

REVIEW OF KSHARA CHIKITSA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has a wide range of formulations and *Kshara* is one of them. *Kshara Chikitsa* is indicated effective over Surgery. The *Kshara* formulation was reviewed from *Bruhatrayi* with objectives to compile the functions of *Kshara* from *Bruhatrayi* and their commentaries and to collect and compile the references of *Kshara Chikitsa* in medicines from *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*, to establish the importance of *Kshara Chikitsa* by knowing cause effect relationship in management treatments of diseases. *Kshara*, its methods of preparations, types, Qualities, Functions, indications, Contraindications, dose, adverse effects and cause effect relationship were studied. Study reveals that with 113 references, 105 formulations in 19 Chapters of *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana*, in few diseases like *Unmada* and *Apasmara* there are medicines which include *gomootra* in formulations which is *kshareeya* in nature. Apart from the general consideration of *Kshara* as part of surgical care, *Kshara Chikitsa* has wider scope in management of many diseases.

Keywords: *Ayurveda Chikitsa*, applications of *Kshara*, Biosalts

INTRODUCTION

Kshara is medicament obtained from ash of one or more plants¹. The process of preparation of *Kshara* involves the extraction of 'alkalies' from ash of dried plants, hence it can term as 'Biosalt'. According to *Sushruta acharya*² there are two types of *Kshara*: 1) *Pratisarneeeya* (External application), 2) *Paaneeya* (internal medication).

The study is based on the following points:

1. Preparation procedures
2. Qualities of *Kshara*
3. Functions of *Kshara*
4. Indications of *Kshara*
5. Dose of *Kshara*
6. Adverse effects of *Kshara*
7. Compilation of *Kshara* from *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa sthana*

Pratisaraneeya Kshara/Pakya/Prativaapa:

When one or more plants, from which the *Kshara* is to be obtained either dried or fresh are cut into the small pieces. Those are allowed to burn in environment along with Calcium compounds (*Sudha sharkara*) and *tila naala*, till we get white ash. Then the calcium compounds i.e. *Sudha sharkara*, *Bhasma sharkara* (crystallized part of plant juice) and *Tila* (Sesame) *naala* separated from the other burnt residue of plants. This white ash has two components. One is water soluble and another is water insoluble. These two parts are separated by adding specific quantity of water in it. In *Sushruta Samhita* the quantity of water is 6 times to that of white ash. In place of water urine of animals like cow, goat can be used³.

In *Ashtang Hrudaya*, ½ part water and ½ part urine of animals is mentioned⁴. The iron vessel is used for the preparation of *Kshara*. Steps of preparation of *Kshara*:

1. The white ash of plant is then allowed to dissolve in liquid.
2. This solvent is then filtered 21 times and the remnants are separated.
3. The previously separated *Sudha shar-kara*, *Bhasmasharkara* (crystalised part of plant juice), *Shankha nabhi* and *Kshira shukti* (quantity: 8 *pala*) is heated up to it become red and hot and dipped into *Ksharodaka* (*Kshara* solution) many times.
4. Then mixture is allowed to evaporate at low temperature (below 60°C).
5. When all liquid is evaporated and only *Kshara* remains at the base of vessel.
6. Then it is separated.

This procedure is of preparing ‘*Madhyama pratisaraneeya Kshara*’. To prepare ‘*mrudu Kshara*’ ‘*Sudhasharkaradi*’ contents are not added into the *Kshara* solution and to prepare ‘*Tikshna Kshara*’, add *danti*, *dravanti* etc *tikshana dravyas*⁵, in addition to *Sudhasharkaradi* contents in it.

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 *Gulmapratishedha adhyaya* from *Sushruta Samhita*, another method of preparation of *Paneeya Kshara* is mentioned, it is of *avaleha* type⁷.

