Identification of Pum Kutaja and Stri Kutaja Mentioned in the Ayurvedic Literature

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ABSTRACT

Kutaja is one among the frequently used medicinal plants in Ayurveda. Kutaja is the drug of choice for bleeding piles. Acharya Charak quoted Kutaja tvak as the best Sangrahika dravya. It possess properties like Deepana and Pachana and is useful in the management of diarrhoea. Charak enumerated eighteen yogas of Kutaja with the name Vatsaka in Kalpastrhana. In this context he described male and female varieties of Kutaja. Modern experts have also described two varieties of Kutaja i.e., Sveta and Krishna variety. The bark and seeds of Kutaja are used for different medicinal purposes. The seeds of Sveta Kutaja and the seeds which are Tikta, possess better medicinal property. The market sample comprises of seeds of both Tikta and Madhur variety mixed together. Market sample of Kutaja mostly comprises of Madhur seeds. There are three species taken under the name of Kutaja i.e., Holarrhena antidysenterica, Wrightia tomentosa and Wrightia tinctoria. It is a matter of confusion that which one is to be taken as Pum Kutaja and which one as Stri Kutaja.

This article is to throw some light on different species taken as Kutaja and decide which species should be taken as Pum Kutaja and which one is to be taken as Stri kutaja.

KEYWORDS: Pum kutaja, Stri kutaja, Holarrhena antidysenterica, Wrightia tomentosa and Wrightia tinctoria.

INTRODUCTION

Kutaja is a large shrub or a small deciduous tree with exfoliating bark. Kutaja occurs almost throughout India up to or altitude of 1250 m often gregariously in deciduous forest and open wastelands and especially abundant in the sub Himalayan tracts. It is a good appetizer, cold in potency and retains undigested food. It cures diseases like haemorrhoids, diarrhoea, haemorrhages, and skin diseases. Acharya Charak kept it in Arshoghna, Kandughna, Stanya Shodhana, and Asthapanaopaga mahakasaya. Acharya Sushruta kept it in Aragwadadh, Pippalyadi, Haridradi and Lakshadi gana. Acharya Vagbhatta kept it in Aragwadadh and Pippalyadi gana. In Kalpa Sthana, Charak has mentioned two varieties of Kutaja i.e., Pum Kutaja and Stri Kutaja. According to Acharya Dallhana bark of Pum Kutaja is better than Stri Kutaja while used in Atisara. The plant with white flowers, smooth or glabrous leaves and big fruits will be Male Kutaja while the plant with reddish flowers, smaller fruit and greyish black bark is Female Kutaja.

Indrayava: The seeds of Kutaja are said to be Indrayava. Indrayava is said to be tridoshnaak and Samgrah. It is used in the diseases like Jwar, Atisar, Visarpa and Kushtha. Indrayava is of two type i.e., Bitter Indrayava and Sweet Indrayava. The seeds of Holarrhena antidysenterica are said to be Bitter Indrayava, while the seeds of Wrightia tinctoria are said to be Sweet Indrayava, rather to say less bitter Indrayava. The fruit of Wrightia tomentosa are attached from top to bottom and therefore may be its fruit is termed as Indrayava instead of seeds. Vaidya Bapalal is of the opinion that the fruit is known as Indrayava and the seed is known as Bhadrayava.

The difference in the Ayurvedic properties of Kutaja and Indrayava in the different Nighantus are mentioned in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nighantu</th>
<th>Kutaja</th>
<th>Indrayava</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhanvantri</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Tikta, Kasaya Veerya- Sheeta</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Tikta Veerya- Ushna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaideva Nighantu</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Kasaya Veerya- Sheeta</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Tikta Veerya- Ushna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raj Nighantu</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Tikta Kasaya Veerya- Ushna</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Tikta Veerya- Sheeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavprakash Nighantu</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Kasaya Veerya- Sheeta</td>
<td>Ras- Katu, Veerya- Sheeta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synonyms of Kutaja in different Nighantus:

Kutaja, Kaut, Vatsaka, Girimallika, Kallina, Indravriksha, Vrikshaka, Kohi, Utsaka, Vartikkata, Sakra, Mallikapuspa, Pravrishya, Sakrapadapa, Yavphala, Samgrahi, Pandurdrum, Mahagandha, Neelyashiti, Kutti etc.

Elaboration of some of the Synonyms of Kutaja:

- Virosaka: It is a small tree.
- Kalinga: It grows wildly in hilly regions of Kalinga.
- Pandurdrum: The bark is pale in colour.
- Mahagandha: The flowers are fragrant.
- Mallikapuspa: The flowers are similar to jasmine.
- Yavaphala: Fruits have barley shaped seeds.
- Indrayava: The shape of the seed is similar to Yava.
- Varatikta: It has bitter taste.
- Samgrahi: Efficacious in diarrhoea and dysentery.
Therapeutic Uses of Kutaja
- **Fever** - Decoction of Indrayava and Kutaka taken with rice water alleviates fever caused by Pitta.
- **Diarrhea** - To check blood coming with stool one should take ghee cooked with Indrayava with barley scum followed by intake of liquid gruel.
- **Bleeding Piles** - Decoction of Kutaja bark with Sunthi checks mucus and blood.
- **Calcium and grays** - Kutaja bark taken with curd along with wholesome diet expels grays through urethra.
- **Wound** - Decoction of Karavrā, Arka and Kutaja promotes healing of wounds.
- **Skin Diseases** - Decoction of Kutaja destroys all skin diseases.
- **Prameha** - Paste of flowers of Kutaja, Rohitaka, Bibhitaka and Saptaparna is useful in Prameha.

