**ABSTRACT**

*Kanchnara* also called Mountain Ebony in English has been used in Ayurvedic system of Medicine since a long period. Different species of *Bauhinia* are known and used as *Kanchnara* in Ayurvedic medicine. It is a moderate sized deciduous tree with greyish colored stem found in Sub Himalayan tract from the Indus eastwards and throughout the forests of India and Burma. Maharishi Charaka and *Sushruta* have mentioned the properties of *Kovidara* and *Karbudara* in their *Samhitas* (Treatise). Both flower and bark of *Kanchnara* are used as medicine because of the important chemical constituents present in them which are hentriacontane, octacosanol, b-sitasterol, stigmasterol, lupeol and amino acids. The drug has been described as *Grahi, Krimighna, Kushtaghna, Gandamalanashaka, Vranopaka, Mehaguna* and *Raktapittashakam*. Considerable efforts have been made by researchers to study the chemical and biological potential of the plant. The reported pharmacological activities of *Bauhinia variegata* Linn. are anti-diabetic, anti-ulcer, anti-oxidant, nephroprotective, anti-cancer, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, anti-microbial, anti-bacterial. *Kanchnara* is one of the major ingredient of many important formulations used in Ayurveda system of medicine such as *Kanchanara Guggulu, Kanchan gutika, Gandamala kundan rasa, Gulkand Kanchanara and Raktapittashakam*. Considerable efforts have been made by researchers to study the chemical and biological potential of the plant. The reported pharmacological activities of *Bauhinia variegata* Linn. are anti-diabetic, anti-ulcer, anti-oxidant, nephroprotective, anti-cancer, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, anti-microbial, anti-bacterial. *Kanchnara* is one of the major ingredient of many important formulations used in Ayurveda system of medicine such as *Kanchanara Guggulu, Kanchan gutika, Gandamala kundan rasa, Gulkand Kanchanara and Raktapittashakam*. Considerable efforts have been made by researchers to study the chemical and biological potential of the plant.

So this review paper is an endeavour of the author to provide details of this medicinal plant *Kanchnara* about its classical references, synonyms, botanical description, phytochemicals, pharmacological activity and classical medicinal uses.

**KEYWORDS:** *Kanchnara*, Mountain Ebony, *Bauhinia variegata* Linn., Gandamalanashaka

**INTRODUCTION**

Different species of *Bauhinia* are known and used as *Kanchnara* in Indian system of Medicine. Watt has described *Bauhinia variegata* Linn. as *Rakta Kanchnar* and *Bauhinia racemosa* Linn. as *Shveta Kanchnar* while in *Bhavaprakash*, besides *Bauhinia variegata* Linn., *Bauhinia purpurea* Linn., *Bauhinia tomentosa* is also mentioned under *Peeta Kanchnar.*

Later Professor Priyavrat Sharma in his *Dravyaguna Vijanam* has described *Bauhinia variegata* Linn. as *Kanchnar* of *Ayurveda.* *Bauhinia variegata* Linn. is an important medicinal plant belonging to family *Caesalpiniaceae*. It is also known by various names like *Kachanara* (Hindi), *Rakta Kanchan* (Marathi), Mountain ebony or orchid tree (English) and *Kanchana* means “A glowing beautiful lady” in Sanskrit. The main chemical constituents of plant are flavonoids, fixedoils, triterpene saponins, tannins, glycosides and polyphenols. Flavonoids like *apigenin, rutin, quercetin, and apigenin 7-O-glucoside* were isolated from different parts of *Bauhinia variegata* Linn.5 The bark is alterative, anthelmintic, astringent and tonic. The juice of the bark is used in the treatment of amoebic dysentery, diarrhoea and other stomach disorders. A paste of the bark is useful in the treatment of cuts and wounds, skin diseases, scrofula and ulcers. It can also be used in cough conditions, asthma, abdominal distention, also act as a gargle for sore throats, prevent from skin diseases, or internally as a remedy for diarrhoea. It is helpful in managing skin discoloration.5,7 Its powdered bark is traditionally used for tonic, astrain; ulcers. It is also useful in skin disease.8
### BOTANICAL ORIGIN

*Bauhinia variegata* Linn., *Bauhinia purpurea* Linn., *Bauhinia tomentosa* Linn.

### TAXONOMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Bauhinia</td>
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<td>Species</td>
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### VERNACULAR NAMES

*Kanchnar* is commonly known as Swalpakesar, Gaandira, Gandari, Chamari, Chamri, Kovidara, Yugamapatraka, Kanchana, Karbudar, Kundal, Aasfotak in Sanskrit.\(^9\)

*Kachnar, Koliar and Kural in Hindi; Kanchavala in Kannada, Kalad in Kashmiri, Chuvanna Mandharam in Malayalam, Champakali in Gujarati, Kovidara in Bombay, Rakta Kanchan in Bengali, Kanchan in Konkan, Raktakanchan in Marathi, Taki in Nepali, Borara in Oriya, Kularh in Punjabi, Devakanchnamu in Telugu, Mountain Ebony in English.\(^12\)

The plant is commonly known as Kanchnara because of having golden yellow coloured flowers. The stamens of this plant are very few and are light orange in colour (Swalpakesar) which grows in clusters resembling chowrie (Chamri). It bears fruits which open at maturity i.e. Dehiscent fruits (Aasfotak), the leaves of Kanchnara are bifid or cleft in nature (Yugamapatraka) and are similar to the skin of the deer (Chamrika). The plant Kanchnara is an effective drug for Gandamala (Gaandira) and protects from diseases (Kundala). The plant comes out after breaking the ground (Kovidara).\(^13\)

### CLASSICAL REFERENCES

In Brihattrâyî, there is no mention of Kanchonara, Kovidara and Karbudara have usually been interpreted to be two varieties, what is now known as Kanchanara. Acharya Charak has mentioned both Kovidara and Karbudara in Yamana dravya kalpa sangraha (C.S. Vi. 8/135)\(^14\) - 786 while Sushruta has placed them under Urdhva bhaagahara dravya (Su.S. Su. 39/3)\(^15\) - 147 and he has also placed Kovidara in Kashaya Varga (Su.S. Su. 43/23)\(^16\) - 159. In Bhava Prakash Nighantu, Kanchnara is mentioned in Guduchyadi Varga\(^17\), In Kāyedevā nighantu, it is mentioned in Aushadhi varga\(^18\); In Dhanwantari Nighantu, Kovidara is mentioned in Guduchyadi Varga\(^19\); In Abhidhana ratnamala (Shadrasa nigantu), Kovidara is mentioned in Kashaya dryya skanda\(^20\) and in Raja nighantu, Kanchnara is mentioned in Karviradi varga\(^21\).

### MICROSCOPIC CHARACTERS

A freshly cut bark is greyish brown externally and cream colored internally. The external surface, however, gradually turns red and on drying becomes brown and smooth. The external surface remain greyish brown and rough due to large number of exfoliations and transverse cracks and fissures. A few longitudinal ridges are also seen here and there. On drying, the bark becomes curved and channeled. The fracture is short outside and fibrous within.\(^25\)

### DRUG SUBSTITUTED IN THE NAME OF KANCHNAR

Different species of Bauhinia viz. *B. variegata, B. purpurea, B. malabarica, B. racemosa, B.tomentosa* resemble morphologically as well as in their medicinal properties. The bark of other species are also sold in the market under the name of Kanchnara.\(^26,27\)

### DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS

Bark is greyish brown externally and cream colored internally, channeled or curved. Fracture is short outside and fibrous within. Microscopically, the
stem shows four ridges. Glandular and non-glandular trichomes are present. Stem bark is of 3-4 mm. Thickness shows 10-20 layers of cork cells, a wide zone of phelloderm, pericycle and phloem regions. Lignified fibres and stone cells are scattered in the phelloderm region. Phloem consists of Ceratenchyma, strands of fibres and a few stone cells. The stone cells are also present in the medullary rays. Associated within the fibres are frequently found crystal fibres of 10-25 chambers, each filled with a prism of Calcium oxalate. Tannin, starch grains, resinous mass, sterols, reducing sugars and glycosides are present.

