



A Brief review on *Raj Nighantu*- Scientific approach in *Dravyaguna*

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Abstract

Nighantu text is one of the important classical textual in the study of *Ayurveda* and especially in the field of *Dravyaguna* as it is a glossary of drugs/dravya indicating synonyms and actions. *Dravyaguna* mainly primarily deals with identification and properties of herbal plants and respective use in different diseases. In ancient period of *Samhita* there was less morphological description of plants but after introduction of *Nighantus* it was like a big change in the field of *Dravyaguna Vigyana*. *Ayurveda Nighantu* is actually traditional collection of words with actions and properties (*rasadi guna*) of drugs. The *Nighantu* is surely a dictionary book containing synonyms according to specific parts having resemblance to any other identified living or non-living object or accordingly to development place etc. In *Raj Nighantu* it has been indicated *Dravya* identification should be done by regional people for proper use. So, it is important for a *Vaidya* to identify drugs accordingly. This article is going to explain specificity of *Raj Nighantu* with its introductory part.

Key words: *Raja Nighantu, Dravyaguna, Varga*

Introduction

Nighantu is a 'Collection of names'. *Nighantu*, a vocabulary or glossary of words¹. It is depicted that without *Nighantu* a physician is like a scholar without grammar and archer without practice². It has been also explained that every drug should be properly investigated before administration by folk people living in remote area³. *Raj Nighantu* has been written following the other previous *Nighantus* like *Dhanwantri Nighnatu, Madanpal Nighantu, Halayu Nighantu, Vishwaprakash Nighantu, Amarkosha, Bhojraj Kosha* but mainly follows the pattern of *Dhanwantari Nighantu*. The drawbacks in previous *Nighantus* has been improved to a great extent in this *Raj Nighantu*. “*Raj Nighantu*” is written by *Sh. Narhari Pandit* of Kashmir, a descendant of the Kashmir leaders. *Narhari Pandit* was the king of Kashmir, a great devotee to Lord Shiva and son of *Iswar Suri*. He was a great scholar, writer, physician, administrator, had knowledge of eighteen languages. At various places *Narhari* himself depicted about him via various *slokas*. It was very first named as “*Abhidhan Cudamani*” or *Dravy abhidhan-gana-Sangraha*” but when it was reaching to completion the writer felt that this *Nighantu* can be supreme to other *Nighantu* due to his work done on it so decided to give it name as *Raj Nighantu*. This *Nighantu* had been declared to clear the shortcomings in previous *Nighantu* and have many specific characteristics features like being better arrangement and having specific additional chapters⁴. *Raj Nighantu* also contributed in food item group as *dhanya varga* where *dhanya* mainly divided into *shali, simbi* and *trin dhanya varga* and explained properties and action of each and every *dhanya* on particular *dosha* which is very helpful in deciding the *pathya-apathya* diet in malnutrition and life style disorders⁵.

Time period⁶⁻⁷

In *Raj Nighantu*, particular time period had not been mentioned. In this *Nighantu* various names of plants has been mentioned in *Maharashtri and Karnataki* languages which shows that he belongs Deccan i.e 12th or 13th century. *Raj Nighantu* was written either at the end of 14th century according to Bapalal Vaidya or at the beginning of 15th century which has been also supported by Acharya Viswanath Dwivedi.

Material and Method

Main documentation has been made from *Raj Nighantu* (14th century) to explore different classification group (*varga*) of *Dravya and basis of dravya* basonyms and synonyms which can be a bridge between classical nomenclature system to present botanical nomenclature.

Basis of Nomenclature system of Herbs in *Raj Nighantu*⁸

Nomenclature of *Dravya* and *Prayay* (synonyms) are declared on the seven basis of *rudhi, svabhava, desokta, lancchna, upama, virya, and itarahvya*.

Table no 1.

