



Review Article

MEDICO-HISTORICAL REVIEW OF *KARANJA* (*Pongamia Pinnata* Linn.)

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ABSTRACT

Karanja is very well-known drug of Indian system of medicine, also called as Indian beech. Acharya Charaka mentioned as *Kandughna* and under *Katu Skandha*. While in *Sushruta Samhita*, *Karanja* is classified under *Aragvadhadi*, *Varunadi*, *Arkadi* and *Shyamadi varga*. The first reference of the drug *Karanja* is available in Sutra Sthana first chapter of *Charaka samhita* with the name of *Prakirya* and *Udakirya* as *Karanja-Dwaya*. In *Sushruta samhita* *karanja* is mentioned in Sutra 38th chapter under *Aragvadhadi*, *Varunadi*, and *Shyamadi varga*. In *Ashtangasangraha* Acharya Vagbhata mentioned it in *Dinacharya Adhyaya* and also mentioned it used as *Dustavrana vishodhana*. In *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Karanja* used for *Danta Dhawana* and also used in *Arsha chikitsa*. In *Ashtangahridaya* synonyms like *Varanak* and *Shitivarak* etc are used for *Karanja*. It has many synonyms like *Prakirya*, *Udakirya*, *Naktamala*, *Chirabilwa*, *Snigdhapatra*, and *Ghratapoor*. According to different Ayurveda classics, it has *Katu Rasa* (pungent in taste) and *Tikta Rasa* (bitter in taste) and having *Tikshna Guna*. It is *Ushna virya* (hot in potency) and *Katu* in *Vipaka* (produces effects of *Katu rasa* in body when final transformation occurs after the digestion). This article summarized medico-historical review of *Karanja* from all Ayurvedic classics.

INTRODUCTION

Karanja is very well-known drug of Indian System of Medicine. It is also called as Indian beech. Acharya Charaka has mentioned it under *Kandughna Mahakashaya*^[1] while in *Sushruta Samhita*, it has been classified under *Aragvadhadi gana* and *Shyamadi gana*^[2]. The first reference of this drug is available in first chapter of *Sutrasthana* of *Charaksamhita* with the name of *Prakirya* and *Udakirya-Karanjadwaya*. In *Dirghajivitam Adhyaya*, *Virechaka dravyas* have been explained. Among those 19 *Phalini dravya*, this drug has been explained by the name of *Prakirya* and *Udakirya* and used for *Virechana*^[3].

In 38th chapter of Sutra Sthana of *Sushrutasamhita*, *karanja* is mentioned under *Aragvadhadi gana* for the first time.^[4] In *Ashtangahridaya* and *Ashtangasangraha*, this drug is used for *Dantadhawana*.^[5]

In different *Samhitas* it has been mentioned with various synonyms but it becomes famous with the name '*Karanja*.' It is known by synonyms like *Chirabilwa*, *Prakirya*, *Udakirya*, *Putikaranja*, *Natakaranja*, *Kantakikaranja*, *Ghrutapoor* etc.

According to different Ayurvedic classics, it possesses *Katu Rasa* (pungent in taste), *Laghu* (produces lightness in body after digestion) and *Tikshna gunas*. It is having *Ushna virya* (hot in potency) and *Katu vipaka* (produces effects of *Katu rasa* in body when final transformation occurs after the digestion). Almost all Ayurvedic classics have described this drug under various *Ganas* (groups) along with its *Paryayas* (synonyms), *Rasapanchaka* (pharmacological properties & actions) and *Upayuktangas* (useful parts). The present review work is taken up with the following aim and objectives so as to summarize medico-historical review of *Karanja* from all ayurvedic classics.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To explore the medico-historical review of *Karanja* from all available Ayurvedic classics.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

To elaborate and elucidate the medico historical review of *Karanja*, the review was started from classical texts of Ayurveda i.e., *Brihatrayi* (greater trio of classics of Ayurveda) viz. *Charakasamhita* with its *Ayurveda dipika* (Chakrapani) commentary, *Sushruta samhita* with its *Nibandhasangraha* (Dalhana) commentary, *Ashtanga sangraha* with its *Shashilekha* (Indu) commentary, *Ashtanga hridaya* with its commentaries–*Sarvangasundara* (Arunadatta) and *Ayurveda rasayana* (Hemadri). After that *Nighantu granthas- Bhava Prakasha*, *Raja Nighantu*, *Madanapala Nighantu*, *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*, *Shodhala Nighantu* and *Saraswati Nighantu* were reviewed.

