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Review Article

### REVIEW ON KSHARASHTAKA (8 ALKALINE MEDICINAL PLANTS)

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#### ABSTRACT

Kshara is a type of Ayurvedic medicine, which is prepared out of dried plant ashes by a special process known as Kshara Kalpana. Ksharashtaka is mentioned in few classical texts where 8 ksharas are clubbed into a group. Rasatarangini explains Sudha (snuhi), Palasha, Apamarga, Chinch, Arka, Tila, Svarjika and Yava under Ksharashtaka whereas Bhavaprakasha nighantu explains Palasha, Snuhi, Apamarga, Chinch, Arka, Tila, Yava and Sarjika under ksharashtaka. Yogaratnakara included Tankana in ksharashtaka. Ksharashtaka is included as one of the ingredients in many Ayurvedic formulations. Due to its guna-karma, Kshara has gained great importance in Kayachikitsa as well as Shalyatantra and considered as *Anushastra*. It plays a very important role in pharmaceuticals affording immense therapeutic value. Hence, this paper is intended to give an insight into ksharashtaka.

**Keywords:** Apamarga, Kshara, Sarjika kshara, Ksharashtaka, Tankana, Kalpana, Anushastra.

#### INTRODUCTION

The literary meaning of the word kshara is “substance which has corrosive, pungent, saline, acrid nature and possesses the ksharana property”<sup>1</sup>. Ksharana here means “to mobilize” or “to remove” the deformed body tissue. It is the alkaline substance of the plants, obtained by processing the ash of drugs. It is also called as anushastra<sup>1</sup> by virtue of its chedana bhedana guna. It's a derivative of plant drug ashes in the form of solutions, powder or crystals, all of which have the basic quality of being alkaline.

Acharya Charaka<sup>2</sup> has mentioned eighteen parts of herbal plants which can be used for medicinal purpose and Kshara is one among them. The method of preparation of Kshara is described by various Acharyas. Due to its guna-karma, it has gained great importance in Kayachikitsa and Shalyatantra. Acharya Charaka has mentioned Kshara in the management of Swasaroga, Udararoga, Kustha etc.

Kshara is a type of Ayurvedic medicine which is prepared out of the dried plant ashes by a special process known as Kshara Kalpana<sup>3</sup>. Ksharashtaka is mentioned in few classical texts where 8 ksharas are clubbed into a group. All have given drugs for Kshara preparations and some categorize them under dwi-Kshara, tri-Kshara, pancha-Kshara<sup>4</sup>. But very few grouped them under Astha Kshara as the drug possesses more of kshariya guna (alkaline property).

Rasatarangini includes Sudha (snuhi), Palasha, Apamarga, Chinch, Arka, Tila, Svarjika, Yava under Ksharashtaka whereas Bhavaprakasha nighantu in haritakyadi varga explained kshara Ashtka as Palasha, Snuhi, Apamarga, Chinch, Arka, Tila, Yava and sarjika.

But according to Acharya Yogaratnakara's opinion, Tankana is one among the Astha kasara. According to him Apamarga, Palasha, Arka, Tila, Muska, Yava, Sarji and Tankana are ksharashtaka. These Asta Ksharas are added as an ingredient in many formulations.

Kshara has gained great importance in Kayachikitsa and Shalyachikitsa. Ksharas are also said to be superior to sharp instruments. It plays a very important role in pharmaceuticals and also has great therapeutic value.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### General method of Kshara preparation<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>

- Panchanga (specified part) of drug is collected & dried properly in sun light and burnt to ashes
- After it is completely burnt, ash is allowed to cool down & collected separately
- The ash should be dissolved in specified parts of water/cow's urine
- Mixture is stirred well & kept undisturbed over night

- Next morning, supernatant fluid is collected and filtered for 21/7 times or according to different opinion it differs.
- The clear supernatant liquid is Ksharodaka
- The Ksharodaka is then boiled in iron vessel and stirred constantly.
- The boiling liquid changes to brown, slimy & pungent smelling.
- Ksharodaka is subjected for further boiling to get paste or dry powder form, which will be called as mrodu Kshara
- Madhyama kshara – to 1 part of mrodu Kshara 1/10 part of burnt lime stone, shankha, shukthi etc. are added
- Tikshna kshara – plant drugs like Danti, Dravanti, Chitraka etc & minerals like Pravala, Vida Lavana etc are added to Madhyama Kshara
- Then white colour (Sita Prabha) Kshara is collected
- As it is hygroscopic in nature, it should be stored in air tight glass bottle