S.no	Synonyms basis	Description	Example
1	<i>Rudhi</i>	No specific basis for naming but the name given traditionally	<i>Guduchi- Giloy</i> (<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>) <i>Pacham-pacha- Daruharidra</i> (<i>Berberis aristata</i> DC)
2	<i>Swabhava/Prabhava</i>	Specific natural properties like <i>guna, virya, vipaka</i>	<i>Kustaghni-Khadir</i> (<i>Acacia catechu</i> . L.f) <i>Pleehari- Sharpunka</i> (<i>Tephrosia purpurea</i> Linn.)
3	<i>Desha</i>	Availability of plants or originated place	<i>Malayaja-Chandana</i> (<i>Santalum album</i> Linn.) <i>Dravidi- Ela</i> (<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> Linn.)
4	<i>Lanchana</i>	Special morphological character	<i>Deerghaphala- Aragwadha</i> (<i>Cassia fistula</i> Linn.) <i>Chitratandula- Vidanga</i> (<i>Embelia ribes</i> Burm. F.)
5	<i>Upama</i>	Similarity to any bird or animal	<i>Shrungi- Ativisha</i> (<i>Aconitum heterophyllum</i> Linn.) <i>Kinshuka -Plasha</i> (<i>Butea monosperma</i> Lam.
6	<i>Virya</i>	Based on potency	<i>Teekshana- Pippali</i> (<i>Piper longum</i> Linn.) <i>Sheeta- Bala</i> (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn.)
7	<i>Itrarahvaya</i>	On basis of other factors that involved	<i>Varee- Shatavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Wild) <i>Pura- Gugglu</i> (<i>Commiphora mukul</i>)

Varga (Classification group) in Raj Nighantu⁹**Table 2 Medicinal plant Groups**

Varga	No of drugs	Description
<i>Anupadi Varga</i>	-	<i>Anupadi desh</i>
<i>Dharnayadi Varga</i>	-	<i>Dhara/bhumi---</i> soils
<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>	52	<i>Valli /climbers</i>
<i>Shatavhadi Varga</i>	80	Large shurbs/Aroma drugs
<i>Parpatadi Varga</i>	60	Small shurbs
<i>Pippalyadi Varga</i>	96	Panaya Economic herbs— <i>Pippali, marich, hingu</i>
<i>Moolakadi Varga</i>	105	Vegetables/ <i>Saka</i>
<i>Shalamdyadi Varga</i>	81	Tress in forests with thorns mainly
<i>Prabhadradi Varga</i>	67	Wild tress
<i>Karaveeradi Varga</i>	83	Puspa varga/flowering plants
<i>Amradi Varga</i>	110	Mainly fruits
<i>Chadanadi Varga</i>	57	Aromatics
<i>Suvarnadi Varga</i>	58	Minerals, metals

Table 3 Aaharadi varga

<i>Paaniya Varga</i>	<i>Water</i>
<i>Ksheeradi Varga</i>	<i>Milk and milk products</i>
<i>Shalyadi Varga</i>	<i>Rice etc (trin dhanya)</i>
<i>Mamsadi Varga</i>	<i>Meat of animals</i>
<i>Manushyadi Varga</i>	<i>Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Kshudra, ang-pratyang), marma</i>
<i>Singhadi varga</i>	<i>Wild animals and birds</i>
<i>Rogadi Varga</i>	<i>Diseases, Panchvidha Kashaya kalpana and 7 types of Kwath</i>
<i>Satwadi</i>	<i>Satva, Raja, Tama</i>
<i>Mishraka Varga</i>	<i>Trikatu, Triphala, Dashmula, Saptdhatu</i>
<i>Ekarthas and Anekarthas.</i>	<i>Referral system of common synonyms for one word</i>

Specific description of Raj Nighantu

1. *Raj Nighantu* has important contribution in the field of *Dravyaguna* as the drugs that described in this *Nighantu* are herbal, minerals, *dhanya*, *paniya* etc in 23 *varga* used as medicine, food, other supplements along their actions and effect on dosha in

2. Basonyms and synonyms classification system is unique system of classification resembling to modern classification system.

3. In ten *Vargas* (classifications) *Narahari* has mentioned 698 herbal drug¹⁰.

4. Synonyms of every drug and *Dravya* at every place and regional types names prevalent in the languages: Kannada, Marathi. *Telegu, Sanskrit*, other local tribal language is a bigger contribution in *Dravyaguna Vigyan* which differs it from others¹¹

5. Land was separated on the basis of four *Varnas* (castes) and told which plant grown accordingly on which land that is useful for each category caste. The hypothesis, however, had not any justified explanation¹².

