



A CRITICAL REVIEW OF PANIYA KSHARA IN GULMA CHIKITSA: CLASSICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THERAPEUTIC SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gulma is a significant disease entity described in Ayurveda, characterized by the formation of a localized abdominal mass resulting from the vitiation of Doshas, predominantly Vata. The disease manifests with symptoms such as abdominal pain, abdominal distension, anorexia, constipation, impaired digestion, and altered bowel habits. According to Ayurvedic classics, the pathogenesis of Gulma involves Agnimandya (diminished digestive fire), Ama formation, Srotorodha (obstruction of bodily channels), and deranged Vata Gati. Various treatment modalities have been advocated for the management of Gulma, among which Paniya Kshara occupies a unique place due to its potent Deepana, Pachana, Lekhana, Bhedana, and Vatanulomana properties. Although Kshara Kalpana has been extensively discussed in Ayurvedic literature, the specific role of Paniya Kshara in Gulma Chikitsa has not been comprehensively reviewed. **Aim:** To critically review the classical references of Paniya Kshara described in Gulma Chikitsa and evaluate their therapeutic significance based on Ayurvedic principles and contemporary scientific understanding. **Materials and Methods:** A narrative literary review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Sangraha, Chakradatta, Bhavaprakasha, Yogaratnakara, and Bhaishajya Ratnavali. Secondary literature was collected from indexed journals, books, dissertations, and electronic databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, DHARA, and the AYUSH Research Portal. Relevant references related to Paniya Kshara and Gulma were compiled, categorized, and critically analyzed. **Results:** The review identified Yava Kshara, Svarjika Kshara, and Apamarga Kshara as the principal Paniya Ksharas associated with the management of Gulma in classical literature, with Ketaki Kshara appearing in later compendia. These Ksharas possess Ushna, Tikshna, Deepana, Pachana, Lekhana, and Vatanulomana properties that directly oppose the pathogenesis of Gulma. Yava Kshara was found to be the most frequently cited Kshara in formulations intended for Vataja Gulma and related gastrointestinal disorders. **Conclusion:** Paniya Kshara represents an important therapeutic modality in Gulma Chikitsa. Classical evidence supports its use in correcting Agnimandya, digesting Ama, removing Srotorodha, and restoring normal Vata movement. However, further standardization, pharmacological evaluation, and clinical studies are required to establish evidence-based therapeutic protocols.

KEYWORDS : Gulma, Paniya Kshara, Kshara Kalpana, Gulma Chikitsa, Yava Kshara, Apamarga Kshara, Svarjika Kshara.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, provides a comprehensive understanding of disease based on the equilibrium and disequilibrium of Dosha, Dhātu, Mala, Agni, and Srotas. Among the various disorders described in the Brihatrayi, Gulma is recognized as one of the important diseases affecting the abdomen. The word *Gulma* literally denotes a "clump," "bush," or "rounded mass," signifying the formation of a localized abdominal swelling due to deranged Doshas. Accordingly, Gulma is classified into five major types: Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Sannipataja, and Raktaja Gulma.

The management of Gulma is primarily aimed at correcting the underlying pathological mechanisms rather than merely alleviating symptoms. Ayurvedic classics recommend Deepana (enhancement of digestive fire), Pachana (digestion of Ama), Vatanulomana (restoration of the normal course of Vata), Snehana, Swedana, Virechana, Basti, and the administration of specific formulations based on the predominating Dosha. Among these interventions, Kshara therapy occupies a distinctive place because of its ability to simultaneously improve digestion, remove obstruction, and resolve pathological accumulations.

Kshara Kalpana is a specialized branch of Ayurvedic pharmaceutics that deals with alkaline preparations derived from medicinal plants. The term *Kshara* is derived from the Sanskrit root *Kshar*, meaning "to melt," "to dissolve," or "to destroy." Acharya Sushruta describes Kshara as a substance possessing *Chedana* (excision), *Bhedana* (piercing), *Lekhana* (scraping), and *Shodhana* (purification) properties, capable of removing morbid tissues and Doshas. Depending upon the route of administration, Kshara is broadly classified into **Pratisaraniya Kshara**, applied externally, and **Paniya Kshara**, administered internally.

Paniya Kshara is specifically indicated in disorders involving Agnimandya, Kapha accumulation, Ama, Srotorodha, and Vata Avarodha. Among the various Paniya Ksharas described in Ayurvedic literature.

The present review was therefore undertaken to systematically collect, compile, and critically analyze the references related to Paniya Kshara

in Gulma Chikitsa from major Ayurvedic classics and later compendia. By correlating these textual descriptions with the Ayurvedic understanding of Gulma Samprapti, the review aims to highlight the therapeutic significance of Paniya Kshara and identify areas where further pharmacological and clinical research is warranted.

