika, Grahani* and *Arsha*. Its descriptions are distributed across the *Brihattrayi, Laghutrayi*, and classical *Nighantus*. **Aim:** To critically review and synthesize the classical Ayurvedic literature on *Kutaja* with emphasis on nomenclature, *Rasapanchaka*, *Dosha-Karma*, therapeutic indications, plant parts, and formulations. **Methods:** Classical references from major Samhitas, therapeutic texts, and 22 *Nighantus* were reviewed. Information related to nomenclature, pharmacodynamic attributes, indications, plant parts, and formulations was extracted and comparatively analyzed. **Results:** The review identified more than 400 textual references to *Kutaja*. The predominant classical profile comprises *Tikta-Kashaya Rasa, Laghu-Ruksha Guna, Sheeta Virya* and *Katu Vipaka,* with *Kapha-Pitta Shamaka, Grahi, Deepana* and *Pachana* actions. Variations in *Virya* and *Dosha-Karma* were observed among texts. *Kutaja* is predominantly indicated in *Atisara, Pravahika, Grahani* and *Arsha*, with additional applications in *Kushtha*, *Jwara, Prameha* and *Visha*. Variations in nomenclature, plant parts, and formulations were also documented. **Conclusion:** Classical literature establishes *Kutaja* as a prominent drug, particularly for gastrointestinal disorders, while demonstrating a broader therapeutic spectrum and textual variations in its pharmacodynamic and botanical descriptions. Comparative evaluation of these sources provides a clearer understanding of its classical Ayurvedic identity and therapeutic application.

INTRODUCTION

In *Dravyaguna Vigyana*, the foundational pharmacology of Ayurveda, the therapeutic utility of any natural substance *(Dravya)* is rationalized through its pharmacodynamic pentad: *Rasa* (taste), *Guna* (biophysical qualities), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (post-digestive metabolic outcome), and *Prabhava* (specific pharmacological action)[1,2]. Through these fundamental attributes, a drug modulates the vitiated *Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha)* and restores homeostatic equilibrium across the *Sapta Dhatus* and *Malas*.

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code	
	https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v13i5.2976

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Comprehensive textual analysis of ancient treatises is therefore indispensable for establishing the authentic therapeutic parameters and botanical identities of classical drugs.

Among the botanical treasures of Ayurvedic materia medica, *Kutaja* holds a paramount position. Historically correlated with *Holarrhena anti-dysenterica* Wall. ex A.DC. (family Apocynaceae), *Kutaja* is classically recognized as the supreme remedy for intestinal motility disorders and inflammatory enteropathies, epitomized by *Atisara* (acute diarrhea), *Pravahika* (dysentery/tenesmus), and *Grahani Dosha* (malabsorption syndrome and irritable bowel spectrum). However, classical treatises also employ the drug across a vast therapeutic landscape, encompassing dermatological disorders *(Kushtha),* pyrexia *(Jwara),* metabolic diseases *(Prameha),* and toxicological conditions *(Visha)*[3].

A significant academic challenge in classical *Dravyaguna* is the chronological and structural distribution of references across diverse textual genres from the foundational Samhitas (Brihattrayi and Laghutrayi) to specialized lexicons (Nighantu Granthas), *Rasa* treatises, and *Chikitsa* manuals. Over successive centuries, classical descriptions accumulated complex synonyms, botanical classifications (such as the gender-based *Pum/Stri* taxonomy), and occasional pharmacodynamic variations (e.g., *Sheeta* vs. *Ushna Virya*). The present review provides a critical, consolidated synthesis of classical Ayurvedic literature on *Kutaja*, serving as an exhaustive reference for researchers, clinicians, and academicians.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To systematically compile, synthesize, and critically analyze the classical Ayurvedic literature on Kutaja (Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall. ex A.DC.).

Objectives

- **Nomenclature & Synonyms:** To critically evaluate the etymology, botanical nuances, and synonymy of *Kutaja* across *Samhitas* and 22 *Nighantus*.
- **Taxonomic Varieties & Botanical Correlation:** To analyze classical gender-based varieties *(Pum, Stri, Asita)* and resolve the pharmacognostic distinction between H. anti-dysenterica and Wrightia tinctoria.
- ***Rasapanchaka* & *Dosha-Karma*:** To comparatively evaluate *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka*, and *Prabhava*, noting historical consensus and textual discordances.
- **Therapeutic Indications:** To map the complete spectrum of clinical applications, ranging from primary gastrointestinal roles to systemic indications.
- **Formulations & Plant Parts:** To consolidate classical formulations (*Kwatha, Churna, Ghrita, Asava-Arishta, Avaleha, Basti)* and correlate specific morphological parts *(Twak, Phala, Beeja)* to their clinical intents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This classical textual review was executed through a rigorous four-phase methodological framework designed to ensure exhaustive coverage, fidelity to primary sources, and transparent handling of classical discrepancies:

- **Source Selection:** Primary treatises were surveyed across distinct historical strata: *Brihattrayi (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha, Ashtanga Hridaya); Laghutrayi* and medieval therapeutics *(Sharangadhara Samhita, Bhavaprakasha Samhita, Bhela Samhita, Harita Samhita, Kashyapa Samhita, Siddhasara Samhita);* and 22 comprehensive *Nighantus* (from *Saushruta Nighantu* to 20th century compendia).
- **Search Lexicon:** Textual queries were conducted using primary Sanskrit designations and established synonyms: *Kutaja, Kutaj, Vatsaka, Kalinga, Girimallika, Vrikshaka, Indrayava, Shakrayava, Yavaphala,* and *Bhadrayava*.
- **Data Extraction Grid:** Data were categorized into standardized parameters: text/reference, formulation name, diagnostic indication, specific name used, morphological part specified, and route/dosage form.
- **Comparative Analysis & Conflict Handling:** Extracted data were cross-tabulated chronologically. In accordance with classical scholarly rigor, conflicting textual assertions (such as divergent *Virya* attributions or alternative varietal classifications) were explicitly documented as textual variations rather than artificially harmonized.