**DISTRIBUTION**

The tree is found in Sub Himalayan tract from the Indus eastward and throughout the forests of India and Burma. It is common everywhere preferring the low hills of India but largely cultivated as ornamental tree throughout the plains. So, it occurs almost throughout India ascending to about 5000 ft. elevation. This is a very popular ornamental tree in subtropical and tropical climates, grown for its scented flowers and also used as food item in South Asian cuisine. In the Neotropics, it can be used to attract hummingbirds.

**CONTROVERSY**

Two types of Kanchnara have been described in Bhavaprabhak Nighantu: Kanchnar and Kovidar. Different Sanskrit names have been given to them such as Kanchnaka, Gandari and Shonuspaka for Kanchnara and Marika, Kuddala, Yagapatroka, Kundali, Tamrapushpa, Asmantaka and Swalapakesari for Kovidar. Both the drugs resemble morphologically and have similar medicinal properties. Narhari of Raj Nighantu and Mahendra Bhogik of Dhanvantari Nighantu have mentioned that Kanchnar and Kovidar both are synonyms of each other. Raj Nighantu has also given Peetapushpa, Girija and Mahapushpa as synonyms for it.

In Nighantu Ratnakar, three types of Kanchnara have been described viz. yellow, red and white flowered, all having similar properties. Bauhinia variegata Linn. has been considered as Kanchnara by many modern workers and Bauhinia purpurea Linn. has been regarded as Kovidara.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS**

**Root:** Flavanone, dihydrodibenzoepxin, flavanol glycoside-5, 7, 3', 4' - tetrahydroxy-3-methoxy-7-O-alpha-L-rhamnopyranosyl (l→3)-O-beta-galactopyranoside (Mopuru et al., 2003), (2S)-5,7-dimethoxy-3'4'-methylenedioxyflavanone, dihydrodibenzoepxin, 5.6-dihydro-1.7-dihydroxy-3.4-dimethoxy-2-methylidibenz [b,f]oxepin (Reddy et al., 2003).

**Stem:** 5, 7-Dihydroxy flavanone - 4'-O-a-L-rhamnopyranosyl b-D-glucopyranoside (Gupta et al., 1979), 5, 7 - dihydroxy and 5,7 dimethoxy flavanone-4-O-a-L-rhamnopyranosyl-b-D-glucopyranosides (Gupta et al., 1979), hentriacontane, octacosanol, sitosterol. Stigmasterol (Prakash and Khosa, 1978), neringenin, 5,7-dimethylether-4'-rhamnoglucone, lupeol (Gupta et al., 1980), 5,7,3',4'-tetrahydroxy-3-methoxy-7-O-alpha-L-rhamnopyranosyl (l→3)-O-beta-galactopyranoside (Yadava et al., 2003), 2,7-dimethoxy-3-methyl-9,10-dihydrophenanthrene -1,4-dione named as bauhinione (Zha et al., 2005).

**Flowers:** Quercitoside, Isoquercitoside, rutoside, taxifoline rhamnoside, kaempferol-3-glucoside, myricetol glucoside (Duret and Paris, 1977), apigenin-7-O-glucoside, quercetin, rutin, quercetin (Abd-El Wahab et al., 1987), apigenin, ascorbic, aspartic, glutamic, octadeconic acid, keto acids, amino acid, tannins (Chowdhury et al., 1984), cyaniding-3-glucoside, malvidin-3-glucoside, malvidin-3-diglucoside, peonidin-3-glucoside, peonidin-3-diglucoside, 3-galactoside and 3-rhamnoglucoside of kaempferol (Saleh and Izhak, 1976).

**Seed:** Carbohydrates, proteins, amino acids, ascorbic acid, flavonoids, alkaloids, leucoanthocyanines, (Niranjani et al., 1985), aspartic acid, glutamic acid, arginine, glycine, alanine, histidine, isoleucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, proline, serine, threonine, tyrosine, valine (Wassel et al., 1989), 5-hydroxy 7,3',4',5'-tetra-methoxyflavone 5-O-beta-D-xlyopyranosyl-(l~→2)-alpha-L-rhamnopyranoside (Yadava and Reddy, 2001).

**PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTIVITY**

**Anti-tumour activity:** Ethanolic extract of the stem bark of Bauhinia variegata has been evaluated against the Dalton’s Ascitic Lymphoma (DAL) on Swiss Albino mice. This ethanolic treatment enhance the peritoneal cell counts.

**Hypolipidemic effects:** The ethanolic and aqueous extracts of the root of B. variegata (200 and 400 mg/kg body weight) in rats, showed significant reduction (P<0.01) in cholesterol and significant reduction (P<0.01) in triglyceride level. The VLDL level was also significantly (P<0.05) reduced, with a significant increase in HDL.

**Antioxidant effects:** The crude extracts and fractions of B. variegata were evaluated for their antioxidant potential. The antioxidant activity was performed by DPPH radical scavenging assay. Generally the lowest antioxidant activity was found in chloroform fraction. The ethyl acetate, methanol and n-hexane fractions showed moderate scavenging activity as compared to standard quercetin.

**Antiulcer effects:** In gastric ulcer induced by pyloric ligation and in aspirin induced ulcer model in rats, the ethanolic extract of B. variegata decrease the volume of gastric secretion, total free acidity and ulcer index.
Immunomodulatory effect: The Ethanolic extract of the stem bark of *B. variegata* showed immunomodulatory activity on the primary and secondary antibody responses. It was also increased phagocytic index and percentage neutrophil adhesion.38

Antimicrobial effects: The antibacterial (against *Escherichia coli* MTCC 64, *Enterobacter aerogenes* MTCC 111, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* MTCC 39, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* MTCC 424, *Salmonella typhi*, *Bacillus subtilis* MTCC 121), of the ethanolic extracts of *Bauhinia variegata* were investigated in vitro. It appeared that the extracts were more effective against gram positive compared to gram negative bacteria.39

Anti-inflammatory effects: Phytochemical analysis of non woody aerial parts of *Bauhinia variegata* yielded 6 flavonoids with one triterpene caffeate. These seven compounds showed anti-inflammatory activity, they inhibited the lipopolysaccharides and interferon γ induced nitric oxide (NO) and cytokines.40

Nephroprotective effect: The antioxidant and nephroprotective effect in gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity of the ethanolic and aqueous extracts of root of *Bauhinia variegata* Linn (200 and 400 mg/kg bw, orally) was examined in rats. Both ethanolic and aqueous root extracts of *Bauhinia variegata* produced significant free radical scavenging activity. Both extracts produced significant nephroprotective activity in gentamicin induced nephrotoxicity model as evident by decrease in elevated serum creatinine, serum urea, urine creatinine and BUN levels, which was further confirmed by histopathological study.41

Hepatoprotective effect: The ethanolic extract of the stem of *B. variegata* showed chemoprevention against N-nitrosothiurea induced experimental liver tumor in rats. Ethanolic extract suppressed liver tumor induced by N-nitrosothiurea as revealed by decrease in N-nitrosothiurea induced elevated level of serum glutamate pyruvate transaminase, serum glutamate oxaloacetate transaminase, alkaline phosphatase, total bilirubin, gamma glutamte transpeptidase, lipid peroxidase, glutathione peroxidase and glutathione-S-transferase. The ethanolic extract of the stem bark of *B. variegata* (at the dose of 100 and 200 mg/kg orally) showed hepatoprotective activity against carbon tetrachloride induced hepatotoxicity in rats, it decreased the level of AST, ALT, ALP and GGTP.42

Effect on wound healing: Excision and incision wound models in albino Wistar rats, were used to evaluate the wound healing activity of the ethanolic and aqueous extracts of root of *Bauhinia variegata* at dose of 200 and 400 mg/kg bw. Both aqueous and ethanolic extracts of root of *Bauhinia variegata* at both doses produced significant wound healing by excision and incision wound models, which was comparable to that of standard (framycetin) in excision wound model.43