Classical Concept of Gulma

The concept of Gulma is elaborately described in Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and other classical texts. Acharya Charaka considers Gulma as one of the major disorders caused by deranged Vata. Five varieties of Gulma have been described: Vataja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, Sannipataja, and Raktaja Gulma. Each type exhibits distinct symptomatology depending upon the predominance of the involved Dosha.

Clinically, Gulma presents with pain as its cardinal symptom. The pain may be intermittent or continuous and varies according to the involved Dosha. Other symptoms include abdominal distension, anorexia, constipation, nausea, flatulence, borborygmi, and a sensation of heaviness in the abdomen. In advanced stages, the disease may interfere with digestion and overall nutritional status.

The treatment of Gulma is directed toward correcting Agni, digesting Ama, relieving obstruction, pacifying aggravated Doshas, and restoring the normal movement of Vata. This therapeutic approach forms the basis for the use of Paniya Kshara in Gulma Chikitsa.

Paniya Kshara: Definition and Ayurvedic Perspective

Paniya Kshara refers to Kshara administered internally for therapeutic purposes. It is prepared by burning medicinal plants into ash, dissolving the ash in water, filtering the solution, and concentrating it to obtain alkaline salts. The final product contains the active alkaline principles responsible for its therapeutic efficacy.

The pharmacological attributes of Kshara include Katu and Lavana Rasa, Ushna Virya, Katu Vipaka, Tikshna Guna, Sukshma Guna, and Laghu Guna. These properties enable Kshara to penetrate deep tissues, remove obstructions, digest Ama, liquefy Kapha, and facilitate Vata Anulomana. Consequently, it becomes particularly useful in disorders such as Gulma, Anaha, Udararoga, Arsha, Krimi, and Ashmari.

Role of Paniya Kshara in Gulma Chikitsa

The therapeutic role of Paniya Kshara in Gulma can be understood through its action on the fundamental pathological mechanisms of the disease. Gulma is primarily associated with Agnimandya, Ama accumulation, Srotorodha, and abnormal movement of Vata. The pharmacological properties of Kshara directly counteract these pathological factors.

The Deepana and Pachana actions of Kshara stimulate digestive fire and facilitate the digestion of Ama. The Tikshna and Sukshma qualities enable penetration into obstructed channels and promote the breakdown of accumulated pathological material. The Lekhana action assists in scraping excessive Kapha and Meda, while Bhedana helps resolve compact masses and obstructions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The present study was designed as a narrative literature review to compile, critically analyze, and interpret the references related to Paniya Kshara in the management of Gulma as described in classical Ayurvedic literature. The review focused on the therapeutic role of Paniya Kshara, its pharmacological properties, formulations, and indications in Gulma Chikitsa.

Data Sources

Primary data were collected from the principal Ayurvedic classics (Bahattrayā and selected Laghutrayā texts), including:

- Charaka Samhita
- Sushruta Samhita
- Ashtanga Hridaya
- Ashtanga Sangraha
- Chakradatta
- Bhaishajya Ratnavali
- Bhavaprakasha
- Yogaratnakara

Secondary literature was collected from peer-reviewed journals, review articles, dissertations, and electronic databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, DHARA, AYUSH Research Portal, and institutional repositories.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using the keywords:

- Paniya Kshara
- Kshara Kalpana
- Gulma
- Gulma Chikitsa
- Yava Kshara
- Apamarga Kshara
- Svarjika Kshara
- Ayurvedic management of Gulma

Relevant references published in Sanskrit and English were screened.

Inclusion Criteria

- Classical references describing Paniya Kshara.
- References mentioning Kshara in Gulma Chikitsa.
- Classical formulations containing Kshara indicated for Gulma.
- Published review articles discussing the therapeutic utility of Paniya Kshara.

Exclusion Criteria

- References related exclusively to Pratisaraniya Kshara.
- Studies dealing only with Kshara Sutra.
- References unrelated to Gulma or internal administration of Kshara.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected information was extracted under predefined headings, including source text, type of Kshara, ingredients, properties (Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka), therapeutic actions, formulations, and indications in Gulma. Similarities and differences among the classical texts were compared, and the therapeutic significance of each Paniya Kshara was critically analyzed.

RESULTS

Among the numerous Ksharas described in Ayurvedic pharmaceutics, only a limited number are directly associated with Gulma Chikitsa.

Yava Kshara is the most frequently encountered preparation, while Apamarga Kshara, Svarjika Kshara, and certain Kshara-based compound formulations are also mentioned in different classical and later Ayurvedic texts.

