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UTILITY OF KSHAR IN
SHALYA-SHALAKYA TANTRA

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ISBN:978-81-948340-5-2



₹350

Published by: Book Bazooka Publication
Email Address: publisherbbp@gmail.com
Website: www.BookBazooka.com
Contact No: +91-7844918767
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Year of Publication: 2020
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Authors: Dr. Arjun Gupta, Dr. Sheweta Kotwal

Edition: First

ISBN: 978-81-948340-5-2

Price- ₹350.00

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About the Book

In the present era, plant derived products are gaining importance as medicinal products, nutraceuticals and cosmetics. Herbal medicines are widely used in healthcare in both developed and developing countries. Ayurveda, 'the science of life' utilizes different forms of herbs in therapeutics and is largely depends upon the medicinal plants for the therapy. The use of herbal medicines has increased remarkably in line with the global trend of people returning to natural therapies. Kshar is one among such forms.

Acharya Sushruta known as 'father of Surgery' has described various surgical process along with parasurgical measures in Sushruta Samhita, which is the oldest available text in surgical practice, enriched with detailed basic surgical techniques and parasurgical measures. Raktamokshan, Kshar karma, Agni karma is amongst of these parasurgical procedures. These procedures have been given special place in surgery by Acharya Sushruta and it is belived that the disease that cannot be cured by any medicine or in subjects where surgery is not possible these processes are very much effective.

Kshar karma is a topic of shalya pradhan text but due to its medicinal and therapeutic use, it is mentioned in all eight branches of Ayurveda in the treatment of various diseases. Among different branches of Ayurveda, Shalya Tantra along with Shalakyia Tantra are shalya pradhan texts which come under Dhanwantari sampradaya.

Shalya Tantra is one of the most important branches of Ayurveda which has its own originality with authenticity, contributing to modern medical technology of today, whereas Shalakyia Tantra deals with the diseases manifesting above the clavicular region and explains the ophthalmology, ENT and dentistry in a very systemic manner. It mainly deals with diseases of the sense organs (gyanendriyas).

Ayurveda encompasses use of various parasurgical/surgical procedures in shalya as well in shalakya tantra for the management of various rogas. Use of different para-surgical procedures has been mentioned in context of so many diseases in Shalyatantra like Arsha, Arbuda, Bhangandra, Vatarakta, Gridhasi etc. Similarly Sushruta has also mentioned these surgical procedures in Shalakya Tantra Netra roga chikitsa like Pakshmakopa, Puyalasa, Abhisyanda and Adhimanta etc. in karn-nasa-mukh rogas like nasa arsha, karn arsha, three types of rohini, etc.

Ayurveda has been a science of healing since ages. It follows a non-invasive approach as a treatment protocol until and unless otherwise is the only option. Kshar Karma is considered one of the best among all surgical or parasurgical modalities due to properties favouring early healing. It has proved its efficacy in order to reduce the agony and pain of the sufferer and avoid invasive surgeries without compromising with the effects.

Many researches and books have depicted the efficacy of Kshar karma in both literary and scientific way in the field of Shalya Tantra. But still there is lot more to dig up from the treasures of Ayurveda. On contrary, it is not widely practised and popularised in Shalakya diseases. So there is need to compile all the material relevant to topic to utilize Kshar karma and give optimum result.

With the aim to provide complete knowledge of Kshar karma in various Ayurvedic texts as well as its clinical aspect in various diseases related to Shalya and Shalakya tantra, we have gathered all the materials regarding Kshar karma from various samhitas, tikas, modern books, journals, research papers and books published by authors on the relevant topic. An effort has been made to compile and present the utilization of Kshar in the pharmceutico-therapeutics of Ayurveda from the historical perspective, by referring important texts of Ayurveda in all aspects of its preparation, types, qualities, indications and uses.

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Chapter - 1

Introduction

Kshar karma is important among all surgical and parasurgical procedures described in Ayurveda due to its advantage of destroying Tridoshaja disorders by excision, incision and scraping action¹. It is versatile, because even such places that are difficult in approach by ordinary measures can be treated by Kshar Karma. It can be administered both internally and externally which makes it more effective than other treatment modalities. Due to properties favouring early healing, it is useful as the substitute of surgical treatment.

Acharya Sushruta and also Acharya Vagbhata have dedicate one whole chapter in Sutrasthana for kshar. Acharya Sushruta has put it under both upyantra² and anushastra³. Where as Acharya Vagbhata has mentioned Kshar under Anushastra only⁴. Acharya Charak has also mentioned 18 drugs of which kshar can be prepared⁵.

Acharya Sushruta has uttered kshara as in Anushastra, Upanyantra, Agropaharaniya and one of the Upakram of Vrana. He emphasises on the fact that, when the kshar administered by an ignorant physician can harm the body like Agni, Shastra and Vajra or death itself. While the same kshar administered by an intelligent and well skilled physician it can prove potent enough subside

all serious and most troublesome disease speedily in which it is indicated⁶.