Historical Evolution in Classical Texts

Vedic Kala (Pre-Samhita Period)[4]

A rigorous examination of the four canonical Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda) reveals no explicit, unambiguous direct reference to the term *'Kutaja'* or its definitive botanical correlates. While the Atharvaveda contains extensive hymns dedicated to medicinal flora and the expelling of intestinal parasites *(Krimi), Kutaja* as an individualized botanical entity emerges only in subsequent classical periods. Certain later lexicons (e.g., *Vedic Nighantu*) retrospectively attribute terms like *'Kutajaka'* and *'Yavaphala'* to ancient traditions, but its formal therapeutic systematization begins unequivocally in the Samhita Kala.

Brihattrayi[5] (The Great Classical Triad)

The *Brihattrayi* represents the pinnacle of ancient Indian medicine and surgery. Within these foundational works, *Kutaja* is assigned critical structural and therapeutic prominence across multiple *Sthanas*.

***Charaka Samhita*[6]:** Acharya Charaka categorizes *Kutaja* under four pivotal *Mahakashayas* in *Sutra Sthana* Chapter 4: *Arshoghna* (anti-hemorrhoidal), *Kandughna* (anti-pruritic), *Stanyashodhana* (galactopurificator), and *Asthapanopaga* (adjunct to non-unctuous enemas). In *Vimana Sthana* (8/143), it is classified under the *Tiktaskandha* (the bitter-tasting group). In *Kalpa Sthana*, Chapter 5 is specifically dedicated to *Vatsaka Kalpa*, detailing 18 distinct emetic/evacuative pharmaceutical preparations. In *Chikitsa Sthana, Kutaja* is an essential ingredient in the management of *Jwara* (Cs.Ci. 3), *Raktapitta* (Cs.Ci. 4),

Prameha (Cs.Ci. 6), *Kushtha* (Cs.Ci. 7), *Rajayakshma* (Cs.Ci. 8), *Arsha* (Cs.Ci. 14), *Grahani* (Cs.Ci. 15), and *Atisara* (Cs.Ci. 19). Across 95 distinct citations, the seed *(Indrayava/Vatsakabeeja)* and bark *(Twak)* are deployed with exquisite pharmacological specificity.

***Sushruta Samhita*[7,8]:** Acharya Sushruta incorporates *Kutaja* within major pharmacodynamic *Ganas* in *Sutra Sthana* Chapter 38: *Aragwadhadi Gana* (indicated in *Prameha, Kushtha*, and *Vamana*), *Pippalyadi Gana* (indicated in *Pratishyaya*, *Vata-Kapha* disorders, and *Agnimandya*), *Haridradi Gana*, and *Lakshadi Gana*. In *Sutra Sthana* 42, *Indrayava* is placed in the *Tiktavarga*. Demonstrating surgical-medical synergy, Sushruta utilizes *Kutaja* alkali *(Kshara)* and ash *(Bhasma)* in *Bhagandara* (fistula-in-ano) and *Gulma* (Su.Su. 11/12), in extensive topical pastes for *Kushtha* (Su.Ci. 9), and in over 20 specific compounds for severe *Atisara* in *Uttara Tantra* Chapter 40 (including *Kutajaphanita* and *Darvyadi Ghrita*). Total citations exceed 67 references.

***Ashtanga Sangraha & Ashtanga Hridaya*[9,10,11]**

Acharya Vagbhata consolidates earlier traditions while expanding formulation science. In *Ashtanga Sangraha, Kutaja* features across 102 references, grouped into *Vatsakadi Gana* (As.Su. 16/25), *Vachaharidradi Gana,* and *Pippalyadi Gana*, and is utilized extensively in toxicological antidotes (*Vishachikitsa*, As.Ut. 40–47). In *Ashtanga Hridaya* (79 references), it appears in *Tikta Gana* (Ah.Su. 10/28), *Kaphaghna Gana,* and *Aragwadhadi Gana.* Vagbhata emphasizes processed preparations such as *Kutajavaleha, Kutaja Phanita*, and diverse medicated *Ghritas* for bleeding piles *(Raktarsha)* and *Pittaja Atisara*.