Table 1. Principal Paniya Ksharas Mentioned in Relation to Gulma

Paniya Kshara	Botanical/Source	Principal Actions	Classical Indication
Yava Kshara	Hordeum vulgare	Deepana, Pachana, Vatanulomana	Gulma, Anaha, Adhmana
Apamarga Kshara	Achyranthes aspera	Lekhana, Bhedana, Kapha-Vatahara	Gulma, Arsha, Ashmari
Svarjika Kshara	Natural alkaline salt	Deepana, Pachana	Gulma, Mandagni, Ajirna

Table 2. Classical References of Paniya Kshara in Gulma Chikitsa

Classical Text	Reference	Observation
Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana (Gulma Chikitsa)	Kshara is prescribed in therapeutic formulations for Vataja Gulma along with Panchamula and Shilajatu.	
Sushruta Samhita, Sutra Sthana (Ksharapaka Vidhi/Ksharavidhi)	Paneeeya Kshara is indicated in Gulma, Udara, Ashmari, Arsha, Ajirna, Agnisada and related disorders.	
Ashtanga Hridaya	Internal administration of Kshara is recommended for diseases involving Kapha obstruction and impaired digestion.	
Yogaratanakara	Kshara-containing formulations are prescribed for Gulma, Anaha and Adhmana.	
Bhaishajya Ratnavali	Compound formulations containing Yava Kshara and Svarjika Kshara are indicated in Gulma.	

Table 3. Ayurvedic Pharmacological Properties of Paniya Ksharas

Property	Therapeutic Significance in Gulma
Ushna Virya	Pacifies Kapha and restores Vata movement
Tikshna Guna	Penetrates obstructed channels
Sukshma Guna	Acts at the microchannel level
Deepana	Improves Agni
Pachana	Digests Ama
Lekhana	Removes pathological accumulations
Bhedana	Breaks hard masses and obstruction
Vatanulomana	Restores normal movement of Vata

Individual Review of Paniya Ksharas

Yava Kshara

Yava Kshara is the most extensively described Paniya Kshara in relation to Gulma. It is prepared from the ash of *Hordeum vulgare* after classical processing. Owing to its Katu-Lavana predominance, Ushna Virya, and Tikshna Guna, it exhibits Deepana, Pachana, and Vatanulomana actions. Classical formulations containing Yava Kshara are indicated in Vataja Gulma associated with constipation, abdominal distension, flatulence, and impaired digestion.

Apamarga Kshara

Apamarga Kshara, prepared from *Achyranthes aspera*, is considered one of the most potent Ksharas described by Acharya Sushruta. Although widely known for its application in Arsha and Ashmari, it is also indicated as Paneeya Kshara in Gulma because of its Lekhana and Bhedana properties. It is especially beneficial in chronic Kaphaja Gulma characterized by Srotorodha and hard abdominal masses.

Svarjika Kshara

Svarjika Kshara is a naturally occurring alkaline substance frequently combined with Yava Kshara in digestive formulations. Its predominant Deepana and Pachana actions improve Agni and facilitate digestion of Ama. It is particularly useful in Gulma associated with Mandagni, Adhmana, Ajirna, and Kapha predominance.

Textual References of Paniya Ksharas in Gulma Chikitsa

1. Yava Kshara (यवक्षार)

Source Drug: Yava (*Hordeum vulgare* Linn.)

Classical References

Text	Reference	Context
Charaka Samhita Chikitsa Sthana	Gulma Chikitsa 5/97	Shilajatu with Panchamula Kashaya and Yava Kshara in Vataja Gulma
Yogatarangini	Gulma 8/57	Yava Kshara indicated in Gulma
Vangasena Samhita	20/44	Panchamuladi Ghrita containing Yava Kshara for Shula, Gulma and Udararoga
Ashtanga Hridaya	Mentioned as single Kshara in Gulma-related conditions	Deepana and Vatanulomana action

Classical Citation

पञ्चमूलीकषायेण सक्षारेण शिलाजतु ।
पिबेत्तस्य प्रयोगेण वातगुल्मात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ ९७ ॥

Meaning: Administration of Shilajatu with Panchamula decoction and Kshara (commentators interpret this as Yava Kshara) relieves Vataja Gulma.

Pharmacological Importance

- Deepana
- Pachana
- Vatanulomana
- Adhmanahara
- Vibandahara

Yava Kshara is the most frequently cited Paniya Kshara in Gulma management and directly targets Anaha, Adhmana, Vibandha, and VataAvarodha.