Methods: Subject related data has been compiled from all primary and secondary resources. Compiled material changed in tabular form and gradually in order as inclusion of *Karanja* in different *Gana* (groups) in ayurvedic classics, *Paryayas* (synonyms), *Rasapanchaka* (pharmacological properties) and *Karma* (actions). Compiled material has been thoroughly studied, re-arranged and critically analyze to find common characteristics and differences in various Ayurvedic classics.

OBSERVATIONS

The following observations are made by reviewing the various Ayurveda classics.

Historical Back Ground

History of any particular subject enables us to understand its origin, progress and also other aspects of subjects. The knowledge of ancient helps in having a better future.

The word *Karanja* as mentioned in *Shabdakalpdrum* is formed by words (*Ka+Ranja+ Nich+Ana*)- *Kam sukham shiro jalam va ranjayatiti*.^[6]

For historical glimpse of Indian Medicine chiefly on medicinal plant, from Vedic period to today's era, for total coverage of historical aspects, it has been divided into 4 sections namely

- a) *Vedic kala*
- b) *Purana kala*
- c) *Samhita kala*
- d) *Nighantu kala*

a) *Vedic Kala*

Among the four *Vedas*, the reference of *Karanja* are found in *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda*. In *Rigveda* the

term *Karanja* is used as *Rakshasa* (demon). While in *Atharvaveda* *Karanja* is used as *Mantra*.

b) *Purana Kala*

In *Purana kala*, the *Garuda purana* describes about Ayurvedic subjects in detail. In *Garuda purana*, a separate chapter is available for medicinal plants, but no description about *Karanja* is available.

c) *Samhita Kala*

The *Samhita* period dates back to 2000 BC to 700 AD. There is no doubt that the old *Samhitas* contained sufficient valuable concepts and material regarding *Dravyaguna*. The importance which was assigned to the subject can very well be imagined by the fact that *Charaka Samhita* starts with the *Aushadhachatushka* (drug quadruped) and ends with the *Annapanachatushka* (food and drinks quadruped). But there is no any separate chapter containing description of drugs along with properties and actions either in *Charaka Samhita* or *Sushruta Samhita*, although here and there descriptions of drugs are found.

The first reference of the drug *Karanja* is available in *Sutra sthana* 1st chapter of *Charakasamhita*, with the name of *Prakirya* and *Udakirya* as *Karanjadwaya*. In *Dirghamajivitiya Adhyaya*, 19 *Phalini dravyas* were explained, among those 19 drugs, *Karanja* is explained and used for *Virechana*.^[7]

In *Sushruta samhita Sutra sthana* 38th chapter, where the first time the *Karanja* was used and it was included under *Aragvadhadi Gana*.^[8]

In *Ashtangahridaya* and *Ashtangasangraha*, this drug is used for *Dantadhawana*^[9] and also explained it in *Aragvadhaya gana* and its *Lepa* are advised in *Vranavishodhana*.^[10] In later periods different *Nighantukaras* gave many different synonyms but it becomes famous with the name *Karanja*.

d) *Nighantu Kala*

The history of *Nighantu* literature is also very old. There is existence of the *Vedic Nighantu* which was the basis of *Nirukta*, one of the six *Angas* of the Vedic literature.

Nighantu contained only the synonymous words which contained implicit meaning. This was the ancient method of conveying the idea in concise form. The *Ayurveda Nighantus* also described the drugs by way of synonyms. Quite later on properties and action were added to it and a new pattern of *Nighantus* was evolved where properties and synonyms were described together.

Table 1: Inclusion of Karanja in Different Gana/Varga According to Different Text

S.No	Name of Text	Gana/ Varga
1	Charakasamhita	Kandughna Mahakashaya ^[11]
2	Sushrutasamhita	Aragvadhadi, Shyamadi, Arkadi, Varunadi gana ^[12]
3	Dhanvantri Nighantu	Amaradi Varga ^[13]
4	Kaiyadeva Nighantu	Aushadhi Varga ^[14]
5	Bhava Prakasha Nighantu	Guduchyadi Varga ^[15]
6	Raja Nighantu	Prabhadradi Varga ^[16]
7	Shodhala Nighantu	Amaradi Varga ^[17]
8	Madanapala Nighantu	Abhayadi Varga ^[18]
9	Saraswati Nighantu	Ulpa Varga ^[19]