***Laghutrayi* and Later Therapeutic Treatises**

In later medieval literature, the therapeutic scope of *Kutaja* was further refined, emphasizing specialized dosage forms *(Khanda, Putapaka, Arishta, Asava, Rasaushadhi):*

- ***Sharangadhara Samhita*[12,13] (13th Cent. A.D.):** Features 41 citations. Acharya Sharangadhara introduces refined pharmaceutical processes including *Kutaja Putapaka* (Sa.Ma. 1/24) for intractable *Atisara*, *Kutajaditwak Swarasa*, *Kutajashtaka Kwatha, Laghu* and *Brihat Gangadhara Churna, Kutajarishta* (fermented formulation), and mercurial-mineral compounds like *Grahanikapatarasa* and *Grahanivajrakapatarasa*.
- ***Bhavaprakasha Samhita*[14] (16th Cent. A.D.):** Documents 96 citations. Acharya Bhavamishra classifies *Kutaja* in *Haritakyadi Varga*, detailing extensive formulations for complicated *Jwara* (e.g., *Ashtadashanga Kwatha, Santatadi Jwarahara Kashaya), Raktatisara* (*Girimallika* decoctions), *Vatavyadhi (Mahanarayana Taila, Mahayogaraja Guggulu),* and severe *Kushtha*.
- ***Bhela Samhita*[15]:** Presents 16 references emphasizing *Kutaja's Deepana-Sangrahi* action in *Amadosha, Pittatisara, Raktarsha (Changeri Ghrita),* and evacuative *Vamana-Virechana Kalpas*.
- ***Harita Samhita*[16]:** Records 43 references, highlighting innovative multi-herbal combinations for *Am Atisara, Jwar Atisara (Kalingadi Kalka, Vatsakadi Kwatha),* obstetric complications *(Garbhasrava, Sutika Roga),* and *Shiroroga nasya*.
- ***Kashyapa Samhita*[17]:** Focuses on pediatric and gynecological applications (33 citations), utilizing *Kutaja* in *Ksheerashodhana* (breast milk purification), pediatric diarrhea, *Phala-taila Basti* in *Mutraghata*, and post-partum complications *(Sutika Upadrava).*
- ***Siddhasara Samhita*[18] (7th Cent. A.D.):** Documents 36 citations across *Haridradi Gana*, *Brihatyadi Gana*, and specific compounds for *Pakv Atisara (Twagvriksha churna), Pitt Atisara,* and potent anti-toxic *Agadas (Sarvavishahar Mahagad).*

Consolidated Frequency and Distribution Across *Samhita* Treatises

To visualize the sheer magnitude and clinical versatility of *Kutaja* across the classical canon, Table 1 summarizes the textual frequency, primary formulations, and dominant disease indications documented in the primary Samhitas.

Treatise / Period	Total Citations	Primary Classical Names	Key Formulations Documented	Dominant Therapeutic Indications
Charaka Samhita[6] *(Brihattrayi)*	95	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Kalinga, Indrayava, Kautaja*	*Kutajadirasa Kriya, Mustadi Kwatha, Lodhrasava, Mahatiktaka Ghrita, Patoladi Niruha Basti, Vatsakadi Kwatha*	*Arsha, Kushtha, Atisara, Grahani, Jwara, Prameha, Stanyashodhana, Urustambha*
Sushruta Samhita[7,8] *(Brihattrayi)*	67	*Kutaja, Vrikshaka, Indrayava, Shakrayava, Kautaj*	*Kutajaphanita, Darvyadi Ghrita, Mahavajraka Taila, Aragvadhadi Gana, Pippalyadi Ghrita, Shampokadi Basti*	*Atisara, Kushtha, Bhagandara, Jwara, Gulma, Galaganda, Mooshika Visha, Pootinasya*

Ashtanga Sangraha[9] (7th c. A.D.)	102	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Indrayava, Kalingaka, Kautaj*	*Kutajavaleha, Pilu Sukta, Yogaraja Avaleha, Mahanila Ghrita, Pushyanuga Churna, Kalyanaka Guda*	*Atisara, Grahani, Arsha, Kushtha, Prameha, Sarpavisha, Luta Visha, Mukharoga*
Ashtanga Hridaya[10,11] (7th c. A.D.)	79	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Kalinga, Shakrayava, Indravriksha*	*Kutajavaleha, Phanita, Nagaradi Churna, Bhoonimbadi Churna, Chandanadi Ghrita, Shyamatrivrut Kalka*	*Atisara, Grahani, Arsha, Jwara, Prameha, Shotha, Vatavyadhi, Balaroga, Bhagandara*
Sharangadhara Samhita[12,13] *(13th c. A.D.)*	41	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Indrayava, Kalingaka, Yav*	*Kutaja Putapaka, Kutajarishta, Laghu/Brihat Gangadhara Churna, Grahanikapatarasa, Kutajashtaka Kwatha*	*Atisara, Pravahika, Grahani, Amashoola, Jwara, Sarvakushtha, Pradara, Arsha*
Bhavaprakasha Samhita[14] (16th c. A.D.)	96	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Kalinga, Indrabeeja, Girimallika*	*Kutajaputapaka, Kutajavaleha, Vriddha Gangadhara Churna, Simhamrita Ghrita, Manjishthadi Kwatha*	*Atisara, Jwaratisara, Raktatisara, Grahani, Kushtha, Vatavyadhi, Prameha, Netraroga*
Bhela Samhita[15] (Classical)	16	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Shakrayava, Yavaphala*	*Mustadi Churna, Changeri Ghrita, Shivavarti Anjana, Suvarnasamaka Churna, Ayorjeeyam*	*AmAtisara, PittAtisara, Arsha, Visuchi, Gulma, Udara Roga, Vamana, Shleshma Visarpa*
Harita Samhita[16] (Classical)	43	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Kalinga, Girimallika, Indrabeej*	*Kutaja Putapaka, Kutajashtaka, Jambutvyadi Avaleha, Kalingadi Kalka, Khadiradi Ghrita, Vajramandooka*	*AmAtisara, Jwaratisara, Grahani, Arsha, Rajayakshma, Garbhasrava, Shiroroga, Pandu*
Kashyapa Samhita[17] (Classical)	33	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Vrikshaka, Indrayava, Kautaja*	*Mahabhayarishta, Saishuka Sneha, Phala-taila Basti, Eranda Taila, Trivrit Yoga*	*Ksheerashodhana, Pediatric Atisara, Sutika Upadrava, Gulma, Visarpa, Charmadala, Shoola*
Siddhasara Samhita[18] (7th c. A.D.)	36	*Kutaja, Vatsaka, Indrayava, Twagvriksha, Kalingak*	*Mahatiktaka Ghrita, Bhagandaranashaka Taila, Mashyasava, Vishamurchahara Nasya, Sarvavishahara Mahagad*	*Mutrakrichhra, AmAtisara, PittAtisara, PakvAtisara, Grahani, Raktapitta, Kushtha, Visha*

