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A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF PALASHA (BUTEA MONOSPERMA LAM.) AND THE PHARMACEUTICAL PREPARATION OF PALASHA KSHARA

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ABSTRACT

Palasha (Butea monosperma Lam.), commonly known as "Flame of the Forest," is a medicinal plant extensively described in *Ayurvedic* literature for its therapeutic applications. Different parts of the plant, including flowers, bark, leaves, seeds, gum, and roots, possess significant pharmacological activities such as anthelmintic, anti-inflammatory, antidiabetic, antimicrobial, wound-healing, and hepatoprotective effects. Palasha Kshara, an alkaline preparation obtained from the ash of Palasha, occupies an important place in Ayurvedic pharmaceutics and para-surgical practices. It is utilized in the management of Arsha (hemorrhoids), Bhagandara (fistula-in-ano), Ashmari (urolithiasis), *Gulma*, and various gynecological disorders. This review compiles classical references, pharmacognostic details, phytochemical constituents, pharmacological actions, and the standardized pharmaceutical procedure of Palasha Kshara preparation. The article aims to provide a consolidated and evidence-based review useful for researchers and Ayurvedic practitioners.

KEYWORDS: Palasha, *Butea monosperma*, Palasha Kshara, Kshara Kalpana, Ayurvedic Pharmaceutics, Drug Review.

INTRODUCTION

Medicinal plants remain the foundation of traditional healthcare systems. Among them, Palasha (*Butea monosperma Lam. Taub.*) has been revered since Vedic times for both medicinal and religious significance. Owing to its brilliant orange-red flowers, it is popularly known as the "Flame of the Forest." The plant belongs to the family *Fabaceae* and is distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Palasha as *Krimighna* (anthelmintic), *Kushtaghna* (anti-dermatosis), *Arshoghna* (anti-hemorrhoidal), and *Vrana Shodhaka* (wound cleanser).[1,4] Kshara preparations occupy a special place among Ayurvedic dosage forms because of their alkaline, cauterizing, scraping, and healing properties. Palasha Kshara is prepared from the ash of Palasha wood and is indicated in several surgical and medical conditions.[5,6]

Botanical Profile

Parameter	Description
Botanical Name	*Butea monosperma (Lam.) Taub.*
Family	Fabaceae
Sanskrit Names	Palasha, Kimshuka, Bijasneha, Raktapushpaka
Hindi	Dhak, Tesu
English	Flame of the Forest, Bastard Teak
Marathi	Palas
Bengali	Palash
Telugu	Moduga

Taxonomical Classification

Rank	Classification
Kingdom	Plantae
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Magnoliopsida
Order	Fabales
Family	Fabaceae
Genus	Butea
Species	Butea monosperma

Morphological Description

Palasha is a medium-sized deciduous tree attaining a height of 10–15 meters. The bark is rough and greyish. Leaves are trifoliate with large leathery leaflets. Flowers are bright orange-red, arranged in dense racemes. Fruits are flat pods containing a single seed.[1,7]

Ayurvedic Properties (Rasapanchaka)

Property	Description
Rasa	Kashaya, Tikta, Katu
Guna	Laghu, Ruksha
Virya	Ushna
Vipaka	Katu
Dosha Karma	Kapha-Vata Shamaka

Therapeutic Indications

- Arsha (Hemorrhoids)
- Krimi (Helminthiasis)
- Kushta (Skin diseases)
- Gulma
- Prameha
- Grahani[3,7]

Phytochemical Constituents

Various phytoconstituents have been isolated from different parts of Palasha.

Flowers

- Butrin
- Butein
- Isobutrin
- Coreopsin
- Sulphurein
- Flavonoids

Bark

- Kino tannic acid
- Gallic acid
- Lupeol
- Lupenone
- Palasitrin

Seeds

- Palasonin
- Monospermoside
- Fixed oils
- Proteinase enzymes

Leaves

- Glycosides
- Oleic acid
- Linoleic acid

Gum

- Tannins
- Pyrocatechin
- Mucilage(1,8)

Pharmacological Activities

Antihelmintic Activity

Palasha seeds exhibit potent anthelmintic activity against gastrointestinal nematodes and roundworms. Palasonin is considered the principal active constituent responsible for this effect.[1,9]

Antidiabetic Activity

Experimental studies have demonstrated significant reduction in blood glucose levels following administration of ethanolic extracts of flowers and seeds.[1]

