



APAMARGA (ACHYRANTHES ASPERA LINN.) IN AYURVEDA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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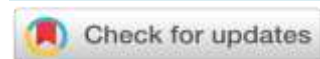
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ABSTRACT

Apamarga (*Achyranthes aspera* Linn.) is a widely utilised herb in *Ayurveda*, known for its diverse therapeutic properties and medicinal uses. This article comprehensively reviews the botanical description, phytochemical composition, pharmacological actions and therapeutic applications of *Apamarga* as documented in *Ayurvedic* texts. The herb is esteemed for its *Shothhara*, *Vednasthapana*, *Lekhana*, *Deepan-Pachan* and *Raktrodhaka*. Additionally, it has been traditionally employed to manage various ailments such as *Kushtha*, *Arsha*, *Kasa*, *Vibandha*, *Karnashoola*, and *Mutrakrichha*.

Keywords: *Apamarga*, *Achyranthes aspera*, Prickly chaff flower

INTRODUCTION

The generic name *Achyranthes* comes from two ancient Greek words: "Achyro", meaning "chaff or husk", and "anthas", meaning "flower". The word *aspera* also comes from Greek, and the meaning of *aspera* is "rough" as the stem and leaves of this herb

are very rough, so it is called "*aspera*". *Apamarga* is botanically known as *Achyranthes aspera* Linn. and belongs to the Family-Amaranthaceae. *Apamarga* (*Achyranthes aspera* Linn.) grows in abundance (*Aghata*) and has flowers at the top (*Shikhari*).

Deflexed flowers (*Pratyakpushpa*) with spinous bracteoles and pointed perianth (*Adhahshalya, Kharamanjari*), which make it difficult to handle (*Durgraha*). Leaves have close appressed hairs beneath (*Markati*). The plant is predominantly alkaline (*Ksharamadhya*). It induces sneezing (*Kshavaka*), cleanses channels (*Marga, Apamarga*), and eliminates poison and other disorders (*Mayuraka*).^[1]

DISCUSSION-

APAMARGA IN VEDIC AND AYURVEDIC LITERATURE

1. VEDIC PERIOD

➤ *Yajurveda*- has mentioned *Apamarga* by saying, “*Apamarga*, please prevent us from ill actions and

bad dreams”. Accordingly, *Apamarga* can boost willpower and control the minds of those who use it.^[2]

➤ *Atharvaveda*

- It praises *Apamarga* that it can eliminate all the *Doshas* and cleanse sins from the body.
- It considered this herb the "Lord of all plants on earth" because it can elongate life spans by wiping away diseases.
- In the inflorescence of *Apamarga*, the direction of flowers is downward, cleansing sins from the body.^[3]

