



## Review Article

### KUTAJA KSHARA- A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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#### ABSTRACT

The word 'Kshara' can be derived from either of the two roots, *Ksarana* or *Kshanana*. *Ksharana* means to dislodge, to melt away and *Kshanana* means to kill or to destroy. The literal meaning of the word 'Kshara' is the substance which is corrosive, caustic, pungent, saline and acrid in its properties. This *Kshara Kalpana* is known to have a wide scope in *Shalya Tantra* branch of Ayurveda. Because of this wider scope many research works are at present undertaken in order to treat many ailments and avoid few surgical procedures. *Apamarga Kshara* is mainly used in practice and many experiments are already done on the same, in order to study the properties and effects of other drugs or *Ksharas*, one such drug is chosen here i.e., *Kutaja*. *Ksharas* are superior to *Shastras*, *Anushastras*, because of their capability to perform *Chedana* (excision), *Bhedana* (incision), and *Lekhana* (scraping). It alleviates all the three *Doshas*. *Ksharas* can be used where *Shashtra Chikitsa* is contra-indicated or where instruments cannot be used i.e., *Marmasthana*, for women, children or on those who are afraid of surgery. Acharya Susruta, while describing the process of *Kshara* extraction has mentioned 23 drugs and *Kutaja* is first and foremost drug. There are no direct references of properties and extraction of *Kutaja Kshara* in classics and other compilation done on the same were also not found while searching through internet. Present paper throws light on the complete description of *Kutaja* as a *Kshara* and preparation of *Kshara Sutra* mentioned in different texts of Ayurveda.

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#### INTRODUCTION

*Kutaja*<sup>[1]</sup> (i.e., *Hollarhena antidysentrica*/*Wrightia tinctoria*) tree grows throughout India, more common in forests. It is a species of flowering plant, belongs to family Apocynaceae. Its seeds are called as *Indrayava*<sup>[2]</sup> which are useful in treating *Arshas*, *Atisara*, *Shoola*. It is *Vamaka*, does *Tridosha Shamana*, *Dipana* and *Pachana*. 18 *Yogas* of *Kutaja* (*Vatsaka Kalpa*) mentioned in *Kalpasthan*<sup>[3]</sup> of *Charaka Samhita*.

*Kutaja*<sup>[4-6]</sup> also known as *Kurchi* or *Conessi* tree in English. It is a herb used in treating skin disorders, diarrhea, bleeding disorders and haemorrhoids.<sup>[7]</sup> It has various synonyms<sup>[8]</sup> like *Kautah*, *Vatsakah*, *Girimallika*, *Kalinga*, *Mallika-pushpa*, *Indravrksha*, *Vrkshaka*. There are various formulations used in day-to-day practice like *Kutajarishtha*<sup>[9]</sup>, *Kutaja ghanavati*<sup>[10]</sup>, *Kutajadya*

*ghrita*<sup>[11]</sup> and extractions like *Kutajarasa kriya*<sup>[12]</sup>, *Kutajaleha*<sup>[13]</sup>, one among them being *Kutaja Kshara*. Acharya Susruta<sup>[14]</sup> has mentioned 23 drugs suitable for *Kshara* extraction. There are 2 varieties of *Kutaja*<sup>[15]</sup> mentioned, *Strikutaja* and *Pum Kutaja*, *Strikutaja*<sup>[16]</sup>- the plant which has flowers and fruits of red colour, smaller *Vrunta*. *Pumkutaja*<sup>[17]</sup>- the plant which has fruits of bigger size, flowers are white and its leaves are unctuous. Both are used in alleviating<sup>[18]</sup> diseases like *Raktapitta*, *Kaphaja Vikaras*, *Hridroga*, *Jwara*, *Vatarakta* and *Visarpa*.