Qualities of *Kshara*⁸:

1. *Na ati tikshna*: not excessively sharp
2. *Na ati mrudu*: not excessively soft
3. *Na ati shukla*: not excessively *saumya* or *ushna* i.e. it should be used in *Pittaja vikara* also⁹
4. *Shlakshna*: better to touch

5. *Pichhila*: slimy
6. *Avishyandi*: immovable
7. *Shiva* or *sama*: not so tough or soft
8. *Shighra*: having rapid action

In addition to these, 2 extra qualities are mentioned in *Ashtanga hrudaya*¹⁰

9. *Shikhari*: do not move when placed in pile
10. *Sukhanirvavya*: (*kanjikadinam sheeti kriyate*)

The *Kshara*, which contains all the above qualities, can be used in treatment of patients otherwise rejected.

According to *Charaka Samhita* the qualities of *Kshara* are¹¹:

1. *Tikshna*: sharp penetrating action
2. *Ushna*: hot and ability to produce perspiration
3. *Laghu*: light

Functions and Importance of *Kshara*:

1. *Chhedana*¹²: cutting of *apaki*, *kathin* (hard), *sthir* (immobile), *snayukotha* (gangrenous part) etc conditions in *vrana* (wounds)
2. *Bhedana*¹³: put opening by local application in cases of carbuncles, sinuses
3. *Lekhana*¹⁴: scratching of *utsanna mamsa* (excessive growth of body tissue at wound margin), *kathina* (hard margins), *sthal vrutta oshtha* (elevated, everted wound margins)
4. *Tridoshghnatva*: as during preparation of *Kshara* many plants are used in combination. It results into combination of *vinshati guna* in it. Hence results in *tridoshghnatva*
5. *Vishesha kriya avcharana*¹⁵: it can be used in *pitta dosh pradhan* conditions also though it is *ushna* and *tikshna*; but in *pittaj* condition *mrudu Kshara* is used
6. *Dahana*¹⁶: cauterization of bleeders
7. *Pachana*: in case of *Pratisaraneeya Kshara*: *vranshotha pachana* and in case of

paneeya Kshara: aama pachan in conditions like *agnimandya, ajirna*

8. *Vilayana*: as it is prepared by *ushna aushadhi*, it is *ushna, tikshna*, hence it can melt *kapha vata vibandha* in many diseases

9. *Darana*¹⁷: bursting, it helps in bursting of wounds in which large pus pockets having number of opening, especially in those where we cannot perform surgical interventions like wounds in children, female, weak and panic patients and wounds over sensitive and vital portions

10. *Vrana Shodhana* and *ropana* (healing of wounds)¹⁸: in *dushta vrana* (infected wounds), where the flies get attracted and lay a lot of eggs. It results in maggots' formation. These maggots engrave wound surface which results into painful inflammation and delayed wound healing. It can be managed with by irrigation of wounds by *Ksharodaka*. It cleans the wound as well as improves healing process

11. *Vrana kled Shoshana* in *kanduyukta vrana*¹⁹: decrease itching in *dushta vrana*

12. *Stambhana* of excessively bleeding wounds²⁰: chemical cauterization of bleeding capillaries

In *Charaka samhita* functions of *Kshara*²¹ are *Kledana* then *vishoshana*: it has ability to generate exudates and cleans up by drying, *Pachana, Dahana, Bhedana*.

The general properties of *Kshara* or Biosalt can be stated as 1) Alkaline nature, 2) Antacid action, 3) Diuretic nature, 4) Depurative (purifying/ purgative), 5) Attenuating behavior.

Kshara is employed in such complicated cases where surgery is inapplicable. It is claimed that in many cases the purpose of surgical treatment may be served by oral administration of *Kshara*. All the reasons men-

tioned above, *Kshara* is best among the *Shashtra* and *Anushastra*²².

According to *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*; the diseases in which *Kshara* is used as treatment are as follows:

Paneeya Kshara: Gara visha, dushi visha (chronic poisoning), *gulma, udara, agnimandya, ajirna* (~indigestion), *aruchi* (~disguassia), *anaha* (~fullness of abdomen), *sharkara* and *ashmari, abhyantara vidradhi*.