Anti-inflammatory Activity

Methanolic extracts of leaves have shown significant inhibition of experimentally induced inflammation.[1]

Antimicrobial Activity

Seed oil and bark extracts possess antibacterial and antifungal activities against several pathogenic microorganisms.[1]

Wound-Healing Activity

Flavonoids and tannins present in Palasha accelerate collagen synthesis and tissue regeneration, supporting wound healing.[10]

Antioxidant Activity

Flower extracts exhibit free-radical scavenging activity due to high phenolic content.[10]

Palasha Kshara

Kshara is an alkaline preparation obtained from the ash of medicinal plants. According to Sushruta, Kshara performs the functions of incision, excision, scraping, purification, and healing simultaneously.[5] Palasha is one of the classical plants recommended for Kshara preparation. Palasha Kshara is used internally and externally in conditions such as Arsha, Ashmari, Gulma, splenomegaly, hepatomegaly, and chronic wounds.[5,6]

Pharmaceutical Preparation of Palasha Kshara

Raw Material

- Dried Palasha wood (Kashtha)

Method of Preparation

Step 1: Collection and Drying

Mature Palasha wood is collected and cleaned. The material is cut into small pieces and dried thoroughly.

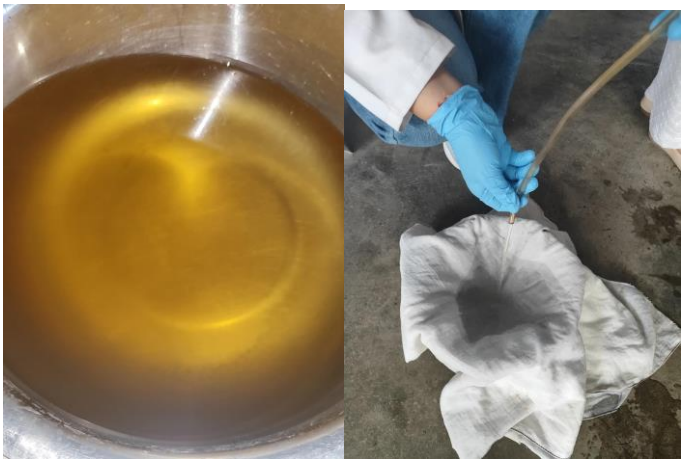
Step 2: Incineration

Step 3: Preparation of Ksharajala

The ash is mixed with four times its quantity of water and allowed to stand overnight (approximately 16 hours).

Step 4: Filtration

The supernatant liquid is filtered repeatedly through a clean cotton cloth. Traditionally, filtration is performed twenty-one times to obtain a clear alkaline solution.



Step 5: Evaporation

The filtered solution is heated on moderate flame with continuous stirring until water evaporates completely.

Step 6: Collection of Kshara

After complete evaporation, a pale whitish-grey powder remains. This is Palasha Kshara.

Analytical Characteristics of Palasha Kshara

Parameter	Result
Appearance	Whitish-grey powder
Odor	Pungent
Taste	Salty-Alkaline
Touch	Soft
pH	11.2–11.5
Water Solubility	Approximately 99%

[6,10]

Therapeutic Applications of Palasha Kshara

- Arsha (Hemorrhoids)
- Bhagandara (Fistula-in-ano)
- Ashmari (Urolithiasis)
- Gulma
- Splenomegaly
- Hepatomegaly
- Cervical Erosion (Pratisaraniya Kshara)
- Chronic wounds and ulcers(5,10)

DISCUSSION

Palasha represents a versatile medicinal plant with extensive applications in Ayurveda. Scientific investigations support many of its traditional claims, including anthelmintic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, and wound-healing properties. Palasha Kshara possesses strong alkaline characteristics that facilitate debridement, cleansing, and healing of diseased tissues. Standardization studies demonstrate high alkalinity and water solubility, validating its therapeutic utility. The combination of classical textual support and modern scientific evidence highlights the importance of Palasha and its Kshara preparation in contemporary Ayurvedic practice.

CONCLUSION

Palasha (Butea monosperma) is an important medicinal plant possessing diverse therapeutic activities. Its Kshara preparation is a valuable Ayurvedic pharmaceutical formulation with established applications in surgical and medical disorders. Proper pharmaceutical processing ensures a standardized alkaline product with significant therapeutic potential. Further clinical and pharmacological studies may help expand its evidence-based applications.

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