Nomenclature, Synonymy, and Botanical Correlation [19-46]

Ayurvedic nomenclature is profoundly descriptive, embedding taxonomic, morphological, ecological, and therapeutic data directly into plant designations. Classical lexicons record more than 70 distinct Sanskrit synonyms for *Kutaja*, reflecting different anatomical parts, habitat characteristics, and pharmacological capabilities.

Morphological and Ecological Synonyms

The primary classical designations encode precise physical and ecological attributes:

- *Kutaja / Kuta*: Derived from *'Kuta'* signifying mountain peaks or rocky terrains, indicating its natural saxicolous and sub-Himalayan hilly habitat.
- *Girimallika*: Signifies 'mountain jasmine', denoting its striking, aromatic white inflorescence resembling Jasminum species growing on hill slopes.
- *Vrikshaka*: Acknowledges its habit as a robust, small-to-medium deciduous tree rather than a climbing shrub or small herb.
- *Panduradruma/Pandurabhooruha*: Refers to its pale, light-greyish or whitish-brown bark, which is smooth in youth and exfoliating in mature trees.
- *Kalinga*: Reflects its abundant distribution in the ancient Kalinga region (modern Odisha and eastern coastal forests).
- *Mallikapushpa*: Celebrates the fragrant, creamy-white terminal corymbose cymes appearing abundantly in the pre-monsoon and rainy seasons.

Seed-Specific *(Indrayava)* Synonyms

The seeds of *Kutaja* hold an independent, eminent status in Ayurvedic pharmaceutics, designated under an exclusive synonymous cluster:

- *Indrayava / Shakrayava / Shakrabeeja:* 'Seeds of *Indra'* or 'divine barley', alluding to barley-shaped, aristate seeds possessing supreme therapeutic potency.
- *Bhadrayava*: 'Auspicious or beneficial seed', underscoring non-toxic, potent antidiarrheal and metabolic benefits.
- *Yavaphala / Kalingabeeja:* Denotes the elongated, slender follicles containing narrow, compressed linear seeds crowned with a tuft of long silky hairs (coma).

Pharmacological and Functional Synonyms

Certain synonyms directly mirror clinical actions:

- *Sangrahi*: Expresses its supreme intestinal astringent, antisecretory, and stool-binding capability.
- *Varatikta / Vanatikta:* Highlights its intensely bitter, purifying secondary metabolites (steroidal alkaloids).
- *Tiktakshiri*: Denotes the bitter milky latex exuded upon incision of bark or tender shoots.

Comparative Analysis of Synonyms Across 22 Classical Nighantus

Textual comparison across 22 Nighantus demonstrates remarkable philological continuity. The core terms *Kutaja, Vatsaka, Girimallika*, and *Indrayava* appear universally across virtually all lexicons *(Dhanvantari, Sodhala, Madanapala, Raja, Kaiyadeva, Bhavaprakasha, Shaligrama,* and *Priya Nighantu*). A detailed synthesis of synonym distributions is encapsulated in Table 2.

Synonym Category	Representative Sanskrit Names	Nighantu Distribution & Frequency	Botanical / Clinical Significance
Arboreal & Ecological	*Kutaja, Girimallika, Vrikshaka, Girija, Kuta*	Universal (Present in 21/22 *Nighantus*)	Deciduous tree habit; rocky, hilly, sub-Himalayan habitat; attractive white jasmine-like cymes.
Seed & Inflorescence	*Indrayava, Shakrayava, Bhadrayava, Yavaphala, Mallikapushpa*	Universal (Present in 20/22 *Nighantus*)	Follicles containing linear compressed barley-shaped seeds with coma; distinct therapeutic entity.
Bark & Wood Color	*Panduradruma, Pandurabhooruha, Neelayashti, Chakrashakhi*	*Madanapala, Raj, Kaiyadeva, Bhavaprakasha, Sodhala*	Macroscopic pale-greyish to brown bark; distinguishing feature from darker related species.
Regional & Mythological	*Kalinga, Shakrahvya, Shatakratudruma, Puruhuta*	*Ashtanga, Dhanvantari, Raj, Kaiyadeva, Priya Nighantu*	Geographical prevalence in ancient Kalinga; association with Indra symbolizing sovereign efficacy.
Taste & Latex Exudation	*Varatikta, Tiktakshiri, Vanatikta, Sangrahi*	*Susruta Nighantu, Chandra, Kaiyadeva, Raj Nighantu*	Steroidal alkaloid content; intense *Tikta rasa; Grahi* (antisecretory/ astringent) clinical action.