CLASSIFICATION OF APAMARGA IN VARIOUS SAMHITAS AND NIGHANTUS

Table no 1.1 References of Apamarga in Various Samhita and Nighantu

1.	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> ^[4]	<i>Phalini Dravya</i>
		<i>Shirovirechana Dravya</i>
		<i>Shirovirechana Mahakashaye</i>
		<i>Krimighana Mahakashaye</i>
		<i>Vamnopaga Mahakashaye</i>
2.	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> ^[5]	<i>Madhura Sakanda</i>
		<i>Varunadi Gana</i>
		<i>Veertarvadi Gana</i>
		<i>Arkadi Gana</i>
		<i>Shirovirechana Dravya</i>
3.	<i>Ashtanga Hridya</i> ^[6]	<i>Tikta Dravya</i>
		<i>Tikta Sakanda</i>
		<i>Shirovirechana</i>
		<i>Arkadi Gana</i>
4.	<i>Sushruta Nighantu</i> ^[7]	<i>Shyamadi Gana</i>
		<i>Arkadi Gana</i>
		<i>Arkadi Gana</i>
5.	<i>Ashtanga Nighantu</i> ^[8]	<i>Arkadi Gana</i>
6.	<i>Madanadi Nighantu</i> ^[9]	<i>Chaturtha Gana</i>
7.	<i>Dhanvantri Nighantu</i> ^[10]	<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
8.	<i>Shabadchandrika</i> ^[11]	<i>Vrikshadi Varga</i>
9.	<i>Nighantu Shesha</i> ^[12]	<i>Gulma Kaanda</i>
		<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
		<i>Samkshipata Varga</i>
10.	<i>Shodala Nighantu</i> ^[13]	<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
11.	<i>Madhava Dravyaguna</i> ^[14]	<i>Vividh Aushadhi Varga</i>
12.	<i>Abhidhan Ratnamala</i> ^[15]	<i>Tikta Sakandha</i>
13.	<i>Hrudaydeepak Nighantu</i> ^[16]	<i>Tripada Varga</i>
14.	<i>Madanpala Nighantu</i> ^[17]	<i>Abhyadi Varga</i>
15.	<i>Siddhamantra</i> ^[18]	<i>Kapha-Vataghana Dravya</i>
16.	<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i> ^[19]	<i>Aushadhi Varga</i>
17.	<i>Raj Nighantu</i> ^[20]	<i>Shatahavadi Varga</i>
18.	<i>Bhavprakash Nighantu</i> ^[21]	<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
19.	<i>Guna Ratnamala</i> ^[22]	<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
20.	<i>Laghu Nighantu</i> ^[23]	<i>Aushadhinamamala</i>
21.	<i>Rajvallabha Nighantu</i> ^[24]	<i>Aushadha Ashrayaparichheda</i>
22.	<i>Shaligram Nighantu</i> ^[25]	<i>Guduchyadi Varga</i>
23.	<i>Abhidhanamanjari</i> ^[26]	<i>Shookdhanyadi Varga</i>
24.	<i>Adarsh Nighantu</i> ^[27]	<i>Apamargadi Gana</i>
25.	<i>Priya Nighantu</i> ^[28]	<i>Shatpushpadi Varga</i>
26.	<i>Saraswati Nighantu</i> ^[29]	<i>Ullapa Varga</i>

VARIETIES OF APAMARGA

Table no 1.2 Varieties of *Apamarga* in the *Ayurvedic* Texts

S.No	Samhita/Nighantu	Varieties	Types
1.	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> ^[30]	1	(i) <i>Apamarga</i>
2.	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> ^[31]	2	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Vasira (Rakta Apamarga)</i>
3.	<i>Ashtang Hridya</i> ^[32]	3	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Vasira</i> (iii) <i>Gouradanda Apamarga</i>
4.	<i>Dhanvantri Nighantu</i> ^[33]	2	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Raktapushpa (Apamarga vishesh)</i>
5.	<i>Madanpal Nighantu</i> ^[34]	2	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Rakta Apamarga</i>
6.	<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i> ^[35]	2	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Vashira</i> (iii) <i>Ramatha (Jala Apamarga)</i>
7.	<i>Bhavprakash Nighantu</i> ^[36]	2	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Rakta Apamarga</i>
8.	<i>Raj Nighantu</i> ^[37]	3	(i) <i>Apamarga</i> (ii) <i>Rakta Apamarga</i> (iii) <i>Kshudra Apamarga</i>

There are two varieties of *Apamarga* viz. *Shweta Apamarga (Achyranthes aspera Linn.)*, *Rakta Apamarga*, which is known as *Vasira (Achyranthes bidentata)*, mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta, Dhanvantri Nighantu, Madanpal, Bhavprakash Nighantu*. Apart from these, other Varieties are also found in classics-

- *Gourdanda Apamarga*, mentioned by *Ashtang Hridya*
- *Ramatha (Jala apamarga)* is mentioned by *Kaidev Nighantu*
- *Kshudra Apamarga* is mentioned by *Raj Nighantu*