Molluscidal effects: The molluscidal activity of *Bauhinia variegata* leaf was studied against vector snail *Lymnaea acuminata*. The toxicity of the plant was time and concentration-dependent. Among organic extracts, ethanol extracts of the plant were more toxic. The toxicity of *B. variegata* leaf ethanolic extract was (96h LC3TR 50R3T- 14.4 mg/L). The 24h LC3TR 50R 3Tof column purified fraction of *B. variegata* was 20.3 mg/L. Saponin and quercetin were characterized and identified as active molluscicidal component.44,45

Anti-diabetic action: Oral administration of ethanolic, aqueous and hydro-alcoholic extract of leaves and stem bark of *Bauhinia variegata* at different doses i.e 200 and 400 mg/kg in streptozotocin (STZ) and alloxan-induced diabetic rats reduced the elevated blood glucose level by increasing glucose metabolism.46

Anti-cancer activity: An in vitro study revealed that *Bauhinia variegata* extract showed anti-cancer activity by inhibiting the growth of these cell lines.47 Another study found that methanolic extract of *Bauhinia variegata* leaves at dose of 300, 600 and 900 mg/kg in cyclophosphamide-induced mutagenesis in bone marrow cells of mice showed antimutagenic action by preventing the formation of micronucleus and chromosomal aberrations.48

Anti tubercular activity: The clinical studies have revealed that preparation of stem bark of *Bauhinia* enhance the effect of Anti – tubercular drugs used in case of Tubercular Cervical Lymphadenitis.49

Other activities: The alcoholic extract of stem bark showed CNS activity. Besides producing hypothermia in mice, it also responded to amphetamine hyperactivity test.50 It is in use in the treatment of experimental goiter in rats have been reported.51

**AYURVEDIC PROPERTIES AND PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECT**

According to Ayurveda Literature, *Kanchnara* is *Kashaya* (astringent) in taste (*Rasa*), light (*Laghu*), dry (*Rukha*) in properties (*Guna*), pungent (*Katu*) in metabolism (*Vipaka*); *cold* (*Sheeta*) in potency (*Veerya*); *Gandamala naashak* in Specific action (*Prabhava*). Due to these properties, it pacify *Kapha* and *Pitta dosha* while aggravate *vata dosha*.52 *Twak* of *Kanchanara* is highly beneficial in curing ailments like *Gandamala, Krimi, Kushtha, Kasa, Vranavikara, Atisara, Apachi* and its *Pushpa* are useful in *Pradara, Raktapitta, Kasa* and *Shwasa*.53 *Charak* has mentioned about the use of flower of both *Kovidara* and *Karbudara* as *Grahi* and *Raktapitta shamaka* (*C.S. Su. 27/104*)54

*Sushruta* mentioned about the properties of *Kovidara pushpa* as they are sweet (*Madhura*) in taste (*Rasa*) and metabolism (*Vipaka*) and can cure bleeding disorders (*Raktapitta shamaka*) (*Su.S. Su. 46/ 281*)55 while the *Karbudara* is sweet (*Madhura*) in taste (*Rasa*) and metabolism (*Vipaka*) and *Vata pitta shamaka* (*Su.S. Su. 45/120*)56.
MEDICINAL USES