The Gender Taxonomy: *Pum, Stri*, and *Asita Kutaja*[3,34,36]

A seminal contribution of Ayurvedic botanical taxonomy is the gender-based classification of *Kutaja*, most prominently articulated in *Raja Nighantu, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, and later commentators. This system does not reflect sexual dioecy in the modern botanical sense, but represents a sophisticated morphological-pharmacognostic classification system:

***Pum-Kutaja* (Male Variety/*Shweta Kutaja*):** Characterized by larger, thick, pale-greyish/whitish bark, large white flowers, long follicles, and bold, pale-brown seeds possessing a prominent coma. Classically designated as *'Pum-vatsaka'* or *'Maha-kutaja'.* Botanical Correlation: Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall. ex A.DC. (syn. Holarrhena pubescens Wall. ex G.Don). This variety is regarded as the authentic, clinically superior *Kutaja* of primary therapeutic choice.

***Stri-Kutaja* (Female Variety / *Krishna* or *Asita Kutaja*):** Characterized by smaller, darker, blackish-brown or reddish bark, comparatively smaller white-to-yellowish flowers, shorter follicles, and dark, slender seeds with lighter tufts. Botanical Correlation: Wrightia tinctoria (Roxb.) R.Br. or Wrightia arborea (Dennst.) Mabb. (syn. Wrightia tomentosa Roem. & Schult.), family Apocynaceae.

Multilingual Vernacular Nomenclature[47,48,49,50,51]

The pan-Indian medicinal utilization of Kutaja is mirrored in its rich regional nomenclature across classical and modern Indian languages:

Language	Vernacular Name	Language	Vernacular Name
Hindi	Kuraiya, Kuda, Kurchi	Bengali	Kurchi
English	Ester Tree, Conessi Bark, Kurchee	Assamese	Dudhkuri
Gujarati	Kuda, Kadachhal, Kado	Marathi	Kudaa, Pandhra Kuda
Kannada	Kodasige, Halagattigida	Malayalam	Kodagapal, Kutakappala
Tamil	Veppalar, Kudasapalai	Telugu	Kala-kodise, Kodisapala
Oriya	Kurei, Keruan	Punjabi	Kewar, Kura, Kurasukk
Kashmiri	Kogad	Urdu	Kurchi
Sanskrit	Kalinga, Śakra, Vatsaka	Vedic Lexicons	Kutajaka, Yavaphala

Pharmacodynamic Profile (*Rasapanchaka* & *Dosha-Karma*)

The classical understanding of *Kutaja's* pharmacological behavior is articulated through the *Rasapanchaka* system. Across centuries of *Nighantu* literature, scholars have recorded the specific taste, physical qualities, thermal potency, post-digestive transformation, and specific *Doshic* actions of this vital drug.

Comparative *Rasapanchaka* Across Major Classical Nighantus

Table 4 provides an exhaustive comparative synthesis of the pharmacodynamic attributes attributed to *Kutaja* across eight major Nighantus representing classical, medieval, and pre-modern periods.

***Nighantu* Treatise**	***Rasa* (Taste)**	***Guna* (Qualities)**	***Virya* (Potency)**	***Vipaka***	***Dosha Karma***	**Specific *Karmas***
Dhanvantari Nighantu[27]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu, Ruksha*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Shamaka*	*Atisarahara, Deepana, Grahi*
Raja Nighantu[34]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu*	*Ushana**	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Hara*	*Krimighna, Atisarahara, Grahi*
Bhavaprakasha Nighantu[36]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Nashaka*	*Deepana, Pachana, Grahi, Krimighna*
Kaiyadeva Nighantu[35]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu, Ruksha*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta-Rakta Hara*	*Atisarahara, Kushtaghna, Deepana*
Madanapala Nighantu[32]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Shamaka*	*Grahi, Deepana, Krimighna*
Sodhala Nighantu[28]	*Tikta*	*Laghu*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Vata-Kapha Hara**	*Atisarahara, Deepana*
Priya Nighantu[46]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu, Ruksha*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Shamaka*	*Grahi, Krimighna, Deepana, Pachana*
Shaligrama Nighantu[41]	*Tikta, Kashaya*	*Laghu*	*Sheeta*	*Katu*	*Kapha-Pitta Hara*	*Atisarahara, Grahi, Kushtaghna, Krimighna*

Critical Synthesis of Pharmacodynamic Discordances[27,28,32,34,35,36,41,46]

A rigorous examination of classical texts reveals high concordance on three primary parameters: *Rasa* (*Tikta-Kashaya* predominant), *Guna (Laghu-Ruksha),* and *Vipaka (Katu).* However, critical textual variations exist that warrant profound clinical and textual analysis:

The *Virya* Dilemma *(Sheeta vs. Ushna):* The overwhelming consensus among *Brihattrayi* authors and Nighantu commentators *(Dhanvantari, Kaiyadeva, Bhavaprakasha, Madanapala)* identifies *Kutaja* as *Sheeta Virya* (cooling potency). This cold potency directly explains its superior efficacy in pacifying inflammatory, hyper-metabolic, and hemorrhagic manifestations of *Pitta*, such as *Pittatisara, Raktatisara, Raktapitta,* and *Raktarsha*. Conversely, certain recensions of *Raja Nighantu* document *Ushna Virya* (heating potency). This apparent anomaly is explained by classical scholars through the lens of varietal differentiation: while the primary bark *(Twak)* of Holarrhena antidysenterica exhibits *Sheeta Virya,* its

seeds *(Indrayava)* possess distinct *Deepana-Pachana* bio-transformative qualities that stimulate *Jatharagni* without vitiating *Pitta*, leading some medieval observers to classify the seed as mildly *Ushna* or *Ushna-virya* dominant.

***Doshic* Action Concordance and Divergence:** The vast majority of treatises establish *Kutaja* as *Kapha-Pitta Shamaka*. The bitter *(Tikta)* and astringent *(Kashaya)* tastes, combined with *Ruksha guna* and *Sheeta virya,* neutralize *Pitta's* liquid *(Drava)* and hot *(Ushna)* qualities, while absorbing excessive morbid *Kapha* and liquid feces. Notably, *Sodhala Nighantu* denotes it as *'Vata-Kapha hara'.* While unadulterated *Tikta-Kashaya* drugs can theoretically aggravate *Vata* due to dryness, *Kutaja's* remarkable capacity to relieve intestinal colic *(Shoola)* and eliminate entrapped *Ama* (metabolic toxins) in *Pravahika* effectively normalizes the downward movement of *Apana Vata (Vatanulomana),* explaining *Sodhala's* functional attribution.

Comprehensive Therapeutic Spectrum Across Disease Systems

Although *Kutaja* is universally heralded as the premier gastrointestinal remedy, comprehensive analysis across 10 Samhitas reveals a far broader, multi-systemic clinical repertoire. Its classical applications span digestive, dermatological, systemic-infectious, metabolic, and surgical conditions.[6-18]

Gastrointestinal Disorders: The Core Specialty

The alimentary tract is the principal theatre of *Kutaja's* clinical action:

- *Atisara* (Acute & Chronic Diarrhoea): Detailed in over 120 Samhita formulations. *Kutaja* is specifically indicated across all *Doshic* varieties *Vataja, Pittaja*, *Kaphaja, Sannipataja,* and notably *Raktatisara* (hemorrhagic diarrhea/dysentery). Classical formulations include *Kutaja Putapaka* (expressed juice extracted via steam/clay-pack method), *Kutajashtaka Kwatha*, and *Vatsakadi Churna*.
- *Pravahika* (Dysentery/Tenesmus): Directly targets severe tenesmus, mucous elimination, and mucosal ulcerations through its *Grahi* (astringent), *Shothahara* (anti-inflammatory), and *Vrana-ropana* (ulcer-healing) properties.
- *Grahani Dosha* (Malabsorption / IBS Spectrum): Re-establishes mucosal integrity and normalizes enzymatic digestive fire *(Jatharagni)* without producing constipation. Standard formulations include *Bhoonimbadya Churna, Nagaradi Churna*, and *Grahanikapatarasa*.
- *Arsha* (hemorrhoids): Charaka lists *Kutaja* as the chief drug in *Arshoghna Mahakashaya*. It is uniquely indicated in bleeding piles *(Raktarsha),* where formulations such as *Kutajavaleha*, *Pilu Sukta*, and *Kutajadirasa Kriya* rapidly arrest active hemorrhoidal bleeding.

Dermatological Applications (*Kushtha* & *Twak Roga*)

A remarkably expansive yet under-recognized application of *Kutaja* is in chronic dermatology. Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata document more than 45 citations employing *Kutaja* in *Kushtha*:

- Topical pastes *(Lepas)* & medicated oils: *Haridradi Lepa, Manashiladi Lepa, Mahavajraka Taila*, and *Mahamarichadi Taila* incorporate *Kutaja* bark and seeds to arrest cutaneous exudation *(Kleda),* eradicate fungal/bacterial pathogens *(Krimi),* and relieve intractable itching *(Kandu).*
- Internal Purifiers: Major classical Ghee preparations like *Mahatiktaka Ghrita* and *Tiktashatpalaka Ghrita* deploy *Indrayava* as an indispensable component for purifying blood *(Raktashodhana)* and restoring epidermal integrity in psoriasis, eczema, and infectious dermatoses.