IMPORTANT SYNONYMS OF APAMARGA WITH THEIR ETYMOLOGY (*NIRUKTI*) & INTERPRETATION ^[38]

Table no 1.3 Synonyms of *Apamarga*

Based on morphological character		
S.No	Name	<i>Nirukti</i>
Flowers		
1.	<i>Pratyakpushpa</i>	प्रत्यङ्गि अधोमुखानि पुष्पाण्यस्य । Deflexed flowers.
2.	<i>Shikhari</i>	शिखरे पुष्पमञ्जरीत्वात् । It has flowers at the top <i>Sikhari</i> .
Bracteoles		
3.	<i>Adhashalya</i>	कण्टकिपुष्पाणामधोमुखत्वात् । It is with spinous bracteoles and pointed perianth.
4.	<i>Kharamanjari</i>	कण्टकित्वात् खरस्पर्शा पुष्पमञ्जरी । It is with spinous bracteoles and pointed perianth.
Growth		
5.	<i>Aghata</i>	आसमन्ताद् घाटः संघातो ऽस्य, 'घट संघाते' । It grows in abundance.
Nature		
6.	<i>Ksharamadhya</i>	क्षारो मध्ये गात्रेऽस्य, ओषधेः क्षारप्रधानत्वात् । The plant is predominantly alkaline.
Based on Pharmacological actions		

7.	<i>Apamarga</i>	1. अपाकृत्य दोषान् शरीरं मार्जयति शोधयतीति । 2. अपमृज्यन्ते विनाश्यन्ते व्याधयोऽनेन इति । It cleanses channels.
8.	<i>Marga</i>	मजियति मार्गान् स्रोतांसीति । It cleanses channels.
9.	<i>Kshavaka</i>	क्षवधुकरः, अपामार्गतण्डुलानां शिरोविरेचकत्वात् । It induces sneezing, <i>Apamarga Tandula</i> are <i>Shirovirechaka</i> .
10.	<i>Kinihi</i>	किणिनो जिहीते याति इति । स्पर्शात् किणो- त्पादकत्वात् । किणिनो व्रणान् जिहीते इति । Cures eruptive conditions like Vrana etc or its touch may produce eruptions.
11.	<i>Mayuraka</i>	मयूर इव विषघ्नः, अथवा मीनाति हिनस्तिरोगान्, 'मीञ् हिंसायाम्' It eliminates poison and other disorders. Tip of its spike is curved and is compared to head of peacock
Others		
12.	<i>Durgraha</i>	कण्टकित्वाद् ग्रहीतुं कष्ट । Which make it difficult to handle.

Table no 1.4 Other Synonyms of *Shaweta Apamarga* in various *Nighantus*

S.No	Synonyms	DN ^[39]	MN ^[40]	KN ^[41]	BP ^[42]	RN ^[43]	PN ^[44]	AN ^[45]
1.	<i>Durbhi Graha</i>	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
2.	<i>Kandkanta</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
3.	<i>Kanti</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
4.	<i>Kashti</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	<i>Katu</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
6.	<i>Kinhi</i>	+	+	+	+	-	-	+
7.	<i>Kubja</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
8.	<i>Malakantaka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
9.	<i>Manjrik</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
10.	<i>Markat Pippali</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
11.	<i>Markati</i>	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
12.	<i>Nandi</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
13.	<i>Pankatikantaka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
14.	<i>Prakpushpi</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
15.	<i>Pratyakpushpi</i>	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
16.	<i>Shaikhrika</i>	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
17.	<i>Vashira</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-	-

Table no 1.5 Synonyms of *Rakta Apamarga* in various *Nighantus*

S.No.	Synonyms	DN ^[39]	MN ^[40]	KN ^[41]	BP ^[42]	RN ^[43]	AN ^[45]
1.	<i>Aaghataka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-
2.	<i>Aalappatrika</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-
3.	<i>Dhamargava</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-
4.	<i>Dugadhnik</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-
5.	<i>Kapipippali</i>	+	+	+	+	-	+
6.	<i>Keshaparni</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-
7.	<i>Kharachhada</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-