Pratisaaraneeya Kshara: kushtha (~skin diseases), *kitibha* (~psoriasis), *kilasa* (~vitiligo), *mandala kushtha, bhagandara* (~fistula-in-ano), *dushta vrana* (~infected wounds), *nadivrana* (~sinus), *bahya vidradhi, dushta vrana* (infected wounds), *arbuda* (~tumor), *charmakeela* (~wart), *tilakalaka* (~mole), *nyachha, vyanga* (~pigmentation of skin), *mashaka* (~nevus), *sapta mukh roga* i.e. *upajivha, adhijivha, upakusha* (~gingivitis), *danta vaidarbha, vataja, pit-taja, kaphaja rohini*.

Paneeya and *Pratisaareneeya: krumi* (worms), *visha, arsha* (~hemorrhoids).

Contra indications of *Kshara*²³:

1. Weak patients or physically debilitated patients, Children, Old patients, Patient who afraid for medical procedures, Whole body oedema, Ascetic patients, *Raktipitta, Pitta prakruti, Timira* (eye disease), Pregnancy, During Menstruation, High grade fever, Diabetic patients, *Ruksha, Kshatkshena, Thirst, Moorchha* (unconscious), Impotent, *Apavrutta yoni, Udvrutta yoni, Phalayoni*

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

3. The conditions like whole body oedema, bone pain, dysguassia, heart pain, joint pain.

Dose of *Paneeya Kshara*²⁴:

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.

Process of application of *Pratisaaraneeya 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*²⁵. When there is over dose of *Kshara* or when it is used for prolong period the following harmful effects may be caused²⁶:

1. Loss of vision
2. Impotency
3. Loss of hairs
4. Graying of hairs
5. Cutting sensation at the site of heart (*hrudayapakartan*)
6. *Kshara* is compared with agni²⁷ i.e. fire hence it has to be used with care

It is general consideration that “*Kshara Chikitsa*” is part of *Ayurvedic* surgical procedures; though it is mentioned in many diseases in medicinal treatment internally as well as externally.

OBSERVATIONS

1. *Palasha Kshara* - 9 times
2. *Yava Kshara* – 70 times
3. *Sajji Kshara* - 14 times

4. And other *Kshara* are found in particular condition.

There are 133 references of *Kshara* were found in *Charaka Samhita Chikitsas-thana*. It establishes the importance of *Kshara* in *Kayachikitsa* also.

DISCUSSION

The conditions in which we cannot perform surgeries due to fear of surgeries or inaccessibility of that part, we can use *Kshara chikitsa*. Due to *Shighra*, *tikshna* qualities, *Kshara* can cut the tumours, with the *Ushna*, *Shighra* and *Tikshna* qualities it can puncture the sinuses, carbuncles. The diseases which are difficult to treat can be cured by *Kshara* therapy.²⁸ In few types of skin diseases where the *Lekhana chikitsa* is necessary *Kshara* can be used. In case of *kapha dosha anubandhi Raktapitta* (bleeding disorder) *Kshara* can be used as it contain *Vishesh kriya avcharana* quality. 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 *ropana*, *Vrankledshoshana* in *kanduyukta vrana*, *Stambhana* of excessively bleeding wounds, *Kledana* then *vishoshana* can do healing of wound very fast.

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 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. In many diseases like *Unmada* and *Apasmara* there are medicines which include *Gomootra* in

formulations which are *Kshareeya* in nature. These references from medicine can help to establish the importance of *Kshara*.

CONCLUSION

The review of *Charaka Chikitsa Sthana* for use of *Kshara* in medicine suggests that the *Kshara chikitsa* is one of the potent tools of treatment of diseases. Many times this therapy is used only to treat Haemorrhoids and Fistula externally. But this study reveals that this therapy is used to treat many diseases internally as well as externally. In the diseases like *Unmada* and *Apsmara*, *Gomootra* is used for treatment which is also *Kshareeya* in nature. 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.

The *Kshara* is such a rare combination that we can find many properties in a single formulation. We can modify the properties of *Kshara* by making change in the drugs used for its preparation. For example when we want to use the *Kshara* in *Kaphanubandhi Raktapitta*, we have to reduce the *Tikshnatva* (sharp penetrating action) of *Kshara* hence we can make the *Kshara* from the drugs like *Kamalnaala* (*Nelumbo nucifera*).

Kshara has rapid action and it is safer when used in proper dose and according to *Dashavidha Pariksha* of patient.

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