Pyrexia and Systemic Infections (*Jwara* & *Jwaratisara*)

Kutaja and *Indrayava* are featured in over 50 classical antipyretic formulations. In *Sannipataja Jwara* (severe infectious pyrexia), *Vishama Jwara* (intermittent/malarial fevers), and *Jwaratisara* (febrile diarrhoea), formulations such as *Sudarshana Churna*, *Ashtadashanga Kwatha, Patoladi Kwatha*, and *Amritadhyashta Kwatha* deploy *Kutaja* to digest systemic *Ama*, clear obstruction in the micro-circulatory channels *(Srotoshodhana),* and alleviate internal burning sensation *(Daha).*

- *Prameha* (metabolic disorders & diabetes): Sushruta places *Kutaja* in *Aragvadhadi Gana* for *Prameha*. Charaka utilizes *Kautaja Churna* and *Lodhrasava* to mitigate *Medas* (adipose tissue) and dry up morbid urinary secretions.
- *Stanyashodhana* (lactation purification): Charaka classifies *Vatsakaphal* in *Stanyashodhana Mahakashaya*. Decoctions of *Kutaja* bark and seeds are administered to lactating mothers to treat breast milk vitiated by *Kapha-Pitta*, thereby safeguarding nursing infants against infantile diarrhoea *(Ksheeralasaka).*
- Toxicology *(Visha Chikitsa):* Ashtanga Sangraha and Sushruta employ *Kutaja* in snake venom *(Sarpavisha),* spider toxins *(Lutavisha),* rodent bites *(Mooshika Visha),* and comprehensive antitoxic formulations *(Mahasugandha Agada, Yapana Agada).*

Metabolic, Urological, and Obstetric Applications

Classical Formulations, Dosage Forms, and Plant Parts Used

Ayurvedic pharmaceutics demonstrates profound sophistication in extracting, concentrating, and bio-potentiating *Kutaja* across multiple dosage forms *(Kalpanas).* Depending upon the therapeutic target, different anatomical parts of the plant are selected.

Morphological Parts Used and Clinical Selectivity[3,47,48,49,50,51]

Classical texts display deliberate precision in prescribing specific plant parts:

- Stem bark *(Twak):* The primary official part used in *Atisara, Pravahika, Raktarsha,* and *Grahani*. Contains the highest concentration of astringent tannins and total steroidal alkaloids that provide immediate mechanical and biochemical barrier restoration in the gut.
- Seeds *(Indrayava/Beeja):* Preferentially utilized in chronic metabolic disorders *(Prameha),* persistent dermatoses *(Kushtha),* blood-cleansing medicated *Ghritas (Mahatiktaka Ghrita),* pediatric enteral fevers, and deep digestive stimulants *(Deepana-Pachana).*
- Flowers *(Pushpa)* & whole plant/fruit *(Phala):* Occasionally utilized in delicate conditions, respiratory distress *(Kasa, Shwasa),* and evacuative *Vamana-Virechana Kalpas* (e.g., *Vatsaka Kalpa* in Charaka Kalpa Sthana).

Representative Multi-Ingredient Classical Formulations

Table 5 provides an extensive compilation of major classical multi-ingredient formulations containing *Kutaja*, delineating their primary pharmaceutical categories, classical references, therapeutic intents, and specific anatomical parts.[7-18]

Formulation Name	Dosage Form	Classical Reference	Plant Part Used	Primary Therapeutic Intent
Kutajarishta	*Asava / Arishta*	Sa.Ma. 10/44	Stem bark *(Twak)*	Chronic diarrhea, dysentery, *Grahani*, fever, *Agnimandya*
Kutaja Putapaka	*Putapaka Swarasa*	Sa.Ma. 1/24; Bha. Ma. 2/90	Fresh stem bark	Hyper-acute *Atisara*, severe *Raktatisara*, tenesmus
Kutajavaleha	*Avaleha* (confection)	As.Ci. 10/31; Sa.Ma. 8/38	Bark & seed *(Twak/Beeja)*	Bleeding hemorrhoids *(Raktarsha), Grahani, Pravahika*
Kutajaphanita	*Phanita* (syrupy conc.)	Su.U. 40/90; Ah.Ci. 9/77	Stem bark decoction	Refractory *Atisara*, infectious bloody diarrhoea
Brihat Gangadhara Churna	*Churna* (fine powder)	Sa.Ma. 6/50; Bha. Ma. 2/32	Bark & seed *(Twak/Beeja)*	*Pravahika, Grahani*, chronic enteropathy, *Atisara*
Sudarshana Churna	*Churna* (powder)	Sa.Ma. 6/28; Bha. Ma. 1/126	Seeds *(Indrayava/ Vatsaka)*	All types of *Jwara, Vishama Jwara, Sannipataja Jwara*
Mahatiktaka Ghrita	Medicated ghee	Cs.Ci. 7/146; Ah.Ci. 19/9	Seeds *(Indrayava)*	Severe *Kushtha, Raktapitta, Visarpa,* chronic dermatoses
Pilu Sukta	Fermented preparation	As.Ci. 10/25	Seeds *(Kutajabeeja)*	*Arsha* (hemorrhoids), deep digestive sluggishness
Lodhrasava	Fermented liquor	Cs.Ci. 6/42; Ah.Ci. 12/25	Bark & seeds *(Kalinga)*	*Prameha* (diabetes/metabolic syndrome), *Medoroga*
Grahanikapatarasa	*Rasaushadhi* (Herbo-min.)	Sa.Ma. 12/249	Seeds *(Indrayava)*	Chronic intractable *Grahani*, persistent lienteric diarrhea
Patoladi Niruha Basti	Medicated enema	Cs.Ci. 3/243; As.Ka. 4/9	Bark & seed Decoction	*Jwara*, systemic *Kapha-Pitta* disorders, intestinal inflammation
Mahavajraka Taila	Medicated oil	Su.Ci. 9/58	Bark decoction & paste	*Maha-Kushtha*, chronic exudative and scaly dermatoses
Pushyanuga Churna	*Churna* (powder)	Cs.Ci. 30/91; As.Ut. 39/74	Bark *(Vatsaka)*	*Guhyaroga, Pradara* (menorrhagia/ leukorrhea), *Yonivyapad*