8.	<i>Kshudrapamarga</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
9.	<i>Kuntha</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-
10.	<i>Markati</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-
11.	<i>Pratyakparni</i>	-	-	-	+	-	+
12.	<i>Prayatakshreni</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-
13.	<i>Raktaapamarga</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-
14.	<i>Raktabinduka</i>	-	-	+	-	-	+
15.	<i>Raktapushpa</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
16.	<i>Raktavindu</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-
17.	<i>Vasira</i>	+	+	-	+	-	+
18.	<i>Vritaphala</i>	-	+	+	+	-	-

Table no 1.6 Different views about Rasapanchaka of Apamarga

S. No.	Nighantu	Rasa	Guna	Vipaka	Virya
1.	<i>Dhanwantari Nighantu</i>	<i>Tikta, Katu</i>	-	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>
2.	<i>Madanpal Nighantu</i>	-	<i>Tikshan</i>	-	-
3.	<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i>	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	<i>Tikshan</i>	<i>Katu</i>	-
4.	<i>Raj Nighantu</i>	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	-	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>
5.	<i>Bhavaprakash Nighantu</i>	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	<i>Tikshan</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>
6.	<i>P.V Sharma</i> ^[46]	<i>Katu, Tikta</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Tikshan</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Ushna</i>

Table no 1.7 ACTION ON DOSHA

Action on Doshas as explained by various Nighantus

S.No.	Grantha	Doshghanta
1.	<i>Madanpal Nighantu</i>	<i>Vata-Kaphanashaka</i>
2.	<i>Dhanwantari Nighantu</i>	<i>Kaphaghana</i>
3.	<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i>	<i>Kaphanashaka</i>
4.	<i>Raj Nighantu</i>	<i>Kaphasnashaka</i>
5.	<i>Bhavaprakash Nighantu</i>	<i>Vata- Kapha Shamaka</i>
6.	<i>Adarsh Nighantu</i>	<i>Vata-Kapha Shamaka</i>

ACTION ON DHATU: It is *Lekhan, Vranshodhana* and *Raktarodhaka*. ^[47]

ACTION ON MALAS: It is *Vibandhara*, ^[48] *Mutrala* and *Swedajanan*. ^[49]

SAMNAYA KARMA OF APAMARGA, ACCORDING TO VARIOUS NIGHANTUS

Table no 1.8 Samanya Karma of Apamarga

S.No.	Karma	DN	MN	KN	Rv N ^[50]	PN	RN	BN
1.	<i>Aadhamaan Nihanti</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
2.	<i>Aama Doshahara</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	<i>Aamghana</i>	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
4.	<i>Apachi Nihanti</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
5.	<i>Arshaghana</i>	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
6.	<i>Aruchi Nihanti</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
7.	<i>Charam Roga Nashaka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

8.	<i>Chhedan Karma</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
9.	<i>Dadru Nihanti</i>	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
10.	<i>Deepan</i>	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
11.	<i>Grahi</i>	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
12.	<i>Hikka Nihanti</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
13.	<i>Hridya Roga</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
14.	<i>Kandughana</i>	+	-	+	-	-	+	+
15.	<i>Karan Shoola Nashaka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
16.	<i>Kaledana</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
17.	<i>Mutrakrichha Nashaka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
18.	<i>Pachaka</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
19.	<i>Rakta Doshahara</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
20.	<i>Rakta Rogahara</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
21.	<i>Sara</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
22.	<i>Shoola Nihanti</i>	-	+	+	-	+	-	+
23.	<i>Sidhama Nihanti</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
24.	<i>Sransan</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
25.	<i>Udara Roga Nihanti</i>	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
26.	<i>Vibandha Hara</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
27.	<i>Vamanakaraka</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS ^[51]