#### Properties<sup>[19]</sup>

*Rasa: Katu, Tikta, Kashaya*

*Guna: Laghu, Ruksha*

*Virya: Sheeta (Raja Nighantu- Ushna)*

*Vipaka: Katu*

*Karma: Kapha- Pittahara, Grahi, Dipana.*

**Indications:** *Raktapitta, Atisara, Grahani, Kushta, Krimi, Amavata, Visarpa, Vatarakta, Jwara.*

**Part Used:** *Panchanga*

<b>Samhita</b>	<b>Gana</b>
<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Arshogna</i> <sup>[20]</sup> , <i>Kandughna</i> <sup>[21]</sup> , <i>Stanyasodhana</i> <sup>[22]</sup> , <i>Asthapanopaga</i> <sup>[23]</sup>
<i>Susruta</i>	<i>Aragvadhadi</i> <sup>[24]</sup> , <i>Pippalyadi</i> <sup>[25]</sup> , <i>Haridradi</i> <sup>[26]</sup> , <i>Lakshadi</i> <sup>[27]</sup>
<i>Astanga Hridaya</i>	<i>Aragvadhadi</i> <sup>[28]</sup> , <i>Vatsakadi</i> <sup>[29]</sup>

### Botanical Description<sup>[30]</sup>

**H. *antidysentrica*:** A small deciduous tree, leaves- elliptic oblong, ovate or ovate-oblong, flowers- in corymbose cymes, whiter fragrant, fruits- follicles, slender, parallel, coriaceous with long white spots, seeds narrowly linear- oblong glabrous.

**W. *tinctoria*:** A small tree, branchlets yellow or light brown, leaves- elliptic, ovate or lanceolate or ovate-oblong, obtusely acuminate, flowers- white, in lax terminal cymes, fragrant, fruit- of 2 distinct pendulous, slender follicles, cohering at the top only. Seeds are linear, plabrous.

### Chemical Constituents<sup>[31]</sup>

**H. *antidysentrica*:** Conessidine, conessimine, conkurchine, holadiene, holarrhenine, kurchine, kurchinine, kurchaline, holantosines A & B, holacetone.

**W. *tinctoria*:** Isoricinoleic acid,  $\beta$ - sitosterol,  $\beta$ - amyryl, lupeol, rutin, cycloartenine, wrightiadione.

### Kshara Extraction<sup>[32]</sup>

Yoga Ratnakara has mentioned the process in '*Kshara Kalpana Vidhi*'.

- Dry stalk of the required *Kshara* plant is taken and burnt till ash
- This ash is collected in a vessel.
- Add 4 parts of water and mixed well and kept overnight.
- Next day, the upper clear water is collected and boiled.
- It is boiled till the entire water gets evaporated and only the residue is left.
- The powder collected at last is nothing but *Kshara*.

### Kshara Sutra

*Kshara Sutra*<sup>[33,34]</sup> is a medicated thread which is prepared by applying the coatings of particular *Kshara* drug, *Haridra* and *Snuhi Ksheera* as binding agent. The thread is then sterilized by UV radiation. The cumulative effect of the above mentioned 3 drugs exerts powerful debridement

effect and induces healing by the fresh and healthy granulation tissue.

<i>Snuhi Ksheera</i>	11 coatings
<i>Snuhi Ksheera+ Kutaja Kshara</i>	7 coatings
<i>Snuhi Ksheera+ Haridra</i>	3 coatings

There are a few scattered references in classics where the extraction of *Kshara* from *Kutaja* has been mentioned and those references are mentioned as follows.

### Susruta Samhita

Acharya Susruta in the chapter *Ksharapaka Vidhi Adhyaya*<sup>[35]</sup> has mentioned a detailed description of preparation of *Kshara*. The whole plant including *Mula, Phala, Patra, Shakha* of the following trees should be collected for preparation of *Kshara*. *Kutaja, Palasha, Asvakarna, Paribhadra, Bibhitaka, Aragvadh, Tilvaka, Arka, Snuhi, Apamarga, Patala, Naktamala, Indravrksha, Vrsha, Kadali, Chitraka, Putika, Sphota, Asvamaraka, Saptachada, Agnimantha* and *Gunja* and all four types of *Koshataki* should be burnt.

