



# Karkkidaka Kanji- A Health Tradition Of Kerala

Sayujya.p.s<sup>1</sup>, Waheeda Banu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, Department of P.G studies in Kayachikitsa, Karnataka Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mangalore, D.K District, Karnataka, India.

<sup>2</sup>HOD & Professor, Department of P.G studies in Kayachikitsa, Karnataka Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Mangalore, D.K District, Karnataka, India.

## Abstract:

*Karkidakam* (July-August) Is the last month of Malayalam calendar and is one of the months that fall under monsoon season. The month is regarded as the most suitable time for rejuvenation therapies. *Karkidaka chikitsa* are well known tradition of Kerala, which focuses on detoxification of the body and prevention of monsoon related diseases. *Karkidaka kanji* is a medicated porridge consumed by the people as the part of *Karkidaka chikitsa*. The Kanji increases the digestive capacity and strengthens the body. It is believed that the *Kanji* will be providing immunity for the upcoming year. The present work reveals the importance of *Karkidaka kanji* and the plants used in the conventional method of its preparation. The information regarding the plants used was obtained from the Ayurvedic Doctors, Ayurvedic practitioners and local people of different regions of Kerala. The *Kanji* is generally prepared using *Njavara* rice, spices and various other herbs like *Sida cordifolia*, *Boerhavia diffusa*, *Mimosa pudica*, the extract of '*Dashapusham*' etc. The ingredients and preparation of *Karkidaka kanji* varied in different region according to the availability of plants. These ingredients are therapeutically active source of drug for various disease and ailments. Still there exist a lot of possibilities for investigating the potential pharmacological activates of these plants. Thus systematic documentation of such traditional system indicating the importance of plants opens up the opportunity for future research.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda, Karkidaka kanji, Karkidakam, Tridosha, Njavara rice.*

## Introduction:

Ayurveda, the science of life, gives importance to food in different contexts, such as a daily regimen, a seasonal dietary regimen, different stages of disease manifestation, a treatment regimen, etc *Karkidaka Kanji, Oushadha Kanji* is one of a unique medicinal porridge traditionally popular in the South Indian state of Kerala during the rainy season. The Malayalam month of *Karkidakom* roughly falls in between July and August of the gregorian calendar. During this time, with the incessant rains beating down the roof, this month is spent in rejuvenation of the mind and body. The unique combination of herbs, spices and rice in this dish would keep the monsoon fevers at bay and have a positive effect against some of the common diseases of rainy season like arthritis (*Vatham* in Malayalam). This is a special diet in Ayurveda which is good for the people of all age groups as it would help to improve the immunity of the body and acts as a detoxifying agent. The recommended consumption of the Kanji is for at least 7 days. The only limitation is to consume it in multiples of 7 days continuously to get the best of the

benefits. The *Kanji* is ideal for the control of diabetes and cholesterol. With little to no fat, this dish is beneficial in ensuring that the body does not have any trouble digesting making it available for nearly anyone to consume this dish. It's seen that the *Kanji* is good for people with arthritis. The other benefits of the *Karkidaka Kanji* are the increase in immunity, rejuvenation of the body by eliminating toxins and also increases the energy and aura of the consumer.

As per Ayurveda, the seasonal regimen (*ritucharya*) has a major role in maintaining health, as well as preventing diseases. *Karkkidaka masa* comes in *Varsha ritu*, during which the body's strength (*Sareera Bala*), digestive fire (*Agnibala*), and immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*) greatly decline<sup>1</sup>. The *karkkidaka kanji* is practiced by Keralites as a traditional wellness food. It is a combination of many herbs that helps boost immunity and rejuvenation for the monsoon season, as well as the season that follows.

This rice-based porridge comes in different flavors, including "jeera kanji," "Dasapushpa kanji," "Uluvakanji," "Njavara kanji," etc. The shelves of medicinal shops and supermarkets are stuffed with the "Oushadha Kanjikootu" (instant mixture of medicinal porridge) during the *Karkkidakamasa* (monsoon season), which signifies the health awareness of the people nowadays.

## Materials and methods:

**Table 1. Karkkidaka kanji ingredients.**

<i>Shashtika shali</i>	100 g
<i>Mudga</i> (green gram)	10 g.
<i>Chandrasoora</i> (garden cress)	10 g
<i>Jeeraka</i> (cumin seed)	10 g
<i>Medhika</i> (fenugreek seed)	10 g
<i>Dasamula churna/bala churna</i>	10 g.
<i>Panchakola churna/Trikadu churna</i>	5 g
<i>Dasapushpa swarasa</i>	Q. S
Coconut milk	Q. S
Water	Q. S
Jaggery	Q. S
<i>Saindhava lavana</i>	For taste

### 1.2. Method of Preparation

Take adequate quantity of water and boil with 10 g of *bala churna/dasamoola churna*. Then, add 100 g of *shashtikashali* and 10 g of *mudga* (green gram) to it after proper washing. Continue the boiling by adding *jeera*, *medhika*, *Chandrasoora*, and *Panchakola Churna*. When the rice is cooked well, add the *dasapushpa swarasa*, coconut milk, and jaggery in sufficient quantity. Lastly, add the *saindhava* for taste, in accordance with the preparation.

### 1.3. Time of Administration

This porridge should be consumed fresh and lukewarm on all days of *Karkkidaka* or for 7, 14, or 21 days continuously, as per one's need. This should be consumed either the morning after an oil bath or in the evening as dinner, or at both times if possible. However, it must be consumed for a minimum of seven days in a row<sup>2</sup>. It is best to avoid tea, coffee, oily foods, and non-vegetarian foods while taking this *kanji* to avoid deterioration of digestive fire and to reap the most benefits.