6. Bhavamishra indicated only two varieties of *Karaveera* i.e. *Sweta* (white) and *Rakta* (red) which was similar to description of *Dhanwantri Nighantu* and *Madanapala Nighantu*, while *Raj Nighantu* indicated four varieties namely *Sweta*, *Rakta*, *Peeta* (yellow) and *Krishna* (black)^{13,14,15}.

7. *Jhandu* Marigold-17th century flowering plant for ornamental need while *Jhandu* in *Raj Nighantu* mentioned for *jwara* and *manas vyadhi* (fever and psychotic disorders). So *Jhandu* of *Raj Nighantu* may not be ornamental Marigold^{16,17}.

Raj Nighantu Discussion

The *Anupadi Varga* and *Dharanyadi Varga* the very first *varga* has been taken from the *Amarakosha*. The *Anupadi Varga* deals with characteristics and various types of *Desha* (region) trees, and different types of trees. The *Nighantu* classifies land (*bhumi*) based on various castes & also on the basis of *Panchamahabhuta*; *Parthiva*, *Aapya*, *Tajasa*, *Vayavya* & *Antariksha* *Raj Nighantu* gives primary importance to nomenclature of drugs with basonyms and synonyms. *Raj Nighantu* has named drugs based on the 7 factors viz; *rudhi*, *svabhava*, *desokta*, *lanchna*, *upama*, *virya*, and *itarahvy*. 23 *varga* has been mentioned in *Raj Nighantu*. Out of which nine groups are predominantly herbal medicinal plant group, one deals with vegetables/ *saka varga* known as *Moolakadivarga* and other group *Suvarnadi Varga* deals with minerals and metals. Groups like *Paniyaaadi*, *Ksheeradi* and *Shaliyadi* etc typically focuses on *anna-paniya* group (food items). The *Sthavara Dravyas* are of 5 types: *Vanaspathi*, *Vaanaspahya*, *Kshupa*, *Valli* & *Oshadi*, each again being of 3 kinds: *Pullinga*, *Sthreelinga* & *Napumsakalimga* (male, female and trans groups of plant). The description of *Chetana* (Conscious) & *panchbhoutiktva* in plant drugs has been explained like *kathinya* (*parthiv*), *adarta* (*jaliya*), *Ushma* (*Teja*), *Vridhhi* (*Vata*), *Chidra* (*Aakash*) respectively. The *Dharanyadi Varga* deals with synonyms for *Prithvi*, *jangla*, *parvat*, *Nakshatra* *Vriksha*. The 3rd-13th chapters deal with *varga* explained as viz; *Guduchyadi Varga*, *Shatavhadi Varga*, *Parpatadi Varga*, *Pippalyadi Varga*, *Moolakadi Varga*, *Shalmalyadi Varga*, *Paribhadradi Varga*, *Karaviradi Varga*, *Amradi Varga*, *Chandanadi Varga*, *Suvarnadi Varga* mainly herbal drug groups. The 14th-17th chapter are *Paniya Varga*, *Ksheeradi Varga*, *Shalyadi Varga*, *Mamsadi Varga*. The eighteenth chapter deals with *Manushyadi Varga*. The 19th chapter is about *Simhadi Varga* with the names of animals and birds. The 20th *Rogadi Varga* is about name of *roga*, medicinal formulations. The 21st chapter *Satwadi Varga* is about three *Gunas*, and the three *Doshas*, *Mana*, *Kala* etc. The 22nd chapter deals about the *Mishraka Varga*, group of medicinal substances. The last chapter ends with *Ekarthas* and *Anekarthas* which deals with number of synonyms for one word.

Conclusion

Specificity of *Raj Nighantu* lies in detailed approach to *Dravyaguna* and importance given to this subject explaining drugs details with their synonyms and actions. This *Nighantu* (glossary) is more popular for better identification of drugs, giving it a scientific corner and make the knowledge more useful for the *Ayurvedic* professionals. *Ayurvedic Nighantu* actually means glossary book referring to *Ayurvedic literature*. *Raj Nighantu* has given the criterion of synonyms and basonyms of different specific drugs, so it is understood that the knowledge of *Nighantu* is essential for a physician. *Raj Nighantu* have a mentioned almost all of the *dhanya*, vegetables as well as medicinal herbal drugs. The study of this *Nighantu* will make easier the study of single *ayurvedic* drugs and their actions.

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