Then one *Drona* (12,288gm) of the ash should be dissolved in 6 *Dronas* of water or cow's urine as prescribed and filtered 21 times and should be treated on fire in a big pan while it is slowly stirred by a ladle. When it becomes *Accha* (clear), *Rakta* (red), *Teekshna* (sharp) and *Picchila* (slimy), it should be re-filtered through a wide piece of cloth and filtrate should be placed again on fire after removing the separated residue.

### Astanga Sangraha<sup>[36]</sup>

Parts of plant like *Nimba, Palasha, Amlata, Mahavruksha, Vrukshaka, Indravriksha (Kutaja), Vrsha, Asphota, Saptachhada, Naktamala, Tilvaka, Kadali, Vibhitaka, Ashwamara, Putika, Chitraka, Kakajangha, Apamarga, Agnimantha* are collected in *Vasanta Rtu*. Same way pieces of 4 types of *Koshataki (Brhatphala, Alpaphala, Pitapushpa, Shwetapushpa)* are collected. The pieces of all above mentioned plants are dried. Then the heap is set on fire using dry stalk of *Tila*. This ash is collected and treated with 1000 *Pala* (40lt) of water and 1000 *Pala* of *Gomutra* and filtered through a thick cloth. Clear, red, slimy water is collected and treated with mild fire stirring it continuously with a ladle. Further, the collected residue is mixed with lime stone, *Shankhanabhi* depending on the type of *Kshara* required (i.e., *Mrudu, Madhyama, Teekshna*).

### Astanga Hridaya<sup>[37]</sup>

Moist roots, branches and other parts of trees such as *Kalamushkaka, Shyamaka, Kadali, Paribhadra, Ashvakarna, Mahavrksa, Palasha, Asphota, Vrikshaka, Indravriksha (Kutaja), Arka, Putika, Naktamala, Ashwamaraka, Kakajangha,*

*Apamarga*, *Agnimantha*, *Tilvaka*, are cut into small pieces and placed on clean stone slabs, separately in heaps. Pieces of the four kind of *Koshataki* plants, the spikes and reeds of *Yava* plants are also similarly heaped. Into the heap of *Kalamushkaka*, pieces of lime stone (*Sudha*) are put in. All the heaps are set on fire by making use of dried chaff of *Tila* plant. After the heaps have been burnt and fire has disappeared, one *Drona* of ash of lime stone together with ash of *Kalamushkaka* and one and a quarter *Drona* of ash of others are taken, mixed together, dissolved well in half *Bhara* of water and cow's urine separately, and filtered through a thick cloth till a slimy, reddish, clear and penetrating alkaline material is obtained. It is then transferred into an iron cauldron and cooked, stirring it constantly with a ladle. When it begins to emit fumes, bubbles come up and attain a solid consistence like *Avaleha*, the cauldron should be taken out of fire. When it gets cool, it is transferred into an iron vessel which is kept concealed inside a heap of *Yava* for some days.

#### **Dhanvantari Nighantu<sup>[38]</sup>**

Author has enlisted *Kshara Shatkam* just as *Kshara Dwaya*, *Kshara Traya* etc but individual properties have not been explained. Among those 6 *Ksharas*, *Kutaja* is one of them.

#### **Ksharashatkam: (6 Ksharas)**

- Krishnatila (Sesamum indicum)*
- Palasha (Butea monosperma)*
- Vacha (Acorus calamus)*
- Apamarga (Achyranthus aspera)*
- Kutaja (Hollarhena antidysentrica)*
- Mushkaka (Schrebera swietenoides)*

#### **Bhaishajya Ratnavali<sup>[39]</sup>**

Author *Bhava Mishra*, while explaining *Kshudra Roga* has explained the following formulation in which the extraction of *Kshara* from *Kutaja* has been observed.