2. Svarjika Kshara (स्वर्जिकक्षार)**Classical References**

Text	Reference	Context
Yogatarangini	Gulma 8/57	Used in Gulma
Bhaishajya Ratnavali	Gulma Rogadhikara 32/15	Vataja Gulma
Vangasena Samhita	20/44	Panchamuladi Ghrita for Gulma and Shula

Properties

- Lavana Pradhana
- Ushna Virya
- Deepana
- Pachana
- Vata-Kapha Shamaka

Role in Gulma

Svarjika Kshara is especially useful where Gulma is associated with:

- Mandagni
- Ama
- Adhmana
- Kapha Avarana of Vata

It is commonly administered along with Yava Kshara because both possess "Vahnisama" (fire-like digestive) properties.

3. Apamarga Kshara (अपामार्गक्षार)

Source Drug: Apamarga (Achyranthes aspera Linn.)

Classical References

Text	Reference	Context
Sushruta Samhita	Ksharavidhi Adhyaya	Internal Kshara indications include Gulma
Yogaratanakara	Ajirna Chikitsa	Component of Shankha Vati used in Anaha and Shula
Classical Kshara Kalpana texts	Kapha-Vata disorders	Obstructive abdominal pathology

Properties

- Tikshna
- Ushna
- Lekhana
- Bhedana
- Kapha-Vatahara

Role in Gulma

Apamarga Kshara is indicated in:

- Kathina Gulma
- Kaphaja Gulma
- Chronic Gulma
- Srotorodha-dominant conditions

Its Lekhana and Bhedana actions help break pathological accumulations and clear obstructed channels.

4. Ketaki Kshara (केतकीक्षार)

This is often overlooked but has a direct Gulma indication.

Classical References

Text	Reference	Context
Chakradatta	Vataja Gulma 30/13	Ketaki Kshara indicated
Bhavaprakasha	Madhyama Khanda 32/25	Vataja Gulma
Bhaishajya Ratnavali	32/15	Vataja Gulma with Svarjika Kshara

Properties

- Ushna
- Tikshna
- Kapha-Vatahara
- Deepana

Role in Gulma

Especially useful in:

- Vataja Gulma
- Chronic abdominal masses
- Kapha-associated obstruction

Ketaki Kshara appears repeatedly in later Ayurvedic compendia specifically for Vataja Gulma.

Summary Table

Kshara	Primary Textual Reference	Gulma Type
Yava Kshara	Charaka CS 5/97	Vataja Gulma
Svarjika Kshara	Yogatarangini 8/57	Vata-Kapha Gulma
Apamarga Kshara	Sushruta Ksharavidhi	Kaphaja Gulma
Ketaki Kshara	Chakradatta 30/13, BR 32/15	Vataja Gulma

Analysis

Among all Paniya Ksharas described in Ayurvedic literature, Yava Kshara possesses the strongest textual support in Gulma Chikitsa. Svarjika Kshara is frequently used as an adjunct due to its Deepana-Pachana activity. Apamarga Kshara is preferred in Kaphaja and chronic obstructive Gulma because of its pronounced Lekhana and Bhedana properties. Ketaki Kshara appears mainly in Chakradatta, Bhavaprakasha, and Bhaishajya Ratnavali, where it is specifically recommended for Vataja Gulma. Collectively, these Ksharas act through Deepana, Pachana, Srotoshodhana, and Vatanulomana mechanisms, thereby directly counteracting the Samprapti of Gulma.

Future research should focus on standardization of Kshara preparations, pharmacological evaluation, and well-designed clinical trials to establish evidence-based therapeutic guidelines. Such investigations will help bridge traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with modern scientific understanding and promote wider acceptance of Paniya Kshara in clinical practice.

DISCUSSION

Among the various Paniya Ksharas identified in the present review, Yava Kshara emerged as the most frequently mentioned preparation. Classical formulations containing Yava Kshara are prescribed particularly in Vataja Gulma associated with abdominal distension, constipation, flatulence, and impaired digestion.

Svarjika Kshara occupies an important place as an adjunctive alkaline preparation. Unlike Yava Kshara, which primarily facilitates Vatanulomana, Svarjika Kshara predominantly enhances digestive activity and reduces Ama.

Apamarga Kshara is another important Paniya Kshara described in Ayurvedic literature. Although widely recognized for its application in Arsha and Ashmari, Sushruta also includes Paneeya Kshara among the therapeutic options for Gulma and other disorders involving obstruction and Kapha predominance.

From a contemporary scientific perspective, the therapeutic actions attributed to Paniya Kshara may partly correspond to its alkaline mineral composition. Experimental studies have demonstrated that alkaline preparations may influence gastric physiology, digestive secretions, intestinal motility, and the evacuation of accumulated gases. Although direct scientific evidence regarding Gulma remains limited, these observations provide a possible explanation for the classical indications of Paniya Kshara in abdominal distension, constipation, dyspepsia, and disorders associated with impaired digestion. Nevertheless, these correlations remain hypothetical and require validation through rigorous pharmacological investigations and controlled clinical trials.

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