Adulteration
The market samples of bark of Holarrhena antidysentrica are adulterated with bark of Wrightia tomentosa and Wrightia tinctoria. Very often the bark of Wrightia tinctoria is adulterated, but it possess much less medicinal properties than Holarrhena antidysentrica.

Macroscopy
**Holarrhena antidysentrica** - The dried bark of Holarrhena antidysentrica appear in small recurred pieces, outer surface dark brown, longitudinally wrinkled and bearing horizontal lenticels, inner surface is brownish and rough. The outer surface of dried stem bark of Wrightia tinctoria faintly longitudinally and transversally striated and intermittently displays small circular lenticels, inner surface rough, having fibres and is buff in colour.

**Wrightia tinctoria** - The pieces of stem bark of Wrightia tomentosa appear recurred, the outer surface is yellow to greenish brown, where as inner is browingly white and strong fibrous. Fracture is tough and fibrous and there is no characteristic taste of bark.

**Wrightia tomentosa** - The macroscopic difference of the three species taken as Kutaja is shown in the table below.

### Table: Macroscopic Differences of Plant Parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Part</th>
<th>Holarrhena antidysentrica</th>
<th>Wrightia tinctoria</th>
<th>Wrightia tomentosa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Bark</strong></td>
<td>Greyish-brown, scaly, not very rough, with prominent lenticels. Bark usually peeling off in irregular scales.</td>
<td>Pale grey, not particularly rough, with some thin scabby patches and prominent lenticels.</td>
<td>Greyish-brown with thin peeling scales; closely mottled with lenticels and exuding a milky latex when the trunk is wounded or incised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Leaves</strong></td>
<td>Leaves up to 30 cm long, arranged in opposite pairs; narrowed at both ends, with about 12 pairs of parallel, arching secondary nerves; smooth or sparsely hairy, especially below; leaf stalks short.</td>
<td>Leaves in opposite pairs, up to 18 cm long with virtually no stalks; pale below, somewhat blue-green on top especially when young; blade softly downy or less commonly completely smooth; secondary veins pale, prominent, arching; apex shortly pointy, base usually rounded.</td>
<td>Leaves about 10 cm long in opposite pairs or nearly so, narrowed at both ends, softly velvety especially below; leaf-stalk short; margins often wavy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Flowers</strong></td>
<td>25-35 mm wide, fragrant, in dense clusters at the ends of branchlets; tube about 15mm long, lobes white, always overlapping to the right, with a hint of yellow in the narrow throat; stamens and stigma deep inside tube.</td>
<td>White, deliciously fragrant, in extravagant clusters at the ends of twigs; about 3 cm wide with 5 slender, twisty petals; the stamens form a prominent cone in the centre, hiding the pistil; delicate, lacy threads radiating from the cone form a corona on top of the petals.</td>
<td>Slender, branched, clusters at ends of twigs; 5 spreading white petals up to 30 mm wide, tinged pale yellow or greenish; stamens form a cone at the centre, surrounded by a fleshy, orange corona; flower stalks are softly hairy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Fruit</strong></td>
<td>Slender, smooth, consisting of 2 diverging prongs, each 30 cm or more long, joined at their apex.</td>
<td>Fruit slim, pendant, cylindrical follicles, up to 45 cm long, dark green, joined at the tips of both ends when they are young, afterwards hanging free at the apex; the seeds are encased in tufts of silvery silk.</td>
<td>Fruit of 2 slender, cylindrical follicles up to 35 cm long, joined all along their length, grooved where they meet; dark green and intensely speckled with pale dots; seeds inside wear a tuft of silky white hairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Colour of Latex</strong></td>
<td>Milky</td>
<td>Milky</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The flowers of Holarrhena antidysentrica, Wrightia tinctoria and Wrightia tomentosa are shown in the figure 1, figure 2 and figure 3 respectively, while the fruits of Holarrhena antidysentrica, Wrightia tinctoria and Wrightia tomentosa are shown in the figure 4, figure 5 and figure 6 respectively.

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**DISCUSSION**

The fruits of *Wrightia tomentosa* are attached from top to bottom and therefore may be its fruit is termed as *Indrayava* instead of seeds. Vaidya Bapalal said that the fruit is known as *Indrayava* while the seed is known as *Bhadrayava*. Wrightia tomentosa yield yellow latex while the other two *Holarrhena antidysentrica* and *Wrightia tinctoria* produce white (milky) latex. The fruit of the *Holarrhena antidysentrica* and *Wrightia tinctoria* are joined at the apex while the fruit of the *Wrightia tomentosa* is joined all along their length leaving a groove where they meet.

**CONCLUSION**

Thus due to similarities in fruit and colour of latex, it is concluded that *Holarrhena antidysentrica* and *Wrightia tinctoria* both should be taken as *Pum Kutaja* while *Wrightia tomentosa* should be taken as *Stri Kutaja*. The fruit should be termed as *Indrayava* while the seed should be called as *Bhadrayava*.

**References**


Cite this article as:

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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