#### **Kshara Ghrita**

##### **Ingredients**

*Mushkaka*, *Kutaja*, *Gunja*, *Chitraka*, *Vasa*, *Arka*, *Snuhi*, *Apamarga*, *Asvamaru*, *Bibhitaka*, *Palasha*, *Paribhadra*, *Karanja*.

Above drugs are taken, dried and burnt. Ash collected is sewed, to this 6 parts of water is added and filtered through a cloth. The filtrate left undisturbed for 12-24 hours is transferred to other vessel. *Murchita Ghrita* and *Triksharas (Yava Kshara, Sarjikshara, Tankana Kshara)* is added to the filtrate and heated on a mild fire. Once the water content has been evaporated the *Ghrita* is sewed, collected and stored in a container. This *Ghrita* is used in *Mashaka*,

*Tilakalaka*, *Padminikantaka*, *Chippa*, *Alasa*, *Dadru*, *Sidhma Roga*.

#### **Vangasena Samhita<sup>[40]</sup>**

Under *Grahani Roga Adhikara* a formulation has been mentioned.

#### **Duralabhadi Kshara**

##### **Ingredients**

*Duralabha*, *Karanja*, *Saptaparna*, *Vatsaka (Kutaja)*, *Madana*, *Murva*, *Patha*, *Aragvadha*.

*Gomutra* is added and burnt, the powder is collected and this *Kshara* enhances *Bala* and *Agni*.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The process of *Kshara* extraction has been described in many *Samhitas* and indicated in alleviation of many diseases. Due to its properties<sup>[41]</sup> like *Slakshna* (smooth), *Na Ati Tikshna* (neither too strong), *Na Ati Mrudu* (nor too mild), *Picchila* (slimy), *Shigra* (spreading quick), *Sita* (white), *Shikhari* (remaining like a mountain peak at the site of application), *Sukha Nirvapa* (easily removable), *Na Ati Vishyandi* (producing neither too much of exudation), *Na Ati Ruk* (nor severe pain); does all the functions of the *Shastra* and *Agni*. By actions such as *Aachusha* (sucking quickly), *Samrambhad Gatra Peeda* (tormenting the whole body), *Sarvato Anusaran* (spreading everywhere), it pulls out all the *Doshas* by their roots, after such action when the pain or disease disappears, the *Kshara* also subsides of its own accord. In the same way, *Kshara sutra* prepared by applying a particular *Kshara* is very much significant and has been proved effective in treating ano-rectal disorders like fistula-in-ano, sinuses, *Arsha*. Since there is wide scope of this treatment in day-to-day practice, different effects of various *Ksharas* mentioned in classics are to be examined. There are few research works conducted on *Apamarga Kshara*, *Palasha Kshara*, *Arka Kshara* and their effects have been determined. In a previous study conducted on *Palasha Kshara* and *Kutaja Kshara* in *Arshas*, it was found that *Kutaja Kshara* had shown better result than *Palasha Kshara* in reducing pile masses.<sup>[42]</sup> Apart from this the efficacy of *Kutaja Kshara* in treating other diseases is also to be studied, henceforth this research is being undertaken.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Kutaja Kshara* has been described in different *Samhitas* like *Astanga Sangraha*, *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*, *Vangasena* and in accordance can be used in treating *Grahani*, *Mashaka*, *Tilakalaka*, *Padminikantaka*, *Chippa*, *Alasa*, *Dadru*, *Sidhma Roga*. *Kutaja Kshara* can be also used in *Kushta*, *Nadi Vrana*, *Arbuda*, *Bhagandara*, *Arsha* and in other diseases where application of *Pratisaraniya Kshara* has been indicated. From the above references it can also be

inferred that the application of *Kshara* holds utmost importance in variety of ailments and henceforth, mentioned in majority of treatises.

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