

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF KSHARA KARMA

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ABSTRACT

There are certain fundamental meritorious principles underlying the *Ayurvedic* methods which have stood the test of time. Their advantage demands their continuous use even in these days. *Kshara karma* is one of them. It is best para-surgical method described in *Ayurvedic* surgical discipline. It is said to be capable of allaying all the three *doshas* and can be taken orally or applied locally. The *kshara* is a herbo-mineral preparation, alkali in nature, obtained from the plants, animal, and minerals. It has been described vividly in *vrihatrayi*, *laghutrayi* and other similar *Ayurvedic* classics. In this article an effort was made to compile the various aspect of *kshara* and *kshara karma* viz. method of preparation, types, merits, demerits, indications, contraindications, dose, and adverse effects and to establish its importance in surgical as well as medical discipline, Study reveals that it is used for more than fifty clinical conditions, not only used in surgical diseases but equally potential and useful in the field of medicinal cases also and hence, may be regarded as a wonder drug.

KEYWORDS: *Kshara*, *kshara karma*, para-surgical method, herbo-mineral preparation.

INTRODUCTION

Kshara is a kind of medication described in *Ayurveda* Texts for the management of various disorders. The word *Kshara* is derived from the root *Kshara*, means to melt away or to perish. *Acharya Sushruta* defines as the material which destroys or cleans the excessive/the morbid doshas^[1] (*Ksharanat Kshanant va Kshara*). The drug which has the characteristics

of *Kshanan* or *Ksharan* literally means that which destroys fleshy mass either healthy or unhealthy is *Kshara*. *Charaka* says *Kshara* is one which scrapes the abnormal tissue from its location and destroys it after dissolving it, because of its corrosive nature. The *kshara* is prepared out of the plants after burning and making ash. A group of plants is being used for the preparation of *kshara*, these plants are ranging from shrub to big tree. Either one or more is used for the preparation of *kshara* as stated by *Sushruta*. The study comprises its method of preparations, types, qualities, functions, indications, contraindications, and adverse effect.

Methods of Preparation: Big, black, middle aged,^[2] undamaged plants^[3] grown on auspicious land on hill top with formal rituals should be collected in autumn and cut into small pieces then mixed the lime gravels and dried stalk of sesame and burned at the place devoid of air. When the fire is extinguished, the ash along with gravels collected and dissolved in 6 times of water/urine. In *Ashtang Hrudaya*, ½ part water and ½ part urine of animals is mentioned.^[4] decimating it 21 times, followed by cooked in a big pan with continuous stirring slowly with ladle. *Vagbhatta* has used the iron vessel for preparation.^[3] when it becomes clear, red, sharp and slimy strained through a large piece of cloth. Again put on fire, isolating the refuse (solid portion) from alkaline water. 160 or 240ml should be taken out. The gravel of lime and ash, oyster shell and core of conch shell etc. after heating red should be macerated in the iron pan with the same alkaline water. And along with the same eight palas each of the core of conch, shell etc. should be put in two dronas of liquid and cooked carefully, constantly stirring till it attains the qualities of *kshara*.^[5] It should be brought down and preserved in an iron vessel, keeping its mouth closed. This is a moderate type. The fine powder of excreta of cock, peacock, falcon, pigeon and bile of quadruped animals and bird's ala, orpiment and salt are taken and well ground into slimy paste and mixed in the boiling liquid.

The procedure of preparation of *Paneeya Kshara* (*savyuhim*) is similar to *Pratisaraneeya Kshara* up to *Ksharodaka*. This *Ksharodaka* is then boiled till 1/3rd of it remains. This is called *Paneeya Kshara*.^[6] In *Gulmapratishedhaadhyaya* from *Sushruta Samhita*, another method of preparation of *Paneeya Kshara* is mentioned; it is of *avaleha* type.^[7]

List of Plants Used for *Kshara* Preparation^[3]

<i>Kutaja</i>	<i>Hollorrhoea antidysentrica</i>	Apocyanaceae
<i>Palasha-</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Apamarga</i>	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	Amaranthaceae