**Table 2. Ingredients and action**

Ingredients	Botanical name	Action
<i>Shashtika shali</i>	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Antioxidant, Antidiabetic
<i>Mudga (green gram)</i>	<i>Vigna radiata</i>	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-diabetic, Anti-hypertensive, anti-tumorous
<i>Chandrasoora</i>	<i>Lepidium sativum</i>	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory
<i>Jeeraka</i>	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i>	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Analgesic
<i>Medhika</i>	<i>Trigonella foenum graceum</i>	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Anticarcinogenic, Antidiabetic
<i>Panchakola churna</i>	<i>Pippali—Piper longum</i> <i>Pippalimoola—Piper longum root</i> <i>Chavya—Piper chaba</i> <i>Chitraka—Plumbago xylanica</i> <i>Nagara—Zingiber officinale</i>	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory
<i>Dasamula churna/Balamula churna</i>	<i>Bala—Sida cordifolia</i>	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Analgesic
<i>Dasapushpa</i>	<i>Sahadevi—Vernonia cinerea</i>	Antioxidant, Cytoprotective Neuroprotective
	<i>Akhukarni-Emilia sonchifolia</i>	Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, Analgesic
	<i>Vishnukrantha-Evolvulus alsinoides</i>	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, nootropic
	<i>Bhringaraja-Eclipta alba</i>	Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, Hepatoprotective
	<i>Indravalli-Cardiospermum halicacabum</i>	Antioxidant, antiarthritic
	<i>Lakshmana-Ipomea sepiaria</i>	Antifungal, anticancer, Antidiabetic
	<i>Musali—Curculigo orchoides</i>	Antioxidant, hepatoprotective, anticancerous
	<i>Viparitalajjalu—Biophytum sensitivum</i>	Antioxidant, antipyretic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory
	<i>Bhadra—Aerva lanata</i>	Antimicrobial, antidiabetic
<i>Durva—Cynodon dactylon</i>	Antioxidant, Immuno-modulator, Hepatoprotective	

Table-3-Traditional recipe

Ingredients	Botanical Name	Rasa panchaka	Properties	Proven studies
<i>Njavara rice</i>	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Rasa- Svadu Guna- Laghu, Snigdha	Tridoshagna, Hima	Antioxidant, Antidiabetic <sup>3</sup>
<i>Broken wheat</i>	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	-	Vrshya, Jeevana, Sandhaanakari, Sthairyakrth, Sara	Antiulcer, Antioxidant, Anti- arthritic <sup>4</sup>
<i>Mudga</i>	<i>Vigna radiata</i>	Rasa- Svadu Guna- Laghu, ruksha Vipaka- Sheeta	Jwaragna	Antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti inflammatory, antidiabetic, antihypertensive, lipid metabolism accommodation, antihypertensive and antitumor <sup>5</sup>
<i>Ghrita</i>		Rasa- madhura Guna- snigdha Virys- seeta Vipaka- madhura	Alakshmiwarapaham Snehanam Uthamam Vayasahsthanam	Antioxidant
<i>Palandu</i>	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Rasa- madhura, katu Guna- snigdha Virya- anushna/ usna Vipaka- madhura	Vatahara, Balaveeryakara	Antidiabetic <sup>6</sup> Cardioprotective <sup>7</sup>
<i>Jathiphala</i>	<i>Myristica fragrans</i>	Rasa- Katu, tikta Guna- Lagu, Ruksha Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Katu	Deepana, Rochana	Antibacterial <sup>8</sup> Antidepressant <sup>9</sup> Analgesic <sup>10</sup>
<i>Black cumin</i>	<i>Nigella sativa</i>	Rasa- Katu Guna- Laghu, Ruksha Veerya- ushna Vipaka- Katu	Deepana, Rochana	Cardioprotective Anticancerous <sup>11</sup>
<i>Naagara</i>	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Rasa- Katu Guna- Guru, Ruksha, teekshna Veerya- Ushna Vipaka- Svadu	Vatakaphahara, Deepana	Antiarthritic <sup>12</sup> Antidiabetic <sup>13</sup>

## Conclusions

Kerala is recognized for its ethnic customs and unique traditions. It is one among the states that receives the largest monsoon during the year. The monsoon rains are heaviest during the month of *Karkidakam*. As per the tradition of Kerala, people follow various therapies during *Karkidakam* to strengthen the body that helps them to withstand the monsoon related problems. *Karkidaka kanji* is a medicated porridge made using easily digestible cereals, spices, herbs and fresh plant extracts. The admiration of *Karkidaka kanji* provide promising results due to the phytochemical properties and therapeutical values of cereals, spices and plants used for its preparation. This study provides an insight into the rationale of “*karkkidaka kanji*.” The analysis of the ingredients and their properties showed that this preparation is an example of *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), modified as per *desa* (place) and *satmya* (homologation). The assemblage of herbs and other ingredients in *Karkidaka kanji* make it a tasty and healthy meal.

The ingredients and preparation of *Karkidaka kanji* varies in different region according to the availability of plants. The rejuvenating effect of *Karkidaka kanji* is a well-established tradition of Kerala. Systematic documentation and subsequent screening on phytochemicals of these plants contribute for potential drug development in Ayurveda and other disciplines of medicine. It can also shed light towards understanding more about the prevailing biodiversity of the area. Thus by following such traditional system can contribute towards conservation of biodiversity and to lead a harmonious life with nature.

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