Part	Chemical Composition
Root	Ecdysone, ecdysterone, inokosterone, olcanolic acid and glycoside
Seed	Saponin, A and B from along with hentriacontane
Fruit	Two new saponins C and D and olcanolic acid based saponins
Whole plant	Alkaloids achyranthine and betaine

PARTS USED: ^[52] *Apamarga Mool* (Root), *Patra* (Leaf), *Tandula* (Seed/Fruit), *Panchanga* (Whole plant)

DOSE OF APAMARGA: ^[53] Seeds- 3gms, Root powder- 3-6 gm, Juice- 10-20 ml, *Kshara*- ½ -2 gms

FORMULATIONS OF APAMARGA ^[54] *Agastya Haritaki*, *Kaphaketu Rasa*, *Apamarga Kshara Tel*, *Apamarga Tel*, *Apamargadi Vati*, *Gulmakalana Rasa*, *Agnimukha Rasa*, *Mahashankha Vati* etc.

THERAPEUTIC USES OF DIFFERENT PARTS APAMARGA ^[55]

Leaves

- A pair of leaves of *Apamarga* introduced into the vagina relieves pain instantaneously.
- The paste of *Apamarga* leaves applied locally checks haemorrhage.

- Liquid gruel prepared of *Apamarga* seeds with milk and inguana meat-juice alleviates *Bhasmaka* (excessive hunger).
- The paste of the *Apamarga* seeds taken with rice water alleviates bleeding piles.
- Massage with oil cooked with *Apamarga* fruits removes all types of pain in the head.

Roots

- Application of the paste of the roots of *Apamarga* and *Punarnava* removes vaginal pain during puerperium.
- The root of *Apamarga* rubbed in a copper vessel with rock salt and curd water applied locally alleviates inflammation in the eye.
- *Apamarga* root is pounded, mixed with honey, and taken with rice water daily in haemorrhoids.

PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTIONS

- Anti-Inflammatory Activity ^[56] *Achyranthes aspera* has been reported to have anti-inflammatory activity. The alcoholic extracts of its leaves and seeds show anti-inflammatory activity in rats.
- Anti-spasmodic: ^[57] The plant was reported to have antispasmodic properties.
- Fistula-in-ano and piles ^[58] *Achyranthes aspera* is one of the ingredients of *Ksharsutra*, an *Ayurvedic* para-surgical measure used to treat fistula-in-ano. *Ksharsutra* can be used as a non-operative treatment of high rectal fistula. Plant juice and ash were mentioned as being used to treat bleeding piles.
- Analgesic and antipyretic ^[59] Methanolic plant extract and leaf and root extract showed analgesic activity. Leaves were reported to be analgesic and antipyretic.
- Wound Healing Activity ^[60] The ethanolic and aqueous extracts of leaves of *Achyranthes aspera* for wound healing activity.
- Diuretic Activity ^[61] A saponin isolated from the seeds of *Achyranthes aspera* shows a significant diuretic effect in adult male albino rats.
- Antioxidant Activity ^[62] Various extracts of the leaves for antioxidant activity.

CONCLUSION

Apamarga exemplifies the synergy between the *Vedic* period and the modern era. It is reflected as a divine herb mentioned in many of the *Vedas*. It is not only famous for its medicinal uses but also its nutritional value. *Apamarga* is essential and readily available all over India. By its *Tikta* and *Katu Rasa*, *Ushna Virya*, *Tikshan*, *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna* it is efficacious in many afflictions as *Deepan-Pachan*, *Aamghana*, *Lekhan*, *Vibandhara*, *Raktarodhaka*, *Kandughana*, *Krimihara* and *Arshoghana*. It was quite a popular drug in the *Samhita* period, as it is mentioned by all *Acharyas* in *Shirovirechana Dravya*. In *Agrya's* context, *Acharya Charaka* is *Apamarga's* best drug for

Shirovirechana due to its *Tikshan*, *Laghu Guna*, and *Kapha Samshodhaka* properties.

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