<i>Snuhi</i>	<i>Euphoria nerifolia</i>	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Arka</i>	<i>Calotropis procera</i>	Asclepiadaceae
<i>Tilwaka</i>	<i>Symplocos racemosa</i>	Symplocaceae
<i>Aragvadha</i>	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Caesalpinnoideae
<i>Mushkaka</i>	<i>Elaeodendron glaucum</i>	Celastraceae
<i>Bibhitaka</i>	<i>Terminalia bellerica</i>	Combretaceae
<i>Paribhadraka</i>	<i>Erythrina veriegata</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Ashwakarna</i>	<i>Dipterocarpus turbinatus</i>	Dipterocarpaceae
<i>Naktamal</i>	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Patla</i>	<i>Stereospermum suaveolens</i>	Bignoniaceae
<i>Vrusha-</i>	<i>Adhatoda vesica</i>	Acanthaceae
<i>Kadali</i>	<i>Musa sapientum</i>	Musaceae
<i>Chitraka</i>	<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i>	Plumbagenaceae
<i>Putika</i>	<i>Holoptela integrifolia</i>	Ulmaceae
<i>Asphota</i>	<i>Hemidesmus indicaceae</i>	Asclepiadaceae
<i>Ashwamaraka</i>	<i>Nerium indicum</i>	Apocyanaceae
<i>Saptachada</i>	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	Apocyanaceae
<i>Agnimantha-</i>	<i>Premna mucronata</i>	Verbenaceae
<i>Gunja</i>	<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	Fabaceae
<i>Koshataki</i>	<i>Luffa acutangula</i>	Cucurbitaceae

*Other plants used in *Ashtanga Hridaya*^[5] are *Shyamaka*, *Shooka*, *Nala*, *Kakajangha*.

Animal Products or Animals Used for: *Sipa* (sea shell), *shankha nabhi* (pila), cock, crow, peacock, pigeon, vulture and bile of cow etc.

Minerals Used for Kshara: *Hartala* (As_2S_3), *manahshila* (As_2S_2), Calcium carbonate, (CaCO_3), *Abhraka*, *Vidlavana* etc.

Classification

On the Basis of Origin

- (A) Plant based- *Kutaja*, *Apamarga* etc.
- (B) Animal based- *Shankha bhasma*
- (C) Others-*Tankada kshara* ($\text{Na}_2\text{B}_4\text{O}_7 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$), *Sarjikshara*

On the Basis of Mode of Application

- 1. *Pratisaraniya* (local application)
- 2. *Paniya Kshara* (systemic application)

On the Basis of Potency: 1. *Mridu* 2. *Madhya* 3. *Tikshna*

On the Basis of Quality: 1. *Uttama* 2. *Madhyama* 3. *Adhama*

They have classified in Various Groups also^[6]

Ksharadwaya: *Yavakshara* and *sarjikshara*

Ksharatraya: *Tankana*, *yavakshara* (barley - *Hordeum vulgare*) and *sarjikshara* (Na_2CO_3 - prepared from the burning of a plant named lana - *Begonia lana*)

Ksharapanchaka: *Palash*, *mushka*, *yava*, *tilnala*, *suvarchika*.

Ksharaashtaka: *Palash*, *snuhi*, *apamarga*, *chinchā*, *arka*, *tilnala*, *yavakshara* and *sarjikshara*.^[7]

Table 2: Qualities of *Kshara*^[8]

Na ati tikshna Not excessively sharp

Na ati mrudu Not excessively soft

Na ati shukla: Not excessively

ushna so that it can be used in *Pittaja vikara*

Shlakshna: Better to touch

Pichhila: Slimy

Avishyandi: Immovable

Shiva or *sama* Not so tough or soft

Shighra Having rapid action

**Shikhari*^[9] do not move when placed in pile

Sukhanirvāpya kanjikadinam sheeti kriyate

***Tikshna*^[10] Sharp penetrating action

Ushna Hot and ability to produce perspiration

Laghu Light

**Ashtanga hridaya* 10 qualities

***Charaka Samhita* 11 qualities

Functions and Importance of *Kshara*: The *kshara* is performing the action of *Chhedana* (to excise)^[11] cutting of *apaki*, *kathin* (hard), *sthira* (immobile), *snayukotha* (gangrenous part) conditions e.g. in cases of *vrana* (wounds) it debrides the unhealthy slough tissue. *Bhedana* (to incise) it may create an opening after suppuration of *doshas* by local application in cases of carbuncles, sinuses. *Lekhana* (scrapping) of *utsanna mamsa* (excessive growth of granulation tissue at wound margin, *kathina* (hard margins), *sthula vrutta oshtha* (elevated, averted wound margins, *Tridoshghnatva* as during preparation of *Kshara* many plants are used in combination. It results into combination of *vinshati guna* in it. Hence results in *tridoshaghnatva*. *Vishesha kriya avcharana* it can be used in *pitta dosh pradhana* conditions also though it is *ushna* and *tikshna*; in *pittaj* condition *mrudu Kshara* e.g. the *kamalanala*