Table 2: Paryayas (Synonyms) According to Different Texts

S.No	Synonyms	BN ^[20]	MN ^[21]	DN ^[22]	KN ^[23]	RN ^[24]	SN ^[25]
1.	Naktamala						
2.	Chirabilwa						
3.	Prakirya						-
4.	Udakirya	-	-	-			-
5.	Ghrutaparna					-	
6.	Putika				-		
7.	Purikaranja		-	-	-		
8.	Putiparna	-	-	-			
9.	Naktaho	-	+	-			-
10.	Somavalka		-	-	-	-	-
11.	Guchhapushpa	-	-	-		-	-
12.	Kaidarya	-	-	-	-	-	
13.	Kalimara	-	-	-	-	-	
14.	Shadgranthi	-	-	-	-		

(BPN- Bhava Prakasha Nighantu, MP- Madanapala Nighantu, DN- Dhanvantri Nighantu, KN- Kaiyadeva Nighantu, RN- Raja Nighant, SN- Shodhala Nighantu)

Table 3: Beeja Rasapanchaka (properties of seed)

Acc. to different Acharyas	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Doshagnata
B.N ^[26]	Katu	Laghu, Tikshna	Ushna	Vata, Kapha ↓
K.N ^[27]	Tikta, Kashaya	Tikshna	Ushna	Kapha, Vata ↓
D.N ^[28]	Tikta	Ushna	Ushna	Vata, Kapha ↓
M.N ^[29]	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Vata, Kapha ↓
R.N ^[30]	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Vata, Kapha ↓

(BPN- Bhava Prakasha Nighantu, KN- Kaiyadeva Nighantu, DN- Dhanvantri Nighantu, MPN- Madanapala Nighantu, RN- Raja Nighantu)

Acharya Charaka has mentioned that every drug has *Panchabhautika* properties, and on the basis of *Panchabhautika sangathana* of the drug *Karanja* having *Tikta*, *Katu* rasa, *Katu* vipaka, *Tikshna* Guna and so, according to *Guna, Rasa, Vipaka - Agni Mahabhuta* followed by *Vayu Mahabhuta* can be predicted. *Ushna* virya itself indicates *Agni Mahabhuta pradhanata* followed by rest four *Mahabhuta*.

Table 4: Karma (Action) According to Different Texts

Karma	B.N^[31]	K.N^[32]	D.N^[33]	R.N^[34]	M.N^[35]	S.S^[36]
<i>Kaphavatahara</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Shothahara</i>	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Vranahara</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
<i>Kushthahara</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
<i>Krimihara</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Arshahara</i>	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-
<i>Yonidoshahara</i>	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-
<i>Gulmahara</i>	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Udavartahara</i>	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-

(BPN- *Bhava Prakasha Nighantu*, KN- *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*, DN- *Dhanvantri Nighantu*, MPN- *Madanapala Nighantu*, RN- *Raja Nighantu*, SS- *Sushrutasamhita*)

Types of Karanja

Acharya Charaka has mentioned *Karanjadwaya*:

1) *Prakirya*

2) *Udakirya*

- *Putika* and *Chirabilwa* is also consider as *Karanjadwaya*.
- After that along with *Kantakikaranja* – *Karanjatraya* is mentioned.
- *Putika* is also known as *Chirabilwa* while *Naktamala* is known as *Karanja*.
- *Kantakikaranja* is also known as *Latakaranja*.

Prayojya Anga

❖ *Patra*

❖ *Bija*

❖ *Twaka*

Matra

❖ *Twak & Patra swarasa*: 10-20ml

❖ *Choorna*: 1-3gms

DISCUSSION

Among the four *Vedas*, the reference of *Karanja* is found in *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda*. In *Rigveda*, the term *Karanja* is used as *Rakshasa* (demon). While in *Atharvaveda*, *Karanja* is used as *Mantra*. Acharya Charaka mentioned it under *Kandughna Mahakashaya*. Acharya Sushruta mentioned it as *Krimighna* and *Kushthaghna*. *Karanja* having *Katu*, *Tikta Rasa* and *Ushna* in *Virya*. *Guna* like *Tikshna* and *Ushna* themselves suggested *Agni Mahabhuta* dominance.

CONCLUSION

From the above review, it can be concluded that *Karanja* is very well-known plant drug of Indian system of medicine. According to different Ayurveda classics, it has *Katu Rasa* (pungent in taste) and *Tikta Rasa* (bitter in taste) and having *Tikshna Guna*. It is *Ushna virya* (hot in potency) and *Katu* in *Vipaka* (produces effects of *Katu rasa* in body when final

transformation occurs after the digestion). These all suggest that drug must having *Agni Mahabhuta* dominancy followed by *Vayu*, *Akash*, *Prithvi* and *Jala* in descending order. This review article will provide its medico-historical review according to Different Ayurveda classics as well as give a clue for use it in treatment of skin disorder.

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