Kutajashtaka Kwatha	*Kwatha* (decoction)	Sa.Ma. 2/67	Stem bark *(Kutaja)*	*Am Atisara, Amashoola* (severe abdominal colic), tenesmus

DISCUSSION

The present review demonstrates that *Kutaja* occupies a prominent and consistent position in classical Ayurvedic literature. Its references occur across major Samhitas, later therapeutic texts, and *Nighantus*, with *Atisara, Pravahika, Grahani* and *Arsha* representing its principal therapeutic domains. The repeated inclusion of *Kutaja* in different *Ganas*, *Mahakashayas* and formulations further reflects its sustained therapeutic importance across textual periods.

Comparative analysis of the *Nighantus* shows considerable concordance regarding the *Rasapanchaka* of *Kutaja. Tikta-Kashaya Rasa, Laghu-Ruksha Guna*, Sheeta Virya and *Katu Vipaka* are predominantly described, supporting its *Kapha-Pitta Shamaka, Grahi, Deepana* and *Pachana* actions. However, variations in *Virya* and *Dosha-Karma* are also documented. The predominance of *Sheeta Virya* is evident in most reviewed sources, while the divergent description in *Raja Nighantu* should be considered a textual variation rather than forcibly reconciled. Similarly, the *Vata-Kapha Hara* attribution reported in *Sodhala Nighantu* indicates variation among classical authorities.

The therapeutic evidence indicates that the gastrointestinal system represents the core classical field of action of *Kutaja*. Its repeated use in different forms of *Atisara, Pravahika*, and *Grahani* corresponds with its classical *Grahi* and *Atisarahara* actions. Nevertheless, its application extends beyond gastrointestinal disorders to *Kushtha, Jwara, Prameha*, *Arsha, Bhagandara, Visha*, and selected paediatric and gynecological conditions.

An important observation is the specificity of plant parts and dosage forms described in classical texts. *Twak* and *Beeja* are frequently employed, while other plant parts occur in selected preparations. *Kutaja* is incorporated into diverse *Kalpanas* including *Kwatha, Churna, Ghrita, Avaleha, Arishta, Taila, Basti* and *Putapaka*, indicating considerable pharmaceutical diversity and therapeutic selectivity.

The review also highlights the importance of nomenclatural and varietal variations, particularly the descriptions of *Pum, Stri* and *Asita Kutaja*. These variations should be interpreted in their respective textual contexts and supported by appropriate classical references rather than treated as completely uniform classifications.

Overall, the classical evidence establishes a stable therapeutic core of *Kutaja* centred on *Tikta-Kashaya Rasa, Laghu-Ruksha Guna,* predominantly *Sheeta Virya, Katu Vipaka, Kapha-Pitta Shamaka* action and *Grahi-Atisarahara Karma*, while also demonstrating variations in textual descriptions, plant parts and therapeutic applications. Such comparative interpretation provides a more balanced understanding of the classical identity and therapeutic significance of *Kutaja*.

Limitations

While this review provides the most exhaustive consolidation of classical textual citations available, several inherent limitations must be recognized:

- Textual and Chronological Recensions: Classical treatises have undergone repeated revisions and regional copying over millennia, leading to minor variant readings *(Pathabheda)* in botanical synonyms and dosage descriptions.
- Non-Standardized Classical Measures: Dosage forms in ancient Samhitas are expressed in traditional metrological units *(Pala, Kudava, Karsha)* which require careful standardized metric conversion for modern clinical research.
- Need for Direct Preclinical and Clinical Translation: Although classical literature provides compelling theoretical and empirical rationales, rigorous pharmacokinetic, toxicological, and phase-controlled clinical trials are imperative to substantiate classical claims in contemporary healthcare.

CONCLUSION

Kutaja (Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall. ex A.DC.) stands as a sovereign therapeutic jewel in the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. Across more than four hundred classical references spanning three millennia, its primary identity as an unrivalled *Grahi, Deepana*, and *Atisarahara Dravya* remains profoundly intact. Simultaneously, its documented utility in chronic dermatoses *(Kushtha),* intermittent pyrexia *(Jwara),* metabolic dysfunctions *(Prameha),* and toxicological emergencies reveals a versatile, systemic therapeutic agent.

Future Directions

The traditional varietal classification between *Pum* and *Stri Kutaja* provides a crucial historical foundation for modern pharmacognostic authentication, definitively establishing H. antidysenterica as the genuine medicinal drug and warning against adulteration with Wrightia species. By establishing clear correlations between classical *Rasapanchaka* attributes and modern alkaloidal pharmacology, this review provides a robust, scientifically rigorous foundation for standardized

botanical drug development, poly-herbal formulation modernization, and evidence-based clinical applications in gastroenterology and metabolic medicine.

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Cite this article as:
Kapila Madhvi, Tripathi S.M, Pathania Neha. A Comprehensive Classical Review of Kutaja (Holarrhena Antidysenterica Wall. Ex A.Dc.) in Ayurvedic Literature. AYUSHDHARA, 2026;13(5):247-257.
https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v13i5.2976
Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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