**Table 1: Ksharashtakas explained by different authors**

Sr.No	Drugs	Rasatarangini <sup>5</sup>	Bhavaprakasha <sup>6</sup>	Yogaratnakara <sup>7</sup>
1	Apamarga	+	+	+
2	Palasha	+	+	+
3	Arka	+	+	+
4	Tila	+	+	+
5	Svarjika	+	+	+
6	Yava	+	+	+
7	Sudha (Snuhi)	+	+	-
8	Chincha	+	+	-
9	Muska	-	-	+
10	Tankana	-	-	+

**Table 2: Kshara used in different diseases<sup>8,9</sup>**

Name of the disease	Kshara
Kaphaja, Rakta pitta	Kamala Kshara
Raktaja Gulma	Palasha Kshara
Kustha, Sotha	Kshara ghrita (Pippalimuladi)
Jalodara, Kaphaja Grahani	Bhallataka Kshara, Duralabhadi Kshara, Bhunimbadi Kshara, Haridradi Kshara, Kshara gutika
Swasa, Kasa, Hikka	Aswagandha Kshara, Matsyatwak Kshara, Nilakantha pakshi pankha Kshara
Aruchi	Kshara gutika
Kaphaja Vatarakta	Ksharadi pariseka
Karna roga, Parswa shula	Kshara taila
Ashmari, mutrakrichra	Yavadi Kshara, Kamalanala Paneeya kshara

**Table 3: Guna Karma of Ksharashtaka<sup>5</sup>**

Sr. No	Drug	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Karma	Doshagnata	Rogagnata
1	Apamarga	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Arshas, Gulma, Ashmari
2	Palasha	Katu	Teekshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	kapha hara	Gulma, Ashmari
3	Yava	Katu	Teekshna	ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Adhmana, anaha, sula, Udara
4	Tila	Katu	Teekshna	ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Gulma, pliha roga
5	Arka	Katu	Teekshna	ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Gulma, pliha roga, swasa, kasha
6	Sarjika/sarji	Katu	Teekshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Gulma, adhyamana
7	Cincha	-	Teekshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Agnimandya Ashmari
8	Muska	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Snuhi	Katu	Teekshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kapha hara	Gulma, shulaprashmana
10	Tankana	Kshariya	teekshna	Ushna	Lekhana, Chedana	Kaphahara	Gulma, kasa, Swasa

## DISCUSSION

“Kshara” is an unique concept mentioned in Ayurveda under kshara kalpana, which extracts water soluble active principles after converting the drug into ash. It has gained great importance in kayachikitsa & shalya chikitsa, considered under Anushastra, due to its ushna, teekshna, chedana, bhedana, lekshana & ksharana guna<sup>1</sup> is also used in many disease like Ashmari, Mutrakricchra, karnaroga, Kasa, Swasa, Jalodara, etc , helps in breaking the dosha dushya sangahata & treating disease.

Whereas ksharashtaka<sup>5,6,7</sup> are the 8 drugs combined together and explained in the classics like, Rasatarangini, Bhavaprakasha & Yogaratnakara. All three has given similar opinion regarding Apamarga, Palasha, Arka, Tila, Svarjika, Yava. But Rasatarangini & Bhavapraksha added Snuhi & Chinchu under Ksharashtaka and Yogaratnakara contradicting other authors added Tankana and Muska in Ksharashtaka but omitted Snuhi & Chinchu<sup>8,9</sup>.

Thus due to the similar Guna and Karma all are included under ksharashtaka.

## CONCLUSION

Kshara kalpana has gained great importance in the classics due to its unique properties, where surgery cannot be adopted there we can adopt kshara karma, even to bala(children) and vriddha(old), therefore our Acharyas grouped them in different categories and explained regarding ksharashtaka. Where eight specific plants which contain alkaline properties are explained together by various Authors i.e Apamarga, Palasha, Arka, Tila, Svarjika, Yava, Snuhi, Chinchu, Muska and also they included Tankana.

The pharmacological properties of these are, Katu rasa, Tikshna guna, Ushna virya, Lekshana, Chedana karma & Kapha hara (with similar properties) in nature are grouped as ksharashtaka. ‘Tankana’ which is one of Rasadravya but have Kshariya guna hence added under ksharashtaka.

kshara play a very important role in pharmaceuticals and also have a good therapeutic value.

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