kshara may be used. *Dahana* is like a chemical cauterization at the site of bleeding. *Pachana*: in case of *Pratisaraneeya Kshara*: *vranashotha pachana* and in case of *paneeya Kshara*: *aama pachan* in conditions like *agnimandya*, *ajirna*. *Vilayana*: as it is prepared by *ushna aushadhi*, it is *ushna*, *tikshna*, hence it can melt *kapha vata vibandha* in many diseases. *Darana* (suppuration and incision) it helps in bursting of wounds in which large pus pockets are present, having number of opening but not adequate for drainage, especially in those where we cannot perform surgical interventions like wounds in children, female, weak and panic patients and wounds oversensitive and vital parts. *Vrana Shodhana* (cleaning) and *ropana* (healing of wounds) in *dushta vrana* (infected or chronic wounds), where the flies get attracted and lay a lot of eggs, maggots formation. These maggots engrave wound surface and results into painful inflammation and delayed wound healing e.g. in diabetic foot, It can be managed with by irrigation of wounds by *Ksharodaka*. It cleans the wound as well as improves healing process. *Vrana kleda Shoshana* it decreases the discharge from wound, in *kanduyukta vrana* decrease itching, *Stambhana* at the site of excessive bleeding i.e. chemical cauterization of bleeding capillaries. In *Charaka samhita*^[12] functions of *Kshara* are *Kledana* then *vishoshana* it has ability to generate exudates and cleans up by *Pachana*, *Dahana* and *Bhedana*.

Indications of *Kshara*^[13]

Local application of *Pratisaraniya Kshara*

Skin disorders Like Dermatitis, Hyperkeratosis, Ring worms, Eczema, Circular patches, Leukoderma, Vitiligo, Corns, Moles, Birthmarks, Facial hypermigation, Warts. Etc.

Diseases of Oral Cavity: *Upjihva*, *adhijihva*, *upakusha*, *dantavaidarbha*, three types of rohini etc.

Other Conditions: Fistula in ano, Haemorrhoids, Sinuses, External abscess, Tumour, Infected and chronic wound having poisons or maggots, Numbness, after the excision of glandular swelling and tumour.^[14] *Raktaja gulma* or abdominal swelling.^[15]

Systemic Use of *Kshara*

Gastrointestinal Disorders: *Raktapitta*– *kshara* of tuber of lotus,^[16] *kaphaja gulma*,^[17] *raktaja gulma* for vaginal cleaning per vaginal use of (*yavakshara* + *palala*)^[18] *Ksharavatika* is used in case of *kaphaja udara roga*, *Vidangadikshara* in *plihodara* (splenomegaly) In *grahani*^[19] or IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) *kshara* is used in different forms e.g. *kshara*

ghrita, kshara gutika, pippalimuladyakshara, bhallatakakshara, duralabhadyakshara, bhoonimbadiakshara, haridradya kshara, ksharagutika, chaturtha kshara, panchama kshara etc., Hemorrhoid,^[20] *Agnisada, Gulma, Diarrhoea, Aruchi, Agnisanga, Ajeerna* (indigestion), *Anaha*, Internal abscess, *Krimi, Sannipataja Udara roga, yakritashoola, parinama shoola, tridoshaja shoola, annadravashoola*,^[21] in *Bhaishajya ratnavali Sarjikshara* and *palashkshara* are used in *gulma*, and *vajrakshara* is used in *udara roga, gulma, shoola, agnimandya, ajeerna* etc.

Renal Disorder: *Ashmari*,^[22] Urolithiasis (*Sharkara*), *Yavakshara* used in *mutrakrichra*^[21]

Respiratory Disorders: *Yavaksharadi churna* used in cough.^[23]

Other: *Timira*, Generalised swelling, poisoning, Fever, Brain diseases, Heart diseases,

Musculoskeletal Disorders: Rheumatoid arthritis^[21] (*shankhadi choorna*)

Demerits of *Kshara* in Long Term Use

Local Use: excessive burning, suppuration, redness, discharge, body ache, exhaustion, thirst, fainting or even death.^[24]

Systemic Use: Hair fall and greying of hairs, diminished vision, impotence, cardiac complications, impotence, burning sensation, bleeding, fainting, and fever etc.^[25-27] If excessively used in anal region gives the symptom of burning in anal region particularly obstruction to the passing of urine, stool or excessive passing of stool and urine, **in nose** it produces excessive burning, severe lesion of nasal bridge, contraction and loss of sensation.

Contra Indications of *Kshara*: Related to persons-Weak patients or physically debilitated patients, Children, Old patients, Patient who afraid for medical procedures, having generalized oedema, Ascitis patients, *Pitta prakruti*.