1. Charak has indicated powder of its flower to be licked with honey to check bleeding disorders. (C.S. Chi. 4/39,70)⁵⁷
2. Charak has mentioned about use of Kovidara as Vamana karaka (C.S. Ka. 1/16)1082, (C.S. Ka. 5/8)⁵⁸
3. Charak has indicated use of Kovidara along with other drugs in the form of Khad yusha for curing bleeding piles (C.S. Chi. 14/202)⁵⁹
4. Acharya Charak has also mentioned about the use of Karbudara and other drugs like Yava, Tila, Upodika in the form of Niruha Vasti to cure Parisrava (C.S. Si. 7/61)⁶⁰
5. Acharya Charak has also mentioned about the use of Karbudara and other drugs like Aadhi, Kadam and Vidula in the form of Vasti to cure Parikartika (C.S. Si.10/34)⁶¹
6. Sushrut told to ingest Kovidara along with Shirish, Arka and Katthi in case of snake bite (Su.S. Ka. 5/17)⁶²
7. Sushruta has also suggested the use of powder of Madhuka, Shobhanjan, Kovidara and Priyangu for curing bleeding disorders (Raktapitta) (Su.S. U. 45/19)⁶³
8. Sushruta has also mentioned use of Karbudara with other drugs like Varshabu, Mulethi, Twaka, Jeeraka along with milk for curing Madaatya (Su. S. U. 47/46)⁶⁴
9. Powder of root bark of Kovidara along with butter milk with suitable diet is also a good remedy to cure Haemorrhoids (A.H.Chi. 8/31)⁶⁵
10. According to Sharangdhar, one should regularly take bark of Kanchnara stem and Shunthi to cure Gandamala (lymphadenitis) (Sha. S. 2/2/124)⁶⁶
11. In case of meases (Masurika), decoction prepared with bark of Bauhinia should be given with Swarna makshik bhasma (B.P. Chi. 60/49)⁶⁷
12. Decoction of the bark of Kanchnara with powder of Shunthi added with lot of honey can cure scrofula (Gandamala) which is persisting from a long time. (B.P. Chi. 44/36)
13. Bark of Kanchnara, one pala (40gm.) or half Pala (20gm.) macerated with rice wash and consumed cures scrofula (Gandamala) (B.P. Chi. 44/37)⁶⁸
14. The fresh bark of Kanchnara mixed with Shunthi is pounded with sour gruel and given in Gandamala (Chakradutta 41/18)⁶⁹
15. Soup of flowers of Kovidara and Karbudara along with flowers of Sana, Shalmali, Dhatki, Padma is cooked with Dadima without oil and is given in Asrigdara, Raktapitta, Daha and diseases of eye and abdomen. (Ka. S. Khi. 4/48)⁷⁰
16. A gagle made from the bark with the addition of extract of Acacia Pods and Pomegranate flowers is a remedy in salivation and sore throat and decoction of buds in cough, bleeding piles, haematuria and menorrhagia. Dried buds are also useful in diarrhoea, worms, piles and dysentery.⁷¹
17. Kanchnara bark added with three myrobalans or Triphala and Pippali churna is recommended in Gandamala as well as Galganda (Goitre). Kanchnara bark pounded in rice water can also be given for curing Gandamala. Kanchnara guggul is also a prominent formulation in Indian medicine which is frequently administered for treatment of Galaganda, Gandamala, Granthi and other allied diseases⁷². In Siddha medicine, one of its important pharmaceutical preparation is Mantharai Kudineer and it is used for Vata disorders and Skin diseases.⁷³

PART USED

Stem bark, flower bud, flower, tender pod; roots and bark⁷⁴

FORMULATIONS

Kanchanara Guggulu, Kanchan gatika, Gandamala kundan rasa, Gulkand Kanchanara and Kanchanaradi Kwatha.⁷⁶ Ushirasa, Chandanasasa, Vidangarishta, Kanchanara drava, Kanchnara Varuna Kwatha⁷⁷

DOSAGE

Bark powder: 3-6 gm, Decoction: 40-80ml, Flower juice: 10-20ml⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

This paper is an attempt of the author to give a detail review on this important medicinal plant used in Indian system of medicine - Bauhinia variegata Linn. In this article, we had discussed about the classical references, phytochemicals, pharmacognostical and pharmacological properties of Bauhinia variegata. The various phytochemical present in it are flavonoids, glycosides, alkaloids, tannins and terpenoids which act as active biological constituents and are responsible for different pharmacological actions of Bauhinia variegata Linn. The present paper also revealed that Bauhinia variegata Linn. act as anti-diabetic, anti-oxidant, anti-ulcer, immunomodulator, nephroprotective, anti-microbial, anti-bacterial, anticancer and hepatoprotective agent.

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