It is katu, hot and pungent and possesses digestive and dissolving properties along with cleansing and healing. Due to these properties it has been indicated in various diseases including local application in skin disorders, fistula, haemorrhoids, sinus, growths and tumours, over granulation, certain oral-cavity disorders and internal use in digestive disorders, internal abscess, worms etc.

Supremacy of Kshar (Caustic Alkalies)

Almost all Ayurvedic texts mention that Kshar is to be used externally or internally according to the ailments of the body but it is having the topmost place in all surgical and parasurgical measures in Ayurveda which is explained by the following facts by different Acharyas:

Acharyas Sushruta and Vagbhata has mentioned it to be having the topmost place among all surgical and para-surgical measures in Ayurveda^{7,8}, due to its efficacy even in surgical measures though being considered as parasurgical one (Chhedya, Bhedya & Lekhya Karanat). Among the parasurgical measures, all the three agni (cauterization), Kshar and jaluka (leeches) are important and that is why separate chapters are earmarked for them, however among the three, jaluka is important, agni is more important and kshara is the most important one. While commenting

on the verse Dalhana clarifies that Chhedana, Bhedana etc. do not come under the preview of Agni Karma or Jalaukavacharan, while Kshar does these actions.

However the statement 'agni is superior to kshar'⁹ is not contradictory because agni is pradhan to Kshar but its superiority depends upon the basis of karma; not in qualities (guna) as there Kshar proves to be superior because of possessing qualities like alleviating three doshas (tridoshaghata) and performance of chhedana (excision), bhedana karma (incision), lekhana (scrapping) etc. Thus both cauterization and alkalisation are important in their respective jurisdictions like Karna and Arjuna who were equally unparalleled in powerful attacks and for reacting attacks respectively.

In the same way, commentator of Ashtanga Hridaya, clarifies that Kshar is easily applicable and gives result even when Agni Karma and Shastra Karmas are either contraindicated or difficult to perform in certain diseases like nasa arsha (nasal polyps), arbuda (tumours)¹⁰.

Due to its multifold potenciality even in odd composition (vishesha Kriyavacharantwat), it is supreme and is used for specific functions such as in piles caused by pitta. Even kshar is Tridoshagna and Saumya. It works as Dahaka, Pachaka, Daraka etc. not only that but even being Agneya in nature it is indicated in Raktapitta and Arsha and at last but not

- 1 आज्यं रुधिरमिवं त्यजेदेवात्रात्रं.....क्षारमन्त्यजमिव
॥(सन्यासोपनिषद् २/६७)
- 2 सब्योषायोरजः क्षारः फलक्वाथश्च शोधहृत्।.....॥ (अग्निपुराण
२८३/४०)
- 3 चांगेरीकोलदह्मम्बुनागर क्षार संयुक्तम्। धृतयुक्तक्वथितं पेयं गुद भ्रंसे
रुजापहम् ॥ (अग्निपुराण २८६/६०-६१)
- 4 क्षार व्योष्वचाहिंगु विडंग सैन्धवन्नतं। अम्बष्ठातिबला कुष्ठ सर्वकीट
विषहरेत् ॥ (अग्निपुराण २६८/१४-१५)
- 5 तीक्ष्णोष्णो लघुरूक्षश्च क्लेदी पक्ता विदारणः।
दाहनो दीपनश्छेत्ता सर्वः क्षारोऽग्नि सन्निभः ॥ (चं°सू° २६/३०६)
- 6 शस्त्रप्रणिधानं पुनश्छेदनभेदन-व्यधनदारणलेखनोत्पाटनप्रच्छनसीवनैषणक्षार
जलौकसश्चेति ॥ (चं°सू° ११/५५)
- 7 क्षारः पुनरौष्यतैक्ष्ण्यलाघवोपपत्रः क्लेदयत्यादौ
..... तस्मात् क्षारं नात्युपयुज्जीत ॥ (चं°वि° १/१७)
- 8 अथ लवणवर्गः। अथ
लवणानि-सैन्धवसामुद्रविडसौवर्चलरोमकौद्रिडप्रभृतीनि
.....यवक्षारस्वर्जिकाक्षारपाकिमटटणक्षारप्रभृतयः ॥ (सु°सू°
४३/३१३-३२२)
- 9 सैन्धवसौवर्चलविडपाक्यरोमकसामुद्रकपक्रिमयवक्षारोपरप्रसूतसुवर्चिकाप्रभृतीनि
न समासेन लवणो वर्गः ॥
(सु°सू° ४३/११)
- 10 पिप्पलीपिप्पलीमूल हस्तिपिप्पली चव्यचित्रकशृग.....
.....फणिङ्गकक्षारमूत्रपित्तानीतिः.....। इति
कटुकस्कन्धः ॥ (चं°वि° ८/१४२)
- 11 तत्र क्षरणात् क्षणनाद्धा क्षारः। (सु°सू° ११/४)