Related to Disease/conditions: *Timira* (eye disease), Pregnancy, During Menstruation, High grade fever, Diabetic patients, *Ruksha, Kshatksheena, Thirst, Moorchha* (unconscious), Impotent, *Apavrutta yoni, Udvrutta yoni, Phalayoni* The conditions like whole body oedema, bone pain, dysguassia, heart pain, joint pain.^[28]

Related to sites: When the sites of diseases are *Marma, Sira, Snayu, Sandhi* (joints), *Tarunasthi* (cartilaginous bones), *Sevani, Dhamani, Gala* (Throat), *Nabhi* (Umbilicus), *Nakhaanta, Shepha* (penis), *Srotas*, thin musculature, Eyes except eyelid diseases.

Dose of Paneeya Kshara^[29]

Uttama matra 1 pala ~ 40 ml

Madhyama matra: 3 karsha ~ 30 ml

Heena matra: ½ pala ~ 20ml

But dose should be calculated by *Vaidyas* according to *Dashavidha Pariksha*.

Pratisaaraneeya Kshara: As per requirement. In the reference of haemorrhoid it was told to use one, two and three *nakhutsedh prmana* as per *dosha* involvement.^[31]

Process of Application of Pratisaaraniya

Kshara: The area, where *Kshara* is to be applied, is roughened or small cuts are taken. The *Kshara* is applied with the help of stick (*shalaka*) and kept for 100 *matra* (~ 100 seconds). The area like *nasa* (nose) or eyelid, the time of *Kshara* application is about 50 *matra* (~50 seconds), then washed with *amla varga dravya* and ghee, honey is applied for healing. The *samyakyoga*, *ayoga*, *atiyoga* are explained in *Sushruta Samhita*.

DISCUSSION

In the description of *kshara Acharya Vagbhata* has told that the diseases which are difficult to treat by other means can be cured by *Kshara* therapy.^[30] *Kshara* is used in tumours due to *tiksna* and *shighra* quality, with the *Ushna*, *Shighra* and *Tikshna* qualities it can treat the sinuses, carbuncles. In skin disorders where the *Lekhana chikitsa* is indicated *Kshara* can be used. In case of *kapha dosha anubandhi Raktapitta* (bleeding disorder) *Kshara* is used as it contain *Vishesha kriya avcharana* quality. *Kshara* can be used for arrest of bleeding due to its styptic nature. Severe indigestion which is difficult to treat with other medicines can be easily cured with *Kshara chikitsa*. The healing of wounds having discharge is very difficult, but few qualities of *Kshara* like *Vrana Shodhana* and *Vrankledshoshana* in *kanduyukta vrana*, *Kledana* then *vishoshana* and *Stambhana* serves as a medical debridement for wound thus preparing the wound bed and by its *ropana* action it promotes healing of wound. The study of *Kshara* reveals that the *Kshara* therapy not only minimizes complication but also reduces recurrence of diseases. It also enables patient to resume work with less discomfort by reducing the healing time. *Kledashoshana* activity of *Kshara* can reduce the chances of post surgical infections. This therapy is also cost effective. The role of *Kshara* in medicine can reduce chances of surgery in future. These references from medicine can help to establish the importance of *Kshara*.

CONCLUSION

The review of *Kshara* suggests that the *Kshara karma* is one of the best para-surgical procedures for treating the various disease conditions. Most of the time the therapy is used only to treat Haemorrhoids and Fistula externally but the study reveals that it is used for more than fifty clinical conditions, not only used in surgical diseases but equally potential and useful in the field of medicinal cases also and hence, may be regarded as a wonder drug. Its internal use as a *paniya kshara* is mentioned in various gastrointestinal disorders viz. *udara roga*, *aruchi* or anorexia, indigestion, in *grahani* (irritable bowel syndrome). To establish the importance of *Kshara* in medicinal treatment the detail review of *Charaka Chikitsa Sthana* has been taken. 133 references, 105 *Kshara kalpa* in 19 *Adhyaya* of *Charaka Chikitsa sthana* suggest that the cautious use of *Kshara* can treat many conditions which are unable to treat with the other kind of therapy. Not only in *vrihadtrayi* but in other treatise viz. *laghuttrayi kshara* is used because of its dramatic action. In *rasashastra kshara* is used for *shodhana* of many drugs. The *Kshara* is such a rare combination that we can find different properties in a single formulation. We can modify the properties of *Kshara* by making change in the drugs used for its preparation. *Kshara* has rapid action and it is safer when used in proper dose and cautiously.

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